



# Towards Enhancing Maritime Capability in the Indian Ocean Rim<sup>†</sup>

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*The Indian Ocean Rim is a vast geographical entity and consists of a number of regional and subregional identities. The paper highlights the common maritime concerns of littoral nations and the need for greater engagement and collaboration to address common threats and challenges. It then traces prominent maritime cooperation initiatives in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), highlighting cooperative trends at regional, subregional and bilateral levels. Ranging from security cooperation among nations and regional cooperation for fisheries management, to multidimensional capacity building, the trends also bring forth the opportunities for furthering the cooperation. The paper explores avenues for cooperation under existing pan-IOR constructs, underscoring the need for a multi-pronged approach to capacity building, and harnessing the potential of such cooperation across various maritime disciplines.*

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*The natural urge of the facts of history and geography should broaden itself to include the concept of an Indian Ocean Rim for socio-economic cooperation and other peaceful endeavours ... recent changes in the international system demand that the countries of the Indian Ocean shall become a single platform.*<sup>1</sup>

Nelson Mandela

## Introduction

The Indian Ocean Rim comprises of coastal and island states including scattered dependencies and island territories. Some of the island states, such as those in the Mascarene Plateau, bear similarities in terms of their geological composition, natural resources, nature of exports, cultural history and developmental challenges pertaining to geographical isolation and vulnerability to natural phenomena like cyclones, hurricanes and tidal surges (tsunamis). Comoros, Madagascar, Maldives, Mauritius, Seychelles, Singapore and Sri Lanka could be identified as the island states in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). A number of these are also members of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) which functions as an ad hoc lobby for Small Island Developing States (SIDS) within the United Nations system, to highlight the adverse effects of climate change.<sup>2</sup> In addition, there are numerous island territories of littoral nations across the IOR: Ashmore, Barrow, Cartier, Christmas, Keeling, Heard and McDonald islands of Australia; Reunion, Mayotte, Amsterdam, Saint Paul, Crozet, Kerguelen and other scattered islands of France; Prince Edward and Marion Islands of South Africa; the Andaman, Nicobar and Lakshadweep islands of India; Zanzibar and Pemba islands of Tanzania; Phuket of Thailand; numerous islands and islets forming the archipelago of Indonesia; Agalega and Rodrigues islands of Mauritius, including the Cargados and Carajos shoals (Saint Brandon islands). The coasts and islands of the Indian Ocean are prone to natural disasters and extreme events such as cyclones, floods and tsunamis. The economies of coastal states are inextricably linked to safe and timely movement of goods over the seas, and could be adversely affected by unsettling external events, manmade or otherwise.

## Maritime Concerns of the IOR States

The states of the Indian Ocean Rim are cognisant of their dependence on safe seaborne trade and its vulnerability to environmental and manmade threats. However, the

primary concerns of the coastal and island states of IOR stem from the lack of sufficient capacity and capability to monitor and regulate their vast exclusive economic zones (EEZs), claimed under the Law of the Sea Convention of 1982, which are often disproportionately large vis-à-vis their small land areas.<sup>3</sup> Some of the prominent concerns of the regional states, pertaining to the maritime domain, are as follows:

*1. Maritime Insecurity and Exploitation of Marine Resources*

Maritime insecurity in the region emerges from various activities by nonstate actors, such as drug smuggling, illegal fishing and poaching, gun running, piracy and terrorism. Over the past two decades, piracy and armed robbery at sea have been a concern in Malacca in South East Asia. In the past decade, piracy off Somalia raised global concerns due to a sharp rise in the number of attacks on vessels sailing through the Gulf of Aden/Western Indian Ocean. Initially limited to Gulf of Aden, from 2008 to 2012, Somali pirates steadily expanded attacks on vessels plying off the northern, eastern and southern coasts of Somalia. The attacks were reported at significant distances from Somalia, with the farthest line of piracy to the south reaching as far as the seas off Tanzania, Seychelles, Madagascar and Mozambique, in the Mozambique Channel. A spurt in attacks was observed in the northern Indian Ocean covering the Arabian Sea, off Oman, near the west coast of India (around Lakshadweep Islands) and close to the Maldives. Island states such as Maldives, Seychelles and Mauritius were particularly concerned as maritime routes and areas affected by piracy are critical to their ocean-based economies. The trends over the last few years indicate that Somali-based piracy has substantially waned,<sup>4</sup> with pirate networks deterred due to multinational cooperation at various levels, including coordinated naval counter-piracy operations. A number of island states and coastal states possess modest coast guards or naval capabilities, which are inadequate for providing total maritime security in their waters. For example, Madagascar, with impressive maritime equities, remains almost “sea blind” due to the near absence of any regulatory capability in its seas. Maritime insecurity caused by nontraditional threats is a matter of concern in the region and will remain so for the near future as piracy, illegal fishing, human trafficking and gun running show rising incidence. While the management of maritime zones and jurisdiction over it is the sovereign concern of the state, it is important to recognise that activities related to surface transport/shipping, offshore hydrocarbon exploration, fishing and fisheries development, submarine cables, oil

and gas pipelines, scientific research, dumping, sea-based tourism, marine farming/aquaculture, exploration of minerals other than petroleum, marine protection/conservation, nonconventional energy projects, etc. are expected to be undertaken on a larger scale by coastal states in the IOR.

### 2. *Maintenance of Outlying Territories*

Many islands and coastal states in the IOR possess small outlying islands (commonly called outer islands) which, due to their remoteness and isolation, depend heavily on seaborne trade and transportation to maintain the population and local economy. For example, the Seychelles archipelago consists of 155 islands<sup>5</sup> and needs to maintain its outer islands of Saint Brandon, Rodrigues and Agalega, whereas Comoros sustains the outlying islands of Moheli and Anjuane. Likewise, Tanzania (Zanzibar, Mafia and Pemba islands), South Africa (Marion and Prince Edward islands) and India (Lakshadweep, and Andaman and Nicobar islands) too need to support their distant island territories. The archipelagic states of Southeast Asia such as Indonesia and Malaysia also have hundreds of islands. Thailand, Myanmar and Bangladesh also need to maintain numerous islands abutting their coastline. The need to keep the inhabited outlying islands logistically supported and politically peaceful is a responsibility of nation states, as the long stretched logistics chains, maintained primarily by sea, are difficult to sustain.

### 3. *Maritime Infrastructure and Capabilities*

The IOR has variable levels of maritime capacities, which are dependent on the country's economic condition. Ports need modernisation in varying degrees to function to their optimum capacity. Maritime services like buoyage, lighthouses, vessel traffic services, hydrographic surveys, cartography, maritime communications, marine information services, search and rescue (SAR) facilities, maritime administration, maritime regulation, etc. remain a matter of concern in a number of ports. With the exception of a few developed and emerging economies, most coastal and island states in the region lack the resources and expertise, including maritime surveillance and law enforcement capabilities, to address the associated challenges.

## **Maritime Cooperation in the Indian Ocean Rim**

It has been argued that the IOR is actually not an "entity" as such and, therefore, realistic cooperation on capacity building towards enhancing maritime security is a

difficult proposition with a pan-IOR approach. Marred by sectarian and ethnic conflicts, a number of littorals suffer from widespread poverty, low levels of social security, and economic stagnation. The effects tend to extend beyond national borders and affect larger regions, as seen in the case of Somali-based piracy. Given this reality, the IOR states have strong incentive to overcome disparity and move closer, to make a common cause for regional peace and security. The IOR can therefore become a viable cooperative entity. The answer to the challenges posed by socioeconomic diversity and geography to maritime capacity building in the IOR lies in forging lasting cooperative relationships for maritime security among countries on a bilateral or multilateral basis. With a growing realisation of this approach, Indian Ocean regionalism has received a boost with initiatives such as the Indian Ocean Regional Association (IORA), Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) and Indian Ocean Commission (IOC). Some prominent examples of bilateral and multilateral initiatives between countries within the IOR are elucidated in the succeeding paragraphs.

### *1. Cooperative Mechanisms in the Malacca Region*

The Malacca Strait Patrols or MSP, which comprises the Malacca Strait Sea Patrol (MSSP), the 'Eyes-in-the-Sky' (EiS) air patrols as well as the Intelligence Exchange Group (IEG), is a good example of co-operative measures taken by Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand to enhance the security of the Straits of Malacca and Singapore.<sup>6</sup> Operation Malsindo was launched in 2004, and 17 ships from Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore undertook patrol within their respective maritime zones in accordance with standard operating procedures (SOPs). Operation Malsindo was later renamed the MSP; the EiS air patrols were launched in September 2005, and the Intelligence Exchange Group (IEG) was formed in 2006, comprising representatives of the intelligence agencies of each the participating countries. Information is shared on a real-time basis through the Malacca Straits Patrol Information System (MSP-IS), a computerised information-sharing system developed for the purpose. Another example of multinational cooperation in the streets of Malacca is the "cooperative mechanism on safety of navigation and environmental protection in the straits of Malacca and Singapore" or the Malacca Cooperative Mechanism. The mechanism involves Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore, and a number of voluntary user states and international

organisations like the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) and Nippon Foundation, Japan.<sup>7</sup>

## 2. *The Western Indian Ocean Marine Highway and Coastal Contamination Prevention Program*

A critical sea lane in the Western Indian Ocean passes through the Mozambique Channel, which is estimated to carry about 30% of the world's crude oil supplies. Towards securing the region from manmade and environmental threats, a project titled "Western Indian Ocean Marine Highway and Coastal Contamination Prevention program" is being undertaken in the region, which is supported by the World Bank, through a grant under the Global Environment Facility (GEF). The lead implementing agency for this project was South African Maritime Safety Authority (SAMSA).<sup>8</sup> The project's development objective is to introduce modern aids to navigation systems in the South African Development Community (SADC) region. The project, which focuses on creating a viable and safe shipping route through the Mozambique Channel, serves two medium- to long-term global environmental goals. Firstly, it seeks to help prevent ship-based environmental pollution from oil spills and grounding, collisions, and illegal discharges of ballast and bilge waters. Secondly, the project aims to reduce risks of environmental damage to beaches, fishing grounds and other domestic resources from oil or chemical spills near Kenya, Mozambique, South Africa and Tanzania. The project includes a marine electronic highway (MEH) to increase the safety of navigation using a network of electronic charts incorporating information on natural features such as reefs, nurseries and migration areas, thereby reducing catastrophic accidents. The highway extends from South Africa to the Mozambican port of Nacala west of Comoros, to Aldabra in Seychelles, passing through the Mozambique Channel, on the east coast of the African continent. The project covers activities such as hydrographical surveys of the region, installing electronic aids to navigation, improving pollution control mechanisms and strengthening SAR capabilities.

## 3. *Fisheries Protection Programmes*

The states of the Western Indian Ocean have exhibited strong regional cooperation in the area of fisheries management. The region is rich in pelagic fish such as tuna, which has a huge international market and attracts fishing fleets from the European Union and East Asia. The coastal and island states of the region have tended to cooperate towards better fisheries management and

protection of fisheries against illegal unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing. The regional cooperation towards fisheries is through collaborative mechanisms, such as the World Bank-funded South West Indian Ocean Fisheries Project (SWIOFP),<sup>9</sup> the European Union-supported SmartFish programme<sup>10</sup> and also the Indian Ocean Commission's Regional Plan of Monitoring of Fishing in the South-west of the Indian Ocean.<sup>11</sup> To combat IUU fishing in the region, the Commission de l'Océan Indien or Indian Ocean Commission (IOC), with support from the EU, conducted a four-year project called the IOC-EU Monitoring, Control and Surveillance (MCS) Programme, from February 2005 to December 2008.<sup>12</sup> It sought to address some of the core weaknesses the region faces in combating IUU fishing – primarily through the upgrading of MCS mechanisms. These areas included policy and legal coordination, regional vessel monitoring systems (VMS) and SAR, and centralised electronic fisheries and statistical information-sharing mechanisms. The success of fisheries management and protection programmes hinges on an effective MCS capability, to prevent and prosecute poachers and IUU fishing. However, such capacity is far from satisfactory. Some nations of the region have been making efforts to shore up MCS measures through the acquisition of seagoing and aerial surveillance platforms. For instance, in March 2015, Mauritius commissioned an offshore patrol vessel, *Baracuda*, which it purchased from an Indian shipyard.<sup>13</sup>

## **Regional Capacity-Building Initiatives**

In recent times, the Indian Ocean Rim has received heightened attention from regional and extra-regional powers. Prominently, the United States, through various initiatives under its Africa Command (AFRICOM), has engaged African military and security forces, including in the East African littoral. The European Union has supported projects aimed at enhancing maritime capacity and law enforcement capabilities in the East Africa region. These include Project NESTOR,<sup>14</sup> a regional capacity-building mission aimed at enhancing the maritime capacities of countries (in the Horn of Africa and the Western Indian Ocean), and a cluster of projects under the Critical Maritime Routes (CMR) programme,<sup>15</sup> aimed at addressing the transregional problem of security and safety of essential maritime routes, and related capacity-building issues. IOR states such as Australia, France, India, South Africa and the United Arab Emirates (UAE)

have also demonstrated keenness towards engaging other countries on security issues. China, though a new entrant in the field, has ratcheted up its engagement with regional states, covering many dimensions, including security. The region has seen a steady increase in the presence of naval vessels and cooperative activities in the area of maritime security. Some of the prominent bilateral and multilateral initiatives taken by regional states are enumerated as follows.

## 1. Australia

Over the past decade, Australia has lent active support to activities under IORA and IONS, the two main pan-IOR forums, which can enhance cooperation in maritime security. With a view to addressing the problem of illegal immigration and people-smuggling to Australia from the sea, it has actively engaged Indonesia, Sri Lanka and India. In August 2015, it established a joint maritime enforcement training capability at the Jakarta Centre for Law Enforcement Cooperation in Indonesia.<sup>16</sup> In 2013, Australia gifted the Sri Lanka Navy two fully refurbished Bay-class patrol boats to strengthen its maritime surveillance and law enforcement capabilities. Australia has steadily strengthened its bilateral relations with India, including an emphasis on maritime security cooperation<sup>17</sup> also reflected in the India–Australia Framework 2014.<sup>18</sup> Over the years, Australia has also fostered closer naval interactions with Mauritius<sup>19</sup> and Seychelles.<sup>20</sup>

## 2. France

France is an Indian Ocean power by virtue of territories and overseas departments it possesses in the IOR. Moreover, some countries in the Western Indian Ocean Region, prominently Madagascar, Mauritius, Seychelles and Comoros, have a long history of engagement with France. French culture is pervasive and deeply rooted in these countries, as reflected in the lingua franca – Creole. France maintains a sizeable number of naval assets at Reunion, an overseas department, and the French forces at Reunion are under the command of FAZSOI (Commandant Supérieur des Forces Armées en Zone Sud de l’océan Indien), a joint services commander.<sup>21</sup> France also maintains a small maritime base and a Foreign Legion Detachment on Mayotte,<sup>22</sup> and assists neighbouring Comoros in defence training.<sup>23</sup> Under its policy of “La Francophonie”, France has close relations with Mauritius, Seychelles and Madagascar, and

leads a number of initiatives under the aegis of the IOC, including aspects of maritime security. France has also been supportive of the Kenyan Navy and donated a naval vessel, *La Rieuse*, to Kenya, in June 2011.<sup>24</sup> In the past, France has participated in naval exercises and manoeuvres in the region, with countries like South Africa, Mozambique and Mauritius.<sup>25</sup> The French Navy deploys vessels for EEZ surveillance of the French Southern Indian Ocean overseas possessions (Kerguelen, Crozet, Saint Paul and Amsterdam). For more than six months a year the *Albatros*, a former trawler, acquired in 1983 by the French Navy, embarks on a fisheries patrol, with civilian personnel of the Administration des Terres Australes et Antarctiques Françaises (TAAF) and, since 2005, has been embarking Australian government representatives (from customs and fisheries administration) as per an intergovernmental agreement between the two countries. This agreement allows law enforcement in alternate EEZs against illegal fishing vessels.<sup>26</sup>

### 3. India

In recent times, India has stepped up cooperation with a number of countries in its neighbourhood towards promoting maritime security in the region. The Indian Navy has been conducting coordinated patrols with navies of Indonesia, Thailand and Myanmar along their respective international maritime boundary lines.<sup>27</sup> The purpose of the coordinated patrols is to counter piracy, armed robberies, poaching, illegal immigration, drug trafficking and other illegal activities. The Indian Navy and Coast Guard frequently called at ports in the region, on goodwill visits and replenishment.<sup>28</sup> India has assisted some of these countries through capacity building, thus promoting good order at sea by conducting joint patrols.<sup>29</sup> India gifted a Trinkat-class fast attack craft, *INS Tarmugli*, to the Seychelles Coast Guard (SCG), in February 2005, where it was renamed PS *Topaz*,<sup>30</sup> and *INS Tillanchang* to the Maldives Coast Guard in 2006, rechristened CGS *Huravee*. India has also supported the maintenance of these platforms by undertaking periodic refits at Indian dockyards.<sup>31</sup> *Topaz* hit the headlines in end-March 2011, when it rescued six Seychellois fishermen from the custody of Somali pirates, in a daring anti-piracy mission.<sup>32</sup> More recently, in November 2014, India handed over a second Trikant fast attack craft, formerly *INS Tarasa*, to the Seychelles Coast Guard.<sup>33</sup> News reports suggest that India has also gifted Seychelles one Dornier aircraft for combating piracy.<sup>34</sup> India has longstanding maritime ties with Mauritius, to which it has transferred naval and coast guard patrol boats in the past, on

concessional terms. A Dornier-228 maritime patrol aircraft was acquired by Mauritius from Hindustan Aeronautics Limited, in 2004,<sup>35</sup> and the contract for another was concluded in 2014.<sup>36</sup> In recent years, the Indian Navy has facilitated the construction and purchase of new ships for friendly countries, viz. Sri Lanka, Mauritius and Myanmar, at Indian shipyards.<sup>37</sup> A Coastal surveillance radar system (CSRS), manufactured by Bharat Electronics Ltd., Bangalore, India, was gifted by India under a one-time grant of 2,465,726 euros; it was inaugurated in Mauritius, in April 2011, to strengthen coastal surveillance capabilities.<sup>38</sup> In addition to Mauritius, Seychelles and Maldives, India has engaged other nations in the southwestern Indian Ocean, including Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique and South Africa. In June 2011, during a five-day visit to India by Mozambican Defence Minister Filipe Jacinto Nyussi, the two countries agreed to enhance maritime security cooperation, including joint maritime patrolling of the Mozambican coast, and military training and equipment maintenance training exchanges.<sup>39</sup> This development follows a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) concluded between India and Mozambique in 2006, addressing maritime patrols in Mozambique's waters, and training exchanges, with two follow-up meetings of the Joint Defence Working Group, in 2008 and 2010.<sup>40</sup> Earlier, the seaward security for the African Union summit 2003, held in Maputo, as also during the World Economic Forum Summit and Afro-Pacific-Caribbean (APC) Heads of State Summit, 2004, was provided by ships of the Indian Navy.<sup>41</sup>

#### 4. South Africa

South Africa considers the Southern African region as the most important priority of its foreign relations, and since its membership of the SADC in 1994, it has endeavoured to play a leadership role in the region.<sup>42</sup> The Strategic Indicative Plan for the Organ (SIPO) of SADC and the Protocol on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation offer South Africa the basis for playing a major role in promoting regional security, including maritime security.<sup>43</sup> The South African Navy (SAN) has pursued active engagement with the SADC maritime states, particularly through its ships' 'Interop' East and West series of patrols, goodwill port calls in the region and cooperation in counter-piracy.<sup>44</sup> Capacity-building initiatives include gifting of patrol boats in the region, disaster relief following floods and donation of medical supplies to Comoros and Madagascar.<sup>45</sup> During the 31st SADC summit, held in the Angolan capital Luanda, in August 2011, the members approved a new regional maritime security

strategy, further strengthening the leadership role of South Africa in the SADC.<sup>46</sup> South Africa has also considered setting up a regional coordinating centre for sharing information on piracy, to be established and operated from South Africa.<sup>47</sup>

## 5. United Arab Emirates

The UAE has made concerted efforts to help the Seychelles in strengthening its maritime capabilities. In January 2011, it gifted five patrol boats to the Seychelles Coast Guard. The vessels include three fast response craft and two larger patrol boats, *Le Vigilant* and *La Flèche*.<sup>48</sup> This doubled the size of the country's coast guard fleet. Later, the UAE constructed a new coast guard base for Seychelles at Ile Preserverance, at the cost of US \$15 million, which was commissioned on November 11, 2011. The project was entirely funded by the government of the UAE.<sup>49</sup>

## Potential Areas of Cooperation towards Capacity and Capability Building

It is apparent that bilateral and multilateral endeavours by some countries have had a positive impact on capability building as well as strengthening maritime security in the IOR. Future possibilities of cooperation could focus on areas which have broader maritime implications. Some activities that could be undertaken between countries under regional or bilateral cooperation arrangements are as follows.

### 1. *Harnessing the Potential of IORA*

IORA's priority areas include maritime safety and security, fisheries management and disaster risk management. The IORA is perhaps the only pan-IOR regional grouping which provides a platform for discussion on maritime issues, including security, at the ministerial level. In the past few years, IORA has been revitalised and its scope broadened. The thrust towards cooperative activities under IORA needs to be sustained and built upon by finding convergences at subregional efforts also. For example, the members of the SADC have agreed to a Strategic Indicative Plan for the Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation, in which "Protection of Maritime Resources" has been identified as one of the important challenges.<sup>50</sup> This can serve as a basis for enhanced cooperation in fisheries protection among the concerned nations.

The IOR is recognised as a region which witnesses the worst fury of natural disasters such as cyclones, earthquakes, floods, tsunamis and droughts. As per the *Worldmapper*, between 1975 and 2004, 43% of disaster-affected people lived in South Asia, 41% in East Asia and 5% in southeast Africa.<sup>51</sup> Some navies of IOR have rich experience in humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) operations in the region. IORA could support the initiatives on cooperation in HADR between littoral nations. This would contribute towards a better understanding of regional strengths and shortcomings insofar as HADR capabilities are concerned. This can be expanded to include joint SOPs which could be worked out between national disaster response agencies to better respond to a variety of HADR situations. These could be validated through tabletop exercises, followed by scenario-based live exercises. A HADR resource page could be created on the IORA website where member states could be invited to update information such as contact details, decision-making hierarchies, HADR force levels and infrastructure available for use during contingencies.

### 2. *Sea Rider Programme*

A Sea Rider programme could be developed under the IORA and IONS constructs, where trainee or probationary officers of various maritime law enforcement agencies could be deputed for varying durations, to sail as observers' onboard naval, coast guard and other patrol vessels, after mutual consent. Countries could specify which nationalities (and number of personnel) they may be willing to host. Based on preliminary responses, a tentative yearly schedule could be promulgated to enable timely deputation formalities. By facilitating cross-deputation of law enforcement personnel to observe and participate in maritime security and safety operations, the regional efforts at promoting maritime cooperation could be taken to functional levels.

### 3. *Hydrography/Oceanography Cooperation*

There exists substantial potential in the IOR for cooperation in hydrographical and oceanographic matters. Since the IOR states share a common maritime environment, joint efforts in these disciplines could provide wider, regional benefits. While some countries in the region have modern, capable hydrography agencies, others do not possess such capabilities. Hence, there is scope for countries within the region to cooperate on developing hydrographic capabilities. Moreover, extreme climatic events and environmental degradation have created new avenues

for oceanographic scientific research. This has resulted in a need for fresh scientific surveys and experimentation in the affected areas. As natural resources are depleted on land, nations are turning to the oceans and the seas for exploration of resources, including by deep-sea mining.

#### *4. Academic and Research Collaboration*

Some members of IONS have instituted dedicated academic bodies or “think tanks” to undertake research on maritime security issues. The IONS initiative can benefit through academic collaboration between various study centres. Some examples of such organisations/forums include the Gulf and Shangri-La Dialogues of the International Institute of Strategic Studies (IISS); Maritime Institute of Malaysia; Centre for Military Studies of the Military Academy, South Africa; Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies (IDSS) Singapore; Emirates Centre for Strategic Studies & Research (ECSSR); National Maritime Foundation’ (NMF), India; and Collège Interarmées de Défense, France. Interaction between scholars of these research centres constitutes the “Track-II” approach towards promoting the objectives of IONS. It is pertinent to mention that the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific (CSCAP), a collaborative think tank, has been functioning since 1993 as the Track-II counterpart of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Regional Forum (ARF).<sup>52</sup> The CSCAP functions as the “sounding board” for confidence building within the ARF.

#### *5. Consultancy on Maritime Issues*

Maritime agencies have to deal with a plethora of legalities and technicalities such as the interpretation and implementation of laws including the 1982 Law of the Sea (LOS), the Suppression of Unlawful Acts Against Safety of Maritime Navigation (SUA Convention with the 2005 Protocol), the International Ship and Port Facility Security (ISPS) Code, the International Convention for the Safety of the Life at Sea (SOLAS) and the IMO directives pertaining to the automatic identification system (AIS) and the long-range identification and tracking system (LRITS). Within the IOR, the IORA and IONS could facilitate consultancy and referral over these matters between the maritime agencies. In regard to maritime safety, an area of growing interest is submarine rescue and salvage. The proliferation in submarine force levels in the IOR and the lack of comprehensive

rescue facilities with the concerned navies have created considerable scope for contingency planning and preparation on this matter.

## Conclusion

Maritime forces can contribute significantly to cooperative capability in the IOR through initiatives for the maintenance of good order at sea and mutually beneficial enterprises. The incidents of piracy off Somalia have exposed the vulnerability of sea-borne trade in the IOR to nonstate maritime actors. Only a safe and secure Indian Ocean can offer germane conditions for the economic potential of the IOR to be realised in full. The cost of neglecting the sea or the inability to protect the EEZs from exploitation can be high for nations and even regions. In the context of the rise in piracy emanating from Somalia, it has been alleged that the problem was aggravated over the years because of the near-total absence of surveillance and monitoring of the sea in that region. This brings home the significance of capacity building through bilateral or multilateral efforts and ensuring the economic wellbeing and development of coastal states of the IOR. The countries of the IOR certainly stand to gain by developing mutually rewarding partnerships in maritime matters. After centuries of fragmented existence, the IOR is now coming to terms with its true identity, bound together as it is by a common ocean. This physical divide at sea too can be effectively bridged by the benevolent partnerships offered under the auspices of forums such as IORA, IONS and other subregional and bilateral initiatives in the Indian Ocean Rim.

## Notes

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