CONCEPT

International Law of the Sea: Maritime Zones, Boundary Delimitation and Dispute Settlement

31 May – 4 June 2027
Barcelona - Eixample district four-star



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Introduction:

International law of the sea decides where a coastal state may regulate, license seabed resources, board vessels or refuse research, yet government and energy legal teams often apply it only when a boundary objection, a vessel incident or a licensing overlap arrives. This Core Concept course trains legal advisers to read the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, measure zone entitlements from baselines, test navigation rights, apply the delimitation method and choose a dispute settlement forum. Participants produce a Maritime Boundary and Resource Dispute Legal Analysis Memorandum for a hypothetical case.

Course Objectives:

- Identify the sources of the law of the sea and measure maritime zone entitlements from normal and straight baselines
- Advise on coastal state sovereign rights and jurisdiction in the exclusive economic zone, on the continental shelf and beyond national jurisdiction
- Assess whether a foreign vessel's conduct falls within innocent, transit or archipelagic sea lanes passage and what enforcement the coastal state may take
- Apply marine environment protection duties, the marine scientific research consent regime and maritime security powers to an incident file
- Construct a provisional delimitation line for opposite or adjacent coasts and test it for relevant circumstances and disproportionality
- Select a dispute settlement procedure and draft a legal position for negotiation, ITLOS, the ICJ or arbitration

Target Audience:

- Government legal advisers who draft maritime zone legislation, boundary positions and treaty notes
- Maritime administration managers responsible for licensing, enforcement and charting within national waters
- Foreign affairs treaty and boundary units that negotiate delimitation agreements and respond to protests
- Coast guard policy managers who set boarding, interdiction and incident response rules at sea
- Offshore energy legal managers who secure seabed licences in areas with overlapping or unsettled claims

Course Outline:

Day 1: Sources, Baselines and Zones of Coastal Sovereignty

- Sources of the Law of the Sea: United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, Customary Rules and Implementing Agreements
- Normal and Straight Baselines, Bays, River Mouths and Low-Tide Elevations on Nautical Charts
- Internal Waters and Territorial Sea Sovereignty up to 12 Nautical Miles
- Contiguous Zone Control of Customs, Fiscal, Immigration and Sanitary Laws
- Maritime Zone Entitlement Map and Claims Review Checklist

Day 2: Exclusive Economic Zone, Continental Shelf, High Seas and the Area

- Exclusive Economic Zone Sovereign Rights over Living and Non-Living Resources and Other States' Freedoms
- Continental Shelf Definition, Natural Prolongation and Article 76 Outer Limit Constraints
- Extended Continental Shelf Submissions to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf: Overview
- High Seas Freedoms of Navigation, Overflight and Submarine Cables and Pipelines
- The Area as Common Heritage and the International Seabed Authority Exploration Regime

Day 3: Navigation Rights, Environmental Duties and Maritime Security

- Innocent Passage Criteria, Prejudicial Activities and Coastal State Laws and Regulations
- Transit Passage Through Straits Used for International Navigation
- Archipelagic Baselines, Archipelagic Waters and Archipelagic Sea Lanes Passage
- Part XII Marine Environment Duties and Part XIII Marine Scientific Research Consent Regime
- Maritime Security Law Overview: Piracy, Hot Pursuit and Right of Visit Decision Tree

Day 4: Boundary Delimitation Method and Dispute Settlement Procedure

- Delimitation Principles for Opposite and Adjacent Coasts: Equidistance, Median Line and Equitable Solution
- Three-Stage Delimitation Method: Provisional Equidistance Line, Relevant Circumstances and Disproportionality Test
- Relevant Coasts, Relevant Area and Island Effect on a Single Maritime Boundary
- Part XV Choice of Procedure Declarations: ITLOS, ICJ, Annex VII and Annex VIII Arbitration
- ITLOS Provisional Measures and Prompt Release of Vessels and Crews Applications

Day 5: Capstone: Hypothetical Boundary and Resource Dispute Analysis

- Dispute File Review: Coastal Geography, Baselines and Competing Claims of Two Fictional Coastal States
- Overlap Mapping of Entitlements with Relevant Coasts and Relevant Area Sketch
- Provisional Line Construction and Adjustment Arguments Drafted for Each Party
- Resource Rights Analysis: Straddling Hydrocarbon Deposit, Fisheries Access and Joint Development Options
- Legal Analysis Memorandum and Forum Strategy Presentation Before a Mock Tribunal Panel

Skills You Will Gain:

- Baseline and Zone Entitlement Analysis
- Coastal State Jurisdiction Advice
- Navigation Regime Classification
- Maritime Boundary Delimitation
- Extended Shelf Submission Literacy
- Maritime Enforcement Legal Review
- Dispute Forum Selection
- Legal Memorandum Drafting

Why Attend This Course:

- Return with a Maritime Boundary and Resource Dispute Legal Analysis Memorandum built on a structured hypothetical case
- Answer a boundary protest, research request or vessel incident with the zone, article and remedy that apply
- Brief ministers, licensing bodies and energy partners on where a claim is strong and where it is exposed
- Test legal arguments against peers from ministries, maritime authorities, coast guards and energy companies

Conclusion:

The law of the sea works as a map of entitlements drawn from baselines and then negotiated where coasts meet. The course moves from sources, baselines, internal waters, territorial sea and contiguous zone, through the exclusive economic zone, continental shelf, high seas and the Area, to passage regimes, environmental and research duties and maritime security, then to delimitation and dispute settlement procedure. The final day applies these rules to a hypothetical boundary and resource dispute and produces a legal analysis memorandum.