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India - The Indian Ocean Region and Engagement with Four Littoral States: Sri Lanka, Maldives, Seychelles and Mauritius

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Introduction

The Indian political and foreign policy orientation towards the seas and the maritime domain has seen a clear recognition of the Indian Ocean region both in terms of maritime security and as a vital element of national progress and international engagement.¹ In addition, currently India's 90% external trade by volume and 70% by value is transacted by sea.² The Indian Ocean has also gained primary importance at all the major international and regional forums and conferences. In March 2015 during the Indian Prime Minister Modi's trip to Seychelles and Mauritius, he clearly laid out a five-fold framework for India's maritime engagement with the Indian Ocean littoral, which included securing India's mainland and island territories, deepening security cooperation with regional partners, building multilateral cooperative maritime security in the Indian Ocean, sustainable economic development and indirectly referring to cooperation with other major powers in the Indian Ocean.³ PM Modi has set top prioritization of the Indian Ocean and the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) as part of India's Foreign Policy engagement architecture.

The nature of non-conventional challenges emanating from the seas have also magnified and multiplied. The threats in the context of the Indian Ocean now require more cooperation and coordinated efforts, thus highlighting the important role of the four littoral states: Sri-Lanka, Maldives, Seychelles and Mauritius. India's quintessential maritime character and vital geo-strategic location is a defining factor in influencing India's role in the IOR linking its security and economic prosperity. India is investing in its naval and coastal capabilities and engaging with the littoral states as a net security provider and

contributor towards strengthening the maritime capabilities of the four littorals to protect, preserve and uphold the sovereignty of coastlines, continental shelf and exclusive economic zones in the IOR. India is also using the elements of its diplomacy, economic prowess and cultural engagement to strengthen the partnerships with the four littoral states of the Indian Ocean.

The China factor cannot be taken out of the context of the Indian Ocean Region, especially now with regards to the setting-up of the first permanent naval Chinese base in Djibouti and also Chinese growing infrastructure investments in the four littoral states of Sri Lanka, Maldives, Seychelles and Mauritius. The focal point of this paper is not to compare India with China but to indicate and bring to light India's engagement in the IOR and with the four littoral states and comprehend India's interest and systemic involvement in the region. It is in this realm of India's engaged strategic interest and greater economic concentration in the IOR that further examination with regards to India's relationship to the IOR, especially with the littoral states of Sri Lanka, Maldives, Seychelles and Mauritius and India's foreign policy ambitions in the IOR is important to be scrutinized.

India's Relationship and Interest in the Indian Ocean Region

The oceans are both arteries of the global economy and back alleys of the criminal underworld. The Indian Ocean is the only ocean in the world which has its name bearing a nation state in it – India. The Indian Ocean carries one half of world's container shipments, one-third of the bulk cargo traffic and two-thirds of the oil shipments.⁴ Indian Ocean region hosts over 40 states and nearly 40 % of world population. In addition, the IOR and its hinterland form the locus of about 70% of the world's natural disasters, resulting from earthquakes, tsunamis, cyclones and floods. The IOR directly and indirectly influences 52

1 Ministry of Defence, Indian Navy, 2015, *Ensuring Secure Seas: Indian Maritime Security Strategy*, Naval Strategic Publication (NSP) 1.2, Foreword, October 2015, <http://indiannavy.nic.in/sites/default/files/Indian_Maritime_Security_Strategy_Document_25Jan16.pdf> (accessed on 10/08/2016)

2 Port community System (PCS) at Indian Ports; <http://www.indianpcs.gov.in/ipacpsweb/html/portlet/aboutpcs/en_US/aboutpcs/AboutIPA.jsp> (accessed on 10/08/2016)

3 Raja Mohan, "Modi and the Indian Ocean: Restoring India's Sphere of Influence", Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative, 18. June 2015, <<https://amti.csis.org/modi-and-the-indian-ocean-restoring-indias-sphere-of-influence/>> (accessed on 10/08/2016)

4 Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, "External Affairs Minister's address at International Conference on 'India and Indian Ocean: Renewing the Maritime Trade and Civilizational Linkages' in Bhubaneswar", 20. March 2015, <<http://mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/24994>> (accessed on 12/08/2016)

nation states of which 28 are Indian Ocean Rim states, plus a further 10 that are coastal states of the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf, together with 14 Indian Ocean land-locked states for which transit to and from the sea is primarily oriented towards the Indian Ocean. In addition, the extra-regional powers like the United States of America, China, Japan and Europe are advantageously linked to the Indian Ocean because of high volumes of trade and natural resources flow in the IOR and also with regards to their respective strategic interests.

India's 90% trade by volume and 90% of all oil imports take place through the sea.⁵ The importance of maritime commerce especially in form of oil imports through the Gulf of Aden, which currently account for 75% but are likely to rise to almost 90% by 2025 provides an underlying importance basis of unhindered sea lanes of communication for India in the IOR. India possesses nearly 7,500 kilometres of coastline and a massive 2.54 million square mile exclusive economic zones (EEZ) that constitutes nearly ten percent of Indian Ocean, with over 1,200 islands, many of which are unhabitated, both in the eastern and the western ocean frontiers. India's paramount concern in the contours of its EEZ of the Indian Ocean has been its own security and especially after the 26/11 terrorist attacks in Mumbai, this concern has been elevated and extended into the IOR.

The Prime Minister of India Mr. Narendra Modi has clearly prioritized the importance of the Indian Ocean in India's domestic and foreign security policy statements and placed the Indian Ocean at the forefront of all policy architectures. In March 2015, the prime minister set out the vision for the Indian Ocean through the acronym 'SAGAR' – meaning 'Ocean' in Hindi and said "We seek a future for the Indian Ocean that lives up to the name of SAGAR – Security and Growth for All in the Region." PM Modi furthered this vision at the International Fleet Review in 2016 and said that, "For us (India), it (Indian Ocean) also

5 Press Information Bureau, Government of India, Ministry of External Affairs, "External Affairs Minister Smt. Sushma Swaraj's address at International Conference on 'India and Indian Ocean: Renewing the Maritime Trade and Civilization-Linkages'", 20. March 2015, <<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=117542>> (accessed on 07/08/2016)

serves as a strategic bridge with the nations in our immediate and extended maritime neighbourhood."⁶ He further highlighted that "The Indian Ocean Region (IOR) is one of my foremost policy priorities".

The Indian Ocean is more so embedded within the context of the Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) for India. As defined by the International Maritime Organization (IMO), MDA is defined as the effective understanding of anything as associated with the maritime domain that could impact the security, safety, economy and environment.⁷ The maritime domain is defined as all areas and things of, on, under, relating to, adjacent to, or bordering on a sea, ocean, or other navigable waterway, including all maritime-related activities, infrastructure, people, cargo, and vessels and other conveyances. Within this context, the MDA framework enlarges India's scope of operation relationship in the environment of the IOR. India's actions in the IOR can be evaluated within the definitional framework of the MDA and in this respect, India provides a more holistic involvement in the IOR. For example, due to the Indian Ocean's certain peculiarity with regards to its underwater topography, salinity and thermoclines, the IOR acts as a special scientific exploration determinant for India and the littoral states.

As the economic importance and the security-cum-threat calculus in the IOR has seen a considerable shift in the last decade, thus, highlighting the growing importance of the Indian Ocean. India's vision and association with the IOR can be simplified in the following four areas.

• **Maritime Framework of the Indian Ocean:** In 2004, the Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh asserted India's interest in the Indian Ocean quoting "our strategic footprint covers ... to the far reaches of the Indian Ocean. Awareness of this reality should inform and

6 Press Information Bureau, Government of India, Prime Minister's Office "Text of PM's address at the International Fleet Review", 07. February 2016

<<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/mbErel.aspx?relid=136182>> (accessed on 05/08/2016)

7 IMO MSC.1/Circ.1343, amendments to the International Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue (IAMSAR) Manual, 24. May 2010, International Maritime Organization, Regulatory Guidance, available online at <<http://www.iadcllexicon.org/maritime-domain-awareness/>> (accessed 30/07/2016)

animate our strategic thinking and defence planning”.⁸ India has thus been setting up Indian Ocean maritime frameworks in form of bilateral and multilateral naval exercises in the IOR. Currently the Indian Navy is engaged in eleven institutional exercise with foreign navies both in a bilateral and a multilateral format in the IOR and this is inclusive of extra-regional powers who have credible strategic interest in the IOR. India’s initiative of the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) – a regional level maritime government level forum, whose aim is to ensure collective security and prosperity of the littoral states in the IOR, showcases India’s active and leading role in the maritime affairs of the Indian Ocean. The geo-political change in form of the ‘Indian Maritime Doctrine’ and ‘India’s Maritime Military Strategy’ reflect a shift in India’s vision in taking up an active role in framing the maritime framework of the Indian Ocean.

• **Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster relief:** In the past, the Indian Ocean has been an area of soft power projection for India and India has demonstrated its rapid response capability in helping and contributing to critical humanitarian crisis. The Indian Navy mobilized 32 ships and over 20,000 naval personnel evacuating casualties and providing emergency power and water during the 2004 Tsunami, thus helping the states of Sri Lanka, Maldives, Indonesia, Thailand and Malaysia. In 2014, the Indian Navy assumed the chair of the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) working group on Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR), which has formulated a way ahead for developing coordinated HADR amongst IOR navies. The Indian Navy’s operation ‘Raahat’ saw the evacuation of civilians of more than 35 nationalities with 1,291 foreigners from Yemen in 2015. This operation was seen as a credible illustration of the India’s peacekeeping and benign potential, as it was conducted amid an active conflict, amidst an unfolding humanitarian catastrophe.⁹ In

8 Bilveer Singh, *Southeast Asia-India Defence Relations in the Changing Regional Security Landscape*, IDSA Monograph Series, No 4, May 2011, pp. 50,

<<http://www.idsa.in/system/files/MonographNo4.pdf>> (accessed on 25/07/2016)

9 Abhijit Singh, “India’s ‘Look West’ Maritime Diplomacy”, in: IDSA NEWS, Institute for Defense Studies and Analyses, 04. October 2015,

2006, just before the Lebanon war, the Indian Navy evacuated as part of operation ‘Sukoon’ approximately 2,300 Indians, Sri Lankans and Nepalese citizens. In 2011, the Indian government evacuated more than 15,000 nationals fleeing from the Libyan War.

• **Securing Sea Lanes of Communication and Anti-Piracy Operations:** India is intrinsically integrated into the fabric of sub-regional and extra-regional cooperation mechanisms and institutional frameworks in the IOR, guided by both India’s strategic and economic interest in the IOR. The importance of IOR is determined by both internal and external factors. India is developing at a 7.5% rate of growth and in order to facilitate and fulfil its continuous economic development needs, India is required to guarantee the security of its sea lanes of communication (SLOC) and trade routes. To this effect, India is drawn undeniably in presenting safer, reliable and unhindered sea trade passages. This realization has the Indian strategic policy planners and also the government foreign policy planners to undertake a driver’s seat approach vis-à-vis the IOR littoral¹⁰ states and thus, India is extending and firming its handshakes with them. In the past India has established political frontier partnership with Sri-Lanka, Seychelles, Mauritius and the Maldives. India is also investing in the IOR with regards to both establishing a more engaged littoral state based diplomacy, military installations in form of radars and surveillance systems and using its cultural soft power components with reference to its historic and religious influences in the region. The Indian maritime footprint has steadily grown with the Indian Navy deepening its engagement with the smaller nations, regional actors and the major powers in the IOR.¹¹ Since 2008, the Indian Navy has also been partnering with regional

<<http://www.idsa.in/idsanews/AbhijitSinghsArticleonIndiasLookWestMaritimeDiplomacy>> (accessed on 30/07/2016)

10 Littoral is that portion of the ocean that lies between coastal zones and open seas. It is also the space where most power projection activity seems to take place.

11 Raja Mohan, “India’s National Security: The Changing International Dimension”, Discussion Paper at the 9th Berlin Conference on Asian Security (BCAS), 14-16. June 2015, SWP Berlin, <https://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/projects/BCAS2015_Raja_Mohan_Web.pdf> (accessed on 20/09/2016)

maritime forces in anti-piracy duties, providing critical support and training to Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) navies in the Indian Ocean region, especially as a security actor to the Gulf of Aden. India has prevented forty piracy attempts and developed an online registration service for merchants to request Indian naval escorts.¹²

- **Search and Rescue Operations and Early Warning Systems:** India is a member of the International Satellite System for search and rescue services called COSPAS-SARSAT programme. This is a global framework programme and provides distress alert and position location services.¹³ India currently is a participating country providing two Indian geo-stationary satellites INSAT-3A and INSAT-3D with a coverage to a large part of the Indian Ocean region rendering distress and alert services to Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, Seychelles, Sri Lanka and Tanzania. The Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS) has developed an exclusive, integrated ocean information and forecast system for Seychelles and Sri Lanka in collaboration with Regional Integrated Multi-Hazard early Warning System (RIMES), of which India is a founding member.¹⁴ This service has already been operationalized for Maldives. These systems help in providing three-day forecasts which are updated on an operational basis and adhere to high alerts vis-à-vis high waves, swells, tsunami, and oil spill trajectory. The services also available for location specific forecasts for important local places such as major port, fishing harbour or a recreational spot for 18 locations in Seychelles and 22 locations in Sri Lanka.¹⁵

12 Eleanor Albert, "Competition in the Indian Ocean", in: CFR Backgrounders, Council on Foreign Relations, 19. May 2016, <<http://www.cfr.org/regional-security/competition-indian-ocean/p37201#>> (accessed on 12/08/2016)

13 See COSPAS-SARSAT (International Satellite System for Search and Rescue Services), directory portal <<https://directory.eoportal.org/web/eoportal/satellite-missions/c-missions/cospas-sarsat>> (accessed on 21/08/2016)

14 The Regional Integrated Multi-Hazard Early Warning System for Africa and Asia (RIMES) is an international and intergovernmental institution, owned and managed by its Member States, for the generation and application of early warning information;

<http://www.rimes.int/about_overview.php>

15 *The Hindu*, "INCOIS develops ocean forecast system for Seychelles, Sri Lanka", 13. July 2015,

<<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/telangana/incois>

The Indian Navy and the Indian Ocean

In the context of oceans, sea power plays a higher role and possesses a higher degree of exclusivity as a means to demonstrate power projection being in a maritime domain. In this reference the Indian Ocean with participation of multiple states provides a classic playground for force projection. India's maritime landscape changed dramatically after the sea based terrorist attack in Mumbai on 26/11 in 2008, which killed 164 people and wounded at least 308. The investment and change of India's maritime security architecture took a forefront approach, especially with regards to strengthening India's coastal security architecture and securing India's extended maritime security domain. This derived an important structural change wherein the Indian Navy was administered to be the overall guardian accounting for both India's coastal regional security and India's maritime security. The Indian Coast Guard and the State coastal police now report directly under the umbrella architecture of the Indian Navy. There has also been a clear political shift in context of securing the Indian shorelines, as is evident in the spending allocations for the Indian Navy share in the defence spending budget reaching 22% in 2014 from 11.2% in 1992 - 93. The Indian naval maritime strategy is clearly directed towards securing the seas in the Indian Ocean region and articulates that, "the arc from the Persian Gulf to the Straits of Malacca is identified as the legitimate area of interest...".¹⁶ The Maritime Military Strategy links together India's economic prosperity to India's naval capability, protecting India's vast and varied maritime interests, including coastal and offshore security.

The representation of the Indian naval modernization lies firstly in securing India's immediate national interests and then in enhancing its regional security, such as secure passage and provision of public goods and securing global commons. This objectivity is gets precedence with regards to the increasing uncertainty in the IOR. India is thus, investing in its naval capabilities in order to address

<[develops-ocean-forecast-system-for-seychelles-sri-lanka/article7415183.ece](http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/telangana/incois)> (accessed on 22/08/2016)

16 Integrated Headquarters, Ministry of Defence (Navy), *Indian Maritime Doctrine*, INBR-8, 2004, p. 56.

these concerns for example, the Indian Navy's new exclusive port facility on the western front of India called INS Kadamba, after completion of expansion phase, will be the largest eastern hemisphere naval base. The Andaman and Nicobar islands naval base, which are almost 1,364 km away from the Indian mainland has become an all armed military base inclusive of Army, Air-Force and the strategic command for the Indian Navy. In August 2013, India launched its first dedicated military satellite GSAT-7 called Rukhmini with a 2,000 nautical miles' footprint over the IOR. India has also boosted its air and missile strikes on shore capability with the acquisition of five land ship tanks (LST's) and five medium landing ships (LSM's) by the Indian Navy. Indian Navy ship Jalashwa is the second largest ship in the fleet with a capacity to transport and deploy 1,000 personnel.¹⁷ Thus the modernization and investment in the Indian Navy is deemed an essential and critical element for India to be a contributory partner in securing the IOR. This has been summed up in the words of former Indian Chief of Naval Staff, Admiral Arun Prakash, former, that "India's options ... are stark: boost military muscle and stand upon its own; or strike alliances with willing partners".¹⁸ Thus, India's clear focus on becoming a net security provider in the region is principally required and affable in the current times of increased insecurity.

India is also engaging extensively with the Indian Ocean littoral states in providing a more appreciative and conducive maritime security architecture. In this regard, the Indian Navy plays a vital role. India has a trilateral maritime security cooperation (TMSC) with Sri Lanka and Maldives. The Indian Navy conducts regular bilateral and multilateral military exercises with the littoral states and is strengthening its defence partnerships in training coast guards and national forces of the respective littoral states. This is indicative of India's contribution towards making the

littoral states self-sufficient in securing their maritime security and in times of crisis. The naval exercises with Sri-Lanka, Maldives, Mauritius, and inclusion of all the four littorals in the IONS are predicament of Indian navy's value added cooperation in the region towards its peace, security and contribution to smooth sea lanes of communication. The Indian Navy thus acts perfectly as a fulcrum from the west to the east of Indian Ocean and possesses a natural advantage compared to the other Indian Ocean nation states in providing a more comprehensive and coordinated structural security architecture to the IOR.

India's Engagement with the Littorals

All the four littoral states – Sri Lanka, Maldives, Seychelles and Mauritius in the Indian Ocean are unique in their geographical topography, strategic interests and also with regards to their political, security and economic and historical linkages with India. It is noteworthy that there is no major maritime disputes between India and the four littoral states; but the Indian Ocean is probably the ocean most prone to non-traditional security threats like piracy, smuggling, maritime terrorism, illegal fishing and trafficking¹⁹ and thus the geo-strategic locations of these four littoral states provides India with a unique engagement footprint in the IOR. In addition, a good strategic and long term relationship with India will be mutually beneficial to the whole of the IOR in all respects of the issues of common maritime cooperation, incorporating the economic integration/cooperation/trade and maritime security. These intertwined aspects can be pursued together providing a stable regional security architecture, encouraging the developmental economics of the IOR and integrate the essentials of engagement over humanitarian and crisis situations. The underlying map depicts the distance in kilometres of the Indian heartland with regards to

17 Walter C. Ladwig III, "Drivers of Indian Navy Expansion", in: Harsh V. Pant (ed), *The Rise of the Indian Navy: Internal Vulnerabilities, External Challenges*, Ashgate 2012, p. 14

<https://kclpure.kcl.ac.uk/portal/files/39704191/Indian_Naval_Expansion.pdf>

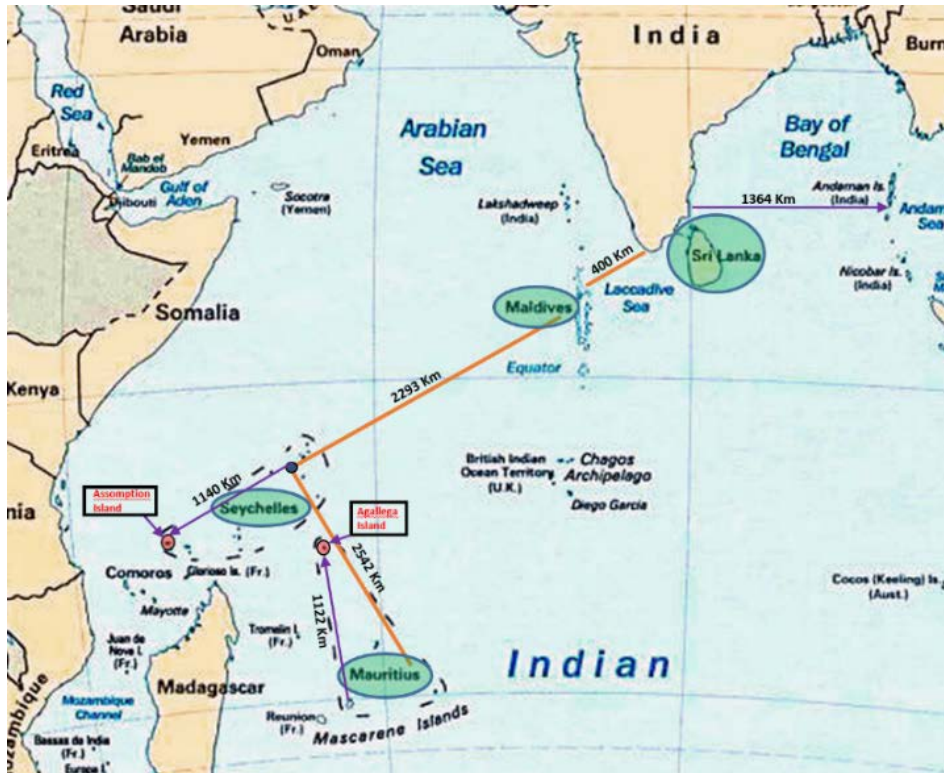
18 Arun Prakash, "China's Maritime Challenge in the Indian Ocean », in: *Maritime Affairs: Journal of the National Maritime Foundation of India*, Vol. 7, No. 1, Summer 2011, p. 14

19 Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, "Valedictory Remarks by Secretary (West) at the National Seminar by ICWA on India and the Ocean Economy", 12. July 2016,

<<http://www.mea.gov.in/Speeches-State-ments.htm?dtl/27020/Valedictory+Remarks+by+Secretary+Wes>

<[t+at+the+National+Seminar+by+ICWA+on+India+and+the+Ocean+Economy](http://www.mea.gov.in/Speeches-State-ments.htm?dtl/27020/Valedictory+Remarks+by+Secretary+Wes)> (accessed on 23/08/2016)

the four littoral states and also points out critical islands namely the Assumption in Seychelles and the Agallega in Mauritius, where India is undertaking developmental work.



Source: The outlined map has been adapted and supplemented with details on the basis of the University of Texas Libraries, Indian Ocean Maps, available at https://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/indian_ocean.html

India is developing the island facilities in Mauritius and Seychelles as these would become critical anchor points for the India in extending its outreach and engagement architecture in the IOR the in future. The Indian Navy presents and utilizes its Hydrography²⁰ expertise in the IOR by helping the littoral states in making electronic navigational charts as part of the international cooperation. India is also constructing in total eight coastal surveillance radars in Seychelles, Mal-

dives, Mauritius and Sri Lanka, thus, strengthening the maritime domain awareness capabilities of the Indian Ocean littorals. As part of the biennial exercise ‘MILAN’ held in 2014 in the island territory of Andaman and Nicobar islands in India, which brought together the maritime forces of 17 nation states, with a means of enhancing closer professional and cultural cooperation between nation states and cementing the friendship and acting as confidence building measure in interoperability between navies. The littoral island nations of Mauritius, Maldives and Seychelles participated for the first time.

India’s agreements in domain of political and defence diplomacy with the four littoral states is based on strengthening of ties, training and capacity enhancement, examining and imbibing of best practices and enhancing the Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) coop-

²⁰ Hydrography is the branch of applied sciences which deals with the measurement and description of the physical features of oceans, seas, coastal areas, lakes and rivers as well with the prediction of their change over time, for the primary purpose of safety of navigation and in support of all other marine activities, including economic development, security and defence, scientific research, and environmental protection; see International Hydrographic Organization website, <http://www.iho.int/srv1/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=299&Itemid=289&lang=en>

eration, as defined earlier under the framework of the International Maritime Organisation. India's foreign policy in this respect works under the bracket of 'ensuring a peaceful periphery' and is embedded under multiple multilateral institutions in form of Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) and the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) and in the immediate neighbourhood form the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation

(SAARC) declaration framework on Indian Ocean Cargo and Passenger Ferry Service between India, Sri Lanka and Maldives and the important defence dialogues in bilateral, trilateral or multilateral formats. Table 1 presents India's political and military linkages with each of the littoral states.

Table 1: India's political and military engagement with the four littorals

INDIA	Political Engagement			Military	
	Littoral States	SAARC	Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA)	International Solar Alliance (ISA)	Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS)
Sri Lanka	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Maldives	YES	NO	YES	YES	YES
Seychelles	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES
Mauritius	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES

The role played in the domain of Naval cooperation is vital as all the four littoral states are small in size are dependent upon bigger naval powers in the region for safeguarding their sea lanes of communication and to establish maritime economic linkages – the most important factor vis-à-vis the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). This gets more precedence when discussed with regards to humanitarian crisis as a state of preparedness and ability to respond quickly can considerably mitigate loss of life, property and suffering. In this regard the role of respective armed forces of the four littoral states comes into focus, as the military is perhaps the best well-structured organization to assist the civil administration when major disasters strike. The IONS provides an ideal forum for maritime confidence building measures and capacity building initiatives between the navies of the littoral states to address the various asymmetric and transnational threats in the IOR and facilitate cooperation in disaster management and humanitar-

ian assistance in strengthening ties in the IOR.²¹

India's contribution in establishing a surveillance network of 32 Coastal Radar Surveillance (CSR) stations with navigational radars in Mauritius, Seychelles, Maldives and Sri Lanka²², brings to light measures taken by India in building capacity and enhancing these capability in helping tangibly to improve the combined ability in responding to natural disasters and in mitigating turbulence in the IOR. These capability sets are also extended to cover the EEZ areas of each of the littoral states as well. All the four littoral states are members to the International

21 Pradeep Chauhan, "The Criticality of the IONS Maritime Security Construct", Centre for International Maritime Security, 25. May 2016, <<http://cimsec.org/criticality-ions-maritime-security-construct/25356>> (accessed on 25/08/2016)

22 "Indian Surveillance Network in the Indian Ocean Region", in: Security-Risk.com website, 22. March 2016, <<http://www.security-risks.com/security-trends-south-asia/indian-ocean/indian-surveillance-network-in-the-indian-ocean-region-6126.html>> (accessed on 25/08/2016)

Solar Alliance (ISA)²³, an initiative jointly launched by Prime Minister Modi and President Hollande of France on the side-line of the UN Climate Change Conference COP21, with an aim to bring clean and affordable renewable energy to all.²⁴

India is also engaged with the littoral states in the sphere of space technology development by providing capacity building and training. This is evident in the surveillance and mapping of the exclusive economic zones using satellites, contribution to the search and rescue operations through satellite usage and also training and capacity development of respective space states' space organizations. India's gift to the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation SAARC states (Sri Lanka and Maldives are member states of SAARC) is a SAARC satellite, now called 'South Asia Satellite' after Pakistan exited from the framework. India is also been a continuous contributor to Seychelles and Mauritius in area of hydrographic mapping support, indicative of India's continuous contribution to the littoral states and their local development needs. Table 2 shows the bilateral trade figures with each of the respective littoral states and also highlights Indi's developmental aid to the states.

Table 2: India's bilateral economic engagement with the four littorals

INDIA	Trade Engagement and AID Figures in USD		
Littoral States	**Bilateral Trade with India 2014 - 2015		*Government of India, Operative Lines of Credit to the 'State' USD as of 12th August, 2016
	Total in USD	Indian exports to the 'State'	
Sri Lanka	7,459 Million	6,703 Million	1066,16 Million
Maldives	156 Million	152 Million	40 Million
Seychelles	34.6 Million	32,56 Million	18 Million
Mauritius	1,930 Million	1,909 Million	112,5 Million

Source: *For Lines of Credit, <http://www.eximbankindia.in/lines-of-credit>

**For Trade Figures: <http://commerce.nic.in/eidb/default.asp>

23 International Solar Alliance, "Working Paper on International Solar Alliance (ISA)", <<http://www.intsolaralliance.org/pdf/ISA-Working-Paper.pdf>> (accessed on 22/08/2016)

24 United Nations, Framework Convention on Climate Change, "India and France Launch International Solar Energy Alliance at COP21", Announcement, 30. November 2015; <<http://newsroom.unfccc.int/clean-energy/international-solar-energy-alliance-launched-at-cop21/>> (accessed on 24/08/2016)

India and Sri Lanka

The statement issued at the 9th session of the India – Sri Lanka joint commission in February 2016 presents the closeness and integrity of India and Sri Lanka's bilateral relationship. The joint commission acknowledged the depth, intensity and uniqueness of the multi-faceted India – Sri Lanka relations and proclaimed that this relationship is founded upon civilizational and close people to people linkages.²⁵ As Prime Minister Modi had rightfully said, "I believe that our destinies are inter-linked. Our security and prosperity are indivisible."²⁶ This got clearly sighted in Modi's visit to the ancient Buddhist pilgrimage town of Anuradhapura and worshipping at the Stupa.²⁷ The year 2015 presents the foundation baseline of the closeness of India and Sri Lanka's bilateral relationship. This is evident with five high level visits in 2015²⁸ alone and a dedicated cultural programme called 'Sangam' for cultural cooperation as a celebration of shared civilizational heritage between India and Sri Lanka.²⁹ The construction of the bridge connecting India and Sri Lanka termed as the 'Sethu Samundran' project which is likely to be finalized soon, also showcases the India – Sri Lanka close civilizational linkages, as a similar bridge has the mention in the holy Hindu text of 'Ramayana', where the army of lord Rama had constructed a bridge between India and Sri Lanka by throwing

25 Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, "Visit of External Affairs Minister of India to Sri Lanka (February 5 – 6, 2016)", 06. February 2016, <http://mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/26330/Visit_of_External_Affairs_Minister_to_Sri_Lanka_February_5_6_2016> (accessed on 27/08/2016)

26 Press Information Bureau, Government of India, Prime Minister's Office, "Text of Statement To Media By The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, during the visit of President of Sri Lanka, Shri Maithripala Sirisena, to India", 16. February 2015, <<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=115496>> (accessed on 24/08/2016)

27 *The New Indian Express*, "Modi Visits Anuradhapura Temple, First PM To Do So", 15. March 2016, <<http://www.newindianexpress.com/world/Modi-Visits-Anuradhapura-Temple-First-PM-To-Do-So/2015/03/15/article2714231.ece>> (accessed on 26/08/2016)

28 Total count of five high level visits = Foreign minister of Sri Lanka visited India in Jan 2015, then President of Sri Lanka visited India in Feb 2015. This was followed by External Affairs Minister Mrs. Sushma Swaraj visit in Mar 2015, just prior to Prime Minister Mr. Modi's visit to Sri Lanka in Mar 2015. In Sep 2015 the prime minister of Sri Lanka visited India.

29 ibid

stones by inscribing the word 'Ram' on them and then the stones floated in the ocean. The bridge project was also one of the highlight discussion items by Prime Minister Modi with his counterpart during his visit to Colombo in March 2015.

India's current relationship with Sri-Lanka is set and maturing in the post war era and in this phase India has dedicated itself towards development and reconstruction of Sri Lanka's northern and eastern provinces which were most affected by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) insurgency. Modi's visit to Jaffna, a first by an Indian prime minister³⁰ and also offering prayers at the Naguleswaram temple clearly showcases India's constructive notion of development and integration in the island nation state. India's contribution to Sri Lanka's railway projects, is worth \$800 million line of credit and housing projects, where more than 44,000 houses have been built and more than 10,000 reconstructed with a promise of total 50,000 houses for the internally displaced people (IDP) in the Northern Province. New Delhi also supported the de-mining projects, clearing 70 million square land for resettlement and residential projects in the north of Sri Lanka. In addition, the India – Sri Lanka, Small Development Projects (SDP's) structure has boosted India – Sri Lanka partnership. This is a remarkable achievement where India is helping Sri Lanka to bridge the developmental gap between the North and the South. India is also developing and contributing to Sri Lanka's education, fisheries and health sector. Prime Minister Modi also extended an additional credit line of \$318 million to Sri Lanka devoted totally to the railway sector.

India and Sri Lanka have an established defence dialogue whose 3rd edition was concluded in September 2015. India has extensive maritime interaction with Sri Lanka. India provides training to more Sri Lankan naval personnel in Indian naval establishments than to any other country in the world. Sri Lanka and India have operationalized the Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty in Criminal Matters, designed to facilitate widest measures of mu-

30 Meera Srinivasan, "Be patient with Sri Lankan govt.: Modi to Tamil Leaders", in: *The Hindu*, 14. March 2015 <<http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/south-asia/be-patient-with-sri-lankan-govt-modi-to-tamil-leaders/article6991961.ece>> (accessed on 27/08/2016)

tual assistance in investigation, prosecution and prevention of crime, service of summons and other judicial documents, execution of warrants and other judicial commissions and tracing, restraint, forfeiture or confiscation of proceeds and instruments of crime.³¹ India and Sri Lanka have an established frameworks of regular naval exercises called Sri Lanka India Naval Exercise or SLINEX. India gifted Sri Lanka the former Indian coast guard ship 'Varah' in August 2015 and is currently building two offshore patrol vehicles (OPV) for the Sri Lankan navy to be delivered under the Sri Lanka Offshore Patrol Vehicle (SLOPV) contract executed for friendly countries by India.³² The vessels are scheduled for delivery in February and end of year 2017. Sri Lanka is also a member state of the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium.

The Sri Lankan cabinet of ministers approved Sri Lanka's bilateral agreement³³ with India on the Orbit Frequency Coordination of the 'South Asia Satellite', an initiative by India for the SAARC member states. After announcing the establishment of an Atomic Energy Regulatory Council in 2011, Sri Lanka for the first time has signed a bilateral civil nuclear cooperation agreement with India³⁴, thus facilitating cooperation in the transfer, exchange, knowledge and expertise inclusive of sharing of resources, capacity building, and training of personnel in peaceful applications of nuclear energy. This also covers the use of radioisotopes – nuclear safety, radiation safety and nuclear security. The Sri Lankan president had said, "that this cooperation opens new

avenues of cooperation, including in areas of agriculture and healthcare."³⁵

India is Sri Lanka's largest trade partner globally and Sri Lanka is India's largest trade partner in South Asia. This is mostly credited to the India – Sri Lanka free trade agreement (ISFTA) which has been in effect since 2000, allowing Sri Lanka to export over 4000 items to India duty free. Sri Lanka was exporting merely goods worth \$39 million in 2000 and this has risen to \$625 million in 2014. According to the Indian High Commissioner in Sri Lanka trade has crossed the milestone of \$US 5 billion in 2011 – 12. There are also talks to upgrade the ISFTA to a comprehensive economic partnership agreement, which got a push with the floating of a new Economic and Technology Cooperation Agreement (ETCA) during external affairs minister (EAM) Mrs. Sushma Swaraj's visit to Sri Lanka in Feb 2016. The ETCA has strong support from the Sri Lankan private sector and the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce, the main body of private sector advocacy group in Sri Lanka.³⁶

The Indian private sector companies like Suzlon and Ankur Scientific Energy technologies are already present in Sri Lanka and contributing to the Sri Lankan renewable energy sector and during the joint commission meeting, India presented project proposals in aggregation of 15 MWs. This is significant as Sri Lanka is considering 20% renewable energy in power generation by 2025.³⁷ The first India – Sri Lanka Renewable Energy forum took place in March 2015³⁸ and the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce was the exclusive support partner to the forum. Sri Lanka is also the partner state to the International Solar Alliance (ISA), initiated by India on the side-line of the UN Climate Change Conference COP21.

31 Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, "International Cooperation section", <http://mha.nic.in/International_Cooperation> (accessed on 28/08/2016)

32 "GSL Launched First 105M OPVs for Sri Lankan Navy", in: Goa Shipyard Limited, A government of India Undertaking, Ministry of Defence, News and Events Details, 10. June 2016, <<http://www.goashipyard.co.in/NewsEventsDetails.aspx?id={049-0108-0151-0128-0161-0192-0225-0256}>> (accessed on 29/08/2016)

33 "Lanka to enter agreements on the orbit frequency of a proposed SAARC Satellite", in: *Times Online*, 10. September 2016; <<http://www.sundaytimes.lk/83491/lanka-to-enter-agreements-on-the-orbit-frequency-of-a-proposed-saarc-satellite>> (accessed on 29/08/2016)

34 "India, Sri Lanka agree to nuclear cooperation", in: *World Nuclear News*, 16. February 2015, <<http://www.world-nuclear-news.org/NP-India-Sri-Lanka-agree-to-nuclear-cooperation-1602154.html>> (accessed on 30/08/2016)

35 *ibid*

36 "Sri Lanka benefits from increased trade with India", in: Oxford Business Group, 18. May 2016,

<<http://www.oxfordbusinessgroup.com/news/sri-lanka-benefits-increased-trade-india>> (accessed on 30/08/2016)

37 Smiti Mittal, "Sri Lanka considering 20% Renewable Energy in Power Generation", in: *Clean Technica*, 29. September 2015, <<http://cleantechnica.com/2015/09/29/sri-lanka-considering-20-renewable-energy-power-generation/>> (accessed on 30/08/2016)

38 "India – Sri Lanka Renewable Energy Growth Forum 2015 on March 11", in: *Opportunity Sri Lanka*, 27. February 2015 <<http://opportunitiesrilanka.com/india-sri-lanka-renewable-energy-growth-forum-2015-on-march-11/>> (accessed by 30/08/2016)

India and Maldives

Maldives is one of the pillars of India's Neighbourhood policy and a party to the SAARC regional forum. Prime Minister Modi on his visit to Maldives in July 2015 specifically mentioned the national interests linking the stability and security of both India and Maldives. PM Modi said, "We are conscious of security needs of Maldives. President Yameen agreed that Maldives will be sensitive to our strategic and security interests. It is clear that the contours of India -Maldives relations are defined by our shared strategic, security, economic and developmental goals." The current president H.E. Mr. Abdullah Yameen during his visit to India also proclaimed that "nothing will precede ties with India, which are...precious." These statements reverberate in historical references between India and Maldives when India secured the island states sovereignty and territorial integrity through 'Operation Cactus', thus saving the former president Gayoom's regime from a coup in 1988 India has thus served as the net provider of security to Maldives. The current president, Mr. Yameen, is the half-brother of the former President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom.

The Indians represent the second largest expatriate community in Maldives approximating 22,000.³⁹ It is notable to state that out of the 400 doctors in Maldives, 125 of them are Indians and also 25% of teachers in Maldives mostly at middle and senior levels are Indians.

The Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has rightfully called Maldives "a valued partner in the Indian Ocean neighbourhood"⁴⁰ and defined aptly the India-Maldives relations as "ties [as being] built on a very strong foundation." During the 2004 tsunami, India was the first to rush relief and aid to Maldives and also provided the financial assistance of \$100 million to manage tidal surges. More recently in 2014, following the breakdown of the desal-

ination plant at Maldives capital Male in 2014, which was the only source of water in Maldives, India supplied Maldives over 2,400 tons of water as airlift and by use of Indian naval ships (INS), as the Maldivian government had declared a state of emergency.

India's engagement with Maldives is profound in field of healthcare, military affairs and infrastructure development. India's aid to Maldives has surged from \$4 million in 2014 to \$30 million in 2015-2016. It should be noted that India also supported Maldives against any punitive action from the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG) vis-à-vis Maldives domestic political situation. Indian Foreign Secretary Mr. Subramanyum Jaishankar is part of the CMAG. Maldives would continue to pursue India's support in this regard, as the next CMAG is scheduled to be in late September 2016 to review Maldives progress on the six point reform agenda, which were promised after the state elections.

India and Maldives already share privileged defence cooperation status since 2012, when India had decided to station a defence attaché at Mali. The defence ties got boosted in April 2016 when Prime Minister Modi and President Yameen inked the Defence Action Plan.⁴¹ Currently India and Maldives key focus is to strengthen the cooperation in the area of counter-terrorism, as Maldives is a Muslim Sunni state and there have been reports of 50-60 Maldivians joining the Islamic State forces in the Middle East. The cooperation in counter-terrorism is one of the key component of the Defence Action Plan and the special envoy of Prime Minister Modi on counter-terrorism Mr. Asif Abraham had already visited Maldives in July 2016 and the Maldives National Counter Terrorism Centre (NCTC) chief will be travelling to India in end of August 2016 discussing specific cooperation with India.

The year 2016 also held the 1st India - Maldives Defence Cooperation Dialogue on July 17-18, 2016. India and Maldives conducted their 6th joint military training exercise in September 2015, a bilateral affair that got initiated in 2009, to enhance military cooper-

39 Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, "India - Maldives Relations", February 2016, <https://www.mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/MALDIVES_23_02_2016.pdf> (accessed on 31/08/2016)

40 Elizabeth Roche, "Maldives is a valuable partner of India: Modi", in: live mint, 27. July 2015, <<http://www.livemint.com/Politics/XczXeeq32rygkv29R2CxGJ/Maldives-is-a-valuable-partner-of-India-Modi.html>> (accessed on 31/08/2016)

41, "Maldives seeks India's help in counter-terror; NCTC chief to visit", in: *The Economic Times*, 18. August 2016, <<http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/default-subsec/defence/maldives-seeks-indias-help-in-counter-terror-nctc-chief-to-visit/articleshow/53756850.cms>> (accessed on 30/08/2016)

ation and interoperability between defence forces of the two countries.⁴² India had positioned an Indian Navy Afloat Support team for a one year period to help the Maldivian fleet in 2012.⁴³ In December 2013, India's state run Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd (HAL) handed over the Advanced Light Helicopter (ALH) 'Dhruv' to Maldives for induction into its defence forces, with a primary purpose of surveillance, medical evacuation, in assisting civil administration and training and rescue operations.⁴⁴ India also plans to fulfil Maldivian army's request for a fixed wing aircraft and a second advanced light helicopter as a gift.

India is already contributing monetarily towards construction of a hanger and aviation facility at the Lammu Atoll Kadhoo domestic airport and helping the Maldives in building the Composite Training Centre for the Maldivian National Defence Forces (MNDF) and the Maldives Police Academy. In the past, India constructed a state of the art military hospital for the MNDF.⁴⁵ On an average, MNDF personnel avail of about 35 courses in Indian military institutions every year. India has also signed an action plan with Maldives on defence cooperation, envisaging an institutional mechanism at the defence secretary level furthering the bilateral defence engagement. The action plan main elements comprise of development of ports, continuous training, capacity building, supply of equipment and maritime surveillance.

India and Maldives signed a trade agreement in 1981, which provides for export of essential commodities. The scope of essential supplies to Maldives in inclusive of rice, wheat flour, sugar, dal, onion, potato and eggs and construction material such as sand and stone

42 "India - Maldives joint military exercise concludes", in: *The Hindu*, 14. September 2015,

<<http://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Thiruvananthapuram/indiamaldives-joint-military-exercise-concludes/article7650540.ece>> (accessed on 31/08/2016)

43 Satish Kumar (ed.), *India's National Security: Annual Review 2013*, Routledge India, 2014, pp. 142

44 "India delivers Dhruv chopper to Maldives", in: *Business Standard*, 14. December 2013, <http://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ians/india-delivers-dhruv-chopper-to-maldives-113121400594_1.html> (accessed on 31/08/2016)

45 Zaheena Rasheed, "India to donate military aircraft, a new helicopter to Maldives", in: *Maldives Independent*, 20. January 2016, <<http://maldivesindependent.com/politics/india-to-donate-military-aircraft-new-helicopter-to-maldives-121579>> (accessed on 31/08/2016)

aggregates to Maldives on favourable terms.⁴⁶ India's trade with Maldives has increased substantially from US\$ 93.87 million in 2007 - 2008 to US\$ 229 million in 2014-2015.⁴⁷ In addition, both India and Maldives have granted each other the Most Favoured Nation (MFN) status and the area of capacity building and skills development is one of the primary components of India's assistance to Maldives. In this regard in the education sector, India offers 75 scholarships and technical trainings every year to Maldivian students under various schemes.⁴⁸ Maldives is holding the 3rd Maldives Investment Forum in New Delhi, India in 2016,

India has been an economic benefactor in the development process of Maldives and India is responsible for implementing some of the major projects in Maldives in the field of health, information technology, education and boosting of state's tourism industry. India established some important institutions on the island state such as the Indira Gandhi Memorial Hospital, Faculty of Engineering Technology and faculty of Hospitality and Tourism Studies and establishment of Technology Adoption Program in Education sector. Indian public sector banks have many a times helped Maldives in the face of foreign exchange crisis, the last instance being in January 2014, when India released \$25 million to meet Maldives' import expenditure. Maldives is one of the few states where the Indian private sector has been involved in a number of projects, especially in the domain of renewable energy both in wind energy and solar power projects, low cost housing units, waste management and a medical and tourist hub project. These include the 25 MW wind farm project by Suzlon Energy of India, a 24 MW solar Power project by Bommidala Infrastructure and a waste management project in Male by Tatva Global Renewable Energy.⁴⁹ Maldives

46 Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, "India-Maldives Relations", February 2016,

<https://www.mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/MALDIVES_23_02_2016.pdf>

47 High Commission of India Male, Maldives, Trade Services, "Trends in Bilateral Trade",

<<http://www.hci.gov.in/male/?2600?000>> (accessed on 31/08/2016)

48 *ibid*

49 High Commission of India Male, Maldives, "India-Maldives Bilateral Relations", 01. September 2013,

has also joined the ‘South Asia Satellite’ (SAS) initiative and India signed a bilateral agreement with Maldives related to Orbit frequency Coordination.⁵⁰

India and Seychelles

During the visit of H.E. Mr. James Alix Michel, the President of Seychelles to India, the president stated that “India and Seychelles are two neighbouring countries linked by the Indian Ocean and both share a vision of peace and prosperity in the region and lot to offer to each other.”⁵¹ He further mentioned that “India and Seychelles have a shared interest in the security of the Indian Ocean and it is important that both continue to strive for ownership of maritime safety and security.”⁵² The Indian diaspora, represents 8 percent of the Seychelles population. President Michel also acknowledged India as the first country which came to Seychelles’ assistance in the fight against piracy. India and Seychelles both have vested interests in securitizing the western Indian Ocean and after assuming the chairmanship of the Contact Group for Piracy off the Coast of Somalia (CGPCS) for 2016, and India supports Seychelles maritime and security values.

It is important to note that Seychelles has an extensive economic exclusive zone (EEZ) of over 1.3 million sq. kilometres and the remote island of Assomption is situated about 1,140 kilometres southwest from the capital Mahé. The Assomption Island currently facilitates scientists visiting the UNESCO World Heritage site of Aldabra atoll, which is densely populated by Aldabra giant tortoises of over 150,000.

<http://eoi.gov.in/eoisearch/MyPrint.php?1042?000/0017>
(accessed on 31/08/2016)

50 Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, Bilateral/Multilateral Documents, “List of Agreements/MoUs signed during the visit of President of Maldives to India (April 11, 2016)”, 11. April 2016, <http://mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/26619/List+of+AgreementsMoUs+signed+during+the+visit+of+President+of+Maldives+to+India+April+11+2016> (accessed on 31/08/2016)

51 Indian Council of World Affairs, “Nineteenth Sapru House Lecture on ‘Maritime Security for the Blue Economy’, by H.E. Mr. James Alix Michel, President of Seychelles”, 27. August 2015,

<http://www.icwa.in/pdfs/ssreports/2014/Reporton19shl21092015.pdf> (accessed on 20/08/2016)

52 ibid

In case of a maritime incident in the island’s vicinity, it currently takes over 40 hours to dispatch a coast guard vessel and 3 hours to dispatch a military surveillance plane⁵³ and thus, maritime resources in the region are under constant threat and a target of illegal fishing and turtle smuggling. A joint project in Seychelles involving the defence forces in enhancing the mutual security along Seychelles western seaboard has been agreed between India and Seychelles in way of building infrastructure on the Assomption Island. The proposed Coast Guard base on Assomption Island would cut the response time to four to five hours and thus better undertake the surveillance of the EEZ.

India plans to build military infrastructures inclusive of quarters for the Seychelles Coast Guard personnel, upgradation of the jetty and the existing airstrip to have a forward base for the Seychelles People’s Defence Forces (SPDF), along with some modern equipment enabling the coast guard to have vessels and air-force plane on the island.⁵⁴ The building of military presence as a security provider helping to safeguard the region’s marine species and as contributor towards protection of the marine resources has been shared by the Seychelles Island Foundation (SIF)⁵⁵ and also by Mr. Paul Rose, the expedition leader of the National Geographic Pristine Seas⁵⁶.

India in 2006 had gifted to Seychelles ‘PS Topaz’ a naval ship and in 2014 India gifted another fast attack craft – the Indian Navy Ship INS Tarasa, renamed ‘PS Constant’ upon induction in Seychelles Coast Guard as a gesture of good bilateral relations between the Coast Guards of the two nation states. The primary usage of these two vessels is to aug-

53 ibid

54 Sharon Uranie/Hajira Amla, “‘There is no lease’ says SPDF chief of staff – India to help build facilities for Seychelles defence forces on Assomption”, in: Seychelles News Agency, 21. March 2015,

<http://www.seychellesnewsagency.com/articles/2590/There+is+no+lease+says+SPDF+chief+of+staff+India+to+help+build+facilities+for+Seychelles+defence+forces+on+Assomption> (accessed on 20/08/2016)

55 Seychelles Island Foundation is a public trust established in 1979 to manage and protect the UNESCO World Heritage site of Aldabra atoll, see < www.sif.sc/ >

56 National Geographic Pristine Seas is a scientific expedition conducting research on Assomption Island in Seychelles, see National Geographic website,

<http://ocean.nationalgeographic.com/ocean/explore/pristine-seas/seychelles/> (accessed on 28/08/2016)

ment surveillance and patrolling capacity of Seychelles waters.⁵⁷ India delivered a new patrol vessel in January 2016 and the Indian Navy also for the first time deployed to any foreign country one of its advanced maritime reconnaissance aircraft the Boeing P 8I for surveillance of the island nation's EEZ. In addition, India had already gifted Seychelles with its first Dornier-228 maritime reconnaissance aircraft in early 2013 and will supply Seychelles another Dornier aircraft and one more interceptor coastguard boat as part of the maritime security arrangement against terrorism and piracy.⁵⁸

These bilateral engagement frameworks comprehend the baseline relationship that Seychelles shares with India and the trust that Seychelles invests in India. As India and Seychelles share an exemplary partnership in the defence and security sectors, Seychelles is also actively considering to be a part of the Indian Ocean tripartite security arrangement, which includes India, Sri Lanka and Maldives. India and Seychelles have already signed an agreement for conducting hydrographic surveys, and launched the coastal surveillance radar project. The technology cooperation between India and Seychelles is aimed at better managing and responding to threats to maritime security architecture. In 2012, India had pledged US \$ 50 million as Line of Credit and US\$ 25 million as grant to the Government of Seychelles.

The 'Blue Economy' is at the heart of the economic growth for Seychelles and this finds resonance as the blue economy forms the part of the economic agenda of the Indian Ocean Commission and the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA). Seychelles has pioneered the concept of 'Blue Economy' with a minister for blue economy. India and Seychelles signed an agreement in the field of the 'Blue Economy'

57 Manish Chand, "Indian Ocean Diplomacy: Seychelles – India Connect", Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, 09. March 2015, <<http://www.mea.gov.in/in-focus-articles.htm?24887/Indian+Ocean+Diplomacy+Seychelles++India+Connect>> (accessed on 20/08/2016)

58 Sharon Uraine, "Five agreements signed as Seychelles President Michel begins state visit in India", in: Seychelles News Agency, 26. August 2015, <<http://www.seychellesnewsagency.com/articles/3588/Five+agreements+signed+as+Seychelles+President+Michel+begins+state+visit+in+India#sthash.f8qblp3i.dpu>> (accessed on 20/08/2016)

to increase understanding of marine ecology and resources and boost scientific and economic cooperation. The Indian prime minister has also highlighted the vision of 'Blue Economy' as an important part of India's transformation goal and cited the example of the 'Blue Chakra' (the wheel) in India's national flag, as representation of the Blue Economy.⁵⁹ In Seychelles the tourism industry is an integral part of the 'Blue Economy' and tourism must be protected from pollution; thus, India is collaborating and providing assistance to Seychelles in oil pollution response exercises, such as oil spills and capacity development in terms of training of personnel in area of environmental protection

India is Seychelles 9th important partner with a valuation of approximately 34.6 million USD as total trade, with about 33-million USD trade as imports from India.⁶⁰ Indian companies have been active on the island nation since 1978 and the local bus transportation in capital Mahé is run by TATA and Ashok Leyland, two of the major Indian transport conglomerates. The island states mobile network is run by the Indian mobile network giant 'Airtel' and Seychelles banking services are developed by the Indian software company – Polaris Software Lab. Indian exports to Seychelles between 27-07-2015 to 27-07-2016 was around 0.02% of total India's exports valued at USD 32.56 Million in the financial year 2014-2015 and imports were valued at USD 1.17 million. The major products of exports to Seychelles are motor cars and vehicles, cereals, medicaments and insulated wires and cables.⁶¹ The India-African Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Seychelles Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) have signed a memorandum of understanding for

59 Public Information Bureau, Government of India, Prime Minister's Office, "Text of PM's address at International Fleet Review 2016", 07. February 2016, <<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/mbErel.aspx?relid=136182>> (accessed on 20/08/2016)

60 European Commission, Directorate-General of Trade, "European Union, Trade in goods with Seychelles", Trade figures from Euro have been converted to USD and thus use of approximation, 21. June 2016, <http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2011/january/tradoc_147379.pdf> (accessed on 21/08/2016)

61 Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, High Commission of India Victoria-Mahe, "India Seychelles Relations", 01. August 2016, <https://mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/Brief_XP_Jul_16_Bilateral.pdf>

cooperation to promote trade and economic relations with a view forming joint ventures between the two nation states.⁶²

The new initiatives launched by India include assistance in setting up solar farms as Seychelles is also a member of the International Solar Alliance (ISA) initiative and in the area of Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) particularly in form of oil pollution response exercises, search and rescue support and providing assistance in legal matters.

India and Mauritius

India's relationship with Mauritius is an imprint of Mauritian population of 1.3 million of which 68% are of Indian descent and with nearly 11,000 Indian currently residing in Mauritius. A modern and progressive India-Mauritius relationship coloured by a Hindu ethos is a crucial feature of current Mauritian politics. The father of the Mauritian nation Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam had accorded centrality to India in Mauritius foreign policy, following Mauritius independence on March 12th 1968 and the celebration of Mauritius National Day March 12th is also a tribute to Mahatma Gandhi's launch of the 'Dandi' Salt March in India.⁶³ India is also Mauritius largest trading partner and has been the largest exporter of goods and services to Mauritius since 2007. Mauritius celebrates November 2 every year as the 'Apravasi Divas' (Immigrant Day) in the memory of nearly 450,000 indentured labourers which set foot into Mauritius from India between 1830s and 1920s and there is the 'Apravasi Ghat' – the site of the former 'immigration depot', which is now a World Heritage site.⁶⁴ Thus, India shares one of the most cordial relationships with one of the most far-fetched Indian Ocean nation

62 Sharon Uraire, "Seychelles and Indian business community seals partnership - trade and economic relations set to increase", in: Seychelles News Agency, 13. August 2014, <<http://www.seychellesnewsagency.com/articles/1163/Seychelles+and+Indian+business+community+seals+partnership+-+trade+and+economic+relations+set+to+increase#sthash.GcvpYVdi.dpuf>> (accessed on 21/08/2016)

63 Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, "India – Mauritius Relations", January 2016, <https://www.mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/Mauritius_08_01_2016.pdf> (accessed on 10/08/2016)

64 High Commission of India, Port Louis - Mauritius, Joint Projects, "Apravasi Ghat", <<http://www.indiahighcom-mauritius.org/pages.php?id=65>> (accessed on 10/08/2016)

states in the IOR. This cordial, reliable and conducive relationship between India and Mauritius provides room for a lot more engagement on a bilateral level on areas of maritime security, terrorism and also infrastructure development. The interface of the cultural integration between communities in India and Mauritius, also plays into strengthening the partnership between India and Mauritius.

The frame of a peripheral imperialism links India and Mauritius and the official multiculturalism plays on true Hindu 'religiosity' to modernize Mauritius via economic links with an imagined centre – La Grande Peninsule.⁶⁵ In this manner, Hinduism on the island hinges on two value systems: as religion immobilized in 'ancestral India' and as business idiom articulated through economic interdependence with 'modern India'. This dichotomy, which operates within Mauritius ambivalent linguistic functionalities, is reinforced through the use of Hindi language on the island nation. The laying of the foundation stone by Prime Minister Modi of the World Hindi Secretariat (WHS) in Mauritius is a testament of the strong ties between India and Mauritius. Two Mauritian Hindi scholars were given the prestigious award, 'Vishwa Hindi Samman' – World Hindi Honour⁶⁶ at the World Hindi Conference in India in 2015. The Indian President H.E. Mr. Mukherjee had quoted India – Mauritius relationship as "extraordinary and unique bilateral relations" and that based on "historical ties of kinship and shared cultural heritage".⁶⁷ These two statements symbolize the India – Mauritius special engagement on a bilateral level with much integration and appreciation for common cultural settings and use of language in the Indian Ocean island nation state. In this context Mauritius is sometimes referred to as 'Little India'.

India's defence cooperation with Mauritius forms a broad set of framework from training the Mauritian police personnel in Indian de-

65 Chantal Zabus (ed), *The future of Postcolonial Relationship*, New York: Routledge, 2015, p. 3

66 India – Mauritius Bilateral Relations Highlights in 2015, <<http://www.newsgram.com/india-mauritius-bilateral-relations-highlights-in-2015/>> (accessed on 10/08/2016)

67 "India, Mauritius have shared cultural heritage: President", in: Yahoo News, Indo Asian News Service, 11. March 2016, <<https://in.news.yahoo.com/india-mauritius-shared-cultural-heritage-president-085804439.html>> (accessed on 11/08/2016)

fence training establishments, undertaking coastal surveillance and patrolling of the Mauritian EEZ, providing deterrence to piracy, carrying out hydrographic surveys and illegal fishing in the region and establishment of coastal radar surveillance systems. India values the Indo-Mauritian partnership at sea in containing the expanding influence of maritime terrorism and piracy. Under the International Technical and Economic Cooperation-II (ITEC-II) programme 40-50 Mauritian police force personnel are trained annually in India.⁶⁸ The Indian marine commando training team has been deployed in Mauritius for two-three weeks since 2008.⁶⁹ Since 2009, at the request of the Government of Mauritius, the Indian Naval Ships have undertaken surveillance and joint patrolling of the Mauritian EEZ since 2009. India delivered an Advanced Light Helicopter 'Dhruv' to Mauritius in November 2009 for rescue operations and surveillance of EEZ, with a capability to be transformed into an air ambulance in case of extreme emergency. Mauritius and India have also operationalized the Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty in criminal matters to combat transnational organized crimes, trans-border terrorism, crimes and other serious offences, such as drug trafficking, money laundering, counterfeit currency, smuggling of arms and explosives, etc.⁷⁰

The India-Mauritius defence partnership got a new boost in the year 2015-2016 as India in March 2015 exported the first ever warship as an Offshore Patrol Vessel 'CGS Barracuda' to Mauritius,⁷¹ built at the total cost of \$ 58.5 million of which India allocated a loan assistance of \$ 48.5 million. The Barracuda is a multi-mission capable vessel, to undertake missions against illegal fishing, smuggling, and piracy and also to carry out surveillance

in the EEZ Zone.⁷² The vessel's versatility and capability also helps the Mauritian coast guard to undertake search and rescue missions (SAR) and to deal with environmental response such as sea-based pollution response in the region. In March 2016, India handed over ten Fast Interceptor Boats to the National Coast Guard (NCG) of Mauritius for a total sum of \$6 million under the line of credit agreement between the Government of the Republic of Mauritius and the Export-Import Bank of India (EXIM)⁷³ and is in the process of delivering two Fast Patrol Vessels to Mauritius, a contract secured by India in 2014.⁷⁴ Thus, India is helping strengthen the defence capabilities of Mauritius in order to counter the threats of anti-smuggling and anti-poaching and contribute to building capacity in area of search, rescue and fisheries protection.

India's maritime infrastructure development project in Mauritius are also significant. India and Mauritius signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in March 2015 during Prime Minister Modi's trip to Mauritius. This pact's main focus was the island of Agalega, some 1,122 km north of Mauritius and where India plans to develop the transport infrastructure projects such as construction of a jetty for berthing of ships, rehabilitation and repaving of the runway over a length of 4000 feet, installation of a power generation facility, setting up of a water desalination plant and construction of a National Coast Guard Post.⁷⁵ In total, India is planning to invest funds to the tune of \$ 18 million in all these developmental projects on the Agalega Island. India is currently assisting Mauritius in con-

68 High Commission of India, Port Louis, Mauritius, Defence Cooperation, <<http://www.indiahighcommissionmauritius.org/pages.php?id=52>> (accessed on 11/08/2016)

69 ibid

70 Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, "International Cooperation", <http://mha.nic.in/International_Cooperation> (accessed on 11/08/2016)

71 "India exports its first warship 'CGS Barracuda' to Mauritius", in: *The Hindu*, 20. December 2014 <<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/india-exports-its-first-warship-cgs-barracuda-to-mauritius/article6711039.ece>> (accessed on 11/08/2016)

72 The Mauritius Police Force, "International Fleet Review 2016", see <<http://police.govmu.org/English/Pages/THE-COMMISSIONER-OF-POLICE-ATTENDS.aspx>> (accessed on 11/08/2016)

73 Republic of Mauritius, "Maritime Security: Induction of ten Fast Interceptor Boats", 14. March 2016, <<http://www.govmu.org/English/News/Pages/Maritime-Security-Induction-of-ten-Fast-Interceptor-Boats.aspx>> (accessed on 11/08/2016)

74 Press Information Bureau, Government of India, Ministry of Defence, "Contracts secured by Goa Shipyard Ltd.", 30. July 2015, <<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=123951>> (accessed on 12/08/2016)

75 Nasseem Ackbarally, "India's strategic interests pinned on Agalega Islands in Mauritius", in: Indian Ocean Observatory, 20. January 2016,

<<http://www.theioo.com/index.php/en/politics/item/481-india-s-strategic-interests-pinned-on-agalega-islands-in-mauritius>> (accessed on 12/08/2016)

structuring a dedicated dockyard to cater for the large number of vessels being inducted into the Mauritius Coast Guard.⁷⁶ India's security initiatives with Mauritius have been necessitated by the need to secure energy and resource shipments and coordinated search and rescue operations in the island nation state.

India is Mauritius largest trading partner and has been largest exporters of goods and services to Mauritius since 2007. Indian exports to Mauritius between 26-07-2015 to 26-07-2016 were around 0.62% of total India's exports valued at USD 1,150.6 Million of which more than 75% accounts for the petroleum products, pharmaceutical products, cereals, and cotton yarn.⁷⁷ Mauritius has also been the largest Foreign Direct Investment partner state to India, with cumulative inflows for year 2014 - 2015 amounting to 9.03 Billion USD.⁷⁸ This is due to the fact that India and Mauritius enjoy a special trade investment instrument in form of the Double Taxation Avoidance Treaty (DTAA), which has undergone changes and will get revised basis after March 2017.⁷⁹

There are currently eight big Indian public sector enterprises in Mauritius and more than 44 Indian private sector / joint ventures registered in Mauritius.⁸⁰ India corresponds to 12.6% of Mauritius's total trade. India is also Mauritius largest imports partner accounting for 18.7% of Mauritius total imports.⁸¹ The

76 Indian Navy, "Mauritius delegation visits Western Naval Command", <<http://www.indiannavy.nic.in/content/mauritius-delegation-visits-western-naval-command>> (accessed on 12/08/2016)

77 Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, "India-Mauritius Relations", December 2014, <http://www.mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/Mauritius_Dec2014.pdf> (accessed on 12/08/2016)

78 "Mauritius regains top slot as source of FDI in India", in: *The Economic Times*, 07. June 2015, <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/articleshow/47572644.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst> (accessed on 12/08/2016)

79 Sandeep Singh, "What the changes in the tax treaty with Mauritius mean for India, investors", in: *The Indian Express*, 12. May 2016 <<http://indianexpress.com/article/explained/what-the-changes-in-the-tax-treaty-with-mauritius-mean-for-india-investors-2795965/>> (accessed on 12/08/2016)

80 High Commission of India, Port Louis, Mauritius, Economic and Commercial, "Indian Companies in Mauritius", <<http://www.indiahighcom-mauritius.org/pages.php?id=71>> (accessed on 13/08/2016)

81 European Commission, Directorate-General for Trade, "European Union, Trade in goods with Mauritius", 21 June 2016, <http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2006/september/tradoc_122463.pdf> (accessed on 13/08/2016)

current line of credit of \$500 million was extended to Mauritius to assist in development of priority civilian infrastructure project by the Indian Prime Minister Modi in March 2016. India has been a partnering with Mauritius in the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) sector and the financial services sector. In 2000, India had signed an agreement of cooperation with Mauritius in the information technology sector and has been a major socio-economic development partner in capacity and institution building such as the construction of the Cyber City project in Mauritius with many joint venture partnership of Indian IT companies in Mauritius. Currently, India is providing assistance in construction of Twin-Towers complex of the Mauritius International Financial Centre City and India is already assisting Mauritius in some of its landmark projects such as the new Parliament building, PMO and the new Swami Vivekananda International Convention Centre (SVICC).

India's Next Steps in the Indian Ocean – Security & Development

Prime Minister Modi has embarked on making India a 'Leading Power' in the global context. As part of that ambition, PM Modi's increased diplomatic engagements and multi-country official visits are representative of India's increased foresight and careful calibration towards the IOR in the national narrative. Modi's visit to Sri-Lanka, Mauritius, and Seychelles and now to the African nation states of Mozambique, Kenya, Tanzania and South Africa reflect an instrumental foreign policy strategy with a directive importance to the Indian Ocean Region.

India has already initiated a number of developmental measures which strengthens its foreign policy directives in the Indian Ocean region in close association with Indian Ocean states and within the framework of economic and developmental support. One of the first steps has been the setting up of the India Ports Global Pvt. Ltd. (IPGPL), a joint venture between the Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust and Kandla Port Trust in the state of Gujarat for

development of ports overseas.⁸² The IPGPL first assignment is the task of equipping and operating container / multi-purpose terminals in Chabahar, Iran.⁸³ Thus, India has started to embark on taking up maritime infrastructure projects overseas and this will help also in the furtherance of relationship and engagement with the four littorals in the IOR and also create opportunities for maritime infrastructure development.

For India to take up a leading role in the IOR, the role of the Indian Navy is vital and necessary in shaping India's geo-political interests in the region and also facilitating and safeguarding India's developmental goals. The role of the Indian Navy as a net security provider in the IOR is definitely foreseen in the eyes of military strategists in India. As in the words of the Admiral Suresh Mehta, a former naval chief, India should look towards exercising selective sea control of the Indian Ocean by 2022, through the establishment of maritime task forces built around three aircraft carriers and a fleet of over 160 ships.⁸⁴ This is partly taking shape and India's most profound rise in numbers of frigates and amphibious crafts has happened.⁸⁵ Indian Navy's increase in striking power, air defence and anti-submarine capability has also increased five-and-a-half times since 1991. The Indian Navy is utilizing these naval capabilities in safeguarding the strategic supply lines, integrating the search and rescue communication framework in the Indian Ocean, is supporting multiple surveillance and patrolling initiatives against piracy and illegal smuggling operations and contributing towards training naval and coast guard personnel of the littoral states. Thus, India's clear focus on becoming a net security provider in the region in principal is also to work hand-in-hand with India's aspiration towards becoming a 'Leading Nation', and

82 Ministry of Shipping, Government of India, "India Ports Global Private Limited (IPGPL)", <http://www.kandlaport.gov.in/kptadmin/upload/IPGPL%20Re4%20CS.pdf> (accessed on 25/08/2016)

83 ibid

84 Holmes et al, *Indian Naval Strategy in the Twenty-first Century*, New York: Routledge, 2009, pp. 83-99

85 India currently possess five amphibious crafts with a total tonnage displacement of more than 28,000 tons. Walter C. Ladwig III, "Drivers of Indian Naval Expansion", in Harsh V. Pant (ed), *The Rise of the Indian Navy: Internal Vulnerabilities, External Challenges*, Ashgate 2012, https://kclpure.kcl.ac.uk/portal/files/39704191/Indian_Naval_Expansion.pdf (accessed on 01/09/2016)

thus, security is being embedded in the context of national and economic prosperity ambitions very intricately.

Conclusion

India is propagating its geopolitical outlook in the Indian Ocean with a keen sense of securing its coastal and maritime border and at the same time investing in development of its coastal communities as part of India's Sagarmala programme.⁸⁶ Thus, India realization and focus to work in parallel on its own coastal infrastructure and communities and India's EEZ and also extending these developments into the IOR and especially with regards to the four littoral states is deriving and contributing to India's engagement in the region. The Indian Prime Minister Modi articulated India's five-point framework for India's maritime engagement in the IOR in Mauritius, emphasizes India's vision in the IOR as strongly linked to the littoral states of the IOR. This engagement through multiple channels, forums and institutional settings have helped shed mutual perceptions, imbibed trust and created opportunities in widening horizons. India cooperation and understanding of the procedures in various fields of interaction with each of the four important littoral states is more visible and constructive and India is taking keen interest in the respective ideologies, motivations and national interests of each of the four littorals and engaging bilaterally and multilaterally as per the situational requirements and the particular need of each of the respective littorals. These partnerships have also instrumentalised in dispelling mistrust, providing transparency and build confidence in the IOR.

The military technical cooperation combining provisions of surveillance, search and rescue, technology transfer and investment are important elements of India's inter-state relationship in the IOR and is becoming more

86 Sagarmala Programme is to promote port-led direct and indirect development and to provide infrastructure to transport goods to and from ports quickly, efficiently and cost-effectively. Press Information Bureau, Government of India, "Sagarmala: Concept and implementation towards Blue revolution", 25. March 2015, <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=117691> (accessed on 01/09/2016)

important with a view of joint research, exploration and infrastructure development projects. The multilateral joint exercises, port calls, and greater interaction between the navies and coast guards in patrolling and piracy related operations is contributing and expanding the scope of inter-operability in the IOR with greater confidence and security. India is thus now embarking on bridging and building upon these four important partnerships into India's vision of SAGAR and thus providing credibility and devotion framework to the IOR. The role of the Indian Navy should now be to invest in developing an operational doctrine, technical standardization and logistical support frameworks that can enable effective inter-services and multilateral networked operations in the IOR. The Indian Navy can play a role in helping to ideate newer peacekeeping avenues such as naval / maritime peacekeeping. India should assume a leadership role in promulgating this viewpoint.

India should take advantage of its proximity in the IOR to the four littoral states. India has shown in the past that it is the foremost respondents in times of crisis and thus, the logic of geography is advantageous to India and provides India with a local concentration and faster deployment of forces and humanitarian aid in the Indian Ocean. India's geo-strategic location is the key in its ability to drive and becoming the maritime interoperability partner from the west of Indian Ocean to the East of Indian Ocean. India should encourage and propagate the power of good neighbourhood relationship and should continue to derive good examples from the past with regards to India's help during natural disasters and propagate India's true belief and concern for its Indian Ocean friends. Tourism in these 4 littoral states should be enhanced and encouraged from India and within the IOR as India shares common culture, heritage and customs in these littoral states in some regard or the other.

The Indian Strategy in the IOR has begun to focus on securing IOR geo-economic interests within the framework of securing the sea lanes of communication, freedom of navigation, collaborative anti-piracy operations, and countering the emerging non-traditional and trans-national threats. This has made India to

frame a geo-political interface with all the major, regional and sub-regional parties in the IOR. India is also propagating the use of institutions like IORA in nurturing trust in the IOR and a need towards building a 'Blue Economy' imperative, is taking the lead in discussing security concerns, propelling cooperation and coordination and securing public goods and global commons through established Naval Symposium and Maritime Security Dialogues. The hindsight for the power play in IOR is currently stable and non-competing; and India is investing in making sure that the status quo remains by adhering to soft power projection, collaborative and cooperative frameworks and investing in developmental projects in the IOR littoral states.

India cannot avoid nor discourage the Chinese involvement in the four littoral states, as the bulk of Chinese investments are currently contributing to the overall growth of the region through both monetary and infrastructure development. India's concerns are rooted in the fact that it would not take time for these developments to take on a new role in the region. As the "places can turn into bases", port calls turning into military exercises and ownership of land giving rise to an expansion regime. The Indian military and maritime strategy thus on the side-lines needs to invest in minimum deterrence capability for any 'Black Swan' event, and thus the naval and coastal modernization programmes should be continued as IOR is getting more and more mentioned and discussed in the strategic security circles of policy planning and military engagement dialogues. Thus, for India there is a definite requirement for a preparatory framework to be developed within its security planning ideological charter to keep a shrewd eye on the remote possibility of a confrontation in the IOR.

India's relationship framework with the four littoral states signals India's political commitment and will to develop cooperation, cordial relations and reduce misperceptions, by promoting common interests. India has showcased its increased and focused engagement in the IOR with the four littoral states with absolute regard to their respective sovereignty and national interests. India should continue to fortune its prowess in the context of being the largest democracy and the

strength of democratic institutions that India shares with each of the littoral states. India should leverage in bolstering ties with the littorals and partner in firming their judicial systems, electoral institutions, parliamentary frameworks and federalism and thus, derive a regional confidence in empowering each of these pillars of democracy. India has already demonstrated its commitment to human security, help during natural disasters, economic development and safety of public goods in the IOR. India should hence invest in formulation of policy guidelines and bring about more clarity on 'how much' and 'in what direction' to garnish these relationships with a long-term strategic vision and kneeled in developmental goals. The crystallization of policy guidelines and contingencies for undertaking combined planning and execution with the four littoral states would give a strategic logic and profile to future cooperation engagements. If India can work towards formalizing an engagement matrix, ensuring cooperation with the four littoral states with an envisioned road map and in sync with India's foreign policy objectives, then a larger engagement partnership architecture on a strategic level can be shaped and developed for the IOR with elements of calibration and mindful awareness. This will further open up opportunities in consolidating the relationship with Sri Lanka, Maldives, Seychelles and Mauritius, and in the long-term stability, security and development of the Indian Ocean Region.