



Aligning Africa's Maritime Ambitions with Broader Indian Ocean Regionalism

ALEX BENKENSTEIN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Blue Economy initiatives have proliferated in recent years, reflecting the growing prioritisation of maritime affairs within the policymaking community. Sustainability concerns related to climate change, pollution and fishing practices are an important component of this engagement, but there is equally an emphasis on the economic potential that improved ocean governance offers through, for example, shipping, offshore oil and gas, tourism and fisheries. Maritime security is also a prerequisite for the flourishing of this economy. Despite the adoption of a range of Blue Economy strategies and initiatives, implementing a coherent and integrated approach to the Blue Economy presents numerous challenges. Key among these is the fact that it covers a diverse range of sectors and issues, many of which are engaged with sector-specific programmes or strategies. As Blue Economy initiatives increase there is a risk that efforts will be duplicated and inefficiencies will creep into co-operation efforts. In this regard, the networking,

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

ALEX BENKENSTEIN is Programme Manager: Governance of Africa's Resources Programme at the South African Institute of International Affairs.

monitoring and reporting functions of these initiatives are important. The AU's '2050 Africa's Integrated Maritime Strategy' (2050 AIM Strategy) and the Indian Ocean Rim Association's (IORA) Blue Economy initiative could support each other and strengthen both environmental governance and the growth of maritime industries. However, this will require bolstering institutional capacity and enhancing the communication and networking functions of these bodies.

INTRODUCTION

Among Africa's 54 states, 38 are either coastal or island countries. Even landlocked states are strongly linked to the ocean, as over 90% of the continent's trade is conducted through maritime routes. Fisheries, tourism and the oil and gas sector play a crucial role in supporting livelihoods and contributing to economies along the continent's 42 000km coastline. Despite the importance of the maritime domain, commentators have argued that the continent's institutions have suffered a high degree of 'sea blindness'.¹ Political co-operation at regional and subregional levels has focused on promoting improved economic linkages between African states and addressing development challenges or conflicts, rather than focusing explicitly on the potential wealth of the region's oceans. Except for South Africa, naval capability on the continent has been limited. Marine scientific research and fisheries management efforts throughout the continent have relied heavily on the support of foreign donors.

However, under the rubric of the Blue Economy, maritime industries and governance issues have become a central concern for African policymakers in recent years. AU Commission Chairperson Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma has referred to the Blue Economy as the maritime dimension of the African Renaissance,² while the AU's Agenda 2063³ envisages Africa's Blue Economy as a major contributor to continental transformation and growth. At the centre of this shift is the 2050 AIM Strategy, a comprehensive plan that aims to 'foster more wealth creation from Africa's oceans, seas and inland water ways by developing a thriving maritime economy and realising the full potential of sea-based activities in an environmentally sustainable manner'.⁴ The 2050 AIM Strategy was adopted during the 22nd Assembly of AU Heads of States and Government in January 2014, but had been under development since 2008.⁵

If the 2050 AIM Strategy is to succeed, it must develop innovative ways to build on sector-specific strategies already in place for the Africa region, and link effectively to broader regional initiatives such as the IORA Blue Economy programme.

THE EMERGENCE OF AN AFRICAN MARITIME POLICY AGENDA

The 2050 AIM Strategy recognises numerous antecedent initiatives relevant to its aims and objectives. For example, achieving an African Common Fisheries Policy would build on the outcomes of the 2010 and 2014 Conferences of African Ministers of Fisheries and Aquaculture, the 2005 Abuja Declaration on Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture in Africa, and the Comprehensive African Fisheries Reform Strategy. For several years the primary institution responsible for driving these initiatives was the Partnership for Africa's Fisheries within the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) Secretariat. More recently, the AU Inter-African Bureau for Animal Resources has been playing a far more central role. However, fisheries governance efforts also incorporate a host of regional fisheries bodies, research projects and institutions across the continent. Similarly, the maritime transport ambitions of the 2050 AIM Strategy are closely linked to the African Maritime Transport Charter (adopted in 1994, with an expanded and updated version adopted in 2010) and with institutions such as the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA), spearheaded by the PIDA Steering Committee. The committee includes representatives of the AU Commission's Infrastructure and Energy Department, the African Development Bank, NEPAD and regional economic communities (RECs). Similar strategic plans, initiatives and institutions may be identified in any of the core areas of the strategy, such as maritime security or disaster risk preparedness.

The AU has initiated a series of programmes and mandated specific institutions to take the lead in tackling challenges in particular economic sectors. Agriculture is addressed through the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme spearheaded by NEPAD, and African policymakers' ambitions related to the mining sector are encapsulated in the African Mining Vision, with the African Minerals Development Centre as its co-ordinating agency. The challenge for Blue Economy initiatives such as the 2050 AIM Strategy is essentially one of fragmentation as they span a wide variety of sectors and a complex array of institutions, initiatives and programmes.

The 2050 AIM Strategy outlines a range of new institutional mechanisms aimed at co-ordinating and supporting its implementation. At its centre lies a new Department of Maritime Affairs within the AU Commission, with a 2050 AIM Strategy Capital Fund to support the strategy's implementation, and a High Level College of Champions to provide strategic input and promote broader political support. A Monitoring and Evaluation Steering Committee would review implementation progress every three years, while collaboration would be promoted through the establishment of various forums, including an African Safety of Navigation Forum and an African Naval Architects and Marine Engineers Forum. However, funding remains a major constraint. None of the institutional mechanisms outlined above has yet been established. An interim

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2050 AIM Strategy Task Force with a limited staff contingent and operating budget has been co-ordinating implementation. In 2014 the AU Commission's 23rd Ordinary Session of Heads of State and Government requested the commission to facilitate the establishment of an expanded Strategic Task Force composed of representatives of member states, the AU Commission and RECs. The task force convened for the first time in July 2015 with the AU's launch of the 2015–2025 Decade of African Seas and Oceans.

It is evident that the 2050 AIM Strategy is highly ambitious both in its proposal of new institutions and the range of issues it seeks to address, which include fisheries and aquaculture, maritime security, disaster risk management, maritime boundaries delineation, illegal oil bunkering/crude oil theft, environmental crimes, flag states and port state control. The strategy further envisions the establishment of a Combined Exclusive Maritime Zone of Africa (CEMZA) as a 'combined African maritime space without barriers'.⁶ African governments will undoubtedly be concerned about the full implications of CEMZA in relation to national sovereignty, particularly with regard to resource utilisation. However, there is a strong case for functional co-operation in a range of areas, such as establishing procedures for coast guards to pursue vessels suspected of illegal fishing across international boundaries, naval interoperability, and effective regional disaster risk and response strategies.

The institutions on the continent that are implementing initiatives and programmes that speak directly to the objectives of the 2050 AIM Strategy include the Nairobi Convention, the Abidjan Convention, the Stop Illegal Fishing initiative, the Benguela Current Commission and the Western Indian Ocean Marine Science Association. Africa's RECs have also been increasingly active on maritime issues in recent years, for example, ECOWAS, the Economic Community of Central African States and the Gulf of Guinea Commission have, together, been implementing a raft of initiatives aimed at addressing maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea. SADC member states have been co-operating on addressing illegal fisheries, including through the establishment of a SADC Regional Fisheries Monitoring, Control and Surveillance Co-ordination Centre.

Implementation of the 2050 AIM Strategy will require closer collaboration within regional partnerships that extend beyond Africa's maritime domain. For example, IORA has a number of African members, but also includes members as distant as Australia and Indonesia.

INSTITUTIONAL RENEWAL AT THE INDIAN OCEAN RIM ASSOCIATION

In 2013 the 20 member states of the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Co-operation (IOR-ARC) agreed to change the association's name to the Indian Ocean Rim Association.⁷ Although a superficial change, the new name was intended to represent a much deeper process of institutional renewal. As recently as 2013, IOR-ARC had been described as having a 'loose institutional

structure, hardly any visible profile and only modest activities'.⁸ With its headquarters in Mauritius housing a small secretariat, the association had made some progress in developing structures and facilitating exchanges among member states, having established a Working Group on Trade and Investment, the Indian Ocean Rim Business Forum and the Indian Ocean Rim Academic Group. However, despite convening workshops and conferences addressing a wide range of issues, little sustained progress was made in areas such as trade facilitation. Research projects and other initiatives championed by individual member states seldom had far-ranging impact, and many of these projects were quietly shelved without achieving their planned output.

With India as chair (2011–2012), followed by Australia (2013–2014), IORA made a decisive effort to break with its underwhelming past performance. In 2011 its broad-ranging set of issue areas was honed down to six priority areas: (i) Maritime Safety and Security; (ii) Trade and Investment Facilitation; (iii) Fisheries Management; (iv) Disaster Risk Management; (v) Academic, Science and Technology; and (vi) Tourism and Cultural Exchanges; with gender empowerment as a cross-cutting theme introduced by Australia. In 2013 IORA issued the Perth Principles Declaration, reaffirming members' commitment to co-operation. The position of Chair of Indian Ocean Studies, vacant for most of the association's history, was filled in 2014. Members were also more willing to engage on a shared maritime security agenda; a topic that had long been avoided in the association's deliberations.

Since its establishment, IORA had dealt with elements of the Blue Economy such as fisheries and maritime trade, but this became more formalised at the association's October 2014 meeting, where member states adopted the Blue Economy as the top priority for generating employment and ensuring sustainability in the region. Members have come forward to serve as lead co-ordinators in priority sectors, including Indonesia (Fisheries and Aquaculture), the United Arab Emirates (Renewable Ocean Energy), Singapore (Seaport and Shipping) and Australia (Seabed Exploration and Minerals). A number of thematic workshops will be convened to flesh out agendas under these themes; the first of which took place in Durban, South Africa, in May 2015, addressing fisheries and aquaculture, and maritime safety and security co-operation. The initial thematic workshops will feed into the first IORA Blue Economy Conference, to be hosted by Mauritius in September 2015. South Africa has received funding from the IORA Special Fund to co-ordinate the development of the IORA Blue Economy Core Group; a framework for academic co-operation and research exchanges in the areas of blue growth.⁹

THE BLUE ECONOMY: A CATCH-ALL WISH LIST?

Much like the more familiar Green Economy, the Blue Economy is not a structured planning methodology or analytical approach. Rather, it is a broadly defined concept that seeks to promote wider appreciation of the economic and socio-ecological value of the maritime domain; engender more integrated

planning of the diverse range of sectors that rely on the oceans; and highlight the need for sustainable approaches to unlocking the value of the oceans.¹⁰ As African regional and subregional institutions have increasingly engaged the Blue Economy, landlocked states have successfully argued that Africa's conception of this should also include inland waters.

In a global context, conceptual and methodological approaches that offer a more structured approach to developing ocean resources have been developed, including integrated coastal zone management, the large marine ecosystem approach and, most recently, marine spatial planning. At national level, states have also sought to develop appropriate institutional mechanisms and planning frameworks aimed at developing maritime resources. The US, for example, has created a National Ocean Council and an Ocean Resource Management Interagency Policy Committee; China has published a series of Five-Year Development Plans for the National Marine Economy; Brazil has developed its maritime sectors within the framework of the 'Blue Amazon'; and South Africa has launched Operation Phakisa.

Blue Economy initiatives at the national, regional and subregional level must grapple with similar challenges. While they play an important role in highlighting the potential of maritime industries and generating political will to develop these sectors, the responsibility to deliver on the targets and objectives of these strategies often lies with other regional institutions, government departments or multi-stakeholder initiatives. As Blue Economy initiatives proliferate, the risk exists that efforts will be duplicated and inefficiencies may creep into co-operation efforts. In this regard, the networking, monitoring and reporting functions of these initiatives are important. Unfortunately, many of these initiatives have not structured their public-facing communication platforms to act as effective nodes of dissemination and co-ordination. For example, IORA established a Fisheries Support Unit in 2003, based in the Sultanate of Oman, yet the IORA website provides no information on the unit's outcomes or achievements, nor an indication of how it engages with other Indian Ocean fisheries institutions or initiatives such as the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission or FISH-i Africa. If IORA and other institutions with Blue Economy initiatives aim to facilitate cross-sectoral and international linkages, more emphasis must be placed on communication platforms that extend beyond the various forums and expert working groups that have already been created. This will promote continuity in the organisation's programmes and facilitate institutional learning.

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Eight of IORA's member states are African. The Indian Ocean is strategically highly important to Africa, particularly the continent's eastern seaboard; landlocked countries such as Zambia and Uganda that rely on Indian Ocean maritime trade; and Africa's island states in the Indian Ocean. However, West African states are also linked to developments in the Indian Ocean, as exports of petroleum and other products to India, China and other countries of South

and East Asia have recently grown rapidly. South Africa, which will chair IORA from 2017 to 2019, has indicated that it intends to promote the interests of Africa broadly during its tenure. In the interim, steps should be taken to facilitate more exchanges between the 2050 AIM Strategy Task Force and IORA. Mauritius' hosting of the IORA Blue Economy conference in September 2015 provides a valuable opportunity for the task force to explore shared priorities and programmes on African soil. Numerous opportunities exist to create connections between initiatives and institutions such as the recently established South African International Maritime Institute or FISH-i Africa with Indian Ocean counterparts. However, IORA's role in facilitating these partnerships and providing strategic input on a shared Indian Ocean Blue Economy will require further bolstering of the association's secretariat in its administrative, research and communication functions.

CONCLUSION

The world's oceans provide annual goods and services of some \$2.5 trillion.¹¹ Blue Economy initiatives at national and regional levels aim to capture an increasing share of this value, while ensuring that potential conflicts between maritime sectors are avoided and that growth is not pursued at the expense of environmental sustainability. A convincing case can be made for the importance of effective ocean governance by estimating the value of sectors such as shipping, coastal tourism, offshore oil and gas, and fisheries, and by listing the series of key ecosystem services the oceans provide in relation to the climate, biodiversity and food security. Similarly, estimates of the cost of illegal fisheries, the ecological damage resulting from oil spills or the impact of piracy on shipping highlight the extent to which current governance regimes do not realise the full economic and environmental potential of the oceans. It is, however, far less certain how governments and multilateral organisations can develop a coherent and integrated approach to promote a flourishing Blue Economy. Blue Economy initiatives should not duplicate the range of initiatives being undertaken in specific sectors (eg, fisheries) or on specific issues (eg, disaster risk preparedness or piracy). Tracking and disseminating information on progress within these more focused, yet sometimes complex and fragmented, initiatives would be more effective. Blue Economy initiatives should also provide the necessary framework and institutional structure to address high-level, integrated planning and respond to potential trade-offs or conflicts between sectors. These initiatives can also play an important role in elevating ocean governance on global and regional policy agendas, thereby supporting increased political will for, and financing of, more effective ocean governance.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Vrey C, 'Turning the tide: Revisiting African maritime security', *Scientia Militaria: Journal of Military Studies*, 41, 2, 2013, pp. 1–23.
- 2 AU (African Union), *Remarks of H.E. Dr. Dlamini-Zuma, Chairperson of the African Union Commission at the ECOWAS–ECCAS Summit on Maritime Safety and Security in the Gulf of Guinea*. Yaounde: AU, 2013, <http://pages.au.int/maritime/>, accessed 28 August 2015.
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- 4 AU, *2050 Africa's Integrated Maritime Strategy*. Addis Ababa: AU, 2012, [http://pages.au.int/sites/default/files/2050%20AIM%20Strategy%20\(Eng\)_0.pdf](http://pages.au.int/sites/default/files/2050%20AIM%20Strategy%20(Eng)_0.pdf), accessed 14 May 2015.
- 5 See also AU, *2050 AIM Strategy Plan of Action for Operationalization*. Addis Ababa: AU, 2 May 2013, [http://pages.au.int/sites/default/files/Annex%20C,%20PoA%20\(Eng\).pdf](http://pages.au.int/sites/default/files/Annex%20C,%20PoA%20(Eng).pdf), accessed 14 May 2015.
- 6 AU, 2012 *op. cit.*
- 7 Member states are Australia, Bangladesh, Comoros, India, Indonesia, Iran, Kenya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mauritius, Mozambique, Oman, Seychelles, Singapore, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Thailand, United Arab Emirates and Yemen.
- 8 Wagner C, 'The Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Co-operation (IOR-ARC): The futile quest for regionalism?', *Journal of the Indian Ocean*, 9, 1, 2013, pp. 6–16.
- 9 HSRC (Human Sciences Research Council), 'HSRC to co-ordinate "Blue Economy" core group', *HSRC Review*, 12, 5, October/November 2014, p. 3, 2014, <http://www.hsrc.ac.za/uploads/pages/1278/12204%20HSRC%20Review%20OctNov%20LR.pdf>, accessed 18 May 2015.
- 10 The concept of the Blue Economy, as originally formulated by Gunter Pauli and popularised through his book, *The Blue Economy: 10 years, 100 innovations, 100 million jobs*, was not linked explicitly to the ocean economy. Instead, it was seen as a new economic model that improved on the Green Economy concept by placing greater emphasis on innovation, entrepreneurship, job creation and the application of principles found in natural ecosystems to economic behaviour. Increasing political attention on the potential wealth of the oceans and the need for the sustainable management of these resources led to the term Blue Economy being used, as this paper does, as an equivalent of the maritime or ocean economy. Elements of Pauli's initial conception are retained in some definitions through the emphasis on sustainability, innovation and the potential of maritime industries to generate jobs.
- 11 Hoegh-Guldberg O *et al.*, *Reviving the Ocean Economy: The Case for Action – 2015*. Geneva: WWF International, 2015, http://assets.worldwildlife.org/publications/790/files/original/Reviving_Ocean_Economy_REPORT_low_res.pdf?1429717323&_ga=1.57516457.2048673872.1440153574, accessed 10 May 2015.

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Jan Smuts House, East Campus,
University of the Witwatersrand
PO Box 31596, Braamfontein
2017, Johannesburg, South Africa
Tel +27 (0)11 339-202
Fax +27 (0)11 339-2154
www.saiia.org.za
info@saiia.org.za

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