

The Economy and Vulnerabilities in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR)

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Abstract:

Seas and oceans cover roughly two-thirds of the surface of globe. Since time immemorial they have served as a vast reservoir of food for mankind. In contemporary age they have been found to contain a rich diversity of resources whose exploitation remains a matter of contention. But waters of the world are more than a prime instance of nature's munificence, or a handy dumping ground for the refuse of civilisation. They can be formidable obstacles to societies lacking the will or the means to cross them. Equally they can be a powerful stimulus to technology and a challenge to the skills of those who, for any reason, seek to use them. They can unite cultures and economics of widely dispersed and radically different peoples, allowing knowledge, ideas and beliefs to be freely transmitted. The ports that develop along their littorals often have more in common with one another than with the states or communities in which they are sited.

Yet since seas are in themselves so rich, and since for centuries they alone gave access to the wealth of many distant regions, land powers have put forward ambitious claims to exercise authority over them. The justification or denial of such authority coupled with political or strategic necessity, real or imagined stimulated the growth of navies, which became formidable expressions of power of modern state. Today, there are more than 6,300 warships worldwide and over 30 nations have navies with global reach. Additionally, 160 nations have some navy, coast guard, maritime police capability