

Chapter 2

Background: the Indian Ocean rim

There can be little doubt that Australia should be giving greater attention to the Indian Ocean. The Indian Ocean is the world's third largest ocean. Australia is a major stakeholder in the affairs of the Indian Ocean region, including its security and stability.¹

2.1 The Indian Ocean is the world's third largest ocean and its 26 littoral countries are home to 2.3 billion people. These Indian Ocean rim countries include some of the world's most populous (India, Indonesia) as well as small and sparsely populated islands. Three countries have a United Nations Human Development Index of over 0.8 (Australia, Singapore and Oman), while the majority of Indian Ocean rim countries rate in the low to medium development categories. The Indian Ocean rim also includes countries such as India, Timor-Leste, Mozambique and Sri Lanka which have high levels of economic growth.²

Definitions

Geographic and hydrographic definition

2.2 The International Hydrographic Organization (IHO), an inter-governmental organisation of which Australia is a member country, defines the Indian Ocean as encompassing the area bordered on the west by Africa, on the east by Australia, and including bodies of water such as the Bay of Bengal. In 2000, the IHO redefined the Indian Ocean, moving it to a southern limit of 60 degrees south to allow for the Southern Ocean.³ While this definition has not been ratified (Australia has lodged a reservation), it is a widely accepted and used definition.⁴

2.3 The map below illustrates the physical limits of the Indian Ocean, according to the IHO definition—this includes the 26 littoral countries forming the rim of the Indian Ocean.⁵

1 Dr Sam Bateman, Dr Anthony Bergin and Professor Russell Trood, *Submission 21*, p. 3.

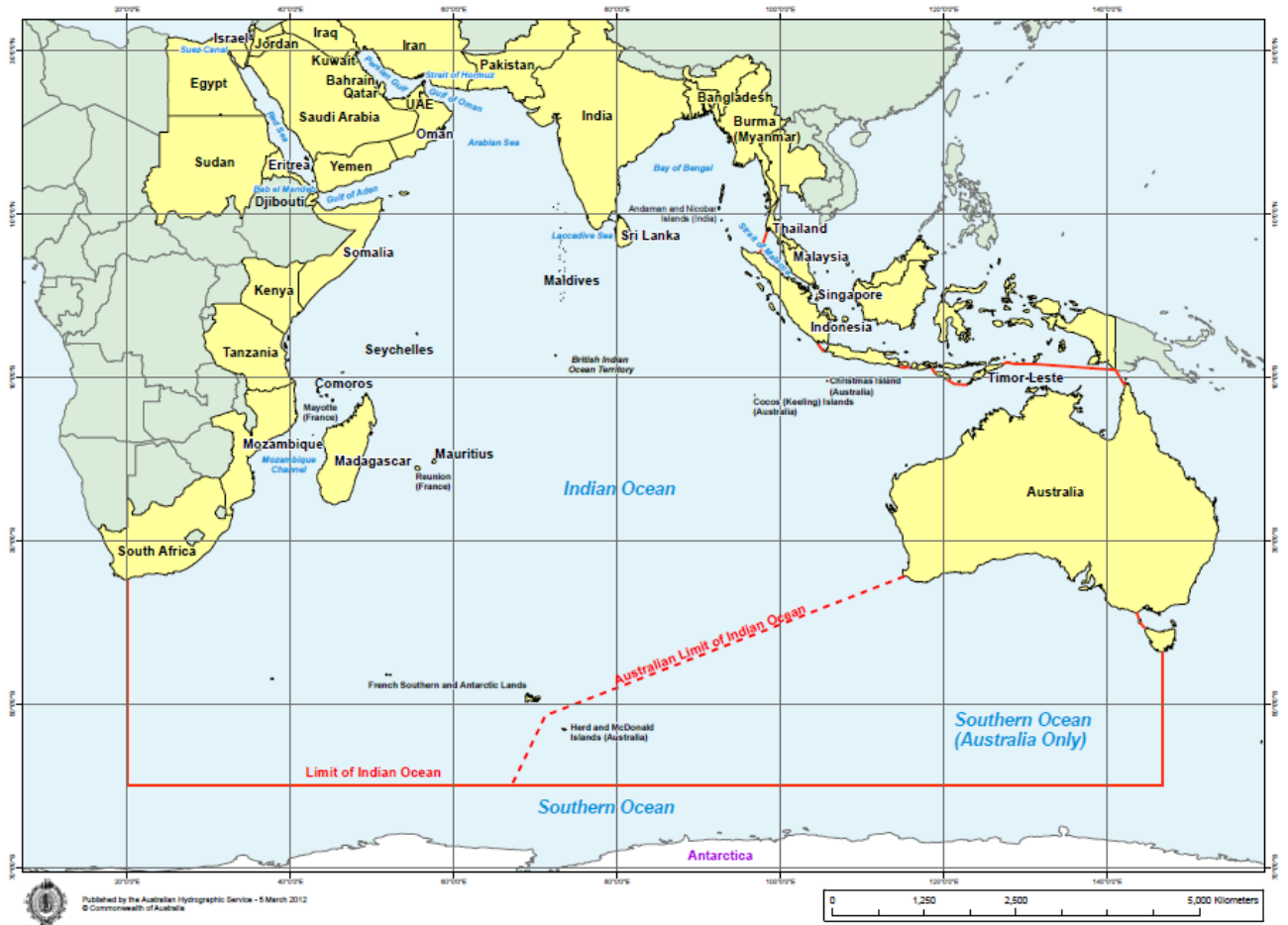
2 *Submission 30*, p. 27.

3 International Hydrographic Organization, *Limits of the Oceans and Seas*, p. 22.

4 Andrew Darby, 'Canberra all at sea over position in the Southern Ocean', *The Age*, 22 December 2003, p. 6.

5 *Submission 30*, p. 8.

Map of the Indian Ocean⁶



Rim vs region

2.4 While some submissions use 'rim' and 'region' interchangeably when discussing the countries which constitute the Indian Ocean rim area, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) notes that the terms can vary and include different countries.⁷

2.5 When collating statistics on a regional basis the countries of the Indian Ocean region are relegated to established and readily understood sub-regions (for example the Gulf countries), geographic areas (African countries are often referred to collectively as simply Africa) or key countries (for example India). DFAT provides a breakdown of countries that can be classified as states of the Indian Ocean—Indian Ocean countries located on the rim; countries included in the wider region; and countries geographically located outside the region but which have strong links to the region.

6 *Submission 30*, p. 8.

7 *Submission 30*, p. 8.

States of Indian Ocean⁸

Indian Ocean rim				
Indian Ocean region				
Broader Indian Ocean region				
Countries located in the Indian Ocean rim@		Nearby coastal countries #	Other nearby countries, including:	Other extra-regional stakeholders with strong interests in the region, including:
<u>Australia</u>	<u>Oman</u>	Bahrain	Afghanistan	China^
<u>Bangladesh</u>	Pakistan	Egypt^	Bhutan	EU
Burma (Myanmar)	<u>Seychelles</u>	Eritrea	Botswana	France^
Comoros	<u>Singapore</u>	Iraq	Burundi	Japan^
Djibouti	Somalia	Israel	Brunei	Republic of Korea
<u>India</u>	<u>South Africa</u>	Jordan	Cambodia	Russia
<u>Indonesia</u>	<u>Sri Lanka</u>	Kuwait	Ethiopia	UK^
<u>Iran</u>	<u>Tanzania</u>	Qatar	Laos	US
<u>Kenya</u>	<u>Thailand</u>	Saudi Arabia	Lesotho	
<u>Madagascar</u>	Timor-Leste	Sudan	Malawi	
<u>Malaysia</u>	<u>UAE</u>		Nepal	
Maldives	<u>Yemen</u>		Philippines	
<u>Mauritius</u>			Rwanda	
<u>Mozambique</u>	<i>French Territories in the Indian Ocean (France)*^</i>		South Sudan	
	<i>British Indian Ocean Territory (UK)^</i>		Swaziland	
			Uganda	
			Vietnam	
			Zambia	
			Zimbabwe	

2.6 Despite the lack of consensus on the countries that form the Indian Ocean region, the committee has, for the purposes of this report, taken DFAT's tighter definition that includes the countries that are located directly on the Indian Ocean littoral rim. Thus, when the committee refers to the Indian Ocean rim, it is referring to the 26 Indian Ocean littoral countries. During this report, the committee also refers to countries outside the region that have a significant interest and/or presence in the region.

Sub-regions

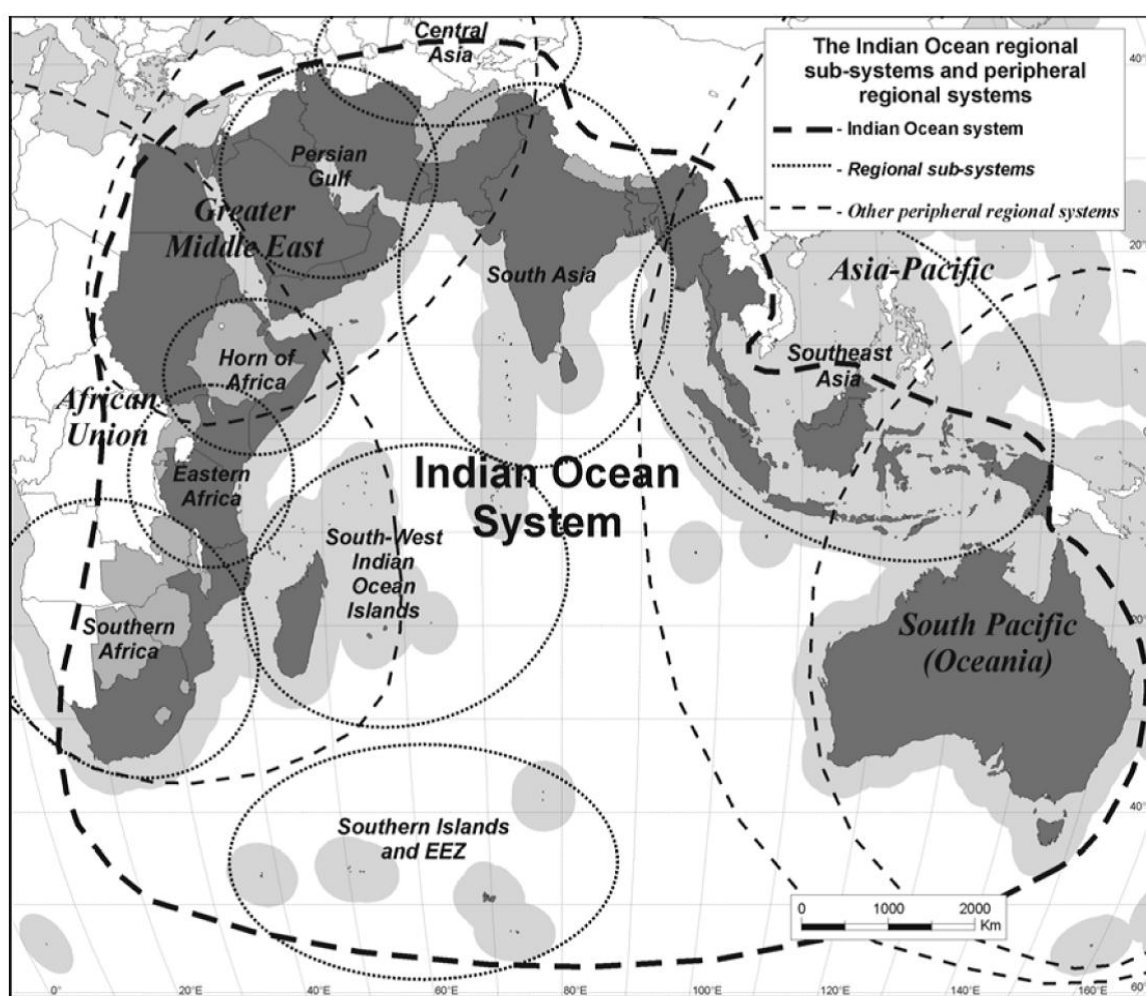
2.7 The Indian Ocean rim 'region' can also be categorised in terms of sub-regional groups and issue-specific groups. In their submission, the Indian Ocean Research Group identified nine regional groupings in the Indian Ocean rim (diagram below).⁹

8 *Submission 30*, p. 8.

9 *Submission 6*, p. 4.

Several submissions noted that the way in which Australia already engages with Indian Ocean rim countries, and can do so in the future, is through issue or region specific groupings. Other submissions, for example Future Directions International, noted that some sub-regional groups can be effective forums to promote Australian interests.¹⁰ Likewise, issue specific groups, which may have larger memberships but their focus is narrower—for example organisations managing fisheries such as the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission and the Indian Ocean Commission. Mr Sergei DeSilva-Ranasinghe¹¹ maintained that Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) had been useful in creating a forum for navies in the region to discuss maritime safety and security issues and share lessons learnt.¹²

The Indian Ocean Region and Sub-Systems¹³



10 *Submission 12*, p. 6.

11 Non-resident fellow, National Security Institute, University of Canberra.

12 *Committee Hansard*, 22 March 2013, pp. 19–20.

13 The diagram is taken from *Submission 6*, p. 4.

2.8 The committee's report explores the question of how useful a conceptualisation of the Indian Ocean rim as a cohesive region would be to Australia's interaction with the region as a whole. In particular, the committee considers how this concept could be used to leverage the efforts already being made by Australian business and state and federal governments in interacting with individual Indian Ocean rim countries and Indian Ocean rim sub-groups.

