



Indian Council
of World Affairs

INDIA AND THE ISLAND STATES IN THE INDIAN OCEAN

Evolving Geopolitics and Security Perspectives

INDIAN COUNCIL OF WORLD AFFAIRS

SAPRU HOUSE, NEW DELHI

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Foreword

India and the Island States in the Indian Ocean: Evolving Geopolitics and Security Perspectives, an edited publication by the Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA), is an outcome of a web-based international seminar organised by the Council on 6 September 2022. The seminar was part of Council's effort to bring forth different perspectives of Indian Ocean island states on evolving geo politics and geo strategic issues in the region and contemporary security issues confronted by the island states.

India's keen interest in the region is shaped by its historical links and commitment to peace and stability. Over the decades, India has presented itself as a security provider, by developing a multifaceted relationship with Indian Ocean island states, which also includes maritime security cooperation, response to natural disasters and humanitarian emergencies. The growing role of India in the region is also evident from its expanding economic and political relations with island states. At the same time, India is well aware of challenges to developing a common security perspective/framework, various internal and external strategic constraints and balance of power issues in the region owing to the heightened interest of extra – regional powers. These issues remain a challenge and have far reaching implications for forging a common security perspective and for peace, security and stability, growth and prosperity of the region.

Therefore, the seminar brought together former Indian diplomats/practitioners who served in island states of the Indian Ocean, both Southern and South-Western Indian Ocean, former Indian Navy personnel and academics from India and island states of Sri Lanka, Maldives, Mauritius, Seychelles and Madagascar. The deliberations at the seminar helped to understand the challenges and prospects for maritime security cooperation between India and the island states in ever evolving geo politics of the region. This publication also helps to understand how the island states perceive India's strategic role in the region.

This publication, will be of value to practitioners, scholars and students interested in understanding the evolving security dynamics and issues faced by the island states in the Indian Ocean Region.

Vijay Thakur Singh

Director General

Indian Council of World Affairs

Sapru House

February 2023

Introduction

In the evolving geopolitics, the strategic importance of Indian Ocean island states has gone up significantly. Given that the Indian Ocean Region is emerging as a key fulcrum of international politics in the 21st century, major extra-regional powers are making active efforts to gain a foothold in the Indian Ocean Region. In this context, the role and position of smaller yet strategically important island states is critical. The competition between major powers for expanding their strategic influence and security presence has endowed these small island states with bargaining power and to leverage their strategically critical location to maximize gains.

Global geopolitical shifts and great power rivalry are resulting in strategic competition in the Indian Ocean Region. Increasing interest of Quad and AUKUS member-states in enhancing their foothold in the region is also seen as a counter to China's assertive presence in the region. Security presence in the form of military bases, listening posts, naval monitoring stations, joint military exercises, and/or logistics support facilities is enhancing the ability of the naval forces to operate in the Indian Ocean. This will also assist monitoring of sea lanes, critical for global energy and economic security passing through the Indian Ocean. Great power politics in the Indian Ocean is also generating new vulnerabilities for the island states. There is a rise in non-traditional security threats such as piracy, terrorism, IUU fishing which are posing a challenge to regional security and stability. It is in this context of increasing presence of major powers and sharpening strategic rivalries that India's engagement with the island states of the Indian Ocean is taking shape.

The reverberations of India's rise as an economic and military, especially naval, power is felt across the region. India perceives itself as a "preferred security partner" for the Indian Ocean states both in traditional and non-traditional security realm. The island states have looked up to India for support as a first responder. India has sought to respond to calls for assistance, be it the water emergency in the Maldives or the relief efforts in the wake of a cyclone in Madagascar. Therefore, it is necessary to understand and locate the Indian Ocean Island states in India's foreign policy.

India has been vigorously engaging with the Indian Ocean Island states within the framework of Neighbourhood First policy and as part of its SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) initiative. In the last one year, India has extended considerable help to Sri Lanka to tide over the economic crisis. In the case of Maldives, the relationship has strengthened and defence and security cooperation has emerged as a key building block of the relationship. Seychelles and Mauritius are important partners in India's outreach to the Western Indian Ocean region. India's Africa policy and Indian Ocean strategy converge in the

The competition between major powers for expanding their strategic influence and security presence has endowed these small island states with bargaining power and to leverage their strategically critical location to maximize gains.

Western Indian Ocean. Regular, high-level visits to Seychelles and Mauritius have deepened the relationship. Indian Navy Chief's visit to Seychelles and eight-day long visit of the Prime Minister of Mauritius to India in 2022, underscore the importance that India attaches to these states. Madagascar, Comoros and French Indian Ocean territories too feature prominently in India's engagement with the Southwest Indian Ocean.

In this backdrop, the web based ICWA seminar on 'India and the Island States in the Indian Ocean: Evolving Geopolitics and Security Perspectives' held on 6 September 2022 brought together speakers from India, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Madagascar, Mauritius and Seychelles to discuss these and other related issues that affect the security dynamics of India and these island states. This volume is an outcome of the different perspectives shared by the speakers on the theme of the seminar.

Vice Admiral (Retd.) M P Muralidharan's paper examines the Maritime Security issues between India and island states of Sri Lanka and Maldives. It highlights the strategic importance of island states in providing warning and surveillance posts, and logistic bases for operations deep into the oceans. The strategic location of India, Sri Lanka and Maldives, gives them an added stake in the security and stability of waters in the Indian Ocean Region and beyond. Enhancing their trilateral cooperation would, apart from addressing mutual concerns, strengthen security and stability in the maritime environment across the region, bringing in economic growth and prosperity.

N. Manoharan's paper notes the there are three broad trends that could be identified in the evolving geo-political and security perspectives of the region: One is the US strategic posture that has witnessed a new interest in the Indian Ocean Region. Second is the rise of China as a power not just at the regional or sub-regional level, but at the global level. And third, the emergence of Indo-Pacific as a new geo-political concept which has propelled the Indian southern neighbourhood to a new significance. The paper also elaborated the concerns that grapple India's national interests when it comes to its southern neighbourhood such as strategic, non-traditional security threats, economic and domestic issues.

Asanga Abeyagoonasekera's paper discussed the background for recent Sri Lanka's political-economic crisis with a particular focus on the external influence of China. What were the political-economic policy decisions that triggered the crisis? What was China's involvement in the crisis? What was the impact of the crisis in Sri Lanka on India and Indian Ocean security? Why did Gotabaya Rajapaksa tilt Sri Lanka's foreign policy posture towards China? What regional and global initiatives Sri Lanka could benefit from? The paper argues that the Sri Lankan crisis has impacted the Indian Ocean Region in two dimensions. First is the economic dimension, where China's geo-economic tactics were used to achieve geopolitical objectives, threatening the country's sovereignty and regional security. Second is the security dimension, where the limited financial resources on security spending can impact patrolling of the Sri Lankan waters, participating in the counter-terrorism measures, human trafficking efforts and overall maritime security domain.

Mr. Athaulla A Rasheed's paper noted that in recent years, Maldives had developed much closer development cooperation ties with extra-regional actors like China that do not

represent traditional regional principles and practices. The rise of China's engagement in Maldives from 2013 to 2018 created multiple concerns for regional actors including India (and its Indo-Pacific partners) about the rise of single powers in the region. However, the new Government that came to power at the end of 2018 reiterated the 'India-First' policy and scrapped some of the major investments made with China. The paper also provides a concise analysis of the drivers of foreign partnerships and geopolitics pertaining to Maldives in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). And how the policy priorities of Maldives are significantly influenced by the unique vulnerabilities inherent to an island nation that is constantly threatened by sea level rise.

Adluri Subramanyam Raju's paper explores the importance of India's engagement with the islands in the Western Indian Ocean. The paper notes that India has cultural and historical links with the western Indian Ocean Island States which give India a geopolitical advantage in the region. The presence of Indian diaspora is also acting as a link to maintain good relations with the region. India has demonstrated its interest in the region by performing various tasks which include humanitarian aid, disaster relief, Search and Rescue (SAR) etc. The paper also highlights the importance of Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI), which focuses on seven pillars: Maritime ecology, security, marine resources, capacity building, disaster risk reduction, science and technology and trade and connectivity. The initiative is important for the island states, for they seek to focus more on geoeconomics than geopolitics.

Priya Bahadoor's paper analyses the perspective of Mauritius towards the security of the Indian Ocean. The paper tries to answer specific questions such as does Mauritius have a specific policy concerning the Indian Ocean or have there been changes in the way that it perceives the region over the years? Did Mauritius have a policy related to its dependencies and territorial waters after its Independence? The paper notes that Mauritius should continue to work in collaboration with different actors of the Indian Ocean to come up with a harmonised strategy for the region whose key transit routes are used by almost two thirds of the world's sea-based commerce. The Government of Mauritius, with its limited resources, cannot proceed to design a specific strategy for the Indian Ocean alone as no State can exist in isolation.

Malshini Senaratne's paper points out that Seychelles is focused on re-building the economy by creating, rejuvenating, and upscaling the country's Blue Economy sectors, but this must happen without the country losing sight of the environmental and socio-economic principles that signpost or guide its Blue Economy Roadmap. Partnerships and collaboration beyond the island nations' shores therefore become urgent and most important. Engaging with key partners of choice such as India has seen numerous and quite successful collaborations on several Blue Economy fronts, including maritime security and monitoring, research and surveys as well as local capacity development. Such collaborations and partnerships will be essential for moving forward Seychelles' Blue Economy agenda.

Juvence F. Ramasy's paper highlights the involvement of neighbouring and extra-regional states in the region which is leading to strategic competition between the old and the new powers in the IOR. In order not to be on the threshold of the new geopolitical order in the

multipolar world in which Africa, including the Indian Ocean, is one of the theaters, it is up to the States of the South-West Indian Ocean, to make their political and diplomatic voice heard within the various bodies. To this end, Madagascar has initiated an all-out diplomacy combined with the principle of fihavanana which is akin to the Indian ethos of *vasudhaiva kutumbakam*.

Commodore (Retd) RS Vasan's paper says India is on the right track in terms of engaging with the smaller island nations in the region, within the framework of the idea of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, which means the world is one family. Unlike China which has led many nations on the debt trap avenue by pursuing cheque book diplomacy, India would like to ensure in the true spirit of SAGAR, a shared prosperity and security amongst partners in the region, in letter and spirit.

Nutan Kapoor Mahawar
Samatha Mallempati

Welcome Remarks

Vijay Thakur Singh

Director General, Indian Council of World Affairs

Dr. Sanjaya Baru, distinguished journalist, author and member of ICWA's Governing Body,
Ambassador Ashok Kantha and Anup Mudgal,

Distinguished Panellists, Guests, and ladies, and gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to welcome you all to the web-based seminar on "India and Island States in the Indian Ocean: Evolving Geopolitics and Security Perspectives".

In the last few years, ICWA has focused a great deal on the strategic affairs of the Indian Ocean and the wider Indo-Pacific region.

We have hosted major national as well as international conferences, published several books and articles dealing with maritime issues. This seminar is part of that process and an attempt to focus on strategic perspectives from the Island States of the Western Indian Ocean.

In the Indian Ocean geopolitics, the concerns and issues of smaller Island States are often not deliberated upon even though they are strategically located in the sea lanes of communication and have critical importance in any discussion on maritime safety and security, on building blue economies, enhancing maritime connectivity and building partnerships for sustainable ocean development.

Experts from India and the countries that are participating in the seminar belong to the region of the Indian Ocean where geopolitics is shaped by traditional as well as non-traditional security issues. Also, extra-regional powers are seeking to establish a foothold in the region. Their growing presence presents a new challenge to regional security and stability.

India has traditionally close and friendly relations with the Island States of the Indian Ocean and has built strong political, economic, developmental and people-to-people ties with them.

In the recent years, India has been vigorously engaging with the Indian Ocean Island States as part of its SAGAR (i.e. Security and Growth for All in the Region) initiative.

India has traditionally close and friendly relations with the Island States of the Indian Ocean and has built strong political, economic, developmental and people-to-people ties with them.

As “first responder” during humanitarian crisis, India has extended assistance, be it the Tsunami of 2004 or the medical assistance during the Covid-19 pandemic as part of its “Mission Sagar”.

As a resident nation, India has “shared concerns” about ensuring security in the region in face of threats - whether piracy or terrorism and understands the need for Island nations to build their defence and security infrastructure. In this context, India has extended Lines of Credit for defence and has gifted military equipment such as Dornier aircraft to enhance the maritime security capacity of the Island States.

We have also worked together in regional organizations, Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) for managing the strategic dynamics of Indian Ocean. We need to strengthen these processes.

In the webinar we will attempt to understand:-

How do Island Nations look at the evolving geopolitics of the Indo-Pacific region? What are their key concerns?

What are their perspectives about the growing military presence of extra-regional powers in the region?

How do Island States look at India’s role in the Indian Ocean?

How do they chart their national trajectories in the face of sharpening international politics in the region?

How do concerns about climate change, Blue Economy, IUU (Illegal, Unregulated and Unreported) fishing and maritime governance affect the national security strategies of these Island States?

I look forward to fruitful discussions. I thank you all for accepting our invitation and joining us today.

Indian Ocean: From Sea Power to Ocean Prosperity

Sanjaya Baru

This seminar is being held at an interesting time when India has just launched a new aircraft carrier and a Chinese navy ship came to visit Sri Lanka. With European powers, especially Britain and France, showing renewed interest in the Indian Ocean, this body of water that has remained a 'zone of peace', so to speak, has begun to attract global attention. It is, therefore, relevant for countries within this geographical space to note that the only memory of conflict we have in the Indian Ocean region is associated with powers that have entered this

space from the outside. We have never been in conflict with each other.

The maritime historian K.M. Pannikar noted in his classic monograph, *India and the Indian Ocean: An Essay on the Influence of Sea Power on Indian History* (1945), "Milleniums before Columbus sailed the Atlantic and Magellan crossed the Pacific, the Indian Ocean had become an active thoroughfare of commercial and cultural traffic."¹ Yet, much of the focus of academic literature and policy analysis for a long time has been on maritime security, sea power and naval strategy, with little attention

India's more recent focus on the development of a Blue Economy and Maritime Domain Awareness, even as the region comes once again under the shadow of Big Power rivalries, augurs well for development and security within the Indian Ocean region.

¹ K.M. Pannikar, *India and the Indian Ocean: An Essay on the Influence of Sea Power on Indian History*, George Allen & Unwin, London, 1945, 2nd Edition, 1951, p.23. I found a copy of the 1951 edition in the library of the National University of Singapore. The book bore the stamp "University of Malaya Library. September 1960". I read this book during my stint at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy in 2008-09. The book is out of print. I have urged the National Maritime Foundation in India to reprint this classic. Other important studies of Indian maritime activity in the Indian Ocean region include: Ashin Das Gupta, *The World of the Indian Ocean Merchant, 1500-1800*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001; and Holden Furber, Sinnapah Arasaratnam and Kenneth McPherson, *Maritime India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2004. On the idea of the 'underlying unity' of the Indian Ocean region, see K.N. Chaudhuri, *Trade and Civilisation in the Indian Ocean: An Economic History from the Rise of Islam to 1750*, Cambridge University Press, UK, 1985. For a more recent and popular history of India's maritime presence in the Indian Ocean region see Sanjeev Sanyal, *The Ocean of Churn: How the Indian Ocean Shaped Human History*, Penguin Random House, New Delhi, 2016.

paid to pan-ocean economic development, investment in maritime infrastructure, maritime connectivity and commerce.

Therefore, India's more recent focus on the development of a Blue Economy and Maritime Domain Awareness, even as the region comes once again under the shadow of Big Power rivalries, augurs well for development and security within the Indian Ocean region.²

Pannikar did of course emphasize the strategic importance of the sea and he believed that "control" of the Indian Ocean and of all the 'choke points' leading in and out of it, including the Malacca Straits, the Gulf of Aden and the southern expanse of the ocean near Mauritius should be in Indian hands, to safeguard India's freedom from external aggression.³ In his masterly study of civilization and capitalism through the 15th to the 18th centuries, historian Fernand Braudel underscored the dominant presence of India in the Indian Ocean region.⁴ Referring to the region spanning the Arabian Sea, the Bay of Bengal, the Straits of Malacca and the South China Sea – what is now called the Indo-Pacific—as the "greatest of all the world economies" of the pre-industrial, pre-capitalist era.⁵

"The relationship between these huge areas," wrote Braudel, "was the result of a series of pendulum movements of

greater or lesser strength, either side of the centrally positioned Indian subcontinent. The swing might benefit first the East and then the West, redistributing functions, power and political or economic advance. Through all these vicissitudes however, India maintained her central position: her merchants in Gujarat and on the Malabar and Coromandel coasts prevailed for centuries against their many competitors – the Arab traders of the Red Sea, the Persian merchants of the Gulf, or the Chinese merchants familiar with the Indonesian seas to which their junks were now regular visitors."⁶

Such was the geo-economics of the Indian Ocean before the Europeans entered this space. As historian Sanjay Subrahmanyam notes, long before the ports of Calcutta, Madras and Bombay became India's links with the ocean, "independent ship-owning merchants" of India traded with the world through ports such as Surat, Machilipatnam, Hooghly and Calicut.⁷ Ashin Das Gupta summed up his enormous research on 'the world of the Indian Ocean merchant' thus:

"There can be little doubt that in the prosperous years of the later 17th century a few thousands of such men set out every year to take care of India's overseas trade and connect India closely

2 Hamant Maini and Lipi Budhraj, *Ocean Based Blue Economy: An Insight into the SAGAR as the Last Growth Frontier*, NITI Aayog, Government of India, at: [https://www.niti.gov.in/writereaddata/files/document_publication/Indian%20Ocean%20Region_v6\(1\).pdf](https://www.niti.gov.in/writereaddata/files/document_publication/Indian%20Ocean%20Region_v6(1).pdf) (Accessed on August 21, 2019); Aparna Roy, *Blue Economy in the Indian Ocean: Governance Perspectives for Sustainable Development in the Region*, Occasional Paper, January 2019, Observer Research Foundation, at <https://www.orfonline.org/research/blue-economy-in-the-indian-ocean-governance-perspectives-for-sustainable-development-in-the-region-47449/> (Accessed on August 21, 2019).

3 K.M. Pannikar, no. 1, Chapter 1; Alfred Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History 1660-1783*, Little, Brown and Company, Boston. 1890.

4 Fernand Braudel, *Civilization and Capitalism, 15th-18th Century: Volume II. The Wheels of Commerce*, Fontana Press, London, 1982.

5 Ibid., pp. 484-535.

6 Ibid., pp. 484.

7 Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "Introduction", in Uma Das Gupta (Ed.), *Collected Essays of Ashin Das Gupta*, Oxford University Press, Delhi. 2001, p. 9.

Historically, India has never been a hegemonic power in the Indian Ocean.

with the world of the Indian Ocean These were men who serviced the commercial ships in every way while in port. They brought together the export cargo on board; they arranged for the sale of the imports; they made it possible for the travellers to sail by arranging to finance their voyage. They were merchants in general trade; they were merchants of particular commodities; they were the money merchants and, above all, they were the brokers of the port towns. ... The Indian maritime merchant properly so-called depended upon and assisted this service sector in the magic century which began roughly in the 1630s.”⁸

It is the entry of European merchants and navies that ended what Das Gupta calls a “magic century” of Indian maritime activity. European colonialism altered the nature of India’s relationship with the waters around it. The waters around the Indian sub-continent were no longer a bridge to prosperity but became a route to the de-industrialization and destruction of the Indian economy and made most island territories captive to imperial commerce. Mauritius, for example, was forced to become a plantation economy serving the needs of European mercantilism. The flag followed trade. Since European conquest came via the sea, much of the discourse on the sea focused excessively on security

and defence, with the relative neglect of its maritime economic potential.⁹

It is useful to recall that through this entire phase of history when India had an Indian Ocean presence and personality it was always viewed by the island nations in the ocean as an opportunity and never as a threat. Historically, India has never been a hegemonic power in the Indian Ocean. Indeed, it is worth asking today why the flag of some western powers continue to fly on Indian Ocean islands. It is equally relevant to ask why countries from outside the region, like China, seek to establish naval bases here. In what manner are such powers likely to alter the stability and security environment of the Indian Ocean region? Should we, the littoral and island nations, not be concerned?

While India today works within cooperative frameworks with countries like the US, France and Britain, it is not clear to me why their island territories, all colonial possessions, should remain within a sub-ordinate relationship with western powers. Equally, why should Indian Ocean littoral and island states become tied to the security calculus of outside powers? Indeed, even less clear is what motivates the growing presence of China in the region. Has Indian Ocean security become captive, once again, to the strategic interests of ‘outside powers’? What are we, the

8 Ashin Dasgupta, “The Maritime Merchant and Indian History”, in Uma Dasgupta, *Ibid.*, pp.25-26.

9 See for example, David Scott, “India’s ‘Grand Strategy’ for the Indian Ocean: Mahanian Visions”, *Asia Pacific Review*, November 2006; Rahul Roy Chaudhury, *Sea Power and India’s Security*, Brassey’s, UK, 1999; Rahul Roy Chaudhury, *India’s Maritime Security*, IDSA, New Delhi, 2000; C. Raja Mohan, *Samudra Manthan, Sino-Indian Rivalry in the Indo-Pacific*, Oxford University Press, 2013; C. Raja Mohan, *Modi and the Indian Ocean: Restoring India’s Sphere of Influence*, ISAS Insights No. 277, March 2015; C. Raja Mohan, “India’s New Role in the Indian Ocean”, *Seminar*, New Delhi, January 2011 at http://india-seminar.com/cd8899/cd_frame8899.html (Accessed on August 21, 2019); Zorawar Daulat Singh, “Foreign Policy and Sea Power: India’s Maritime Role Flux”, *Journal of Defence Studies*, 11(4), October-December 2017, pp.21-49.

countries of the region, doing about it? Such questions have gone out of fashion within the post-colonial societies but require to be asked and answered.

Renewed Focus on Trade

Post-Independence India turned inward and paid little attention to the ocean and the world economies. It was only after 1991 that the Government of India began to emphasize the economic dimension to India's stakes in the Indian Ocean. The rise of East Asian economies as well as the acceleration of India's own economic growth drew attention to the need to assure the security of sea lanes of communication for the transportation of oil from West Asia to South and East Asia. If oil began to move in increasing quantities across the Indian Ocean, goods too moved increasingly as Asian exports to Europe and West Asia increased. With the rise of Asian economies, the Indian Ocean regained its significance as an arena of commerce. India's economic stake in western Indian Ocean region was also enhanced by the increasingly important economic role of the Indian community in West Asia. Inward remittances from Indians working in the Gulf region has over time become an important constituent of India's foreign exchange reserves. On the other hand, the safety of Indians living in the Gulf and their rapid repatriation home during emergencies has added a new security dimension to India's Indian Ocean strategy.

It was against this background and during Prime Minister Narasimha Rao's tenure that the Indian Ocean Rim Initiative was launched, creating a new regional grouping of the Indian Ocean littoral. The IORI mutated into the IOR Association (IORA)

with a focus on sustainable development and regional economic cooperation.

IORA's objectives have been to promote sustainable growth and development in the ocean region with a focus on economic liberalization and a lowering of cross-border trade and investment barriers. While IORA as an organization, with headquarters in Mauritius, has progressed very slowly it has helped focus policy attention at least in India on issues that soon came to define India's 'blue economy' policies. The IORA has identified six priority areas that have come to define the ocean region's 'blue economy'. These are:

1. Maritime security,
2. Trade and investment facilitation,
3. Fisheries management,
4. Disaster risk reduction,
5. Academic and scientific cooperation and
6. Tourism promotion and cultural exchanges.

These remain our central concerns in the region even today.

Blue Economy and Regional Security

Of the three major ocean littorals – Pacific, Atlantic and Indian – the Indian Ocean region is the economically least developed. Apart from a handful of countries like Singapore, Australia and the United Arab Emirates, most countries around the ocean are classified as lower or middle income economies. That trans-ocean trade across the Indian Ocean is much less than trans-ocean trade across the Atlantic and Pacific is quite understandable. In fact, most of the Indian Ocean economies trade with countries around the Atlantic and Pacific. The only major item traded within and

This basic need to remain focused on economic development should define the security calculus of the Indian Ocean region.

across the IOR is oil. Given the region's relative economic backwardness, the focus of the region's Governments will have to be on their internal economic development and on establishing beneficial economic relations with the rest of the world. This basic need to remain focused on economic development should define the security calculus of the Indian Ocean region.

Given this understanding, the focus on the development of cross-ocean connectivity, development of ports and harbours, ship-building and maritime capability, fisheries and mineral exploration, oceanography and so on should be the agenda for the region's Blue Economy development.¹⁰ The Blue Economy is more than a country's 'coastal economy'. It may include activities related to fisheries, boat and ship making, ship repairing and breaking, ports and shipping, marine biotechnology, marine construction, deep sea mining, tourism, marine renewable energy, insurance, finance and ocean disaster management. It has the potential to provide employment and livelihood to large sections of a country's

population and to contribute to sustainable development. In island economies such as Maldives, Mauritius, Seychelles and Sri Lanka, one need not over-emphasize the relevance and importance of Blue Economy development.

It is, therefore, understandable that India places considerable emphasis on the development of the Blue Economy. Outlining the centrality of the Indian Ocean to India's security and development Prime Minister Narendra Modi told the IISS Shangri La Dialogue at Singapore in June 2018, "The Indian Ocean has shaped much of India's history. It now holds the key to our future. The ocean carries 90% of India's trade and our energy sources. It is also the life line of global commerce. The Indian Ocean connects regions of diverse cultures and different levels of peace and prosperity. It also now bears ships of major powers. Both raise concerns of stability and contest."¹¹

Government of India has brought India's security concerns in the Indian Ocean and the region's shared developmental

SAGAR - Security and Growth for All in the Region. Indeed, SAGAR is a geo-economic construct that retains a balance between maritime security and economic development and cooperation so essential to the Indian Ocean region. It balances the imperatives of power and security with the necessity of growth and prosperity.

10 S. K Mohanty, Priyadarshi Dash, Aastha Gupta, and Pankhuri Gaur, "Prospects of Blue Economy in the Indian Ocean", Research and Information System for Developing Countries, New Delhi, 2015. at http://www.ris.org.in/sites/default/files/Blue%20Economy_PB_Report_0.pdf (Accessed on August 24, 2019); Also see Aparna Roy, no. 2.

11 Narendra Modi, Inaugural Keynote Address to IISS Shangri La Dialogue, Singapore, June 1, 2018. at <https://www.mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/29943/Prime+Ministers+Keynote+Address+at+Shangri+La+Dialogue+June+01+2018> (Accessed on August 24, 2019).

priorities together in this formulation of security and growth dubbed as SAGAR – Security and Growth for All in the Region. Indeed, SAGAR is a geo-economic construct that retains a balance between maritime security and economic development and cooperation so essential to the Indian Ocean region. It balances the imperatives of power and security with the necessity of growth and prosperity. Consequently, any maritime strategy and doctrine for the Indian Ocean must balance the security and developmental interests of all countries in the region. The regional response to the Tsunami in December 2004 finally confirmed the relevance of a regional approach to both growth and security in the Indian Ocean region.

Maritime Domain Awareness

All these issues have now come together in the policy thinking on what has been called Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA). The International Maritime Organization (IMO) defines MDA as “the effective understanding of any activity associated with the maritime environment that could impact upon the security, safety, economy or environment.” The use of land-based, sea-based, space-based and cyber-related technologies in improving maritime domain awareness has made the task highly technology intensive and financially costly. Developed economies like the United States, Japan and France have invested considerably in MDA and India is collaborating with them in this field. Given the infrastructure and technology costs involved and the human capability required, small island states may not be able to invest in securing a better MDA. The development of MDA infrastructure and

technologies could be an important agenda for India and the IO island states.

Investment in MDA should be viewed both from an economic and a security perspective. The ability of island states to tap their Blue Economy potential depends on their MDA. Equally, the ability of such states to safe-guard against security threats, especially sea-based terrorist attacks, also depends on MDA capability. The India-Japan and India-France cooperation in enhancing MDA capability in the Indo-Pacific region could benefit the island states of the Indian Ocean if shared programmes can be devised with a focus on technology adaptation, information sharing and infrastructure development. The island states of the Indian Ocean are aware of both the potential for economic cooperation between India and the littoral and island states as well as the necessity for cooperation in addressing regional security challenges.

The geopolitics and geo-economics of the Indian Ocean region compel the littoral and island states to work within a framework of regional development and regional security, conscious of the fact that in the post Second World War period the Indian Ocean has not been a theatre of conflict, while the Atlantic and Pacific remain so. Compare, for example, British action in Malvinas, US attitude to Cuba and China’s to Taiwan. India has never adopted such an attitude to its island neighbours in the Indian Ocean region. Rather, it has sought to promote growth and security within the region. It is in India’s own interest to maintain relations of mutual benefit and mutual inter-dependence with the island republics of the Indian Ocean region, not allowing Big Power rivalries to destabilize the region.



Island States in Southern Neighbourhood Sri Lanka and Maldives

Maritime Security issues from the Perspectives of India, Sri Lanka and Maldives

M P Muralidharan

It is important to examine the Maritime Security issues from the perspectives of India, Sri Lanka and Maldives. It is exhilarating to see the world shifting focus to the maritime arena during the last few decades. Situated as we are on the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), the words of Admiral AT Mahan, the US Naval thinker and historian of the 19th century comes flashing by. Mahan had prophetically said “Whoever controls the Indian Ocean controls Asia. This ocean is the key to the seven seas. In the 21st century, the destiny of the world will be decided on its waters.” Of course, a slight change occurred, of the concept being expanded to that of Indo Pacific and not merely the IOR, as towards the end of the 20th century, it became apparent that Indian Ocean cannot be looked at in isolation or as a lake. The emergence of a multipolar world at the end of Cold War and the expanding globalization of trade and commerce coupled with growth of Asian economies, which in turn called for their energy and mineral resources from the Arabian Gulf and Africa and transportation

of finished products from these nations to other parts of Asia, Africa and Europe resulted in increased shipping between both the oceans. Thus, in the early part of this century, strategists conceived the concept of Asia – Pacific as a region and the term Indo-Pacific emerged linking both the oceans into one strategic area or one geo economic and security zone.

This aspect was very succinctly put across by Indian PM Narendra Modi at the Shangri La dialogue in 2018 when he said that in the 21st century the destiny of the world will be deeply influenced by the course of developments in the Indo-Pacific region. He further brought out India’s strategic outlook towards the region by stating that “India’s own engagement in the Indo-Pacific Region – from the shores of Africa to that of the Americas - will be inclusive. promote a democratic and rules-based international order, We will work with others to keep our seas, space and airways free and open; our nations secure from terrorism; and our cyber space free from disruption and conflict. ...”.

Mahan had prophetically said “Whoever controls the Indian Ocean controls Asia. This ocean is the key to the seven seas. In the 21st century, the destiny of the world will be decided on its waters.”

Geostrategic Significance

Geostrategic significance of the seas would be evident from the fact that 70% of the earth is covered by sea. Nearly 2/3rd of the population lives within 100 miles from the coast and 150 out of 193 member states of UN are coastal states. 80% of the cities of the world and nearly all major trade / financial centres are located on the coast. Past few decades have seen liberalization across the world, leading to closer cooperation between nations in manufacturing, trade and capital flows, resulting in enhanced economic interdependence. Development of newer technologies in communications and transportation has also enhanced trade, which would only increase further, as more developing nations try to leverage globalization. Shipping still remains the cheapest form of transportation of cargo. Global maritime trade therefore accounts for nearly 80% of the world trade by volume and 70% by value. Around 54,000 ships estimated at \$450 billion ply the ocean routes and generate nearly 14 million jobs. The total trade across the oceans considering imports and exports is estimated at \$35,000 billion. Apart from transportation, the oceans are also a major source of food (fish), metals, minerals and energy resources. As natural resources on land deplete and cheaper technologies emerge for extraction of resources from deep sea, importance of seas would grow further.

If we look at the Indian Ocean region, it will be observed that the region has nearly 33% of the world's population and accounts for 50% of world maritime trade. 50% of the container traffic and 70% of the global trade in oil and gas ply through the IOR. As the Persian Gulf with 60% of world oil and 26% natural gas reserves is located in this region, major oil arteries of the world flow through the waters of Indian Ocean. Trade through the Indian Ocean impacts the economies of nearly all major nations of the world, thus encouraging most world powers to have a foothold or at least regular presence in the region. Needless to say, the natural geographical location of India, Sri Lanka and Maldives places them strategically in a position to safeguard and enable free flow of trade through the IOR. The same is true even if we look at the expanded Indo Pacific as one region, which accounts for nearly 60% of the world's GDP and 65 % of population. Nearly 60 percent of global maritime trade passes through Indo Pacific. In case of India, bulk of her trade is through sea and amounts to 90 % of trade by volume and 70% by value amounting to close to \$ 750 billion.

Geo-strategic value of the region is evident from the number of extra regional powers who are looking for bases or have forward deployed their forces including nuclear capable ones in the region, in support of respective national interests, such as naval forces of United States, United Kingdom, France, China, and many others with lesser frequency. While examining the various facets of the region and more so the

Geo-strategic value of the region is evident from the number of extra regional powers who are looking for bases or have forward deployed their forces including nuclear capable ones in the region.

security angle, one aspect that emerges is the rise of China and its assertive political and military behaviour in the Western Pacific and expansion into the IOR. Albeit under the guise of safeguarding their vast economic interests in the IOR and assisting in anti-piracy patrols, the Peoples Liberation Army Navy (PLAN), has been making regular forays into the IOR for over two decades now. The so-called string of pearls strategy of bases and diplomatic ties from Africa to Middle East and South Asia are all part of China's strategy to establish herself as a power in IOR or a potent threat in years ahead. Over the years, China has mastered the art of 'Salami slicing' or gradually bringing small changes or making incremental gains, each of which by itself may not raise any alarms, but when taken as a whole, it can bring about major strategic changes in the long run. In the maritime arena this is being used to enhance her claims over island territories in the seas around her. The PLAN is today assessed to be the largest Navy in terms of numbers with around 350 units which include aircraft carriers, major surface combatants such as cruisers, destroyers and frigates, submarines, amphibious ships, mine warfare ships and supporting auxiliaries. PLAN is modernizing and upgrading forces and is emerging as a multi-mission capable force. It is evident that China is looking to emerge as the pre-eminent power in the world or at least in the Indo Pacific region. One needs to be hardly reminded of Taiwan emerging as a potential flash point and if it happens there would be spill-over effects across the Indo Pacific.

Having taken an overview of the strategic perspectives of the area, it would be evident that Maritime Security has a predominant role. Challenges to maritime security could

emerge to economic well-being of the nation i.e., energy, trade and commerce, living and non-living resources, or to social stability i.e., crimes in the maritime arena or to political peace i.e., maritime sovereignty, or even to health of its people i.e., the environment. Towards the second half of the 20th century, it became evident that there was a shift from traditional Naval confrontation on the high seas, to challenges in the littoral region and more so towards non-conventional maritime security challenges also called as LIMO (Low Intensity Maritime Operations). It would include maritime terrorism, piracy, drug and human trafficking, gun running, poaching or IUU (Illegal Unregulated and Unreported) fishing and illegal gathering of sensitive seismic and economic data. Many of these threats could also emerge from non-State entities who could well be funded by States who choose to remain in the background. It would be apparent, that challenges to maritime security are varied and complex and often cutting across political boundaries, in turn calling for cooperation between nations to safeguard common maritime interests.

Island States Strategic Significance

At this juncture, we need to understand the importance of islands or island nations in safeguarding maritime interests. Strategically, islands have played important roles such as providing warning and surveillance posts, and logistic bases for operations deep into the oceans. Today, they also provide countries with baselines to measure jurisdictional waters. Since the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) came into force, national

Strategically, islands have played important roles such as providing warning and surveillance posts, and logistic bases for operations deep into the oceans. Today, they also provide countries with baselines to measure jurisdictional waters.

governments have been able to establish Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ), extending beyond their territorial waters, within which they retain certain sovereign and jurisdictional rights. EEZ can extend up to 200 nautical miles from the baseline, making it an important body of water for the exploitation of maritime resources as well as for providing defence-in-depth strategy, as seen from the continent and for power projection, as seen from the sea. So even islands earlier ignored as remote, are in prominence as they provide bases for extended territorial claims and rights to marine resources in the EEZ. With focus shifting to the maritime arena in this century, the strategic significance of islands has increased manifold and it would be apparent as to why major powers and more so those wanting to gain a foothold beyond their own region are looking to Island nations. The geographic location of Sri Lanka and Maldives as mentioned earlier, gives them significant strategic role in IOR.

India is Sri Lanka's closest neighbour. The relationship between the two countries is more than 2,500 years old and both sides have built upon a legacy of intellectual, cultural, religious and linguistic interaction. In recent years, the relationship has been marked by close contacts at the highest political level, growing trade and investment, cooperation in the fields of development, education, culture and defence, as well as a broad understanding on major issues of international interest.

India and Sri Lanka also enjoy a growing defence relationship built on extensive training and Service-to-Service linkages. The commonality of concerns of both countries, including with respect to the safety and security of their sea lanes of communication, calls for enhancing security cooperation. During the visit of Indian External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar to attend the 8th Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) meeting in March 2022 at Colombo, India and Sri Lanka signed several agreements including a defence-related pact to expand maritime security. This includes a joint Maritime Rescue Coordination Center (MRCC) to be set up to strengthen Sri Lanka's capacities in its search and rescue region, a floating dock and a ship repair dock for Sri Lankan Navy, Dornier surveillance aircraft and a liaison officer from Sri Lanka at International Fusion Center (IFC) in India. All this will strengthen cooperation between maritime forces and enhance maritime security.

India-Maldives bilateral partnership is underpinned by geographical proximity, historical, cultural ties and shared values. During the recent visit of President of Maldives to India, Prime Minister Modi underlined that the Maldives occupies a special place in the hearts of Indians and in India's "Neighbourhood First" policy. President Solih of Maldives, reaffirmed his Government's "India-First Policy". The leaders reiterated their commitment to further strengthen and deepen this

During the recent visit of President of Maldives to India, Prime Minister Modi underlined that the Maldives occupies a special place in the hearts of Indians and in India's "Neighbourhood First" policy. President Solih of Maldives reaffirmed his Government's "India-First Policy".

mutually beneficial comprehensive partnership in a number of areas.

Since 1988, defence and security has been a major area of cooperation between India and Maldives. A comprehensive Action Plan for Defence was also signed in April 2016 to consolidate defence partnership. India-Maldives defence and security partnership, is a time-tested example of regional cooperation in the areas of transnational crimes and disaster relief and provides stability in the Indian Ocean Region. Both nations recognize that the security of India and the Maldives are inter-linked. A major understanding is to be mindful of each other's concerns on the security and stability of the region and not to allow their respective territories to be used for any activity inimical to the other.

India provides the largest number of training opportunities for Maldivian National Defence Force (MNDF), meeting around 70% of their defence training requirements. MNDF has also been participating in various mil-to-mil activities such as joint EEZ patrols, anti-narcotic ops, Search and Rescue (SAR), sea-rider programme, Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) exercises, adventure camps, sailing regatta, and so on. Indian Navy has provided MNDF with air assets for air surveillance, medical evacuation, SAR and conducts Joint Hydrography. Initiatives are on the anvil to enhance cooperation in maritime safety and security, maritime domain awareness and HADR through the

implementation of ongoing projects and capacity building initiatives.

PM Modi had summed the cooperation between both nations and I quote, "The threat of transnational crime, terrorism and drug trafficking in the Indian Ocean is serious. And, therefore, close contact and coordination between India and Maldives in the field of defence and security are vital for the peace and stability of the entire region. We have increased our cooperation against all these common challenges. It also includes capacity-building and training support for Maldivian security officials."

Colombo Security Conclave

The Colombo Security Conclave founded as a trilateral security framework between India, Sri Lanka and the Maldives in 2011 with four pillars of security cooperation, covering marine safety and security, human trafficking, counter-terrorism and cyber security has been a major initiative to examine concerns of security in the region and cooperation. Mauritius joined the grouping later. Its 5th Meeting in Male witnessed membership expansion as well as addition of a new pillar – Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief – at Maldives' initiative. In November 2021, India, Maldives and Sri Lanka conducted a two-day maritime operation in the Indian Ocean Region to keep it safe and secure. The sixth Colombo Security Conclave held in Kochi in July 2022 saw delegations from Bangladesh

The sixth Colombo Security Conclave held in Kochi in July 2022 saw delegations from Bangladesh and Seychelles also participating as Observers.

and Seychelles also participating as Observers. The meeting discussed the implementation of the roadmap for enhancing security in IOR through cooperation on five pillars; Maritime safety and security, Countering terrorism and radicalization, Combating trafficking and transnational organized crime, Cyber security, protection of critical infrastructure and technology and Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief.

Challenges

Coming back to the strategic outlook in the region, challenges continue to emerge to the security architecture in the region due to ever changing geopolitical environment, which in turn calls for strengthening existing platforms and to explore new areas of cooperation amongst the littorals. A major focus area for cooperation should be in enhancing knowledge or awareness of the maritime domain or Maritime Domain Awareness or MDA as we now call it. MDA has been defined by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) as the effective understanding of anything associated with the maritime domain that could impact security, safety, economy, or environment. It would be evident that MDA is something needed on a continuous basis, to enable timely identification of threats and development

of plans to overcome them at both strategic as well as operational levels. In today's scenario it calls for monitoring activities along the sea and adjoining coast, under the sea, in the air and space based as well as cyber surveillance. In this context it needs to be highlighted that India, Sri Lanka and Maldives have significant EEZs and the surveillance capacity to monitor such large areas is at premium. Closer cooperation to enhance MDA would enable continuous surveillance and identification of hostile threats including transnational non-conventional security challenges, by analyzing inputs to develop a coherent tactical picture and in turn, timely dissemination of it to decision makers to initiate actions as necessary. Patrolling by ships, aircraft, UAVs, Space based surveillance and underwater based sensors are all used for maritime domain data gathering. Geography has blessed all three nations to conduct effective MDA. The Information Fusion Centre (IFC- IOR) set up at Gurugram in 2018 was a major step in collaborating with countries in the region and multinational agencies to enhance maritime awareness and share information. The Centre currently has linkages with 21 partner countries (with many of them having Liaison officers based at the Centre) and 22 multinational agencies across the world to enhance the surveillance of maritime spaces and sea lanes of communication across the Indo-Pacific.

India, Sri Lanka and Maldives have significant EEZs and the surveillance capacity to monitor such large areas is at premium. Closer cooperation to enhance MDA would enable continuous surveillance and identification of hostile threats.

Greater cooperation between India, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Madagascar, Mauritius and Seychelles, will enhance security interests of all.

Maritime forces i.e., Navies and Coast Guards have always played a significant role in enhancing connect between maritime nations. Port visits by ships at regular intervals, institutionalized bilateral and multilateral exercises, coordinated patrols along maritime boundaries, anti-piracy operations, assistance for Search and Rescue, HADR post major calamities, staff talks, training and other interactions have all helped increase cooperation and information sharing. A coordinated patrol is one way to keep the EEZ safe. Multilateral platforms and initiatives by India such as SAGAR, IPOI, the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) and Exercise MILAN have all enhanced cooperation between littorals in IOR. IONS an initiative led by the Indian Navy provides a platform for military leaders of the region to discuss the regional challenges. In its recent edition in 2022, MILAN a biennial naval exercise, saw maritime forces from 40 countries from across Indo Pacific jointly exercising at sea.

Conclusion

The IOR, has emerged as a theatre for economic and strategic competition in the

21st century, as maritime trade through it, impacts the economies of all major nations of the world. The strategic location of India, Sri Lanka and Maldives, gives them an added stake in the security and stability of waters in the IOR and beyond. Enhancing their trilateral cooperation would, apart from addressing mutual concerns, strengthen security and stability in the maritime environment across the region, bringing in economic growth and prosperity. I would expand the concept to say that greater cooperation between India, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Madagascar, Mauritius and Seychelles, will enhance security interests of all. India's EAM Jaishankar in his book 'The India Way – Strategies for an Uncertain World', on the benefits of multilateral initiatives to enhance security, citing IONS, he says "it has helped to promote a shared understanding of maritime issues, enhance regional maritime security, strengthen capabilities, establish cooperative mechanisms, develop interoperability and provide speedy responses". He goes on to say that "moving from policy to performance, it is evident that navies working together in pursuit of shared security goals have a stabilizing impact".

India and the Southern Neighbourhood

India's Approach to Evolving Geopolitical and Security Perspectives

N. Manoharan

Introduction

Stable neighbourhood is crucial in any country's security and economic development. Not without reason Roman philosopher, Seneca, famously remarked: "Live for thy neighbour if thou wouldst live for thyself." And, to Hesiod, "A bad neighbour is a misfortune, as much as a good one is a great blessing." To drive in the importance of the neighbourhood in global politics, some go to the extent of declaring that "all international politics is local". In trade terms, neighbours are usually considered as "nations at zero distance" to indicate the ease of transporting goods due to proximity. But in security terms, as Kautilya's Mandala Theory postulated, the likelihood of conflict with a neighbouring country is higher than with a distant country.

India has not failed to note this point since its Independence. From time-to-time, various Prime Ministers articulated

their neighbourhood policies. Jawaharlal Nehru adopted a "family approach" and articulated that "neighbouring countries have in a sense first place in our minds."¹² India was seen "as a pivot of Western, Southern and South-East Asia." Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi were more realistic, assertive and pro-active in their approach towards the neighbours that were visible in what was dubbed as "Indira Doctrine". I.K. Gujral articulated a principle of non-reciprocity to India's smaller neighbours (called "Gujral Doctrine"). For Manmohan Singh, India "cannot realize our growth ambitions unless we ensure peace and stability in South Asia."¹³ Under Narendra Modi "India has been making continuous efforts to deepen its decades-old cultural, economic, and social ties with its neighbouring countries."¹⁴ India's southern neighbourhood, consisting of Sri Lanka and Maldives, occupies a special place in its "Neighbourhood First Policy". The aim of the paper is to look at India's approach to the evolving geopolitical

12 Jawaharlal Nehru, Indian Foreign Policy: Selected Speeches, delivered at the Indian Council of World Affairs, New Delhi, 22 March 1949, India Quarterly, Vol. 41, No. 1, Jan-Mar 1985, p. 78.

13 Manmohan Singh, Address at the Combined Commanders' Conference, New Delhi, 13 September 2010, <https://archivepmo.nic.in/drmanmohansingh/speech-details.php?nodeid=926>, accessed on 2 November 2022

14 Narendra Modi, address to the Nation on the 74th Independence Day, 15 August 2020, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseDetail.aspx?PRID=1646045>, accessed on 3 November 2022.

The rise of China as a power not just at the regional or sub-regional level, but at the global level, has actually impacted the Indian Ocean region.

and security issues in the southern neighbourhood that comprises of Indian Ocean and two island countries: Sri Lanka and Maldives.

The Context: Indian Ocean Region

The India's Southern Neighbourhood, especially the Indian Ocean region, has witnessed transformation in the past two decades or so. In this regard, three broad trends could be identified in the evolving geo-political and security perspectives of the region:

Firstly, the American strategic posture has witnessed a new interest in the Indian Ocean region. The "centre of gravity" of the global politics has now shifted from Atlantic and Pacific to the Indian Ocean for its economic and strategic reasons. Alfred Thayer Mahan, a maritime thinker of 19th Century, is often invoked to emphasise the importance of the Indian Ocean in the current global politics. Robert Kaplan in his *Monsoon: The Indian Ocean and the Future of American Power* has bolstered this significance. Hence, the U.S. has outlined an Indo-Pacific Strategy "to more firmly anchor the United States in the Indo-Pacific and strengthen the region in the process. Its central focus

is sustained and creative collaboration with allies, partners, and institutions, within the region and beyond it."¹⁵

Secondly, the rise of China as a power not just at the regional or sub-regional level, but at the global level, has actually impacted the Indian Ocean region.

Beijing's footprints in Indian Ocean littorals, especially in India's southern neighbourhood, have

increased, especially after its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). China has been increasing its influence in the Indian Ocean region through investments, aid, grants, trade and military assistance. Notably, most of the investments are in the infrastructure projects like roads, ports and power plants. In the South Asian context, some experts call it as "String of Pearls" strategy. Sri Lanka and Maldives are considered by China as important "pearls" in this "string".

Thirdly, the emergence of Indo-Pacific as a new geo-political concept has propelled the Indian southern neighbourhood to a new significance. As a result of this tectonic geo-political, geo-economic and geo-strategic

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¹⁵ The White House, Indo-Pacific Strategy of the United States, February 2022, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2022/02/11/fact-sheet-indo-pacific-strategy-of-the-united-states/>, accessed on 05 November 2022.

shift, apart from US, China and India, the involvement of several mid-level players like Australia, Japan, France, UK, Indonesia and Korea in the region is increasingly conspicuous. The new construct also reflects India's rising stature and aspirations in the region.¹⁶ Connected to this is rise of new regionalism in the Indian Ocean Region in the form of multilateral and plurilateral arrangements like Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), Indian Ocean Commission (IOC), Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS), the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD), Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States (AUKUS) and so on.

India's Concerns

In South Asia, India is in a 'gravitational position' sharing borders with all the countries of the region. There are four concerns that grapple India's national interests when it comes to its southern neighbourhood:

First is the strategic concern. Stability in its neighbourhood is closely linked to India's security and development. Independent India inherited what is known as 'strategic unity' from the British, which regarded possession of Sri Lanka and Maldives an imperative to the defence of India. New Delhi is sensitive to involvement of any extra-regional powers that are inimical to Indian interests in the region. Hence, India

is fine with the articulation of "free, open, inclusive, peaceful, and prosperous" Indian Ocean region and continue to support the Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace.¹⁷

The second concern is over the non-traditional security threats like piracy, armed robberies at sea, violent radicalization, terrorism, militancy, arms and drug trafficking, illegal migration, human trafficking and so on that plague the region. Piracy and armed robbery at sea are most prevalent in the region threatening sea lines of communication. Violent radicalisation, terrorism and militancy are rampant due to the fragile nature of states in the region. Due to proximity to 'Golden Crescent' and 'Golden Triangle', world's most notorious narcotics regions, drug-trafficking is a given in the region. Notably, these threats are transnational in nature and arise either within the region or use the region as a transit. The threat bearers are mostly non-state actors, but not without collusion with certain state actors in the region.

The third concern is in the form of economic crisis that has hit the southern neighbourhood, especially Sri Lanka. The island's economic growth that is highly dependent on export sectors like tourism, investments, export of plantation crops, and remittances became highly vulnerable. The depreciation of Sri Lankan rupee has been huge in the last two years, especially vis-à-vis US dollar. The country's credit

Stability in its neighbourhood is closely linked to India's security and development.

16 Clubbing with Pacific as Indo-Pacific frame, External Affairs Minister, S. Jaishankar remarked: "Separation of the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean as distinct compartments looks less and less tenable. We are quite visibly in each other's proximity and to pretend otherwise is really not realistic."

17 United Nations General Assembly, 'Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a zone of peace: resolution,' 15 December 1972, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/191429?ln=en#record-files-collapse-header>, accessed on 7 November 2022.

rating has been downgraded to CCC indicating risk in investments, making inflow of foreign direct investments all the more difficult. Over half a million lost their jobs during the pandemic; 50 percent of them were in the tourism sector alone. Foreign exchange reserves dipped to an all-time low that the country went bankrupt. The inflation has reached a double-digit figure. The economic crisis, in fact, triggered internal dissensions and political instability. Due to pandemic and war in Ukraine, the crisis also hit Maldives, though not to the extent of Sri Lanka. Being in the proximity, India could not be a mute spectator but to reach out and help these countries.

The fourth concern pertains to certain domestic issues in the southern neighbourhood and their wider implications. In Sri Lanka, the worry is on the ethnic issue and Islamic radicalisation in the larger context of Sinhala majoritarianism. On the settlement of the ethnic issue in Sri Lanka, India has consistently maintained that it stood in favour of “a politically negotiated settlement acceptable to all sections of Sri Lankan society within the framework of an undivided Sri Lanka and consistent with democracy, pluralism and respect for human rights.”¹⁸ For India, the full

implementation of the 13th Amendment provisions as an interim arrangement and going beyond it for the permanent settlement is practical. In Maldives, over the past decade or so, the number of Maldivians drawn towards ISIS and Pakistan-based

madrassas and jihadist groups has risen. Protests by Islamists bearing ISIS flags are widespread on the island. About 200 Maldivian citizens have reportedly been fighting along with the ISIS. In terms of proportion to population, this number is quite high compared to other Muslim-majority South Asian countries. Political instability and socio-economic uncertainty in the atoll state are the main drivers for Islamic radicalism.

India's Approach

India has been approaching these geopolitical and security concerns at two broad levels: bilateral, and multilateral.

Bilateral:

Maldives: Defence cooperation is one of the key pillars of bilateral ties between India and Maldives ever since India rescued Maldives from a coup attempt in 1988. There are several components to the cooperation: training, infrastructure, dialogue, information sharing and joint exercises. Interestingly, to consolidate all aspects of the defence cooperation, a comprehensive Action Plan for Defence was also signed in April 2016.

India is involved in training of Maldivian security personnel for several decades now. Notably, 70 percent of the Maldivian defence training requirements are met by India. New Delhi is also involved in strengthening the local training facilities, the most notable being Maldivian National Defence Force's Composite Training Centre (CTC) facility in Maafilafushi and a building to accommodate Maldives Defence headquarters. Given the remoteness of

Defence cooperation is one of the key pillars of bilateral ties between India and Maldives.

¹⁸ Lok Sabha, Statement made by Pranab Mukherjee, the then External Affairs Minister of India, 03 March 2008.

Maldives, India has been assisting in the Maldives' Coastal Radar System and air assets for constant air surveillance so as to enhance the security of the atoll state.

The two countries have been holding Annual Defence Cooperation Dialogue at Defence Secretaries level and joint military-to-military talks since 2016. At a larger level, the Maldivian National Defence Force (MNDF) is also part of IONS, Goa Maritime Conclave and Goa Symposium. The armed forces of two countries regularly share information on White Shipping. Exchange of Instrument of Ratification of Treaty on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters signed in 2019 has enabled both countries "to extend assistance and support in investigating and prosecuting criminal matters."¹⁹ It should be noted that though both countries are part of international/regional conventions covering provisions related to mutual legal assistance (including SAARC Convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters, United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime, United Nations Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substance, United Nations Convention Against Corruption, the Hague Convention, and the Commonwealth Scheme) the need for a focused bilateral agreement was felt and inked.²⁰

The forces of both countries are involved in joint training exercises like Ekuver-in, Dosti, Ekatha and Operation Shield to strengthen the capacity of MNDF. The forces of both countries have also been involved in activities such as joint exclusive economic zone patrols, search and rescue missions, anti-narcotic operations, sea-rider programmes, Humanitarian Aid and Disaster Relief (HADR) exercises, adventure camps, and sailing regatta."²¹

A Joint Working Group on Counter Terrorism, Countering Violent Extremism and De-radicalization is in place between the two countries "to strengthen cooperation required to combat the common threats arising from terrorism, radicalism and drug trafficking in the region."²² India's help in building capacity of Maldives' forces also extended to its police forces. An MoU between Maldives Police Service and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel National Police Academy exists for "mutual cooperation in the sphere of training management and exchange of trainers and trainees between the two institutes."²³

Sri Lanka: With Sri Lanka, the scope of security cooperation is similar to Maldives: defence dialogues, assistance in training and capacity-building, joint exercises and supply of arms and equipment.

19 Republic of Maldives, The President's Office, 'Maldives' participation in the "Treaty between the Republic of Maldives and the Republic of India on mutual legal assistance in criminal matters" to be submitted for Parliament's approval,' 12 February 2019, <https://presidency.gov.mv/Press/Article/20642#:~:text=As%20per%20the%20E2%80%9CMutual%20Legal,especially%20crime%20related%20to%20terrorism.,> accessed on 10 November 2022

20 Government of India, Ministry of Home Affairs, 'Guidelines on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters,' December 2019, pp. 4-5, https://www.mha.gov.in/sites/default/files/ISII_ComprehensiveGuidelines16032020.pdf, accessed on 12 November 2022.

21 Government of India, Ministry of External Affairs, 'India-Maldives Bilateral Relations,' https://mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/India-Maldives_2022.pdf, accessed on 13 November 2022

22 Government of Maldives, 'Joint Press Statement on the 6th Joint Commission Meeting (JCM) between Maldives and India,' 13 December 2019, <https://www.gov.mv/en/news-and-communications/joint-press-statement-on-the-6th-joint-commission-meeting-jcm-between-maldives-and-india>, accessed on 15 November 2022.

23 Government of Maldives, 'India and Maldives sign several key agreements to build capacity and cooperation between both countries,' 26 March 2022, <https://www.gov.mv/en/news-and-communications/india-and-maldives-sign-several-key-agreements-to-build-capacity-and-cooperation-between-both-countries>, accessed on 18 November 2022.

With Sri Lanka, the scope of security cooperation is similar to Maldives: defence dialogues, assistance in training and capacity-building, joint exercises and supply of arms and equipment.

At the bilateral level, India and Sri Lanka have Annual Defence Dialogue mechanism since 2012 to “provide senior defence officials of both countries a forum to meet and discuss matters related to defence and security, annually.”²⁴ Apart from cooperation at the level of armed forces, both countries have Police Chiefs’ Dialogue to look at steps “against the drug traffickers and other organized criminals exploiting the narrow sea route between the two countries, the need for sharing of real time intelligence and feedback and to work jointly against the terrorist entities including the Global Terrorist Groups and fugitives, wherever they are present and active.”²⁵

India-Sri Lanka bilateral naval exercise – SLINEX – is being conducted to “enhance inter-operability, improve mutual understanding and exchange best practices and procedures for multi-faceted maritime operations between both navies.”²⁶ The armies of the two countries are also involved in Exercise Mitra Shakti, “on counter insurgency and counter terrorism

operations in semi urban terrain” and to promote “synergy and inter-operability amongst the Armed Forces.”²⁷

India is also deeply involved in training and capacity building of Sri Lankan defence and police personnel. More than 1500 slots are reserved for Sri Lankan military personnel in Indian military training establishments. Despite the inability for Sri Lanka to foot the training fees due to deep economic crisis, India is committed to continue the training under Special Aid Programme (SAP).²⁸ Interestingly, Sri Lanka also hosts select Indian military officers for specialized training on counter-insurgency. This was in the wake of successful decimation of the LTTE by Sri Lankan armed forces.

India has from time-to-time provided non-lethal weapons for Sri Lankan armed forces. New Delhi also gifted offshore patrol vessels and Dornier aircraft to strengthen patrolling along Sri Lankan coasts to track and counter trafficking (drugs, arms and human), smuggling and other maritime crimes. They also would enhance Sri Lanka’s capabilities

24 https://slhcindia.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=550:annual-defence-dialogue-between-india-and-, accessed on 25 November 2022.

25 Ministry of Home Affairs, India, ‘India-Sri Lanka Police Chiefs’ Dialogue,’ <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaselframePage.aspx?PRID=1710427>, accessed on 28 November 2022.

26 Indian Navy, ‘Sri Lanka - India Bilateral Maritime Exercise SLINEX,’ 07-10 March 2022, <https://indiannavy.nic.in/content/sri-lanka-india-bilateral-maritime-exercise-slinex-07-10-march-2022#:~:text=10%20March%202022-,Sri%20Lanka%20%2D%20India%20Bilateral%20Maritime%20Exercise%20SLINEX%2007%2D10%20March,March%20to%2010%20March%202022,> accessed on 30 November 2022.

27 Indian Army, ‘Indo-Sri Lanka Joint Military Exercise-Mitra Shakti-Culminates In Ampara (Sri Lanka),’ 18 October 2021, <https://indianarmy.nic.in/Site/PressRelease/PressRelease.aspx?n=bniEtbbo9LN7kb4q3kupGg==&NewsID=qQ6MqMaw7weLhZu1mXfJRG==>, accessed on 02 December 2022.

28 ‘India pledges to train Lankan armed forces even in challenging times,’ Sunday Island, 08 October 2022, <https://island.lk/india-pledges-to-train-lankan-armed-forces-even-in-challenging-times/>, accessed on 03 December 2022.

in search and rescue operations.²⁹ Although there is a China angle to India's security cooperation with Sri Lanka, the intention behind is essentially to stabilize Indian neighbourhood.

Multilateral:

At the multilateral level, India's approach has been both specific and broad in handling the southern neighbourhood. The rationale behind the approach was based on the need for cooperation among the three countries on issues such as maritime domain awareness, sharing of data on shipping, training, search and rescue, response to oil pollution, piracy and illegal maritime activities.

Specifically, there are NSA-level security talks that have now been expanded to look at all security threats in the southern neighbourhood from the earlier maritime focus. Significantly, to firm up and institutionalize these talks, a Secretariat for National Security Advisors (NSA) on security cooperation between India, Sri Lanka and Maldives was set-up in 2021.

The three countries are also conducting trilateral maritime security exercise at Coast Guards level. Termed 'Dosti' the biennial exercise is to "further fortify the friendship, enhance mutual operational capability, and exercise interoperability and to build cooperation between the Coast Guards of Maldives, India and Sri Lanka."³⁰ Interestingly, the exercise

commenced as a bilateral one between India and Maldives in 1991, but turned trilateral by including Sri Lanka since 2012.

At the broader level, there are multilateral arrangements like IORA, IONS, IPOI, IOC, IFC-IOR, and BIMSTEC that also look at some of the geo-political and security issues of India's southern neighbourhood. The involvement of littoral countries of the Indian Ocean in these arrangements has actually broad-based India's southern neighbourhood approach. IORA is the only multilateral organization that brings together all littoral countries of Indian Ocean with 23 member countries and nine dialogue partners under one umbrella. Although the grouping is primarily meant for economic cooperation, it is gradually scaling up to touch other security areas like Maritime Safety and Security, and Disaster Risk Management.³¹

IONS "seeks to increase maritime co-operation among navies of the littoral states of the Indian Ocean Region by providing an open and inclusive forum for discussion of regionally relevant maritime issues."³² Apart from discussions, IONS conducted first ever Maritime Exercise 2022 (IMEX-22) "to enhance interoperability in Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) operations among member navies."³³ This scaling up is a good sign for a promising cooperation among the navies of the Indian Ocean countries. Announced at the 4th East Asia Summit in Bangkok in November 2019, the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI)

29 All India Radio, 'India gift Dornier Maritime Reconnaissance aircraft to Sri Lanka,' 16 August 2022, <https://newsonair.gov.in/Main-News-Details.aspx?id=446054>, accessed on 05 December 2022.

30 High Commission of India, Maldives, 'Joint 'DOSTI' Exercise by Indian Coastguard with Maldives and Sri Lanka,' 27 October 2014, <https://hci.gov.in/male/23628?000>, accessed on 06 December 2022.

31 See Annex I of the IORA Charter, <https://www.iora.int/media/8248/iora-charter-min.pdf>, accessed on 08 December 2022.

32 Indian Ocean Naval Symposium, 'About IONS', <https://www.ions.global/>, accessed on 08 December 2022.

33 Government of India, Ministry of Defence, 'IONS Maritime Exercise 2022 (IMEX 22),' Press Information Bureau, 30 March 2022, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1811590>, accessed on 09 December 2022.

It is important to distinguish between those extra regional players that involve with good intentions and those that are not. India's approach towards its southern neighbourhood has to be attuned accordingly.

is aimed at focusing on “seven central pillars conceived around Maritime Security; Maritime Ecology; Maritime Resources; Capacity Building and Resource Sharing; Disaster Risk Reduction and Management; Science, Technology and Academic Cooperation; and Trade Connectivity and Maritime Transport.”³⁴

Acceptance of India as an observer in the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC) is a welcome development that would bolster India's SAGAR (Security And Growth for All in the Region) initiative. Information Fusion Centre-Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR), based in India, is aimed “at strengthening maritime security in the region and beyond, by building a common coherent maritime situation picture and acting as a maritime security information sharing hub for the region.”³⁵ The fusion centre has 11 partner countries including Sri Lanka and Maldives.

BIMSTEC is a sector-driven cooperative organization unlike various other regional groups. So far, 14 sectors have been recognized, in which security constitutes

an important sector. The sub-groups in the security sector identified include narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and precursor chemicals, intelligence sharing, legal and law enforcement issues, anti-money laundering and combating the financing of terrorism, human trafficking and illegal migration, and countering radicalization and terrorism.³⁶ Maldives is currently not a member of the Bay of Bengal grouping, but may be included in the future given the common threats and proximity.

Overall, the sense of “regionness” in the Indian Ocean may look weak, but it is gradually gaining traction by the increasing importance of Indian Ocean and the emergence of Indo-Pacific as a concept.

The Way Forward

The significance of neighbourhood is pointed out by Waldo Tobler's first law of geography “everything is related to everything else, but near things are more related than distant things.”³⁷ This is truer to India and its neighbourhood in

The meaning of SAGAR is that India is ready to help with economic capacity and maritime capability.

34 Government of India, Ministry of External Affairs, 'Indo-Pacific Division Briefs,' February 2020, https://mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/Indo_Feb_07_2020.pdf, accessed on 11 December 2022.

35 Indian Navy, 'Information Fusion Centre – Indian Ocean Region,' <https://www.indiannavy.nic.in/ifc-ior/about-us.html>, accessed on 14 December 2022.

36 BIMSTEC, 'Security,' <https://bimstec.org/security-2/>, accessed on 15 December 2022.

37 Daniel Z. Sui, "Tobler's First Law of Geography: A Big Idea for a Small World?" *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Vol. 94, Issue 2, p. 269.

every parameter. The way forward has to be calibrated accordingly considering the overall context, various concerns and approach of India.

At the outset, the very India's name in the Indian Ocean may be creating some jitters. But India has reiterated time and again that there is no sense of possessiveness as far as Indian Ocean is concerned. At the same time, it is important to distinguish between those extra regional players that involve with good intentions and those that are not. India's approach towards its southern neighbourhood has to be attuned accordingly. The meaning of SAGAR is that India is ready to help with economic capacity and maritime capability.

It is good to note that in the present context there is a complementarity in terms of India's "neighbourhood first" policy vis-à-vis "India First" policies of Maldives and, to an extent, Sri Lanka. What is more important is that security ties of India with this southern neighborhood cannot be looked at in a segmented manner. As the improvement in security ties is directly proportional to the improvement in the other sectors, it is imperative to address other areas of relations like political, culture, economics and people-to-people as well.

New Delhi should note the fact that since countries of India's southern neighbourhood are democracies, it is important to reach out to the people. Winning the hearts of the common man in the neighbourhood is crucial so that they do not elect regimes that are anti-India. In this regard, India may consider incorporating human security in a bit more serious manner in the overall security component. More than the Governments, the people of Maldives and Sri Lanka need India's focus. Similarly, the West has to handle Maldives and Sri Lanka in a calibrated manner rather than seeing things in black and white.

India is quick to reach out to its neighbours when in need, either that be a coup attempt or insurrection or relief during natural or man-made disasters or even when faced with economic crisis. This is a natural geographical advantage that India has vis-à-vis its southern neighbourhood – good pangs of proximity. India should not hesitate to highlight this aspect. 'Good neighbourhood' has to be demonstrated than assumed.

More than the Governments, the people of Maldives and Sri Lanka need India's focus.

China in Sri Lanka's Political-Economic Crisis; Foreign Policy and Security Perspective

Asanga Abeyagoonasekera

The paper attempts to assess the background for Sri Lanka's recent political-economic crisis with a particular focus on the external influence of China. What were the political-economic policy decisions that triggered the crisis? What was China's involvement in the crisis? What was the impact of the crisis in Sri Lanka towards India and the Indian Ocean security? Why did Gotabaya Rajapaksa tilt Sri Lanka's foreign policy posture towards China? Regional and global initiatives that Sri Lanka could benefit from will be discussed.

Competition and rivalry among great powers such as US-China and India-China is visible in Indian Ocean security dynamics. China's involvement in Sri Lanka's crisis is a lesson for the region and many other BRI nations. Littorals in the Indian Ocean, such as Sri Lanka and Maldives and in the Pacific Ocean, such as the Solomon Islands, have received considerable Chinese funding for infrastructure projects from the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) introduced by Chinese President Xi Jinping in 2013. The infrastructure diplomacy carried out by China in Sri Lanka attracted significant

global attention due to debt-to-equity swaps where China signed long-term 99-year lease agreements to acquire strategic projects in the island nation. From highways, power plants, water projects, port projects, and airport construction to telecommunication sectors, where Huawei and ZTE, the Chinese telecommunication providers, dominate with more than 80% of the nation's telecommunication backbone, are clear examples of China's expansion and dominance in critical infrastructure projects in Sri Lanka.

Geopolitics and geo-economics have impacted Sri Lanka due to its strategic location, where Sri Lanka is on the East-West Sea Lines of Communication (SLOC). Securing China's energy supply route from the Middle East and Africa is a priority for China's long-term development strategy and securing the energy path is paramount to China. The inadequate investment and commitment to long-term strategic thinking was a primary weakness in Sri Lanka's foreign policy, where decisions were made purely on economic gains, and not seeing the strategic implications was the principal limitation, which has also

Competition and rivalry among great powers such as US-China and India-China is visible in Indian Ocean security dynamics.

Sri Lankan foreign policy has taken a passive posture due to China's heavy interference, which has become a danger to Sri Lanka's sovereignty and impacted the regional security of South Asia.

threatened the sovereignty and national security of Sri Lanka. From a 'non-aligned' foreign policy practised during the Cold War, Sri Lanka evolved towards a 'balanced' foreign policy with 'non-aligned' principles. Political leaders in the past, such as President Mahinda Rajapaksa, explained in 2010 that 'his government will continue Sri Lanka's non-aligned foreign policy'³⁸. His brother Gotabaya Rajapaksa in the 2019 election manifesto articulated that 'Sri Lanka's foreign policy will be based on non-alignment and mutual friendship and trust among nations'³⁹. While rhetorically committing towards neutrality, in practice, Rajapaksas failed to sustain a balance or neutrality in foreign policy. Present multiple foreign policy blunders in Sri Lanka depict the absence of Sri Lanka's limitation in this regard.

The geo-economics engaged by external forces such as China has impacted Sri Lanka's foreign policy. China being the largest trading partner and donor in Sri Lanka, the economic interest has given China the comfortable manoeuvring space to position its geopolitical ambitions. Sri Lankan foreign policy has taken a passive posture due to China's heavy interference,

which has become a danger to Sri Lanka's sovereignty and impacted the regional security of South Asia.

The economic crisis in Sri Lanka has two dimensions. On is the liquidity issue and the second is insolvency crisis. The liquidity issue, where the foreign reserves started to deplete month by month, and insolvency, where the country lost its capacity to service its external debt are eventually leading to a sovereign debt default.

The Government of President Gotabaya Rajapaksa ignored multiple early warnings due to the ultra-nationalistic inward policy prescription introduced by his policy circle. The SLPP Government saw external advice from economic experts and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) not as a prudent solution but as a financial burden. President Gotabaya admitted⁴⁰ the same policy blunders he had made.

China is not the only factor in the Sri Lankan crisis, but it is a significant factor.

There were other external factors from 2019 to 2022. The Easter Sunday Terror

China is not the only factor in the Sri Lankan crisis, but it is a significant factor.

38 Mahinda Rajapaksa Election Manifesto, 2010, https://www.preventionweb.net/files/mahinda_chintana_vision_for_the_future_eng%5B1%5D.pdf

39 Gotabaya Vistas of Prosperity and Splendour, 2019, https://www.presidentsoffice.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2019/16/Gotabaya_Manifesto_English.pdf

40 Business Standard, 19th Nov 2022, 'Sri Lankan Prez Gotabaya Rajapaksa admits mistakes led to economic crisis', https://www.business-standard.com/article/international/sri-lankan-prez-gotabaya-rajapaksa-admits-mistakes-led-to-economic-crisis-122041900143_1.html

attack in 2019, followed by the pandemic and Ukraine war, affected tourist arrivals. There was a drastic drop in tourism income, impacting the economy.

Autocratic Rule and Reforms

The reforms introduced by the Rajapaksa led Government, including the tax cuts and the external factors impacting the economy, had a severe impact eroding the revenue streams to the economy. Thus, when examining the ultranationalist inward policy prescription exercised by the Rajapaksa led Government, decisions such as the import subsidization with the overnight chemical fertilizer ban directly impacted the economy. Further, the heavy militarization with twenty eight military appointments in the Civil Service, judicial interference by the executive branch, the democratic backsliding, and the rejection of the early warnings by the international community were the concerns that triggered the crisis.

The autocratic model, which President Gotabaya Rajapaksa introduced with the heavy push factor from China to alter the democratic model by integrating with heavy militarization, further eroded the human rights concerns adding to the already raised concerns by Geneva UNHRC. China's support to Sri Lankan Governments' positions at UNHRC depicts Chinese endorsement of the autocratic regime. The Sri Lankan Government

reciprocated the Human Rights support from China by helping China's human rights concerns in Xinjiang⁴¹.

At the political party level, the CCP (Chinese Communist Party) and Rajapaksa's political party, the SLPP (Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna) had close collaboration. The CCP funding impacted the SLPP and domestic political agenda, creating a centre-heavy model with President Gotabaya and his strong military circle dominating the critical decision-making process. The rivalry with senior ministers under the Gotabaya led Government erupted with this factor, where most senior ministers were not in the decision-making process⁴².

Sri Lanka had its first military, foreign secretary appointed under the Gotabaya Rajapaksa led Government, which had a devastating impact on foreign policy. The balanced foreign policy practised by Sri Lanka was tilted towards China, a China bandwagoning foreign policy that Gotabaya Rajapaksa introduced during his tenure impacted the entire nation. Sri Lanka's rejection of the US's The Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) development assistance grant and India and Japan's East Container Terminal (ECT) project rejection, under national security pretexts, depicted the Chinese agency and influence during the Rajapaksa led Government. The quick approval of the Chinese Port City project⁴³ and significant borrowing more from China show the alignment towards China.

41 Xinhua, 12 Feb 2021, 'Interview: No evidence of genocide or detention camp in Xinjiang, says Sri Lanka's foreign secretary'http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2021-02/12/c_139739459.htm

42 Farzan Z, 4th Jan 2022, 'Ready to return to legal profession' – Susil packs up & leaves State Ministry, <https://www.newsfirst.lk/2022/01/04/ready-to-return-to-legal-profession-susil-packs-up-leaves-state-ministry/>

43 ANI, 23 Nov 2021, 'Colombo Port City Project approved in haste, will serve China's strategic interest',

<https://www.aninews.in/news/world/asia/colombo-port-city-project-approved-in-haste-will-serve-chinas-strategic-interest-says-report20211123122034/>
<https://www.aninews.in/news/world/asia/colombo-port-city-project-approved-in-haste-will-serve-chinas-strategic-interest-says-report20211123122034/>

On the think-tank level, financial and technical support from China towards private think tanks in Colombo was another factor. One such think tank is believed to have translated Chinese COVID health guideline material into the local language and assisted Huawei telecommunication in signing a strategic partnership to implement and support the Chinese strategic expansion. This think tank is understood to have worked closely with President Gotabaya Rajapaksa during his tenure. Chinese Confucius Centres also directly influenced local think tanks and Universities in Sri Lanka.

The heavy militarization with military appointments, for the first time in Sri Lankan history, in the Government civil service as well as in Government institutions including the archaeology, agriculture, foreign ministry to many other Government departments were carried out. When comparing the military appointments with another South Asian nation, it was much more than Pakistan. With heavy military presence during the Rajapaksa led Government, it was a clear departure from democratic norms and values. The crisis ruptured because of three conditions: autocratic family rule, rampant corruption, and the rise of poverty. Currently, with Ranil Wickremasinghe's Presidency, the people's uprising is somewhat settled. There are still unresolved concerns, such as in the political and economic domains, which have triggered a high inflation rate in the country, where many find it challenging to afford the prices of essential goods. The

recent United Nations report highlighted the rising inflation and poverty in nations like Sri Lanka due to the prevailing external factors such as the war in Ukraine.⁴⁴ If the economic challenges are not stabilized, there could be a future uprising, and further instability would bring devastating consequences. Therefore, Sri Lanka will require immediate stability from its political-economic crisis.

President Wickremasinghe has made commendable progress in moving with IMF and working with international partners on stabilizing the economic crisis. However, the present dispensation has also resorted to use of force to crack down on the protest and arrest many protestors under the terrorism act, which is not the most prudent measure. The alignment with the previous Government for his political survival by appointing SLPP members as Ministers is also a visible factor. According to Ranga Jayasuriya, a reputed journalist, more than 3353 activists have been captured using the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA)⁴⁵. Most people who broke into the President's house during the crisis were identified as terrorists by the present Government. There is a warning from the United States and many other countries that the current trajectory is not the most conducive way to handle this situation. Ambassador of the United States to Sri Lanka Julie Chung called on President Ranil Wickremesinghe to express her grave concern over the "unnecessary and deeply troubling"⁴⁶ escalation of violence against protesters.

44 VOA, 17 July 2022, 'UN Report: 71 Million More People Reported to be in Poverty', <https://learningenglish.voanews.com/a/un-report-71-million-more-people-reported-to-be-in-poverty/6655422.html>

45 Jayasuriya R, 22 Aug 2022, <https://twitter.com/RangaJayasuriya/status/1561762005434105857?s=20&t=jdArJ4339KNEntntcwqpTQ>

46 Colombo Times, 23 July 2022, <https://www.colombotimes.net/us-envoy-tells-lankan-president-this-is-not-the-time-to-crack-down/>

Chinese Loans

The other most significant factor that aggravated the crisis was China. Sri Lanka heavily relied on China's support. The direct request from Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi during his visit to the island was the best example where Sri Lankan President Gotabaya Rajapaksa requested debt restructuring assistance. China refused this and agreed to issue more loans to settle the existing Chinese debt. China's position on debt restructuring is still a concern. The volume of borrowings from China, equal to the Japanese loans, is around 10%. There is an argument from Umesh Moramudali, an academic at Colombo University, that it is more than 10% and closer to 20%. "Sri Lanka's [debt] to Chinese creditors comes about 20%, not 10%. So, all these 20% will have to be restructured. That means you'll have to look at how China Development Bank will deal with restructuring and China's Exim Bank will deal with restructuring,"⁴⁷. China's opaqueness and non-transparency are apparent in most of the loans, which cannot be compared with Japanese loans.

Strategic Trap

The civil-military nexus space created for China at strategic projects in Sri Lanka, such as Hambanthota port in the deep South, poses a severe concern. The

Government needs to calculate the long-term security implications to the nation from these projects.

The former Foreign Minister, Dinesh Gunawardena of Sri Lanka, explained that the Hambanthota port lease agreement signed with China is more than its actual 99 years lease period. Foreign Minister explained, "it says the 99-year lease can extend for a further period. It can go on for any number of years after 99 years or for another 99 years"⁴⁸. This statement reflects how much weight the policy circle has determined on a strategic level. The loosely signed, opaque Chinese agreements and non-transparency have created public concern about Chinese projects. More than the much-discussed debt-trap diplomacy, there is a strategic trap by China due to three factors. First, on the political party level, where CCP and SLPP have made alignments; Second, on human rights, where China and Sri Lanka reciprocally support each other. Finally, military-to-military support between Sri Lanka and China.

Impact on the Indian Ocean and Beyond

The crisis has impacted the Indian Ocean in two dimensions. First is the economic dimension, where China's geo-economic tactics were used to achieve geopolitical objectives, threatening the country's

The civil-military nexus space created for China at strategic projects in Sri Lanka, such as Hambanthota port in the deep South, poses a severe concern.

47 CNBC, 20th July 2022, <https://www.cnbc.com/2022/07/20/china-can-play-critical-role-to-help-sri-lanka-with-its-debt-problems-analysts-say.html>

48 The Indian Express, 24th Feb 2021, <https://indianexpress.com/article/world/hambantota-port-deal-china-7203319/>

sovereignty and regional security. The long-term lease agreements leasing the strategic infrastructure projects and heavy China dependency have paved the way for a long-term security threat. The trade volumes have dropped due to the dysfunctionality of the ports during the crisis, further burdening the economy. The Chinese infrastructure projects with large borrowings did not produce the expected revenue from the inception of these projects, adding an extra burden to the ailing economy. A fragile Sri Lanka will directly impact Sri Lanka's commitments towards Indian Ocean security.

Second, in the security domain, the limited financial resources on security spending will impact patrolling of the Sri Lankan waters, participating in the counter-terrorism measures, human trafficking efforts and overall maritime security domain. Due to the economic condition of the country, there will be less investment in human trafficking and other marine security operations, which will directly impact regional security. The naval security limitation of Sri Lanka will extend towards India's immediate and Indian Ocean security.

Another factor is the external interference from China which has become a serious concern to Sri Lanka and India. The Chinese spy ship 'Yang Wang 5' visit to Sri Lanka was a clear example of Sri Lankan foreign policy tilt towards China and the security threat to Sri Lanka and the region. While ignoring the multiple signalling from New Delhi to turn down the visit, Colombo gave access to the Chinese spy

ship at Hambantota port. The inability to deny the visit shows China's existing strategic influence towards Sri Lankan foreign policy decision-making process. According to Indian scholar Harsh Pant, the spy ship visit 'will have consequences for India and India-Sri Lanka relations. The People's Liberation Army Navy has been seeking a forward presence in the Indian Ocean region by building bases. What is happening in Hambantota is a signal about the Chinese intent about the infrastructure it is building in the wider region'⁴⁹.

The wind power project in Sri Lanka was another example depicting Chinese interest in India's immediate periphery, closer to the southern shore of India⁵⁰. The project became a concern for New Delhi due to its proximity to India. A senior bureaucrat, a Secretary of a Government Ministry⁵¹ in Sri Lanka interviewed by this author, assessed the position of India as interfering with Sri Lanka's internal development project, not accurately reading the security sensitivity. The Rajapaksa administration propagated this dimension for their political gain.

With the rise of the power rivalry between the US and China, nations like Sri Lanka will face a direct impact due to its geostrategic location. Sri Lanka is sandwiched between the BRI and the Indo-Pacific strategy. By supporting both strategies, the island nation is trying to balance each other. China's belligerence in South China and East China Seas and the Pacific islands are visible. The Solomon Islands in the Pacific and Sri Lanka in the Indian Ocean are facing a similar pattern of Chinese influence in the economic and

49 Pant H V, 23 Aug 2022, The Telegraph India, <https://www.telegraphindia.com/opinion/ship-of-concern/cid/1881839>

50 The Economic Times, 3rd Dec 2021, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/international/business/china-suspends-lanka-energy-project-over-security-concerns/articleshow/88067029.cms>

51 Name of the Senior Secretary of the Ministry in Sri Lanka has been kept anonymous. Interview conducted by the author and a Research assistant in 2021 first quarter for a Political-Economic Analysis.

Sri Lanka is sandwiched between the BRI and the Indo-Pacific strategy. By supporting both strategies, the island nation is trying to balance each other.

security sectors. Both islands had leaders supporting China, tilting the foreign policy towards China. The impact on Canberra through security manoeuvres in the Solomon Islands could be assessed with the implications for New Delhi through security manoeuvres in Sri Lanka⁵². China's more significant role in both regions is to expand its influence, tilting various governments towards China which was achieved through strategic exercises.

Neighbourhood First and SAGAR

India and Sri Lanka need to look at the 'Neighbourhood First' policy and the Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR) introduced by the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in a very close manner and identify the existing challenges to their strategic and security domain. Prime Minister Modi said, "The relations between India and Sri Lanka are thousands of years old. According to my Government's Neighbourhood First policy and SAGAR doctrine, we give special priority to

relations between the two countries,"⁵³. India has proven this during the Sri Lankan crisis as the first responder, assisting with a sizeable financial package than any other nation. India's assistance in supplying essential commodities, including basic food essentials and oil, stabilized the nation during the crisis. Unfortunately, in the past, the security calculations warned by India were entirely ignored by Colombo during the Gotabaya Rajapaksa Government and followed by the present Wickremasinghe led government that invited the spy ship to Hambanthota. Such incidents are clear relationship and trust deteriorating decisions for the Indo-Lanka close security relationship.

Another factor for the trust deficiency between India-Sri Lanka is the danger of China's easy capturability of the political elites, influencing policy. According to the 2021 Carnegie South Asia report⁵⁴, the capturability of the elites, especially the political elites by China, is a dangerous development in many South Asian nations, including Sri Lanka. This factor could

Prime Minister Modi said, "The relations between India and Sri Lanka are thousands of years old. According to my Government's Neighbourhood First policy and SAGAR doctrine, we give special priority to relations between the two countries," . India has proven this during the Sri Lankan crisis as the first responder, assisting with a sizeable financial package than any other nation.

52 Abeyagoonasekera, ISDP, <https://www.isdp.eu/publication/china-in-sri-lanka-and-solomon-islands-role-of-littorals-in-the-geopolitical-competition/>

53 ANI, 26th Sep 2020, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/india-has-always-given-priority-to-sri-lanka-under-its-neighbourhood-first-policy-sagar-doctrine-pm-modi/articleshow/78331886.cms>

54 Carnegie South Asia, 2021, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2021/10/13/china-s-influence-in-south-asia-vulnerabilities-and-resilience-in-four-countries-pub-85552>

further widen the trust deficit between India and Sri Lanka. The genuine intention of India's neighbouring countries, such as Sri Lanka, to commit and work on regional programs with India is essential to regional stability and improving regional security measures to establish a rules-based order in the Indian ocean.

The Quad/IPEF/BRI Toolkit

Finally, the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QSD), commonly known as the Quad, and the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF)⁵⁵ are important initiatives Sri Lanka could support and benefit from recalibrating its foreign policy towards a more balanced posture. To create a resilient and fair economy and clean economy, highlighted in IPEF can be adopted to bring some strict measures on infrastructure projects. On Quad, according to Tanvi Madan and Dhruva Jaishankar, the Quad should diversify its engagement with other like-minded partners. 'Quad does not need to add more members to accomplish this; it could instead involve other countries in existing Quad activities based on their needs and comfort levels, or participate in their initiatives to enhance regional security and resilience.'⁵⁶ In the same way, Sri Lanka could partner with Quad and IPEF and engage with many nations to improve its present economic and security position.

A tool kit for BRI projects introduced by Asia Society ASPI⁵⁷ is a new initiative that nations with Chinese BRI projects could implement for better stakeholder

engagement and improve the process for environmental impact assessment (EIA). Most BRI projects in Sri Lanka had less stakeholder participation, and initial EIA clearance processes needed to be followed adequately. The airport project stalled due to construction next to a bird sanctuary in Mattala is a good example.

Conclusion

There are multiple regional and global initiatives Sri Lanka could work to improve its present position to move out of the crisis stage. The trust deficit between India and Sri Lanka requires immediate attention. Investment to regain trust is necessary by genuinely committing to regional and global initiatives such as IPEF. For this, Sri Lanka needs to recalibrate its existing foreign policy, from the China bandwagoning posture towards a more balanced foreign policy position. Sri Lanka could benefit from the US, China, and many middle powers with a balanced foreign policy. The infrastructure diplomacy carried out with strategic intention by China requires attention from Colombo to look at it from a long-term strategic lens to identify security implications impacting the nation's sovereignty and regional security. The Sri Lankan crisis may have ripple effects on other developing countries with unsustainable loans, such as Pakistan, with a much larger BRI footprint. There is a lesson from Sri Lankan political-economic crisis and the China factor in Sri Lanka to many other countries.

55 White House, 23rd May 2022, IPEF, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/05/23/fact-sheet-in-asia-president-biden-and-a-dozen-indo-pacific-partners-launch-the-indo-pacific-economic-framework-for-prosperity/>

56 Madan T, Jaishankar D, 19th May 2022, Foreign Affairs, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/world/2022-05-19/quad-needs-harder-edge>

57 Asia Society, 2022, <https://asiasociety.org/policy-institute/navigating-belt-road-initiative-toolkit>

Maldives, Climate Security and Geopolitics in the Indian Ocean Region

Athaula A Rasheed

Introduction

Maldives has historical ties with its neighbours, particularly India. In recent years, Maldives had developed much closer development cooperation ties with extra-regional actors like China that do not represent traditional regional principles and practices. The rise of China's engagement in Maldives from 2013 to 2018 created multiple concerns for regional actors including India (and its Indo-Pacific partners) about the rise of a single power in the region. However, the new Government that came to power at the end of 2018 reiterated the 'India-First' policy and scrapped some of the major investments made with China. Despite the foreign partnership formations and geopolitical outlook since 2018, a clear understanding of the factors affecting the country's foreign policy choices yet remains an element of policy and scholarly inquiry.

Climate security can be seen as a key driver of foreign partnerships and geopolitical interests of Maldives.

Through the lens of climate security, this paper provides a succinct analysis of the drivers of foreign partnerships and geopolitics pertaining to Maldives in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). The policy priorities of Maldives are significantly influenced

by the unique vulnerabilities inherent to an island nation that is constantly threatened by sea level rise. Achieving climate security is integral to its sustainable development plan and national security[1, 2]. Maldives is also a developing country lacking natural, economic and infrastructural resources to support its development activities and achieve self-sufficiency. While climate change exacerbates these challenges and vulnerabilities, projects and programmes that can enhance development through climate-friendly activities and adaptation measures requires the cooperation of the international community. In this context, international policy frameworks and development agencies including bilateral aid programmes can support national efforts [3-7]. However, national efforts and priorities are also determined by the way in which climate threats and their security implications are perceived and constructed by the national agencies and politics.

This paper explains how climate security has been constructed by Maldives as a key security and development priority. It also explains how climate security can be seen as a key driver of foreign partnerships and geopolitical interests of Maldives. This can help to understand the present and future trajectories of foreign partnerships in Maldives. Using a review of policy documents, country studies and

media reports, the following sections discuss the past and present priorities and trends concerning climate security and geopolitical considerations of Maldives.

Construction of Climate Security

What is the main threat to security in Maldives, or what does security mean to Maldives? Maldives faces both traditional and non-traditional security threats[8]. An issue is considered to be a security issue when it poses an existential threat to a nation's survival or potential for progress including economic, social, cultural, political and environmental progress [9-11]. As a small state, Maldives depends on larger regional actors particularly India as its net security provider in the IOR. Preparing for conventional and non-conventional warfare is included in its security agenda[8]. Achieving security in the traditional or conventional security spheres also depends on how Maldives navigates its security issues through the collective security agenda of the IOR. Therefore, non-traditional security issues have been on the top of key policy agenda of both the security sector and non-security (civil) sector agencies. Due to climate change, Maldives is facing multiple challenges and risks that threaten the security and survival of its economy. The island is vulnerable and is constantly threatened by events such as sea level rise and ocean acidification [6, 12]. Apart from environmental (or climate-based) dangers, the large ocean also potentially occupies multiple dangerous activities such as piracy, human, drug and arms trafficking that can threaten the economy, society and security and potentially compromise its economic engines including tourism and fishing industries [8]. Climate change exacerbates

existing vulnerabilities and weakens the infrastructural capacities to deal with such non-traditional threats. This affects the country's potential for sustainability, development and political stability.

Maldives is a small island nation, with a population of just about 500,000 people, and is resource-dependent for economic and infrastructure development. This means that its local resources cannot support the full development potential of the economy especially with a fast-growing mega industry like tourism. The constant risks and threats posed by sea level rise has immediate and potential impact on social opportunities.[13]. In this respect, a number of factors can show how climate security drives the policy priorities of the Maldives. These are discussed in below sections.

Dependency on Tourism

Maldives has a great potential for development. Since the 1970s and 1980s, Maldives has made significant progress in terms of increasing the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and national income because of tourism [6]. The survival and sustainability of tourism is important for the development of the nation therefore, it remained a Government policy priority. For example, the recent COVID-19 pandemic lockdown had a severe impact on this activity. However, Government was swift to take extraordinary measures to have the industry resume its activities, very soon after the travel restrictions were lifted across the globe[14]. Nonetheless, the climate change puts the tourism industry

As a small state, Maldives depends on larger regional actors particularly India as its net security provider in the IOR.

at risk of high costs which is associated with managing tourism infrastructure. Therefore, the idea of protection around the reefs and building reclaimed islands and land have become an attractive development model for the industry and the local communities. Reclaimed land and artificial islands can work well for the industry activities [15]. However, the idea of moving to and live on a new land is a challenge and concern for local communities as it can come in conflict with their identities and socio-economic activities attached to their original land [16].

Loss of Land and Inundation

The sea level rise, soil erosion and ocean acidification have both immediate- and long-term implications for the land used for socio-economic activities. Sea level rise has already affected the freshwater aquifers of most of the islands. Water security is a key issue which is interlinked with food security and health issue. Government has over the decades, with the help of the United Nations agencies and bilateral aid donors, taken several measures to address these issues [12, 17]. However, addressing the long-term impact that transcends water security issues including loss of land and infrastructure remains the ongoing policy concern. For example, the islands of Maldives are just about 2.4m above sea level and the global scientific predictions of 0.5 m sea level rise by year 2100 can put the country at the risk of inundation. [12]. Way back in 2009 the underwater Cabinet Meeting projected this idea of inundation and helped Maldives to push its advocacy on the need for international cooperation for climate action [18]. The idea of sinking islands calls for the protection of the land



Figure 1: Malé and Hulhumale showing on map (Google maps cut)

from sea level rise for the survival of the economy. Building seawalls and reclaiming land using sand from seabed to support the shoreline have become part of key policy actions. This has supported the government plan to move smallest populations to larger islands, or safer islands [19, 20]. However, some studies also show the climate has no direct link to reasons for people moving to urban or economically active populations. The main reasons are rather linked to their need for better livelihood opportunities and economic life[21]. This means that better living conditions, economic opportunity and infrastructure build up have to go hand in hand and are linked to climate action to address the issue of inundation and loss of land.

Movement of People and Infrastructure Development

This paper also looks at the two major population centres or urban islands: Malé, capital city of Maldives and Hulhumalé, the second largest residential island just about 7km apart (see figure 1). The movement of people to Malé is historical and has started in a pre-climate policy era – an example of people moving for better socio-economic life. However, the movement to Hulhumalé is more recent and prominent example of a link between Government policy, people's movements, and climate security. The Government's main policy focus has been the development of the economy and adoption of climate adaptation mechanisms to support the development plan. Tourism has been the main engine that supports Government revenue [6, 12, 22]. This industry contributes to broader socio-economic activities of Maldives. While the industry support Government's economic plan, building better infrastructure for the population can also support economic, social and political stability. For example, the cramping up of people in the capital city has been a key concern and obstacle to long-term sustainability of the economy. Therefore, with the support from development aid donors, the Government has embarked on mega projects to build and strengthen islands, land and infrastructure to support socio-economic activities including housing and local business ventures. The Hulhumalé development project is centred around providing these pathways[23]. Another recent mega project has been the China-Maldives Friendship Bridge that connected Malé and Hulhumalé through the international airport island, Hulhule (see figure 1)[24].

While these developments definitely support to achieve climate security, the islands dependency on foreign aid also has further implications for the status and nature of security promoted and followed by the Maldives

at the national and regional level. There is no alternative to foreign aid; it is not an option, but a necessity. However, how the successive Governments in Maldives have sought to attain such foreign partnerships, have created further political tension and geopolitical competition in the region [25, 26].

There is no alternative to foreign aid; it is not an option, but a necessity.

Foreign Partnerships and Geopolitical Implications

While projects like the Hulhumalé development project have attracted foreign investors to support development plans in Maldives, interaction with extra-regional actors has also created some tension among regional security actors. This includes an increase of geopolitical competition between traditional and non-traditional regional aid partners[27]. Here it is important to realize the close connection between what small states do in terms of climate security and development, and their implications for the regional security dynamics, especially when extra-regional actors are involved in their development projects. Maldives presents a classic case considering its engagement with China to support its development projects from 2013 to 2018 [25, 28]. Important examples are the Hulhumalé development project and the China-Maldives Friendship Bridge. In the same

The new MDP Government that came to power in 2018 reiterated the “India-first” policy, and tried to situate foreign partnerships on track with traditional norms and rules-based systems.

period, previous government led by PPM preferred China’s investments over other regional neighbours. Concerns were raised among Indo-Pacific partners in the Indian Ocean regarding Chinese investments in Maldives which could pose potential risks to the security of the IOR [28].

The new MDP Government that came to power in 2018 reiterated the “India-first” policy, and tried to situate foreign partnerships on track with traditional norms and rules-based systems. Beginning from early 2019, President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih’s Government held back most of the major investments that were supported by China during his predecessor’s term. The change, that is, India as the preferred partner of choice was triggered by the change in domestic political scene. It is to be noted that there have not been major changes to the Maldives foreign policy with regard to development cooperation. Even during the previous Government, the Maldives maintained closed cooperation and friendly ties with India. However, the party politics in Maldives has also created room for competing political opinions and options regarding foreign partnerships. The renewed stance of the Government towards

India has created new opinions in the domestic politics. This has risen domestic political questions, mostly posed by the opposition party, about the legitimacy of the renewed engagement with India that aims to strengthen mutual cooperation on the political, economic and military fronts [29]. However, such tension has little to do with how Maldives’ foreign policy on India has been shaped, at present and in the past.

Maldives’ foreign policy is based on national sovereignty, territorial integrity, respect for rules and rights-based systems, and most crucially, friendly ties with regional partners. India has been the closest and most important development partner, since post-independence years. India has an important interest in the maintenance of regional peace and security as well as to support the development of the region. In this context, the India-First policy has brought India closer to the Maldives, and this is important for promoting rules-based diplomacy and the mutual interests of both the Governments[30]. Maldives heavily depends on external support for food and infrastructure security. India has a bigger role in this. Infrastructure is key to sustainability in Maldives, and the support from India’s recent projects, for example the

Infrastructure is key to sustainability in Maldives, and the support from India’s recent projects, for example the Greater Male Connectivity project, is going to make a big difference, in the medium and long-run, in supporting socio-economic activities and progress in the island nation.

Greater Male Connectivity project, is going to make a big difference, in the medium and long-run, in supporting socio-economic activities and progress in the island nation [31]. Then again, as a large ocean state, the Maldives is both protected by the ocean and challenged by climate-induced changes to the ocean. Therefore, the ocean becomes a major source of resources, supporting the blue economy and the national security of Maldives[32]. While climate change is the greatest catalyst to exacerbate existing multiple challenges, the ocean continues to pose immediate and potential security risks to the nation. With fish and other marine support systems, illegal activities conducted by external maritime intrusions can cause both security risks and economic losses[8]. A climate impact can weaken the existing resources-based capacities even to deal with these physical security threats.

Maritime is a key security sphere or domain where India has and continues to support Maldives, particularly in navigating non-traditional security challenges pertaining to ocean-based or maritime risks[33]. For example, Maldives has an effective coast guard service, improved technology, infrastructure, and guidance, navigation and information systems which can further support respective agencies to address maritime challenges, which are crucial to support its security


activities including navigating its climate security questions in the IOR[9].

Conclusion

Maldives is challenged by multiple security threats and climate change has been the most prominent threat. Climate change has an inherent impact on all other challenges facing the island nation. Maldives has prioritized to address climate change in all its development projects. Its efforts to achieve these development and climate security objectives have also attracted competing political agendas which have ultimately been driven by different approaches to building foreign partnerships. Question of security has been closely embedded in the political interests and policy objectives of the ruling parties and the Government in power. While Maldives has seen an era (although short through) of strong investments with China, the current Government has a strong stance in building development agenda around the security objectives that support and complement the interests of regional security actors. This has strengthened further ties with India in navigating its security concerns including climate-based development activities and other non-traditional issues in the maritime domain.

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Island States in Southern Western Indian Ocean Seychelles, Madagascar and Mauritius

Remarks

Anup Mudgal

At the outset, I would like to thank the Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA) to have organized this timely conference on an important aspect of emerging security situation in the Indian Ocean Region which is also central to India's own security and development. I would also wish to recognize an excellent opening statement by Amb Vijay Thakur Singh, Director General, ICWA, a very comprehensive Key Note by Dr Sanjaya Baru, an incisive introduction by Amb Ashok Kantha and valuable statements by the expert panel in the first session on Sri Lanka and Maldives. These eminent speakers have already laid an exceptional ground for the theme of the day encapsulating the background, current scenarios and future road maps relating to the emerging security situation in the Indian Ocean and the larger Indo-Pacific region as also the crucial place the island States occupy in this puzzle.

The Indian Ocean has always been an important space for global linkages not only for trade, investments, cultural exchanges but also for conflicts from time to time for control over the essential sea lanes of communication, especially the choke points. This was done by the littoral States but more often by non-resident

powers for securing these channels for their essential supplies.

India has historically been at the centre of this global socio-economic-cultural-security discourse from the ancient to the contemporary times, connecting in the West with Europe through the Red Sea and the Mediterranean, and to the East and Far East through the Bay of Bengal and the Malacca strait. The Indian subcontinent also has a long and rich maritime history with its navigators mastering the art of deploying the monsoon to power their boats much before the advent of mechanization. These boats carried both goods and ideas, leaving behind a region-wide footprint of Indian culture and diaspora. The long Indian coastline was dotted with quite well developed ports, ship building and repair facilities and related supply chains right from the ancient times. History is replete with references to the maritime expertise of the kingdoms of Kalinga, Chola, Pandya, Pallava and Maratha.

India has also been a close witness to all the ups and downs in the Indian Ocean region, learning and appreciating the value of peace and security for growth and

The Indian Ocean has always been an important space for global linkages not only for trade, investments, cultural exchanges but also for conflicts from time to time for control over the essential sea lanes of communication, especially the choke points.

prosperity of the region. Peace brought prosperity and happiness whereas violent conflicts always inflicted misery. This experience guided India's philosophy, policy and behaviour, including its external relations, simply summed up in the ancient concept of "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" that signifies the world as a family.

With time, the situation has been changing but the Indian desire for societal progress through peace and cooperation has remained steadfast. The global geopolitical situation is once again seeking a shift and it would directly impact all of us in the region. We need to make hard choices for protecting our long term interests without falling for unsustainable short term options.

The earlier speakers have explained in much detail the salience of the Indian Ocean for economic growth and prosperity not only for the region, including India but beyond, as also the emerging challenges to the security and stability because of growing contestation with potential of conflict. We are also facing much more serious risks because of the degrading ocean health. Pollution, acidification, loss of biodiversity and warming could challenge the very existence of normal life by disrupting among others agriculture, climatic stability and pathogen behaviour.

Peace, security and sustainability of the Indian Ocean region is paramount and any disruptions, both anthropocentric and natural, must be addressed through cooperation driven by wisdom, maturity

and commitment. The earlier speakers have highlighted the risks of contestations being forced by the non-resident players. Non-resident powers may be the triggers but the consequences of any conflict would essentially be borne by the region.

Much higher salience of the ocean for the island States, especially the small island States explains the essence of today's theme. Given their small size in terms of area, population and resources, and geographical isolation, while their dependence on the ocean is much more critical compared to the rest, their capacity to manage these spaces seems quite limited. A simple indicative demonstration of this compelling situation can be highlighted by the ratio of their land based capacity in relation to the sizes of their EEZs. For instance, India has a GDP of approximately USD 1.1 trillion and population of 1300 million persons per square Km of its EEZ. This ratio for Madagascar is USD 13000 and 23 persons per square km of EEZ. In case of Mauritius it drops to USD 6000 and 0.56 person and it further drops for Seychelles to just USD 1000 and 0.07 person per square km of their EEZ (these calculations are purely indicative and are for illustrative purpose and should not be construed as official).

The island States rightly call themselves as 'large ocean States' and they heavily depend on their marine resources like fishing, tourism, they also aim to develop into hubs for higher education, health care, shipping, air-services, banking and finance. All these

Peace, security and sustainability of the Indian Ocean region is paramount and any disruptions, both anthropocentric and natural, must be addressed through cooperation driven by wisdom, maturity and commitment.

sectors are directly dependent on security, safety and healthy oceans.

Managing the oceans' security and health is a very expensive enterprise both for capital and skills, which the small island States may not be able to afford without regional and global cooperation. They need well-meaning and capable partners who could help them address these capacity gaps but without seeking to unduly undermine their freedom of policy choices.

India has always been conscious that the regional peace and stability must be a shared responsibility of all and primarily the resident States as they would be most impacted by any disruptions. The interest of non-resident stakeholders needs to be recognized and all possible channels of cooperation should be explored for ensuring greater peace and mitigating larger challenges. This is at the core of the Indian vision for managing maritime spaces for Security and Growth for all in the Region (SAGAR). I was privileged to be associated with the launch of SAGAR as the former Indian High Commissioner to Mauritius where this vision was pronounced by Hon'ble Prime Minister Modi in March, 2015.

I completely agree with Dr Baru that SAGAR is economy centric and it was a deliberate goal. The soul of SAGAR lies in its emphasis on inclusion and shared goals. It is a tripod platform where the primary goal of growth

should be accomplished fully in sync with the ocean health with the security as an essential enabler for both growth and sustainability.

The philosophy of SAGAR is supported by India's wholesome framework for regional cooperation both for security and development partnership. The maritime security cooperation is primed on capacity building, capacity enhancement and direct support as requested by the partner States. It includes all stages like training, supply of hard ware, technology support and joint operations for EEZ surveillance, disaster relief and rescue, MDA support, etc. The development partnership on the other hand provides a comprehensive framework for support by way of developmental capacity building (training, skills, infrastructure), finance (grants, concessional credits), investment promotion and market access. These implementation tools are in conformity with the principles of SAGAR.

India has a long history of excellent relations and partnerships with the entire region, in particular the participating partners today namely Seychelles, Mauritius and Madagascar. I have briefly explained the Indian vision and approach to the regional growth, prosperity and peace and now look forward to listening to the expert representatives from these countries as to their assessment and expectation from this time tested partnership.

Managing the oceans' security and health is a very expensive enterprise both for capital and skills, which the small island States may not be able to afford without regional and global cooperation. They need well-meaning and capable partners who could help them address these capacity gaps but without seeking to unduly undermine their freedom of policy choices.

India and the Western Indian Ocean Island States: Some Observations

Adluri Subramanyam Raju

India has a coastal line of 7,516.6 kilometers, 2.1 million square kilometres of Exclusive Economic Zone, 5,30,000 square kilometres of continental shelf and more than 1000 islands in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). It plays a significant role in maintaining peace and stability in the IOR. Its policy of non-aggression, its cultural and philosophical virtues and its relation with its neighbouring littoral states through ethnic and religious ties strengthened its relation with littoral states (including the western Indian Ocean Island states) in the region. India is seen as a security provider by most of the countries in the region and India's credibility has been enhanced through the maritime dimension. In other words, India's profile in the world has enhanced through the maritime dimension. For instance, India accepted the verdict of Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) in July 2014 with reference to the maritime dispute with Bangladesh as a law abiding maritime nation.⁵⁸

The geographical location of the Western Indian Ocean region is considered as the lifeline of world trade. Most of the trade from Europe, Asia, the Middle East and Africa goes through the region. The island states have large ocean area than territorial area. However, they suffer from poverty. They face numerous threats. Many of these

states do not have the capabilities to monitor and govern their maritime domain, as they lack maritime surveillance and enforcement capacities.

India has cultural and historical links with the western Indian Ocean Island states (Mauritius, Madagascar, Seychelles, Comoros, Reunion and Mayotte) and these linkages facilitate India a geopolitical advantage in the region. The presence of Indian diaspora is also acting as a link to maintain good relations with the region. India has demonstrated its interest in the region by performing various tasks which include humanitarian aid, disaster relief, Search and Rescue (SAR), ordnance disposal, diving assistance, salvage operations, hydrographic surveys etc. in the region. It has taken a number of steps: helping Mauritius operate a Coast Guard, improving the ability of Mozambique and Madagascar to monitor their maritime domain. It has been involved in addressing the maritime threats, a major concern for the island states. It has been helping Mauritius, Madagascar and Seychelles to develop their coastal surveillance and anti-piracy capabilities. On the other hand, the region is strategically,

India's credibility
has been
enhanced through
the maritime
dimension.

58 For details see Adluri Subramanyam Raju, "Delimitation of Maritime Boundary in the BIMSTEC", in Adluri Subramanyam Raju & Anasua Ray Chaudhury (eds), *New Futures for BIMSTEC: Connectivity, Commerce and Security*, London: Routledge, 2022, pp.28-29.

India has an advantage in the maritime domain to expand its presence as most of the littoral states consider New Delhi as a security provider and recognize its credibility in terms of respecting international law.

economically very important to India. India has recognized the importance of strategic location of these islands spanning the Sea Lanes of Communication (SLOC) from the Bab-El-Mandeb and the Gulf of Aden, which are oil and hydrocarbon routes. It is dependent on the region for its energy security. Both entities realize the importance of each other. This paper focuses on India's strategic interests in the region and cooperation between the Islands states and India.

India has an advantage in the maritime domain to expand its presence as most of the littoral states consider New Delhi as a security provider and recognize its credibility in terms of respecting international law. Give its linkages with the island states and as an observer of Indian Ocean Commission (IOC), India could focus on helping the island-states of the Indian Ocean to protect their maritime environment and manage their marine resources.

Since the Western Indian Ocean countries are island-states, their land areas are very small compared to their Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs). There are various security challenges in the region: maritime piracy, organized crimes at sea, illegal

fishing, narcotics smuggling and impact of climate change.

Mauritius is often called a mini India as it has strong economic and diaspora relations with India. The National Security Advisor of Mauritius is always an Indian officer.⁵⁹ India has patrolled Mauritian coastal waters, gifted patrol boats and performed hydrographic surveys on behalf of the Mauritius. It has exported its first ever indigenously-built warship to Mauritius in 2013.⁶⁰ It assists Seychelles with maritime patrolling and hydrographic research along with supplying surveillance aircrafts. It has handed over a fast patrol boat PS Zoroaster to Seychelles in an official ceremony attended by President of Seychelles and the Prime Minister of India. Further, India has completed construction of the Magistrate Court funded by India and a one megawatt solar power plant on Romainville, which is expected to produce electricity for about 400 households.⁶¹ India reportedly has a listening post since 2007 in Madagascar, which is intended to relay intelligence back to commands in Mumbai and Kochi.⁶² Madagascar has expressed its interest to deepen defence relations with India as it "represents a security umbrella which maintains peace and prosperity in the region."⁶³ India has been conducting anti-piracy patrols in the

59 David Brewster, *India's Ocean: The story of India's bid for regional leadership*, London and New York: Routledge, 2014, p.73.

60 Nilanthi Samaranayake, "Island States in a Region of Great Powers", in David Michel and Ricky Passarelli (ed.), *Sea Change: Evolving Maritime Geopolitics in the Indo-Pacific Region*, Washington DC: Stimson Center, December 2014, p.59

61 Vinitha Revi, "India's approach towards Seychelles in the Indian Ocean Region," Observer Research Foundation, 26 April 2021.

62 Samaranayake, n.3, p.60.

63 Sachin Parashar, "Madagascar wants to deepen defence relations with India", *The Times of India*, 8 February 2021.

region since 2008. There are three task forces⁶⁴ to combat piracy in the region. India has coordinated with these taskforces in controlling piracy in the region. It escorts ships of international agencies carrying food supplies and relief material in piracy-infested waters of the region.⁶⁵

India is planning to post naval Liaison Officers at the Regional Maritime Information Fusion Centre (RMIFC) in Madagascar and the European Maritime Awareness in the Strait of Hormuz in Abu Dhabi for improved Maritime Domain Awareness.⁶⁶

India can link its Information Fusion Centre (IFC-IOR) with the RMIFC and the other station called Regional Coordination and Operational Centre in the region under the aegis of the IOC and the EU-funded Regional Programme for the Promotion of Maritime Security. It can assist these stations with data collation and management as a regional hub of maritime data with its technical expertise as it has potential for collection of maritime intelligence.

India has concern over the Chinese presence in the IOR. China has defence cooperation with Madagascar and reportedly intends to have a military base in the latter. It provides financial support and military equipment such as communication items and military

uniforms to Madagascar. It donated two short-range patrol vessels to Madagascar. It is to be noted that Madagascar is a key island in Indian Ocean, closer to Mauritius and Seychelles, which are close military partners of India in the region.

The Foreign Minister of China Wang Yi, who visited Sri Lanka on 9 January 2022 announced the initiative of Indian Ocean Council for the development of Indian Ocean island countries⁶⁷ to “build consensus and synergy and promote common development.”⁶⁸ China had convened first “China-Indian Ocean Region Forum” on 21 November 2022 in Kunming, where representatives of 19 countries⁶⁹ of the Indian Ocean region participated, except India. China proposed “to establish a marine disaster prevention and mitigation cooperation mechanism between China and countries in the IOR and stood ready to provide necessary financial, material, and technical support to countries in need.”⁷⁰ Further, China proposed to establish a Blue Economy think tank network. The participant countries agreed to cooperate with China to “strengthen policy coordination, deepen development cooperation, increase resilience to shocks and disasters and enhance relevant countries’ capacity to obtain economic benefits through use of marine resources such as fisheries, renewable energy, tourism

64 US’ Combined Task Forces 150 and 151, the European Union based Operation Atalanta, and the NATO’s Operation Ocean Shield

65 Indian Navy, “INS Triakand Escorts World Food Programme Ship”, <https://www.indiannavy.nic.in/content/ins-triakand-escorts-world-food-programme-ship>, accessed 13 September 2021.

66 Dinakar Peri, “India looks to deploy naval liaisons at Madagascar, Abu Dhabi for information exchange”, *The Hindu*, 14 June 2020, <https://www.inl.com/news/india-looks-to-deploy-naval-liaisons-at-madagascar-abu-dhabi-for-information-exchange>, accessed 24 November 2022.

67 Prajakta Sawant, “China in the Indian Ocean: Agenda Beyond Development?”, *Modern Diplomacy*, 19 February 2022, <https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2022/02/19/china-in-the-indian-ocean-agenda-beyond-development/>

68 Anantha Krishnan, “India is the lone absentee at China’s Indian Ocean Forum of 19 countries”, *The Hindu*, 27 November 2022, p.12.

69 Indonesia, Pakistan, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Maldives, Nepal, Afghanistan, Iran, Oman, South Africa, Kenya, Mozambique, Tanzania, Seychelles, Madagascar, Mauritius, Djibouti and Australia.

70 Krishnan, n.2.

The IPOI initiative can prove to be important for the island states, as they tend to focus more on geo economics than on geopolitics.

and shipping in a sustainable way.”⁷¹ The Chinese are penetrating into the Indian Ocean in general and the Western part of Indian Ocean in particular, which is a matter of concern for India.

Indian Prime Minister initiated the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI), which focuses on seven pillars: Maritime ecology, security, marine resources, capacity building, disaster risk reduction, science and technology and trade and connectivity. The IPOI initiative can prove to be important for the island states, as they tend to focus more on geo economics than on geopolitics. India can work with the Western countries of the Indian Ocean in developing blue economy particularly in the following sectors:

1. Fisheries sector has a long history compared to other sectors. Fish is a key source of nutrition, employment and export revenues and is essential for economic survival of coastal states. Mostly women are involved and empowered in this sector. The Illegal, Unreported, Unregulated Fishing is a major concern for these island states as well as for India. Poor fishery management needs to be addressed, otherwise the poor become poorer in the region.
2. Tourism is another sector, which not only generates revenue but also protects and respects local

culture, traditions and heritage. It becomes an important source of foreign exchange and is linked to the social, economic and environmental well-being of many countries. Tourism is instrumental for the economic survival of many coastal states and is a key sector in developing blue economy. This is an important aspect of any country's economic survival, particularly coastal states.

3. Marine species provide cosmetic products and painkillers and even treatment for cancer, asthma, arthritis, etc. In 2011, the demand for pharmaceuticals from marine species was valued at US\$4.8 billion⁷² and it was anticipated to be tripled in the near future. Pharmaceuticals is one of the sectors that need to be focused particularly post Covid. Cooperation in exploration of minerals in respective waters should be looked into. China, for instance, is involved in a project to explore mineral deposits with Madagascar.
4. Sustainable marine energy can play a vital role in social and economic development, as well as in climate mitigation. Many coastal states have the potential to produce significant amount of ocean-

⁷¹ Krishnan, n.2.

⁷² R.C. Botei, “Asia-Pacific may benefit from marine bio-prospecting”, 3 February 2012, <http://www.scidev.net/global/indigenous/news/asia-pacific-may-benefitfrom-marine-bio-prospecting.html>, accessed 27 July 2015.

In addition to forging stronger ties with the Western Indian Ocean Island States, India's close and strategic relations with France (French presence in the western Indian Ocean), the US (US presence in Bahrain, Djibouti and Diego Garcia) and Japan could be leveraged to enhance India's involvement and engagement with the region.

based energy, but are limited due to physical constraints or lack of investment. Ocean based energy refers to all sources of energy: wave, tidal, thermal conversion, salinity gradient and offshore wind energy. There are hundreds of isolated communities which are scattered and blue energy can really help to provide power to these isolated communities.

5. Blue clusters will help the different sectors to reduce their cost and enhance revenue. The clusters play a significant role in bringing industry and government stakeholders together to promote development of different sectors. The cluster is a focal point for all: companies, institutions, research centres acting at various levels in the transformation of products, including the programming of maritime activities.
6. Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) helps to get maximum benefits in a limited area. In other words, a single notional location can be designed for multiple purposes. MSP is a tool to manage the use of seas and oceans. It is a dynamic process that addresses

the use of sea areas by humans, with efficiency and efficacy concerns and principles.

Conclusion

India has demonstrated its role as a security provider in the IOR. So far, in the security realm, it has focused more on anti-piracy activities in the Western Indian Ocean region. It needs to work in a broader perspective to focus on traditional and non-traditional security as also on prosperity and development in the region. Western Indian Ocean has become strategically important particularly on account of the Indo-Pacific concept and the SAGAR vision of India. India and the littoral states can cooperate in the blue economy, as their development is associated with coastal economy. In addition to forging stronger ties with the Western Indian Ocean Island States, India's close and strategic relations with France (French presence in the western Indian Ocean), the US (US presence in Bahrain, Djibouti and Diego Garcia) and Japan could be leveraged to enhance India's involvement and engagement with the region including to monitor and counter activities inimical to its interests and to the peace, security and stability of the Indian Ocean Region.

Mauritius and the Indian Ocean

Priya Bahadoor

This paper is a humble attempt to analyse the perspective of Mauritius on the Indian Ocean. Does Mauritius have a specific policy concerning the Indian Ocean or have there been changes in the way that it perceives the region over the years? Until recently, much attention has been given to the security aspect of the Indian Ocean with claims of sovereignty over the Chagos archipelago, the Wakashio incident and the fire aboard the Cargo ship, MV X-Press Pearl, in the territorial waters of Sri Lanka.

Did Mauritius have a policy related to its dependencies and territorial waters after its independence? The numerous battles led through diplomatic channels as well as through legal means regarding the Mauritius claim over its sovereignty on the Chagos archipelago, do illustrate the willingness to define and secure its territorial waters. Its actions in collaboration with other Indian oceanic states and powers to tackle the non-traditional security threats like piracy and Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing do highlight a plan of action. However, some of the actions of Mauritius concerning the Indian Ocean seem to be in response to the actions of other powers of the region rather than something emanating from the government. This

is so because Mauritius is a small island state with limited resources at its disposal and there are several issues linked with the Indian Ocean, an area covering approximately 70.56 million km². There is no real long-term plan concerning its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) as well as the Indian Ocean region. Former diplomat, Vijay Makhani, has mentioned in one of his papers (Makhani, 2018), that Mauritius did not have a real Foreign Policy blueprint in its post independence era but managed to diversify its economy with the help of powers like India, China and Japan, amongst others. He also highlighted how the economic interest of the island is guiding the interaction of Mauritius with international actors. The geographical specificities of Mauritius as well as its friendly relations with a number of regional as well as non-regional powers do make it a relatively well disciplined player of the Indian Ocean.

History

It is important to highlight the history of Mauritius to better understand its stand on issues concerning maritime security. The island of Mauritius, found in South-

The geographical specificities of Mauritius as well as its friendly relations with a number of regional as well as non-regional powers do make it a relatively well disciplined player of the Indian Ocean.

Western Indian Ocean has been used by the Dutch as a port of call on their way to the East Indies during the 17th century. Eventually, it was colonized by the French in 1715 until the British decided to take control of it to secure their ships travelling to and from India during the course of the late 18th and early 19th century. The island, colonized by the British because of its strategic location in the Indian Ocean, came to acquire a new role in the eyes of Great Britain. Starting from the 17th century, the different colonial powers introduced free European as well as non European workers, liberated Africans, Indian convicts and indentured labourers for the development of the island up to the 19th century (Peerthum, 2020). The cultivation of sugarcane became the focus of the British administrators in Mauritius and with the abolition of slavery in 1835, indentured labourers were brought on the island mainly from India. The small British colony thus relied on India up to 1910 for labour, the year, when the last batches of Indian indentured labourers were brought on the island. The policies related to the island of Mauritius and its dependencies depended on the British colonial powers. The dependencies of Mauritius included Rodrigues, the Chagos Archipelago, Saint-Brandon & Agalega.

Post Independence Initiatives

The Cold War brought with it several important developments in the Indian

Ocean which resulted in, amongst other things, the excision of the Chagos archipelago from the territory of Mauritius and the independence of the island on 12 March 1968. The colonial powers were however quite skeptic as to the future of Mauritius. Described as the “paradigm of the small isolated, poor, dependent country...” the island managed to come out of the dependence of a mono crop industry to develop other pillars of its economy. Immediately after independence, the different political actors as well as diplomats tried their best to weave connections with various countries throughout the world which would help the island to come out of its isolation and develop its economy. Mauritius, even though had by that time managed to get admitted in a number of international as well as regional organisations, did not really have a clear policy concerning the Indian Ocean. It was still a young independent nation and the contours of a semblant of policy for the Indian Ocean came with the formation of the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC) in 1982. Mauritius was one of the founding members of the Indian Ocean Commission which regrouped the small islands found in the South-Western Indian Ocean, namely, Seychelles, Madagascar, the Comoros Islands and Reunion Island. With time, Mauritius had to align its national strategy concerning the Indian Ocean to that of some of the regional organisations, namely the IOC, the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) and the African Union (AU). The IOC has a number

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of projects in various sectors including that of Maritime security in the Indian Ocean. The MASE programme, the Maritime Security Programme, set up by the IOC has, in the words of the Secretary General of the IOC, Prof Vêlayoudom Marimoutou (IOC website, 2021), transcended the primary objectives which was to fight against piracy and its criminal ramifications. The cross border nature of these maritime crimes calls for cooperation beyond the areas of the IOC. The Secretary General further stated that it was essential to come up with virtuous synergies with other regional mechanisms found in the Indian Ocean and even beyond that region. However, the organisation in question has to take into consideration that the different member countries have to, first of all, come up with their respective national strategies and then see to it that they are in line with those of, for example, the maritime strategy of the IOC. The former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade, Mr Nandcoomar Bodha, has mentioned in the preface of the report presenting the achievements of Mauritius while it was chairing the Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia (CGPCS) that

“As one of the signatory countries of the 2 MASE regional agreements, Mauritius contributes to build a safe and secure region through the development of a regional maritime security architecture – materialized by the two regional centres, the RMIFC2 and RCOC3, based in Madagascar and Seychelles respectively.” (IOC Publication, 2020)

The IORA, has on its part made the maritime safety and security as one of its priority area, and has during the first IORA Strategic Planning Workshop highlighted the possibility and by extension the need for coming up with a regional security architecture. However, despite some of

the limitations encountered by Mauritius by being part of these regional forums, it seems that there is indeed a maritime security architecture, in the Indian Ocean region, to deal with piracy, drug smuggling or information sharing.

Mauritius since Independence has been busy establishing relations with different countries and in different regional organisations despite being preoccupied with its internal affairs; such as transition from a mono crop economy and political instability as mentioned above. Still as a young nation during the course of the Cold War, the then Government of Mauritius claimed sovereignty over the Chagos archipelago which had been illegally detached from the territory of Mauritius before its Independence in 1968. The Government of Mauritius had recourse to diplomatic means and ultimately chose to adopt legal ways to win this case. It has always highlighted its friendly ties with all countries, both the regional and extra regional ones. The territorial disputes have not influenced the bilateral relations of Mauritius with the two former colonial powers; Great Britain and the Republic of France.

The IOC, has in the past, acted as a platform to mediate between France and Mauritius to try to find a solution to the territorial dispute over Tromelin. Due to its limited means, Mauritius has over the years received diverse kinds of help from regional and extra regional actors for the management of its territories. It is quite difficult for a small island nation like Mauritius to come up with a policy for the Indian Ocean just like India's Indian Ocean policy or China's Africa policy. Mauritius, however, finds itself playing the role attributed to it by Indian oceanic or non- Indian oceanic states. For example,

during the event organised in Mauritius to celebrate the 75 years of diplomatic relations between India & Mauritius, the High Commissioner of India to Mauritius, Nandini Singla has shared how,

*“Mauritius is at the intersection of three priority areas of India’s foreign policy- the Neighbourhood First policy and focuses on the Indian Ocean Region and on Africa.”
(Economic Development Board, 2022)*

India is one of the most important strategic partners of Mauritius. She has also been providing technical and financial assistance to Mauritius in many fields over the years. The country is the largest trading partner as well as the largest exporter of goods and services to the island since 2007. Over the years, Mauritius has concluded several cooperation agreements with different countries in various fields. The last bilateral agreement with India, the Comprehensive Economic Cooperation and Partnership Agreement (CECPA), which came into force from 1st April 2021, is expected to reinforce the commercial ties between the two countries.

In the 21st century, the Indian Ocean witnessed some major geopolitical challenges. Mauritius does not form part of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). However, the Government of China, has financed and delivered several projects in Mauritius, namely, the new airport and the Bagatelle dam. The Jin Fei (ex Tianli) project, which was designed to be part of the Special Economic Zones being set up by

the Chinese government in some African countries, did not live up to the initial expectation. The China- Mauritius bilateral Free Trade Agreement (FTA) signed in October 2019, which came into force, from January 2021, is the first agreement between China and an African country.

It is essential to highlight the role of the National Coast Guard of Mauritius at this point. The National Coast Guard, which is a specialized unit of the Mauritius Police Force and under the authority of the Commissioner of Police, was constituted on 24 July 1987 after approval of a blueprint for the management of the island territorial waters. The rise in smuggling and IUU fishing made the creation of this organization important. According to a recent interview published by Le Matinal (November 2022), the Current Commissioner of Police has stated that the National Coast Guard has to rely on regional and international cooperation to tackle issues like marine pollution, human trafficking, drug trafficking and looting in the EEZ of Mauritius, about 2,3 million square kilometers. Despite being proactive in its approach, the National Coast Guard has not been able to prevent the MV Wakashio oil spill in July 2020 in the territorial waters of Mauritius.

Mauritius has a maritime zone of 2.3 million square kilometers and an area of 396,000 square kilometers which is co-managed with Seychelles. The activities associated with the blue economy are in

It is quite difficult for a small island nation like Mauritius to come up with a policy for the Indian Ocean just like India’s Indian Ocean policy or China’s Africa policy. Mauritius, however, finds itself playing the role attributed to it by Indian oceanic or non- Indian oceanic states.

The Government of Mauritius thus wants to ensure long- term benefits by the sustainable use of marine resources by developing local capacity. Mauritius is yet to unlock the potential of the blue economy.

the beginning phases. There are several regional partners, like Australia, who are collaborating on issues related to the blue economy. The vision of the Government is to transform it as an important pillar of the Mauritian economy while ensuring conservation of the marine ecosystems. The Government of Mauritius thus wants to ensure long- term benefits by the sustainable use of marine resources by developing local capacity. Mauritius is yet to unlock the potential of the blue economy. This point has been highlighted by Sudheer Maudhoo, the Minister of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and shipping, in the Annual Report on Performance for Financial Year 2020-2021.

Mauritius should continue to work in collaboration with the different actors of the Indian Ocean to come up with a harmonized strategy for the region whose key transit routes are used by almost two thirds of the world's sea based commerce. The Government, with its limited resources, cannot proceed to design a specific strategy for the Indian Ocean alone as no state can exist in isolation. Despite being a small island state, the EEZ of Mauritius makes it a critical actor which can influence the balance of power in the region. The different regional organizations can only act as platforms to invite the different states of the region to formulate specific policies for the numerous issues linked to this area.

Despite being a small island state, the EEZ of Mauritius makes it a critical actor which can influence the balance of power in the region.

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Charting Seychelles' Blue Economy

Malshini Senaratne

The Republic of Seychelles is a Small Island Developing State (SIDS) located in the Western Indian Ocean. With a population of roughly 100,000, the country holds more water than land to its name. Indeed, it possesses an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of territorial waters ranging about 1.3 mn sq. km and sovereign land of about 455 sq km. The island state has thus sought to rebrand itself as a Large Ocean State through its Blue Economy model in recent years.

In 2015, Seychelles achieved high income country status, due to the rapid development of its tourism and sound macroeconomic reform following the 2008 economic crisis. The country additionally enjoys comprehensive social services, including free health and education, housing support, water and waste management services and consistently ranks highest in Africa on global human development indicators.

The island state has thus sought to rebrand itself as a Large Ocean State through its Blue Economy model in recent years.

Nonetheless, the island state faces considerable socio-economic challenges, largely exacerbated by the recent COVID-19 pandemic. For instance, COVID heaved much of the world's population under the poverty line,

and similarly in Seychelles, around 25% of population are thought to be living below the poverty line. How Seychelles chooses to navigate her development pathway

through the Blue Economy framework – economically, environmentally and socially - will impact her for generations to come.

The Blue Economy

The Blue Economy concept acknowledges small islands' unique dependencies on oceans and their vulnerability to climate change. It therefore proposes options for mitigating some of the inherent structural challenges of small, undiversified economies, including small populations, high dependency on imports, limited space, skills, capacity and high unit costs of providing public services. In a preliminary finding in 2018, Seychelles' Blue Economy was valued at \$495 million comprising 30.6% of GDP and contributing 45% of Seychelles formal employment.

With tourism and fisheries – both traditional and heavily climate-impacted sectors - being the cornerstones of the economy, a healthy and sustainable ocean was further deemed imperative for the country's future development. The country chose to undertake some innovative financial instruments as a means to finance this development agenda.

In 2015, the first debt-for-nature swap for ocean conservation was concluded, where Seychelles restructured US\$ 21.6 million of its debt, in agreement with the Paris Club.

The country also launched the world's first sovereign Blue Bond thereafter, raising

These successes, combined with the achievements of gaining blended financing through new innovative financial instruments, have made Seychelles a pioneer in the Blue Economy space.

US \$15 million from international private investors. Proceeds from the bond are intended to fund the expansion of marine protected areas, sustainable marine and fisheries projects and the development of the island's Blue Economy.

In the midst of a pandemic, the government also declared 30% of Seychelles' EEZ a Marine Protected Area (MPA) in 2020, which exceeds the meeting of SDG 4.5, that states: by 2020, conserve at least 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas, consistent with national and international law and based on the best available scientific information. Now, the country is seriously engaged in implementing the outlines of the MPA, with respect to various zones that can have some economic activities, and zones that are 'no take' zones, or cannot have any economic activities undertaken. These successes, combined with the achievements of gaining blended financing through new innovative financial instruments, have made Seychelles a pioneer in the Blue Economy space. Nonetheless, the country faces numerous challenges in its socio-economic development.

Seychelles' economy is particularly vulnerable due to its relatively isolated geographic location and its undiversified nature. Its substantial reliance on fisheries and tourism made it vulnerable to exogenous shocks such as COVID. The fisheries sector faces several challenges, a primary one being an inadequately trained and aging workforce, with few signs of succession. Over exploitation of the

nation's marine environment is possibly the greatest medium to long-term risk to Seychelles' economy. These include the prevalence of Illegal, Unregulated, and Unreported (IUU) fishing, naturally leading to concerns on fish stock, quotas for catch and food security. Transnational crime, human and drug trafficking events are also major concerns in our waters.

Tourism is an over-developed sector that cratered substantially as a result of the pandemic. It is a sector that is heavily relied upon for income by coastal communities and government for substantial revenue. Tourism faces similar challenges from an employment perspective, with a high proportion of the jobs in the tourism sector being held by non-Seychellois.

Hydrocarbon exploration and mining is a tricky one, as it was also identified by the government as an economic zone within the Blue Economy model that is ripe for exploitation. Oil exploration in Seychelles' territorial waters is therefore set to restart after the island nation signed an agreement with a British oil company in 2022. The government has nonetheless stressed that Seychelles' principal focus remains on the conservation and protection of its pristine and unique environment, by stating oil exploration "...should not preclude us, within the framework of the Blue Economy, to engage in research and exploitation of resources that may lie below our ocean floor."

These challenges showcase the issues the country faces as it attempts to get its Blue

Engaging with key partners of choice such as India has seen numerous and quite successful collaborations on several Blue Economy fronts, including maritime security and monitoring, research and surveys as well as local capacity development. Such collaborations and partnerships will be essential for moving forward Seychelles' Blue Economy agenda.

Economy agenda back on track in the wake of COVID-19.

Next Steps

Economic recovery following the COVID pandemic is visible on the horizon, Seychelles is now focused on re-building the economy by creating, rejuvenating, and upscaling the country's outlined Blue Economy sectors, but this must happen without the country losing sight of the environmental and socio-economic principles that signpost or guide its Blue Economy Roadmap. Opportunities abound in the aquaculture, renewable energy and hydrocarbon space, but these will require delicate balancing acts from the decision makers and policy makers in this space. Boosting sectors such as agriculture, sustainable fisheries and ports and shipping expansion, for example, will be important for food security, infrastructure development, economic diversification as

well for cultural reasons, but it cannot come at the expense of loss of livelihoods in the fishing and tourism sectors.

Partnerships and collaboration beyond the island nations' shores therefore become urgent and most important. Engaging with key partners of choice such as India has seen numerous and quite successful collaborations on several Blue Economy fronts, including maritime security and monitoring, research and surveys as well as local capacity development. Such collaborations and partnerships will be essential for moving forward, Seychelles' Blue Economy agenda. Unless a clear vision of Blue Economy prevails, Seychelles runs the risk of failing to appreciate the opportunities provided through the model in terms of equity and conservation benefits — and may opt for business as usual. Nonetheless, her future remains very bright, and very blue.

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Madagascar's Diplomacy, *Fihavanana* and Strategic Competition in the Indian Ocean

Juvence F. Ramasy

The Indian Ocean is strategically contested ocean due to its geostrategic position straddling various zones of influence and international markets. The Indian Ocean Region (IOR) is defined geographically as the group of States bordering the Indian Ocean, i.e. twenty-nine States, from South Africa to the Australian continent, and including the east coast of Africa, the Horn of Africa, the Arabian Peninsula, the Gulf States, South and South-East Asia. It represents 36% of the world maritime economy, where about 200 Mt of oil transit through its waters to America and Europe via two routes, the Red Sea or the Mozambique Channel and then the Cape of Good Hope, representing 30% of world oil production. The IOR includes 2/3 of the most strategic straits and 55% of the world's population, illustrating its importance in the current geopolitics and reinforced by the growing importance

of the Indo-Pacific area. Moreover, this area is strategic because of the presence of maritime routes that are crucial for the world economy and also because of the richness of its seabed (oil, gas, fish products). Therefore, the stability of the IOR is essential to guarantee the supply of the main international markets and to ensure the international economic stability necessary for international stability in a broader sense.

In this regard, the involvement of neighboring and extra-regional states is of major importance in promoting a zone of peace and stability and resolution of conflicts that may affect the zone. This is also leading to strategic competition between the old and the new powers in the IOR. In order not to be on the threshold of the new geopolitical order in the multipolar world in which Africa, including the Indian Ocean, is one of the theaters, it is up to the

Madagascar has initiated an all-out diplomacy combined with the principle of *fihavanana* in the face of strategic competition in the IOR and beyond. Thus, the Malagasy foreign policy transcends its traditional diplomacy and its historical partners to explore new partnerships and new opportunities in the Indo-Pacific space. Among its new partners is India, which is emerging as a strategic power in the IOR.

States of the South-West Indian Ocean to make their political and diplomatic voice heard within the various bodies. To this end, Madagascar has initiated an all-out diplomacy combined with the principle of *fiHAVANANA* in the face of strategic competition in the IOR and beyond. Thus, the Malagasy foreign policy transcends its traditional diplomacy and its historical partners to explore new partnerships and new opportunities in the Indo-Pacific space. Among its new partners is India, which is emerging as a strategic power in the IOR. Moreover, the importance of the Indo-Pacific is leading states like Madagascar to rethink their actions and make new strategic choices in the face of competition among various powers present in the region. In this respect, the country has recently drawn closer to India, which is distinguished by its diplomatic activism within the IOR and has an active Indian Navy as one of its top priorities⁷³.

All-Out Diplomacy, *FiHAVANANA* and Strategic Competition

Madagascar, the 4th largest island in the world, is located in the South-Western Indian Ocean, 400 km east of the African coast (Mozambique and Tanzania) and straddling the Tropic of Capricorn. This island has a geostrategic position near the hydrocarbon highway of the Mozambique Channel and has an oil and gas potential comparable to those of the North Sea, confirmed by a study of the US Geological

Survey (USGS) in 2012⁷⁴ and the China Geological Survey in 2018 indicating that Madagascar could become an oil producing country⁷⁵. This richness of the seabed includes the Bassa a India, Juan de Nova and Europa islands, which are the subject of a territorial dispute with France. China and Russia support Madagascar in its claims. China understands that Madagascar can play the role of transit state in developing the maritime silk route. As for Russia, it wants to develop Madagascar's potential as a leader, so much so that it has shown significant diplomatic activism since the last presidential election in 2018 and diplomatic activism has accelerated following the conflict in Ukraine. Indeed, Madagascar has a mining and agricultural potential that is coveted by various countries (USA, China, France, India, Japan, Türkiye) and transnational firms.

Consequently, among the islands of the South-Western Indian Ocean, Madagascar is the country which possesses the most natural resources and is therefore of great interest to regional and extra-regional powers. This has led Madagascar to initiate an all-out diplomacy (similar to the diplomacy practiced by Didier Ratsiraka in the 1970s), in order to play its part in this geostrategic puzzle. The Malagasy foreign policy is defined as a non-exclusive, multi-sectoral diplomacy based on the principle of non-alignment. This policy was at display at the time of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, and how Madagascar justified its abstention during the votes at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA).

73 Baruah D. M., 2022, Maritime Competition in the Indian Ocean, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2022/05/12/maritime-competition-in-indian-ocean-pub-87093>

74 Lagneau L., 2014, « Pourquoi il faut s'intéresser aux îles Éparses », <http://www.opex360.com/2014/07/19/pourquoi-il-faut-sinteresser-aux-iles-eparses/>

75 Da-tian Wu, Johanne Iomimalala Ramaniraka, Feng-ming Xu, Jian-bo Shao, Yong-heng Zhou, Yuan-dong Zhao, Bruno Ralison, 2019, « Characteristics and potential analysis of Madagascar hydrocarbon-bearing basins », China Geology, Volume 2, Issue 1, 2019, Pages 56-66, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2096519219301089>

The *fihavanana* advocates the preservation of union or unity with the aim of safeguarding peace in the sense of universal brotherhood. As such, it can be compared to the concept "*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*" considering the world as one family. The *fihavanana* thus constitutes the heart of Malagasy foreign policy in accordance with the principle of the Indian Ocean peace zone.

The Malagasy diplomatic and strategic doctrine is also linked to the concept of *fihavanana* which encompass the Malagasy concept of kinship, friendship, goodwill between beings, both physical and spiritual. The literal translation is quite difficult to capture, as the Malagasy culture applies the concept in unique ways. Its origin is *havana*, meaning kin. It embodies a principle of solidarity and an ideal type of relationship based on mutual understanding and solidarity. The *fihavanana* advocates the preservation of union or unity with the aim of safeguarding peace in the sense of universal brotherhood. As such, it can be compared to the concept "*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*" considering the world as one family. The *fihavanana* thus constitutes the heart of Malagasy foreign policy in accordance with the principle of the Indian Ocean peace zone.

In addition, all-out diplomacy is an extraversion diplomacy in which Madagascar is trying to leveraging its geostrategic position within the great Indian Ocean in order to assert its interests amidst the competition among various powers. Within this geopolitical framework, Madagascar, through a balancing act, has concluded agreements and partnerships to best realize its desire for development

and to take advantage of its rich potential. Finally, Madagascar wants to carry a diplomacy of neutrality and position itself in favor of multilateralism which was moreover recalled during the speech of the President of the Republic of Madagascar, Andry Rajoelina at the 77th UN General Assembly in September 2022. This position is in line with the positive neutralism advocated by the 1975 Red Book.

As for Madagascar's diplomatic outreach within the IOR, it is essentially based on actions promoting its pacification. This has resulted in conclusion of agreements with a multitude of actors. Thus, military and security agreements have been initiated mainly to fight against piracy, illegal fishing, terrorism, transnational organized crime. Maritime security is the cornerstone of the defense cooperation agreements for Madagascar mainly to secure 5,000 km of coastline. But, the structural weakness of its navy in terms of human, material and financial resources is a concern. Securing coastline is a necessity as the Global Initiative described Madagascar as a hub (or plaque tournante) of "regional illicit markets and wider illicit flows."⁷⁶ Securing the IOR and controlling the choke points require the participation of all countries including Madagascar as well as the

76 Global Initiative, "Une Plaque Tournante: Madagascar's Changing Role in Regional Illicit Markets—Webinar," Global Initiative, 2020, <https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/une-plaque-tournante-madagascar-webinar/>

assistance of regional organizations. As such Madagascar is an active member of 4⁷⁷ organizations, of the 7⁷⁸ organizations having jurisdiction in the area. Regional cooperation is exemplified, for example, by the establishment in 2018 of the Regional Center for Fusion and Maritime Information, which plays a major role in promoting maritime security between Djibouti, Madagascar, Mauritius, the Union of Comoros and the Seychelles.

The strategic importance of Madagascar is demonstrated by the location of its naval base in the north of the country in Antsiranana. This base allows control of the sea route through the Mozambique Channel, resulting in considerable interests by various powers in the region for Madagascar. Indeed, countries like France had a base there after independence but had to leave it in the 1970s after the revision of the defense agreement. The United States and China want more cooperation allowing them better access to this naval base. The Antsiranana base's strategic importance was demonstrated during the blockade of the Suez Canal in April 2021. The Malagasy waters were widely used in order to ensure uninterrupted supply

of international trade. This should lead Madagascar to accelerate maritimization⁷⁹ for the benefit of the country.

The conclusion of various military agreements is part of all-round diplomacy and the doctrine of non-alignment and positive neutrality. It is also an illustration of the strategic competition that is characterized by the passage of military ships of different powers in Malagasy waters, the practice of joint military exercises (such as Africa Endeavor with the USA, DIANA with France), the training of Malagasy soldiers in foreign military academies, the organization of training (with the French Armed Forces in the Southern Zone of the Indian Ocean or Forces armées dans la zone sud de l'Océan Indien, FAZSOI; the MASE project funded by the EU in collaboration with the IOC) and language courses among others (English, French, Chinese). The growing interest for Madagascar in security matters was illustrated by the appointment of a defense attaché at the Chinese Embassy in Madagascar in 2021⁸⁰. The other countries with a defense attaché are the United States, France and India.

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77 Indian Ocean Commission; Southern African Development Community; Indian Ocean Naval Symposium; Indian Ocean Rim Association.

78 The other 3 organizations are: ASEAN; Gulf Cooperation Council and South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation.

79 Rafidinarivo C., 2021, La nouvelle géopolitique de l'océan Indien, The conversation, <https://theconversation.com/la-nouvelle-geopolitique-de-locean-indien-152638>

80 Ministère de la Défense nationale, 2021, « L'attaché de défense de Chine a Madagascar a effectué une visite de courtoisie auprès du Ministre de la Défense nationale », <http://www.defense.gov.mg/lattache-de-defense-de-chine-a-madagascar-a-effectue-une-visite-de-courtoisie-aupres-du-ministre-de-la-defense-nationale/>

India has organized the India Africa Forum Summit in 2008, 2011 and 2015 to further assert its place on the African continent. For India, this means insisting on South-South solidarity through actions in favor of Africa's development, which can contribute to a rebalancing of relations within an increasingly globalized and interdependent world.

The Indian Umbrella, Soft Power, Naval Diplomacy and Security

The evolution of the world, particularly the relations between the different powers, is leading to a new structuring of the relations between States. Africa occupies a strategic place in the world geopolitics and geo-economics due to its richness in terms of natural resources and its subsoil. This has increased the interests of various powers, which are implementing multiple strategies to modify the old relationships. Diplomacy of the forums to project Africa is being set up in various countries including in India. India has organized the India Africa Forum Summit in 2008, 2011 and 2015 to further assert its place on the African continent. For India, this means insisting on South-South solidarity through actions in favor of Africa's development, which can contribute to a rebalancing of relations within an increasingly globalized and interdependent world.

In order to consolidate its status as a power in the region, India, is developing and implementing soft power diplomacy. Indian soft power diplomacy is putting forward Indian tradition and culture through a series of actions. This is contributing to the development of its cultural influence, which is based on a cultural diplomacy that

relies among others on the establishment of Indian cultural centers, the granting of scholarships, training for students, civil servants, especially diplomats, the military, and the practice of yoga or the learning of Indian languages such as Hindi. The Indian Prime Minister, has moreover made the promotion of yoga as one of the major points of his cultural diplomacy from 2014 so much so that the General Assembly of the United Nations proclaimed on December 11, 2014 that June 21 be henceforth called the International Day of Yoga.⁸¹ In this regard, the Embassy of India in Madagascar has organized various events to promote yoga day and Indian languages such as Hindi learning programs.

India's soft power also relies on its diaspora, which has a long-standing presence in Madagascar. The Indian diaspora is well established and plays an important role at both the local and national levels. Moreover, it is also distinguished by its significant presence in the economy of the country where the elite of Indian origin owns the main economic groups. Outreach to the diaspora has been characterized by the inauguration of a diaspora center, the Indian Dhow, in June 2022. This center will promote an understanding of the history, role, achievements and contributions of the Indian diaspora in Madagascar. Such an initiative is necessary for this social

81 Resolution A/RES/69/131

Within this geostrategic space, the islands of the South-West Indian Ocean see India as a security umbrella to ensure peace and prosperity. And Madagascar is perceived by India as an anchor and a vital pole in terms of regional development. In this respect, a series of strategic actions have been initiated by India within the framework of the Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR program), which constitutes the basis for the renewal of Indo-Malagasy relations.

group, commonly called, Karana,⁸² object of prejudices and prejudices.

In its desire to counter the growing influence of China in the Indian Ocean, particularly through the Maritime Silk Road, India has increased its presence in various areas such as maritime governance in order to assert its leadership in the Indian Ocean region. Indeed, India is implementing a set of strategies to get closer to the islands of the South-West Indian Ocean. India is increasingly positioning itself as a political and military power in this region, which it considers its natural zone of influence.

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have been initiated by India within the framework of the Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR program), which constitutes the basis for the renewal of Indo-Malagasy relations.

The Indian presence is now more evident and has taken various forms. Indian foreign policy towards Madagascar combines the soft power and cooperation in the military and security fields. As such, a listening station has been installed in the north of the country since 2007, which is a strategic location due to its proximity to the Mozambique Channel.⁸⁴ This initiative is part of the Indian naval diplomacy especially with the establishment of the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium in 2008 to assert its geopolitical and geostrategic role in the Indo-Pacific region. So much so that India and Madagascar have increased their cooperation by signing an agreement during the year 2021 to strengthen security

82 The Karana have been present in Madagascar since the 18th century. The name "Karana", formerly written Karany comes from the term "Koran". They are from the peninsula of Kathjawa and more broadly from the district of Gujerat, which formerly was part of the sultanate of Baroda but was very close to the "Presidency of Bombay", territory of the English East India Company. The Karana in the broad sense are divided into 5 socio-religious groups, there are 3 Shiite Muslim groups, Bohra Dawudi, Khodja ithna ashery, Khodja isma'ili; 1 Sunni Muslim group, Sunni surti or Sunni sindhi or kutchi (in reference to a geographical origin) and the last group the Banians, of Hindu religion. According to the Indian embassy, there would be about 17 500 persons of India origin in Madagascar, including approximately 2500 Indian passport holders. They are in fact the owners of a large majority of the stores in the cities of the west and a non-negligible share in the cities of the center. Blanchy S., 1995, Karana et Banians : les communautés commerçantes d'origine indienne Madagascar, Paris, L'Harmattan, 346 p.

83 Eddmond R., 2022, "Coopération : « Madagascar, un pôle vital de l'Océan Indien en matière de développement régional », selon l'ambassadeur de l'Inde Abhay Kumar. », Midi Madagasikara, 14 juin 2022, <https://midi-madagasikara.mg/2022/06/14/cooperation-madagascar-un-pole-vital-de-locean-indien-en-matiere-de-developpement-regional-selon-lambassadeur-de-linde-abhay-kumar/>

84 Pubby, M. (2007, July 18). India activates first listening post on foreign soil: Radars in Madagascar. Indian Express. <http://archive.indianexpress.com/news/india-activatesfirst-listening-post-on-foreign-soil-radars-in-madagascar/205416/>

A clear definition of Madagascar's diplomatic and strategic orientation is required in both regional and international dimensions, with an emphasis on the naval component of its diplomacy in order to appear as a naval state aware of its assets in this area.



cooperation mainly in the maritime field through experience sharing and transfer of expertise to the Malagasy Navy. In addition, the two countries have agreed to conduct joint military exercises. The intensification of relations between these maritime neighbors was manifested by a meeting between the Foreign Ministers on the sidelines of the UNGA in September 2022. This is part of India's desire to increase its naval presence within the IOR. India has expanded its naval presence in the Indian Ocean⁸⁵.

Madagascar a Transit State or a Naval State?

The fragility of successive political regimes and the absence of a well-established foreign policy, such as a white paper or even

a strategic document, tends to weaken the Madagascar's positioning. So much so that its diplomacy of extraversion leads to mixed results unlike a state like Djibouti. Indeed the fragility of the Malagasy regimes does not engender the confidence of the partners and tempers the success of its strategy of extraversion. In addition, the low diversification and lack of competitiveness of the Malagasy economy does not allow it to conclude a large number of partnerships despite its rich potential. However, Madagascar, through its all-out diplomacy and its positive neutrality, tends to play the card of its strategic positioning in the face of the competition between the powers in the IOR and even the Indo-Pacific. Thus, the country must have room to maneuver in order to assert its own interests, the first of which is participation in its economic and social development, and not serve as the missing piece of the puzzle or a transit state for the control of the IOR. From this perspective, a clear definition of Madagascar's diplomatic and strategic orientation is required in both regional and international dimensions, with an emphasis on the naval component of its diplomacy in order to appear as a naval state aware of its assets in this area. This strategic repositioning will enable it to work with the powers of the moment in a constantly changing world.

⁸⁵ https://www.rips.or.jp/en/rips_eye/1575/

Remarks

R S Vasan

Management of Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZs) is important for maritime nations, including India. India has nearly 2.01 million square kilometers area that needs to be managed including the sea area around Andaman and Nicobar. India needs to optimize methods for harnessing the oceans, through structured and planned blue economy initiatives.

Both Admiral Mahan and Sardar Panikkar who spoke about the potential of sea power were quoted by Dr. Sanjay Baru and Admiral Muralidharan. Some of the well-founded theories have been mentioned by other speakers. While discussing the constituents of maritime power of a nation, the geographic location is a significant factor. There is a need to look at the location of Island States of the Indian Ocean. How have they become important? It is because of their physical location, whether it's Madagascar close to the African coast or whether it Seychelles, or Mauritius, or Maldives. Location in the region define the way in which maritime relations are conducted.

The location of these Islands States plays a significant role in their geo political, geo-strategic and geo economic profile. The location and the geographic contours while complementing the growth trajectory of

nations also help in addressing the security concerns. A look at the maritime map of India brings out the density of shipping along the Sea Lanes of Communication (SLOCs) that bring in both opportunities for connectivity as well as challenges. Nearly 60,000 vessels pass every year through SLOC, which are very close to these island nations. However, as Ambassador Mudgal brought out in his remarks, they do not have the capacity to monitor the EEZ. Just 0.25% or 0.3% of man power is looking after every square kilometer of EEZ which is a constraint in regular monitoring of sea routes. This is where there is a need for island states to look up to friendly nations like India, who can provide the support, which is essential for expanding the scope of their surveillance. The Blue Economy initiatives also demand enormous cooperation amongst maritime nations to optimize the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

India is on the right track in terms of engaging with the smaller island nations in the region, within the framework of the idea of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*, which means the world is one family. Unlike China which has led many nations on the debt trap avenue by pursuing cheque book diplomacy, India would like to ensure in the true spirit of SAGAR, a shared prosperity

There is a need for island states to look up to friendly nations like India, who can provide the support, which is essential for expanding the scope of their surveillance.

As the fastest growing economy and with the benevolent nature of its engagement with its neighbours, India finds it easy to transact its relations with any island state in the Indian Ocean.

and security amongst partners in the region, in letter and spirit.

An inverted map of India with the south on top makes it clear as to the enormous maritime areas that India is blessed with. Because of the relative locations of these islands in the IOR they play an important role in the integration of maritime dynamics in the region. The Madagascar which is close to the African coast, Comoros and Seychelles with their own maritime dynamics, the growth and prosperity of these island states are of great importance to India. Whether it's economic development, blue economy, education, and technology, India can play an important role as a benevolent partner.

On Chagos islands issue, India has a role to play in ensuring that this is returned to their original owners. There are efforts to convert the island into some kind of economic, environmental showpiece by other powers in the region, to deny the ownership to the natives. So India should join hands with Mauritius and other neighbours on this issue to restore the rightful ownership to the original inhabitants.

Many terms have been used to describe India as a lead security provider, first responder, lead security facilitator and lead coordinator. Because of the geographic location, vibrant economy, democratic and secular credentials, India is destined to play a major role in the region. As the fastest growing economy and with the benevolent nature of its engagement

with its neighbours, India finds it easy to transact its relations with any island state in the Indian Ocean.

Indian Ocean is the only Ocean named after a country. Despite this, India has not nurtured any notions that it owns the ocean. On the contrary, it would like to play a constructive role in the destiny of the nations around it. This is the whole objective of SAGAR and the Blue Economy Initiative. Indian Navy is justifiably a regional superpower in the IOR. No other Navy has the credentials to be a regional power in IOR.

Terms such as string of pearls, encirclement etc... are being used to describe China's active engagement with islands in the IOR. Involvement of extra regional actors in the region has a bearing on strategic, political and economic matters. But, India likes to engage with smaller neighbours in the context of historical and cultural relations spanning centuries. In terms of maritime engagement and security needs, India has to accommodate the aspirations of the Island nations and find ways to provide for political and economic support. It is also necessary to harmonize India's responses with like-minded partners such as France which has the largest EEZ in IOR.

In conclusion, it can be said that India is nurturing maritime relations with smaller Island nations and the historical and civilizational relations provide a firm basis for enhancing the engagement profile in the maritime domain.



Programme

International Seminar
on
India and the Island States in the Indian Ocean
Evolving Geopolitics and Security Perspectives

6 September 2022

Venue: Virtual Platform

1200 – 1230 Hrs	Inaugural Session
1200 – 1205 Hrs	Welcome Remarks Amb. Vijay Thakur Singh <i>Director General, Indian Council of World Affairs</i>
1205 – 1225 Hrs	Keynote Address Sanjaya Baru, <i>Member Governing Body Indian Council of World Affairs</i>
1230 – 1355 Hrs	Session 1: Southern Neighbourhood: Sri Lanka and Maldives
1230 – 1240 Hrs	Remarks by Chair Amb. Ashok Kantha, <i>Former Indian High Commissioner to Sri Lanka</i>
	Speakers
1240 – 1255 Hrs	Dr. Asanga Abeyagoonasekera (Sri Lanka) <i>Geopolitical Analyst, Strategic Advisor on Security and Author, Senior Fellow, The Millennium Project, Washington DC</i>
1255 – 1310 Hrs	Mr. Athaulla A Rasheed (Maldives) <i>Department of Pacific Affairs, Australian National University, former diplomat at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs</i>
1310 – 1325 Hrs	Dr. N. Manoharan (India) <i>Director, Centre for East Asian Studies, Associate Professor, Department of International Studies, Christ University, Bangalore</i>

1325 – 1340 Hrs	Vice Admiral (Retd.) M P Muralidharan (India) <i>Former Director General, Indian Coast Guard</i>
1340 – 1355 Hrs	Q & A
1400 – 1540 Hrs	Session 2: Southwest Indian Ocean
1400 – 1410 Hrs	Remarks by Chair Amb. Anup Mudgal <i>Former Indian High Commissioner to Mauritius</i>
	Speakers
1410 – 1425 Hrs	Ms Malshini Senaratne (Seychelles) <i>Asst. Head of Department, Faculty of Business and Sustainable Development, University of Seychelles</i>
1425 – 1440 Hrs	Dr Priya Bahadoor (Mauritius) <i>Lecturer, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, University of Mauritius</i>
1440 – 1455 Hrs	Dr Juvenice F. Ramasy (Madagascar) <i>Lecturer, University of Toamasina, Madagascar</i>
1510 – 1525 Hrs	Commodore (Retd) RS Vasan (India) <i>Director, Chennai Centre for China Studies, Chennai</i>
1540 – 1545 Hrs	Vote of Thanks Dr Nivedita Ray <i>Director Research, ICWA</i>





About the Contributors



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Ambassador Vijay Thakur Singh holds a Master's degree in Economics from Himachal Pradesh University. She joined the Indian Foreign Service in 1985. Her first posting was in the Embassy of India in Madrid, Spain, where she later went as Deputy Chief of Mission in 2006. She worked in the Ministry of External Affairs from 1989 to 1999, handling India's relations with Afghanistan and Pakistan. She was posted as Counsellor in the Embassy of India in Kabul from 2003 to 2005. She has had multilateral experience, particularly in economic and environmental issues. She was Counsellor in the Permanent Mission of India to the United Nations in New York from 2000 to 2003. She has served as Joint Secretary to the President of India from August 2007 to August 2012 and as Joint Secretary at the National Security Council Secretariat (NSCS) from 2012 to 2013. She has been High Commissioner of India to Singapore from 2013 to 2016 and Ambassador of India to Ireland from 2016 to 2018. For two years from 2018, she was Secretary (East) in the Ministry of External Affairs and retired in September 2020. She took over as the DG of ICWA in July 2021.



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Dr. Sanjaya Baru is Distinguished Fellow, Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies & Analysis (MP-IDSA) & United Service Institution of India (USI). He has been the editor of India's major financial newspapers, The Economic Times, Financial Express and Business Standard. He was Media Advisor to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Director for Geo-economics and Strategy, International Institute of Strategic Studies, London. He was professor of economics at University of Hyderabad, Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations and the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, Singapore. He was Secretary-General, Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry. His publications include The Strategic Consequences of India's Economic Rise, India and the World: Essays on Geo-economics and Foreign Policy, The Accidental Prime Minister: The Making and Unmaking of Manmohan Singh and 1991: How PV Narasimha Rao Made History and The Bombay Plan: A Blueprint for Economic Resurgence (2018).



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Asanga's forthcoming book is on Sri Lanka's geopolitical challenges *Conundrum of an Island* (World Scientific, Singapore). He is the author of *Sri Lanka at Crossroads* (2019) and *Towards a Better World Order* (2015). Asanga served as a Visiting Professor for Geopolitics and Global Leadership (NKU, USA), Visiting Lecturer for International Security (Colombo University, Sri Lanka), International Political Economy (University of London in Colombo RIC). Asanga is the node chair for the Millennium Project Foresight Initiative Global Think Tank (Washington DC) and Young Global Leader of the World Economic Forum.



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Dr Athaulla A Rasheed is a doctoral scholar from the Australian National University. His academic scholarship at the Department of Pacific Affairs of Australian National University covers developing frameworks for climate security in small island developing states and their implications for regional and international security cooperation. Athaulla also has published in many international peer-reviewed and policy journals, covering Maldives and geopolitical competitions in South Asia and the Indian Ocean region, including the implications of climate security in Indo-Pacific island nations. He undertakes academic roles at ANU and has academic and policy affiliations with the Pacific and Indian Ocean agencies. Athaulla has also formerly worked as a diplomat and foreign service officer at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Maldives. He has had long-standing professional and academic expertise in Maldives' politics and governance.



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His areas of interest include internal security, terrorism, Sri Lanka, Maldives, human rights, ethnic conflicts, multiculturalism, security sector reforms and conflict resolution.

His main books include:

- *Developing Democracies, Counter-terror Laws and Security: Lessons from India and Sri Lanka;*
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- *Ethnic Violence and Human Rights in Sri Lanka;* and
- *Counterterrorism Legislation in Sri Lanka: Evaluating Efficacy.*

His forthcoming book is on *Federal Aspects of Foreign Policy: The Role of Tamil Nadu Fishermen Issue in India-Sri Lanka Relations* (Routledge).

He writes regularly for leading newspapers, websites and reputed peer-reviewed international journals.



| VICE ADMIRAL (RETD.) M P MURALIDHARAN

| FORMER DIRECTOR GENERAL, INDIAN COAST GUARD

Vice Admiral M.P.Muralidharan, an alumnus of National Defence Academy, Khadakvasla, was commissioned into the Indian Navy on 01 Jan 1975. He is a specialist in Navigation and Direction and also holds a post graduate degree in Defence Studies. In a career of almost four decades, the Admiral has held several key Operational and Staff appointments. He has commanded three warships including the Guided Missile Destroyer Ranvijay and has been Fleet Operations Officer of the Western Fleet and Principal Director of Naval Operations at the Integrated Headquarters of the Ministry of Defence (Navy). He was also Directing staff at Defence Services Staff College (Wellington), Naval Assistant to the Chief of the Naval Staff and Naval Attaché, at the Embassy of India, Moscow.

On elevation to Flag Rank, as Rear Admiral he was the Flag Officer Sea Training at Kochi, Chief of Staff, Western Naval Command at Mumbai and also held the operational appointment of the Flag Officer Commanding, Maharashtra and Gujarat Naval Area. On promotion to Vice Admiral, he became the first commandant of the Indian Naval Academy at Ezhimala. Subsequently, he became the Chief of Personnel at Naval Headquarters prior to taking over as the 19th Director General of the Indian Coast Guard from where he retired in Feb 2013.



I AMB ANUP MUDGAL

■ FORMER INDIAN HIGH COMMISSIONER TO MAURITIUS

Ambassador Anup K. Mudgal, a member of the Indian Foreign Service (IFS), retired in May 2016 as India's High Commissioner to Mauritius. As part of his diplomatic career, spanning thirty two years, he served thrice at the Headquarters of the Ministry of External Affairs handling relations with India's neighborhood, ASEAN region, Russian Federation and some countries of Central and Eastern Europe, as well as issues relating to Human Resource Development.

As part of his eight assignments abroad, Amb. Mudgal served in different capacities at the Indian Missions in Mexico (including NAFTA matters), Peru, former Yugoslavia, Belgium (including EU matters), Germany, Austria (work relating to: IAEA, UNIDO, UNODC, UNOOSA, UNCITRAL), and Mauritius (including IORA).

Post retirement, Amb Mudgal has been engaged in several voluntary assignments, the important ones being: Member, FICCI Task Force on Blue Economy; Member, Steering Committee on Blue Economy under PMEAC, and chaired a working group on security, strategic dimensions, and international engagement; Member, Core Team of Kalinga International Foundation; ex-Chair, Diaspora Committee, ARSP; Former Joint Secretary, Association of Indian Diplomats; Guest lectures at various higher education and professional institutes.



| MS MALSHINI SENARATNE (SEYCHELLES)

ASST. HEAD OF DEPARTMENT, FACULTY OF BUSINESS AND
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, UNIVERSITY OF SEYCHELLES

Malshini Senaratne is the Assistant Head of Department within the Faculty of Business and Sustainable Development at the University of Seychelles, and a Director with Eco-Sol Consulting Seychelles. With a background in economics, business and development studies, she has published extensive research pertaining to the Blue Economy for the Observer Research Foundation, the Journal of Indian Ocean Region and the Seychelles Research Journal. Malshini is presently a PhD candidate in the Islands and Small States programme at the University of Malta.



| PRIYA BAHADOOR, (MAURITIUS)

LECTURER, FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND
HUMANITIES, UNIVERSITY OF MAURITIUS

Dr. Priya Bahadoor has completed PhD from the Université de La Réunion Masters in Historical Studies (By Research) from the University of Mauritius. She is currently teaching History on a 2 years contract at the University of Mauritius under the Department of History and Political Science.



| DR JUVENTE RAMASY (MADAGASCAR)

■ LECTURER, UNIVERSITY OF TOAMASINA, MADAGASCAR

Political and Electoral Expert, Juvence is in Support of the PACTE Project in Madagascar. Juvence is a lecturer at the University of Toamasina, Madagascar, where he teaches constitutional law. He is a PhD in political sciences from the University Toulouse 1 Capitole, France. His thesis was on the thematic: “State and implementation of democracy in the islands of the southwest Indian Ocean: the case of Madagascar and Mauritius.” He has been a visiting scholar at the Institute of Diplomacy of China in 2011. In 2012, he was Visiting Professor at the Institut d’Etudes Politiques de Lyon (France) and at the Institut d’Etudes Politiques de Toulouse (France). In 2013, he was a Visiting Scholar African Studies near the center of Leiden (Netherlands). He has participated in several scientific conferences where he presented about political and electoral issues relating to Madagascar. Finally, he has published several articles on the process of democratization in the Malagasy context. His current research focuses on issues of state, elites, military, elections and democracy in sub-Saharan Africa.



PROF. A. SUBRAMANYAM RAJU,

DEAN, INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS, PROFESSOR & HEAD, UMISARC &
CENTRE FOR SOUTH ASIAN STUDIES, PONDICHERY UNIVERSITY

Adluri Subramanyam Raju is Professor and former Head of the UNESCO Madanjeet Singh Institute of South Asia Regional Cooperation (UMISARC) and Centre for South Asian Studies and Coordinator of the UGC Centre for Maritime Studies at Pondicherry University, India. He is the recipient of the Mahbub ul Haq Award (Regional Centre for Strategic Studies, Colombo, Sri Lanka), the Scholar of Peace Award (Women in Security, Conflict Management and Peace, New Delhi, 2002) and the Kodikara Award (Regional Centre for Strategic Studies, Colombo, 1998). He was a Salzburg Seminar Fellow (2006). He received the National Best Teacher Award (C.V.S. Krishnamurthy Theja Charities, Tirupati, 2017) and Best Teacher Award twice (Pondicherry University, 2013 and 2018). He is a member of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry's Third Task Force on Blue Economy. He was previously a visiting fellow at the Bandaranaike Centre for International Studies, Colombo, Sri Lanka. He is on the editorial boards of five journals.



| COMMODORE (RETD) RS VASAN

| DIRECTOR, CHENNAI CENTRE FOR CHINA STUDIES

An Alumnus of the Defence Services Staff College, the Naval War College and the International Visitor Leadership Programme, Commodore Seshadri Vasan has a distinguished service of over 34 years in the Navy and the Coast Guard. His appointments include command of warships, two major air stations and a maritime air squadron. He has participated both in the 1971 war and IPKF operations. He was an instructor at the Naval War College, India. Prior to retirement, he was the Regional Commander of the Indian Coast Guard Region East overseeing EEZ Patrol, SAR, Anti-Piracy, Fisheries protection, Maritime Border Control, Marine Pollution prevention and other maritime tasks in the Bay of Bengal.

Post retirement he has served in many think tanks and is a regular speaker at many International and national conferences. He was also the Chairman of Aeronautical Society of India, Chennai Charter And the Director of the Asian Bureau of the World Border Police .He has many publications to his credit in journals, websites, edited books and media.

The think tanks that he has served in include the Observer Research Foundation where he steered the Maritime Security Programme and The Center for Asia Studies where he was the Head Strategy and Security Studies. He is presently the Director General of the Chennai Centre of China Studies, the Regional Director of the National Maritime Foundation Tamil Nadu and the President of the Navy Foundation Chennai Chapter. He is also a visiting faculty at the Indian Maritime University, Academy of Maritime Education and Training, Great Lakes Institute of Management and Hindustan Institute of Engineering Technology. He is also on the Board of Advisors at the Madras University, the Stella Maris College and the Pondicherry University.



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