

Executive Summary for International Readers

Theory of the Maritime State

Conditions for Its Formation and Endurance in the Twenty-First Century

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The question of endurance

What enables a society to turn its relationship with the sea into capabilities that contribute to its well-being across generations? This question guides Theory of the Maritime State. The book examines the sociopolitical, economic, legal and geopolitical conditions, together with public policy decisions, that enable a Maritime State to take shape and preserve its capabilities as governments, technologies and social needs change.

The category of Maritime State refers to the structural incorporation of the maritime dimension into a State's geography, interests, institutions and capabilities. It includes landlocked countries: access through foreign territories, navigation, services, knowledge and production chains can establish effective maritime relationships. It also encompasses the inland regions of coastal countries. The research therefore traces connections among activities, territories and people, alongside developments at sea and in ports.

The argument brings together social support, economically viable capabilities, national integration and institutional continuity. Its purpose is to understand how these relationships create lasting opportunities for human development and how they can be corrected when they cause harm or exclusion.

A hypothesis about society

The central hypothesis holds that comprehensive, incremental and regionally balanced national maritime development, sustained for at least fifty years, requires ocean awareness among a majority. This condition combines, in more than half of the adult population of voting age, recognition of the ocean's importance and benefits for well-being with support for the establishment and implementation of a maritime policy of the State, including the allocation of resources in relation to competing priorities. Both dispositions must be present in the same individuals, whether or not they are registered as voters and whether or not they actually vote.

This majority is proposed as a necessary condition for that outcome, although insufficient to produce it. Whether it has been historically necessary remains to be tested. Nor does it constitute an additional requirement in the doctrinal definition of a Maritime State. Distinguishing the category, the outcome and the hypothesis makes it possible to study relevant capabilities and incomplete experiences without treating the explanation as proven.

Support for the national direction can coexist with opposition to specific projects. Defending rights, questioning a location or demanding environmental protection can contribute to maritime development itself. The majority condition applies nationally; it neither requires a majority in every region nor removes the legal safeguards of those who disagree.

The concepts that structure the proposal

Ten concepts articulate the book's framework. Maritime Centrality connects objective maritime conditions, the social imaginary, institutions and coordinated action to guide priorities and enduring capabilities. The Oceanic Imaginary makes it possible to examine the historically formed and contested meanings, memories and expectations through which a society interprets the ocean. The Maritime State locates the structural incorporation of that dimension within State organization; the Maritime Nation addresses its integration into the identity, public life and future of a political community that accommodates diversity and disagreement.

Ocean Governance enables analysis of the rules and relationships governing decision-making, participation and responsibility. Maritime Strategy examines choices among ends, means, risks and opportunity costs. Maritime Domain Awareness provides information-based operational understanding that may be partial, uncertain and subject to revision: it is distinct from collective ocean awareness and confers no authority to act. Maritime Security refers here to protection against coercion, violence and unlawful acts, in the sense of security as distinct from safety.

The Blue Economy offers a normative orientation towards economic value and well-being within ecological limits and with respect for rights. Maritime Connectivity makes it possible to study who can use the connections among routes, ports and inland territories, and under what conditions. The existence of these connections does not, by itself, establish integration or equitable benefits. These concepts serve complementary functions; their names do not substitute for evidence of outcomes.

What development should be examined

The book proposes examining the national outcome through six interrelated dimensions:

- Material and operational: infrastructure, equipment and services that are available, used and maintained.
- Human capital and its integration into employment: training, relevant employment and the sustained renewal of skills.
- Economic integration: national and global production linkages and where the value generated accrues.
- Institutions and law in practice: the exercise of powers and responsibilities, coordination, compliance and continuity of functions.
- Social benefits and human development: opportunities, decent work, living conditions and the distribution of burdens.
- Environmental impacts and sustainability: effects on ecosystems and the preservation of their capacities.

All regions must participate and receive benefits in accordance with their verifiable potential. This potential can be expanded through investment and learning. Balance allows for different territorial contributions and requires the examination of exclusions; it is not established solely by the growth of a port or an industry.

Incremental development encompasses the accumulation, improvement, maintenance and renewal of capabilities. It allows for crises and restructuring within a long-term trajectory. The horizon of at least fifty years is the author's analytical criterion for delimiting the sustained outcome, not a threshold derived from a demonstrated historical regularity. Nor does it require every project to be maintained for half a century.

Capabilities and recognizable well-being

Social support can encourage the provision of resources, vocational aspirations and participation, but translating it into capabilities depends on coordinating training and employment, investment and maintenance, and legal powers and effective means. Government, businesses, civil society and maritime communities take part in this process, with distinct responsibilities.

Economic viability must be assessed in the aggregate. An activity with low profitability may justify subsidies because of its social contribution, provided that sustainable funding and review are in place. Economic appraisal, fiscal consequences and social appraisal must remain distinct, with opportunity costs and alternatives made explicit. Public support requires a justification that can be reviewed.

Benefits can renew support when they reach people, are perceived and are recognized as originating in maritime activities. This relationship calls for caution: the existence of sea-related revenues does not automatically allow a particular school or benefit to be attributed to them when public funds are fungible. Information must make benefits and costs understandable; where harm or exclusion occurs, material changes are also needed. The Blue Economy orientation requires evidence of viability, well-being, respect for rights and environmental conservation.

Continuity with accountability

The legal foundation organizes powers and responsibilities, obligations, resources and procedures that enable functions to be preserved through political changes. It may be distributed across different laws and instruments. Continuity requires the ability to adapt and to review the means used.

If a previously verified majority is lost, institutions may maintain functions temporarily. The scope for doing so depends on their effective capacity and the political cost that those responsible can bear. Its limits must be identified independently of the continuity observed. The theory proposes that this cost tends to rise for as long as support is not restored, without a linear relationship or a universal time limit.

Evaluation must track impacts and translate substantiated findings into mandatory corrective action. Audits ideally require full independence from promoters and implementers. The competent authorities are responsible for determining measures, the parties responsible and deadlines through procedures that provide an opportunity to be heard, reasoned decisions and review. Implementation and its effects must be verified; sanctions require an applicable legal basis and procedure.

The Observatory for Maritime Development is one option for bringing together government, private-sector and civil-society participation to gather information and monitor responses. Its composition does not automatically confer powers to issue orders or impose sanctions. Other arrangements may fulfil these functions.

An open international agenda

The proposal emerges from Mexican and Latin American legal reflection, with an international scope. International cooperation can facilitate access and continuity, while dependencies and geopolitical tensions require alternatives and adaptation. It is examined as a favourable condition, without elevating it to a universal necessity.

Comparative experiences concerning access to the sea, industrial development, territorial integration and institutional oversight clarify specific mechanisms. Their accumulation does not demonstrate a universal causal relationship, nor does it by itself amount to a fifty-year national trajectory.

The book distinguishes doctrinal formulations, explanatory hypotheses and normative proposals. It opens a research programme that must reconstruct trajectories, measure recognition and support jointly, and test alternative explanations. Development that satisfied the full outcome without the hypothesized majority, beyond the previously delimited scope for temporary institutional continuity, would require the necessity hypothesis to be revised. The contribution thus invites discussion of how maritime relationships can sustain useful capabilities, rights and well-being across generations, and under what conditions they cease to do so.