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The Journal of Indian Ocean Studies is a publication of the Society for Indian Ocean Studies (SIOS). Having completed thirty years of publication, the Journal, published three times a year-in April, August and December, aims at bringing out articles contributed by defence experts, diplomats, eminent scholars and renowned thinkers on the various aspects of the Indian Ocean and the littoral regions of South and Southeast Asia, Africa, the Gulf and Australia.

The Editorial Advisory Board comprising strategists and former practitioners of foreign affairs and defence as well as distinguished scholars on economy, history, etc. of the region provide regular guidance and advice. The Journal has a vast readership among the Parliamentarians, think-tanks, maritime establishments, universities and institutions of excellence in various fields as also individual scholars.



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Society for Indian Ocean Studies (SIOS)



Journal of **INDIAN OCEAN** Studies

ISSN 0972-3080

Vol. 31, No. 1

January - April 2023

JOURNAL OF INDIAN OCEAN STUDIES

VOL. 31, NO. 1

JANUARY - APRIL 2023

**India and African Countries on the Indian
Ocean Littoral: Interface and Relations**



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New Delhi

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Annual Subscription Price:

National (INR) 1500.00 | International (US\$) 150.00

Online version free with Print Subscription

All remittances must be paid in favor of Prints Publications Pvt Ltd payable at New Delhi.

ELECTRONIC VERSION : This Journal can be accessed at www.printspublications.com

PERIODICITY : This Journal is published three times a year in – **April, August and December**

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Published and printed on behalf of Society for Indian Ocean Studies (SIOS)

By Mr. Pranav Gupta, Prints publications Pvt Ltd, at Printext, New Delhi, India

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Readers are encouraged to contribute articles for the Journal of Indian Ocean Studies. Generally, a theme for each issue is decided three months in advance. Articles are therefore expected to fall within/connected to the theme. However, papers/articles related to aspects of maritime economy, maritime security and geopolitics in the Indo-Pacific, will also be welcome. The following template/style is preferred:

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Journal of Indian Ocean Studies

Vol. 31, No. 1

January-April, 2023

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Editorial

The eastern seaboard of Africa constitutes the western flank of the Indian Ocean. This huge landmass has had connection with India dating back to millennia. The rich civilizations that flourished here remained in close contact with India, especially its western part influencing each other in myriad ways.

From antiquity to modern contemporary times the two regions have gone through the vicissitudes of a shared history. After a prolonged period of peace and prosperity the two became victims of colonialism suffering from ruthless oppression and exploitation of all kinds. It is in the post-colonial period that they started to have a closer look and better understanding of each other. The evolution of India-Africa engagement over the past few decades and especially of the 21st century points to not just growth in relationships between individual African nations and India but to the development of an enduring partnership between India and Africa. Both are now seen to be taking a strategic view about their engagement.

The emergence of the Indo-Pacific construct puts the African states and India in a unique and advantageous position as both have a direct outreach across the Indian Ocean. There is no doubt acute international competition exists in this oceanic space amongst actors as the U.S, the EU, Japan, India, Australia and principally China. And it extends to both politico-security as well as economic fields. How to navigate skilfully through the choppy waters of geopolitics remains the main challenge before India and the African states on the Indian Ocean littoral.

This edition of the Journal of Indian Ocean Studies aims precisely to have an insightful view of the issues that the two face and the opportunities that are available to them from the perspective of a shared history and geographical connectivity.

Ambassador Gurjit Singh, who recently authored a book titled. The ‘Harambee Factor’ on India-Africa partnership states in his paper that since the 3rd India-Africa Forum Summit in 2015 international dynamics around the Indian Ocean has vastly altered and calls for reassessment and reinvigoration of India’s engagement with the countries on the Indian Ocean

(ii) *Sudhir T. Devare*

littoral. While there is bilateral engagement there is also a regional dimension and India takes a strategic view of the whole littoral.

Stating that the Indo-Pacific concept has replaced the Asia-Pacific, Amb Singh points out that India has the maximum interface with the African littoral in the Indo-Pacific construct. While economic engagement and trade between India and these countries have expanded considerably, Amb. Singh finds that India's relationship with the regional economic communities of Africa has, however not fully materialized.

He suggests revival of India-Brazil-South Africa (IBSA) and also calls on India for new ideas like rupee dominated trade, loans and credit to support the banking system in Africa and also for supporting its private sector to invest more deeply in the strategic neighbourhood of Africa.

In his paper titled 'The Building Blocks of a non-paternalistic Indo-African Partnership', Dr Gicheru Kinyua from Kenya believes that there has never been a better time to exploit the relationship than now and argues that the geopolitical scene is resetting and the Indo-African demographic dividend is a formidable force. He regards the Indian Ocean as the lynchpin for reinvigorating the relationship going forward as both need to maintain maritime security of the critical sea lanes, a matter of common interest. The author touches upon an interesting area such as the newly signed Treaty on the High Seas and states that the ratification and implementation of BBNJ (Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction) is a tall order for developing countries. But it provides a vital opportunity to integrate biodiversity protection with climate action on high seas.

He thinks India can play a useful role in this regard. India's G-20 Presidency, according to him, is a watershed moment. He also finds a nexus between Africa and India's energy interests.

Prof. Dr Makarius Peter Itambu from Tanzania, in his paper titled 'Transoceanic Interconnectivities between India-Tanzania Coastal Communities from the Antiquity to Contemporaries provides an archaeological perspective from the ancient maritime trade connections via the Indian Ocean'. He refers to the pre-historic contacts between East Africa and the Indian sub-continent which have left legacies in terms of trade, language, architecture, intermarriage, etc. During the historical times, East Africa, he points out was an ideal setting for the emergence and consolidation of Swahili culture and the coast and hinterland of Tanzania were central in maritime exchanges in the Indian Ocean

world. However, the European invasions offset 1500 years of cultural continuity and led to negative consequences to the development of ties that existed whereby Africans became lower-class citizens. India, he adds had a massive socio-economic influence on Tanzania's coastal communities. The author recalls how Tanzanian leaders like Mwalimu Julius Nyerere held Mahatma Gandhi in high esteem. He believes that current governments should think of the necessity of promoting bilateral cooperation and mutual research collaboration in trade and tourism in order to stimulate people-centred developments between Tanzania and India.

Prof. Dr. Sankalp Gurjar in his article entitled 'Bringing the Western Indian Ocean into the Indo-Pacific geopolitics' analyses the role of the Western Indian Ocean (WIO) (where the East African seaboard is located) in the dynamics of the Indo-Pacific construct. He argues that while there is no unanimity about the geographical definition of Indo-Pacific, for India, as a growing military power and a country concerned about energy security the WIO acquires primary importance. In modern times, the anti-piracy campaigns brought the East Asian powers like China, Japan, Korea to this area. It has now seen an amalgamation of traditional and non-traditional security threats. Major powers came here to tackle non-traditional threats and, in the process, entrenched themselves in regional geopolitics.

Since the 1990s the region became a theatre for war on terror. Global and regional players justify their presence by pointing out that regional states are weak and lack capabilities.

The author further argues that unlike the Eastern Indian Ocean the WIO lacks institutional structures such as the East Asia Summit (EAS) or the Shangri-la Dialogue to deal with security threats.

We also have a Review of the book titled 'Malam-Ni-Pothi: The Pre-Modern Kutchi Navigation Manuals Vol I' translated and edited by Ashok B. Rajeshirke. The review is written by Prof. Dr Neeta Khandpekar of University of Mumbai. The book contains day-to-day sailing reports from the Kutch region of Gujarat from 1664 to 1895. Malam means the navigator and Pothis are handwritten navigation manuals. These Pothis give details on how Kutchis mapped routes to various ports with the help of nakshatras, water currents, depth of water and movements of eel fish. The book is full of figures and tables which are technical and also contain instructions and observations as guidelines for crossing perilous locations. The book addresses the Kutchi voyages across the Indian Ocean to different ports. This will be a very useful

(iv) *Sudhir T. Devare*

medieval source reference to scholars working on Indian Ocean studies and for exploring rare areas in maritime history.

The African countries on the Indian Ocean littoral continue to suffer from threats of insurgency, political instability or piracy. The present volatile and violent situation in Sudan points to that. India is engaged in efficiently handling the evacuation of thousands of Indian citizenship. Needless to say, these developments clearly show the growing strategic importance of this region to India.

Sudhir T. Devare
Editor-in-Chief

28th April, 2023



India and the African Countries on the Indian Ocean Littoral

Gurjit Singh

India's long-standing policies of engagement with Africa in the true spirit of the 'Harambee Factor' which emphasizes partnership rather than a vertical relationship is well established.¹ However, as international dynamics change, engagements have to keep pace.

Since the third India-Africa Forum Summit in 2015, international dynamics around the Indian Ocean have vastly altered calls for a reassessment and reinvigoration of India's engagement with African countries particularly on the littoral of the Indian Ocean. It is imperative that given India's strategic interests, greater emphasis is required in engaging these countries so that mutually beneficial engagement can be increased.

While many of these countries were engaged bilaterally by India, slowly there has been a regional dimension as well as a broadening of the strategic view through which India views the Indian Ocean littoral.²

The Indo-Pacific concept replaced that of the Asia Pacific. India in particular, uses the concept to cover the entire Indian Ocean region up to the coast of Eastern and Southern Africa. This is not common to other countries Indo-Pacific policies. All the Quad countries do not have the same view. The US,

**Ambassador (Retd.) Gurjit Singh was India's Ambassador to Ethiopia, Indonesia and Germany. Besides his widely acclaimed book on India-Africa Relations, he has been a regular contributor with his articles on International Affairs.*

¹ Hardeep S Puri: Career diplomat Gurjit Singh traces the growing partnership between India and Africa in The Harambee Factor, Indian Express, 27 August 2022. <https://indianexpress.com/article/books-and-literature/career-diplomat-gurjit-singh-traces-the-growing-partnership-between-india-and-africa-in-the-harambee-factor-8114071/>

² Srikant Kesnur & Abhishek Mishra: India's Maritime Agenda Pivots to Western Indian Ocean; ORF, 6 September 2022. <https://www.orfonline.org/research/indias-maritime-agenda-pivots-to-western-indian-ocean/>

for instance, covers Indian Ocean out of its Central Command and operate the AFRICOM for Africa, whereas Australia's interests are limited mainly to the Pacific and the area of the Indian Ocean up to India. Japan has a commonality of view with India and has enhanced its presence in the region. Another important player is France, which through its Indian Ocean Territory, has always had a presence in the region and now puts it into the wider construct of the Indo-Pacific policy. In reality, it is India, which has the maximum interface for the African littoral in its Indo-Pacific construct.³

The inclusion of the Indian Ocean, particularly the Western Indian Ocean, into the Indo-Pacific strategy impacts Africa. The five countries of Africa which have a seaboard on the Indian Ocean include South Africa, Mozambique, Tanzania, Kenya and Somalia. In the Red Sea, Eritrea, Sudan and Egypt and Djibouti in the Horn of Africa are thus connected. The Island countries of Madagascar, Mauritius, Comoros, Seychelles and the French Indian Ocean territories are important parts of this construct.

The Regional Dimension

The Indian Ocean Commission is perhaps the oldest body dealing with countries within the region. Established in 1984 and headquartered in Mauritius, it connects African Indian Ocean countries like Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius, Seychelles and Réunion (an overseas region of France). Observers include China, India, the European Union, and the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie (OIF), which has tremendous French influence. France also controls the island of Mayotte which did not obtain independence along with the Comoros.⁴ India acceded to the forum as an Observer in March 2020, along with Japan and the United Nations. This gave it a more cohesive approach with France which traditionally dominated the IOC.

The regional arrangement through the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) since 1997 now has 22 members and 10 dialogue partners. The five Indian Ocean littoral African countries and the four island countries make up 40% of the membership which extends up to Australia. It has 4 ASEAN

³ Gurjit Singh; The Indo-Pacific Concept and Its Africa Connect, Forbes Africa, 23 February 2021. <https://www.forbesafrica.com/opinion/2021/02/23/the-indo-pacific-concept-and-its-africa-connect/>.

⁴ Somen Banerjee, Growing Salience of the Indian Ocean Commission: What Has Changed for India as an Observer.

countries, (Indonesia, Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia), 4 SAARC members, (India, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Bangladesh) and 4 from West Asia, (Yemen, UAE, Oman and Iran). Among the 10 Dialogue Partners are China, Egypt, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, Turkey, United Kingdom and United States of America. Most of these are important players in the Indo-Pacific construct today. Two Quad members, India and Australia are members of IORA while Japan and the USA are Dialogue Partners.

India was instrumental in establishing IORA originally as the IORARC. It brought various countries from the Indian Ocean littoral together and gave a new dimension and importance to its African partners. From 2012, when India assumed the IORA Chair, there has been a growing direction and determination to strengthen institutions and capacities within IORA. India revitalized IORA during its chairmanship and six Priority and two Focus Areas were identified on the basis to promote sustained growth and balanced development in the Indian Ocean Region.⁵

These included maritime security, trade facilitation, management of disaster risk and fisheries, blue economy, women's empowerment and academic and tourism exchanges. This was largely a functional agenda and the activities gave the members an opening to various partners who are active in the Indo-Pacific and the Gulf of Aden. Since 2017, the Chairmanship came to South Africa for 2 years then UAE and is currently with Bangladesh, is in the Chair. It has been a long time since Africa led IORA. The first term was with Mauritius in 1997-98 and then with Mozambique in 1999-2000. Kenya and Tanzania have not Chaired IORA at any time so far.

When piracy hit the region, navies from several IORA member states helped control the scourge but IORA played no role in the security arrangements. The new arrangements included the **Djibouti Code of Conduct (DCoC)**.⁶ Since January 2009 it has provided opportunities for 21 member countries to coordinate capacities to deal with piracy in the Gulf of Aden and the Western Indian Ocean. A DCoC meeting in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia in January 2017 revised the code, now known as the DCoC+, or the Jeddah amendment. This builds

⁵ National Maritime Foundation, 22 April 2020, <https://maritimeindia.org/growing-salience-of-the-indian-ocean-commission-what-has-changed-for-india-as-an-observer/>.

⁶ IORA Overview: <https://www.iora.int/en/priorities-focus-areas/overview>.

on the 2009 version and encourages members to cooperate fully to repress transnational organised crime in the maritime domain, maritime terrorism, and IUU (illegal, unreported and unregulated) fishing. India joined as an observer in 2020⁷ like the EU and the East Africa Standby Force. This DCOC is like an IORA with stronger security elements. Through the DCoC+ there are cooperative arrangements to combat piracy with Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP).⁸

African Regional Organisations

The African Union, since its emergence in 2002, recognizes eight Regional Economic Communities (RECs). The countries on the Indian Ocean and related littoral are among four of these RECs: the Southern Africa Development Community, the East African Community, the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa. Thus, half the RECs are engaged through the countries with whom India is engaged along the shores of the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea.

Economic engagement with their members has continued to increase, but India's relationship with these REC's did not fully materialize. Prior to the establishment of the India-Africa Summit in 2008, India had already opened partnerships with SADC, EAC and COMESA who are among the better functioning of African RECs. Ministerial meetings were held with them around 2006. India has held meetings with Secretary Generals of RECs around each India Africa summit. The RECs were offered several projects at the time of the IAFS II but hardly any of them could get those projects implemented in their member countries.

The effort to promote Africa's regional tier with direct cooperation, therefore, did not entirely succeed, leading to a fair amount of exclusion from the IAFS process by the time of the third IAFS III.

⁷ Djibouti Code of Conduct, IMO, <https://www.imo.org/en/OurWork/Security/Pages/DCoC.aspx>

⁸ India joins the Djibouti Code of Conduct as Observer; MEA 16 September 2020, <https://mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/32977/india+joins+the+djibouti+code+of+conduct+ as+ observer.>

Top 10 African Markets for India's Export (Sorted on Avg. of 10 years)
Value in USD Billion

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
South Africa	3.65	4.32	4.97	5.74	5.72	3.81	3.24	4.07	4.03	3.87
Kenya	2.00	2.04	3.77	3.94	4.41	3.18	2.46	1.82	2.13	1.94
Nigeria	1.92	2.55	2.83	2.90	2.87	2.29	1.74	2.05	2.75	3.64
Egypt	1.93	2.12	2.83	2.90	3.14	2.36	2.09	2.35	2.80	2.67
United Republic of Tanzania	1.12	1.177	1.60	3.67	3.71	1.66	1.77	1.57	1.88	1.64
Mozambique	0.50	0.57	0.89	1.62	1.96	1.48	0.87	1.05	0.81	2.06
Algeria	0.77	0.80	1.02	1.18	1.08	0.85	0.86	0.78	0.95	0.78
Mauritius	0.68	1.36	0.67	0.95	1.50	0.76	0.56	0.77	0.98	0.83
Ghana	0.51	0.79	0.75	0.91	0.67	0.64	0.71	0.64	0.73	0.59
Ethiopia	0.26	0.43	0.64	0.95	0.76	0.76	0.93	0.71	0.72	0.81

Indian FDI in Africa 1996-2021 in US Dollar Million

S. No.	Country	Apr 1996- Mar 2015	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	Apr 1996- Mar 2021
1.	Mauritius	43,211.0	3,670.4	5,392.7	1,387.1	3,086.8	2,940.0	2,496.8	62,184.9
2.	Mozambique	2,673.5	1.7	8.0	37.3	40.2	150.4	323.1	3,234.3
3.	Sudan	1,238.8	-	-	-	-	12.2	1,251.0	1,251.0
4.	Egypt	981.0	8.3	1.0	13.8	22.0	0.2	0.2	1,026.6
5.	South Africa	437.6	60.6	32.5	64.9	54.8	12.8	15.1	678.3
6.	Kenya	169.4	3.8	7.8	28.1	20.7	22.0	16.4	268.3
7.	Libya	254.6	0.1	0.5	0.6	5.2	1.0	0.1	262.1
8.	Tunisia	113.4	82.2	0.1	2.5	-	-	-	198.2
9.	Liberia	192.3	-	-	-	-	-	-	192.3
10.	Nigeria	118.6	0.6	5.0	4.3	9.7	12.3	34.8	192.3
11.	Morocco	99.5	21.7	11.5	18.5	13.4	8.2	4.9	177.6
12.	Zambia	64.8	79.7	10.8	10.2	2.6	3.6	4.1	175.9
13.	Ethiopia	70.7	17.0	20.9	21.5	28.6	12.5	2.0	173.3
14.	Gabon	100.0	0.0	2.7	5.3	3.9	6.7	2.9	121.6
15.	Tanzania	63.2	11.4	0.2	21.8	17.2	2.5	0.7	117.1
Africa Total		50,072.9	3,970.5	5,520.9	1,651.6	3,335.5	3,214.4	2,936.1	70,702.0
India Total (including Gift City)		2,58,964.1 %	220165.5 %	24,862.9 %	18,654.9 %	21,322.6 %	20,955.4 %	18,619.2 %	3,85,381.2 %

Biggest Beneficiaries of Approved LoCs (more than \$250 mn)

Country	LoCAmount (in USD Millions)	Number of LoCs
Tanzania	1115.22	6
West Africa (EBID)	1000	4
Ethiopia	985.67	8
Mozambique	772.44	14
Mauritius	764.8	6
Sudan	756.68	9
DR Congo	718.37	13
Rwanda	669.65	8
Zimbabwe	468.1	5
Malawi	395.68	5

Economic Engagement

There is a larger diaspora dimension to India’s relationship with African littoral countries. Many of these countries have a large Indian diaspora, historically. Mauritius, Comoros, Madagascar and Seychelles and South Africa, Mozambique, Tanzania, Kenya and the like all have large Indian populations which play an important economic and political role within their countries.

Given the proximity to India, across the ocean, India’s trade with these countries has also increased. South Africa, Kenya and Tanzania are among India’s largest trading partners.

Already stated table shows that among the top 10 trading partners of India in Africa, 7 are within the ambit of the Indian Ocean/Red Sea littoral and its immediate hinterland like Ethiopia.⁹

Indian investment has also found its way into the East African countries, South Africa and Mozambique. While Mauritius and to a smaller extent Seychelles have become conduits for Indian investment into Africa and to other parts of the

⁹ Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia, ReCAAP, <https://www.recaap.org/>.

world. 'The table below show that among the top 15 investment destinations for Indian FDI in Africa between 1996-2018, are in the IOR and related region.¹⁰

The Lines of Credit (LoC) provide under the Indian Development and Economic Assistance Scheme (IDEAS) in 2003-04 was a boost to the expansion of economic engagement with Africa. Starting well after the ITEC programme of 1964, these became the most potent part of the development compact for India in its engagement with developing countries.

The IDEA Scheme was an initiative for providing assistance to developing countries in Africa, South Asia and others and also to leverage India's strategic economic interests abroad. Through these LoCs, India supported capacity-building, trade and infrastructure in partner countries. The EBI was the main delivery mechanism for the LoCs. From its inception, EBI pursued Indian project exports and supported the expansion of business in existing markets, as well as entry into new markets.

Among the top 10 users of the LOCs 7 were the countries from the IOR region or its hinterland.¹¹

Security Issues

Meanwhile, a greater role for the RECs to provide security and deal with problems within their own regions has emerged. They have been encouraged to have standby brigades and deal with issues of terrorism, insurgency and the like; they seem to have succeeded only when supported by outside partners, like the IGAD had started a Peacekeeping Mission in Somalia, and later in Darfur, which later became African Union missions.

India has supported many of these countries with military training, capacity building and has set up institutions for them, like military staff colleges and some non-lethal military equipment was also provided. India's direct participation to support the military aspects of these RECs has not been forthcoming though India is a major TCC in UNPKO in Africa. India has preferred to deal with these countries bilaterally, many of whom have hosted Indian military teams over a period of time.¹²

¹⁰ Gurjit Singh" *The Harambee Factor* Macmillan, 2022, P 292.

¹¹ Gurjit Singh" *The Harambee Factor* Macmillan, 2022, P 329.

¹² Collated from GOI LoC Statistics on Exim Bank website, accessed at <https://www.eximbankindia.in/lines-of-credit> in April 2020.

Bilateral Relations

For the purposes of this paper, an assessment of the bilateral engagement with countries directly on the Indian Ocean is provided. The island countries have always been strategically important to India particularly Mauritius and Seychelles. The diaspora element has played an important role. Mauritius has been a strong economic partner due to the double taxation avoidance agreement now replaced by a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement.¹³ This had made Mauritius the window for investments into India and has given it a salient importance. In Mauritius, several important projects like the cyber city, the light rail project and the like are funded by India.

India supported Mauritius and Seychelles with their defence capabilities including establishing their coast guard and supporting their economic development. At the time when piracy was rampant, India had augmented the capacity of Seychelles to deal with piracy. In both countries, Indian advisors have been stationed to build their capabilities.

Due to their strategic importance under the Indo-Pacific, these countries now are moved from the Africa division of MEA to the Indian Ocean Division; they are dealt with alongside Sri Lanka and Maldives showing their strategic salience. With both countries negotiations were undertaken for development of strategically located islands with a view to aid economic development and create facilities for them while also providing India strategic access on important sea routes. Divergent governments within those countries have often slowed the pace of such evolution.

Despite years of positive engagement, both countries have not hesitated to strategically play the China card with India and try and seek greater economic impetus from both China and India.

The two other islands within the Indian Ocean are Madagascar and Comoros which have strong French influence. With both countries now having stable governments for some time, India has worked with them to enhance economic engagement. This has been more successful with Madagascar¹⁴

¹³ Gurjit Singh: The Southern African Development Community and the Mozambique insurgency, ORF, 13 July 2021, <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/south-african-development-community-mozambique-insurgency/>.

¹⁴ India Mauritius Bilateral Brief, HCI Mauritius, November 2022, <https://hcimauritius.gov.in/pages?id=9avme&subid=yb8md&nextid=RdG7d>.

because of its ability to absorb development cooperation and less with Comoros.

Madagascar has had several visits to India over the last few years and continues to seek a partnership with India in positive terms. Madagascar lies alongside the Mozambique Channel between Madagascar and Mozambique, which is critical for India's energy security. Since 2008, India has diversified its sources of energy supply, and nearly 16% now come from West Africa. These supplies often pass through the Mozambique Channel and require a safe and secure passage in which the role of Madagascar is important. The role of Comoros will now become more important as the country has become the chair of the African Union for 2023. This is a rare occasion for such a small country in the Indian Ocean to become the AU chair, and this calls for closer cooperation between India and Comoros.¹⁵

The four Indian Ocean Island countries are frequently visited by Indian naval ships on goodwill visits and to support HADR.¹⁶

Kenya, with this important port of Mombasa is an important place for India's trade and investment. In a survey carried out for the book "The Harambee Factor" it was found that for Indian businessmen interested in investing in Africa, East Africa is the most favoured destination among which Kenya attracts the most attention.¹⁷ Kenya has a large amount of Indian investment and the Indian diaspora is economically very powerful.¹⁸

India's trade with Kenya is also growing, though it is in favour of India. As Kenya has developed and often finds Indian X imports appropriate for its economic part of growth. Kenya has an important Indian diaspora which plays a significant role in maintaining the relationship with India. Kenya however, given its more exalted economic status, attracted more Indian investment but did not use India's development cooperation either through grants like the Pan African E network project, or the lines of credit.

¹⁵ Gurjit Singh: Madagascar: A firm partner of India, Financial Express, 7 May 2022, <https://www.financialexpress.com/defence/madagascar-a-firm-partner-of-india/2516200/>.

¹⁶ India Comoros Bilateral brief, Embassy of India, Antananarivo, September 2022. <https://www.eoiantananarivo.gov.in/page/bilateral-relations-with-comoros/>.

¹⁷ Maj Gen CP Singh: Indian Navy: The Guardians of the Indian Ocean Indian Defence Review 6 January 2022. <http://www.indiandefencereview.com/spotlights/indian-navy-the-guardians-of-the-indian-ocean/>.

¹⁸ Gurjit Singh "The Harambee Factor Macmillan, 2022, P416.

In the last decade, Kenya has become a playground for Chinese intense economic activity. India and Japan in particular continued to try and work with Kenya to have a more level playing field. Among the first trilateral projects that India and Japan initiated was a cancer hospital in Kenya. The project has failed to take off due to problems relating to the site and frequent changes of specifications by Kenya.

Tanzania is the other East African country with its important port of Dar Es Salaam, which is also a significant economic partner of India as well as having an important diaspora element. Unlike Kenya, Tanzania has been following a more socialist and planned model of development and has used Indian assistance and development cooperation effectively. Besides the Pan African E network project, Tanzania has also used Indian assistance for a centre for excellence in Information Technology at Dar es Salaam Institute of Technology, an ICT Centre at Nelson Mandela African Institute for Science & Technology and developed a cogent implementation program for the benefit of their youth.

Tanzania is among the largest users of the lines of credit, augmenting its water supply, both rural and urban and being one of India's major partners. Due to the lines of credit, Indian investment and trade with Tanzania has also grown. Tanzania now is becoming more open and willing to look beyond the Chinese BRI; it is possible that Tanzania could offer larger projects to India which will help to fulfil India's Indo-Pacific strategy on the Indian Ocean littoral. These matters are under discussion.¹⁹

Mozambique, the former Portuguese colony, was a late bloomer in its relations with India. However, over the last 15 years, Mozambique has decisively looked towards India and had a level playing field even after China's BRI kicked in and Mozambique is among the largest recipient of Indian lines of credit and has used them well to augment its infrastructure, including through solar power. It has also used Indian development cooperation well²⁰, having vocational training centres though its absorption capacities have been slower.

¹⁹ Kwame Owino, *India, Kenya and the Afro-Asian Century*, ORF, 26 January 2022, <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/india-kenya-and-the-afro-asian-century/>

²⁰ UAE and India Sign Mou for Ports Development in Tanzania, Tanzania Invest, 5 August 2022, <https://www.tanzaniainvest.com/transport/uae-india-mou-port-development> and follow us on www.twitter.com/tanzaniainvest.

Mozambique has become a very important source for India's energy security and attracted large Indian investments in the coal and gas industries. Initially, these were private sector investments but Indian public sector has been investing more and more; nearly \$20 billion is under investment by the Indian PSUs for development of gas supplies from the northern part of Mozambique in association with the French company Total. However, that area is currently on hold due to an insurgency and once that is settled both coal and gas supplies from Mozambique through the Mozambique Channel may start. This has the potential to be a game changer for the India-Africa energy partnership.

Mozambique has been forthcoming in seeking a cooperative defence partnership with India. Initially, it was a partnership to train their police forces which has slowly evolved into Indian role in enhancing their coast guard capacities and capabilities. Thus, Mozambique is an all-round partner in the region and has considerable significance in India's economic policies.

South Africa is the largest economy in the region. India has a historical engagement with South Africa thanks to the role of Mahatma Gandhi. India steadfastly supported the dismantling of apartheid in Africa. This gave India a special status. But over the years as South Africa has found its own firm feet internationally, it has played a role where India is no more a primary partner.

South Africa has a large amount of private Indian investment in a variety of areas but strategically China seems to be dominating the engagement.

India and South Africa are partners in BRICS. But they don't seem to coordinate much to the detriment of the BRICs. India, Brazil and South Africa had the IBSA three continent initiative which preceded the BRICs. Ever since South Africa was admitted to BRICS, where India and Brazil are already members, it seems to have gone on the backburner. It is important for IBSA to be revived, so that the dominance of China over BRICS and its attempt to use it as the counter to the G7 could be frustrated. A revived IBSA with a more potent base could speak more loudly for the Global South than what China has allowed the BRICS or the AIIB to do. The fact that India, Brazil and South Africa will be chairing G 20 in succession also gives this the necessary impetus.²¹

²¹ India-Mozambique Bilateral Relations, HCI Maputo, November 2022, <https://www.hcimaputo.gov.in/page/india-mozambique-relations/>.

Conclusion

The international dynamics have altered briskly thanks to the assertiveness of China, the COVID pandemic, the Ukraine crisis and the lack of a clear voice of the developing countries in the international order. All this requires a readjustment. India's successful Africa policy with a special focus on the Indian Ocean littoral has now acquired strategic dimensions. This calls for closer coordination with other partners like Japan, France and the US in the region, but also gives added impetus to the partnership with countries which are strategically important.

India needs to move away from a 'please all' strategy in Africa, having effectively covered Africa through its grants and lines of credit. It now needs to choose its partners who have strategic or economic value for it and deal with them intently. In this process, India must focus on implementing the SDGs because those benefit the people directly. India must also look for a LOC model of cooperation and have new ideas like rupee denominated trade, rupee denominated loans and credit to support the banking system in Africa. Through this India should aim at supporting its private sector to invest more deeply in its strategic neighbourhood so that India's economic engagement becomes stronger and more meaningful.

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The Building Blocks to a Non-Paternalistic Indo-African Partnership

*Brian Gicheru Kinyua

Indian Ocean as the Linchpin for Indo-African Cooperation

India's rise to a global power must involve a balanced relationship with Africa. Whereas the Indo- African partnership has existed over millennia, there has never been a better time to exploit it than now. On the one hand, Africa through AfCFTA (African Continental Free Trade Area) is seeking to intensify intra-African trade. India, on the other hand, is on a path to a global super-power and is well poised to fill the financing and infrastructural gap needed by Africa to achieve its trade ambitions.

However, one resource intertwines the interests of Africa and India- the Indian Ocean. In fact, this article argues that the Indian Ocean is the linchpin for re-invigorating the Indo-African relationship going forward. The geopolitical scene is resetting and the Indo-African demographic dividend combined is a formidable force in terms of global economics, politics and socio-cultural practices.

Most importantly, with the Indian Ocean consisting of critical sea-lanes that allow over 70 percent of the world's oil shipments, it is incumbent on India and Africa to maintain maritime security within the Indian Ocean rim.¹

The Covid-19 pandemic and the grounding of the, Ever Given in the Suez Canal have reignited the debate on sea power. As naval history shows, powerful empires of the past had tremendous sea power.

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¹ <https://maritime-executive.com/editorials/what-we-are-getting-wrong-about-the-indian-ocean>

Andrew Lambert, a well-respected British naval historian, defines a sea power state as one that understands its wealth and might principally derived from seaborne trade and it uses instruments of sea power to protect its interests.²

To a large degree, Africa and India have both taken a trajectory of consolidating their sea power at some point in future. Unfortunately, the sea power strategy is not clearly defined on the African side, or at least for the countries along the Western Indian Ocean coastline. The closest attempt is the AU's Africa Blue Economy Strategy, which is yet to translate into national strategies for the member states.

India is seemingly ahead with concise plans and strategies to influence the Indo-Pacific region, currently viewed as the epicenter of the global geopolitical competition. The most remarkable initiative is India championing for a Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP). The main objective is to guarantee safety, security and stability of the Indo-Pacific maritime domain.³

Indian Ocean's Maritime Security as a Common Interest

For India, the maritime security of the Western Indian Ocean Region (WIOR) is of utmost importance. The region has a rich natural resource profile estimated to be at least \$333.8 billion. It also has critical chokepoints such as the Gulf of Aden, Bab-el- Mandeb, Mozambique Channel, Cape of Good Hope and the Strait of Hormuz.

All these chokepoints form a strategic intersection between the interests of African navies (with jurisdiction in WIO) and the Indian Navy, playing the role of a regional partner.

A case in point is the Somali Piracy, one of the Indian Ocean's darkest moments. Luckily, following concerted efforts by multilateral players, the challenge has subsided.

The highlight of victory over Somali piracy was last year when the shipping industry agreed to remove the Indian Ocean High Risk Area (HRA),

² <https://www.military-history.org/books/review-seapower-states-maritime-culture-continental-empires-and-the-conflict-that-made-the-modern-world.htm>

³ <https://www.orfonline.org/research/indo-pacific-oceans-initiative-towards-coherent-indo-pacific-policy-india/>

effective January 2023.⁴

At the height of the Piracy starting in 2008 to 2013, India was one of the key players in tackling the menace. During the period, India deployed 75 naval vessels in the WIOR, safely escorting over 3440 people, including 413 Indian-flagged vessels with over 25,000 mariners onboard.

While Somali Piracy has considerably reduced, other illicit maritime activities are still a major concern. IUU fishing, drug and arms trafficking are some of the notable threats to maritime security in WIOR. A solution to these issues ought to be multilateral. Indeed, India has a huge interest in WIOR, as its ambition to become a maritime power are pegged on the stability and safety of Indian Ocean's SLOCs.

In fact, India's 2015 Maritime Security Strategy identifies WIO as a region of primary interest. This emphasis is due to increased role of Indian Navy in the region, as a provider of regional security and regional public goods.

Undoubtedly, maritime domain awareness is a requisite investment that African countries in WIO need to make. The sustainable exploitation and conservation of the Indian Ocean depends on it. Unfortunately, coast guard and naval budgets for most African countries remain modest. Any assistance from the region's historical partners such as India would prove beneficial.

But neutrality is key as WIOR has become highly militarized. External players such as China, USA and France have been attracted to the region owing to its role in shipping, abundant natural resources and conduit for oil and gas.

Currently, India's defense engagements in WIOR include joint naval exercises, counter-piracy operations, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. Further, India is emerging as a reliable exporter of indigenous defense equipment to Africa. So far, India has supplied Uganda with police armored vehicles.

In 2022, India also held a mini defense-expo in Tanzania in pursuit of promoting 'Made in India' manufacturing initiative. Around 16 Indian companies participated in the event, which was supported by the Tanzania People's Defense Force (TDPF).

⁴ <https://www.ics-shipping.org/press-release/shipping-industry-to-remove-the-indian-ocean-high-risk-area/#:~:text=The%20removal%20of%20the%20HRA%20will%20come%20into%20effect%20at,the%20changed%20threat%20from%20piracy.>

Maritime Information Sharing as the Bedrock of Indo-African Partnership

Closely connected to Indo- African maritime security cooperation in the WIOR is maritime information sharing. The bedrock of maritime security in WIO is a strong maritime domain awareness amongst all the stakeholders involved.

Through its Integrated Coastal Surveillance System (ICSS), India could help bridge the existing gap in Africa's maritime domain awareness. More so, a boost in coastal surveillance is the first step in unraveling the 'dark fishing fleets' illegally extracting African fisheries and consequently marine biodiversity destruction.

Remarkably, India has already started deploying ICSS in Africa, specifically the Horn of Africa and Madagascar. India also has plans to establish 32 radar surveillance stations, with sites in Seychelles and Mauritius.

India's push for a connected WIOR was visible with the launch of an Information Fusion Center- India Ocean Region (IFC- IOR) in Gurugram in December 2018. The center collects, analyses and disseminates information related to maritime safety and HADR (Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Response) incidents at sea.

To augment the Center's footprint and influence, the Indian Navy has been actively seeking cooperation on exchange of white shipping information. To date, India has signed agreements with African countries such as Mauritius, Seychelles, Kenya, Mozambique and Nigeria.⁵

Additionally, India has been pursuing for regular exchange programs with African navies. Interested countries in WIOR could post Liaison officers at IFC-IOR in New Delhi. Mauritius and Seychelles have already expressed interest to deputize their naval liaison officers to the facility.

A New Solution to Climate Action in the Indian Ocean

Meanwhile, this is a significant year after nations around the world agreed to a new global treaty for sustainable use and conservation of the high seas. While the treaty- Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) - has a long way to go in terms of ratification and implementation, it is imperative to start the discussions early.

⁵ <https://www.orfonline.org/research/indias-maritime-agenda-pivots-to-western-indian-ocean/>

Indeed, implementation of the high seas treaty could be a tall order for most developing countries, most of which are currently unable to secure waters within their jurisdiction. Luckily, within the Indian Ocean, the operationalization of the treaty could easily be adopted within existing regional bodies.

The Indian Ocean Tuna Commission and the Indian Ocean Rim Association are two influential bodies, both with a direct mandate in the sustainability of the India ocean resources. They form a formidable platform to guide the application of the BBNJ by the Indian Ocean littoral states.

With India as a member of the two agencies, it could easily curate multilateral conversations on protection of the Indian Ocean international waters. As have been witnessed recently, developing countries in the Indian Ocean rim are at the frontline of climate risks.

In March, the record-setting tropical cyclone Freddy pounded Mozambique, where it left a trail of destruction. The cyclone's intensity prompted the World Meteorological Organization to term it as the most remarkable storm, seen since Hurricane John in 1994. Madagascar and Malawi, which were along the cyclone's path, have also recorded immense fatalities and economic losses.

The increased frequency of tropical cyclones in the Western Indian Ocean is in tandem with multiple climate projections so far made in the region.

According to Dr. Roxy Matthew Koll, a climate scientist at the India Institute of Tropical Meteorology, the entire Indian Ocean is warming at a faster rate compared to the Atlantic or the Pacific. Thus, the rise in sea surface temperature is connected with changes in the intensity and frequency of cyclones.

Therefore, the time is nigh for nations bordering Indian Ocean to chart a course out of the climate and biodiversity crisis facing the ocean. The BBNJ Agreement provides a vital opportunity to better integrate biodiversity protection with climate action in the high seas. Based on India's influence in the India Ocean rim, it has a pivotal role in advancing BBNJ ratification talks in the region.⁶

The Hydrography Link

But BBNJ is anchored on the UN ambition to protect 30 percent of the planet's marine ecosystems. This means expanding the scope of MPAs. For such to

⁶ <https://www.dosi-project.org/wp-content/uploads/climate-and-bbnj-2023-1.pdf>

happen, most coastal countries have to update their hydrographic data to generate accurate Ocean maps crucial in drawing the limits of the MPAs.

Unfortunately, hydrography is one of the most neglected disciplines in Africa as it is scarcely funded by governments. Additionally, the resources needed like the hydrographic vessels are a luxury for most African marine research bodies.⁷

The situation is changing though as some governments prioritize blue economy and consequently marine spatial planning. For instance, the membership of the Southern Africa and Islands Hydrographic Commission (SAIHC) has grown significantly, as most countries in Western Indian Ocean band together to map marine ecosystems in the region.

Some of the notable projects under SAIHC include the development of the Marine Spatial Atlas for the Western Indian Ocean (MASPAWIO). It is an open access geospatial data repository for the WIO. While these efforts are noble, extra synergies are needed to continuously fill the existing gap of marine spatial datasets.⁸

Gladly, the National Hydrography Office of the Indian Navy has come out as a reliable partner in hydrographic surveys in WIO. The Government of India has recently handed over 100 nautical charts to the Government of Kenya which covers the general coastal area around the Lamu archipelago.⁹

The survey was done by an Indian Navy Hydrographic vessel at an estimated cost of over \$1.8 million. This is a huge thrust to Kenya's ambition of turning the new greenfield Port of Lamu into Eastern Africa's transshipment hub.

In addition, India has existing MoUs on hydrographic cooperation with three other African countries, namely Mauritius, Tanzania and Seychelles.¹⁰

The Impact of India's G20 Presidency to Africa's Economic Diplomacy

India's G20 Presidency in 2023 is another important fulcrum to enhance relations with Africa. In fact, the presidency theme- "One Earth One Family"-

⁷ <https://static.pmg.org.za/docs/091009iho-edit.pdf>

⁸ https://iho.int/uploads/user/Inter-Regional%20Coordination/RHC/SAIHC/Letters/SAIHC_Letter_1-2023.pdf

⁹ https://hcinairobi.gov.in/eoinrb_listview/ODQ5

¹⁰ <https://hydrobharat.gov.in/international-co-operation/>

is quite telling of India's overarching ambition to promote multilateralism during the one-year stint at the helm of the G20.¹¹

India's G20 presidency is seen as a watershed moment, coming at a time the country is going through an economic reformation into a global power. It also comes at the beginning of "Amritkaal"- the 25-year period beginning from the 75th anniversary of India's independence, leading up to the centenary of its independence. In essence, it is a period the Indian government hopes to achieve a futuristic, prosperous and developed India, distinguished by a human-centric approach to governance. Nonetheless, India will also have to put its best foot forward overseeing economic strife unfolding in the rest of the G20 member states. As one of its G20 presidency priorities, India has pledged to accelerate resilient growth, for example through integration of MSMEs in global trade.

Such an effort opens up a valuable opportunity, which could potentially involve resource rich African countries as part of the global trade transformation.

Interestingly, India's businessman Sunil Mittal, the owner of the telecom giant Airtel, has recommended expansion of India's Jan Dhan-Aadhaar-Mobile(JAM) trinity in Africa to catalyze digital connectivity in the continent.¹²

One of the solutions under JAM Trinity is the India's digital stack, a form of digital identity that leverages on fintech to move finances and subsidies across population in the most efficient manner. India is currently using this solution guaranteeing financial inclusion to millions of its residents, who would otherwise be excluded in conventional banking setups. Mittal believes replicating this solution in Africa would have similar results. The African Union had earlier mapped out Africa's digitization opportunity in its Digital Transformation Strategy 2020-2030. The main goal is to support the development of a Digital Single Market for Africa, ranging from the Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM) to the much-hyped African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).¹³

¹¹<https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=1882356#:~:text=India%20holds%20the%20Presidency%20of,Summit%20in%20September%20next%20year.>

¹² https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/india-s-jam-trinity-of-can-be-applied-to-africa-says-sunil-bharti-mittal-123031400864_1.html

¹³ <https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/38507-doc-dts-english.pdf>

Further, Sunil Mittal, who is also a key member of the B20, the official G20 dialogue forum with the global business community, said the integration of the African economy has been chosen by India as one of the legacies it wants to leave behind as part of its G20 presidency.

Mittal's telecommunication Bharti Airtel has an extensive footprint in Africa and it is reassuring to see Mittal present African interests at the G20 platform.

The BRICS Overarching Factor

In addition, BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) expansion agenda is another platform likely to shape India's trade relations with Africa. During last year's BRICS Summit in Beijing, India indicated it was open to the expansion process, subject to full consultation and consensus with other members.¹⁴

Some of the African nations eyeing to join the BRICS include Egypt, Senegal, Nigeria and Algeria. While the BRICS is not a free trade bloc, its members are known to coordinate on trade matters and have established a policy bank, the New Development Bank (NDB), to structure infrastructural loans.¹⁵

If the new proposed members join the BRICS, it would create a powerful entity with a GDP 30% larger than U.S, over 50 percent of global population and control 60 percent of gas reserves, especially if Saudi Arabia is also admitted as member.

The future BRICS arrangement is seen as the platform that could be used to re-write rules of the global trade, specifically upending the US Dollar as the reserve currency.

In fact, BRICS is working on establishing a new reserve currency based on a basket of the currencies of the five-nation bloc. Some member countries are now increasing the use of local currencies in their mutual trade.

Notably, BRICS also appears keen to develop an alternative international financial system, especially in light of the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war, where

¹⁴ <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/india-cautious-on-brics-expansion-101656526682146.html>

¹⁵ <https://www.silkroadbriefing.com/news/2022/11/09/the-new-candidate-countries-for-brics-expansion/#:~:text=Summary,all%20known%20global%20gas%20reserves.>

Russia has been sanctioned from the western banking network and got SWIFT payment system disconnected.

The recent India and Tanzania agreement to conduct business in their respective currencies are proof that the BRICS' proposed alternative financial system is gaining traction.¹⁶

This is such a significant move considering that India is one of Tanzania's largest trading partners. According to data from the Indian High Commission in Dar es Salaam, the value of trade between the two countries was \$4.5 billion in the year ending March 2022.

The agreement works through a monetary policy under the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), which has paved way for trade using local currencies. It allows authorized Indian banks to open Special Rupee Vestro Accounts (SRVA) in Tanzania. On the other hand, Tanzania must also open SRVA in India in order to trade under the mechanism.

Indian importers using this mechanism will pay invoices for the supply of goods and services from the overseas seller or supplier with payments made in Indian rupees, remitted into the special Vestro account of the correspondent bank in the partner country.

This kind of arrangement is also available to 18 other countries including African nations such as Kenya, Uganda, Botswana, Mauritius and Seychelles.

The Nexus between Africa and India's Energy Interests

While these initiatives are meant to spur trade between Africa and India, a tremendous trade opportunity is opening up in the energy front.

The Russia-Ukraine war has re-drawn the global energy map. The western sanctions on Russian oil have caused volatility in the energy market, with prices at record high. To counter this impact, large industrial nations such as India are considering strategic LNG reserves to avoid future shortages.

Reportedly, the Indian government is considering expanding LNG import terminals to act as emergency energy stockpiles. This would help to guard

¹⁶ https://africa.businessinsider.com/local/markets/the-dollar-is-no-more-relevant-in-trade-between-india-and-tanzania/dt2tzej?utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter&utm_campaign=share-button

against future price hikes and supply shortages such as the one experienced last year after the war in Ukraine begun.¹⁷

India's growing demand for gas creates an interesting symmetry in its trade cooperation with Africa. In the last three years, appetite for Africa's energy resources have surged, a direct benefit from re-organization of the global energy trade.

For the first time last year, Mozambique was able to export its first LNG cargo to Europe, which is committed to pivot from Russian LNG supplies. The country has in excess of 180 trillion cubic feet of natural gas reserves, most of which remains untapped.

Strengthening the already existing energy cooperation between Africa and India is an opportunity that needs to be fast tracked. Encouragingly, Indian energy companies are actively seeking investment opportunities in Africa.

ReNew Energy Global PLC, India's largest renewable energy company, is completing feasibility studies on an \$ 8 billion green hydrogen project in Egypt. According to the firm's Chairman Sumant Sinha, the company is also exploring green hydrogen and methanol investments in Morocco.¹⁸

The state-run consultant Engineers India Limited (EIL) is also finalizing its \$25 million order for a gas-based fertilizer complex in Nigeria. Since 2014, EIL has been providing project management consultancy (PMC) services for Brass Fertilizer Company's fertilizer complex, comprising urea/ methanol plant at Brass Island, Nigeria.¹⁹

EIL's Chairperson Vartika Shukla has also revealed that EIL is reviewing opportunities in oil refining projects across Africa.

Going Forward

Amidst all these initiatives to grow the Indo- African synergy, the true potential remains untapped. What remains to be seen is how each partner could leverage their individual interests for a collective bargain to benefit all.

¹⁷ <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/energy/oil-gas/india-considers-strategic-Ing-reserve-to-avoid-future-shortages/articleshow/99024648.cms>

¹⁸ <https://english.alarabiya.net/business/energy/2023/02/07/India-energy-firms-see-growth-prospect-in-Africa-and-Mideast-including-Saudi-Arabia>

¹⁹ <https://www.projectstoday.com/News/Engineers-India-wins-order-in-Nigeria>

Historically, Africa has found itself on the receiving end of poorly negotiated trade partnerships with global super powers. Whether it is corruption or utter negligence from leaders is a matter of debate.

Could this be the case with an Indo- African cooperation? So far from what we have seen, India and Africa have genuine economic interests to pursue together. At no given point has there been signs of paternalism in the association, quite common with the western trade relations in Africa.

In addition, Africa and India are two important growth poles in the “Global South” and hence their ties are recalibrated to address almost similar socio-economic challenges.

Nevertheless, the ship carrying the Indo-African deal has already sailed. The focus now should be on weathering the murky geopolitical sea where distractions abound.



Transoceanic Interconnectivities Between India-Tanzania Coastal Communities from the Antiquity to Contemporaries: The Archaeologic Perspectives from the Ancient Maritime Trade Connections via the Indian Ocean

*Makarius Peter Itambu

Abstract

The currently available archaeological and historical records indicate that since the prehistoric times, India and Tanzania shared a very long antiquity in terms of human civilization through the Indian Ocean maritime trade especially during the Neolithic period in aspects such as maritime trade links, ancient technology transfer, and intermarriages, expressly in monumental built heritage assets along the coast of the Indian Ocean. Outstandingly, the East African coast and its offshore islands preserve a lot of ancient remnants of built heritage assets, religious and symbolic entities, and socio-cultural traditions. Archaeologically, Swahili culture, which is one of the most powerful African civilizations along the coastal towns and littoral regions in East Africa, is to some extent predisposed and inspired by Indian elements of early civilizations. The prehistoric contacts between the Indian ocean communities of East Africa and India subcontinent have left some legacies in terms of language, crop and animal domestication, trade, architecture and intermarriage. Some of these cultural elements are clearly visible in the forms of a spectacular series of historic stone towns along the coast and littoral regions of Tanzania for instance, especially ones that contain ruins of houses, mosques, and tombs built of coral limestones are typically Indian heritage inspired, which significantly influenced costal and littoral societal socio-cultural developments in Tanzania.

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1. Introduction and Background Information

The maritime international and interregional trade networks that existed before and flourished during 1000 to 1500 A.D left significant legacies in the lifestyle of coastal communities of Tanzania, demonstrated by archaeological sites and ancient city states located along Tanzania's coastal towns (Figure 1). Historically, these two countries have had a long antiquity together in many avenues ranging from ancient maritime trade, ancient intermarriages, and cross-cultural influences between the two. Presently, many Tanzanians of Indian descent are forming a very solid and harmonious culture in Tanzania, such as in sports, trade, and healthcare systems whereby all of them are being supported by a complex religio-social tradition (Itambu et al., 2023). At this time, there are plenty and popular culinary ingredients in Tanzania which are fundamentally Indian inspired, such as 'chapati' and 'pilau', and more importantly, music and sports in Tanzania which are of Indian origins.

A very long historic legacy of trade of various luxury goods, as well as raw materials, from East Africa placed the region at the epicenter of global intercontinental networks, linking the Tanzanian coast to the Arabian Peninsula, China, India, Persia, and the Omani Sultanate, among others. During the 1400s, European intrusion to Africa (i.e., the Portuguese intrusion and later the German and British) entered this matrix as pirates and as authoritarians seeking trade monopoly because Europe had nothing of great value to trade with Asia and Africa in equal terms through the Indian Ocean trade transactions. The invasion of European merchants and eventual disruption of trade between India and East African coastal city states had negative consequences to the development and historical ties that existed whereby Africans become treated as the lower-class citizens.

The merchants working on behalf of the European imperial companies were tasked by their home countries to make as much profit they can by traveling back and forth across the Indian Ocean, conducting trade between Asian and East African coastal states (Pollard, 2007; Chami, 2006; Itambu et al., 2023). This is especially true as it is revealed by both historic and archaeological evidence in Tanzania that shows African people were not primitive and isolated from the outside world as previously thought, because the coastal and littoral (and even hinterland) kingdoms and city-states in Eastern and Central Africa were involved in the immense and profitable Indian Ocean

maritime trade transactions (Pollard, 2007; Chami, 2006; Ichumbaki 2012; Itambu et al., 2023). The ancient Indian ocean trade links took place between Africa and Asia between approximately 1000 and 1500 AD on the Indian Ocean. All the historic and archaeological evidence available at hand demonstrates that East Africa, specifically Tanzania, played a crucial role in the world economy long before contact with European nations. Thus, international trade relationships between India and Tanzania during the ancient times have very long antiquity, having started even before the European Age of Exploration through the trans-ocean trade networks across the globe (Itambu et al., 2023).

1.1 Historic Records

All through historic times, India had massive socio-economic influence on Tanzania's coastal communities. Significantly, some critical instances can be drawn from the colonial period, especially during the struggle for political independence from the British colonialists as India did during the times of Mahatma Gandhi, when Mwalimu J.K. Nyerere did lead the liberation struggles in Tanzania by emulating the Late Mahatma Gandhi's philosophies. Borrowing ideas and following the footprints of this great former Indian statesman's philosophy of fighting for political independence through nonviolence means, Tanganyika (Tanzania) was able to attain her political independence in 1961 without bloodshed i.e. through peaceful means by negotiation, mediation, and talks. Therefore, one can argue that Gandhi influenced the founder of our nation and his friend Mwalimu Julius K. Nyerere to follow similar footpaths while fighting for political independence; both Gandhi and Nyerere were pioneers of struggle for human rights, anti-colonial activists, politicians, and political theorists as well.

Similarly, bromance relationships were cemented and strengthened after India attained her political independence, whereas Gandhi's philosophy was an instrumental and huge inspiration to the founder of our nation Mwl. J.K. Nyerere during the struggle for Tanzanian independence from the British colonialism through peaceful means. It is because of such kind of solid and harmonious relationships between these two countries that India was able to establish schools and hospitals in Tanzania that have been so helpful and beneficial to Tanzanian communities. Some good examples can be extracted from the Aga Khan, and Hindu Mandal Hospitals and Schools in Tanzania (Itambu et al., 2023).

For a couple of decades, Tanzanian patients have been travelling to India while seeking medication services, whereby they have been frequenting cities like Delhi, Calcutta, and Chennai while visiting and attending medication facilities and treatment at the various Apollo Hospitals in India (Itambu et al., 2023). Treatment and cure of some chronic diseases to some Tanzanians have been possible because they have more technologically advanced and higher end medical and lab facilities. The Indian culture in Tanzania has also influenced some popular sports, especially cricket, which is usually played at the University of Dar es Salaam play grounds. Hence, this research article will discuss the necessities of having bilateral agreements and international cooperation on issues pertinent to joint research collaboration in education, trade, medical and health care systems, culture, sports, education, and all aspects pertinent to heritage and tourism between Indian-Tanzanian institutions. Their universities should develop mobility and staff-student exchange programs between these two countries in issues pertinent to trade and commerce, medicine, and marketing touristic attractions of India and Tanzania.

1.2 Archaeologic Evidence

The trade interaction and interconnectivity during the ancient times between India and East African coastal states vastly stimulated the socio-economic activities of the coastal communities in eastern Africa. In the same time, the interactions between India and Tanzania are beyond historic times, whereas the archaeological evidence shows that since prehistoric times the ancient Indian traders and merchants had multiple trade networks and connections along the eastern Africa coastal and littoral communities which settled and occupied areas adjacent to coastal lines of the Indian Ocean. Similarly, the first agrarian revolution that occurred in the Middle and Near East and interconnectedness with the East African world before 1000 BC (Itambu et al., 2023; Chami, 2006) had direct impact on the exchange of goods and socio-economic development and a total change in subsistence systems in human life. The ancient intercontinental trade interrelations and its viable links before the advent of colonial invasion in both continents make these two countries share an incredible history since the earliest times.

As the transoceanic trade intensified between Africa and Asia, powerful city-states flourished along the eastern African coastal areas. These ancient

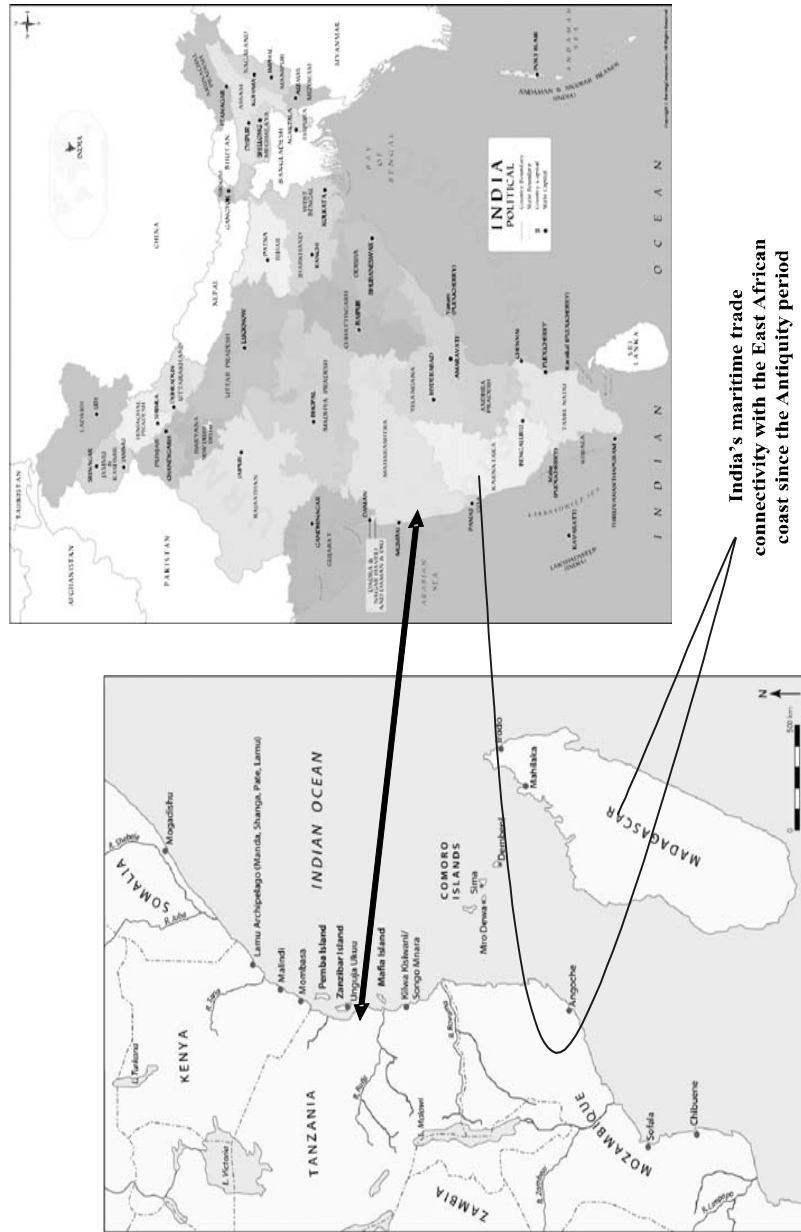


Figure 1: Map showing historical linkages via the Indian Ocean trade between Indian subcontinent and the Eastern Africa Coast since the Antiquity period

city states included Kilwa, Mogadishu, Mombasa, Malindi, Sofala and many other satellites-partner trading states along the Indian Ocean coast. The city-states traded with coastal, littoral, and hinterland states, empires, and kingdoms in order to obtain diamonds, gold, ivory, and iron. These materials were then sold at exorbitant prices to places like India, Southeast Asia, Persia, Oman, and China. These were Africa's exports in the Indian Ocean Trade during 800-1500AD. These items could be sold at an extremely high profit because they were scarce in India and other Asian countries. At the same time, the East African city-states were buying items from Asia. Many inhabitants of the city-states were willing to pay high prices for cotton, beads, silk, and porcelain objects which were Africa's imports in the Indian Ocean maritime trade before the advent of the slave trade and colonialism, and these imported commodities were pricy because they were not available in Africa at the time (Pollard, 2007; Ichumbaki, 2012).

The city-states along the eastern coast of Africa become the paramount and ideal centers of trade connectivity between Asia and Africa. An important attraction that laid the foundation for coastal-hinterland connections was the gold obtained from inland kingdoms and empires. The gold was needed mainly for coins, although it was also used for works of art, decoration, ornamentation on buildings, and jewelry. Similarly, the city-states were easy to reach from Asia by ship because of the favorable monsoon winds. Dhows and ships had no trouble docking at the excellent ports and harbors located on the coasts of the city-states of both ends, making it easy to unload and load cargo from various trading destinations (Itambu et al. 2023; Pollard, 2007; Chami, 2006; Ichumbaki, 2012).

Immensely, the ancient maritime trade networks and ivory trade played a very crucial role early contacts, especially during the mercantile period whereby goods from India such as glassware, beads, and spices were imported to the eastern Africa coast areas from India in exchange for ivory, copper, and gold (Pollard, 2007). All of these eventually resulted in intermarriages and an influx of Indian technology, art, and architectural designs in East Africa coastal regions. The Asian culinary flavours, ingredients, and styles, such as cooked-spiced rice which is an Indian inspired dish, spread thought East African coastal areas. These sites were once cosmopolitan centers of trade and an important part of the medieval

Islamic world. They are also the culmination of a long period of urban development, starting with villages built of wattle and daub founded on the coast from around the 7th century CE, which were key players in international trade circuits (Pollard, 2007; Itambu et al., 2023).

During that time, the East African coast was a peaceful trading region, and the few conflicts that did occur were temporarily resolved, and were also brief and insignificant. The existence of conducive ancient maritime trading atmospheric conditions along the Indian Ocean coast created an ideal setting for import-export companies to conduct trading activities. All of this played a crucial keystone for the emergence and consolidation of Swahili culture along the coastal areas of East Africa. The emergence of Swahili culture is thus associated with a diverse and changing culture and traditions, united through oceanic trade transactions and transconnections and with a range of interrelationships with interior regions of East Africa (Itambu et al., 2023). Many of the merchants from the Arabian Peninsula, Persia, Oman Sultanate, India, and Southeast Asia stayed in the city-states of East Africa. Before the trade contacts, interracial marriages were not uncommon, and progressively over the centuries, a new and distinct ethnic group developed, known as the Swahili people. Today, millions of Swahili people live in the nations of East Africa, where the Swahili language is widely spoken, especially in Tanzania where it is a national language and used in all spheres of life (Pollard, 2007; Itambu et al., 2023).

The Swahili language is pidgin which is an admixture of the Arabic, Hindi, and Bantu languages. The ancient Swahili city-states steadily grew and prospered, and were a major world economic power by the 14th-15th centuries. Although the city-states were famous throughout Africa and Asia, no European countries knew of them during the 1500s. It was like that until 1498, when a Portuguese captain Vasco da Gama accidentally discovered the presence of these states while he was enroute to India in 1498. He came upon bustling trading centers like port cities of Mombasa, Malindi, Kilwa, and Sofala as he sailed up the eastern coast of Africa (Pollard, 2007). This was a starting point of European countries to have contacts with East Africa, because prior to that, they had been buying Asian goods for years through other, more difficult trade routes. The discovery of the trans-Indian Ocean trade with East Africa communities led to a quick U-turn in trade transactions between Asian countries

and the European mercantile countries who were to eventually begun looking for faster, cheaper routes to Asia. Vasco da Gama did ultimately reach India in order to represent and engage his company in commerce and trade, and thereafter returned to Portugal and told the king who had sponsored his expeditions about all the precious items that he saw and found. He took with him to Europe some items, including shiploads of gold, ivory, porcelain, silk, and cotton being bought and sold in the port cities along the eastern coast of Africa and sales made via the trans-Indian Ocean trade network.

The archaeology records and evidence from the coastal sites and its littoral areas corroborates with coastal settlements, of which most reveal a developmental trajectory that continues directly to the stonetowns of the contemporary coasts and islands of Tanzania (Pollard, 2007; Chami, 2006; Itambu et al., 2023). The current linguistic and recent archaeological data suggest that the Swahili culture had its origin in the early first centuries AD (Chami, 1998, 2006a; Ichumbaki, 2020). These material records provide evidence indicative of the trade relations that took place not only between the Tanzanian coast and other parts of the world, but also between the coast and the hinterland. These evidentiary archaeological records along the coastal and littoral regions of eastern Africa landscapes show that the Swahili civilization is spread over an area that extends along the coast of East Africa about 3,000 km from Mogadishu (Somalia) in the north to Inhambane (Mozambique) in the south (Pollard, 2007; Ichumbaki and Pollard, 2021). The Swahili civilization locale also includes the islands of Unguja (Zanzibar), Pemba, Mafia, Comoros, and some parts of northern Madagascar. Some remnants marking the Swahili civilization in East Africa are also found in Lamu Old Town in Kenya, and Ilha de Mozambique in Mozambique. In Tanzania there are the UNESCO World Heritage Sites of Zanzibar Stone Town, Bagamoyo, Ruins of Kilwa Kisiwani, and Songo Mnara. The civilization continues in this early 21st century with its oral traditions and maritime technology that are testimony of coastal Swahili culture continuing through East Africa's socio-economic arenas, whereby all of these contain a substantial number of Indian origin key elemental aspects (Pollard, 2007; Itambu et al., 2023).

2. Discussion

The traces of these connections in the archaeology of the 7th to 10th centuries

in both of these regions are correlative and concordant with the type, shape, artistic stylistic motif, attribute, meaning, and uses of material objects from Asia and especially India during the maritime trade with coastal areas of Tanzania. Archaeological evidence has indicated that there were different types of ancient connections between the people of India and Africa across the Indian Ocean (Hawkes and Wynne-Jones, 2015; Pollard, 2007; Chami, 2006; Ichumbaki 2012). Equally, Horton (1984) notes “significant numbers” of carnelian beads in at Shanga archaeological site, and their numbers peaked in the 9th and 10th centuries, and again in the second millennium. These were made in India (Horton, 1984; Hawkes and Wynne-Jones, 2015). Interestingly, he noted that the Cambay (modern Khambhat) in Gujarat as their likely source, but suggests that they could have been transported to East Africa as “roughouts” (Horton, 1984, 1987), which were commonly found in the excavations, and finished locally (Hawkes and Wynne-Jones, 2015).

Another exemplary form archaeological evidence can be drawn from the archaeological site of Manda, which has the largest quantities of imports for any site during this period. A surprisingly low number of carnelian beads are reported there, with only five examples, which all date to Periods I and II i.e., c. 7th–10th centuries (Hawkes and Wynne-Jones, 2015). This might be similar to the intensity of interconnectivity between Manda and the Persian Gulf, India, and other Near East countries which are demonstrated in other categories of imported goods such as *Sirafi* storage jars (Hawkes and Wynne-Jones, 2015). It is also confirmatory evidence of a notably low number of stone beads in general, with only 15 specimens total, manufacture, including those made from rock crystal, which were likely of local manufacture and derived from local materials (Hawkes and Wynne-Jones, 2015).

In the same vein, Chami (1996) also reported that the Carnelian beads also travelled to sites in the interior of Tanzania; these are stone beads from the 7th–9th century site of Misasa in the Tanzanian coastal hinterland. Also, Jonathan Walz has recovered eight Carnelian beads in 7th–10th century layers at the site of KwaMgogo in Pangani and Mombo areas (see also Pollard, 2007; Chami, 2006; Ichumbaki 2012; Walz, 2017). Correspondingly, Itambu and Patalano (2022) recently revisited the sites in Usambara and recovered a handful of *insitu* exotic beads of Asian and Indian origin from their

archaeological digs at numerous archaeological sites located in the Lower Usambara areas about 1.84 km west of the Mombo township, along the Dar es Salaam-Arusha highway which are indicative of coastal-inland connectivity during the ancient times (Itambu and Patalano, 2022).

Today in many coastal areas of Tanzania you will encounter lots of historic ruins representing tombs, mosques, and other dwelling settlements of the Asian people who migrated to Africa during the ancient trade connections. It was the early farming people who settled on the coast in the last centuries BC who first adopted iron technology and sailing techniques and founded the coastal settlements (see Chami, 1998; Pollard et al., 2012; Ombori, 2012). The culture of the iron-using people spread to the rest of the coast of East Africa, its centre changing from one place to another (Ombori, 2012). Involvement in transoceanic trade from the early centuries AD contributed to the prosperity of the coastal communities as evidenced by coastal ruins, tombs, and monuments.

As noted earlier, at least more than 1500 years of cultural continuity was offset by the arrival of European colonizers in the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries AD at Kilwa Kisiwani with other Swahili coastal sites, such as at Bagamoyo and Kaole (Chittick, 1961, 1974, 1975; Pollard, 2008; Pollard et al., 2012). In all the ancient coastal city states of Tanzania, archaeological records and evidence from the excavated material culture, built structures, and features reveal a lot of the social and economic significance of the ancient coastal sea connections, which in turn are associated with built maritime infrastructures. These sources of evidence show that from the first millennium CE, Tanzania was connected to the Indian Ocean maritime trade networks and that for a period of more than a thousand years, the coast and hinterlands of Tanzania and other areas of the Swahili coast were central in maritime exchange in the Indian Ocean world.

3. Conclusions

Both archaeological and historical information about the Indian Ocean international trade interconnectivity indicate that it began with small trading settlements along the coastal areas, then exponentially spread throughout the littoral regions and ultimately the hinterlands of countries such as Tanzania (Pollard, 2007; Chami, 2006; Ichumbaki 2012). It was around 800 A.D. that

the maritime trade between India and coastal East African communities strengthened and thoroughly flourished and it reached her climactic stage. It then ended in the 1500s when European merchants such as Portuguese invaded and tried to take-over, control the trade, and have monopoly over the international maritime trade between Tanzania and India that has existed over the centuries. As maritime commercial trades intensified between Tanzania, eastern Africa coastal communities, and Asia, and more specifically the Indian subcontinent; some powerful city-states flourished along the eastern coast of Africa. These included Bagamoyo, Raphtha, Kilwa, Mombasa, Malindi, Zanzibar, and Sofala, among others. These ancient historic city-states traded with inland kingdoms of eastern Africa and particularly Tanzania in order to exchange items from India with African commodities such as gold, diamond, ivory, animal skins, and iron. These materials were then sold to places like India, Southeast Asia, Oman, China, and Persian kingdoms. These African exports in the Indian Ocean trade were brought to India and many other Asian states, and were sold out at mega profits because they were sparse in Asian countries during the time in question.

In conclusion, regarding the current global demands, and taking into consideration the past historical ties between India and Tanzania; one can argue and recommend that the current governments between the two countries should think about the necessities of bilateral trade cooperation and a dire need for a mutual research collaboration in trade and tourism sectors in order stimulate people-centred developments between Tanzania and India, especially in socio-cultural and tourism endeavours.

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Bringing the Western Indian Ocean into the Indo-Pacific Geopolitics

*Sankalp Gurjar

In the multi-dimensional and complex geopolitics of the Indo-Pacific, there is no unanimity between major powers about the geographical definition of the region. Each country has defined the region based on its core interests and strategic imperatives. All major powers agree that Western Pacific and the Eastern Indian Ocean is integral part of the Indo-Pacific region. However, the disagreement is about the region known as the Western Indian Ocean (WIO) that lies west of India and includes West Asia and Africa.

Among the Quad countries, India and Japan consider WIO as part of the Indo-Pacific region. In fact, in 2016, the Japanese Indo-Pacific strategy was launched in Nairobi, Kenya. For India, maritime space along East and Southern Africa and West Asia has been important for the protection of its key national interests such as energy security as well as for the projection of its growing military power. However, Australia's idea of Indo-Pacific stops at the Western coast of India and the region beyond India does not appear as a core national security interest for Canberra. The United States (US) has been ambivalent about the inclusion of the WIO in the Indo-Pacific dynamics. However, the region is a critical component in the American geostrategy towards the Indian Ocean as well as to East Africa.

As China and Russia staunchly oppose the idea of Indo-Pacific — they see it as the American construct to contain China's rise — there is no question of these two powers outlining their definition of Indo-Pacific in terms of geography.

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However, owing to their strategic activities, they are important players in the geopolitics of the WIO. Russian engagement with the region builds on the history of Soviet support for the regional states. While the Russian interest is in the domain of security and strategy, for China, imperatives like imports of energy, strategic minerals, and investments as part of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) shaped its engagement with the region. The Chinese military base at Djibouti and the network of dual-use infrastructure complement demonstrates the growing importance of this region in the evolving Chinese strategy towards the Indian Ocean.¹

If one is to consider the strategic imperatives and geopolitical initiatives that brought the idea of Indo-Pacific at the front and centre of the global geopolitics, the role of WIO should perhaps be central to the conversations about the Indo-Pacific. The Indo-Pacific represents the amalgamation of the Indian and Pacific Oceans. Former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe called it the “Confluence of the Two Seas.”² The close interconnections facilitated by global shipping and geopolitics have been bringing the Asia-Pacific and the Indian Ocean region ever closer. Apart from the energy and economic links between the dynamic economies of East and South Asia and the resource-rich West Asia and Africa, facilitated by the sea lanes of the Indian Ocean, security concerns too helped to find the two regions closer. The most notable example being the rise of maritime piracy in the Gulf of Aden and the launch of the global anti-piracy effort.

The counter-piracy deployments since 2008 have provided a strategic rationale for China’s People’s Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) to dispatch its warships to the Gulf of Aden and in the process regularize its naval presence in the Indian Ocean. (China even sent a nuclear submarine in 2014 to the region under the pretext of anti-piracy deployments.) Chinese naval ships on anti-piracy deployments conduct defence diplomacy as well in the East and Southern Africa.³ Japan and South Korea too deployed their navies to the

¹ Dutton, P. A., Kardon, I. B., & Kennedy, C. M. (2020). *Djibouti: China’s First Overseas Strategic Strongpoint*. Washington, DC: U.S. Naval War College

² Abe, S. (2007, August 22). “Confluence of the Two Seas” Speech by H.E.Mr. Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan. Retrieved April 28, 2023, from <https://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/pmv0708/speech-2.html>

³ Gurjar, S. (2019). Geopolitics of Western Indian Ocean: Unravelling China’s Multi-dimensional Presence. *Strategic Analysis*, 43(5), 385–401.

region and just like China, gained experience in operating far away from the familiar waters of the Western Pacific. The forays of these East Asian players in the region later resulted in them establishing permanent military facilities in the region.

Meanwhile, India, a major player in the WIO geopolitics, began to regularly conduct military diplomacy with the countries located along the Western Pacific rim. The strategic initiatives and activities of major players helped in fashioning the idea of Indo-Pacific as a single, unified region. For a proper examination of China's geopolitical and geoeconomic activities across the Indo-Pacific region, the inclusion of WIO in the wider Indo-Pacific framework is necessary. Therefore, the case for the inclusion of WIO in the idea of the Indo-Pacific is not just strong in terms of geography but also in terms of strategy.

In this context, some pertinent questions could be raised while bringing the WIO into the strategic fold of the Indo-Pacific. How to define the WIO? What are the core features of the geopolitics of the WIO? How does it fit within the strategic matrix of the wider Indian Ocean and Indo-Pacific? We try and answer some of these questions in the subsequent sections.

Geography of the WIO

India is located at the centre of the Indian Ocean and the definitions of what is Eastern and Western Indian Oceans are conceptualized in terms of India's position. Generally speaking, West Asia and the littoral as well as island countries in the East and Southern Africa are considered as part of the WIO. However, owing to the strategic and geographic imperatives, we need to consider the Red Sea region and the landlocked East African countries like Uganda that depend on the Indian Ocean maritime Africa for access to sea as part of the WIO geopolitics. Therefore, the WIO can be defined as the region lying between the Suez Canal, South Africa, and India's west coast. It includes global maritime chokepoints like the straits of Bab-el-Mandeb and Hormuz, strategically important island states like Mauritius and Seychelles, unstable countries like Yemen and Somalia and important regional powers like India, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and South Africa. The region is also home to military bases of major global powers. It is a strategic theatre in its own right as well as it links the Indian Ocean and Indo-Pacific to the geopolitics of the Mediterranean and Europe.

Core Features of the WIO

There are three key features of the geopolitics of the WIO-

1. The Great Power Presence

The region has historically attracted the global major powers. The opening of the Suez Canal through Egypt in 1869 increased the strategic importance of the region. It shortened the distance between Europe and Asia and the colonial powers scrambled to gain a foothold in the region. The colonies and bases were meant to facilitate logistics support, refuelling of ships, expand influence in the region and also to monitor the activities of other colonial powers. Britain (Egypt, British Somaliland, Kenya and Yemen and island states of Mauritius and Seychelles), France (Djibouti, Madagascar, Comoros and other smaller islands in the Southwest Indian Ocean), Italy (Eritrea and Italian Somaliland) and Germany (Tanzania) possessed colonies in the region. Portugal already controlled Mozambique.

After the decolonization and with the onset of the Cold War, the US and Soviet Union acquired military bases in the region. The emergence of West Asia as an energy heartland of the world intensified the geopolitical significance of the region. Moreover, the US and Soviet Union competed for influence in the newly liberated states of Africa. The US had built a strong strategic partnership with West Asian countries as well as with the apartheid South Africa. The base at Diego Garcia at the Chagos archipelago was, and even now remains, a centrepiece of the US engagement with the Indian Ocean region. The network of the US bases expanded after the 9/11 terror attacks as it launched the 'Global War on Terror'. The US acquired a base at Djibouti in 2002 and built many clandestine military facilities in East Africa (primarily to launch drone strikes against terrorists operating out of Yemen and Somalia).⁴

Soviet Russia had a major base at Berbera in present-day Somaliland. Post-Soviet Russia engaged Sudan for a base at Port Sudan and has also been conducting regular naval exercises in the WIO with the navies of China, South Africa, and Iran. The anti-piracy operations since 2007-08 in the Gulf of Aden provided an impetus to China and Japan to establish a permanent

⁴ Sun, D., & Zoubir, Y. H. (2016). The Eagle's Nest in the Horn of Africa: US Military Strategic Deployment in Djibouti. *Africa Spectrum*, 51(1) ; Gordon, M. R. (2002, November 17).

military foothold in the region. Japan established its base at Djibouti in 2011 and China in 2017.⁵ The increasing Chinese and Russian presence in the region and the sharpening great power rivalries between the West and these two Eurasian autocracies are also being played out in the WIO. For example, the US accused China of using military-grade lasers on American pilots landing at the US base in Djibouti.⁶

India, a resident naval power in the region, is an important player in regional geopolitics. The region has been a focal point of India's defence diplomacy. Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) too expanded their military presence in the region along the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden for their war against the Iran-supported Houthis in Yemen. Turkey has built a close partnership with Somalia with a military base and training facility at Mogadishu.⁷

Therefore, the great power presence is a key feature of the geopolitics of the WIO and is likely to continue for the foreseeable future. With the emergence of Indo-Pacific as a single strategic space and the sharpening of strategic rivalries between great powers, the significance of the region is going up even further.

2. Amalgamation of Traditional and Non-Traditional Security Threats

The WIO has been home to an array of threats, both, in the traditional as well as non-traditional domain. Interestingly, in the new millennium, major powers flocked to the region to tackle the non-traditional security challenges like terrorism and maritime piracy and, in the process, entrenched themselves in the regional geopolitics. The region has now emerged as one of the important theatres in the great power rivalries between the US and the West on the one hand and China and Russia on the other.

⁵ Threats and Responses: The Operations; U.S. Turns Horn of Africa into a Military Hub. The New York Times. Retrieved April 28, 2023, from <https://www.nytimes.com/2002/11/17/world/threats-and-responses-the-operations-us-turns-horn-of-africa-into-a-military-hub.html>

⁶ BBC News. (2018, May 4). US Accuses China of Pointing Lasers at its Pilots from Djibouti Base. Retrieved April 28, 2023 from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-43999502>

⁷ For more, see: Melvin, N. (2019). The Foreign Military Presence in the Horn of Africa Region. Retrieved April 28, 2023, from https://sipri.org/sites/default/files/2019-04/sipribp_1904.pdf

Since the 1990s, the region has been facing the threat of terrorism. The attacks on the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998 and the attack on the American warship *USS Cole* in 2000 off the coast of Yemen underlined the emergence of this region as a terror hotspot. The threat of terrorism has worsened in the last two decades. The growing presence of Al-Shabaab in Somalia and the Islamist insurgency in Northern Mozambique point to the gravity of the challenge. In addition to terrorism, maritime piracy, armed robbery at sea, drug, and weapons trafficking and illegal, unregulated, and unreported (IUU) fishing are some of the other key security challenges in the WIO. In fact the East African coastline is now known as the ‘Heroin coast.’⁸ Since the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan in August 2021, the links between Makran coast along the Arabian Sea and East Africa seemed to have deepened.

In this context of evolving threats, the global and regional players justify their presence in the region. The argument is that the WIO states are facing such a multitude of threats and the regional states are not only weak but lack capabilities to tackle these threats effectively. Most of the regional states lack well-equipped and well-funded coast guard and maritime patrolling capacity to stop threats emanating from the maritime domain. Many of these states do need assistance in the form of capacity building, training and financial support for countering myriad challenges which bring major global and regional powers to the region.

3. Lack of Institutional Structure

Another key feature of the WIO is that unlike the Eastern Indian Ocean, the WIO region lacks region-wide institutional architecture. Institutions such as the East Asia Summit (EAS) and platforms like the Shangri-La Dialogue (SLD) ensure that there exists a structure and platform for dialogue for the key stakeholders of the Eastern Indian Ocean. In the WIO, there is no such architecture. Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) includes most countries in the WIO whereas Indian Ocean Commission (IOC) includes four island states of Southwest Indian Ocean (Seychelles, Mauritius, Comoros, and

⁸ Haysom, S, Gastrow, P, & Shaw M (2018). The heroin coast: A political economy along the eastern African seaboard”, ENACT Research Paper. Retrieved April 28, 2023 from <https://globalinitiative.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/2018-06-27-research-paper-heroin-coast-pdf.pdf>

Madagascar) along with France. The Djibouti Code of Conduct/Jeddah Amendment (DCOC/JA) too is an important regional platform. However, unlike the EAS and SLD, these forums and their meetings are yet to emerge as one of the most important features of the regional security landscape. In the context of growing foreign military presence and sharpening rivalries, it would be necessary to bring key stakeholders on a single platform such as the EAS.

How does WIO fit in the Geopolitics of the Indo-Pacific?

The Indo-Pacific region can be divided into three broad sub-regions: Eastern Indo-Pacific, Central Indo-Pacific and the Western Indo-Pacific. WIO is part of the Western Indo-Pacific region and is influenced by the larger geopolitical trends affecting the whole region. Major, region-wide trends such as the political, economic, and military rivalry between the US and China, increasing strategic presence and activities of major global and regional powers like India, Japan, France and South Korea, amalgamation of traditional and non-traditional security threats etc. are being played out in the WIO as well.

These processes present challenges as well as opportunities for the regional states. For example, Seychelles has been leveraging India-China competition to draw maximum benefits from both. It is smartly playing one against the other. Meanwhile, regional states are also affected negatively by the strategic rivalries. Their strategic autonomy is in danger. For example, in February, South Africa carried out naval exercises with Russia and China. But the US, South Africa's traditional security partner, was unhappy about the Pretoria's behaviour and expressed its displeasure. The sharpening competition between the West and Russia over the war in Ukraine has also been making it difficult for regional states of WIO to make foreign policy decisions. They would prefer to not choose any one side over the other.

Interestingly, regional states of WIO would like to turn the attention that they are receiving to their advantage. Kenya has been voicing its concerns about the strategic rivalries in the Indo-Pacific and its adverse effect on the region and regional states. It considers militarization of the region, piracy and transnational crimes and oceanic pollution as key concerns.⁹ Madagascar's

⁹ Gurjar, S (2021, October 1). How Kenya Views the Indo-Pacific. Retrieved April 28, 2022 from https://icwa.in/show_content.php?lang=1&level=3&ls_id=6424&lid=4415&kval=sankalp%20gurjar

foreign minister Richard Randriamandrato had said that “we have to look forward and have a common willingness for common destiny... We have to strengthen dialogues to make sure that we address the issue of terrorism, the piracy, transnational organised crime, illegal fishing as well.”¹⁰

It is clear regional states of the WIO would like to steer clear of the strategic rivalries between global and regional powers and would like to seek maximum benefits by engaging with as many players as possible. Strategic competition between major powers creates opportunities for the smaller regional states. They could play one against the other and Seychelles is the best example of such a foreign policy approach. However, the strategic rivalries also generate vulnerabilities for these states. It would be interesting to see how these states deal with the evolving strategic scenario.

Conclusion

The WIO has been emerging as a key strategic theatre in the world politics and in the Indo-Pacific. The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 was a turning point that increased the strategic importance of the region. In the contemporary geopolitics, the emergence of maritime piracy in the Gulf of Aden was a key development. Major global and regional powers flocked to the region under the pretext of anti-piracy operations. Major strategic trends such as growing foreign military presence, an amalgamation of traditional and non-traditional security threats and lack of a region-wide institutional architecture will play a role in shaping the geopolitics of the region. Meanwhile, the regional states will look to maximize their strategic space and reduce the vulnerabilities generated by the evolving geopolitics.



¹⁰ WION (2022, April 27). Madagascar FM calls Indo-Pacific a ‘legitimate vision’; bats for peaceful military ties with India. Retrieved April 28, 2022 from <https://www.wionews.com/india-news/madagascar-fm-calls-indo-pacific-a-legitimate-vision-bats-for-peaceful-military-ties-with-india-474163>

Book Review

Ashok B Rajeshirke, Translated and Edited, Malam-Ni-Pothi: The Pre-Modern Kutchi Navigation Manuals Vol I, Maritime History Society, Mumbai, 2021, 395 pages, Rs. 2500/-.

**Neeta M. Khandpekar*

This Book is an outcome of a project initiated by Darshak Itihas Nidhi, Vadodara, by founder Chairman Shri Hasmukh Shah. It is a rare treasure for Maritime historians and scholars interested in Indian Maritime History Heritage. The writer Dr. Ashok is a linguistically skilled scholar. The forward for this book has been written by Prof. K.S. Mathew. The book is a day-to-day sailing reports from the Kutch region of Modern Gujarat from 1664 to 1895. Introduction running in eleven page highlights the term Malam which means the navigator, Pothis are handwritten navigation manuals (which are now housed in National Museum Delhi). These Pothis give details on how Kutchis mapped out routes to various ports with the help of nakshatras, water currents, depth of water and movements of morejas (eel fish) of different sizes and colours.

The Book has Three Sections, and Section I is lengthiest having seven Chapters. The first chapter covers the Astro-Navigation with figures and Tables which are very technical and require special art to understand them. The second chapter is interestingly titled Astro-Mathematics in Navigation. Through Tables (pothi of Hiran Govani) this chapter explains the Kutchi navigators were aware of system of astromathematics. The third chapter on Traditions in Navigation show how Kutchis encountered atypical phenomena in the high sea. Fourth chapter named Instructions and Observations offers guidelines for crossing perilous locations along the Sea Routes Safety. Interesting illustrations prepared by Malam Ladho Surani shown in coloured Plate No. VII on p. 127.

Chapter five on the chronicles borrowed devices in navigation, covers how the Kutchis developed a professional affinity with the Arabs and

**Dr. Neeta M Khandpekar, D. Litt., Professor, Department of History, University of Mumbai, Mumbai-400 098.*

Portuguese. The Hamal and Juner charts are given (pages 128 to 162). Here, the author has used maximum tables. Sixth chapter brings together the faith and superstitions. The Kutchis assumed that observance to the popular suppositions and superstitions would reduce the gravity of the crisis in the high seas e.g of Sheshnag given with drawing (06.01). Pages 175 to 182 unravels 16 types of bird chatters bringing different omens given. But glossary should have added meaning about partridge, Tador, Katrat, Manragat, Kalak, Kalag, Mirage, Hodid, Akik as types of sea bird... perhaps as given on p 380 of Pharasias a type of sea bird. The seventh chapter brings together how Pothis contain tables on latitudes and longitudes of different landmarks and ports in the Indian Ocean. It's a brief chapter.

The second section addresses the Kutchi Voyages across the Indian Ocean, Voyages from Calcutta to Maldives, Maldives to Colombo, Colombo to Maldives, Mandovi to Maldives, Colombo to Gali, Gali to Calcutta, Calcutta to Muscat, Rameshwar to Muscat, etc. This part is a major medieval source reference to scholars exploring Indian Ocean Studies. Section III identifies Kutchi Maloms and their Muquadams useful for scholars aiming to research the seafaring community of Kutch from social-anthropological or a statistical point of view. Five page Glossary seen. End part of the Book has Kutchi compass/ ship, Mast Sketch, memorial stone of eighteenth century, Dariyalal Mandir.

This book is a valuable source material for exploring rare areas in Maritime History.



Regional News and Views

IMF approves \$4.7b loan for Bangladesh

The International Monetary Fund approved a \$4.7 billion loan for Bangladesh to support the country's economic policies. The decision came in the meeting of IMF's executive board on January 30.

“Many doubted that the IMF might not give us this loan. This loan approval proves that our economy is standing on a solid foundation and our fundamentals better than many other countries,” said Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal in his immediate reaction to the loan approval.

This would be Bangladesh's 13th loan from the lender, with the previous package taken in 2012. The first instalment of \$447.8 million would come in February, followed by six equal instalments of \$708.7 million.

The interest rate would be about 2.2 percent. Of the \$4.7 billion, \$1.3 billion can be repaid over a 20-year horizon with a grace period of ten years. The remaining amount must be paid back within ten years; the grace period for a portion of the sum is 3.5 years and for another portion 5.5 years.

Raising the tax-GDP ratio, implementing the VAT law, setting up an asset management company to dispose of soured loans, bringing down the banking sector's default loans to within 10 percent and raising the capital adequacy ratio to the BASEL 3 requirement of 12.5 percent, are among the reforms agreed upon.

The government has already started implementing some of the reforms such as raising the fuel and power prices and the central bank is aiming to move towards a market-based, flexible and unified exchange rate regime (within a 2 percent variation) by the end of this fiscal year.

Bangladesh Bank Governor Abdur Rouf Talukder informed that the \$7 billion Export Development Fund had been trimmed by \$1 billion already and would be reduced further.

(The Daily Star, 31st January, 2023)

Bangladesh commissions its first submarine base constructed with Chinese help

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on Monday said a glorious chapter opened in the country's military history with the commission of its first ever submarine base in Cox's Bazar.

"A glorious chapter started in the military history of Bangladesh as a full-fledged and modern submarine base is being commissioned in the Bangladesh Navy," she said.

The premier was addressing the commissioning ceremony of the country's first submarine base 'BNS Sheikh Hasina' of Bangladesh Navy at Pekua in Cox's Bazar through a virtual platform from her official residence Ganabhaban here.

The newly constructed submarine base can accommodate a total of six submarines and eight warships at a time. An agreement with China was signed by Bangladesh in September, 2019 and the ground-breaking ceremony was held in February, 2021.

(The Business Standard, 20th March, 2023)

Pakistan

The Sinking feeling

In the last six months since October, we have witnessed an unmistakable deterioration in the country's economic fundamentals, with gloom overtaking whatever little hope the people had regarding their future.

Global rating agencies have downgraded Pakistan's credit score further into junk territory, saying Pakistan is hurtling towards sovereign default because of its balance-of-payments crisis and severe dollar crunch.

Indeed, it is surprising that the government has so far dodged default despite the delay in the finalisation of the IMF bailout deal. However, the costs of this economic downturn have been too steep to bear for people and businesses.

Multilateral lenders such as IMF, the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank have also slashed their growth and employment forecasts in recent months.

For example, the IMF has downgraded its projection for the country's GDP from a reasonable 3.5pc to just 0.5pc in this six-month period. Its latest GDP growth prediction is closer to the forecasts of the World Bank (0.4pc) and ADB (0.6pc). These lenders have also predicted significant loss of jobs as factories shut down or cut their output across different economic sectors.

Against this backdrop, the warning from foreign firms operating in the country of 'mass industrial unemployment' over raw material shortages — thanks to import restrictions meant to stop the outflow of whatever foreign currency reserves we have left — was only to be expected.

The statement by the Overseas Investors Chamber of Commerce & Industry chief that business continuity was at stake for most foreign players in Pakistan sums up the economy's precarious condition. OICCI members are also facing delays in the repatriation of profits and dividends to the tune of \$1.5bn and are holding back — at least temporarily — new investments of close to \$2bn.

But foreign investors are not the only ones facing hardship caused by the unavailability of raw material, currency depreciation, price inflation, the dollar crunch, suppressed demand, etc. National companies, including exporters, face the same issues. Unending political instability has made matters worse in the last one year, taking the government's eyes off the economic ball.

The IMF says the unemployment rate will rise from 6.2pc to 7pc due to the downturn. However, economists like Hafeez Pasha believe that the unemployment rate is likely to hit 10pc, with the number of jobless people increasing by over 2m to 8m by the end of the current fiscal year.

He has repeatedly stated in interviews that the country is set to face another year of negative GDP growth rate. The last time the economy shrank like this was during the Covid-19 lockdowns in 2020. What worries one most is the grim future. Once nations fall below a certain economic threshold, they may find it extremely hard to recover.

(The Editorial in Dawn, 13th April, 2023)

Pakistan heading towards constitutional crisis

Differences between the top judges of the Supreme Court of Pakistan (SCP) and the ruling Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) government has exacerbated to seemingly a point of no return.

There are clear divisions among the SCP judges on the matter as some are against the apex court's "suo moto" powers – alleged to be arbitrarily exercised by CJP Bandial – in this case and has reportedly asked for a larger bench to address the ongoing political turmoil in the country.

On the other hand, the powerful military establishment is backing the Shehbaz Sharif-led government on the matter and has recently informed the CJP and other judges that the security environment in Pakistan is not conducive to holding elections in the two provinces.

Lieutenant General Nadeem Anjum, the Director General of Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), paid a "courtesy call" to CJP Bandial on April 17 during which, it is believed, he informed the superior judiciary that the current military establishment believes that polls in Punjab are not feasible under the present security environment, reported Pak Observer.

The power struggle between the judiciary and the government is likely to continue, with each side asserting its supremacy. With the military establishment siding with the ruling PDM, it is likely that a divided SCP will be under immense pressure on the issue of the election. After much back and forth movement with the National Assembly, the President of Pakistan finally signed the NA's bill curtailing the powers of the CJP to take up any matter *suo moto* and also to unilaterally deciding the constitution of bench.

(The Print, 21st April, 2023)

China

China warns against Taiwan independence as it ends military drill

China has warned that peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait and independence for Taiwan are "mutually exclusive" as it has concluded three days of live-fire drills near the self-governed island in response to Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen's recent trip to the United States.

“If we want to protect peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait, we must firmly oppose any form of Taiwan independence separatism,” Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesman Wang Wenbin said at a briefing on Monday.

The war games simulated strikes on Taiwan and encirclement of the island, and a state media report said dozens of planes had practised an “aerial blockade”.

The exercise “comprehensively tested the integrated joint combat ability of multiple military branches under actual combat conditions”, the People’s Liberation Army’s Eastern Command said in a statement.

The drills began after Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen returned home from a visit to Central America, during which she stopped over twice in the United States and held a high-profile meeting with the Speaker of the US House of Representatives Kevin McCarthy.

Taiwan’s Ministry of National Defence said it had detected 70 Chinese military aircraft and 11 vessels around Taiwan. It said its forces monitored the exercises and aircraft, navy vessels and land-based missile systems were tasked with responding to them.

Taiwan’s government has condemned the exercises while the US has urged China to show restraint. Japan said it had scrambled jets in recent days as a result of the drills.

During the tense situation, the Philippine president said his country will not allow “any offensive actions” to be launched from the bases it has. The US Department of State said on Sunday that Beijing should not turn Tsai’s visit “into something it is not or use it as a pretext to overreact”. as opened to US forces.

The Kremlin on Monday backed the military drills, saying Beijing had a “sovereign right” to respond to what Moscow called “provocative acts”.

(Al Jazeera, 11th April, 2023)

Myanmar

Myanmar junta slams door on hopes for better life abroad

It’s no secret that many people, especially the young, have sought to leave the country since the February 2021 coup. The internal turmoil

and international isolation that ensued in the wake of the military takeover have devastated the economy. Desperate to find jobs elsewhere, thousands have flocked to passport offices to escape the stagnation—and the danger—that they face at home.

Thanks to corrupt officials and opportunistic brokers, however, the cost of acquiring a new passport soared after the coup. And as time went by, it became clear that even paying bribes and brokers' fees did not guarantee success.

Now that the passport offices have also been closed, thousands of would-be passport holders find themselves stranded. Even those who had already been notified that their newly issued passports were ready to be picked up are at a loss, as all operations have been put on hold.

Speculation is rife about why this has happened, but so far, few answers have been forthcoming. Meanwhile, many are watching the situation closely, hoping for news of a resumption of services.

But as long as it is Myanmar's military junta that decides who does and doesn't get a passport, many will have to resign themselves to life inside a country that continues to spiral out of control.

(Myanmar Now, 10th February, 2023)

Myanmar military airstrike: More than 100 people feared dead

More than 100 people are feared to have been killed in Tuesday's airstrike by the Myanmar military, one of the deadliest so far in the civil war.

Survivors told the BBC they have collected at least 80 bodies, but expect the toll to rise further.

The United Nations has condemned the attack, which targeted a village in the north-western Sagaing region.

The spokesman for the military junta, General Zaw Min Tun, told state television, "yes, we launched the air strike". He said they had chosen to attack Pa Zi Gyi because the village was holding a ceremony to mark the opening of an office for their local volunteer defence force.

A military jet had flown over at about 07:00 local time (01:30 BST) on Tuesday and dropped a bomb directly onto the hall where community leaders were meeting, followed by a helicopter gunship which attacked

the village for 20 minutes. Later, witnesses said, the aircraft returned and opened fire on those trying to collect the dead. The village had been packed with people from nearby communities who were attending the ceremony.

“Despite clear legal obligations for the military to protect civilians in the conduct of hostilities, there has been blatant disregard for the related rules of international law,” the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Turk, said.

Thousands have been killed in the civil war, with an additional 1.4 million displaced. Nearly a third of the country’s population is also in need of humanitarian aid, according to the United Nations.

There were at least 600 air attacks by the military between February 2021 and January 2023, according to a BBC analysis of data from the conflict-monitoring group Aced (Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project). The junta has been increasingly relying on its Russian and Chinese aircraft to bomb opposition-controlled villages, inflicting much higher casualties among non-combatants.

If the death toll at Pa Zi Gyi is confirmed, it will be one of the deadliest single incidents so far in the civil war.

(BBC, 13th April, 2023)

800 Myanmarese seek refuge in Mizoram after aerial bombing

A fresh influx of over 800 refugees from Myanmar into the Champhai district of Mizoram has been reported in the past few days following an intense civil war and aerial bombing of villages by the military junta of the neighbouring country, leaders of the Village-Level Committees on Myanmar Refugees (VLCMR) here said on Tuesday. Farkawn area VLCMR secretary T Lalrindika said there are 820 new entrants in their village while a leader of the Young Mizo Association (YMA) branch in the nearby Vaphai village said around 30 people have entered his village from the Chin state of Myanmar. Mizoram has already hosted over 3,000 refugees from Myanmar following the military coup in February, 2021.

(Times of India, 19th April, 2023)

Middle East

Chinese-Brokered Deal Upends Mideast Diplomacy and Challenges U.S.

Finally, there is a peace deal of sorts in the Middle East. Not between Israel and the Arabs, but between Saudi Arabia and Iran, which have been at each other's throats for decades. And brokered not by the United States but by China.

This is among the topsiest and turviest of developments anyone could have imagined, a shift that left heads spinning in capitals around the globe. Alliances and rivalries that have governed diplomacy for generations have, for the moment at least, been upended.

The Americans, who have been the central actors in the Middle East for the past three-quarters of a century, almost always the ones in the room where it happened, now find themselves on the side-lines during a moment of significant change. The Chinese, who for years played only a secondary role in the region, have suddenly transformed themselves into the new power player. And the Israelis, who have been courting the Saudis against their mutual adversaries in Tehran, now wonder where it leaves them.

Amy Hawthorne, Deputy Director for Research at the Project on Middle East Democracy, a non-profit group in Washington admitted that "the United States could not have brokered such a deal right now with Iran specifically, since we have no relations. But in a larger sense, China's prestigious accomplishment vaults it into a new league diplomatically and outshines anything the U.S. has been able to achieve in the region since Biden came to office."

President Biden's White House has publicly welcomed the re-establishment of diplomatic relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran. Privately, Mr. Biden's aides suggested too much was being made of the breakthrough, scoffing at suggestions that it indicated any erosion in American influence in the region.

And it remained unclear, independent analysts said, how far the rapprochement between Saudi Arabia and Iran would actually go.

It does not mean that the Sunnis of Riyadh and the Shiites of Tehran

have put aside all of their deep and visceral differences. Indeed, it is conceivable that this new agreement to exchange ambassadors may not even be carried out in the end, given that it was put on a cautious two-month timetable to work out details.

Mr. Biden and his team were infuriated when, in their view, the Saudis later breached the unannounced agreement reached during that visit and curbed oil production last fall to keep the price of gas elevated. In that instance, the U.S. officials believed Prince Mohammed was siding with President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia, and Mr. Biden threatened unspecified “consequences,” only to back off without imposing any.

China has been seeking military bases of its own in the region as it pursues energy resources and influence beyond Asia. The decision to involve itself in the Saudi-Iranian rift makes clear that there is another player to be reckoned with. In turning to Beijing to mediate with the Saudis, Iran is elevating China in the region and seeking to escape the isolation imposed by Washington. And Israel finds its hopes for an anti-Iranian coalition with Saudi Arabia evidently dashed.

(Peter Braker in New York Times, 11th March, 2023)

Saudi Arabia and Syria ‘in talks to restore ties

Saudi Arabia and Syria are in talks over a resumption of consular services between the two countries, according to Saudi state television, an indication of a possible restoration of ties between the two countries.

Saudi Arabia, which backed the Syrian opposition in the country’s war, closed its embassy in Damascus and expelled the Syrian ambassador in 2012.

Contacts between Riyadh and Damascus had gathered momentum following a landmark agreement to re-establish ties between Saudi Arabia and Iran, a key ally of President Bashar al-Assad, a regional source aligned with Damascus told Reuters.

The re-establishment of ties between Riyadh and Damascus would mark the most significant development yet in moves by Arab states to normalise ties with al-Assad, who was shunned by many Western and Arab states after Syria’s civil war began in 2011.

The apparently sudden breakthrough could indicate how the deal between Tehran and Riyadh may play into other crises in the region, where their

rivalry has fuelled conflicts including the war in Syria.

The United States and several of its regional allies, including Saudi Arabia and Qatar, had backed some of the Syrian rebels. Al-Assad was able to defeat the opposition across most of Syria, thanks largely to Iran and Russia.

(Al Jazeera, 24th March, 2023)

Sri Lanka

UK military bases face security risk over China's sprawling new jungle radar base

China is planning the construction of a new radar base in Sri Lanka which will allow it to spy on UK and US military bases in the Indian Ocean.

The project, revealed by Sri Lankan intelligence sources, has been condemned by experts as proof of Beijing's willingness to leverage the debts of its economic partners for strategic gain.

Planning for the remote satellite receiving ground station is being led by the Aerospace Information Research of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, and the base will be constructed in the dense jungles near Dondra Bay, at the island's most southernmost tip in Ruhuna.

Its location would allow China to greatly increase its intelligence gathering operations against Western navy vessels in the Indian Ocean.

More seriously, it would allow China the potential to spy on US and British military installations in Diego Garcia, as well as India itself.

India's spaceport in Sriharikota, its missile test range in Odisha, and several other military facilities in the peninsular region would all fall within tackling range.

Apart from signals intelligence, China's ground stations form a key terrestrial leg of China's overall space infrastructure, fulfilling the telemetry, tracking, and command capabilities that enable the operation of satellites and other spacecraft.

China's orbital launch rate has risen dramatically over recent years,

increasing China's need for ground station support infrastructure.

Sri Lanka is heavily indebted to China having become another victim of Beijing's Belt and Road Initiative which provides infrastructure projects using Chinese labour at exorbitant rates to return.

Though the idea of constructing a new and unprofitable port in Hambantota came from Colombo the island nation, which boasts a population of only 22 million, now owes Beijing £6b - almost a tenth of its £71bn GDP, and a fifth of its total external public debt.

In view of its sharp economic crisis, China recently offered to freeze debt repayments for two years, while Sri Lanka brokered a deal with the IMF.

But Beijing's magnanimity was not without strings, and one condition was said to be permission to build the radar base.

"Allowing China to build this base may well be part of the price for China allowing Sri Lanka to restructure its debt", said Prof Alessio Patalano of KCL. "China does its best to disguise the military nature of bases like these," added Prof Patalano.

"The worrying aspect here is not just that China knows how to leverage debt owed through BRI projects, but that national authorities who are confronted with the difficult realities of economic cooperation with China will do whatever it takes to free themselves", he opined.

(The Daily Express, UK, 3rd April, 2023)

India

Big Breakthrough for India! ISRO's Reusable Launch Vehicle's Success Is A Threat To Elon Musk's SpaceX

At 7.10 am India time, an Indian Air Force's (IAF's) Boeing-made Chinook helicopter took off with the RLV stowed beneath its belly. It climbed to 4.5 kilo meters in the air (above Mean Sea Level).

The vehicle landed in Hypersonic Flight Experiment (HEX) on a makeshift runway high over the Bay of Bengal. The HEX mission did not require any practice landings on real runways to complete.

Why RLV?

Despite a history spanning over 40 years and a total of 135 launches, the United States was ultimately compelled to give up using the NASA Space Shuttles. These shuttles turned out to be exorbitantly expensive and quite risky to operate.

The failure of the space shuttle compelled space research organizations worldwide to concentrate on developing unmanned launch systems and vehicles that are both less expensive and safer to use.

The expense involved in sending satellites or humans into space is significant. Therefore, since the first step humans took on the moon, space community members have had the consistent goal of developing and designing a vehicle capable of carrying out multiple-launch missions. The vehicle is similar to an aircraft that can be used for either cargo transport or military purposes.

The Reusable Launch Vehicle (RLV) is the space analogue of an aircraft. It takes off vertically on the back of an expendable rocket and then glides back down to Earth like an aircraft. During the landing phase, an RLV can either land on a runway or perform a splashdown. Several tests will be performed on the RLV.

Experiment on Return Flight (REX): As part of the third experiment, the RLV-TD will be launched into orbit, and after it completes its mission in space, it will be brought back to Earth, where it will be landed on a runway.

Scramjet Propulsion Experiment (SPEX): The final experiment will determine how well an RLV-TD, modified with an air-breathing scram jet engine, performs.

Mission Specifications

On confirmation from the onboard Mission Management Computer that the predetermined conditions of the pillbox had been met, the system gave the order to send the RLV into the air at a downrange of 4.6 kilometers.

Because of its low lift-to-drag ratio, RLV was required to approach the landing at high glide angles to land at high speeds of 350 kilometers per hour. The criteria for releasing the RLV included ten different

characteristics, including coordinates, speed, altitude, and heart rate. After executing approach and landing manoeuvres with the assistance of the Integrated Navigation, Guidance, and Control System at approximately 7.40 am, the RLV successfully performed an autonomous landing on the ATR airstrip.

To prevent any mishap, it was necessary to have precise navigation hardware and software, a pseudolite (pseudo-satellite) system (for Positioning Information), a Ka-band radar altimeter, indigenous landing gear, aerofoil honeycomb fins, and a braking parachute system.

ISRO has developed localized navigation systems using satellite positioning technology, such as pseudolites, instruments, and sensors. The Ka-band radar altimeter generated the Digital Elevation Model (DEM) of the landing site, making it possible to determine the landing site's elevation with a high degree of accuracy.

Applying the cutting-edge technology developed for the RLV LEX to other operational launch vehicles of ISRO makes it possible to reduce overall launch costs.

The final approach phase of the LEX mission was successfully accomplished, and the re-entry return flight route demonstrated an autonomous high-speed landing (350 kilometers per hour).

In 2019, the LEX began with an Integrated Navigation Test, and in the years that followed, it was followed by a flurry of Engineering Model Trials and Captive Phase Trials.

(The Eurasian Times, 13th April, 2023)



Society for Indian Ocean Studies

Following a decision of Prime Minister Smt. Indira Gandhi in 1981 to send an expedition to Antarctica and to set up the Department of Ocean Development, Shri P. N. Haksar, Prof. S. Nurul Hasan and Prof. Satish Chandra took the initiative to set up the Society for Indian Ocean Studies (SIOS), as a non-profit initiative stimulating India's profile in ocean affairs.

The aims and objectives of the Society are to initiate, coordinate and promote the various aspects of Indian Ocean Region connected with its history, geography, living and non-living resources, legal regimes as well as those connected with strategic, scientific, technical, social and economic factors.

In its endeavour to promote awareness of ocean affairs, the Society has held a number of national and international seminars such as "Climate Change"; Culture, Trade and Development in South East Asia"; "India's Look East Asia Policy"; India and South Africa-An Emerging Partnership"; Indian Ocean and Central Asian Land-locked States"; "Arc of Peace and Prosperity in the Indo-Pacific region"; "Emerging Geopolitics in the Indian Ocean"; "Strategic Outlook of the Countries in the Bay of Bengal Region" and "Marine Spatial Planning & Regional Cooperation".

The Society also publishes the Journal of Indian Ocean Studies, three issues a year, which has completed 30 years of publication with printed copies of each issue for parliamentarians, Indian Navy and Coast Guard, Foreign Attaches, universities and libraries, both in India and abroad.

