

Public International Maritime Law Conference

LAWSEA 2026

*“Maritime Disputes in an Era of Contestation:
Shifting between ‘Law in Abstraction’ and ‘Law in Operation’”*

16 - 17 September 2026

Gujarat National Law University
Gandhinagar, Gujarat, India



The Organising Team

National Maritime Foundation

The National Maritime Foundation was inaugurated in 2005, as the nation's first maritime think-tank for the conduct of independent and policy-relevant research on all 'matters maritime', by the then Defence Minister of India, Dr Pranab Mukherjee, who later went on to become the Honourable President of the Republic of India.

It was, from its very inception, designed to create and heighten maritime awareness amongst India's policy-makers, intellectual echelons, and civil society at large. Towards this end, it was to be a policy-relevant research organisation of acknowledged excellence that would not only undertake serious, cutting-edge maritime research of its own but would also provide a common platform for advocacy, discourse, and debate, between maritime-related national and international institutions, organisations, and academic establishments, as also reputed and renowned individuals, professionals, and practitioners the world over.

Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung

The Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) is a political foundation. Established in 1955 as the "Society for Christian-Democratic Civic Education", in 1964 the Foundation proudly took on the name of Konrad Adenauer, the first chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany.

With 16 regional offices in Germany and over 120 offices abroad, the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung is committed to achieving and maintaining peace, freedom and justice through political education. It promotes and preserves free democracy, the social market economy, and the development and consolidation of the value consensus. Its focus lies on consolidating democracy, the unification of Europe and the strengthening of transatlantic relations, as well as on development cooperation.

The India Office of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung has organised its programme priorities into five working areas: (1) Foreign and Security Policy; (2) Economic, Climate and Energy Policy; (3) Rule of Law; (4) Political Dialogue focussed on Social and Political Change; and (5) Media and Youth. The India Office takes great pride in its cooperation with Indian partner institutions who implement jointly curated projects and programmes.

Gujarat National Law University (GNLU)

Gujarat National Law University (GNLU) is a statutory university established by the Govt. of Gujarat under the Gujarat National Law University Act, 2003. The University is recognized by the Bar Council of India (BCI) and the University Grants Commission (UGC) (2f & 12B). The University is also a member of the Association of Indian Universities (AIU), United Nations Academic Impact (UNAI), International Association of Law Schools (IALS), Asian Law Institute (ASLI) and Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute.

The GNLU Act 2003 proclaims that the role of GNLU, “shall be to advance and disseminate learning and knowledge of law and legal processes and their role in national development: to develop in the students and the research scholars a sense of responsibility to serve society in the field of law by developing skills in regard to advocacy, legal services, legislation, parliamentary practice, law reforms and such other matters; to make law and legal processes efficient instruments of social development; and to promote inter-disciplinary study of law in relation to management, technology, international cooperation and development.” GNLU’s teaching methodology and the student response to it can be safely summarized as being par excellence. Its student fraternity has won laurels in various spheres of national and international moot court competitions, paper presentations and cultural activities. GNLU strives for an all-round and inter-disciplinary academic excellence in sync with the other National Law Schools of the country.

Gujarat Maritime University (GMU)

Gujarat Maritime University (GMU), established by the Government of Gujarat through the Gujarat Maritime Board in 2019, is a pioneering initiative dedicated to bridging critical knowledge and capacity gaps in the maritime sector. Conceived as a centre of excellence, GMU offers specialised academic and professional programmes in Maritime Law, Maritime Management, International Trade Law, Shipping, Logistics, and related disciplines, designed in collaboration with industry experts, academicians, and governmental stakeholders. With a strong governance framework and strategic partnerships with leading national and international institutions, GMU is committed to advancing maritime education, research, training, and capacity building. Through its globally aligned curriculum and industry-oriented approach, the University seeks to prepare future professionals and strengthen India’s role in the evolving global maritime landscape.

Gujarat International Maritime Arbitration Centre (GIMAC)

The Gujarat International Maritime Arbitration Centre (GIMAC) is conceived as a specialist Alternative dispute Resolution (ADR) centre established under the auspices of Gujarat Maritime University, with a mission to organise and manage arbitration proceedings in disputes related to the maritime and shipping sector. The GIMAC is housed at the Gujarat International Finance Tec-City (GIFT City) in Gandhinagar, within India’s first-ever commercial maritime cluster ecosystem — the Gujarat Maritime Cluster. With envisaged access to experienced arbitrators, legal professionals in maritime and admiralty law, as well as professionals and experts from the maritime and shipping sector, the GIMAC intends to shape the ADR

mechanism for quick and effective dispute resolution in the maritime and shipping sector, and to compete on a par with other globally renowned maritime arbitral institutions.

Concept Note

Maritime Disputes in an Era of Contestation: Shifting between “Law in Abstraction” and “Law in Operation”

For centuries, the seas have been spaces of both connection and contestation. From the earliest seagoing endeavours of humankind to our contemporary time, kingdoms, republics, empires, nation-states, and collectives, have all been engaged in a continual struggle to reconcile freedom with order, access with authority, and power with restraint. Despite this extensive passage of time, the attainment of an enduring commonality of understanding and acceptance of legally binding norms of behaviour within the maritime domain continues to evade us. As the ongoing conflicts in Ukraine and in the Persian Gulf remind us, maritime disputes remain distressingly commonplace. Even elsewhere, in less conflict-ridden spaces, there is, on the one hand, a general reluctance to resolve these disputes through the use of military force while on the other, there is distressingly little agreement to be found on pacific means of resolution.

Maritime disputes today rarely present themselves as isolated legal disagreements over lines on a chart. Instead, they unfold as prolonged processes shaped by competing interpretations of law, technological disruption, environmental change, strategic behaviour, and the growing use of law itself as an instrument of statecraft. While adjudication and arbitration remain vital tools, many disputes evolve below the threshold of formal litigation, manifesting through operational frictions, regulatory assertions, narrative contestation, and selective compliance with legal norms.

In contemporary times, the Indo-Pacific — that vast, predominantly maritime space extending eastwards from the coastlines of Africa and West Asia to the shores of the Americas, and southwards from the southern shores of the Eurasian landmass to the northern coast of Antarctica — is where these dynamics converge, combining unparalleled economic significance with intense legal and strategic contestation. Disputes over maritime boundaries, the status of the contiguous zone, EEZ entitlements, the legal regimes permissible within straits used for international navigation, an episodic flurry of military activities, ambiguities in marine scientific research, contestation over the seabed and its resources, the growing criticality of submarine cables, and the growing pressure upon fisheries, have all become structural features of the increasing fragility of the regional maritime order.

It is within this dynamic — even fluid — operational and strategic context that the “LAWSEA-2026 Conference” situates itself. Convened by the National Maritime Foundation in close collaboration with the India Office of Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS), Gujarat National Law University (GNLU), Gandhinagar, and Gujarat Maritime University (GMU), Gandhinagar, “LAWSEA-2026” is the second edition of what is being envisaged as an annual series of conferences focussed upon public international maritime law (PIML). While it seeks to build upon the foundations laid by the inaugural edition (LAWSEA-2025) it will deliberately endeavour to shift the focus from *law in abstraction* to *law in operation*.

“LAWSEA-2026” seeks to explore the practical dynamics through which maritime disputes emerge and are managed, the ways in which maritime law is interpreted and contested by States, and the conditions under which legal disagreement risks spilling over into strategic instability.

Rather than treating dispute-settlement as an endpoint, “LAWSEA 2026” approaches maritime disputes as **ongoing governance challenges**, where law, diplomacy, operational conduct, and power, all interact over time.

There is no gainsaying the fact that the factors driving maritime disputes have become numerous and increasingly complex over time. Amongst them are varying interpretations of coastlines and baselines, some of which challenge long-standing legal assumptions. Sea-level rise has led States such as Tuvalu and the Marshall Islands to assert the permanence of maritime baselines despite physical changes to their coastlines, raising questions of customary international law and State practice that have a degree of consensus that might not be found in more complex cases such as those prevalent in South Asia, and now, in West Asia as well. Adding to these complexities is a whole slew of technological advances — including autonomous systems, persistent satellite surveillance, data-driven maritime situational awareness (MSA) that aspires towards the kind of maritime domain awareness (MDA) espoused by the International Maritime Organisation (IMO), and cyber vulnerabilities — all of which have compressed decision-making cycles, thereby increasing the risk of escalation through miscalculation or competing legal interpretations. Thirdly, while the 1982 UNCLOS is often considered to be, in and of itself, the central legal framework governing the oceans, an internalisation of other pieces of international legislation evades far too many representatives of nation States. Moreover, the authority of 1982 UNCLOS is itself increasingly being tested by divergent interpretations, fragmented institutional regimes, and uneven compliance. Advisory opinions and arbitral awards have sought to clarify important aspects of the law, yet significant gaps persist between legal norms and operational realities.

Recent State practice underscores the fact that maritime disputes are rarely resolved by law alone. The peaceful adjudication of maritime boundaries in the Bay of Bengal contrasts with the political resistance and delayed compliance following the 2021 judgment in the case of *Somalia versus Kenya*. Continued non-compliance with the 2016 arbitral award in *Philippines v. China*, renewed tensions in the East China Sea, and the persistence of legal infirmities in the Persian Gulf, all serve to illustrate that legal clarity does not automatically translate into durable maritime governance. At the same time, hybrid and sequenced approaches — such as the UNCLOS Annex V conciliation between Timor-Leste and Australia — point to evolving but largely area-specific preferences in dispute management. Additionally, advisory opinions, domestic legislation, cartography, and institutional engagement are increasingly used as instruments of *lawfare*, shaping behaviour and narratives without recourse to open conflict.

For India, these developments carry direct and far-reaching implications. As a major maritime State with extensive coastlines, island territories, vital sea lines of communication, and expanding blue-economy interests, India has a profound stake in the stability and predictability of the maritime order. India’s approach to maritime disputes has traditionally emphasised restraint, respect for international law, and preference for negotiated solutions. At the same time, regional dynamics compel a more nuanced engagement with unresolved questions relating to dispute-management, maritime governance, legal signalling, and strategic communication — particularly in situations where formal adjudication may neither be feasible nor desirable.

“LAWSEA-2026” aims to provide a forum for examining these challenges in a manner that is analytically rigorous, operationally grounded, and strategically informed, while reinforcing India’s role as a credible and responsible convenor of maritime dialogue. It will bring together legal scholars, policymakers, naval and

maritime practitioners, diplomats, and technical experts in a “Track One-point-Five” format that bridges doctrine and practice. Alongside expert panels, the Conference will examine the desirability of scenario-based discussions and moot-style deliberations to stress-test legal arguments, policy choices, and response strategies in realistic contexts.

Rather than offering prescriptive solutions, “LAWSEA 2026” aspires to generate informed guidance — clarifying legal ambiguities, identifying policy options, and strengthening India’s capacity to navigate maritime disputes in a complex and contested Indo-Pacific. In doing so, the conference aims to reinforce the central proposition that maritime law, despite the pressure it is being subjected to, remains an indispensable compass for stability at sea, provided it is continuously interpreted, defended, and adapted to emerging realities. Structured around a set of interlinked thematic conversations, LAWSEA 2026 hopes to reflect the following set of contemporary realities of maritime disputes and their management —

- **The resilience and limits of UNCLOS** in the face of divergent interpretation, selective compliance, and evolving State practice;
- **Maritime boundaries, baselines, and sovereignty claims**, including the legal and strategic implications of feature classification, delimitation methodologies, and climate-induced change;
- **Operational frictions in Maritime Zones**, particularly at the intersection of military activities vis-à-vis straits used for international navigation, marine scientific research, surveillance, and legally compliant blockades;
- **Technology as a dispute multiplier**, examining how autonomy, persistent surveillance, cyber and data vulnerabilities, and evidentiary challenges intensify maritime contestation;
- **Lawfare and maritime disputes**, focusing on the strategic use of domestic law, legal narratives, cartography, and institutional processes to consolidate maritime positions; and
- **Dispute management beyond courts**, exploring practical pathways — such as provisional arrangements, confidence-building measures, joint development, and crisis-prevention mechanisms — through which States seek to contain disputes without escalation.

Together, these themes are intended to move the discussion beyond static notions of dispute settlement, and towards a more nuanced understanding of how maritime disputes are generated, sustained, and managed in a contested Indo-Pacific maritime order.

Programme

DAY ONE		
LEGAL FOUNDATIONS & EMERGING FAULT LINES		
0900–0930 (30 min)	Tea and Registration	
OPENING SESSION (50 min)		
0930–0932 (02 min)	Introductory Remarks	Ms Muskan Rai Emcee
0932–0935 (03 min)	Welcome Remarks	Ms Simran Dhingra Head of International Cooperation Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, India Office
0935–0945 (10 min)	Presidential Remarks	Professor (Dr) S Shanthakumar Director, Gujarat National Law University Provost, Gujarat Maritime University President, Gujrat International Maritime Arbitration Centre
0945–0955 (10 min)	Inaugural Address	Vice Admiral Pradeep Chauhan AVSM & Bar, VSM, IN (Retd) Director-General National Maritime Foundation, New Delhi
0955–1015 (20 min)	Special Address <i>Maritime Disputes Today: From Delimitation to Day-to-Day Contestation</i>	Admiral Dinesh Kumar Tripathi PVSM, AVSM, NM, IN (Retd) Chairman, NMF, and former <i>Chief of the Naval Staff</i>
1015–1020 (05 min)	Group Photograph	
PROFESSIONAL SESSION ONE (1 h 45 min)		
UNCLOS Under Pressure: Interpretation, Compliance, and Contestation		
1020–1025 (05 min)	Session Instructions	Ms Muskan Rai Emcee
1025–1035 (10 min)	Moderator’s Remarks	Vice Admiral Tarun Sobti UYSM, AVSM, VSM, IN (Retd) Former Deputy Chief of the Naval Staff
1035–1055 (20 min)	<i>UNCLOS after Forty Years: What International Courts Have Clarified—and What They Cannot</i>	Dr Maria Gavouneli [Online] Professor, Faculty of Law and Athens PIL Director, Refugee and Migration Studies Hub – RMS Hub National & Kapodistrian University of Athens
1055–1115 (20 min)	<i>From Treaty to Practice: How Maritime Powers Selectively Invoke UNCLOS</i>	Mr Neil Simon Silva Lecturer, Institute for Maritime Affairs and Law of the Sea University of the Philippines Quezon City, Philippines
1115–1135 (20 min)	<i>Beyond UNCLOS: Why Naval Operations Depend on More Than One Legal Regime</i>	Captain Himadri Das, IN

DAY ONE
LEGAL FOUNDATIONS & EMERGING FAULT LINES

		National Maritime Security Coordinator (NMSC) Staff
1135–1200 (25 min)	Audience Interaction	Vice Admiral Tarun Sobti UYSM, AVSM, VSM, IN (Retd) Former Deputy Chief of the Naval Staff
1200–1205 (05 min)	Group Photograph	
1205–1305 (60 min)	LUNCH	
PROFESSIONAL SESSION TWO (1 h 45 min) Maritime Boundaries, Baselines, and Sovereignty Claims		
1305–1310 (05 min)	Session Instructions	Ms Muskan Rai Emcee
1310–1320 (10 min)	Moderator’s Remarks	Dr Abhay Singh Director (I/C) and Assistant Professor School of Maritime Law, Policy and Administration (SMLPA) Gujarat Maritime University (GMU), Gandhinagar, Gujarat
1320–1340 (20 min)	<i>Expanding Coastal State Jurisdiction: The Contiguous Zone in Contemporary Maritime Security</i>	Ms Fretti G Ganchoon [Online] Senior State Counsel Department of Justice Republic of the Philippines Manila, Philippines
1340–1400 (20 min)	<i>Evidence at Sea: Hydrography, Climate Change and Scientific Data in Maritime Claims</i>	Rear Admiral Peush Pawsey Chief Hydrographer (Officiating) National Hydrographic Office, Dehradun
1400–1420 (20 min)	<i>Straight Baselines, Archipelagic Claims and Strategic Cartography</i>	Dr Nguyen Ba Cuong Director, Scientific Research Institute of Sea and Islands (SRISI) Hanoi, Viet Nam
1420–1445 (25 min)	Audience Interaction	Dr Abhay Singh Director (I/C) and Assistant Professor School of Maritime Law, Policy and Administration (SMLPA) Gujarat Maritime University (GMU), Gandhinagar, Gujarat
1445–1450 (05 min)	Group Photograph	
1450–1520 (30 min)	TEA BREAK	
PROFESSIONAL SESSION THREE (1 h 45 min) Military Activities, Marine Scientific Research, and Surveillance in the EEZ		
1520–1525 (05 min)	Session Instructions	Ms Muskan Rai Emcee
1525–1535 (10 min)	Moderator’s Remarks	Dr Harsha Rajwanshi Assistant Professor of Law Gujarat National Law University (GNLU) Gandhinagar, Gujarat
1535–1555 (20 min)	<i>Can a Coastal State Restrict Foreign Military Activities in its EEZ?</i>	Wg Cdr (Dr) U C Jha (Retd) Secretary General Indian Society for International Law

DAY ONE		
LEGAL FOUNDATIONS & EMERGING FAULT LINES		
		New Delhi
1555–1615 (20 min)	<i>Freedom of Navigation versus Security Interests in Operational Practice</i>	Mr Aristyo R Darmawan [Online] PhD Scholar, School of Regulation and Global Governance Australian National University, Australia
1615–1635 (20 min)	<i>Reconciling Operational Necessity with Legal Restraint</i>	Mr Himanil Raina Honorary Adjunct Fellow, NMF, and PhD and Teaching Assistant, Department of International Law Geneva Graduate Institute
1635–1700 (25 min)	Audience Interaction	Dr Harsha Rajwanshi Assistant Professor of Law, GNLU Gandhinagar, Gujarat
1700–1705 (05 min)	Group Photograph	
1705–1730 (25 min)	TEA BREAK	
PROFESSIONAL SESSION FOUR (1 h 45 min) Technology as a Dispute Multiplier		
1730–1735 (05 min)	Session Instructions	Ms Muskan Rai Emcee
1735–1745 (10 min)	Moderator’s Remarks	Commodore Manish Kumar Sinha, IN (Retd) Senior Fellow, National Maritime Foundation New Delhi
1745–1805 (20 min)	<i>Emerging Technologies and the Future of Maritime Law</i>	Cdr Abhimanyu Singh, IN Judge Advocate, CJA Office, HQSNC Kochi
1805–1825 (20 min)	<i>Technology Outpaces Law: Where Existing Maritime Law No Longer Fits</i>	Ms Antara Jha Advocate, Cyber Law Government of India
1825–1845 (20 min)	<i>Grey-Zone Competition Below the Threshold of Armed Conflict</i>	Ms Shalini Assistant Professor of Law Gujarat Maritime University
1845–1910 (25 min)	Audience Interaction	Commodore Manish Kumar Sinha, IN (Retd) Senior Fellow, National Maritime Foundation New Delhi
1910–1915 (05 min)	Group Photograph	
1915-1920	End of the Day Instructions	Ms Muskan Rai Emcee
1930	DINNER	
END OF THE PROCEEDINGS FOR DAY ONE		

DAY TWO

DISPUTE MANAGEMENT, LAWFARE & POLICY CHOICES

1000–1025 (25 min)	Tea and Registration	
OPENING SESSION (25 min)		
1025–1030 (05 min)	Introductory Remarks	Ms Muskan Rai Emcee
1030–1050 (20 min)	Special Address <i>Law as Compass: Managing Maritime Disputes Without Escalation</i>	Prof Manimuthu Gandhi Vice President Indian Society for International Law New Delhi
1050–1055 (05 min)	Group Photograph	
PROFESSIONAL SESSION FIVE (1 h 45 min) Lawfare and Maritime Disputes: Strategy, Narrative, and Response		
1055–1100 (05 min)	Session Instructions	Ms Muskan Rai Emcee
1100–1110 (10 min)	Moderator’s Remarks	Vice Admiral Pradeep Chauhan AVSM & Bar, VSM, IN (Retd) Director-General National Maritime Foundation, New Delhi
1110–1130 (20 min)	<i>Narrative Competition at Sea: How States Shape Maritime Legitimacy Without Litigation</i>	Commodore Seshadri Vasan, IN Regional Director Tamil Nadu Chapter of National Maritime Foundation, Chennai
1130–1150 (20 min)	<i>Lawfare through Domestic Legislation, Cartography and Administrative Practice</i>	Ms Raaga Manjari Researcher, Ocean Law and Policy Maritime Institute of Malaysia (MIMA) Malaysia
1150–1210 (20 min)	<i>International Courts Are Only One Arena: Alternative Legal Strategies in Maritime Disputes</i>	Dr Christian Schultheiss [Online] Senior Research Fellow Max Planck Institute for Comparative Public Law and International Law Heidelberg, Germany
1210–1235 (25 min)	Audience Interaction	Vice Admiral Pradeep Chauhan AVSM & Bar, VSM, IN (Retd) Director-General National Maritime Foundation, New Delhi
1235–1240 (05 min)	Group Photograph	
1240–1340 (60 min)	LUNCH	
PROFESSIONAL SESSION SIX (1 h 45 min) Beyond Courts: Managing Maritime Disputes in the Indo-Pacific		
1340–1345 (05 min)	Session Instructions	Ms Muskan Rai Emcee
1345–1355 (10 min)	Moderator’s Remarks	Commodore Jai Bedi, IN Executive Director National Maritime Foundation, New Delhi
1355–1415 (20 min)	<i>Beyond Litigation: The Potential of Conciliation in Promoting Cooperative Mechanisms</i>	Professor Yoshifumi Tanaka [Online] Professor, Centre for Private Governance (CEPRI) Faculty of Law, University of Copenhagen Denmark

DAY TWO

DISPUTE MANAGEMENT, LAWFARE & POLICY CHOICES

1415–1435 (20 min)	<i>What Governments Actually Need from Maritime Lawyers</i>	Dr Madhumita Kothari Advocate, Supreme Court of India, and Former Senior Advisor, International Seabed Authority New Delhi
1435–1455 (20 min)	<i>From Dialogue to Deterrence: Preventing Escalation While Preserving Legal Claims</i>	Mr Martin Egknud Petersen Deputy Chief of Mission, and Minister Counsellor, Political Affairs Embassy of Denmark
1455–1520 (25 min)	Audience Interaction	Commodore Jai Bedi, IN Executive Director National Maritime Foundation, New Delhi
1520–1525 (05 min)	Group Photograph	
SUMMATIVE SESSION (17 min)		
1525–1527 (05 min)	Session Introduction	Ms Muskan Rai Emcee
1527–1542 (10 min)	Summative Guidance	Vice Admiral Pradeep Chauhan AVSM & Bar, VSM, IN (Retd) Director-General National Maritime Foundation, New Delhi
CLOSING SESSION (17 min)		
1543–1545 (02 min)	Session Introduction	Ms Muskan Rai Emcee
1545–1548 (03 min)	Closing Remarks & Gratitude	Ms Eram Mahtab Research Associate Public International Maritime Law (PIML) Cluster National Maritime Foundation New Delhi
1548–1551 (03 min)	Institutional Reflections & Co-Host Acknowledgements	Ms Shalini Assistant Professor of Law Gujarat Maritime University Gandhinagar, Gujarat
1551–1554 (03 min)	Partnership Perspective & Concluding Remarks	Dr Harsha Rajwanshi Assistant Professor of Law Gujarat National Law University (GNLU) Gandhinagar, Gujarat
1554–1557 (03 min)	Vote of Thanks	Ms Simran Dhingra Head of International Cooperation Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, India Office New Delhi
1557-1600 (03 min)	End of Conference Instructions	Ms Muskan Rai Emcee
END-OF-CONFERENCE & GROUP PHOTOGRAPH		
END OF THE DAY HIGH TEA		

Speaker Profiles

(In alphabetical order of surnames)



Commodore Jai Bedi, IN

Executive Director, National Maritime Foundation, New Delhi

Commodore Jai Bedi is an alumnus of the National Defence Academy, Khadakvasla, and was commissioned into the Indian Navy on 01 July 1994. A Navigation and Direction specialist, he has commanded INS Ranvijay and INS Vinash, and has also served as the Executive Officer of INS Trishul. His staff appointments include two tenures each at NHQ (DSR/DNCO) and HQSFC. He has been an instructor at ND School and Directing Staff at DSSC.

He has undergone Staff Course at DSSC, NHCC at Naval War College, Goa, and NDC at Dhaka, Bangladesh. He holds four Master's degrees, two in Science, one each in Social Science and Philosophy. He is an avid reader.



Vice Admiral Pradeep Chauhan, AVSM & Bar, VSM, IN (Retd)

Director-General, National Maritime Foundation, New Delhi

An alumnus of the National Defence Academy, the Defence Services Staff College, the Naval War College, and the National Defence College, with BSc, MSc and MPhil degrees under his belt, Vice Admiral Pradeep Chauhan, AVSM & Bar, VSM, is currently the Director-General of the National Maritime Foundation, New Delhi, which is India's foremost resource centre for the development and advocacy of strategies for the promotion and protection of India's maritime interests.

The admiral retired on 30 November 2013 after an illustrious, rich, and varied four-decade-long career in the Executive Branch of the Indian Navy. This included a stint in Antarctica, as also a three-year deputation to the Government of Mauritius, where he set up and commanded the Mauritius National Coast Guard. His sea-going service incorporates as many as four command-appointments. After doing the 42nd NDC, he was the Principal Director of National Operations and thereafter went on to command the Indian Navy's sole aircraft carrier of that period, the Viraat. As a Rear Admiral, he was the Navy's first Assistant Chief of the Naval Staff (Foreign Cooperation & Intelligence), where he conceptualised and executed the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS). As a Vice Admiral, he has been Chief of Staff of the Western Naval Command; and was, in his last naval appointment before retirement, the Commandant of the Indian Naval Academy (Ezhimala). He has been commended three times by the President of India for sustained distinguished service. Not one to rest on past laurels, he has remained active even after retirement and is a much sought-after thought-leader and leadership mentor. Apart from being on the visiting faculty of the higher-command establishments of all three of India's defence services, as also tri-Service establishments such as the College of Defence Management, Hyderabad and the National Defence College, New Delhi, he has also been advising the government through his interaction with the Integrated Headquarters of the Ministry of Defence (Navy), the Ministry of External Affairs, and the National Security Council Secretariat. He is, in addition, a prolific writer with

over 95 published professional articles and papers, and, a respected Adviser and Fellow of several important think-tanks.



Dr Nguyen Ba Cuong

Director, Scientific Research Institute of Sea and Islands (SRISI), Hanoi, Viet Nam

Dr. Nguyen Ba Cuong is Co-Founder and Director of the Scientific Research Institute of Sea and Islands — the institute holding the largest portfolio of state-level projects on maritime law and policy in Vietnam, and concurrently Co-Founder and Managing Partner of VNJUST Law Firm.

With nearly 20 years of experience, Dr. Cuong has advised and protected the interests of individuals, organizations, businesses, NGOs, and state agencies on a wide range of issues, particularly corporate and commercial law, dispute resolution, maritime law, international trade, and public international law.

He has been a Visiting Lecturer at leading institutions in Vietnam and abroad, teaching subjects ranging from Economic Law, International Trade Law and International Law to Arbitration, Mediation, Negotiation, and Legal Ethics.

Dr. Cuong regularly advises the Ministry of National Defense, Ministry of Public Security, and foreign embassies (US, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Canada, EU, South Korea, Japan...) on issues of international law and the law of the sea. He is the author of numerous books and articles on international and maritime law.

In 2013, he received the award “Honor in Recognition of Action for Vietnam’s Sea and Islands” for his contributions to affirming and protecting Vietnam’s maritime sovereignty.



Mr Aristyo R Darmawan [Online]

PhD Scholar, School of Regulation and Global Governance, Australian National University, Australia

Aristyo Rizka Darmawan is an Assistant Professor of international law at the Faculty of Law, Universitas Indonesia. Currently, he is a PhD Scholar at the School of Regulation and Global Governance at the Australian National University. His research focuses on the intersection between the international law of the sea, foreign policy and maritime security in the Asia Pacific, with particular focus on the South China Sea.

His research has appeared in international journals such as the International Journal of Marine and Coastal Law and the Asia Pacific Journal of Ocean Law and Policy. He also regularly publishes commentary on contemporary international law issues in international outlets, such as the Lowy Institute’s The Interpreter, the Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative (CSIS), East Asia Forum, Policy Forum, Asia Global Online, the Fletcher Forum of World Affairs, ISEAS Yusof Ishak Institute commentaries, Mongabay, and the Jakarta Post.

He obtained his Master's degree from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University, United States, and his Bachelor of Law from Universitas Indonesia. He is also a former Visiting Fellow with the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies at Nanyang Technological University.



Captain Himadri Das, IN

National Maritime Security Coordinator (NMSC) Staff

Captain Himadri Das is a serving naval officer. He graduated from the Naval Academy, Goa and was commissioned into the Indian Navy on 01 July 1994. As a naval officer he specialises in navigation, aircraft direction, and tactical operations. During his service, in addition to operational, policy, training, and instructional appointments, he has also been actively engaged with doctrinal development, across the tactical, operational and strategic levels. His professional experience is across multiple areas of maritime security, including operations, policies, law, and strategy, as also in security-related issues across maritime sectors and activities. He was previously Senior Fellow at the National Maritime Foundation, and a managing editor of the *Indian Naval Despatch*. He has authored several articles and three books on issues related to maritime and coastal security. He holds a doctorate in defence and strategic studies, and his PhD thesis was focused on maritime security governance in India. He holds an MPhil degree in Defence and National Security Studies with a thesis on coastal security; three post-graduate degrees in nautical sciences, international relations, and maritime law; and a post-graduate diploma in human resource management.



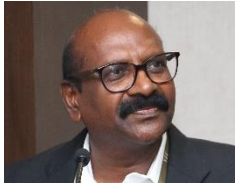
Ms Simran Dhingra

Head of International Cooperation, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS), India Office

Ms Simran Dhingra is currently working as Head of International Cooperation at the India Office of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS). She has been a Scholar of the Managing Global Governance (MGG) Academy 2022 at the German Institute of Development and Sustainability (IDOS), Bonn, Germany. Her work focuses on geo-strategic and geo-economic issues and the 2030 Agenda ~~of~~ for Sustainable Development Goals. Ms Dhingra is a member of WICCI's India-EU Business Council and, being a staunch advocate for strengthening India-Germany and India-EU relations, she actively collaborates with cooperation partners on subjects pertaining to international relations.

She pursued her graduation in Economics and post-graduation in German language and literature from the University of Delhi. She has been an ardent learner of the German language for more than a decade and has successfully cleared the “Goethe-Zertifikat C2: Großes Deutsches Sprachdiplom (GDS)”, which corresponds to the highest level — C2 — of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. She has also been an Alumni Ambassador for PASCH (Schools: Partners

for the Future) and a German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) Young Ambassador. In this fast-evolving world, the power of global governance and sustainability is paramount and, going forward, Ms Dhingra is keen to contribute to ventures that bring the much-desired change in society.



Prof Manimuthu Gandhi

Vice President, Indian Society for International Law, New Delhi

Prof. M. Gandhi is a Vice President of the Indian Society of International Law. He is an Independent Legal Consultant in International Law. He was a former Professor & Dean of VIT School of Law, VIT Chennai. He also served as Professor and Executive Director, Centre for International Legal Studies, O P Jindal Global University, Sonapat, NCR Delhi, after a long stint in the Ministry of External Affairs, where he retired as a Joint Secretary (L&T) and Legal Adviser.

He is an accomplished teacher and practitioner of International Law. He served as a member of the legal team in the Aerial Incident Case (1999) (Pakistan v. India) decided by the ICJ in India's favour. He has also served as a Legal Adviser at the Permanent Mission of India, New York, representing India in the VI (Legal) Committee of the UNGA. He has participated in several International Conferences, negotiating international treaties and agreements and also Working Groups on International Law representing the Government of India. He has been mentoring reputed Law Schools in India.

Professor M Gandhi has a Master's Degree in Political Science from Madurai Kamaraj University and B.L., M.L., and Ph.D. degrees from the University of Madras. Under the Colombo Plan, the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies, University of London, trained him in Legal Advice and Legislative Drafting. He was also a UNITAR visiting scholar at Columbia University, New York. He has contributed research articles and book chapters in international law to books and journals published in India and abroad.

He is a well-known Law of the Sea expert in India. Served as a panellist in several International Law of the Sea and maritime Conferences in India and abroad. He has been serving as a resource person for the Indian Navy and Coast Guard, and for the Tri-Services courses conducted by Gujarat National Law University..



Ms Fretti G Ganchoon [Online]

Senior State Counsel & Maritime Group Head, Legal Staff, Department of Justice, Republic of the Philippines

Atty Fretti G Ganchoon is a Senior State Counsel at the Department of Justice (DOJ) of the Republic of the Philippines and heads the Department's Legal Staff – Maritime Group. She also serves as the DOJ's Alternate Permanent Representative to the National Task Force for the West Philippine Sea (NTF-WPS) and the National

Maritime Council (NMC), and as Secretariat Head of the Legal Action Working Group (LAWG) of the NTF-WPS.

With nearly two decades of experience in maritime law and related legal and policy issues, Atty Ganchoon has been closely involved in the development and implementation of Philippine maritime policy. She was a member of the Philippine Legal Team that studied the initiation of the South China Sea Arbitration against China and subsequently served as a resource person in relation to the enactment of the Philippine Maritime Zones Act and the Philippine Archipelagic Sea Lanes Act. Her work encompasses the operationalisation of maritime laws, international maritime conventions, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), and the 2016 South China Sea Arbitral Award.

Prior to her appointment as State Counsel, Atty Ganchoon served as a Senior Court Attorney at the Office of the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the Philippines. She has also contributed extensively to legal education and teaches international law at universities in Manila, including the University of Asia and the Pacific, Far Eastern University and the University of the East.

Atty Ganchoon is a graduate of the Ateneo School of Law and holds an LLM in International Maritime Law, with Distinction, from the IMO International Maritime Law Institute (IMLI), Malta. Her postgraduate research at IMLI examined traditional fishing rights in the disputed waters of Scarborough Shoal. She is also a Maritime Security alumna of the University of Wollongong, Australia, and the Daniel K Inouye Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies. In recognition of her contribution to maritime affairs, she received the Australian Ambassador's Award for Maritime Excellence in 2025.



Dr Maria Gavouneli [Online]

Professor, Faculty of Law, National & Kapodistrian University of Athens

Dr Maria Gavouneli is Professor of International Law at the Faculty of Law, National & Kapodistrian University of Athens, and Deputy Director of the Athens Public International Law Center (Athens PIL). She also serves as Director of the LLM in International & European Law at the Faculty of Law and as Director of the University's Refugee & Migration Studies Hub. Her academic and professional work spans public international law, with particular expertise in the law of the sea, international environmental law, maritime and energy law, human rights and international institutions.

She holds an LLB with Honours from the National & Kapodistrian University of Athens, an LLM in International Law from the University of Cambridge, and a PhD in International Environmental Law from the University of Cambridge. Her doctoral research, entitled Pollution from Offshore Installations, was awarded the Paul Guggenheim Prize. She was also a Fulbright Scholar at the University of California, Berkeley, during 2018–2019.

Dr Gavouneli has held a number of significant academic, policy and professional appointments. She is President of the Greek National Commission for Human Rights and a member of the Board of Directors of the Hellenic Foundation for European & Foreign Policy (ELIAMEP), where she served as Director General from 2023 to 2025. She is also President of the Hellenic Branch of the International Law Association and has participated in the Association's work on issues including sea-level rise, cables and pipelines. She has taught and lectured at numerous universities and research institutions internationally, including the University of London, Chatham House, the British Institute of International and Comparative Law, Tulane University, the University of Edinburgh, the University of Glasgow, the University of Manchester and Utrecht University.

A substantial part of Dr Gavouneli's scholarship has centred on the law of the sea and international environmental law. She is the author of several monographs, including *Pollution from Offshore Installations*, *State Immunity and the Rule of Law*, *Functional Jurisdiction in the Law of the Sea*, and work on energy installations at sea. Her research has also addressed evolving questions concerning maritime jurisdiction, environmental governance and new uses and challenges to the international law of the sea.

In recognition of her distinguished academic work in international law, particularly the law of the sea, as well as her contribution to human rights and European cooperation, Dr Gavouneli was awarded the insignia of Chevalière de la Légion d'honneur (Knight of the Legion of Honour) by the French Republic in April 2026.



Ms Antara Jha

Advocate (Cyber Law), Government of India

Antara Jha is a cyber law expert and scholar-practitioner specialising in the intersection of cyberspace, law, and national security, with a strong focus on defence research and international security policy.

She has represented India's perspective on digital threats and policy at major global forums, including the UN General Assembly, UNOCT, UNODC, UNIDIR, the Malaga Counter-Terrorism Conference, the BRICS Youth Summit, the Internet Governance Forum, CTBTO, and COP-26.

Her research spans critical, emerging areas of cybersecurity — notably vulnerabilities in space industries, published in the *Journal of Space Safety Engineering*, as well as work featured by NASA, ESA, JAXA, and Tallinn University. She has also published on maritime defence cyber infrastructure through the Indian Naval War College (INS Mandovi), and her writing on cybercrime and digital evidence has appeared in leading national publications.

Her contributions have earned wide recognition, including being named among the world's leading cybersecurity authorities by multiple organisations. She was recently honoured with the "Lawyer of the Year — Defence" award by the Indian National

Bar Association and Constitution Club of India, presented by former Chief Justice of India K. G. Balakrishnan.



Wg Cdr (Dr) U C Jha (Retd)

Secretary General, Indian Society of International Law, New Delhi

Dr U C Jha is a distinguished air veteran. He earned his PhD from Jawaharlal Nehru University in 2007, where he also served as a Visiting Fellow at the Centre for the Study of Law and Governance. He is presently Secretary General, the Indian Society of International Law, New Delhi. His expertise has been shared on various prestigious platforms where he has presented papers and offered insights on international humanitarian law and military law. These venues include the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in Geneva, the Diplomatic Academy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Russia, and multiple South Asian Teaching Sessions organised by the International Committee of the Red Cross across several countries, including Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Nepal, and Iran. His contributions also extend to numerous universities in India and the Indian Army Commands.

Dr Jha has been invited by the Indian Parliamentary Standing Committee on Defence to provide his perspective on crucial military legislation, such as the Armed Forces Tribunal Bill, the Common Code for the Armed Forces, and issues related to stress management within the armed forces. His scholarly work includes the authorship of 35 books, contributions to 12 additional books, and the publication of over 170 papers and articles focusing on a range of topics, including international humanitarian law, the military legal system, environmental issues, human rights, and refugee law.



Dr Madhumita Kothari

Advocate, Supreme Court of India; Former Senior Advisor, International Seabed Authority

Dr. Madhumita Kothari is a Senior International Development Professional, Policy Advisor, and Supreme Court Advocate with 30 years of multidisciplinary expertise in Blue Economy, Ocean Governance, and South-South & Triangular Cooperation. A published author of books & peer-reviewed articles, and a frequent keynote speaker at major international conferences, she bridges international law, multilateral diplomacy, and strategic policy. She holds a Ph.D. in Blue Economy & Ocean Governance, an LL.M. in Shipping Laws (Distinction, UK), an LL.B., an MBA (International Business), an M.A. in Geography, and a Gold-Medal PGD in International Human Rights Laws. During her work as Senior Advisor to the United Nations International Seabed Authority, she conceived and negotiated institutional cooperation frameworks linking the ISA with premier Indian research institutions, policy think tanks, Chambers of Commerce, UNESCO, UNCTAD and law universities. She spearheaded program design, stakeholder engagement, and high-level delegation programming for official visits of the ISA Secretary-General to India (2022–2023), driving cross-sectoral collaboration alongside organizations like NIOT, NIO, IMMT, INCOIS, NCPOR to advance marine scientific research, capacity building across Global South partner countries, and sustainable deep-seabed resource

governance. Honoured with multiple awards including the Bharat Gaurav Ratna Award for Excellence in Maritime Studies, the National Legal Luminary Award, International Women Achiever's Award, Dr. Kothari brings a distinguished track record in ocean policy & diplomacy, legal practice, and strategic leadership.



Ms Eram Mahtab

Research Associate, Public International Maritime Law Cluster (PIML), National Maritime Foundation
Eram Mahtab is a Research Associate with the Public International Maritime Law (PIML) Cluster at the National Maritime Foundation (NMF). She is a lawyer with a masters' degree in International and Area Studies. She did her B.A. LL.B. (Hons.) from the Faculty of Law, University of Allahabad, Prayagraj in 2016, and her M.A. (Politics: International and Area Studies) from MMAJ Academy of International Studies, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi.

Eram has done a six-month internship programme at the National Maritime Foundation in the Autex-2024 batch. Herein, she participated in the NMF workshop on 'Unlock ocean-based solutions to climate change' in collaboration with Nausicaa, the European Commission, and EuroOcean as part of the Ocean Citizen series. She also completed a Certificate Course on Exclusive Economic Zone Protection Officers' Course organized by the Royal Navy, UK. She has also published a book review during her internship titled 'The Free Sea: The American Fight for Freedom of Navigation'

Eram is currently focusing her research on Public International Maritime Law, particularly on the themes of UNLCOS and the Laws of Naval Warfare.



Ms Raaga Manjari

Researcher, Ocean Law and Policy, Maritime Institute of Malaysia (MIMA)

Ms Raaga Manjari Annathurai is a Researcher with the Ocean Law and Policy programme at the Maritime Institute of Malaysia (MIMA). A legal professional specialising in maritime law and ocean governance, her principal research interests include the Maritime Labour Convention, maritime insurance and maritime cyber security. Her wider research has focused on emerging technologies and maritime security, cybersecurity in the maritime domain, submarine cable governance, and the legal and regulatory dimensions of maritime affairs.

She holds an LLB (Hons) from Multimedia University, Malaysia, and has undertaken postgraduate studies in Commercial Law at the University of Malaya. She has also undertaken specialised training at the IMO International Maritime Law Institute (IMLI) in the field of protection of the marine environment and ocean governance. Prior to joining the research community, she gained professional experience in legal practice, including work involving contract negotiation and dispute resolution.

Ms Annathurai's research and publications have increasingly focused on the governance and protection of submarine communication cables, particularly within Malaysia and the wider ASEAN region. She co-authored the chapter "Protection of Submarine Communication Cables: The Need for a Systematic Legal and Regulatory Framework in Malaysia", published in the 2024 Springer volume *Asia and UNCLOS 30 Years' Implementation: An Assessment*. She has also contributed to regional academic work on the legislative framework and governance of submarine cables in Malaysia.

Her recent work at MIMA has examined ASEAN submarine cable governance, digital connectivity and Malaysia's role in strengthening regional maritime and digital resilience. She has also participated in international maritime forums and, in 2025, was listed as an adviser in the Malaysian delegation at meetings of the International Oil Pollution Compensation Funds.



Rear Admiral Peush Pawsey

Chief Hydrographer (Officiating), National Hydrographic Office, Dehradun

Rear Admiral Peush Pawsey is an alumnus of Rashtriya Indian Military College, Dehradun and the National Defence Academy, Khadakwasla, and was commissioned into the Indian Navy on 01 Jan 1992.

A graduate of Defence Services Staff College, Wellington and Naval War College, Goa, he has varied exposure in command, ashore and afloat appointments. The Flag Officer has the distinction of commanding three Indian Naval Survey Ships, namely INS Sarvekshak, INS Darshak and INS Investigator, and has undertaken numerous major foreign cooperation surveys at Seychelles, Mauritius, Tanzania and Sri Lanka. The officer has had rich exposure to international affairs and has represented the country in several International Hydrographic Conferences. He has been an elected member of the Advisory Board on the Law of the Sea (ABLOS) under the aegis of the International Hydrographic Organisation. The Flag Officer was actively involved in the crucial Indo-Bangladesh Maritime Boundary dispute and was a member of the core team responsible for preparation of India's stand and response. The Flag Officer was the Joint Chief Hydrographer at the National Hydrographic Office, Dehradun prior to taking over as Chief Hydrographer to the Government of India on 01 Jul 26



Mr Martin Egknud Petersen

Deputy Chief of Mission & Minister Counsellor (Political Affairs), Embassy of Denmark

Martin Egknud Petersen is the Deputy Chief of Mission and Minister Counsellor, Political Affairs at the Embassy of Denmark in New Delhi. Prior to his posting in India, he served as Team Leader for Levant and Gulf Affairs in the Middle East and North Africa Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Copenhagen, and as Senior Political Advisor at the Embassy of Denmark in Washington, DC. Before joining the Danish foreign service, he worked for the International Crisis Group in

Brussels. He holds an MA in Philosophy and Social Science from the University of Århus, Denmark.



Mr Himanil Raina

Honorary Adjunct Fellow, NMF; PhD & Teaching Assistant, Geneva Graduate Institute

Himanil Raina is a Teaching Assistant in the Department of International Law at the Geneva Graduate Institute, where he has just submitted his PhD dissertation on national security and international law under the supervision of Professor Andrew Clapham. In Geneva, he has previously worked with the Deputy Director UNIDIR, the Indian, Vietnamese and Egyptian representatives to the International Law Commission and with the Permanent Mission of India to the UN and WTO.

Specializing in the Law of Naval Warfare and Outer Space Warfare, he has published in leading public international law journals including the American Journal of International Law. He has previously been invited as a panellist at the U.S Naval War College and as an expert at a closed-door expert roundtable on maritime security and chokepoints organized by the Geneva Centre for Security Policy.

He has presented his research on Naval and Outer Space Warfare at the University of Oxford Faculty of Law, the European Society of International Law, the University of Geneva and at the Europaeum Technology Forum, Helsinki.

Prior to moving to Geneva, he completed his B.A. LL.B. (Hons.) at NALSAR University of Law, Hyderabad, and worked as a Research Associate at the National Maritime Foundation. He has since returned to NALSAR to teach international law and will also teach at NLSIU, Bengaluru, in 2026.

Himanil Raina is a Teaching Assistant in the Department of International Law at the Geneva Graduate Institute, where he has just submitted his PhD dissertation on national security and international law under the supervision of Professor Andrew Clapham. In Geneva, he has previously worked with the Deputy Director UNIDIR, the Indian, Vietnamese and Egyptian representatives to the International Law Commission and with the Permanent Mission of India to the UN and WTO.

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Prior to moving to Geneva, he completed his B.A. LL.B. (Hons.) at NALSAR University of Law, Hyderabad, and worked as a Research Associate at the National Maritime Foundation. He has since returned to NALSAR to teach international law and will also teach at NLSIU, Bengaluru, in 2026.



Dr Harsha Rajwanshi

Assistant Professor of Law, Gujarat National Law University (GNLU), Gandhinagar

Dr. Harsha Rajwanshi is an Assistant Professor of Law at Gujarat National Law University (GNLU), one of India's top five national law schools in India. She specialises in Public International Law and Private International Law and plays a pivotal role in bridging academia with practice. As Coordinator of GNLU's collaboration with the Indian Navy and Indian Coast Guard, she curates and leads year-round training programs on the Law of the Sea and Maritime Law.

Her contributions extend to global scholarship, including collaborative work with members of the International Law Commission and projects with the Government of India. She has also been a contributor to the UN Special Rapporteur on different themes intersection intersecting international law, whose reports were presented at the 80th UN General Assembly (2025).

At GNLU, she serves as Co-Head of the Centre for Public and Private International Law, Centre Head of the Centre for Trade and Competition Law (GCTCL), and runs the Trade Lab Clinic, part of the Geneva-based Trade Lab Project.

Dr. Rajwanshi is a recipient of Summa Cum Laude from the 10th Yeosu Academy of Law of the Sea (2023) and is a UN Fellow (2018), with prior participation at the UN Regional Course on International Law, Xiamen Academy, and The Hague Academy of International Law.



Dr Christian Schultheiss [Online]

Senior Research Fellow, Max Planck Institute for Comparative Public Law and International Law, Heidelberg

Christian Schultheiss is a Senior Research Fellow at the Max Planck Institute for Comparative Public Law and International Law in Heidelberg, Germany. He has held visiting fellowships at leading institutions in East and Southeast Asia, including the University of the Philippines and Keio University. He earned his PhD from Cambridge University and later returned as a visiting postdoctoral researcher.

As a senior expert with the European External Action Service, he played a key role in negotiations on maritime law enforcement and confidence-building measures at the ASEAN Regional Forum. His highly regarded book, *Ocean Governance and Conflict in the East and South China Sea: Negotiating Natural Resources, Institutions and Power* (2024, Amsterdam University Press), offers a comprehensive analysis of maritime dispute

settlement efforts and negotiation. He has also published widely on dispute resolution, negotiation, maritime security, and the law of the sea.



Professor (Dr) S Shanthakumar

Director, Gujarat National Law University (GNLU), Gandhinagar, Provost, Gujrat Maritime University and President, Gujrat International Maritime Arbitration Centre

Prof. (Dr.) S. Shanthakumar is the Director of Gujarat National Law University and Provost of Gujarat Maritime University with nearly 30 years of experience in teaching and academic leadership, including at Hidayatullah National Law University. He also holds additional charge as the President of the Gujarat International Maritime Arbitration Centre.

An alumnus of the University of Madras, Chennai, he holds his Bachelor's, Master's and Doctoral degrees in Law and practiced for seven years before the Madras High Court. His areas of specialisation include Environmental Law, Human Rights Law, International Law and Constitutional Law. He has authored three books on Environmental Law and two on Human Rights Law published by LexisNexis, CEERA (NLSIU) and Tamil Nadu Dr. Ambedkar Law University, and has published widely in national and international journals.

He is the Governing Body Member of the Consortium of National Law Universities in India and a Governing Board Member of the International Association of Law Schools, in addition to serving as Chair of the Environmental Law Study Group of the International Association of Law Schools. He is also the Country Focal Point for India for the Asian Development Bank's Environment and Climate Change Law Project, a Member of the Standing Committee on Legal Education of the Bar Council of India, a Member of the Advisory Board for the Development of Legal Education and the Legal Profession of the Bar Council of India, and a Member of the Special Task Force on School and Higher Education of the Chhattisgarh State Planning Commission.

Prof. Shanthakumar has led major capacity-building projects, including the World Bank-funded Environmental Law Capacity Building Project through CEERA (NLSIU) and the British Council–Cardiff University Law Teaching and Legal Research Skills Project. His honours include the Environmental Law Champions Development Award (Asian Development Bank, Philippines), the Best Social Scientist Award (Indian Society of Criminology), and recognition as “IP Director of the Year” at IP Fest 2020. He has delivered invited lectures at over thirty premier universities worldwide.



Mr Neil Simon Silva

Lecturer, Institute for Maritime Affairs and Law of the Sea, University of the Philippines

Mr Neil Silva is a legal officer at the Institute for Maritime Affairs and Law of the Sea in the University of the Philippines' Law Center, and a lecturer at its College of Law. He is a fellow at the Philippine Public Safety College and a lecturer at the Development Academy of the Philippines, and served as a reader at the National Defense College of the Philippines.

Mr Silva has worked on international defense cooperation, including on the negotiation of the 2014 Philippines–US Agreement on Enhanced Defense Cooperation and on the implementation of the Philippines–US VFA. He also worked on internal security issues, including on agreements between the Philippine Government and Maoist and Salafist rebel groups. He participated in the negotiation of the ASEAN Convention on Trafficking in Persons and the preparation of the Philippines' 2009 and 2024 Partial ECS Submissions, and helped advise Congress on the Maritime Zones Act and Archipelagic Sea Lanes Law of 2024.

He was part of the Philippine delegations to various Track 1.5 and Track 2 meetings, and has delivered briefings on legal and security issues for Philippine agencies and for foreign or international organizations. He is currently advising the Philippine Congress on foreign interference and maritime legislation.



Dr Abhay Singh

Director (I/C) & Assistant Professor, SMLPA, Gujarat Maritime University (GMU), Gandhinagar

Dr. Abhay Singh is an Assistant Professor at Gujarat Maritime University, where he also serves as Director (I/C) of the School of Maritime Law, Policy and Administration, Member of the Board of Management, and Centre Head of the Centre for Maritime Environmental Law.

Dr Singh also holds the position of Registrar (I/C) at Gujarat International Maritime Arbitration Centre. With over a decade of experience across academia, industry, and legal practice, his work focuses on Maritime Arbitration, Shipping Law, Marine Environmental Law, Ocean Governance, and the Law of International Carriage.

He is a Member of the Ocean Expert Group at the World Maritime University and actively contributes to international discussions on maritime law and policy. His research has been published in leading journals, and he has presented at international forums organised by institutions including the US Naval War College, World Maritime University, Erasmus University Rotterdam, and the Korea Maritime Institute.

Dr. Singh holds a Ph.D. in Law from Gujarat National Law University and an LL.M. from the West Bengal National University of Juridical Sciences (WBNUJS), Kolkata.



Commander Abhimanyu Singh, IN

Judge Advocate, CJA Office, HQSNC, Kochi

Commander Abhimanyu Singh is a legal officer in the Indian Navy, currently serving as Judge Advocate. With over 15 years of experience across military and corporate legal domains, he has played a pivotal role in shaping operational legal frameworks and advancing maritime governance.

He has held key appointments including Judge Advocate (Naval Operations) at the Directorate of Naval Operations at Naval Headquarters and Fleet Assistant Judge Advocate with the Western Fleet. His legal expertise spans operational advisory, international humanitarian law, rules of naval engagement, and maritime security. He has been actively involved in multiple inter- and intra-governmental assignments on maritime operations law and has contributed to several national legislative efforts, including India's first Maritime Anti-Piracy Act (2022). His work has been instrumental in aligning India's maritime legal posture with evolving regional and global challenges.

Cdr Singh was part of the Maritime GENIE Cohort by YCAPS and the East-West Center, and served as a peer reviewer for Newport Manual 2.0 on the Law of Naval Warfare. He has presented at premier international forums and published extensively on naval warfare, unmanned systems, and maritime law.

He is currently pursuing a PhD on governance of maritime autonomous systems and frequently instructs officers at Indian and international defence institutions. He is a sports enthusiast with a keen interest in polo, representing the Indian Navy at the sport.



Commodore Manish Kumar Sinha, IN (Retd)

Senior Fellow, National Maritime Foundation, New Delhi

Commissioned into the Executive Branch of the Indian Navy on 01 January 1992, Cmde Sinha is a Surface Warfare Officer specialised in Gunnery and Missiles. Prior superannuating from the Indian Navy on 31 July 2025, he served as the NMF's Executive Director, and has rejoined on 01 March 2026.

An alumnus of Naval Academy, INS Dronacharya, Defence Services Staff College (Wellington) and Naval War College (Goa), he has also attended short courses at the Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey and Daniel K Inoyue-Asia Pacific Centre for Strategic Studies, Hawaii. His educational qualifications include Masters (Thesis: India-US Nuclear Deal), and MPhil (Thesis: Professional Military Education of Executive Branch Officers) degrees in Defence and Strategic Studies from the University of Madras.

His career is divided equally between operations, foreign cooperation and instructional tenures. He has served as Executive Officer on board the Abhay and Shivalik, and commanded Coast Guard Ship C-01 followed by the Ajay and Betwa. During his command of the Betwa, the ship led India's largest Search and Rescue

operation in the wake of Cyclone Tauktae, and was also awarded the Indian Navy's coveted Unit Citation.

His staff assignments include tenures at the Headquarters Integrated Defence Staff/ Defence Intelligence Agency (Military Cooperation/ Defence Protocol & Foreign Liaison); Naval Headquarters (Joint Director Foreign Cooperation – Indian Ocean Region/ Indian Ocean Naval Symposium) and Headquarters Western Naval Command (Command Operations Officer, Command Plans Officer, and Staff Officer to Chief of Staff).

His instructional assignments include 1st Training Squadron on board INS Tir; Directing Staff, and subsequently Head of Training Team (Navy) at Defence Services Staff College (Wellington); as also the first Indian Military Training Team positioned at the Command and Staff College, Tanzania.

He is currently appointed as Director (Training and Education) of the Regional Maritime Security Centre of Excellence (RMSCE), an India-UK construct formed under the Maritime Security pillar of the Indo Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI). Supported by the MEA-FCDO, it was launched on 04 June 2026 during the visit of the UK Foreign Secretary to India. Working in partnership, the NMF and Centre for Statecraft and National Security (CSNS), King's College London aim to enhance the understanding of current and future non-traditional challenges to maritime security across the region through research, advocacy and convening mechanisms.

Given the multi-disciplinary nature of the maritime medium, his policy interests cut across all research areas of the NMF, with particular interests in History, Environmental Social & Governance issues, Public International Maritime Law, and Op Warfare/ Art. He has most recently co-authored a book Quantum Era Warfare, and an article on the Naval Dimensions of Op EPIC FURY. He is an avid reader and wildlife photographer.



Vice Admiral Tarun Sobti, UYSM, AVSM, VSM, IN (Retd)

Former Deputy Chief of the Naval Staff

Vice Admiral Tarun Sobti, UYSM, AVSM, VSM, IN (Retd) is the former Deputy Chief of the Naval Staff who assumed charge on 01 Oct 2023. He was commissioned into the Indian Navy on 01 Jul 1988 and is a Navigation and Direction Specialist.

In his career spanning over 35 years, he has held a variety of Command and Staff appointments both ashore and afloat. The Flag Officer has commanded INS Nishank, a Missile Boat, INS Kora, a Missile Corvette, and Guided Missile Destroyer INS Kolkata. In his staff tenures he has served in the Directorate of Staff Requirements and Directorate of Personnel, and as the Naval attaché at the Embassy of India at Moscow.

On promotion to the rank of Rear Admiral in 2019, he was appointed as the Deputy Commandant and Chief Instructor at Indian Naval Academy, Ezhimala and subsequently as Flag Officer Commanding Eastern Fleet. On elevation to the rank of

Vice Admiral in 2021, he took over as Director General Project Seabird prior taking over as Deputy Chief of Naval Staff at NHQ MoD.

The Flag Officer was awarded the Vishisht Seva Medal in 2020 and Ati Vishisht Seva Medal in 2022 by the Hon'ble President of India.



Professor Yoshifumi Tanaka [Online]

Professor, Faculty of Law, University of Copenhagen, Denmark

Yoshifumi Tanaka is Professor of International Law, with specific focus on the law of the sea, at the Faculty of Law, University of Copenhagen, Denmark. He holds a DES and a PhD from the Graduate Institute of International Studies, Geneva (currently the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva) and an LLM from Hitotsubashi University, Tokyo.

He is the single author of six books, i.e. Predictability and Flexibility in the Law of Maritime Delimitation (Hart Publishing 2006; 2nd edn 2019), A Dual Approach to Ocean Governance: The Cases of Zonal and Integrated Management in International Law of the Sea (Ashgate 2008), The International Law of the Sea (1st edn, Cambridge University Press 2012; 4th edn 2023), The Peaceful Settlement of International Disputes (Cambridge University Press 2018; 2nd edn forthcoming), The South China Sea Arbitration: Toward an International Legal Order in the Oceans (Hart Publishing, 2019), and Polar Law: Introduction (Edward Elgar, 2025). He is a co-editor of the Routledge Handbook of Polar Law (Routledge 2023) (with Rachael Johnstone and Vibe Ulfbeck). He has published widely in the fields of the law of the sea, international environmental law and the peaceful settlement of international disputes.



Admiral Dinesh Kumar Tripathi, PVSM, AVSM, NM, IN (Retd)

Chairman, National Maritime Foundation; former Chief of the Naval Staff

Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi assumed command as the 26th Chief of the Naval Staff on 30 April 2024, bringing to the nation's highest naval office over four decades of distinguished commissioned service. An alumnus of Sainik School, Rewa; the National Defence Academy, Khadakvasla; and the Defence Services Staff College, Wellington — and a graduate of the United States Naval War College, Newport — he was commissioned into the Indian Navy on 1 July 1985, specialising in Communication and Electronic Warfare. Over a seagoing career spanning more than three decades, Admiral Tripathi commanded frontline warships from missile corvettes to a multi-mission frigate, and served in key operational roles within the Western Fleet. His career has been defined as much by its breadth as its depth. He holds the rare distinction of having served in senior appointments across all three foundational branches of the Navy: operations, capability development, and personnel.

His operational biography is among the most consequential of his generation. He has been associated with Operation Parakram (2001); Operation Madad, i.e. the tsunami relief mission of 2004; Operation Bandar during the Balakot strikes (2019); Operation Kaveri (the evacuation of approximately 1,500 Indians from Sudan in 2023); and Operation Sankalp, India's initial naval response to the Red Sea crisis. As CNS, he led the Indian Navy's decisive role in Operation Sindoor, overseeing the deployment of a Carrier Battle Group in the Northern Indian Ocean, and directed Operation Urja Suraksha to safeguard India's critical energy sea lanes. What distinguishes Admiral Tripathi as a combat leader is not merely the scale of operations he has commanded, but the clarity of strategic intent he has brought to each — a rare quality of knowing precisely when presence alone speaks louder than firepower, and when deterrence must yield to decisive action.

As Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral Tripathi articulated Indian Navy Vision 2047, aligned with the national vision of Viksit Bharat, and oversaw the revision of the Indian Maritime Doctrine and the Indian Navy Maritime Security Strategy. He championed Atmanirbhar force modernisation, indigenous technology infusion, and the establishment of Special Task Forces for innovation. His tenure also saw the historic trinity of major maritime events at Visakhapatnam, i.e. the International Fleet Review, Exercise MILAN, and the IONS Conclave of Chiefs, drawing participation from 74 nations and marking India's return to the Chairmanship of IONS after sixteen years.

Beyond operations and strategy, Admiral Tripathi has been a deeply empathetic steward of people, advancing progressive personnel policies, expanding opportunities for women across naval cadres, and championing holistic wellbeing across the force. Those who have served under his command speak consistently of a leader who remembers names, listens before he speaks, and carries the welfare of the youngest sailor with the same attentiveness he brings to matters of high strategy. As Commandant of the Indian Naval Academy, his leadership was recognised with the conferment of the President's Colours.

He is a recipient of the Param Vishisht Seva Medal, the Ati Vishisht Seva Medal, and the Nau Sena Medal. A student of international relations, military history, and leadership, Admiral Tripathi remains, at his core, a man shaped by the values of the small-town India of his formative years — grounded, focussed, unhurried, and quietly proud of where he comes from. He took over as Chairman, National Maritime Foundation on 16 June 2026.



Commodore Seshadri Vasan, IN (Retd)

Director, Tamil Nadu Chapter of National Maritime Foundation

An Alumnus of the Defence Services Staff College, the Naval War College and the International Visitor Leadership Programme USA, Commodore Seshadri Vasan has a distinguished service of over 34 years in the Navy and the Coast Guard. His appointments include command of warships, two major air stations and a maritime

air squadron. He has participated both in the 1971 war and IPKF operations. He was an instructor at the Naval War College, India. Prior to retirement, he was the Regional Commander of the Indian Coast Guard Region East overseeing EEZ Patrol, SAR, Anti-Piracy, Fisheries protection, Maritime Border Control, Marine Pollution prevention and other maritime tasks in the Bay of Bengal.

Post retirement, he has served in many think tanks and is a regular speaker at many International and national conferences. He was also the Chairman of Aeronautical Society of India, Chennai Charter, President of the Navy Foundation Chennai Chapter and the Director of the Asian Bureau of the World Border Police.

The think tanks that he has served include the Observer Research Foundation where he steered the Maritime Security Programme (now redesignated as the Maritime Policy Initiative) and the Center for Asia Studies where he was the Head, Strategy and Security Studies. He is presently the Director General of the Chennai Centre of China Studies and the Regional Director of the National Maritime Foundation Tamil Nadu. He has been a visiting faculty at the Indian Maritime University, Academy of Maritime Education and Training, Great Lakes Institute of Management and Hindustan Institute of Engineering Technology. He is also on the Board of Advisors at the Madras University, the Stella Maris College and the Puducherry University. His areas of study include the Indo Pacific, neighbourhood policies, maritime security, stability, counter terrorism and maritime dynamics in the IOR, China, blue economy and ocean governance



Ms Shalini

Assistant Professor of Law, Gujarat Maritime University

Ms Shalini is an Assistant Professor of Law at Gujarat Maritime University (GMU), Gandhinagar, India. She is also a Ph.D. research scholar at Maharashtra National Law University, Nagpur and holds an LL.M. from NALSAR University of Law. Her teaching and research interests include Maritime Law, Alternate Dispute Resolution, Gender Justice, and International Trade Law. She serves in academic and administrative roles at GMU, including as Placement and Internship Convenor, and has previously taught at Symbiosis International University. She has presented research at national and international conferences and published in Scopus- and Web of Science-indexed journals on human rights, ADR and gender justice. She has also delivered lectures and moderated panels on maritime law. Her engagement with ocean-related legal scholarship includes a fellowship from the Yeosu Academy on the Law of the Sea (2025). She is also designated as an Advocate Prime Dispute (APD) by Prime Dispute, London.



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