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Two Swiss lawyers take aim at flags of convenience in new book

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Mobilisation Nationale Wakashio

Two Swiss lawyers have published a 247-page book looking at the risks associated with flags of convenience.

Flags of Convenience, Below the surface of the global shipping industry, penned by Mark Pieth and Kathrin Betz, is available to read for free by [clicking here](#).

Research for the book took the authors to accident sites in Europe and Africa, to inspections in Belgian ports, to developers of new engines and fuels, as well as a ship recycling facility in India. The pair spoke to representatives of regulators, governments, shipping companies, traders, ports, NGOs and to captains and seafarers themselves.

The book covers the economy of shipping and the vulnerability of modern supply chains, how ships are owned, operated and financed as well as looking at labour rights and their violations, the environmental impacts of shipping, and efforts to find greener alternatives.

The book ends with a few thoughts about the regulatory framework around shipping, suggesting that regulations and institutions evolved with globalisation and were designed to serve the industry and economic priorities. Even where “patches” have been added to address egregious impacts and risks relating to the environment, climate change and human rights, the authors argue that the regulatory framework still resembles a net that allows the big fish to swim free.

“The global shipping industry faces many challenges related to protection of the environment and labour conditions. The problem is not primarily regulation, but a lack of implementation, and flags of convenience are maybe the main reason why implementation is weak,” Pieth told *Splash*.

Betz said she had serious doubts that the International Maritime Organization and other organisations are able to enforce the rules.

“We think that beyond self-regulation, stricter government interaction, including tougher Port State Control, is needed,” she said.

Splash readers can read the whole book for free by [clicking here](#).