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Editorial

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In November 2022 the Ocean Regions Programme (ORP) in the Department of Political Sciences at the University of Pretoria published a special issue of *Strategic Review*, covering external perspectives of the evolving Indo-Pacific region. Subsequently, the ORP hosted three colloquiums (2022-2024) on African perspectives of ocean governance and maritime issues.¹ This special issue brings together seven articles from a decidedly African perspective, covering some of the topics presented and discussed during these three colloquiums. It also demonstrates the growing interest on the part of African scholars in matters concerning Africa's oceans, ranging from geostrategic concerns to continental and national challenges and developments.

Francois Vreÿ opens the issue with an article focusing on the maritime potential of an expanded BRICS. He points out that BRICS+ and the countries invited to become 'BRICS partners' now covers vast maritime areas across the globe, interconnected by maritime routes spanning the South Atlantic, Indo-Pacific, Red Sea, Mediterranean and the Southern Ocean. Yet, despite these connections and the Group's declared focus on cooperation and collaboration to promote trade and development across the Global South, there is very little evidence of the Group focusing on the potential that these oceanic connections have for the attainment of BRICS goals and objectives. Vreÿ explores the potential opportunities for BRICS+ and partners, either as a bloc or as a dispersed maritime player to strengthen and support the group's long-term objectives.

Samuel Oyewole's article also focuses on opportunities for closer maritime cooperation, but this time around from an African continental perspective, focusing on the Cape Sea Route. Oyewole points out that the conventional approach to the Cape Sea Route is one of perceiving it as an alternative to the traditional East-West trade route through the Red Sea and the Mediterranean during times of crisis. Oyewole brings an Afrocentric lens through which he argues that the Cape Sea Route should not be relegated to an alternative to East-West trade, but should rather be conceived of as holding the potential to make a huge contribution to intra-Africa trade and development. A continental focus on the Cape Sea Route, including issues of governance and institution-building, holds the promise of becoming an African corridor of trade, investment, services and industry.

Ethiopia's (often controversial and contentious) quest for sea access and maritime status is the subject of Lisa Otto's article. This brings to the fore the needs, rights and claims of landlocked (sometimes referred to as land-linked) states vis-à-vis the maritime domain. As Otto points out, the study of landlocked countries is often limited to issues of trade and conflict or disputes over sea access, whilst attention is seldom paid to their broader maritime interests or the strategies that they employ to safeguard these interests. Otto's article aims to address this gap, utilising Ethiopia as an illustrative case to demonstrate how African landlocked countries put their strategies into practice.

A topic of growing interest to Africa's littoral states, is that of the protection, preservation and repatriation of marine and underwater cultural heritage. Ramachela and Bizos' article considers existing international legal frameworks, such as UNESCO's Convention on the Protection of Underwater Cultural Heritage (CPOCH) and point to some of the challenges surrounding the preservation and ownership of marine and underwater cultural heritage sites and artifacts. They frame their discussion through a 'frontier' lens: a spatial, knowledge and an ocean governance frontier, underscoring the importance of African involvement in safeguarding its underwater cultural heritage.

The last three articles in this issue turn to individual African countries and the way in which their maritime environment impact their foreign policies. In her article on the foreign policies of Mauritius and Seychelles, Daniela Marggraff challenges traditional perceptions of small island states as being 'dependent' on major powers, with hardly any agency to determine and pursue their own interests. The author argues that these two African island states in particular are, in fact, 'pioneers'—a foreign policy role conception that demonstrates power and influence in the international system, especially in the domain of global climate issues and politics.

Oscar Otele identifies the numerous maritime threats experienced by Kenya and discusses the problem of coordination amongst the agencies involved in addressing these threats, and tensions between the Kenyan national government and the coastal counties over the

¹ The colloquium reports are available at <https://www.linkedin.com/company/ocean-regions-programme/>.

legitimacy of intra-governmental maritime assignments. Otele recommends the development of an integrated national maritime strategy that would address both threats and challenges, as well as the problems of policy legitimisation and coordination. Fred Jonyo and Philip Kaudo address a growing problem in the domain of ocean governance namely, disputes over ocean borders. Such contestations are not surprising: growing interest in and attention to the ‘blue/ocean economy’ drive competition over natural resources and demarcation of the borders between the exclusive economic zones (EEZs) of states are, therefore, important and often the source of conflict. Fred Jonyo and Philip Kaudo, in their qualitative study of the sea border dispute between Kenya and Somalia, explore the principles underlying the subsequent judgment (2021) of the International Court of Justice in this case and argue for compliance with the verdict and for closer maritime security cooperation between the two countries in order to promote regional integration and development.

The issue concludes with four short reviews of books dealing with various aspects of oceans politics and governance.

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