

The Indian Ocean's History and its Prospects of a Unified Region

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The Indian Ocean region has a rich history of trade, migration, and cooperation, creating world-systems within the region through the use of the monsoon winds and sail. This is, however, contrasted to the Indian Ocean of today, which has become the single most important ocean for global trade but also a region of volatility. While the Indian Ocean oversees over half of the world's oil production and its transportation, it also sees around half of the world's conflicts along with a plethora of security issues that overflow into the maritime realm. These issues could possibly be better addressed through a more unified Indian Ocean region, where they can be shared and solved under a single cause. The concept of a unified Indian Ocean would be a challenge to behold, but there are aspects that are shared among the nations along the rim that could bring them together for their greater good.

### **Introduction**

The Indian Ocean region has been characterized as a culturally diverse section of the world, with a strong amount of untapped potential. The region is also strife with issues, ranging from religious extremism to illegal fishing, with relatively weaker governments having to address these issues on their own. However, the region is also geostrategically important, garnering the attention of nations around the world, looking to gain strategic positioning within the Indian Ocean. The amount of trade that travels through the region is staggering, and potentially crippling, as an overwhelming percentage of the world's oil ships through the various geographical chokepoints throughout the region.

The maritime has always been the defining characteristic of region. Ever since the invention of the sail, the monsoon winds brought the entire region together, through trade, intercultural mingling, and even before the spread of Islam. Historically, the Indian Ocean Rim was socially progressive for its time; now, conflicts between ethnic groups are prevalent and the radicalization of the religious and nationalistic have become the answer as a pushback against globalization and the interests of the west. The region's people and their governments could potentially learn from certain aspects of their history, namely how the monsoon winds brought people from across the ocean together and how it had been beneficial and how this could be traced or translated to the present day. This region has been an area of diversity, whether in politics, culture, economy, environment, and in the past, it was these differences that brought the region and its various people together by the prospects of trade through the exploitation of the seasonal monsoon winds. The maritime focus for the Indian Ocean could be a potential starting point as a comparison to the then and now.

## **Literature Review**

The idea of the importance of a modern Indian Ocean region has become more and more apparent in the world, as can be seen by the number of researched projections of data surrounding the economic and political issues displayed in academic literature today (Bateman, 2012; Bouchard, 2010; Cordner, 2010; Fatima, 2015). Today, the geostrategic importance of this ocean to the world at large has not been glossed over, nor the maritime aspect of it. The maritime aspect of the Indian Ocean, specifically the trade and its security, has been a major part of the academic discussion (Bateman, 2012; Cordner, 2010; Fatima, 2015, Ghosh, 2004).

Even years past, before the ocean's prominence had been brought into the spotlight, academics have discussed numerous ideas that involve the Indian Ocean. Major geopolitical theories could be interpreted with the Indian Ocean region in mind, whether attributing to it as a region of global strength or a region sculpted for the purpose of conflict (Hensel, 1994; Mackinder, 1942). Either way, discussion of the region's conflicts has been reviewed on many occasions, as they have been a part of the public discussion around the world. However, this also brings about the idea of a unified region, and where one could start looking for how that might be possible. Scholars have pointed to the relatively peaceful history of the region, leading to many scholars trying to deduce why it was a more unified region in the past.

Scholars are also known to address the interconnection found in the history of the Indian Ocean region and how it can be related to the modern region, discussing through their academic literature how the region's history can be a part of today's political landscape (Beaujard, 2005; Chaudhuri, 1993; Phillips, 2015). This discussion also entails the importance of historiography, presenting possible complications when discussing how history is represented in academic literature (Allen, 2010; Chaudhuri, 1993; Mukherjee, 2013). The ideas of *longue durée* and

prosopography are prominent within the academic literature of these historians, trying to introduce different ways of looking at history, of looking at long-term aspects of a centuries at a time rather than the method of looking at history from one historical event to the next (Braudel, 1996; Chaudhuri, 1993). There are even scholars who argue a difference of types of unity, in relations to the history of the Indian Ocean region, putting forth a difference between spatial and chronological unity (Chaudhuri, 1993).

Even so, there are arguments to be made for a unified Indian Ocean region in the present political climate. The global economy relies heavily on the region and its maritime security, and so do the nations that make up the ocean's littoral states. However, since the region is relatively under-developed, the security of maritime shipping is at risk. Therefore, scholars have argued that an interdependence of multilateral maritime security measures would entail mutual benefits and the possibility of more open friendly diplomatic relations, which can also coincide with the commercial peace theory (Arasaratnam, 1990; Beaujard, 2005; Brewster, 2015; Vivekanandan, 1981). In addition, some scholars argue that there is a possibility of unity through the diversity of the region (Phillips, 2015). Overall, academics have shown keen interest into the Indian Ocean and the surrounding littoral states and their developed theories surrounding the region are vast.

#### Regional Overview

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

The Indian Ocean Region stretches across the waters from the Eastern African shores to the Malay Peninsula. It stretches from the Cape of Good Hope, the southern tip of Africa, to Indonesia and the western coast of Australia and it includes the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf, thus comprising of 20% of the Earth's surface, about 102 million square kilometers, about two-thirds sea one-third land (Bouchard, 2010). The population of the Indian Ocean Rim is about 2.65 billion

people, around 39.1% of the world's total population, and its gross domestic product in purchasing power parity makes up for \$10,813 billion, about 15% of the world's GDP-PPP (Bouchard, 2010). The ocean also encompasses all of the littoral states and those landlocked that rely on access to it. In total, there are 56 states that make up its littoral and hinterland, the obvious one being the eponymous subcontinent of India, settled as a protrusion in the middle of the Indian Ocean, among many, many more.

In addition, the Indian Ocean region in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century has been a stage for crucial maritime issues to the international community. The most important geographic positions in the Indian Ocean are its various straits and their role in the transportation of energy resources. Over half of the world's oil production travels through the Indian Ocean, about 36% of the world oil being produced in the Indian Ocean region (Cordner, 2010). The Bab-el Mandeb and the Strait of Malacca, the two straits at opposite ends of the Indian Ocean, along with the Strait of Hormuz are the three most important maritime chokepoints today.

For example, the Bab-el Mandeb, 20 miles wide and the third busiest and most important waterway, is responsible for over 2.1 million barrels per day, with a capacity of up to 3.3 million. The Bab-el Mandeb is situated between Yemen in the northeast and Djibouti and Eritrea in the southwest, connecting the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden. This amounts to most of the European crude oil imports, having to travel through the Bab-el Mandeb then the Suez Canal (Fatima, 2015). After the Suez Canal opened in 1869, the main route leading to Europe, Northern Africa, and the eastern coast of the Americas from the Indian Ocean found its way through the Bab-el Mandeb, through the Red Sea, and through the Suez Canal.

However, if the Bab-el Mandeb were ever to be closed down, whether by a piracy resurgence or threats coming from Yemen, ships would then have to travel down south, around

the Cape of Good Hope, the southern tip of Africa, then make its way to its destination. For example, if an oil tanker were to make its way from the Persian Gulf to the port of Rotterdam, the busiest port of Europe, it would add around 4,750 nautical miles and 12 to 14 days extra, which would obviously have a negative effect on transportation costs. This would be even worse for a ship traveling to Louisiana, where it would add on top the previous addition 2,700 nautical miles and an additional seven to nine days of travel time (Fatima, 2015).

On the other side of the Indian Ocean is the Strait of Malacca, lying between the Indonesian island of Sumatra to the south and the Malay Peninsula. At its narrowest point, the Phillips Channel in the Singapore Strait, it is only 1.7 miles wide, or 2.7 kilometers. Even so, the strait sees nearly 15 million barrels per day go through the Strait of Malacca, making it the second most important strait, after the Strait of Hormuz (Fatima, 2015). This strait is crucial to satisfy the petroleum import needs for nearly all states along the Pacific Rim, including South Korea, Japan, and China. With over 500,000 vessels crossing every year, 30 percent of the world's trade and 80% of the petroleum imported by China, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan travels through that strait, implying severe consequences that could be possibly caused by increased traffic or freight charges or even closure.

In the event of closure, there are the Sunda and Lombok straits that could act as alternative routes. However, the Sunda and Lombok are situated between the Indonesian islands of Sumatra and Java and between the islands of Bali and Lombok respectively. However, both are poor alternatives. On one hand, the Sunda strait is very shallow and narrow at certain points while also being hard to navigate through, having to take into account heavy tidal waves, the oil drilling platforms and smaller islands. On the other, the Lombok strait is a safe and wider, deeper route

but, if used instead of the Strait of Malacca, it would add 3.5 more days and 1,600 nautical miles to the travel, hiking up the time and cost of transportation (Fatima, 2015).

The Strait of Hormuz, situated between the Arabian Peninsula and Iran, is a 48 to 80-kilometer-wide channel that separates the Persian Gulf from the Gulf of Oman. This strait alone oversees almost 20 percent of the world's oil, meaning 35 percent of all seaborne oil shipments travel through that strait. On average, around 3,000 vessels, including oil tankers and fishing boats, travel through the strait per day, each of which would see about 14 tankers and about 19 million barrels of crude oil and other petroleum products pass from the Persian Gulf and through the Strait of Hormuz (Fatima, 2015).

Over half of the world's oil production travels through the Indian Ocean, including the 38% of global oil production that the Indian Ocean contributes itself, and more than 80% of that travels through the three major Indian Ocean straits (Cordner, 2010). The clear and presiding geostrategic importance of this area has led the Indian Ocean region to the forefront of the international community. The potential for harm on global energy security The Bab-el Mandeb and the Strait of Malacca are also two of the most dangerous areas for vessels traveling through them.

### **Modern Maritime Issues**

One of the more exciting issues that pertains to the Indian Ocean is the issue of maritime security against nontraditional security threats, namely terrorism and piracy. The importance of the straits of Bab-el Mandeb and Malacca is not lost on the opportunistic and the violent. Somalia, famous for piracy and instability, makes up the southern coast for the Bab-el Mandeb and the Gulf of Aden. However, recently Somali piracy has dropped to near non-existence, due to the amount of attention that they had garnered from the international community and their naval assets. This

has led them to lay low, potentially waiting for the moment when the region is deemed “secure” enough for the naval warships to leave the area so that they can come out of hiding and continue the lucrative activity. On the other side of the ocean, piracy along the Strait of Malacca has been a constant threat. The region is also home to its fair share of extremist groups responsible for several terrorist attacks around the globe, including maritime acts of terror against the United States within the Indian Ocean, such as the attack against the USS Cole in October of 2000. Nontraditional security threats, especially over maritime security, can also encompass other issues, such as human, arms, and drug trafficking, illegal and unregulated fishing, and maritime pollution and natural disasters (Ghosh, 2004).

Another maritime issue in the region is the situation surrounding the efficiency of Port State Control. Port State Control, or PSC, refers to the safety-net of international legislation where the port state has the authority to investigate any vessel to see if it follows all of the standardized practices. If an inspected ship is found to be substandard, then it is up to the flag state of that vessel to ensure it meets international obligations. Meanwhile, the vessel can be detained by the Port State until the ship can be rectified. This has been used to ensure the effectiveness of international law mandated by UNCLOS and the IMO, however, the developed world has seen much more success in this case compared to the developing world, not excluding the north-western Indian Ocean region (Bateman, 2012).

How could these international maritime laws be imposed against foreign, substandard ships when the state cannot even enforce their own laws in their own waters? Their lack of development grants many difficulties that impede the maritime security of their own waters and their PSC. The high incidence of sub-standard ships along the Indian Ocean Rim adversely impacts the entire region’s maritime security. It would have to fall on the aid coming from developed countries in

order to help with PSC duties and training, even if they may just be propping up ineffective systems rather than addressing the lack of resources and limited capacity (Bateman, 2012). Either way, effective PSC can help with the reduction of substandard vessels, which could help with improving the region's maritime security, but their other areas of needed improvement to help with the Indian Ocean's maritime security.

### **Regional Conflict**

These issues are just the ones surrounding its maritime realm. A vast amount of the world's conflicts resides within this region. In the year 2009 there were a total of 170 political conflicts that were recorded within the Indian Ocean Region out of 365 conflicts worldwide, representing about 46.6% of global political conflicts (Bouchard, 2010). Half of all crises and 19 out of 31 of global high-intensity conflicts occurred in the region, including all seven wars presently occurring at that time (Bouchard, 2010). Foreign military intervention and the rebuking of said interventionism has also stoked the flames of conflict, but there had already been several local factors that prove the foundation of this fire. Cultural intolerance, radicalism, environmental degradation, resource conflicts, lack of democracy and weak state authority are but a few factors that had created a region so rife with conflict and tension (Bouchard).

As an example, Iran, which controls the northern half of the Persian Gulf, including the Strait of Hormuz, has at times threatened to close the strait in retaliation to European and American sanctions, threatening about 20% of the world's energy supply. Renegade and unstable regimes, such as Iran, Somalia, and, more recently, Yemen have threatened not only the lives of their citizens through internal instability, as in the case of Yemen and Somalia, but also the livelihood of other states globally. The spillover of instability could lead to disastrous results, like the use of anti-ship missiles along the coast of Yemen, near the Bab-el Mandeb and the Gulf of Aden.

Meanwhile, Iran has threatened to close the Strait of Hormuz several times. Both of these threats of conflict, if acted upon, could have devastating results to not only the states of the region, but globally as well.

However, due to the region's strategic resources and importance to global trade, the Indian Ocean has also attracted some foreign powers from outside the rim, namely China and the United States. The United States has several political and strategic interests within the region, which has led to many a conflict. The obvious ones would be the two wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, intervention in Somalia, and their continued feud with Iran. However, if one were to look at China's approach in the region, it would show the use of soft power across the Indian Ocean Rim, helping with the development of ports and infrastructure, the use of diplomacy, and the image that they try to project is one of generosity yet uninvolved with the domestic dealings of the states China approaches.

China's rising influence in the region has provoked the ire of India, causing India to become suspicious of ulterior motives behind China's supposed selfless utilitarianism. For example, India views the various ports that China is helping to expand and develop as potential naval bases for the PLAN to refuel in the event of a potential naval conflict, calling it the "String of Pearls" that would be used to choke India. China, however, contests this notion, stating that their interest in the ports are not militaristic in nature and are more economically driven, calling this chain of Chinese influenced ports, the "Maritime Silk Road". The obviously opposing connotations between the two names can exhibit how the two are vying for regional hegemony in the Indian Ocean. They have already conducted land wars over their border disputes, but since they are both seen expanding and developing their navies, the potential spillover to a maritime dispute is a possibility.

## Theory

There have already been many scholars who try to relate conflicts to one another, trying to seek connections to possibly address them. There have been theories that address why this is so through a geopolitical standpoint. One of the more prominent of these is a theory introduced by Saul Cohen called the Shatterbelt Theory, a supplement to Halford John Mackinder's Heartland Theory and Nicholas Spykman's Rimland Theory. The general gist is that the Heartland Theory pertains to the division of the lands of the world into different categories: the heartland, the area of landlocked terrain that makes up the majority of present day Russia; the inner crescent, made up of western Europe, the Middle-East, and the littoral Asian continent; and the outer crescent, including the African, Australian, and American continents. He also described the Eurasian and the African continents as the World-Island, the largest, most populous, and most wealthy of all possible land combinations (Mackinder, 1942). As a summary of the theory, Mackinder (1942) had stated, "Who rules East Europe commands the Heartland; who rules the Heartland commands the World-Island; who rules the World-Island commands the world". The Heartland theory was presented to have a continental focus, while the Rimland theory was presented with a more maritime oriented view.

Spykman's Rimland theory addressed the perceived continental value of the Heartland by addressing how the littoral area of the surrounding Rimland has more potential power comparatively to the landlocked Heartland. As a rebuttal to Mackinder's quote, Spykman stated, "Who controls the rimland rules Eurasia; Who rules Eurasia controls the destinies of the world". Spykman's Rimland was divided into three sections: the European coastal land, the Arabian-Middle Eastern desert land, and the Asiatic monsoon land. These areas are found between the Heartland and its neighboring oceans, along with the farther reaching maritime powers, making

them just as important, if not more important, to the survival of the Heartland. Therefore, the Rimland works as a sort of buffer zone between sea power and land power. However, this also means that the countries within the Rimland have to compete on both fronts, creating several security issues for these countries to contend within and without themselves. That is where the shatterbelt theory comes into play.

Saul Cohen introduced the idea of a shatterbelt, which has some relations to the previous theories. Originating in geopolitical writings in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the term refers to a geographic region that is plagued both by local or interstate conflicts in the region, and by the involvement of competing major powers from outside the region (Hensel, 1994). Where the two previous theories collide, the Rimland is essentially where the shatterbelt can be found. Therefore, according to this, the Indian Ocean Rim is the perfect candidate for being a shatterbelt, and this seems to be the case. Aforementioned conflicts regarding ethnicity, religion, and resources are rampant in the region; it has also become the focus of foreign geopolitical strategies, namely from China and the United States. The attention the region receives from the two major powers has been associated with stability through developmental and militaristic aid to those developing states, but they are also associated with foreign intervention and increased tensions throughout as the regional powers contend with one another to see who has the capability to be the regional hegemon.

### **History of the Indian Ocean**

#### **The Possibility of a Lesson from a General History**

After the discussion of the Indian Ocean's present day geopolitical importance and its fractured nature, periods in the history of the region presents distinguishable contrasts. However, the perception of history and the studying of it has greatly changed over the years. History has

grown more complex, having to take into account the cultural difference, political interest, and colonial past of its study instead of framing history in conventional categories, such as national or imperial (Sutherland, 2007). Seeking unity in the complexity of the Indian Ocean's history, whether through geographical or temporal ties, has shown to be a challenge. However, before theory comes into play, the general history of the Indian Ocean region must be discussed, including broad generalizations and specific minutiae, and how they can be attributed to the region as a whole.

### **Ancient Maritime Trading**

It has been shown that as far back as 5000 BC the Indian Ocean has shown patterns of seafaring trade along the coasts of the region, even before the introduction of agriculture (Fatima, 2015). Back then, the trade system between one person to the next would have been made up of the exchange of simpler, more tangibly beneficial products such as salt, stone, wood, and food. These products would have to be transported short distances over land or by sea along the coast. The sea passages would be expanded upon, leading to the oceanic voyages, separately between the Eastern and Western halves of the Indian Ocean.

For example, the Austronesians, ancestors of the maritime civilizations living in both the Indian Ocean and the Pacific, traveled between the thousands of islands in the Southeast Asian area of the Indian Ocean, including the continent of Australia. In the west, the civilizations formed around Mesopotamia and the Arabian Gulf had been found to trade more luxurious items as their civilizations grew. Including the vital resources of the time, their trading also saw an abundance of luxuries such as fine ceramics, gold, silver, turquoise, pearls, and coral. In addition, the Indus Valley Civilization was seen to trade along the Indian Ocean coast to trade Mesopotamian civilizations, according to historical weights and seals. Meanwhile, trade conducted from the horn

of Africa and its western coast expanded into the Indian Ocean and its coastlines, trading animal skins, feathers and ivory for fish and shellfish (Ridgway, 2005).

### **Classical Antiquity and Monsoon Winds**

Although some of the contacts made between larger distances before the year 1000 BCE were not as well recorded, there are more records of long-distance trade and connectivity between Indian Ocean civilizations during the Classical Age. This also marked the realization of the seasonal wind patterns of the monsoon and the use of celestial navigation. This meant that the people of the Indian Ocean region could now travel even farther than before; the Arabians in the west and the Austronesians in the east were both recorded to have sailed in the open ocean and reached India in the center by ship, and even further. The Austronesians during this time would sail past India and begin settling in the island of Madagascar southeast of the African continent (Fatima, 2015).

The major civilizations of this era were also trading across the seas, farther than ever before. Where the Mesopotamians had traded with the Egyptians, their trade was thus replaced by Greek and Roman sailors, able to enter the Indian Ocean. In addition, there is evidence of trade between several empires, such as the Indian Mauryan Empire, the Persian Empire, the Roman Empire, and the Han Dynasty. This connection was made due to the types of products found among them that would be indigenous to a different civilization (Beaujard, 2005).

### **The Rise of Islam**

After the mass exodus of humans from their African origin, several civilizations rose and fell all along the Indian Ocean Rim. Meanwhile, one unifying factor found its way, originating from the Middle East and spreading from to the other side of the African and Asian continents. The rise of Islam had begun in the year 622 AD, when the introduction of the religion to the city

of Medina after the persecution of Mohammed and his followers by the authorities of the city of Mecca. From there, Mohammed had converted Medinans and with their help, along with the Meccan migrants, had established a political and religious authority and created a constitution, instituting the concept of Ummah, where the people of Muslim, Jewish, Christian, and Pagan faiths were brought under one community and given rights and responsibilities.

By the time of Mohammed's death, a decade later, the tribes of Arabia were unified under the polity of Islam. However, his death had also led to the biggest internal division within the Islam religion, the differing ideas of succession, whether through the community's choice or Mohammed's lineage, had split Islam between the Sunni and the Shia. Afterwards, the Rashidun Caliphate, from the established capital of Medina, expanded out and by 661 AD the third caliph had expanded to modern-day Tunisia in the west and up to modern-day Pakistan to the east. After the Rashidun, the Umayyad Caliphate rose to power and expanded even further, and by 750 AD the caliphate reached its zenith, holding control over the Iberian Peninsula and Morocco to the west and modern-day Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Pakistan to the east.

However, the religion of Islam did not stop there. With the help of the already established trade winds, Islam had expanded even further east, converting many peoples all the way through the islands of Southeast Asia. This can be seen today, as Islam is the official religion of Malaysia and Indonesia has the largest Muslim population in the world. This is a strong unifying factor for the region due to the large concentration of Muslim people in the region that can identify themselves as part of the Ummah. Even if they find themselves with different ideas of leadership succession. No Muslim empire ever tried to control the ocean, but due to Muslim merchants, the religion spread throughout the Indian Ocean (Vivekanandan, 1981).

### **Medieval Indian Ocean**

The Indian Ocean pre-sixteenth-century could be described as a mercantile network of port cities and their cosmopolitan societies, relating to a multiple interconnectedness among the indications of economic activity. Technological innovations in production, transportation, and trade led to flowering periods of economic upturns for Indian merchant guilds and the city-states of Southeast Asia and East Africa. The Increase in trade also led to an increase in competition between states, which stimulated commerce and innovation, but also wars of expansion among the medieval empires at this time: The Sung empire, followed by the Yuan empire of China; the Chola empire and the Delhi sultanate of the Indian subcontinent; and the Abbasid Caliphate and Ilkhanate empire of the Arabian Peninsula and the Middle East (Beaujard, 2005).

There had also been ideological and institutional innovations that emerged in these phases of expansion, like neo-Confucianism in the eleventh century as an intellectual movement in the Sung dynasty. This also created a base for political organizations which contributed to the expansions of these major civilizations and their economic development. The Silk Road allowed the Chinese dynasties to import Indian Ocean goods, like spice and cotton, and export their own goods, mostly silk and porcelain. This however, was later disrupted by the Mongol invasions of Southeast Asia in the thirteenth century, but was later restored by the Ming dynasty. This time had also seen an increase in colonies for traders along with active trade and prosperity. This was mostly due to the advancements of the use of ships and navigation that helped the Indian Ocean region flourish during this time. Trade activity throughout, even affecting dynasties from different oceans.

### **Introduction of Imperialism**

The Indian Ocean had entered the age of foreign influence from great powers outside the region when Vasco de Gama of Portugal sailed around the Cape of Good Hope and made it to

India in the year 1497. In 1507, Portuguese ships began to implement a strategy to take control of the Indian Ocean, as retaliation against the Muslim faith and their occupation of the Iberian Peninsula as well as to secure the spice trade by building an empire in Asia. A Portuguese general and viceroy by the name of Afonso de Albuquerque began the brutal campaign of raids and conquests in order to secure spice routes and a Portuguese presence in the Middle East and the Orient. This culminated into the control of several strategic ports all along the Indian Ocean, including Hormuz, Aden, Malacca, and Goa, and several holy wars conducted by the Spanish and the Portuguese against various Muslim states throughout the Indian Ocean. Under Afonso de Albuquerque, the Portuguese jumpstarted the introduction and takeover of western powers all along the Indian Ocean, coming into conflict with several nations, including the Malayan, the Sinhalese, and even the Ming Dynasty of China. This paved the way for several major European powers, such as the British, the Dutch, the French, and the Portuguese to hold some sort of stake in the Indian Ocean rim by the turn of the seventeenth century.

The Portuguese had also introduced the European slave trade to the Indian Ocean, transporting slaves received in Mozambique and dropping them off at various Portuguese establishments throughout the Indian Ocean, from the established Estado da India to Portuguese held Goa, Daman, and Diu, averaging at around 125 slaves per year (Allen, 2010). This trade, however, left Portugal overextended, allowing for greater European involvement into the slave trade. When the Dutch East India Company was introduced to the region in the early seventeenth century, Portuguese supremacy in the region fell apart, leaving the Dutch to take over as the dominant European force in the Indian Ocean, along with its slave trade. The Dutch also became involved in the slave trade of Africans and Asians, also sending them to various stations and plantations under Dutch control within the Indian Ocean rim. However, the slave numbers in

Dutch establishments were exponentially higher than the Portuguese. Where Portugal's Goa held 2,153 slaves by 1719, as early as 1687 the Dutch held around 66,350 (Allen, 2010). The British and the French were also invested into the slave trade in the seventeenth century, overseeing the transportation of thousands of Africans and Asians alike.

British endeavors into the region proved to be longer-lasting compared to any other colonial power. Their control began not as a proxy to their monarchy, but as a business venture of the private sector. The British East India Company was granted a monopoly on trade in the Indian Ocean by Queen Elizabeth I in 1600. By 1639 the city of Madras on the Coromandel Coast off the Bay of Bengal was acquired by the East Indian Company and quickly surpassed Portuguese Goa as the center for European trading in India. British control was not primarily held by military might and crackdowns on the indigenous peoples, like the other colonial powers, but was more open to cooperation with the local leaders, whether it be conducted through bribes, diplomacy, or manipulation.

For example, the British East India Company established a trading post on the eastern coast of India in Masulipatnam and Surat in 1611 and 1612, each granted by the Mughal Emperor at the time, Jahangir. The Vijayanagara also gave similar permission to the British East India Company for a factory in Madras in the southeast. By 1688, the company had established a presence all along India's eastern coast, from Madras to Calcutta in the Ganges river delta, and along parts of the west coast as well, including Bombay. Although seemingly unremarkable according to other companies established by Portugal, France, and the Netherlands, the British were found to be longer lasting, and ultimately in control of the entire subcontinent by 1858 through the rule of the British Raj.

### **Recent History**

The twentieth century for the Indian Ocean shows the fall of European imperialism throughout the region as several former colonies had gained their independence. However, it was also marked with weak state authorities, which had given rise to less than favorable forms of governance for the people, and foreign military intervention. The Indian Ocean was known as the “British Lake” due to Britain’s naval superiority among the European states with territories in the region, however, after the end of the Second World War in 1945, the authority of the colonial powers vanished from the region, as the European states now had to look inward to rebuild. Thus, there was a rapid succession of Indian Ocean states gaining their independence from European colonial powers which had declined due to the war. However, this attracted the attention of the two superpowers of the twentieth century, the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (Bouchard, 2010).

The United States’ interest in the region began as far back as 1944, when the Anglo-American Petroleum Agreement was signed pertaining to the British and their access to Persian Gulf oil. In the following year, American President Roosevelt and the Saudi King at the time, Abdul Aziz ibn Saud, held a meeting where an agreement was made between the two, security from the United States and oil supplied by Saudi Arabia. This could be seen as the precursor for American military interventionism within the Indian Ocean region, or specifically the Middle East (Bouchard, 2010). It would not stop there, for within a couple of decades the United States and the Soviet Union’s geostrategies overlapped and collided all around the world, including the Indian Ocean, where naval ships, submarines, and nuclear weapons were deployed across the region in search for suitable locations for military bases. This would ultimately lead to further interference of domestic and international politics throughout the region as the youthful states of the Indian

Ocean found themselves having to choose a side, between the capitalist United States or the communist Soviet Union, and suffer the consequences of that decision.

However, that did not mean that they would all go meekly into the night, completely subservient to either side. The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries was founded by five nations in 1960, four of which were along the Indian Ocean: Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia. In 1973, in retaliation for American involvement in the Yom Kippur War, the thirteen members of OPEC conducted an oil embargo against the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, the Netherlands, and Japan. They raised oil prices by 70% and they cut five percent of oil production with additional five percent cuts every month until their economic and political requests were met. The price of oil quadrupled by the following year for the United States and the country was greatly affected by the embargo. This showed that not only powerful states made a difference in the international community, but even organizations of seemingly weaker states could make a huge impact across the globe.

This event, along with other events, led to superpower geostategists and security analysts taking a closer look at the region, and subsequently finding it as a region of geostrategic importance. Several conflicts seen in the Indian Ocean region during the twentieth century has had several international effects and implications. The Indo-Pakistani wars, the Israeli wars, the oil crises, the occupation of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union, and the Iran-Iraq war had in some way, shape, or form affected the international community and shaped the realm of modern international politics. Thus, the history of the Indian Ocean, much like any culture's history, helped shape the world into what it is today.

### **The Historical Influence of Foreign Powers Translated Today**

The Indian Ocean's history can show a general decline in interdependence and a decline in trust of foreign powers. However, in the modern era of globalization and international community, interactions with foreign powers is necessary now more than ever. The history that has been associated with these outside nations have affected the relations of Indian Ocean states in varying degrees, dependent on how recent these historic relations took place and how they affected the ocean rim.

**China.** China has been a major influence in the region for thousands of years, and that is not lost on the China of today. China has had a keen interest in the Indian Ocean in the past decade, especially as the state continues to develop and their need for natural resources grows as well. In order to secure assets across the Indian Ocean, they do not rely on heavy-handed displays of force, but rather they rely on negotiation and the use of their "soft power". This can be seen in their foreign policies rhetoric, where they try to relate their interests in the region to that of the historic Chinese admiral, Zheng He. Zheng He was a palace eunuch, diplomat, and explorer for the Ming dynasty and had been known to travel across the Indian Ocean, where his interactions with the local peoples was characterized as peaceful and diplomatic. Today, China has never failed to push forward this narrative as a way to illustrate the benign nature of the Sino-centric system of diplomacy and commerce since a millennium ago (Yoshihara, 2010).

One aspect of Chinese influence over the Indian Ocean region is the "Maritime Silk Road", or also known as the "String of Pearls". This is in reference to Chinese interests and investments into port facilities across the Indian Ocean rim, from Gwadar in Pakistan to Chittagong in Bangladesh. Even though India sees it as an encroachment on their maritime borders and mobility, hence their term the "String of Pearls", China insists that these investments are purely based on economic reasons. Thus, China coined the term the "Maritime Silk Road", relaying to the world

the connotations and the meaning that the historic Silk Road had on the Eurasian continent in the past. It is strategically important for China to block India from its own maritime access, since this would reinforce regional hegemony to be Chinese, from the Pacific to the Indian Ocean, instead of Indian. This can be seen in three elements of China's strategic maneuvering: constructing links between China's south and west directly to the Indian Ocean in order to disperse Chinese growth and neutralize sea power through land power, create a "string of pearls" in the Indian Ocean, and strengthen the PLAN (Berlin, 2010).

An important reason for China's involvement within the region is its own energy consumption. China's crude oil demand had doubled between 1995 and 2005 and will double again by the year 2025. By 2020, China's import of crude oil will be expected to be at 7.3 million barrels per day, which would end up being half of Saudi Arabia's planned output (Kaplan, 2009). However, this presents a problem to China, one that has been dubbed the "Malacca Dilemma". More than 85 percent of oil bound for China has to cross the Indian Ocean and the chokepoint of the Strait of Malacca. If there were to be an incident that leads to the closing of the Malacca Strait, then it would prove to be a major concern for China. Therefore, China has begun to address this issue by looking for alternative routes they can receive their oil, namely from pipelines from other countries. This does not mean that their interest in the matter lies elsewhere from the Indian Ocean. While these alternative pipelines are beneficial, China holds a focus on the security of the Strait of Malacca, even enough to shift naval energies away from Taiwan Strait and toward the Indian Ocean (Kaplan, 2009).

**The European Union.** Europe has lost a lot of its direct influence over the Indian Ocean region, but that does not mean they are not still invested in the Indian Ocean. Since, imperial Britain's departure from the Indian Ocean, a major concern for a stable, post-independence Indian

Ocean was the security of the vital ocean. Back in 1942, the British Indian Foreign Secretary, Sir Olaf Caroe, brought together a group of strategists in order to study the strategic necessities of an independent India and what its role would be as a part of a British-led Commonwealth. It was in this group that the naval strategist K. M. Panikkar stated that India's security could be guaranteed only through control of the Indian Ocean, claiming that it should remain truly Indian. He then discussed establishing a system of forward bases near Indian Ocean chokepoints; this strategy and its importance can be seen today (Brewster, 2015).

For instance, the European Union has been actively involved in counter-piracy operations in the western half of the Indian Ocean since 2008, including the Bab-el Mandeb, deploying significant financial and human resources through European Union institutions and states in order to enhance maritime security and safety in the region. This includes promoting holistic approaches to maritime security, investing in training, enhancing national legislation, information-sharing, and maritime domain awareness through the Critical Maritime Routes Program. In addition, the International Maritime Organization's Djibouti Code of Conduct, which had been signed by twenty-one littoral states along the Indian Ocean's western region, which facilitates the creation of information-sharing centers in Yemen, Kenya, and Tanzania along with a Regional Maritime Training Center in Djibouti (Pejsova, 2016). European interests extend to as far as even conventional naval forces that patrol the region along the western coast of Africa, such as the European Union Naval Force Operation Atlanta, which has not only been disrupting piracy but has also been monitoring fishing activities, in accordance with United Nations Security Council's resolutions, since December 2008 until December 2018.

**The United States.** Even though the United States' interests in the area have been relatively more recent compared to China or Europe, they are arguably the most invested in the

region today. The United States had been involved in one way or another with almost all of the wars that had been conducted in the region since the end of World War II, and their want to command the seas of the Indian Ocean has further shown their inclination for strategic security. Since the end of the Cold War, America's strategic interests in the region expanded through the global war on terrorism and its military interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan, enlarging their strategic posturing, which have stemmed from a variety of concerns in the region, by sharing these concerns with US allies (Berlin, 2010).

An example of American military interests in the Indian Ocean is the island of Diego Garcia. Strategically positioned in the center of the Indian Ocean, far enough away from any other state to have interest in the island, Diego Garcia was once owned by the United Kingdom before being sold to the United States navy in 1966 for a proposed 50 years, which was then followed by a 20 year extensions. However, Diego Garcia is also another subject of controversy for American interests in the Indian Ocean. When the American military began establishing its naval base on the island, it had to displace the indigenous Chagossian population living on the island before the base could begin construction. The 1,000 Chagossians once living on Diego Garcia were being forced off the island in several unsavory tactics, one such tactic involved gassing Chagossian pets in front of their owners to coerce the people to leave, where most ended up relocating to other Indian Ocean islands such as the Seychelles or the Mauritius.

Indirectly, American influence has also changed policies and directions of Indian Ocean states, namely through the words of the influential United States naval strategist Alfred Thayer Mahan. Mahan's teachings can even be seen in Indian and Chinese growing strategic rhetoric and policies. Mahan had taught that the command of the sea was of paramount strategic importance. Even local or temporary, the ability to permit the maintenance of sea lanes of communications of

strategic chokepoints grants great amounts of maritime strength militarily and economically around the world. Control of the sea could be achieved by neutralizing enemy fleets, military or commercial, through the control of their maneuverability and range. These ideas can be seen in China's naval plans, as well as in the distribution of Alfred Thayer Mahan's works among the Chinese. This can also explain the concerns of India surrounding the "String of Pearls" that China has developed.

Along the notions that Alfred Thayer Mahan presents, the United States takes its position as maritime hegemon, along with everything that it entails, seriously. Sea power is by far in a way less threatening than land power. Sea power is more attributable to soft power, an expansion of influence through the presence of navies can leave a smaller footprint than the presence of an army. For example, in response to the 2004 tsunami, the United States navy showed that their interests are more humanitarian, comparatively to the land-based intervention of the United States army getting caught in sectarian conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan (Kaplan, 2009). Meanwhile, the United States' concerns in the Indian Ocean region can be connected to its maritime presence in the region. This post-Cold War strategic vacuum has led the United States to expand its strategic footprint, keep the emerging Chinese power in check, maintain access to significant oil reserves, and involve themselves in Islamic militancy and its associated terrorist movements and targets (Berlin, 2010).

### **Study of World-Systems**

The idea of world-systems has been built upon the dependency theory, a theory which rose in response to the modernization theory and other theories of development, where the notion of resources flow from periphery states, or the poor and underdeveloped states, to core states, or the wealthy states. Immanuel Wallerstein had originally developed the world-system theory, which

focuses on the idea of an inter-regional and transnational division of labor, divided between three types of countries, the core countries, the semi-periphery countries, and the periphery countries, in which the production and exchange of basic goods and raw materials becomes a necessary part of the lives of the inhabitants within these countries.

Core countries are the most economically diversified, wealthy, and economically and militarily powerful with strong central governments and at the forefront of technological and industrial advancements. These core nations will hold different forms of dominance over their span of superiority: productivity, allowing for less costly production of greater quality; trade, where there has become a favorable balance since the periphery states would buy the core states' products; financial, so that banking allows more control over the world-system's finances; and military, most likely due to the previous three, which ensures a dominance of violence over the other states. Meanwhile, semi-periphery countries are, as the name suggests, halfway in the middle between core states and periphery states. They, in all intents and purposes, fall under the peripheral country category, but at the same time strive to a part of the core country category (Wallerstein, 2011).

The peripheral countries are the least economically diversified, with weaker governments and institutions, out of the countries within the world system. They also tend to be the country that is dependent on the extraction and exportation of raw materials to core countries as their economic activity, and they tend to have a higher social inequality with a higher percentage of the population being a poor and uneducated people. They also have the tendency to be extensively influenced by the core nations, whether politically, economically, or militarily (Wallerstein, 2011).

According to Philippe Beaujard, the Indian Ocean region could have been identified as a world-system, even as early as the fourth millennium BCE, where the rise of interrelated city-states in Mesopotamia and their expansions could be acted as an ancient world-system. (Beaujard, 2005). Following economic cycles, which correspond with political and religious cycles of events, the Indian Ocean world-systems are revealed to have four cycles, each with a phase of expansion and phase of contraction since the end of the first millennium BCE. Each of these can be seen with an upward curve, a corresponding growth in population, production, the volume and rapidity of trade, and urban development, which are then precipitated by technological improvements and capital investments.

The first cycle can be seen during the first century until the sixth, where the cores were represented by the rise and fall of the Han, Kushan, Shatavahana, Gupta, Pathian, Sassanid, and Roman empires. The second, which ran until the tenth century, the core nations were the Tang, the Pallavas, the Rashtrakutas, the Muslim and the Byzantine empires. The third cycle saw the Sung, Chola, Delhi, Abbasid, and the Egyptian states until the fourteenth century. The fourth and final historic cycle ran from the fifteenth until the middle of the eighteenth century (Beaujard, 2005).

Today, one can attribute the world-system theory to the Indian Ocean as a semi-peripheral sub-region, where compared to the “core” powers such as China or the United States. The states within the Indian Ocean region have relatively weaker governments and tend to extract and export materials to core powers, while also being targets for investments from multinational corporations from these core powers. They also have a higher percentage of poor and uneducated people and also less industrialized comparatively to the core nations. However, there are states in the region,

such as India, which are becoming more like a core country, especially within the Indian Ocean region.

### **Unity in The Indian Ocean Region**

Due to the strategic importance of the Indian Ocean region, several powers, from within and without the region, have scrambled for the resources and political posturing that would benefit themselves. However, this selfish concern for one's own state has led to major issues throughout the region, thus doing what is beneficial for oneself in the short-run while being detrimental to the rest of the group in the long-run. Similar to the Tragedy of the Commons and the Freerider Problem, this can be solved through an increase in relations, cooperation, and assurance in order to decrease mutual distrust and uncertainty in an anarchic international system. In the Indian Ocean's history, there have been several examples of a unified region, cooperation and trade being a possibility through the use of the monsoon winds. There are several ways today that the Indian Ocean region can become a more unified space, even under their own international organizations, such as the Indian Ocean Rim Association. There are some possible ways of a more unified Indian Ocean region to be brought together.

### **Studying the Unity and Disunity of the Indian Ocean's History**

The study of the unity and disunity of the Indian Ocean's history is complicated by skewed perceptions of history and its relations to the region, or even the world. Eurocentrism in historiography has led to unreliable narratives of historical events. Where it would be said that a new world was discovered in the history books, there had already been a civilization, with its own culture and history. Mukherjee (2013) addresses this sort of historical inaccuracies in his writing, where he stated:

It is by now evident that Europe neither ‘discovered’ nor ‘created’ the Indian Ocean. But how did Asians view this space? Arab mapping of the Indian Ocean, the Korean Kangnido map of 1402, Cheng He’s fifteenth century maps, Javanese sea charts and Piri Reis’ maps in the sixteenth century *Kitab I Bahriye* show a working knowledge of the Indian Ocean world, although it is not always depicted accurately.

While Asians were certainly aware of this vast world, the Asian seas were confusing to European sailors, explorers and geographers and so the *cartographic* category of the ‘Indian’ Ocean was slow to capture the European imagination. The ‘Indian Ocean’ as a historical category arrived only in the nineteenth century. Until then, European cartographers called this whole waterscape the ‘Indian Sea’. Therefore, we see that spatial narratives and historical events did not always move in synchronization. The geographical imagination was far more diverse and a great deal richer than the historical mind was capable of grasping. (p. 299).

However, according to K.N. Chaudhuri, the studying of the unity and disunity of a region becomes an even more complicated matter, taking into account several factors that many other scholars might dismiss as conjecture. For example, Chaudhuri discusses the difference between the implicit spatial or chronological unity of the Indian Ocean. Chaudhuri (1993) states:

By definition, the Balad al-Islam was a concept rather than a contiguous unit space. The contradiction lies in the fact that if a physical or discursive unity of the Indian Ocean is established on the level space, that viewpoint might not coincide with the notion of a temporal unity, and vice versa. This is a methodological problem, but actual historical structures are replete with such contradictions, which are

embedded in the system itself and cannot be removed without destroying the rationality of the system. (p. 4).

Chaudhuri then states the problem is in the methodology, where actual historical structures are replete with contradictions which can be found within the system itself, incapable of being removed without destroying the rationality of that system (Chaudhuri, 1993). This type of historiography would then take into account prosopography and *longue durée*. Prosopography is the investigation of common characteristics of historical groups and relations between seemingly untraceable individual biographies, while *longue durée* is the prioritizing to long-term historical structures over what is called “eventual history”, concentrating on what is known as the second level of time, comprising of long-term social, economic, and cultural history.

Margariti had written on cosmopolitanism in the Indian Ocean, where historians had described the Indian Ocean region’s mercantile networks as that, a recognition of a shared humanity with a sense of obligation towards the world, even beyond one’s familial, ethnical, and religious affiliations. He also states that the Islamic world has been described as mobile, dynamic, and universal since its inception through the mercantile constituents of Islamic societies (Margariti, 2008). However, he also states that this material, which can be seen as evidence of peaceful relations and tolerance, can also be seen as a potential source of conflict and contest throughout the Indian Ocean.

### **Unity in Religion**

Besides the majority Hindu population in India, the Indian Ocean’ littoral states are mostly majority Muslim. This could be seen as a unifying factor for the Indian Ocean, since under the Islamic faith a Muslim would be considered a part of the *ummat al-Islamiyah* or Ummah, the Islamic Community. Although the Islamic religion and Muslims in general may be targeted by

more ignorant individuals as a people of intolerance, their ummah encompasses people of other religions as well. The Jewish and Christian communities have been referred to as the People of the Book, or other religious communities that fall under a monotheistic belief-system. This term, however, as also included polytheistic people, such as the Hindu Indians. This concept of a community under the idea of a celebration and tolerance of religions can be used as a sort of unifier for the Indian Ocean region, and could promote a more accepting community of different nations and religions under one roof.

There are, however, several caveats to this idea, such as the different Islamic schools and branches that make up the Islamic faith, namely the Sunni and the Shia Muslims. There have been several examples of fighting and conflict between these two sects of the Islamic religion. Iraq had seen an oppression of the Shia Muslims under the elite Sunni rulers, which ultimately led to them being at odds with their Shia neighbor, Iran, which then led to the Iran-Iraq war. Another exception would be religious extremism and their antagonism towards secular governments or other religions outside their own. Religious extremism has usually been weaponized under dogmatic oppression to instill a hatred for those who are different or are changing their way of life to something unfamiliar to them. Their hatred for western globalization has not been assuaged in recent years, however, through the extension of global communication through technology like the internet, tolerance has been preached from all ends of the earth, the Indian Ocean region not excluded.

### **Unity in Trade**

According to commercial liberalism, the promotion of economic interdependence can lead humanity to the road of peace, much like the democratic peace theory. The democratic peace theory states that states under democratic rule are more hesitant to engage in armed conflicts with

each other, either by adjacent governing doctrines, public accountability, or economic damages. Although this may be a possibility, by seeing every Indian Ocean state become some sort of democratic government, it will be some time before this kind of change comes into fruition. However, the idea behind that can still be applied through an interdependence through trade and commerce. The commercial peace theory advocates global financial institutions and multinational companies as instruments of interdependence through the economy of several nations all at the same time.

Trade and commerce have always been an important factor in a state's formation and development throughout the history of the Asian maritime world. The Indian Ocean has been an autonomous region with its own inner dynamics of growth, having been resulted by the mechanisms of trade and the major merchant communities that had been built thousands of years beforehand. Diaspora merchant communities, such as the Persians, Arabs, Gujarati Banyas, Chulia Muslims, and the Coromandel Chetties, have been scattered throughout the Indian Ocean and are an example of cross-cultural trade, having been known to set themselves up in permanent or quasi-permanent settlements in foreign ports while maintaining a link to their native lands and people, miles and miles away. This can be shown as an example of unity through trade, acceptance of people of a different culture due to the importance of trade and commerce to all who are involved (Arasaratnam, 1990).

An example of the commercial peace theory possibly being utilized today is through the Pakistani-Indian rivalry. The potential for economic growth between these two nations through mutual trade has been consistently ignored. However, the augmented trade from Pakistan with India holds the potential for growth in several areas, not just economic. Political stability, improved social services, economic integration, reduction of defense expenditures, and an

enhancement in peace and prosperity in general. India and Pakistan are the two largest economies in South Asia today, with about ninety percent of the gross domestic product of the region, while also having eighty-five percent of the population in South Asia. However, the clear absence of potential bilateral trade agreements holds these two nation back from their own potential gains. Even at the bilateral trade that they had according to data of 2011, Pakistan and India were standing at a trade balance of \$1.7 billion, even though this balance is Indian heavy since Indian exports to Pakistan have been totaled up to be \$1.45 billion while Pakistan's stood at about \$275 million (Wasif, 2016).

A focus on economic development rather than national security would help not only Pakistan and India flourish, but the rest of the Indian Ocean region as well. Peace has been known to enhance trade and commerce along with the economies within the region. Interstate links through bilateral trade helps to improve communication, thus reducing the uncertainty that comes with being a part of an anarchic international system, while also becoming more of a deterrent to future conflicts between the two nations, increasing the security of the Indian Ocean region. Their rivalry, if turned into that of friendly competition, could help bring prosperity to South Asia and the Indian Ocean as a whole.

### **Unity in Diversity**

There is an argument to be made for the possibility of unity constructed through the pretense diversity. Even though one may find themselves a part of a culture, society, or government fundamentally different to another's, it does not mean that they are completely incompatible or destined to be in conflict. Whether through the search of similarities or compatibility or through sheer tolerance and acceptance, the differences found among people can

ultimately be overlooked or even overshadowed by what they may hold in common between one another.

For example, diversity may persist while also being unified through polities that, although may be different, could possibly be complementary in preferences over trade and conquest. This could also persist if these polities hold congruent traditions of heteronomy, allowing the intermingling of authority structures, as well as when agents of these polities are willing to accommodate these differences through practices of localization. This can be seen in the Indian Ocean as a direct contrast to Europe. Historically, Europe, where there is an increased interaction that promotes definitive boundaries, had been different compared to the Indian Ocean, while increasing interactions, consolidated the interweaving of the heteronomous, overlapping polities (Phillips, 2015).

Therefore, it could be stated that the system of diversity had developed during the centuries of European imperialism, when the Europeans and the local peoples possessed differences in land or maritime based views of conquest. In addition, competition did not drive homogenization because the system's most significant actors, the maritime European polities and the continental Asian polities were incompatible for competition. However, this did promote a complementary preference between the Europeans and the Indian Ocean locals, which muted pressures for convergence through competitive elimination and allowed European insertion into the region. Another factor was that the Europeans and the Asians shared similar traditions of heteronomy, allowing the Europeans to share authority with local polities while at the same time further assisting European influence in the region due to their shared experience of an outside force in control of their governance (Phillips, 2015).

### **Unity through Multilateral Security Agreements**

Another possible unifier for the Indian Ocean region is possible application of multilateral security agreements, more specifically for the use of maritime security. There have been thousands of occasions of international relations being built upon treaties, whether trade agreements or security agreements. Security agreements allow states to expand their own capabilities and ultimately become stronger in the process. Seeking help does not mean one is weak, only that they want to become stronger, and those that help can ultimately become stronger as a result. Therefore, these types of agreements allow these states to grow in relations, and become more interdependent in one another.

This includes strategic partnerships with nations from without the Indian Ocean region. Even though the European Union and India have been strategic partners since 2004, relations have been stalled, which can also be attributed to their security cooperation. This can be seen in the ongoing diplomatic standoff between Italy and India over the *Enrica Lexie* incident, where in 2012 two Indian fishermen were killed aboard the *St. Antony* off the coast of Kerala, India by Italian marines who were onboard the Italian-flagged MV *Enrica Lexie*. This obviously does not help with maritime security cooperation, but relations between the European Union and other Indian Ocean nations have always been shaky at best, attributable to differences in security and threat perceptions (Pejsova, 2016).

Ghosh, however, contends that maritime cooperation and maritime issues have not attained the importance that is deserved within the region. He discusses the dissimilarities in state economic and military capabilities make the convergence of interests on security issues not readily forthcoming. India, Australia, and South Africa each have blue water naval capabilities and booming economies, while the smaller nations within the Indian Ocean region probably cannot compare. Ghosh even takes into consideration how late the Indian Ocean Rim Association for

Regional Cooperation was formed, in 1997, relative to other regional intergovernmental organizations, like the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, which was formed in 1967. However, Ghosh also discusses instances of bilateral and multilateral exercises between regional navies from time to time, spearheaded by India (Ghosh, 2004). Smaller regional navies find that there is a lot to be gained from interacting with the regional hegemonic navy, based on the Indian Navy's experience with transnational crime and terrorism.

The security of one's nation can at times trump everything else. For example, while Sri Lanka wanted the Indian Ocean to be a nuclear-free zone during the 1970's and 1980's, India faced a nuclear China. Under that type of military constraint, it would seem that India would have no choice but to begin creating their own nuclear weapons, and, in turn, Pakistan began their own nuclear program in retaliation (Vivekanandan, 1981). Security comes at the price of another's but not unless you share it.

Even though there are no institutionalized set-up for Indian Ocean regional navies, there are extensive bilateral and multilateral exercises. These exercises between the navies of the region include search-and-rescue drills, sharing of operational expertise and intelligence, anti-submarine warfare, advanced mine countermeasures, and anti-terror and transnational crime tactics (Ghosh, 2004). These exercises also include the United States from time to time. Even though the United States' role in the Indian Ocean was seen as less than favorable in India's perspective back in the 1970s, India now accepts that the United States, along with its base at Diego Garcia and the Persian Gulf, will likely remain the dominant naval power in the region. Therefore, India sees its own capabilities are a bit of a setback to what they aspire to be, the predominant maritime power of the Indian Ocean. However, through the help of security agreements with the United States, India is

able to expand its capabilities, ultimately setting their sights on the perceived longer-term threat, China (Brewster, 2015).

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the Indian Ocean is an important part of our modern world. The amount of economic leverage that travels through the region daily has the constant possibility of severely affecting any nation around the world. With over fifty percent of the world's oil being produced and shipped across the Indian Ocean, the disruption of trade at any of the major maritime chokepoints, whether it be the Bab-el Mandeb strait or the Strait of Malacca, can disrupt the economic and industrial advancement across the world, East and West.

The Indian Ocean's History has shown a vast temporal span where the region itself had become its own sort of unified world-system. The monsoon winds and the use of sailing allowed the people of the Indian Ocean to traverse great distances in relatively short amount of time on scheduled voyages according to the seasons. This helped the promotion of migration and trade, along with religion and ideals, and gave the Indian Ocean a grand age of prosperity, unknown to the world at the time. However, with the introduction of colonial powers, the Indian Ocean saw an age of occupation and exploitation for centuries until the twentieth-century. Now, with several issues found across the region spilling over to the realm maritime security, threatening to disrupt the important trade routes of the ocean, nations from around the world focus their attention on the Indian Ocean.

The Indian Ocean rim of today can learn a thing or two from its history, but it can also adapt the unity of the past to the modern scene. Unity under diversity, unity under religion, unity under trade, there are several reasons why the Indian Ocean region should be unified, and it will be under a unified Indian Ocean that their threats to their security can be addressed together and

promote a more cooperative, peaceful, thriving region of the earth. It is only together, receiving help and helping one another in kind, that the Indian Ocean region can be a peaceful region for sailors and citizens alike to feel safe as a part of a larger community under the banner of the human race.

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