



THE BHAWANIPUR



THE BHAWANIPUR EDUCATION SOCIETY COLLEGE
ASSEMBLY OF NATIONS

STUDY GUIDES

BESCAON

2024

THE BHAWANIPUR EDUCATION SOCIETY COLLEGE

ASSEMBLY OF NATIONS

STUDY GUIDE



LOK SABHA

BESC AON'24

FEHMANPUR EDUCATION SOCIETY COLLEGE
ASSEMBLY OF NATIONS

AGENDA:

1) Review of India's approach towards the Indian Ocean Region (IOR)

2) Comprehensive Review of Places of Worship Act (1991) with respect to contested religious sites.

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

Hello, perspective and distinguished senators, we welcome you to the simulation of the AIPPM at the BESC Assembly of Nations, 2024.

Committees like ours are unique and have a charm of their own, for it is of essence that an individual learns the policies and legislative frameworks of a country that plays such a vital role in the international diaspora.

From the outset, it is our hope that you have begun your initial and most basic research into the agenda and related topics. One must be aware of the Mandate of the Committee and understand that the prospective portfolio holders have to be a better version of themselves rather than merely being a carbon copy of their portfolios. Please do understand that the background guide is a very basic piece of work and should serve the purpose of giving you a mere insight and certainly shouldn't be the end of your research.

Your Executive Board is here to guide the flow of debate, and will be taking part in substantive debate through the updates and questions to you. We do believe that quality debate is of the greatest essence in a committee, but above that, we regard MUNs as a constant source of learning. The information and facts you gather here and the opinions one forms in these forums shapes the very mentality of the future leaders of a brighter tomorrow. Thus, we will not just be your judges or moderators, but your teachers as well.

We expect participation from all of you, and for those of you who are new to the concept of MUNs, we shall always be there for your help.

We urge you to use this background guide only as a starting point for your research. At no point are you supposed to rely completely on it. Only when you research beyond the guide can we ensure healthy debate.

What this Executive Board expects is that you to express an analysis of the information you have, not to just read out that information. Moreover, we expect you all to understand the agenda and the essence behind the same.

Lastly, we as executive board members give great priority to professionalism and parliamentary ethics, which is exactly why we hope all Senators debate and participate with great spirit and chivalry.

We wish you all the very best in preparing for the committee.

NISHANT DAS

(SPEAKER)

SAPNIL BISWAS

(DEPUTY SPEAKER)

AGENDA ITEM I: REVIEW OF INDIA'S APPROACH TOWARDS INDIAN OCEAN REGION (IOR)

The Indian Ocean region is a vast maritime expanse bounded by landmasses from three major continents: Africa to the west, Asia to the north, and Australia to the east. It is the third-largest of the world's oceanic divisions, covering approximately 20% of the Earth's total ocean surface. This region plays a crucial role in global geopolitics, trade, and economic activities due to its strategic location and vital sea routes.



Geography:

- **Extent:** The Indian Ocean spans approximately 70.56 million square kilometers, making it the third-largest ocean after the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans.
- **Major Seas:** The Indian Ocean includes various seas, such as the Arabian Sea, Red Sea, Andaman Sea, Persian Gulf, and the Bay of Bengal.

The Indian Ocean matters today, arguably more than ever. It is a major conduit for international trade, especially energy. Its littoral is vast, densely populated, and comprised of some of the world's fastest growing regions. The Ocean is also a valuable source of fishing and mineral resources. And yet its governance and security are under constant threat of being undermined, whether by non-state actors such as pirates, smugglers, and terrorists, or by furtive naval competition between states.

The Indian Ocean basin is of particular importance for India, as the region's most populous country and geopolitical keystone. Although India has long been preoccupied by continental considerations, it has recently begun to re-evaluate its priorities. India's Indian Ocean Region strategy—which is only just taking shape—conforms closely to global priorities for preserving the Ocean as a shared resource: an important channel for trade, a sustainable resource base, and a region secure from heightened military competition, non-state actors, and catastrophic natural disasters. Achieving these objectives will require further investments in capacity, greater transparency and confidence-building measures, and enhanced institutional cooperation.

Strategic Importance

The Indian Ocean is important for three reasons. First, it enjoys a privileged location at the crossroads of global trade, connecting the major engines of the international economy in the Northern Atlantic and Asia-Pacific. This is particularly important in an era in which global shipping has burgeoned. Today, the almost 90,000 vessels in the world's commercial fleet transport 9.84 billion tonnes per year. This represents an almost four-fold increase in the volume of commercial shipping since 1970. The energy flows through the Indian Ocean are of particular consequence. Some 36 million barrels per day—equivalent to about 40 per cent of the world's oil supply and 64 per cent of oil trade—travel through the entryways into and out of the Indian Ocean, including the Straits of Malacca and Hormuz and the Bab-el-Mandeb.

But the Indian Ocean is more than just a conduit for commerce. The Ocean's vast drainage basin is important in its own right, home to some two billion people. This creates opportunities, especially given the high rates of economic growth around the Indian Ocean rim, including in India, Bangladesh, Southeast Asia, and Eastern and Southern Africa. However, the densely populated littoral is also vulnerable to natural or environmental disasters. Two of the most devastating natural disasters in recent memory occurred in the Indian Ocean rim: the 2004 tsunami that killed 228,000 people, and Cyclone Nargis that hit Myanmar in 2008 and took 138,300 lives.

Finally, the Indian Ocean is rich in natural resources. Forty per cent of the world's offshore oil production takes place in the Indian Ocean basin. Fishing in the Indian Ocean now accounts for almost 15 per cent of the world's total and has increased some 13-fold between 1950 and 2010 to 11.5 million tonnes. Aquaculture in the region has also grown 12-fold since 1980. Although global fishing is reaching its natural limitations, the Indian Ocean may be able to sustain increases in production. Mineral resources are equally important, with nodules containing nickel, cobalt, and iron, and massive sulphide deposits of manganese, copper, iron, zinc, silver, and gold present in sizeable quantities on the sea bed. Indian Ocean coastal sediments are also important sources of titanium, zirconium, tin, zinc, and copper. Additionally, various rare earth elements are present, even if their extraction is not always commercially feasible.

The challenges of securing the free passage of trade and energy, ensuring the sustainable and equitable exploitation of fishing and mineral resources, and managing humanitarian assistance and

disaster relief (HADR) operations would be daunting enough even if the Indian Ocean was not so contested. Beginning in 2005, pirates operating mostly from Somalia began to hijack commercial ships with alarming regularity, with such incidents peaking in 2010. Following global attention and the growing notoriety of Somali piracy, a series of steps were taken by industry and various governments. These included naval operations, transnational coordination, and security measures taken by the shipping industry. These developments resulted in a sharp drop in incidents in 2012. Nonetheless, as late as 2012, maritime piracy was costing the global economy between \$5.7 and \$6.1 billion, the bulk of which was borne by industry. Non-state actors such as pirates are not the only entities contesting the Indian Ocean. With an eye on securing trade routes, resource rights, and commercial interests, the naval forces of maritime states in the Indian Ocean region and beyond are becoming increasingly active.

India's Importance in the Indian Ocean

The Indian Ocean holds particular importance for India, as the littoral's most populous country. Indeed, for the rest of the Ocean's littoral states, and even those outside the region, India's leadership role will be important in determining the strategic future. India is geographically located at the Ocean's centre, and has over 7,500 kilometres of coastline. "India is at the crossroads of the Indian Ocean," Prime Minister Narendra Modi declared in a speech in Mauritius in 2015. "The Indian Ocean Region is at the top of our policy priorities." The Ocean has long been a key determining factor of India's cultural footprint, with people, religion, goods, and customs spreading from India to Africa, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia and vice-versa. India's approach after independence was initially defined by the British withdrawal from east of Suez and Prime Minister Indira Gandhi calls for a zone of peace. Only after the late 1990s, under the BJP-led government of Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and the Congress-led government of Manmohan Singh, did the possibilities of openings in and around the Indian Ocean come to be seriously contemplated.

Today, 95 per cent of India's trade by volume and 68 per cent of trade by value come via the Indian Ocean. Additionally, 3.28 million barrels per day—or nearly 80 per cent of India's crude oil requirement—is imported by sea via the Indian Ocean. Taking into account India's offshore oil production and petroleum exports, India's sea dependence for oil is about 93 per cent, according to the Indian Navy. India is also the fourth-largest importer of liquefied natural gas (LNG), with about 45 per cent coming by sea.

Moreover, India is heavily dependent on the resources of the Indian Ocean. India captured 4.1 million tonnes of fish in 2008, placing it sixth in the world and its fishing and aquaculture industries employ some 14 million people. Fisheries and aquaculture industries are also a major source of exports. India's maritime exports grew 55 times in volume between 1962 and 2012 and fisheries exports now account for Rs. 16,600 crore or about \$2.5 billion.

Mineral resource extraction is also important. In 1987, India received exclusive rights to explore the Central Indian Ocean and has since explored four million square miles and established two mining sites. In 2013, the Geological Survey of India acquired a deep sea exploration ship Samudra Ratnakar from South Korea, boosting its survey capabilities. In 2014, the International Seabed Authority issued

licenses for the Indian Ocean ridge, opening up new opportunities for deep seabed mining. This region is estimated to have massive reserves of manganese, as well as cobalt, nickel, and copper, all of which are scarce on Indian soil. However, such deep sea exploration will require further investments in remotely operated vehicles and processing facilities.

Finally, there is a strong security dimension to India's engagement with the Indian Ocean, beyond traditional naval considerations. One of the worst terrorist attacks in recent Indian memory—the 2008 assault on Mumbai in which 164 people were killed—was perpetrated by terrorists arriving by sea. Smuggling, illegal fishing, and human trafficking are all also major concerns. The revelations about the A.Q. Khan network have highlighted the need for greater vigilance concerning the proliferation by sea of weapons of mass destruction – and even possible interdiction. And while piracy has declined noticeably in the Indian Ocean since 2013, due in part to the efforts of countries like India, it could once again prove a threat to Indian commerce.

India has also been playing a more active role in humanitarian and disaster relief operations. These have often focused on rescuing citizens of India from conflict zones, although India has helped citizens of many other countries in the process. A recent example in the Indian Ocean region is Operation Raahat in Yemen. Indian efforts have also extended to disaster relief in other countries, including assistance to Indonesia and Sri Lanka following the 2004 tsunami, to Myanmar after Cyclone Nargis, to Bangladesh after Cyclone Sidr, and to Sri Lanka after Cyclone Roanu. Relative to other countries in the region, India has advantages in terms of capabilities. These include better maritime domain awareness, and military equipment in the form of transport aircraft, helicopters, and support vessels that can help deliver food, water, and medical supplies.

Securing Shared Interests

An overview of the importance of the Indian Ocean and India's priorities indicates a close alignment between Indian and global interests. The Indian Ocean can, as some have argued, be India's ocean. But that need not come at the expense of others. The shared interests relating to the region are essentially five-fold: (i) preserving freedom of navigation for commercial shipping, (ii) sustainably and equitably harnessing the Indian Ocean's natural resources, (iii) establishing protocols for enhancing disaster prevention and relief as well as search and rescue operations, (iv) countering piracy, terrorism, smuggling, and illegal weapons proliferation, and (v) managing international naval competition.

These overlap with India's objectives, as outlined by Indian Prime Minister Modi in 2015 under the banner of SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region). "Our goal," he said, "is to seek a climate of trust and transparency; respect for international maritime rules and norms by all countries; sensitivity to each other's interests; peaceful resolution of maritime issues; and increase in maritime cooperation." India's Indian Ocean policy, he said, would be based on building up India's own capabilities, helping regional partners with capacity building, collective action, sustainable development, and cooperation with non-Indian Ocean region actors to ensure greater transparency,

rule of law, and the peaceful resolution of disputes. He also laid out the objective of integrated maritime security coordination between India, Sri Lanka, the Maldives, Seychelles and Mauritius, initiated in 2011 as a trilateral India-Sri Lanka-Maldives arrangement. India's security efforts in the Indian Ocean have already begun to take concrete shape with the transfer of the Indian-made patrol vessel Barracuda to Mauritius, the deployment of P-8I aircraft to Seychelles for surveillance of its exclusive economic zone, the agreements to develop connectivity infrastructure on Assumption Island in Seychelles and Agaléga in Mauritius.

In the near future, collective steps will need to be taken to prevent unnecessary—and possibly ruinous—maritime competition in the Indian Ocean. Greater Indian and international efforts must be made to ensure transparency concerning naval activity and the development of potential dual-use facilities, which can be used for both civilian and military purposes. Indian leadership will also be necessary if international coordination and cooperation is to improve, whether on sustainable resource extraction, humanitarian measures, or Indian Ocean governance. Some institutions have already been established with these objectives in mind. India has thrown its weight behind the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium, which has 35 members and seeks to “increase maritime co-operation among navies” of the Indian Ocean littoral states. Meanwhile, the Indian Ocean Rim Association—which has traditionally emphasised maritime security, trade, cultural promotion, tourism, and fisheries, but has recently diversified into resource management and governance—involves 21 states.

But questions will need to be answered concerning the adequacy of these institutions for addressing the region's many challenges, and relatedly more resources should be devoted to these efforts. For all the region's stakeholders, this will require greater financial outlays, which in turn necessitates a greater appreciation of the importance of the Indian Ocean for collective interests. This is slowly changing. “We recognize that there are other nations around the world with strong interests and stakes in the region,” Prime Minister Modi said in Mauritius in 2015. “India is deeply engaged with them.” By instilling an appreciation of the importance of the maritime domain, key steps can be taken to advance global interests in the Indian Ocean.

ACTION TAKEN BY NARENDRA MODI GOVERNMENT – A TIMELINE

After assuming office in 2014 :

2015:

- **Indian Ocean Outreach:** The Modi government emphasized strengthening relationships with Indian Ocean countries through various diplomatic initiatives, recognizing the strategic importance of the region.
- **Maritime Diplomacy:** India engaged in maritime diplomacy, fostering closer ties with countries in the Indian Ocean, including Mauritius, Seychelles, and Sri Lanka.

2015-2016:

- **SAGAR Doctrine:** In March 2015, Prime Minister Modi introduced the Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR) doctrine, outlining India's commitment to promoting regional cooperation, security, and sustainable development in the Indian Ocean.

2018:

- **Indian Ocean Conference:** India hosted the third edition of the Indian Ocean Conference in 2018, bringing together leaders, policymakers, and experts to discuss regional challenges and opportunities.

2019:

- **PM's Visit to Maldives and Sri Lanka:** In June 2019, Prime Minister Modi visited the Maldives and Sri Lanka, reinforcing India's commitment to maritime cooperation, economic development, and security in the region.

2020:

- **Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS):** India continued to actively participate in the IONS, a forum for naval cooperation among Indian Ocean littoral states.

2021:

- **Quad Summit:** In March 2021, leaders from the Quad countries (India, the United States, Japan, and Australia) participated in a virtual summit, where discussions included maritime security in the Indo-Pacific region, which encompasses the Indian Ocean.

2022:

- In December 2022, the government approved a major **National Maritime Domain Awareness (NMDA) project** to create an integrated intelligence grid that can detect and respond to sea-based threats in real time.

2023:

- March 2023, the Indian Navy completed its four-month **Theatre Level Operational Readiness Exercise (TROPEX)** in the **Indian Ocean**. Including approximately seventy naval ships, six submarines, and over seventy-five aircraft, the exercise practiced coastal defense, amphibious actions, and weapons testing. As recently as June, the navy showcased a twin-carrier operation exercise in the Arabian Sea—a **feat which China has yet to accomplish**. The exercise involved the integration of two aircraft carriers along with a diverse fleet of ships, submarines, and the coordinated deployment of over thirty-five aircraft, demonstrating India's technological prowess in the region.

Infrastructure Development and Capacity building:

- **Port Development:** The Modi government has invested in the development of ports and maritime infrastructure to enhance connectivity in the Indian Ocean region. Projects like the Chabahar Port in Iran and other strategic partnerships with Indian Ocean states like Seychelles and Mauritius, have been part of this initiative.

- **Blue Economy Initiatives:** Launched initiatives to harness the potential of the blue economy, including sustainable fisheries management, marine renewable energy projects, and coastal tourism development. Eg – Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana
- **Security Cooperation:** Strengthened security cooperation with Indian Ocean countries through initiatives like coordinated maritime patrols, capacity building, and joint exercises to enhance maritime domain awareness and counter transnational threats. Eg - Mutual Logistics Support Agreement (MLSA) between India and Australia.
- **Strategic Partnerships:** Forge strategic partnerships with key Indian Ocean stakeholders such as the United States, Japan, Australia, and France to promote maritime security, stability, and freedom of navigation in the region. Eg- QUAD
- **Climate Change Initiatives:** Initiatives to address climate change and environmental challenges in the Indian Ocean region, including the International Solar Alliance (ISA) and efforts to promote sustainable development and marine conservation.

However, despite India's increased efforts to shore up Indian Ocean security, there is still room for improvement. The committee should focus on this particular avenue.

AGENDA ITEM I: COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF PLACES OF WORSHIP ACT (1991) WITH RESPECT TO CONTESTED RELIGIOUS SITES.

What is the Places of Worship Act?

About:

It was enacted to freeze the status of religious places of worship as they existed on August 15, 1947, and prohibits the conversion of any place of worship and ensures the maintenance of their religious character.

Major Provisions of the Act:

Prohibition of Conversion (Section 3):

Prevents the conversion of a place of worship, whether in full or part, from one religious' denomination to another or within the same denomination.

Maintenance of Religious Character (Section 4(1)):

Ensures that the religious identity of a place of worship remains the same as it was on August 15, 1947.

Abatement of Pending Cases (Section 4(2)):

Declares that any ongoing legal proceedings concerning the conversion of a place of worship's religious character before August 15, 1947, will be terminated, and no new cases can be initiated.

Exceptions to the Act (Section 5):

The Act does not apply to ancient and historical monuments, archaeological sites, and remains covered by the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958.

It also excludes cases that have already been settled or resolved and disputes that have been resolved by mutual agreement or conversions that occurred before the Act came into effect.

The Act does not extend to the specific place of worship known as Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid in Ayodhya, including any legal proceedings associated with it.

Penalties (Section 6):

Specifies penalties, including a maximum imprisonment term of three years and fines, for violating the Act.

Criticism:

-Bar on Judicial Review:

Critics argue that the Act prevents judicial review, which is a fundamental aspect of the Constitution.

They believe this restriction undermines the checks and balances system and limits the judiciary's role in protecting constitutional rights.

-Arbitrary Retrospective Cutoff Date:

The Act is criticized for using an arbitrary date (Independence Day, 1947) to determine the status of religious places.

Opponents argue that this cutoff date disregards historical injustices and denies redressal for encroachments before that date.

-Violation of the Right to Religion:

Critics claim that the Act infringes upon the religious rights of Hindus, Jains, Buddhists, and Sikhs.

They argue that it restricts their ability to reclaim and restore their places of worship, impeding their freedom to practice their religion.

-Violation of Secularism:

Opponents argue that the Act violates the principle of secularism, which is a core component of the Constitution, and favours one community over others

They contend that this undermines the equal treatment of religions under the law.

Exclusion of Ayodhya Dispute:

The Act is specifically criticized for excluding the land involved in the Ayodhya dispute.

Opponents question its consistency and raise concerns about the differential treatment of religious sites. [Find here why](#)

-Supreme Court's Stance on the Act:

The Supreme Court views the Places of Worship Act as a legislative intervention that upholds the commitment to secularism, a fundamental aspect of the Indian Constitution.

The Act enforces the constitutional obligation of the State to ensure equality among all religions. It guarantees the preservation of places of worship for every religious community.

QUESTIONS THE DEBATE MUST ANSWER -

1. The validity of the Law in question
2. Context of the Law in question with regards to Krishna Janmabhoomi and Gyanwaapi Masjid Dispute
3. Possible changes in the existing Legislation
4. Implications of the Supreme Court not taking the Act into consideration in context of Ram Janmabhoomi Verdict.
5. Indian Secularism in context of this Act