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## **SOUTH AND SOUTHERN AFRICA AND THE INDIAN OCEAN-SOUTH ATLANTIC NEXUS: Strategic and Blue Economy Dimensions**

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### **Introduction**

This policy brief summarises and updates the outcome of the very first symposium devoted to exploring Indian Ocean-South Atlantic sea lanes of convergence around South Africa's Cape of Good Hope. This linkage and its manifold policy implications informed the motivation behind "The Blue Economy and the Challenge of Maritime Security for South and Southern Africa" held on 17-19 November 2014 in Tshwane. Jointly organized by the Institute for Global Dialogue (IGD) and the Policy Research and Analysis Unit (PRAU) of the Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO), it was assisted by a reference group comprising the South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA), the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) and the Wits Centre for Defence and Security Management (CDSM) and its Southern African Defence and Security Management (SADSEM) network.

*Global Insight aims to provide members of the policy community with concise but trenchant analyses of topical issues. Comments and suggestions are invited.*

While the symposium coincided with surging interest in a 'blue economy' among several Indian Ocean Rim and island states, the underlying intellectual and policy impetus was geostrategic: exploring architectural problems and prospects for fashioning a southern hemispheric 'Gondwanan' subsystem of global governance for enhanced maritime security cooperation in its broadest sense, including the health of the oceans.

Discussions on Africa and the Southern Oceans have largely focused on the Indian Ocean, partly due to the activities of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) as an active area of engagement in respect of trade, political and security issues.

As of late, the South Atlantic is also becoming increasingly important in articulating African as well as South American interests. This is partly triggered by Nigeria's socio-economic growth and development needs necessitating increased cooperation and attention to the geopolitics of the South Atlantic. In terms of West and Central African security interest, the South Atlantic brings into focus the Gulf of Guinea and the Gulf of Guinea Commission (GGC) embracing both the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS). Altogether, the geostrategic landscape of the Indian and South Atlantic oceans situates South Africa's maritime domain as the fulcrum in exploring any future multilateral structure of cooperation. This necessarily revolves around confronting issues of African maritime security with focus on the blue economy, trade, investment and development cooperation.

### **Background I: The strategic dimension**

In the current prevailing policy emphasis on economic imperatives and development and functional cooperation, the strategic 'big picture' that should inform these areas of engagement tends to get short-shrift in international relations and policy discourses. As a result, South Africa's proverbial strategic identity defined by the Cape Sea Route forming the sea lanes nexus joining the Indian and South Atlantic Oceans tends to be overlooked; this is in terms of its implications for how the country's leaders should pursue an integrated multi-dimensional diplomacy: defence as well as geopolitical and economic – and increasingly environmental. This also extends to how these different but interrelated aspects of diplomacy should be balanced in relation to the rest of the world

as well as Africa, especially given the priority afforded the 'global South' in South African foreign policy. Perhaps the 'siloed' approach to governance wherein different ministries and departments tend, in uncoordinated fashion, to pursue their own agendas rather than seek coordinating synergies accounts for this lack of strategic consciousness and coherence to international relations and cooperation. This was a circumstance the November 17-19, 2014 symposium on the Indian Ocean and South Atlantic sought to overcome in its thematic focus and organization.

Defence, in terms of the presence of the SA Navy as well as DIRCO (through PRAU), formed key actors in the symposium planning reference group along with the think tank presence and that of senior experts on naval and maritime affairs. This elevated the need for the symposium to elevate the strategic importance of the 2013-14 South African Defence Review chaired by the event's inaugural keynote speaker, Roelf Meyer as a starting point in delving more broadly into Indian and South Atlantic Oceans governance maritime security and the 'blue economy.'

Defence Secretariat senior analyst Nick Sendall's presentation provided this background which, on the third day of the symposium was reinforced by the keynote provided by retired University of the Western Cape Professor Renfrew Christie. Christie fleshed out the urgency of the strategic imperatives that should drive South African policy. This he did by emphasizing the magnitude of Africa's demographic revolution and how this will challenge infrastructural and economic capacity interacting with exploitation of the continent's minerals and energy endowment on behalf of the global as well as the African economy. This would place a premium on defending the continent's offshore exclusive economic zones (EEZs) and continental shelves.

However, given South Africa's bi-coastal and sea lanes convergence, its positioning virtually compels it to engage multilaterally in both the Indian and South Atlantic Oceans in the search for viable architectures of cooperation. Hence, the relevance of discussion revolving around the India-Brazil-South Africa (IBSA) Trilateral Dialogue Forum, its maritime IBSAMAR component as well as the Zone of Peace and Cooperation in the South Atlantic (ZPCSA) and the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) and other platforms. These are strategic and architectural dimensions that cannot be ignored in the South African quest for a 'blue economy' both at home and in the rest of Africa and the global South.

### **Background II: The Blue Economy**

From a strategic perspective, the importance of the 'blue economy' in South Africa's policy agenda is situated in the recognition of the converging sea lanes as its 10th province. However, this has SADC regional cooperation implications in terms of South Africa's relations with Namibia in the South Atlantic and neighbouring Mozambique on the Indian Ocean. Both have continental shelf claims as well as South Africa. These implications and how they might be reconciled were explored by Unisa Professor Jo-Ansie Van Wyk. While the totality of South Africa's marine endowments is yet to be fully explored, an important commitment made to develop a blue economy has been the launch of Operation Phakisa. Operation Phakisa, loosely based on the Malaysian maritime development model, provides a framework to spur economic growth and aims to create up to a million jobs in 2033. Operation Phakisa reinforces the economic feasibility of an increased focus on the marine domain and could therefore encourage support from the South African government and citizenry to finance the development of the marine space for larger socio-economic development.

The regional development of Operation Phakisa within the Comesa-SADC-East African Community Tripartite Grand Free Trade Area and beyond into

South and Southeast Asia would play an important role in discerning the geo-economic patterns of the southern oceans. Given prior blue economy strategies launched by some of the Indian Ocean island states, notably SADC members Seychelles and Mauritius, and blue economy policy analysis being undertaken by Indian institutions such as the National Maritime Foundation, an ample basis exist for regional and interregional scientific and development cooperation regarding the marine economy. In terms of economic diplomacy, Operation Phakisa should serve to kick-start trade and investment momentum in both the South Atlantic (Mercosur) as well as the Indian Ocean developing South and Southern Africa's marine economy (ASEAN).

### **In Search of Architecture**

However, the architecture of cooperation needs to be properly defined starting with the existing but marginalised infrastructure provided by the IBSA which geostrategically links the Indian and South Atlantic Oceans within a trilateral framework involving both Brazil and India. The IBSAMAR naval exercises reflect the strategic potential of this linkage. However, this might evolve; it would be located in a landscape of paradoxical emerging geopolitics where a diminishing space for negotiation on maritime issues was exacerbated by entrenched positions of power in global governance. These dynamics emphasise the need for a greater convergence of interests and shared perspectives. This approach should extend to ocean governance and collectively securing the marine domain in an effort to fit into the wider debate on maritime security.

The practicalities and constraints of elaborating an IBSA-based southern oceans architecture came under especially insightful critical analysis by veteran University of Brasilia Professor Alcides Costa Vaz in his exploration of how IBSA might relate to the ZPCSA. Apart from South Africa being situated at the very juncture of the Indian and South Atlantic Oceans,

neither Brazil or India seem motivated by an overriding strategic interest in elaborating IBSAMAR into a comprehensively bridging mechanism apart from the naval exercises. Perhaps, the elaborating of a counterpart zone of peace and cooperation multilateral system in the Indo-Pacific might provide the basis for IBSA eventually serving as a liaising platform in southern oceans governance. But this will be contingent on how proactively visionary Tshwane and Delhi are in elaborating this potential into an axis of cooperation between themselves extending to Indonesia and Australia. On this open-ended note, there were several recommendations put forth.

### **Symposium Recommendations:**

#### *A stronger regional approach to maritime security:*

This needs to be promoted among regional economic communities (RECs) and would require regular meetings on maritime security. In so doing, an effective response would also be needed to define maritime issues and negotiate around geographical variability. South Africa should continue to assist the SADC Maritime Strategy and the African Integrated Maritime Strategy (AIMS) 2050 and actualise region-building through a focus on maritime issues in the context of the 'Africa rising' narrative. South Africa should also attend to its regional commitments by firstly resolving maritime differences with its neighbour, Namibia and communicate the status and content of its continental shelf. This could be advanced through the development of a *Southern African Continental Shelf Agency* and strategy that would include India and Brazil and is a possible item for consideration in a special IBSA summit on oceans governance and maritime security.

*A special summit on Oceans Governance and Maritime Security in the Southern Oceans:* This summit should be convened by South Africa, India and Brazil to feed into a consultative process toward an Indian Ocean-South Atlantic ocean governance and security architecture.

This architecture should, among other things, reinforce AIMS 2050.

#### *The division of the IORA into 'areas of responsibility':*

Each area would contain a north and southern anchor comprising emerging middle powers in the IORA which would have to take into account the existing security arrangements, regional diversity of interests and make more effective use of limited resources. This would also have to consider the 'western ocean' comprising the Middle East and Africa and the 'eastern ocean' which geo-strategically becomes the 'Indo-Pacific' merging into 'zones of contention' like the East and South China Seas.

#### *Financing a blue economy for South and Southern Africa:*

The issue of financing should not only be considered for South and Southern Africa but also extends to other rim states in the global South. This might involve conceptualising and investing the feasibility of an African – based and led 'Gondwana Bank' as a sustainable development finance initiative. The African Regional Centre of the BRICS New Development Bank may have relevance here otherwise, private equity investment as well as inter-governmental or public-private partnerships might be a possibility. The California Maritime Infrastructure and Economic Development Bank provides a useful model of a such a specialised financing mechanism.

#### *The development of an Integrated National Security and Development Strategy:*

This would allow for the initiating of a national strategy for South and Southern Africa in developing an Integrated Southern Oceans Governance and Maritime Strategy as a global South multilateral initiative. This would allow for implementation of a blue economy agenda that promotes a geostrategic vision while also emphasising the protection of the oceans as a matter of national, regional and global South security interests. In ensuring an integrated and complementary approach, the national interdepartmental strategy should be co-ordinated

jointly by the Department of International Relations and Cooperation, the Department of Defence and the Department of Trade and Industry. The strategy should incorporate work done by the Department of Environmental Affairs and the Department of Transport. A National Security and Development Management System should be established and could be situated in the current portfolio of the Ministry in The Presidency which is responsible for implementing the National Development Plan and monitoring and evaluation.

*South Africa requires enhanced maritime domain awareness (MDA):* This can be achieved through a fixed network of sensors to complement manned platforms in order to conduct information-based operations and increase effectiveness. South Africa should also invest in improved intelligence gathering as that will assist in developing the Common Operating Picture (COP). This would be contained in a layered intelligence system that provides a clear picture of the situation from the strategic to the tactical level.

## **Conclusion and Policy Priorities**

The November 2014 symposium falls within a larger context of policy discourses that have been underway in South and Southern Africa and on the continent for the past few years. As such, it was not singularly definitive apart from its uniqueness in placing African maritime affairs within a larger global South strategic context. This was critically important in as much as Africa, bi-coastal Southern Africa especially, cannot be considered in isolation from the westerly 'Atlantic Hemisphere' on the one hand and its eastern and southern littoral bordering the Indian Ocean and farther afield the 'Indo-Pacific.' Within the South African policy context, the one agency that appears to emerge most centrally in influencing maritime strategy is the South African Maritime Safety Authority (SAMSA) which, while a participant at the symposium, did not feature as prominently as it might have.

As an active player at the continental level of AIMS 2050, SAMSA is actively engaged in exploring maritime development financing options within the context of deciphering the bigger African continental maritime and oceans governance landscape. This is one that includes the fledgling South African International Maritime Institute (SAIMI) based in Port Elizabeth, having been launched in 2014 with the involvement of the Norwegian-based International Maritime University. SAIMI has the potential to serve as a think-tank on maritime security and oceans governance affairs for the entire continent. However this nexus unfolds, South Africa is not alone within SADC in shaping the maritime agenda as Angola is reportedly exploring a possible conference on US-African maritime relations with US Secretary of the Navy, Ray Mavis. Then, there is the upcoming African Union (AU) maritime summit planned for November 2015 in Lome.

What is overridingly critical for South Africa is the development of an integrated national grand strategy, inclusive of a major maritime-oceans governance dimension and a more definitive and balanced global South-emerging powers strategy extending beyond its Sino-Russia BRICS alignment.

This could prioritize three initiatives:

- Consolidation of different governmental institutional actors into a *South African Agency on Maritime Security and Ocean Governance Affairs*, preferably within the context of a National Security and Development Council within The Presidency.

- An accelerated exploration of maritime development financing options which takes on greater urgency given the operationalizing of the BRICS New Development Bank (NDB) which brings nearer determining the role and agenda of the African Regional Centre of the BRICS-NDB – or should Africa have its own independent maritime infrastructure investment institution comparable to China’s Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank?
- The convening of an IBSA+ summit on maritime security and oceans governance that among other things considers how to strengthen the ZPCSA in the South Atlantic in building Afro-Latin American maritime security and development cooperation while exploring possibilities of a similar but more expansive zone of peace and cooperation architecture in the Indo-Pacific with Indonesia and Australia.

## Notes

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