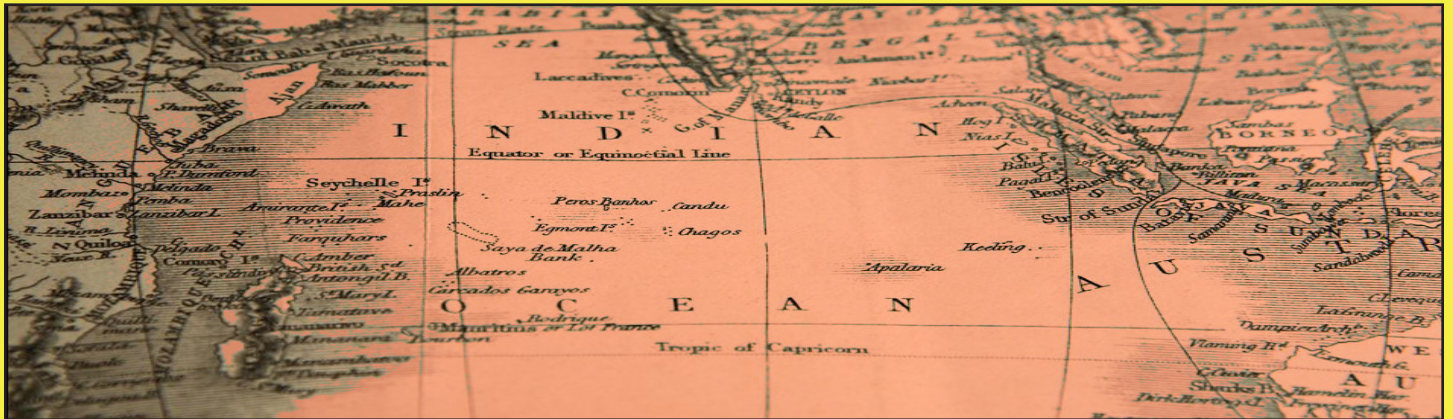


# Sea Indian Ocean

Indian Ocean Strategic Studies – New York, USA



## Mission

*Indian Ocean is at the heart of international geo-politics. Some 80% of the world's maritime oil trade flows through three narrow passages of water, known as choke points, in the Indian Ocean. This includes the Strait of Hormuz—located between the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman—which provides the only sea passage from the Persian Gulf to the open ocean. Geo-Politically, the Indian Ocean is becoming a pivotal zone of strategic competition. It is also our belief that national security and human security issues as well as ecological and environmental concerns in the Indian Ocean region are linked to the state of individual, social, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, political, economic and collective rights of people in the region. This newsletter is therefore deeply committed to sharing ground realities, experiences, knowledge and global insights on peace, development and conflict resolution issues as well as the state of human rights and justice in the Indian Ocean region.*

## ***New strategic partnership between the ISA Secretariat and the Research and Information System for Developing Countries***

The Secretary-General of the International Seabed Authority (ISA), H.E. Mr. Michael W. Lodge and the Director General of the Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS), Dr. Sachin Chaturvedi, signed a letter of cooperation during a ceremony held at the Office of RIS in New Delhi yesterday. The letter of cooperation formalizes a new strategic partnership to facilitate joint activities between the two organizations. These will be implemented at the national, regional and international level to support the priorities of interested developing States to foster their blue economy and contribute to achieving the 2030 Agenda.

The development of dedicated initiatives to build and develop the capacities of developing States in the fields of ocean governance and marine scientific research, the organization of thematic workshops and seminars, and dedicated actions to facilitate the participation of women scientists from developing States with deep-sea-related skills in research and technology-oriented programmes are some of the different activities that will be jointly designed and implemented.

“This new partnership formalized today with RIS is another significant progress made towards fostered institutional collaboration at the global, regional and national level to support meaningful actions to advance the knowledge base and capacity of developing States in the work that ISA and its Member States do,” noted the ISA Secretary-General during the signing ceremony.

“I trust this new collaboration will bring signifi-

cant added value to the work that the Secretariat is doing to address the priority needs identified by our Members. I particularly welcome future dedicated actions with RIS to advance further women’s empowerment and leadership in the field of ocean affairs in India and the region,” he added. Professor Sachin Chaturvedi underscored the importance of the partnership with ISA to foster RIS’s work programme on the blue economy. “RIS has developed expertise in national income accounting for the blue economy and has provided a knowledge base for the Government of India for the upcoming blue economy policy,” he said, further noting that “RIS-ISA collaboration in ocean-related sectors may be seen in the context of India’s G20 Presidency as a contribution to the 2030 Agenda, especially the Science, Technology and Innovation programme for SDG-14. The collaborative efforts of the two institutions would advance India’s blue economy and the South-South cooperation roadmap.”

As India assumes the Presidency of the G20 for 2023, ISA and RIS will work together to contribute to vital discussions on the potential that deep-seabed economic activities have in driving the development of a sustainable blue economy in India and the region.

This collaboration will contribute to the implementation of strategic priorities for ISA. It will act as a stepping stone towards furthering the effective implementation of the Action Plan for Marine Scientific Research in support of the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development and the Capacity Development Strategy.

For a detailed report see: <https://www.isa.org.jm/news/new-strategic-partnership-between-the-isa-secretariat-and-the-research-and-information-system-for-developing-countries-to-strengthen-the-knowledge-capacity-of-developing-countries-and-womens/>

## ***Indian Ocean will not be High Risk Area anymore***

The International Maritime Organization (IMO) decided that the Indian Ocean will not be an High Risk Area since January first 2023.

After years and year of piracy operations, it's a long time that Indian Ocean is improving in terms of security. In the Somalia Gulf (Gulf of Aden) is now more than 4 years that pirates do not strike succesfully containerships, so the International Maritime Organization decided to remove the Indian Ocean from the High Risk

For a detailed report see: <https://befgroup.com/site/en/shipping-since-january-2023-indian-ocean-will-not-be-high-risk-area-anymore/>

## ***Expanding the Scope of Oman's Israel Boycott?***

Omani and international news agencies reported that the Omani Shura Council was discussing the prospect of amending the 1972 Israel boycott law which bans contact with any Israeli entity or person. This surprising news came as information about an imminent rapprochement between the two countries was leaked, and only a few years after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu visited Muscat and met with the late Sultan Qaboos bin Said in 2018.

The Deputy Chairman of the Omani Consultative Assembly, Yaqoob al-Harathi, said in a statement that seven members of the Shura Council proposed amending Article 1 of the aforementioned law to expand the scope of the boycott. Specifically, they proposed "an expansion of criminalization, and an expansion of boycotting this entity." They requested that the boycott be expanded to include technical, cultural, economic, and

For a detailed report see: <https://carnegieendowment.org/sada/89160>

## ***Geostrategic competition for military basing in the Indian Ocean region***

Military basing and access across the Indian Ocean region (IOR) is an important – and asymmetric – object of strategic competition in the contemporary international security environment. The region's maritime geography and the major powers' varied security interests in the theater are shaping the force postures and strategic interactions of America, China, India, Australia, France, and Britain as they pursue regional military basing and access objectives. China, in particular, is seeking to establish a greater military presence and a more robust operational foothold in the IOR, height-

ening the United States' strategic interest in the region. America's changing global force posture and the high-end challenges it faces in the western Pacific and Europe make the legacy U.S. basing network in the region ill-suited to meet growing international security demands. Given that the United States shares certain threat perceptions and objectives with key regional maritime democracies and other like-minded partners, Washington should develop deeper security and economic partnerships as it rebalances its IOR posture to meet the asymmetric challenge posed by the PRC.

## ***Iran employs drones in massive war games amid tensions with West***

Iran's armed forces downed hostile simulated drones on Sunday during large-scale military drills underway from the eastern part of the Strait of Hormuz to the northern part of the Indian Ocean, Anadolu reports.

During the drills, condemned Zolfaghar 1401, Iran's indigenously-developed Mersad air defense system was used to detect, intercept and target mock drones early on Sunday, the state media said.

For a detailed report see: <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20230101-iran-employs-drones-in-massive-war-games-amid-tensions-with-west/>

Area. The counter attacks by international institutions and regional stakeholder (shipping industry and especially military, political and civil society) have been profitably. IMO said it's for 15 years they are working hard on this issue: "Thanks and gratitude is given to all the seafarers and offshore workers who have served during this time in safely maintaining global trade and operations".

sports relations, and that it prohibit all types of interactions—whether physical, virtual, or through any other means.

Although the suggested amendment details the areas of prohibition, it does not change the comprehensive nature of criminalization under the 1972 provision which prohibited all Omani natural or legal persons from entering into an agreement with a body or a person residing in, or acting on behalf of, Israel. This applied regardless of whether the agreements involved "commercial transactions, financial operations, or any other transaction of any nature." However, the press leak did not mention whether the proposed amendments would lead to an intensification of the penalties stipulated in Article 7 of the law, which imposes fines and prison sentences of three to ten years for those who violate the law.

For a detailed report see: <https://www.brookings.edu/research/geostrategic-competition-for-military-basing-in-the-indian-ocean-region/>

Mersad has a detection range of 150 kilometers, up from 110 kilometers, with sharp operational accuracy and capability to hit targets within a distance of 40 kilometers, reports cited military officials as saying.

The massive war games kicked off on Thursday night with the stated theme of "self-confidence, power, and sustainable security" amid Iran's growing tensions with Western states and Israel.





## ***Prioritizing the Indian Ocean in US Indo-Pacific Strategy***

Washington's Indo-Pacific framework merges theatres in East Asia, South Asia, the Indian Ocean, and the Western Pacific into an integrated theatre that envisages working with like-minded countries to uphold a regional rules-based order. However, the U.S.'s lack of focus on the Indian Ocean within the Indo-Pacific strategy demonstrates singular tunnel vision that limits a holistic, context-specific view of the wider region. Against increasing Chinese presence and influence in the region, pushing the Indian Ocean to become a mere appendix to the Pacific Ocean could threaten U.S. long-term national interests.

This policy memo highlights the Indian Ocean's role in the Indo-Pacific and makes a case for Washington to strengthen engagement with actors across the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). Building on the existing policy focus on enhancing relations with India, this memo provides recommendations for strengthening U.S.-India cooperation in the Indian Ocean.

### **Importance of the Indian Ocean**

The Indian Ocean has been a critical trade route for centuries and currently accounts for "one-third of the world's bulk cargo traffic and two-thirds of the world's oil shipments." Home to roughly 35 percent of the world population, the Indian Ocean economy accounted for 10.7 percent of the global GDP in 2017 and is expected to account for a fifth by 2025. Spanning three continents, the Indian Ocean's vast and diverse

For a detailed report see: <https://www.stimson.org/2023/prioritizing-the-indian-ocean-in-us-indo-pacific-strategy/>

maritime geography is often understood as consisting of several sub-regions broadly encompassing Australasia, Southeast Asia, South Asia, West Asia, and Eastern & Southern Africa. This view is prevalent in Washington's military and civilian institutions. The Indian Ocean is divided across commands in the Department of Defense and the Department of State's geographical bureaus, arguably due to bureaucratic tractability and institutional history. Whether the Indian Ocean is best viewed as a unified whole or a set of interconnected subregions is a matter of scholarly debate. Still, there is a broad consensus on the growing geostrategic importance of the Indian Ocean.

With intensifying great power competition between the United States and China, the relatively peaceful Indian Ocean region is metamorphosing into an important theatre of strategic competition and power politics. During the Cold War, the Indian Ocean was a secondary theatre. The United States' presence in the region was largely reactive to the growing strength of the Soviet Union's Indian Ocean Squadron. The Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan and the Iranian revolution, both in 1979, pushed the United States to establish a forward presence with carrier battle group presence in the Indian Ocean and expand the naval base at Diego Garcia, located in the heart of Indian Ocean in the Chagos Archipelago.

## ***Japan's Rising Role as an Indian Ocean Actor: What Do Port Stories Tell Us?***

In January 2023, a little-noticed naval exercise took place between the U.S. and Sri Lanka in the strategically located Trincomalee port and Mullikulam base in the Indian Ocean. The annual bilateral CARAT Sri Lanka exercises have been long-standing, but this year, Japan's Maritime Self-Defense Force joined them for the second time after its initial participation in 2021. This came right on the heels of India sending the INS Delhi to dock at Trincomalee and providing training for the Sri Lankan Navy. These actions come four months after the controversial Chinese docking of a surveillance ship at Hambantota port in the midst of Sri Lanka's historic economic and political meltdown in 2022.

Japan's increasing involvement in the Indian Ocean will have a deep impact on the interests of its Quad partners, especially India. While Japan has been a traditional development aid partner in the region, its newest role suggests a leading strategic edge. What does Japan's strategic edge in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) look like? And to what extent is it characterized by a partnership with India versus a more unilateral approach?

For a detailed report see: <https://www.risingpowersinitiative.org/publication/japans-rising-role-as-an-indian-ocean-actor/>

### **The Race for Ports in the Indian Ocean Sri Lanka**

Japan's strategic outlook on the Indian Ocean may be best reflected in how it participates in port and port infrastructure development. China took an early lead in constructing ports in the Indian Ocean Region ahead of both Japan and India. The latter two have been playing catch-up since 2010. Given Japan's greater capital, resources and a better reputation for building and delivering quality infrastructure, Tokyo is in a more advantageous position to compete than India. India, however, brings strong historical experience working closely with key states like Sri Lanka and Bangladesh that could add value for Japan.

Tokyo's sweeping new National Security Strategy, released in December 2022, points to China's rising assertiveness in the Indo-Pacific as Japan's "greatest strategic challenge." In turn, Japan's National Defense Strategy further notes that it must "deepen bilateral and multi-lateral defense exchanges" and will prioritize "the importance of stable use of sea lane and an energy and economic perspective" with coastal Indian Ocean states.



## **HISTORY - ARCHIVES**

### **World War II: Indian Ocean Raid**

#### **Indian Ocean Raid - Background:**

Following the Japanese attack on the American fleet at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941 and the start of World War II in the Pacific, the British position in the region quickly began to unravel. Beginning with the loss of Force Z off Malaysia on December 10, British forces surrendered Hong Kong on Christmas before losing the Battle of Singapore on February 15, 1942. Twelve days later, the Allied naval position in Dutch East Indies collapsed when the Japanese soundly defeated American-British-Dutch-Australian forces at the Battle of the Java Sea. In an effort reestablish a naval presence, the Royal Navy dispatched Vice Admiral Sir James Somerville to the Indian Ocean as Commander-in-Chief, Eastern Fleet in March 1942. To support the defense of Burma and India, Somerville received the carriers HMS Indomitable, HMS Formidable, and HMS Hermes as well as five battleships, two heavy cruisers, five light cruisers, and sixteen destroyers.

Best known for his reluctant attack on the French at Mers el Kebir in 1940, Somerville arrived on Ceylon (Sri Lanka) and quickly found the Royal Navy's principal base at Trincomalee to be poorly defended and vulnerable. Concerned, he directed that a new forward base be constructed on Addu Atoll six hundred miles to the southwest in the Maldives. Alerted to the British na-

For a detailed report see: <https://www.thoughtco.com/indian-ocean-raid-2360523>

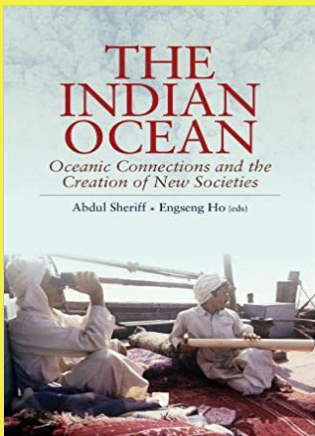
val build up, the Japanese Combined Fleet directed Vice Admiral Chuichi Nagumo to enter the Indian Ocean with the carriers Akagi, Hiryu, Soryu, Shokaku, Zuikaku, and Ryujo and eliminate Somerville's forces while also supporting operations in Burma. Departing Celebes on March 26, Nagumo's carriers were supported by a variety of surface vessels as well as submarines.

#### **Indian Ocean Raid - Nagumo Approaches:**

Warned of Nagumo's intentions by American radio intercepts, Somerville elected to withdraw the Eastern Fleet to Addu. Entering the Indian Ocean, Nagumo detached Vice Admiral Jisaburo Ozawa with Ryujo and ordered him to strike British shipping in the Bay of Bengal. Attacking on March 31, Ozawa's aircraft sank 23 ships. Japanese submarines claimed five more along the Indian coast. These actions led Somerville to believe that Ceylon would be struck on April 1 or 2. When no attack materialized, he decided to dispatch the older Hermes back to Trincomalee for repairs. The cruisers HMS Cornwall and HMS Dorsetshire as well as the destroyer HMAS Vampire sailed as escorts. On April 4, a British PBY Catalina succeeded in locating Nagumo's fleet. Reporting its position, the Catalina, flown by Squadron Leader Leonard Birchall, was soon downed by six A6M Zeros from Hiryu.

## **BOOK REVIEW**

### **The Indian Ocean: Oceanic Connections and the Creation of New Societies - Abdul Sheriff (Editor), Engseng Ho (Editor)**



The Indian Ocean was the first venue of global trade, connecting the Mediterranean and South China Sea. Inspired by the insights of Fernand Braudel, and by Michael Mollat, who saw it as 'a zone of encounters and contacts....

a privileged crossroads of culture,' this volume explores two inter-related themes. The first, on oceanic linkages, presents the diversity of the peoples who have traversed

it and their relationships by tracing their tangible movements and connections. The second, on the creation of new societies, revisits better-known socio-historical phenomena--such as slavery, indentured labor, the Swahili language and Muslim charity--which tie the genesis of these social formations to the seascape of an interconnected, transcultural ocean. The chapters offer a broad and diverse view of the mobile, transregional communities that comprise Indian Ocean society, while in-depth case studies allow students and specialists to see how individual research projects may contribute to developing a view of the Indian Ocean as a transcultural arena, one in which individual societies were and are shaped by their interactions with others from across the waters.

<https://safety4sea.com/cm-book-review-maritime-trade-in-indian-ocean/>

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