

IMO

STUDY GUIDE

POWER OF THE PAST
PEOPLE OF THE FUTURE



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1. Letter from Secretary General

Most Esteemed Participants,

I, the Secretary-General of GITOMUN'24, am deeply honoured and privileged to welcome you to the seventh edition of our Model United Nations conference which will take place on 21-22-23-24 November 2024. I am delighted to see our journey continue as much as you, growing stronger each year to provide participants a conference that is fulfilling every aspect. From the earliest stages of planning, our academic and organizational teams have been working relentlessly to ensure that GITOMUN'24 upholds the high standards and enriching experiences that have come to define our conference. Our seventh edition marks not only a continuation but an evolution of what we aim to achieve, harnessing **the power of the past** to empower **the people of the future**.

This year, we are proud to host eight diverse committees, each providing a platform to delve into the pressing issues facing our world today. We are offering seven committees in English: the World Trade Organization (WTO), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the Disarmament and International Security Committee (DISEC), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the International Maritime Organization (IMO), the International Court of Justice (ICJ), and the Joint Crisis Committee (JCC). Additionally, we are honoured to present our sole Arabic committee: جامعة الدول العربية (the Arab League.)

In the light of reuniting for GITOMUN'24, we are lectured by the wise words of a world peace advocate: "If the United Nations is to survive, those who represent it must bolster it, those who advocate it must submit to it; and those who believe in it must fight for it."

On behalf of the entire GITOMUN'24 team, I wish you all a fruitful, challenging, and rewarding experience. May this conference inspire you to continue your journey as advocates for peace, justice, and equality.

Welcome to the seventh edition of our Model United Nations. Let us make it a memorable one.

Yours in service,
Secretary-General
Meryem Sönmez



2. LETTER FROM THE UNDER SECRETARY GENERAL

Most Esteemed Delegates,

It is a distinct honour to serve as the Under Secretary-General of the International Maritime Organization committee for GITOMUN 2024. Allow me to extend my warmest welcome to each of you. Your participation and dedication are what make this conference exceptional, and I am thrilled to see so many enthusiastic delegates ready to engage in meaningful debate.

To introduce myself briefly, my name is Emir Esat Temiz. I am a second-year law student at Boğaziçi University, where I also lead our university's Willem C. Vis Moot Team. My academic journey and my experiences in the field of international law have provided valuable insights into the complexities of international relations and arbitration, topics that align closely with our committee's agenda. I am also currently completing a legal internship with a consultancy firm based in Belgrade. Since 2018, I have been actively involved in MUN conferences, which have continuously enriched my understanding of diplomacy, collaboration, and global challenges.

As you know, we are gathered here to address a topic of significant importance: the governance and demarcation of continental shelf boundaries. With the growing geopolitical and environmental challenges tied to maritime resources, this agenda invites us to consider sustainable and equitable solutions within the framework of international law. I urge each of you to approach this discussion with an open mind, as our goal is to balance diverse national interests with global needs in a way that upholds both justice and cooperation.

I would like to thank Ms. Meryem Sönmez, our Secretary-General, for her hard work in organizing GITOMUN, and my fellow Academic Assistant, Ilaf Bayazid, for her invaluable contributions and support throughout this process. I am looking forward to engaging with each of you during this conference and hope we can work together to create solutions that reflect the dedication and creativity that define Model United Nations.

With warm regards,

Emir Esat Temiz

Under Secretary-General, International Maritime Organization

3. INTRODUCTION TO THE IMO AND ITS ROLE IN MARITIME GOVERNANCE

3.1. About the IMO

In the words of the Convention on the IMO, “The importance of international co-operation in shipping has been recognized for centuries, and has long been manifested in maritime traditions such as ships taking refuge in foreign ports in the event of bad weather and going to the aid of others in distress, irrespective of their nationality.”

Seaborne trade has an extensive history that establishes it as one of, if not the most, ancient forms of transnational industry. Similar to how international laws are required on land to improve safety and maintain order, the sea equally demands a framework of regulations. Although numerous treaties were adopted between nations, shipping can only function successfully if a global commitment ensures that *all* practicing nations not only agree to those terms, but also actively uphold them.

That urgency of that role became increasingly recognized during the aftermath of WWII, which led to the United Nations adopting the Convention establishing the Inter-Governmental Maritime Consultative Organization (IMCO) on March 6th 1948. Its existence was subsequently actualized on March 17th, 1958, after the convention was ratified, establishing its headquarters in London, UK. Their first meeting was held in January 1959, where the first Assembly debated the apportionment of expenses. The mere *21* member states, agreed that each member must pay based on its contribution to the United Nations (Resolution A.20(I)).

The name of the organization was changed in 1982 to International Maritime Organization (IMO). As it stands today, those initial 21 member states have grown to a total of 176 member states, and the IMO serves as the primary international body responsible for the regulation of all aspects of maritime operations. They are fundamentally concerned with the preservation of sea life, the prevention of accidents, the protection of the environment, the reduction of pollution, the security of shipping routes against threats such as piracy and terrorism, and the efficiency of said routes. Simply put, the IMO aims to promote “Safe, secure and efficient shipping on clean

oceans.” As the world’s framework-setting forum on maritime, they are the UN specialized agency that verifies international shipping is operating within clear legal boundaries, which includes the governance of maritime zones such as the continental shelf.

3.2. Relevance of the Topic

The organization’s existence is symbolic of the diplomatic balance between the national interests of 176 nations, each with diverse capabilities and geographical realities, and their common goal of a legal framework that is fair, universally accepted, and sustainable.

Within that legal framework lies the question of continental shelf boundaries, their governance, and their demarcation. This topic is of utmost importance in today’s international maritime and political landscape because of the valuable resources (like oil, gas, and minerals) that the continental shelves carry. As the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) states, those areas grant states “sovereign rights for the purpose of exploring and exploiting” resources within 200 nautical miles from their shores. Given that those natural resource deposits are integral to the economic success or failure of states, strategic claims to those shelves often overlap, especially in cases of neighboring countries. Furthermore, disputes over those areas could fuel nationalistic tensions, which could be overall detrimental to regional stability and diplomatic ties. Simply put, they could evolve into long destabilizing conflicts.

Despite existing treaties, uncertainty over precise borders and claim to resources remains. This, combined with a lack of enforceable guidelines to address such conflicts, creates an urgent need for a system of standards and regulations that can be utilized to bring justice and peace. Addressing the governance and demarcation of continental shelf boundaries allows nations to establish a framework that makes sovereign rights evident while fostering collaboration and cooperation within nations, a goal directly aligned with the IMO’s mission of fostering international stability.

3.3. Purpose of the Agenda

This agenda gives delegates the opportunity to immerse themselves in comprehensive debates to propose amendments or additions that could potentially enhance the legal framework surrounding the governance and demarcation of continental shelf boundaries in accordance with international maritime law.

Delegates must address the complications that arise from overlapping claims and indefinite maritime borders as well as identify gaps within international maritime law that contribute to disputes over continental shelves. The objective is to alleviate conflict by fostering a generally recognized framework that balances shared duties and national interests. Ultimately, those efforts will support just resource distribution, environmental conservation, and political stability. By fulfilling these goals, the agenda aims to support global peace and security, providing a basis for just access to maritime resources on the continental shelf and sustainable management.

4. GLOSSARY

- Ballast water management: methods designed to prevent the introduction of invasive aquatic species through ships' ballast water.
- Bathymetric maps: maps that represent the underwater topography of the sea floor, showing natural extensions of continental shelves.
- Claimant States: states that assert legal rights to a particular territory, often used in conflictual context.
- Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS): body established by UNCLOS to examine and assess the claims of coastal states wishing to extend their continental shelf.
- Continental shelf: submerged land extending from the coastline of a country to the deep sea; subject to specific legal regulations.
- Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ): sea zone over which a state has jurisdiction over both living and nonliving resources.
- Geological surveys: scientific examinations that analyze the structure of the Earth; used to provide data on the natural extension of a country's land territory into the sea.

- Geospatial data processing: collection and analysis of data related to geographic locations often for mapping and resource management.
- Historical rights: claims to areas based on historical occupancy or usage.
- Invasive species: species that are non-native to an environment that spread rapidly and cause harm to local balances.
- Littoral state: state located on the shores of a sea or ocean.
- Marine Protected Areas (MPAs): regions designated to conserve marine ecosystems and biodiversity, usually through restrictions on human activity.
- Maritime zones: areas of the ocean defined by legal regulations as a result of either national or international authority.
- Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA): international organization that facilitates arbitration and dispute resolution between states.
- Resolution A.20(I): adopted during the first assembly of the IMO, established the financial responsibilities of member states.
- Seaborne trade: exchange of goods and services conducted via maritime routes.
- Seismic studies: techniques used to assess the geological structure and resources of the continental shelf.
- Sovereign rights: a state's exclusive rights to the region.
- Truman Proclamation (1945): precedent declaration by U.S. President Harry S. Truman asserting U.S. jurisdiction over its continental shelf.
- UNCLOS: United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, an international treaty that defines the rights and responsibilities of nations in regards to the ocean.
- UN Specialized Agency: operates under the umbrella of the United Nations, with a specific mandate.

5. BACKGROUND ON CONTINENTAL SHELF BOUNDARIES

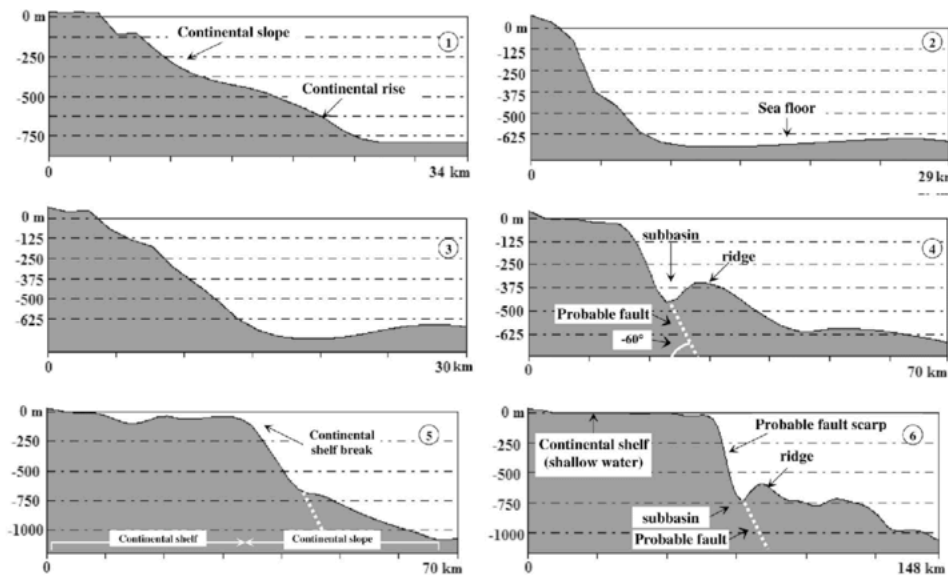
5.1. Definition and Legal Framework

Continental shelves and states' rights over them are clearly defined in UNCLOS as well as the legal framework regarding them.

A continental shelf is a significant extension of a state's sovereign territory. It is the underwater land (seabed and subsoil) that extends beyond a coastal country's territorial sea, to either the edge of the continental margin or up to 200 nautical miles from the baseline used to measure the territorial sea, whichever distance is greater.

This thus provides coastal states with rights to seabed resources to reduce uncertainty, preventing conflicts over marine boundaries.

Part V, Article 56, of UNCLOS legitimizes those areas' "sovereign rights for the purpose of exploring and exploiting, conserving and managing the natural resources, whether living or non-living."



5.2. Historical Context

The concept of continental shelves and their boundaries was brought to existence and evolved over time in response to territorial and resource-based disputes. It was initially an ignored topic due to limited knowledge of marine resources and their extraction methods; therefore, coastal nations tended to limit their claims to modest territorial seas, typically only a few miles offshore.

Countries realizing the economic value of marine resources can be increasingly observed in the 20th century, which came alongside assertions of sovereignty over oceanic territories. This is most notably illustrated by the Truman Proclamation of 1945, with American president Harry S. Truman declared U.S. jurisdiction over resources within its continental shelf, primarily to secure oil and minerals. This precedent pushed other coastal states to act similarly.

As more coastal nations began claiming continental shelves, the issue of overlapping boundaries posed a threat to international peace. Early conflicts, such as disputes between the U.S. and Mexico over Gulf of Mexico oil reserves, proved the need for a legal framework. This resulted in the first attempt to define continental shelf rights, the 1958 Geneva Conventions on the Law of the Sea.

In the years that followed, as technology for underwater exploration and resource extraction advanced, so did the potential of conflict over those underwater territories as well as concerns over maritime sovereignty. This ultimately led to the adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) in 1982. To manage those claims, UNCLOS established the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS).

5.3. Current Challenges in Boundary Demarcation

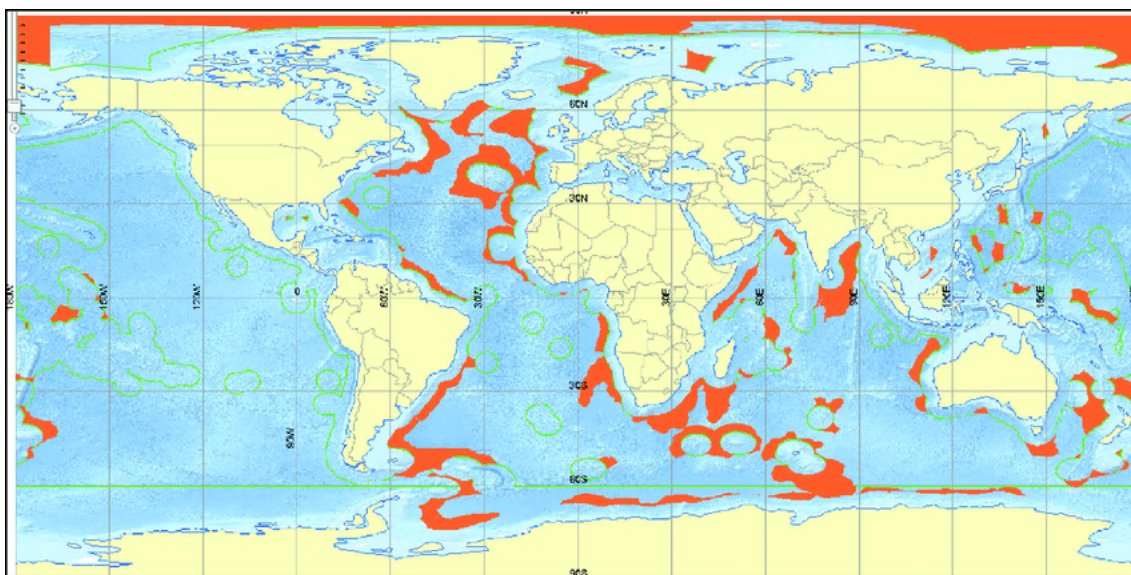
Boundary demarcation refers to the process of officially establishing boundaries between territories. Within this context, it is determining the maritime boundaries between the continental shelves of neighboring coastal states in order to clarify their rights over underwater resources.

Despite legal frameworks like UNCLOS, boundary demarcation remains a challenging matter due to overlapping claims, sovereignty disputes, intensified resource competition, different interpretations of UNCLOS, and heightened nationalistic tensions.

Furthermore, technology has exacerbated those challenges as it enables deeper exploration and extraction of resources. As it stands, if a nation loses territory from its continental shelf, it can result in a significant economic loss, amounting to hundreds of millions of dollars.

Political dynamics add more fuel to the fire: influenced by economic motivations and national pride, they further elongate the road to a solution on maritime boundaries. As disagreements become representative of larger national interests, compromise becomes harder to attain. Even if agreements are reached within states, compromises that fail to deliver full benefits can lead to discontent among citizens, especially those with strong nationalistic tendencies. The idea of lost opportunities or lost sovereignty may fuel dissatisfaction, complicating domestic politics and straining public trust in leadership.

Rising sea levels and climate change have the potential to redraw maritime borders by changing the baselines that are used to support territorial claims. Countries may lose their established claims if low lying islands or coastlines are flooded, which could result in new conflicts and unclear legal issues.



6. KEY CONCEPTS AND LEGAL FRAMEWORKS

6.1. UNCLOS Provisions on the Continental Shelf

The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) is the primary legal framework for all activities related to maritime affairs. Articles 76 through 85 focus on maritime boundaries and the rights of coastal states over their continental shelves.

PART VI of UNCLOS under Article 76 defines a continental shelf of a coastal state is “the seabed and subsoil of the submarine areas that extend beyond its territorial sea throughout the natural prolongation of its land territory to the outer edge of the continental margin, or to a distance of 200 nautical miles from the baselines from which the breadth of the territorial sea is measured where the outer edge of the continental margin does not extend up to that distance.”

The standards for determining the continental shelf's outer boundaries are outlined in UNCLOS Part VI, Article 76, which mandates that governments validate their claims with scientific and technical data submitted to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS).

Furthermore, as stated in Articles 123 and 147, which demand the preservation and protection of the maritime environment as well as sustainable development, UNCLOS highlights the importance of states working together to manage common resources.

6.2. The Role of the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS)

The Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS), which came to fruition in accordance with UNCLOS Article 76, is tasked with carrying out UNCLOS regulations in regards to the continental shelf.

The CLCS is in charge of examining applications from coastal governments that wish to define the outer boundaries of their continental shelf beyond the conventional 200 nautical miles. In order to verify that claims are in line with international law and the standards outlined in

UNCLOS, this process includes a comprehensive evaluation of the information supplied by coastal states, including as geological surveys, seismic studies, and bathymetric maps. These facts include geological and geomorphological elements that establish how a state's land area naturally extends into the sea.

Although the CLCS lacks the jurisdiction to decide matters pertaining to sovereignty, it makes recommendations for the definition of the continental shelf's outer limits following the study, which governments might utilize to create their borders.

By doing this, the CLCS helps avoid conflicts of overlapping claims and promotes the peaceful settlement of maritime disputes. The CLCS's efforts support the preservation of the marine environment and the sustainable management of marine resources, which is consistent with UNCLOS's objective of striking a balance between national interests and international maritime safety goals.

6.3. Relevant International Precedents and Case Law

Important precedents in the interpretation and application of maritime law are provided by landmark decisions such as the North Sea Continental Shelf Case, the Black Sea Case, and the Bay of Bengal Case.

The North Sea Continental Shelf cases (1969): the drawing up of continental shelves between neighboring states of Germany, Denmark, and the Netherlands, was a topic of discussion at the International Court of Justice. The Court advised states to take historical, geographical, and equitable factors into account when determining marine borders, ruling that "equidistance is not the only method." This decision stated that the division should represent a fair balance of interests among surrounding states and should not result in disproportionate resource allocations.

The Black Sea Case (2009): centered around the maritime boundary dispute between Ukraine and Romania over the Black Sea's continental shelf and exclusive economic zones, namely those surrounding Serpents' Island. Romania claimed that its rights to the continental shelf and

maritime zones were being infringed upon by Ukraine's declaration of an exclusive economic zone. The International Court of Justice concentrated on the necessity of historical usage and geographic context for equitable solutions. In the end, the Court recognized Ukraine's claims to some regions while also awarding Romania a greater portion of the continental shelf.

The Bay of Bengal Case (2012): India and Bangladesh attempted to use arbitration to settle their long-standing maritime boundary dispute of overlapping claims to resource-rich and vital fishing regions in the Bay of Bengal. Both countries extended their maritime claims based on historical rights and physical features, and tensions rose as competition for possible oil and gas deposits intensified. After analysis of both nations' claims, the Permanent Court of Arbitration established the border itself, giving Bangladesh a part of the region while guaranteeing India continued access to resources and crucial fishing grounds.

7. MAJOR STAKEHOLDERS AND GEOPOLITICAL CONSIDERATION

7.1. Coastal and Littoral States

Coastal states are countries with a shoreline along an ocean, sea, or other major body of water that have jurisdiction over the nearby marine regions. Littoral states are nations that are situated along the shores of a body of water, such as lakes, seas, or oceans.

The approaches that coastal and littoral states handle resources and boundary disputes differ. Larger countries frequently make broad claims based on pride in their country and historical rights, which results in aggressive posturing and military presence in contested waters. For example, regional tensions with neighboring nations like Vietnam and the Philippines increased as a result of China's large military buildup and strong enforcement of its claims in the South China Sea. Smaller nations, on the other hand, usually concentrate on diplomatic discussions and international legal frameworks to safeguard their interests and provide fair access to resources. This is illustrated by the Philippines' attempts to utilize arbitration to settle the territorial disputes with China, which ended up in the Permanent Court of Arbitration's 2016 decision invalidating China's vast claims in the South China Sea.

Despite these contrasting approaches, maritime challenges and IMO proceedings have an impact on both kinds of states. Competition for resources can exacerbate tensions and spark disputes, which can affect economic growth and regional stability of either type of nation. The necessity of cooperation and dispute resolution techniques in shared maritime areas is further proven by the fact that decisions taken by one state regarding resource extraction may have ecological effects felt by neighboring countries. This interdependence emphasizes how crucial agreements and diplomatic efforts are to resolving overlapping claims and advancing the sustainable use of maritime resources.

7.2. International Organizations and Bodies

The IMO makes decisions that have impact on a number of international organizations that have an economic and security-related stake. Because the IMO's rules on environmental standards and shipping safety have a direct impact on international trade dynamics and marine logistics, the World Trade Organization (WTO) is affected economically. International trade agreements may be impacted by shipping costs and operational efficiency as a result of IMO standards compliance. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), which works to combat marine crimes like piracy and trafficking, is one stakeholder involved in security since the IMO's decisions about security procedures have a direct effect on the security of ports and shipping lanes.

Furthermore, IMO decisions have a big impact on the European Union (EU), which aims to improve safety and environmental sustainability by aligning its policy on European waters with global norms. With the European Green Deal aiming to make Europe the first climate-neutral continent by 2050, the EU has recently been outspoken about improving the sustainability of the maritime industry. Furthermore, in accordance with IMO initiatives such as the Initial GHG Strategy, which aims to cut shipping emissions by at least 50% by 2050 compared to 2008 levels, the EU proposed measures in 2021 to drastically reduce shipping's greenhouse gas emissions. In order to encourage greener technology and operational procedures in the shipping sector, the EU is also actively participating in negotiations with the goal of implementing the Carbon Intensity

Indicator (CII) and the Energy Efficiency Existing Ship Index (EEXI). The African Union (AU) is also impacted since the IMO's rules assist member nations in combating illegal fishing and piracy, which in turn promotes security and better resource management in African waters. The same applies for the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) since they improve the safety of shipping routes that are essential for oil exports based on IMO findings, which in turn affects regional economic situations.

7.3. Private Sector and Environmental NGOs

Private sector players alongside environmental non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are greatly impacted by the choices made by the IMO as well. Shipping firms like Maersk and MSC have to modify their operations to meet IMO safety and emissions criteria, which affects their operational expenses and competitive tactics. Since states adjust their expectations and laws regarding shipping based on IMO decisions, private sector players must meet those expectations. Major companies like Shell and ExxonMobil, which represent the oil and gas sector, are also affected by IMO shipping regulations since they have an impact on environmental obligations and transportation logistics.

Environmental NGOs like Greenpeace and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) keep an eye on IMO rulings and react to them, promoting stricter rules to shield marine ecosystems from overexploitation and pollution. By increasing knowledge and advocating for the adoption of sustainable practices in the shipping sector, these groups seek to have an impact on marine policy. In order to strike a balance between economic interests and the pressing need for environmental preservation and sustainability in maritime operations, the corporate sector and environmental NGOs collaborate to interact with the IMO's frameworks.

8. KEY ISSUES FOR DEBATE

8.1. Overlapping Claims and Boundary Disputes

Through a sequence of actions and equal reactions, overlapping claims and boundary disputes cause tensions among coastal states that turn into threats to regional stability. Under the banner of historical rights or geographical features, a state may initially claim a maritime region, to which other governments may then reply with claims of their own. In order to deter competing claims and demonstrate national triumph, the first assertion frequently leads to an increase in military presence or naval patrols in the disputed area. States' resource exploration missions, followed by extraction activities (drilling for gas or oil) in the area would proceed to intensify the already tense situation. This increases the likelihood of direct warfare since competing nations may try to obstruct or ruin one another's operations. States may try to settle these disputes diplomatically, but if these attempts are unsuccessful, they may turn to international tribunals, which can take years to rule or advise. In the states involved, nationalistic feelings may grow stronger during these events, and political parties may use the conflict to mobilize support from the citizens and divert attention from other internal problems. Compromise between states becomes more challenging when aggressive nationalism from both sides expects no compromises on their behalf. This pressures the current governments to act in the interest of those nationalistic movements to avoid a change in power. Ultimately, a tense atmosphere quickly rises and threatens regional security and cooperation is created by the interaction of assertions, military escalations, resource competitiveness, and national pride.

8.2. Natural Resource Rights and Management

As nations seek control of profitable resources like oil, natural gas, and fish stocks located within their Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs), natural resource rights and management are legitimate concerns in maritime governance. Although coastal nations are granted sovereign rights over resources located within 200 nautical miles of their coastline by UNCLOS, disagreements over how to interpret the agreement can lead to conflict in regions where claims overlap. In

resource-rich areas like the South China Sea, where several countries make conflicting claims based on historical, geographical, and legal reasons, the concerns are intensified.

Because neighboring states perceive unilateral actions as encroachments on their own claimed territory, such as offshore drilling or industrial fishing in overlapping claim waters, tensions frequently rise. In addition to putting a burden on diplomatic relations, such actions endanger the environment by causing pollution, overfishing, and habitat damage in delicate ecosystems. Growing worldwide demand for food and energy exacerbates resource conflicts by pressuring states to protect maritime resources, even at the expense of diplomatic stability.

As states try to protect their own interests, this competition for resources usually results in economic sanctions or shows of military strength and even action. It has become imperative, for the safety of our interdependent world, to implement cooperative resource-sharing agreements and sustainable management techniques in order to avoid the environmental disasters of resource exploitation and avoid conflict.

8.3. Environmental Protection and Sustainability

As human activity and greed increases, the environment slowly deteriorates. This can be seen by how human activities have increased in delicate marine ecosystems, and as a result, environmental sustainability and conservation in maritime zones become more and more important. Delicate ecological balances are at risk and biodiversity is threatened by overfishing, pollution (from shipping and industrial runoff), and the mining of minerals and oil. Particularly at risk are areas like the Arctic and the Coral Triangle, where resource exploitation and climate change pose threats to distinctive ecosystems.

Although governments are urged under UNCLOS, other international agreements, and their own people, to make environmental conservation a priority maritime policy, implementation has proven to be difficult, particularly in disputed regions where states may put economic interests ahead of ecological considerations. Environmentally damaging practices can go unnoticed due to

a lack of thorough control and inspection, which has long-term effects on marine health as well as habitat loss and species decrease.

In order to address these problems, governments must work together to create marine protected zones, reduce pollution, and implement sustainable practices. International organizations and environmental NGOs frequently push for more safeguards, reminding governments of the importance of combined efforts.

8.4. Technological and Scientific Advancements

Technological and scientific developments are influencing maritime operations for both environmental and economic reasons. In order to balance the competing objectives of resource exploitation and ecological preservation and make sure that advancements in one do not come at the price of the other, nations must utilize advancements in both sectors.

Economically speaking, states can now find and harvest resources like oil, gas, and rare minerals from previously unreachable depths because of advancements like remotely operated underwater vehicles (ROVs), deep-sea drilling rigs, and advanced seismic imaging. These developments fuel commercial interests and heighten rivalry for maritime territories by making it possible to exploit resources in far-flung, contested regions.

On the other hand, technologies such as automated marine drones offer the ability to carry out real-time ecosystem monitoring, satellite-based pollution tracking, and artificial intelligence in species mapping are enhancing preservation and conservation efforts for environmental management. These tools assist respective authorities in monitoring illicit fishing, enforcing marine protection laws, and evaluating the health of biodiversity in vulnerable areas.

9. PAST ACTIONS AND CASE STUDIES

9.1. Previous IMO Resolutions and Actions

In pursuit of the IMO's objective to improve maritime safety, safeguard marine habitats, and uphold international security through peace, the IMO has approved a number of important resolutions and actions.

MARPOL 73/78 Convention (1973): a landmark resolution created to stop ship pollution. It greatly lessened the environmental impact of maritime operations by establishing strict limits on the release of pollutants, focusing on hazardous materials such as oil spills and garbage disposal at sea. With modifications made over the years to meet emerging risks, MARPOL has resulted in the development of rules to protect marine habitats from pollution.

Ballast Water Management (BWM) Convention (2004): discusses the ecological risk caused by invasive organisms that are brought in by ship ballast water discharge. In order to protect marine biological diversity and ecosystems, it requires ships to install systems that cleanse ballast water before releasing it. The guidelines established by this convention, which went into effect in 2017, greatly reduce the possibility that invasive species may have a terrible effect on local surroundings.

International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW) (1978): guarantees that all marine workers obtain the necessary instructions and certifications to ensure maritime safety is in safe and capable hands. It established global standards for sailors' competency and training, which decreased accidents. A number of changes have been made to the STCW to reflect changing industry norms and procedures.

Resolution A.1025(26) (2009): primarily concerned with fighting piracy, this resolution calls for member states to take the protection of shipping lanes, especially in dangerous regions like the Horn of Africa and the Gulf of Aden, into their own hands. International naval patrols and

coordinated responses to piracy followed as a result, greatly enhancing maritime security in the impacted areas.

The International Ship and Port Facility Security (ISPS) Code (2004): created to provide security measures for ships and port facilities in the wake of the September 11 attacks. To reduce the dangers connected with possible terrorist attacks, it requires that vessels follow strict security plans and procedures. International shipping operations are now safer as a result of the ISPS Code's application, which has improved marine transportation's general safety.

9.2. Case Studies

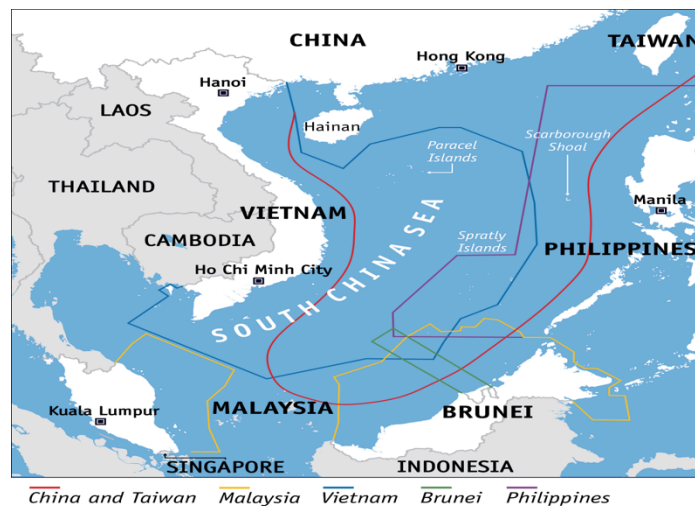
a. The South China Sea Dispute

China, the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, and Brunei are among the nations involved in the complex maritime conflict known as the South China Sea dispute. Based on the "nine-dash line," which crosses over into neighboring territorial claims, China makes broad territorial claims over the area, especially with regard to the resource-rich Spratly Islands and Scarborough Shoal. As countries expanded their military presence and began resource development, tensions in the region started to rise in the 1970s and 1980s, resulting in more intense conflicts.

The situation reached its peak when China started building artificial islands in the Spratly Islands. Other governments who believe in their own right to the territory became more concerned about China's ambitious policies in the area as a result of these activities, which naturally increased tensions.

The Philippines brought its claims before the Permanent Court of Arbitration in 2013 in an effort to resolve these growing disputes. The Philippines defended its EEZ rights and contested the legitimacy of China's nine-dash line. In a landmark ruling delivered in July of 2016, the Permanent Court of Arbitration dismissed China's claims, upholding the Philippines' EEZ rights. The court even declared that, since a number of China's islands lack adequate landmass or are not naturally created, do not meet the legal definition of islands under international law, specifically as outlined in UNCLOS, which defines an island as a naturally formed area of land that is surrounded by water and above water at high tide.

China rejected the court's verdict in spite of this important finding, upholding its claims and carrying on with its assertive and dismissive regional operations. As a result of this, the South China Sea conflict still remains unresolved, and the claimant governments continue to engage in military operations and maintain diplomatic tensions. In addition to the difficulties of striking a balance between conflicting national interests and regional powers in one of the most strategically important rivers in the world, the conflict illustrates a notorious obstacle in international law: the issue of its enforcement.



b. The Arctic Continental Shelf Claims

As the world suffers from the negative externalities of global warming, the melting ice creates new sea lanes which opens access to unexplored natural riches. Russia, Canada, Denmark (via Greenland), Norway, and the United States are among the nations fighting for control of the resource-rich Arctic region. When the countries started formally submitting applications to the CLCS in the early 2000s to expand their continental shelf claims beyond the 200 nautical mile limit, cold competition over the region was ignited.

Russia was notably aggressive, claiming a large area of the Arctic seabed by asserting that the underwater Lomonosov Ridge is a natural extension of its continental shelf. However, Denmark

has claimed portions of the seabed surrounding Greenland, claiming that those are extensions of its territory, while Canada has claimed sovereignty over the Northwest Passage.

The CLCS began looking into the overlapping submissions in 2019, including Canada's rights to the Beaufort Sea, Denmark's claims regarding the Greenland shelf, and Russia's broad claims.

Tensions among nations with overlapping Arctic claims have escalated as a result, prompting military readiness and increased patrols in the region. These conflicts also raise serious environmental concerns since they potentially jeopardize delicate Arctic ecosystems due to increased resource exploitation and shipping. The matter is still open, and continuing discussions and legal analyses highlight how challenging it is to balance national interests in a geopolitical environment that is rapidly changing.



c. The Mediterranean Basin Disputes

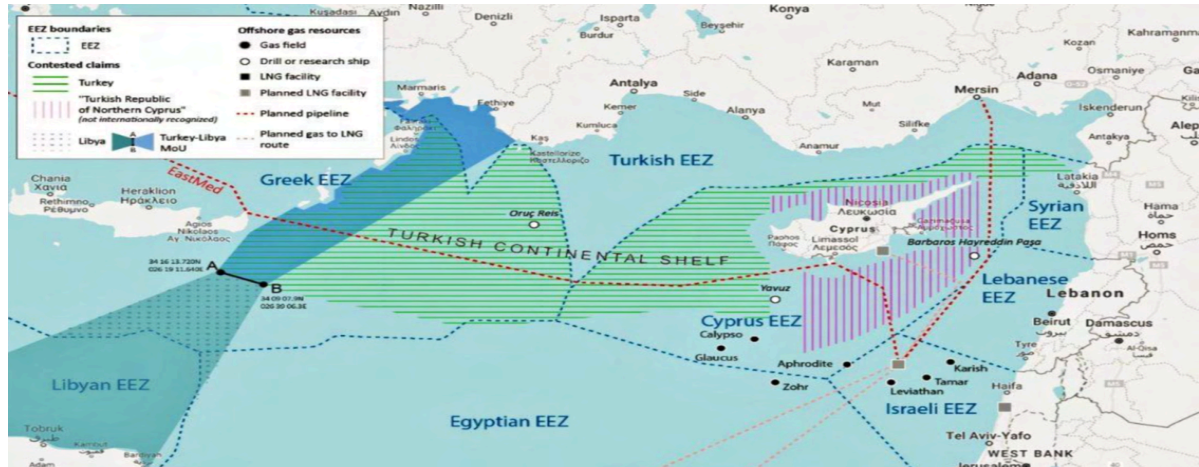
A number of overlapping maritime claims between nations including Greece, Türkiye, Cyprus, Egypt, and Libya are covered under those disputes. The main point of contention is access to submerged natural gas reserves and EEZs, leading to continental shelf boundary disputes.

The eastern Mediterranean became a focal point in the unfolding of this crisis as a result of large gas resource discoveries. With all eyes set on the rights to those resources, competition was ignited and existing political tensions were exacerbated.

Greece and Türkiye have long experienced tensions over territorial waters of the Aegean Sea. Disputes particularly focus on Greece's maritime zones around a number of islands which are close to Türkiye's coast, notably Kastellorizo. Türkiye contends that its access to resources in the area is unjustly restricted by Greece's EEZ claims, which originate from islands distant from its mainland. In 2019, in order to establish an EEZ that overcomes Greek and Cypriot claims, Türkiye concluded a maritime agreement with Libya to establish an EEZ that bypasses the maritime claims of Greece and Cyprus.

Cyprus is involved in conflicts as well. It has granted exploration rights to international energy companies as part of efforts to develop its natural gas reserves. Türkiye, which does not recognize the Republic of Cyprus, has also deployed its own exploration ships to areas that Cyprus claims as part of its EEZ, asserting that the Turkish Cypriots in Northern Cyprus should also benefit from these resources.

With foreign forces, especially members of the EU, voicing their opinions on this topic, these conflicting claims have resulted in increased military presence in the Mediterranean and numerous diplomatic escalations. The conflicts in the Mediterranean Basin continue to pose obstacles to regional security and collaboration due to the engagement of international law and the presence of external players.



9.3. Lessons Learned

The ongoing conflicts in those regions has provided us with important lessons in regards to handling delicate maritime issues.

- The value of clear, detailed, and recognized legal frameworks.

By establishing guidelines for resource rights and territorial claims, a clear legal framework (like UNCLOS) is essential to reduce conflict. Are these structures sufficient, on their own, in the absence of regular enforcement?

- The role of international courts and arbitration.

As demonstrated by decisions like the South China Sea rule, international courts are essential to settling conflicts and encouraging amicable solutions. What occurs when countries disregard court rulings?

- Keeping regional stability and national interests in balance.

As demonstrated by the Mediterranean conflicts, nations often put their own interests ahead of regional unity, which heightens tensions. How might states better balance these priorities? Is there a way to incentivize governments to promote regional stability by enhancing their national benefits?

10. POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS AND DIPLOMATIC APPROACHES

10.1 Multilateral Agreements and Cooperation Mechanisms

Strong multilateral agreements and cooperation mechanisms are required to address continental shelf limits within international maritime law. By guaranteeing that member nations follow accepted legal norms for border delineation, strengthening current frameworks can improve clarity and conformity regarding continental shelf claims. Encouraging communication and negotiation between conflictingly claimant governments alongside encouraging cooperative dispute resolution, and forming a means of communication with mediator states could be beneficial. Further, to support their claims and guarantee openness in the demarcation process, governments can use information-sharing systems with access to hydrographic surveys and scientific data.

10.2. Proposals for Enhancing the Role of the IMO and CLCS

In order to promote accelerated evaluations of continental shelf submissions and joint capacity-building initiatives for developing countries to more effectively participate in the submission process, it is thought that more cooperation between the IMO and CLCS is essential. To ensure compliance with international standards, the IMO could offer member states technical support and clear instructions for defining and demarcating continental shelf borders. Furthermore, more just and equitable results may result from improving stakeholder (state, IOs, private, NGOs) engagement through the participation of affected states, indigenous people, and pertinent NGOs in decision-making. Fostering more openness in both organizations' operations will increase member state trust, which will motivate involvement and responsibility. The IMO and CLCS can greatly enhance maritime governance and promote amicable settlements of boundary disputes by putting these recommendations into practice.

10.3. Innovative Technological Solutions

In line with international maritime law, innovative technical solutions are a brand-new opportunity to improve the governance and demarcation of continental shelf boundaries. Using remote sensing tools, such as satellite imaging and geospatial data processing, to precisely map and track maritime borders is one promising strategy that could guarantee all member states have access to correct information about continental shelf claims. Geographic Information System (GIS) could also help visualize complex maritime data and support nations in making well-informed decisions about resource management and territorial claims. Furthermore, the advancement of autonomous vehicles and underwater drones may make it easier to map and explore the seabed in detail, enabling more thorough evaluations of continental shelf features. In order to improve state-to-state trust, delegates may also take into account how blockchain technology may be used to produce transparent and safe records of maritime claims and agreements. Funding capacity-building programs that teach staff how to use these tools will enable developing countries to participate in boundary delineation procedures successfully. Delegates can promote forward-thinking approaches to maritime law and a cooperative atmosphere for tackling the difficulties of continental shelf control by investigating these creative alternatives.

10.4. Environmental Safeguards

For the purpose of assessing and reducing ecological effects, delegates may want to consider conducting deep environmental impact assessments (EIAs) for all activities on the continental shelf. Promoting environmentally friendly technologies and lower emissions as well as other sustainable practices in maritime operations can be successful. Establishing marine protected areas (MPAs) in continental shelf zones can aid biodiversity and habitat conservation. Additionally, tracking environmental changes and ensuring regulatory compliance might be accelerated by strengthening global collaboration in scientific research and utilizing technologies for real-time monitoring.

11. QUESTIONS TO BE ADDRESSED

- What actions, beyond what is already being done, can the IMO take when it comes to boundary disputes?
- How should the rights to resources found in continental shelves be allocated among neighboring states when their maritime boundaries are contested?
- How can such agreement mechanisms be structured to ensure equitable participation, long-term compliance, and genuine commitment from all parties?
- How can preexisting legal frameworks be strengthened or adapted?
- In what ways can technological advancements be utilized to provide unbiased and precise support in boundary determinations?
- Should stakeholders, including private sector actors and environmental NGOs, be engaged in the governance and management of continental shelf resources to ensure sustainable practices? If so, how?
- How can regional organizations contribute to conflict resolution regarding continental shelf governance?
- How could emerging economies, particularly those with significant claims to continental shelf resources, be integrated into frameworks for maritime governance?

12. SUGGESTED READINGS AND RESOURCES

United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)
The International Law of the Sea, Donald R Rothwell and Tim Stephens
ICJ "Black Sea Case" (Romania v. Ukraine)

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