



**Royal United Services Institute**  
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Prospects for Integration and Cooperation

Aaditya Dave

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RUSI Conference Report, June 2019



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# The UK and India in the Maritime Domain

**O**N 28 FEBRUARY 2019, RUSI and Carnegie India, with support from the British High Commission New Delhi, hosted a dialogue in New Delhi on India and the UK in the Indo-Pacific. The participants, including experts, officials and serving and retired naval officers from both countries, discussed the two countries' perspectives on the maritime domain and identified areas of potential collaboration as well as challenges to cooperation.

## Indo-Pacific

The Indo-Pacific has become a global fulcrum for both international trade and maritime security. The region contains critical sea lanes of communication and trade routes and is also an area of concern in terms of terrorism and piracy. Moreover, the Indo-Pacific has emerged as a battleground in the effort to emphasise the international rules-based system and sustainable growth, with the priorities of both the UK and India broadly aligning in this regard. While China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) promises investment and infrastructure that many countries in the region require, critics have raised questions about the transparency and financial sustainability of BRI projects.

Given the wide-ranging nature of the above challenges – affecting areas as far apart as the Horn of Africa, the Malacca Strait, and the South and East China Seas – roundtable participants agreed that there is utility in like-minded countries partnering and coordinating activities in the Indo-Pacific to bolster the rules-based international order and regional stability as well as promote international standards in infrastructure and economic development projects.

## Western Indian Ocean

At a grand strategic level, the Indo-Pacific concept rightly recognises the economic and political interconnectedness of the regions encompassed by the Indian and Pacific Oceans. At the same time, this vast domain includes a range of sub-regions that each have their own unique security challenges and the strength of regional institutions varies considerably. Thus, when seeking to identify potential areas for cooperation, participants agreed that it makes most sense to concentrate on specific sub-regions rather than the Indo-Pacific as a whole. In particular, the western Indian Ocean (WIO) provides a key point of convergence between UK and Indian interests. Both countries have economic stakes in the region, particularly in terms of energy supply. Between April 2018 and February 2019, for example, India's largest sources of crude

oil imports were Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and the UAE.<sup>1</sup> For the UK, over half of its jet fuel imports in 2017 came from Kuwait, the UAE and Saudi Arabia.<sup>2</sup> Further, the WIO contains states with strong cultural and historical links to both the UK and India, most visibly through people-to-people connections and institutions such as the Commonwealth.<sup>3</sup>

UK participants highlighted that it has longstanding defence commitments and political relationships with the Gulf states, as well as forward deployed forces in the region. The WIO is therefore a key node for coordination between the UK and India as part of their efforts to preserve the rules-based system. Moreover, the WIO is not part of the US conception of the Indo-Pacific, the area of responsibility for which deconflicts with US Central Command and Africa Command from the western tip of India onwards.<sup>4</sup> Unlike the eastern half of the region, which in addition to the US, India and the UK also includes other capable regional powers such as Australia and Japan, the WIO plays host to a series of relatively smaller navies and weaker states. As a result, there is space for the UK and India to play a larger role. Participants noted that there is a gap in the regional security architecture and that regional mechanisms are not adequately equipped to counter non-traditional security threats and criminal activity.

## UK–India Interests and Prospects for Cooperation

Participants identified a number of areas in which cooperation between the UK and India can be advanced on a bilateral and multilateral level, specifically discussing maritime security and the blue economy.

UK participants pointed to assets located in the WIO to indicate its long-term interest in the region. They also noted former Secretary of State for Defence Gavin Williamson's comments that one of the Royal Navy's two new littoral strike groups would be deployed in the Indo-Pacific and that the first operational mission of HMS *Queen Elizabeth*, the Royal Navy's new aircraft

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1. Government of India, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Directorate General of Commercial Intelligence and Statistics, <<http://www.dgciskol.gov.in/>>, accessed 21 March 2019.
  2. UK Government, '2018 Digest of UK Energy Statistics (DUKES)', 26 July 2018, <<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/digest-of-uk-energy-statistics-dukes#2018>>, accessed 28 March 2019.
  3. Indian Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), 'Population of Overseas Indians (Compiled in December, 2018)', <[https://mea.gov.in/images/attach/NRIs-and-PIOs\\_1.pdf](https://mea.gov.in/images/attach/NRIs-and-PIOs_1.pdf)>, accessed 28 March 2019; Office for National Statistics, 'Population of the UK by Country of Birth and Nationality: 2018', dataset for January to December 2018, <<https://www.ons.gov.uk/file?uri=/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/internationalmigration/datasets/populationoftheunitedkingdombycountryofbirthandnationality/januarytodecember2018/populationbycountryofbirthandnationalityjan18todec18.xls>>, accessed 28 March 2019; The Commonwealth, 'Member Countries', <<http://thecommonwealth.org/member-countries>>, accessed 22 March 2019.
  4. US Indo-Pacific Command, 'Area of Responsibility', <<https://www.pacom.mil/About-USINDOPACOM/USPACOM-Area-of-Responsibility/>>, accessed 22 March 2019.

carrier, will cover the Mediterranean, the Middle East and the Pacific.<sup>5</sup> Facilities such as HMS Jufair, the UK's naval support facility in Bahrain; UK Maritime Component Command, which supports Royal Navy vessels in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) in various capacities; and the Joint Logistics Support Base in Duqm, Oman; along with the British Indian Ocean Territory, cement the UK's interests in the area.

Although India's threat perception is still focused largely on its land borders with China and Pakistan, the IOR has grown to become critical in its defence- and foreign-policy thinking. The IOR has increasingly become the arena in which India can take decisive steps to strengthen partnerships and expand its economic and security role in the region. This evolution is manifested in the long-awaited operationalisation of the Chabahar port in Iran,<sup>6</sup> as well as logistics support agreements with France and the US and a series of planned investments in ports in the IOR.<sup>7</sup>

A key question that emerged from the roundtable discussions was about finding ways to coordinate British and Indian activities and points of presence in the IOR and moving towards future cooperation. UK participants noted that much of its work on maritime security in the WIO was channelled through the Combined Maritime Forces (CMF), a 33-nation naval partnership based in Bahrain that is led by the US and has a UK deputy commander.<sup>8</sup> Through a focus on counterterrorism and anti-piracy, CMF encourages regional cooperation and promotes a safe maritime environment. However, although the Indian navy has participated in exercises and anti-piracy missions with the CMF, UK participants questioned why it has not yet become a formal member of the group. Such separation also prevents communication over classified channels and thus limits the range of information sharing.

Indian participants highlighted a number of obstacles to closer cooperation in the region. Foremost among these was the absence of a clear UK Indian Ocean strategy. They also noted perceptions of divergences between India and the UK on regional security and geopolitical questions. Indian participants' queries about the UK's policy towards BRI and China's presence in the IOR more broadly hinted at uncertainty in New Delhi about the UK as a strategic partner. Participants highlighted concerns about the British government's responses to terrorist attacks in India, which have been perceived as more restrained than those of other countries.<sup>9</sup> Questions were also raised about the UK's ability to maintain a meaningful presence in the region, with the

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5. Ministry of Defence, 'Gavin Williamson Sets Out Vision for Defence in Global Britain', 11 February 2019, <<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/gavin-williamson-sets-out-vision-for-defence-in-global-britain>>, accessed 25 March 2019.

6. *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, 'Afghanistan Sends First Exports To India Via Iran's Chabahar Port', 24 February 2019.

7. Huma Siddiqui, 'India-France Operationalise Their Logistics Support Agreement', *Financial Express*, 25 January 2019; Dinakar Peri, 'LEMOA Fully Operational Now', *The Hindu*, 8 September 2018.

8. Combined Maritime Forces, 'Combined Maritime Forces (CMF)', <<https://combinedmaritimeforces.com/>>, accessed 25 March 2019.

9. Prasun Sonwalkar, 'Pressure Mounts on UK to Retract "India-Administered Kashmir" Remark', *Hindustan Times*, 19 February 2019.

participation of only one Royal Navy vessel in the 2018 Konkan bilateral naval exercise cited as a specific example.<sup>10</sup>

Indian participants also suggested that the UK's reluctance to participate in deeper defence cooperation and technology transfers have stymied progress towards a closer strategic relationship. While some of this criticism may be questioned – for instance, the UK was one of the countries to nominate Pakistan for the Financial Action Task Force grey list in February 2018,<sup>11</sup> and Prime Minister Theresa May emphasised the importance of international standards and transparency when discussing the BRI during her visit to Beijing in the same month<sup>12</sup> – it nevertheless continues to have an impact on bilateral ties.

Despite these obstacles, participants identified several areas of common interest on which the two countries can work together in the WIO.

### Maritime Security

Maritime domain awareness (MDA) emerged as a crucial area for cooperation on governance in the global commons, with participants noting that the only effective way of achieving true MDA is by burden sharing through activities such as real-time data and information exchange, law enforcement cooperation and capacity building.

In this context, India's newly established Information Fusion Centre – Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR), which 'aims to engage with partner nations and multi-national maritime constructs to develop comprehensive MDA and share information on vessels of interest',<sup>13</sup> was presented as an opportunity by both UK and Indian participants. It complements the Dubai-based UK Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO), which serves as an information conduit between military and security forces and international maritime trade;<sup>14</sup> in fact, information sharing between IFC-IOR and UKMTO has already begun.<sup>15</sup> This network also includes the Maritime Security

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10. Indian Navy, 'IN–RN Exercise KONKAN-18 Begins at Goa', last updated 29 November 2018, <<https://www.indiannavy.nic.in/content/rn-exercise-konkan-18-begins-go>>, accessed 25 April 2019.
  11. Asif Shahzad, 'Pakistan Given 3-Month Reprieve Over Terrorist Financing Watchlist – Minister', *Reuters*, 20 February 2018.
  12. UK Government, 'PM Meeting with President Xi: 1 February 2018', press release, 1 February 2018, <<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/pm-meeting-with-president-xi-1-february-2018>>, accessed 29 May 2019.
  13. Indian Ministry of Defence, 'Raksha Mantri Inaugurates Information Fusion Centre – Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR)', 22 December 2018, <<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=186757>>, accessed 25 March 2019.
  14. UK Maritime Trade Operations, 'About UKMTO', <<https://www.ukmto.org/about-ukmto>>, accessed 25 March 2019.
  15. Information Fusion Centre Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR), 'Monthly Maritime Security Update (MMSU): Covering Events During Feb 2019', 4 March 2019, <[https://www.indiannavy.nic.in/ifc-ior/IFC\\_MMSU\\_Feb\\_19.pdf](https://www.indiannavy.nic.in/ifc-ior/IFC_MMSU_Feb_19.pdf)>, accessed 25 March 2019.

Centre – Horn of Africa (MSCHOA), which was based in Northwood in the UK but moved to Brest in France on 29 March 2019 as it is part of the EU's Operation *Atalanta*.<sup>16</sup> One idea suggested was for the UK to post a liaison officer at the IFC-IOR to develop a conduit for information sharing between the UK and India in this domain, which is being explored at the time of writing.

UK participants also highlighted the issue of 'sea blindness', when countries fail to consider maritime contingencies while focusing on other priorities. For example, India suffered from this ahead of the 2008 Mumbai attacks, when the country lacked sufficient intelligence about a potential attack from sea-borne vessels. This information gap led to the creation of the Indian Navy's Information Management and Analysis Centre (IMAC).<sup>17</sup> Similarly, one UK participant claimed that many countries are not fully aware of the economic and security costs of insufficient MDA, suggesting that it is critical to develop human capabilities and political will alongside the installation of sensors and hardware. Participants from both countries agreed that in their diplomatic engagement with Indian Ocean states, the UK and India can work together to raise awareness around this issue to lay the groundwork for improved regional MDA, either through academic capacity building or joint training.

Participants noted that the UK and India can also cooperate and expand on activities already carried out in the region. Suggestions included joint monitoring of exclusive economic zones (EEZs) of smaller littorals in the WIO, which India undertakes in the Maldives,<sup>18</sup> the Seychelles and Mauritius,<sup>19</sup> as well as coordination of humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) responses in the region, such as in the case of the recent Cyclone Idai in March 2019 in Mozambique, for which both the UK and India provided assistance.<sup>20</sup>

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16. Council of the European Union, 'EU NAVFOR Somalia Operation Atalanta: Council Prolongs the Operation and Decides on New Headquarters and New Operation Commander', press release, 30 July 2018, <<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2018/07/30/eunavfor-somalia-operation-atalanta-council-decides-on-new-headquarters-and-new-head-of-operation/>>, accessed 25 March 2019.
  17. Indian Navy, 'Raksha Mantri Shri Manohar Parrikar Inaugurates IMAC, a Navy-CG Joint Operations Centre', last updated 2 November 2015, <<https://www.indiannavy.nic.in/content/raksha-mantri-shri-manohar-parrikar-inaugurates-imac-navy-cg-joint-operations-centre>>, accessed 25 March 2019.
  18. Indian Navy, 'Joint Exclusive Economic Zone Surveillance of Maldives', last updated 26 February 2019, <<https://www.indiannavy.nic.in/content/joint-exclusive-economic-zone-surveillance-maldives-0>>, accessed 26 March 2019.
  19. Indian Navy, 'EEZ Surveillance of Seychelles and Mauritius', last updated 26 February 2019, <<https://www.indiannavy.nic.in/node/18225>>, accessed 26 March 2019.
  20. Department for International Development, 'UK to Provide up to £6 Million of UK Aid to Support Victims of Deadly East Africa Cyclone', press release, 18 March 2019, <<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-to-provide-up-to-6-million-of-uk-aid-to-support-victims-of-deadly-east-africa-cyclone>>, accessed 26 March 2019; MEA, 'India to Provide Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) Support to Mozambique', press release, 18 March 2019, <<https://www.mea>>.

While coast guard cooperation was presented on multiple occasions as a useful way forward in bilateral terms, it was also noted by one UK participant that there are no appropriate multilateral configurations to broaden this to a regional level. The Indian Ocean Naval Symposium, for instance, focuses on navies and seeks to work across the IOR.<sup>21</sup> UK participants suggested that it might be useful to consider sub-regional organisations, although they cautioned against assuming a uniform model of maritime law enforcement, pointing out that certain countries, such as Australia, do not have an independent coast guard.

A crucial element that participants agreed was missing in the UK–India bilateral space was a sustained maritime dialogue, which has not materialised despite being mentioned in the 2015 Joint Statement during Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s visit to the UK.<sup>22</sup> This would be a useful step towards developing areas of common interest as well as ironing out the differences on regional security issues. It was highlighted by an Indian participant that even in India’s other relationships, such as with the US, there was a prolonged period of strain before ties deepened to reach the level they are at now. Ensuring that a strategic dialogue element exists beside occasional formal engagements is key to creating the context for a strong bilateral partnership.

## Blue Economy

Indian participants noted that while India has a considerable economic stake in ensuring sustainable use of ocean resources, the Indian government still needs to develop a coherent blue economy policy. While vision papers and official statements outline India’s objectives of regional connectivity and the sustainable use of ocean resources,<sup>23</sup> it was recognised that the UK is one of the leaders in actual implementation and in harnessing the blue economy. This provides a point of engagement in technical cooperation on developing India’s blue economy strategy and action plan. Moreover, participants indicated that where India was working towards its blue economy objectives, it would be useful for the UK and India to share information and

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gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/31164/India\_to\_provide\_Humanitarian\_Assistance\_and\_Disaster\_Relief\_HADR\_support\_to\_Mozambique>, accessed 26 March 2019.

21. Indian Ocean Naval Symposium, ‘Indian Ocean Naval Symposium’, <<http://www.ions.global/>>, accessed 26 March 2019.
22. UK Government, ‘Joint Statement on the United Kingdom-India Summit 2015’, 12 November 2015, <<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/joint-statement-on-the-united-kingdom-india-summit-2015>>, accessed 26 March 2019.
23. See Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry, ‘Blue Economy Vision 2025: Harnessing Business Potential for India Inc and International Partners’, April 2017, <<http://ficci.in/spdocument/20896/Blue-Economy-Vision-2025.pdf>>, accessed 26 March 2019; Ministry of Shipping, ‘Shri Nitin Gadkari Addresses the Sustainable Blue Economy Conference in Nairobi Says Blue Economy a Critical Aspect of India’s Economic Development Agenda’, 28 November 2018, <<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=185994>>, accessed 26 March 2019; Sushma Swaraj, ‘SAGAR – India’s Vision for the Indian Ocean Region’, *India Foundation Journal*, November–December 2017, <<https://www.indiafoundation.in/sagar-indias-vision-for-the-indian-ocean-region/>>, accessed 26 March 2019.

coordinate from the designing and planning stages, enabling more integrated action and reduced duplication. Further dialogue is, however, required to identify specific activities and areas for collaboration.

Illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing was highlighted by Indian and UK participants as a priority issue for both the UK and India due to the deleterious economic effect on Indian Ocean littoral states. Both productivity and sustainability were pointed to as important considerations in fishing and aquaculture, with India having drafted a national plan for this purpose.<sup>24</sup> While it was acknowledged that tackling IUU fishing would likely happen through regional efforts and solutions, based on domestic economic imperatives, vessel tracking was a gap that the UK can help plug. Another cooperative activity in this regard, suggested by a UK participant, could be a joint mapping of resources available to countries in the WIO and to help them develop practical maritime strategies and national action plans that align with UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 14 ('conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development')<sup>25</sup> and 17 ('strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development').<sup>26</sup> India and the UK could also assist with assessments of existing blue economy strategies and the associated financing and investment arrangements and help outline regional priorities as well as private finance options, facilitating a market-appropriate and therefore viable long-term approach.

Participants also encouraged a shift towards technology-based solutions, with big data and AI providing an opportunity for bilateral and regional cooperation, both in research and development as well as knowledge sharing. This is particularly relevant in light of the establishment of the IFC-IOR and, as noted by a UK participant, existing expertise in India on marine autonomous systems, real-time data collection and remotely operated underwater vehicles.<sup>27</sup> Participants noted that UK universities and research institutes possess complementary strengths in robots and marine research.

Participants further noted that working together in and with third countries leading on blue economy initiatives would be beneficial. The Seychelles, where the UK is already engaged, was suggested by UK participants as a potential case study. The Seychelles worked with the World Bank to launch the world's first sovereign blue bond in October 2018, which raised \$15 million

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24. Indian Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, 'Blue Revolution', 11 April 2017, <<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=160888>>, accessed 26 March 2019.

25. UN, 'Sustainable Development Goal 14', <<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg14>>, accessed 25 March 2019.

26. UN, 'Sustainable Development Goal 17', <<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg17>>, accessed 25 March 2019.

27. National Institute of Oceanography, 'Autonomous Underwater Vehicles (AUV)', <<https://www.nio.org/research/technologies/autonomous-underwater-vehicles-auv>>, accessed 12 June 2019; *Hindu Business Line*, 'IIT-M-Incubated Planys Launches New ROV for Underwater Inspection', 17 March 2019.

from international investors to finance the sustainable use of marine resources.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, the Seychelles hosts the Regional Centre for Operations Coordination, which requires human resources and can be a useful mechanism for regional information sharing as well as capacity building. The Seychelles is also the site of the first descent planned under the Indian Ocean Mission of Nekton Oxford Deep Ocean Research Institute, a UK-based independent institute which aims to work with the Seychelles government to generate critical data and develop local research expertise.<sup>29</sup> The UK and India can provide technical assistance, human capital capacity as well as co-financing for such projects, although further dialogue would allow a clearer understanding of specific contributions that the two can make.

The Commonwealth was seen by numerous participants as a forum through which blue economy cooperation could be advanced. In addition to the Seychelles, the UK and India, other member countries in the WIO also have similar priorities, as reflected in the signing of the Commonwealth Blue Charter, which aims to ensure that the Commonwealth takes a fair, equitable, inclusive and sustainable approach to ocean economic development and protection.<sup>30</sup> Leveraging India's desire to play a larger role in multilateral institutions and focusing on key areas of mutual concern, such as sustainable development and connectivity, will be important if the Commonwealth is to become a viable platform for UK–India and multilateral cooperation on questions about blue economy.

Other multilateral forums were discussed as well, with participants noting that the vast remit of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) has restrained its effectiveness. As noted earlier, given the different sub-regions in the IOR and their varying economic and strategic considerations, it has proved difficult to develop a coherent strategy through such a wide-ranging organisation. While Indian participants argued that the UK could be more active in IORA, through technology transfers, technical cooperation and investment, it was also suggested that building thematic multilateral organisations may be useful to develop tangible responses to specific issues. The Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement, which focuses on the 'conservation and sustainable use of the fishery resources' in the southern Indian Ocean, was brought up as an example by a UK participant.<sup>31</sup>

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28. World Bank, 'Seychelles Launches World's First Sovereign Blue Bond', 29 October 2018, press release, <<https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2018/10/29/seychelles-launches-worlds-first-sovereign-blue-bond>>, accessed 26 March 2019.

29. Nekton, 'First Descent: Indian Ocean 2019-2022', <[https://nektonmission.org/missions/first\\_descent](https://nektonmission.org/missions/first_descent)>, accessed 26 March 2019.

30. The Commonwealth, 'The Commonwealth Blue Charter: "Shared Ocean, Shared Values"', <<https://bluecharter.thecommonwealth.org/>>, accessed 26 March 2019.

31. Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement (SIOFA), 'Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement (SIOFA)', <<https://www.apsoi.org/>>, accessed 26 March 2019.

## Challenges

While participants from both sides recognised the potential of bilateral cooperation on maritime security and blue economy initiatives, it was noted by Indian participants in particular that differences on regional security can become a stumbling block at the political level. Geopolitical issues and irritants have consistently hampered UK–India ties, with Indian participants expressing questions about the UK’s relationships with Pakistan and China. Notwithstanding these issues, there is in fact a great deal of commonality in the UK and India’s strategic security outlook. While the UK has substantial relationships with both Pakistan and China, it has also expressed regular public concern about aspects of their foreign and security policies. For the UK and India, the optimal way forward would be to focus on their shared strategic outlook and opportunities for cooperation to deal with mutual security threats and concerns.

In furthering a rules-based international order, UK participants also noted that it is necessary to develop a common understanding of international law, governance and standards. Currently, there are differences between the UK and India on this, as reflected in the Chagos Islands dispute, in which India has regularly voted at the UN in favour of the UK returning the territory to Mauritius.<sup>32</sup> In addition, India’s requirement of consent for military passage through its EEZ is seen as ‘excessive’ by the US and has led to the US regularly conducting operational challenges in waters claimed by India.<sup>33</sup> Crucially, given the complexity of international law, it was pointed out by UK participants that expectations of what can be achieved in this regard need to be managed, especially as there are unresolved questions about how prosecutions are undertaken or how EEZs are calculated. Participants thus reiterated that a bilateral dialogue would be helpful to bring the UK and India on the same page and to ensure a long-term partnership in the WIO.

## Recommendations

- Within the Indo-Pacific, each sub-region has unique security and geostrategic challenges. The UK and India should focus on working together in the WIO, as it provides a key point of convergence between UK and Indian economic interests and has cultural and historical links to both countries.
- There is a need to coordinate existing British and Indian points of presence in the IOR. The UK and India should work together on activities already carried out by them, such as monitoring of EEZs and HADR. Moreover, India should consider formal membership of the CMF, and the UK should look to develop a clear Indian Ocean strategy.
- Although this is being explored at the time of writing, the UK should post a liaison officer at the IFC-IOR to serve as a conduit for information sharing between the UK and India on maritime security.
- It is crucial to have a sustained bilateral dialogue on maritime issues. This would be a useful step towards developing areas of common interest as well as ironing out the differences on regional security issues. The dialogue should focus on shared strategic

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32. *BBC News*, ‘Chagos Islands Dispute: UN Backs End to UK Control’, 22 May 2019.

33. *Economic Times*, ‘US Regularly Conducts Operational Challenges in Indian EEZ’, 12 July 2018.

outlooks and opportunities for cooperation in response to mutual security threats and concerns. Such dialogue will also help develop a common understanding of international law, governance and standards, which are important in managing expectations of what can realistically be achieved by the two sides.

- The UK and India should leverage their complementary capabilities in big data and AI and deepen cooperation in research and development, as well as knowledge sharing towards enhanced MDA.
- In addition to technological and hardware requirements, it is also critical to develop human capabilities and political will towards the improvement of MDA. The UK and India can work together to raise awareness of this issue through activities such as academic capacity building or joint training.
- With regard to blue economy objectives, the UK and India can engage in a joint mapping of resources available to countries in the WIO and help them develop practical maritime strategies and national action plans that align with relevant UN SDGs as well as market requirements. The UK and India can also provide technical assistance, human capacity and co-financing for blue economy projects in third countries.
- The UK and India should exchange information and coordinate from the design and planning stages of blue economy activities, enabling integrated action and reduced duplication.
- Capitalising on India's desire to play a larger role in multilateral institutions and to focus on areas of mutual concern, the UK and India can become key players in building thematic multilateral organisations aimed at developing tangible responses to specific issues. The two can also use the Commonwealth as a forum through which blue economy cooperation could be advanced in the WIO, given the shared interests around this issue among member states.

# About the Author

**Aaditya Dave** is a Research Analyst focusing on South Asia in the International Security Studies department at RUSI. His research interests include South Asian foreign policy, regional security and strategic dynamics, Chinese engagement with South Asia, and counterterrorism and conflict in the region. Prior to joining RUSI, Aaditya worked using open-source intelligence to identify specific hotspots for militant activity in South Asia for both private and public sector clients. He has completed an MA in Conflict, Security and Development from King's College London.