SCIENTIFIC CULTURE
www.sci-cult.com

SCIENTIFIC CULTURE, Vol. 12, No. 4, (2026), pp. 369-377
Open Access. Online & Print

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo. 12426131

NAVIGATING THROUGH BIAS IN THE POST-TRUTH ERA: THE "SHADOW FLEET" AND SELECTIVE SANCTIONING

Kirill Patyrykin[1]*, Ludmila Vasyukova[2]

[1] *Managing Director, Sun Marine and Trading Management.*
[2] *School of Economics and Management, Far Eastern Federal University.*

Received: 01/12/2025
Accepted: 02/01/2026

Corresponding author: Kirill Patyrykin (kirill@patyrykin.net)

ABSTRACT

The terms "Shadow fleet" and "Dark fleet" are pervasive in political briefings, media, and maritime sanctions discourse, reflecting a post-truth phenomenon where emotive labeling and ideological agendas overshadow legal clarity and empirical evidence. This article critiques the ambiguous and selective instrumentalization of the "shadow fleet" concept, demonstrating how this rhetorical construct functions as a tool for economic exclusion, geopolitical signaling, and normative control, rather than as a classification grounded in international maritime law. Drawing on philosophical, legal, and geopolitical analyses, this research reveals that legitimate maritime operations are unfairly forced into a gray area and proposes solutions, including globally recognized definitions, adherence to the burden of proof, independent oversight, fleet modernization, and risk-based enforcement to enhance transparency, fairness, and maritime stability.

KEYWORDS: bias, post-truth era, sanctions, dark fleet, shadow fleet, insurance, marine insurance.

1. INTRODUCTION

In today's geopolitical context, terms such as "shadow fleet" and "dark fleet" have become key terms in discussions about maritime sanctions, particularly in reference to vessels allegedly helping nations bypass Western sanctions. However, these labels reveal more about the emotional and ideological dynamics of our "post-truth" era than about the legal realities of maritime law. In an age where fact and fiction often intermingle, public perception is increasingly shaped by emotion rather than by evidence [1]. The "shadow fleet" discourse exemplifies this phenomenon, where legal precision is overshadowed by political convenience.

The shadow fleet has replaced a convenient scapegoat, charged with symbolism instead of decisiveness. It provokes the images of sneaking, fraud, and unlawfulness, producing an emotionally imbued story of ethical danger. Nonetheless, such a description continues a reductionist good-versus-evil system, which is inconsistently applied. Few inquiries are made when vessels from politically aligned states engage in similar activities, revealing the selective and biased application of the term "shadow fleet" (e.g., Russian tankers face stricter EU and US sanctions, while Venezuelan or Iranian tankers often operate with fewer restrictions) [2,3]. Insurance practices reflect the same bias, with Russian-linked ships facing coverage restrictions, unlike other states' vessels [4]. Consequently, ships are stigmatized as inherently illicit without a legal definition or judicial ruling, highlighting the need for a clear, evidence-based framework. This study critically examines how the "shadow fleet" is constructed and deployed in the post-truth era, focusing on selective sanctions, biased narratives, and ambiguous legal definitions, and demonstrates how these factors shape enforcement legitimacy, influence geopolitical discourse, and affect the stability of global trade and maritime security.

2. A TERM WITHOUT ANCHOR

The term "shadow fleet" exemplifies a "floating signifier", a concept from discourse analysis describing a term with no fixed meaning, which is instead defined by its context [5]. In legal terms, such vagueness matters because it allows states to apply sanctions selectively, undermining legal certainty and the consistent application of international maritime law and the shadow fleet is an example of this. Although commonly used, it lacks a universal legal meaning in international maritime law, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and customary principles governing flag state jurisdiction, freedom of navigation, and state responsibility [6]. Its interpretation varies by user: for some policymakers, it denotes uninsured tankers; for others, aging ships near Russian ports; and for others still, any vessel connected, even indirectly, to Russian energy exports [7].

In a significant development, the IMO defined the term for the first time in its non-binding resolution of December 6, 2023. [8]. The IMO defines the "dark fleet" or "shadow fleet" as ships engaging in illegal activities, such as circumventing sanctions, evading safety or environmental regulations, avoiding insurance premiums, or disabling AIS tracking systems. While this step toward formal recognition is a positive move, it has been criticized. Many global experts and EU representatives argue that the IMO's definition is too narrow, failing to encompass Russia's broader tactics to bypass sanctions and the associated environmental and security risks [9].

This ongoing debate helps illustrate the central argument of this article, that the "shadow fleet" label is vague and often unfairly applied. From an international law perspective, it raises questions about the consistent application of state responsibility, flag state jurisdiction, and the freedom of navigation. While legitimate concerns about safety and environmental risks are essential, such issues must be determined based on consistent legal standards and objective evaluations instead of politically motivated labels.

3. THE LEGAL AND POLITICAL FRAMEWORK

Since February 2022, sanctions have led to the loss of over $400 billion in Russian assets and revenue. This amount has been estimated to sustain the country's military operations for an additional four years [10]. The global response to the circumvention of these sanctions has been diverse and multifaceted. In a notable demonstration of political unity, 44 European leaders issued a joint statement in July 2024, pledging to disrupt and deter the "shadow fleet" by targeting both its ships and "facilitators". The leaders stated that:

> *"We urge ship owners and operators, the marine insurance industry, ship brokers and other relevant maritime stakeholders to adhere to their relevant obligations, and support the prevention, detection and reporting of 'shadow fleet' activities."*

This political will, expressed through EU and UK declarations targeting the "shadow fleet," is

grounded in binding legal authority. UK sanctions regulations operationalize these commitments through enforceable detention orders, port restrictions, and registration prohibitions. At the international level, IMO guidelines provide a framework of norms that align enforcement with flag state responsibilities and port state control, granting institutional legitimacy and ensuring that politically driven actions remain consistent with recognized maritime law [11].

The United Kingdom (UK) has been particularly proactive in implementing sanctions, targeting over 2,000 individuals and entities under its Russia sanctions regime [12]. The Russia (Sanctions) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 empower the UK government with significant authority. Under these regulations, harbor authorities can be directed to detain any ship owned, controlled, chartered, or operated by individuals or entities designated under the sanctions. Such ships are banned from entering UK ports, denied registration in the UK Ship Register, and are ineligible for the Oil Price Cap. Section 57D of the Russia (Sanctions) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 stipulates that:

> *"The Secretary of State may direct a harbour authority to give a detention direction to the master of*
> *(a) a ship owned, controlled, chartered or operated by a designated person,*
> *(b) a ship owned, controlled, chartered or operated by persons connected with Russia."*

The use of terms like "facilitators" broadens the scope of responsibility, placing indirect pressure on a broad range of maritime actors, from shipowners to insurance companies [13]. From an international law perspective, this raises questions about state sovereignty, due process, and the principle of legality: the designation of "facilitators" has to be aligned with clear legal criteria to avoid arbitrary enforcement, consistent with UNCLOS provisions on flag state jurisdiction and port state control.

As investigations into these sanctions continue, the UK's state-run broadcaster, the BBC, reported that the government is actively probing 37 UK-linked businesses, including several marine insurers, for potentially violating these sanctions. A Treasury spokesperson confirmed that enforcement action will be taken as necessary [14]. Meanwhile, the IMO, a traditionally neutral regulatory body, has also aligned with the broader enforcement rhetoric. The IMO has called on flag states to tighten regulations on illegal operations in the maritime sector and has urged port states to conduct enhanced inspections on vessels suspected of being part of the shadow fleet. Therefore, its involvement provides an institutional legitimacy to the enforcement measures, labeling something as vaguely defined as "shadow fleet" *prima facie* illegal.

4. A GROWING FLEET PARADOX

Despite extensive efforts to combat the shadow fleet, the number of ships involved continues to rise, presenting a paradox in global maritime governance. According to Allianz, a global insurer, efforts to crack down on shadow fleet vessels have paradoxically coincided with their expansion, highlighting the complex dynamics of sanctions enforcement [15].

Estimates of the fleet's size vary considerably, raising questions about source reliability and potential political or commercial motivations. Allianz reports that roughly 17% of the global tanker fleet belongs to the shadow fleet, whereas S&P Global estimates around 591 vessels are trading Russian oil, and the Kyiv School of Economics suggests a lower figure of 435 [16]. These discrepancies likely arise from divergent definitions of the "shadow fleet," gaps in AIS tracking data (due in part to deliberate transponder shutdowns), and differing assumptions about vessel activity or ownership. Insurers may emphasize higher numbers to frame the fleet as risky, aligning with commercial interests, while research institutions may present lower figures to highlight sanctions' effectiveness, demonstrating how data can be politicized.

The term "shadow fleet" functions as a floating signifier: some define it as old or uninsured ships, others as vessels near sanctioned states, or ships indirectly involved in energy trade. Without a universally accepted definition, statistical comparisons risk being misleading, and AIS gaps or inclusion of routine STS operations further undermine methodological reliability.

This paradox also reflects structural and regulatory factors. Sanctions may incentivize parallel operational networks, fragmented enforcement across jurisdictions can reduce effectiveness, and over-regulation may push legitimate actors toward informal structures. Consequently, sanctions may unintentionally fuel the problem they aim to resolve.

Legally, the absence of standardized definitions complicates enforcement under international law, weakens due process, and raises questions about whether vessels can be penalized based on vague criteria. Additionally, perspectives from non-Western maritime powers, such as China, India, and

Gulf states, are often overlooked, limiting the discourse and marginalizing alternative data interpretations that could provide a more balanced understanding of the fleet's dynamics.

5. REFRAMING THE SHADOW FLEET

In discussions surrounding the "shadow fleet," it's crucial to distinguish between what is rhetorically considered illicit and what is legally illicit. Under international law, actions are legally deemed illicit after proof, due process, and judicial rulings, procedures often absent when negative labels are applied to these vessels. Anscombe (1958) argued that deprivation without due legal process is inherently unjust, a principle that resonates with international maritime law, where due process, legal certainty, and predictability are foundational to flag state jurisdiction, port state control, and the consistent enforcement of maritime regulations [17]. As in the *UN Legal and Documentary Aspects of Marine Insurance Contracts*, clear legal procedures and precise definitions are essential to ensure fairness, legitimacy, and the rule of law in maritime governance [18]. In the absence of such universally accepted criteria, the term "shadow fleet" operates as a rhetorical device that stigmatizes vessels without legal justification, undermining both procedural fairness and regulatory coherence.

As Hanseler (2024) observes, the mainstream media regularly play a devastating role, both on the road to war and during war [19]. The frequent invocation of terms like "legal basis" or "rule of law" in these cases often serves to rationalize punitive decisions rather than to reflect a genuine commitment to legal norms. Applied to maritime sanctions, this selective and inconsistent application erodes the burden of proof, risks arbitrary enforcement, and contravenes customary principles of legal certainty. Such practices cultivate an environment governed by power rather than law, a drift toward "jungle law," in which geopolitical expediency overrides formal legal standards and undermines the legitimacy of international maritime governance.

6. MISINTERPRETING STANDARD PRACTICES

The inconsistencies within the sanction regime exacerbate the problem, as routine, legal maritime operations are increasingly treated with suspicion. A prime example is the ship-to-ship (STS) cargo transfer, such as oil.

STS transfers are globally recognized as standard practice, designed for logistical efficiency and supported by legal agreements like the Charter Party. The Charter Party, along with the associated STS Clause and STS Plan, legally authorizes charterers to direct owners to load and/or discharge cargo by lighterage or other STS operations at any safe and lawful location permitted under the charterparty [20].

However, in the context of sanctions, STS transfers are often portrayed as suspicious, especially when ships disable their AIS transponders, creating gaps in tracking [21]. While such gaps may conceal illicit activities, categorizing all vessels engaged in STS transfers as inherently illicit misinterprets standard practices.

Yet, categorizing all vessels engaged in STS transfers as illicit is a misstep. As Lloyd's List explains, the so-called "dark fleet" is not a monolith entity; vessels within it exhibit vastly different risk profiles. While some operate in legal gray areas, only some engage in overtly deceptive practices [22]. Bockmann emphasizes that STS and similar industry-standard practices should not be assumed to indicate wrongdoing. Instead, these methods should be understood as integral components of a complex maritime system that requires a nuanced, risk-based approach. Moreover, blanket suspicion of STS transfers clashes with legitimate maritime commerce protections under UNCLOS, particularly the freedom of navigation under Article 87, the right of ships to innocent passage through territorial seas under Article 17, and port access obligations. This overgeneralization undermines lawful operations, eroding legal certainty and imposing disproportionate constraints on vessels conducting routine, compliant transfers.

7. DATA LOOPHOLES AND BIASED ARGUMENTS

A central argument used to condemn the "shadow fleet" is that its vessels are dangerously old and pose a safety risk. Nick Childs (2025) claimed that the average age of these vessels is 18 years, portraying the shadow fleet as outdated and a potential environmental hazard [23]. However, this claim falls apart when compared to global maritime data. For instance, global maritime data shows the average age for commercial ships is around 20 years, while UNCTAD declared an average ship age of 22.2 years in early 2023 [24]. Additionally, figures from Tanker Operator also indicate that, as of January 1st, 2023, the global oil tanker fleet had an average age of 20.1 years, which represents a slight increase from 2022, when the average was 19.6 years [25]. The data clearly indicates that the permitted average vessel age of vessels in the shadow fleet is lower than that of the global fleet.

Further, Childs asserts that only members of the International Group (IG) of P&I Clubs can provide

reliable insurance. This argument promotes a Western-centric view that marginalizes credible non-IG alternatives. Several reputable non-IG insurers, such as QBE, Korea Ship Owner Mutual P&I, Mitsui Sumitomo, and others, offer legitimate coverage and operate globally, yet these are overlooked in Childs' analysis. This selective framing is a classic example of post-truth tactics, where data is manipulated to fit a predetermined narrative rather than reflect objective reality.

Lastly, Childs advocates for preemptive boarding or seizures under a more "liberal" UNCLOS interpretation. Such recommendations bypass the necessary burden of proof and risk normalizing suspicion-based enforcement, a dangerous trajectory that mirrors Orwellian policy that uses political language to distort the meaning of language [26]. This rhetoric undermines empirical evidence and due process by conflating normative language with legal authority, steering global maritime governance toward "jungle law," where legal systems are replaced by political expediency.

8. GEOPOLITICAL FRAGMENTATION

The discourse surrounding the "shadow fleet" is predominantly shaped by institutions and think tanks in the Global North, leading to a Eurocentric bias in understanding maritime legality. This narrow framing often ignores the legitimate economic interests and perspectives of countries in Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America. For example, China, India, and Gulf states apply UNCLOS provisions with an emphasis on commercial freedom and flag state autonomy, while simultaneously developing alternative maritime governance frameworks outside the International Group of P&I Clubs, such as China's China Maritime Arbitration Commission (CMAC) guidelines, India's Shipping Arbitration and Dispute Resolution Rules, and the UAE's Abu Dhabi Maritime Regulatory Framework, which prioritize regional regulatory norms, port state oversight, and commercial dispute resolution [27].

This dynamic allows control not by force, but through self-righteous moralism, where those imposing labels assume their inherent virtue. Levitt (1958) explicitly cautioned the business world about the dangers of social responsibility, warning of its potential misuse [28].

The practical result is a pattern of what amounts to xenophobic and discriminatory stigma. Vessels linked to countries like Iran, Venezuela, China, or Russia are reflexively labeled as part of the "shadow fleet". This extends to punishing entities for simply having "Russian connections," where association is treated as proof of wrongdoing [29]. The clear implication is that guilt by association is sufficient, reducing complex legal matters to sensationalized narratives.

This process can be analyzed using international relations and legal theory. Constructivists explain how labels like "shadow fleet" shape state behavior and sanction decisions beyond material evidence [30]. Critical legal studies demonstrate how law can be selectively applied to advance political agendas. Postcolonial theory accounts for the persistent Eurocentric bias in maritime governance, emphasizing the epistemological power asymmetries between the Global North and South [31].

However, Hostile Attribution Bias (HAB), analogous to flawed Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) frameworks, assumes harmful intent without evidence [32]. Ships are presumed risky, old, or uninsured based on geopolitical affiliation, even when contrary evidence exists. This collective stigma undermines individual accountability and the Roman legal maxim nullum crimen sine lege, "no crime without law." Although the UN's Pact for the Future addresses such risks proactively, enforcement disregards these safeguards [33].

From a theoretical perspective, the labeling of the shadow fleet can be understood through multiple lenses. Constructivist international relations theory explains how socially constructed labels, such as "shadow fleet," shape state behavior and sanctions decisions beyond material evidence. Critical legal studies frame how law is applied selectively to advance political agendas, highlighting the risk that vague categorizations enable punitive enforcement without consistent legal justification [33]. Postcolonial theory illuminates the Eurocentric bias in maritime governance, showing how Global North institutions and regulatory frameworks disproportionately define legitimacy while marginalizing South perspectives [34]. Integrating these theoretical and South perspectives underscores that labeling the shadow fleet is not merely rhetorical; it actively shapes power, law, and maritime governance across geopolitical and legal dimensions.

9. ECONOMIC PARADOX

A key justification for tightening sanctions is the narrative that Russia's shadow fleet is a highly profitable means to circumvent the oil price cap. Policy discussions in the European Parliament often cite estimates from the Kyiv School of Economics (KSE), suggesting the fleet has generated about $9.4 billion in additional revenue for Russia in 2024 [35]. By using ships not directly linked to Moscow, Russia

allegedly sells its crude oil for an average of $64 per barrel, bypassing the $60 limit.

However, this narrative becomes questionable when substantial costs are considered. The same KSE report estimates that Russia invested $10 billion to develop its shadow fleet to avoid using G7/EU vessels, ports, and financial and maritime services.

This substantial initial investment casts doubt on the operation's profitability. When ongoing operational costs, such as insurance, crew wages, ship maintenance, and fuel, are considered, the profit margin could be minimal or negative. Presenting revenue figures without contextualizing the operational costs is more of a rhetorical tool to strengthen the sanctions narrative than an objective economic analysis.

This situation echoes Cold War-era rhetoric, where adversary states were accused of exploiting economic tools for ideological reasons, with little attention paid to market dynamics [36]. The narrative persists not because it is empirically valid, but because it resonates with dominant ideologies and functions as a form of virtue signaling. Once a negative label is applied, evidence becomes secondary to a moral panic, a classic example of hostile attribution bias.

10. INCONSISTENT NARRATIVE

The “shadow” or “dark” fleet is still defined in varying ways in literature. This supports Orlitzky’s (2018) thesis that certain discourses prevail not due to their objective realities, but due to their attachments to prevailing ideology and public virtue. In this instance, the persistent "shadow fleet" economic claims, which do not seem to have a rigorous check, still seem to fall within the realm of virtue signaling and not dispassionate policy analysis [37]. In the same vein, authors considered ideological rigidity and hostile attribution bias, which is when the label is the most convenient substitute for evidence, and the irreducible panic becomes morally charged.

11. IMPLICATIONS FOR GLOBAL STABILITY

Terms such as "shadow" or "shadow fleet" have no recognized legal status. In addition, inequitable enforcement, such as the blacklisting of certain vessels without due process, is particularly harmful to the global economy. Such practices lead to an atmosphere of legal unpredictability, which is difficult for businesses to manage in such an unstable global market. The 2025 Allianz Risk Barometer report illustrates this. The report ranks the global business cost of regulatory unpredictability as the 4th highest and reflects the legal assurance deficit pervasive in business and policy circles [38]. Enforcing restrictions without a legal and regulatory framework will likely increase unpredictability and risk in the sensitive shipping and energy sectors.

Business Interruption (BI), driven by supply chain disruptions and geopolitical tensions, has consistently ranked as a top-two global business risk for the past decade. The aggressive, unilateral enforcement debated in the "shadow fleet" context threatens to exacerbate these vulnerabilities. For instance, the growing tolerance for "reciprocal liberalization" could provoke retaliatory actions from sanctioned or excluded states, such as de facto blockades of the Arab Gulf or Far Eastern trade routes, escalating from diplomatic disputes to full-scale logistical gridlock [39]. This pattern is reminiscent of historical shipping conflicts, such as tanker reflagging during the Iran–Iraq War and the widespread use of flags of convenience in Liberia and Panama, illustrating continuity in how states navigate, evade, or manipulate maritime regulation [40].

Contemporary conflicts are increasingly complex, involving multiple nations and domains from ground warfare to influence operations. An informal coalition of China, Iran, Russia, and North Korea (CIRN) has emerged as a counter-influence network challenging Western economic and geopolitical power [41]. The rise of blocs like BRICS further exemplifies this manifestation of global fragmentation.

This escalation could disrupt the global maritime order and challenge long-standing international norms, as has been observed during past crises such as the Suez Crisis or the 1980s tanker war [42]. Without a commitment to transparent dialogue and rule-based enforcement, liberalized sanctions may become destabilizing, producing significant economic and political consequences.

12. FOUNDATIONAL LEGAL REFORMS

Addressing the ideological fog surrounding the "shadow fleet," a series of corrective measures is needed to build a more equitable and legally coherent maritime governance system. The goal is not to excuse actual sanction evasion but to restore legal clarity and ensure legitimate commercial operations are not unfairly penalized by politically motivated narratives.

A globally accepted and operational definition of an "illicit fleet" must be created and adopted. This definition needs to be grounded in IMO standards and backed by judicial rulings, not shaped by media narratives or unilateral government decrees. The current ambiguity allows for arbitrary labeling, often weaponized for geopolitical signaling instead of lawful enforcement.

Civil enforcement actions should always start with asserting the burden of proof. Suppose enforced actions continue to be taken without proof, for instance, boarding vessels without legal reason or targeting owners based on their nationality, the so-called liberal approach will become a weapon. The swift shift toward a "jungle law" world underscores the dangers of ignoring legal pluralism and intercultural dialogue, principles central to Third World Approaches to International Law (TWAIL). TWAIL stresses that international law should reflect diverse legal traditions and the interests of Global South states. In the "shadow fleet" context, Eurocentric definitions and selective enforcement marginalize these actors. Recognizing TWAIL perspectives supports inclusive rule-making, equitable enforcement, and acknowledgment of non-Western maritime norms, ensuring maritime governance serves all states rather than privileging the Global North [42].

The UN could establish an independent ad hoc technical committee composed of experts and representatives from the insurance industry to provide objective evaluations of a vessel's legal and insurance status, mitigating the influence of regional blocs and focused institutions such as the Kyiv School of Economics. However, the political feasibility of such a committee is uncertain. Consensus in the UN Security Council may be difficult due to conflicting national interests among permanent members, veto powers, and divergent geopolitical priorities, particularly when states involved in or benefiting from shadow fleet activities are themselves Council members. Even if recommendations are adopted, enforcing them poses practical challenges, including limited capacity to monitor compliance, difficulty coordinating port state inspections across jurisdictions, and reliance on flag states for action, which may have little incentive to implement sanctions against their vessels.

From a structural point of view, the discussion must also remember the key issue: the aging of the global fleet. There are reports of the entire industry's inefficiencies and environmental risks of old vessels. Furthermore, many ships wrongly classified as part of the "shadow fleet" are not much older than the global mean. Complementing governance reforms, fleet-wide management programs incorporating smart technologies, such as drones and Corrosion Under Insulation (CUI) monitors, could enhance transparency and oversight. Such operational improvements also intersect with sustainability imperatives: shadow fleet debates, if unregulated, may derail IMO's decarbonization targets and ESG compliance, demonstrating that sanctions and regulatory measures must consider environmental as well as legal objectives. Additionally, the legitimacy of Protection & Indemnity (P&I) Insurers should be assessed based on their adherence to robust regulatory standards, such as Solvency II and IFRS 17, rather than solely on their membership in the International Group of P&I Clubs.

In the end, these suggestions are supposed to bring back legal clarity and equilibrium to the system, so that not only the evidence-based commercial operations are kept, but also those that are legal and bound to international relations are not misguidedly dragged into politically motivated stories where the ideology much overshadows the reasons.

13. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the "shadow fleet" issue stems from definitional ambiguity, selective enforcement, and partial narratives, all undermining international maritime law and eroding legal certainty. This uncertainty creates tangible risks: skewed economic calculations, politically motivated targeting, and arbitrary enforcement that expose legitimate maritime activities to unanchored penalties. Addressing these challenges requires specific and actionable reforms. For example, the IMO could lead the drafting of an operational definition of the "shadow fleet." At the same time, an independent arbitration body under UNCLOS could assess disputed cases in line with the principle nullum crimen sine lege ("no crime without law"). Regional frameworks and incremental measures may be more feasible given the limits of international consensus, and reform processes should actively incorporate perspectives from Asia, Africa, and Latin America to avoid Eurocentric bias. Together, these measures would enhance transparency, restore fairness in enforcement, and mitigate destabilizing effects on global maritime governance while respecting the rule of law and diverse stakeholder interests.

14. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors gratefully acknowledge the institutional support and constructive feedback that contributed to the development of this manuscript. They also extend their appreciation to all individuals whose insights assisted this work but who do not meet the criteria for authorship.

15. DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

No potential competing interest was reported by the author(s)

16. FUNDING

Not applicable.

REFERENCES

Modreanu S, "The post-truth era" (2017) 6 *Human and Social Studies* 7, 9, available at https://doi.org/10.1515/HSSR-2017-0021

Arslanian F, "US Sanctions and Cooperation among Targets: The Case of Cooperation between Iran and Venezuela" (2025) *Middle East Critique* 1, 1–22, available at https://doi.org/10.1080/19436149.2025.2520645

Jánošová V, "EU Sanctions Against Russia - The Impact on the Russian and EU Markets" (2024) 3 *Slovak Yearbook of European Union Law* 35–50, available at https://doi.org/10.54869/syeul.2023.3.796

Boonsom J, "Dark Waters Ahead: EU Maritime Security Integration in Response to the Russian Shadow Fleet" (2025) *Lub.lu.se*, available at https://lup.lub.lu.se/student-papers/search/publication/9189765

Jørgensen M and Phillips L, "Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory" in *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method* (2002) 24–59, available at https://doi.org/10.4135/9781849208871.n2

Parlov I and Sverdrup U, "The Emerging 'Shadow Fleet' as a Maritime Security and Ocean Governance Challenge" in *Maritime Security Law in Hybrid Warfare* (Brill Nijhoff, 2024) 225–262, available at https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004707993_010

Braw E, "The threats posed by the global shadow fleet—and how to stop it" (2024) *Atlantic Council*, available at https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/in-depth-research-reports/report/the-threats-posed-by-the-global-shadow-fleet-and-how-to-stop-it/- and-how-to-stop-it/

Beckman R, Nguyen T, and Hao JOJ, "The 2023 IMO Assembly Resolution enables States to challenge the 'Dark Fleet' that threatens the marine environment" (2024) *Centre for International Law*, available at https://cil.nus.edu.sg/blogs/the-2023-imo-assembly-resolution-enables-states-to-challenge-the-dark-fleet-that-threatens-the-marine-environment/.

Caprile A and Leclerc G, *Russia's «shadow fleet»: Bringing the threat to light* (European Parliamentary Research Service, European Union, 2024)

Shatz HJ and Reach C, "The Cost of the Ukraine War for Russia" (2023) *Dtic.mil*, available at https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/html/trecms/AD1216976/

Legislation.gov.uk, *The Russia (Sanctions) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019* (2019)

Gov.UK, *UK sanctions guidance for non-UK businesses* (2025), available at https://www.gov.uk/guidance/uk-sanctions-guidance-for-non-uk-businesses

Wilson T, "How Russia's 'shadow fleet' gets its ships" (2024) *Financial Times*, available at https://www.ft.com/content/b9dee3f3-c2f8-4aa1-b0d9-d207f815b6e5

Chambers S, "37 businesses probed by UK over Russian oil ties" (2024) *Splash247*, available at https://splash247.com/37-businesses-probed-by-uk-over-russian-oil-ties/

Safety and Shipping Review (2025) *Allianz Commercial*, available at https://commercial.allianz.com/news-and-insights/reports/shipping-safety.html

Kyiv School of Economics, *Assessing Russia's Shadow Fleet: Initial Build-Up, Links to the Global Shadow Fleet, and Future Prospects* (2024) available at https://kse.ua/about-the-school/news/asseszing-russia-s-shadow-fleet-initial-build-up-links-to-the-global-shadow-fleet-and-future-prospects/

Anscombe GEM, *Modern Moral Philosophy* (1958) 33 *Philosophy* 124

UNCTAD, *Legal and Documentary Aspects of the Marine Insurance Contract* (1982)

Hanseler P, "The US plans to let BRICS fail in a geopolitically explosive environment" (2024). *Forvm Geopolitica*, available at https://forumgeopolitica.com/article/the-us-plans-to-let-brics-fail-in-a-geopolitically-explosive-environment-135

SHELLTIME 4 Charter Party (2012) US Securities and Exchange Commission Archives, available at https://www.sec.gov/Archives/edgar/data/1507571/000119312512466806/d422110dex101.htm

Fernández-Villaverde J et al., "Charting the Uncharted: The (Un)Intended Consequences of Oil Sanctions and Dark Shipping" (2025) *National Bureau of Economic Research*, available at http://www.nber.org/papers/w33486

Bockmann M, "Shifty shades of grey: The different risk profiles of the dark fleet explained" (2023) *Lloyds List*, available at https://www.lloydslist.com/LL1144787/Shifty-shades-of-grey-The-different-risk-profiles-of-the-dark-fleet-explained

Childs N, "Russia's 'Shadow Fleet' and Sanctions Evasion: What Is To Be Done?" (2025) *International Institute for Strategic Studies*, available at https://www.iiss.org/research-paper/2025/01/russias-shadow-fleet-and-sanctions-evasion/

UNCTAD, *Review of Maritime Transport 2023* (2023)

Majidi M, "Report: Russian LNG Fleet Makes Stops in France for Repairs" (2025) *The Maritime Executive*, available at https://maritime-executive.com/article/report-russian-lng-fleet-makes-stops-in-france-for-repairs

Hooligan C, "Orwellian codes of behaviour exploring ideological power in education research policy" (2020) 12 *Power and Education* 3, 27

Singh AJ, "UNCLOS: Facilitating ocean governance and maritime security" (2022) 18 *Maritime Affairs: Journal of the National Maritime Foundation of India* 1, 72–90, available at https://doi.org/10.1080/09733159.2022.2097643

Levitt T, "The dangers of social responsibility" (1958) 36 *Harvard Business Review* 5, 41

Jagdeep A et al., "Instructing animosity: How DEI pedagogy produces the hostile attribution bias" (2024) *Rutgers University's Social Perception Lab: Network Contagion Research Institute (NCRI)* 1–23

Wendt A, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge University Press, 1999), available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/social-theory-of-international-politics/0ED39A0A5DD6A26B36E3BCB8D6C7F0C9

Zanchetta M, "Maritime Geopolitics and the role of port cities and international straits in a multilateral context" (2024) *Unive.it*, available at https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.14247/11758

United Nations, *Pact for the Future - United Nations Summit of the Future* (2024) available at https://www.un.org/en/summit-of-the-future/pact-for-the-future

Levin B, "Criminal Law Exceptionalism" (2022) 108 *Virginia Law Review* 6, 1381–1448, available at https://www.jstor.org/stable/27219957

Collins, Maguire-Rajpaul, V., Krauss, J. E., Asiyanbi, A., Jiminez, A., Mabele, M. B., & Alexander-Owen, M. (2021). Plotting the coloniality of conservation - White Rose Research Online. *Whiterose.ac.uk*. https://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/id/eprint/180709/3/Collinsetal_2021_Plottingthecolonialityofconservation_Proof_V2.pdf

Mchugh D, "Shadow fleet of tankers keeps Russia's oil money flowing despite Western sanctions" (2025) *Associated Press*, available at https://apnews.com/article/russia-sanctions-shadow-fleet-oil-baltic-ukraine-76b66900d599d6e49692643674907fc0.

Leffler MP, *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration, and the Cold War* (Plunkett Lake Press, 2019)

Orlitzky M, "Virtue signaling: Oversocialized 'integrity' in a politically correct world" in *Integrity in Business and Management* (Routledge, 2017) 172–187

Allianz Risk Barometer: Identifying the Major Business Risks for 2025 (2025)

Jamshidian Tehrani M and Golshan Khavas R, "Analyzing the potential of the southern corridor in competition with China-Europe freight transport corridors using multi-criteria decision-making" (2024) 22 *International Journal of Civil Engineering* 12, 2283–2302

Cavalcanti E, "Armed attacks against merchant vessels: 'Looking behind the Flag' to find the victim State" (2024) *Journal of Conflict and Security Law*, available at https://doi.org/10.1093/jcsl/krae013

Colibasanu A, "Trade Corridor Wars: Escalating Competition Between China, Russia, Iran and the West" (2024) *Foreign Policy Research Institute*, available at https://www.fpri.org/article/2024/12/trade-corridor-wars-china-russia-iran-west/

Gómez Sánchez D and Arenas Catalán ES, "Third World Approaches to International Law (TWAIL)" in *Springer Textbooks in Law* (2024) 127–166, available at https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-69522-3_6