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The Indian Ocean and Its Role in
Strengthening India's Security

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Abstract:

From the Horn of Africa, past the Arabian and the Indian Peninsula, going all the way to Indonesia and beyond, the great Indian Ocean region, stretches across these important junctures which becomes an important medium for India to strengthen its security. India's geostrategic and geo-economic strategy is now getting extremely influenced by its changing Ocean Diplomacy towards indo-pacific. With the recent development of increasing Chinese influence in this region becomes important for India to change its discourse in the Indian Ocean. This geopolitical importance of the Indian Ocean region binding Asia, Africa and Australasia together is calling for a lot of attention by the Indian foreign policy makers for India to counter the China's growing power and its role in the Indian Ocean. India by using its economic, political and diplomatic window with the Indian Ocean rim states needs to further build her strategic power to counter the role of China.

Keywords:

Indian Ocean, Security, India, China, Foreign Policy, Ocean Policy.

***NOTA:** Las ideas contenidas en los **Documentos Marco** son de responsabilidad de sus autores, sin que reflejen, necesariamente, el pensamiento del IEEE o del Ministerio de Defensa.

Introduction

In the Indian Ocean, a new reality among the Indian Ocean rim states needs to emerge to restore the Asian power balance by rethinking their Ocean Policy. Ocean Policy is a code of behaviour established for the state's strategy, course, development plans, and external relations concerning the seas. The well-being and security of the region can only be ensured through incorporating important foreign policy strategies like the Ocean Policy. The Indian Ocean bordering the Indian peninsula is a resource rich and a strategically important oceanic space connecting diverse regions of the world. It has acted as a platform for the exchange of knowledge, culture, technologies, goods and services that has benefitted all the regions bordering this ocean. With around 36 million barrels and 40 percent of world's oil supply transiting through this ocean, it is an important medium for facilitating maritime links between the countries surrounding this ocean.¹ India has benefited since the UN convention on the Law of the Seas, has extended the economic jurisdiction of the coastal states which has led to the mere inclusion of two third of India's landmass thereby massively benefiting its national jurisdiction by ensuring greater security. India has been seen as a pioneer investor as it recovers and processes resources in the deep seas. For India to be at the forefront internationally as well as restore its position regionally, the Department of Ocean Development allocates power for its effective oceanic development, which in turn ensures its protection of maritime border and environment.

The increasing security concerns in this ocean, demands a greater emphasis to be laid on the maritime security agenda of the Indian Ocean region. Notably, the strategic competition between India and China has spilled over into the Indian Ocean creating further anxiety. As China advances its naval presence in the Indian Ocean region, it becomes important for India to expand its naval partners, develop regional infrastructure, and engage more actively in this region. Being the third largest Ocean, it acts as a vital geopolitical space for collective security by providing important maritime links. India, South Africa, Australia, Indonesia and other large and small nations that share borders

¹ JAISHANKAR, Dhruva. Indian Ocean region: A pivot for India's growth. *Brookings* [online]. 12 September 2016. [Accessed 15 April 2018]. Available from: <https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/indian-ocean-region-a-pivot-for-indias-growth/>

with the Indian Ocean are conscious of their responsibility in contributing to the security and stability of the six regions within the rim of the Indian Ocean. Despite the prevalence of peace in many parts of the Indian Ocean, there still exists some potential threats to the national security of many South Asian nations.

India's Defence Policy moving towards a strong Maritime Security

India's Defence Policy has been characterised by status-quo with no desire for expansion and domination. India since independence has not dominated militarily but has instead displayed a strong position in resisting subordination. India's foreign policy has pursued neutrality in the course of international relations. India was a founding member of the Non-Alignment Movement (NAM) during the cold war era. India since its independence maintained its traditional relations with many third world nations in Asia, Africa and in Latin America.

India's Security Policy began in the Nehruvian era and is based on the principles of peace, cooperation and friendship with all nations. In 1962, India came into direct contact with China in the Indo-Sino War and since then the relations between the two has been unsteady. These incidents have had a huge impact on influencing India's security policy. Since then China has established a close relationship with Myanmar, Pakistan and Iran in its attempt to safeguard the sea-lines of communication in the Indian Ocean. China's Indian Ocean policy focuses, among others, on two important aspects. They are (a) ensuring that China's national image is supported by a network of diplomatic relations with which to secure trade relations and influence (b) ensuring that China's objectives are not jeopardised by India or the US. Thus china is quite clear about her India policy and very keen on protecting her SLOCs (sea lines of communication) in the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA).² The development of China's "String of Pearls" strategy of making ports in Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka and the construction of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor as part of the Belt and Road initiative has declined India's relations with China over the years.³ China through its veto power and aggressive soft power

² GOUD, R. Sidda and MOOKHERJEE, Manisha. *China in Indian Ocean Region*. New Delhi : Allied Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 2015.

³ BREWSTER, David. Beyond the 'String of Pearls': is there really a Sino-Indian security dilemma in the Indian Ocean? *Journal of the India Ocean Region*. 2014. Vol. 10, no. 2p. 133–149. DOI 10.1080/19480881.2014.922350.

diplomacy has built stronger maritime links with the littoral states by offering loans, aiding infrastructure, providing military assistance and political support. China has exercised its hard power by deploying army naval vessels in Sri Lanka along with establishing foreign ports in many of the littoral states of the Indian Ocean. The air force of the People's Republic of China, which is the third largest in the world, has successfully established an operating system in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) in India's neighborhood. China has further built rail links in this region and has initiated plans to extend the network in Sikkim.⁴ If the neighboring countries of India allow China to operate from their bases, then it would pose serious security challenges to India.

In an international system which remains anarchic, states constantly seek to maximize their power for survival which involves the engagement of states in conflicts. This theory, known as the Tragedy of the Great Power Politics which was first mentioned by Mearsheimer, has gained popularity in the contemporary world.⁵ In contrast to Joseph Nye's liberal approach of forming regional organisations to achieve a balance of power, Mearsheimer defends his argument with an offensive realist approach. According to this theory, since the great powers would enjoy the hegemony they already possess, a balance of power with weaker states could never exist. China's so-called peaceful rise, can be seen to create a sense of fear among other littoral states in the Indian Ocean, in the process intimidating them to build stronger trade ties with China. To counter China's offensive approach, India is pursuing a defensive approach by responding through increasing its hard power. India is further strengthening its ties with Japan by signing civilian nuclear agreements. India's security policy in the contemporary times has also expanded to include the African countries. In this regard, the Asia-Africa Growth Corridor is being developed by India and Japan as a counterbalance of China's Belt and Road Initiative.⁶ Along with these initiatives, the Indian Ocean Rim Association has also given

⁴PLAAF Deployments in Tibet. *Centre for Land Warfare Studies (CLAWS)*[online]. [Accessed 23 April 2018]. Available from: <http://www.claws.in/347/plaaf-deployments-in-tibet-manish-girdhar.html>

⁵John Mearsheimer's Theory of Offensive Realism and the Rise of China. *E-International Relations*[online]. [Accessed 23 April 2018]. Available from: <http://www.e-ir.info/2014/03/06/john-mearsheimers-theory-of-offensive-realism-and-the-rise-of-china/>

⁶ CAI, Peter. *Understanding China's Belt and Road Initiative*. www.bing.com/cr?IG=2DF72DCF2E2C4FE6B02DC354E0817550&CID=3F9F4938A05A6518231C42ECA1F5641D&rd=1&h=dG_GWLC2hUyTNwNJ69C-hFdZYrrqwJmW18e4UHixn98&v=1&r=https://www.lowyinstitute.org/sites/default/files/documents/Understanding_China's_Belt_and_Road_Initiative_WEB_1.pdf&p=DevEx,5065.1.,2017

India an upper hand in countering Chinese influence in this region. India has realized the importance of incorporating good foreign policies with its neighbors in order to maintain a powerful position in the world and for a peaceful co-existence. The increasing Chinese influence in the Indian Ocean rim states and its expansion of naval capabilities indicate a need for India to further develop its Ocean policy towards this region. It is now high time for India to change its foreign policy to strategic influence from strategic autonomy. India should grab the opportunity of developing closer ties with the US in order to extend its maritime influence up to Australia and Far East thereby benefiting from its integration with Australia and ASEAN nations. Most importantly, for India to counter China, it is important for it to cooperate with the US even though the nations in the Indo-Pacific region are apprehensive about US self-interests and its excessive military presence in the region.

The well-being and security of the region can be only ensured through incorporating important foreign policy strategies like the Ocean Policy. To reduce the external influence upon the region it becomes important for the nations in this region to strategize their collective efforts through strengthening regionalism. India's Foreign Policy from the beginning has always focused on the idea of regionalism to ensure a greater security. According to Nye, regionalism is the process whereby nations within the same geographical proximity come together under a multilateral, regional organization to promote dependency in areas like economics.⁷ The establishment of regional organizations has encouraged member states to avoid potential threats from other countries. Regionalism hence became more a universal and multidimensional ideology whose objectives are not restricted to the promotion of free trade and security in specific regions.⁸ India's post-independence regional initiatives mainly focused on promoting cooperation between the newly independent nations of Asia and Africa, thereby advocating world peace. During the past few decades, India has adopted foreign policies such as Neighbourhood First policy, Act East, Focus Africa Plan, Link West and Indo-Pacific to enhance its security policy goals. In the larger context, this process has advocated greater linking of Asia, Africa and Australasia with India. The Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA)

⁷ NYE, Joseph S. *International regionalism: readings*. Boston, 1968.

⁸ MELO, Jaime De and PANAGARIYA, Arvind. *The new regionalism in trade policy*. Washington, D.C. : World Bank, 1992.

provides the perfect platform for India to further build its security policy agendas. India by fostering bilateral and multilateral cooperation with the Indian Ocean rim states has secured its military presence in this ocean. Realising the importance of such an integration, India continues its support on the expansion of IORA.

The IORA has had an essential role in promoting Asian, African and Australian regional integration. For India to deal with its security and strategic challenges, it becomes important for it to engage with Indian Ocean Rim states. In mid 1990s, the Indian Ocean Island states put forth their own ideas about sovereignty of large and small Island states as a responsibility which did little to promote consensus among the nations within the Indian Ocean. This doctrine was partially associated with South Africa's former President, Nelson Mandela. With the formation of IORA, this association played an important role in embodying and catalysing the principles of sovereignty among the Indian Ocean rim states. These moves by South Africa and India helped shape the development of the role of IORA and its mandate after its inception. IORA consists of 21 countries at various stages of development and diversity. Out of the twenty one nations India is the largest with a population exceeding 1.3 billion. From the outset it was evident that India's stance was instrumental in terms of explaining why IORA was important for the Indian Ocean Rim States. The cultural affinities among the citizens of the member nations, continues to provide the bedrock for bilateral relations. Beginning with tourism, the IORA has progressed into more and more areas of the Ocean policy ranging from fisheries to maritime to regional development and security. The Indian Ocean Rim states are politically, economically and diplomatically connected through the Indian Ocean.

The member states of IORA comprising around 2.7 billion people (IORA, 2017) are well connected through the Indian Ocean despite being culturally diverse, linguistically distinct and varying greatly in terms of religion, art, traditions, and cuisines.⁹ Even the status of economic development, population and geographical location of these member states differ greatly. This association's member nations have had the opportunities in recent times to be sustainable and there are much more chances of open competition among

⁹ IORA - Indian Ocean Rim Association. [online]. [Accessed 16 April 2018]. Available from: <http://www.bing.com/cr?IG=BE0711E5A6874A26BFFBCFD94B1B3466&CID=325485FCAA4563CD28318E28ABEA62F8&rd=1&h=L-L5IUUgEqYxom9qU5cgAdvWNGtjxsl3ldcCdhFjHwY&v=1&r=http://www.iora.net/en&p=DevEx,5068.1>

the member states. Despite these differences and diversities, the Indian Ocean closely integrates these member states through economic cooperation and maritime links in the Ocean. The IORA has been a very active multi-regional organization with an ever increasing importance in the Indian Ocean. Through the strategy of non-intrusion in the rapid dynamic setting of the region, the IORA has been devoted to expanding the understanding and cooperation among its member nations. India being the largest in size and economy in this association exercises the greatest influence in this organisation. Hence, IORA acts as an important platform for India to strengthen its security policy goals. The inability of Indian Rim state member states to take responsibility in its early years of engagement and to develop a coherent strategy has also been a major failure in the security policy system of several IORA member nations. Thus IORA should be seen as a unique vision of the future, representing the six regions in Asia, Africa and Australia to balance the rise of China as a regional and a global giant.

Regional Organizations in the Indian Ocean

A new era of security through regionalism has unfolded with the emergence of regional organizations like ASEAN (Association of North East Nations), SAARC (South Asian Association for regional cooperation) and others. Keeping these ideas of peace and stability in mind, SAARC was the first regional organization established in the South Asian region. SAARC has demonstrated its will to achieve regional cooperation in the South Asian region but at a slower pace compared to other regional organizations.

The role of India in SAARC is also of significance as it defines the dynamics of political will and interaction among member states. The fear of India's hegemony by the smaller economies and India's failure to open up can also be attributed to the inhibition of economic integration over political integration.¹⁰ However, SAARC has been ineffective in the implementation of its initiatives as a result of various hurdles like mutual mistrust amongst nations and lack of political commitment. This has made cooperation in aspects like security and economy to be counterproductive. The absence of progress in economic integration in the South Asian region can be attributed to a number of factors such as domestic and external trading competitions amongst member states. However, regional

¹⁰ SRIDHARAN, Eswaran. *International relations theory and South Asia*. New Delhi : Oxford University Press, 2011.

actors involved in economic integration initiatives have great chances of benefiting from such alliances. Even though this organisation has been ineffective, it has successfully implemented maritime trade and the management of fisheries among its member nations which makes these countries economically interdependent thereby increasing the possibilities of peace in this region. Saez views domestic actors as being equally important in the security agenda of a region.¹¹ India through its neighbourhood first policy is developing a close relationship with its SAARC neighbours to counter China's string of pearls strategy and IORA neighbours of India like Sri Lanka and Bangladesh are aiding this countermeasure of India by providing important sea lane connections to India. India's maritime environment and geostrategic location makes it imperative that she takes effective steps in safeguarding her SLOCs in Indian Ocean.¹² The advantages that South Asian nations can enjoy as a result of successful economic integration can be understood better by focusing on the role that SAARC has to play in it. In spite of the introduction of preferential trading agreements aimed at reducing trading tariffs for instance South Asian Preferential Trade Arrangement' (SAPTA) and later the South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA), the insecurity and tensions that have been witnessed in the region amongst nations have stalled economic growth and integration amongst the South Asian nations. It thereby becomes necessary for the SAARC nations to come together and overcome common challenges facing them instead of fighting each other and reducing the possibilities of security in the region.

Another important regional organization established in this region is the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC). India plays a significant regional and economic role in this organization, thereby widely influencing the other members of this organization. This organisation is currently focussing on vital areas like fighting terrorism, global warming, energy cooperation, trade and investment policies to rebalance the other powers around this region.

SAARC and BIMSTEC have closely replicated other regional organizations like ASEAN. In Rajiv Bhatia's Transforming South Asia Imperatives For Action (2014), Rajiv notes that the conceptualization of SAARC was mainly a response to domestic, political and

¹¹ SAEZ, LAWRENCE (2011) [*South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation \(SAARC\): An emerging collaboration architecture*](#). London: Routledge.

¹² Ibid. p. 3

economic needs of the South Asian nations, and has often been compared to its counterparts like EU or ASEAN which have been stating driven initiatives pushed forward by extra-regional force.¹³

ASEAN has played a significant role in regional cooperation by addressing security, economic and humanitarian issues. Subsequently, a close relationship between the South and the Southeast Asian nations have been formed in the Indian Ocean Region to foster important relations among the navies of these countries. A free trade agreement between India and ASEAN knew as the ASEAN India Free Trade Agreement mainly aimed at increasing economic cooperation in the Asia Pacific region.¹⁴ A greater security integration is also required to overcome the problems faced during maritime trade.

Looking at India's Ocean Policy with Australia, this island nation historically has had good relations with India under the Indo-Pacific foreign policy. Pacific situated on the west of the Indian Ocean, consists of over 10,000 islands. Australia being the largest in the Pacific with an extremely developed economy and consisting the most significant sea lanes of communication, supports the other nations by contributing to their trade and production. Indian immigrants to Australia form the third largest source of immigrant population and also contribute significantly to the Australian economy as they form a source of skilled labor. Asia and Pacific have been key regions in influencing the foreign policy of Australia. It is one of the fastest developing nations of the world, viewing UK and U.S. as major alliances and vital world economic centers for Australia. It is also adapting to its dynamic neighbors like East Asia and Western Pacific which have a massive influence on its political, economic and strategic issues.¹⁵

Moving towards India's Link West Policy, the Gulf states also play an important role in influencing India's foreign policy. Gulf Cooperation Council formed in 1981, is a political, economic and military union advanced by Saudi Arabia with a hidden agenda of counterbalancing Iran. Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) founded in 1960 came about with the purpose of uniting petroleum policies between the

¹³ BHATIA, Rajiv K., SINGH, Swaran and MARWAH, Reena. *Transforming South Asia imperatives for action*. New Delhi : KW Publishers, 2014.

¹⁴ PRASAD, BIMAL, (2012), *The Making of India's Foreign Policy*, Vitasta Publishing Pvt.Ltd. S. (2016, January 09). UAE has 2.2m Indians: 40% from Kerala. Retrieved April 10, 2018, <https://www.emirates247.com/news/emirates/uae-has-2-2m-indians-40-from-kerala-2013-05-13-1.506273>

¹⁵ ARGOUNES, F. (2012). Australia: the Temptation of Regional Power. Retrieved April 7, 2018 from <https://www.cairn-int.info/publications-of-Argoun%C3%A8s-Fabrice--4664.html>

member countries and providing important information about the global oil market. The OPEC members whenever faced with a threat of internal conflicts become steady as per the evolving formula to keep the organization together.¹⁶ In OPEC, Saudi Arabia and Iran are the key members being the first and the second largest exporter of oil respectively. The GCC in terms of its economic, military and international relations is continuously changing in the Middle East.¹⁷ The Indian Ocean is also termed as the “oil line of the West” as the Indian Ocean provides a smooth passage for the export of oil. China’s energy imports from the gulf has also made it increase its military presence in the region in this shadow of economic interests which makes it important for India to step up its stance against this increased military presence by furthering its ties with the Indian Ocean rim states.

Looking at the Southern African region, Mozambique is an emerging partner of India in this region because of its increasing economic and security interests in India. It is also one of the top exporters of oil and gas as well as various minerals to India. South Africa with a diverse population of 55.9 million.¹⁸ South Africa is the largest producer and consumer of energy in the African continent. This is particularly important for India, as it is one of the largest energy consuming nation in the world. In future there is a possibility of China depending on India to protect its interests of trade in the Indian Ocean as India is gradually increasing the provisions of security of the sea lines of communication.

Bilateral trade between South Africa and India has grown remarkably since the mid-1990s. South African trade with India reached USD 9.4 billion in 2016.¹⁹ (Diplomatic Society, 2017). According to the 2015 World Bank report, Africa is regarded as the second-fastest growing region in the world, and six of the ten fastest growing economies of the world originate from Africa. The global relations between India and South Africa got further strengthened through the inclusion of South Africa in the BRIC (Brazil, India, Russia, and China). The GDP of BRICS countries is growing at a rapid rate. The

¹⁶ SKEET, Ian. *OPEC, twenty-five years of prices and politics*. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1991.

¹⁷ LEGRENZI, Matteo. *The gcc and the international relations of the gulf: diplomacy, security and economic coordination in a changing middle east*. I.B. Tauris, 2015.

¹⁸ South Africa's population hits 55.91 million. *BusinessTech*[online]. [Accessed 15 April 2018]. Available from: <https://businesstech.co.za/news/general/134550/south-africas-population-hits-55-91-million/>

¹⁹ KIANJA. South South – Africa Asia. *News*[online]. [Accessed 10 April 2018]. Available from: <http://www.thediplomaticsociety.co.za/archive/archive/2137-south-south-africa-asia>

contribution of the BRICS member states to international trade has been 17 percent with an immense rise in the agricultural output.²⁰ (BRICS, India, 2016). The diverse population in South Africa also includes about 2 million Indians who contribute immensely to the bilateral relations.²¹ (Diplomatic Society, 2016). The cooperation between India and South Africa can be traced back historically as well as contemporarily with their involvement in the IBSA Dialogue Forum and the BRICS Summit. Apart from BRICS, South-South cooperation also plays an important role in uniting the African country with the other nations in the global south. This cooperation, involving the global south, focuses on reaching sustainable development goals that benefit the member countries economically. India and South Africa, through this cooperation, have further improved their strategic ties. Even through IBSA (India, Brazil and South Africa), India and South Africa have been able to interact with one another on a global platform promoting south-south cooperation. South Africa's Durban and Cape town ports are important maritime logistic hubs in the Indian Ocean connecting the Indian Ocean with the Atlantic as well as the Pacific.

The Eastern African region, constituting of nations like Madagascar, Mauritius, Kenya, Tanzania, Comoros, Seychelles, and Somalia are important contributors to the sustainability of Indian Ocean rim states. Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda with an aim to enhance economic development and mutual success have formed an important trading bloc, the East African Community (EAC). The Eastern African Community integration has incorporated four major areas. Firstly, the establishment of a customs union and a free trade zone among the member nations. Secondly, provision of public goods and services for coordination between the community members. Thirdly, in 2006, a negotiation of a common market was too initiated. The author, Muinde has used National Interest theory to analyze how member states of EAC implement treaties while working under an institution.²² Lastly, the formation of a political union following the monetary union under the federal constitution would be the ultimate goal to integrate the Eastern African

²⁰ B R I C S BRAZIL, RUSSIA, INDIA, CHINA & SOUTH AFRICA. *BRICS : ABOUT BRICS* [online]. [Accessed 17 April 2018]. Available from: <http://brics2016.gov.in/content/innerpage/about-us.php.php>

²¹ Ibid.

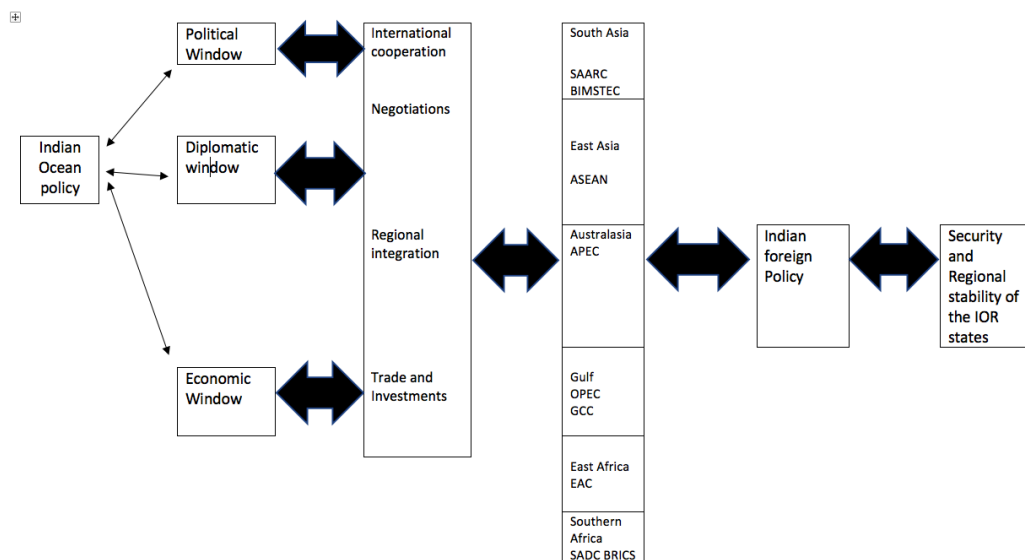
²² MUINDE, N. (2009), Regionalism in Eastern Africa: Lessons learnt from the defunct East African Community. Retrieved March 6, 2018
http://erepository.uonbi.ac.ke/bitstream/handle/11295/100140/Muinde_Regionalism%20in%20Eastern%20Africa%20Lessons%20Learnt%20From%20The%20Defunct%20EasT%20African%20community.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

Community Members.²³ Considering the security threats in the Indian Ocean region, India and Mauritius work closely in developing secure maritime links. Mauritius plays a very active role in furthering the Indian Ocean Rim Initiative by being a prominent member of Indian Ocean Commission (IOC), whereas Seychelles has remained behind in this process despite being active in the IOC.

ResearchMethodology

Figure 1.

Figure 1. Conceptual model designed by authors. (A model designed by the authors)



The methodology adopted for this paper has been comprised of three divisions aiming at containing the Chinese influence within the Indian Ocean region. The first and second division focused on the diplomatic initiatives and the political commitment of the six (6) sub regions within the Indian Ocean rim states to improve the strategic dynamics of this region. The third section of the analysis was concerned with economic window mainly

²³ BOOTH, D., Cammack, D., KIBUA, T., Kweka, J., & RUDAHERNWA, N. (2007). East African integration: How can it contribute to East African Development. [online]. [Accessed 12 April 2018]. Available

from: https://www.bing.com/cr?IG=5893189EE6D941C7876E6204ACBCDC5A&CID=2AE1066DC3AB68F227D00DB9C20469E6&rd=1&h=8khoRbqCevJXibFT_fjpbUUAsIADbD3WNe13v6h_FWo&v=1&r=https://www.odi.org/resources/docs/126.pdf&p=DevEx.5067.1

focusing on strengthening India's security with the IORA member states by enhancing economic interdependence in this region. The analysis would be discussed in several stages. Based on our research questions, the below-given regions are assessed using mixed methods of quantitative and qualitative analysis. Secondary data is based on facts retrieved from journals, books, online articles and other sources. The operationalizing of the research paper is divided into measurable factors.

Table 1. IORA selected member regions

Number	Region's representing IORA	Selected IORA member nations	Total number of selections
1.	South Asia	India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh	3
2.	South East Asia	Singapore, Malaysia	2
3.	Australasia	Australia	1
4.	Gulf	UAE, Iran	2
5.	Eastern Africa	Mauritius, Kenya	2
6.	Southern Africa	South Africa, Mozambique	2
Total number of selections			13

***IORA member states: Commonwealth of Australia, People's Republic of Bangladesh, Union of Comoros, Republic of India, Republic of Indonesia, Islamic Republic of Iran, Republic of Kenya, Republic of Madagascar, Malaysia, Republic of Mauritius, Republic of Mozambique, Sultanate of Oman, Republic of Seychelles, Republic of Singapore, Federal Republic of Somalia, Republic of South Africa, Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, United Republic of Tanzania, Kingdom of Thailand, United Arab Emirates and Republic of Yemen. (Source: Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), 2018)**

Table1.

The variables and measurable factors will be assessed through nine (9) sub regional groupings such as SAARC, BIMSTEC, ASEAN, APEC, OPEC, GCC, EAC, SADC and BRICS based on the larger mandate of India's Security Policy through intensifying India's Ocean policy with the Indian Ocean rim states. The political window will focus on the ocean policy concerning fisheries, maritime security and tourism. Secondly, the diplomatic window will be analyzed through the variables of international cooperation, negotiations, and regional integration. Thirdly, the economic window will measure the trade and investments between the member states. All the three windows ultimately promoting greater collaboration to fight the common concern, China.

Analysis of India's Security Policy and Regional Integration of Indian Ocean Rim States

The comparative explanations discussed here contribute to the understanding of the importance of integration of Indian Ocean Rim States for the Indian Security Policy agenda. This paper aims to give an analysis on how the Indian Ocean policy needs to be advanced to foster India's security and help it in countering China's military presence in this Ocean. An assessment has been carried out in three major stages relating to political, diplomatic and economic parameters and regionally based Indian foreign policies such as Neighbourhood First, Act East, Link West, Focus Africa, has been analysed to solidify India's regional and global position as a rising power.

The South Asian region can be described as being economically and culturally diverse. Over the years, this region has undergone different stages of transition. The region accounts for almost one-fourth of the world's population and is made up of eight contiguous nations. Efficient economic interdependence amongst these states can only be achieved through political, economic and social development. India has strengthened its cooperation with its neighbours in the Indian Ocean through bilateral and multilateral cooperation. The "China factor" constantly bothers India as it pursues greater energy security. This struggle between India and China to tap into the energy resources is observed as both the countries direct their foreign policies towards South Asia and South East Asia for oil and gas.

The South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC) has been struggling to make an impact for a long period of time. Although it was established in 1985, it has been as effective as ASEAN in fostering regional cooperation and in re settling disputes peacefully. The influence of regional politics and poor interstate relations amongst the member states of SAARC has led to the poor integration in this region. In addition, SAARC intra trade is of less benefit compared to Indo-ASEAN trade. As a region, South Asia is important for consolidation of its security policies and expanding its economic cooperation with SAARC nations. Within the SAARC member states, intra trade is 5 percent. It is bound to improve in the coming years with India's economic growth as the third largest economy. In an attempt to improve the economic cooperation between the countries of South Asia, SAARC formed the SAPTA and later the SAFTA. In the early

2000s, through the formation of Indo-Sri Lanka Free Trade Agreement (ISFTA), the economic relations between the two nations has grown manifold. Sri Lanka is also important for India due to its strategic location and maritime security links. India has granted more than USD 2.8 billion aid to Sri Lanka and is one of the biggest trading partners of Sri Lanka, with bilateral trade amounting to around USD 4.38 billion in 2016.²⁴ (High Commission of India in Sri Lanka, 2018).

Similarly, concerning India's ties with Bangladesh, India has played a significant role in liberating Bangladesh in 1971. After the G20 countries, Bangladesh's economy is now named amongst the 'Next 11' club. Bangladesh has a population of 156 million (2010) comprising of huge Indian diaspora. Their relationship is also viewed in an important organization like BIMSTEC. Bangladesh provides important maritime security to India by acting as a buffer zone for China's influence in the Indian ocean.

The ASEAN bloc has played a significant role in India's economic growth.

This bloc comprises of a population of around 625 million in 2013²⁵ and the intra trade among the 10 members, is 35 percent.²⁶ Obviously like most other advanced economies ASEAN nations historical path continuing through a major emphasis on the manufacturing and on to largely service oriented production.

Interpreting Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and Indonesia as examples of the bilateral strategic choice of India's Act East Foreign Policy with these ASEAN nations contributes significantly towards strengthening the Indian Ocean foreign policy agenda. These are some of the key players and out of these the Asian tigers, Singapore and Malaysia have prospered in the years 1960s to 1990s with double-digit economic growth. India transformed its policy of Look East to Act East. There was an urgent need for the government of India to amend the breach of India's foreign policy. Therefore, the look

²⁴ ADMINISTRATOR. High Commission of Sri Lanka in India. *India Sri Lanka Foundation*[online]. [Accessed 14 April 2018]. Available

from: http://www.slhcindia.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=371&Itemid=106

²⁵ ASEAN stats, (2013), ASEAN indicators of December 2016, Retrieved March 6, 2018, from https://web.archive.org/web/20150904103519/http://www.asean.org/images/2015/January/selected_key_indicators/Summary%20table_as%20of%20December%202014_R.pdf

²⁶ The Potential of Intra-regional Trade for South Asia. *World Bank*[online]. [Accessed 13 April 2018].

Available from: <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/infographic/2016/05/24/the-potential-of-intra-regional-trade-for-south-asia>

east policy was launched in order to reiterate the economic and political relations of India and the nations of Southeast and East Asia. Notably, the Look East policy (LEP) of India was not only inspired by the need to promote regional economic integration with the neighbours of India to the east, but it also aimed at counterbalancing the influence of China in the Asia Pacific region. The signing of the comprehensive economic cooperation between India and Malaysia provides new opportunities for economic collaboration and strong commercial ties. The bilateral trade between the two nations in the period 2014-2015 stood at USD 16.9 billion.²⁷ This was an increase from the previous periods like 2011 where it stood at USD 12.52 billion and presently trade between India and Malaysia has decreased to USD 12.8 billion in the period 2015-2016.²⁸ These two countries are also home to Indian nationals who reside outside India. The FDI inflow of Malaysia to India has been USD 618.37 million from 2000 to 2012.²⁹ In addition, many Indian entrepreneurs and industries have invested in Malaysia in different spheres like technology, banking, and healthcare. Hence, the ties and the diplomacy between India and Malaysia goes beyond economic ties due to the presence of the large Indian diaspora in Malaysia. Singapore is one of the wealthiest region in Asia with a population of 4.5 million out of which Indians are three lakh. One important sector creating a foundational set up for economic development in Singapore is the manufacturing sector. This well-grown sector has acted as an important platform in Singapore in creating jobs and providing economic development. In the recent times, the Singapore port is considered to be the world's busiest ports with nearly 200,000 ships visiting it annually. Singapore and Malaysia also have a large Indian diaspora who are contributing largely to the different sectors of their economy. ASEAN as an organisation is a strong tool for implementing India's Ocean Policy as it provides vital maritime, air and logistical links. Indonesia is the world's largest Muslim nation spread along nearly 17,000 islands. It is one of the fastest growing economies in the world with huge FDI inflows coming into the nation. Further, it is a founding member of APEC sharing its strategic relationship with

²⁷Indian SME trends: The year gone by and 2017 [online]. [Accessed 12 April 2018]. Available from: https://www.bing.com/cr?IG=A5597EF3AC0644ECB04EA12B7737638D&CID=1FE9D96E2E5E6F522AEFD2BA2FF16E35&rd=1&h=3DtJPMqUw5KG9a7ZvQ5ZwG_2PPfGUnGXUZ7WHZFc0qM&v=1&r=hhttps://economictimes.indiatimes.com/small-biz/sme-sector/indian-sme-trends-the-year-gone-by-and-2017/articleshow/56254240.cms&p=DevEx,5040.1

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Malaysian Indian Youth Forum. *Welcome to Youth Forum for Malaysian Indians*[online]. [Accessed 11 April 2018]. Available from: <http://malaysianindiansyouthforum.com/hpages.php?hid=206>

Australasian nations. Indonesia acts as a nation bordering the Pacific and the ten ASEAN member nations. Indonesia being the sixteenth largest economy, is one of the most powerful and potential country in the Southeast Asian region. IORA has led to an improvement in the bilateral and cultural ties between India and Indonesia and the development of important maritime links between these two countries. Assessing further East, the analysis will now cover Australasia, which is the Easternmost point of the Indian Ocean Rim states. The Indo-Pacific foreign policy of India combined with Act East Policy plays a significant role in further solidifying its eastward influence towards the Pacific. Looking at the close links between India and Australia, the trade ties in 2016 between the two stands at USD 15.6 billion approximately.³⁰ In the same year, India's exports to Australia stood approximately at USD 4.6 billion while the imports stood at USD 11 billion. As Australia has a huge Indian diaspora of three lakh who also have a major role in contributing immensely to the Australian economy. India and Australia are important strategic partners since the joint declaration of security cooperation between the two in 2009. "Australia's membership of the G20 enables us to further our national interests and contributes to its global good. It is already a source of national prestige, signifying our success as a country, an economy, and a political player. It brings our Prime Minister into regular contact with the world's most powerful leaders."³¹ East Asia, Free Trade Area, consisting of ASEAN+3 (China, Japan, and Korea), the Comprehensive Economic Partnership for East Asia consisting of (ASEAN+3 and Australia, New Zealand and India) and the Trans-Pacific Partnership have involved nine negotiating countries in the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC).³²

The Gulf and the OPEC countries from the Middle East are portrayed not simply as being oil rich nations but also as being major spots for tourism and destinations for expatriate

³⁰ MEA | Statements : Bilateral/Multilateral Documents. *Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India*[online]. [Accessed 11 April 2018]. Available from: http://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/28367/IndiaAustralia_Joint_Statement_during_the_State_visit_of_Prime_Minister_of_Australia_to_India

³¹ FULLILOVE, Michael. With Friends in High Places: Australia's G-20 Membership. *Brookings*[online]. 28 July 2016. [Accessed 14 April 2018]. Available from: <https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/with-friends-in-high-places-australias-g-20-membership/>

³² CHIA, Siow Yue. The Emerging Regional Economic Integration Architecture in East Asia, by Siow Yue Chia. *Asian Economic Papers*[online]. 1 January 1970. [Accessed 13 April 2018]. Available from: <https://ideas.repec.org/a/tpr/asiaec/v12y2013i1p1-37.html>

workers especially from the Indian subcontinent. The oil-rich Middle Eastern states have been in the global limelight for the past five decades. 70 percent of oil reserves are mainly situated in the Gulf and the Persian region. A large proportion of the Indian workforce resides in this region which is approximately 42 percent. They contribute immensely to the economy of this region, and the bilateral trade has exceeded USD 53 billion trade annually. Iran, Saudi Arabia, and other Gulf states play an important role in stabilizing the energy requirements in the region. Over the years, India's foreign policy towards the Middle East has changed from "Look West" to "Link West", demanding the need for a greater focus in this region. India mainly depends on energy resources from these states. Iran is a significant nation in this region due to the availability of the energy resources such as oil and gas. It is the second largest oil exporter among OPEC nations, consisting of 4,445 million barrels per day.³³ Nearly 20 percent of India's crude oil imports come from Iran. As per the current data, India purchased a monthly average of 450,000 bpd Iranian crude oil from January to August 2017. Iran's exports to India have been on a relatively steady trend with a slight uptrend since March 2013-14 when they reached their lowest level of USD 2.41 billion.³⁴ India's recent development of the Chabahar port in Iran has helped open new transit routes between India, Iran and Afghanistan. This port is extremely crucial for India to boost its regional trade and to improve its economic ties with these countries. This route will in turn give Iran an immediate access to the markets in the Indian Ocean and in Central Asia. The Indian investments during the Phase-1 of this project has been more than \$ 200 million.³⁵ Looking at the Gulf States, India's Link West foreign policy is a major initiative to strengthen its economic and security ties with important Middle Eastern states. India, through this policy seeks to draw attention from this region by developing economic reforms. A significant trade partner for India is UAE having bilateral ties accounting to over USD 50 billion.³⁶ The number of Indian migrants in UAE is nearly 40 percent which has aided to the development of regions, especially in

³³ U.S. Energy Information Administration - EIA - Independent Statistics and Analysis. *U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) - Data* [online]. [Accessed 10 April 2018]. Available from: <https://www.eia.gov/totalenergy/data/monthly/previous.php>

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ TIMESOFINDIA.COM. Why developing the Chabahar port in Iran is important for India: 10 points - Times of India. *The Times of India* [online]. 16 February 2018. [Accessed 23 April 2018]. Available from: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/why-developing-the-chabahar-port-in-iran-is-important-for-india-10-points/articleshow/62944859.cms>

³⁶ Ministry of External Affairs, India, (2016), "India UAE Bilateral Relations", Retrieved March 2, 2018, https://www.mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/Bilateral_Brief_for_US_DD_new.pdf.

South India. The contribution of NRIs in UAE has strengthened the scope for trade connectivity between India and UAE. Among the OPEC member nations, UAE's oil production stands at 3,047 million barrels per day in 2017.³⁷ UAE was the fifth largest import source of crude oil for India in 2011-12 with import of 15.79 MMT of crude oil. The country was the 10th largest investor in India in terms of FDIs during 2000-12. India and GCC have identified sectors like oil and gas, fertilisers and information technology as key areas of cooperation. (130) The Indian presence interests the Gulf States as India emphasises stability military and economic cooperation. Their interest is further observed as the remittances from the GCC to India rise from USD 16.43 billion in 2011 to USD 24.93 billion in 2013.³⁸ India's newly found security partner, United States has its base in Diego García island to secure vital maritime links near the Gulf of Aden.

Among the East African member states, Kenya, Mauritius, Seychelles play an important role in the economic integration of the region. Historically, India has had close links with these regions due to its huge Indian diaspora. Island nations like Seychelles and Madagascar are important for the growth of tourism as well as fisheries industry and provides a vital maritime gateway to the Indian Ocean. In the recent past, India has been strengthening its foreign policy of Focus Africa Plan to strengthen its bilateral and multilateral ties with the African nations. Mauritius has the largest number of Indian descendants, comprising 68 percent of the total population. Foreign direct investment from Mauritius to India from 2000-2013 has been around USD 73 billion. During that period, FDI inflows from Mauritius to India accounted for about 38 percent.³⁹ Due to its Indian diaspora, many Indian companies have invested in Mauritius and played a vital part in the national as well as the regional economy. Kenya being the northernmost nation of East Africa is a vital gateway to the African continent for the Indian Ocean Rim states. India plays a vital role with Kenya to secure important sea lanes from the threat of piracy. It is also an important aerospace hub connecting Europe with Asia and Africa. Tea production and tourism has been an important factor contributing significantly to the national economy of Kenya. Kenya has been granted the most favoured nation status under the current Indian foreign policy mandate. Over the years, the bilateral trade

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid. p. 3

³⁹ Ministry of External Affairs, (2013), India-Mauritius Relations, Retrieved March 5, 2018, from https://mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/India-Mauritius_Relations.pdf

between the two nations has improved vastly. According to the latest figures, the bilateral trade for 2016-17 amounted to USD 2.3 billion.⁴⁰ Considering these facts, this East-African region is not only important for IORA mandate but it also further solidifies Indian foreign policy agenda towards African nations. In addition, the African Union comprising over 50 member states plays an important role in continental and regional cooperation. India also has major defence collaboration with East African states to counterbalance China's influence and provide security to ships carrying oil from the Middle East. Further, China has its first foreign base in Djibouti to counterbalance India's influence in the region. Southern African nations like Mozambique and Tanzania, who were facing famine and incidences of poverty in the mid-80s had required regional leadership from South Africa to address their issues to the international community. South Africa is one of the most developed nations in the African continent and has the resources as well as the economic advantage to address many issues pertaining to the continent. South Africa's position had further strengthened later with the formation of Southern African Development Community (SADC) and as an active part of the African Union. Mozambique and South Africa are two important Southern African nations representing the Indian Ocean Rim States. India has historical links with these two nations going back to over 200 years. The mineral-rich Mozambique nation has had significant Indian investment stakes especially in steel, coal mining and petroleum industries. During 2014-15, Mozambique and India's bilateral trade has accounted for more than USD 2,396 million in favour of India. India's focus towards South-South cooperation has entered a new dimension with South Africa entering BRICS. Being the richest nation in Africa, it has consolidated its status among 50 member African Union and the 15 member SADC. Since diplomatic ties were established between India and South Africa, more than 15 agreements were signed between them on economic, defense and cultural cooperation. South Africa has a 2 million Indian diaspora population, and the bilateral trade figures amount to 9.8 billion annually. During the past 20 years, Indian foreign policy of Focus Africa Plan had significantly contributed towards linking India with Africa through South Africa. Going back to the historical background of the IORA, former president, Nelson Mandela's contribution has also played a vital role in establishing this Indian Ocean Rim Association. After the

⁴⁰ Ministry of External Affairs, (2017), India-Kenya bilateral relations, Retrieved March 7, 2018, from http://www.mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/Kenya_June_2017.pdf

establishment of diplomatic relations in November 1993, South Africa and India have signed around 15 agreements on various spheres including economic, defense and cultural cooperation. "Focus Africa Plan" of the government of India in the year 2001-2002, has focused initiatives to strengthen Indo-African Cooperation in the area of trade, technology transfer, investment opportunities, information technology and healthcare.⁴¹

However aside from these vital thorny but relatively mundane questions a benign future can be seen for Indian Ocean Rim states. The analysis above shows that India, South Africa, Australia, Indonesia, Iran, Kenya have both the political will and the economic ability to lead the Indian Ocean rim states.

During the last two years, Indian diplomacy has focused on regional and continental approach towards its foreign policy such as Neighbourhood First policy, Act East, Focus Africa Plan, Link West and Indo-Pacific. Analysing the above facts from the six sub regions, it can be summarised that security of the Indian Ocean is one of the most important aspect for securing a stable political and socio-economic environment for the rim states. The transformation of the Indian foreign policy and its collaboration with these nations will counterbalance China's influence in the Indian Ocean region.

Conclusion

To balance it out it seems reasonable to conclude by saying that this paper reflects on strengthening India's security agenda in the six sub region of the Indian Ocean through the five equally important Indian foreign policies of Neighbourhood First, Act East, Indo Pacific, Link West and Focus Africa Plan. Any nation state's identity may it be regional or global is derived in a large part from its history and geography. This integration of the regional organisation in the Indian Ocean foreign policy agenda gives an impression of a collective geopolitical approach to sustain the aspirations of certain sub regionally powerful nations within the Indian Ocean Rim States. Stability brought about by regionalism not only ensures that a region is conflict-free, but it also paves the way for the attraction of both foreign and local investment. It also helps in creating mutual trust amongst the Indian Ocean rim states. Groupings such as IORA, ASEAN, SAARC,

⁴¹South Africa's Foreign Policy Towards India, (2005, May 11) Retrieved 10th April 2018, from http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/18743/11/11_chapter%206.pdf

provides a platform for regional integration and cooperation that may help them benefit in terms of joint security, conflict resolution, and economic projects.

Through the mandate of IORA and the other sub regional organisations, the opportunities for political action may be created in a series of ways. This Ocean and Foreign policy mix of the Indian Ocean rim states will lead to a prolonged stretch of sustained socio-economic growth of the six regions surrounding the Indian Ocean. The Indian Ocean has an important role to play in facilitating international trade and the transportation of goods and services, which forms an important component in ensuring interdependence of the nations surrounded by the Indian Ocean.

As India and China progress to meet their developmental goals, the Indo-China rivalry is expected to continue in the forthcoming years. This threat should signal India to redirect its defence policy in the Indian Ocean and stop piggybacking on the regional security provided by the US. It is more realistic if India will take a stronger position within the Indian Ocean Rim states stretching from Africa to Asia Pacific. The Indian foreign policy poses an ultimate solution to security and economic stability in the Indian Ocean.

With the new emerging threats in the global arena, it now becomes important for India to take the necessary steps with the support of Indian Ocean rim states to maintain its security in the international order. India can be politically, economically, and diplomatically strengthened through incorporating its foreign policies such as Neighbourhood First policy, Link West Policy, Act East Policy, Indo Pacific, and Focus Africa Plan into the platform of Indian Ocean Rim states. The results have been explored in this paper through analyzing the six regions and the significant thirteen member nations within the Indian Ocean. India's strong position in the IORA could advance its emergence as the third largest economy in the world, after that improving the intrastate dynamics and the economic performance of the South Asian nations. With the conceptualization of regional organization like SAARC, IORA, ASEAN, South Asia was gradually transformed from a realist to a neo realist region. Neo realism, an ideology that emerged in the post-cold war period, is an ideology whose main tenets emphasize a structural model of international relations.

Furthermore, it becomes important to assess India's relations with the Southeast Asian nations and its affiliation with ASEAN to counterbalance China's influence in the Indian Ocean. The need for an alliance for the Southeast Asian nations with other countries is

significant for them to resolve their dispute about territorial sovereignty with China. India wanted to counterbalance the geopolitical powers of China in the Asia Pacific through the Act East policy. The Act East policy has since then evolved to become a crucial element of India's foreign policy. India being a regional superpower in the South Asian region can act as an important alliance for the South Asian member nations to counter the threat they face from China. In addition, the maritime linkages connecting Southeast Asia to India through vital sea lanes can strengthen their position as a naval power. This important relationship between India and Australia is further solidified through India's Act-East Asia and Indo-Pacific foreign policy. Drawing findings from the Gulf and the Middle Eastern states, it is clear that the Link West foreign policy of India has worked to its advantage for oil, petrol, and energy purposes. Also, UAE becomes integral for India due to a presence of large Indian workforce in UAE. India's foreign policy of Focus Africa Plan with the East African states can be solidified through the interplay of Mauritius and Kenya with India. India's collaboration with the East African Community can help in transforming the Focus Africa Plan towards strengthening defence ties with East African nations. Southern African member states such as South Africa interacts with India on platforms such as BRICS. Apart from this the interaction between the two extends to the Indian diasporic population in South Africa contributing to the political, economic and diplomatic advancement of this collaboration. This new cooperation pattern of forming collective alliances of security and regional arrangements can be a commencement of a new era in India's foreign and defence policies. This has been achieved through the scrutiny of policies, regional relationships, and foreign nation's role in the regional partnership. India's maritime doctrine focuses on the maritime security with India's neighbours. India's security requires strengthening its diplomatic and defense cooperation, especially in the Indian Ocean. India should therefore foster regional cooperation within the Indian Ocean rim states to counterbalance the future security threats.

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