

# Call for Papers

## Indian Ocean Islands: Environment, Ocean, Geopolitics

Islands are intrinsic parts of the Indian Ocean Region's physical geography and human landscape. Historically, many have played substantial roles in the regional cultural and economic networks, as well as in the regional political developments. Today, at least three issues bring these islands back to the forefront of the regional and global affairs, namely environment, ocean and geopolitics. However, there has not been yet a lot of research and publications on this phenomenon of islands' growing significance in the specific context of the Indian Ocean Region.

Overall, there is still an important lack of knowledge and understanding about the Indian Ocean islands. Globally, they used to be somehow forgotten as the Caribbean, the Pacific and the European islands largely dominate the island studies. The situation is different in regards to Indian Ocean studies that recognize the islands as substantial pieces of the Indian Ocean World. Nevertheless, the Indian Ocean Rim is dominated by much larger continental states where oceanic issues have long remained low on the national agendas. But it is now an area of increasing interest, especially in regards to maritime security and blue economy. This highlights and increases the regional importance of the islands, with their huge maritime domains and their geostrategic values.

In regards to environment, the islands are recognized as being very fragile and facing growing pressures, which are both internal and external. On one hand, local natural resources and ecosystems need to be exploited and managed in a sustainable manner, with specific efforts to be made to limit the environmental degradation and pollution, as well as to expand conservation. On the other hand, the islands are also greatly affected by global changes, including changes in climate conditions and sea level rise. Overall, environmental sustainability and climate change adaptation have emerged as main challenges for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Failing to cope with these issues could have significant regional repercussions in terms of migrations and stability.

Developing stronger links with their surrounding waters is another main issue for the islands. The ocean is seen as providing economic opportunities (fishing, aquaculture, tourism, energy), but also as an environment that needs to be better protected (biodiversity, ocean physicochemical conditions) and controlled (regulation, monitoring, policing, defence). Like the other coastal states, the islands have gained extended rights and duties over larger oceanic spaces, as granted by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. This made them very relevant in regards to the regional maritime affairs and well positioned in the regional and international programs to develop the blue economy.

Finally, the islands also are of great interest in terms of geopolitics and geo-strategy. Island states and island territories have their own internal political dynamics, and they are strongly involved in regional cooperation and international island networks. Among other things, the sovereignty over some islands is still disputed (as for example, for the Chagos Archipelago), some maritime domains are still in the making (claims for extended Continental Shelf), and there is an increased interest to develop their military functions. On this latter point, we can even affirm that many of the islands have been very much involved in the recent regional geostrategic developments, and military cooperation with foreign powers has increased significantly.

Considering the importance of these three issues, there is definitively a need to better understand both the islands' general background as well as their respective specific situation, especially in relation to the regional context of the Indian Ocean Region. This is the objective of the special edition of the Journal of the Indian Ocean Region on 'Indian Ocean Islands: Environment, Ocean, Geopolitics'. Contributions can either tackle one of the three subthemes or propose an integrated analysis, for a single island, a group of islands or the overall Indian Ocean islands. Paper on either island states (such as Comoros, Indonesia, Madagascar, Maldives, Mauritius, Seychelles and Sri Lanka) or island territories (such as Andaman and Nicobar, Chagos, Cocos Islands, Lakshadweep, Mayotte, Reunion, Socotra, Zanzibar, etc.) are welcomed.

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**Guest Editors: Christian Bouchard and Shafick Osman**

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Potential contributors can access the JIOR website at: <http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/rior>  
Authors are encouraged to submit abstracts and proposals to the Commissioning Editor of the journal:

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The journal seeks research articles, discussion papers, policy papers and book reviews on major Indian Ocean issues such as: regional geopolitics; resource exploitation; maritime jurisdiction, coastal management, ocean laws, maritime security; human and environmental security; human trade and cooperation. Interstate relations and non-traditional security threats thus constitute the substantive, but not necessarily exclusive, contents of the *JIOR*.