

THE REGIONALIZATION OF MARITIME GOVERNANCE: TOWARDS A POLYCENTRIC GOVERNANCE SYSTEM FOR SUSTAINABLE SHIPPING IN THE EUROPEAN UNION



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This article aims to understand how for the EU member states, regionalization and its underlying processes of integration and cooperation has affected maritime governance.

APPROACH:

The research presented in this piece is based on a review of the previous literature concerning the international architecture of maritime governance. The article utilizes a conceptual framework based on the notion that regionalization is a primary driver for the shift from global to polycentric maritime governance. While this spatial turns in marine governance takes place as a result of the adoption of ecosystem based management approaches, it is argued that in the case of maritime governance, it is not ecosystem based management that is driving regionalization, but environmental and effectiveness concerns.

MAIN FINDINGS:

- The research from this paper implies that maritime governance has largely shifted from the centralized intergovernmental form of governance of the 1950's-60's to an increasingly polycentric form of governance.
 - While the IMO remains a central source of authority, the monopoly of its power has dispersed to more localized institutions such as regional port collectives (i.e the Paris MoU on Port State Control) and region-based intergovernmental organizations (i.e, the EU).
- Regional groups do not necessarily contest the relevance of global standards nor the authority of IMO in rule-setting. However, they do regularly advocate for differentiation in global standards in areas that require stricter standards because of their vulnerability and perceived negative impact from shipping.
- While a more polycentric governance system has emerged as a result of ecosystem-based management, this has not appeared to extend to shipping and other sectors or for marine management in general. However, the institutions examined in this paper remain fairly young, and the author admits that this could change in the near to mid future.