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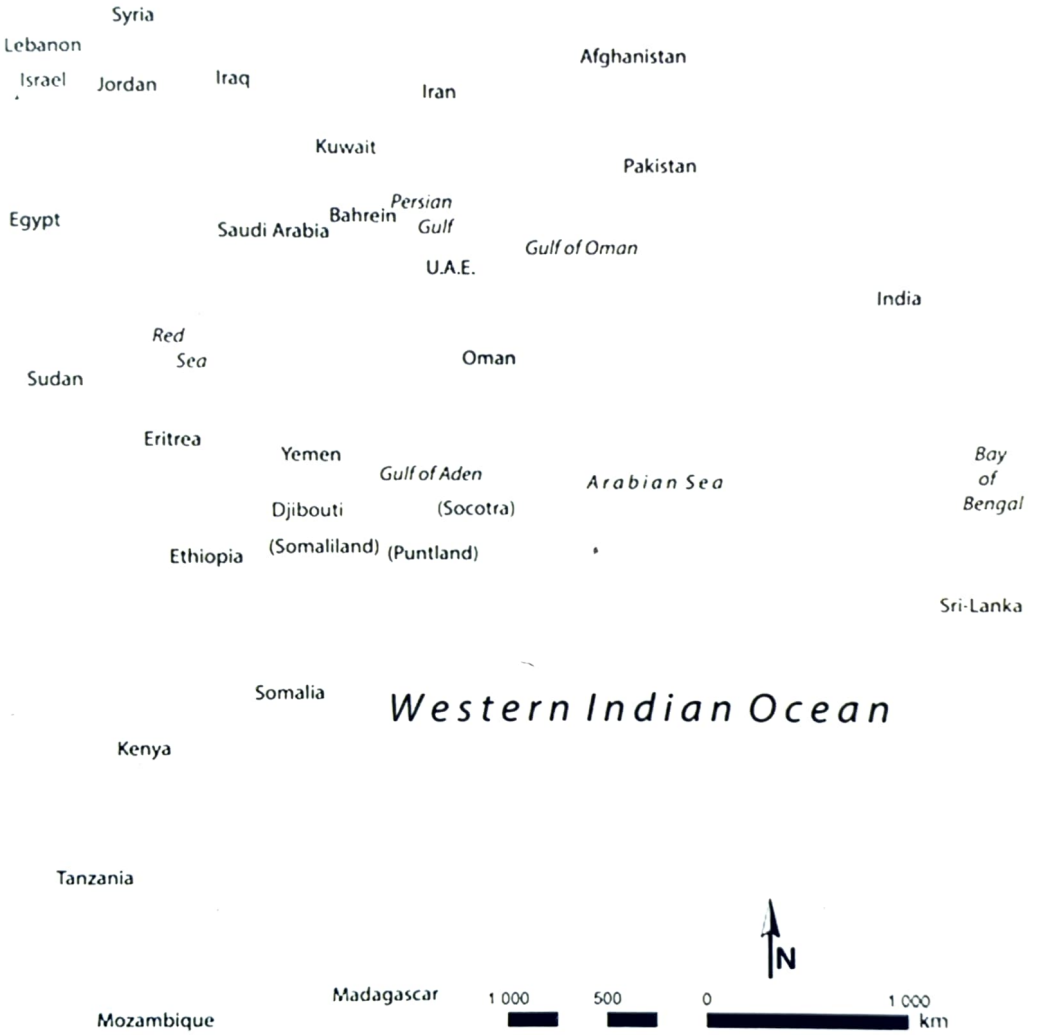
FORMULATION OF WESTERN INDIAN OCEAN REGIONAL ASSOCIATION (WIORA): ANALYSIS AND PROPOSAL



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ABBREVIATIONS

IMS	Africa Integrated Maritime Strategy
U	African Union
ENTCOM	US Central Command
MF	Combined Maritime Force
OI	Indian Ocean Commission
CoC	Djibouti Code of Conduct
AC	East African Community
U	European Union
MC	International Maritime Conference (NIMA)
MS	International Maritime Symposium (NIMA)
ORA	Indian Ocean Rim Association
MASE	Programme to Enhance Maritime Security
MDA	Maritime Domain Awareness
NDAA	US National Defense Authorization Act
N	Pakistan Navy
ROPME	Regional Organization for the Protection of the Marine Environment
SADC	South African Development Community
UNCLOS	United Nations Convention on Law of the Sea
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drug and Crime
WIO	Western Indian Ocean
WIOMSA	Western Indian Ocean Marine Science Association

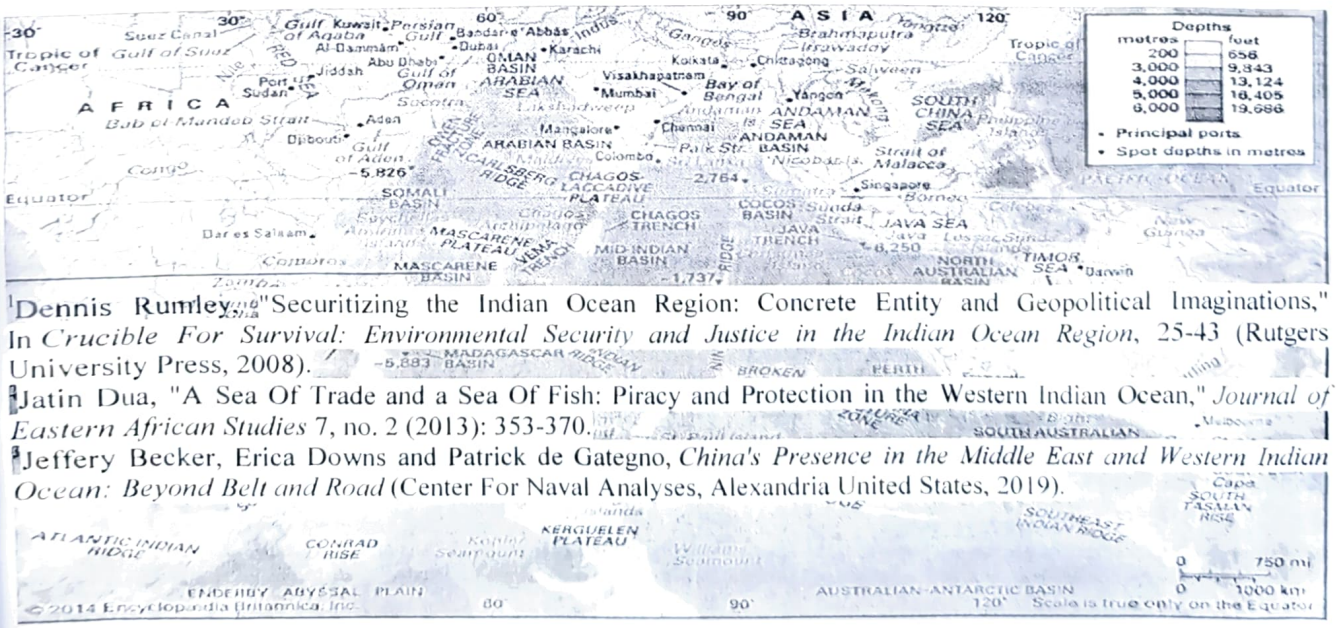
Formulation of Western Indian Ocean Regional Association (WIORA): Analysis and Proposal

1. Introduction

The Indian Ocean is an area of major global geostrategic confluence where primary maritime trade routes traverse the region from East and South Asia to Europe and beyond. During the Cold War, the Western Indian Ocean was a significant area of operations for the navies of both super powers, which brought an increase in naval bases and military presence in the region. Actors with interests in the region include not only its littoral states, but also a range of global stakeholders including the EU and NATO, the US, China, Russia and notable multinational and commercial actors.[1]

The region is home to a diverse range of security challenges. It however lacks the potency of geostrategic competition that can be found in regions like the South China Sea, it remains a space of major geopolitical and naval interaction between states.[2] In addition, it has seen the most virulent outbreak of piracy in the modern period; it borders hotspots of and violence in Somalia and Yemen; it incorporates key trafficking routes for narcotics, humans and arms and has played host to significant fishery crimes and other environmental crimes. These insecurities are closely linked to instabilities and state fragility on land, highlighting nature of the challenges, and their relationship to wider issues of development and insecurity. Historically, maritime security has been a relatively minor concern in many countries and therefore the regional states never realized to play any collective role in the regional maritime security matters.

In recent times, Western Indian Ocean has been adapting to the practices of maritime cooperation. The region has seen experimentation to maritime security and capacity building in the region including the multinational naval partnership of the Combined Maritime Forces, the counter-piracy cooperation and capacity building coordination conducted by the Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia, the Djibouti Code of Conduct, the EU-funded Regional Programme to Enhance Maritime Security (MASE) and the UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime), Global Maritime Crime Programme.[3]



[1] Dennis Rumley, "Securitizing the Indian Ocean Region: Concrete Entity and Geopolitical Imaginations," In *Crucible For Survival: Environmental Security and Justice in the Indian Ocean Region*, 25-43 (Rutgers University Press, 2008).

[2] Jatin Dua, "A Sea Of Trade and a Sea Of Fish: Piracy and Protection in the Western Indian Ocean," *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 7, no. 2 (2013): 353-370.

[3] Jeffery Becker, Erica Downs and Patrick de Gategno, *China's Presence in the Middle East and Western Indian Ocean: Beyond Belt and Road* (Center For Naval Analyses, Alexandria United States, 2019).

1.1 Aim of the Study

To analyze the prospects of creating a regional Association for maritime cooperation amongst the littoral states of the Western Indian Ocean Region under the name WIORA.

2. Geography of the Indian Ocean

The question of defining the oceanic limits of the Indian Ocean is complicated and remains unsettled. However it is considered prudent to clarify its geographical bounds before going any further. According to Encyclopedia Britannica, the Indian Ocean is bounded by Iran, Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh to the north; the Malay Peninsula, the Sunda Islands of Indonesia, and Australia to the east; Antarctica to the south; and Africa and the Arabian Peninsula to the west. In the southwest it joins the Atlantic Ocean south of the southern tip of Africa, and to the east and southeast its waters mingle with those of the Pacific Ocean.

It has been noticed that Regimes and Associations and other common issues in certain geographical regions are addressed generally on politico-economic requirements as well as the coherence of interests. For example, according to one of the WWF report on Western Indian Ocean Economy, the Western Indian Ocean (WIO) region was quoted to comprise of 10 countries: Somalia, Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique, South Africa, Comoros, Madagascar, Seychelles, Mauritius, and the French overseas territory of La Reunion.[4] At the same time another UN report on fisheries spells out that the Western Indian Ocean is subdivided into following 8 sub areas, which categorically includes the Arabian Sea and coast of Pakistan.

Pakistan is considered part of the WIO political map, extensively as evident from the US Indo-Pacific Strategy and National Defense Authorization Act (2020) that terms the Indo-Pacific as **"extending from the west coast of India to the west coast of US"** and the region comprising of Pakistan, Middle East and Africa as part of WIO.[5] The same is also reflected in US command structures, whereas the former falls under Indo-Pacific command and the latter is commanded by CENTCOM. Based on all the above definitions and argument, it is concluded for the purpose of this study that West Indian Ocean Region include ocean areas and the littoral states starting from eastern boundary of Pakistan to the southern tip of Africa to further down towards Antarctica, including the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea.

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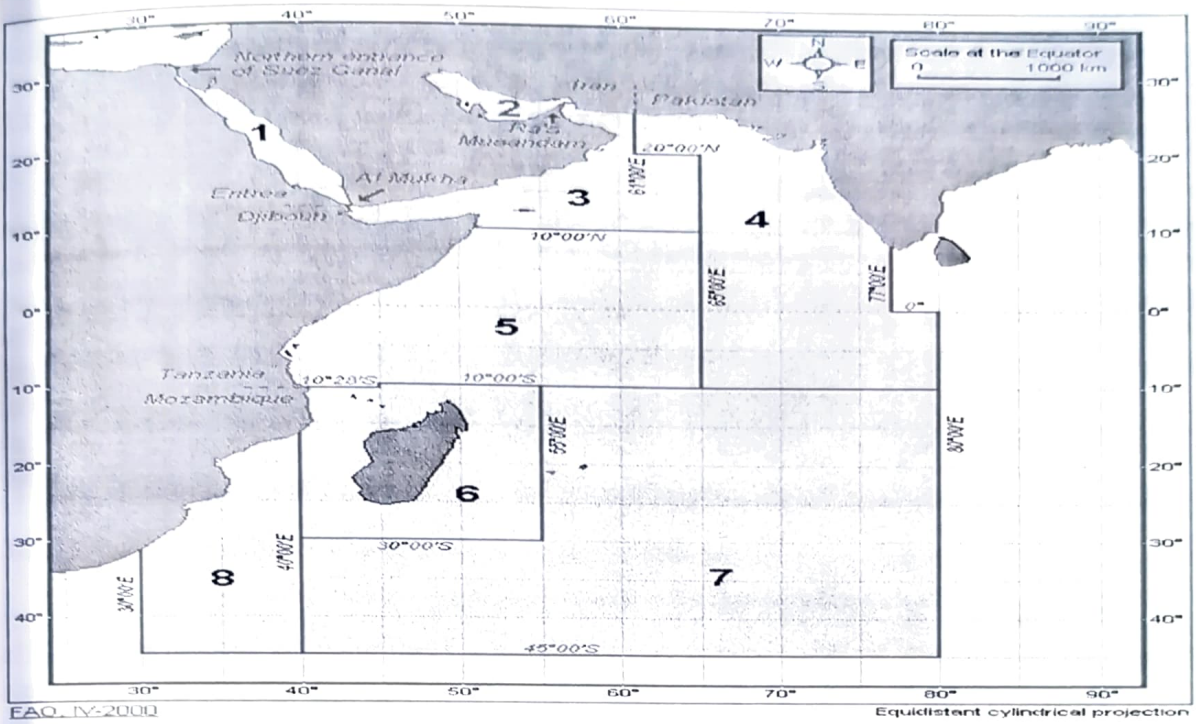
[4] D. Obura, M. Smits, T. Chaudhry, J. McPhilips. D. Beal and C. Astier, "Reviving the Western Indian Ocean economy: actions for a sustainable future." *World Wide Fund for Nature (Formerly World Wildlife Fund), Gland, Switzerland* (2017).

[5] Zaki Khalid, "Indo-US Militarisation of Western Indian Ocean – Implications for Pakistan." *CSCR Perspectives*, no. 2 (2019):1-6.



3. Maritime Security in Western Indian Ocean

Maritime security incorporates a number of security concerns, including traditional themes of geopolitics and naval competition; transnational challenges such as piracy, smuggling, illegal migration, trafficking and fishery crimes; insecurity, conflict and state fragility in coastal regions and issues relating to environmental protection and blue growth.[6] The complexity of maritime security often stems from its transnational nature, in that security challenges take place across and outside the territorial boundaries of individual states. Such complexity implies that narrow or isolated responses to maritime security, which for instance address only one form of maritime crime, are unlikely to succeed and may even prove counterproductive. There is a need for maritime security practitioners to adapt to a holistic view regarding maritime security for understanding of how problems interlink.

Historically, maritime security has been a relatively minor concern in many countries and therefore the regional states never realized to play any collective role in the regional maritime security matters. In some cases, countries lack a strong maritime tradition or seagoing history; in others, security or economic development concerns have traditionally derived from the land. This is because the international maritime order has been relatively untroubled for much of the past few decades, and has demanded little in the way of political attention. Public awareness of maritime issues is also limited, outside specific locations such as port cities or fishing

[6] B. Wilson, "Naval Diplomacy and Maritime Security in the Western Indian Ocean," *Strategic Analysis* 33, no. 4 (2009): 488-497.

communities. In these ways, the importance of the sea has become hidden.[7] This attitude towards sea blindness is changing, both because of the rise of various 'new' security challenges at sea and with the increasing importance of blue economy agenda in the region.

3.1 Maritime Security Capacity Building

Maritime security capacity building can be defined as "activities which are directed at the empowerment of governments and coastal communities to efficiently and efficaciously govern and sustainably exploit the maritime domain, including territorial waters and exclusive economic zones".[8] Maritime security governance requires ambition and vision, but also a pragmatic attitude strongly grounded in everyday needs and practical problems. Many countries require international assistance to develop the capacities of their maritime security sector. To ensure the sustainability of capacity building and avoid long-term dependency on outside assistance, the cultivation of 'local ownership' is required to be a leading principle of collaboration in the maritime arena.

3.2 Pakistan's Role in Regional Maritime Security

Pakistan has always been in the forefront when it comes to any international or regional effort in the maintenance of peace, protection of life at sea and the navigational safety.[9] It remained part of coalition forces playing an active role in peacekeeping efforts against maritime violence, illegal trafficking and piracy in the western Indian Ocean region. To this end, Pakistan Naval ships have ensured escorting of large number of regional and international shipping to safety from the piracy threatened areas. Pakistan regularly hosts AMAN series of exercising inviting delegates and navies from around the world particularity the regional navies for establishing peace showcasing resolve and deterrence against common threats at sea. Not only in the maritime security domain, but Pakistan's naval forces have also been actively participating against other challenges such as Tsunami relief operations, search and rescue efforts, helping regional fishermen in crises at sea, evacuation of stranded personnel in disaster/calamity areas, etc. crisis. Pakistan enjoys good relations with all states of the WIO right from Iran through the Gulf states to the Red sea and East African states down to South Africa. Hence there is a case for Pakistan to play an active role in any likely organisation for the maritime collaboration in the region

4. Conceptual Foundations

In the contemporary environment, interdependent relationships are vital to deal with non-military dimensions of security that characterize international relations. It is worth noting that interdependence does not automatically spell mutual benefits. The reciprocal effects of interdependence revolves around the question of "who gets what" even in situations where nation-states recognize that they cannot act alone. Individual nation-state's power to affect

[7] Sarah Percy, "Counter-Piracy in the Indian Ocean: A New Form of Military Cooperation," *Journal of Global Security Sstudies* 1, no. 4 (2016): 270-284.
[8] Basil Germond, "The Geopolitical Dimension of Maritime Security," *Marine Policy* 54 (2015): 137-142.
[9] Muhammad Azam and Ayesha Aijaz, "The Indian Ocean, United States and Pakistan Navy," *IPRI Journal* (2012): 35-57.

outcomes in interdependent relationships depends on their own sensitivity and even more on their own vulnerability in the event of policy change.[10] The network of complex interdependence depends on what gets securitized as the referent object and who is the securitizing and functional actors.

Modern day ocean policy is illustrative of the three aspects of complex interdependence. First, multiple channels connect nation-states. Second, there are multiple issues which are closely interrelated at various levels across a multiplicity of stakeholders which lack coordination with no clear hierarchy among issues. Third, nation-states in a region are less inclined to use naval force against one another and are more willing to use collective naval forces to deal with issues that affect the interdependent relationship.[11] Over the past two decades, ocean politics has moved even closer to complex interdependence than when it was first studied by Keohane and Nye in the 1970s.[12]

In global ocean politics, the process of ocean governance as a way for better managing the oceans is becoming a priority across stakeholders and sectors. In the governance of oceans, economic development, environmental protection and maritime, safety and security are now considered to be interdependent and indivisible. The impetus for new regime for the oceans is embodied in the Law of the Sea Convention (LOSC) adopted by the third United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) in 1982 and entered into force in 1994, the most significant yet least recognized legal instrument of the twentieth century.[13] The document assumes that the problems of the maritime space are closely interrelated and need to be considered as a whole, where all nations will cooperate in the management of the sea. LOSC has consolidated all past treaties, codified customary law and put in place new law for contemporary issues, such as climate change and other non-traditional threats. The global agreement for the first time even included land-locked states when discussing maritime affairs. LOSC, therefore provides an international law framework which can facilitate regional cooperation in the maritime domain.

In the Western Indian oceans, nation-states have acted more to protect individual interests than to protect the common heritage of mankind. They must adapt to the emerging maritime environment to coordinate, collaborate and cooperate in matters of ocean governance not just at the national level but also at the regional level. In a world, which has become interdependent, virtually every country is engaged in cross-border region building. Cooperation in marine issues that are of common interest to all Western Indian Ocean states will serve as a "building block" for wider maritime security.

5. The Structure

[10] Robert O. Keohane, and Joseph S. Nye, "Power and Interdependence Revisited," *International Organization* 41, no. 4 (1987): 725-753.
[11] Thean Potgieter, "Notes on Regional Leadership and Maritime Security." *Journal of African Union Studies* 2, no. 3/4 (2013): 65-77. Accessed April 13, 2020. doi:10.2307/26893588.
[12] Thomas Walker, "A Circumspect Revival of Liberalism: Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye's Power and Interdependence," In *Classics of International Relations*, pp. 160-168 (Routledge, 2013).
[13] Sam Bateman, "UNCLOS and Its Limitations as the Foundation for a Regional Maritime Security Regime," *The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis* 19, no. 3 (2007): 27-56.

The 1982 UN Convention on Law of the Sea serves as the nucleus for maritime cooperation arrangements around which a web of international maritime law for ocean governance have evolved in the last three decades. Mark Valencia, an internationally known maritime policy analyst, political commentator and consultant of the Asia-Pacific region published a seminal piece outlining that "major impediment in maritime governance is the widespread inability to formulate and implement national ocean policy as an integrated whole, balancing the overall interests of the nation and the region in the short and long term". Valencia advocates for specifying maritime geographic region, an approach that focuses on getting a defined group of actors to reach agreement on the following: distribution of power and authority, system of rights and obligations and a body of rules and regulations that govern individual behaviour of members. Such an agreement would give effect to the institutional character, jurisdictional boundaries and conditions of operation for the maritime organization[14].

Various key several key features of an ideal maritime organization highlighted in the aforementioned seminal piece are: [15]

a. Define structure, objectives and functions supported by a significant political constituency;
b. Focus on sector-specific issues of concern, identified at the outset, to geographically fit the natural system;
c. Concentrate on policy functions by maintaining a decentralized decision-making process;
d. Avoid distributive issues to focus on mutually beneficial solutions where benefits of participation outweigh the costs;
e. Build institutionalized capacity with clear distribution of power and authority conducive to negotiating rules and/or agreements;
f. Commit to cooperative marine environment monitoring and scientific research;
g. Seize "window of opportunity" in crisis situations to enhance speed of regime formation;
h. Maintain strong leadership by one or more members coupled with willingness by other members to effectively participate would give impetus and direction for the regime.

According to Valencia, a level of complexity in regard to consensus is prerequisite. States in the region generally distrust outside solutions, favour principle of non-interference and prefer informal structures, placing great emphasis on personal relationships.

5.1 Membership

Maritime policymaking requires a solid, evidence-based understanding of the issues and problems that need to be addressed. Membership of WIORA should similarly assess based on the following criteria:

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[14] Mark J. Valencia and James Barney Marsh, "Access to Straits and Sealanes in Southeast Asian Seas: Legal, Economic, and Strategic Considerations" *J. Mar. L. & Com.* 16 (1985): 513.
[15] Mark J. Valencia, "Regional Maritime Regime Building: Prospects in Northeast and Southeast Asia," *Ocean Development & International Law* 31, no. 3 (2000): 223-247.

a. **International obligations and standards**. Membership must follow and not be contradictory in any way from established practices enshrined in international conventions and maritime treaties a country has ratified.

b. **Known and established threats in the maritime domain**. Threats such as piracy, maritime violence, or maritime crimes such as smuggling, fishery and other environmental crimes affect countries differently must be defined by WIORA. Different perspectives from Western Indian Ocean states may be taken into account for developing an inclusive and precise understanding of which threats are relevant to national maritime security agenda.

c. **Prospective risks and vulnerabilities**. Membership assessment should take into account transformations in the external maritime environment. Criteria maybe set for full-membership of states, partial membership and observer status based on maritime capabilities, contributions and share in the region.

d. **Effective maritime governance.** Proper institutional design is vital to finding the right balance between the different vertical levels of control in order to achieve the collective goals of WIORA. A formalized institutional framework that has the mandate, the human and financial resources and the political will to put into practice the concept of maritime governance would inevitably attract the attention of regional stakeholder states.

5.2 WIORA Working

WIORA initiative must be rooted in a thorough understanding of the local and regional conditions. An appraisal of the pressures and driving forces influencing the Western Indian Ocean states is vital. The institutional characteristics should be reflective of the diverse set of social, cultural and economic norms of the region. In this regard, following are proposed:

a. **WIORA workings should be concrete and problem-centred.** If they are too ambitious, generic or abstract and not followed by immediate implementation initiatives, there is risk of becoming merely symbolic documents that fail to trigger action

b. **Develop consultative practices**. WIORA should initiate a consultation process among member states to identify needs and working procedures between all governmental agencies involved in the Western Indian Ocean. Close liaison should be kept with the member states for organizational legitimacy through parliamentary ratification and public dissemination. If consultation is not broad and deep enough, maritime agencies might not buy into the strategy and may sideline it with other initiatives.

c. **Ensuring decisions taken today do not foreclose options for the future**. Ocean governance must explicitly acknowledge the uncertainty of future conditions that

may arise from sea-level rise, climate change or coastal erosion and promote sufficiently flexible management. It is particularly important not to forget future generations and those who are not physically present in the target maritime zone.

d. **Using participatory planning to develop consensus**. Participatory planning may be seen as the involvement and collaboration of the private sector, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), citizens groups and other non-institutional organizations or individuals interested in or affected by the process of ocean governance. It works to build the opinions and perspectives of all relevant stakeholders into the planning process through collaborative involvement reducing conflict and developing consensus.

e. **Ensuring the support and involvement of all administrative bodies**. It is essential to engage local authorities from the start. Ocean governance is not effective if it is not supported by all levels and by all relevant sectors.

f. **Using a combination of instruments**. Ocean governance can only succeed using multiple instruments that include a mix of law and economic instruments, voluntary agreements, information provision, technological solutions, research and education. If the strategy does not include concrete measures for a regular review process and an accountability mechanism, it will have a short shelf-life and will soon become outdated.

6. Existing Arrangements in the Western Indian Ocean

6.1 There are a number of organization that exist in the WIO. Following are the most pertinent examples of regional and sub-regional cooperation:

a. **Africa Integrated Maritime Strategy (AIMS) 2050** - The 2050 AIMS is the African Union's (AU) resolute attempt to reclaim the continent's maritime sector for the development of its own citizens. The strategy aims to foster more wealth creation from Africa's oceans, seas, inland waterways by developing a thriving maritime economy and realizing the full potential of sea-based activities in an environmentally sustainable manner.

b. **Djibouti Code of Conduct (DCoC)** – The Code of Conduct concerning the Repression of Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in the Western Indian Ocean (WIO) and Gulf of Aden provides a framework for capacity building in the WIO region in order to counter the threat of piracy. This is the first such code to be operational in the Western Indian Ocean waters. The code was signed on 29 January 2009 and its membership includes 20 of the 21 eligible countries.

c. **Djibouti Code of Conduct (DCoC+)** – A high-level meeting of the signatories to the DCoC held in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia in January 2017 adopted a revised code of conduct, known as the DCoC+. The amendment recognizes the role of the 'Blue Economy' including shipping, fisheries, seafaring, and tourism

in supporting sustainable economic growth, food security, employment and stability. The revised code builds on the earlier 2009 code and encourages signatory states to cooperate to the fullest possible extent to repress transnational organized crime in the maritime domain, maritime terrorism, and IUU (illegal, unreported and unregulated) fishing.

d. **East African Community (EAC)** - The EAC is a regional intergovernmental organization headquartered in Arusha, Tanzania, with Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda and Burundi as members. In maritime terms the emphasis is on economic and safety issues rather than on security.

e. **Indian Ocean Commission (COI)** - The COI (Commission de l'océanindien in French) is an intergovernmental organization created in 1984 with the Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius, France and the Seychelles as members. Its objectives centre on cooperation and development in diplomatic, economic, commercial, agricultural, aquacultural, cultural, scientific, judicial and educational fields. The COI has funded various projects focusing on conservation and alternative livelihood projects.

f. **Programme to Promote Regional Maritime Security (MASE)** - The MASE Programme was adopted on 7 October 2010 in Mauritius, and is jointly run by the European Union (EU) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). The programme is is collectively implemented by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), East African Community (EAC), Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), and the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC). The primary objective is to strengthen the maritime security capacity of Eastern and Southern Africa and the WIO (ESA-IO) region in order to implement the Regional Strategy and Action Plan against Piracy.

g. **Regional Organization for Protection of Environment (ROPME)** - The ROPME was established in early 1979 to implement the Kuwait Action Plan for Protection and Development of the Marine Environment and Coastal Areas. It comprises of three administrative organs (the Council, the Secretariat and the Judicial Commission), scientific bodies (Remote Sensing Unit, RIIS, MEMAC) and legal instruments (Protocols and Guidelines). The main ROPME is to coordinate efforts of the eight Member States (i.e Bahrian, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and UAE) towards protection the marine ecosystems in the area against pollution.

h. **Southern African Development Community (SADC)** - The SADC Treaty, signed by members in Windhoek, Namibia, on 17 August 1992, was put into force on 30 September 1993. SADC has 14 member states of which South Africa, Mozambique, Madagascar, Mauritius and Tanzania are also IORA members. The SADC Standing Maritime Committee has the aim of promoting regional peace and prosperity through maritime military co-operation and has three main objectives: mutual maritime security to ensure the freedom of SLOCs,

the development and maintenance of maritime capabilities in the region, and the development of a quick response maritime capacity.

i. **The Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA)** – IORA was established in Mauritius in March 1997 and a Charter was adopted. It comprises 22 member states: Australia, Bangladesh, Comoros, India, Indonesia, Iran, Kenya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritius, Mozambique, Oman, Seychelles, Singapore, Somalia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Thailand, the UAE and Yemen.

j. **Western Indian Ocean Marine Science Association (WIOMSA) - Western Indian Ocean Marine Science Association** is a regional, non-governmental, non-profit, membership organization, registered in Zanzibar, Tanzania. The organization is dedicated to promoting the educational, scientific and technological development of all aspects of marine sciences throughout the region of Western Indian Ocean. The association has about 1000 individual members as well as about 50 institutional members from within and outside the region. The organization's inter-disciplinary memberships consist of marine scientists, coastal practitioners, and institutions involved in the advancement of marine science research and development.

6.2 IORA Membership – Analysis

Under the IORA charter admission of new members takes place by consensus. In other words, a single member can effectively veto the admission of a new member. In November 2018 Maldives has become the latest member of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA). It applied to become an IORA member in 2017, became the 22nd member. Maldives' application was first considered by the IORA Committee but Mauritius had objected to the Maldives' membership due to the latter voting against a resolution in the United Nations General Assembly regarding the sovereignty of the Chagos Archipelago. Later Maldives' membership was backed by India, which held informal talks with the Mauritius delegation, after which the latter did not raise objections to approving Maldives' application at the Council of Ministers.

Pakistan has repeatedly tried to become a member of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), but remain unsuccessful. The primary reason for Pakistan failing to get a membership is its ties with New Delhi. India has done on the pretext that since Pakistan has not extended Most-favored-nation (MFN) status to India. IORA does not currently encompass all the key players. Some Middle Eastern countries are included, but not Saudi Arabia. Some analysts identify it as a major drawback. David Brewster observes, "the exclusion of Pakistan in particular, undermines efforts for regional consensus on security issues, if the Indian Ocean Region is to have a fully inclusive regional organization".[16]

[16] Ahmad Rashid Malik, "The Indian Ocean Security: Challenges and Opportunities for Pakistan," *Journal of Security and Strategic Analyses* 3, no. 1 (2017): 25-44.

Pakistan, should also be included in IORA, if not as participating member states, then at least initially as dialogue partners. Nevertheless, one strategic commentator argues that IORA could see political deadlock like SAARC if Pakistan becomes a member state. Despite the inevitable protests that will emanate from India over bringing Pakistan into IORA, the two countries are already both members of SAARC and IONS and the difficult bilateral relationship would continue beyond the remit of IORA.

6.3 The IORA Structure

IORA's apex body is the Council of Foreign Ministers (COM) which meets annually. The United Arab Emirates (UAE) assumed the role of Chair since November 2019 - November 2021, followed by the People's Republic of Bangladesh. A committee of Senior Officials (CSO) meets twice a year to progress IORA's agenda and consider recommendations by Working Groups and forums of officials, business and academics to implement policies and projects to improve the lives of people within the Indian Ocean Member States.

a. IORA Areas of Focus
b. Maritime Safety and Security
c. Trade and Investment facilitation
d. Fisheries Management
e. Disaster risk management
f. Tourism and Cultural exchanges
g. Academic, Science and Technology
h. Blue Economy
i. Women's Economic Empowerment

6.4 Indian Factor

India has gained considerable space with our traditional friendly countries of the Middle East including Iran. Its maritime collaboration with USA, Oman, UK, Russia, Australia and other major powers is strategically challenging for Pakistan's maritime interests. IN deployment in Indian Ocean is expanding and set ups are on permanent basis. India is keen to infuse sense of regionalism among IOR through Indian Ocean Strategic Dialogue, discussions of security and economic issues. India dominates IORA, hence, restricts Pakistan to be a member of organization.[17]

7. Proposed WIORA Framework

The political leadership in the region can no longer ignore the need for cooperation in maritime affairs in the Western Indian Ocean. An all-inclusive WIORA is proposed that collectivity looks after the maritime security and economic well-being of the member states. Following are proposed as the framework for maritime construct of WIORA:

[17] David Brewster, "Australia and India: the Indian Ocean and the Limits of Strategic Convergence," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 64, no. 5 (2010): 549-565.

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The political leadership in the region can no longer ignore the need for cooperation in maritime affairs in the Western Indian Ocean. An all-inclusive WIORA is proposed that collectivity looks after the maritime security and economic well-being of the member states. Following are proposed as the framework for maritime construct of WIORA:

[17] David Brewster, "Australia and India: the Indian Ocean and the Limits of Strategic Convergence," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 64, no. 5 (2010): 549-565.

a. **Taking a long-term view**. In most Western Indian Ocean states the maritime governance strategy is in the form of disjointed projects with time frames of 5 years or a decade at most rather than consisting of distinct elements based on a coherent, overarching strategy. Maritime governance cycle is a process that needs continual updating and amendments that requires 8–15 years for completion.

b. **Adopting for a process of adaptive management.** A sustained effort of learning is required for WIORA to be successful. There is a need to link the WIORA initiative to sustainable development model of maritime governance based on principles of participatory democracy and knowledge sharing.

c. **Organizing around an integrated approach**. WIORA needs to ensure that it is in horizontal and vertical cooperation with the regional states. Structural and policy coordination with existing organization in WIO would be vital for addressing the strategic maritime gaps.

d. **Promoting participation and a collaborative culture.** WIORA should ensure that that states with different and often conflicting sectors are able to collaborate with each other. Effective participation would help allow commitment, ownership and shared responsibility for the working of WIORA. Stakeholder ownership of the policies and projects will lead to commitment to the maritime governance process.

e. **Establishing coastal forums.** WIORA in the long-term can establish coastal forums in particular states and regions to further Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) construct and to achieve organization's core objectives. Public participation can also be extended to addresses issues related to quality of life, cultural and social heritage, and leisure time pursuits in the member states.

f. **Developing understanding through multidisciplinary training.** WIORA can provide workshops, training and seminars by experts in the member states to raise maritime awareness. Same can also be extended to policymakers and statesmen, on the format of MARSEW with broader mandate extending to all member states. Developing capacity at all levels is as important as the need to demonstrate that effective resource management is possible and sustainable. While a short-term solution is to undertake capacity-building of existing planners and managers, a long-term approach is to build multidisciplinary perspective into the education system.

g. **Highlighting best practice guidelines.** There is a need to highlight best maritime practices as guidelines covering every possible area of economic, environmental and social activity.

h. **Establishing conflict resolution mechanisms.** The varying maritime and economic interests of the different stakeholders has the potential to create conflict. Effective conflict resolution mechanism needs to be made part of WIORA for maritime cooperation and development of member states.

i. **Conducting interdisciplinary research.** WIORA can provide a platform to intellectuals, policymakers and educational institutes to undertaken collaborative research on the pressing issues facing in the WIO. In the long-term international seminars such as International Maritime Conference (IMC) and International Maritime Symposium (IMS) may be carried out in member states, whereas in the short-term speakers from member states be invited to deliberate on the topics of mutual interests.

j. **Providing an information technology network.** A failure in knowledge diffusion is one of the key reasons for many of the problems of the coastal and marine area whereby required information or understanding never reaches the correct audience. WIORA can provide the dissemination of information, knowledge and understanding to planners, decision-makers and the general public of the member states. Such an initiative would provide the basis for developing sustainable policy and management actions in the maritime domain.

k. **Maritime capacity building as a technical activity.** International capacity building agenda faces the danger of becoming irrelevant to local circumstances, counterproductive, or undermined if attention is not paid to existing formal and informal governance mechanisms. WIORA needs to ensure that capacity building conforms to the needs of technical expertise, practical local knowledge and an understanding of the political situation.

l. **Coping with multiple actors.** A multitude of actors are engaged in maritime security and capacity building. These include international or regional organizations such as the UN, and their constituent agencies, as well as individual states. Maritime security engages a wide range of non-state actors, including international NGOs and foundations, and commercial shipping and fishing bodies. These actors can sometimes be in competition or tension with each other. Tensions may develop in an organization between member states regarding their differing political goals and strategic interests. WIORA must recognize how many actors are involved in maritime security of a particular country and region and what kinds of projects they run. This would be an important step towards developing relations and information sharing between all actors involved. However, some duplication and competition is likely to be inevitable.

m. **Timescales and sustainability** Capacity building is a long-term endeavor. Capacity builders often aspire to achieve substantive reforms in governance and organizational culture. Such changes take time and require the cultivation of relationships with relevant stakeholders and the development of local knowledge. It is important to approach maritime capacity building as an on-going process, rather than as a one-off intervention with rigidly pre-defined outcomes and goals defined in a strategic master plan.

8. Conclusion

Owing to common challenges and interests, an effective regional cooperation in the Western Indian Ocean Region is a need of the hour. As a result of the land-based orientation, in general, and some regional disputes, the importance to mutually develop and control the maritime sector for common benefits of regional countries has largely been ignored in the past, which gave way to international actors to play major role including deployment of forces. It is time that political leadership in the region should realize the need for cooperation in maritime affairs. The study argues that the maritime security, economic prosperity of the regional states which is linked to Blue Economy and environmental safety in the Western Indian Ocean cannot be divested from one another. All are fundamentally dependent on the ability of the countries in the region to individually and collectively pool up their efforts and resources to realize these objectives in the maritime areas of their interest. This concept can lead the regional countries to form up a suitable platform e.g. the Western Indian Ocean Regional Association.

9. Recommendations

Following recommendations are proffered for realization of the proposed organization in the sequence as listed:

a. Initially the idea should be first coined academically during various suitable forums e.g. next AMAN Exercise / IMC
b. Prior undertaking all the above steps, a high level team of experts be formulated to carry out a comprehensive research addressing all legal, technical, operational, political and diplomatic aspects
c. Pakistan Navy should propose this idea first to the government of Pakistan for a formal approval in principle.
d. MoFA may be asked to study the matter in regard to the foreign policy connotations of constructing WIORA under Pakistan's leadership
e. Afterwards the proposed concept be taken up formally through diplomatic channels with the WIORA states

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