

International Conference

Contested Seas. War, Commerce, and the Making of the Law of the Sea (c. 1400–1800)

Ostend: VUB aan Zee/VLIZ, 19–20 November 2026

Convenors: Stefano Cattelan (Vrije Universiteit Brussel / Brussels School of Governance), Frederik Dhondt (Vrije Universiteit Brussel)

DAY 1 – Thursday, 19 November 2026

Venue: VLIZ

Jacobsenstraat 1, 8400 Ostend

Time	Session
09:00–09:30	Welcome and coffee
09:30–11:00	Session 1 – Plenary
11:00–11:25	Coffee break
11:25–12:55	Sessions 2 & 3 – Parallel
12:55–13:45	Lunch in situ
13:45–15:15	Sessions 4 & 5 – Parallel
15:15–15:40	Coffee break
15:40–16:50	Session 6 – Focused session
16:50–17:15	Coffee / transition break
17:15–18:45	Public keynote + reception
19:30	Dinner, Ostend centre

09:00–09:30 Welcome and coffee

Stefano Cattelan (Vrije Universiteit Brussel / Brussels School of Governance), Frederik Dhondt (Vrije Universiteit Brussel) & Torsten Feys (Flanders Marine Institute, VLIZ)



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09:30–11:00 Session 1 – Plenary

Foundations of Maritime Order: Territory, Freedom, and Authority at Sea

1. **Florian Reverchon** – Université Toulouse Capitole
De nuptiis Philologiæ et Neptunii. Sovereignty over Seas and the lex Deprecatio (D. 14, 2, 9) in the Modern Era
2. **Henry Jones** – Durham University
Birth of the Territorial Sea? Re-reading the Anglo-Dutch Wars
3. **Matthew Cleary** – Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań
Printing the Freedom of the Seas: A Census of the 1618 Mare Liberum and the Material Authority of Grotius' Maritime Law

11:25–12:55 Session 2 – Parallel A

War, Neutrality, and Seapower

4. **Ubaldo Morozzi** – Independent Researcher
1653: Tuscan Neutrality and the Battle of Livorno
5. **Stefano Cattelan** – Vrije Universiteit Brussel / Brussels School of Governance
Guardians of the Gulf: Venetian Maritime Neutrality and the Law of the Sea, ca. 1688–1714
6. **Shoya Fugetsu** – University of Tokyo
The Foundation of the British Seapower State: Maritime Interests in Political Society, 1688–1783

11:25–12:55 Session 3 – Parallel B

Prize, Capture, and Maritime Violence

7. **Aybüke Naz Durmuş Venturini** – Hacettepe University
Prize, Property, and Payment: Commercial Law after Maritime Capture, c. 1650–1800
8. **Julia Weiyao Han** – The University of Hong Kong
The Undivided Sea: Prize Courts, Insurance, and the Making of Maritime Law's Division, c. 1650–1875

9. **Niels Fieremans** – Ghent University / FWO

Heroes or Zeros? Shifting Perspectives on Maritime Plunder in the Renaissance Low Countries

13:45–15:15 Session 4 – Parallel A

Mediterranean Sovereignty, Ports, and Jurisdictional Practice

10. **Scheyma Djaziri** – Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne / IREDIES

Neither “Mare Liberum” nor “Mare Clausum”: Towards Mare Non Liberum in the Mediterranean

11. **Mohamed Sobhy Hassan Ali Mohamed** – Zagazig University

Legal Pluralism and Maritime Practice in Ottoman Egypt, c. 1500–1800

12. **Soumia Ezzarktouni** – Université Cadi Ayyad, Marrakech

Neutralité, commerce et juridictions portuaires marocaines: pratiques normatives et fabrique contestée du droit de la mer au XVIII^e siècle

13:45–15:15 Session 5 – Parallel B

Asian Seas, Treaties, and Maritime Sovereignty

13. **Shinsaku Kato** – Shiga University

Treaties and the Making of the Maritime Order in the Arabian Sea during the Eighteenth Century

14. **Eduardo Cavalcanti de Mello Filho** – University College London

The Nationality of Ships before “Nationality”: From the Ming Dynasty’s Hai jin to the Early Modern Friendship, Commerce and Navigation Treaties

15. **Akrita Kaur & Arundathi M.S.** – World Maritime University, Sasakawa Global Ocean Institute & Panjab University / Gujarat National Law University

Whose Mare Liberum? Eighteenth-Century European Jurists and Asian Maritime Sovereignty



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15:40–16:50 Session 6 – Focused session

Maritime Neutrality and Trade in the Austrian Netherlands

16. Marion A. Huibrechts – KU Leuven

Maritime neutrality, economic policy, and government centralization in the Austrian Netherlands (1715–1784). The port city of Ostend as a hub for international trade

17. Théophile Goffin – Université libre de Bruxelles

Trade and Maritime Neutrality: The Austrian Netherlands' Projects for Trade with Russia (1781–1785)

17:15–18:45 Public keynote + reception

Prof. dr. Indravati Hiltl-Félicité – Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg

Beyond Mare Liberum: Empires and the Contest for Maritime Order



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DAY 2 – Friday, 20 November 2026

Venue: VUB aan Zee

Graaf De Smet de Naeyerlaan 4, 8400 Ostend

Time	Session
09:00–09:20	Welcome and coffee
09:20–09:30	Welcoming
09:30–10:45	Keynote 2
10:45–11:10	Coffee break
11:10–12:40	Session 7 – Plenary
12:40–13:35	Lunch in situ
13:35–15:05	Session 8 – Plenary
15:05–15:30	Coffee break
15:30–17:00	Sessions 9 & 10 – Parallel
17:00–17:30	Concluding words and outlook

09:20–09:30 Welcoming

John Crombez – Mayor of the City of Ostend (TBC)

09:30–10:45 Keynote 2

Prof. dr. Surabhi Ranganathan – University of Cambridge, Lauterpacht Centre for International Law

Seeking Other Oceans – Chokepoints Past and Present

11:10–12:40 Session 7 – Plenary

Maritime Jurisdiction and Legal Order at the Turn of the Nineteenth Century

18. **Luisella Zocca** – “Giorgio Zanotto” Law Library, University of Verona

The Venetian Prize Commission and the Making of Habsburg Maritime Jurisdiction in the Adriatic (1798–1803)

19. **Raphaël Cahen** – Justus Liebig University Giessen / Vrije Universiteit Brussel

A Forgotten Expert of Maritime Law: Pierre Boulouvard (1752–1823)



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20. **Emmanuel Leroux** – Université Paris Panthéon-Assas / Institut d'Histoire du Droit
Jean Gaudemet

*To Establish Freedom of Navigation on European Rivers at the Congress of Vienna
(Dec. 1814–June 1815): Peace, Commercial Interests and Liberal Ideas*

13:35–15:05 Session 8 – Plenary

Maritime Space, Freedom, and the Transformation of Legal Order

21. **Filippo Ruschi** – University of Florence

Sailing the Mare tenebrosum: the Ocean and the Crisis of the Respublica Christiana

22. **Matilde Rocca** – SOAS University of London

Upon Free Seas: Maritime Liberty and the Individual in the Age of Abolition

23. **Daniele Mandrioli** – Università degli Studi di Milano

Does “Artificial Land” Dominate the Sea? Past and Recent Trends of a Long-Standing Debate

15:30–17:00 Session 9 – Parallel A

Shipboard Order, Liability, and Maritime Jurisdiction

24. **Matilda Sidel** – Yale University

Masters between Land and Sea: Regulating Shipboard Order in the Sixteenth-Century Spanish Atlantic

25. **Ionut Iordache** – “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” Police Academy, Bucharest

The Evolution of Liability in Maritime Transport: From Early Commercial Practices to Modern Legal Concepts

26. **Chiara Pavesi** – University of Liverpool

State’s Jurisdiction over Privately Contracted Armed Security Personnel on Merchant Vessels



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15:30–17:00 Session 10 – Parallel B

Resources and the Regulation of Ocean Space

27. **Samdup Dolma** – Tibet Policy Institute

Extracting the Sea: Maritime Resource Economies and the Legal Construction of Exploitable Ocean Space, 16th–18th Centuries

28. **Bui Tai Kien** – Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Viet Nam

From Resource Exploitation and Security to Environment: UNCLOS's Uneven Regulatory Design

29. **Lindsay De Jong** – Erasmus University Rotterdam

The Depth of Colonial Roots: Attempting to Decolonise the Deep Seabed

17:00–17:30 Concluding words and outlook