

Prospects for New Security Architecture for the Indian Ocean Aimed at a Rules-Based International Order, Consistent with the Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy

By Nilanthi Samaranyake¹

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to examine the Pathfinder Indian Ocean Security Conference (PFIOSC) 2020 recommendation to design a new security architecture for the Indian Ocean region.² The conference observed the:

“Indian Ocean has been a theatre for conflict involving issues such as trade, conquest, power rivalry, maritime piracy, human and drug trafficking, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing as well as global terrorism. Whilst nations in the region continue to deploy their resources attempting to combat these issues, lasting solutions have yet to be realised. In order to achieve lasting solutions this, the creation of idea for a New Security Architecture for the Indian Ocean was has been considered by stakeholders over the years, but it has failed to materialize.”³

To address the PFIOSC Phase I recommendation, this paper will consider the following topic: “Prospects for New Security Architecture for the Indian Ocean Aimed at a Rules-Based International Order, Consistent with the Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy.”

I. Trends and Drivers: Why a New Security Architecture for the Indian Ocean?

Why should observers be interested in the development of a new security architecture for the Indian Ocean region at the present time? By examining the trends and drivers of this search for a stable order, one understands that this is not a new question for the vast region, which is 70,560,000 square km,⁴ spanning multiple continents and sub-regions (from East Africa to the Middle East to South Asia to Southeast Asia to Australia), and includes a diverse set of stakeholders.

Nearly a decade ago, India’s National Security Advisor (NSA) Ajit Doval recommended revisiting a UN General Assembly resolution advanced by Sri Lanka in December 1971 for a declaration of an Indian Ocean zone of peace (IOZOP).⁵ In his December 2014 keynote address to Sri Lanka’s Galle Dialogue, he “call[ed] upon great powers not to allow escalation and

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² Pathfinder Foundation, *Pathfinder Indian Ocean Security Conference*, November 10-12, 2020, 96, https://pathfinderfoundation.lk/images/pdf/PFIOSC-Doc-for_REPRINT-10122020.pdf.

³ Pathfinder Foundation, “Terms of Reference: Research Study and Position Paper on Indian Ocean Security on ‘Prospects for New Security Architecture for the Indian Ocean Aimed at a Rules-Based International Order, Consistent with the Free and Open Indo Pacific Strategy,’” December 19, 2021, 1.

⁴ Viktor Filipovich Kanayev, “Indian Ocean,” *Britannica*, Updated December 13, 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Indian-Ocean>.

⁵ UN General Assembly, Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace, A/RES/2832(XXVI), December 16, 1971, <https://www.refworld.org/docid/528c9f6b4.html>.

expansion of military presence in the Indian Ocean.”⁶ Doval viewed the resolution through the lens of India’s concerns about a rising China. Its submarine had recently paid a highly controversial port visit to Colombo that symbolized Beijing’s expanding reach into the Indian Ocean. This statement by India’s NSA signified that New Delhi was concerned with the broader development of China’s expanding presence in the region.⁷

However, Sri Lanka’s reasons for originally proposing this resolution lay in multiple dimensions, including concerns about India’s expanding presence in the region. As Gamini Keerawella observes:

“The original proposal made by Sri Lanka in the First Committee of UN was very comprehensive and it related as much to the naval forces of littoral states as to the forces of the extra-regional powers.”⁸

India and Pakistan, for example, fought a naval battle in December 1971 in their war over Bangladesh (formerly East Pakistan). Beyond the regional level, Colombo was also concerned about great power ambitions and operations in the Indian Ocean. The small island state joined with other Asian and African countries committed to non-alignment.⁹ In fact, Sri Lanka led thinking on the IOZOP concept in the context of great power rivalry by first presenting it at the Non-Aligned Movement’s heads of state conference in Cairo in 1964 and the Non-Aligned Movement’s Lusaka conference in 1970.¹⁰ In January 1971, Prime Minister Sirimavo Bandaranaike outlined Colombo’s IOZOP proposal at the first Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting. Presciently, she anticipated the use of the Diego Garcia territory for purposes beyond that of a “communications centre.”¹¹ US President Richard Nixon’s deployment of Task Force 74, which included the USS *Enterprise* aircraft carrier, to the Bay of Bengal and the operations of Soviet naval forces in the vicinity during the India-Pakistan 1971 war were vivid demonstrations of great power competitive dynamics in the Indian Ocean.

Decades later, President Gotabaya Rajapaksa resurrected the IOZOP idea in 2020, demonstrating its ongoing relevance.¹² The promotion of a stable regional order is a persistent interest of smaller states in the Indian Ocean and other regions, which find themselves in a position of

⁶ Meera Srinivasan, “Indian Ocean Has to Remain a Zone of Peace: Ajit Doval,” *The Hindu*, December 1, 2014, <https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/south-asia/indian-ocean-has-to-remain-a-zone-of-peace-ajit-doval/article6651325.ece>.

⁷ Abhijit Singh, “The Indian Ocean Zone of Peace: Reality vs. Illusion,” *The Diplomat*, January 7, 2015, <https://thediplomat.com/2015/01/the-indian-ocean-zone-of-peace-reality-vs-illusion>.

⁸ Gamini Keerawella, “The Indian Ocean Space in Sri Lankan Foreign Policy: Evolving Strategic Perceptions Since Independence,” Regional Centre for Strategic Studies (Sri Lanka), 2020, 7, <https://rcss.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/The-Indian-Ocean-Space-in-Sri-Lankan-Foreign-Policy-Prof.-Gamini-Keerawella.pdf>.

⁹ K.P. Misra, “Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace: The Concept and Alternatives,” *India Quarterly* 33, No. 1 (January-March 1977), 1, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/45070608>.

¹⁰ Robert O’Neill and David N. Schwartz, “The Indian Ocean as a ‘Zone of Peace’” in *Hedley Bull on Arms Control, Studies in International Security* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1987), 264.

¹¹ “Indian Ocean Peace Zone Proposed,” *The Star-Phoenix* (Saskatoon, Canada), January 21, 1971, https://books.google.lk/books?id=n-lkAAAAIIBAJ&pg=PA2&dq=1970+Indian+Ocean+Zone+of+Peace+concept&article_id=3600,3719194&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjD_sGbrf71AhUO63MBHb8bC0AQ6AF6BAgJEAI#v=onepage&q=1970%20Indian%20Ocean%20Zone%20of%20Peace%20concept&f=false.

¹² P.K. Balachandran, “President Gotabaya Reiterates Lanka’s Plea to Make the Indian Ocean a Zone of Peace,” *NewsIn.Asia*, October 5, 2020, <https://newsin.asia/president-gotabaya-reiterateslankas-plea-to-make-the-indian-ocean-a-zone-of-peace>.

asymmetry with more powerful states—India, at the regional level (in the case of the Indian Ocean), and the United States and increasingly China, at the global level. Sri Lankan academics have long examined this position, as seen in the title of the book *Security Dilemma of a Small State*¹³ by P.V.J. Jayasekera published in the early 1990s. To address threat perceptions at both the regional and global levels, small states often try to compensate for their lesser defense capabilities by seeking multilateral solutions that emphasize the regional architecture.¹⁴ This approach enhances their security while preserving their autonomy. As a result, many small states in the Indian Ocean, including Sri Lanka, have renewed their pursuit of the aforementioned “New Security Architecture for the Indian Ocean Aimed at a Rules-Based International Order, Consistent with the Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy.”

II. Tools: What Are the Ways to Achieve a New Security Architecture for the Indian Ocean?

Given these drivers of the continued pursuit for stability in the Indian Ocean, this section will consider the tools for achieving a new security architecture in the Indian Ocean.

First, multilateral institutions with participation at the global and regional levels is a means for creating a more stable Indian Ocean. As discussed previously, Sri Lanka and other small states in international affairs have pursued this approach. For example, Colombo used the United Nations and Non-Aligned Movement to put forward the IOZOP concept. At the regional level, Sri Lanka participates in institutions such as the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation (SAARC), Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS), and even launched its own collaborative effort called the Galle Dialogue in 2010.

Second, international law is another key tool for advancing security architecture. While the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) involves the role of the UN global institution, UNCLOS is legally binding on its signatories. Not only is Sri Lanka a signatory, but Colombo takes pride in its contributions to the negotiations of UNCLOS that led up to its conclusion.¹⁵ UNCLOS continues to have particular relevance in an era of great power competition. Washington—which has not ratified UNCLOS, but abides by it—sees a fundamental problem for maritime law under UNCLOS at the heart of these tensions. The past decade of these tensions in the legal domain and in the operational domain at sea led to the creation of Washington’s Free and Open Indo-Pacific strategy. According to a 2022 report from the US Department of State’s Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs:

¹³ P.V.J. Jayasekera, editor, *Security Dilemma of a Small State: Sri Lanka in the South Asian Context*, Institute for International Studies, New Delhi: South Asian Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1992.

¹⁴ Shaheen Afroze, “Small States in Global Perspective: In Search of a Role Model in Regional Stability” in *Small States and Regional Stability in South Asia*, Mohammad Humayun Kabir ed., Dhaka: The University Press, 2005, 19.

¹⁵ Sonali Samarasinghe, “Sri Lanka Statement,” Minister, Permanent Mission of Sri Lanka to the United Nations, 29th Meeting of States Parties to the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, New York: UN Headquarters, June 19, 2019, https://www.un.int/srilanka/statements_speeches/statements-mrs-sonali-samarasinghe-minister-delivered-29th-meeting-states; Dan Malika Gunasekera, “Sri Lanka’s Contribution to the Indian Ocean,” *Daily News* (Sri Lanka), October 12, 2018, <https://www.dailynews.lk/2018/10/12/features/165258/sri-lanka%E2%80%99s-contribution-indian-ocean>.

“The [People’s Republic of China’s] expansive maritime claims in the South China Sea are inconsistent with international law as reflected in the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (“Convention”).”¹⁶

In the context of these great power tensions, small states such as Sri Lanka have engaged in building and maintaining international legal mechanisms and norms such as UNCLOS for the purpose of maintaining stability in the Indian Ocean.

Third, informal groupings—sometimes known as minilaterals—are another way of advancing stability. These interactions are not conducted through formal international organizations, and countries are not held to legal scrutiny in their decision to participate. For example, Sri Lanka has resurrected its NSA-level dialogue and maritime activities with India and Maldives under the rubric of the Colombo Security Conclave.¹⁷ The trilateral grouping began in 2011 and was rebranded in 2021. With some hiccups, the three countries over the past decade have shared information about maritime domain awareness and built habits of cooperation at the diplomatic and military dimensions of interaction.

Beyond the externally oriented ways to achieve a new security architecture, there are also domestic tools for realizing this vision. National defense capacity building is an obvious one, especially for a small state seeking to ensure its survival in the face of external threats. Sri Lanka has a fully developed army, air force, and navy and has expanded its military services in recent years to feature a coast guard and marine corps. For example, Sri Lanka participates in bilateral and multilateral exercises with navies in the Indian Ocean. The Sri Lanka Navy conducts regular exercises with the Indian Navy called SLINEX, and the coast guards of India, Maldives, and Sri Lanka participate in the DOSTI exercise. In the multilateral realm, the Sri Lanka Navy participates in IONS’ meetings.

Finally, strengthening national economies is a key tool for realizing a stable security architecture. The link may not be as apparent as diplomatic relations with bilateral and multilateral partners or national defense capacity building. However, the factor that undergirds the ability to conduct an independent foreign policy and finance military services is the economic security of a nation. Small states are especially vulnerable due to threats at the regional and global levels due to their comparatively lesser size and capabilities. To offset this asymmetry, building economic security is fundamental for contributing to and maintaining a stable regional architecture. Small states are observed to approach this task by, among other options, leveraging their strategic locations.¹⁸ Sri Lanka appears to follow this model as a small state, such as with its extensive port infrastructure at Colombo as a regional transshipment hub.

III. Models: What Are the Possible Visions and Shaping Factors for a New Security Architecture?

¹⁶ US Department of State, Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs, “Limits in the Seas—People’s Republic of China: Maritime Claims in the South China Sea,” No. 150, January 2022, 24, <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/LIS150-SCS.pdf>.

¹⁷ India’s Ministry of Defence, “Colombo Security Conclave Focused Operation between India, Maldives and Sri Lanka,” November 28, 2021, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1775797>.

¹⁸ Naren Prasad, “Small but Smart: Small States in the Global System,” in *The Diplomacies of Small States: Between Vulnerability and Resilience*, ed. Andrew F. Cooper and Timothy M. Shaw (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013), 43, 51.

The first two sections examined the trends and drivers behind the continued pursuit for stability in the Indian Ocean and the tools available to help achieve a “new security architecture for the Indian Ocean aimed at a rules-based international order, consistent with the Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy.” This section will now identify three possible models to help achieve this objective: a status quo model; a regional leader model; and a small states model. They are summarized in the table below. The purpose of this discussion is not to provide a discrete, exhaustive set of options, but rather to conceptualize some alternative ways of thinking about the region’s architecture and facilitate a larger conversation.

Conceptualizing Indian Ocean Architecture			
	<i>Status Quo Model</i>	<i>Regional Leader Model</i>	<i>Small States Model</i>
Regional institutions	IORA; BIMSTEC; ReCAAP	IONS (i.e., India’s founding role)	Singapore’s IFC; AOSIS
Factors			
Global & Regional	The role of international legal mechanisms	Small states seeking to affirm sovereignty	Small states constitute a numerical majority
Internal/ Domestic	Changes in domestic leadership	Resourcing for the regional leader	Asymmetric relationship to major & great powers
Pros & Cons			
Pros	Regional diversity	Streamlined command and control	Highlights agency of small states
Cons	Costs to small states	Challengers to regional leader	Risks irrelevance

Status Quo Model

Maintaining the status quo is an option for Indian Ocean stakeholders and one that deserves to be analyzed for its components. Regional states benefit from participating in multilateral institutions such as Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) and BIMSTEC. The Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP) is an international organization devoted to combating piracy. Countries also contribute to informal groupings such as the Colombo Security Conclave.

This status-quo model can be seen as having particular factors that can shape its outcomes. Among external factors, countries’ willingness to abide by international legal norms contributes to stability in the region. For example, Bangladesh sought the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS) and Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) to resolve its maritime disputes with Myanmar and India, resulting in 2012 and 2014 decisions that have been upheld by all participants. Countries also have internal or domestic factors that shape outcomes of the regional order. For example, Sri Lanka’s pursuit of an IOZOP was altered by change in the country’s domestic leadership in the 1970s under President J.R. Jayewardene and change in Colombo’s threat perceptions of great power naval capability in the Indian Ocean.¹⁹

¹⁹ Gamini Keerawella, “The Indian Ocean Space in Sri Lankan Foreign Policy: Evolving Strategic Perceptions Since Independence,” Regional Centre for Strategic Studies (Sri Lanka), 2020, 7, 9, <https://rcss.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/The-Indian-Ocean-Space-in-Sri-Lankan-Foreign-Policy-Prof.-Gamini-Keerawella.pdf>.

This model presents a set of pros and cons to consider. In terms of pros, the Indian Ocean is a diverse region. While this regional diversity presents challenges in terms of gaining consensus, this trait involves a wide array of countries that resist being controlled by a single power. Second, this diversity entails a reliance on UNCLOS and international law-driven solutions versus nation-state preferences. As an example of this respect for international law, the Indian Ocean is a distinct theater from the Pacific. While US and other allied strategy has begun to link both the Indian Ocean and Pacific Oceans conceptually, the disputes of the Pacific waters stand in contrast to how legal norms and disputes are peacefully resolved in the Indian Ocean.²⁰

In terms of cons, the status quo functions with influences by great powers and regionally dominant countries, sometimes at the expense of small states. An example of this is how Mauritius has steadily pursued international and diplomatic venues in its battle with the UK over the sovereignty of the Chagos Islands. While the small state has notched up victories on the issue, the UK shows no sign of withdrawing its forces—and by extension, the US—to comply with international legal and diplomatic opinion.²¹

Regional Leader Model

Departing from the status quo, this paper considers a second model for Indian Ocean stakeholders. This model would involve a single country with sizable economic, diplomatic, and military capabilities assuming the role of regional leader. For some examples across sub-regions of the Indo-Pacific, India is dominant in South Asia, Australia is the major country in Oceania, and France is a leader in the western Indian Ocean. Given the trends in the Indian Ocean region, India stands out as a country with increasing strategy and policy attention to the entire region, supported by increasing capabilities. Therefore, this model will assume India would be the country that is identified as the regional leader by stakeholders in the region.²²

In terms of regional architecture, India took the initiative to launch the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) in 2008. New Delhi has also devoted greater attention to advancing BIMSTEC as a regional organization, given the difficulties in SAARC's ability to promote regional cooperation due to the India-Pakistan conflict.

This regional leader model can be seen as having particular factors that can shape its outcomes. At the regional level, the Indian Ocean has witnessed a history of countries seeking to maintain their sovereignty in the face of rising countries. For example, smaller countries may not embrace the outcomes of India or any other country serving in a regional leader role. Second, domestic factors may impede a particular country serving as a regional leader—in this case, India. For example, India's internal process of allocating resources to meet national priorities may not permit the actions of India serving effectively as a regional leader. Funding for India's military

²⁰ Nilanthi Samaranayake, "The Indian Ocean's Key Role in the Indo-Pacific Rules-based International Order," in "Indo-Pacific Perspective" ed. Peter Harris, *Journal of Indo-Pacific Affairs*, Air University Press, December 7, 2020, <https://media.defense.gov/2020/Dec/06/2002546906/-1/-1/1/SAMARANAYAKE.PDF>.

²¹ Nilanthi Samaranayake, "The Chagos Archipelago Dispute: Law, Diplomacy and Military Basing," *Lawfare*, October 6, 2020, <https://www.lawfareblog.com/chagos-archipelago-dispute-law-diplomacy-and-military-basing>.

²² Still, the model is flexible and can incorporate another country as desired.

services shows the funding priority is not to the navy and its work in the maritime domain.²³ Other stakeholders could offer resources to India serving this role, but the resources may be insufficient for significant activities such as building capacity which smaller countries at present are already seeking externally.

This model presents a set of pros and cons to consider. In terms of pros, identifying a country to act as a single regional leader presents a streamlined, command and control (C2) architecture for a diverse Indian Ocean region. This is a model that may be of interest to extraregional stakeholders. For example, Washington could see value in focusing its attention on a few key allies and partners as it focuses on a new era of strategic competition.²⁴ The US highlighting the Quad (with India, Japan, and Australia) can be seen as an example of this focusing device. A streamlined, C2 structure with India as the regional leader would facilitate prioritization of finite time and limited funds by Washington, located far away.

In terms of cons, this model's trajectory may not adequately incorporate changing geostrategic and regional-level factors. For example, if India serves as regional leader, other countries may seek to challenge its status. Despite being an extraregional actor, China is rising in its global capabilities, and trends suggest it may seek a greater presence in the Indian Ocean.²⁵ It has already established one military base (in Djibouti) and could seek additional bases as an indicator of increased regional presence.

At the regional level, other countries may seek to contest India as a sole regional leader. Pakistan is a continual thorn in India's side, given their history of conflict. Meanwhile, Bangladesh is another potential contender to leave its standing as a smaller country and be a meaningful regional leader. Dhaka has a rising economy, set to graduate from least developed countries (LDC) status in 2026; has withstood the travails of the pandemic to maintain robust foreign exchange reserves, where it performed a first-ever currency swap to assist Sri Lanka; and has built its disaster resilience capacity to gradually move away from being a well-known *recipient* of disaster relief to becoming a *provider* of disaster relief to its neighbors, such as Maldives and Sri Lanka.²⁶

Small States Model

A third model can be considered for Indian Ocean stakeholders. This model puts at its center the interests of smaller states, referred to subsequently as "small states" as a shorthand. Therefore, this model focuses on small states taking the lead in the Indian Ocean region to advance stability.

²³ Nilanthi Samaranyake, "India's Naval and Maritime Power" in *Conceptualizing Maritime & Naval Strategy: Festschrift for Captain Peter M. Swartz, United States Navy (ret.)*, eds. Sebastian Bruns and Sarandis Papadopoulos (Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 2020), 250.

²⁴ White House, *Interim National Security Strategic Guidance*, March 2021, 20, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/NSC-1v2.pdf>.

²⁵ Bernard D. Cole, *China's Quest for Great Power: Ships, Oil, and Foreign Policy* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2016), 88-89.

²⁶ Nilanthi Samaranyake, "Non-Traditional Security in the Bay of Bengal," Observer Research Foundation, December 13, 2021, <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/non-traditional-security-in-the-bay-of-bengal>; Nilanthi Samaranyake, "Bay of Bengal as a Microcosmic Model for Law Of The Sea In The Indian Ocean," International University of Bangladesh, Conference on "Moving Forward in the Indo-Pacific: Bangladesh's Role in Fostering An Open, Resilient, and Interconnected Bay of Bengal and Beyond" March 31, 2022.

Small states have shown a desire to advance regionalism. For example, Singapore's Information Fusion Centre (IFC) serves as a useful institution for information-sharing with multinational participation through international liaison officers, including many from the Indian Ocean region.²⁷ Maldives has served as the chair of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), which assembles small countries concerned about the effects of climate change.²⁸

The small states model can be seen as having particular factors that shape its outcomes. Externally, much attention is paid to great powers and regionally dominant countries. Yet, at the global level, small states constitute the majority of the international community.²⁹ They also comprise a numerical majority at the regional level in the Indian Ocean.

Internally, small states are characterized by their fewer capabilities compared with major and great powers. As a result, they have an asymmetric power relationship to major and great powers.³⁰ For example in South Asia, India has long been the regionally dominant country, with the smaller South Asian (SSA) countries having faced threats of India's previous military and intelligence operations in their countries.³¹

The small states model presents a set of pros and cons to consider. In terms of pros, it focuses on empowering smaller countries who may feel their voices are unheard in the backdrop of a focus on great power competition and regional rivalries. A focus on building out this model may hold appeal to assemble the numerical majority of small states internationally and serve as a source of moral authority in an era characterized by contestation of the rules-based international order. Second, while small states are defined by their lesser size and capability, small states can also be characterized by their surprising strengths.³² For example, Sri Lanka is a regional leader with Colombo often ranking as the busiest port in South Asia. Small states can provide military basing for larger powers as seen in Seychelles and the United Arab Emirates.

Regarding cons, the implementation of this model risks irrelevance through a focus on only like-stakeholders, united by their differences from larger and major powers. If great powers and regional countries are not incentivized to engage in this model, small states may not be helped through this vehicle for collective action. Great powers and regional leaders may continue to focus on their interests, without attention to small states' regional objectives.

²⁷ Ministry of Defence and the Singapore Armed Forces, "Fact Sheet on Information Fusion Centre (IFC) and Launch of IFC Real-Time Information-Sharing System (IRIS)," May 14, 2019,

https://www.mindef.gov.sg/web/portal/mindef/news-and-events/latest-releases/article-detail/2019/May/14may19_fs.

²⁸ Maldives Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Maldives Chairmanship of the Alliance of Small Island States, August 31, 2020, <https://www.gov.mv/en/publications/small-states#:~:text=Maldives%20assumed%20the%20Chairmanship%20of,through%20an%20year%20of%20milestones>.

²⁹ Matthias Maass, *Small States in World Politics: The Story of Small State Survival, 1648-2016* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017), 34, 152.

³⁰ Anders Wivel, Alyson J.K. Bailes, and Clive Archer, "Setting the Scene: Small States and International Security," in *Small States and International Security: Europe and Beyond*, ed. Clive Archer, Alyson J.K. Bailes, and Anders Wivel (New York: Routledge, 2014), 8–9.

³¹ Nilanthi Samaranayake, *China's Engagement with Smaller South Asian Countries* (Washington: United States Institute of Peace, 2019), 15-16.

³² Nilanthi Samaranayake, "Indian Ocean Island States and the Quad Plus," *Journal of Indo-Pacific Affairs* 3, no. 5 (2020): 233.

Conclusion

At the recommendation of the PFIOOSC Phase I, this paper has studied the “prospects for a new security architecture for the Indian Ocean aimed at a rules-based international order, consistent with the Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy.” First, the paper considered the reasons for developing a new security architecture for the Indian Ocean region at the present time. The discussion revealed the persistence of the desire for an IOZOP—a proposal that peaked in the 1970s and has seen a resurgence in the past decade. Rising threat perceptions of small states, especially when considering their asymmetric position in a new era of great power competition, are a key driver of their search for a stable regional order.

Second, the paper examined the range of available tools for achieving a new security architecture in the Indian Ocean. These include multilateral institutions at the global and regional level; international law such as UNCLOS; informal groupings or minilaterals, conducted beneath the level of formal international organizations; and domestic tools such as policies to build defense capacity and strengthen economic security.

Third, the paper presented three models to develop a new security architecture for the Indian Ocean: a status quo model, a regional leader model, and a small states model. Each model identifies examples of regional institutions, external and internal factors that can shape outcomes, and a set of associated pros and cons to consider. This discussion is not intended to be exhaustive but rather to inform a wider discussion about regional security architecture.

Through an examination of these three models, the paper finds that the status quo model may hold the most benefit for the majority of Indian Ocean countries based on historical trends and the current climate of great power competition. A regional leader model would likely benefit the interests of great and major powers, but it would do so at the expense of small states. Meanwhile, a small states model risks becoming irrelevant because great and major powers would likely proceed as they currently do with comparatively less concern for smaller states.

A benefit of the status quo model is the emphasis placed on international law and its applicability to the entire international community. The benefit of this model to smaller states can be seen in the resolution of Bangladesh’s maritime disputes. While legal norms are actively being contested in Pacific waters, they are still largely (and peacefully) upheld in the Indian Ocean. Even Mauritius’s dispute with the UK—though so far ineffective in changing the situation on the ground—has remained in the realm of law and diplomacy. Despite various efforts in the past decade to link the Indian and Pacific Oceans in strategy, the Indian Ocean remains a distinct theater from the Pacific.³³ This trend may not always hold, but it is a dynamic that works in favor of Indian Ocean security and regional stakeholders at present—including small states.

If none of these models is an acceptable path forward, then what are the alternatives that Indian Ocean stakeholders should consider? This paper encourages the development of additional models and the identification of shaping factors, informed by an assessment of the trends,

³³ Nilanthi Samaranayake, “The Indian Ocean’s Key Role in the Indo-Pacific Rules-based International Order,” in “Indo-Pacific Perspective” ed. Peter Harris, *Journal of Indo-Pacific Affairs*, Air University Press, December 7, 2020, <https://media.defense.gov/2020/Dec/06/2002546906/-1/-1/1/SAMARANAYAKE.PDF>.

drivers, and available tools for envisioning a new security architecture for the Indian Ocean aimed at protecting a rules-based international order. Ongoing dialogue to this end, conducted on an annual or biennial basis, will help equip Indian Ocean stakeholders with new concepts and tools to enhance the architecture of their dynamic region.