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# India-Africa and Indian Ocean Regional Arrangements: Regional Security Challenges and Concerns

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*Abstract*

*Regional cooperation was a growing feature of post-cold war global politics. With the changing global reality, countries among and around Indian Ocean are also relying to integrate their economic and security policy in accordance to the regional needs and conditions. They emphasized on regional institutional arrangements and engagement as such institutions are implicitly designed to promote stability, conflict avoidance and collective viability of their communities by encouraging integration among their members. Indian Ocean's recent history illustrates the geopolitical dynamics concerning British hegemony in the Indian Ocean and the escalation of superpower rivalry during Cold War. It left the IOR countries with a common historical experience of European imperialism and a sense of shared identity. It seems logical for the IOR countries to rediscover the past littoral economic, social and cultural community of an ocean-centric, regional, co-operative grouping serving as a bridgehead between Africa and Asia. Although maritime oceanic thread binds the littorals together, maritime cooperation and maritime issues have not attained the importance they deserve in this region. However, the dissimilarities in state capabilities (both economic and military) are also considerable. India and South Africa each have a blue water naval capability and a booming economy, while the smaller island nations can hardly compare. For both South Africa and India, the Indian Ocean is an arena of economic and geostrategic importance. The more recent piracy problem linked to the ongoing malaise in the Horn of Africa has created security challenges, largely about keeping the SLOCs open. In fact, there are two key threats to Indian Ocean security: the instability of certain littoral states such as Somalia, Myanmar and Pakistan on one hand and the rise of the non-state actors perpetrating piracy, terrorism and the narcotics trade, on the other. This paper is intended to analyze the major threats in IOR, and underline India-Africa engagement through various regional arrangements in order to effective management of these regional challenges. However, the paper assumes no one country is capable of controlling these threats in isolation; multilateral co-operation is being needed in order to tackle these challenges.*

India along with Africa share the vast expanse of the Indian Ocean often referred to as a bridge between the two continents i.e. Asia and Africa. As both India and Africa have long coastlines; thus, security of maritime interests is a mutual concern. The concept of the Indian Ocean community emerged with the liberation of South Africa and the resumption of relations between India and South Africa. Interestingly, the Indian Ocean region as a whole contains nearly two billion people. It is a massive market, rich in strategic and precious minerals and metals and other natural resources, valuable marine resources and energy for industries. It has abundant and diverse arable land, as well as significant human resources and technological capabilities.

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## Emergence of the concept of Regionalism

Since 1945, regional cooperation has been growing features of world politics. In the decades after World War II, the Cold War and decolonization resulted in the establishment of number of regional organizations across the world, including the NATO, the predecessors of what is today the European Union (EU), the Organization of American States (OAS), the Organization of African Unity (now African Union), the Arab League (AL), the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and so on.

The end of the Cold War and the advent of globalization trigger the so-called new regionalism, with the establishment of a number of regional cooperation frameworks, such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the Asia–Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) process, as well as efforts to rejuvenate and strengthen existing regional institutions and the creation of several sub-regional ones in Europe and Africa. Security cooperation has been an important part of this wider phenomenon. Some institutions, such as NATO, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), are explicitly and primarily security organizations. Most of the general-purpose regional organizations, such as the Arab League, the AU and the OAS, have significant security dimensions, in same way, a number of other smaller regional (or sub-regional) groups, such as the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

However, many regional and sub-regional organizations bridge the gap between traditional definitions of security and wider concepts of security involving democracy, human rights, economic and environmental issues. The main objective of most regional institutions are primarily to promote economic cooperation and prosperity among regional states, although it also often explicitly designed to enhance regional security by promoting stability, conflict avoidance and the collective viability of their communities (an important factors for security) by encouraging integration among their members. Significantly, with the changing reality in post-Cold War phase, India and South Africa has also been relying to integrate their security policy in accordance to the regional needs and requirement. Thus, they emphasized on regional institutional arrangements and engagement, in order to ensure peace, security and stability in the region to ensure their own security.

## Indian Ocean Region: Security Challenges and Response

Indian Ocean is the third-largest Ocean of the world among five oceans and demarcated by Asia in the north, Africa in the west, Indo-china in the east, and Antarctica in the south. The Indian Ocean connects the Middle East, Africa and East Asia with Europe and the America. It can be approachable only through traditional Cape of Good Hope, the Suez Canal or the Strait of Malacca, augment its strategic significance. The geo-political position of the Indian Ocean has enabled it to acquire the importance of being an integral link between the eastern and the western parts of the globe. This is evidence from the point outlined by K.M. Pannikar (1944; 7), "the whole Ocean area is strategically of the greatest importance as it is the highway of European nations to India, the Far-East, Australia, Africa and now even Antarctica". Because of that, it had long been the hub of great power rivalry and the struggle for its domination had been a perennial feature of global politics.

Because of its crucial geographical role, Indian Ocean is being an area of power politics. Major Powers had long vied with each other for its control, though it was only in the nineteenth century that Great Britain was able to enjoy an overwhelming dominance in the region. With the decline in Britain's relative power and the emergence of two superpowers during the Cold War, the Indian Ocean region became another arena where the US and the former Soviet Union struggled to expand their power and influence. The regional states, having suffered from a long colonial domination, were weak and sharply divided on ideological, political and territorial issues. The absence of local maritime powers in part offered opportunities to the super-powers to deploy their naval forces.

The US, however, has remained the most significant player in the region for the last several years. Apart from a global strategic dimension, the US security interests in the Indian Ocean related to two additional objectives--the first objective was the safeguarding of the Sea Lines of Communications (SLOCS) and the second objective was to ensure and strengthen the security of their friendly regional states, which complemented US security interest as threatened and weak local allies would be reluctant to support the western alliance. However, the regional allies of the US feared that, in the absence of US naval forces in the Indian Ocean, the Soviet Union might assume a more threatening posture (Rais, 1986). In post-Cold War period, US decision makers assigned new role to its navy to pursue its economic and political stakes in the region, threatened by local political instability and intra-regional conflicts.

In 1971, countries in and around the Indian Ocean, concerned over the military activities of external powers in the Ocean and anxious to extend the 'Zone of Peace', were able to obtain a resolution by the United Nations General Assembly declaring the 'Indian Ocean a zone of peace' for all time. The Assembly called upon the Great Powers to enter into consultations with the littoral states to halt further escalation and expansion of their military presence and to eliminate any manifestation in the area of Great Power military presence, including nuclear weapons.

Although, the Assembly established an Ad Hoc Committee on the Indian Ocean, with the participation of the governments in the region as well as the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council and major maritime nations. The Committee, in its labour for over two decades, had been unable to make any progress because of the attitude of the major western powers. France, UK and the US withdrew from the Committee in 1989, opposing in particular the provision of the 1971 Declaration calling for the dismantling of military bases and installations. The 'Ad-Hoc Committee' made a series of attempts to persuade them to rejoin the committee, including a visit to the three capitals by its Chairman, Mr. Herman Leonard de Silva of Sri Lanka, but without success.

The withdrawal, which took place after the end of the Cold War, raises the question whether the western powers are perhaps not now extending their desire for hegemony as it is no more challenged by the Soviet Union. However, western military bases and movements of naval vessels in the Indian Ocean continue, despite the end of the Cold War and the disintegration of military alliances in the region.

Besides, the regional events following terrorist attack on World Trade Center followed by Iraq War and War against Taliban to stabilize Afghanistan, have transformed the maritime space of the Indian Ocean. At the peak of operations during the US led War on Terror, more than a hundred ships, submarines and support vessels were deployed in the North Arabian Sea. Regional organizations are bypassed in dealing with inter-state disputes in the region in contravention of the

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spirit of the United Nations Charter, while the Great Powers contest with each other in selling arms to the countries in the region.

Today, the maritime dynamics in the Indian Ocean are premised on force postures of the extra-regional navies deployed for the tasks of regional power projection, challenging violent non-state actors, securing energy significance of the Indian Ocean region is evident from the emergent missions, new doctrines and technologies that are showcased by extra-regional naval forces (Sakhuja, 2007). It is well evident that the extra-regional powers particularly the U.S., U.K., France, China, Japan and Russia that are slowly but steadily carving out a share for themselves in shaping the regional security environment.

Today, the Indian Ocean has emerged as an area of geo-economic and geo-strategic consequences to a large number of Indian Ocean littorals as well as to non-littorals. Enormous energy and natural resources of the region appear to drive the importance of Indian Ocean. Beside promises and potential of globalization for further regional economic development, Indian Ocean also witnesses mounting power rivalries, power transitions and growing asymmetric conflicts. The emergence of non-traditional threat such as sea piracies, drug and arms trafficking, smuggling, trade in Weapon of Mass Destruction, Nuclear proliferation, organized sea crimes etc. has threaten the economic and security interests of the littoral countries in the region. However, both India and South Africa convinced that these problems cannot be solved by acrimonious debates in economic cooperation forums only, but effort should be made to deal with these problems to ensure a conducive environment for security cooperation in the region.

## India and South Africa's Interest in Indian Ocean

Colonial history has tied a number of African Indian Ocean Rim countries to the India sub-continent since the 16th Century. Mozambique was a staging post for the Portuguese in Goa and often used over stamped Indian rupees. The British East Africa Protectorate (now Kenya and parts of Uganda) was originally administered out of Bombay and Indian rupees were its currency from 1897-1920. Today rupees remain the currency of the Seychelles and Mauritius and a significant Indian diaspora lives along the coast of East and Southern Africa, particularly in Mauritius, Kenya and South Africa (Vines and Oruitemeka, 2008). India has its most comprehensive diplomatic presence in this part of Africa, with embassies or high commissions in Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique, Seychelles, Madagascar, Mauritius, besides South Africa.

India and South Africa are the two important and strategically located countries among regional and littoral states. The independence of India, the largest colonial country, in 1947 and the transformation of South Africa, the bastion of racism, into a democratic State in 1994, were the two major landmarks in the struggle for the emancipation of nations which changed the map of the Indian Ocean littoral. The march of liberation in the half century between these two great events made possible the establishment of co-operative relations among nations in the region in the interest of their peoples rather than those of external imperial Powers.

However, power politics are against the vital interests of India and South Africa and all other developing countries, and are also not in the interests of the majority of developed nations. As in the case of colonialism and apartheid, that was not in the long-term interests of the big powers. The purpose is, therefore, to build the broadest coalition of like-minded states as well as public opinion all over the world for a non-violent, non-nuclear world in which democracy, peace and prosperity prevail everywhere. Given consideration to their strategic position, India and South Africa are being co-operated through bilateral as well as multilateral mechanism, for building such

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coalition to deal with the urgent tasks in the interests of the peoples of the Indian Ocean region and the world.

## Indian Ocean as India's Backyard

By virtue of its central location in the Indian Ocean, its vast land area, large skilled manpower and its well developed agriculture and industry, India constitutes the core of South Asia. The fact that it lays on the southern periphery of the two major land powers i.e. Russia and the People's Republic of China, advance its importance from the strategic standpoint.

During the Cold War, India could hardly remain unconcerned by the heavy military presence of the Super-powers. India, therefore, pursued a consistent policy of steadily increasing its naval capability and opposing any extra-regional naval presence in the Indian Ocean. Although, by 1961, India had transformed its navy from a small coastal force to a balanced force, its strategic perception of the Indian Ocean was still limited. It was only during India's war with Pakistan in 1971 and after the creation of Bangladesh, that India's strategic perception of the Indian Ocean and its future security role in South Asia underwent a radical change. Thereafter, India, aided by the Soviet Union to a great extent, launched a massive program of rapid deployment and modernization of its naval fleet.

Besides, after the oil crisis of 1973 and adoption of liberal economic policy, the importance of Indian Ocean has been increased for India as its 90 percent of trade is sea-bound. Moreover, India's maritime security concern became particularly grave with respect to safeguarding its Island territories lying far out in the Ocean. So the policy till the early 1990s was one of the isolation. But, since then, India has moved from this position of 'isolation' to the path of engagement with everyone. Just look the calendar of the Indian armed forces, the number of countries it exercises with. This includes Russia, the US, Australia, France and other lesser powers in the immediate region (Mohan, 2006).

Fortunately, India's quiet diplomacy, slow but steady growth in its maritime capacity and the favorable post-Cold War environment together paved the way for the country to develop closer maritime contacts with its neighbours including East African littoral states. Since most of the African states of this region are financially weak, they cannot afford a large navy. A few small and medium size patrol craft is not enough to safeguard their respective coastal zone, leave aside patrol their vast EEZ or neutralize the threat from non-state actors. Frequent visits of the Indian Navy and the Indian Coast Guard in Western Indian Ocean region and States, are an important component of demonstrating cordial relationship which alone can be the basis for maritime cooperation (Singh, 2006: 210).

India has been offering help in improving maritime security capacity of some of these states. There are a number of examples alluding to India's rising influence on every Indian Ocean littoral states. The Indian military diplomacy in the region include a continuing programme of coordinated patrols with Indonesia in the Malacca Strait, naval surveillance of the Mauritius EEZ since mid-2003, and patrolling off the African coast (Pathak, 2009). An Indian Navy spokesman asserted that in these patrols the 'Indian warships are being demonstrated the Indian Navy's emergence as a competent, confident, and operationally viable and regionally visible maritime power. The Indian military has also been very active in pursuing combined exercises with a variety of Indian Ocean partners. These maneuvers underscore the new flexibility and reach of Indian military forces. More can be done if a framework of regional cooperation can be worked out at regional and sub-regional levels.

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## South Africa as an Anchor between Indian Ocean and Atlantic Ocean

South Africa is another most important country in the Indian Ocean region, both from economic and strategic points of view. South Africa is a maritime country. This is borne out of the fact that it is a coastal state with a long coastline strategically situated along one of the vital sea routes of the world. It also has a vast EEZ and a sovereign possession in the Southern Ocean, *the Prince Edward Island grouping*. From the geo-strategic point of view, South Africa forms part of the coastal region of the South Atlantic and South Indian Oceans. Its geostrategic importance arises from its location, its strategic minerals, and industrial base and extensive communications. It lies at the gateway between the Atlantic and Indian Oceans. Given the vulnerability in times of crisis of Suez and Panama, the Cape was (is still) recognized as a major choke point. Strategically the Cape sea route is one of world's most important routes. "Approximately 30 per cent (154 million tons) of Persian Gulf oil bound for Europe and the Americas is conveyed around the Cape annually. There are six well developed ports and a sound maritime infrastructure in South Africa, with good facilities for ship repair and potential to get involved in shipbuilding. More than 90 per cent of South African imports and exports in terms of tonnage, or 80 per cent in value, flow through its ports (Anderson, 1995).

However, due to its strategic location at the junction of two major Oceans of the world, the Indian Ocean and South Atlantic Ocean, South Africa is being an extremely important for the Western countries since colonial period. During the Cold War period, a major concern of the Super-Powers was the safety of the shipping lanes passing through the Indian Ocean, if it fell into hostile hands would disturbed the free flow of commerce and energy, particularly for US. At that stage of time, South Africa was a source of protection of the Cape of Good Hope, so it was not the major concern of the West because the white minority regime in South Africa was a West ally (Sexena, 2001: 389). The main threat to the shipping lane between the Persian Gulf and the eastern tip of Cape of Good Hope came from the existence of Communist/Socialist states along the eastern sea-board of Africa, such as Ethiopia, Tanzania, Mozambique and Malagasy Republic.

However, until 1990, the perception of South Africa was that except from the Soviet design and activities in the region, there was no challenge or a threat of a challenge that could worry the South African government. Since the bulk of South African trade, both imports and exports, are carried by ships over the high seas, like India, it is also been interested to secure its free navigation and safety at all time and at all cost. Therefore, South Africa is also joined hand with other countries in tackling the problem of piracy and maintaining surveillance in the region in order to ensure security of Sea Lanes of Communication (SLOCs).

## India-South Africa and Indian Ocean Commission (IOC)

India has been generally opposed to the extension of big power naval presence and the establishment of foreign military bases in the Indian Ocean region. It supported all those resolutions which oppose the big power presence in the region. It played a key role in mobilizing public opinion in favour of the 'Zone of Peace' proposal. During the Cold War era, India also opposed the presence of French troops in western Indian Ocean politics. Whereas apartheid South Africa was being a western ally, thus, it always defended western interests in the region. Significantly like West, white government in South Africa also perceived the presence of communist USSR in Indian Ocean as a major threat to regional stability. This is evident from the fact that strategic thinking in America and Britain under the new Cold War situation in the Indian

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Ocean overwhelmingly favours South Africa to defend their interests in the Southern parts of this region particularly in the Cape Route, from where heavy oil tankers passes (Misra, 1986: 133).

In the post-colonial world, France consistently emphasized its independent role as an ocean power. Its strategy is shaped by its own perception of an independent 'Great Power' based on its economic and security concerns that include protection of its island territories in the western Indian Ocean region. However, since the 1990s, Indian policy and strategy for Indian Ocean region and towards the French role in the region has changed. Even India for years, has figured as a low priority area in French foreign policy formulations, but the trend since 1998 indicates a marked shift in French policies towards India. France now finds convergence of strategic interests with India in the Indian Ocean region and many believes that France-Indian defence cooperation would be mutually beneficial (Bureau, 2000: 67). France like other countries is recognizing India's potential for being both a regional and global power. They have agreed to hold regular institutional defence dialogues for evolution of common security perspectives and military doctrines and to explore joint participation in international crisis management (Kapila, 2000: 50). They have also explored the plans for proposed joint exercises and joint production of weapons systems.

The French Navy is strongly involved in the fight against piracy in the region. Four navy ships are currently part of Operation *Atalanta*: the replenishment ship *Marne*, the Helicopter Carrier *Dixmude*, and the frigates *Aconit* and *Georges Leygues*. In addition, naval forces stationed in La Réunion contribute to the protection of the southern part of the Indian Ocean. These maritime standing forces are composed of: two Frigates *Nivose* and *Floreal*, one offshore patrol vessel *Albatros*, one Landing ship *La Grandiere* and one Patrol boat *Le Malin*. These French vessels from La Réunion standing naval forces are directly dedicated to the maritime security of the southern part of the Indian Ocean (*French Embassy in Pretoria*, 2012). Therefore, the maritime co-operation is embodied by India and France, for whom the Indian Ocean has strategic significance because of its geographic, economic and security value, 'it's everybody's interest to guarantee the stability in this region' (Rooyen, 2011: 9).

### India-South Africa and Indian Ocean Regional Association (IORA)

The Indian initiative and participation in the IORA is regarded as part and parcel of India's wider neighbourhood strategy (including Eastern and Southern Africa) and is expected to act as nodal points of intensified interaction and added forum for south-south cooperation (Mathews, 1997: 13). India's role and participation in the IORA is intimately related to India's economic diplomacy. The idea of promoting an economic community in the IOR comes up at a time when India has adopted policies of economic liberalization and globalization. Its newly formed export led growth strategies requires wider markets and assured sources of raw materials. Thus, India has a great strategic interest in the Indian Ocean which carries a third of the world's bulk cargo and two thirds of its oil (Burrows, 1997: 225). Moreover, IORA may also be regarded as an alternative power base for India for influencing the developing and developed world, as the NAM seems lost much of its relevance in the post-Cold War world.

The international sea lanes that cross the Indian Ocean, in fact, are of vital importance to India, to sustain its fast growing economy and trade. India's energy demands are very high and increasing. Already the sixth-highest energy consumer in the world, India is projected to be the third-highest by 2030, based on its anticipated increased consumption. Any disruption to this energy flow has immediate effects on energy costs and the world economy, and the potential of increasing tensions exists in an area of the world already raven by conflicts. India's maritime

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strategy therefore prioritizes the protection of its offshore oil and gas fields, existing and future deep-sea drilling programmes in its vast EEZ and associated infrastructure (including pumping stations, ports, pipeline grids and refineries).

In response to China's advances in the Indian Ocean, the Indian navy aims to modernize its fleet, including building of a medium-sized aircraft carrier. India launched its first nuclear submarine in July 2009, purchased new destroyers and an aircraft carrier from Russia, and further warships from the US. Yet, China's plans to build aircraft carriers and boost its own submarine fleet, far outstrip those of New Delhi. India has expanded defence contacts and exchanges with a host of strategic Indian Ocean countries and archipelago nations such as Mauritius, Seychelles, Madagascar and Maldives. It is also engaging in naval exercises with other East Asian and South-East Asian nations, such as Japan and Vietnam, wary of China's growing stature (Vines and Oruitemeka, 2008). The Indian Navy conducted simultaneous combined exercises with Singapore in the South China Sea and with France in the Arabian Sea in late February and early March 2005. Moreover, a multiservice combined planning exercise with the United Kingdom in Hyderabad; a naval exercise with South Africa and a port call by warships in Vietnam; and the deployment of a large flotilla to Southeast Asian waters. The agenda in the late 2005 included naval maneuvers with the United States in the Arabian Sea in September, with Russia in the Bay of Bengal in October, and with France in the Gulf of Aden in November. In addition, New Delhi partnered with Russia in a combined air-land exercise near the Pakistan border in October 2005 and with the United States in November in a *Cope India* air exercise (Pathak, 2009).

India has recently increased political attention on Africa, viewing its role as that of a partner for countries to benefit from a secure maritime domain, so as to ensure enhanced development. For India, the very visible presence of extra-regional navies shows that other states are interested in the Indian Ocean region. In IOR countries and island states, major powers have stationed a variety of maritime 'assets', ranging from carrier battle groups, to forward bases, to maritime patrol aircraft and UAVs. India continues to observe China's toe-holds in the IOR in order to gauge its intentions.

India therefore enacts its maritime strategy by ensuring that perceived legitimate threats are not realized. The network of co-operative partnerships, which it continues to build with select IOR nations and extra-regional powers, is designed to 'increase Indian influence in the region, acquire more strategic space and strategic autonomy, and create a safety cushion for itself'. An excellent illustration of this type of creative thinking lies in India's initiation of the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS), which has effectively consolidated IOR maritime defence and security institutional mechanisms. It is clear that India remains particularly effective at harnessing the range of available forces and resources in order to shape its strategic environment (Vines and Oruitemeka, 2008).

During its nascent period, IORA was facing lots of problem because of the differing priorities of member states. In addition, disappointment was also because of the Working Group of the Heads of Mission had apparently lost interest in its work; regional meetings not being held on schedule and sometimes cancelled; difficulties experienced by the Secretariat in keeping up with the dynamic global economic conditions; and a lack of technical staff at the Secretariat affecting the performance of the Secretariat and the organisation at large. South Africa also showed dwindling interest in IORA, as evidenced by reduced ministerial attendance at summits. When Thabo Mbeki became president, South Africa was becoming more interested in issues closer to home such as the SADC, the converting of the Organisation of African Unity into the African

Union (AU) and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (Nepad), initiated in 2001 (Kelegama, 2002: 2424).

At that point of time, South Africa took some important efforts to remedy the situation, for instance, seconded an official to Mauritius to augment the capacity of the Secretariat. In 2006, Iran as the two-year chair of the association, established an ambassadorial level working group in South Africa to provide some momentum in implementing projects. Pretoria plays an important role, giving that it is the only state in which all 18 members are diplomatically represented. An expert meeting on a trade priority agreement also took place in Oman in September 2007. In 2008, the organisation still has 18 Indian Ocean states as members. China, Egypt, France, Japan and the United Kingdom are Dialogue Partners, while the Indian Ocean Tourism Organisation is an observer.

A number of factors make South Africa an important part of the IORA grouping. It gives both South Africa and Southern Africa a stronger political and economic basis for negotiations with the main regional associations and with international agencies like the World Bank and European Development Funds (Beri, 1997: 339). While the primary focus of South Africa's foreign policy is to recognize the importance of its African neighbours, it also wants to play an important role internationally. The IORA provides an opportunity to that effect. Further, the economic reality of the region also forces South Africa to search for alternative markets for its goods. The organization, thus, provides South Africa with a new market diversity and potential foreign investment funding, while boosting infrastructural development throughout the region. South Africa's regional hopes with regards to SADC are also enhanced by the IORA projects and the benefits of such projects diffuse to the entire grouping. South Africa's membership of the IORA has similar beneficial effects for the whole Southern African region. While expressing security concern in Indian Ocean at Sana'a (Yemen) 10th meeting of the council of ministers of the IORA on 5 August 2007, Amb. Ngombane pointed out that South Africa is now considering deployment of naval units in the Indian Ocean to assist in combating piracy and trafficking (*IOR-ARC's 10th Meeting of Council of Ministers*, 2007).

### India-South Africa and their Regional Engagements

The Indian Ocean's recent history illustrates the geopolitical dynamics of the region. After the Second World War, decolonization meant the end of British hegemony in the Indian Ocean, and the escalation of superpower rivalry due to the region's strategic importance. The common historical experience of European imperialism had left a sense of shared identity, and it seemed only logical for the IOR countries to rediscover the past littoral economic, social and cultural community of an ocean-centric, regional, co-operative grouping serving as a bridgehead between Africa and Asia (Rooyen, 2011). Although maritime oceanic thread binds the littorals together, maritime cooperation and maritime issues have not attained the importance they deserve in this region. However, the dissimilarities in state capabilities (both economic and military) are also considerable. India and South Africa each have a blue water naval capability and a booming economy, while the smaller island nations can hardly compare. Hence convergence of interests on security issues has not been readily forthcoming.

For both South Africa and India, the Indian Ocean is an area of economic and geostrategic importance. The more recent piracy problem linked to the ongoing malaise in the Horn of Africa perpetuates has created security challenges for both countries. As Surjit Mansingh emphasized that Indian Ocean security concerns are largely about keeping the SLOCs open,

because as he further argued, there are two key threats to Indian Ocean security: the instability of certain littoral states such as Somalia, Myanmar and Pakistan on one hand and the rise of the non-state actors perpetrating piracy, terrorism, narcotics trade etc. on the other. However, he convinced no one country (including the US) is capable of managing or controlling these threats on its own. Multilateral co-operation is being needed in order to tackle these challenges.

Therefore, co-operation is an important diplomatic attribute for maritime nations that operate in the Indian Ocean, a delimited ocean space that continues to experience an influx of forces. One area of collaboration is the north-western Indian Ocean, where these maritime powers are all involved in some form of anti-piracy, World Food Programme vessel protection or general maritime security operation off Yemen, Somalia, the Gulf of Aden and the Horn of Africa. They can be regional, single-state, or independent operations. While figures change continuously, at any one time in excess of 30 warships from at least four alliances i.e. the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), the Shanghai Co-operation Organisation (SCO), the Australia, New Zealand, and United States Security Treaty (ANZUS) and the European Union (EU); may be present in the area. In July 2010, the arrival of a Royal Netherlands Navy submarine in the area to carry out reconnaissance improved capability and significantly raised the stakes (Rooyen, 2011).

What may militate against co-operation is the competition for resources and access to these resources. Over the past few years, a growing presence of navies, wanting to claim increasingly important sea lanes, shows that regional powers are taking a more robust approach to world affairs. Yet, although the US navy still dwarfs other navies, even this may change; for 'if you're looking forward over the next few decades, there is no doubt that Asian navies will have a larger presence in the Indian Ocean relative to Western forces (Rooyen, 2011). This is evidence from the creation of IONS which is already-functional and very active institution. The challenge for the nations of IONS is to co-operate and collaborate to ensure permanent maritime security in this major maritime arena, which is unlikely to happen due to scarce maritime resources and the need to act productively.

From South African perspective, in its bilateral relationship with India, Indian Ocean dynamism to be linked to the need to flesh out the still very low-key New Asia Africa Strategic Partnership (NAASP) as well as breathe new life into the IORA as providing a structured geopolitical-economic framework for incorporating a multilateral maritime security strategy. For the other dimension of Martin Walker's CHIMEA (China, India, the Middle East and Africa) projections is the fact that while "the economic promise of CHIMEA is dazzling," the geopolitical and strategic implications are described as "sobering". He concludes by observing: "As the Mediterranean, Atlantic, and Pacific proved in their own periods of surging trade growth, commercial highways can easily become battlegrounds in their turn. And with the CHIMEA nations poised in this century to become the globes center of gravity, the stakes in the Indian Ocean promise to become very high indeed" (Walker, 2008: 28). Hence, a joint Indo-South African cooperative security architecture for the Indian Ocean is the compelling case for both littoral states, although, there are a lot of imponderables affecting such prospects. Moreover, both China and India are caught up in the anti-piracy coalition of forces that has been mobilized in the Indian Ocean and which is beginning to draw in a hitherto distant South Africa as the piracy threat has migrated into the Mozambique Channel. South Africa, in conjunction with SADC, has perforce to devise a maritime security strategy within the context of the continental framework outlined by the AU. This pressure is being generated on South Africa at a time when India is taking over the chairmanship, for a two year term, of the IORA (Kornegay, 2011: 16).

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Within the South Asian strategic realm are increasing concerns that what has been a promising "composite dialogue" between India and Pakistan may become overtaken by renewed tensions between these two nuclear rivals as the Kashmir dispute flares anew; a prospect which would continue ruling out Indian Ocean regional cooperation prospects within the IORA (Bhadrakumar, 2008). Another imponderable is perceived as Sino-Indian competition in the Indian Ocean belying their collaboration in the G-5. Given importance to the above fact, a fundamental question on India's priorities reside in striking a workable balance between its budding relations with Washington and the South-South cooperation factoring in South Africa and IBSA.

However, the changing global landscape had manifested itself in a number of ways in India's case. Indian foreign policy, as we discussed earlier, has changed dramatically with respect to the Indian Ocean. The Indian navy has close links with the British navy, but at present, India carries out more joint naval exercises with the US than with any other country. The US has played a key role in the Indian Ocean where the eastern Indian Ocean falls under the US's Pacific Command, and the western Indian Ocean under US Central Command. Besides, India has an active naval diplomacy, with regular joint exercises with a number of other countries and groupings, such as IBSAMAR (India, Brazil and South Africa), the Malabar (involving India, the US, Japan, Australia and Singapore) and the Milan (the navies of South and South East Asian countries and New Zealand and Australia) exercises. India has also been using of Kenyan ports. India also cooperated with Mauritius, Seychelles and the Maldives. The Indian navy was also undertaking constabulary duties in the Straits of Hormuz and Malacca where it has been accompanying US ships, not just focusing on Indian merchant ships. But the apparent relative decline of the US and the rise of China, with its goal of becoming an Indian Ocean power, have complicated the triangular relationship among the three. India has adopted a modest security posture, where the accent is on shared security and prosperity. In that sense, India's approach is multilateral, recognizing that the US cannot solve everything, but equally that the US should not be replaced by China.

## Conclusion

Unlike other Oceanic regions, Indian Ocean region lacks any 'dominant regional power', exposes it to extra-regional powers and may also allow possible power rivalry in the 21$^{st}$ century. Thus, India and South Africa needed to achieve, 'Sea control capability' & 'power projection attitude' in the region as a national maritime strategy. Undoubtedly, India's geopolitical and strategic position in the Indian Ocean region enhanced its potential to revive its traditional sphere of influence with improved acceptance as a major regional power and playing a more important strategic role in the region.

In fact, India's policy towards military modernization, maritime security and nuclear programs are nothing but reflecting its regional and global security concerns. Construction of military bases, modernized equipment & fleets, new maritime assets, and the expansion of security ties are all part to assert India as a regional leader. Moreover, India's advance in the Indo-Pacific region by joining hand with the US and other strategic partners, such as Australia, Japan, South Korea and Vietnam, to establish a cooperative security framework for peace and stability, is a remarkable achievement in diverting China's attention from Indian Ocean. The new government under the leadership of PM Modi aimed to fostering stronger diplomatic, economic, and security ties with Indian Ocean maritime states and African countries to strengthen India's economy, and simultaneously diminish China's growing appeal in the region.

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Thus, in order to advance and consolidate their agenda, India and South Africa has gone beyond relying on infusing strategic direction into policy processes, and backing it up with financial resources. Maritime interest of India and South Africa is itself a combination of geo-strategic aspirations and regional obligations. Hence, India and South Africa are trying to reconcile their global aspirations with the promotion and expansion of its own interests, and Africa is seen as a support base to that end.

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