



Journal Homepage: - www.journalijar.com
**INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF
ADVANCED RESEARCH (IJAR)**

Article DOI: 10.21474/IJAR01/22917
DOI URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.21474/IJAR01/22917>



RESEARCH ARTICLE

**INDIA–MAURITIUS RELATIONS IN THE 21ST CENTURY: STRATEGIC
CONVERGENCE, MARITIME SECURITY, AND DIASPORA DIPLOMACY IN THE
INDIAN OCEANS**

Prasenjit Roy and Joy Mukherjee

1. Research scholar, Department Of Political science, Burdwan University.

Manuscript Info

Manuscript History

Received: 04 January 2026
Final Accepted: 08 February 2026
Published: March 2026

Key words:-

Indian Ocean, diaspora diplomacy,
maritime security, SAGAR, Indo-Pacific

Abstract

India-Mauritius relationship is one of India's longest-standing and multi-dimensional partnerships in the Indian Ocean Region. The bilateral relationship is built on the foundations of historical migration, shared culture, heritage and post-colonial solidarity. With the passage of time, it has not only been confined to close ties but has evolved into a full-fledged strategic partnership. The presence of a large number of people of Indian origin in Mauritius has contributed to the deep social and cultural links between the two countries. It has played an important role in maintaining diplomatic trust and consistency over the decades. However, in the twenty-first century, the identity of this relationship has expanded significantly, and now cooperation between the two countries has increased in the areas of defence cooperation, overall security, coordination, economic integration and framework, and central development assistance. This study analyses India and Mauritius through an integrated theoretical framework where both realism and constructivism data are used together. From a realist point of view, the geographical location of Mauritius is very important as it is located close to the important Sea Lane of Communication. However, Mauritius has increased the importance of India's maritime security strategy in the context of growing political competition in the Indian Ocean. On the other hand, the constructivist view emphasizes that the identity of the Indian diaspora, shared democratic values, and historical memories play an important role in shaping the country's policy and diplomatic closeness.

"© 2026 by the Author(s). Published by IJAR under CC BY 4.0. Unrestricted use allowed with credit to the author."

The study argues that while identity-based relationships provide moral depth and stability to these partisan relationships, the dynamics of relationships in contemporary times are increasingly being influenced by strategic maritime interests, especially in the context of China's growing presence in the Indian Ocean region. After all, India-Mauritius relationship is an example of a hybrid diplomatic model where cultural closeness and strong security interests do not conflict but strengthen each other. This has helped shape a stable and adaptive partnership in the emerging Indo-Pacific region.

Introduction:-

India-Mauritius relations occupy a distinct and long-lasting place in India's foreign policy framework. Located in the southwestern Indian Ocean, Mauritius is strategically important because it is located close to the vital communication links that connect Africa, the Middle East and Asia. In the case of India, whose trade and energy supplies are heavily dependent on sea routes, the stability of the Indian Ocean region is a fundamental national interest. Mauritius has emerged not only as a culturally close partner but also as an important maritime and strategic partner in the twenty-first century. The historic migration trend deepens these bilateral ties, with nearly 70 per cent of Mauritius's population of ancestors from India, most of whom were taken there as migrant labourers during the colonial era. This common heritage, language, religion, education and political symbols have created lasting social and cultural bonds (Bunwaree, 2007).

Mauritius's presence of a large Indian diaspora maintains diplomatic warmth between the two countries as a result, regular high-level visits and multi-national forums have increased cooperation, and the India-Mauritius relationship has been strengthened by identity-based intimacy that ensures mutual trust and continuity, rather than just interest-based partnerships. However, in recent times, this relationship has expanded beyond the boundaries of expatriate community-centric diplomacy, with maritime security, cooperation, infrastructure development, capacity building, and economic engagement becoming important pillars of bilateral relations (Pant, 2019). There is a turning point through the SAGAR policy announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2015 that emphasizes cooperative maritime security and inclusive regional development in the Indian Ocean Region. Under this framework, Mauritius is considered an important partner in India's island diplomacy and wider Indo-Pacific Vision. Thus, the India-Mauritius relationship is reflective of a multi-faceted partnership in the twenty-first century.

Theoretical Framework:

From a realistic point of view, India's engagement with Mauritius is driven by strategic and security imperatives in the Indian Ocean Region. According to the realism theory, states prefer to increase their survival capabilities and establish control over important geostrategic areas. Mauritius is located near the important Sea Lanes of Communication, which is the main sea route for energy transport and trade between Asia, Africa and Europe. Ensuring the security of these sea lanes is a central part of India's national interest as India's trade and energy supplies are heavily dependent on maritime trade (Brewster, 2014). Therefore, the partnership with Mauritius strengthens India's maritime surveillance capabilities and its strategic presence in the southwestern Indian Ocean. Also, what is India's strategic calculation of China's growing presence in the region, such as port development, infrastructure financing and maritime diplomacy? Adding to this, according to many analysts, Beijing's activities in the Indian Ocean have made it necessary for India to adopt a balancing strategy to maintain its regional influence (Pant & Saha, 2016).

In this context, projects such as infrastructure development at Agalega Island and the installation of coastal surveillance radar systems in Mauritius reflect India's efforts to enhance security cooperation and maintain strategic depth. Therefore, according to the realist analysis, the India-Mauritius relationship is seen as part of a larger energy balance strategy in an increasingly competitive maritime environment. Constructivism emphasizes the role of shared identity, social values, and historical experience in determining the behaviour of the state. In the context of India-Mauritius relations, the large Indian diaspora serves as a strong social and cultural bridge, strengthening diplomatic engagement through language, religious education and cultural exchanges (Bunwaree, 2007). This identity-based linkage creates a sense of welcome continuity and symbolic closeness between the two countries, as well as mutual trust and strategic alignment in the foreign policies of the two countries based on shared democratic values and shared post-colonial historical experiences (Alden & Vieira, 2005). Therefore, not only material or strategic interests, but also conceptual and social elements play an important role in maintaining the depth and stability of India-Mauritius bilateral relations.

Historical Evolution:

The historical development of India-Mauritius relations reflects a multidimensional trend, which is shaped by migration, colonial structures, post-colonial integration, economic institutionalization, and emerging maritime geopolitics. The relationship began in the nineteenth century when indentured labourers were taken from India to Mauritius after the abolition of slavery by the British Empire. From 1834 until the first half of the twentieth century, a large number of Indians settled there, which gradually changed the demographic structure of the island. With the passage of time, the community became socially and politically influential and deeply embedded Indian culture, language and religious traditions in the society of Mauritius, forming an ideological basis for post-independence

diplomatic relations (Bunwaree, 2007). After gaining Mauritius independence in 1968, India quickly established diplomatic relations and focused on anti-colonial experience and South-South cooperation. Mauritius pursued a neutral foreign policy during the Cold War, but maintained close ties with India in the fields of education, civil service training and institutional development (Brewster, 2014). India's assistance to the development of governance and governance capacities has been instrumental in strengthening democratic institutions and modernizing governance in Mauritius. The main features of the relationship at this stage were development cooperation and diplomacy based on shared identities and historical ties. An important change occurred in the 1980s and 1990s, when the Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement was signed in 1983. The agreement established Mauritius as an important financial centre. Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) started flowing into India. After India's economic liberalization in 1991, Mauritius became one of the largest sources of FDI in India (Reserve Bank of India [RBI], 2018). This increased economic interdependence between the two countries and strengthened regulatory cooperation. As a result, bilateral relations transcend the boundaries of mere cultural diplomacy and evolve into a structured economic engagement. In the twenty-first century, this relationship acquired a more explicit strategic dimension. The growing political importance of the Indian Ocean and concerns over piracy, and in particular the growing presence of external powers such as China, reshape India's regional priorities (Pant, 2019).

Mauritius becomes important in India's maritime security strategy due to its proximity to important sea lanes of communication. The bilateral cooperation extends to coastal surveillance, radar systems, hydrographic support, defence training, and infrastructure and development projects. The high-level visit and announcement of the SAGAR Policy reinforce India's importance to Mauritius in the Indian Ocean Strategic Partnership. The signing of the Comprehensive Economic Cooperation and Partnership Agreement in 2021 is another important milestone in this regard, which has institutionalized trade liberalization and economic diversification (Government of India, 2021). Thus, the historical evolution of India-Mauritius relations has been sustained by the diaspora communities and distinct identities on the one hand, and on the other hand, it has adapted itself to the prevailing economic and strategic environment. As a result, the relationship has gradually evolved from post-colonial integration to an integrated partnership where development, economics and maritime security are all intertwined.

Strategic and Maritime Cooperation:-

Strategic and maritime cooperation has been one of the most dynamic and rapidly developing aspects of India-Mauritius relations in the twenty-first century. This partnership is no longer limited to traditional development assistance but includes a deeper security cooperation, effective coordination, and joint response to emerging political challenges in the Indian Ocean region. Mauritius's proximity to the vital Sea-Lance of Communications still plays a central role in India's regional strategy, especially as competition from major powers grows and China's presence expands in the Indian Ocean coastline (Brewster, 2014). In March 2025, India and Mauritius upgraded their relationship to an Enhanced Strategic Partnership. During this period, the two leaders signed agreements on joint maritime surveillance, hydrographic Zarif and exchange of information on white shipping traffic (Times of India, 2025). These initiatives were aimed at enhancing maritime domain awareness and strengthening maritime security coordination. These arguments include the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Indian Navy and the Mauritius Police Force that facilitates real-time exchange of information on commercial and strategic shipping (Times of India, 2025; India Seatrade News, 2025). In line with India's largest SAGAR policy, New Delhi is assisting in the development of infrastructure such as the establishment of coastal surveillance radar systems in Mauritius, defence equipment such as helicopters and patrol vessels, and the construction of airfields and jetties on Agalega Island, significantly enhancing Mauritius's surveillance and response capabilities (The Diplomat, 2025).

In addition, the participation of Indian Naval Ship INS Sarvekshak in several hydrographic missions further highlights the effective maritime cooperation between the two countries (Economic Times, 2025). An important strategic initiative is vision MAHASAGAR, which was unveiled during high-level meetings and broadened the SAGAR policy. The concept provides an integrated framework for maritime security, economic cooperation, and enhancing regional connectivity across the Global South, where Mauritius is considered an important partner. India's recent USD 680 million aid package has further strengthened this strategic partnership. The package includes port infrastructure development, maritime security measures and surveillance capabilities in the vicinity of the Chagos Marine Protected Area, which is geopolitically significant because it is located close to the Diego Garcia military base in the United States and the United Kingdom supporting Mauritius' territorial claims and cooperating in the Chagos region is part of safeguarding important maritime strategic interests for India (Reuters, 2025). Collectively, these initiatives demonstrate that strategic and maritime cooperation has now become a central pillar of India-Mauritius relations, where security infrastructure and multilateral political cooperation are intertwined, the two

countries have enhanced their maritime stability through joint exercises, coordination of surveillance networks and common strategic concepts such as oceans, and contribute to building a secure and stable regional architecture in the Indian Ocean Region.

Economic Engagement and Development Partnership:-

In the twenty-first century, India has emerged as a key pillar of Mauritius's economic engagement and development cooperation. These relations are no longer confined to historical cultural bonds but have been strengthened by a deep economic interdependence and joint development initiatives. An important institutional milestone in this process is the Comprehensive Economic Cooperation and Agreement signed in 2021. Which has officially ensured trade liberalization, tariff reductions and expansion of market access between the two countries. Trade and investment flows under the CECTA have increased significantly. In early 2026, the two countries organized multi-sectoral investment promotion missions in various Indian cities with the aim of encouraging Indian investors to invest in Mauritius and use Mauritius as a gateway to access African markets (Economic Development Board Mauritius, 2026). Another important development in bilateral trade policy in recent years is the initiative to settle trade in local currencies. Through this, efforts are being made to reduce trade risks and transaction costs by reducing dependence on third country currencies. The two leaders agreed to facilitate trade settlements in Indian Rupees and Mauritian Rupees under the CECTA framework, marking a strategic shift in economic cooperation and financial integration (DD India, 2025). Another important aspect of contemporary economic cooperation is India's special economic assistance package of US\$ 680 million announced in September 2025.

The package was approved during the visit of Prime Minister of Mauritius Naveen Chandra Ram Goolam to India. This includes \$215 million in grants and \$440 million in loan facilities. Which is said to be spent on the development of infrastructure, healthcare, transportation and logistics (Indian Defence News, 2025). Transportation and logistics. Major projects include the construction of Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam National Hospital, the establishment of an Ayush centre of excellence, the construction of a new air traffic control tower at Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam National Airport, the expansion of the motorway M4 and Ring Road Phase 2, and the development of port equipment. This will make Mauritius more competitive as a maritime and logistics hub (Indian Defence News, 2025; Blue Azurite, 2025). In addition, a number of MOU's have been signed to enhance cooperation in various fields such as science and technology, oceanography education, renewable energy and hydrographic surveying, which are contributing to capacity building and long-term sustainable development (IBEF, 2025). For example, India's support for a 17.5 MW floating solar power project at Tamarind Falls and 100 electrification projects highlight joint cooperation in energy transition and green infrastructure development (IBEF, 2025). Collectively, these initiatives demonstrate that the India-Mauritius economic relationship is steadily expanding, intertwined with bilateral trade facilitation, infrastructure, modernization, innovation and skill development, and sustainable economic growth.

Mauritius in India's Indo-Pacific Strategy:-

Mauritius is an important partner in India's Indo Pacific strategy, particularly in the context of India's island diplomacy and Indian Ocean regional engagement. India has gradually deepened its strategic partnership with the Indian Ocean Island States on the basis of the SAGAR policy announced in 2015 (Pant, 2019). And within this framework, Mauritius has emerged as an important focal point. The SAGAR policy underscores the importance of inclusive maritime security capacity building and economic cooperation as a key pillar of a stable regional order. Over the last five years, India and Mauritius have implemented this strategy on ground, in line with the larger Indo-Pacific Vision. In 2025, the two countries elevated their bilateral relationship to an enhanced strategic partnership, which further strengthens their shared commitment to maritime security, maritime information surveillance, and combating non-traditional security threats such as piracy, trafficking and illegal fishing (Times of India, 2025). This trend is a reflection of India's efforts to build an 'India Ocean First' pillar of Indo Pacific Policy. Mauritius also plays an active role in regional multilateralism, which strengthens regional cooperation, economic integration and maritime policy.

Among the Indian Ocean Rim Association, Mauritius has taken a lead in initiatives related to maritime security, blue economy, disaster management and digital connectivity (IORA, 2024). At the 2024 IORA Summit, India and Mauritius jointly proposed the Blue Partnership Initiative, which aims to promote sustainable ocean governance, climate resilience and oceanographic collaborative research development aligned with the priorities of the region (IORA, 2024). Another recent development is the Quad Plus dialogue and increased participation in trilateral initiatives, including India, Mauritius and other Indian Ocean countries such as Seychelles and Madagascar. These

platforms emphasize integrated naval intelligence sharing and joint simulation exercises to build an integrated maritime security architecture across the western Indian Ocean (The Diplomat, 2025). Collectively, these recent initiatives demonstrate that Mauritius is playing an important role in implementing India's Indo-Pacific Vision. It is a strategic partner in defence cooperation on the one hand, and the voice of small island states in regional forums on the other, and advocates for sustainable and rules-based maritime governance. In this context, the role of Mauritius demonstrates that bilateral strategic cooperation and multilateral engagement are strengthening each other and contributing to building a stable regional order in the Indian Ocean region.

Conclusion:-

India-Mauritius relations in the twenty-first century reflect the multifaceted strategic transformation of a historically established partnership, shaped by the convergence of political, economic and policy interests. The relationship that began on the basis of the migration of indentured labourers and shared colonial experiences has gradually grown into an integrated cooperation, which includes maritime security, defence cooperation, trade liberalization, infrastructure development, and multilateral diplomacy. Diaspora linkages and shared democratic values have provided an enduring moral foundation to this relationship, while the changing political realities of the Indian Ocean region have given this partnership a new strategic importance. From a theoretical point of view, this relationship is a consolidated reflection of the three streams of realism, liberalism and constructivism. From a realist point of view, the security of sea lanes of communication, balancing the influence of external forces, and enhancing maritime surveillance capabilities are increasingly influencing India's security cooperation.

At the same time, liberal institutional mechanisms such as the CECTA, the investment framework and the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) have institutionalized multilateral cooperation. On the other hand, constructive elements such as identity-based intimacy and historical memory have perpetuated diplomatic trust and symbolic legitimacy. These three dimensions of interaction highlight a hybrid character of India and Mauritius. Recent developments such as elevating the relationship to an Enhanced Strategic Partnership, the announcement of the MAHASAGAR concept, expansion of maritime surveillance cooperation, and significant development financing indicate that Mauritius has become an important strategic partner in India's Indo-Pacific Vision. Mauritius is playing an important role not only in security cooperation but also as a gateway to access to African markets, a voice representing small island states, and a partner in the Blue Economy and Climate Initiative.

References:-

1. Alden, C., & Vieira, M. A. (2005). The new diplomacy of the South: South Africa, Brazil, India and trilateralism. *Third World Quarterly*, 26(7), 1077–1095. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436590500235678>.
2. Brewster, D. (2014). *India's Ocean : the Story of India's Bid for Regional Leadership*. Routledge.
3. Bunwaree, S. (2007). Politics of identity in Mauritius. *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 25(1), 3–18.
4. Economic Times. (2025). PM Modi announces MAHASAGAR vision for Global South from Mauritius. *The Economic Times*. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/india/pm-modi-announces-mahasagar-vision-for-global-south-from-mauritius/articleshow/118925323.cms?from=mdr>
5. Government of India. (2021). Comprehensive Economic Cooperation and Partnership Agreement (India–Mauritius CECTA). Ministry of Commerce and Industry. <https://www.commerce.gov.in/international-trade/trade-agreements/india-mauritius-cecpa/>
6. Hey, J. A. K. (2003). *Small states in world politics: Explaining foreign policy behavior*. Lynne Rienner Publishers.
7. <https://edbmauritius.org/>
8. IBEF. (2025). India, Mauritius ink deals to boost cooperation across healthcare, energy. India Brand Equity Foundation; IBEF. <https://www.ibef.org/news/india-mauritius-ink-deals-to-boost-cooperation-across-healthcare-energy>
9. India News Network. (2024). India-Mauritius maritime partnership: INS Sarvekshak visits Port Louis. <https://www.indianewsnetwork.com/en/20241228/india-mauritius-maritime-partnership-ins-sarvekshak-visits-port-louis>
10. India Seatrade News. (2025). India-Mauritius announce enhanced strategic partnership, ink MoUs on currency, shipping to boost ties. <https://indiaseatradenews.com/india-mauritius-announce-enhanced-strategic-partnership-ink-mous-on-currency-shipping-to-boost-ties/>
11. Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA). (2022). About IORA. <https://www.iora.int>

12. Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA). (2024). IORA Annual Report 2024: Toward Blue Partnership Initiatives. <https://www.iora.int>
13. Jaishankar, S. (2020). *The India way: Strategies for an uncertain world*. HarperCollins India.
14. Pant, H. V. (2019). *India and the Indian Ocean: The new maritime strategy*. Observer Research Foundation Issue Brief. <https://www.orfonline.org/people-expert/harsh-v-pant/issue-briefs>
15. Pant, H. V., & Saha, P. (2016). *India's 'Act East' policy: A shift in India's engagement with Southeast Asia*. Observer Research Foundation.
16. Reserve Bank of India. (2018). *Foreign direct investment flows to India*. RBI Bulletin. https://www.rbi.org.in/Scripts/BS_ViewBulletin.
17. Reuters. (2025). *India pledges \$680 million in economic support for Mauritius*. <https://www.reuters.com/world/india/india-pledges-680-million-economic-support-mauritius-2025-09-11/>
18. The Diplomat. (2025). *India and Indian Ocean island states expand trilateral security cooperation*. <https://thediplomat.com/2025/03/india-and-indian-ocean-island-states-expand-trilateral-security-cooperation/>
19. The Diplomat. (2025). *India reiterates Mauritius' centrality to its Indian Ocean region strategy*. <https://thediplomat.com/2025/03/india-reiterates-mauritius-centrality-to-its-indian-ocean-region-strategy/>
20. Times of India. (2025). *Sagar to Mahasagar: India upgrades Mauritius ties*. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/sagar-to-mahasagar-india-upgrades-mauritius-ties/articleshow/118953086.cms>
21. Times of India. (2025, March 10). *India, Mauritius upgrade ties to enhanced strategic partnership*. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/india-mauritius-upgrade-ties-to-enhanced-strategic-partnership/articleshow/118953086.cms>