

SOUTH AFRICA'S MARITIME FOREIGN POLICY: A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

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Introduction

In October 2017, South Africa assumed the prestigious chair of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) for two years. At the time, observers questioned whether this was geared to lead and extract maximum benefit for its members and the country itself.¹ The country's foreign policy paper of 2011 noted the existence of the Indian Ocean Rim (IOR) but proposed no integrated strategic plans, save to call for a maritime security policy for Africa.²

The observers did not have to wait long for a response. At the opening of the seventeenth meeting of the IORA Council of Ministers in October, former South African Minister of International Relations and Co-operation, Ms Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, laid out a strategy to promote the Indian Ocean as a zone of peace, stability and development. In doing so, she noted three priorities: maritime safety and security, enhanced disaster risk management, and sustainable and responsible fisheries management.

Soon after, tropical Cyclone Idai hit Africa. In a matter of a few days, in March 2019, the storm caused catastrophic damage, and a humanitarian crisis in Mozambique, Zimbabwe, and Malawi. Despite early warning by meteorological services based on Reunion and Hawaii, responses from the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and its member states were slow and inadequate, leaving international aid agencies to run rescue and recovery operations.³ IORA was nowhere to be found.

What are the overriding global and regional trends and dynamics that our strategic thinkers ought to keep in mind as they ponder the alignment of various maritime policy approaches in the national and regional interest? An answer to this question would include the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, the African Union's Vision 2063, the 2050 African Integrated Maritime Strategy (AIMS), the Common Agenda and security strategy of the SADC, and South Africa's foreign, defence, economic and trade policy frameworks.

Ultimately, can the Indian Ocean's value find expression in strengthened national interest policy frameworks, whether it is the promotion of security, trade or diplomatic goals, or a combination of all of these?

The study on which this article is based, aimed to provide a conceptual framework for South Africa's maritime foreign policy and maritime diplomacy using a themed matrix. Such framework includes the socio-economic, security and governance dimensions on the horizontal axis, and the national, continental and global levels of analyses on the vertical axis. This is done by first conceptualising maritime foreign policy and maritime diplomacy, followed by a synopsis of strategic interests for maritime foreign policy. The

discussion then focuses on the dimensions of South Africa's maritime foreign policy, and finally offering concluding remarks.

Conceptualising maritime foreign policy and maritime diplomacy

What do we mean by 'maritime foreign policy' and 'maritime diplomacy'? The question of how to define 'maritime foreign policy' and 'maritime diplomacy' is not easily answered. We view the broad concept of diplomacy as an instrument and rules of engagement in the hands of governments to advance their foreign policy interests. Remarkably, maritime-oriented concepts of foreign policy or diplomacy do not appear readily in the literature. Le Miere suggests maritime diplomacy encompasses a spectrum of activities ranging from co-operative measures, such as port visits, exercises and humanitarian assistance, to persuasive deployment and coercion. For him, maritime diplomacy is an activity no longer confined to navies, but pursued by coastguards, civilian vessels and non-state groups.⁴ In fact, maritime diplomacy includes naval diplomacy, which may be defined as the use of the navy as an instrument of foreign policy through maritime coercion (mainly known as "gunboat diplomacy"),⁵ naval co-operation, international maritime assistance and international conflict resolution and management to safeguard national interests.⁶

Le Miere notes that, as states such as China and India develop, they are increasingly using this most flexible form of soft and hard power. Navies are used as instruments of soft power for purposes other than war, and as hard power for deterrence through gunboat diplomacy. This is a useful opening to discuss how some emerging powers from the Global South interpret these concepts. According to Chauhan, India's 'maritime diplomacy' is a function of the desire of the nation to preserve, protect and promote her maritime interests. These maritime interests flow from and simultaneously feed into India's core national interest, which – derived from the Constitution – is "to assure the societal, economic, and material well-being of the People of India".⁷

In light of this brief exploration, and the fact that South Africa has no clearly defined maritime policy framework and strategy, we offer a working definition of 'maritime foreign policy', namely the intent of a nation to preserve, protect and promote its maritime interests as reflected in its national interest doctrine or philosophy. This is often codified in a constitution or national policies such as the National Development Plan (NDP) in the South African case. The term 'maritime interests' refers to the protection and enhancement of maritime assets (such as marine environment, transport, safety and security, the maritime industry, the oceans economy). The term 'maritime diplomacy' refers to the behaviour of a nation in pursuit of its maritime interests, usually by combining and/or applying the instruments of state power in the diplomatic, economic and security domains. Securing maritime interests takes place via co-operation or coercion, often referred to as the exercise of 'soft' and 'hard' power. Nations are able to exercise maritime power and influence depending on the doctrine of their national interests as well as the strength of their foreign policy and diplomatic instruments. In the case of South Africa exercising soft power, the country recently hosted a joint maritime exercise, which brought together Russian, Chinese and South African naval and air assets.⁸ The exercise of South African hard power at sea mostly relates to combating of maritime crime – although capacity is limited.⁹

Chauhan offers other examples of maritime diplomacy – the instrument used to pursue foreign policy interests. The first is China’s development of major maritime infrastructure abroad:

- the creation of ‘artificial islands’ on the Paracel and Spratly islands;
- the Chittagong container terminal;
- the Maday crude oil terminal in Myanmar’s Kyakpyu port; and
- the development of ports such as –
 - Hambantota in Sri Lanka;
 - Gwadar in Pakistan;
 - Bagamoyo in Tanzania;
 - Beira in Mozambique;
 - Walvis Bay in Namibia;
 - Kribi in Cameroon; and
 - the Djibouti Multipurpose Port.

Together with the seductive Maritime Silk Route/One Belt One Road Initiative, these are examples of China’s maritime diplomacy at ‘strategic’ level.

The second is the case of India. India intends to be a net security provider in the Indian Ocean. Chauhan notes that India’s efforts at maritime ‘capacity building’ and ‘capability enhancement’ in Sri Lanka, the Maldives, the Seychelles, Mauritius, Madagascar, Myanmar and Vietnam, are examples of India’s maritime diplomacy at ‘strategic’ level. However, Chauhan is of the view that India is more often than not reactive, and frequently, its strategic-level game plays are ‘too little too late’.¹⁰

The place of maritime foreign policy and maritime diplomacy in promoting South African national interests is not always well articulated or well understood. Evidently, there is a literature gap between foreign policy and the maritime domain. This gap also exists when one focuses on South Africa’s foreign policy white paper¹¹, as well as its NDP.

Encouragingly, the recent Comprehensive Maritime Transport Policy (CMTP) of 2017 identifies “effective maritime international cooperation and diplomacy” as a desired outcome.¹² The CMTP proposes several areas of activity where South Africa has a foreign policy role to play. These range from promoting the maritime industry (transport, shipping carrying capacity, offices for ship owners) to regional co-operation in maritime safety, security, and environmental protection. It also proposes the establishment of a “Maritime International Relations and Technical Co-operation Committee” to coordinate all international maritime strategic engagements.¹³ It is unclear whether this latter committee has seen the light of day and, if so, to what extent it is operational. It is also unclear why this section of the CMTP does not make mention of the international aspects of Operation Phakisa – which appears to be an oversight.

Synopsis of strategic interests for maritime foreign policy

Before delving into the strategic interests for maritime foreign policy, it is pertinent to highlight some pointers. In international relations terms, the spotlight is on the IOR as it connects the Middle East, Africa and East Asia with Europe and the Americas thus emerging as the theatre of twenty-first century geopolitics.

Movement across these waters is both facilitated and potentially constrained by several key choke points – the Mozambique Channel, the Bab el-Mandeb (‘gate of grief’, a strait located between Yemen on the Arabian Peninsula, and Djibouti and Eritrea in the Horn of Africa), the Suez Canal, the Strait of Hormuz, the Malacca Straits, the Sunda Strait, and the Lombok Strait.

Stretching eastward from the Horn of Africa to the Indonesian archipelago and beyond, the IOR acts as a vital channel for Western military supplies and the Persian Gulf hydrocarbon resources. Most international commerce flows through this route.

The volatile socio-political environment in the region and the rise of India and China as major powers have made this an area of crucial geo-strategic importance. High rates of population growth and youth unemployment coupled with extremism and weak governance add to instability and migration issues. The region, already prone to natural disasters, is predicted to suffer most from climate change when compared globally.

There are many challenges as well as opportunities facing the IOR, stemming from the interests of regional and extra regional players. The IOR, which is presently a pivot for contemporary geopolitics and geo-economics, should be on the priority list of South Africa’s foreign policy. Given that a high percentage of our trade and imports are transported by sea, forging regional partnerships is very vital to ensure the security of the sea lanes of communication and to attain larger strategic interests.

Let us highlight four such strategic interests and conclude with a cautionary note.

Trade, investment and economic growth

As noted, the Indian Ocean provides critical sea trade routes that connect the Middle East, Africa and South Asia with the broader Asian continent to the east and Europe to the west. It transports one half of world’s container shipments, one third of the bulk cargo traffic, two thirds of the oil shipments and more than 50 per cent of the world’s maritime oil trade. The IOR represents a large market with around 2 billion population (one third of the world) and producing goods and services worth US\$1 trillion (around 8 per cent of world production).¹⁴ As Doyle notes, “its core position in terms of global trade, industry, labor, environment and security will increasingly shape the planet in the twenty-first century”.¹⁵

The shift of global economic gravity towards Asia over the past decade has resulted in significant growth for regional and global trade as well as cross-border investment flows in the IOR, which experiences a high degree of trade complementarity among the economies. While reforms in economic policies along with infrastructure development have driven foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows to the region, some of the IOR countries have also emerged as potential sources of outward investment flows.

Our strategic thinkers should consider that existing trade potential could be tapped further through sectoral co-operation initiatives in areas such as tourism, fisheries, food processing, information and communication technologies, small and medium enterprises, and the regional value chain.

In doing so, they should align policy frameworks with what Professor Attri (the chairperson of Indian Ocean Studies at the University of Mauritius) calls “the new emerging development paradigm of the Blue Economy”.¹⁶

This concept, inclusive of the ocean economy, green economy, coastal economy and marine economy, focuses on the long-term sustainability of oceans and has potential for higher and faster gross domestic product (GDP) growth in the IOR. The blue economy advocates the same outcome as the green economy, namely improved human well-being and social equity, while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities.

Attri analysed South Africa’s 2014 Operation Phakisa and noted four challenges:

- yet to obtain a license from international seabed authority (ISA) for deep sea mining;
- delimitation of maritime and transnational aquatic boundaries to remove tensions among states;
- managing complex dynamics of rapid population growth, coastal urbanisation, climate change and licensed use of aquatic and maritime resources; and
- the need to develop a holistic and integrated approach.

Defence and security

The maritime strategic outlook of several IOR nations is influenced by the presence of extra-regional players and unresolved border issues. Unlike the Pacific Ocean, the Indian Ocean has a so-called ‘roof above its head’ that only allows entrance via straits or choke points. Therefore, any nation that wants to engage economically from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean has to transit through the choke points in the Indian Ocean that are increasingly becoming points of vulnerability. The extraordinary expansion of global trade with the advent of globalisation has prioritised the concerns with regard to maritime security in the Indo-Pacific. Today, maritime security branches out to include human security, climate change and security of livelihoods.

Furthermore, the arms race, which is responsible for transfer of sophisticated armaments to the countries in the Indo-Pacific is a matter of much concern in an already uncertain and volatile region. In recent years, the United States and China have adopted positions with regard to the whole region. On one hand, the United States is strengthening its hold on the region via its ‘rebalancing’ or ‘pivot’ strategy, while on the other hand, China is asserting its claims on the islands in the South China Sea via reclamation of the sea or through movement of oil rigs near the islands. Moreover, traditional and non-traditional threats, such as natural disasters, piracy and terrorism also pose a challenge.

South Africa has established extensive maritime diplomacy for defence and security in the Indian Ocean. This was done as part of naval diplomacy, which is a subset of maritime diplomacy. The country engages in a number of initiatives and exercises. Operation Copper is part of the initiatives and some of the exercises as mentioned in this article. In addition, goodwill visits by various naval platforms have been undertaken since 1994. Nonetheless, our strategic thinkers should consider six themes:

- global and regional power dynamics, which require our policy makers to understand the strategy and role of extra-regional/regional powers in the IOR, such as China, France, Germany, Australia, the United States and South Korea, as well as the role of small littoral states, such as Malaysia, the Maldives, the Seychelles, Singapore, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Indonesia;
- traditional and non-traditional threats to maritime security, such as disruptions of energy supplies, cyber-security, piracy and terrorism;
- governing the seas, including sea lanes of communication and freedom of navigation as well as maritime disputes and intergovernmental negotiations;
- the Indian Ocean Zone of Peace Declaration (IOZP) proposal and outcomes for South Africa (for example, piracy, arms flows and nuclear weapons);
- the emerging security architecture of the IOR in the context of the rise of the Indian Navy as the net security provider, and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief; and
- the growing influence of China in the IOR, and the One Belt One Road (OBOR) and Maritime Silk Road Initiatives.

Soft power diplomacy

Africa's historic and ethnic ties via the littoral states of the IOR are a big asset that have shaped present cultural and civilisational linkages in the region. However, Africa has not been able to use these ties optimally for its own interests. The commonalities of shared culture, such as art, literature, music and cuisine, are a strength and should be nurtured in order to counterbalance the growing powers of other regional players in the IOR. Given that South Africa's foreign policy document is titled 'The diplomacy of *ubuntu*' (meaning, the foreign policy of 'compassion' or 'humanity'), our strategic thinkers should consider two themes:

- people-to-people contact, including the diaspora, citizen diplomacy, and partnerships in higher education; and
- cultural diplomacy, including gastronomy, cultural centres, and the media and cinema.

Development co-operation

While the majority of IOR countries depend on foreign assistance for supplementing their social and economic needs, a few of them have also come to offer development support to other countries within and outside the region. The volume of resources flowing from the regional donors in the IOR has been on a steady rise over the past decade. Our strategic thinkers should consider giving the moribund South African Development Partnership Agency (SADPA) the political and economic muscles it requires to influence the IORA agenda further.¹⁷

Dimensions of South Africa's maritime foreign policy

At national, continental and global level, South Africa's maritime foreign policy may be understood using the matrix that was developed with three dimensions of analysis as shown in Figure 1, namely the socio-economic, maritime security and governance dimensions as discussed below.

South Africa's maritime foreign policy at the national level

In terms of the three dimensions, what informs South Africa's maritime foreign policy at national level? Firstly, it must be noted that South Africa lacks a national security strategy from which a maritime security strategy should flow. Simply put, there is no national maritime policy or strategy. Other than maritime security strategy, however, there are policy documents, which inform South Africa's maritime foreign policy. Apart from the 1996 Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, there is legislation and other major policy documents. Examples are:

- the South African Foreign Policy Discussion Document (SAFPDD);
- the NDP;
- a Research, Innovation and Knowledge Management Road Map for the South African Maritime Sector: Charting a Course to Maritime Excellence by 2030;
- the Defence Act (42 of 2002); and
- the 2015 Defence Review.

In its simplest form, the socio-economic dimension refers to the economic and social factors relating to South Africa's maritime foreign policy. In this regard, the NDP is a leading policy document as it aims to move the country forward to 2030 and beyond. It is for this reason that Operation Phakisa has been introduced as a vehicle to produce fast results. However, there has been significant underachievement of Operation Phakisa's planned targets, which Masie and Bond termed "small, slow failures".¹⁸ In fact, due to ambitious target-setting and subsequent implementation failures, the NDP is in need of a serious upgrade.¹⁹

Although several authors concur that maritime security lacks an agreed definition due to varying threats,²⁰ the maritime security dimension may be defined as an environment where conflicts between states, maritime terrorism, piracy at sea, and other maritime crimes, such as illegal fishing have been obliterated.²¹ Following from this definition, the maritime security dimension of South Africa's foreign policy is concomitant with the absence of maritime insecurity at sea to enable the blue economy in order to achieve socio-economic development through Operation Phakisa to achieve national objectives as stipulated in the NDP.

Foreign policy: the maritime dimensions			
	Socio-economic	Maritime security	Governance
National level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NDP • Operation Phakisa (blue economy elements) • CMTP for South Africa • Comparing South Africa with other developing states (socio-economic aspects) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NDP, MTSF 2014 • Operation Phakisa (Marine Protection Services) • CMTP for South Africa • Defence Act • Defence Review • Comparing South Africa with other developing states (maritime security) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NDP • Operation Phakisa (ocean governance) • CMTP for South Africa • Comparing South Africa with other developing states (governance)
Continental level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • African Union Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) (socio-economic) • Agenda 2063 • 2050 AIMS (Strategic Priority 4) • Continental Free Trade Area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NDP (Chapter 7) • SADC Maritime Security Strategy (Operation Copper) • AU Peace and Security Architecture • 2050 AIMS (maritime security) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2050 AIMS (governance) • SADC maritime security strategy (governance)
Global level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa (BRICS) (blue economy such as fisheries, tourism, aquaculture) • India, Brazil and South Africa (IBSA) (blue economy, perhaps also human security/trafficking dimension) • IORA (blue economy such as fisheries, tourism, aquaculture) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BRICS (maritime safety issues) • IBSA Maritime Exercises (IBSAMAR) • IORA (maritime safety issues) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BRICS (governance issues) • IBSA (governance issues) • IORA (governance issues)

Figure 1: Key dimensions of South Africa’s maritime foreign policy matrix

Through sub-outcome 3 (South Africa’s borders effectively defended, protected, secured and well managed) of outcome 3 (all people in South Africa are and feel safe), which extends to the protection of maritime borders, the 2014–2019 Medium-Term Strategic Framework (MTSF) also focuses on maritime security.²² However, the major challenge in maritime security is the lack of coordination and the duplication of func-

tions by the various actors. In fact, one of the official documents clearly states, “[t]here is very little inter-agency coordination and or cooperation”.²³

In terms of the governance dimension, there is no comprehensive maritime strategy or policy that governs the conduct of the various actors in the maritime domain. This has often created problems with the duplication of function. For instance, with the establishment of the Border Management Agency (BMA), a paramilitary force (law enforcement for borders) would be established focusing on border safeguarding. This extends to sea borders. Accordingly, it can be presumed that a coastguard would also be established, thereby duplicating both the functions of the South African Police Service (SAPS), and the navy to some extent. The control of the legal/illegal cross-border movement of all persons and goods at all ports of entry – which include the nine seaports – falls within the mandate of the SAPS. Sadly, it seems there was no co-operation and coordination in the quest to establish the BMA as emerged during deliberations of the Portfolio Committee on Home Affairs regarding the BMA Bill in August 2016. South Africa would benefit considerably from such strategy as it would outline these issues related to governance.

One of the greatest risks outlined in the NDP is poor governance, which may risk the success of the developmental agenda of the country. Thus, there is a striving towards better governance, which extends to ocean governance.²⁴ This was operationalised by launching Operation Phakisa, which had the Marine Protection Services and Governance (MPSG) launched in 2014 to implement an overarching and integrated governance framework for sustainable growth of the ocean economy. Whether this has been achieved is another matter. Indications, however, are that there has been underachievement of most of the promised benefits, such as job creation.

South Africa’s regional and continental maritime foreign policy

At regional and continental level, South Africa’s maritime foreign policy is shaped by the country’s policies such as the NDP, the Maritime Doctrine of the South African Navy (SANGP100), the SADC arrangements, as well as the African Union arrangements. Some of the major policy documents and strategies are the 2050 Integrated African Maritime Strategy, and the decisions by the SADC Organ on Politics Defence and Security Co-operation, particularly the Standing Maritime Committee (SMC).

In terms of the socio-economic dimension, the vision of the 2050 AIMS “is to foster increased wealth creation from Africa’s oceans and seas by developing a sustainable thriving blue economy in a secure and environmentally sustainable manner”.²⁵ Additionally, the strategic end state emphasises socio-economic development, amongst others. Other initiatives emphasise the socio-economic dimensions. For instance, the first aspiration of the African Union’s Agenda 2063 is “[a] prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development”.²⁶ The blue economy is instrumental in the socio-economic development of the continent. Accordingly, the blue economy has been identified as one of the major drivers of growth and development.²⁷

In terms of the maritime security dimension, the SADC SMC was instrumental in the establishment of Operation Copper in 2011 after a defence meeting, which was at-

tended by former Defence Minister, Lindiwe Sisulu. This led to the signing of a trilateral memorandum of understanding (MoU) on maritime security co-operation in February 2012 between South Africa, Mozambique and Tanzania, signalling the commencement of Operation Copper.²⁸ This operation was part of the SADC maritime security strategy, which is classified for security reasons.

As part of South Africa's position in the world, the eradication of piracy has been identified as pertinent in Chapter 7 of the NDP. It is stated:

Maritime piracy is putting the continent's coasts and ports under increasing pressure. Even though piracy has not yet penetrated South Africa's local waters significantly, efforts need to be made to prevent the problem from spreading along the country's coastline. This is especially important in light of the fact that about 95 percent of South Africa's trade volume (about 80 percent by value) is seaborne.²⁹

To eradicate maritime insecurity, the South African Navy – as a foreign policy instrument – is deployed to perform its diplomatic role.³⁰ These deployments are authorised by letters from the President as submitted to the Parliament's Joint Standing Committee on Defence for consideration. However, the tempo of deployments has been reduced in the recent past owing to budgetary constraints. Additionally, and contrary to the 2015 Defence Review, the naval assets are inadequate owing to delays in the acquisition of new vessels under Project Biro. SANGP 100 states, “[a] credible maritime capability is important for the promotion of the wider interests, to confer influence and to underpin diplomacy”.³¹ To remain credible, the navy needs to keep its vessels maintained and old ones, such as refurbished strike craft, replaced.

Continentially, APSA informs the country's maritime foreign policy. This includes the 2050 AIMS, the African Union (AU) Agenda 2063, as well as other arrangements such as the Sea Power for Africa Symposium, the SADC SMC, and other bilateral and multilateral arrangements with other countries. The AU Peace and Security Council is the main pillar of APSA supported by the various structures, including the African Standby Force, which has maritime components in the brigades of the coastal states, including South Africa. This maritime security and safety component is one called for in the 2050 AIMS.³² It is intended to make Africa a secure and peaceful continent as stated in the fourth aspiration of Agenda 2063. In this regard, collective security is pursued through various mechanisms,³³ such as maritime and naval diplomacy, which is evident in initiatives such as the Sea Power for Africa Symposium.

In terms of the governance dimension, 2050 AIMS is geared for wealth creation through ocean governance and Africa's inland waters. One of the missions is the promotion of the rule of law in societies and good governance.³⁴ This links to the third aspiration of Agenda 2063, which emphasises good governance and the rule of law, amongst others. Inarguably, good governance is also required in the maritime domain.

South Africa's global maritime foreign policy

At global level, South Africa's maritime foreign policy is shaped by the countries' policies as well as the international agreements and membership of various organisa-

tions, such as IORA, BRICS, and IBSA, to name a few. When South Africa took over the chair of IORA for the period 2017–2019, former Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, promised to have an African perspective by aligning the 2050 AIMS in areas such as maritime security and the ocean economy.³⁵ Whether this has been the case, remains to be seen.

In terms of the socio-economic dimension, some of the priorities and focus areas of IORA are women's economic empowerment, blue economy and fisheries management. For these priorities, various IORA ministerial blue economy conferences have been held where declarations were adopted. The first was held in September 2015 in Mauritius. Indonesia held their conference in May 2018, where a declaration on the blue economy was adopted, aimed at optimising the use of existing IORA financial instruments to enhance blue growth for the member states.³⁶

In terms of the maritime security dimension, one of the priorities and focus areas of IORA is maritime safety and security. Issues of maritime security being addressed are elements of peace and security, sovereignty/territorial integrity/political independence, good order at sea, security of resources and the environment. For maritime safety, the focus is on training, transport, construction and equipment-related issues and assistance in distress situations. In 2015, the IORA Maritime Cooperation Declaration was signed focusing on socio-economic matters, maritime security and governance issues.³⁷ Within IBSA, there is a naval co-operation agreement to have joint exercises known as IBSA Maritime Exercises (IBSAMAR). Other exercises with various countries to enhance naval co-operation are Atlasur, Good Hope, Golfinho, Transoceanic and Blue Crane.³⁸

In terms of the governance dimension, international regimes and agreements under the United Nations and other organisations are important. They guide South Africa's foreign policy, as the country is a signatory.

The dimensions above clearly illustrate how South Africa's maritime foreign policy may be understood. South Africa is evidently a maritime actor. As an actor, the country plays a maritime leadership role in various forums at regional, continental and global level. Accordingly, the country needs to use its position for socio-economic and other benefits by promoting blue growth. Having maritime security and good governance in the maritime domain are pre-requisites for socio-economic development.

Conclusion

We conclude with a cautionary note. Our strategic thinkers need to consider harmonising and aligning several wide-ranging policy frameworks and strategies in the interest of extracting maximum value from the oceans. It is attractive to think that South Africa has extra influence by virtue of the fact that it chairs the AU and the African Peer Review Mechanism in 2020, and has chaired SADC. IORA, has a seat at the Group of 20, the AU and its Peace and Security Council, and various UN bodies, including its Security Council not to mention South Africa's membership of BRICS, IBSA, the Forum for China–Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), and others. This reality must be anchored in realistic understandings of South Africa's capacity to exercise power and influence through maritime foreign policy and diplomacy.

It is one thing to develop a vision, but another to implement policies in the quest for achieving strategic objectives. The major problem faced by South Africa is not policy development, but rather implementation. Take the 2015 Defence Review for example. It is an important policy document that could arrest the decline of the South African National Defence Force; yet, there is a lack of implementation because it needs R80 billion for the first year, which is almost double the annual allocation for the Department of Defence. However, this cannot be blamed on political leadership or a lack thereof. The reality is that there are many competing interests, and defence is currently not a priority. Accordingly, it is simplistic to assume that senior politicians decide and implementers implement. Implementation is dynamic and complex.

Policymakers need to take the various factors that influence policy implementation (content, context, capacity, commitment, clients and coalitions) seriously. In bringing together the overall strategic vision for the country these are the determining factors. A technical approach – listing ‘unachievable’ projects – is insufficient. A strategic vision must be credible – backed up by resources and an implementation plan. Currently, South Africa suffers from outdated foreign, defence and national security policy frameworks. Updates have rarely been made to these policy frameworks. For instance, before the current 2015 Defence Review, the last was finalised in 1998.

New approaches depend on the appetite of the post-May 2019 government. Given the weaknesses of the security sector and the economic growth rate of less than one per cent, we can conclude that resources will significantly constrain the evolution of a maritime foreign policy, let alone the capability to implement it. In addition, we have to note that the 2050 AIMS and SADC’s Strategic Indicative Plan for the Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Co-operation are no longer credible. Even our own NDP is based on out-dated assumptions. South Africa is at a difficult moment in its evolution as a democracy and our strategic thinkers must factor this into their forward planning. Maritime foreign policy holds much promise for the ocean and blue economy, and it is our contention that our strategic thinkers should integrate its potential into a recalibrated, long-term vision and plan for South Africa’s continental and global place and role. Without such an integrating and coordinating philosophy, South Africa and the continent will not benefit maximally from IORA, BRICS, IBSA or the UN.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ See for example A Benkenstein. *South Africa's Indian Ocean Rim Association legacy: A more inclusive and open IORA*. Policy briefing 175. Johannesburg: South African Institute of International Affairs, 2018.
- ² South Africa's White Paper on Foreign Policy states the following on maritime matters: "South Africa must take note of the fact that the Indian Ocean Rim has become the world's major energy and resource supply route to the fast-growing Asian economies, and that the major global powers have a heightened military presence in the region. Consequently, a maritime security policy for Africa becomes essential." See Department of International Relations and Cooperation. "Building a better world: the diplomacy of Ubuntu: White Paper on South Africa's Foreign Policy". 2011. <https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/201409/foreignpolicy0.pdf> Accessed on 24 March 2019.
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- ¹⁰ Chauhan *op. cit.*, p. 16.
- ¹¹ Department of International Relations and Cooperation *op. cit.*
- ¹² Department of Transport. "Comprehensive Maritime Transport Policy for South Africa". 2017. <<https://www.transport.gov.za/documents/11623/44313/MaritimeTransportPolicyMay2017FINAL.pdf/4fc1b8b8-37d3-4ad0-8862-313a6637104c>> Accessed on 1 April 2020.
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