

Brussels and Delhi: Converging Interests in the Indian Ocean

By CONSTANTINO XAVIER & DARSHANA M. BARUAH

**EU-India Policy Dialogues On
Global Governance & Security**

POLICY PAPER
March 2017



Funded by the
European Union

The Indian Ocean today is critical for the future of the EU and India. The rise of piracy in the late 2000s demonstrated the pernicious effect non-traditional security threats can have on European and Indian economic growth prospects. While both aim to ensure a rules-based order, cooperative multilateralism, and sustainable growth and stability in the Indian Ocean Region, the European Union and India have rarely partnered to pursue these shared interests. Two deeply entrenched myths explain the absence of this dialogue and the consequent lack of cooperation: Indian perceptions of the EU as a strategic non-entity and irrelevant strategic actor beyond its borders; and similarly, European perceptions of an introverted India that is hesitant to take on a leadership role beyond South Asia and unwilling to work together with other middle powers. Based on consultations with policymakers and experts under the EU-India Policy Dialogue on Global Governance and Security, this brief emphasizes that, despite such perceptions, in practice the EU and India's initiatives in the Indian Ocean are widely congruent and complementary.

Policy Recommendations

Constantino Xavier is fellow
and Darshana M. Baruah is an
analyst at Carnegie India

- The EU and India should move from occasional naval coordination to institutionalized cooperation through regular joint exercises and patrolling initiatives. They should focus on maritime cooperation in non-traditional security domains, such as humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, which underline the Indian Ocean’s significance as a global commons.
- They need to jointly develop and transfer defense equipment and devise common programs to build island states’ coastal and naval capacity through training. Pursue a “blue revolution” by investing in maritime infrastructure, especially sea ports and communication networks, to connect and integrate the region as a distinct economic space.
- Emphasizing the potential of international law and norms to mitigate and solve disputes, the EU and India should strengthen existing institutions and create new ones that foster a multilateral and rules-based order.

The Indian Ocean’s New Centrality

Rising interdependence and connectivity highlight the fact that Europe and India’s domestic security, stability, and wealth are increasingly reliant on a benign external environment in their extended neighbourhoods, which includes the Western Indian Ocean.

The Indian Ocean Region is home to over thirty states and one-third of the world’s population. The EU and India rely predominantly (over 90 percent) on sea-based trade. Rich in natural resources, the Indian Ocean contains 62 percent of the world’s proven oil reserves and 35 percent of its gas. Every day seventeen million barrels of oil, or 20 percent of the world’s oil supply, travel by tankers through the Strait of Hormuz.¹ Although large amounts of oil reach Europe and the Americas via the Suez Canal and South Atlantic, the more important route is eastward, as Gulf oil provides nearly 75 percent of Asia’s import needs.² Such floating economic assets have fueled a rising number of non-state actors, including pirates and terrorists, who have expanded their reach to disrupt security and stability. For the last ten years, the EU and India have taken the lead in various naval missions to counter such security threats in the Western Indian Ocean.

The region is also on the frontlines of the battle against climate change, which threatens to affect the integrity of island-nations like the Maldives and the Seychelles and the coastal areas of West Africa and the Bay of Bengal. Moreover, the three countries that produce the most refugees are Indian Ocean states – Afghanistan, Iraq and Somalia – which also rank high on the failed state index, and more than half of

The authors are grateful to Arushi Kumar at Carnegie India for her excellent research assistance to this brief.

© European Union, 2017
The information and views set out in this publication are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official opinion of the European Union. Neither the European Union institutions and bodies nor any person acting on their behalf may be held responsible for the use which may be made of the information contained therein.

1 “Persian Gulf Oil and Gas Exports Fact Sheet” *Marcon International, Inc.*, <http://www.marcon.com/marcon2c.cfm?SectionListsID=93&PageID=771>.

2 Mohan Malik, *Maritime security in the Indo-Pacific: perspectives from China, India, and the United States*, (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), 6.

the UNHCR’s “global population of concern” resides in Indian Ocean states.³ Of the one million migrants and refugees that entered the EU in 2015, almost one quarter came from three Indian Ocean littoral states.⁴ India also continues to offer a safe haven for thousands of Rohingya refugees from Myanmar and Tamils from Sri Lanka.

The IOR is vulnerable to natural disasters as well: in 2004, the Indian Ocean tsunami killed 228,000 people across the Indian Ocean, from Indonesia to Sri Lanka and beyond, and in 2008 Cyclone Nargis took 138,300 lives, mostly in Myanmar.⁵ Furthermore, the increasing global demand for nuclear energy is further having a significant impact on uranium trade in the Indian Ocean, whose waters are increasingly threatened by the dumping of nuclear waste. More importantly, with the rapidly changing balance of power across Asia and the rise of China, the Indian Ocean is witnessing a new era of geopolitical competition that could quickly morph into militarization and conflict escalation.

The EU’s Maritime Extroversion and Initiatives

By looking southeast towards the Indian Ocean as a new priority area, Brussels is heralding a new era in the EU’s external strategy, marked by a shift from a continental to an oceanic outlook. The Indian Ocean currently assumes a central role in the EU’s extroverted maritime outlook. With more goods and services travelling between Europe and Asia than across the Atlantic, 90 percent of the EU’s external trade and 40 percent of its internal trade is transported across seas. European ship owners manage 30 percent of the world’s vessels and 35 percentage of world shipping tonnage, representing 42 percent of the value of global seaborne trade.⁶ The EU is also a resident actor in the Indian Ocean: 85 percent of France’s exclusive economic zone, the second largest in the world, is located in the Indian and Pacific Oceans, along with 1.6 million of French citizens.

After 1945, the European Union flourished as one of the boldest political and economic projects of the modern era, but this extraordinary experiment now faces significant challenges. At the internal level, economic recession and the rise of populism have strengthened anti-Europeanist currents that were further emboldened by the outcome of the Brexit referendum. At the external level, the United States’ global retrenchment and President Donald Trump’s skepticism about the transatlantic security partnership have forced Brussels into a realist rethink.

3 Dennis Rumley, *The Indian Ocean region: security, stability and sustainability in the 21st century* (Melbourne: Australia India Institute, 2013), 49, <http://www.aii.unimelb.edu.au/publications/indian-ocean-security-and-stability>.

4 “Migrant crisis: Migration to Europe explained in seven charts,” *BBC News*, March 4, 2016, accessed March 13, 2017, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34131911>.

5 “Indian Ocean Tsunami: Then and now,” *BBC News*, December 25, 2014, accessed February 13, 2017, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-30034501>.

6 European Commission, *Towards an EU integrated approach to global maritime security*, March 6, 2014, http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-14-224_en.htm?utm_source=mare_newsroom&utm_medium=Website&utm_campaign=mare&utm_content=Towards%20an%20EU%20integrated%20approach%20to%20global%20maritime%20security%20&lang=en.

How can the EU be taken seriously if it is seen to lack, for example, the most elementary capabilities to secure its borders and act as a single strategic entity in its periphery and beyond? Beyond traditional security threats – whether it is conflict in the Middle East, the rise in terrorism, or cyber-attacks – are European states prepared to collectively address a variety of new internal and external threats to their continent’s stability and wealth? Commenting on these concerns in 2015, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini said to her Asian counterparts: “please don’t look at us just as a big free trade area: the European Union is also a foreign policy community, a security and defense provider.”⁷ If only in words, such appeals and consequent thought exercises seem to have started to affect the EU’s external outlook and presence worldwide, replacing its previously lofty and idealist statements with a more strategic framework.

Reflecting this transition, the EU’s new global strategy launched in 2016 develops a pragmatic set of recommendations that question the traditional boundaries of European strategic imagination – hitherto a perpetual and self-sustaining island of

By looking southeast towards the Indian Ocean as a new priority area, Brussels is heralding a new era in the EU’s external strategy, marked by a shift from a continental to an oceanic outlook.

peace. Nowhere is this new pragmatism more apparent than in the maritime security domain and its increased focus on EU presence in its extended neighborhood; this involvement is especially evident in the Gulf of Aden, which builds upon previous efforts in the European Security Strategy (2003) and the EU NAVFOR experience there in recent years. Brussels sees stability in the Indian Ocean as a requirement for its own internal stability and sustained economic growth. The strategy thus emphasizes “the need for global maritime growth and security, ensuring open and protected ocean and sea routes critical for trade and access to natural resources,” and pledges that “the EU will contribute to global maritime security, building on its experience in the Indian Ocean.”⁸

The European Union Maritime Security Strategy (2014) spells out the EU’s new maritime interests in detail: territorial security, international maritime cooperation and peace, protection of critical maritime infrastructure, freedom of navigation, protection of economic interests at sea, common situational awareness, effective

7 Federica Mogherini, “Speech at IISS Shangri-La Dialogue,” May 2015, https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/6254/speech-by-high-representativevice-president-federica-mogherini-at-the-iiss-shangri-la-dialogue-2015_en

8 High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, “Joint Communication to the European Parliament, The Council, The European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions” (2016), accessed March 13, 2017, https://ec.europa.eu/maritimeaffairs/sites/maritimeaffairs/files/join-2016-49_en.pdf.

management of EU's maritime areas and external borders, and environmental security.⁹ The strategy also tackles maritime awareness, surveillance, and information-sharing by attempting to break a 'silo approach' through cross-sectoral coordination and interoperability; cross-border surveillance cooperation and information exchange; consistency between the EU's internal approach and CSDP operations; and development of the Common Information Sharing Environment (CISE).

The EU has thus developed a series of initiatives and acquired a niche expertise in the Indian Ocean. Most of these initiatives have a multilateral and institutional dimension, which is largely congruent with India's emphasis on creating cooperative frameworks to address common challenges in the Indian Ocean Region.

Under MASE (Programme to Promote Regional Maritime Security), the EU has enhanced maritime security in the Eastern and Southern Africa and Indian Ocean Region (ESA-IO), creating a favorable environment for economic development. Adopted during the 2nd High Level Regional Ministerial Conference on Maritime Piracy held in Mauritius in 2010, MASE focuses on the implementation of the Regional Strategy and Action Plan against Piracy and for Maritime Security and has the Indian Ocean Commission as a lead partner. By strengthening maritime capabilities and fostering regional coordination and information exchange in the Western Indian Ocean, MASE effectively contributed to its stabilization in recent years.¹⁰

The EU CRIMARIO project was launched by the Critical Maritime Routes (CMR) program in order to increase awareness about potential risks or threats in the Indian Ocean (known as maritime situational awareness, or MSA), together with capacity building, information data sharing, and improvement of maritime governance. First implemented in 2015, the project is expected to run until 2019, with a budget of €5.5 million. It seeks to support Indian Ocean coastal countries in sharing data from various maritime sources such as national and international agencies, the maritime industry, and nongovernmental organizations, in order to support maritime security.¹¹

The European Union provides around 80 percent of the total financial support given to the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC), an inter-governmental organization institutionalized in 1984, which comprises five Indian Ocean nations: Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius, Reunion and Seychelles. European support, amounting to around 80 million euros, focuses on facilitating the sustainable development in the fields of energy, fisheries, and macroeconomic policies.¹²

The Regional Integration Support Programme (RISP 2) continuation program was established under the 10th European Development Fund (EDF) with the overall objective of contributing to regional integration in East and South Africa and the

9 European Commission, "Maritime Security Strategy," http://ec.europa.eu/maritimeaffairs/policy/maritime-security_en.

10 European Union External Action, "Program to Promote Regional Maritime Security (MASE)" (2016), https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/8407/program-promote-regional-maritime-security-mase_en.

11 European Commission, "EU CRIMARIO: Enhancing Maritime Situational Awareness in the Indian Ocean" (2015), http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/eu-crimario-enhancing-maritime-situational-awareness-indian-ocean_en.

12 Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Mauritius, to the Union of the Comoros, and to the Republic of Seychelles, "Indian Ocean Commission," http://eeas.europa.eu/archives/delegations/mauritius/regional_integration/indian_ocean_commission/index_en.htm.

Western Indian Ocean as a means to enhance stability and economic growth. Between 2007 and 2013, the 10th EDF allocated a total of €645 million to this region.¹³

In line with India's efforts, the EU has also developed force projection capabilities in the Indian Ocean to combat non-traditional security threats. The first counter-piracy mission of the EU Naval Force, EU NAVFOR Somalia (Operation Atalanta), was established in 2008 off the Horn of Africa and in the Western Indian Ocean.¹⁴ It focused on protecting Somalia-bound vessels and shipments belonging to the World Food Programme and the African Union Mission to Somalia. In 2012, the EU also mandated the EUCAP Nestor mission to build up the maritime capacity of regional navies. European naval forces also cooperate with the multinational Combined Task Force 151 of the US-led Combined Maritime Forces (CMF) and NATO's anti-piracy operation Ocean Shield.

Finally, beyond the Western Indian Ocean, the EU is actively reaching out to its eastern shores, an area that has been at the heart of India's Act East policy. The EU has thus invested close to 200 million Euros to support the ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) integration project and, in 2015, held a high level EU-ASEAN dialogue on piracy, maritime surveillance and port security, while also expressing interest in a closer security and defense engagement with the ASEAN Regional Forum.¹⁵ As New Delhi focuses on bridging the Bay of Bengal to connect with Southeast Asia, this offers an additional region to develop EU-India cooperation.

India Steps up to Lead

The Indian Ocean is the primary area of importance for the Indian Navy, and stability in these waters is crucial for New Delhi's maritime security environment. India has always played a leading role through initiatives to secure the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) community. While the Indian Navy needs many more capabilities to become a net security provider, it has been a leading contributor in the region. In the strategic sphere too, New Delhi has led efforts to foster dialogue amongst its littoral states to share threat assessments and develop new instruments to overcome common challenges. India's increasing emphasis on multilateral initiatives and institutional mechanisms' importance for promoting regional cooperation and integration aligns with the European approach to the region.

India has deployed ships in the Gulf of Aden since 2008 to keep maritime highway safe for trade and commerce. The Indian Navy patrols the Internationally Recommended Transit Corridor (IRTC), a distance of 490 nautical miles in the Gulf of Aden.¹⁶ It also contributes to other anti-piracy missions in the region, such as NATO's Operation Ocean Shield and the EU NAVFOR Atlanta to combat Somali-based piracy. India now regularly participates in SHADE (Shared Awareness and Deconfliction) meetings held in Bahrain,

13 European External Action Service, "Delegation of the European Union to Zambia and COMESA" (2016), https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/factsheet-2016_final.pdf.

14 European Union External Action, EU NAVFOR, <http://eunavfor.eu/mission>.

15 Federica Mogherini, "Speech at IISS Shangri-La Dialogue."

16 Ministry of Defence, Government of India, "Anti Piracy Operations" (2016), accessed March 13, 2017, <https://www.indiannavy.nic.in/content/anti-piracy-operations>.

which brings together operations under NATO, EU, the US-led Coalition Maritime Force, the maritime industry, and various navies deployed in the region. Despite occasional overlap in scope and mandate, the Indian and European missions reflect a shared concern and similar outlook on how to cooperatively address a common security threat.

On Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR), there is also significant scope for greater EU-India cooperation. As a “low-hanging fruit,” such missions can utilize India’s rich operational experience in the Indian Ocean, as well as its European coordination capacity and expertise. In the natural disaster-prone IOR, India has played a leading role in Search and Rescue (SAR) operations and assisting rehabilitation after calamities. India has been quick to respond to disasters like the Indian Ocean Tsunami in 2004, Cyclone Sidr (Bangladesh) in 2007, Cyclone Nargis (Myanmar) in 2008, and it contributed toward search and rescue efforts for Malaysian Airline MH370 in 2014. The Indian Navy was also the first to respond to the Maldives fresh water crisis in 2014, and in non-combatant evacuation operations from conflict zones in Lebanon (2006), Libya (2011), and Yemen (2015).¹⁷

India’s increasing emphasis on multilateral initiatives and institutional mechanisms’ importance for promoting regional cooperation and integration aligns with the European approach to the region.

Nowhere is the potential for EU-India cooperation in the Indian Ocean more apparent than in their common efforts to foster governance through multilateral institutions. One of New Delhi’s first initiatives toward building an IOR community was the creation of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA). Borne out of discussions between South Africa and India in 1995, IORA seeks to explore “socio-economic cooperation and other peaceful endeavors.”¹⁸ While IORA has regular meetings among senior officials of the members, dialogue partners, and observers, in 2014 India initiated the Indian Ocean Dialogue (IOD) to discuss issues pertaining to geo-politics and security challenges in the IOR.¹⁹

The Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) is another key initiative from the Indian Navy to discuss IOR challenges in an open and free platform. While the IOD brings together policymakers and government officials, IONS serves as a platform among the littoral navies to share threat perceptions and security challenges in the

17 Constantino Xavier, *India’s Expatriate Evacuation Operations: Bringing the Diaspora Home.* Carnegie India Policy Paper. (New Delhi: Carnegie India, 2017), <http://carnegieindia.org/2017/01/04/india-s-expatriate-evacuation-operations-bringing-diaspora-home-pub-66573>.

18 Indian Ocean Rim Association, “Background,” accessed March 13, 2017, <http://iora.net/about-us/background.aspx>.

19 Sujata Mehta, “Secretary (ER&DPA)’s address at the first Indian Ocean Dialogue held under the Indian Ocean Rim Association [IORA] at Kochi,” (September 6, 2014), Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, http://mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/23983/Secretary_ERampDPAs_address_at_the_first_Indian_Ocean_Dialogue_held_under_the_Indian_Ocean_Rim_Association_IORA_at_Kochi.

region. India also hosts MILAN, a biennial naval exercise among the littoral navies of the Bay of Bengal and Southeast Asia. New Delhi is now keen to build new partnerships and expand its naval exercises both at the bilateral and multilateral level.

An important goal of the Indian Navy's strategy is to develop its maritime domain awareness (MDA), as reflected in its revised maritime strategy of 2015. Through surveillance and analysis, India aims to boost its preparedness and presence in the maritime domain to ultimately emerge as a net security provider. MDA is aimed at increasing "situational awareness" at sea in order to better respond to any kind of scenario in the IOR.²⁰ Along with installing radar networks on its islands and 7,500 kilometer coastline, the Indian Navy is installing radar networks on the Maldives, Seychelles, Mauritius, and Sri Lanka. The Indian Navy assists these island nations in patrolling their vast exclusive economic zones by deploying its surveillance vessels and aircrafts as well as by undertaking infrastructure construction and commissioning patrol vessels.²¹ India's focus on island states is similar to European efforts to develop information-sharing and to increase MDA in East African littoral states. At the first IORA leaders' summit in March 2017, New Delhi proposed to host an Information Fusion Centre to coordinate MDA among the IOR members.²²

Through establishing consultative and institutional frameworks in a transparent and inclusive process, the Indian Navy has been a key contributor toward peace and security in the region. Keeping the Indian Ocean free of threats is of critical importance to India's maritime security strategy. The security environment in the Indian Ocean is rapidly changing today as the Indian Ocean continues to emerge as the new theatre for geo-political competition. Much of this new focus on the Indian Ocean is driven by China's formidable rise in the region. As a key stakeholder in the region, India's priorities are focused on keeping the region stable and secure through a rules based order.

While India continues to modernize and enhance its naval capabilities, its expertise and multilateral approach in the Indian Ocean form a strong foundation from which to explore partnerships with the European Union, which is still a relative newcomer in the region.

Moving Forward: Policy Recommendations

How can the EU and India leverage their shared interests, similar initiatives, and common objectives to promote stability, peace, and development in an open Indian Ocean order? The European Union's Maritime Security Strategy (2014) and India's Maritime Strategy (2015) reflect converging areas and positive momentum. This

20 For a detailed understanding of India's need for MDA please see: Ministry of Defence, Government of India, "Ensuring Secure Seas: Indian Maritime Security Strategy" (2015), https://www.indiannavy.nic.in/sites/default/files/Indian_Maritime_Security_Strategy_Document_25Jan16.pdf.

21 Darshana M. Baruah, "Expanding India's Maritime Domain Awareness in the Indian Ocean," *Asia Policy*, no. 22 (2016): 49-55.

22 Remarks by Vice President at the 1st IORA Leaders' Summit in Jakarta (March 07, 2017), Ministry of External Affairs, March 07, 2017, available at http://www.mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/28119/Remarks_by_Vice_President_at_the_1st_IORA_Leaders_Summit_in_Jakarta_March_07_2017

section puts forward specific policy recommendations across five areas that have an extraordinary potential to further accelerate Indo-European synergies in the Indian Ocean Region.

Move from Coordination to Cooperation

Both the Indian Navy and the EU NAVFOR have operated side by side in the Gulf of Aden and across the Indian Ocean to counter piracy and secure sea lines of communication. This ad hoc coordination of efforts must now give way to greater coordination and occasional integration across a wider theater of operations beyond just patrolling and deterring piracy. Indian and European naval forces must institutionalize their engagements, for example through a regular dialogue to share threat assessments in the Indian Ocean Region. Beyond naval officers, these interactions should also include other security actors, including officials from the diplomatic and intelligence domains. Brussels and Delhi should also consider holding a joint naval exercise between EU NAVFOR and the Indian Navy, which would be the first of its kind.

Focus on Non-Traditional Security Domains

The EU is still struggling to develop its distinct security presence beyond Europe. Even if only in rhetoric, India's past commitment to self-reliance and non-alignment occasionally still hinders its investment in multilateral initiatives. While still committed to its non-alignment policy, New Delhi however is beginning to work closely with a number of friends and partners on areas of common interests. Brussels and New Delhi should focus on the "softer" and non-conventional domains of naval security in the Indian Ocean, for example by exchanging best practices, promoting joint exercises, and taking coordinated action on issues relating to Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR). This could include disaster mitigation and expatriate evacuation operations, as well as issues relating to the preemption of environmental degradation and monitoring migration. Given the risks of instability in the Gulf and the larger Middle East regions, including in Afghanistan, the EU and India should foster a close dialogue on preempting and managing refugee flows.

Jointly Develop and Transfer Defense Equipment

Both India and the EU have invested significant resources in the Indian Ocean's littoral and small island states' capabilities to secure their exclusive economic zones. Congruent with the EU CRIMARIO project, in recent years India has sanctioned radar systems, offshore patrol vessels, coast guard launches, and naval reconnaissance aircrafts to Mauritius, the Seychelles and other states in the region. Besides delivering such assets separately, Delhi and Brussels should develop communication channels to coordinate their respective efforts in order to avoid redundancies, for example through a regular security dialogue on the Indian Ocean Region. They should also consider jointly training coast guard and naval personnel, from Mozambique to Malaysia. More

importantly, India and the EU must consider leveraging their export-competitive naval industries to consider joint production of patrol boats, radar systems, among a wide range of equipment. Finally, in order to increase synergy and explore comparative advantages, the European Defence Agency must be encouraged to take on a more proactive role in partnering with Indian organizations such as the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), which are at the forefront of developing and implementing new defense technologies that can be deployed in the surface, underwater, aerial, and spatial domains across the Indian Ocean.

Invest in Infrastructure to Connect and Integrate

The EU's Blue Growth Initiative, which seeks to harness maritime wealth from everything from fisheries to tourism, energy and resource extraction, corresponds with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's call for India to embrace a "Blue Revolution." In the Indian Ocean, however, this will first require significant investments in connectivity and infrastructure projects that can facilitate the emergence of the region as an integrated economic and geopolitical space. With reference to the International Maritime Organization's 2017 Maritime Day theme, "Connecting Ships, Ports and People," the EU and India should develop a strategic plan that implements the concept of the Indian Ocean as a dense maritime communication network. New Delhi should rope in European expertise and investments in its efforts to upgrade Indian coastal ports and facilitate their direct connectivity with smaller littoral and island states in the Indian Ocean.

Strengthen Institutions and the Rules-Based Order

Reflecting their democratic nature and their reluctance to rely exclusively on bilateral power projection strategies, the EU and India have dedicated significant resources to institutionalize cooperation in the Indian Ocean Region. Such a shared normative commitment towards multilateralism, should lead both sides to pool their resources to strengthen existing organizations and create new ones where necessary. In their joint statements, Brussels and New Delhi should make more explicit references to the importance of the rule of international law for governing the Indian Ocean as a global commons and emphasize the centrality of UNCLOS to conflict resolution in the maritime domain. Their statements should be supported by a frank Indo-European dialogue on how existing legal mechanisms can be expanded to let the Indian Ocean Region lead by example regarding the peaceful settlement of maritime disputes. At the institutional level, the Indian government should ensure that the EU becomes a partner member of the IORA and is involved in the IONS, while the EU, in turn, could facilitate India's engagement with the IOC and other initiatives on the East African littoral region.

Towards Convergence Across the Ocean

The European Union (EU) and India have shared interests and objectives in the maritime security domain, which offers an extraordinary potential for coordination and cooperation across the Indian Ocean Region: The EU has recently adopted a more extroverted and pragmatic outlook on the importance of stability, growth, and security in regions beyond its immediate periphery. Similarly, India is investing in unprecedented resources to consolidate its role as a leading power in the wider Indian Ocean Region.

Whether on the narrow naval security front or on the wider, multilateral, normative and economic front, Brussels and New Delhi must take further steps now to actualize the potential for greater cooperation and joint action. Greater Indo-European convergence and engagement will help to ensure that the Indian Ocean – a key space for geopolitical competition and host to a variety of security challenges – is able to attain sustainable growth and stability through cooperative frameworks and a rules-based order.

Global Public Policy Institute (GPPi)

Reinhardtstr. 7, 10117 Berlin, Germany

Phone +49 30 275 959 75-0

Fax +49 30 275 959 75-99

gppi@gppi.net

gppi.net

Carnegie India

12, Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam Road

New Delhi-110011, India

carnegieindia@ceip.org

carnegieindia.org