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A Historical Analysis of IORA: Building a Case for Pakistan's Membership

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Background

Despite being a primary littoral state in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR),¹ Pakistan's maritime potential remains at the mercy of hegemonic whims; these are manifested by actors based within and external variables controlled by a neighbour that considers the IOR as its "backyard".² An important case in point is Pakistan's continued exclusion from the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), which remains the largest inter-governmental multilateral forum focused on the IOR.

Since the inception of IORA almost three decades ago, successive Pakistani governments have failed to accord due priority to its membership. The obvious result of these non-serious or weak efforts is that Pakistan has, today, become an isolated oddity in the larger regional maritime neighbourhood, even lagging behind "user" countries (US, UK, China, Japan, Russia etc.), let alone the hinterland states (Afghanistan, Turkey etc.), as defined by Dr Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema.³

After a thorough literature review, the author of this paper concluded that while the literature on IORA is sufficiently available for academics, there are very few substantive publications that present its overall historical analysis. More so, asserting a case for Pakistan's membership necessitated the conduct of thorough research, which could serve as a strong foundation for subsequent lobbying. This paper attempts to fill that gap and serve as a comprehensive reference point for current and future academic discourse around the subject.

Research and Analysis Framework

The paper relies extensively on the information made available through IORA's official website and a breadth of secondary sources (articles, periodicals, books, papers etc.) published over the past decades.

To present a holistic and integrated outlook into the forum, the author of this paper denotes 1995 as the starting point of his research (marking

IORA's conceptual inception) and concludes in December 2021. Initiatives, policies and programmes promulgated from January 2022 have been intentionally excluded to maintain a static analytical timeframe.

The paper begins by tracing the origins of IORA and proceeds with a macro-level overview of its evolution over the past decades before analysing the forum's focus areas and themes in detail. Once readers have been familiarised with the workings of IORA alongwith knowledge of key influential actors, the paper examines the composition of members and dialogue partners and compares their overall standing in other prominent regional inter-governmental multilateral institutions by evaluating them in a novel "scorecard"; Pakistan is included in this closer examination.

Near the end of the paper, the author shares primary and secondary accounts of efforts made by Pakistan to secure membership in IORA before presenting a set of noteworthy observations based on the conduct of various external actors. It concludes with a SWOT Analysis of Pakistan's diplomatic approaches to IORA and a proposed way forward for the Government of Pakistan.

Origins of IORA

The origins of IORA can be found in a lecture delivered in January 1995 in India by visiting South African President, the late Nelson Mandela. Speaking at the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation, Mandela paid rich tribute to the people of India, particularly three figures who influenced him personally; Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and Rajiv Gandhi. Quoting Nehru, Mandela said that the "natural urge of the facts of history and geography" should "include exploring the concept of an Indian Ocean Rim of socio-economic cooperation and other peaceful endeavours" that could help developing countries within multilateral institutions "such as the United Nations, Commonwealth and Non-Aligned Movement".⁴

IORA was initially named the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation (IOR-ARC). In his inaugural address, Mandela envisioned

that the platform would provide regional countries to cooperate in promoting trade and investment, technology transfer, and tourism, as well as “reinforce” bilateral relations.⁵ Subsequently, the First International Meeting of Experts was held in Mauritius (1995) to discuss the modalities of this forum.⁶

Evolution of IORA

Following its inaugural meeting, IOR-ARC held its First Ministerial Meeting, also in Mauritius (1997). It was attended by 14 member states: Australia, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mauritius, Mozambique, Oman, Singapore, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tanzania and Yemen. The majority of participants were from the Asian continent, followed by Africa. Within Asia, countries from South and Southeast Asia participated with equal representation while East African countries dominated the African side.⁷

Organisational structuring of the IOR-ARC was ongoing by 1998 when a Pilot Coordination Mechanism (PCM) was created in Mauritius. Keertee Coomar (Kailash) Ruhee, a former Minister for Agriculture in the government of Mauritian Prime Minister Anerood Jugnauth,⁸ was appointed the first Director General (DG) of the forum by Jugnauth’s successor, Navinchandra Ramgoolam (Ruhee would resign two years later and serve as Ramgoolam’s Chief of Staff during the latter’s second term as premier and also Ambassador to the US).⁹

The PCM was renamed “Coordinating Secretariat” the following year (1999), and institutional documents were finalised through a meeting of legal experts in Mozambique. At the turn of the second millennium (2000), IOR-ARC was formally accredited with diplomatic status for the forum and its associated officers. By 2004, IOR-ARC’s first specialised agency, Fisheries Support Unit (FSU), was setup in Oman to promote sustainable fishery practices.¹⁰

A further two years later (2006), IOR-ARC Special Fund was established to

implement activities and studies in Iran.¹¹ In 2008, IOR-ARC established a Regional Centre for Science and Technology (RCSTT) in Iran,¹² the only other specialised agency of the forum besides the FSU in Oman.

Till the end of 2021, IORA comprised 23 member states (Australia, Bangladesh, Comoros, France, India, Indonesia, Iran, Kenya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritius, Mozambique, Oman, Seychelles, Singapore, Somalia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Thailand, UAE, and Yemen)¹³ and 10 dialogue partners (China, Egypt, Germany, Italy, Japan, Korea [South], Russia, Turkey, UK, and the US).¹⁴

IORA Secretariat

The current organisational structure of IORA consists of a Secretary-General assisted by various administrative and managerial staff; four Directors and experts report to him, who are on voluntary secondment from various member states; the Secretary-General also liaises directly with experts through a Chief Coordinator Policy & Projects (Figure 1).

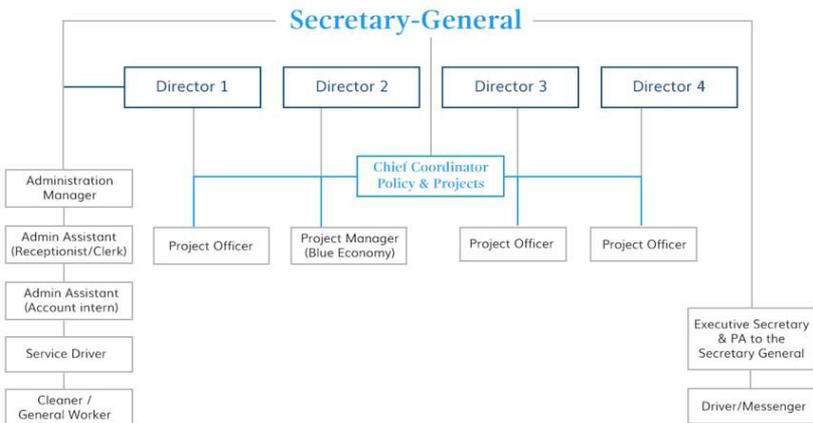


Figure 1¹⁵

At any given time, the IORA Secretariat has 17 full-time staff members. The current batch of four Directors comprises one each from Australia, Bangladesh, India, and South Africa, while an Information &

Communications Technology (ICT) Adviser is also on secondment from India.¹⁶ The incumbent Chief Coordinator at IORA Secretariat, although a Mauritian national, is a former trainee of India's Ministry of External Affairs' Training Course for IORA Diplomats (2013).¹⁷

Focus Areas

IORA has focused on eight different themes or focus areas for priority attention and cooperation (in no order of precedence):¹⁸

1. Maritime Safety and Security.
2. Trade and Investment Facilitation.
3. Fisheries Management.
4. Blue Economy.
5. Academia, Science and Technology.
6. Women's Economic Empowerment.
7. Disaster Risk Management.
8. Tourism and Cultural Exchanges.

1. Maritime Safety & Security: IORA includes elements of international peace and security, sovereignty and territorial integrity, crimes at/from the sea and environmental security in this focus area. The IORA Leaders' Summit in Indonesia (2017) gave renewed impetus to this theme, leading to the establishment of the IORA Working Group on MSS in 2018.¹⁹

Trend analysis of IORA meetings centred on Maritime Safety & Security (**Figure2**) reveals the following:

- Most of the meetings were convened physically in, or virtually by, Sri Lanka.
- All six countries that hosted relevant meetings and virtual conferences are littoral states in the IOR, except China.

IORA Maritime Safety & Security Meetings/ Workshops/ Conferences (till end of 2021)

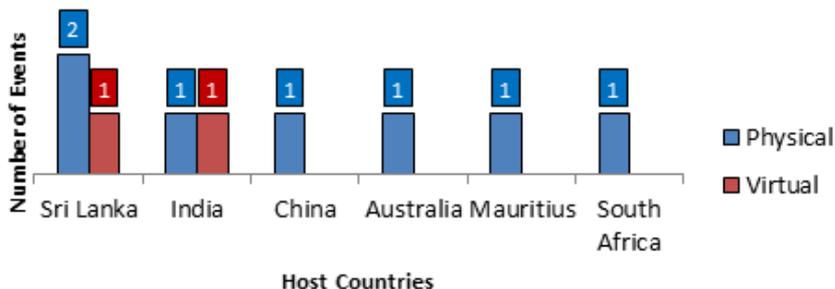


Figure 2²⁰

2. Trade and Investment Facilitation: IORA caters for a region from where half of the world's containers ship and two-thirds of oil shipments transit regularly. The forum has an initiative called IORA Business Forum (IORBF) and a Working Group on Trade and Investment (WGTI). In 2021, IORA partnered with the UK-based Global Trade Review (GTR) to participate in its array of regional trade conferences.

IORA's Action Plan for 2017-2021 established seven targets to be achieved during this timeframe:

- Capacity-building for the reduction in trade barriers.
- Promoting Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs).
- Establishing an online IORA Trade Repository for business facilitation.
- Establishing an Investment Guide.²¹

Trend analysis of IORA meetings centred on Trade & Investment Facilitation (**Figure3**) reveals the following:

- India was the predominant host for trade and business-related meetings of IORA members, followed closely by Mauritius and Iran (two from South Asia and one from West Asia).

- Italy hosted virtual meetings only and remained the only non-littoral host.

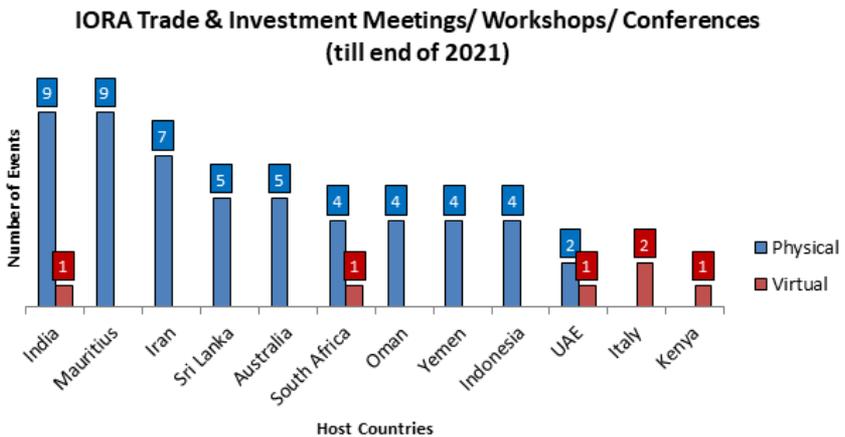


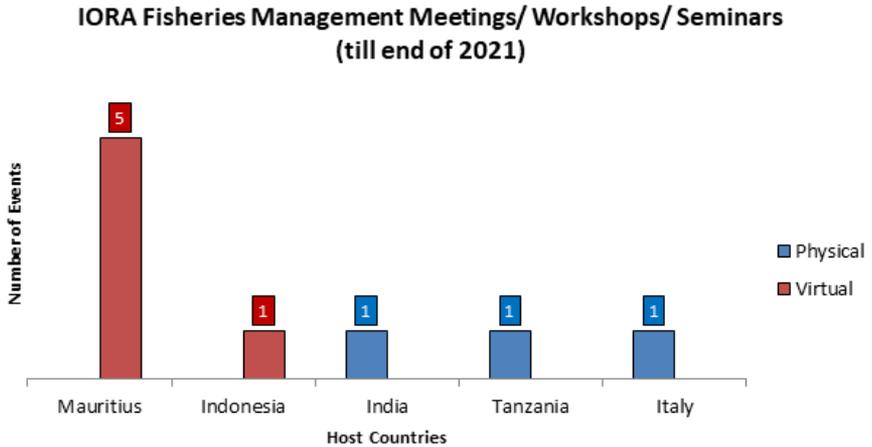
Figure 3²²

3. Fisheries Management: IORA set up its Fisheries Support Unit (FSU) in Oman that spearheads collective efforts to identify and discuss relevant issues in an ongoing Action Plan. It is also a regional centre for knowledge-sharing and capacity-building among member states. Members intend to incorporate fisheries management at the core of their maritime policy so that global demand for fish consumption can be addressed through aquaculture.²³

Trend analysis of IORA meetings centred on Fisheries Management (**Figure 4**) reveals the following:-

- The majority of fisheries-related events were organised by the IORA Secretariat in Mauritius; all of these were funded by the Agence Française de Développement or French Development Agency (AFD) in 2021. France’s application for membership in IORA was unanimously accepted a few months prior to the first sponsored webinar.²⁴
- India and Mauritius are the only South Asian countries that hosted meetings relevant to fisheries management.

- The active interest of France and Italy indicates European interest in regional fishing.

Figure 4²⁵

4. **Blue Economy:** This focus area was collectively recognised during IORA's 14th Ministerial Meeting in Australia (2014), while the first related IORA Ministerial Blue Economy Conference (BEC) was held in Mauritius the following year. At the second IORA Ministerial BEC in Indonesia (2017), member states adopted the Jakarta Declaration on the Blue Economy to consolidate existing financial instruments in the IOR (within member states).²⁶

IORA also setup a Blue Economy Working Group (WGBE) under the Action Plan 2017-2021. Six priority areas for the Blue Economy were listed:

- Fisheries and Aquaculture.
- Renewable Ocean Energy.
- Seaports and Shipping.
- Offshore Hydrocarbons and Seabed Minerals.
- Marine Biotechnology, Research and Development.

- Tourism.²⁷

Trend analysis of IORA meetings centred on Fisheries Management (**Figure 5**) reveals the following:

The majority of the events were hosted by Mauritius, followed by Indonesia and Australia, an overwhelming share of African and “Indo-Pacific”²⁸ countries in the blue economy discourse.

Korea (South), China and Germany are non-littoral IOR countries and are the “users”, as described by Dr Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema.

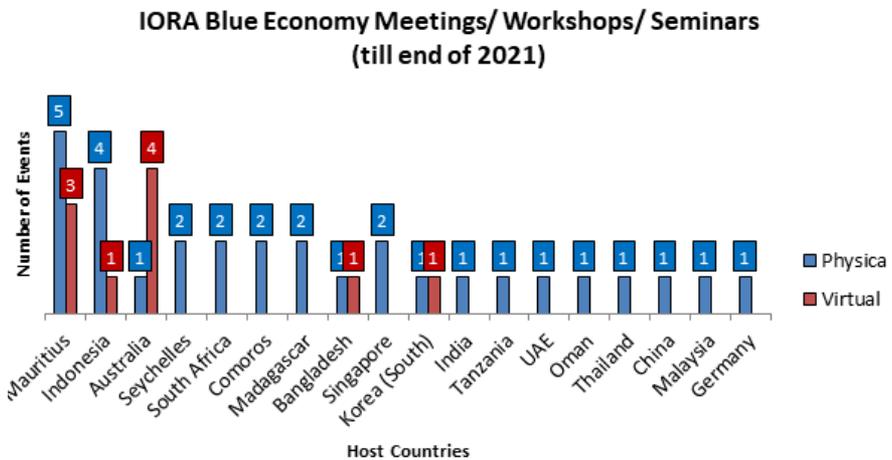


Figure 5²⁹

5. Academia, Science & Technology: IORA members adopted the Jakarta Accord (2017) that commits to strengthening cooperation in academia, science and technology. Some of the prominent forums/initiatives toward this were achieved through the IORA Academic Group (IORAG) and the establishment of the Working Group on Science, Technology and Innovation (WGSTI) as a functional mechanism.³⁰ IORA also initiated the Expert Group Meeting on Academic, Science and Technology Cooperation (EGMASTC) in late 2019, an ad-hoc inter-governmental gathering.³¹

Trend analysis of IORA meetings centred on Academia, Science & Technology (**Figure 6**) reveals the following:

- Most of the events were convened in Mauritius, followed closely by Sri Lanka.
- Iran and India were ahead of Australia in these events.
- Indonesia was an active host from the ASEAN region.

IORA Academia, Science & Technology Meetings/ Workshops/ Seminars (till end of 2021)

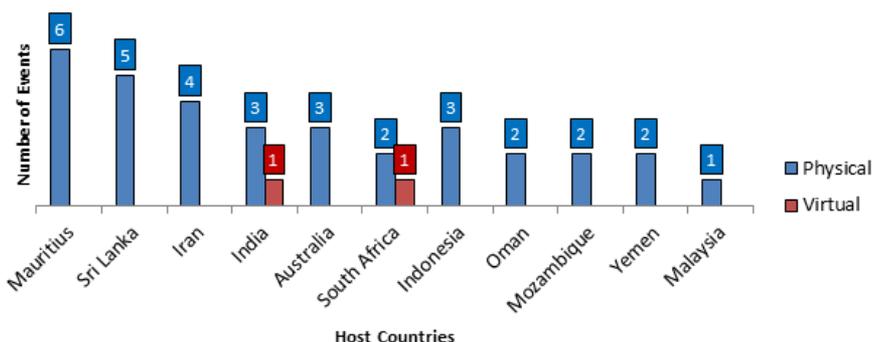


Figure 6³²

6. Women's Economic Empowerment: This area was prioritised by IORA after a Council of Ministers (COM) meeting in Australia (2013). Subsequently, a Working Group on Women's Economic Empowerment (WGWE) was established in 2018 and is currently chaired by Iran.³³

Trend analysis of IORA meetings centred on Women's Economic Empowerment (**Figure 7**) reveals the following:

- Australia took the lead in sponsoring events, all of them virtual, benefiting from the post-COVID-19 circumstances. These events were almost exclusively in partnership with UN Women.
- The only other littoral IOR countries with multiple hosting duties were Mauritius and India.
- The US co-hosted an event alongside Australia, albeit virtually.

- Despite being the relevant chair, Iran has not hosted any event (physical/ virtual) yet.

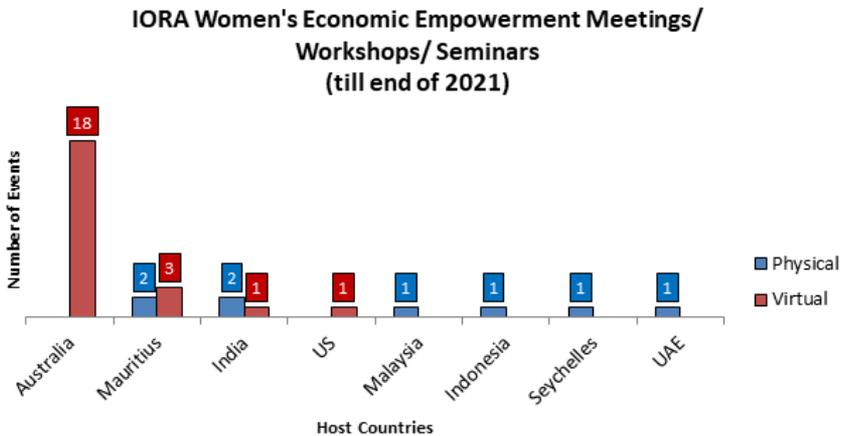


Figure 7³⁴

7. Disaster Risk Management: IORA’s focus on Disaster Risk Management is based on preparation, mitigation and recovery. To this end, the forum recognises the “multidisciplinary” nature of the issue. Thus, it also incorporates stakeholders from academia, non-governmental organisations, partners, donors, members of the civil society and private sector organisations.

Currently, India leads the IORA Core Group on Disaster Risk Management, which also includes Indonesia, Mauritius, Mozambique and Sri Lanka. IORA member states are working toward finalising a Regional Work Plan and Guidelines for Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief.³⁵

Trend analysis of IORA meetings centred on Women’s Economic Empowerment (**Figure 8**) reveals the following:-

- Germany is the only non-littoral IOR country to take the lead in hosting and supporting relevant events, directly or through the support of its development agency, the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ). The event supported by

GIZ was held with the help of the United Nations Satellite Centre (UNOSAT) of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR).³⁶

- As a leader of the Core Group on Disaster Risk Management, India remains an active front-runner in hosting relevant events.

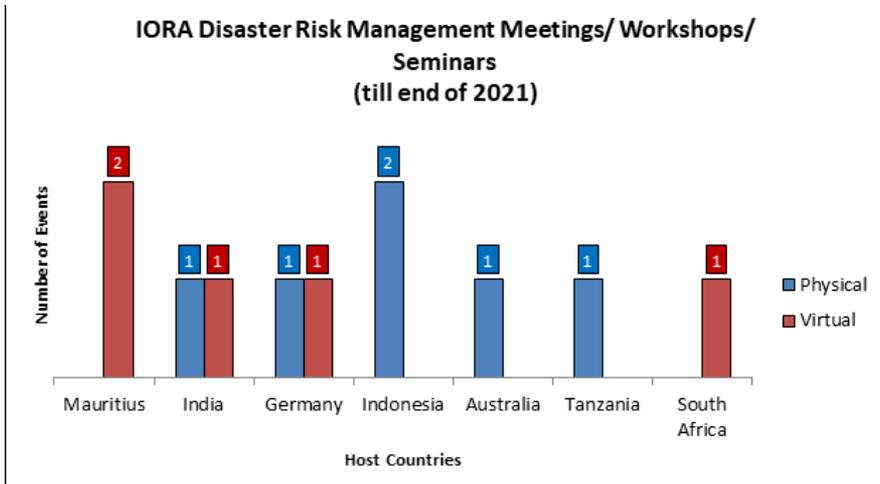


Figure 8³⁷

8. Tourism & Cultural Exchanges: This is one of the key soft power focus areas for IORA. The Jakarta Accord (2017) adopted by member states promotes increased people-to-people interaction, community-based and eco-tourism, cultural heritage preservation and augmenting regional connectivity through direct flights and shipping/ cruising services.

To this end, IORA established a Core Group on Tourism Work Plan and several meetings were hosted. IORA Secretariat (Mauritius) also launched a Tourism Newsletter. The UAE is presently the Coordinator of the Core Group on Tourism.³⁸

Trend analysis of IORA meetings centred on Tourism & Cultural Exchanges (**Figure 9**) reveals the following:

- African countries (South Africa and Mauritius) hosted the most

events.

- Countries in South Asia hosted the second highest number of events.
- Italy is the only non-littoral IOR country to host relevant events.

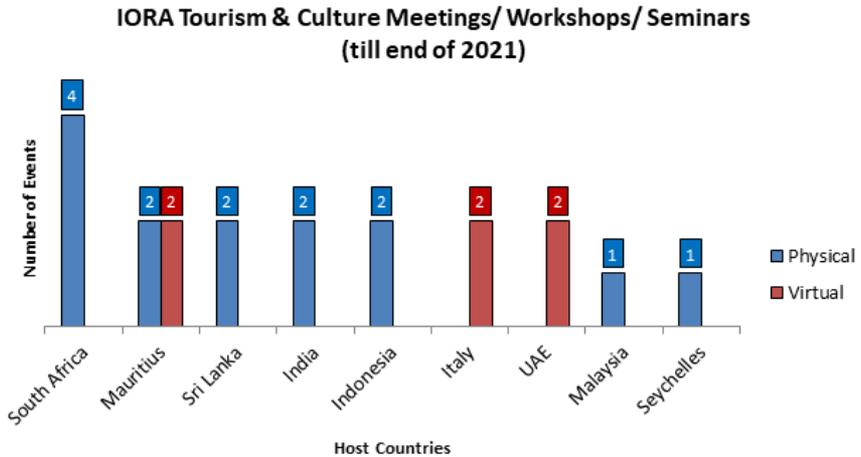


Figure 9³⁹

A cumulative examination of these eight focus areas (defined by IORA itself) reveals even more interesting insights(**Table 1**)(**Figure 10**):

- By virtue of hosting the IORA Secretariat, Mauritius hosted the highest number of events (four out of eight focus areas).
- Except for Mauritius, no other littoral IOR country has a recurring role as a host.
- Italy remains the most active non-littoral IOR country (“user country”) to host IORA events.
- Among non-littoral IOR countries, only East Asian countries (China, Korea [South]) have participated actively in focus areas related to Maritime Safety and Security and also the Blue Economy.
- Non-littoral IOR countries have not hosted any event for IORA covering Academia, Science and Technology.

- Fisheries Management is a major focus area of recurring interest for both littoral and non-littoral IOR countries.
- From a Pakistani perspective, India's dominance in event hosting is limited only to the focus area pertaining to Trade & Investment Facilitation.

Focus Area (IORA)	Littoral IOR Country Lead	Non-Littoral IOR Country Lead
1. Maritime Safety and Security	Sri Lanka	China
2. Trade and Investment Facilitation	India	Italy
3. Fisheries Management	Mauritius	Italy
4. Blue Economy	Mauritius	Korea (South)
5. Academia, Science & Technology	Mauritius	-
6. Women's Economic Empowerment	Australia	US
7. Disaster Risk Management	Mauritius	Germany
8. Tourism & Cultural Exchange	South Africa	Italy

Table 1¹⁰

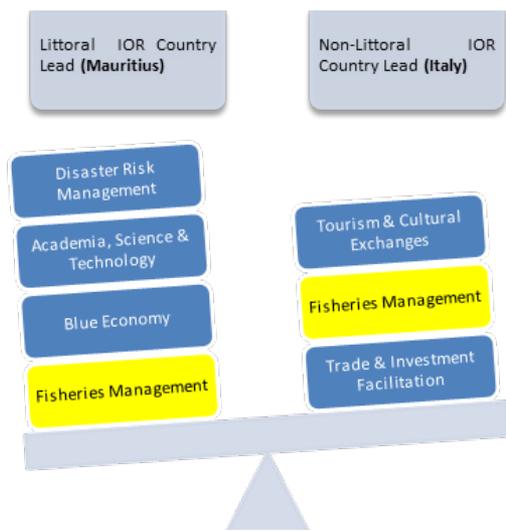


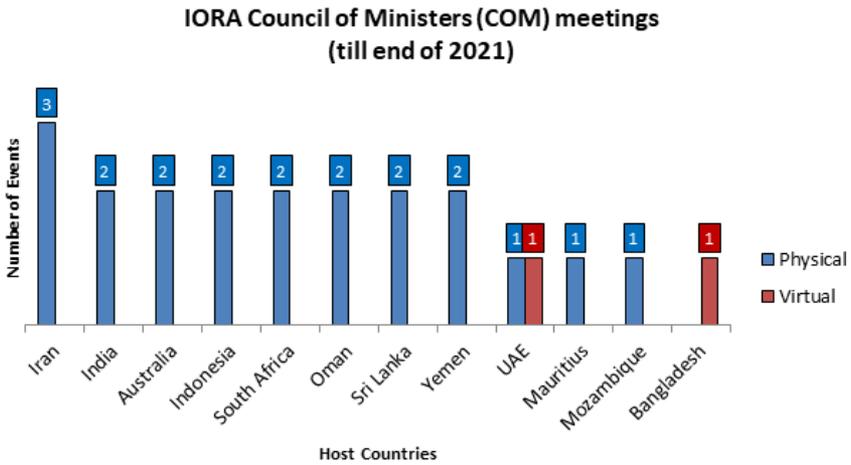
Figure 10⁴¹

Prominent IORA Conventions

1. Council of Ministers (COM): The COM is the highest and most influential policymaking authority in the IORA that convenes at least once a year. The COM also elects a Chair and Vice Chair for a 2-year period.⁴²

COMs have been convened annually since 1999, with the exception of the years 2002 and 2005 (reasons for which are not known). A trend analysis of host countries reveals the following (**Figure 11**):-

- Contrary to popular belief, Iran has convened the most number of COMs, followed closely by India. Both these countries share land and maritime borders with Pakistan.
- Western IOR countries are the recurring hosts. Only Indonesia and Australia have performed similar hosting duties from the Eastern IOR.
- Surprisingly, despite being the host country for IORA Secretariat, Mauritius as a country itself has just convened one COM meeting.

Figure 11⁴³

Further, if we examine members nominated as Chair and Vice Chair of IORA (under COM directions), trend analysis reveals the following (**Figures 12 & 13**):

- For IORA Chair, Iran and Sri Lanka have been nominated the most. Both countries fall in the northern hemisphere.
- For Vice Chair, Australia and South Africa have been nominated the most. Both fall in the southern hemisphere.
- Cumulatively, the following countries have been nominated the most for both chairs: Iran, Australia and South Africa. To put it another way, Iran has been the leading representation from the northern hemisphere or the section of IOR that forms part of Pakistan's maritime area of interest.
- Surprisingly, India falls behind countries such as Sri Lanka and Yemen in terms of cumulative (Chair + Vice Chair) nominations.
- Mauritius, the host of the IORA Secretariat, was nominated the least (Chair only, not for Vice Chair).

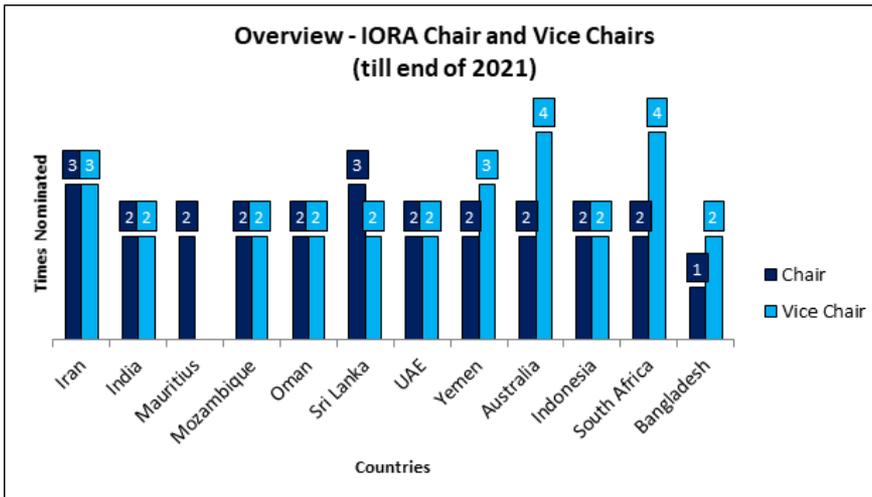


Figure 12⁴⁴

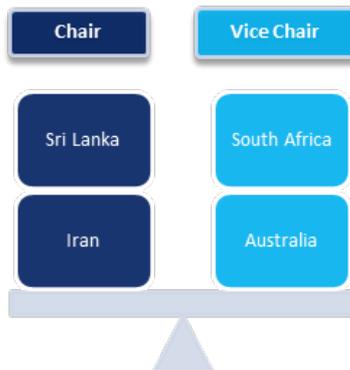
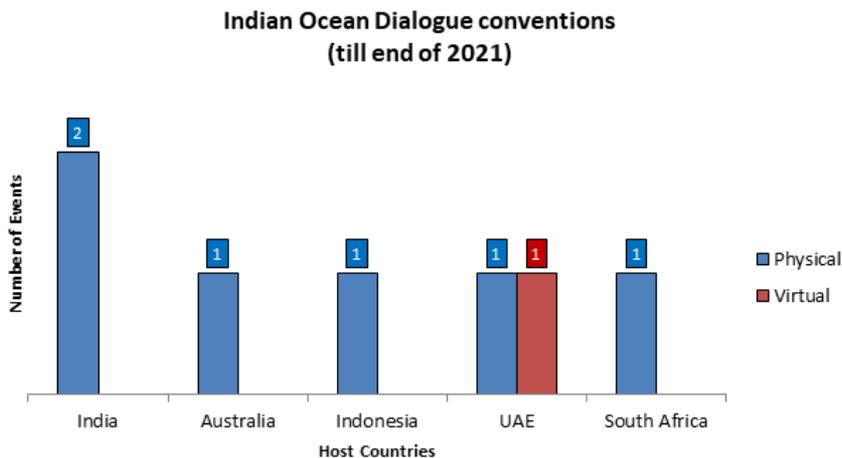


Figure 13⁴⁵

2. Indian Ocean Dialogue (IOD): It is one of the most significant flagship projects of IORA. The idea for IOD emerged after the COM meeting in Australia (2013), while its inaugural convention was hosted by India. The IOD functions as a “stand-alone” Track 1.5 discussion representing members of the government, intelligentsia and civil society.⁴⁶

IOD conventions have been convened annually since 2014, with the exception of 2020 due to COVID-19. A trend analysis of host countries reveals the following (**Figure 14**):

- India and the UAE have been recurring hosts.
- India is the only host for IOD conventions from South Asia.
- Non-littoral IOR countries have not (yet) convened any IOD.

Figure 14⁴⁷

Diplomatic Clout of IORA Members & Dialogue Partners

To understand the diplomatic clout of IORA members and dialogue partners from a broader perspective, examining their ranking with regard to participation in regional governmental multilateral forums/architectures is imperative.

The author of this paper has developed a scorecard (**Annexure I**). Each member state and dialogue observer has been given a score of “1” if they are a member or observer in thirteen carefully-shortlisted regional governmental architectures besides IORA. Their cumulative scores (out of 13) determine the overall ranking in terms of presence and may not necessarily indicate their level of influence. These shortlisted forums include:

1. The Memorandum of Understanding on Port State Control for

the Indian Ocean Region (IOMOU): It is an inter-governmental organisation on Port State Control (PSC) in IOR recognised by International Maritime Organisation (IMO).⁴⁸ The concept for IOMOU emerged during the International Maritime Convention (1997). Subsequently, the Government of India, in 1997, coordinated with the then Secretary-General of the IMO to conduct the first preparatory meeting. The MOU came into effect in 1999.⁴⁹

2. Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS): An initiative by the Indian Navy in 2007 that evolved from a scientific conference to a full-fledged forum for cooperation and collaboration among navies of littoral IOR countries.⁵⁰
3. Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC): Established in 1993 at the 105th Session of the Council of the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations (UN). Members can make decisions concerning the management of tuna and tuna-like resources and associated environments that are binding upon all.⁵¹
4. Indian Ocean Commission (IOC): Commission de l'Océan Indien (COI), or IOC, is an inter-governmental organisation that links African IOR nations as members along with observers. It was created in 1982 in Mauritius and institutionalised by the 1984 Victoria Agreement in Seychelles. Like IORA, the headquarters of IOC is also situated in Mauritius.⁵²
5. Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN)/ ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF): The forum was established in 1967 in Thailand. It works within an institutional and legally-binding framework to accelerate economic growth, social progress, and cultural development and promote regional peace and stability.⁵³ The ARF is a platform within ASEAN that aims to construct dialogue/consultation on political and security issues of concern. It also regularly engages in confidence-building and preventive diplomacy in the Asia Pacific.⁵⁴
6. Pacific Islands Forum (PIF): Founded in 1971, it is the Pacific region's premier political and economic policy organisation. Inclusion of this forum in the scorecard was considered necessary, keeping in view that some of its prominent members and dialogue partners are proponents of the "Indo-Pacific" concept and concurrently littoral

IOR countries.⁵⁵

7. Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO): A permanent inter-governmental organisation established in 2001 by China, Russia, and a few former Soviet republics. The SCO aims to strengthen mutual trust and neighbourliness among member states, promote political, economic, cultural, technical, energy, environmental and research cooperation; maintain and ensure peace and stability in the region and strive for a “rational new international political and economic order”.⁵⁶
8. African Union (AU): A continental body established in 2002 as a successor to the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) instituted in 1963. Its main objectives include promoting unity and solidarity among African states, defending territorial integrity and sovereignty, eradicating all forms of colonialism and striving for the betterment of the peoples of Africa.⁵⁷
9. South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC): to improve the quality of life and welfare of the peoples of South Asia, accelerate economic growth, social progress, and cultural development, strengthen collective self-reliance among members and cooperate in technical and scientific fields.⁵⁸
10. Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC): It was established in 1997, known formally as Bangladesh-India-Sri Lanka-Thailand Economic Cooperation of BIST-EC.⁵⁹ It aims to create an enabling environment for “rapid” economic development, accelerate social progress and promote active collaboration and mutual assistance in economic, social, technical and scientific fields and to maintain peace and stability in the Bay of Bengal.⁶⁰
11. Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC): A regional economic forum established in 1989 to leverage the growing inter-dependence of the Asia Pacific region. It aims to create greater prosperity for the peoples of the region through balanced, inclusive, sustainable, innovative and secure growth alongside regional economic integration.⁶¹

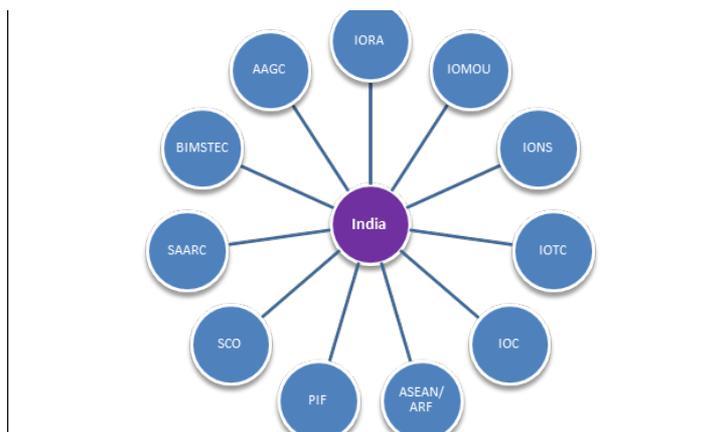
12. Belt & Road Initiative (BRI): Formerly known as One Belt One Road (OBOR), the BRI is a global infrastructure development strategy by the Chinese government that emerged in 2013.⁶² It was incorporated into the Constitution of China in 2017.⁶³
13. Asia-Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC): It is an economic cooperation agreement between the governments of India, Japan and multiple African countries that emerged in 2017.⁶⁴ Some commentators say the AAGC is a counterbalance to China's BRI.⁶⁵

Informal groupings (Quad, BRICS, Colombo Security Conclave etc.) and platforms managed by non-governmental organisations or semi-official administrations have been intentionally excluded to keep the analysis of formal, government-led diplomacy a priority.

The results of the scorecard (out of 13 for each country) yielded very interesting results:

- India leads all other IORA member states and dialogue partners within external multilateral, regional groupings and initiatives, with the top score of 10.
- Sri Lanka is a close runner-up to India with a cumulative score of 9.
- Among IORA members, Somalia has the lowest scores (2), while Egypt and Germany both have similar scores among dialogue partners.
- China and Japan, being geostrategic competitors, have the same and largest score among IORA dialogue partners (8).
- Pakistan is not yet an IORA member or dialogue partner. Findings indicate it has a cumulative score of 6, higher than nine existing members.

India's sizable footprint in multilateral inter-governmental groupings and initiatives is a clear testament to its deft diplomacy backed by sound policymaking by successive political regimes (**Figure 15**).

Figure 15⁶⁶

Despite an apparently restrained presence and participation in IORA, India's overall regional diplomatic clout gives it the political weight in ministerial decision-making that other members may not necessarily enjoy. This privileged position is acknowledged and supported fully by countries in the developed world which are venturing gradually into the "Indo-Pacific" paradigm but may not necessarily be a littoral country in the IOR. The US, Germany, Italy and Netherlands are prime examples of extra-regional actors trying to synthesise the IOR with the Pacific. At the same time, the UK and France have overseas territories in the IOR and can be counted among littoral IOR stakeholders. China and Japan are competing actors in the IOR but the latter benefits due to a close strategic alliance with India and interests in Iran.⁶⁷

IORA's Dialogue Partners have their own defined national approaches to the region, whether toward IOR as a distinct space or within the "Indo-Pacific" construct. These include:⁶⁸

1. US: The 2019 Indo-Pacific Vision expressed support for IORA in security and economic sectors. India was mentioned on multiple occasions as a strategic partner. However, the policy placed ASEAN at its "centre".⁶⁹

2. UK: The 2021 publication ‘Global Britain in a competitive age’ presented by the UK Cabinet presents a balanced approach toward the “Indo-Pacific” by building on relations with China as well, apart from its competitors. However, there is special emphasis on improved defence cooperation in the IOR with India. The policy desires ASEAN centrality, but only in terms of Southeast Asia.⁷⁰
3. Germany: The 2020 Policy Guidelines for the Indo-Pacific places emphasis on support for IORA and ASEAN. While it adopts a balanced approach to the region, it has a favourable tilt toward India.⁷¹
4. Japan: The policies of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe (late) since 2016 spearheaded the Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) concept, adopted in different manifestations by remaining members of the informal Quad grouping. Japan aims to integrate the Indian and Pacific oceans with ASEAN at its core. It has not explicitly mentioned or discussed IORA in its key policy documents.⁷²
5. Italy: It does not yet have a declared policy or strategy on the “Indo-Pacific”, but it did launch an Italy-IORA Platform (2020) to showcase its commitment to the IOR.⁷³ The same year, it became the new Development Partner for ASEAN.⁷⁴ Italy also launched a trilateral partnership with India and Japan (2021) to establish stability and a rules-based order in the region.⁷⁵
6. Korea (South): In 2017, the government of Moon Jae-in issued its New Southern Policy (NSP) that placed Southeast Asia and India at the centre of its foreign policy agenda that had been dominated by the Korean Peninsula and the role of four major powers (US, China, Japan and Russia).⁷⁶ During the 3rd Korea-US Senior Economic Dialogue (2018), both countries” discussed ways to work more closely together in implementing the New Southern Policy and the Indo-Pacific strategy”.⁷⁷ While commenting on the upgraded NSP (NSP Plus) issued in 2020, some Korean academics remarked that the country began focusing on the Indian Ocean after its growing geopolitical recognition in 2018.⁷⁸⁷⁹
7. China/ Russia: Both countries’ views on the “Indo-Pacific” converge in terms of their general perception as an anti-Beijing alliance and vehicle for American unilateralism.⁸⁰ However, unlike Russia, which

has no particular interest in ASEAN,⁸¹ China believes in the “ASEAN centrality” approach to regional cooperation.⁸²

8. Turkey: Turkish foreign policy views the region from the prism of the “Asia Anew Initiative” with ASEAN centrality.⁸³
9. Egypt: No clearly elaborated policy toward the Asia Pacific or “Indo-Pacific”.

In terms of Dialogue Partners’ approach, if we focus on the language used to describe its regional networking role, ASEAN has been accorded more value than IORA. Greater importance is assumed by countries that are part and parcel of the broader “Indo-Pacific” construct. For non-littoral IOR countries with significant economic clout, India holds the key to pivot through both IORA and ASEAN. This extra-regional patronage helps sustain its impeccable clout in the forum, apart from its own diplomatic strategising.

It is pertinent to mention that ASEAN’s central role cannot compensate for most of the IORA members that are based in the Western IOR.

Timeline - Pakistan’s Efforts for IORA Membership

2001: IOR-ARC (now IORA) defers Pakistan’s membership for “lack of consensus” and accepts France as a Dialogue Partner. An unidentified Asian diplomat confirms⁸⁴ that India vetoed Pakistan’s entry on the pretext of not receiving Most Favoured Nation (MFN) status.⁸⁵

2005: Rashid Soorty, Chair of the National Committee for “Indian Ocean Rim Network” in the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI), writes a letter to Pakistan’s Foreign Secretary Riaz Mohammad to take up the membership issue with all member states of IOR-ARC (IORA). Soorty asks Mohammad to file the IORA Instrument of Acceptance in advance of a scheduled meeting and mentions India’s objection viz MFN status.⁸⁶

2011:

- The cabinet of the ruling Pakistan People’s Party (PPP) unanimously decides to grant MFN status to India. India’s Trade Secretary terms the development “a welcome step in the right direction”. Pakistan’s Information Minister Firdous Ashiq Awan says that commerce officials from both countries will meet later in November to discuss means for improved trade.⁸⁷
- In his weekly news briefing, Pakistani Foreign Office spokesperson Abdul Basit shares that the process of giving MFN status to India will be completed by October next year (2012). He further shares that the Commerce Ministry of Pakistan is working on the issue “in sync with our interest and WTO rules”.⁸⁸

2012: Pakistani officials claim that MFN status for India is placed on the back-burner by the PPP government, as the matter was being opposed by “right wings groups, backed by the agriculturalist lobby”. Foremost among them, reportedly, is the Jamaatud Dawa, accused by India of masterminding the 2008 Mumbai attacks. Later, PPP leaders Senator Sughra Imam and Member of National Assembly Noor Alam Khan request their leadership to delay the process of granting MFN status to India.⁸⁹

2013:

- January: Pakistan’s Foreign Minister Hina Rabbani Khar announces in the National Assembly that the PPP government has decided to grant “in principle” MFN status to India.⁹⁰
- May: Bashir Ali Mohammad, CEO of Gul Ahmed Group and member of the Pakistan-India Joint Business Council, addresses a seminar jointly organised in New Delhi by the Research and Information System for Developing Countries and Commonwealth Secretariat. Mohammad says that MFN status would be granted to India by June 2013, soon after the new federal government is elected. He also requests India to notify the sensitive list (of goods) before awarding MFN status, which is not accepted.⁹¹
- August: The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) government is elected to the federation after general elections. Finance Minister Ishaq Dar intimates that granting MFN status to India “is not under

consideration”, citing ceasefire violations along the Line of Control (LoC).⁹²

- November: Arvind Mehta, Joint Secretary in India’s Department of Commerce, remarks, “The sooner Pakistan grants India the MFN status, the better it is for bilateral trade”. He adds that by further delaying the MFN status, Pakistan “was losing out to Bangladesh”.⁹³

2014: Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif (PML-N) says that granting MFN status to India has been postponed “because of a lack of consensus”. He also discusses the non-resolution of the Kashmir issue on the sidelines of a two-day nuclear summit in the Netherlands. Sharif claims the move was also delayed because they do not want to favour a single political party in India (Bharatiya Janata Party or BJP).⁹⁴

Assessment of Pakistan’s efforts:-

- Before General Pervez Musharraf’s Coup: Relevant information not available.
- General Musharraf’s Era (1999-2008): Pakistan apparently tried to apply for membership to IORA but was blocked by India. The FPCCI attempted to bring the government’s attention to the importance of IOR trade, but there is no information on whether Pakistan filed another Instrument of Acceptance with the IORA Secretariat. It merits attention that Pakistan reached a Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) with Mauritius in 2007. However, it is not known whether the larger objective of lobbying for IORA motivated Islamabad to reach out to Port Louis.⁹⁵
- PPP Era (2008-2013): The government worked toward India’s MFN status after about three years in power and later discarded it indefinitely under pressure from right-wing elements, including a banned organisation.
- PML-N Era (2013-2018): The government scraps interest in MFN status for India due to tensions along the LoC and apprehensions of appearing favourable toward the BJP. The bilateral disagreements over Jammu & Kashmir are linked to awarding of the MFN status.

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- PTI Era (2018-2021): No reported effort toward membership of IORA and/or MFN status for India. Following the 2019 Pak-India escalation and ahead of elections for a second term in office, the BJP government of Prime Minister Modi scrapped MFN status for Pakistan that had been in place since 1996; Modi's Finance Minister, Arun Jaitley, vowed, "complete diplomatic isolation" of Pakistan.⁹⁶

Apart from the visible lack of interest by successive political governments, the extraordinary influence of the Pakistani military (land forces) in foreign and defence policymaking played a major role in maintaining the status quo of continental policymaking.

Moreover, Pakistan's priority attention toward internal counter-terrorism operations in erstwhile tribal areas and certain urban centres did not leave adequate room for maritime policymaking. This was the period in which Pakistan's military acted as a "frontline state" in the US-led "Global War against Terrorism" and plunged the entire country's focus toward peace and stability in Afghanistan, apart from routine ceasefire violations by the Indian military along the LoC. By design or otherwise, Pakistan had no option but to focus on managing relations with two unfriendly borders along its borders. The insurgency in Balochistan also kept paramilitary forces on their toes vis-à-vis Iran.

This backdrop can also explain why Pakistan failed to secure membership in the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) council on several occasions,⁹⁷ even as recently as 2021.⁹⁸

The author of this paper tried to solicit further information directly from Pakistan's concerned quarters to no avail:

- A Right to Information (RTI) request was filed with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) in December 2021 to ascertain Pakistan's efforts toward membership in IORA and information about resistance by any particular countries. The request was dropped because it was "related to Foreign Office policy matter (sic)".⁹⁹
- Multiple attempts to get through to a senior and relevant official

in MoFA via telephone since May 2022 remained unsuccessful. Requests for appointment through intermediary staff were also not returned.

Noteworthy Observations

Keeping aside Pakistan's own dismal track record in maritime policymaking and diplomacy, a few observations concerning external factors and considerations merit due attention:

- Certain members of IORA have been at loggerheads against each other on the geostrategic plane, for example, contentions between Iran and certain Arab Gulf states. Despite apprehensions and proxy battles between them, none of these countries has ever tried to use the forum to dislodge the other or hold to contempt. The war in Yemen is another important case in point. This is due in part because of Section 2(d) in the 2018 IORA Charter that, "Bilateral and other issues likely to generate controversy and be an impediment to regional cooperation efforts will be excluded from deliberations".¹⁰⁰
- The 2018 IORA Charter also empowers the COM to grant the status of Dialogue Partner or Observer to other states or organisations that have the "capacity" and "interest" to contribute to IORA.¹⁰¹ Furthermore, it is explicitly stated in Section 4(a) of the 2018 IORA Charter that "All sovereign States of the Indian Ocean Rim are eligible for membership of the Association. To become members, States must adhere to the principles and objectives enshrined in the Charter of the Association. Expansion of membership of the Association will be decided by Member States".¹⁰²
- Countries such as France were inducted as members of IORA (2020) on the basis of Overseas Territories (OT) in the IOR.¹⁰³ However, Russia's acceptance as a Dialogue Partner (2021) is both astounding and ominous. It maintains no OT in the IOR, is not a littoral IOR country and is considered a geostrategic nemesis not only by the US but also by other NATO countries already part of IORA.¹⁰⁴ Even more interesting is that Russia's membership was strongly backed by India, which is itself a pivotal state for transatlantic countries' forays in the IOR.

- Pakistan is a committed member of India-led IONS, even as a member of its maritime security working group. Comoros and Somalia, conversely, are members of IORA but not present in IONS. Rahul Roy-Chaudhury, Senior Fellow for South Asia at the UK-based International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) and a former official in India's National Security Council Secretariat (NSCS), assessed the gaps among IOR architectures as follows: "... both the two region-wide Indian Ocean groupings, the IORA and the IONS, are far less than the sum of their parts. This needs to urgently change through pragmatic and focused coordination and cooperation between themselves as well as with other sub-regional groupings, thereby strengthening regional cooperation. This could take place in areas such as maritime security and safety, maritime terrorism, maritime domain awareness and the development of a rules-based framework".¹⁰⁵ Continued discrimination against prospective members of IORA will keep generating weaknesses in overall regional security, inter-state networking and larger win-win cooperation.
- Pakistan is not only a primary littoral state in the IOR but also ranks comparatively higher in the scorecard for regional governmental and multilateral engagements than nine existing members of IORA, as discussed previously. It is, without dispute, as the scorecard shows, a strong qualifier.
- Both membership and Dialogue Partner status for Pakistan in IORA have been blocked due to India's multiple vetoes, in blatant violations of Section 2(c) and especially Section 4(a) of the 2018 IORA Charter. Reportedly, the vetoes are on the pretext that India has not received MFN status from it; since a single veto can nullify the membership request, Pakistan remains excluded.¹⁰⁶
- The US Navy established Combined Maritime Forces (CMF) in 2002 within the United States Central Command (USCENTCOM) Area of Responsibility to facilitate coalition operations. CMF personnel are drawn from 34 countries into four task forces: (1) Combined Task Force 150 (CTF-150) which focuses on Maritime Security & Counter Terrorism, (2) CTF-151 which focuses on Counter Piracy and (3) CTF-152 which looks into Persian Gulf Security Cooperation and

(4) CTF-153 which focuses on international maritime security and capacity-building efforts in the Red Sea, Bab al-Mandeb and the Gulf of Aden.¹⁰⁷¹⁰⁸ Pakistan has so far led CTF-150 on 12 occasions and CTF-151 on ten occasions. It gained the distinct privilege of being the most recurring leader and the first in the CMF to command both CTFs concurrently.¹⁰⁹ Moreover, a representative of the Pakistan Navy served as Deputy Commander in the US-led International Maritime Exercise-2022 (IMX-2022), which took place in the Western IOR and included Israel as a new entrant. IMX is the region's largest multilateral naval exercise.¹¹⁰ Pakistan's maritime security prowess is internationally and regionally recognised and carries more than adequate merit for inclusion in IORA.

- Pakistan Navy organised the seventh iteration of its flagship multilateral exercise, "Aman (Peace)". It provided a common platform for the US, NATO, Russia, Iran and China to huddle together for maritime preparedness and cooperation despite multiple political differences. These exercises, like the "Milan (Meetup)" exercises of the Indian Navy, are the largest of their kind, particularly in the Western IOR.¹¹¹ Pakistan's naval diplomacy has consistently improved, but these achievements are not registered by all members of IORA.
- Iran, which has faced international sanctions and condemnations for the pursuit of nuclear weapons production, has expressed keenness in expanding relations with IORA states.¹¹² Unlike Pakistan, a committed member of CMF, which engages through multilateral forums through a holistic and inclusive approach, Iran instituted a distinct maritime trilateral with Russia and China that has been exercised on several occasions in the Persian Gulf.¹¹³ Tehran has never faced resistance within IORA, despite also posing an "existential threat" to Israel¹¹⁴ which is a newcomer to the USCENTCOM theatre.
- India has viewed IORA as a forum that could compete with SAARC. Since it was unable to secure membership in APEC, India saw fit to use IORA as a vehicle to promote its "Look East Policy".¹¹⁵ Under the successive regimes of Prime Minister Modi, India also promoted the concept of Security And Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR). This initiative describes IORA as a "facilitator" of trade and fisheries

management and the promotion of tourism, culture and the blue economy.¹¹⁶

- Sri Lanka had been at the forefront of promoting regional maritime-centric multilateralism through its Indian Ocean Affairs Marine Cooperation (IOMAC) network in the late 1980s. The objective was to exploit the common interest of littoral and island states in the IOR to manage marine resources, protect the environment and conduct marine scientific research. At the time, ironically, India did not support IOMAC because Pakistan and the US were involved.¹¹⁷ Today, India is in a strategic partnership with the US and an indispensable underdog for the Quad's larger "Indo-Pacific" construct aimed at containing China.
- At the 16th IORA COM Meeting in Indonesia, India was asked about Pakistan's membership. Amar Sinha, Secretary of Economic Relations in India's Ministry of External Affairs, remarked that IORA fights "for peace and security in the Indian Ocean", adding that these values "may not suit Pakistan" (in an apparent criticism of Pakistan's alleged support for terrorism).¹¹⁸
- Australian academics Timothy Doyle and Dennis Rumley proffer that IORA's failure to include Pakistan is "an obvious gap and has an ongoing practical impact on the ability of IORA to work with other organisations such as IONS in which Pakistan is a member". They also argue that continued exclusion of Eastern IOR states such as Myanmar and Timor Leste could translate into "missed opportunities for regional engagement with those countries".¹¹⁹ Both Doyle and Rumley are editors of the *Journal of the Indian Ocean Region*, one of the flagship publications of IORA.

SWOT Analysis – Pakistan's Diplomatic Efforts for IORA Membership

In view of the preceding detailed historical analysis of IORA and its evolutionary dynamics over the past decades, it is imperative to present a SWOT Analysis of Pakistan's diplomatic efforts for IORA membership so that renewed efforts can develop novel methods to persuade India against veto (**Figure 16**).

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friendly political relations with most members and Dialogue Partners of IORA • Regular naval engagements with existing members of IORA through IONS and CMF • HADR activities in countries in Africa • Sufficient clout in the OIC and SAARC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Absence of restructuring and reorganisation with MoFA (dedicated attention to IOR missing) • Lack of inter-departmental coordination (between Foreign, Defence and Maritime Affairs Divisions) • Lack of timely and proper lobbying with IORA, particularly members of the COM • Exaggerated concerns of certain sections of the business community, particularly agriculturalists 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pakistan Navy's increasing diplomatic clout in regional multilateralism (Aman exercise) • Safe withdrawal of US and allied forces from Afghanistan/ end of the 'frontline state' commitments • Indiscriminate action against terrorist groups, including those accused of militancy by India • Pakistan as host of the largest African diaspora in South Asia (Sidi community) • Strategic communications related to <i>Engage Africa</i> and <i>Vision East Asia</i> policies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Lack of consensus' between civilian governments, the military and right-wing elements with respect to improved relations with India • Interference in foreign policy development by actors other than elected politicians • Coordinated disinformation by the Government of India around Pakistan's compliance checks with FATF

Figure 16¹²⁰

Concluding Thoughts

Some domestic researchers proffer that Pakistan should give up on the idea of IORA membership by engaging through alternate forums such as the SCO, OIC and the ASEAN.¹²¹ These suggestions are poorly thought through because:

- The SCO is concerned with the territorial sovereignty of hinterland Asian countries, particularly those in Central Asian Republics (CARs).
- The OIC is specifically a forum of Islamic/Muslim-majority countries and is not effective in matters of geopolitical concern (repeated statements condemning India's actions in Indian Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IOJ&K) being a case in point).
- Engagement with ASEAN cannot cater to the specific dynamics and demographics in the Western IOR.

In her insightful commentary, Maria Bastos notes:

“While the IOR region certainly owes its diversity, cultural and historical constructions to the very existence of India, the latter should not envisage ownership of the ocean, despite several attempts in the past. The Indian Ocean cannot and should not be understood as India’s ocean.”

“Given the crescent importance of the African continent into China’s BRI, including Eastern African/IOR countries like Kenya and Tanzania (at least in these two countries, there is a Pakistan High Commission), Pakistan may well be condemned to sit at Gwadar, qua sentinel (perhaps for China), assisting to one of the most significant regional politics moments of the century developing before her eyes.”

“Unless Islamabad/Rawalpindi foreign policy makers will promptly realise that Pakistan is bound to miss the ship of IOR politics, and that imagining naval battles will prove insufficient to guarantee Pakistan own security, Pakistan will remain a connector without belonging. Active diplomacy, including naval diplomacy, must quickly engage the stakeholders in the Indian Ocean. Pakistan’s engagement with African countries, including Djibouti need to be sought, preferably within the context of CPEC/BRI. Pakistan foreign policy elites need to envisage CPEC beyond Gwadar to Khasgar. CPEC needs to look South. The IORA needs to be approached in a frank manner (sic).”

“Perhaps concessions need to be made; therefore political courage must take precedence over hubris. Compromising on certain aspects, including the MFN status of India, which allegedly has been used by the latter to block Pakistan’s membership, need to be carefully thought-out not only, but also through the perspectives of the potential that ‘blue economy’ has on offer. Pakistan needs to be, and to feel that belongs to the IOR (sic).”¹²²

IORA may have structural shortcomings, but historical analysis confirms it is not “systemically” bound to the whims of a particular country. The distinct clout that India enjoys is partly due to its diplomatic footprint in

other regional multilateral groupings/initiatives and partly because of its utility as a pivot to the “Indo-Pacific” for many transatlantic powers. The successive regimes of Prime Minister Modi/BJP in New Delhi gave India the policy continuity needed to cement these relations through otherwise turbulent and shifting geostrategic tides.

Pakistan, on the other hand, has suffered from strategic myopia partly because of rigid civil-military relations and partly because the country does not have a maritime culture.¹²³ Unless maritime policymaking is trickled down from the highest echelons of decision-making, Pakistan could one day become completely isolated in the IOR. It is most necessary, therefore, that Pakistan reinvigorate efforts to secure membership in the IORA.

As the late Dr Cheema remarked in 1980:

“Bilateralism and non-alignment are the most feasible and best suited to serve Pakistan’s interests”...(in the IOR)...“Pakistan needs to improve its relations with its neighbours and to reconcile itself with the changed power patterns in the area. To offset the economic benefits accruing from special relationships with the United States, emphasis should be placed on the cultivation of good relations with Western Europe, ASEAN, and Australia in addition to its neighbours and the Islamic World”.¹²⁴

Remarkably, Dr Cheema’s thesis rings true despite the changed context in which his thoughts were earlier articulated, i.e. from Cold War to post Cold War era. On bilateralism, he made it clear that “A country whose territorial integrity is at stake has to pursue a low-profile foreign policy, cultivating good relations with all its neighbours irrespective of differences in ideology or political and economic systems”.¹²⁵ For Pakistan, agendas and protocols for bilateral engagement with India need to be specifically reviewed and redrafted.

Recommendations and Way Forward

Some broad suggestions are as follows:

1. Executive Oversight of Maritime Affairs: Instituting a top-level mechanism for maritime diplomatic engagement. This could be achieved through the appointment of a “Special Assistant” or “Special Representative” to the Prime Minister on Maritime Affairs. Ideally, the position-holder should be a civilian expert in maritime law and/or a retired Flag Officer of the Pakistan Navy with career experience in multilateral engagements.
2. Restructuring of MoFA: Revising the existing architecture of Pakistan’s Foreign Office to define new divisions based on different regions and sub-regions. IOR affairs should be handled by a dedicated division so that diplomatic engagement with littoral and island countries is given the priority attention it deserves, and career diplomats are trained accordingly.
3. IOR Diplomatic Appointments: Against conventional wisdom, military veterans from the land forces have often been posted to IOR. Only career civilian ambassadors or retired Flag Officers from Pakistan Navy must be posted in littoral and island countries of the IOR.
4. Observer Status in the African Union (AU): Pakistan must apply as an observer in the AU, similar to Israel, the UAE and Kazakhstan. As host to the largest African diaspora in South Asia,¹²⁶ Pakistan can capitalise on its credentials for membership in IORA.
5. Rotational Headship of Joint Staff: Prior and globally accepted practice of having tri-service officers on rotational headship of Joint Chiefs of Staff/Chiefs of Defence Staff should be resumed; monopoly of one service over others needs to be discouraged. Ideally, to make up for the lost time, Pakistan Navy chiefs should be elevated to Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (CJCSC) for at least two consecutive terms so they can complement efforts by elected governments from a security perspective.
6. Institutional Linkages: There should be regular institutional exchange programmes for career diplomats and naval officers in

their respective training institutions. An MOU between the Foreign Service Academy and Pakistan Navy War College could promote a deeper understanding of global diplomatic mechanisms and maritime policymaking, respectively.

7. Integrated Strategic Communications: Pakistan needs to up the ante through integrated whole-of-nation publicity of “Engage Africa”, “Vision East Asia”, and other initiatives that project its diplomatic successes. In parallel, these efforts should effectively counter India’s coordinated disinformation campaigns to present Pakistan as a “terrorist” and “failed” state.
8. Paradigm Shift in Bilateral Engagement with India: The regime of Prime Minister Modi illegally annexed IOJ&K into so-called “Union Territories” in 2019. This happened in the same year when India revoked MFN status for Pakistan. Unless there are Confidence-Building Measures (CBMs) in place through back-channel and informal academic dialogues, Pakistan’s diplomatic efforts to enter IORA will remain futile. Pakistan will have to accept the harsh reality that it cannot enter the forum without persuading India. The issue of IOJ&K will, and should, remain an important one for Pakistan, but it must not be etched as a ‘necessary precondition’ for talks that could give Pakistan a say in IOR policymaking; the dispute will, in any case, remain unresolved for the United Nations itself and cannot be decided without taking into account the aspirations of the peoples in IOJ&K. If India is not satisfied with awarding of MFN status, Pakistan should be open to condemning terrorism in all its forms and manifestations; a prospect India would find very assuring. This would not go toward India’s “appeasement”, as some would nastily suggest; similar statements are echoed through the SCO. Pakistan has sacrificed billions in the economy and thousands of lives in the war against terrorism and extremism; it should have no qualms speaking up against these menaces in all their forms.
9. Maritime Heritage & Culture: Pakistan must work toward preserving and highlighting its maritime heritage and culture in partnership with specialist institutions within the country and overseas. An important effort toward this end is to fund academic research in key higher education institutes across Pakistan and the exploration of

marine archaeology.

10. Naval Diplomacy: Pakistan Navy should invite their Indian counterparts to future iterations of the Aman exercise under the larger common banner of IONS to promote mutual trust and dialogue.

Author Profile



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Annexure

IORA MEMBER STATES AND DIALOGUE PARTNERS' PRESENCE IN REGIONAL GOVERNMENTAL GROUPINGS/INITIATIVES (2021)

Country	IOMOU	IONS	IOTC	IOC	ASEAN/ ARF	PIF	SCO	AU	SAARC	BIMSTEC	APEC	BRI	AAGC	Cumulative Score
Score	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	13
Pakistan		1	1	1	1		1		1			1		6
IORA Member States														
1. Australia	1	1	1		1	1			1		1			7
2. Bangladesh	1	1	1		1				1	1		1	1	7
3. Comoros	1		1	1				1						4
4. France/OT	1	1	1	1	1									5
5. India	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		1	1			1	10
6. Indonesia		1	1	1	1	1					1	1		6
7. Iran	1	1	1			1	1		1			1	1	7
8. Kenya	1	1	1					1				1	1	6
9. Madagascar	1	1	1	1				1				1	1	7
10. Malaysia		1	1		1	1				1		1		6
11. Maldives	1	1	1						1			1	1	6
12. Mauritius	1	1	1	1				1	1	1			1	8
13. Mozambique	1	1	1					1				1		5
14. Oman	1	1	1									1		4
15. Seychelles	1	1	1	1				1				1	1	7
16. Singapore		1			1							1	1	4
17. Somalia			1									1		2
18. South Africa	1	1	1					1				1		5
19. Sri Lanka	1	1	1		1		1		1	1		1	1	9
20. Tanzania	1	1	1					1				1	1	6
21. Thailand		1	1		1	1			1	1	1	1	1	8
22. UAE		1						1				1		3
23. Yemen	1		1									1		3

Country	IOMOU	IONS	IOTC	IOC	ASEAN/ARF	PIF	SCO	AU	SAARC	BIMSTEC	APEC	BRI	AAGC	Cumulative Score
Score	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	13
IORA Dialogue Partners														
1. China		1	1	1	1		1		1		1	1		8
2. Egypt						1		1				1		2
3. Germany		1				1								2
4. Italy		1				1						1		3
5. Japan		1	1	1	1	1			1		1	1	1	8
6. Korea (South)			1	1	1	1			1		1	1		5
7. Russia		1	1		1		1				1	1		6
8. Turkey						1	1	1				1		4
9. UK		1	1			1								3
10. US					1	1			1		1			4

Green denotes either full membership status, observer status or dialogue partner status.

Purple denotes the leading country, score-wise.

Legend:

IOMOU	=	The Memorandum of Understanding on Port State Control for the Indian Ocean Region
IONS	=	Indian Ocean Naval Symposium
IOTC	=	Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations)
IOC	=	Indian Ocean Commission
ASEAN/ ARF	=	Association of South East Asian Nations/ ASEAN Regional Forum
PIF	=	Pacific Islands Forum
SCO	=	Shanghai Cooperation Organisation
AU	=	African Union
SAARC	=	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
BIMSTEC	=	Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation
APEC	=	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
BRI	=	Belt & Road Initiative
AAGC	=	Asia-Africa Growth Corridor

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