

The Evolution of Transregional Cooperation: A Case Study of Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation (IOR-ARC)

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Abstract

‘Transregionalism’ is an emerging concept in international relations. The concept trans-regionalism encompasses a broader set of actor’s relationships. In theoretical aspect any type of co-operation among actors across more than two regions is trans-regional. Hence the existing theories such as refer are unable to cover the whole aspect of transregional integration. The flow of trans-regional cooperation has similarities with the old South-South cooperation; hence it is fundamentally differed in economic aspect and shaped by the emerging contours globalization. It is considered as a fruitful way to promote economic and commercial cooperation among the nation states. It can be traced back to the idea of ‘regionalism’ that particularly developed after the Second World War and it proves that geographical distance need not lead to insignificant amounts of trade or the establishment of RTAs. This article focused on the development transregional integration from European Economic Committee and African Countries to the new transregional organizations like Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation (IOR-ARC). It also analyze the major developments in IOR-ARC regional cooperation and India’s strategic relations with major IOR-ARC countries.

KEYWORDS: Transregionalism, regionalism, European Economic Community (EEC), Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation (IOR-ARC)

Transregionalism is a new model for international cooperation. It implies the establishment of common space between and across regions in which constituent agents such as individual countries, communities, and organizations operate and established ties with each other (Dent 2003:224). It is an extensive integrative link between the entire regions or among the regional actors. It refers to the expansion of regionalism as a response to the changing trends in the global economy. Generally, transregionalism involves the cooperation between more than two regional actors or that between more than two regional groupings included in a multi- tiered structure of policy making. It seems to be most of the transregional cooperation has an economic space, political space and cultural space. It is an expansive form of regionalism with highly liberalized policy options in the economic sphere and based on nonbinding rules and regulations.

The regional, inter-regional and transregional integration has the potential to reconstitute the global economic order. Regionalism¹ is considered as the first

step towards the integration of global economy. Regionalism is confined to the relationship between the countries in a same geographical area (region). There is greater importance for regional cooperation among the countries because the member states in the region possess similar/ same features based on their history, culture, and ethnicity as well as the common objectives and challenges. These commonalities must motivate them to shape a collective solution (Mohanan 1992). Transregionalism is different from regionalism and inter-regionalism. However the scholars are interchangeably using these concepts. Vinod K Aggarwal and Edward Fogarty define inter-regionalism as the “pursuit of formalized intergovernmental relations with respect to commercial relationships across different regions” (Aggarwal and Edward 2004: 1). They illustrate the nature of relations according to actor scope, geography and product scope. For them, an agreement is ‘purely inter-regional’ if it links two free trade areas or customs unions (Aggarwal and Edward 2004: 5). Inter-regionalism is an institutionalized relationship between two distinct and separate regions. It is region to region engagement or more than two region’s engagement so it is also known as multi-regionalism. It might be the cooperation between two regional organizations from different regions like the ASEAN –EU agreements, the Mercosur –EU trade relations etc (Gilson 2005: 310).

The member states in the transregional entities may not share common historical and cultural background and they need not possess geographical continuity. It is mostly based on common interest and concerns in economic, security and international issues. The reasons for transregional integration may be contemporary and dynamic. The transregional organizations are formed by concerned states from more than two regions sharing some common interests. The member states in the transregional entities may be retaining their membership in regional or sub-regional entities. APEC, IOR-ARC, IBSA are the best examples of transregional organizations. The member states in these organizations are simultaneously the members in different regional organizations. The drive towards regional and transregional cooperation shall be from external sources also, for example, the international institutions like United Nations had supported regionalism for economic development.ⁱⁱ Today every nation state is the part of one or more than one Regional Trading Arrangement (RTA). Most of the important regional entities in the World are registered in WTO. These entities are trying to make intensive trade and commercial interaction across regions. These entities created a hub of opportunities in trade in goods, services and technological exchange for the member states through economic and trade liberalization.

Transregionalism: The Stages of Evolution

Generally the evolution of transregional integration can be classified into two stages. The first stage involves early transregional integrations. The growing integration between European Economic Community and countries in Africa, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) as well as the security alliances (NATO, SETO and SENTO) formed during the Cold War period are the examples of early transregional integration in modern politics. The second wave of

transregionalism is associated with the formation of economic oriented transregional organizations which have more regularity in conducting meeting and proceedings. It shall also be considered a search from participants, mainly the developing countries for a new assertion in the dynamic global economic and political order. These new transregional alliances are highly liberal and decisions are based on consensus and promoting cooperation in matters of mutual interest among the member states. The two stages of evolution of transregionalism are explained in the following paragraphs, in detail.

(1) Transregionalism: The First Stage

The first transregional integration was followed by the inter-regional agreement known as the 'Yaoundé Convention' concluded between European Economic Community, 18 African ex-colonies and Madagascar in Yaoundé on July 20, 1963 for a period of 5 years. After the first treaty was expired, a new one was signed on July 29, 1969 and entered into force on January 1, 1971 (David 2000:11). These agreements and the entry of United Kingdom to EEC later led to the formation of broader 'Lomé Convention' of on February 28, 1975 (Ibid). It expanded the Europe-Africa cooperation to other Commonwealth countries in Africa, Caribbean and Pacific, and then the agreement was transformed as transregional. Later on, Spain's entry to EU widened the space of this transregional cooperation. The First Lomé Convention came into force on April 1, 1976 for a period of five years. The second convention 1979 was expired in 1984, third convention signed in 1985 and it expired in 1990. The fourth convention was signed for a period of 10 years (1990-2000) (EU 2013). The first agreement granted free trade on all products from ACP states which gained full access (without tariff restrictions) to European market. The EEC also provided development aid to these states. The agreement included the provisions to design Industrial cooperation and to diversify industrial production in the ACP States by means of development of research and technology, exchange of information and encouraging contact between business firms and business groups (Evrensel 2006:1-4). All these provisions were extended to second, third and fourth Lomé conventions without major changes.

The fourth Lomé included Cultural and social cooperation. It promoted cultural identities, intercultural dialogue, and included the provisions to emphasizing the role of women in the agriculture process (French 2009:7-15). After the expiry of the fourth Lomé, EU concluded another transregional agreement with ACP states on June 23, 2000 namely Cotonou Partnership Agreement for a period of 20 years. This agreement made changes in the terms and conditions last Lomé agreement. It was based on mutual commitment and responsibility, and provided a space for political dialogue, including issues such as democracy, good governance and immigration as well as providing opportunity for the involvement of the civil society in the interstate dialogue. The new agreement also focuses on the sustainable economic development of African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP) and their smooth and gradual integration into the global economy through a combination of free trade,

investment, private sector development and financial cooperation (concord 2010).

In the post Second World War era, the emergence of a bipolar world and the consequent ideological conflicts between the United States and Soviet Union granted a form of transregionalism which was largely security oriented in nature. They were North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), South East Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) and Central Treaty Organization (CENTO). NATO established transregional integration between North America and European countries on April 4, 1949 at Washington (NATO 2002). It constituted a system of collective defense to prevent external attack, particularly from Soviet Union with strategic military and political considerations. The Marshall Plan of United States in 1947 was for economic assistance to the war affected economies of Europe. It indirectly laid the foundation to create North Atlantic Treaty Organization. The signatories of NATO agreed that an armed attack against one member or more than one shall be considered as an attack against all of them. Consequently they agreed that, if such an armed attack occurred, each of them in exercise of the right of individual or collective self-defense could assist the party or parties being attacked, individually and in concert with other parties. Such action as it deems necessary, included the use of armed force to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic Area (Weixing 2009). These organizations were largely silent in economic cooperation and dominated by the United States. The purpose of these organizations was to prevent the communist expansion in Europe, South East Asia, Middle East and Asia Pacific (Fawcett and Harrell 1995: 14). The economic matters, whatever might have emphasized remained on the periphery, not to the core of such agreement.

The growing integration between EEC and countries in Africa, Carrabin and Pacific countries (ACP) formed in the early stage of transregionalism also were greatly under the influence of Cold War politics, in which western powers trying to shape cooperation with developing states based in the combined agenda of their security and economic aspect of foreign policy. Even though, an agreement was signed between the EEC and ACP, the trade was fully favourable to EEC than the poor countries. The 90 percent product access sanctioned by the EEC to the ACP states was not fully enjoyed by the latter as they were mostly backward and non-industrialized states. Compared to the previous form of regional cooperation in a transregional dimension under the global free market are more advantages to both developing and developed states.

(2) Transregionalism: The Second stage

The second stage of transregional integration which was developed in the era of new regionalism during 1980s and 1990s was both a cause and consequence of global economic integration. It is often called 'open regionalism,' which has multiple dimensions. It witnessed the resurgence of old regional entitiesⁱⁱⁱ, and the emergence of new organisations (Vayrynen 2003: 25-26). By this time, most of the third world countries were compelled to adopt neoliberal economic policies due to the external and internal pressure such as balance of payment crisis, huge foreign debt and the formation of new international regimes such as

WTO as a major decisive force in international trade. In the new international situation regional associations were more oriented towards economic cooperation than security. The new regionalism deviates from the economic cooperation set in the traditional pattern of North- South divide. Emerging North-South cooperation through liberalization of trade has led to the proliferation of regional organizations in multiple forms, regionalism, inter-regionalism and transregionalism. They envisaged for Preferential Trade Area (PTA) Free Trade Area (FTA), customs union, common market, and economic union (Kuwayama 1999). They caused to the creation of comprehensive multilateral economic treaties, larger trade flow in goods, services, human resources and technology, and joint ventures among the partner to deal with certain challenges at the global level (Kuwaai 2004).

The member states for regional cooperation have accepted free trade as common starting point and the global market as a reality to adjust with. In this manner, they are well in accordance with the GATT and its successor WTO. All contemporary regional organizations tended to reduce tariff and non-tariff barriers in conformity with the provision of GATT in the 1990s. Under the GATT rule, Art-XXIV deals with the provisions for the establishment of Regional Trading Arrangement or Customs Union. These provisions allow Regional Trade Arrangements (RTAs) based on certain conditions that the trade barriers after regional integration should not raise above the tariff reduction decided at the beginning of integration within the RTA or Customs Union etc. All trade barriers must be removed gradually within a reasonable length of time. RTAs must be notified to the WTO council. The General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) allows member countries to form RTA in services corresponding to the Art- XXIV of GATT. In spite of these conditions all regional trading arrangement does not follow strictly the global free trade agreement. It has not yet emerged as a serious issue in WTO even through only very few regional trading arrangements are in conformity with these provisions (WTO 2014). However, there is a tremendous progress in the registration of regional trading arrangement with the WTO. So far, 585 RTAs have been notified to the WTO up to June 2014 (Ibid).

Transregional entities provide an opportunity to ensure cooperation among the member states to face common economic crisis particularly to find out solutions to those related to energy, food, security and climate change for countries in different regions. It also appears to be a way for dealing with global security threats such as terrorism and transnational crime. The transfer of technology related to renewable energy and joint research to develop nonconventional source of energy are the major areas of transregional integration. Transregionalism is useful to overcome the global economic challenges through building up solidarity and dynamic transregional and inter-regional economic tie-up. Rethinking regional integration beyond the regions may also be helpful to address global environmental degradation and a powerful means to implement environment friendly sustainable development projects. The new transregional entities formed in the globalized era are; Asia Pacific Economic Community (APEC), Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional

Cooperation (IOR-ARC) , India Brazil South Africa Dialogue Forum (IBSA) and Brazil Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS). However Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation (IOR-ARC) is transregional organization which covers most of the Indian Ocean rim countries and India become a part of it so this article is mainly focusing on IOR-ARC.

Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation (IOR-ARC)

The Indian Ocean region is a strategic location internationally both in economic and security aspects which witnessed regional interaction since the beginning of human civilization. In the 20th century it was a zone of South-South interactions extending from the Mediterranean in the West to the Pacific in the East. The end of cold war had far reaching implication for the Indian Ocean region. The earlier preference of countries in the region to Non Alignment as their foreign policy option lost its relevance. After the end of Cold War the search for new policy options included the formation of regional entities (particularly in African continent) and the transregional organizations known as Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation as well as a number of sub-regional groups (Singh 2005:347-348). The formation of Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation (IOR-ARC) joined together the countries from different geographical regions. The IOR-ARC began as an economic dialogue forum and policy consultation body which was later transformed into a transregional entity by formalizing a charter and institutional mechanisms. Its secretariat is based in Port Louis in Mauritius. In 1995 Mauritius, Australia, India, Kenya, Mauritius, Oman, Singapore and South Africa originally came together to discuss the formation of the IOR-ARC. After 2 years of discussions it was officially launched in 1997 by signing the Charter by fourteen countries that were on the coast of the Indian Ocean. Pakistan's application for membership was rejected due to its unwillingness to offer Most Favoured Nation (MFN) status to India (Dutta 2009). The Charter of the IOR-ARC declared that it seeks to build and expand mutually beneficial cooperation and decisions will be taken on the basis of 'consensus.' Bilateral issues which would likely generate controversy would be excluded from deliberations.

The IOR-ARC focused on two levels of consultation, business to business and government to government. The institutional establishment of IOR-ARC is comprised of three bodies, the Working Group on Trade and Investment (WGTI), the Indian Ocean Rim Business Forum (IORBF) and the Indian Ocean Rim Academic Group (IORAG). It advocated open regionalism through voluntary action and sectoral cooperation. Since 1997 the association has been conducting regular meetings. The IOR-ARC conduct major summits in every two years presided over by foreign ministers, and also the second track of regular technical meetings by the Indian Ocean Rim Business Forum (IORBF). The Indian Ocean Rim Academic Group (IORAG) monitors and coordinates the work programs of the association (MFA: 2009). Measures for trade and investment facilitation were undertaken with an eye on trade liberalization. The objectives are to make the trade and investment regimes more transparent and to harmonize them among the member countries in the long run. As a basic step in

this regard, the countries decided to share information on trade, finance, investment, intellectual property, procurement procedures, customs regulations, quarantine requirements, etc (MEA 2013). The IORNET is helpful in sharing information on these areas among the member states.

India's Foreign Policy Options in IOR-ARC

The Strait of Malacca is connecting the South China Sea to Gulf of Aden in the Indian Ocean. It is an important trade route between India, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Oman, Yemen, South Africa, Tanzania, Kenya, Mozambique, Madagascar and Mauritius. They are the littoral countries of critical significance to India's maritime trade. India also wants to engage in Indian Ocean security affairs in South East to balance the growing influence of China and wanted to preserve its indispensable role in South Western Indian Ocean (IOR-ARC 2004). With the end of cold war, New Delhi's strategic ties with the Indian Ocean Rim countries based on the principles of nonalignment lost its relevance. India wanted to preserve its strategic autonomy in Indian Ocean region while promoting trade with the countries. India's interest in the IOR-ARC is closely correlated to this goal. India is keen to attract support from IOR states by means of providing credit and aid to the underdeveloped countries. Maritime security in the region to improve trade and commerce with the littoral states in the IOR region is the main determinant of interactions with the region.

India was one of the founding members of the IOR-ARC, and was a signatory of the Charter in March 1997. The signing of this treaty was correlated to the Gujral Doctrine^{iv}. IOR-ARC is transregional in dimension because it involves countries which are members in certain other regional organizations also. In IOR-ARC India has evolved effective strategic partnership with South Africa in Southern Africa and Singapore in South East Asia. After the formation of IOR-ARC, a number of economic partnership agreements aimed to strengthen maritime security and trade were signed between India and IOR countries. After the formation of IOR-ARC the energy diplomacy with these countries also increased substantially. In addition to signing treaties, agreements and MoU for economic cooperation IOR-ARC has also set up joint committees to analyze the progress of agreements and action plans taken at the governmental level. Importantly these transregional organizations are involving nongovernmental groups like business and commercial enterprise in the discussions. Therefore, the transregional cooperation is truly in accordance with the rules and norms of free trade in the context of globalization. This transregional cooperation substantially increase India's trade volume with other member states. India's trade with the Indian Ocean Rim countries shows an increase from US\$ 13430.24 million in 1997-98 to US\$ 74832.98 million in 2006-07 and shows an increase of US\$103600.46 million in 2007-08, again it grows up to US\$ 132696.59 million in 2008-09. Among the Indian Ocean Rim countries, United Arab Emirates (UAE) is the largest trading partner of India followed by Iran, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, South Africa etc. India's interactions with Oman, Iran, and Yemen are mainly focused on the oil resources in these

countries. They can meet a large amount of India's oil requirement. India's growing relation with the African states also leads to a more intensive oil exploration from the region. In recent years, India's Oil and Natural Gas Corporation has bought equity stakes in oil fields in Sudan, Libya, Angola, Iran, Iraq and Syria (MEA 2013).

Security dimension of Indian Ocean Region

India's involvement in the Indian Ocean association intended to strengthen security in the region starting from Gulf of Aden to Strait of Malacca. It aims at both the defence of the country and regional maritime security in Indian Ocean to protect its maritime trade roots. India also wanted to preserve its hegemony in the region, which is of very significant to India's 2004 maritime doctrine. India's military diplomacy in 2007 resulted in large scale joint naval exercises with these countries. India wanted to preserve the African states in the Indian Ocean region as its own independent zone of action. This was reflected in the Indian Navy's initiative to convene for the first time an Indian Ocean Naval conclave in February 2008. India undertook joint training exercises with the Mauritius National Coast Guard. An Indian Naval Training Team conducted Ships Diver Refresher course and Marine Commando course in Mauritius for the Mauritian National Coast Guard from 19 May to 6 June 2008. It mainly intended to establish maritime security in the Ocean to contain piracy from Somalia in the Gulf of Aden and in South Western Indian Ocean. To contain the Somalian pirates, India also initiated talks with Ethiopia (MEA 2009).

India's maritime security cooperation with South East Indian Ocean countries is also showing steady progress. In October 2003 Singapore signed a defense cooperation agreement with India. This Agreement improved bilateral defense ties. It aimed at Indian defense training to Singapore armed forces. The first meeting conducted in Singapore in March 2004 discussed the common defence and regional issues. Due to the confidence-building mechanisms, Singapore and India were able to improve their defense cooperation considerably. Another example of the maturing defense ties between two countries was the signing of 2007 Joint Military Exercises agreement. It allows the Singapore air force for training at Indian military bases in Kalaikunda for five years on payment basis (Dutta 2009). This military agreement is significant because it was the first time the Indian government allowed the stationing of foreign troops on its soil. In November 2008, a three-week long joint air force training exercise was conducted. It is considered as another significant milestone in defense relations of India.

In August 2008, both states entered into another bilateral defense agreement that allowed their infantry forces to undertake joint training exercises in India. Over the past 30 years, Singapore-India defense relations have grown from virtually non-existent to being characterized by close and enduring cooperation between all three branches of their military in the present (Rahman 2009). The establishment of close defense ties indicates the presence of a high level of trust between the two states, which may improve Singapore-India relations in the future. Through closer ties with India, Singapore seeks to dilute Chinese

influence on itself and in South East Asia as well. To increase India's presence in the region, Singapore has been keen in not only developing channels to increase its interaction with India, but also to ensure that these channels, once formed, become permanent. Likewise, India has been keen to reciprocate. This is because India benefits from its ability to leverage on its closer ties with Singapore to improve relations with other South East Asian states, thereby increasing its regional presence (MFA 2006).

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Conclusion

To summarize, transregionalism a new method of cooperation which has potentials to transform the international order in a different dimension. The transregional integration was mainly used by the member states of such organizations for promoting trade and commerce and also for political and security achievements. However this kind of cooperation among the nations able to tackle the challenges like transnational crime, terrorism, weapons traffic, environmental degradation etc. Among various types of regional group formations transregionalism is relatively new. It has learned from the experience and drawbacks of previous regionalism. However, it is not entirely contradictory and opposite to regionalism. It creates a common platform for the countries from different regions and discuss their issues and take initiatives to cooperate in issues which they have mutual concern. In case of IOR-ARC, it create a

common platform of the Indian Ocean rim countries from Sub-Saharan Africa, West Asia, South Asia, South East Asia and Australia for business interaction through 'track two diplomacy' with strong support of the concerned governments. It seems to be transregionalism as a foreign policy option helped India to expand its relation with the states in Southern, South Western, South Eastern part of Indian Ocean and Latin America. These collaborations are highly flexible in practice and principles so it is helpful for India to satisfy the economic, security and political interests within those organizations and also outside the organization. These alliances considerably broadened the space of India diplomacy, with diverse policy options.

End Note

ⁱ In international relations a regional arrangement is defined as an arrangement that covers areas of common interests among the nation-states with or without geographical continuity. It could be based on economic alliances or collaborations in other fields such as military, social, cultural and technological. The fundamental urge for regional cooperation may emanate from economic and security compulsions, pressures and threats which may be affecting one or more than one country amongst the entire group of countries of the region.

ⁱⁱ The first step towards regional integration in the South was initiated by United Nations. Five regional economic commissions were established by the UN in the 1950s, namely, the Economic Commission for Latin America and Caribbean (ECLAC), the Economic Commission for Africa(ECA), Economic Commission for Asia and Far East (ECAFE), Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). It aims to a development strategy of collective self-reliance through regional integration.

ⁱⁱⁱ The European Economic Community was transformed as European Union and also ASEAN was transformed as economic oriented regional organization.

^{iv} To develop better cooperation with Immediate neighborhood, India's Foreign Minister Inder Kumal Gujral briefed his parliament on the launch of the IOR-ARC, he expressed the view that 'The Indian Ocean Rim is linked to India's destiny by name, by the Indian Diaspora and by the opportunities these Rim countries hold for expanding and globalizing the Indian economy.' He added, 'Indian participation in IOR-ARC takes further our wider neighborhood strategy. South Asia, South East Asia, Asia Pacific, the Gulf, East and Southern Africa are now part and parcel of our close neighborhood approach and nodal points of intensified interaction', heralding the association as 'yet another dimension of South-South co- operation'.

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