

The Political Dynamics of Inter-Island Cooperation and Contestation in the Western Indian Ocean: A Case Study of Regional Fisheries Development

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Declaration

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Abstract

For political scientists, the vulnerability, peripheral nature and presumed lack of bargaining power of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) raises intriguing questions around how these factors influence SIDS' political and diplomatic behaviour. Given the globalised nature of issues such as climate change, management of the ocean commons and the structuring of international trade agreements, all vital to SIDS' national interests, it is logical to infer that SIDS have a strong motivation, even more than most states, to adopt diplomatic approaches that are "open" and that prioritise the formation and maintenance of cooperative relationships and even formal alliances. For some scholars, there is a view that the most effective way for SIDS to overcome their structural weaknesses and improve their bargaining power is through a "gang up" approach to cooperative diplomacy, whereby they seek to work together to address common problems – including through a SIDS-focused regionalism.

Recognising that much of the SIDS literature has taken it as a given that these states' political and diplomatic behaviour is conditioned by their supposed vulnerability and that the political dynamics of cooperation and contestation that may influence inter-island cooperation are too often downplayed, this study sets out to explore the realities of political engagement, cooperation, regionalism and collective diplomacy in one particular island grouping and in a specific thematic area: the island states of the Western Indian Ocean in the context of fisheries.

The study asks how existing political dynamics between the Western Indian Ocean island states incentivise (or fail to incentivise) deepening cooperation, integration and collective diplomacy among these states in the fisheries sector. The study also asks to what extent these existing political dynamics allow for the Western Indian Ocean island grouping to be thought of as a distinct and socially-constructed *region* – particularly one characterised by commonly-held and actionable fisheries regimes. Finally, to the extent that signs of inter-island cooperation and collective diplomacy can be found within this island grouping, the study queries whether there is evidence to suggest that "ganging up" has allowed these island states to boost their collective bargaining power and achieve impactful diplomatic outcomes on fisheries issues.

The study argues that the political dynamics that exist between the Western Indian Ocean island states do incentivise inter-island cooperation in fisheries, but only to a limited extent. Technical cooperation in the fisheries sector, whether at the state or non-state levels, is clearly evident among these islands. However, the existence of this technical cooperation does not

appear to serve as a catalyst for cooperative spillovers or for sustained political buy-in among the islands for fisheries-based integration, collective diplomacy or regime-building. Connected to this, it is difficult to identify among these islands a clear notion of true regionness.

The absence of commonly-accepted fisheries regimes among these islands, in particular, points to a lack of common values and expectations converging around this sector. This, in turn, precludes the possibility of these island states constructing a common political identity as a distinct “fisheries region” (something that this study demonstrates has taken place in the comparable island grouping of the Pacific). The upshot of these realities is that the Western Indian Ocean island states have little apparent motivation to “gang up” for common cause and, in the rare cases they have done so, they lack the deep reserve of collective political capital required for such efforts to be impactful.

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List of Acronyms

ACP	African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States
AFD	<i>Agence Française de Développement</i> (French Development Agency)
AOSIS	The Alliance of Small Island States
BERI	James Michel Blue Economy Research Institute, University of Seychelles
BPOA	Barbados Programme of Action on the Sustainable Development of Small Island States
CAPAM	<i>Chambre d'Agriculture, de la Pêche et de l'Aquaculture</i> (Chamber of Agriculture, Fisheries and Aquaculture, Mayotte)
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CEP	Citizens Engagement Platform, Seychelles
CFP	Common Fisheries Policy
CNCSP	<i>Centre National de Contrôle et de Surveillance des Pêches</i> (National Centre for Fisheries Control and Surveillance, Comoros)
CNDRS	<i>Centre National de Documentation et de Recherche Scientifique</i> (Centre for Scientific Research and Documentation, Madagascar)
CNRO	<i>Centre National de Recherches Océanographiques</i> (National Centre for Oceanographic Research, Madagascar)
COMESA	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
CSF	Civil Society Forum, Mauritius
CSP	<i>Centre de Surveillance des Pêches</i> (Centre for Fisheries Surveillance, Madagascar)
CSA	Civil Society Alliance, Madagascar
DBM	Development Bank of Mauritius
DBS	Development Bank of Seychelles
DfID	Department for International Development, United Kingdom
DGRH	<i>Direction Générale des Ressources Halieutiques</i> (General Directorate of Fishery Resources, Comoros)
DMSOI	<i>Direction de la Mer Sud Océan Indien</i> (Directorate of the South Indian Ocean, France)
DWFN	Distant Water Fishing Nation
EAC	East African Community
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
EFF	European Fisheries Fund
EPA	Economic Partnership Agreement
EU	European Union
EUR	Euro
FAA	Fisheries Access Agreement
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FFA	Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency

FFA	Seychelles-EU Fisheries Access Agreement
FMC	Fisheries Monitoring Centre, Seychelles
FMP	Fisheries Management Plan
FPS	Fisheries Protection Service, Mauritius
FSU	Fisheries Support Unit (IORA)
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HAACP	Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point
IHSM	<i>Institut Halieutique et des Sciences Marines</i> (Fisheries and Marine Science Institute, Madagascar)
INRAPE	<i>Institut National de Recherche pour l'Agriculture, la Pêche et l'Environnement</i> (National Institute for Agriculture, Fisheries and Environment Research, Comoros)
IOC	Indian Ocean Commission
IORA	Indian Ocean Rim Association
IOT	Indian Ocean Tuna, Ltd.
IOTC	Indian Ocean Tuna Commission
IRD	<i>Institut de Recherche pour le Développement</i> (Institute for Research and Development, Réunion)
IUU	Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing
JMA	Joint Management Area
KI	Key Informant
KII	Key Informant Interview
MCCI	Mauritius Chamber of Commerce and Industry
MCS	Monitoring, Control and Surveillance
MFA	Ministry of Fisheries and Agriculture, Seychelles
MIS	Management Information System
MMC	Madagascar Marine Conservation
MMCS	Mauritius Marine Conservation Society
MMTA	Mauritius Maritime Training Academy
MOI	Mauritius Oceanography Institute
MRHP	<i>Ministère des Ressources Halieutiques et de la Pêche</i> (Ministry of Halieutic and Fisheries Resources, Madagascar)
MSM	Mauritian Socialist Movement
MT	Metric Tonne
MT&Cs	Minimum Terms and Conditions
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PFOI	<i>Pêche et Froid Océan Indien</i>
PIF	Pacific Islands Forum
PNA	Parties to the Nauru Agreement
PRSP	<i>Plan Regional de Surveillance de Pêche</i> (Regional Fisheries Surveillance Plan, IOC)
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SCCI	Seychelles Chamber of Commerce and Industry
SCMRT	Seychelles Centre for Marine Research and Technology
SFA	Seychelles Fishing Authority
SFPA	Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreement
SICS	Seychelles Island Conservation Society
SIDS	Small Island Developing States

SMA	Seychelles Maritime Academy
SMME	Small, Micro and Medium Enterprise
SPF	South Pacific Forum
SPRFMO	South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organisation
SWIOFC	Southwest Indian Ocean Fisheries Commission
TAAF	<i>Terres Australes et Antarctiques Françaises</i> (French Southern and Antarctic Lands)
UN	United Nations
UNCLOS	United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UN-OHRLLS	United Nations High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States
USD	United States Dollar
VDS	Vessel Day Scheme
VMS	Vessel Management System
WCPFC	Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission
WIOMSA	Western Indian Ocean Marine Science Association
WIOTO	Western Indian Ocean Tuna Organization
WWF	World Wildlife Fund

CHAPTER 1: The Political Dynamics of Cooperation among Small Island Developing States – An Introduction

1. Background: The Vulnerability of Small Island Developing States & the Presumed Importance of Cooperative Diplomacy

A considerable literature exists chronicling the economic, political and environmental challenges facing Small Island Developing States (SIDS). SIDS' comparatively small populations mean that their domestic markets seldom provide a strong base for economic growth. SIDS are resultingly obligated, in spite of their tendency to be geographically remote and distant from global markets, to adopt an outward orientation that subjects them to the vagaries of international trade. These states lack abundant natural resources and yet struggle to diversify their economies away from the few resources they do have. Most SIDS rely on exporting a limited number of primary commodities, often to a very small number of export markets. These traits all lead to a high exposure among SIDS to external economic shocks (Campling, 2006; Feeny and McGillivray, 2010; Guillaumont, 2010; Heger, Julca and Paddison, 2009; McGillivray, Naudé and Santos-Paulino, 2010).

Some SIDS, especially those with expansive territorial waters, are able to leverage the endowments available to them through their Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs)¹, including leasing oil and gas or mineral exploration rights, as well as fishing rights, to raise revenues. Financially, the benefits of leasing these rights may be substantial. However, such benefits are mirrored by the strong possibility of over-exploitation and resulting resource depletion by rights-holders, particularly in contexts where SIDS lack the governance capacity to develop and enforce sustainable resource extraction measures. Some SIDS have succeeded in diversifying their economies, often by making astute investments in developing their human capital. Even this diversification, however, has tended to centre on fickle service sectors such as finance and tourism, which rarely provide a stable or extensive economic foundation (Campling, 2006; Lee, Hampton and Jeyacheya, 2014; Scheyvens and Momsen, 2008).

Politically, SIDS are sometimes lauded for their supposed high levels of social cohesion and tendency towards transparent and democratic governance (Anckar, 2002; Srebrnik, 2004). However, these states' public administrations are typically large proportional to population size and are costly to operate given SIDS' small domestic tax bases and limited revenue sources.

¹ **Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs)** are sea zones, prescribed by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), that extend 200 nautical miles from a state's shoreline. Within its EEZ, a state has "sovereign rights" over marine resources *below the sea's surface*. This is the case even if surface waters within the EEZ are classified as international waters. EEZs are thus not the same as a state's *territorial waters*, which based on UNCLOS conventions, extend 12 nautical miles from a state's shoreline. See the following link: https://www.un.org/depts/los/convention_agreements/texts/unclos/part5.htm (accessed 24 December 2018).

Many SIDS are resultingly forced to rely on foreign aid to ensure the day-to-day delivery of government services (Chittoo, 2011; Feeny and McGillivray, 2010; Rodrik, 1998).

High transport and energy costs, connected to SIDS' geographic remoteness, act as considerable drags on island economies, but also emerge as intractable political problems and sources of occasional unrest linked to high costs of living (Armstrong and Read, 2003; Briguglio, 1995; Read, 2004). Extensive labour migration provides needed remittance income to many small island households, but also pulls at the social fabric of these states in addition to draining local workforces (Amuedo-Dorantes, Pozo and Vargas-Silva, 2010; Attzs, 2009). Finally, while European colonial rule did bequeath at least some islands with stable systems of government, it also left legacies of racial resentment stemming from unequal access to power and resources among different ethno-cultural groups in some SIDS. This is especially true in those islands that were centres for European plantation agriculture based on slave – and later indentured – labour (Scarr, 2000). The persistence of inequalities, combined with failures in basic government service delivery, have been credited with increasing rates of crime and political violence in many SIDS (McGillivray, Naudé and Santos-Paulino, 2010).

Environmentally, SIDS are confronted with the ongoing degradation of their coastal and marine resources, particularly their coral reefs and fish stocks. As has been well-documented, many of these states are at the forefront of conversations about the medium and long-term impacts of climate change. Rising seas, ocean acidification and increased exposure to intensified ocean storm systems all pose threats to these islands' wellbeing and even survival. At present, increased soil salinity caused by heightened incidences of flooding and drought are pressuring these islands' agricultural livelihoods and food security (Barnett and Campbell, 2010; Betzold, 2015; Kelman, 2010).

There remains considerable scholarly debate around both the formulation of a precise conceptual definition of “smallness”, as well as about how “smallness”, in both a geographic and demographic sense, links to “islandness” to mark the issues noted above (Campling, 2006; Maass, 2009; Sutton, 2011). There is also an acknowledgment that many of the problems confronting SIDS, such as small domestic markets, lack of economic diversification and costly government administration, may also be characteristic of some non-SIDS small states and even some larger island states (Connell, 1993; Read, 2001; Selwyn, 1980). However, the literature tends to broadly agree on two main points. First, that when taken together, the scale and intensity of these economic, political and environmental challenges contribute to a unique *vulnerability* among SIDS. Second, that this vulnerability makes it especially important that SIDS pursue cooperative diplomatic relationships with other states, including other SIDS, in

order to improve their visibility and to form political and diplomatic alliances that will help them increase their bargaining power and effectively represent their national interests.

Turning first to the issue of vulnerability, this has been used to justify a categorisation of SIDS as a specific sub-set of states. Indeed, it was on the basis of their perceived vulnerability that the United Nations (UN) first recognised SIDS as a “special case” at the 1992 Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro. The UN’s 1994 Barbados Programme of Action on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (BPOA) operationalised this distinctiveness by working towards the design of SIDS-specific development strategies.² The creation of a UN High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLS) in 2001, the adoption of the “Mauritius Strategy” as a follow-up to BPOA in 2005, as well as the UN’s regular hosting of multi-stakeholder international conferences on SIDS (the third and most recent being held in Samoa in 2014), all signify efforts to support SIDS to improve their resilience.

The focus of this study is not on SIDS’ vulnerability *per se*. This issue, while important to reiterate, has been dealt with extensively in the social science literature dealing with these types of states. What is of interest to this study is delving further into the issue of SIDS diplomacy and critically interrogating the assumption that these vulnerable states are as cooperatively inclined as the SIDS literature seems to expect. Campling (2006: 236), while suggesting that much of the SIDS literature is too pessimistic, nevertheless contends that there are clear limitations on what action SIDS can take by themselves to overcome “the *permanent* nature of their geographical constraints and their associated *extreme* economic vulnerability” (author’s italics). The pursuit of close cooperative relationships and some degree of regionalism with their near neighbours – whether other SIDS or the larger states that often comprise SIDS’ main aid donors and export markets – is seen as an essential political response to coping with these adverse conditions. Barnett and Campbell (2010) as well as Betzold (2015), while praising SIDS’ adaptive efforts in the face of marine degradation and climate change, arrive at a similar conclusion. For these writers, these existential threats are rooted in issues of global governance over which SIDS can attain little influence unless they are able to forge robust diplomatic alliances with like-minded allies, including other SIDS.

Cohen (1983: 9-10), in a much earlier assessment of the economic development prospects of SIDS, argued that “a general association between smallness and weakness is clear”

² For a comprehensive listing of documents connected to BPOA, see the following link: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/conferences/bpoa1994> (accessed 19 May 2018).

and that SIDS would inevitably struggle to overcome dependency on larger states and create an improved position for themselves in the global economy unless they could “gang up” and form cooperative relationships amongst themselves. Similar perspectives have been offered by a range of scholars with an interest in the diplomacy of small states – and SIDS in particular (Benwell, 2011; Graham, 2017; Schiff, 2010). Critically interrogating the extent to which SIDS view cooperation – and particularly cooperation with other SIDS – as a political imperative, is deemed by this study to have analytical value. While there tends to be an assumption, including in much of the literature cited above, that SIDS are a relatively uniform group of vulnerable states, the examples of countries like Mauritius and Singapore, both with highly-developed and prosperous service-based economies, would suggest that this is not necessarily true. Even when faced with a number of common challenges, SIDS are more heterogeneous than is often acknowledged. Similarly, assumptions about these states’ diplomatic motivations tend to be driven by a generalised view of these countries as being relatively powerless and dependent. Is this really the case or are these states actually characterised by more complex political and diplomatic dynamics?

For political scientists, the vulnerability, peripheral nature and presumed lack of bargaining power of SIDS raises intriguing questions around how these factors influence SIDS’ political and diplomatic behaviour. Given the globalised nature of issues such as climate change, management of the ocean commons and the structuring of international trade agreements, all vital to SIDS’ national interests, it is logical to infer that SIDS do indeed have a strong motivation, even more than most states, to adopt diplomatic approaches that are “open” and that prioritise the formation and maintenance of cooperative relationships and even formal alliances.³ The reasons for SIDS’ presumed lack of bargaining power are deemed both structural and practical. A number of scholars highlight SIDS’ bargaining power as being constrained by their marginal positioning within the global power structure. This, in turn, limits the extent to which these states can devise and pursue their own diplomatic agendas, particularly if these agendas do not align with the interests of the larger and more powerful states with whom many SIDS have politically and/or economically dependent relationships (Breuning, 2007). For other scholars, SIDS’ bargaining power and diplomatic potential are restricted for more practical reasons. These include SIDS’ comparatively weak diplomatic

³ Scholars have defined the concept of ‘international cooperation’ in different ways. The scholarly debate around this concept will be touched on in Chapter 2. However, as a useful starting point, this study will frequently reference Axelrod and Keohane’s (1985:226) common definition of cooperation as occurring when “actors adjust their behaviour to the actual or anticipated preferences of others.”

networks, as well as the scarce human and financial resources these states have available to allocate to diplomacy (Bueger and Wivel, 2018; Hey, 2003; Schiff, 2010).

How should SIDS respond to these challenges? Some thinkers point to a need for SIDS to simply accept their peripheral positioning in the global power structure and for them to seek benefits through patron-client relationships. By working to develop positive “exchanges” with larger and more powerful states, SIDS can obtain external backing and material support (e.g. development aid or foreign direct investment) that may prove crucial in allowing them to meet their national interests, even if these “exchanges” come at the expense of SIDS being able to develop truly independent foreign policies (Veenendaal, 2017). By contrast, and as noted in the previous sub-section of this chapter, scholars like Benwell (2011), Graham (2017) and Schiff (2010), focused on the more practical diplomatic challenges confronting SIDS, all take a more positive view about the potential for these states to rise above their peripheral positioning and to at least modestly punch above their diplomatic weight.

They make this argument by highlighting the view that small states such as SIDS are best served through a “*gang up*” approach towards international diplomacy. By dedicating political capital towards the strengthening of cooperative relationships with one another, and by then leveraging their combined efforts through the pooling of resources and expertise, SIDS should be able develop institutional capacities – and influence – that would be unavailable to them individually. Schiff (2010) gives form to the “*gang up*” thesis by arguing that it is only through the establishment of intra-SIDS regional cooperation agreements and by forming common cooperative blocs that SIDS can really increase their capabilities, gain leverage and address their shared challenges.

These cooperative relationships between SIDS are not meant to push aside other diplomatic strategies, including those based around SIDS seeking productive engagement with more powerful (non-SIDS) states. For the islands of the Pacific, Indian Ocean and Caribbean, these broader relationships will always be of vital importance. However, cooperation and collective diplomacy among SIDS is seen as a complementary yet undervalued approach that allows SIDS to be pro-active in strengthening their mutual bargaining power and diplomatic presence. Relationships between SIDS, contend both Benwell (2011) and Schiff (2010), are marked by common interests. Not least is a shared sense of urgency over climate change and

a common desire to reap benefits through the emerging “blue economy”.⁴ The motivations for SIDS to cooperate seem readily apparent and indeed, there exist clear examples of the “gang up” approach in action. The Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) is an inter-governmental organisation, acting at a global level, that leverages shared resources and common diplomatic efforts among SIDS to raise awareness of the threats they face from climate change (Benwell, 2011; Chasek, 2005; Gillespie, 2003). Within specific island groupings, inter-governmental organisations also exist to bring SIDS together to cooperatively undertake technical initiatives, mainly by pooling resources, sharing experience and undertaking joint management of common projects in sectors as varied as fisheries, renewable energy, transport, tourism and higher education. In addition to providing mutual support and capacity development, these organisations offer (at least in theory) common diplomatic fronts for SIDS when they choose to engage the international community on important issues. Arguably the most prominent of these organisations are the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC).

2. Research Problem: The Political Dynamics of Cooperation, Collective Diplomacy and Regionalism among SIDS

As one potential avenue for SIDS to improve their bargaining power and overcome at least some of the constraints that deprive them of visibility and influence, the dynamics underpinning a “gang up” approach to cooperation and collective diplomacy are potentially exciting. It is notable, however, that in spite of scholars such as Benwell (2011), Graham (2017) and Schiff (2010) providing strong conceptual arguments for this approach, and while evidence of both inter-island cooperation as well as “gang up” diplomacy clearly exist, there has been **relatively little political science dedicated to exploring these topics in-depth**. In part, this may be a consequence of SIDS not being given high priority in much of the international relations literature (though there are important recent exceptions – see, for example, Cooper and Shaw, 2009; Graham, 2017; Veenendaal, 2017). There is a small literature oriented around the SIDS-focused inter-governmental organisations noted above, but this tends to focus more on the bureaucratic functioning of these bodies rather than on the cooperative dynamics that underpin them.

⁴ An agreed definition of the term “blue economy” does not yet exist. This concept, including its differing interpretations, will be discussed in subsequent chapters. However, this dissertation works on a prevailing understanding of the term as provided by the Center for the Blue Economy, Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterrey. The Center’s definition identifies the “blue economy” as having three distinct but connected meanings relating to: “*the overall contribution of the oceans to economies, the need to address the environmental and ecological sustainability of the oceans, and the ocean economy as a growth opportunity for both developed and developing countries.*”. See the following link: <<https://www.middlebury.edu/institute/academics/centers-initiatives/center-blue-economy/about/history>> (accessed 4 November 2018).

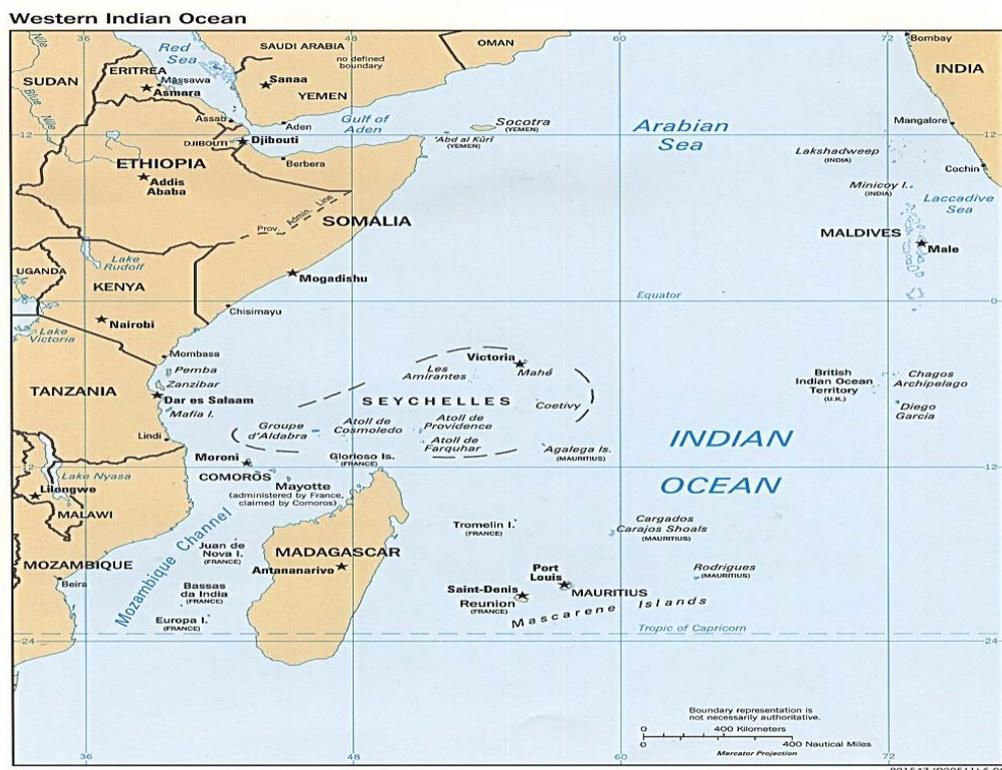
These gaps mean that the literature provides little analytical insight on the degree to which the assumptions around the “gang up” approach to SIDS cooperation and collective diplomacy reflected in reality. How effective does this approach truly appear to be in helping SIDS improve their bargaining power and diplomatic heft? Are the motivations for SIDS to cooperate really as evident (and important) as the proponents of the “gang up” approach assume? To what extent are SIDS, with their scarce diplomatic resources, incentivised to make mutual cooperation and collective action a priority? Does the pooling of resources and expertise by SIDS, where it occurs, truly help them enhance their shared institutional capacities? Nor is there much perspective on how inter-SIDS cooperation, where it exists, can best be structured and how it should evolve. Can SIDS meaningfully improve their bargaining power and address their common array of challenges by cooperating on a purely technical or issue-by-issue basis? Or does the “gang up” approach to cooperation and collective diplomacy also demand, as Schiff (2010) seems to imply, a high degree of institutionalisation and even a move towards some type of SIDS-based regionalism based around the creation of shared regimes?

Underlying this gap in exploring the possibilities of cooperation and collective diplomacy among SIDS is **a seeming reluctance in the literature to delve into the politics around SIDS cooperation**. As alluded to in the previous sub-section, there is an assumption that SIDS are a relatively uniform group of states and that their political and diplomatic behaviour is largely conditioned by their vulnerability. **Issues of political contestation between SIDS or the diverse motivations of different SIDS to see (or not see) cooperation or even formal region-building as an avenue to pursue collective diplomacy, are seldom explored with any degree of robustness. The research problem of interest to this study is focused on the political dynamics of cooperation between SIDS.** It may be the case that SIDS, with their unique vulnerability, are politically aligned more often than not. However, without exploring in some depth the political dynamics that influence whether (and how) these countries choose to cooperate and pool their diplomatic efforts, including at the non-state level where inter-island exchanges between civil society and private sector actors may indicate the strength of cooperative processes, it is difficult to say for sure. Consequently, it becomes problematic to gauge what potential the “gang up” approach truly has as a strategic option for SIDS and whether SIDS-based regionalism is truly an achievable political aim.

From an understanding of these dynamics, it will be possible to provide more thoughtful insights on whether cooperation between these states really has the potential to serve as strategy for boosting SIDS’ collective bargaining power. Recognising the practical difficulties of

exploring this research problem at an international level and with a focus on multiple issue areas, this study instead takes a deep dive into exploring intra-island political dynamics in one particular island geography – the islands of the Western Indian Ocean (Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius, Seychelles and the French-controlled islands of Mayotte and Réunion) (Figure 1.1) and in the context of a specific issue-based theme focused around fisheries. The study does provide some analysis that compares and contrasts certain aspects of the Western Indian Ocean SIDS context with the context of the Central and Western Pacific SIDS. However, the study does not aim to provide a fully-fledged comparison of the two island geographies. As will be noted in the outlining of the study’s research methodology later in this chapter, this focused approach limits the degree to which this study can offer broad generalisations on the issues noted above. However, an in-depth analysis of particular geographic and thematic context still allows the study to address the identified research problem with rigour and with the aim of at least contributing modestly to the gaps in the literature identified earlier.

Figure 1.1: Political Geography of the Western Indian Ocean Island States



Source: CIA World Factbook, 2020.

3. Objective of the Study & Key Arguments

With this bounded geographic and thematic focus in mind, the study sets out to address the following main research question: **How do existing political dynamics between the**

Western Indian Ocean island states incentivise (or fail to incentivise) deepening cooperation, integration and collective diplomacy among these states in the fisheries sector? The study also explores two secondary research questions. First, **to what extent do these existing political dynamics allow for the Western Indian Ocean island grouping to be thought of as a distinct and socially-constructed *region* – particularly one characterised by commonly-held and actionable fisheries regimes?** Second, to the extent that signs of inter-island cooperation and collective diplomacy can be found within this island grouping, **is there evidence to suggest that “ganging up” has allowed these island states to boost their collective bargaining power and achieve impactful diplomatic outcomes on fisheries issues?**

It will be argued that the political dynamics that exist between the Western Indian Ocean island states do incentivise inter-island cooperation in fisheries, but only to a limited extent. Technical cooperation in the fisheries sector, whether at the state or non-state levels, is clearly evident among these islands. However, the existence of this technical cooperation, or what Mitrany (1976) calls “functional cooperation”, does not appear to serve as a catalyst for cooperative spillovers or for sustained political buy-in among the islands for fisheries-based integration, collective diplomacy or regime-building. Connected to this, it is difficult to identify among these islands a clear notion of what Hettne and Söderbaum (2000: 461) call *regionness*, whereby “a geographical area is transformed from a passive object to an active subject capable of articulating the transnational interests of the emerging region”.

The absence of commonly-accepted fisheries regimes among these islands, in particular, points to a lack of common values and expectations converging around this sector. This, in turn, precludes the possibility of these island states constructing a common political identity as a distinct “fisheries region” (something that this study will demonstrate has taken place in the comparable island grouping of the Pacific). The upshot of these realities is that the Western Indian Ocean island states have little apparent motivation to “gang up” for common cause and, in the rare cases they have done so, they lack the deep reserve of collective political capital required for such efforts to be impactful.

This conclusion by no means invalidates the assumption that a “gang up” approach to inter-island cooperation among SIDS can be a valuable diplomatic strategy for these types of states to pursue. Indeed, some of the comparative evidence provided from the Pacific island context will point to the merits of collective diplomacy among SIDS, particularly when this involves active efforts towards fisheries-based integration and the creation of actionable regimes. However, these conclusions do indicate that simply assuming that SIDS, because of

their shared challenges and vulnerability, are conditioned by these factors to behave in a particular political and diplomatic manner, too easily disregards the often-messy political dynamics that shape SIDS' national interests and foreign relations – just as these dynamics do for other types of states.

In making these overarching arguments, this study will identify *three main factors* that shape – in ways that impede the formation of regionness and which dissuade these islands from “ganging up” – inter-island political dynamics in the Western Indian Ocean. The first factor, and the one that this study will stress as being most important, pertains to the disparities in levels of socio-economic development and political cohesiveness between the different islands. These disparities are primarily between Mauritius and Seychelles on one side and the poorer island states of Comoros and Madagascar on the other. The Fragile States Index, maintained by The Fund for Peace, clearly illustrates these disparities in assigning Comoros and Madagascar positions as the 53rd and 57th most fragile countries in the world, whereas Seychelles and Mauritius sit at 126th and 153rd place, respectively. Strikingly different socio-economic conditions and political cultures create a mismatch in the dominant policy and political incentives between the islands. These intra-island disparities serve to inhibit prospective platforms for cooperation between these states, whether at the state-to-state level, within the context of inter-governmental organisations and even at the non-state level.

The second factor relates specifically to the inefficiencies present within the shared institutional architecture – namely, the inter-governmental organisations – within which the islands seek to cooperate and build collective action over fisheries. The third factor relates to the disruption of France, as both a “regional” player within the island grouping (due its sovereignty over Mayotte and Reunion) and as an external power seeking to impose its own interests in the region. This disruption serves to sow distrust between the four independent island states and this makes collective action over fisheries challenging to generate or sustain. Each of these factors will be touched on as repeated themes in the three core chapters (Chapter 4, Chapter 5 and Chapter 6) that detail inter-island political dynamics over fisheries.

4. “New Regionalism” as an Underlying Theoretical Perspective

The above arguments will be presented with reference to the theoretical insights of “new regionalism”, put forward by scholars such as Bachinger and Hough (2009), Goldstein (2002), Hettne (1997, 1999, 2005), Hettne and Söderbaum (1998, 2000), Hurrell (1995), Mittelman (1999), as well as Shaw (2000, 2004). “New regionalism”, articulated in more detail in Chapter 2, provides a useful conceptual lens for examining cooperation, integration and

regime-building among the Western Indian Ocean island states. Finding inspiration in the social constructivist view of international relations, “new regionalism” posits that both cooperation and its outcomes are politically contested and are driven mainly by the emerging ideas and values held by cooperative actors across a wide range of issue areas. This stands in contrast to less ideational theories of international relations, such as those based in a realist, liberal institutionalist or even Marxist worldview (typically categorised by the above scholars under the banner of “old regionalism”), which tend to emphasise material concerns (e.g. security or economic interests) as the main drivers of cooperation and collective action.

“New regionalism” argues that cooperative processes must be studied in recognition of the context in which they are taking place. It also holds that cooperative outcomes be assessed not against an idealised “gold standard”, but rather on whether they truly reflect the ideas and values that political actors profess to hold. For a number of “new regionalist” scholars, these ideas and values take tangible form through Krasner’s (1983: 1) notion of cooperative regimes, which he identifies as “explicit or implicit principles, norms, rules and decision-making procedures around which actors’ expectations converge in a given area of international relations.” Ruggie (1975: 570) provides an earlier – and even more concrete – definition of regimes, which he articulates as “mutual expectations, rules and regulations, plans, organisational energies and financial commitments, which have been accepted by a group of states.”

Much of the academic focus around regimes, illustrated through liberal interpretations of regime theory, pertains to the role they play in supporting the development of formal cooperative institutions. Importantly, however, Hurrell (1995: 336), writing very much from a “new regionalist” perspective, points out that regimes can also “often be based on a much looser structure, involving patterns of regular meetings with some rules attached, together with mechanisms for preparation and follow-up.” Such a definition is useful in a study of cooperation and collective diplomacy in the global south, including among SIDS, where formal institution-building (unlike in a cooperative space like the European Union – EU) seldom emerges as a priority among political elites. From this interpretation, it should be apparent that this study will take an approach to the study of regimes that builds on those aspects of regime theory that are based on a sociological rather than rationalist view of state (and indeed non-state) decision-making. The perceptions of state/non-state actors, as well as the environment in which they operate, matter just as much as interests and power when it comes to predicting how these actors will behave towards each other.

In presenting its key arguments, this study will critically interrogate the types of cooperative regimes that have been developed among the Western Indian Ocean island states in the fisheries sector. As is detailed in the research methods section later in this introduction, evidence for both the existence and effectiveness of these regimes, including the degree to which they strengthen these states' capacities for collective diplomacy, will be drawn from primary interview data as well as from documentary sources. These sources include fisheries cooperation agreements, project budgets and reports, treaties, meeting minutes, investment agreements, import/export records, policy papers/briefs, as well as fisheries surveillance protocols (to name just a few). To reflect the ideational nature of "new regionalism", these regimes will be examined with a view to whether they appear to reflect the stated aspirations and beliefs articulated by cooperating political actors.

By introducing the concept of *regionness*, "new regionalism" adopts a mutable view of cooperation, with both its form and objectives being open to ongoing change along a spectrum that reflects fluid levels of cohesion among cooperating states (Hettne, 2005). Aligning with Hurrell's (1995) aforementioned view of regimes, regionness does not imply the necessity of cooperation evolving only through a formal process of *regionalisation* and institution building. Instead, it accepts the social constructivist view of cooperation as having meaning if it creates a sense of shared identity and common purpose among cooperating states – even if such cooperation remains largely informal in nature (Hettne and Söderbaum, 1998, 2000; Hurrell, 1995). For this study's investigation of cooperation and collective diplomacy among Western Indian Ocean island states, "new regionalism's" emphasis on ideas and values, its acknowledgment that politics matter in informing if (and how) cooperative processes evolve, as well as its stress on adopting flexible (and contextually-aware) interpretations on the utility of cooperative outcomes, all offer considerable value. In particular, these tenets legitimise the importance of political dynamics as a primary research focus, they emphasise the importance of collecting rich qualitative data that provide ideational insights from political actors (detailed later in this chapter's research methods section) and they allow the researcher some leeway in establishing how to critically analyse the outcomes of cooperative efforts among these islands.

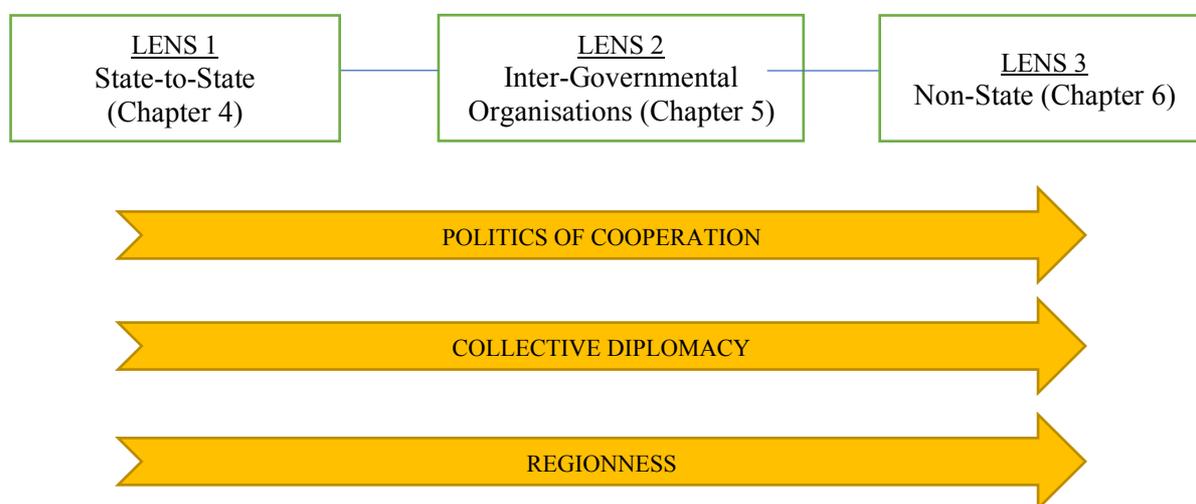
While fully acknowledging the central importance of state-to-state cooperation, whether pursued bilaterally or multilaterally, "new regionalism" also acknowledges that important political actors exist at different levels. "New regionalism" recognises a meaningful role for inter-governmental organisations as drivers of issue-based cooperation as well as in helping to formalise this cooperation by strengthening the shared regimes upon which collective diplomacy can be built (Hettne and Söderbaum, 1998). "New regionalism" also

acknowledges the role played by non-state actors, in both civil society and the private sector, in building and sustaining cooperative endeavours, not least through epistemic communities sharing technical knowledge and expertise (Keck and Sikkink, 1998; Hettne, 2005).

In a study of cooperation, collective diplomacy and regime-building among island states, it is important to acknowledge that national governments are not always strong and that cooperative processes – and the political dynamics that influence them – are likely to also be affected by these additional political actors. Bottom-up cooperation through non-state actors, in particular, may be a key source of political mobilisation, particularly over environmental, social and developmental issues. In the Western Indian Ocean fisheries setting, these actors include private sector fisheries operators, scientific and surveillance bodies, educational institutions, media interests, as well as fisheries-focused non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to name just a few.

This study’s analytical framework (Figure 1.2) draws on “new regionalism’s” recognition of *political actor pluralism* to justify the use of three different “lenses” to analyse fisheries-focused cooperation and collective diplomacy among Western Indian Ocean island states.

Figure 1.2: Analytical Framework & Cross-Cutting Themes



The first of these lenses focuses on cooperation and collective diplomacy at the state level. This lens considers the types of cooperative agreements and collective diplomatic initiatives undertaken by political actors situated within these island states’ national governments, particularly their fisheries ministries. A second (and somewhat overlapping) lens focuses on these same issues in the context of the Western Indian Ocean’s inter-governmental organisations – the IOC, Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), Indian Ocean Tuna

Commission (IOTC) and Southwest Indian Ocean Fisheries Commission (SWIOFC). A third lens focuses on the role that non-state actors, such as NGOs (and transnational NGO networks), scientific institutions, educational and vocational training institutes, as well as private sector fisheries operators, play in influencing cooperation and collective diplomacy within this SIDS grouping. These three lenses will be explored separately in this dissertation's three core chapters. However, cross-cutting themes pertaining to the politics of cooperation, collective diplomacy and regionness will serve as inter-linking threads tying different aspects of the case study together, while reinforcing the study's key arguments.

5. Providing Context: The Western Indian Ocean Islands as a Cooperative Space

Prior to delving into the study's research methodology and its methods of data collection and analysis, it is useful to provide a brief cultural, historical and political sketch of the Western Indian Ocean island grouping. This sketch serves to identify some of the overarching traits that make these islands a distinct space in which to explore the political dynamics of cooperation, collective diplomacy, regime-building and even region-formation among SIDS.

Contrary to their near neighbours in East Africa, who came under mainly British or Portuguese domination in the late 19th century, the Western Indian Ocean islands were long the preserve of French political and cultural influence. Mauritius (*Île de France*) and Réunion (*Île Bourbon*), both previously uninhabited, emerged in the 18th century as settler-led plantation economies focused on the production of sugarcane using slave labour (Allen, 1999; Anata and Selvon, 2012). Around this same time, Seychelles, also lacking an indigenous population, became prized by the French for its strategic location on the "spice route" to India, as well as for its potential to serve as a centre of spice production for the French East India Company. However, Seychelles never received the same European settler influx as Mauritius or Réunion (Scarr, 2000).

These territories all came under British control after France's defeat in the Napoleonic wars. Réunion was returned to French sovereignty, where it remains to this day, by the Congress of Vienna in 1815. Mauritius and Seychelles (administered as part of Mauritius until becoming a separate crown colony in 1903), while allowing French interests to retain economic primacy, remained under British control until independence. This arrived in 1968 for Mauritius and in 1976 for Seychelles. In all three territories, multicultural societies were gradually established in the colonial period through the ongoing influx of labourers from Africa, India, China and elsewhere to work the sugarcane fields and in other commodity sectors after the

abolition of slavery. This labour influx was particularly notable in Mauritius, where indentured labourers from India eventually came to form a majority of the population and would attain political power in the lead-up to independence (Allen, 1999).

Madagascar, with a long-settled population ruled by an absolute monarch, came under French control progressively over the course of a decade after an initial invasion in 1883. Comoros, ruled by local Sultans enjoying close links with Zanzibar, came under French influence a few decades earlier in 1841. Both island states experienced a colonialism more akin to the states of the African mainland, with violent repression an integral element of the colonial regime. While not plantation economies in the same way as the other islands, the French utilised Comoros and Madagascar as centres for the production of assorted primary commodities, including vanilla, cocoa and ylang-ylang (Caminade, 2010; Deschamps, 1965). After considerable (and often violent) resistance, Madagascar achieved independence in 1960. Three of the four Comorian islands became independent in 1975, but with the fourth island – Mayotte – choosing in a referendum to remain under French sovereignty. This remains an ongoing point of tension between France (and by extension the European Union – EU) and the Comorian government, which continues to lay sovereign claim to Mayotte (Caminade, 2010).

While not a central focus of this study, the colonial and post-colonial histories of the Western Indian Ocean islands will be touched on at various points in the following chapters. What is important to note at this stage is how this history has shaped these islands as a cooperative space – and as a prospective *region* – in the present. The French language acts as a common source of linguistic unity among these islands. Meanwhile, the shared colonial experience and the socio-cultural commonalities this entails has created an element of mutual identity under the banner of *l'Indianocéanie* (Researcher Interview: Chief Diplomatic Advisor, Government of Seychelles), though the degree to which this identity really manifests itself at a political and popular level will be critically interrogated at different points in this study.

The Western Indian Ocean islands possess commonalities in their economic histories, being centres for primary commodity production and export, mainly to France/the EU. Even as island economies have diverged, common cause has often been developed among these islands as they seek to exploit trade benefits, first under the preferential market access provided by the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP) regime and now – with far less certainty – under updated Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) with the EU (Giesbert, Pfeiffer and Schotte, 2016). Looking towards the future, these islands are all confronting a common economic and political future in which their waters are likely to be a centre for “great power” competition between France/the EU, China and India. Indeed, the fact that both Beijing

(in 2016) and New Delhi (in 2020) have recently obtained observer status within the IOC points to a growing role for these countries in influencing the nature of these islands' collective efforts around economic development, preserving their natural environments and combatting the growing threat of climate change.

Shared experiences of anti-colonial struggle and the exchange of material and moral support between political elites during the different islands' drives for independence, though not widely acknowledged today, at one time provided a foundation for political cooperation between these countries. Indeed, the creation of the IOC in 1982 was, in part, a means for these countries to coordinate a shared anti-colonial 'third way' foreign policy (McDougall, 1994). However, as will be discussed later in the study, the IOC certainly did not retain this focus, particularly once France (because of its sovereignty over Réunion) was admitted as a member later in the decade.

To varying degrees, the Western Indian Ocean SIDS are all confronted with the litany of economic, political and environmental challenges that were noted earlier. To make a seemingly obvious point, Madagascar, with its sizeable land mass and population, cannot be formally classified under the SIDS framework. In theory, this island possesses attributes, such as greater availability of human resources and more opportunity for economic diversification, that would merit hesitation for including it in a common analysis with its neighbouring SIDS. However, as will be demonstrated in later chapters, the realities confronting the Malagasy state, in terms of its weaknesses and vulnerabilities, actually make it similar to its near island neighbours. Also, drawing on Sutton's (2011: 142) argument that "larger" island states (in his work referring to Jamaica and Papua New Guinea) "share many characteristics and also maintain integral links with all small states in their respective regions", there is some logic for including a "larger" island country like Madagascar in this SIDS-focused analysis. In the chapters that follow, the study will variously use the terms "SIDS" and "island states" when discussing the various nations that are part of the Western Indian Ocean island grouping.

Taking a very current focus, migration flows between the Western Indian Ocean islands, while not necessarily extensive (with the exception of flows into Réunion and Mayotte, which as members of the EU are attractive to would-be economic migrants), are nonetheless evident. Private sector investments, such as those of Mauritian textile firms outsourcing some operations into lower-wage Madagascar (Maminirinarivo, 2006), as well as common branding efforts, such as these islands' current joint tourism marketing under the banner of the "Vanilla

Islands”⁵, all serve as examples of inter-island connectedness. These contemporary connections as well as those borne out of common historical experience, all suggest that there is logic in looking at these islands as a contained cooperative space. This is not to suggest that these countries do not also exist as part of much larger geographic and political “regions”, not least in their ties to the African continent. However, there are enough elements that distinctively bind the Western Indian Ocean islands together that it is reasonable to see this grouping as an appropriate case study context for this study’s lines of inquiry.

At the same time, key differences between the islands in this grouping also allow for a consideration of whether the unique vulnerability associated with SIDS really provides, in itself, a strong rationale for these states to see “ganging up” as a political priority. Alternatively, it can be queried whether this vulnerability is secondary to other political considerations, including those emerging from very distinct cultural influences and dramatically different levels of development. The islands of the Western Indian Ocean, separated by considerable distance and by rough seas, are culturally diverse. A unique Creole culture predominates in Seychelles and Réunion, while in Mauritius this Creole population is a minority in a country where the majority is of Indian descent. Comoros and Mayotte, with their closer proximity to the African mainland and historical trading links with Zanzibar, enjoy a great deal of Afro-Arab cultural influence. Madagascar is perhaps the most distinctive, with much of its population being descended from long-ago migrants from the Indonesian archipelago, though with some African cultural influence along its coasts.

There are also stark disparities in levels of socio-economic development between these islands. These disparities, less marked even twenty years ago than they are today, have become more significant as countries such as Mauritius, and to a lesser degree Seychelles, have embarked on political and economic reforms to democratise, invest in their human capital, diversify their economies (at least to a degree) away from primary commodities and reduce poverty. Mayotte and Réunion, while not particularly dynamic from an economic standpoint, reap the benefits of largesse from the French state and enjoy higher living standards than their near neighbours. Madagascar and Comoros, due to long-lasting political instability and a number of failed economic reforms, remain poorly governed and impoverished. The Western Indian Ocean is a cooperative space, but even compared to other island groupings such as the Caribbean or the Pacific, it is hardly uniform.

⁵ See the Vanilla Islands tourism marketing website: <https://www.vanilla-islands.org/en/> (accessed 13 October 2018).

The fisheries milieu in the Western Indian Ocean will be mapped out in some detail in Chapter 3. For the moment, it is important to note that within this issue-based setting, there is additional logic in seeing this island grouping as a cooperative space and as a prospective region where a “gang up” approach to collective diplomacy would seemingly have merit. Fisheries are an economic driver for all islands albeit to varying degrees. The sector acts as an important source of livelihoods, income and food security for island populations, as well as a vital source of state revenues – whether in the form of fish and fish product exports, access fees, the licensing of foreign vessels or the allocation of fishing permits. Large and overlapping maritime EEZs give added impetus for these states to coordinate with one another on issues of ocean governance. In addition to their common membership in the IOC, which places a strong technical focus on fisheries, aquaculture, maritime shipping, marine protection and tourism (among other areas), the Western Indian Ocean SIDS are also all members of two other fisheries-focused inter-governmental organisations: IOTC and SWIOFC. Fisheries and linked “blue economy” themes are also of importance to IORA, which brings the Western Indian Ocean islands together with the full gamut of countries with Indian Ocean coastlines.

The Western Indian Ocean is central to the global tuna fishery, with both purse seine fishing (centred around Seychelles) and long line fishing (focused around Mauritius) taking place.⁶ Some cooperative regimes have been developed in the Western Indian Ocean to establish shared responsibility for managing the ocean commons and its resources, with the most well-known arguably being the bilateral agreement between Mauritius and Seychelles to jointly manage the continental shelf of the Mascarene Plateau.⁷ As this study will demonstrate at various points, however, such regimes are hardly commonplace, especially when compared to an island grouping like the Pacific. While the study will focus on fisheries as a generalised sector, a particular emphasis is placed in many areas on the tuna fishery, which serves as the most commercially-lucrative fishery and the one where inter-island connections are most evident. Finally, the Western Indian Ocean islands have all developed wider “blue economy” policy papers that outline mutual steps to secure the sustainability of ocean resources even while utilising these resources for economic gain (though implementation is a separate and more problematic issue) (Researcher Interview: Managing Director for the Department of the Blue Economy, Government of Seychelles). Just as broad historical and contemporary socio-

⁶ The distinction between purse seine and long line fishing pertains to the type of net used. Purse seine fishing utilises a fishing net that operates in a similar manner to a drawstring on a traditional purse and is a preferred technique for catching fish species that aggregate close to the ocean surface, including some types of tuna. Longline fishing makes use of baited hooks along single lines of a large net and is used to catch fish species, including tuna and swordfish, at greater depths.

⁷ See press release: ‘Seychelles and Mauritius Sign Landmark Treaties for Joint Management of Continental Shelf’, Department of Foreign Affairs – The Republic of Seychelles. <http://www.mfa.gov.sc/static.php?content_id=36&news_id=278> (accessed 03 July 2018).

economic trends suggest a degree of binding between Western Indian Ocean SIDS, the shared economic and environmental importance of fisheries for these countries further indicates the presence of common interests.

6. Research Methodology: An Instrumental Case Study of Political Cooperation, Integration and Regime-Building in the Western Indian Ocean

This study's research methodology takes the form of a single instrumental case study. The research is "instrumental" in the sense that it is seeking to shed light on a general phenomenon – how the political dynamics evident between the Western Indian Ocean island states incentivise (or fail to incentivise) deepening cooperation, integration and collective diplomacy between these countries – by focusing on a thematically-bounded case pertaining to this phenomenon: how political dynamics between these islands impact the above in the context of *the fisheries sector*. Cooperation, collective action and regime-building, *as processes*, in one particular thematic sector, serve as a distinct case of cooperation, collective action and regime-building, as processes, among the Western Indian Ocean island states more broadly. This stands in contrast to an intrinsic case study, where a case is being investigated because it is unusual or unique. It is also distinct from a collective case study, in which a series of individual instrumental case studies are done to examine an issue and develop comparative analyses (Rule and John, 2011).

Yin (1981, 2009) provides what may be the most commonly cited conceptual overview of the case study approach, noting that these studies seek to explore, *in-depth*, a contemporary and distinct phenomenon within its "real-life context" and with a case study methodology being an all-encompassing approach that informs decisions around the logic of research design, not least in approaches to data collection and analysis. There continue to be contested views on the extent to which case study truly serves as a distinct research methodology (Yazan, 2015), the role of theory generation through case study research (Creswell, 2007; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009), as well as whether case studies should strive to achieve a high level of "analytical generalisation" (Yin, 2009) or remain rooted in a more descriptive approach (Stake, 1995).

However, there is scholarly consensus, including among political scientists (Crasnow, 2012; Gerring, 2004) around the fact that case studies are fundamentally oriented around depth of focus, an appreciation of how phenomena are intimately linked to the context in which they exist, diversity in the types (and sources) of primary and secondary data collected, plus the importance of data thoroughness and triangulation to validate emerging themes. Also vital is rigour in the application of qualitative data analysis techniques, as well as the need to aim for

some type of generalised reporting of findings, even if these generalisations are not aimed at providing evidence of causal relationships.

In this study, the case being examined is that of a *process* – the process of cooperation, integration and regime-building between SIDS, the ways this process is influenced by the political dynamics evident between these states, as well as the modalities and outcomes of this process – in a particular thematic sector and geographic context. The case study brings together a wide range of primary and secondary data (outlined in the next section), mainly qualitative but also secondary quantitative data where appropriate. In doing so, the case study takes a deep dive into the fisheries sector within the Western Indian Ocean, aiming to gain as thorough an understanding as possible of the prevailing trends that define this sector – at the state and non-state levels – and how these trends relate to their broader political context. The case study approach is naturally descriptive. However, analytical rigour is also brought to bear by connecting the analysis back to the underlying theoretical approach of “new regionalism”. The approach to data analysis, also outlined in the next section, ensures that the patterns identified in the data are linked back in a focused way to answering the key research questions.

There are implications to adopting an intensive rather than extensive research methodology. Most prominently, can the case study, even with an in-depth focus, really provide any semblance of Yin’s (2009) “analytical generalisations”? Ideally, a study seeking to offer general conclusions on the political dynamics of cooperation, integration and regime-building among the Western Indian Ocean island states would explore a wide array of issue areas. Indeed, the researcher’s initial plan for this study was to adopt a collective case study approach and utilise comparisons across different thematic areas (fisheries, renewable energy, tourism and transport) and even different island geographies to offer a generalisable set of conclusions. The practicalities of doing a collective case study, however, were daunting given the time and financial resources available to the researcher. This was especially true since this study was planned to collect and analyse large amounts of primary data.

A single instrumental case study is burdened with certain hindrances when it comes to making generalisations. For a number of reasons, the cooperative dynamics pertaining to one thematic sector may not be easily generalised to other thematic sectors, even within a common geographic context. Prudence must be employed by the researcher in regards to making claims on what the results of the research are saying. For this study, *causal* generalisation is not a realistic objective. Instead, the study is focused on providing an in-depth analysis of its case, arguing its thesis within the bounded confines of its thematic and geographic contexts.

However, even without causal generalisation, the findings can still be used to highlight issues of broader importance that can guide future research.

There remains the need to justify the selection of fisheries as the thematic focus for the study. Even in the absence of casual generalisations, the findings generated by the bounded case study must demonstrate value in shedding light on broader phenomena. The decision to focus on fisheries was made by the researcher, in part, for practical reasons. The researcher's previous experience, contextual familiarity (Sherbut, 2008) and existing contacts in the Western Indian Ocean SIDS, particularly at government level, made the sector a logical focus. Indeed, the researcher has carried out both academic and professional fieldwork connected to the Western Indian Ocean fisheries sector, meaning that technical expertise had been generated and could be drawn upon to facilitate interviews with Key Informants (KIs). This expertise and past experience also made it easier for the researcher to identify which factors relevant to the overarching research questions were most essential to explore.

A case study focused around fisheries has a number of other advantages. First, fisheries act a key economic driver for the Western Indian Ocean island states. As will be detailed in Chapter 3, there exist dedicated inter-governmental organisations, government ministries, private sector firms, scientific institutions and NGOs focused on the sector – usually taking an economic and/or conservation focus. These actors, in turn, are associated with a number of existing bilateral and multilateral political and technical agreements on issues such as combatting Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing, the management of shared continental shelves, port facility management and the establishment of protected marine areas (among other topics). These agreements provide a solid platform for assessing the existence (or non-existence) and effectiveness of cooperative regimes between the Western Indian Ocean islands. Comparable institutions and agreements, while evident in other sectors, such as transport and tourism, were not seen to provide the same “thickness” in terms of the body of resources that would be available to the researcher for analysis.

Second, fisheries are at the heart of the “blue economy”, a concept that focuses on a range of economic initiatives connected with the sea as well as with sets of activities and policies geared towards the sustainable development of ocean resources. Besides serving as arguably the core of the “blue economy”, being a highly visible example of the exploitation of – and fight to conserve – marine resources, fisheries are also intimately linked with complementary sectors that also fall under a “blue economy” framework – e.g. port management, ocean surveillance and tourism. A focus on fisheries thus offers an opportunity,

even in a limited way, to bring into the analysis some of the cooperative dynamics evident (or not) within these other issue areas, thus providing a broader scope for the study.

7. Research Methods: Data Collection and Data Analysis

Data Collection Methods

The data used to inform this case study analysis have been obtained from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data have been collected by the researcher through in-depth Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with stakeholders engaged in the respective fisheries sectors of the different Western Indian Ocean island states. A total of twenty-five KIIs were carried-out by the researcher over two separate field visits. A first field visit to Madagascar, Mauritius and Seychelles took place over five weeks in September and October 2017. A second field visit took place at different points over four months from August to November 2018, allowing for interviews to be carried out in Réunion, as well as in Comoros and Mayotte. Brief return visits to Madagascar and Mauritius also occurred in late 2018.

KIs were identified purposively by the researcher, based on their organisational affiliations and professional roles. The researcher had the luxury of being able to utilise eight pre-existing contacts, established through previous fieldwork in the region, as KIs. A further twelve KIs were identified by the researcher through the use of government, NGO and chamber of commerce directories, mostly accessed online. Finally, the remaining five KIs were identified by the researcher with the assistance of other informants, allowing for a snowball sampling approach to be utilised. This was especially useful in contexts such as Comoros, where the researcher lacked pre-existing contacts and where stakeholder directories – either online or hard copies – were difficult to access or were non-existent. To align with the study's three investigative lenses focused around state-to-state ministerial interactions, engagement through inter-governmental organisations, as well as engagement among non-state actors, efforts were made to identify prospective KIs from fisheries-focused national government bodies (usually fisheries ministries), inter-governmental organisations, NGOs/civil society and the private sector. A full list of the study's KIs, by affiliation, country and sector, is provided in Table 1.1.⁸

⁸ Consent was obtained from each KI for their listing in this dissertation. To protect the confidentiality of KIs, all names have been omitted. All KIs consented to having their professional title and organisation/company listed.

Table 1.1: List of Interviewed Key Informants by Affiliation, Country & Sector

KII #	Key Informant (Affiliation)	Country	Sector
1	Administrator (National Quality Office for Certification of Fisheries Products)	Comoros	Government
2	Fisheries Officer (General Directorate of Fishery Resources of Comoros)	Comoros	Government
3	Representative (Grande Comore Union of Boat Owners)	Comoros	Non-State (Civil Society)
4	Fisheries Officer (Chamber of Agriculture, Fisheries and Aquaculture of Mayotte)	France (Mayotte)	Government
5	Associate Director (Réunimer)	France (Réunion)	Non-State (Private Sector)
6	Research Officer (Institute for Research for Development)	France (Réunion)	Non-State (Civil Society)
7	Senior Fisheries Administrator (TAAF Governance Authority)	France (Reunion)	Government
8	Associate Editor (Madagascar Tribune)	Madagascar	Non-State (Civil Society)
9	Research Officer (Fisheries and Marine Science Institute of Madagascar)	Madagascar	Non-State (Civil Society)
10	Vice-President (National Association for Fish Collectors and Exporters of Madagascar)	Madagascar	Non-State (Private Sector)
11	Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs for Regional Integration (Government of Mauritius)	Mauritius	Government
12	Executive Director (Mauritius Oceanographic Institute)	Mauritius	Non-State (Civil Society)
13	Former Chairman of the Ocean Economy Commission (Government of Mauritius)	Mauritius	Government
14	Former Chief Fisheries Officer (Government of Mauritius)	Mauritius	Government
15	Managing Director (Princes Tuna)	Mauritius	Non-State (Private Sector)
16	Chief Diplomatic Adviser (Government of Seychelles), ex-Secretary-General of the Indian Ocean Commission	Seychelles	Government; Inter-Governmental Organisation
17	Director of the James Michel Blue Economy Research Institute (University of Seychelles)	Seychelles	Non-State (Civil Society)
18	Director (Seychelles Maritime Academy)	Seychelles	Non-State (Civil Society)
19	Executive Director (Nature Seychelles)	Seychelles	Non-State (Civil Society)
20	External Adviser (Indian Ocean Tuna, Ltd.)	Seychelles	Non-State (Private Sector)
21	Former Director (Seychelles Fishing Authority)	Seychelles	Government
22	General Consul of Mauritius in Seychelles (Government of Mauritius)	Seychelles	Government
23	Managing Director for the Department of Blue Economy (Government of Seychelles)	Seychelles	Government
24	Ocean Governance Advisor for the Department of Blue Economy (Government of Seychelles)	Seychelles	Government
25	Secretary-General (Indian Ocean Tuna Commission)	Seychelles	Inter-Governmental Organisation

The researcher had considerable success enlisting the participation of individuals from national government departments and agencies, as well as in engaging with high-level contacts from inter-governmental organisations. Gaining the participation of non-state KIs, particularly from the private sector, was typically more challenging. This may have been the result of the researcher having comparatively more experience, and a higher comfort level, engaging with public sector officials (the researcher's pre-existing contacts in the Western Indian Ocean

island states were all government officials) and communicating to them the value of their participation in the study. The researcher also found that prospective KIs from the private sector were less interested in the study focus and less likely to deem the study's research questions as being worthy of their engagement. A study limitation connected to this is that insights from the private sector are not documented nearly as comprehensively as those of even other non-state actors, such as NGOs and research institutes.

The role of "gatekeepers" in facilitating/hindering access to KIs is also important to note. The researcher was able to engage with pre-existing contacts directly. In cases where the researcher benefitted from prospective interviewees being identified through snowball sampling, it was usually the case that the researcher was provided with the information required to contact these individuals without going through an intermediary. Particularly for prospective private sector informants, however, the researcher could not draw on these same advantages and usually had to filter an interview request through an intermediary. In such cases, pinning down the availability of potential interviewees was more difficult and interview requests were not always successful, particularly given the relatively limited time the researcher had available on each country field visit. On some occasions, the researcher did attempt to obtain interviews with private sector firms and local NGOs by making unscheduled visits to their offices, though to mixed results.

Not all of the KIIs proved equally informative. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the researcher had more detailed discussions with pre-existing contacts and with those individuals referred by other KIs. In terms of the research analysis, the result is that the primary data which inform much of this study's evidence base are somewhat skewed towards a representation of national government and inter-governmental organisation informant perspectives. This is not to say, however, that the primary data that *were* collected from non-state informants were not useful (they undeniably were). Furthermore, a number of the KIs that the researcher interviewed from the government and inter-governmental sectors had previous private sector (though less commonly NGO) experience, even if this experience was not current. Particular efforts were also made throughout the research to ensure the collection and analysis of quality secondary data pertaining to NGO/civil society and private sector activities in the Western Indian Ocean fisheries sector. Taken together, the researcher is of the view that these initiatives have yielded quality data.

The other imbalance within the primary data pertains to the fact that considerably more interviews were carried-out in Mauritius and Seychelles than in the other Western Indian Ocean

islands. This was for three main reasons. First, a majority of the researcher's pre-existing contacts were in these two countries. As noted earlier, these pre-existing contacts greatly facilitated further field research. Second, the relatively transparent nature of the Mauritian and Seychellois political systems and society, when contrasted with the lack of transparency in Comoros and Madagascar, as well as the heavy bureaucratisation of the French territories, meant that it was far simpler to obtain interviews in these countries, with informants feeling more open to sharing their perspectives. Third, the inter-governmental organisations most relevant to the Western Indian Ocean are located in either Mauritius (the IOC and IORA) or Seychelles (the IOTC), further accounting for the higher respondent numbers in these states.

KIIs⁹ were scheduled in a location of the informant's choosing, usually their office or home. All interviews were carried out in a location that ensured privacy. Most interviews were one-on-one, though the researcher was able to engage in a useful group interview exercise in Seychelles among three informants, with different profiles and expertise, affiliated with the national Department of the Blue Economy. The majority of interviews were carried-out in English (particularly in Mauritius and Seychelles), though some were also carried-out in French, a language for which the researcher has a strong working knowledge. Informed consent was obtained from all KIs after the researcher had explained the objectives of the research, the reason for the informant's inclusion in the study, as well as how the data would be used and how the researcher would ensure the confidentiality of the interview data. Twenty-two KIs permitted an audio recording of their interviews, all of which lasted between sixty and ninety minutes in duration. For recorded interviews, the researcher carried out a transcription of the recorded data immediately following the interview, supplementing these with additional notes taken during the interview. For interviews where the KI did not consent to being recorded, the researcher wrote up detailed notes. These digital interview data files, both audio recordings and transcripts, while not containing information that could be deemed especially sensitive, were maintained (and backed-up) in encrypted files.

To complement these primary data and to reinforce data reliability, a large amount of secondary documentation was utilised to triangulate the research analysis. The majority of this documentation was available in the public sphere, usually through government or inter-governmental organisation online portals. These documents included archival records, fisheries and 'blue economy'-centred project and programme reports, technical reports,

⁹ Ethical approval for the fieldwork was obtained from Stellenbosch University's Research Ethics Committee: Humanities, in August 2017. This approval was granted based on a review of all data collection tools (in English and French), a written informed consent form, as well as prospective interview request letters/emails. This ethical approval was valid throughout the duration of the study (being valid until August 2020).

scientific papers, policy papers, meeting minutes (especially from inter-governmental summits and chamber of commerce meetings), conference papers, diplomatic memos, media resources (e.g. interviews, press releases), as well as a small amount of quantitative trade and investment data, extracted from publicly-accessible online databases.

Some trade and investment data, as well as sectoral fisheries data (e.g. on employment and shipping movements) were not available online, but could be accessed through national statistics agencies. Similarly, a select amount of secondary qualitative data, particularly diplomatic memos, annual reports and policy documents, were accessed physically through national archives in the different countries. When the researcher was obligated to obtain information through an in-country institution, a written letter was presented to a responsible staff member to outline the rationale for the information request and to detail how the information would be used by the researcher. The full list of secondary documentation analysed for this study can be found in the references list at the end of the dissertation.

Data Analysis Methods

Adopting one of the approaches to qualitative data analysis advocated by Stake (1995) and Creswell (2007), the researcher undertook a process of categorical aggregation of the transcribed interview data and field notes. With the help of qualitative data analysis software (NVivo), transcribed interview and field note data were coded thematically according to common ideas and patterns. A code table was developed by the researcher to ensure coding consistency. Some codes were pre-chosen by the researcher to reflect concepts in the study's theoretical framework, allowing the researcher to explore the resonance of these concepts in relation to the primary data. However, additional codes were developed as the researcher undertook multiple iterations of data review, thus allowing the data "to speak" (Rule and John, 2011) without being limited by the researcher's own pre-established expectations. From these coded categories, the researcher undertook a content and thematic analysis to identify what Stake (1995) refers to as multiple "instances" within the data. These "instances", in turn, were used to derive "issue relevant" meanings, which provided a basis for a further grouping of the coded data, including direct quotations from KIs, into categories aligned with the study's primary and secondary research questions.

Collected secondary sources were grouped thematically and the researcher undertook multiple iterations of content analysis on relevant documentation. The same process of data coding, grouping and theme identification applied to the primary data was also followed simultaneously for the secondary data. However, the researcher was cautious to ensure that

the secondary data were allowed “to speak” without being pigeonholed into the codes, groups and themes identified in the primary data. Separate codes were developed from the secondary data analysis (with some of the researcher’s pre-chosen codes again being applied to ensure a link to theoretical concepts). It was only after these secondary data analysis codes had been transformed into “issue relevant” meanings and sorted into themes linked to the study’s primary and secondary research questions that the researcher brought these analyses together and undertook a further stage of collective review, with a set of final data categories being validated with reference to the full array of analysed data. It is from the analysis of these final categories that the study write-up is derived.

8. Structure of the Dissertation

The remainder of this dissertation is structured as follows. Chapter 2 provides a critical review of the scholarly literature that informs the focus of this study. A particular emphasis is placed on analysing the literature on the diplomacy of small states and on the different perspectives of cooperation provided by the main theoretical schools within international relations. This chapter situates the focus of this study within this literature even while acknowledging that it seldom touches directly on SIDS (and almost never on fisheries) as core areas of interest. The main component of this chapter focuses on elaborating “new regionalism” and its social constructivist foundations. The suitability of “new regionalism” as a theoretical perspective for this study is defended, though the shortcomings of this theory are also highlighted where relevant.

Chapter 3 presents an overview of the dynamics that characterise the fisheries sector (and particularly the tuna fishery) in the Western Indian Ocean. There exist a wide array of actors, agreements, policies and trends that characterise this sector. A mapping of these, both at a “region-wide” level and in the context of each of the individual islands, ensures that basic technical terminology, key ideas, concepts and important stakeholders are all introduced and their roles understood before they are discussed further in the dissertation’s core analytical chapters. This chapter also establishes, through practical examples, the existence of technical or “functional” cooperation between the Western Indian Ocean island states over fisheries.

In Chapter 4, the dissertation begins its analytical exploration with a focus on the first of the study’s three investigative lenses: the political dynamics at play between the Western Indian Ocean islands at the state-to-state ministerial level. The chapter explores these dynamics through a particular focus on the largely unsuccessful efforts of the islands’ respective fisheries ministries to enact common Minimum Terms and Conditions (MT&Cs) to

govern foreign vessel access to their EEZs. Two particular issues – disparities in socio-economic development between the islands and the economic competition between them over fisheries related foreign investment – are highlighted to detail this case.

Chapter 5 deals with the second of the study's investigative lenses: the political dynamics at play between the Western Indian Ocean SIDS within the key inter-governmental organisations responsible for facilitating inter-island cooperation over fisheries. The chapter details how these political dynamics are influenced by the lack of coordination existing between these bodies and the resulting duplication of many of their core fisheries initiatives. The chapter also discusses how the heterogeneity that exists between the different islands as to their overriding foreign policy priorities, influences their differing approaches to each inter-governmental organisation. The chapter concludes with a discussion on the role of France in shaping inter-island political dynamics, particularly within the IOC, and how this affects prospects for deepening cooperation, integration and fisheries regime-building among the Western Indian Ocean SIDS.

In Chapter 6, the dissertation changes focus to its third investigative lens, exploring inter-island political dynamics and regionness from the standpoint of fisheries-focused non-state actors. The chapter considers issues around the weakness of civil society within the island grouping, but particularly in Comoros and Madagascar, as well as how the lack of autonomy that the islands' respective civil society actors have from their national governments affects prospects for the creation of inter-island epistemic communities focused on fisheries.

Finally, Chapter 7 brings the dissertation's analysis full circle, relating how inter-island political dynamics between island state fisheries ministries, within fisheries-focused inter-governmental organisations and at the non-state level combine to affect the islands' prospects for deepening cooperation, enacting integrative regimes and engaging in collective diplomacy. The chapter also relates the conclusions of the study back to "new regionalism" and social constructivism, commenting on what the findings say about the extent to which the Western Indian Ocean island states can truly be thought of as a socially-constructed *region*. The chapter concludes with some specific commentary on what the findings of this study, even with its very bounded geographic and thematic focus, says about the diplomacy of small states (and particularly SIDS) and the prospective utility of the "gang up" approach to collective action as a means for these types of states to improve their bargaining power and represent their national interests. Specific reflections are also provided on how political scientists should consider these issues in the context of future research.

CHAPTER 2: Small State Diplomacy, Cooperation & ‘New Regionalism’ - A Literature Review

1. Introduction and Chapter Overview

This chapter sets out to critically review the scholarly literature that informs the focus of this study. In doing so, the chapter works to establish the relevance of the study’s primary and secondary research questions, including how these questions address gaps in the academic understanding of SIDS’s cooperative diplomacy. The chapter also establishes the suitability of the study’s theoretical approach and the analytical lenses introduced in Chapter 1. The chapter starts by analysing the literature pertaining to the diplomacy of small states and the distinctive place that SIDS occupy within this literature. This analysis establishes the relevance of low bargaining power and corresponding diplomatic weakness as structural constraints to SIDS’ political action. Drawing on perspectives from two key schools of thought, one focusing on the barriers facing SIDS due to their weak positioning in the global power structure, and the other concentrating on the practical limitations that SIDS must overcome in order to project diplomatic influence, a focus is placed on unpacking the thinking underlying the “gang up” approach to cooperation and collective diplomacy among SIDS. The chapter then proceeds to provide a brief summary of how different intellectual traditions within international relations define and seek to operationalise the concept of “cooperation” between states. Touching on the realist, liberal institutionalist, Marxist and social constructivist schools of thought, arguments are presented as to why the latter provides the most useful foundation for this study’s research focus. Following this, the chapter moves to an examination of the “new regionalism” literature, first presenting the competing conceptual perspectives around what “new regionalism” represents, before delving into the practical applications of this approach in the global south – and particularly in relation to SIDS.

Importantly, this literature review will work to establish the credibility of “new regionalism” as an appropriate theoretical lens by which to engage with this study’s lines of inquiry. At the same time, the review will also note areas where this theoretical perspective appears to be lacking, as well as how the research presented in this dissertation will address some of these shortcomings. The chapter will conclude with a review of existing literature, albeit limited, on how political dynamics between SIDS influence cooperation between these states in the fisheries sector. In doing so, the chapter will reinforce the value in taking this sector as a case study focus in exploring issues of cooperation and collective diplomacy among the Western Indian Ocean SIDS.

2. The Diplomacy of Small States

Within much of the international relations and political science literature, SIDS are often lumped into the broad category of “small states” rather than being analysed as a case apart (Archer, Bailes and Wivel, 2014; Cooper and Shaw, 2009; Graham, 2017; Hey, 2003; Jesse and Dreyer, 2016; Sutton, 2011). This stands in contrast to much of the economic, social development and environmental literature, which is more likely to treat SIDS, much as the UN does, as a distinct classification of states. This inclusion of SIDS in the broader political analysis of small states can be useful in identifying broad trends and, as is done in most of the works cited above, when the interests of SIDS and small state non-SIDS are examined in a comparative manner. However, the inclusion of SIDS in the broader small state literature does have drawbacks. In particular, this literature tends to get bogged down in trying to produce authoritative definitions of *smallness*, whether based on population size (Read, 2001; Streeten, 1993), land area (Crowards, 2002) or assorted economic measures, such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP) or trade openness (Davenport, 2001; Mattoo and Subramanian, 2004). This definitional discussion is often of limited value; something that was recognised even in some of the foundational work on small state diplomacy (Keohane, 1969; Rothstein, 1968; Vital, 1967). As Campling (2006: 249) argues, views on smallness are “laden with subjectivity”, while Wood (1967: 29) notes that smallness is “a comparative and not an absolute idea” and any metric used to assess smallness will be “arbitrary”. This is a view furthered by Bjøl (1971), Handel (1990), Jazbec (2001) and – somewhat more recently – Cooper and Shaw (2009).

Even in a discussion of SIDS, contestation exists over defining what is “small”. While most scholars do not hesitate to classify SIDS as “small” or even “micro” states, Perinchief (2016) cites the often-considerable area of many SIDS’ EEZs to argue that these states are not “small” at all, particularly in terms of their (actual or potential) resource endowments. However, an overt fixation on smallness is also problematic in any discussion of SIDS because SIDS’ uniqueness does not come from their size alone. It also comes from the collective scale and intensity of the economic, political and environmental challenges these states face, as well as the distinct vulnerability these challenges create. It is true that these challenges are all, to a degree, linked to smallness. However, they are also connected to SIDS’ geographical positionings, resource endowments, colonial and post-colonial histories, types of political and economic institutions, as well as to SIDS’ dependence on (and exposure to) the ocean, among other factors. When SIDS are discussed politically in the broader small state context, the importance of these various factors in influencing SIDS’ political behaviour tends to get

subsumed under an assumption that smallness, as a discrete and yet somewhat undefinable concept, matters above everything else.

Nevertheless, for scholars concerned about the wellbeing of SIDS, the broad literature on small states is extremely useful in providing a justification for highlighting low levels of bargaining power, as well as limited diplomatic capabilities, as important structural constraints to SIDS' political action. The literature tends to come at these issues from two perspectives. First, in terms of the weak positioning of small states in the context of global power relations. Second, focusing more on the practical constraints, such as human and financial resource limitations, that prevent small states from attaining diplomatic heft. These perspectives occasionally overlap, but as will be argued later in this section, the literature focusing on the practical hindrances to small state power projection provide a more useful foundation upon which to situate this study.

3. Diplomatic Weakness among Small States: The “Global Power Relations” Literature

A useful example of the early work done on small state diplomacy, rooted very much in the “global power relations” literature, is that of Keohane (1969). Keohane takes a systemic view and divides the global political order into four tiers of states: “system-determining”, “system-influencing”, “system-affecting” and “system-ineffectual”. While states in the first two categories are capable of projecting influence unilaterally, “system-affecting” states can attain influence only through collective action. “System-ineffectual” states, meanwhile, have almost no leverage, with their foreign policymaking reflecting “adjustment to reality, not rearrangement of it” (p. 296). Keohane's analysis makes no reference to SIDS. However, since he perceives the majority of “Lilliputian” developing countries to be in the “system-ineffectual” category, there is little doubt that this is where he would envision SIDS to be situated as well. Similar sentiments are expressed by Holbraad (1971), who refers to small states as the “pawns” of international relations. Holbraad notes that small states, including SIDS, struggle “to come to grips with a process [international diplomacy] that takes place, so to speak above their heads” (p. 78).

Handel (1990), unable to come to a satisfactory definition of “small”, instead talks of a general class of “weak states”, inclusive of countries lacking in some combination of their human, natural, economic and/or military resources. Included at the bottom-rung in his list of “weak states”, Handel speaks of “mini-states”, in which he includes the majority of SIDS. These “mini-states” have some overlap with Keohane's “system-ineffectual” states.

Concurring with Keohane, Handel describes these states as being almost entirely *reactive* in the face of tumultuous global forces. Lacking the economic or military resources to be real diplomatic players, “mini-states” are overwhelmed by external events and have their foreign policy¹⁰ options dictated to them. Handel’s views echo those of Jervis (1976), who posits that small states’ comparative lack of resources and resulting inability to buffer themselves against external shocks, makes them little more than passive reactors in a global system within which they have minimal power.

The above scholars wrote at the height (Keohane, Holbraad, Jervis) and tail end (Handel) of the Cold War. In this period of “great power” politics, defined by security concerns and hard realist thinking among international relations scholars, it is not surprising that small states would be ascribed a marginal role in global diplomacy. However, with the end of the Cold War and a gradual shift away from hard realism towards a more liberal internationalist perspective (Ikenberry, 2018), combined with the emergence of themes such as human rights (Risse, Ropp and Sikkink, 1999; Sikkink, 1998) and the natural environment (Dalby, 1992; Smith, 1993) as diplomatic focus areas, some scholars did expect a modest opening in the diplomatic space available to small states. Elman (1995), for example, hypothesised that the emergence of this broader array of issue areas could presage an opportunity for small states to generate foreign policy pro-actively and on the basis of their domestic political preferences rather than as reactions to prevailing geo-political forces.

For the most part, however, the contemporary “global power relations” literature has continued to paint a broadly negative picture of small states when it comes to their prospects for engaging in pro-active diplomacy. Breuning (2007), despite writing in a more current geo-political environment, echoes Keohane and Handel by citing the constrained political space that small states, defined as having limited land, human or resulting economic resources, have at their disposal. Breuning contends that small states are likely to be highly interdependent with other (larger) states. This interdependence may exist in relation to security or economic concerns (or both), but has the effect of constraining the foreign policy options that dependent small states are willing to consider. To preserve the advantages they obtain through these interdependent relationships, Breuning argues that most small states will adopt either “*consensus-oriented foreign policies*”, in which they passively align their diplomatic priorities with those of a larger state, or “*compliant foreign policies*”, in which small states continue to

¹⁰ This study adopts Nanjira’s (2010: 330) definition of ‘foreign policy’ as “the process by which states identify goals in the international system...acting on the international stage...in pursuit of their...national interests”.

align their diplomatic agendas with more powerful counterparts, but do so resentfully and with awareness that they lack the capabilities to pursue other options.

Bailes, Thayer and Thorhallsson (2016) mirror Breuning's views in postulating "shelter theory", in which small states seek 'alliance shelter relationships' with more powerful (larger) states. These relationships can be extremely beneficial to the interests of small states, but they necessitate diplomatic alignment – consensus or compliance – with those states providing them with "shelter". Veenendaal's (2017) discussion of small states as beneficiaries of patron-client relationships, introduced in Chapter 1, appears to also fit this mould. To Veenendaal, small states (which he defines as those with populations below 250,000 people) benefit from "exchanges" with larger patron states, including in the provision of security and economic support. However, Veenendaal acknowledges that these benefits come with an acceptance of passive diplomatic alignment on the part of small state clients.

In none of the above analyses are small states presented as independent actors with meaningful levels of bargaining power or an ability to project their own diplomatic influence. These states may be able to take basic steps to strengthen the rules and procedures of international organisations, in the hope that doing so "binds" larger powers to global norms that serve small state interests (Neumann and Gstöhl, 2006; Vital, 1967). More likely, however, is that small states will simply be reactive players in a global system that forces them to seek alliances with larger and more powerful counterparts in order to guarantee their security and wellbeing. Wivel and Oest (2010: 434), writing specifically of "microstates", describe them as "permanently stuck as the weak party in asymmetric relationships internationally and therefore forced to adopt strategies that cope with the permanency of their weakness." No clear pathway is established within this literature for these types of states to change their peripheral circumstances, with most seemingly destined to remain in Keohane's bottom rung of "system-ineffectual" states.

SIDS seldom feature as a core focus of this literature on small state positioning within the global power structure. For the most part, SIDS are simply assumed to follow patterns of diplomatic behaviour akin to other small states, though possibly – given their "micro" status – from an even more marginal global positioning. Veenendaal (2017) is something of an exception since he takes a number of SIDS as case study examples in his analysis of patron-client relationships between small and large states. However, Veenendaal makes little effort to distinguish the effects of patron-client "exchanges" between SIDS vs. non-SIDS small states. For the purposes of this study, the above literature should mainly serve to lend credence to the study's overarching claim that small states like SIDS are, by and large, presumed to be

operating with little bargaining power and from corresponding positions of diplomatic weakness.

4. Diplomatic Weakness among Small States: The “Practical Limitations” Literature

There is a second strand of small state literature that focuses less on strategic power imbalances and more on the practical challenges associated with effective diplomatic engagement. While by no means denying the comparatively weak position that small states occupy within the global power structure, this literature is more open to the possibility that small states can exploit opportunities for diplomatic influence on particular issues. What may prevent small states from individually realising these opportunities, however, are limitations in the human and financial resources these states can allocate to diplomacy. Hey's (2003) reference to “limited foreign policy bureaucracies” encapsulates this view. Both Hey, as well as Bueger and Wivel (2018), note that small states, including SIDS, typically possess weaker diplomatic networks than their larger counterparts.

Small states, and especially “micro-states” (a category within which Bueger and Wivel categorise SIDS), have comparatively limited funds to spend on diplomatic efforts and have smaller pools of potential human resources to draw upon when staffing their diplomatic corps. These factors make it difficult for many small/micro states to maintain a consistent or sizeable presence at international fora or other (formal or informal) meetings. This has two major impacts. First, it makes it less likely these states will gain the opportunity to chair diplomatic committees and/or to take the lead in crafting policy proposals. Second, it leaves these states with less information than they would like on the diplomatic positions of other states; something that prevents the strengthening of small/micro states' bargaining power. Schiff (2010) summarises the result of these resource constraints with his contention that small states, and particularly SIDS, lack the resources needed to overcome the high “negotiation costs” that are incurred by states engaging in modern-day diplomacy.

For this study, a useful foundation emerges from the literature focused on the practical limitations that inhibit small states from projecting influence. The small state literature focused on global power relations is less suitable. This is not because the latter literature is not valid, but rather because this literature tends to start from a realist standpoint that: a) is somewhat deterministic in assigning small states a set position in the global power structure; and b) seldom recognises cooperation as a viable means for small states to adjust (however modestly) their global positioning. As already noted, this literature provides few identifiable avenues for

real change. The more practically-focused literature, on the other hand, allows small states some agency to realise diplomatic objectives provided they can overcome their aforementioned resource constraints. This literature is more cognisant of SIDS as distinct actors and it presents problems that while significant, are not intractable. This literature draws on liberal thought and raises the possibility that through mutual cooperation and by exploiting the malleability of diplomatic systems, small states can tilt the diplomatic playing field slightly in their favour.

5. Opportunities for Enhancing Small State Influence

A number of “practical limitations” scholars argue that diplomatic institutions and processes (referred to as “institutional systems” by Cooper and Shaw, 2009) provide more openings to small states than is commonly recognised. These openings, however, can only be realised through deft political action on the part of small state decision-makers. Bueger and Wivel (2018), in their excellent analysis of Seychellois diplomacy in the field of ocean governance (to be referenced at various points in this dissertation), note that in spite of undeniable material limitations, small states – and particularly SIDS – can take three measures to attain diplomatic influence. First, these states must work to establish the importance of their geographical positioning, reinforcing to larger powers the vital strategic role they can play on important issues in their vicinity (e.g. for Seychelles, the country’s ideal positioning as a logistical centre for efforts to combat piracy off the coast of Somalia). This, the authors claim, has the effect of drawing in both financial and material investments from larger powers, including in capacity-building, that may strengthen these small states’ diplomatic capabilities over time.

Second, small states need to develop issue-specific capacity and strive to achieve “niche influence”. Small states cannot hope to be major diplomatic players. However, by channeling their limited resources into developing expertise in particular sectors (as Seychelles has done with the “blue economy”), small states can insert themselves into issue-based diplomacy that reflects their national interests. Third, small states need to develop political cultures and institutions that are conducive to “activist” foreign policies. This means establishing democratic norms that minimise (as much as possible) domestic political cleavages, while mobilising decision-makers to universally support the “niche” policy aims that the small state intends to pursue. Institutionally, small states must minimise levels of bureaucracy and ensure that political decision-making, inclusive of civil society, happens quickly and can respond to changing circumstances.

The measures put forward by Bueger and Wivel for enhancing small state diplomatic power are not new. Graham (2017) also writes of the importance of “context specific determinants” in allowing some small states to exploit their geographical positioning to overcome practical limitations in projecting power. Both Blanton and Kegley (2016) and Morgan and Webber (2002) point to the importance of regional context and political culture as determinants of diplomatic action among small states. These ideas can also be found within much of the literature focusing on small states in the European Union (Arter, 2000; Bailes and Thorhallsson, 2013; Bunse, 2009; Panke, 2010). However, Bueger and Wivel (2018) provide one of the few in-depth analyses that considers these “power-enhancing” measures in a global south/SIDS context (though both Smed and Wivel, 2017 and Thorhallsson, 2012 provide commentary that complements Bueger and Wivel’s analysis). Curiously, Bueger and Wivel’s study of Seychelles does not mention the notion of the country “ganging up” with its SIDS neighbours. If these three measures can be implemented by a single small island nation, could they not also be implemented – at greater effort but also to greater effect – by an island grouping? This is a question that will be explored in the chapters that follow.

Bueger and Wivel (2018) establish that global diplomatic processes are not wholly rigid and that small states can take steps to overcome their considerable limitations. Thorhallsson and Steinsson (2017) also seize on the issue of small states developing niche expertise and comparative diplomatic advantages. They argue that in international environments that are “peaceful, stable and institutionalised” (p. 22), this expertise can provide small states with some “leeway for maneuver”, particularly when working through regional or international organisations. Cooper and Shaw (2009), drawing on the analysis of Bjøl (1971), discuss the importance of international institutions, and especially the types of “institutional systems” in which small states find themselves. In institutional systems that are relatively less “confrontational”, small states may be in a position to follow Bueger and Wivel’s advice to play-up their geographical value and to pursue “activist” foreign policies. Masters (2012) takes the discussion of small state diplomacy away from a state-centric view altogether. She offers a reminder that even if small state governments are comparatively lacking in resources, an array of non-governmental actors in academia, the private sector and the media (to name a few) may also be brought to the table to strengthen small states’ bargaining power – provided small state governments are willing to make available the political space for these actors to operate (alluding to Bueger and Wivel’s “political culture”).

In addition to exploiting opportunities presented by prevailing “institutional systems”, some scholars within the “practical limitations” literature also recognise that small states’

ability to project influence can be boosted through mutual cooperation. While the term “gang up” is not used by all of these scholars (Benwell 2011 and Graham 2017 appear to be the main recent purveyors of this term), this literature broadly emphasises how individual small states’ resource constraints can be overcome through a pooling of available resources and expertise, as well as through the development of collective institutions that facilitate shared decision-making. This literature rejects Holbraad’s (1971) notion that international diplomacy takes place “above the heads” of small states. It also goes against the arguments made by the “global power relations” thinkers, like Handel (1990) and Jervis (1976), who contend that small states are mere “reactors” to global events. This literature, like that focusing on “institutional systems” does not overstate the benefits of mutual cooperation, recognising that small states may only be able to punch above their weight to a modest extent. However, it at least acknowledges another strategy within the diplomatic toolkit that small states can leverage to try and increase their bargaining power.

Interestingly, much of this literature makes use of SIDS case studies – focusing on mutual cooperation between these states in regards to international trade negotiations (Byron, 1994; Hornbeck, 2008; Girvan, 2010; Sheahan *et al.*, 2010) or in advocating for measures to mitigate the consequences of climate change (Benwell, 2011; Deitelhoff and Wallbott, 2012; Jaschik, 2014). Schiff (2010), as already noted, takes the example of Caribbean SIDS to make the argument that for these states to overcome their resource limitations and high “negotiation costs”, they are best served by establishing regional cooperation agreements and negotiating as a bloc. Schiff contends that SIDS are well-placed to establish such mechanisms because they “exhibit greater similarity of interests than more distant countries” (p. 1).

“Ganging up” also brings benefits, Schiff posits, because SIDS will be seen as more attractive negotiating partners by larger states or larger regional groupings if they can be dealt with as a collective rather than on an individual basis. This is because the “negotiation costs” that arise when dealing with individual small states may not be seen as worth the effort, even by a body like the EU. In Schiff’s view, SIDS establish and maintain bargaining power by banding together. Byron (1994) and Hornbeck (2008) provide an underpinning to Schiff’s claims by arguing that Caribbean SIDS’ ability to maintain preferential trade access to the EU market has come about largely because the EU has seen CARICOM as an institutional partner worth negotiating with, and because Caribbean SIDS have pooled their resources and political capital into CARICOM to establish its credibility and competence.

A few scholars point to the role that mutual cooperation among small states, and especially SIDS, has played in allowing these states to influence global norms, especially in

relation to climate change and human rights (Wallbott, 2014; He, 2016; Pettenger, 2016). Benwell (2011) argues that cooperation between SIDS, both through island-focused organisations like AOSIS and through more informal platforms, has allowed SIDS to emerge as “regime leaders” in shaping how global institutions perceive and seek to confront climate change. Benwell contends that given the existential threat that climate change poses to many SIDS, these states do not have the option of simply being “reactive”. By banding together and allocating their individually scarce financial and human resources to the development of a collectively-agreed strategy for climate advocacy, Benwell suggests that SIDS have been able to leverage a far higher (and more effective) profile than would have been possible if they had sought to pursue this advocacy individually. By collaboratively working together to establish a mutual identity as “front-line states” that stand to be the first victims of climate change, Benwell also credits SIDS’ collaboration with injecting urgency into the climate debate.

Graham (2017), in her thorough analysis of the foreign policies of Southern African small states, plainly notes that small states “may be individually weaker than others but collectively they can prove very influential in international relations” (p. 134). Graham concurs with Benwell’s thesis that SIDS – referring in her case to Mauritius and Seychelles – have achieved a great deal through collaborative efforts, both in advocacy around climate change as well as in working to shape global efforts to promote sustainable approaches to the “blue economy”. Like Bueger and Wivel (2018), Graham singles out Seychelles as a small island state that punches above its weight and which has worked to establish “niche expertise” in different facets of ocean governance. Unlike Bueger and Wivel, however, Graham argues that Seychelles has been effective in leveraging this expertise in part by seeking common cause with Mauritius, its larger and relatively more powerful neighbour. “Ganging up” with Mauritius to develop common policy positions has allowed Seychelles to piggyback on Mauritius’ larger diplomatic stature within various regional organisations when pressing its objectives. This stature arises from Mauritius’ better resourced diplomatic corps.

As has been noted, the benefits of mutual cooperation (or other strategies outlined for small states/SIDS to overcome practical limitations to projecting influence) are rarely overstated within the literature. However, some scholars have still taken issue with what they perceive to be a tendency among some small state “optimists” to celebrate these states’ occasional success in influencing diplomatic *processes*, even if doing so does not appear to lead to tangible diplomatic *outcomes* (Drahos, 2003; Lee, 2009). Benwell (2011) tackles these criticisms head-on in arguing (not entirely convincingly) that changes in process may actually

be more important over the long-term in generating lasting transformations in norms and attitudes (e.g. towards the urgency of climate change).

These criticisms do raise the question of how effective small state diplomacy really is. While the “practical limitations” literature presents a number of measures for small states to punch above their weight, the literature tends to lack evidence suggesting that these measures deliver sustained diplomatic success. The work of Benwell (2011) and Jaschik (2014), for example, clearly outline how SIDS have collectively and forcefully inserted themselves into the climate change debate, but they provide little clarity on how (or even whether) small states have fundamentally been able to change the terms of this debate to their advantage. Similarly, while Schiff (2010) provides a strong conceptual rationale for the notion of small states banding together to form common negotiating blocs, he actually provides little thought on what modalities these states should take to institutionalise this cooperation – e.g. what level of cooperation and collective action is required for such blocs to be successful? Also, he provides little real evidence to suggest that these blocs generate positive returns for small states over the long-term. Other writers, focusing on SIDS organisations like CARICOM and AOSIS, while highlighting singular instances of diplomatic success, tend not to demonstrate whether or not these successes are sustained.

Also focusing on mutual cooperation among small states, Graham (2017) warns against the assumption that these states will inevitably be aligned on all matters. Instead, she reiterates the importance of contextual factors, types of institutions and prevailing political cultures, as well as political and economic incentives, as the true drivers of cooperation or non-cooperation among small states. Stated differently, small states are not all that different from their larger counterparts in having diverse interests. Political considerations, and not merely the fact of being “small” (or being SIDS), will influence how small states choose to engage cooperatively and in the wider diplomatic sphere. This is undoubtedly as true for SIDS as it is for small states in general. Graham notes that while small states do, as Schiff argues, have common interests and share many underlying traits, they all will still place paramount importance on protecting their sovereignty and retaining flexibility in their diplomatic endeavours. Those concerned with small states, she concludes, should not lose sight of this fact.

6. Situating a Study on Western Indian Ocean SIDS in the Context of Small State Diplomacy

This section has provided a general overview of the literature focused on small state diplomacy. It has been argued that this literature falls roughly into two camps: 1) a “global

power relations” literature that draws on realist thinking and which ascribes almost no diplomatic capabilities to small states; and 2) a “practical limitations” literature that is more liberal in its outlook and which, while not disputing the comparatively weak diplomatic position in which small states find themselves, nevertheless argues that these weaknesses are largely based around resource constraints rather than global power imbalances. This “practical limitations” literature is much more likely to consider the diplomacy of SIDS and it presents a number of practical measures that small states/SIDS can take to enhance their bargaining power and diplomatic heft.

For SIDS, leveraging the strategic value of their geographic positioning, channelling scarce resources into the development of “niche expertise” and developing political systems and institutions that facilitate diplomatic drive towards priority objectives, are approaches that can be taken to exploit flexibilities within the “institutional systems” of global diplomacy. An additional approach is for small states to pursue intensive cooperation with one another. The formation of common negotiating blocs among SIDS can boost these states’ collective bargaining power, both by enhancing their own visibility and by reducing the “negotiation costs” that might discourage diplomatic engagement if larger powers had to interact with SIDS individually. Even the informal pooling of resources and expertise among small states like SIDS may allow them increased opportunity to push key objectives than would be the case if they sought to do so alone.

This study is clearly situated within the “practical limitations” literature. It concurs with Benwell (2011), Bueger and Wivel (2018), Graham (2017) and Schiff (2010), that small states – and specifically SIDS – are capable of doing more than simply reacting to their realities and can be pro-active diplomatic players, at least in niche areas. While not dismissing the views of “global power relations” scholars, this study takes a view that existing evidence, such as the work of AOSIS in coordinating SIDS advocacy efforts around climate change, indicates a degree of influence projection among these states that rises above what these scholars are willing to concede. However, the study also keys in on some of the overarching criticisms aimed at (and contained within) this literature. Namely, even if small states like SIDS can find avenues to enhance their diplomatic influence, *it is not clear what this actually means in terms of generating tangible outcomes.*

Turning specifically to the possibilities of mutual cooperation between SIDS, it is not clear from the literature how this cooperation can best be structured or sustained to ensure collective diplomatic influence. Finally, Graham’s (2017) caution that small states are heterogeneous in their interests and will, in spite of their common “smallness”, act on different

incentives when choosing whether (and how) to pursue cooperation with other small states, gives impetus to this study's primary research question looking at how (and whether) existing political dynamics among SIDS in the Western Indian Ocean are conducive to fostering sustained cooperation, integration and collective action.

7. Defining Cooperation

The following chapters of this dissertation will focus on unpacking three concepts introduced in Chapter 1, and which form the core focus of this study: cooperation, collective diplomacy and regionness. The latter term will be fleshed out in the next section of this chapter focusing on "new regionalism". Few issues are as central to international relations as "cooperation". Yet arriving at a settled definition of this term, or understanding how it is operationalised into something that is tangible and easy to identify, remains a challenge for scholars. In what follows, a general overview will be presented of how different theoretical traditions in international relations perceive cooperation between states. The ways in which this cooperation is seen to lead (or not lead) to the emergence of collective diplomacy will be discussed. Finally, this section will return to Krasner's (1983) notion of *regimes*, also introduced in Chapter 1, to outline one way that those analysing the process of cooperation (such as this study) can be sure that they are examining something that is substantive.

Turning briefly to how "cooperation" is situated within the dominant theoretical frameworks of international relations, a simplified categorisation can be done on the basis of three overarching approaches: realism, liberal institutionalism and constructivism. A fourth approach, a Marxist or Gramscian perspective, tends to focus on issues of hegemonic power, which in a modern 21st-century form, considers international relations as being about the power of a transnational capitalist class (Destradi, 2010; Robinson, 2005). It is difficult to see where small states like SIDS fit into this type of framework or, stated differently, it seems unlikely that small states would be ascribed even the hint of any real agency in this type of outlook. As such, this approach has not been adopted as a major focus for this study.

For scholars concerned with SIDS, it is readily apparent that a realist view of cooperation will offer little succour in dealing with issues of low bargaining power or minimal diplomatic capabilities among these states. Indeed, realist perspectives tend to take the view, outlined by the "global power relations" thinkers in the previous section, that these constraints are natural and immutable consequences of relative state weakness in a global system that emphasises hard power. Realist perspectives downplay the value of cooperation, at least outside the context of security alliances. Also, because realism focuses on the balance of power

between states and assumes the existence of anarchy outside the state system, it provides no intellectual space for non-state actors or international (inter-governmental) organisations to play a role in supporting diplomatic processes. With its focus on hard security, realism also gives little credence to the importance of socio-economic issue areas as foundations for international relations between states (Bull, 1977; Fromkin, 1981; Freyburg-Inan, Harrison and James, 2009; Hoffman, 1965; Keohane, 1984; Waltz, 1979).

For the reasons above, it should be apparent that both the central research question posed by this study, as well as the study's analytical framework, would be of little interest to committed realists. Cooperation between presumably "system-ineffectual" states, focused around a socio-economic set of issues pertaining to fisheries, would find no intellectual space in the realist framework. Perceptions of self-interest among states would likely preclude the realist from expecting this type of non-security-focused cooperation to evolve into regular institutionalised collective diplomacy. Returning to this study's analytical framework, introduced in Chapter 1, a realist would – at best – only see one of the three "lenses" examined in this study, that of state-state cooperation, as being relevant. The additional lenses focusing on cooperation through inter-governmental organisations and through non-state actors, would be deemed of little importance.

These views stand in contrast to the liberal institutionalist approach outlined by Bulmer (1993), Keohane (1984, 1988), Keohane and Martin (1995), Keohane and Nye (1977), as well as Milner (1997). Contrary to realism, liberal institutionalism contends that diverse forms of cooperation are not only possible, but are inevitable (and essential) in a world marked by multiple forms of complex interdependence. While not denying that states are the predominant actors in international relations, liberal institutionalists acknowledge a need for states to cede some sovereignty to enable the creation and functioning of international organisations. These organisations are managed through the creation of cooperative regimes – Krasner's (1983) principles, norms, rules and decision-making procedures – that govern relations between member states and which may also allow for the incorporation of non-state actors into cooperative processes. Within the liberal institutionalist framework, it is also possible to find the ideas underlying functional and neo-functional cooperation (Haas, 1961, 1970; Mitrany, 1976). Influential in explaining early patterns of political integration in post-war Europe, functionalism emphasises a link between issue-based technical cooperation among states and the effect of cooperative "spillovers" in incentivising deepening political integration over time. This integration may lead to the development of supranational bodies through which complex forms of cooperation are managed and intensified.

Liberal institutionalism would seem to offer far more promise for scholars focusing on cooperation and collective diplomacy among SIDS. It acknowledges that cooperation is a viable (and desirable) objective for states, while also positing that meaningful cooperation can exist beyond the issue of security. The notion of “functional” cooperation lends credibility to the possibility of technical issue areas, such as fisheries, serving as a catalyst for deepening cooperation and collective diplomacy. Liberal institutionalism, unlike realism, also provides non-state actors with some room for maneuver and by drawing on the existence of cooperative regimes, it provides a basis for establishing the existence of institutionalised cooperation within an organisational structure. It is seemingly possible to situate the “gang up” approach to SIDS cooperation under a liberal institutionalist framework. Indeed, Schiff’s (2010) call for small states like SIDS to form common negotiating blocs and other formal structures through which to foster cooperation, would find favour with liberal institutionalists.

However, whereas liberal institutionalism (and particularly functionalism) has been effectively applied to explaining the evolution of the European Coal and Steel Community into the European Economic Community and then into the EU, it has been examined from a slightly different perspective in the global south. As Axline (1994) notes, the emphasis that liberal institutionalism places on cooperation as a pathway towards political integration, is less relevant among developing countries. This is because: a) political integration is seldom an objective of political elites in developing states, who even more than their counterparts elsewhere (e.g. in Europe) are likely to be protective of state sovereignty; and b) international organisations developed to foster cooperation in the global south are usually constrained in their ambitions by the lack of resources member states are able (or choose) to contribute. This, in turn, may limit the extent (and types) of cooperative regimes produced.

Liberal institutionalism possesses a number of traits that make it a viable framework for this study. Unlike realism, which lends credibility to only one of the study’s analytical “lenses” (the state-state level), a liberal institutionalist approach would justify a focus on both state-state cooperation and cooperation through inter-governmental organisations. It even, to an extent, provides space for considering the role of non-state actors in cooperative endeavours. However, the overarching focus of liberal institutionalism is on the functioning of inter-governmental bodies, which for this study would refer mainly to the IOC and to a lesser degree, IORA, IOTC and SWIOFC. It is certainly possible to consider the extent to which political dynamics among Western Indian Ocean SIDS foster cooperation and collective diplomacy through these bodies (Chapter 4 of this dissertation does so). However, it is also necessary to acknowledge Axline’s critiques and to recognise that in a global south/SIDS context, more than

if the study were looking at a cooperative space like the EU, a liberal institutionalist analysis that puts inter-governmental organisations (and their cooperative regimes) front and centre, may not capture the full story.

Constructivism offers a third key theoretical perspective on international cooperation and it is through a constructivist lens that this study finds its most appropriate foundation. Constructivism, as its name suggests, assumes that cooperation is “constructed” through consistent social practice and interaction. Whereas realists see the material design of the international system as an unchangeable given, constructivists give credence to the notion that this system is actively developed – and consistently changed – based on the prevailing interests, values and identities held by participating political actors (Finnemore, 1996; Wendt, 1999). These factors determine not only the degree to which states choose to cooperate, but also how they do so, as well as the ways in which they may decide to develop and structure this cooperation over time (Ruggie, 1998; Wendt, 1992, 1999).

Like liberal institutionalists, constructivists ascribe importance to inter-governmental organisations. However, whereas the former tends to assume that these organisations must be assessed on the basis of whether or not they facilitate political integration, constructivists contend that these organisations function – and should be assessed – on the degree to which they reflect the ideas and values that underpin them. Finally, with its emphasis on identity and values as shapers of cooperation, it is unsurprising that more political space is available under constructivism for non-state actors – “norm entrepreneurs” in the words of Keck and Sikkink (1998) – to play a role in shaping cooperative processes.

There is a degree of interpretative flexibility with constructivism that does not exist for either realism or liberal institutionalism. This flexibility is extremely useful in a study of cooperation in a global south/SIDS context. Because constructivism does not hold to the realist view of a pre-determined institutional structure based around hard power, there is nothing precluding small states like SIDS from seeking cooperative relationships on their own terms. Rather than being mere adopters of “consensus” or “compliance” foreign policies, SIDS can actively construct cooperative/collective initiatives, and even regimes, through their own volition and to reflect their interests.

While the effectiveness of these “constructs” may be variable depending on how they are assessed (and as “practical limitations” scholars would argue, based on the resources these states have available to support them), a constructivist at least acknowledges that these states have some agency and can actively mould the political space in which they exist. This is a foundational assumption for this study as well. It underlies the primary research question,

which essentially asks how existing political dynamics shape the ways in which Western Indian Ocean SIDS choose to construct their common diplomatic environment in relation to fisheries.

Constructivism also adopts a more flexible interpretation of what cooperation should lead to. Whereas liberal institutionalists would argue that the end goal of cooperation should be some type of political integration, the constructivist contends that the process of cooperation is mutable and that the objectives of cooperation will change as the ideas and values that underpin this cooperation change as well. This notion will be further discussed in relation to the idea of regionness in the next section of this chapter. This flexible interpretation allows this study to engage with the cooperative process among the Western Indian Ocean SIDS without having to assess it against a pre-determined “gold standard”. Returning to the study’s primary research question, constructivism allows for a much deeper dive into how politics appears to influence the underlying social interactions between the islands’ diplomatic actors rather than merely querying whether political dynamics influence a prevailing balance of power (realism) or affect progress towards political integration (liberal institutionalism).

Finally, non-state actors, whether in civil society or the private sector, are front and centre as meaningful political actors under constructivism, whereas they remain either completely marginal (realism) or at best complementary (liberal institutionalism) under other frameworks. With the constructivist perspective, all three of the study’s analytical “lenses” are valid: state-state cooperation, cooperation through inter-governmental organisations and cooperation through non-state actors. The next section expands this theoretical focus and discusses constructivism in the context of “new regionalism”. This discussion will outline more clearly how constructivism will inform this study’s analysis.

Having reviewed the ways that different international relations theories perceive cooperation, it is still useful to briefly consider how the literature has attempted to precisely define this concept. In Chapter 1, it was noted that this study looks favourably on the definition provided by Axelrod and Keohane (1985: 226), in which they describe cooperation as occurring “when actors adjust their behaviour to the actual or anticipated preferences of others”. In separate work, Keohane (1984: 51) further details cooperation as revolving around the actions of separate states (or organisations), not previously in harmony, being “brought into conformity with one another through a process of negotiation”.

Each of these definitions is valid in their own way and they each seize on the idea that cooperation is only real if it includes identifiable *action* on the part of cooperating agents. Ruggie (1975: 570) offers a constructivist reflection on cooperation that focuses on the existence or non-existence of regimes. Providing a definition upon which Krasner (1982)

undoubtedly elaborated, Ruggie defines regimes, in material terms, as “mutual expectations, rules and regulations, plans, organisational energies and financial commitments, which have been accepted by a group of states.” Krasner’s explicit inclusion of principles and norms further sharpens the ideational component of regimes. Regimes are ultimately about ideas and about material evidence demonstrating that these ideas are being put into action.

This study, when assessing evidence of cooperation among Western Indian Ocean SIDS, holds to this perspective. Both the primary data collected through KIIs, as well as the reviewed secondary documentation, focus on interrogating the existence and meaning given to particular regimes established within this island grouping. Materially, the study bases its analysis on a review of different evidential sources that are used to establish the existence and nature of cooperative regimes: budgets, investment agreements, treaties, joint cooperation/management agreements, meeting minutes, project reports, treaties and fisheries protocols (to name just a few). At the level of ideas, the study utilises some of the same sources, but also draws heavily on the qualitative interview data in order to delve into the beliefs and values that inform the actions of key actors in each of the SIDS (at state and non-state levels) when formulating or engaging in collective diplomatic action. The link between regimes and “new regionalism” is discussed in the following section.

8. ‘New Regionalism’ as a Theoretical Framework

The concept of “new regionalism” was introduced in Chapter 1 as an overarching theoretical framework for this study. Acharya (2012) legitimately questions whether it is really possible to view “new regionalism” as a coherent theory akin to functionalism or liberalism. He argues that “new regionalism” is more “an intellectual movement to broaden the scope of regionalism studies, taking into consideration the impact of globalisation” (p. 8). A cursory review of the literature tends to support Acharya’s view. The scholarly divide between “old” and “new” regionalism is generally marked by the end of the Cold War and the shift away from a global system defined by state-centricity and a bi-polar order focused on security, to a system that if not truly multi-polar, was marked by the emergence of diverse political actors capable of projecting influence on an array of issues. These diverse actors included revitalised multilateral organisations, multinational firms and transnational civil society networks, enabled by the post-Cold War spread of democracy and capitalism (Hettne, 1999; Hettne and Söderbaum, 1998; Hurrell, 1995; Shaw, 2000). An additional way of considering the shift from “old” to “new” regionalism is through Eikenberry’s (2018) previously cited shift from realism towards a greater acceptance of liberalism within post-Cold War international relations.

Acharya is also correct that “new regionalism” does not serve as a traditional predictive theory of international relations. It does not offer a simple model of state behaviour and it contains a diversity of perspectives. However, as will be detailed in this section, “new regionalism” contains within it a number of assumptions that give defined structure to a constructivist view of international relations. The array of perspectives that exist within the “new regionalism” literature are considerable and this study does not attempt to draw on them all. Instead, it focuses on a core selection of arguably the most well-known literature, particularly the conceptual work of Hettne, Inotai and Sunkel (1999) plus Hettne and Söderbaum (1998, 2000). Also discussed will be the literature focused on the role of cooperative regimes within “new regionalism” (such as Hurrell, 1995 and Fawcett, 2004), as well as the literature that focuses on “new regionalism” in the global south and among SIDS (particularly Shaw 2000, 2004).

What does “new regionalism” represent in practice? Much as this chapter earlier noted that academic debates around “smallness” tend to get bogged down in definitional disagreements, Hettne (2005) argues that so too do attempts to define what constitutes a “region” (Cantori and Spiegel, 1970; Hettne, Inotai and Sunkel, 1999; Hurrell, 1995; Nye, 1968; Powers and Goertz, 2011). Nye’s (1968: xii) terming of a region as “a limited number of states linked together by a geographical relationship and a degree of mutual interdependence” remains a gold standard definition. Most subsequent definitions have built on Nye, framing the idea of a region based on what Powers and Goertz (2011: 2389) call “geography plus something.” Geographical proximity combined with substantial economic ties, a common historical or cultural identity, or shared security concerns (to name a few possibilities) provide a logical way to determine whether a group of states constitute a region.

“New regionalism” does not dismiss these definitions, but it contends that since regions are socially constructed, what matters is not arriving at an objective understanding, but instead recognising the ways that political actors perceive and choose to interpret and act on the idea of a region. Regions are politically contested, with their structure, purpose and definition fluctuating according to prevailing levels of *regionness* (Hurrell, 1995). *Regionness* is also a contested term, though its essential traits are captured by Hettne and Söderbaum (2000: 461), who refer to it as a process by which “a geographical area is transformed from a passive object to an active subject capable of articulating the transnational interests of the emerging region.” According to Hettne (2005), levels of *regionness* consistently vary within a grouping of states, bringing higher or lower levels of cohesion depending on the prevailing political dynamics at play within the grouping.

Hettne identifies five levels of regionness on a spectrum from low to high-level cohesion: 1) a regional space; 2) a regional social system; 3) a regional international society; 4) a regional community; and 5) a regional institutionalised polity. Across this spectrum, state groupings evolve from basic “trans-local relationships” to increasing interdependence. By the time the level of regionness reaches that of an international society, norms and rules have been established between states to create predictability in their relations. At the level of an international society, a grouping of states has chosen to construct “an enduring organisational framework” that encourages a convergence of values and behaviours. Finally, at the level of an institutional polity, a grouping has developed fixed decision-making structures and with inter-governmental organisations taking on supranational powers, including at least a modest degree of coercive power.

Hettne and Söderbaum (2000), as well as Hettne (2005) and Hurrell (1995), all contend that evolution along this spectrum is halting and that reversals in levels of regionness may be just as common as progression. Importantly, however, “new regionalist” scholars do not view reversals in levels of regionness as signifying a failure of inter-state cooperation. Hettne (2005) contends that regions (however defined) may be comparatively strong or weak, but as long as they display some regionness, cohesion and *actoriness* (capacity to act on commonly-defined priorities), they are distinct political formations worthy of study. This stands in contrast to a liberal institutionalist, and particularly a functionalist, who expect cooperation to consistently evolve and deepen, and who see backsliding in progress as representing a failure of the regional project (Hamad, 2016; Wolf, 1973). Bøas, Marchand and Shaw (1999: 1068) make the point that there is not one universal approach to understanding cooperation or regional organisation and that scholars must “start to accept that regional organisation and regionalisms are not developed within the framework of just one rationality, but in several localised rationalities.”

What do the above perspectives mean? First, in attempting to understand the trajectory of cooperation among states, it is not useful to make assessments on the basis of an idealised objective. Not all groupings of states will cooperate or form “regional” structures in the same way or with the same goals in mind. SIDS in the Western Indian Ocean will have very different cooperative intentions than the developed states of the EU, for example. Because cooperation and its evolution are products of social construction, “new regionalism” demands that cooperative processes be studied in recognition of the local context in which they are taking place and that cooperative efforts be assessed based on whether they appear to be reflecting the ideas and values of cooperating actors. Second, because cooperation and its evolution are politically contested, they are inherently fluid and can be expected to demonstrate more or less

cohesion (regionness) at a given time depending on the prevailing political dynamics that underpin them. “New regionalism” tends to adopt the view that higher levels of regionness are more desirable, largely because greater cooperative cohesion tends to open more political space for engagement by non-state actors (Hettne and Söderbaum, 2000). However, a relative lack of regionness does not make the study of cooperation in a given geographical space unimportant. Rather, it points to the need to understand the ways in which prevailing political dynamics are influencing how cooperative actors behave and how these dynamics may be affecting actor incentives for working towards higher levels of regionness over time.

From the above description, it should be apparent how “new regionalism” and the concept of regionness fits within this study. “New regionalism” draws on the social constructivist perspective that cooperation, and particularly its modalities, are the product of social interaction and the evolution (or not) of ideas and values. It also posits that judgments on the utility of cooperation be made on the basis of whether these ideas and values are reflected in the types of cooperative regimes produced. In recognising the diversity in types of cooperation, the “new regionalism” perspective is also in line with the social constructivist view that agency to undertake cooperation is not merely the preserve of more powerful (larger) states, but can also exist in very localised contexts (e.g. within an island grouping).

Importantly, however, “new regionalism” also provides some analytical grounding to a social constructivist perspective. The flexibility of social constructivism, identified so far as a virtue, can also lead to vagueness when it is accepted that cooperative regimes can be whatever cooperative actors construct them to be. With such subjectivity, how can scholars attempt to draw conclusions about what they are studying? The concept of regionness, and especially Hettne’s (2005) five-level spectrum of regionness, provides something of a typology within which scholars can try to situate their own analysis. It also provides terminology that can be used to discuss the nature of cooperative efforts and their evolution (or regression). At various points in the following chapters, reference will be made to Hettne’s spectrum of regionness, including further detail on its different levels, as well as how cooperation among the Western Indian Ocean SIDS fits into (and moves along) this spectrum.

By emphasising the politically contested nature of cooperation and region-building, “new regionalism” also informs this study by laying out the centrality of politics as a driving (or hindering) force in affecting cooperative approaches and outcomes. Social constructivist views of cooperation, with their emphasis on ideas and values, do implicitly acknowledge a role for politics. Indeed, constructivism does this to a much greater extent than either realism or liberal institutionalism, which consider politics very narrowly – mainly in relation to

strategic interests (realism) or economic interdependence (liberal institutionalism). However, “new regionalism”, by articulating how regionness is made fluid by the shifting nature of political dynamics within a cooperative space, puts politics front and centre. This study’s primary research question, looking at how political dynamics incentivise cooperation, collective diplomacy and regionness among Western Indian Ocean SIDS, is very much rooted in the “new regionalist” assumption that politics matter and that cooperation needs to be understood as an overtly political – and not merely technocratic – process.

In addition to introducing the idea of regionness and giving voice to the importance of politics in defining the structure of international cooperation, “new regionalism” also gives structure to the constructivist perspectives around: a) the potential of non-state actors as key players in cooperative endeavours; and b) the relevance of a wide range of issue areas as foundations for cooperation – particularly emerging environmental issues in which norms, values and cooperative processes are still very much being developed. Söderbaum and Shaw (2003: 222) define “new regionalism” as being neither state-led nor non-state led, but rather as involving “state, market, civil society and external actors coming together in a variety of mixed-actor collectivities, networks and modes of regional governance.” Contrary to an “old regionalism” in which only the state mattered as a driver of cooperation, “new regionalism” deems that cooperative action can be initiated by a multiplicity of actors (Shaw, 2000).

Hettne and Söderbaum (2000) note that evidence of non-state actor engagement in cooperative efforts may only be truly evident at higher levels of regionness. However, where non-state actors are active, they may be as influential as their government counterparts, particularly when cooperative epistemic communities are created along a range of technical issue areas (Haas, 1992; Keck and Sikkink, 1998). Epistemic communities are a central component of many liberal theories of international cooperation. Under a social constructivist-inspired “new regionalism”, however, these communities are – like state actors – ascribed important ideational roles and are seen to be capable of influencing the values and norms (“norm entrepreneurs”) that may shape cooperation, either outside the context of state-state relations or as a complement to them.

“New regionalism” also seizes on Elman’s (1995) assumption that the introduction of new issue areas in international diplomacy can open a wider space for different types of diplomatic actors to attain influence. Rather than being materially-focused like the realist-inspired “old regionalism”, constructivist “new regionalism” emphasises the importance of normative issue areas as drivers of cooperation and regionness. These issues include human rights, environmental sustainability, climate change and cultural protection (to name just a few)

(Benwell, 2011; Hettne, Inotai and Sunkel, 1999; Shaw, 2004). While these issues have not necessarily displaced security as the core focus of international cooperation, “new regionalism” contends that cooperative regimes, reflecting both material and value-based concerns, are becoming increasingly evident in these expanded issue areas (Fry, 1994; Shaw, 2004). Some of the aforementioned literature looking at the role of SIDS in leading the development of norm-based climate change regimes (Benwell, 2011; Jaschik, 2014) takes a constructivist viewpoint that acknowledges, with something of a “new regionalist” perspective, the role of non-state actors in dedicating political capital towards the establishment of these regimes.

This chapter has reviewed the literature around the diplomacy of small states, including SIDS. Two overriding perspectives have been offered as to why these types of states are generally characterised by low levels of diplomatic bargaining power. The “global power relations” literature focuses on the structural impediments small states confront when seeking to project influence in a global system that is seen to be designed to serve the interests of “larger” powers. The “practical limitations” literature, meanwhile, also acknowledges low levels of diplomatic bargaining power as an important challenge for small states like SIDS. However, this literature, contrary to the “global power relations” analysis, points to the possibility of small states *overcoming* these limitations through practical diplomatic and policy approaches, including through the type of “gang up” approach advocated by scholars like Schiff (2010) and Graham (2017). The chapter elaborated on some specific examples of how SIDS (including the Western Indian Ocean SIDS) have worked to overcome (or at least mitigate) practical limitations, such as human resource and financial constraints to projecting diplomatic influence even if only in the context of very specific issue areas.

The chapter operationalised the notion of “cooperation” between states, considering how this concept is understood by the foundational approaches to international relations: realism, liberal institutionalism and constructivism. Finally, the chapter provided a justification for the study’s theoretical approach based on “new regionalism” and its constructivist ethos. Through this analysis, the chapter has identified the analytical gaps that this study’s research questions seek to address and it has identified the theoretical foundation on which the study is based and through which the findings from the study’s primary research will be interpreted. With this study’s literature review complete, Chapter 3 will now turn directly to the study’s exploration of the Western Indian Ocean island context, starting with a descriptive overview that aims to contextualise the “regional” fisheries sector.

CHAPTER 3: Contextualising the Fisheries Sector in the Western Indian Ocean

1. Introduction and Chapter Overview

A considerable array of actors, agreements, policies, programmes and trends characterise the Western Indian Ocean fisheries sector, and particularly the internationally important tuna fishery that serves as the main focus for this study. While this dissertation does not aim to get caught up in too much technical detail, there is merit to carrying out an overarching mapping of the fisheries sector so that terminology, key ideas and concepts, as well as important stakeholders, are recognised when they are discussed in the study's deeper analysis. This chapter draws on both primary data - the interviews done by the researcher with KIs in each of the Western Indian Ocean SIDS – as well as document review in order to provide this sectoral overview.

The chapter begins by providing a broad perspective on fisheries in the Western Indian Ocean, touching on both the socio-economic and environmental aspects of the sector. The thinking underlying the wider “blue economy” is also briefly discussed. Following this, the chapter moves to a country-by-country overview, outlining general trends as well as introducing key national fisheries institutions and their roles. The chapter then details the four main inter-governmental organisations engaged in the Western Indian Ocean fisheries sector before finally highlighting the main policies and programmes that underpin regional fisheries development.

While mostly descriptive in nature and separate from the analytical insights provided in the chapters that follow, the overview provided in this chapter serves to demonstrate, through practical examples, the existence of technical cooperation between the Western Indian Ocean island states in fisheries. It will then fall to the remainder of the dissertation to build on this overview and to develop the dissertation's key argument: that existing political dynamics between these islands act to prevent this technical cooperation from evolving into something *more*, whether a sustained culture of cooperative engagement or a sector-based preference for collective action and regime-building.

2. The Western Indian Ocean Fisheries Sector: Providing Context

As was briefly noted in Chapter 1, the Western Indian Ocean is a core component of the global tuna fishery. The seas surrounding the Western Indian Ocean islands lie within the migration path of assorted tuna species, the most commercially prominent of which are of the yellowfin, skipjack, albacore, bigeye and southern bluefin varieties. Taken as a whole, the

Indian Ocean serves as the world's second largest tuna fishing area after the Western Pacific, accounting for nearly 20% of the world's annual commercial tuna catch and 16% of the tuna industry's annual global revenues (Lecomte *et al.*, 2017). The Western Indian Ocean accounts for between 70-80% of the Indian Ocean's overall tuna catch – around 850,000 tons per annum valued at a little over USD 1.3 billion (Obura, 2017). Marlin, swordfish and (particularly around Madagascar) prawns, are the other species harvested at large volumes for commercial purposes. A wider range of species (e.g. anchovies, octopus, sardines, sea cucumber and snapper) are harvested closer to shore by smaller-scale fishers from these islands, mainly for sale and consumption in their home markets (Le Manach and Pauly, 2015).

A study by Obura (2017) estimates the total “Gross Marine Product”¹¹ of the Western Indian Ocean to be in the annual range of USD 20.8 billion. Fisheries (tuna plus other species) account for an estimated 9% of this total (a value of USD 1.9 billion). For each of the Western Indian Ocean island states, fisheries serve as a key economic driver, albeit to varying degrees. In addition to the role that fisheries play in sustaining local livelihoods and in domestic trade, the sector also generates revenues through the annual access and license fees that Distant Water Fishing Nations (DWFNs)¹² pay to operate in these islands' EEZs, as well as through landing fees, vessel registration fees and from these islands' own fish and fish product exports. To provide a sense of the central role that fisheries play in some island economies, it is useful to look at the example of Seychelles. The country hosts the Indian Ocean's largest tuna canning factory, which provides nearly 13% of Seychelles' formal employment and is singularly responsible for over 90% of the country's goods exports by volume (Obura, 2017).

Within Western Indian Ocean waters, fishing takes place on three levels: industrial, artisanal and traditional.¹³ The industrial sector, focused mainly on tuna, accounts for an estimated 87% of the total commercial value of fisheries in the Western Indian Ocean and is dominated by DWFN fleets, typically originating in Western Europe or East Asia. The remaining 13% of the commercial value of regional fisheries is accounted for by artisanal fishing (traditional fishing is almost entirely subsistence-based), though it is in the artisanal sub-sector that many of the Western Indian Ocean islands' own indigenous fisheries operators

¹¹ **Gross Marine Product** is defined by Obura (2017) as being the estimated GDP-equivalent value accruing to the Western Indian Ocean island states solely from ocean-focused (or “blue economy”) economic sectors: coastal and marine tourism, renewable energy and fisheries.

¹² **Distant-water fishing fleets** are those foreign-registered fleets that fish within the 200 nautical mile EEZ of other countries and/or on the high seas. These fleets (or their nations) negotiate *access agreements* with the countries within whose EEZs they wish to operate.

¹³ There are a number of means by which to distinguish “industrial”, “artisanal” and “traditional” fishing, though clear-cut differentiation can be difficult to establish. **Industrial fishing** is capital-intensive, using large multi-million-dollar boats and a high-level of technology to efficiently allow for very large catches, typically far offshore. Industrial fishing boats, including purse seiners, trawlers, mid-water trawlers and factory boats, may stay at sea for months to years at a time. **Artisanal fishing** tends to be more coastal in focus, is far less capital-intensive and uses small to mid-size boats and less technology. Whereas industrial fishing tends to be the preserve of large corporations, artisanal fishing may be pursued by small firms or fishing cooperatives, using boats such as trawlers, seiners or long-liners. **Traditional fishing** is usually subsistence-based and involves the use of very small boats (e.g. canoes) with no technology, as well as shore-based fishing.

are categorised and where most of the islands' fisheries-focused livelihoods are generated. Indeed, across the island grouping an estimated 250,000 people (minimum) are engaged in artisanal fishing (Teh and Sumaila, 2013; Lecomte *et al.*, 2017). Le Manach and Pauly (2015) credibly argue that the Western Indian Ocean SIDS undervalue their artisanal fisheries while allocating far more political capital to issues pertaining to the industrial tuna fishery. Given that most fisheries-based cooperation that is apparent in the region, particularly at the ministerial level or through inter-governmental organisations, is predominantly focused on industrial-level tuna fishing, this sector is the main focus of this study.

The Western Indian Ocean is somewhat less affected by human activity than other ocean regions (Stojanovic and Farmer, 2013). Nevertheless, there is ongoing deterioration in the island grouping's coral reefs and coastal mangroves, which has a direct impact on the wellbeing of fish stocks. Nearly two-thirds of Western Indian Ocean fish stocks are overexploited or fully exploited (Lecomte *et al.*, 2017). This situation is especially apparent among species such as the bluefin and yellowfin tuna, which are in high demand in foreign markets for consumption as sushi/sashimi. Speaking in regards to the yellowfin tuna, the IOTC noted in 2017 a high risk of stock collapse over the coming 5-10 years absent the introduction of stronger harvest control measures (Obura, 2017).

A considerable volume of bycatch – in the form of whales, dolphins, sharks and rays – is captured as part of fishing operations in the Western Indian Ocean, particularly among fishers employing gillnets (over 23,000 MTs of bycatch per year) and industrial longlines (around 18,000 MTs of bycatch per year) (Lecomte *et al.*, 2017). The Western Indian Ocean island states' collective fisheries Monitoring, Control and Surveillance (MCS) systems have improved over the past 10-15 years, in large part due to the fisheries governance structures put in place by the projects and programmes facilitated by inter-governmental organisations like the IOC, IOTC and SWIOFC. Technological developments (e.g. satellite tracking and improved digital communications facilitated by East Africa's enhanced digital infrastructure following the installation of the Eastern Africa Submarine Cable System) have also modestly contributed to improvements in regional MCS capabilities (IOC, 2017). However, there remain considerable MCS gaps, particularly in regards to traditional and artisanal fisheries, which are lightly regulated across the island grouping (Researcher Interview: Secretary-General, IOTC).

In the traditional and artisanal sub-sectors, fishery resources are typically viewed as public goods and open access to fishing grounds is expected among local operators and fishing associations. Attempts to control access, such as Madagascar's efforts to introduce Marine Protected Areas along its coast, or Mauritius' endeavours to undertake spatial planning within

its EEZ and to allocate only particular ocean “blocks” to artisanal fisheries operators, have proven to be politically contentious (Researcher Interview: Former Chairman of the Ocean Economy Commission, Government of Mauritius). National governments are gradually adopting improved fisheries management policies, nominally aligned with Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) standards for ecosystem-based management (Obura, 2017; Researcher Interview: Secretary-General, IOTC). However, these policies are often: a) not backed up with enabling legislation that would secure a means of ensuring their enforcement; and b) are at odds with the sector growth objectives put forward by some national governments, which tend to emphasise ever greater catch targets without accounting for the actual health of existing stocks (Researcher Interview: Secretary-General, IOTC).

3. The Western Indian Ocean Fisheries Sector: Country-Level Dynamics

Individual country fisheries profiles are provided below, in which some of the above details are unpacked further. These profiles will demonstrate that while the broad issues outlined above are pertinent for all of the Western Indian Ocean SIDS, there are also clear differences in regards to: a) the extent to which fisheries are prioritised in the setting of public policy; and b) the institutional capacity available to the different islands to manage their fisheries effectively.

Comoros

The Comorian EEZ sits at the mouth of the Mozambique Channel, which is one of the Western Indian Ocean’s primary fishing grounds. A number of species are harvested from Comorian waters by fishers engaged in traditional, artisanal and industrial fishing (Table 3.1). Domestic fisheries operations are all traditional or artisanal and are coastal in focus. Industrial fishing is undertaken entirely by DWFN vessels, mainly purse seiners from France and Spain, in the wider EEZ (UNCTAD, 2017). Total fisheries production, across levels and species, has fluctuated considerably over time, but with a notable aggregate decline in recent years. The most immediate cause of this decline relates to the ongoing threat of piracy off the East African coast, which has contributed to a reduction in the overall vessel presence in Comorian waters (with many industrial operators choosing to fish in waters further south and east that are seen to be at lower risk from piracy) (UNCTAD, 2017).

This reduced vessel presence, especially noticeable since 2010, has contributed to a recovery of tuna stocks, which are seen to be healthier in the Comorian EEZ than elsewhere in the Western Indian Ocean (UNCTAD, 2017). Overexploitation is apparent, however, in the coastal stocks harvested by traditional and artisanal fishers. Rapid population growth and a

lack of livelihood opportunities in Comoros has led to an increase in the number of fishers exploiting coastal fish stocks. Increased boat traffic and the use of dynamite fishing¹⁴ are leading to the degradation of Comorian reefs and a reported decrease in coastal catch volumes (Ranaivoson and Ranaivoarison, 2013; Researcher Interview: Fisheries Officer, DGRH).

Table 3.1: Key Fisheries Statistics - Comoros

Size of EEZ	160,000 sq. km
Total fisheries production (annual)*	12,003 MTs (2000); 10,738 MTs (2005); 63,447 MTs (2010); 12,674 MTs (2015); 16,407 MTs (2016)
Main species harvested	anchovies, breams, cuttlefish, marlins, sailfish, sardinellas, sharks, snappers, tunas (albacore, bigeye, mackerel, skipjack, yellowfin)
Fisheries contribution to GDP	10%
Traditional fishing	Yes - carried out by (non-motorised) outrigger dugout canoes; also includes shore-based fishing
Artisanal fishing	Yes - carried out by planked or fibreglass boats, usually motorised (but with engines of less than 50 hp)
Industrial fishing	Yes - carried out by large DWFN fleets, particularly purse seiners
Mariculture	Not significant
Revenues from granting DWFN access rights (annual)	EUR 615,000 (access fees) + EUR 160,000 (other fees) = EUR 775,000 (2017)

* Total fisheries production figures should be seen as a likely underestimate given weaknesses in data collection, analysis and reporting, especially for the traditional and artisanal sub-sectors.

MTs = metric tons; EUR = Euros.

Sources: All data obtained from SmartFish Programme Country Review - Comoros (2014), except for production data, which are drawn from the World Bank/FAO dataset: Total Fisheries Production (2016) and revenue data, which are taken from UNCTAD (2017).

Industrial fishing by EU DWFN fleets was governed (until 2018) by a bilateral Comoros-EU Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreement (SFPA). However, in March 2018, the EU parliament voted to end its SFPA with Comoros due to perceptions that Comorian authorities had failed to enact legislation complying with international regulations on preventing IUU fishing in its waters.¹⁵ Until this agreement is re-established, industrial fishing and the over half a million Euros per annum that accrued to the Comorian state from access/license fees (a portion of which were allocated to modernising the country's fisheries infrastructure and supporting the artisanal sub-sector), will face a steep decline. Some DWFN revenues are still forthcoming through private access agreements with Asian DWFN operators, albeit at far lower values (Researcher Interview: Fisheries Officer, DGRH).

Unlike the other Western Indian Ocean island states, Comoros lacks an indigenous export-oriented commercial fisheries industry. The Comoros National Fishing Company was established in 2015 with Qatari investment and Sri Lankan technical assistance. However, by

¹⁴ **Dynamite fishing** involves using explosives to stun or kill large schools of fish, which allows for easier collection. While illegal in most fisheries jurisdictions, lax enforcement makes this type of fishing a common problem, particularly among traditional and artisanal fishers. Dynamite fishing commonly harms reef systems and other fish habitats, leading to significant losses in biodiversity.

¹⁵ See the following link on details surrounding the termination of the Comoros-EU FPA: <<https://medium.com/@ALDEgroup/ending-the-eu-comoros-fisheries-deal-the-eu-must-step-up-against-illegal-fishing-fa19cb61bca6>> (accessed 03 April 2019).

2018, the company's operations were moribund, due to financial shortfalls and because Comoros lacks a local laboratory in which to undertake the tests required for quality control of any potential fish and fish product exports (Researcher Interview: Administrator, National Quality Office for Certification of Fisheries Products of Comoros). However, in a notable example of inter-island cooperation, the ministerial agency responsible for fisheries, the *Direction Générale des Ressources Halieutiques (DGRH)* is working with its counterpart in Madagascar to allow the Company (if/when it re-starts) to make use of Madagascar's *Institut Pasteur* laboratories (in the cities of Antananarivo and Toamasina) for sample processing. Access to quality laboratory facilities could enable the Company to eventually become an active exporter, though the poor physical quality of Comoros' maritime and fisheries infrastructure (particularly landing sites, ports and cold-chain facilities – as well as the electricity and roads that support them) makes the success of the Company a questionable proposition in the short-term (Researcher Interview: Fisheries Officer, DGRH).

Industrial tuna fishing in Comoros, contrary to the other Western Indian Ocean islands, does not create any employment. This is because none of the tuna caught by DWFN fleets is landed in the country. Around 80% of the catch of DWFN vessels operating in Comoros' EEZ has traditionally been processed in Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius or Seychelles (Researcher Interview: Fisheries Officer, DGRH). A foreign-owned semi-industrial fishing fleet is registered in Comoros, but lands its catch elsewhere (UNCTAD, 2017). Comorian waters are also not a location for the transshipment¹⁶ of fish and fish products.

Comoros' key fisheries institutions (Table 3.2) are characterised by financial constraints and a lack of human resource capacity. The DGRH serves as the main government body tasked with managing the fisheries sector. The functions of the DGRH are replicated at the sub-national level, with separate DGRH offices operating on each of the three Comorian islands: Grande Comore, Anjouan and Mohéli. Tensions within the Comorian political system, between those advocating a unitary system of government versus those pushing for a federal arrangement and considerable autonomy for the individual islands, are replicated within the DGRH. This reinforces Comoros' particularly high ranking in the Fragile State Index when it comes to the fragmentation of state institutions.¹⁷ Central directives are often ignored or overridden by the Governors of the individual islands, who have responsibility for appointing the DGRH administrators in their respective jurisdictions. This has served to hinder the

¹⁶ **Transshipment** occurs when a fishing vessel offloads its catch to a refrigerated cargo vessel (a "reefer") at sea.

¹⁷ See the following link for the ranking of countries in the Fragile States Index: < <https://fragilestatesindex.org/data/>> (accessed 20 December 2020).

creation of a legal fisheries framework across the country (the sector instead operates on the basis of a vaguer *Fisheries Code* adopted in 2007) (Researcher Interview: Fisheries Officer, DGRH). The DGRH has received considerable financial and capacity-building support from the World Bank through both the SmartFish and SWIOFish projects, which are discussed further at the end of this chapter and in Chapter 5. However, the DGRH remains extremely weak, particularly in regards to its internal research and policy formulation capabilities.

Table 2.2: Key Fisheries Institutions & Legislation – Comoros*

Competent Authority	<i>Office National de Contrôle des Qualité et de Certification des Produits Halieutiques (ONCQPH)</i> (National Quality Office for Certification of Fisheries Products)
Government Ministries	<i>Direction Générale des Ressources Halieutiques (DGRH)</i> (General Directorate of Fishery Resources); regional offices of the DGRH operate on each of the three Comorian islands
	<u>Department of Planning</u> - focuses on planning, regulations, fishing agreements and monitoring
	<u>Department for Fisheries Promotion</u> - deals with licensing, statistics, value addition and professional organisations
	<i>Agence Nationale des Affaires Maritimes (ANAM)</i> (National Agency for Maritime Affairs)
Key Legislation	<i>Loi n° 07- 011/AU portant Code des pêches et de l'aquaculture</i> (Fisheries and Aquaculture Act), 2007
Monitoring, Control & Surveillance (MCS)	<i>Centre National de Contrôle et de Surveillance des Pêches (CNCSP)</i> (National Centre for Fisheries Control and Surveillance)
Professional Associations	<i>Syndicat National pour le Développement des Pêches aux Comores (SNDPC)</i> (National Syndicate for Fisheries Development in the Comoros)
Key Private Sector Operators	Comoros National Fishing Company (moribund)
Key Scientific Research Institutes	<i>Institut National de Recherche pour l'Agriculture, la Pêche et l'Environnement (INRAPE)</i> (National Institute for Agriculture, Fisheries and Environment Research)
	<i>Centre National de Documentation et de Recherche Scientifique (CNDRS)</i> (Centre for Scientific Research and Documentation)
Technical Training Centres	<i>Ecole de Pêche, Anjouan</i> (Fisheries School, Anjouan)

DGRH leaders continue to report that the agency has little ability to properly budget for research initiatives or to staff key research positions. This means that the DGRH often operates and makes decisions on the basis of minimal (or no) data, especially in its governance of the coastal traditional and artisanal sub-sectors (Researcher Interview: Fisheries Officer, DGRH). The DGRH, due to its own capacity limitations, also has weak links with Comoros' main national scientific research body, the *Institut National de Recherche pour l'Agriculture, la Pêche et l'Environnement (INRAPE)*, with the country lacking an overall fisheries research

plan¹⁸ (Researcher Interview: Administrator, National Quality Office for Certification of Fisheries Products of Comoros). Responsibility for MCS rests with the DGRH's Department of Planning, under which sits the *Centre National de Contrôle et de Surveillance des Pêches (CNCSP)*. The CNCSP has responsibility for implementing all MCS measures, particularly those pertaining to operationalising Vessel Monitoring Systems (VMS).¹⁹ The CNCSP is widely seen to have dramatically improved its monitoring and data management capabilities in recent years, aided especially by technical assistance from the IOTC. However, the agency continues to lack essential equipment, such as its own patrol vessel, and unlike equivalent bodies in the other Western Indian Ocean islands, the CNCSP is still in the formative stages of developing a holistic fisheries Management Information System (MIS) capable of synthesising diverse types of monitoring data, as well as consolidating data from different sources.

Notably, technical assistance has been forthcoming from the main public fisheries agency in Seychelles, the Seychelles Fishing Authority (SFA), both bilaterally and under the auspices of the IOC, to help the CNCSP develop an improved MIS (Researcher Interview: Former Director, SFA). Still, the CNCSP is as constrained as other Comorian fisheries institutions in regards to staff skills shortages. Only recently has the CNCSP started to make available its own observers to work aboard DWFN vessels. However, a shortage of adequately trained observers still means that many vessels operate in the Comorian EEZ without a Comorian MCS presence (observers from other Western Indian Ocean islands are often substituted instead) (UNCTAD, 2017).

Inter-island cooperative efforts, though few in number, provide hope for changing this situation over the medium and long-term. As part of a bilateral Comoros-Seychelles Cooperation Framework signed in 2015, the Seychelles Maritime Academy (SMA) has started to regularly host Comorian students (as well as shorter-term learners on exchange visits) who are being trained in a range of MCS issues. Over time, it is hoped that this will help build-up a trained coterie of Comorian technical staff capable of leading the country's MCS efforts, including through the provision of a consistent observer presence aboard DWFN vessels (Researcher Interview: Fisheries Officer, DGRH; Researcher Interview: Deputy Director, Seychelles Maritime Academy).

¹⁸ Scientific studies are routinely carried out by the Scientific Committees of both the IOTC and SWIOFC, though the level of direct involvement by Comorian researchers (DGRH or INRAPE) appears to be very low.

¹⁹ VMS describes all systems used in commercial fishing to allow for the tracking and monitoring of fishing vessel activities, whether traditional, artisanal or industrial.

Madagascar

At 1.2 million square kilometres, Madagascar's EEZ is among the largest in the Western Indian Ocean. Both traditional and artisanal fishing take place along the country's long coastline (Table 3.3). Unlike Comoros, Madagascar also has its own domestic industrial fishery consisting of trawlers and long liners that mainly harvest prawns and tuna, respectively. Industrial tuna fishing is also carried out by European (French and Spanish) purse seiners and long liners, including a sizeable number registered in Mayotte and Réunion. Overall catch levels have modestly increased after experiencing a decline from 2008 to 2014 – a period marked by political crisis in Madagascar following a *coup d'état* in 2009. This crisis contributed to the imposition of sanctions and the suspension of trade deals with the EU (Madagascar's main aid donor), as well as a weakening of state institutions, including the administrative capacity of those bodies responsible for issuing fishing licenses to artisanal, as well as to domestic and DWFN industrial fleets; something recognised in the poor quality of public services highlighted in Madagascar's ranking in the Fragile States Index. Taken together, these factors all contributed to a reduction in reported fishing activity (Ramariandrasoa, 2017).

Table 3.3: Key Fisheries Statistics - Madagascar

Size of EEZ	1,200,000 sq. km
Total fisheries production (annual)*	128,947 MTs (2000); 143,944 MTs (2005); 140,524 MTs (2010); 137,447 MTs (2015); 168,331 MTs (2016)
Main species harvested	bivalves, breams, crabs, cuttlefish, goatfish, lobsters, mackerels, marlins, octopus, prawns, sailfish, sea cucumbers, sharks, snappers, squids, tunas (albacore, bigeye, skipjack, yellowfin)
Fisheries contribution to GDP	2%
Traditional fishing	Yes - carried out by non-motorised (or motorised) outrigger dugout canoes; also includes shore-based fishing
Artisanal fishing	Yes - carried out by planked or fibreglass boats, usually motorised (but with engines of less than 50 hp)
Industrial fishing	Yes – tuna fishing carried out by large DWF fleets, mainly purse seiners and long liners; shrimp trawlers used for domestic industrial fishing, while a small number of domestic long liners harvest tuna in coastal areas
Mariculture	Reasonably well-developed, with production of 25,998 MT per year (mostly prawns) (2016)
Revenues from granting DWF access rights (annual)	~EUR 1,500,000 (access and other fees)**

* Total fisheries production figures should be seen as a likely underestimate given weaknesses in data collection, analysis and reporting, especially for the traditional and artisanal sub-sectors. Production figures refer exclusively to *marine fisheries*. Inland (fresh water) fisheries contribute around 30,000 MT of production per year (2016).

** Revenue data taken from the text of the bilateral Madagascar-EU SFPA. Based on the SFPA, EUR 1.6 million in financial contributions was to be provided to Madagascar in 2015/2016, while EUR 1.5 million was to be provided in 2017/2018. Out of these amounts, EUR 700,000 was to be allocated to supporting the development of the wider Malagasy fisheries sector.

MTs = metric tons, EUR = Euros.

Sources: All data obtained from SmartFish Programme Country Review – Madagascar (2014), except for production data, which are drawn from the World Bank/FAO dataset: Total Fisheries Production (2016) and revenue data, which are taken from the Madagascar-EU SFPA (2014).

Like Comoros, Madagascar's coastal waters are subject to often severe over-exploitation in spite of the country introducing – at least on paper – tighter MCS regulations as

well as access restrictions in some coastal waters (Researcher Interview: Secretary-General, IOTC). Tuna within the Malagasy EEZ are seen to be almost fully exploited, while prawn catch volumes are reported to have declined by 40% over the past fifteen years (Researcher Interview: Research Officer, Fisheries and Marine Science Institute of Madagascar). Industrial fishing by European DWFN fleets was previously governed by a bilateral SFPAs between the EU and Madagascar. This SFPAs remained in force until the end of 2018. As this dissertation was being written, negotiations were underway to explore the possibility of arranging a new SFPAs. However, in light of the EU's stated intent to prioritise sustainability in its fishing agreements with third countries, concerns about the Malagasy state's commitment to combatting IUU fishing, as well as broader worries about the integrity of the country's public institutions, has left the future of the SFPAs in doubt. For this reason, Madagascar has taken steps to expand its fisheries agreements with East Asian states, such as by signing a ten-year (USD 2.7 billion) access agreement with a Chinese fisheries consortium in September 2018.²⁰

Unlike the EU SFPAs, which was developed through state-to-state diplomacy, fishing agreements with East Asian DWFN fleets (mainly Chinese, Japanese, South Korean and Taiwanese) are typically made directly by the Malagasy government with East Asian fishing companies through private access agreements.²¹ There is little transparency and few sustainability measures incorporated into these types of agreements, including only minimal demand for accurate reporting on catch levels (UNCTAD, 2017). IOTC efforts are ongoing to improve buy-in by DWFN private operators for adherence to MCS requirements in the tuna fishery. However, Madagascar's seeming shift away from the EU, with its generally reliable adherence to sustainability objectives, towards other actors without this same focus, bodes ill for efforts to ensure the future health of tuna stocks in the Malagasy EEZ (Researcher Interview: Secretary-General, IOTC).

The majority of DWFN vessels fishing for tuna within the Malagasy EEZ land their catches in Seychelles (for purse seiners) or Mauritius (for longliners). However, a smaller number do land their catches in Madagascar itself, thus creating employment and opportunities for product processing that do not exist in a country like Comoros. Madagascar's own export-oriented commercial fisheries sector incorporates a mix of artisanal and small-scale industrial operators, as well as a growing mariculture industry. In 2018, the value of Madagascar's

²⁰ See the following link for information about the Malagasy-Chinese fisheries agreement <<https://stopillegal-fishing.com/press-links/madagascar-agrees-to-a-10-year-fisheries-agreement-with-chinese-consortium/>> (accessed 10 June 2019).

²¹ The Madagascar-China fisheries agreement was made on the initiative of the *Agence Malagasy de Développement économique et de Promotion d'entreprises (AMDP)* rather than the country's fisheries ministry. This has led to considerable political controversy within Madagascar over the deal and its seeming lack of transparency. See the following link: <https://news.mongabay.com/2018/11/local-fishers-oppose-2-7-billion-deal-opening-madagascar-to-chinese-fishing/> (accessed 13 June 2019).

exported fish and fish products was a little over USD 114 million.²² Over two-thirds of these exports – of which prawns and canned tuna were the largest by volume – went to the French market, with a small portion (~5%) finding their way to Mayotte and Réunion (Researcher Interview: Vice-President, National Association for Fish Collectors and Exporters of Madagascar). Looking at Madagascar’s commercial fisheries sector, it is possible to identify evident linkages with the other Western Indian Ocean islands. These linkages reinforce the notion of viewing this island grouping as a connected fisheries space. For example, the Réunionnais company *Réunimer* serves as a customer and main shareholder of a large crab and prawn aquaculture association on Madagascar’s southwest coast, investing a little over USD 100,000 since 2016, as well as providing technical assistance and in-kind equipment donations to help the association manage and ensure the quality of its operations (Researcher Interview: Vice-President, National Association for Fish Collectors and Exporters of Madagascar).

An additional example demonstrates inter-island connectedness in the context of the fisheries value chain. Madagascar imports a little over USD 4 million (2018) worth of fish and fish products from Seychelles. Most of this fish is frozen tuna, harvested across the Western Indian Ocean islands’ respective EEZs before being landed by purse seiners in Seychelles. From Seychelles, this product is sent on to Madagascar to be processed at one of Madagascar’s tuna canning factories, such as the one belonging to the *Pêche et Froid Océan Indien (PFOI)*, a major operator on the country’s north coast. This processed product is then sold domestically or is exported to the French/EU market, thus serving as a needed source of export earnings (Lecomte *et al.*, 2017).

In another case of inter-island cooperation, members of PFOI’s senior management participated in a series of regular experience exchanges, over the period 2013-2015, with counterparts at Seychelles’ Indian Ocean Tuna (IOT) cannery, the Western Indian Ocean’s largest and most efficient fisheries enterprise (Researcher Interview: External Adviser, Indian Ocean Tuna, Ltd.). Such exchanges were reported to have contributed to improved knowledge among PFOI staff on such issues as operational management, technological innovation and staff training (Researcher Interview: Vice-President, National Association for Fish Collectors and Exporters of Madagascar). While it was not possible to interview PFOI representatives, this claim is at least partly reinforced by an examination of PFOI’s organisational strategic plan, developed in 2015. This plan cites organisational learning obtained from these exchanges as a driver of its corporate priorities, particularly in relation to setting technical objectives for

²² All 2018 trade data were accessed through the International Trade Centre’s (ITC’s) *Trade Map Database*, accessible at the following link: www.trademap.org (accessed 10-15 March 2019).

staff skills development, as well as in informing PFOI's approach to organisational restructuring (PFOI, 2015).

Madagascar's key fisheries institutions (Table 3.4) are generally well-regarded from a technical standpoint. Chronic underfunding, however, continues to serve as a major constraint in preventing some of these institutions from adequately fulfilling their mandates. Responsibility for the overall public management of the fisheries sector lies with the *Ministère des Ressources Halieutiques et de la Pêche (MRHP)* and its two constituent departments. MRHP sub-offices operate in each of Madagascar's twenty-two regions and have responsibility for operationalising Ministry objectives.

Table 3.4: Key Fisheries Institutions & Legislation – Madagascar

Competent Authority	<i>Autorité Sanitaire Halieutique (ASH)</i> (Halieutic Sanitary Authority)
Government Ministries	<i>Ministère des Ressources Halieutiques et de la Pêche (MRHP)</i> (Ministry of Halieutic and Fisheries Resources)
	<u>Department of Fisheries and Fisheries Resources</u> - focuses on planning, regulations and monitoring
	<u>Department of the Management of Fisheries Resources</u> - deals with licensing, statistics, value addition and professional organisations
Key Legislation	<i>Ordonnance 93-022 du 04 mai 1993 portant réglementation de la pêche et de l'aquaculture</i> (Ordinance for the Regulation of Fisheries and Aquaculture)
	<i>Loi N°2011 portant refonte de l'Ordonnance n°93-022 du 04 mai 1993 sur la réglementation de la pêche et de l'aquaculture</i> (Law on Amending the Ordinance for the Regulation of Fisheries and Aquaculture) (2012)
Monitoring, Control & Surveillance (MCS)	<i>Centre de Surveillance des Pêches (CSP)</i> (Centre for Fisheries Surveillance)
	<i>Agence Portuaire Maritime et Fluviale (APMF)</i> (Maritime and Riverine Port Agency)
Professional Associations	<i>Groupe des Aquaculteurs et des Pêcheurs de Crevettes de Madagascar (GAPCM)</i> (Group of Aquaculturalists and Shrimp Fishermen of Madagascar)
Key Private Sector Operators	<i>Groupe des Collecteurs et Exportateurs des Produits de Mer (GEXPROMER)</i> (Association of Small and Medium Fish Product Exporting Enterprises)
	<i>Copefrito; Madagascar Seafood; Murex International; Pêche et Froid Océan Indien (PFOI); S&G Madagascar; Tandrefana Pêcheries</i>
Scientific Research Institutes	<i>Institut Halieutique et des Sciences Marines (IHSM)</i> (Fisheries and Marine Science Institute)
	<i>Centre National de Recherches Océanographiques (CNRO)</i> (National Centre for Oceanographic Research)
	<i>Centre National de Données Océanographiques (CNDO)</i> (National Centre on Oceanographic Data)
	<i>Centre National de Documentation et de Recherche Scientifique (CNDRS)</i> (Centre for Scientific Research and Documentation)
Technical Training Centres	<i>Ecole d'Application des Sciences et Techniques Agricole (EASTA)</i>

* The above listing of institutions is not exhaustive, but includes most of the headline institutions responsible for fisheries governance in Madagascar. The above institutions are also those that will be referenced in the following chapters.

However, an evaluation by Ramariandrasoa (2017) found that over a three-year period tracked from the 2014 fiscal year, none of the MRHP's sub-offices received the full funding that was officially allocated to them in the state budget. Moreover, functional linkages between the Ministry and its sub-national offices are seen to be weak, with little oversight taking place to ensure that central directives are implemented in a uniform manner across the country. This has particularly notable implications when it comes to the implementation of MCS in coastal waters, as well in the failure to implement a systematic process for the collection, analysis and reporting of both scientific and socio-economic fisheries data (Ramariandrasoa, 2017). There are also concerns around a lack of transparency within the MRHP. At the central level, these concerns pertain mainly to how the Ministry allocates fishing licenses (particularly for Asian DWFN fleets). At the sub-regional level, these worries are largely around perceptions that fees paid by traditional and small-scale artisanal fishers, collected by the MRHP for intended re-investment in fisheries infrastructure (e.g. landing sites and associated electricity generation and roads) are expropriated for other purposes (Ramariandrasoa, 2017; Researcher Interview: Vice-President, National Association for Fish Collectors and Exporters of Madagascar).

Madagascar's fisheries research institutes are deemed to be technically strong, though also underfunded and far less capable than they were in the past. Contrary to the situation in Comoros, reasonably strong functional linkages exist between the MRHP and the country's main scientific research institute, the *Institut Halieutique et des Sciences Marines (IHSM)*. IHSM serves as both an academic and applied scientific research centre, as well as a training centre for private and public sector fisheries personnel in need of refresher courses on marine biology and commercial fisheries management. While it is difficult to gauge the extent to which IHSM research guides ministry-level policymaking, the institute's work is regularly cited in MRHP policy documents (MRHP, 2018, 2019).

Madagascar's key institutional weakness lies with MCS. The main national agency with responsibility for MCS, the *Centre de Surveillance des Pêches (CSP)*, works officially under the MRHP, but is operationally independent. The CSP is equipped with VSM facilities, patrol boats, aerial means of surveillance, onboard observers, as well as personnel to carry out port inspections (UNCTAD, 2017). The agency's staff have also been active participants in the collective training of observers and in joint patrol initiatives undertaken by each of the Western Indian Ocean islands as part of the SmartFish project (IOC, 2014).²³ However, the CSP has been gradually undermined as a result of underfunding, with its budget declining each

²³ A key element of the SmartFish project's support for strengthening the collective MCS capabilities of Western Indian Ocean states is in encouraging observers from different states to participate in patrols in each other's EEZs.

year since 2009 (with the exception of slight increases in 2015/2016 that were not maintained) (Researcher Interview: Secretary-General, IOTC). As such, trained observers have not been retained, while existing surveillance infrastructure (e.g. patrol vessels) is not always adequately maintained.

Much of this budget reduction has resulted from the suspension of EU aid and investment after the 2009 coup and the fact that the EU (and other prospective donors) are reluctant, even after the restoration of diplomatic relations in 2014, to provide financial support to Malagasy institutions that are seen to lack transparency (Researcher Interview: Vice-President, National Association for Fish Collectors and Exporters of Madagascar). For the CSP, the result is inconsistency in its ability to fulfill its mandate. Basic MCS capabilities exist and are implemented, but funding is not always available to ensure the presence of Malagasy observers aboard DWFN vessels. Pervasive corruption within Malagasy state institutions is also seen as affecting fisheries MCS, with authorities being accused of turning a blind eye to IUU fishing and of making little effort to improve surveillance activities geared towards traditional and artisanal fishers in coastal waters (Ramariandrasoa, 2017).

Seychelles

Seychelles sits prominently at the centre of the Western Indian Ocean tuna fishery. The country has a very large EEZ that covers 1.3 million square kilometres (Table 3.5). The Port of Victoria on Seychelles' main island of Mahé, serves as the Western Indian Ocean's primary landing and transshipment point for DWFN tuna fleets (particularly purse seiners), with much of the tuna landed in the country being processed and exported by the IOT cannery²⁴ or exported for processing in neighbouring islands, particularly Madagascar and Mauritius. Fisheries constitute a larger proportion of national GDP in Seychelles, at around 20%, than in neighbouring countries (SFA, 2017). As in Comoros, the threat of piracy has adversely affected fishing activity in the Seychellois EEZ. Indeed, a marked decline in fisheries production from 2005 to 2010 was largely the result of vessel operators abandoning much of the EEZ for more secure fishing grounds in the Southern Ocean. Through international efforts to combat piracy, security has been restored to most of Seychelles' EEZ and fisheries production has steadily increased over the past five years (Researcher Interview: Chief Diplomatic Advisor, Government of Seychelles).

²⁴ An estimated 60% of all tuna caught by industrial operators in the Western Indian Ocean is transhipped at the Port of Victoria. Of this volume, 30% is subsequently processed by IOT (SFA, 2017).

Efforts to ensure fisheries sustainability in Seychelles have provided mixed results. Like its island neighbours, Seychelles has struggled to implement adequate MCS measures in the coastal waters where most of its artisanal fishers operate. The Seychellois government’s traditional policy of preserving open access to fishing grounds within its territorial waters has created a legacy of limited management control and resulting problems of stock over-exploitation (Catanzano and Joël, 2013; Lecomte *et al.*, 2017). The government’s focus has shifted as more controlled access to fishing grounds, as well as the introduction of broader regulatory reforms, are deemed necessary to support sector sustainability under the national “blue economy” strategy. Indeed, a considerable amount of political capital has recently been invested in establishing area-focused Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs), which seek to tighten access rights in some offshore waters, as well as more strictly regulate the methods and gear that can be employed by fishers. While nominally the product of consultation between the state, fishers and bodies representing fishers’ interests, especially the Seychelles Fishermen and Boat Owners’ Association, FMPs are often deemed to be top-down impositions by the state and adherence to FMP stipulations on the part of artisanal and semi-industrial operators is typically weak (though so too is enforcement) (Researcher Interview: Ocean Governance Advisor in the Department of Blue Economy, Government of Seychelles; SFA, 2018).

Table 3.5: Key Fisheries Statistics - Seychelles

Size of EEZ	1,288,643 sq. km
Total fisheries production (annual)	33,203 MTs (2000); 109,452 MTs (2005); 87,110 MTs (2010); 104,986 MTs (2015); 127,128 MTs (2016)
Main species harvested	bonitos, groupers, lobsters, marlins, octopus, sailfish, sea cucumber, sharks, snappers, swordfish, trevally, tunas (albacore, bigeye, skipjack, yellowfin)
Fisheries contribution to GDP	20%
Traditional fishing	Yes, but small in scale - carried out by non-motorised (or motorised) canoes as well as speedboats; also includes shore-based fishing
Artisanal fishing	Yes - carried out by planked or fibreglass boats, usually motorised with outboard engines; also involves some schooners with inboard engines
Industrial fishing	Yes – tuna fishing carried out by large DWF fleets (and a smaller domestic fleet), mainly purse seiners and smaller numbers of long liners;
Mariculture	Emerging, but still fairly marginal, with <2,000 MT produced per year (mostly pearl oysters and prawns); <i>aquaculture production has actually declined in Seychelles due to the failure of a key prawn aquaculture enterprise in 2008</i>
Revenues from granting DWF access rights (annual)	EUR 5,000,000*

MTs = metric tons, EUR = Euros.

* Revenue data taken from the text of the bilateral Seychelles-EU SFPA. Based on the FPA, EUR 5.5 million in financial contributions was to be provided to Seychelles in 2014/2015, while EUR 5.0 million was to be provided from 2016 to 2019. Out of these amounts, 50% was to be allocated to supporting the development of the wider Seychelles fisheries sector.

Sources: All data obtained from SmartFish Programme Country Review – Seychelles (2014), except for production data, which are drawn from the World Bank/FAO dataset: Total Fisheries Production (2016) and revenue data, which are taken from the Seychelles-EU SFPA (2017).

The central importance of the industrial tuna fishery to the national economy has led the Seychellois government to institutionalise fairly stringent (if still not fully consistent) MCS measures in this sub-sector, including the regular review and auditing of vessel declarations and log books, as well as limiting entry to its EEZ through the withholding or cancellation of licenses to DWFN vessels that fail to provide accurate information on their activities and catch levels (IOC, 2014). The presence of the IOTC Secretariat in Victoria has led to the development of close linkages between Seychellois fisheries authorities and IOTC technical staff, with officials in Seychelles' Ministry of Fisheries and Agriculture (MFA) and SFA typically playing a leading role in championing IOTC conservation management objectives in multilateral fora with other member states (Researcher Interview: Secretary-General, IOTC).

Unlike Comoros and Madagascar, the bilateral SFPA that governs EU industrial fishing in the Seychellois EEZ remains in force. The existence of an actionable legislative framework in Seychelles for combatting IUU fishing, combined with perceptions of transparency and competence within the country's public institutions, means that the EU has seen little reason to question the SFPA, though additional access and sustainability measures are likely to be discussed between the Seychelles government and the EU when the current SFPA expires in late 2020 (Researcher Interview: Chief Diplomatic Advisor, Government of Seychelles). Under the current SFPA, a total of 40 EU purse seiners and 6 surface longliners are permitted to operate in the Seychellois EEZ, with the EU paying around EUR 5 million per year in access fees, much of which is earmarked for supporting the country's wider fisheries sector, including infrastructure upgrades and supporting livelihoods through community-based projects.²⁵ The industrial tuna fishery is also inclusive of Seychelles-flagged purse seiners, acting as a *de facto* extension of the EU DWFN fleet, but operating on the basis of private access agreements rather than under the SFPA. Asian DWFN vessels (all longliners) also operate under private access agreements (Lecomte *et al*, 2017).

As already noted, Seychelles' commercial fisheries industry is an important component of the country's economy. In 2018, the value of Seychelles' exported fish and fish products was a little over USD 273 million, with canned tuna – mainly exported to the EU and Japan – being the largest single fisheries export product by volume.²⁶ As noted previously, Seychelles exports a little over USD 4 million (2018) worth of fish and fish products (mostly frozen fish) to Madagascar for further processing. Also striking, however, is the USD 49.1 million (2018)

²⁵ See the following link for details on the Seychelles-EU SFPA: <https://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/cfp/international/agreements/seychelles_en> (accessed 24 January 2019).

²⁶ All 2018 trade data were accessed through the International Trade Centre's (ITC's) *Trade Map Database*, accessible at the following link: <www.trademap.org> (accessed 10-15 March 2019).

worth of fish and fish products (also mostly frozen fish) the country exports to Mauritius, where it is processed by a range of companies operating under Mauritius' Freeport Seafood Hub, which aims to make Mauritius a centre for seafood processing in the Western Indian Ocean.²⁷ Bilaterally, the strongest political relationship within the Western Indian Ocean exists between Mauritius and Seychelles. While not without tensions (which will be detailed in the following chapters), this relationship is marked by a number of practical examples of mutual cooperation, including on commercial issues.

Under a bilateral ten-year fisheries agreement signed in 2005 (and renewed in various stages over the period 2015-2019), Mauritian and Seychellois-registered vessels (and by extension companies) are provided with reciprocal rights to fish in the other state's EEZ.²⁸ Regular exchanges have also been established through the renewed agreement between commercial actors in the two states. In both 2017 and 2018, for example, senior staff from the Development Bank of Seychelles (DBS) and the Development Bank of Mauritius (DBM) held joint retreats to discuss "best practice" approaches and shared learning for strengthening their countries' respective artisanal and semi-industrial fisheries sectors through the provision of development finance to small, micro and medium enterprises (SMMEs). The ideas generated through these exchanges were incorporated into these agencies' budgeted sector-specific support plans (Researcher Interview: Honourary Consul of Mauritius in Seychelles).

The two countries' national chambers of commerce have also undertaken cooperative measures, albeit not consistently. In 2015, representatives from the Seychelles Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) and the Mauritius Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI), along with select fisheries firms – particularly the large canneries, IOT in Seychelles and Princes Tuna in Mauritius – met to develop a joint action plan to identify common challenges hindering the fisheries sector's growth, as well as to propose policies that the two countries' respective governments could enact to address these challenges (Researcher Interview: External Adviser, Indian Ocean Tuna, Ltd.). While collaboration in the development of this plan does not seem to have generated lasting momentum for ongoing private sector engagement between the two states, many of the ideas generated – for example on how to entice foreign direct investment in fisheries firms, national port authorities and in mariculture – were adopted as core components of both countries' national "blue economy"

²⁷ For a summary of the Mauritian Seafood Hub initiative, see the following link:

<http://oceaneconomy.govmu.org/English/Pages/Fisheries---SEA-FOOD-HUB.aspx> (accessed 22 June 2019).

²⁸ See the following link on the re-negotiation of the Mauritius-Seychelles Fishing Agreement:

<http://www.seychellesnewsagency.com/articles/2196/Seychelles+and+Mauritius+discuss+renewal+of+fisheries+agreement> (accessed 22 June 2019).

strategies (Researcher Interview: Chief Diplomatic Adviser, Government of Seychelles; Researcher Interview: External Adviser, Indian Ocean Tuna, Ltd.).

From a technical standpoint, Seychelles' fisheries institutions (Table 3.6) are arguably the most competent in the Western Indian Ocean. This, in turn, has allowed them to play a role in supporting (albeit at modest scale) the capacity development of fisheries institutions in neighbouring island states. The key institution is the SFA, a parastatal that operates independently of – but in close collaboration with – the MFA. The SFA performs all management, planning, development, scientific and training functions, as well regulatory functions pertaining to the national fisheries sector. Unlike Comoros and Madagascar, where the institutions responsible for overall fisheries management and MCS are administratively separate, the body responsible for MCS coordination in Seychelles, the Fisheries Monitoring Centre (FMC), is an administrative component of the SFA. The SFA has also gradually brought under its purview all issues pertaining to the licensing of domestic and DWFN fishing vessels (a function that is also administratively separate in neighbouring islands). The SFA, through its Research and Development Section, also hosts the country's main scientific research capacity.

Table 3.6: Key Fisheries Institutions & Legislation – Seychelles*

Competent Authority	Fish Inspection and Quality Control Unit (FIQCU) of the Seychelles Bureau of Standards (SBS)
Government Ministries	Ministry of Fisheries and Agriculture (MFA) <u>Seychelles Fishing Authority (SFA)</u> – a parastatal that serves as the executive arm of the MFA on all fisheries-related matters. The SFA is responsible for operationalising all MFA directives in the fisheries sector, whether pertaining to commercial and environmental objectives.
Key Legislation	Fisheries Act (1986), <i>revised in 2001 to establish a stronger legal framework for MCS compliance and enforcement</i>
Monitoring, Control & Surveillance (MCS)	Fisheries Monitoring Centre (FMC) (part of the SFA's Department of MCS)
Professional Associations	Seychelles Fishermen and Boat Owners' Association (FBOA)
Key Private Sector Operators	Development Bank of Seychelles (DBS); Indian Ocean Tuna (IOT); Oceana Fisheries; SAPMER; Sea Harvest;
Scientific Research Institutes	SFA Research and Development Section Blue Economy Research Institute (BERI), University of Seychelles
Technical Training Centres	Seychelles Maritime Academy (SMA)

* The above listing of institutions is not exhaustive, but includes most of the headline institutions responsible for fisheries governance in Seychelles. The above institutions are also those that will be referenced in the following chapters.

As already alluded to, the SFA is closely linked to the IOTC Secretariat. In addition to supporting the IOTC through its own sample-based collection of length-frequency data²⁹ to

²⁹ Length-based data are commonly collected in tropical fisheries to estimate the health of prevailing fish stocks. Data are collected through a measurement of a wide sample of landed fish at port facilities.

assess fish stocks, SFA technical staff have led technical workshops on this topic at IOTC Scientific Committees and have undertaken field visits with both the Comorian DGRH and the Malagasy MHRP and IHSM to provide training in proper data collection and analysis approaches using length-frequency methods (Researcher Interview: Former Director, SFA; Researcher Interview: Secretary-General, IOTC). While the utility of this SFA outreach may be questionable (the high turnover of technical staff in Comorian and Malagasy fisheries agencies is particularly problematic from a capacity-building standpoint), these efforts as well as the SFA's earlier-noted support for Comoros' CNCSP in developing an improved Management Information System for MCS, all point to the existence of technical rigour in the SFA. From an MCS perspective, the SFA has also been at the forefront in leading activities under the *Plan Regional de Surveillance de Pêche (PRSP)*, a core component of the IOC SmartFish programme. Under the PRSP, staff from the SFA's FMC have served as technical leads in the training of counterparts from other Western Indian Ocean islands (and East African coastal states) on the use of satellite-based surveillance technology (Researcher Interview: Chief Diplomatic Adviser, Government of Seychelles).

This is not to say that Seychelles' fisheries institutions cannot be improved. As Bueger and Wivel (2017) note in their analysis of Seychellois diplomacy, the country is as hampered by financial and human capacity limitations in the same ways as other SIDS. However, the general strength of governance institutions like the SFA, as well as the commercial success of companies like IOT, also reinforce Bueger and Wivel's point on the benefits that accrue to these islands from trying to develop strength in particular sectors. For all the constraints it still faces, Seychelles has pro-actively invested in working to make itself something of a "fisheries power" within the region; something that the comparatively high quality of its political system helps to facilitate.

Mauritius

Mauritius possesses one of the largest EEZs in the Western Indian Ocean at 2.3 million square kilometres (Table 3.7). Contestation exists over the political status of Tromelin Island east of Madagascar, which is claimed by both Mauritius and France, and which currently constitutes part of France's Indian Ocean EEZ. More well-known is Mauritius' claim to the Chagos Islands (British Indian Ocean Territory), whose indigenous inhabitants were evicted in the late 1960s/early 1970s by the British government in order to make way for an American military base. The Chagossian diaspora, still claiming a right of return to their islands, now constitute an economic underclass in both Mauritius and Seychelles (de l'Estrac, 2011).

Mauritius continues to claim the Chagos Islands as part of its EEZ, but the country has no *de facto* presence in these waters.

In the same way that Seychelles serves as a landing and transshipment point for DWFN purse seiners in the Western Indian Ocean, Port Louis in Mauritius plays the same role for DWFN longliners. Overall fisheries production in Mauritian waters is notably lower than in either Madagascar or Seychelles. Much of the country's fisheries sector operates on the basis of importing frozen fish from these neighbouring islands and processing it for re-export. While fisheries account for only about 2% of Mauritius' GDP, fish and fish products account for almost 15% of national exports by volume (World Bank, 2017). Similar to the other islands, industrial fishers, whether DWFN or domestic, mainly harvest tuna, though marlin and swordfish are also harvested in sizeable volumes. Artisanal fishers also harvest these latter species, as well as groupers, snappers and lobsters (among others).

Table 3.7: Key Fisheries Statistics - Mauritius

Size of EEZ	2,300,000 sq. km (1,900,000 sq. km excluding contested territories)
Total fisheries production (annual)	9,702 MTs (2000); 10,255 MTs (2005); 7,934 MTs (2010); 16,515 MTs (2015); 19,083 MTs (2016)
Main species harvested	bonitos, groupers, lobsters, marlins, octopus, sailfish, sea cucumber, sharks, snappers, swordfish, trevally, tunas (albacore, bigeye, skipjack, yellowfin)
Fisheries contribution to GDP	2%
Traditional fishing	Yes, but small in scale - carried out by non-motorised (or motorised) canoes as well as speedboats; also includes shore-based fishing
Artisanal fishing	Yes - carried out by planked or fibreglass boats, usually motorised with outboard engines; also involves some schooners with inboard engines
Industrial fishing	Yes – tuna fishing carried out by large DWF fleets (and a smaller domestic fleet), mainly longliners and smaller numbers of purse seiners;
Mariculture	Still emerging, with annual production of just over 1,000 MTs per year (primarily sea bream, red drum and cobia)
Revenues from granting DWF access rights (annual)	EUR 575,000*

MTs = metric tons, EUR = Euros.

* Revenue data taken from the text of the bilateral Mauritius-EU FPA. Based on the SFPAs, EUR 575,000 in financial contributions was to be provided to Mauritius over the period 2014 to 2021. Out of these amounts, 50% was to be allocated to supporting the development of the wider Mauritian fisheries sector.

Sources: All data obtained from SmartFish Programme Country Review – Mauritius (2014), except for production data, which are drawn from the World Bank/FAO dataset: Total Fisheries Production (2016) and revenue data, which are taken from the Mauritius-EU SFPAs (2017).

Some of the richest fishing grounds within the Mauritian EEZ lie within the waters of the Mascarene Plateau. This marine area provides another notable example of inter-island technical cooperation, with Mauritius and Seychelles agreeing in 2012 to the development of a Joint Management Area (JMA), under which the two countries would share jurisdiction over the Plateau.³⁰ While the JMA focuses explicitly on the joint management of the Plateau's

³⁰ For an overview of the Mauritian-Seychellois Joint Management Area pertaining to the Mascarene Plateau, see the following link: <http://www.seychellesnewsagency.com/articles/11255/Seychelles%2C+Mauritius+negotiate+shared+approach+to+underwater+plateau> (accessed 12 July 2019)

seabed and its mineral resources and less prominently on fisheries, the JMA has contributed to a modest intensification of joint vessel patrols by the two states' MCS authorities, as well as spurring an increase in joint scientific fieldwork (e.g. on the health of fish stocks and wider marine biology), for example by the SFA and the Fisheries Research Division of Mauritius' Ministry of Ocean Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping (Researcher Interview: Former Chairman of the Ocean Economy Commission, Government of Mauritius; Researcher Interview: Managing Director for the Department of the Blue Economy, Government of Seychelles).

The bilateral SFPA that governs EU DWFN fishing within the Mauritian EEZ remains in force. As with Seychelles, the EU recognises Mauritius as having undertaken fairly robust action to combat IUU fishing (though Chapter 6 will suggest that this is not entirely the case). Mauritian institutions also enjoy a high level of trust and are deemed to be transparent, meaning that the EU has shown little hesitation in maintaining the SFPA (Researcher Interview: Former Chairman of the Ocean Economy Commission, Government of Mauritius). Under the terms of the SFPA, which runs to the end of 2021, a total of 40 EU purse seiners and 45 surface longliners are permitted to operate in Mauritius' EEZ, though because of the higher volumes that are able to be harvested from the Seychellois EEZ versus its Mauritian counterpart, the reference tonnage by which the SFPA determines annual access fees, is considerably higher under the EU-Seychelles SFPA. While Seychelles receives around EUR 5 million per year in access fees, Mauritius receives a much more modest EUR 575,000 per year (EC, 2014). In addition to EU-flagged vessels, some Asian DWFN longliners also operate in Mauritius' EEZ, mainly targeting tuna under private access agreements. A small number of domestic longliners also operate in the country's EEZ (Lecomte *et al.*, 2017).

In 2018, Mauritius exported USD 150 million worth of fish and fish products, with canned tuna – exported to the EU, United States and Japan – being the largest export by volume. Smaller volumes of non-fillet frozen fish are exported, mainly to Asian markets. Whereas Madagascar and Seychelles export frozen fish for processing in Mauritius, exports of Mauritian fish to other Western Indian Ocean islands are marginal.³¹ This reflects Mauritius' aforementioned position within the regional fisheries value chain, characterised by relatively low levels of domestic production but serving as a processing centre for product caught in the other islands' EEZs. As already noted, Mauritius has undertaken investments to establish itself as a duty-free fish product processing centre, with the Freeport Seafood Hub being developed

³¹ All 2018 trade data were accessed through the International Trade Centre's (ITC's) *Trade Map Database*, accessible at the following link: www.trademap.org (accessed 10-15 March 2019).

to serve as a focal point for Mauritian and non-Mauritian-owned companies to access basic fisheries services such as landing and transshipment, as well as handling, grading, weighing, packaging, labelling, storage and canning (Researcher Interview: Managing Director, Princes Tuna). The Seafood Hub also provides ancillary services pertaining to vessel maintenance, while the Hub's Trade and Marketing Centre serves as a "one-stop shop" for operators looking to facilitate the import and re-export of fish and fish products. The logistics services available at the Hub are in-line with EU standards (particularly on cold chain storage) and are in accordance with internationally-recognised Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) standards of food safety.³² All of this has contributed to making the Hub a core component of what Mauritius terms its "ocean economy" (Researcher Interview: Former Chairman of the Ocean Economy Commission, Government of Mauritius).

Mauritius' fisheries institutions (Table 3.8) are deemed technically competent and reasonably well-resourced. Whereas the other Western Indian Ocean island states have broadly kept their different maritime sectors siloed under different ministries, Mauritius' Ministry of Ocean Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping brings these sectors under a single administrative framework.

Table 3.8: Key Fisheries Institutions & Legislation – Mauritius*

Competent Authority	Competent Authority Seafood
Government Ministries	Ministry of Ocean Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping, Fisheries Division
Key Legislation	Fisheries and Marine Resources Act (2007)
Monitoring, Control & Surveillance (MCS)	Fisheries Protection Service (FPS)
	Monitoring, Control, Surveillance/Vessel Monitoring System/Port State Control and Import/Export Division
Professional Associations	Mauritius Fishermen Cooperative Federation, Ltd.
Key Private Sector Operators	Bella Amigo Co. Ltd.; Development Bank of Mauritius (DBM); Freeport Seafood Hub; <i>Mer des Mascareignes Ltée.</i> ; Princes Tuna
Scientific Research Institutes	Albion Fisheries Research Centre (AFRC)
	Mauritius Oceanography Institute (MOI)
	Western Indian Ocean Marine Science Association (WIOMSA)
Technical Training Centres	Fisheries Training and Extension Centre (FiTEC)
	Mauritius Maritime Training Academy (MMTA)

* The above listing of institutions is not exhaustive, but includes most of the headline institutions responsible for fisheries governance in Seychelles. The above institutions are also those that will be referenced in the following chapters.

Additionally, all key fisheries bodies, including those pertaining to MCS, scientific research and port control measures all fall under the aegis of this Ministry. The Ministry's

³² For an additional overview of services made available at the Freeport Seafood Hub, see the following link: <http://www.mfd.mu/en/supplychain-solutions-services-seafood-hub.php> (accessed 12 February 2019).

Fisheries Division has responsibility for overall sector management and planning initiatives. Mauritius has two separate bodies dealing with MCS. The Fisheries Protection Service (FPS) operates under the Fisheries Division and is mainly a law enforcement unit tasked with combatting IUU fishing; a task that is mainly left to “traditional” MCS bodies, with support from coast guard authorities, in the other islands. Core MCS functions lie with the broadly-mandated Monitoring, Control, Surveillance/Vessel Monitoring System/Port State Control and Import/Export Division, which is administratively separate from the Fisheries Division, but which is closely aligned in day-to-day workplans.

There is comparatively little evidence of direct capacity building exchanges between Mauritian fisheries governance bodies and their counterparts in the other Western Indian Ocean island states. However, in regards to scientific research, inter-island connections are considerably more prominent. There are three main marine science institutes/groups operating in the country: the Albion Fisheries Research Centre, Mauritius Oceanography Institute (MOI) and the previously mentioned Western Indian Ocean Marine Science Association (WIOMSA). The latter is an international body that brings marine scientists together from across the Western Indian Ocean SIDS and East Africa. It was noted earlier that Madagascar’s IHSM has been (at least in the past if not the present) a key contributor to WIOMSA symposiums. The same is true of staff from the MOI, which plays a prominent role in developing core training modules for the WIOMSA Marine Protected Area Professional Programme. The MOI has also regularly hosted training seminars and experience exchange workshops bringing together oceanographers and marine biologists from across the island grouping.

France (Mayotte & Réunion)

Unlike the four independent Western Indian Ocean island states, the French territories of Mayotte and Réunion play far less prominent roles in the Western Indian Ocean tuna fishery. This is one reason why these islands are less of a focus in this study than are the other island states discussed above. However, in order to provide a comprehensive picture, a brief summary is provided below on the fisheries sector in these two islands.

France’s sizeable EEZ in the Western Indian Ocean (Table 3.9) includes the separate EEZs of Mayotte and Réunion, plus the EEZs established as a result of French control over what are termed the “Scattered Islands”: Bassas da India, Europa and Juan de Nova in the Mozambique Channel, the Glorioso Islands northwest of Madagascar and Tromelin Island east of Madagascar. Politically, the “Scattered Islands” (all unpopulated) are governed by the senior administrator of the French Southern and Antarctic Lands (TAAF), based in Réunion.

Sovereignty over the ‘Scattered Islands’ is disputed between France/the EU and various Western Indian Ocean island states. Madagascar claims the three islands in the Mozambique Channel, while Comoros claims the Glorioso Islands (as well as Mayotte). Finally, Mauritius continues to lay sovereign claim to Tromelin Island. Given the existence of these disputes, it should not be surprising that the collective extent of France’s maritime EEZ in the Western Indian Ocean, sitting a little over one million square kilometres, is also contested and acts as an irritant in the relations between France, its constituent territories and the other states within the island grouping. This is a topic that will be returned to, particularly in Chapter 5.

The fisheries profile of Mayotte is similar to that of Comoros. With an EEZ also located at the northern entrance to the Mozambique Channel, the same types of fish species harvested in Comorian waters are also harvested in Mayotte. Domestic fisheries production is either traditional or artisanal, taking place within a large barrier reef-lagoon complex surrounding the territory. Industrial fishing is mainly the preserve of DWFN purse seiners harvesting tuna. A considerable number of Seychellois purse seiners are permitted to operate in *Mahorais* waters under the terms of a 2014 Seychelles-EU Fisheries Access Agreement (FAA).³³ This FAA, a global first for the EU in allowing a third country to access its waters for commercial fishing, provides Mayotte with needed revenue in the form of private access fees. A share of revenue from these fees is utilised by Mayotte’s main fisheries authority, the *Chambre d’Agriculture, de la Pêche et de l’Aquaculture* (CAPAM) (Table 3.10), to cover its administration and training costs, as well as undertake MCS operations. Five purse seiners are registered to Mayotte itself³⁴ and serve as part of the EU’s DWFN fleet operating in other islands’ EEZs (particularly Madagascar), as well as fishing within the EEZs of the various “Scattered Islands” (Ojamaa and Martí, 2015; Researcher Interview: Fisheries Officer, CAPAM). A smaller number of (mostly Asian) long liners also operate around Mayotte, mainly targeting swordfish.

Similar to Comoros, none of the industrial tuna catch from *Mahorais* waters is landed in Mayotte, instead being landed and transshipped in Seychelles. As such, the industrial sector does not act as a generator of employment on the island and Mayotte does not export fish and fish products. Nor, because of Mayotte’s status as an EU territory, does the island receive access fees from the EU in the same manner as the independent Western Indian Ocean islands. Instead, Mayotte (as well as Réunion) benefits from EU development assistance provided by

³³ The Seychelles-EU FAA is distinct from the Seychelles-EU FPA. See the following link: <https://www.fis.com/fis/worldnews/worldnews.asp?monthyear=&day=18&id=64820&l=e&special=&ndb=1%20target> (accessed 9 January 2019).

³⁴ None of the purse seiners registered to Mayotte operate from (or visit) the island due to a lack of appropriate port, landing or cold chain storage facilities.

the European Fisheries Fund (EFF). This assistance is valued at around EUR 90 million for the two departments over the period 2014-2020 (Researcher Interview: Fisheries Officer, CAPAM).

CAPAM is responsible for key functions pertaining to fisheries governance, including MCS. Efforts are underway to develop on-island capacity for scientific research and technical training. For the moment, however, the island relies on technical expertise sourced primarily from *Réunionnais* institutions such as the *Institut de Recherche pour le Développement (IRD)* (Researcher Interview: Fisheries Officer, CAPAM). What is most notable about Mayotte, however, is that in spite of its position within the Western Indian Ocean tuna fishery, the ongoing territorial claim that Comoros makes on Mayotte (a claim that neighbouring Western Indian Ocean islands broadly support), means that Mayotte is not an IOC member and *Mahorais* representatives (e.g. from CAPAM) are not always welcome to participate in key regional initiatives, such as various components of the IOC SmartFish project (Researcher Interview: Fisheries Officer, CAPAM).

Table 3.9: Key Fisheries Statistics – France (Mayotte & Reunion)

Size of EEZ	63,078 sq. km (Mayotte); 315,058 sq. km (Réunion); 640,000 sq. km ('Scattered Islands') = 1,018,136 sq. km (Total)
Total fisheries production (annual)	29,826 MTs (2012), ~20,000 MTs (2016) (Mayotte); ~10,000 MTs (2017) (Réunion)
Main species harvested	cuttlefish, marlin, sailfish, sardinellas, sharks, snapper, swordfish, tuna (albacore, bigeye, mackerel, skipjack, yellowfin) (Mayotte); lobster, mahi mahi, pompanos, sharks, swordfish (Réunion)
Fisheries contribution to GDP	~8-10% (Mayotte); 1.5% (Réunion)
Traditional fishing	Yes - carried out by non-motorised, outrigger dugout canoes (Mayotte); N/A (Réunion)
Artisanal fishing	Yes - carried out by planked or fibreglass or polyester boats, sometimes motorised, as well as my motorised canoes (Mayotte); carried out by planked or fibreglass or polyester boats (Réunion)
Industrial fishing	Yes - carried out by large DWFN fleets, mainly purse seiners but also a small number of long liners (Mayotte); DWF purse seiners and longliners operate as part of the Southern Ocean fishery (Réunion)
Mariculture	Yes – marginal production in the range of 70 MT per year (Mayotte) and 50 MT per year (Réunion)
Revenues from granting DWF access rights (annual)	N/A – as Outermost Regions of the EU, neither Mayotte nor Réunion collect <i>access fees</i> to allow EU DWFN fleets to operate in their EEZs. Some private access agreements are in place. Also, a considerable level of EU funding is provided annually to support economic development and fisheries 'modernisation' through the European Fisheries Fund (EFF). EFF Funding to Mayotte and Réunion is EUR 90 million over the period 2014-2020.

MTs = metric tons, EUR = Euros.

Sources: All data obtained from European Parliament Directorate-General (2015), except for revenue data, which have been obtained from European Commission (2019).

Réunion's position within the regional fisheries sector is somewhat unique. The island's fisheries industry is comparatively small when assessed against neighbouring islands – e.g. the sector accounts for 0.5% of formal employment in Réunion vs. 13% in Seychelles

(European Parliament Directorate-General, 2015). The industrial sector includes both domestic and DWFN long liners, mainly harvesting swordfish, with this catch being landed either in Réunion or in Mauritius. Processing for export, almost entirely for the EU market, takes place in Réunion (fish and fish products represent 20% of Réunion’s exports by volume), with the island’s processing operators also drawing on the catch of artisanal fishers, as well as fish product imports from Madagascar, to serve the island’s domestic market (Researcher Interview: Associate Director, Réunionimer).

Table 3.10: Key Fisheries Institutions & Legislation – France (Mayotte & Réunion)*

Competent Authority	<i>Direction de la Mer Sud Océan Indien (DMSOI, Division pour l'Importation / Exportation des Produits de la Pêche</i> Directorate for the Southern Indian Ocean, Fish Product Import/Export Division
Government Ministries	<i>Direction de la Mer Sud Océan Indien (DMSOI)</i> Directorate for the Southern Indian Ocean – based in Réunion to administer maritime affairs, including fisheries, across the French EEZs in the Western Indian Ocean and Southern Ocean; includes a territorial unit in Mayotte
Key Legislation	<i>Chambre de l'Agriculture de la Pêche et de l'Aquaculture de Mayotte (CAPAM)</i> Chamber of Agriculture, Fisheries and Aquaculture of Mayotte Art.5(3) of Reg. (EU) No 1380/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11. Dec, 2013 of the Common Fisheries Policy
Monitoring, Control & Surveillance (MCS)	<i>Centre Régional Opérationnel de Surveillance et de Sauvetage (CROSS)</i> Regional Operational Centre for Surveillance and Rescue <i>Affaires Economiques (AE)</i> Economic Affairs – a component of DMSOI that is responsible for vessel licensing, particularly in the artisanal sector
Professional Associations	<i>Association Réunionnaise Interprofessionnelle de la Pêche et de l'Aquaculture (ARIPA)</i> Réunion Interprofessional Association of Fisheries and Aquaculture
Key Private Sector Operators	<i>Réunionimer</i> (inclusive of key companies like <i>Le Martin Pêcheur, Le Pêcheur Créole and Réunionpêche</i>);
Scientific Research Institutes	<i>Institut de Recherche pour le Développement (IRD)</i> Research Institute for Development <i>La Délégation Ifremer Océan Indien (DOI)</i> Ifremer Indian Ocean Delegation <i>Université de La Réunion (Laboratoire ECOMAR)</i> (University of Réunion ECOMAR Laboratory)
Technical Training Centres	<i>L'École d'Apprentissage Maritime de La Réunion (EAM)</i> Maritime Training Academy

All aspects of fisheries governance are under the purview of the *Direction de la Mer Sud Océan Indien* (DMSOI), a French government agency based in Réunion, under which sit a number of different components with responsibility for tasks such as assessing fish and fish product sanitary standards, MCS as well as providing support to private sector operators. These bodies, in turn, operate in accordance with the EU Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) and under the supervision of the European Commissioner for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries. The French presence in the Western Indian Ocean, valued by neighbouring islands from a cultural, economic and security perspective, but also resented as something of a colonial relic, will be returned to as a factor that affects political dynamics within the island grouping. It is important

to note, however, that French technical assistance plays a considerable role in supporting the functioning of fisheries bodies across the region.

For example, the Réunion branch of IRD has worked closely with researchers at both the Comorian INRAPE and the Malagasy IHSM to develop these latter institutions' socio-economic and scientific research capacity. This has included undertaking joint research projects focused on tracking changes in marine biodiversity within these states' territorial waters, as well as socio-economic studies exploring the impact of Marine Protected Areas on both coastal fish stocks and fishers' livelihoods (Researcher Interview: Research Officer, IRD). France's technical assistance extends to the contribution the country (and by extension the EU) makes in financially and technically supporting the operations of the Western Indian Ocean's inter-governmental organisations, particularly the IOC, and the projects they launch, including SmartFish. This is a theme that will be returned to in Chapter 5 and its discussion of the region's inter-governmental bodies.

4. The Western Indian Ocean Fisheries Sector: Inter-Governmental Organisations & Key Projects

The key inter-governmental organisations and projects that characterise the fisheries sector in the Western Indian Ocean will be introduced in considerable detail in Chapter 5. As such, only a brief overview is set out below. Both the IOTC and SWIOFC operate under the auspices of the FAO and are mainly technocratic “rules setting” organisations that work to establish and enforce international norms around fisheries management, both within member state EEZs and on the high seas. The IOTC carries out this role with a direct focus on the tuna fishery, while SWIOFC mainly focuses on non-tuna pelagic resources. Both bodies have memberships that extend beyond the island states of interest to this study, also encompassing East African coastal states and a number of Asian states with Indian Ocean coastlines.

Both the IOC and IORA have mandates to foster cooperation among their member states on a broad range of issue areas, with fisheries being only one component of this cooperation. IORA is undeniably the most ambitious of the inter-governmental bodies, seeking to foster closer trade and investment linkages between all Indian Ocean rim countries, promote collaboration in regards to maritime security, support disaster risk reduction strategies, as well as encourage broad-based academic, scientific and tourism exchange (Meng, 2018). In spite of the broadness of this mandate, however, IORA is the organisation with the least amount of “executive power”, with its assorted functions being almost entirely dialogue-based rather than involving the creation and enforcement of binding agreements between members. For its part,

the IOC promotes technical fisheries cooperation, as well as cooperation in other sectors, such as agriculture, transport and tourism (to name just a few). Unlike IORA, however, the IOC's membership is exclusive to the Western Indian Ocean island states and the body aims to promote tangible outputs in the form of binding agreements, joint area management schemes (such as that governing the Mascarene Plateau between Mauritius and Seychelles) and political commitments towards joint policy initiatives – though the degree to which it is able to do so will be explored at various points in the study.

Two key fisheries-related projects are worth briefly highlighting: 1) the SmartFish Project, implemented primarily through the IOC, with funding from the European Commission; and 2) the SWIOFish Project, implemented under the auspices of both SWIOFC and the IOC with funding from the World Bank. The SmartFish Project was a large, multi-phased initiative implemented from 2011 to 2018 at a cost of twenty-one million Euros. While the IOC was the primary implementing agency, the geographic scope of the project also included a number of East African coastal states and involved collaboration with SWIOFC and the IOTC, as well as with additional East and Southern African regional organisations. SmartFish focused its activities on five main themes: fisheries development and management; fisheries governance; MCS; facilitation of trade in fish and fish products; and food security. The SWIOFish Project, initiated in 2015 and now in its third phase of implementation, was launched with many of the same objectives as SmartFish, albeit with a much larger implementation budget of over 200 million U.S. Dollars. Like SmartFish, SWIOFish took a particular focus on fisheries governance, institutional strengthening and capacity-building (including in MCS), as well as improving livelihoods in the traditional and artisanal fisheries sectors. Both of these projects will be a main focus of Chapter 5 and its discussion of inter-island political dynamics in the context of fisheries-focused inter-governmental organisations.

There are a number of other 'regional' organisations that play a role in different aspects of fisheries development in the Western Indian Ocean. These include the African Union, Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and Southern African Development Community (SADC), to name just a few. However, these organisations tend to provide funding or participate in technical initiatives through projects like SmartFish and SWIOFish rather than by creating their own separate fisheries projects or programmes. As such, it is the perspective of this study that these bodies do not occupy the same level of primacy when it comes to initiating detailed fisheries engagement between the Western Indian Ocean island states when compared to the IOC, IORA, IOTC and SWIOFC.

This chapter has provided a descriptive overview of the Western Indian Ocean fisheries sector, both at a macro-level and with a situational analysis for each individual island state. This overview has outlined the commercial and policy-related trends that define this sector. It has also introduced the key national institutions, companies, non-state actors, inter-governmental organisations and transnational projects that will be discussed throughout the remainder of the study's analytical investigation. The chapter has also situated, if at a cursory level, the "regional" fisheries sector in the context of a wider consideration of the "blue economy" – a policy framework that is likely to be of ever-greater importance to each of the Western Indian Ocean SIDS in future. Building on the descriptive overview provided in this chapter, Chapter 4 will now delve into the first of the study's analytical lenses, focusing on the politics of inter-island engagement at the state-to-state ministerial level.

CHAPTER 4: The Limits of *Indianocéanie*: Island Fisheries Ministries & the Politics of Enacting MT&Cs for DWFN Vessel Access

1. Introduction and Chapter Overview

In this chapter, the dissertation begins its analytical exploration of how existing political dynamics between the Western Indian Ocean island states incentivise (or fail to incentivise) deepening cooperation, integration and collective diplomacy among these states in the fisheries sector. Returning to the tenets of “new regionalism” detailed in Chapter 2, this exploration also begins to query whether these political dynamics allow for the Western Indian Ocean island grouping to be thought of as a distinct and socially-constructed *region* characterised by commonly-held regimes. Finally, the chapter starts to shed light on whether, based on the bounded geographic and thematic contexts of this study, there is merit to the view posited by some scholars that inter-island cooperation and “ganging up” can serve as an effective means for these types of states to boost their collective bargaining power.

Going back to this study’s three investigative “lenses”, introduced in Chapter 1, the analysis presented in this chapter focuses on the first lens, exploring cooperative dynamics, collective action and regime-building at the state-to-state ministerial level. Much of the interaction on fisheries that takes place between the Western Indian Ocean island states occurs within the four inter-governmental organisations introduced earlier: IOC, IORA, IOTC and SWIOFC. The political dynamics at play within these organisations will be the focus of Chapter 5. However, a considerable level of political engagement also takes place between island state governments outside of – or at least in parallel to – these organisational structures. Engagement between ministry officials often serves to foster the working relationships that underpin the work done in the technical committees and working groups of bodies like the IOC and IOTC (Researcher Interview: Chief Diplomatic Advisor, Government of Seychelles).

Clear examples of technical cooperation between the different islands’ state fisheries institutions and their ministry officials were provided in Chapter 3. A number of these examples will again be referenced in the analysis that follows. This chapter will argue, however, that there is little evidence that this technical cooperation is serving to catalyse political moves towards deeper fisheries-based integration or collective diplomacy among the Western Indian Ocean SIDS. On the contrary, the political dynamics at play between the islands, particularly between their respective fisheries ministries, seem to disincentivise the active construction or maintenance of what Ruggie (1975: 570) would identify as actionable regimes in the fisheries sector: “mutual expectations, rules and regulations, plans,

organisational energies and financial commitments, which have been accepted by a group of states”.

Why is this so? It will be argued that there are two main factors that hinder fisheries ministries in the islands from working towards closer integration and the development of robust collective fisheries regimes. First, the disparities in levels of socio-economic development and political cohesiveness between the Western Indian Ocean islands, particularly between Mauritius and Seychelles on one side and the poorer island states of Comoros and Madagascar on the other, creates a mismatch when it comes to the dominant policy and political priorities of the islands’ respective ministry actors. This is especially evident regarding the extent to which *sustainability* should sit at the centre of collective fisheries-based initiatives among the islands. While a mix of sustainability and resource maximising objectives characterise all of the islands’ fisheries sectors, the islands differ considerably on the degree they believe their political capital should be dedicated towards long-term fisheries sustainability versus shorter-term goals related to employment generation, foreign investment and broad sectoral growth. The “more developed” islands, and Seychelles in particular, are likelier to advocate a stronger sustainability focus that the poorer islands deem a constraint to the development of their own fisheries industries.

Second, the political power dynamics that exist between the different islands, evident but not necessarily that impactful when dealing with issues of basic technical cooperation, come into much sharper relief when matters turn directly to the economic gains to be made from the fisheries sector. Professed unity quickly gives way to individual interest as the different island state governments seek to competitively exploit commercial arrangements, specifically with DWFNs, to their own benefit. The development of strong integrative regimes becomes less politically compelling for the islands’ fisheries ministries when such regimes run the risk of upsetting commercial arrangements over the short-term, even if these regimes could potentially lead to longer-term economic gains for the island grouping as a whole.

This means that, in spite of the basic technical cooperation they may engage in with each other, the islands’ ministry actors all too often lack political will or a common conception of how a more integrated Western Indian Ocean fisheries sector should be operationalised. It then becomes considerably more difficult for these actors to move beyond more superficial forms of cooperation and towards the types of integrative and tangible regimes that would demonstrate a true sense of collective interest among these states. When the above arguments are interpreted in light of “new regionalism”, they paint a picture of an island grouping that cannot – at least on the basis of examining ministerial interactions – be deemed a socially-

constructed region. Or, more accurately, these islands cannot be spoken of as a region with a high level of *regionness*. Cooperative dynamics clearly exist between the islands, at least at a technical or “functional” level. The importance of these dynamics should by no means be dismissed. However, “new regionalism” and its social constructivist ethos expects something more than mere technical interactions at the state level. Indeed, it envisions a transformation of a group of states “...from a passive object to an active subject capable of articulating the transnational interests of the emerging region” (Hettne and Söderbaum, 2000: 461).

The outward messaging put forward by the islands themselves over fisheries – “islands, close and united” (IOC, 2013) – would appear to suggest that this transformation should be evident. As the above arguments will make clear, however, the Western Indian Ocean island states fall short, at least at present, of being an “active subject” in the political sense. A collectively constructed identity around the concept of *Indianocéanie*, while perhaps existing as an ideal, does not find practical expression among ministry actors in the fisheries sector. This does not preclude the possibility of these islands “ganging up” to boost their collective bargaining power. However, given the paucity of evidence suggesting that the islands’ respective fisheries ministries have found it worthwhile to do so, the chapter will reiterate that it is not enough to assume that these states will choose to “gang up” merely because they are islands in close proximity and with some shared traits. At least in the context of the fisheries sector, complex political dynamics play a decisive role in determining the degree to which these islands view “ganging up” with one another as an advantageous diplomatic strategy.

Given the technical and policy complexity of fisheries as a socio-economic sector, it is difficult to articulate the above arguments with clarity unless the analytical focus is placed on a set of specific issue areas. The chapter will present its evidence for the above arguments through the detailing of one specific issue area that captures important interactions between the island states’ fisheries ministries: the ongoing efforts among the islands to collaboratively work towards *enacting* collective MT&Cs for granting territorial access rights to DWFN vessels.

2. Introducing MT&Cs as an Approach for Collective EEZ Fisheries Management

It was noted in Chapter 3 that DWFN operators wishing to fish within the EEZs of other countries are usually expected to meet certain terms and conditions in order to be granted territorial access. Globally, these terms and conditions are applied with different levels of rigour, but are broadly centred around ensuring: 1) that DWFN vessels hold valid and updated fishing licenses; 2) that DWFN vessels adhere to particular reporting requirements in relation to both vessel movements and catch volumes; 3) that DWFN vessels adhere to port controls

and do not attempt to evade these controls by transshipping their catches at sea; and 4) that DWFN vessels make allowance for the presence of on-board observers to ensure compliance with MCS controls aimed at combatting IUU fishing. In addition, the terms and conditions governing EEZ entry require DWFN operators to pay both access and licensing fees. These are levied per vessel and typically on an annual basis (Campling, 2008; Mwikya, 2006).

In the Western Indian Ocean, agreements covering these terms and conditions have been worked out bilaterally, between individual island state governments and the DWFNs seeking to operate in their EEZs. Access negotiations sometimes take place exclusively at the government-level. The islands' SFPAs with the EU, for example, involve island state officials negotiating with the European Fisheries Commission over access rights for EU-registered purse seiners. Alternatively, these access negotiations can involve island state governments negotiating directly with DWFN fishing companies through private access agreements, as is currently done with the Asian long liner operators that are becoming a marked presence in island waters. What is important to note about the Western Indian Ocean, however, is that when it comes to the global island state context, this bilateral approach to access negotiations is not always the norm. Among island states in the Central and Western Pacific, for example, access negotiations are carried out *collectively*. Moreover, the Pacific island states have developed a common set of regulatory regimes, in the form of MT&Cs and complementary agreements, that standardise DWFN access conditions across these islands' tuna-rich EEZs.

In the analysis that follows, it will be argued that the failure of the Western Indian Ocean island states to work collectively at the ministerial-level to enact common MT&Cs serves as a significant demonstration of the lack of *regionness* among these islands. The factors noted earlier as inhibiting the development of actionable regimes among these island states – differing policy priorities resulting from disparate levels of development and political cohesiveness, as well as economic competition – are central to these states' inability to generate the sustained inter-ministerial cooperation required to enact MT&Cs. This is despite acknowledgment that the enactment of MT&Cs would serve to strengthen collective island fisheries governance (Researcher Interview: Chief Diplomatic Advisor, Government of Seychelles; Researcher Interview: Secretary-General, IOTC).

3. A Brief Detour: MT&C Development in the Pacific Island Context

Before diving into an analysis of the Western Indian Ocean context, it is worth discussing how a number of island states in the Central and Western Pacific came together to develop a collective set of MT&Cs. The purpose here is not to dwell on the technical details

of these MT&Cs. Rather, it is to highlight how cooperative political dynamics, particularly between the fisheries ministries of individual Pacific island states, incentivised these countries towards the creation of practical and integrative fisheries regimes. This will later be contrasted with the absence of comparable political dynamics among the Western Indian Ocean island states. A useful entry point for understanding the politics of fisheries cooperation in the Pacific is the 1982 Nauru Agreement Concerning Cooperation in the Management of Fisheries of Common Interest (Nauru Agreement).³⁵ As has been noted by a number of scholars, the Nauru Agreement has come to symbolise not only the merits of inter-island cooperation and regime building, but has also spurred the formation of a collective identity and common political purpose around fisheries for a number of Pacific island states (Aqorau, 2002; Hanich, Parris and Tsamenyi, 2010).

The Nauru Agreement is directly linked to the formation of the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) in 1979. The FFA was notable for being the first regional fisheries body created at the initiative of island states themselves (Aqorau, 2002; Hanich, Parris and Tsamenyi, 2010; Van Dyke and Heftel, 1981).³⁶ Formed to promote dialogue, technical cooperation and policy harmonisation among Pacific island states looking to improve their management of migratory fish stocks, the FFA's technocratic focus somewhat belied the fact that its creation was very much a political act. By the late-1970s, most of the Pacific island states had only achieved their independence (nominally or in-full) in the preceding decade. These states were economically and politically fragile and maintained a high degree of aid dependency on outside powers, such as Australia, France, Japan and the United States. Both France (acting through the European Commission) and Japan, in particular, were also major DWFNs with interests in the Pacific tuna fishery (Lodge, 1992). In founding the FFA, the Pacific island states recognised that an upshot of their aid dependence was being played-off against each other by DWFNs in negotiations over vessel access terms and conditions. Granting concessions to DWFNs on the rigour by which MCS controls would be enforced or on vessel access and licensing fees, to provide just two examples, served to maintain DWFN favour and the flow of aid. Not wishing to lose this favour, individual island states had been compelled to match the concessions made by others, losing out on revenues and leading to something of a regulatory "race to the bottom", in which individual states' fisheries governance

³⁵ The original signatories to the Nauru Agreement were: Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Tuvalu.

³⁶ The creation of the FFA was an initiative of the 8th South Pacific Forum in 1977. The international treaty establishing the FFA, the *South Pacific Forum Fisheries Agency Convention*, was initiated at the behest of the less-developed Pacific island states, but with Australia and New Zealand also signing on as members.

structures came to hold little oversight over the fish stocks migrating through their EEZs (Hanich, Parris and Tsamenyi, 2010; Lodge, 1992).

The FFA represented a concerted political effort by the Pacific island states to at least modestly redress this power imbalance. Acting under the aegis of the South Pacific Forum (SPF), which was created in 1971 and later re-named the PIF, the founders of the FFA understood that efforts to improve inter-island technical or “functional” cooperation in fisheries management would amount to little unless the islands were able to truly assert authority over DWFN fishing in their EEZs (Fry, 1991; Fry and Tarte, 2015). The FFA consequently advocated for member states to pool their human and financial resources, as well as work to establish shared policy positions, all with the objective of boosting the islands’ collective bargaining power in negotiations with DWFN partners. While having no illusions about their relative diplomatic stature compared to these DWFNs, the island members of the FFA gambled that the overriding desire of DWFNs to maintain access to the lucrative Pacific tuna fishery gave them an opening.

If the islands could follow Schiff’s (2010) advice to form a united negotiating bloc and, in the words of Lodge (1992: 211), “hold their nerve” in the face of potential threats of aid reductions, then they could leverage their legal authority over their EEZs, as well as their resulting power to grant vessel access rights. This, in turn, could be used to minimise both the prospects of individual island states continuing to be played-off against each other, as well as to push back against particular DWFN practices that were undermining the islands’ (admittedly limited) MCS controls and which were preventing them from obtaining fair economic returns (Fry and Tarte, 2015; Hanich, Parris and Tsamenyi, 2010). A KI from the Government of Seychelles’ Department of Blue Economy, who served as an advisor within the FFA in its formative years, summed up the diplomatic perspective that drove the FFA’s creation: “The Agency [FFA] was created to give these islands a louder voice. They [island states] knew that, acting alone, the French, the Japanese, the Americans...these countries would not take them seriously. Working together, these islands suddenly understood that they controlled vast parts of the ocean [through their EEZs] and especially the tuna migration routes. They could control [vessel] access and weren’t powerless” (Researcher Interview: Ocean Governance Advisor in the Department of Blue Economy, Government of Seychelles).

Arguably the most tangible manifestation of the FFA’s efforts to promote a common front, as well as a pushback against DWFN power, was the forging of the Nauru Agreement. Entered into by a sub-set of those FFA members most heavily engaged in the migratory tuna fishery, the Nauru Agreement outlined a number of common EEZ fisheries management

practices to be enacted by island state signatories. These included agreement on, and a promise to strictly monitor and enforce (as much as capacity constraints allowed), a set of collective MT&Cs that would determine whether DWFN vessels would secure (and maintain) access to *any* island EEZ. Failure to adhere to MT&Cs in one island state EEZ would preclude the possibility of vessels continuing to fish in that EEZ or gain access to any of the other Pacific island EEZs (Fry and Tarte, 2015). The migratory nature of tuna stocks made access to multiple EEZs a commercial imperative for DWFN operators. As such, provided the Pacific island states could indeed “hold their nerve” against DWFN pressure and develop the governance capacity required to ensure compliance, the enactment of MT&Cs was seen as a logical means by which these states could obtain political leverage and oversight over the industrial tuna fishing occurring in their waters.

The majority of MT&Cs concerned MCS, stipulating requirements that: all DWFN vessels would require valid permits renewed annually; that observers from the islands’ MCS bodies would be placed on all vessels to guard against IUU fishing; that transshipment would be prohibited at sea to prevent avoidance of port controls; and that vessels would maintain standardised log books and would follow a timely process for reporting catches, as well as providing EEZ entry, exit and other vessel movement updates to the island states’ national authorities.³⁷ Equally important, the Nauru Agreement’s MT&Cs also formalised the data sources and negotiation process through which the islands would collectively determine vessel access and licensing fees. They also mandated that these fees would, once negotiated with DWFNs, include development assistance aimed at improving the technical capacity of the islands’ fisheries authorities. Finally, fee levels would be applied in a uniform manner across all island state EEZs (Campling, 2006; Hanich, Parris and Tsamenyi, 2010).

There is a notable literature that discusses the technical outcomes of the Nauru Agreement, its MT&Cs, as well as the range of complementary provisions that have emerged over the past thirty years to expand upon the Nauru Agreement’s original scope. Fry (1991) and Campling (2006), for example, touch on how the introduction of MT&Cs contributed to gradual capacity improvements in the fisheries MCS bodies of the Pacific islands. Fry and Tarte (2015), Hammond (2012), as well as Morris and Fisher (2015), detail the role that the FFA, the Nauru Agreement and complementary measures have played in improving Pacific island states’ economic returns from migratory tuna resources. Implicit in these analyses is a recognition that the signatories to the Nauru Agreement – who collectively came to be known

³⁷ The MT&Cs noted in the text are not exhaustive. The full text of the Nauru Agreement, inclusive of amendments made in 2010, is available at the following link: <https://www.pnatuna.com/content/nauru-agreement> (accessed 24 July 2019).

as the Parties to the Nauru Agreement (PNA) – were broadly successful in their aims. Indeed, that DWFNs have largely accepted and adhered to the MT&Cs put in place by the Pacific island states, even as these MT&Cs have evolved over time, is reflected in the terms of such agreements as the South Pacific Tuna Treaty, signed between the PNA and the United States in 1988 (and extended three times since – most recently in 2016).³⁸

It would be incorrect to suggest that there has been no counter-pushback by DWFNs against the MT&Cs introduced by the Nauru Agreement, or that these MT&Cs are not still subject to political contestation. The fact remains, however, that these MT&Cs remain pillars of fisheries governance in the Central and Western Pacific, with the Pacific island states suffering few consequences – such as the feared loss of foreign aid – for enacting them. This would seem to point to the benefits of a “gang up” approach being used by island states to individually escape a situation akin to Breuning’s (2007) “compliance foreign policymaking” in favour of a more assertive collective stance that delivers beneficial fisheries outcomes.

For this study, what truly matters in relation to the above description is not so much what the Nauru Agreement achieved (although this is important), but rather the nature of the inter-island *political dynamics* that allowed the Nauru Agreement and its MT&Cs to emerge in the first place. As was alluded to earlier, the Nauru Agreement did not arise out of any real change in the Pacific island states’ geo-political or economic circumstances. These states were still heavily aid dependent in 1982, when the Nauru Agreement was signed (as, indeed, many still are today). Nor was there any large structural change in the nature of the Pacific tuna fishery (Fry and Tarte, 2015). What really appears to have mattered is what Hanich, Parris and Tsamenyi (2010) identify as a change in the political calculus among Pacific island states. Foreign aid from DWFNs was undoubtedly important. However, the prospective risk of losing at least some of this aid was deemed a risk worth taking in exchange for enacting MT&Cs that would allow the island states to strengthen their governance authority over their EEZs and obtain fairer economic returns from their fisheries resources.

It is the perspective of this study that a key driver behind this change in political calculus was the emergence of more cooperative political dynamics between the fisheries ministries of individual Pacific island states. The creation of the SPF in 1971 already guaranteed that an institutional platform existed for Pacific island state officials to engage one another on a multitude of issues (Fry, 1991; Havice, 2007; Peebles, 2005). From a fisheries

³⁸ See the following link for an overview of the South Pacific Tuna Treaty: <<https://2009-2017.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2016/06/259201.htm>> (accessed 17 May 2020).

standpoint, however, the formation of the FFA, and particularly the process of determining its organisational scope and structure, served to qualitatively change the nature of inter-island ministerial relations. In the early years of the SPF, these relations had been constrained by a relatively high turnover of fisheries ministers, aides and technical officials (Havice, 2007). Recognising that the technocratic focus required to lay out the parameters of the FFA necessitated a “professionalisation” of the individual islands’ respective fisheries ministries, concerted efforts were made by these ministries to develop and maintain a stable roster of technically-knowledgeable individuals who would become fixtures in their roles. In time, this stability made it possible for ministers and ministry officials from the different island states to regularly interact and to begin developing familiarity, trust, as well as political camaraderie (Fry, 1991; Havice, 2007; Researcher Interview: Ocean Governance Advisor in the Department of Blue Economy, Government of Seychelles).

The upshot of regular engagement between a consistent and technically competent roster of fisheries ministry officials from across the different island states, was an increase in the number of inter-island ministerial coordination meetings (Fry and Tarte, 2015; Havice, 2007). A review of primary documentation suggests that these meetings became a regular fixture of Pacific island diplomacy in the years leading up to (and immediately following) the formation of the FFA. Notably, this documentation also reiterates the presence of a consistent roster of ministry attendees at these gatherings, as well as a stable leadership team within the FFA’s senior management once the body had been established (SPF, 1978, 1980). Most important in the context of the Nauru Agreement and the creation of MT&Cs, however, is what the KI from the Government of Seychelles’ Department of Blue Economy, herself present at a number of these ministry coordination meetings, calls the “ideational exchange” that took place between ministry officials at these gatherings: “As ministry officials became more familiar with one another, developed trust and interacted at meeting after meeting, they began to really focus...at what I would call a granular level...on very specific technical and governance issues [concerning fisheries]. Broad discussions and aspirations were not put aside, but familiarity and repetition of interaction allowed our [Pacific island state] ministers to focus on policy specifics, of which terms and conditions [MT&Cs] became among the most important” (Researcher Interview: Ocean Governance Advisor in the Department of Blue Economy, Government of Seychelles).

The professionalisation of fisheries ministries and repeated interaction among a consistent roster of ministry officials, created a new political dynamic that fostered more detailed and policy-specific cooperation than had previously been evident among the Pacific

island states. Fry (1991), Fry and Tarte (2015) and Havice (2007) all point to examples of how key components of the Nauru Agreement were developed by engaged fisheries ministries, most often working within the institutional structure of the FFA. It was through inter-ministerial working groups of state fisheries officials that common vessel licensing criteria were established, as was the standardising of what had been disparate island vessel reporting requirements into a single harmonised system that would be applied to DWFN purse seiners (Fry, 1991). It was at a series of two multilateral summits between island fisheries and finance ministers in 1981 and 1982, that Pacific island governments established the criteria for vessel access and licensing fees that would form the foundation for collective negotiations with DWFNs (Fry and Tarte, 2015; Havice, 2007). Underlying all of this technical or “functional” cooperation was the burgeoning formation of something of a common political identity around fisheries (Hanich, Parris and Tsamenyi, 2010). Said the KI from the Seychelles Department of Blue Economy: “For the Pacific islands, I really do believe that the creation of the islands’ own access terms and conditions [MT&Cs] was a point where they began to really see themselves as a collective...where they stood together and said that...these are our waters and we will unite to be treated fairly and assert our sovereignty” (Researcher Interview: Ocean Governance Advisor in the Department of Blue Economy, Government of Seychelles).

What is important to understand about the above, particularly when it comes to a comparative consideration of the Western Indian Ocean island state context, is that the Pacific island state fisheries ministries have continued to deepen their cooperation over time, building on the MT&Cs first put forward in the Nauru Agreement and constructing them into the types of “mutual expectations, rules and regulations, plans, organisational energies and financial commitments” that would be recognisable to Ruggie (1975) as actionable regimes. Under the terms of the 1995 Palau Arrangement, for example, the Pacific islands introduced the Vessel Day Scheme (VDS), which set legal limits on the number of days in a calendar year that DWFN vessels would be licensed to fish in the islands’ collective EEZs. Joint regulations have also been developed to allow each individual island state to withdraw the license of any DWFN vessel found to be operating in areas of the high seas collectively designated by the islands as off-limits to commercial fishing. A series of Implementing Agreements, such as the Federated States of Micronesia Arrangement, have been established to enforce a multilateral licensing regime for DWFN vessels. These agreements also establish – and monitor/enforce through peer review – the specific procedures through which islands are expected to harmonise their

fisheries legislation, standardise their MCS systems, train vessel observers, as well as share commercial and scientific data upon which collective decisions can be made.³⁹

A series of agreements, such as the Koror Declaration, which commits the islands to joint efforts to increase their economic returns from tuna, and the Delap Commitment, which reiterates the shared objective of islands to “not be bystanders in the development of their tuna fisheries” (PNA, 2018: Clause 3), further point to the existence of common energies, converging expectations and even a shared island political identity around fisheries objectives. Perhaps most representative of the existence of clear fisheries regimes among the PNA was the decision of these islands to transition their series of increasingly complex agreements into a new institutional structure, an inter-governmental organisation also known as Parties to the Nauru Agreement, that would have executive powers to enforce compliance with all enacted measures, especially MT&Cs. This organisation was formally established in 2010, with a dedicated Secretariat based in the Marshall Islands and with an operating budget funded relatively equally by each individual member state.⁴⁰

When considering MT&Cs as a specific issue area, the evidence above points to the Pacific islands having a reasonably high level of *regionness*. A recognition of mutual interests, not least the fact that DWFNs were capitalising on the weakness of individual islands to renegotiate heavily imbalanced access terms and conditions, catalysed an initial desire among the islands to “gang up” and strengthen their bargaining power. A shift in political dynamics towards greater inter-ministerial engagement, aided by ministry professionalisation, regularised interaction and growing familiarity among a consistent roster of island state fisheries officials, served as a foundation upon which the island states could construct common policy responses that would redress these imbalanced terms and conditions. Equally important, the political camaraderie forged during these interactions lent political weight to the enactment of MT&Cs and equipped Pacific island state officials with the sense of collective will needed to enact these measures even in the face of potential DWFN retaliation. The sense of common identity and collective purpose created by the process of MT&C formation has been enhanced by moves towards deeper cooperation over time, including through the creation of more sophisticated integrative regimes. In all of the above, the Pacific island states clearly reflect Hettne and Söderbaum’s (2000) “new regionalist” view of states moving from “passive object” to “active subject” with clear “regional” interests. They also reiterate the social constructivist

³⁹ Evidence for the regimes noted in the text have been determined based on a review of primary documents (all publicly available) taken from the website of the Partners to the Nauru Agreement: <<https://www.pnatuna.com>> (accessed 24 July 2019).

⁴⁰ See the following link: <<https://www.pnatuna.com/>> (accessed 09 January 2019).

view of “region formation” as being driven by regularised interactions, which in turn foster common values that deepen political bonds over time.

4. Potential Barriers to MT&C Enactment in the Western Indian Ocean

The enactment of MT&Cs played a significant role in allowing the island states of the Central and Western Pacific to boost their collective bargaining power and attain a greater degree of control over (and economic value from) their fisheries resources. It is striking, therefore, that a comparable set of codified MT&Cs has yet to emerge among the island states of the Western Indian Ocean. First, however, some clarification. It would be wrong to suggest that MT&Cs have never been on the policy agenda for these islands. In fact, the development of MT&Cs was central to the mandate of the short-lived Western Indian Ocean Tuna Organisation (WIOTO), a body established in 1992 that was intended to replicate many of the functions performed by the FFA in the Pacific. A lack of political agreement among members – inclusive of the Western Indian Ocean island states as well as African littoral states – as to how WIOTO should be institutionally structured and financed, scuttled the organisation before it had the opportunity to get off the ground (Edeson, 2009).

Following the collapse of WIOTO, intensive efforts to re-visit MT&C development periodically re-emerged, with documented evidence pointing to a substantial prioritisation of efforts in the early-2010s, pursued largely at the inter-governmental level and particularly through SWIOFC. In 2015, the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) presented a draft concept paper outlining a preliminary set of MT&Cs for the Southwest Indian Ocean.⁴¹ These draft MT&Cs were actively discussed within the fisheries ministries of individual island states (DGRH, 2017; SFA, 2016, 2017). They were also debated within the technical committees and working groups of the IOTC and SWIOFC (IOTC, 2016; SWIOFC, 2017b), as well as within the technical research outputs of WIOMSA (WIOMSA, 2017). In March 2017, SWIOFC members tentatively endorsed a revised and supposedly final set of MT&Cs, very similar in nature to those codified in the Pacific through the Nauru Agreement. However, this endorsement has not produced any tangible moves towards actual MT&C *enactment*. Instead, ongoing discussion of the still unfinished “MT&C process” continues to be found within “regional” fisheries documentation, most recently in connection with SWIOFC’s Ninth Working Party on Collaboration and Cooperation in Tuna Fisheries, held in Maldives in September 2019.⁴²

⁴¹ The position paper can be accessed through the following link: <<http://www.panda.org/?208719/DEVELOPING-REGIONAL-MINIMUM-TERMS-AND-CONDITIONS-FOR-GRANTING-TUNA-FISHING-ACCESS-IN-THE-WESTERN-INDIAN-OCEAN>> (accessed 14 March 2019).

⁴² See SWIOFC’s ‘Policy Brief on a Possible Southwest Indian Ocean Fisheries Framework Agreement’ <<http://www.fao.org/3/ca6115en/ca6115en.pdf>> (accessed 25 November 2019).

MT&Cs have hardly been neglected by the Western Indian Ocean islands, to be sure, but nor have they been meaningfully operationalised.

What has made the process of enacting MT&Cs seemingly more difficult in the Western Indian Ocean than in the Pacific? An argument will be put forward that the absence of cooperative political dynamics between Western Indian Ocean island fisheries ministries, in contrast to the experience of the Pacific island states, is central to answering this question. Prior to articulating this argument, however, it is worth briefly discussing a few of the other explanations put forward in the (admittedly limited) comparative literature on this topic. This literature is generally unanimous in arguing that MT&Cs are desirable as a means for the Western Indian Ocean island states to assert authority over their EEZs and ensure fairer economic returns from DWFNs. Uniformity in the access terms and conditions applied across the islands' EEZs is seen as likely to reduce the incidence of IUU fishing, improve vessel adherence to port controls, guarantee a role for island state observers onboard DWFN vessels, as well as raise the collective value of vessel access and licensing fees through the implementation of a multilateral vessel licensing regime (Andriamahefazafy, Kull and Campling, 2019; Campling, 2008; Researcher Interview: Chief Diplomatic Advisor, Government of Seychelles; Researcher Interview: Former Chairman of the Ocean Economy Commission, Government of Mauritius; Researcher Interview: Secretary-General, IOTC).

However, whereas the Nauru Agreement and the regimes emerging from it were constructed exclusively among Pacific island states, Sawyer (2015) acknowledges that the debate around MT&Cs in the Western Indian Ocean has tended to involve a much wider array of states, including not only the islands of interest to this study, but also African littoral states and even some Asian states like Maldives and Sri Lanka. This reflects the primacy of SWIOFC, with its broad membership, in leading the discussions around MT&Cs; something generally supported by the Western Indian Ocean island states to ensure that fisheries regulations are standardised across as many of the Western Indian Ocean EEZs as possible (Researcher Interview: Secretary-General, IOTC). Logically, it would seem more difficult to establish agreement on common MT&Cs among a more diverse cross-section of states.

Interestingly, however, this argument found little traction among the KIs interviewed for this study. This is because the Western Indian Ocean island EEZs encompass the heart of the migratory path for most harvested tuna species. Fisheries also constitute a much more significant part of the economy for the Western Indian Ocean island states than for most coastal African or Asian states. As such, it is the Western Indian Ocean island states themselves that are seen to be at the forefront when it comes to driving the MT&C agenda (Researcher

Interview: Secretary-General, IOTC). Said the Chief Diplomatic Adviser to the Government of Seychelles, formerly the Secretary-General of the IOC: “Nothing stops our IOC islands from taking the lead in enacting them [MT&Cs]. We could have come to agreement among ourselves and, given the size of our EEZs, we could have provided leadership on this issue with the other SWIOFC countries...far more than we have. Our issues are internal...we can’t agree among ourselves how exactly they [MT&Cs] should be put in place” (Researcher Interview: Chief Diplomatic Advisor, Government of Seychelles).

A compelling argument is put forward by Andriamahefazafy, Kull and Campling (2019), who contend that among the Pacific island states, the migratory routes of harvested tuna species almost entirely align with their inter-locking EEZs. This gives DWFNs little choice but to adhere to the MT&Cs put forward by these islands if they wish to engage at all in the Pacific tuna fishery. In the Western Indian Ocean, on the other hand, tuna migration routes do not conform perfectly to the island EEZs and also traverse the high seas, where the islands have no *de jure* authority over the resource and where MT&Cs can simply be bypassed. This supposedly gives DWFN operators an incentive to concentrate their operations in the high seas and weakens the political compulsion among the island states to make enacting MT&Cs a priority. The problem with this argument, as Chapter 3 clearly demonstrated, is that there is undoubtedly a great deal of industrial tuna fishing taking place in island EEZs. There is little observable indication that DWFN operators are foregoing fishing in these waters to concentrate primarily on high seas fishing grounds. Also, there is nothing that theoretically prevents the Western Indian Ocean island states from developing common MT&Cs for their own EEZs and working to obtain buy-in to institutionalise aspects of these within the IOTC, which does have authority over the regulation of high seas fishing (Researcher Interview: Former Chairman of the Ocean Economy Commission, Government of Mauritius; Researcher Interview: Secretary-General, IOTC).

In seeking to understand why MT&C enactment in the Western Indian Ocean has yet to be realised, this study contends that it is essential to seek explanations that go beyond the above factors and to instead look primarily at inter-island political dynamics. These dynamics, so conducive to incentivising regularised engagement, personal relationship building and political camaraderie among dedicated fisheries ministries in the Pacific, are defined by much more fraught political contestation among the Western Indian Ocean island states. At the heart of this contestation are the disparities in socio-economic development and political cohesiveness that define the Western Indian Ocean islands and which drive them towards policy objectives, including in fisheries, that cannot easily be reconciled.

5. Development Disparities and the Shaping of Political Incentives: Implications for MT&C Enactment

In Chapter 3, a number of examples were presented of how the Western Indian Ocean island states cooperate with each other on a range of technical fisheries issues. Often, this cooperation has involved public institutions in Mauritius and Seychelles, linked to the islands' respective fisheries ministries, providing capacity-building support to their counterparts in Comoros and Madagascar. Such examples include the support provided by the SFA to the Comorian CNCSP for the creation of an MCS-focused Management Information System; the Seychelles Maritime Academy's hosting of Comorian and Malagasy students on both short and long-term professional development courses; and the work done by the MOI to promote experience exchanges among oceanographers and marine biologists from Comorian and Malagasy research organisations like INRAPE and CNRO.

Implicit in this support is an acknowledgment of marked differences in the technical quality of state fisheries institutions. These differences, in turn, are representative of the disparities in levels of socio-economic development and state cohesiveness, described in Chapter 1, which typify the Western Indian Ocean island states. How do these disparities relate to the enactment of MT&Cs? Based on the interview data collected for this study, two points stand out. First, these disparities serve to create a mismatch in the fisheries policy priorities held by the different Western Indian Ocean SIDS – and, by extension, a mismatch in their overriding political incentives. Second, these mismatched incentives produce political dynamics that, while sufficient to foster the above types of “functional” cooperation, serve to undermine the political will of the islands' respective fisheries ministries to engage in the types of regularised interactions and relationship-building that allowed for MT&Cs to not only be debated, but also operationalised and continuously deepened in the Pacific island context.

MT&C enactment is, by its nature, a strategic exercise that looks towards establishing norms and regulatory commitments that will govern DWFN fishing over the long-term. In recounting how the PNA have been able to achieve and maintain a common strategic outlook on MT&Cs, Havice (2007) notes the importance of these islands' relative homogeneity when it comes to their levels of socio-economic development and internal political cohesiveness. While by no means suggesting that the Pacific islands are (or ever have been) identical on these measures, Havice argues that the absence of *glaring* disparities in economic status and political cohesion makes it likelier that each state will take a similar outlook regarding the prospective benefits, drawbacks and trade-offs associated with specific types of collective fisheries action (this is a view cautiously echoed by Andriamahefazafy, Kull and Campling, 2019). There are

legitimate grounds to critique Havice's (2007) view on the relative economic and political "sameness" of the Pacific island states.⁴³ For the purposes of the argument that follows, however, it is important to state that any disparities between the Pacific islands on these measures do pale in comparison to those highlighted earlier among the Western Indian Ocean island states.

Dealing first with how these disparities create a mismatch in the fisheries policy priorities and political incentives held by the different Western Indian Ocean island states, it is helpful to look at the contestation that exists over the relative importance the island states place on "sustainability" vs. "sectoral growth" as the main drivers of their fisheries-based policymaking. Each of the Western Indian Ocean SIDS seeks to maximise its economic returns from fisheries resources. However, working alongside this commercial imperative is an evident Mauritian and Seychellois government focus on strengthening measures around fisheries sustainability.

In Seychelles, this sustainability ethos is arguably more ingrained as an ideological project, reflecting the role that ex-President Michel has played in promulgating the idea of the "blue economy", both regionally and internationally. The Government of Seychelles' well-publicised issuing of the world's first sovereign "blue bond" in October 2018 also reflects this commitment to sustainability.⁴⁴ The Department of Blue Economy, housed within the Office of the Vice-President, has a specific mandate that is "focused as much on conservation and promoting sustainable approaches to ocean governance...and not just on extraction for its own sake" (Researcher Interview: Ocean Governance Advisor in the Department of Blue Economy, Government of Seychelles). References to "sustainable development", "blue economy sustainability objectives" and "conservation of fish stocks for future generations" are peppered throughout the Government of Seychelles' fisheries policy documentation (SFA, 2017, 2018; SMA, 2018, 2019).

For Mauritius, an emphasis on sustainability is arguably more commercially-driven, with Port Louis seeing the implementation of fisheries sustainability measures across the Western Indian Ocean as being beneficial for its Freeport Seafood Hub, which – as Chapter 3 described – sources both fresh and processed fish and fish products from other island EEZs

⁴³ For example, much like Madagascar in the Western Indian Ocean, Papua New Guinea is a comparative 'giant', both geographically and in terms of population compared to other members of the PNA. Political instability and state fragility are the factors that likely prevent Port Moresby from playing a dominant role in Pacific island affairs. Economically, there are disparities between 'larger' island states like Fiji, with more sophisticated service sectors, and micro-island states like Nauru and Kiribati, which lack this economic sophistication.

⁴⁴ See the following link: <<https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2018/10/29/seychelles-launches-worlds-first-sovereign-blue-bond>> (accessed 17 November 2018).

before exporting these products to markets like the EU. Sustainability measures that allow the Seafood Hub to promote its “ethical sourcing” of these products is seen as a means by which it can potentially expand its reputation and market share in future (Researcher Interview: External Advisor, Indian Ocean Tuna, Ltd.; Researcher Interview: Former Chairman of the Ocean Economy Commission, Government of Mauritius). Even if the Mauritian focus on sustainability is somewhat less egalitarian than that of Seychelles, ministry documentation still discusses pursuing fisheries development “with due consideration of ocean economy objectives that prioritise long-term sustainability” (Mauritian Ministry of Ocean Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping, 2018).

Expectedly, the upshot of the emphasis both Seychelles and Mauritius place on sustainability is a higher degree of political alignment when it comes to the “MT&C process”. On matters pertaining to proper vessel licensing, the enforcement of port controls and mandating an observer presence onboard DWFN vessels, there is “broad agreement between the two countries on the importance of these terms and conditions and, I would say, reasonable agreement on how they should be put in place” (Researcher Interview: Chief Diplomatic Advisor, Government of Seychelles). Said the Former Chairman of the Government of Mauritius’ Ocean Economy Commission: “We [Mauritius] and the Seychellois don’t agree 100% on terms and conditions and I think we’re not on the same page when it comes to [vessel access and licensing] fees. But on other measures, and especially on those based around some degree of conservation or sustainability, there is at least a broad consensus” (Researcher Interview: Former Chairman of the Ocean Economy Commission, Government of Mauritius). The areas of contestation that do exist between Mauritius and Seychelles on MT&Cs will be discussed later in this chapter. For the moment, what is important to recognise is that, with sustainability as a broadly shared policy priority, these two island states have political incentives that are more aligned than not on many aspects of MT&C enactment.

This same sustainability focus is not found as a policy priority, at least in any actionable sense, within the state fisheries bodies in Comoros or Madagascar. A content analysis of ministry literature from both the Comorian DGRH and the Malagasy MRHP reveals that while references to “fisheries sustainability” “conservation” and “blue economy objectives” are not entirely absent, they are comparably few in number and far less detailed when it comes to offering specific policy prescriptions, including on issues pertaining to combatting IUU fishing (DGRH, 2015; MRHP, 2018, 2019).

What *is* given greater comparative emphasis in the Comorian and Malagasy literature are issues that pertain to “sectoral growth”, particularly the development of indigenous

fisheries processing capacities. Indeed, the 2019 Annual Report from the Malagasy MRHP reiterates the overall goals of the ministry as being: “Enhancing the contribution of fisheries to national GDP” and “Creating employment in value-added areas of export-led fisheries”. Similarly, the Comorian DGRH, in a 2018 policy brief, established the institution’s primary objective as being: “The reduction of poverty through the creation of formal employment, including [through] the creation of an industrial fisheries sub-sector” (DGRH, 2018).

To be clear, these economic development aims are hardly neglected within the state fisheries literature produced by Mauritius and Seychelles. In the latter two countries, however, these aims are not discussed with the same exclusive primacy and nor are they discussed separately from broader sustainability objectives in the way they are in Comoros and Madagascar. In regards to their prioritisation of “sustainability” vs. “growth”, there seems to be a clear difference between the Western Indian Ocean’s “more developed” and “less developed” island states. While it would perhaps seem imprudent to arrive at such a conclusion based on a review of this ministry literature alone, it should be acknowledged that when this difference in prioritisation was raised with KIs, there was considerable agreement that these differences were not merely the product of chance. Indeed, KIs were of the view that these differences in prioritisation were directly linked to the disparities in socio-economic standing between the different island states. Because both Seychelles and Mauritius have already developed stable and sophisticated value-added fisheries sectors that provide employment as well as sizeable export revenues, these islands are in a position to think differently about how their fisheries industries can be structured to better account for sustainability objectives over the long-term (Researcher Interview: Former Chairman of the Ocean Economy Commission, Government of Mauritius; Researcher Interview: Vice-President, National Association for Fish Collectors and Exporters of Madagascar).

For Comoros and Madagascar, by contrast, the suspension of their SFPAs with the EU in 2016 has led to a loss of the fisheries development funds that they had previously used to support the maintenance of even their basic fisheries infrastructure. As such, these islands are “in a fairly desperate situation...these funds [from the EU SFPAs] were supporting investments in a lot of the small-scale industry and fish processing. Our [Malagasy] government and likely Comoros too, now faces lots of pressure from people who were expecting to go fish [commercially] and get jobs [in canneries], but with the outside financial support no longer there to make it happen” (Researcher Interview: Vice-President, National Association for Fish Collectors and Exporters of Madagascar). Said a KI from Comoros: “There is definitely a difference between what we prioritise and what they [Mauritius and Seychelles] prioritise.

We're a poor country. This blue economy sounds great. Sustainability sounds great. But we need jobs first and our policies are based around this. We don't think sustainability is unimportant, but we honestly...unfortunately...have to think short-term first. For a country like Seychelles, maybe they have the luxury of making that [blue economy] their number one issue" (Researcher Interview: Fisheries Officer, DGRH).

For Comoros and Madagascar, economic fragility and the need to *urgently* recoup development support that was lost with the suspension of their SFPAs with the EU, makes a short-term focus on growth more important than the longer-term perspective around sustainability adopted by Mauritius and Seychelles. For Comorian and Malagasy fisheries policymakers, this makes the allocation of political capital towards strategic long-term objectives like MT&Cs less compelling. This is particularly true if working collectively with other islands on vessel licensing, the enforcement of port controls or mandating the presence of observers onboard DWFN vessels involves a trade-off when it comes to losing out on possible aid and/or investment from DWFNs. In the words of the KI from the Comorian DGRH: "Our focus is on attracting investment. These terms and conditions...we have agreed to them in principle, I think, through SWIOFC. But will we insist on them if they [DWFNs] come to us with investment in our fisheries sector but insist on some concessions [on these MT&Cs]? Probably not" (Researcher Interview: Fisheries Officer, DGRH).

This sentiment would seem to preclude the likelihood of MT&Cs ever being codified in a legally binding treaty similar to the Nauru Agreement. Moreover, this view places Madagascar and Comoros at odds with Mauritius and Seychelles which, while also very much engaged in trying to attract investment and grow their fisheries sectors, appear to view actionable MT&Cs as a tool to pursue sustainability objectives that they deem strategically relevant (ideologically and/or commercially). From this description, it should be apparent that unlike the Pacific island states, where there was evident unity among islands on the political imperative of asserting greater authority over industrial fishing in their collective EEZs, even if this came with the potential for a reduction in foreign aid from DWFNs, this shared political imperative is not so evident in the Western Indian Ocean.

Two specific examples illustrate the practical implications of how socio-economic disparities between the Western Indian Ocean islands have affected – and ultimately hindered – the "MT&C process". These examples concern the private access agreements that, as Chapter 3 highlighted, each of the Western Indian Ocean island states have entered into with private fishing companies from Asian DWFNs – mainly from China, Japan, South Korea and Taiwan. With the suspension of the SFPAs, these private access agreements are now the main

ways through which Comoros and Madagascar engage with DWFNs. It was noted earlier that Comoros lacks its own export-oriented commercial fisheries industry. Attempts to create such an industry through the development of the Comoros National Fishing Company, funded through investments from Qatar and Sri Lanka, have been unsuccessful. However, steps were taken by the Comorian government in 2016 to seek South Korean and then Chinese financing to make the Company's planned small-scale canning facilities operational. This financing was to come mainly in the form of commercial loans to purchase capital equipment (DGRH, 2016; Researcher Interview: Fisheries Officer, DGRH).

A condition of the loan offerings from both DWFNs was a request to the main Comorian MCS body, the CNCSP, to reduce the reporting frequency by which these countries' vessels (mainly long liners) would be required to report their movements and catch volumes to Comorian authorities. While the motivations behind this request remain somewhat opaque (and neither financing agreement went through), the implication on inter-island efforts to move forward the "MT&C process" were clear: "We were at the stage where each of the IOC islands seemed to be close to agreement on at least a preliminary set of access terms and conditions. However, once we knew the Comorians were going to concede on the [vessel] reporting requirements to get [DWFN] funding, we realised that the political will was not there. We were not a united group on this issue and for us in Mauritius and Seychelles, upholding DWFN reporting standards was a deal-breaker" (Researcher Interview: Chief Diplomatic Advisor, Government of Seychelles).

In another similar example, the Malagasy government sought Chinese financing to upgrade facilities at the country's main commercial cannery (PFOI) in 2017 (PFOI, 2017). Like in Comoros, this financing was to take the form of commercial loans and was offered in exchange for a concession on vessel access conditions; in this case, an insistence that all observers serving onboard Chinese long liners be Malagasy nationals rather than including a mix of nationalities (as the IOC has consistently promoted as part of its technical fisheries cooperation initiatives among the Western Indian Ocean islands). Collective IOC pressure, along with promises of French investment in PFOI, compelled Madagascar to reject this concession, but its effect was "to once again disrupt the process of generating real vessel access terms and conditions" (Researcher Interview: Chief Diplomatic Advisor, Government of Seychelles). Said a Malagasy KI: "Madagascar, and I suppose the Comoros too, we have become very opportunistic. Regional standards agreed with the other islands become a priority until the promise of money from a DWFN is there. Then these standards become negotiable"

(Researcher Interview: Vice-President, National Association for Fish Collectors and Exporters of Madagascar).

What does the above analysis suggest in relation to the overall focus of this study? Perhaps the most obvious point is that technical cooperation between the island states, as outlined in Chapter 3 and again at the beginning of this section, does not guarantee policy alignment or an assured desire among island states to “gang up” on integrative measures. “Functional” cooperation that involves few, if any, trade-offs – such as capacity-building training or experience exchanges between officials from state institutions – are readily undertaken. However, moves towards deeper fisheries-based integration or collective diplomacy, which is what the enactment of MT&Cs represents, involve more complex trade-offs (e.g. a potential loss of DWFN aid and/or investment).

An acceptance of these collective measures is thus conditioned upon there being commonalities (if not outright consensus) in policy alignment and shared political incentives. In the Pacific island context of the late 1970s, these priorities and incentives aligned and the result was the Nauru Agreement and its MT&Cs. The fact that these policy priorities and political incentives have mostly remained aligned in the Pacific, a result – according to Havice (2007) – that is at least partly due to these islands’ economic and political similarities producing commonly-held perspectives – has allowed these MT&Cs to be deepened over time and to take the form of ever more sophisticated cooperative regimes. Among the Western Indian Ocean islands, starker disparities in levels of socio-economic development have created different policy priorities and different political incentives, with Mauritius and Seychelles being broadly aligned on one side, while Comoros and Madagascar are aligned on the other side. This then weakens any possibility for MT&C enactment for the island grouping as a whole.

6. Development Disparities, Political Cohesiveness and the Shaping of Ministerial Political Dynamics: Implications for MT&C Enactment

To bring this analysis full circle, it is necessary to take the discussion back to the types of political dynamics that emerge among the Western Indian Ocean island states, at the ministerial-level and specifically around MT&Cs, as a result of the mismatched political incentives identified above. In the Pacific island states, a shift in political dynamics towards greater inter-ministerial engagement, aided by ministry professionalisation, regularised interaction and growing familiarity among a consistent roster of island state fisheries officials, was central to these states both entering into the Nauru Agreement and building additional

cooperative regimes thereafter. In the Western Indian Ocean, a comparable positive shift in political dynamics among island fisheries ministries is not so evident.

Looking back, it could be argued that the failure of WIOTO to become established as a technical fisheries body akin to the FFA hindered the emergence of a true technocratic space in which fisheries issues could be discussed at a high level among these islands (Researcher Interview: Ocean Governance Advisor in the Department of Blue Economy, Government of Seychelles). For reasons that will be discussed further in Chapter 5, none of the other inter-governmental organisations involved with fisheries in the Western Indian Ocean, including the IOC and SWIOFC, have provided a platform for high-level policy engagement fully equivalent to the FFA. Given how important the formation of the FFA was in catalysing fisheries ministry professionalisation in the Pacific, the lack of a truly comparable institution in the Western Indian Ocean perhaps provides a decent explanation for why ministry professionalisation never got off the ground in quite the same way among these islands. Using the Pacific context as a guide, this lack of ministry professionalisation can then be said to have hindered the emergence of cooperative political dynamics that would have made collective action, including the enactment of MT&Cs, a greater priority among the Western Indian Ocean SIDS.

The above perspective, while broadly true, is also somewhat oversimplified. This is because fisheries ministry professionalisation did occur, over time, in both Seychelles and Mauritius. As a consequence, these two islands have considerably deeper cooperative ties, being broadly aligned on sustainability-focused MT&Cs and engaging in high levels of “functional” cooperation, as described in Chapter 3. Rather than ministry professionalisation in these two states being the result of a “regional” catalyst, such as the formation of an inter-governmental fisheries body, however, this professionalisation came about mainly due to internal governance reforms pursued in each state. These reforms were introduced in Seychelles following the full restoration of democratic politics in 2004 and in Mauritius during a drive for ministerial consolidation under the Militant Socialist Movement (MSM) governments of the early-2000s (de L’Estrac, 2009).

It is in Comoros and Madagascar where this ministry professionalisation has never really taken place. In Comoros, this is seen to be due to the widespread emigration of skilled professionals, the collapse in aid for budget support due to ongoing civil conflict, as well as the inter-island rivalries that feed this conflict and which see ministerial postings mainly as prizes to be traded among the three competing islands (Researcher Interview: Fisheries Officer, DGRH). In Madagascar, fisheries scientific institutes tend to be staffed with reasonably

effective technical personnel, but ministry positions themselves are typically allocated on the basis of patronage rather than technical competence (Ramariandrasoa, 2016).

A conclusion that can be drawn from this is that the professionalisation of the islands' fisheries ministries was not *dependent* on the formation of an inter-governmental body akin to the FFA, but was also possible to achieve through internal political processes in the different islands. The fact that Mauritius and Seychelles achieved this professionalisation, while Comoros and Madagascar have not, is again the product of these islands' differences in socio-economic development and, crucially, political cohesiveness. Ongoing state fragility in Comoros and Madagascar has prevented these states from “ever making a serious effort at developing professional bureaucracies. It is often difficult to know who you will be dealing with from their [fisheries] ministries from meeting-to-meeting” (Researcher Interview: Chief Diplomatic Advisor, Government of Seychelles).

Differing policy priorities and political incentives over fisheries, combined with profound differences in the level of fisheries ministry professionalisation, all of which are linked in some way to disparities in socio-economic development and political cohesiveness, create practical challenges when it comes to fostering inter-island cooperation. They also generate a shortage of political will at the ministerial level, to engage in the regularised interactions and relationship-building that were so important to MT&C enactment in the Pacific. Turning first to practical challenges, fisheries coordination between ministries in the Western Indian Ocean islands are not characterised by regularised engagement by a stable roster of ministry officials. A review of the meeting minutes from over twenty gatherings involving fisheries ministry personnel from each Western Indian Ocean island, held between 2013 and 2018 and with MT&Cs a dedicated agenda item, revealed that at 90% of these gatherings, at least two names from the SFA have been present at every meeting. From the Fisheries Division of the Mauritian Ministry of Ocean Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping, this figure is 75%. From the Malagasy MRHP, this figure is 40%. Finally, from the Comorian DGRH, at least two names were present for only 15% of these meetings.⁴⁵

These data would seem to clearly highlight the lack of stability characterising the Comorian and Malagasy fisheries ministries, with near continuous turnover in personnel making it difficult to build any type of personal working relationships between ministry officials, not to mention any sense of camaraderie and common political ethos – the very notion

⁴⁵ These meeting minutes were accessed during the KII with the Secretary-General of the IOTC. These files were maintained as part of this KIs' personal files rather than being available as sets of institutional documents.

of *Indianocéanie*. The Ocean Governance Advisor serving in the Seychellois Department of Blue Economy offered a succinct observation on her time spent working with ministry officials in both the Pacific and Western Indian Ocean: “For a lack of better terminology, I would say there is no personal chemistry between fisheries ministry officials here, particularly when Comoros and Madagascar do not send a regular group of officials to key meetings. In the Pacific, this regularity was really important, especially when discussing something fairly sensitive like [vessel] access terms and conditions” (Researcher Interview: Ocean Governance Advisor in the Department of Blue Economy, Government of Seychelles). The Chief Diplomatic Adviser to the Government of Seychelles concurred, adding: “The islands already have some key differences in what they think is most important. These differences aren’t impossible to bridge, but the familiarity is not there between negotiators [ministry officials]. We [in Seychelles] know our counterparts in Mauritius, but with Madagascar we make progress for a while and then someone [at the MRHP] leaves and we are back to square one. With Comoros, sometimes no one [from the DGRH] shows up to our meetings to discuss [vessel access] terms and conditions” (Researcher Interview: Chief Diplomatic Advisor, Government of Seychelles).

Returning for a moment to the Pacific context, it was noted how important sustained engagement between ministry officials was among these islands in ensuring the creation of assorted working groups to pin down specific details over MT&Cs, including common vessel licensing criteria and standardised DWFN vessel reporting requirements. These types of working groups do exist in the Western Indian Ocean and have functioned successfully between Mauritius and Seychelles, not least in the joint committee these countries have established to share management of the Mascarene Plateau. For the island grouping as a whole, however, equivalent working groups of ministry officials – usually established under the auspices of the IOC, IOTC or SWIOFC – have faltered on the practical basis of fisheries ministries from the “less developed” islands not being professionalised enough to provide a stable roster of officials who can make consistent contributions to policy discourse.

Equally important is what the above issues mean when it comes to generating political will at the ministerial level. In the Pacific, MT&C enactment was a political calculation. Island states were “ganging up” to represent their collective interests against DWFNs with considerably more diplomatic clout. Doing so necessitated risk that only became acceptable once the island states had generated enough mutual engagement and trust among themselves to be sure that they could “hold their nerve” in the face of potential threats, such as a loss of

aid from their DWFN partners. The success the Pacific islands had in securing recognition of the MT&Cs enacted under the Nauru Agreement, as well as the success they had in deepening subsequent cooperative regimes, also created a sense of shared island identity.

The Western Indian Ocean, unsurprisingly, tells a different story: “I think the fisheries ministries in these islands...there is little sense of camaraderie. If we are not oriented around the same objectives and we do not get to know each other on a personal level, then we do not feel much loyalty to each other. We are not looking out for each other’s interests” (Researcher Interview: Fisheries Officer, DGRH). The final section of this chapter will relate the discussion above to the tenets of “new regionalism”. As a point of departure for that discussion, however, it is worth briefly touching on how the evidence presented above reflects on the regionness of the Western Indian Ocean islands as a grouping of states. Returning to Hettne and Söderbaum’s (2000: 461) overarching definition of regionness as involving an evolution of a group of states “...from a passive object to an active subject capable of articulating the transnational interests of the emerging region”, it is difficult to find evidence of such an evolution and indeed, if MT&Cs and associated regimes are taken as a focus, any evidence to suggest the existence of firm transnational interests – with the possible exception of some shared commonalities between the “more developed” island states of Seychelles and Mauritius.

Considering the social constructivist view of region-formation, with the emphasis it places on regularised interactions as a pathway towards the fostering of common values, identities and deepening political bonds, it is difficult to credibly assign the Western Indian Ocean islands the label of a true “region”. It is also hard to see any evidence of these SIDS building-up the collective political capital that would make a “gang up” approach to fisheries-related diplomacy worthwhile or effective.

7. Enacting MT&Cs in the Western Indian Ocean: Island Dis(Unity) and Economic Competition

In addition to inter-island disparities in levels of socio-economic development and political cohesiveness, one additional issue is worth highlighting to shed light on how efforts around MT&C enactment reflect the limits of *regionness* among the Western Indian Ocean island states, specifically at the ministerial level. It was noted earlier that among the key MT&Cs introduced by the Pacific island states was a set of collectively-defined DWFN vessel access and licensing fees. Indeed, one of the prime motivations for the Pacific islands to “gang up” in the first place and enter into the Nauru Agreement was the perception that they were

being deliberately played-off against each other by DWFNs seeking to leverage foreign aid as a means to gain fee concessions.

In the Western Indian Ocean, the idea of establishing common vessel access and licensing fees has been debated between islands at the ministerial level (Researcher Interview: Chief Diplomatic Advisor, Government of Seychelles; Ramariandrasoa, 2016; SWIOFC, 2017b). Similar to other MT&Cs, however, these common fees have yet to be operationalised in any consistent and meaningful way. When searching for an explanatory factor for this situation, inter-island economic competition over fisheries emerges as an important consideration. To be clear, this competition does not relate directly to islands *attracting* DWFN operators to their EEZs. The migratory routes of key species such as skipjack and yellowfin tuna determine both the level of fishing activity in each island's EEZ at a given time, as well as when (and for how long) DWFN operators seek to be active in each EEZ. Because tuna migration routes and the resulting level of fisheries productivity in each EEZ are determined mainly by the characteristics of local marine ecosystems, there is nothing that individual islands can do to drastically impact the productivity differences between their EEZs and those of neighbouring islands. Where economic competition does exist, however, is in attracting fisheries-related *investment* from DWFNs – particularly to support the islands' own value-added fisheries production.

Examples of this desired investment were presented earlier in relation to efforts by the Comorian and Malagasy governments to attain Chinese and South Korean loans for their canneries. On the issue of *competition* over this investment, however, political cleavages are actually most apparent between Mauritius and Seychelles, the two islands that were previously identified as having a considerable degree of alignment on many fisheries issues, including sustainability-focused MT&Cs. The issue at play is what the Former Chairman of Mauritius' Ocean Economy Commission termed “attempts at Mauritian disruption in the region's [Western Indian Ocean's] tuna value chain” (Researcher Interview: Former Chairman of the Ocean Economy Commission, Government of Mauritius).

This disruption centres around two main issues. First, Mauritius' Ocean Economy Strategy was updated in early 2018 to include, as part of its intended approach for the expansion of the port in Port Louis, objectives focused on attracting some of the purse seine vessels currently using the Port of Victoria in Seychelles as their centre of offloading, transshipment and vessel maintenance. The strategy goes so far as to directly reference Seychelles as an economic competitor: “In developing its strategic framework for the Ocean Economy, the GoM [Government of Mauritius] will focus on maintaining its competitive edge as a centre for the

region's long line fishery and seek to attract a greater portion of the [DWFN] purse seine operators currently using Seychelles' port facilities as their main regional hub" (Mauritian Ministry of Ocean Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping, 2018). Second, and connected to this, are efforts by the Mauritian government to position the Freeport Seafood Hub and its two national tuna canneries, Princes Tuna and *Thon de Mascareignes* as a processing and export centre for purse seiners – something that would come at the commercial expense of the Indian Ocean Tuna cannery in Seychelles (Researcher Interview: Former Chairman of the Ocean Economy Commission, Government of Mauritius).

There is broad consensus that the Mauritian strategy to capture market share from Seychelles in serving DWFN purse seiners is unlikely to be successful, not least because the recent expansion of vessel maintenance facilities at the Port of Victoria, as well as the additional travel time (and expense) required for purse seiners to travel to Port Louis, are likely to allow Seychelles to maintain its dominant market position (Researcher Interview: External Advisor, Indian Ocean Tuna, Ltd.). However, the diplomatic effect of Mauritius' attempts to assert its economic interests at the expense of Seychelles, for which economic linkages to the purse seine fishery are absolutely central to the national economy and for providing employment, has been an undermining of inter-ministerial relations: "There is no real logic to the Mauritian proposal. Most of the goals they have set out [on capturing market share in servicing DWFN purse seiners] do not have a sound economic reasoning. So for us [in Seychelles] it seems that part of this strategising is just to shake confidence in the ability of Seychelles to continue serving the [DWFN] purse seiners. I will be honest...this has sowed some distrust between us that was not there before" (Researcher Interview: Chief Diplomatic Advisor, Government of Seychelles).

Relating this issue back to the setting of common DWFN vessel access and licensing fees, one of the Mauritian strategies for trying to attract investment, particularly from Asian DWFNs, for port expansion and for the canneries at the centre of the Freeport Seafood Hub, has been to undercut the tentative negotiations that have occurred with Seychelles on the creation of a bilateral vessel licensing regime and set of common access fees (Comoros and Madagascar have been involved in these discussions at a general level, but with Mauritius and Seychelles taking the lead on proposing specific tangible agreements). For instance, agreement on an initial bilateral draft of common vessel licensing criteria was undermined as a result of Mauritian agreements to waive these prospective criteria in exchange for Chinese investment in processing facility upgrades at its *Thon de Mascareignes* cannery (Researcher Interview: Chief Diplomatic Advisor, Government of Seychelles). An initial agreement on a common set

of access fees to be applied across the two islands' respective EEZs, and which were to apply to all private access agreements with DWFN operators, was undercut when the Fisheries Division of the Mauritian Ministry of Ocean Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping decided entered into an access agreement with a South Korean long liner operator that disregarded these fees in favour of lower fees that were charged in exchange for reciprocal investment in technology upgrading at Princes Tuna (Researcher Interview: External Advisor, Indian Ocean Tuna, Ltd.).

Focusing on the political power dynamics that exist between the islands, the Former Chairman of Mauritius' Ocean Economy Commission noted: "Mauritius is the little United States of the island grouping. Our commitments with Seychelles [on the setting of common fees] are important and I think they are, at some level, undertaken in good faith. But if we see an opportunity for self-interest...and the Seafood Hub is very much a top economic priority for our government...then these bilateral commitments, or commitments that may also involve Comoros and Madagascar, will always be secondary" (Researcher Interview: Former Chairman of the Ocean Economy Commission, Government of Mauritius). Stated differently, while the power dynamics between the different islands, at which Mauritius sits atop the island grouping as a comparative economic giant, do not seem to affect issues around basic "functional" cooperation, which continues apace even with the introduction of the competitive economic dynamics noted above, these power dynamics do seem to matter more when commercial interests come into play. The willingness of the Comorian and Malagasy governments to similarly undercut MT&Cs in exchange for short-term commercial gains – even if little tangible benefit has accrued to these countries for doing so – further demonstrates that any sense of unity among these islands will quickly give way to individual interest in the right commercial circumstances.

When looking holistically at the economic potential of fisheries for the islands as a whole, this situation is unfortunate. Said the Ocean Governance Advisor in the Government of Seychelles' Department of Blue Economy: "I think in the Pacific, the benefits of an integrated economic and political approach [to fisheries] have been clear. You look at those islands and they have all mostly gained from collective action, at least over time. They may not all have seen it that way at the beginning, but most have better [economic] returns from fisheries than they did. In the [Western] Indian Ocean, the same thing could happen, but short-term thinking about commercial benefits from the fishery still seems most important [to these islands]" (Researcher Interview: Ocean Governance Advisor in the Department of Blue Economy, Government of Seychelles). From the standpoint of the island grouping's respective

fisheries ministries, the end result of a willingness to seemingly abandon “regional” commitments in favour of short-term economic goals, seems to be an undermining of trust and a view that on the creation of potentially integrative regimes, existing political dynamics simply do not exist to make them a reality.

8. The Western Indian Ocean Islands as a Socially-Constructed Region: Considerations from the Perspective of Island Fisheries Ministries

The primary research question posed by this study relates to how existing political dynamics between the Western Indian Ocean island states incentivise (or fail to incentivise) deepening cooperation, integration and collective diplomacy among these states over fisheries. This chapter has shown that on the specific issue of enacting MT&Cs, and looking at political dynamics that affect inter-island cooperation between these states’ fisheries ministries, these dynamics are generally not conducive to allowing these islands to move beyond basic forms of technical or “functional” cooperation and towards the enactment of Ruggie’s (1975: 570) actionable regimes: “mutual expectations, rules and regulations, plans, organisational energies and financial commitments, which have been accepted by a group of states.”

Two arguments were put forward for why this appears to be the case. First, the disparities in socio-economic development and political cohesiveness between the island states, with “more developed” Mauritius and Seychelles on one side and “less developed” Comoros and Madagascar on the other, give the different islands contrasting policy preferences. While all of these islands are focused, to some degree, on maximising the economic value they receive from their fisheries, both Seychelles and Mauritius are comparatively more sustainability-minded. Comoros and Madagascar, reeling from the loss of structural development funding from the EU, which had been used to support the development of their value-added fisheries industries, are focused on short-term sectoral growth. The implication for MT&Cs is that the two “less developed” island states see far less to be gained from a policy initiative that is, by its nature, strategic and focused on long-term fisheries governance – particularly if pursuing this policy initiative runs the risk of upsetting relations with DWFNs willing to provide immediate investment.

Compounding these differences in policy priorities and resulting political incentives, are the sharp disparities between Seychelles and Mauritius, both stable and democratic, versus Comoros and Madagascar, characterised by acute stage fragility. A consequence of these disparities relates to the profound differences that exist in levels of fisheries ministry professionalisation. Unable to contribute a stable roster of technically-proficient ministry

officials due to their own internal political dynamics, the ability of both Comoros and Madagascar to contribute substantively to key discussions around MT&Cs is inherently limited. This means that while MT&C enactment can be debated, at least to a degree, among ministry officials in Seychelles and Mauritius, who have the opportunity to regularly interact, build personal relationships and even develop a degree of camaraderie with each other, similar interactions cannot be held with Comorian and Malagasy policymakers. This creates political dynamics that are not conducive to the sustained hard work of developing truly integrative cooperative regimes.

Even among these two “more developed” island states, however, economic competition over fisheries serves to inhibit progress towards developing lasting cooperative regimes. Even if these regimes, such as collective DWFN vessel access and licensing fees, could serve to benefit all of the islands over the long-term, short-term commercial imperatives tend to take precedence. This is true even if these serve to undermine progress towards regime creation. From all of the above points, it is necessary to conclude that in spite of the basic technical cooperation they may engage in with each other, the Western Indian Ocean island states’ fisheries ministries too often lack political will or a common conception of how a more integrated “regional” fisheries sector should be operationalised. As such, it becomes difficult for these actors to move beyond more superficial forms of cooperation and towards integrative measures – such as MT&Cs – that would demonstrate the true sense of collective interest that these states’, “close and united” would profess to hold.

What do the above observations say when it comes to querying whether or not the Western Indian Ocean islands represent a socially-constructed region? The technical cooperation that does take place between these islands does demonstrate the clear existence of inter-island linkages. These linkages take the form of capacity-building and experience exchange among fisheries officials, but also pertain to the often-substantial economic linkages between the islands’ fisheries firms, which were described in Chapter 3. As such, it seems acceptable to define these islands as a “region” using Nye’s (1968: xii) accepted minimal definition of a “region” as “a limited number of states linked together by a geographical relationship and a degree of mutual interdependence.” Indeed, even drawing on Powers and Goertz’s (2011: 2389) similar but more updated definition of a “region” as “geography plus something,” would seem to apply adequately to the Western Indian Ocean island states.

However, given that the above definitions are largely lacking in analytical sophistication, it is worth considering more varied notions when it comes to interpreting the factors involved in “region-formation.” Hettne and Söderbaum’s (2000: 461) “new

regionalist” definition of a “region”, referenced elsewhere in this chapter, as “a geographical area transformed from a passive object to an active subject capable of articulating the transnational interests of the emerging region”, offers interesting pathways for interpretation. On one hand, there are enough “functional” linkages between these islands, as well as dedicated inter-governmental organisations established to coordinate their interactions, that it is likely unfair to consider them merely as a “passive object.” Nor, however, does the evidence presented in this chapter point to the islands as an “active subject”, at least at the ministerial level, with clearly defined transnational fisheries interests. Interactions between the islands’ fisheries ministries are too fragmented, too *ad hoc* and too prone to be undermined by short-term opportunism, for a reliable defence to be provided as to the existence of these interests.

Going back to the discussion of regionness introduced in Chapter 2, the absence of clear transnational interests at present does not preclude the possibility that these interests could be established in the future. Regionness, after all, assumes that “regions” are politically contested and that their structure, purpose and definition will fluctuate as political dynamics change over time (Hurrell, 1995). Looking at the typology of regionness introduced by Hettne (2005: 548), in which states can constitute a “regional space”, a “regional translocal system”, a “regional social system”, a “regional international society”, a “regional community” or a “regionalised institutional polity”, it is possible to offer a judgment as to where ministerial interactions between the Western Indian Ocean island states place these islands on a fisheries-focused regionness spectrum. A “regional space” is merely “a geographic area, delimited by more or less natural physical barriers.” It is a given that the islands meet these criteria. The “translocal social system” is one in which “the region is organised by human inhabitants, at first in relatively isolated communities, but more and more creating some kind of trans-local relationship.” Again, the islands easily meet these criteria of regionness, with established basic political and economic relationships, fostered by the islands’ respective fisheries ministries, being clearly evident.

The discussion becomes more interesting when moving up this spectrum to the “regional social system”, defined by Hettne as involving “ever widening translocal relations, in which the constituent units are dependent on each other, as well as on the overall stability of the system.” From a fisheries standpoint, there is a reasonable case to be made that the islands fall within this category. Translocal relations between the island states are reasonably sophisticated, with considerable technical or “functional” ties between a variety of ministry-linked fisheries institutions. Whether the islands are dependent on each other or on the overall stability of the system is more questionable. However, it is largely the case that commercial

initiatives such as Mauritius' Freeport Seafood Hub and Seychelles' Indian Ocean Tuna, Ltd. canning factory all have business models that depend on sustaining "regional" supply chains. The fact that the islands' ministries place considerable importance in supporting these supply chains lends credence to the notion of inter-island dependency. The issue of MT&Cs is at the heart of whether ministry interactions allow the islands to be deemed a "regional society", which is "characterised by norms and rules which increase the level of predictability in the system." The failure of the islands to enact robust MT&Cs would appear to preclude the possibility of applying this level of regionness to the island states.

Hettne's "regional community" takes shape "when an enduring organisational framework facilitates and promotes social communication and convergence of values and behaviour throughout the region." Interestingly, the Western Indian Ocean islands do theoretically have such an organisational framework in the form of the IOC – and to a lesser degree, IOTC and SWIOFC. Chapter 5 will delve into why these bodies do not really succeed in promoting the constructivist's ideal of converging values and behaviours. At the ministerial level and looking at MT&Cs, however, it is clear that this framework does not exist in any real sense. The failure (so far) of the "MT&C process" also suggests that ministerial interactions have not facilitated the convergence of values or behaviours among the islands over fisheries. Finally, the "regionalised institutional polity" "has a more fixed structure of decision-making and stronger actor capability." Indeed, this final category of regionness is defined by what Hettne calls *actorness* – the capacity of states to act on commonly-defined priorities. The Pacific island states, in institutionalising their commonly-held MT&Cs in an inter-governmental body with executive powers (the PNA), has arguably become a "regionalised institutional polity" in regards to fisheries. There is little, however, to suggest a high degree of actorness in the Western Indian Ocean. For the two "less developed" island states – Comoros and Madagascar – it is not clear that any real level of actorness exists at all.

The following chapters will review these islands' regionness using the same typology, albeit from alternative perspectives – through the lenses of inter-governmental organisations (Chapter 5) and non-state actors (Chapter 6). This chapter concludes with a brief thought on what ministerial interactions around MT&Cs say about the social constructivist ethos that defines "new regionalism." Constructivism assumes that cooperation is "constructed" through consistent social practice and interaction. Constructivists give credence to the notion that this system is actively developed – and consistently changed – based on the prevailing interests, values and identities held by participating political actors (Finnemore, 1996; Wendt, 1999). Given the observations of this chapter, indicating that social practice and interaction are, at

best, *ad hoc* occurrences between fisheries ministry officials, it should come as no surprise to suggest that there is, so far, little to indicate the active construction of common ideas, common values or a common fisheries identity among these states.

Speaking to the overarching issue of SIDS diplomacy, this chapter reinforces the fact that it is complex political dynamics, rather than “islandness” *per se*, that determines whether these types of states to have the will (and even the practical ability) to “gang up”. The Pacific SIDS, in part due to their relative socio-economic homogeneity and their common perceptions of being played against each other by DWFNs over vessel access terms and conditions, made a conscious political choice to enforce greater control over their fisheries resources. The creation of the FFA was a political act that set-in motion processes of fisheries ministry professionalisation. This, in turn, incubated an ongoing culture of interaction that made “ganging up” to create MT&Cs a politically acceptable (and seemingly valuable) choice for each of these SIDS. In the Western Indian Ocean, many of the same motivations should exist for these SIDS to enact MT&Cs. However, these islands, largely because of their comparative heterogeneity, have never viewed “ganging up” to do so as the best use of their political capital. The fact that the Western Indian Ocean SIDS are islands has never been enough to ensure that they find common cause. As Graham (2017) noted in her analysis of small state diplomacy, these states are not necessarily that different from any other type of state. Their national interests are defined in complex ways and the fact that they are “small” or are “islands” should not be seen as a decisive indicator for how these states will choose to behave diplomatically.

Having explored inter-island political dynamics at the state-to-state ministerial level, Chapter 5 will now continue the study’s analysis by focusing on how these same dynamics manifest themselves within the key inter-governmental organisations – IOC, IORA, IOTC and SWIOFC – that seek to drive cooperation in the Western Indian Ocean fisheries sector.

CHAPTER 5: Building Sustainable Fisheries Regimes in the Western Indian Ocean: Island Cooperation and Contestation within Inter-Governmental Organisations

1. Introduction and Chapter Overview

Following on the previous chapter's discussion of inter-island political dynamics at the state-to-state ministerial level, this chapter considers these dynamics as they relate to the second of the study's investigative "lenses" – the Western Indian Ocean's key inter-governmental organisations. As was noted in Chapter 3, the Western Indian Ocean island states are members of four inter-governmental bodies that seek to play a role in facilitating cooperation in the fisheries sector: IOC, IORA, IOTC and SWIOFC. This chapter will focus primarily on the IOC and IOTC, while drawing on examples from IORA and SWIOFC where relevant.⁴⁶ Focusing on the political dynamics that are evident between the island states within these bodies, this chapter continues with this study's overarching focus, asking how these dynamics appear to incentivise deepening cooperation, integration and collective diplomacy among the islands on fisheries issues. The chapter further interrogates what these political dynamics say about the Western Indian Ocean island states in the context of "new regionalist" thinking around the social construction of regions. Finally, the chapter continues with a discussion around the implications of these political dynamics when it comes to the actual and prospective utility of island states "ganging up" to address common interests.

In Chapter 4, it was argued that at the state-to-state ministerial level, two main factors hinder closer cooperation, integration and collective action among the Western Indian Ocean island states over fisheries. First, the disparities in levels of development between the islands creates a misalignment in their respective policy and political incentives. Second, economic competition between the islands, particularly over fisheries-related investment from DWFNs, serves to limit these states' willingness to expend political capital on the creation and maintenance of integrative regimes. In contrast to the Pacific island grouping, these factors lead to an evident lack of regionness and provide little indication that these islands constitute a socially-constructed *region*. This chapter continues with this line of argument and contends that within the institutional structures of the main fisheries-focused inter-governmental organisations, particularly the IOC and IOTC, the political dynamics at play between the

⁴⁶ The decision to focus on the IOC and IOTC in this chapter partly reflects the fact that the researcher was able to interview KIs from these two organisations. Efforts to interview KIs from IORA and SWIOFC were unsuccessful. However, it is also the case that when it comes to issues pertaining to the migratory tuna fishery, the IOC and IOTC are the two inter-governmental bodies at the forefront of most cooperative efforts. SWIOFC, in spite the prominent role it plays in the "MT&C process" discussed in Chapter 4, mainly deals with non-tuna fisheries. IORA, on the other hand, has initiated a number of fisheries projects, but does not have the dedicated institutional focus on island-specific fisheries cooperation held by the IOC. Nor does IORA deal with tuna fisheries governance in a manner akin to the IOTC.

Western Indian Ocean islands again fail to incentivise sustained moves towards the construction of actionable and integrative fisheries regimes. Nor are the political dynamics evident within these organisations conducive to fostering common diplomatic action among the island states over fisheries. This is in spite of the fact that these inter-governmental bodies exist largely to facilitate such collective endeavours.

This chapter will argue that three key factors are at play in explaining these outcomes. First, while inter-governmental organisations are often highly effective in fostering technical fisheries cooperation among the islands, there is an evident lack of coordination *between* these bodies. An upshot of this is considerable duplication in the types of fisheries projects and programmes implemented under the auspices of each organisation. This duplication is highly inefficient since it forces each of the islands to overstretch their limited financial and human resources to try and participate as uniformly as possible in a number of administratively separate but nearly identical fisheries initiatives. The result of the islands' scarce resources being pulled in multiple directions is an uneven level of real engagement, particularly by under-resourced Comoros and Madagascar, in any of these initiatives. This, in turn, weakens the likelihood of these organisations fostering political dynamics conducive to sustained integration, regime-building or collective action for the island grouping as a whole.

Second, and somewhat connected to the above, the islands appear to each have a different political calculus in regards to which inter-governmental organisations are most worthy of their political capital. For Seychelles, the Victoria-based IOTC, with its apolitical and technocratic approach to fisheries governance, is given political prioritisation. For Mauritius, which alone among the islands has ambitions to be a prominent actor in the wider Indian Ocean economy, IORA and the political connections it allows Mauritius to strengthen with countries like Australia and (especially) India, is of paramount importance. Comoros and Madagascar, on the other hand, invest more effort in the IOC, where their comparative economic underdevelopment and political instability do not serve to marginalise them; a problem both countries face in IORA and the IOTC, with their much broader collections of member states. With the different Western Indian Ocean island states investing their energies in different inter-governmental bodies, the result is that *none* of these organisations serve to effectively foster the types of political dynamics required to sustainably deepen fisheries cooperation, compel the islands to undertake integrative measures or support them to consistently “gang up” for collective diplomatic efforts. This does not mean that these inter-governmental organisations are unimportant. However, without any of these bodies having the full backing of the islands' collective political capital, the scope for any of them to emerge as

platforms to support the transformation of these islands “...from a passive object to an active subject capable of articulating the transnational interests of the emerging region” (Hettne and Söderbaum’s (2000: 461) is conspicuously limited.

The third factor is the influence of France, both as a “regional” state (through its sovereign control of Mayotte and Réunion) and in its role as an external power keen on enforcing its territorial/EEZ claims in the Western Indian Ocean. Neither Mayotte nor Réunion have nearly as prominent a position within the Western Indian Ocean tuna fishery as do the four independent island states. It is for this reason that these islands were not given much focus in the previous chapter on MT&C enactment. Despite this, France does exert considerable influence within the institutional structures of the IOC – through Réunion’s membership in the organisation, the EU’s observer status within the body, as well as through the EU funding that comprises around half of the IOC’s core operating budget and most of its project-based funding (IOC, 2018). French power within the IOC does not necessarily manifest itself directly in fisheries issues. Rather, the tendency of France to (often successfully) use IOC structures to play off member states against each other – particularly when it comes to pressing its contested territorial claims – has the effect of creating political tension and contestation between the four independent island states. Efforts towards fisheries cooperation, integration and collective action through the IOC then become something of an indirect casualty as the islands struggle to overcome stoked internal divisions in order to pursue collective fisheries interests.

Similar to what was argued in Chapter 4, the cumulative result of the above factors is an island grouping that, while very much engaged in “functional” fisheries cooperation, evidences few signs of true regionness and very little of what a “new regionalist” thinker would identify as a commonly constructed identity over fisheries. Interestingly, the Pacific example again offers something of a contrast, with both the FFA and PNA standing out as inter-governmental organisations that have been largely successful in fostering rationalised collective action, regime-building and a common fisheries-focused regional identity among island states. As was done in the previous chapter, the analysis that follows will draw attention to pertinent examples from the Pacific context, particularly where these can be used to compare and contrast the functionality of fisheries-focused inter-governmental organisations in this island geography with those in the Western Indian Ocean.

The chapter will present its evidence for the above arguments through an examination of one specific issue area: MCS capacity-building and the harmonisation of fisheries surveillance systems across the island grouping; something that serves as a central focus for each of the Western Indian Ocean’s inter-governmental bodies.

2. Inter-Governmental Organisations in the Western Indian Ocean: The Evolution of “Mandate Creep” in the Fisheries Sector

Chapter 3 provided a brief introduction to each of the four fisheries-focused inter-governmental organisations to which the Western Indian Ocean island states belong. From this introduction, it was possible to identify, based on their founding mandates and in spite of their varying collections of member states, a fairly clear and complementary division of responsibilities between these organisations. Both the IOTC and SWIOFC, for example, operate under the auspices of the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) and are primarily technocratic “rules setting” organisations. These bodies work to establish and enforce international norms around fisheries management, both within member state EEZs and on the high seas. The IOTC carries out this role with a focus on the tuna fishery. While its membership encompasses all of the African and Asian nations with Indian Ocean coastlines, as well as DWFNs like China, Japan and South Korea, its core focus tends to be on managing the tuna fishery in the Western Indian Ocean (Researcher Interview: Secretary-General, IOTC). The membership of SWIOFC is more limited, encompassing the Western Indian Ocean island states, coastal East African states, as well as two Asian countries (Maldives and Yemen). In spite of its prominent role in the “MT&C process” described in Chapter 4, SWIOFC’s focus is largely on non-tuna pelagic resources.⁴⁷

Both the IOC and IORA have mandates to foster cooperation among their member states on a broad range of issue areas, with fisheries being only one component of this cooperation. IORA is undeniably the most ambitious of the inter-governmental bodies, seeking to foster closer trade and investment linkages between all Indian Ocean rim countries, promote collaboration in regards to maritime security, support disaster risk reduction strategies, as well as encourage broad-based academic, scientific and tourism exchange (Meng, 2018). In spite of the broadness of this mandate, however, IORA is the organisation with the least amount of “executive power”, with its assorted functions being almost entirely dialogue-based rather than involving the creation and enforcement of binding agreements between members. For example, IORA’s Fisheries Support Unit (FSU), based in the Omani capital of Muscat, operates exclusively as a dialogue forum and research unit, working to bring together fisheries officials from across member states to engage in scientific studies and exchanges of experience, but with no expectation that these outputs will lead to IORA itself driving the creation of actionable fisheries regimes among member states (Geest, 2017).

⁴⁷ See the following link for an overview of SWIOFC: <<http://www.fao.org/fishery/rfb/swiofc/en>> (accessed 17 September 2018).

At one time, the IOC was the most political of the four inter-governmental organisations. Being the only one of the bodies to have its membership be exclusive to the Western Indian Ocean island states, the IOC has always provided a deliberative space for the islands' heads of state, ministry officials and scientific personnel to engage with each other on issues specific to their interests, rather than having to also encompass the interests of other Indian Ocean countries. However, whereas the IOC began as an anti-colonial body (McDougall, 1994, 1997), the organisation's admittance of Réunion (and by association France) as a member in 1986, marked the beginning of a gradual move by the IOC towards becoming a largely technocratic and project-focused organisation. As will be discussed later in this chapter, this move towards organisational technocracy has not always been welcomed: "The IOC now exists largely to receive and spend the European Union's development funds. That's about it" (Researcher Interview: Former Chairman of the Ocean Economy Commission, Government of Mauritius).

Like IORA, the IOC promotes technical fisheries cooperation, as well as cooperation in other sectors. Unlike IORA, however, the IOC promotes cooperative efforts in fisheries that are intended to produce not just dialogue, but also tangible outputs in the form of binding agreements, joint area management schemes (such as that governing the Mascarene Plateau between Mauritius and Seychelles) and political commitments towards joint policy initiatives, including a common strategic framework for the "blue economy" (Ramariandrasoa, 2017). Unlike SWIOFC and the IOTC, the IOC is not fundamentally focused on "rule making" *per se*, but rather on operationalising practical cooperation, such as on the sharing of fisheries surveillance assets, harmonising port control measures and developing training curricula for MCS personnel, such as island state observers serving aboard DWFN vessels (Researcher Interview: Chief Diplomatic Advisor, Government of Seychelles; Researcher Interview: Secretary-General, IOTC). Finally, whereas IORA, the IOTC and SWIOFC are all focused primarily (though not exclusively) on issues affecting advanced artisanal and industrial fishing, the IOC also implements a number of projects that support the islands to maintain livelihoods in the traditional fishing sector (Sherbut, 2008).

The Western Indian Ocean island states have a clear vested interest in all of the above inter-governmental organisations, not least since the IOTC Secretariat is based in Seychelles, while those of the IOC and IORA are headquartered in Mauritius (SWIOFC's Secretariat is based in the Mozambican capital of Maputo). The organisations all, in theory, should play niche roles in different aspects of the fisheries sector, all of which could have value for the islands. The IOTC establishes and governs norms relating to the industrial tuna fishery.

SWIOFC does the same for the non-tuna fishery. IORA promotes dialogue and scientific collaboration, while exposing the Western Indian Ocean island states to scientific and policy expertise from across the Indian Ocean rim. The IOC is more localised and island-specific in focus, while working mainly through practical projects to create a more unified approach to the fisheries sector. Efforts by the islands to engage with each other (and with their other maritime neighbours) through these organisations would appear to present clear opportunities for them to achieve a deeper level of mutual fisheries integration.

An evident problem has emerged in recent years, however, as these organisations' founding mandates have gradually given way to mandates that are both more expansive and more muddled. Indeed, a review of the annual reports from each organisation, even over the period 2010 to 2019, reveals the emergence of what could be termed “mandate creep”, as an ever-increasing number of fisheries priorities are added to organisational agendas. Rather than the organisations having clear areas of fisheries specialisation that they started with, and which are alluded to in the descriptions above, they have increasingly come to take on many of the same objectives and areas of focus. This is particularly the case on issues relating to fisheries MCS. While not always identical in their operating modalities (e.g. IORA remains dialogue-focused and the IOC focused on tangible projects), each of the four inter-governmental organisations now have specific initiatives focused on the training of vessel observers and the training of port control authorities. Each body also has an overlapping focus on supporting countries to develop fisheries surveillance Management Information Systems (MIS') (IOC, 2017; IORA, 2019; IOTC, 2018a; SWIOFC, 2017b).

This “mandate creep” has not gone unnoticed. Said the Chief Diplomatic Advisor to the Government of Seychelles, formerly the Secretary-General of the IOC: “It is certainly true that these organisations are now trying to do many of the same things. This was not always the case. We [at the IOC] focused for a long time on vessel observer training, for example, but then it was decided that SWIOFC would do the same thing. Then the countries in IORA decided that observer training should be part of that organisation's role too” (Researcher Interview: Chief Diplomatic Advisor, Government of Seychelles). Rather than clear complementarities, the organisations are increasingly defined by a fairly substantial level of duplication and overlap. More detailed depictions of this duplication, as well as its implications for inter-island political dynamics, will be presented in the next section of this chapter. For the moment, it is useful to ask why this duplication and overlap have emerged. For the KIs interviewed for this study, the explanation lies with the increasingly donor-driven nature of these organisations' respective operations. While member states contribute dues to each

organisation, these contributions are rarely sufficient to cover the operating costs of these bodies' Secretariats nor the expenses involved in organising annual summits or even the smaller and more frequent meetings held between member state officials (Researcher Interview: Secretary-General, IOTC). Much of this core funding instead comes from multilateral bodies like the World Bank, from within the UN system or – as with the IOC – from the European Commission. Moreover, project-based funding is almost entirely contributed by donors (Researcher Interview: Secretary-General, ITOC; IOTC, 2017a; SWIOFC, 2016b).

A degree of donor dependence among these organisations is unavoidable. This is particularly the case for bodies like the IOC and SWIOFC, where many of the member states are small and/or impoverished countries with few resources of their own to contribute. Indeed, from a project perspective, most members of the four inter-governmental organisations eagerly welcome donor funds as vital contributions to support a range of fisheries initiatives (Researcher Interview: Fisheries Officer, DGRH). However, as donors have become more attuned to trying to address key fisheries problems, such as the drivers of IUU fishing, they have been eager to fund an ever-wider range of initiatives. Inter-governmental organisations, in turn, have adjusted their remits accordingly: “You have to understand that the member states of each organisation want funding for fisheries. If an organisation’s existing mandate is not ideal for attracting this funding, then members will simply tweak the mandate so that it becomes more aligned with what the donors have an interest in funding” (Researcher Interview: Former Chairman of the Ocean Economy Commission, Government of Mauritius). The Ocean Governance Advisor in the Government of Seychelles’ Department of Blue Economy concurred: “If donor funds are available, none of the member states will worry too much about whether the projects being funded fully align with a specific organisational mandate. These mandates are movable” (Researcher Interview: Ocean Governance Advisor in the Department of Blue Economy, Government of Seychelles).

A cynical interpretation of the above perspectives would indicate that member states view the inter-governmental bodies they are a part of as serving primarily to deliver funding rather than having value for the specialised technical roles they are intended to play. There is clearly an element of truth to this, but while “mandate creep” may be conducive to attracting more in the way of donor funds for inter-governmental organisations, it brings with it the need for member states to stretch their resources, and particularly their human resources, ever more thinly. This is particularly the case if members are to *meaningfully* participate in the increasing array of overlapping initiatives implemented through the different organisations. The

implications of “mandate creep” on the Western Indian Ocean islands’ scarce resources, and what this means for the political dynamics fostered among the islands at the inter-governmental organisation level, are detailed in the analysis that follows.

3. “Mandate Creep”, Resource Scarcity and the Undermining of Effective Political Engagement among the Western Indian Ocean Island States: The Case of Fisheries MCS

It was suggested above that there is considerable overlap among the four inter-governmental organisations when it comes to implementing projects and programmes around fisheries MCS. In fact, this overlap often takes the form of direct duplication, with nearly identical types of initiatives being launched under the auspices of each organisation or even similar projects being implemented by the same organisation. Two of the most prominent fisheries projects implemented with the involvement of the Western Indian Ocean island states are the SmartFish Project, implemented primarily through the IOC, with funding from the European Commission, as well as the SWIOFish Project, implemented under the auspices of both SWIOFC and the IOC with funding from the World Bank. Both of these projects were briefly introduced in Chapter 3.

The SmartFish Project was a large, multi-phased initiative implemented from 2011 to 2018 at a cost of twenty-one million Euros. While the IOC was the primary implementing agency, the geographic scope of the project also included a number of East African coastal states and involved collaboration with SWIOFC and the IOTC, as well as with additional regional organisations like the African Union, COMESA, the East African Community (EAC) and SADC, to name only a few.⁴⁸ SmartFish focused its activities on five main themes: fisheries development and management; fisheries governance; MCS; facilitation of trade in fish and fish products; and food security.

External evaluations of the SmartFish project point to a number of positive outcomes in the above areas, particularly in relation to MCS. For instance, the project provided opportunities for exchanges of experience between MCS officials, including a very well-regarded exchange that saw technical personnel from the SFA welcome Comorian officials from the CNCSP for a six-week placement. This placement was used to strengthen the capacity of CNCSP officials on “best practice” approaches to the development of MCS management strategies, the planning of scientific data collection, the interpretation of scientific data, as well

⁴⁸ See the following link for an overview of the SmartFish Project <<https://agrotec-spa.net/smartfish-programme/>> (accessed 12 November 2019).

as how to carry-out effective stakeholder consultations with traditional and artisanal fishers (IOC, 2016). The project also developed a standardised curriculum that could be applied to the training of on-board vessel observers across the island states (and beyond), with this curriculum subsequently being adopted as a “gold standard” for training by educational institutes like the Seychelles Maritime Academy (Researcher Interview: Deputy Director, Seychelles Maritime Academy). Finally, the SmartFish project was deemed highly successful in encouraging agreements for the sharing of MCS surveillance assets, such as helicopters, light aircraft and remote sensing equipment - between the Western Indian Ocean island states, as well as between the islands and nearby East African countries (IOC, 2016; Researcher Interview: Secretary-General, IOTC). SmartFish’s contributions to strengthening MCS capacity were recognised through the project’s receipt of two global prizes for leading the fight against IUU fishing.⁴⁹

The SWIOFish Project, initiated in 2015 and now in its third phase of implementation, was launched with many of the same objectives as SmartFish, albeit with a much larger implementation budget of over 200 million U.S. Dollars. Like SmartFish, SWIOFish took a particular focus on fisheries governance, institutional strengthening and capacity-building (including in MCS), as well as improving livelihoods in the traditional and artisanal fisheries sectors. SWIOFish placed a greater emphasis than SmartFish on engaging with private sector fisheries operators, emphasising value addition within export-led fisheries value chains. SWIOFish also placed a more direct focus on conservation, encouraging project members – inclusive once again of both the Western Indian Ocean island states and East African coastal states – to pursue the creation and enactment of Marine Protected Areas within their EEZs.⁵⁰ Like SmartFish, SWIOFish has been a well-regarded initiative, with external evaluations pointing to the project’s contribution to improving the quality of both bilateral and multilateral protocols and procedures for combatting IUU fishing, supporting fisheries processors within the island states and in East African coastal states to undertake the steps needed to meet EU sanitary and phytosanitary export standards for fish and fish products, as well as in encouraging member states – and particularly the island states – to develop protocols for joint vessel patrols (SWIOFC, 2016a, 2017a, 2018a).

⁴⁹ See the following link: <<https://asiapacificreport.nz/2016/03/11/indian-oceans-smartfish-wins-global-award-for-fight-against-illegal-fishing/>> (accessed 17 June 2020).

⁵⁰ See the following link for an overview of the SWIOFish Project: <https://symposium.wiomsa.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/23_SWIOFish-Brief-for-Speciall-Session-at-11th-WIOMSA-Symposium.pdf> (accessed 05 June 2018).

From the above, it can be broadly acknowledged that both SmartFish and SWIOFish have been implemented with reasonable levels of success. Both projects have clearly facilitated technical cooperation between their constituent member states, with inter-governmental organisations – namely, the IOC and SWIOFC – playing leading roles in project coordination. The KIs interviewed for this study were admittedly less sanguine about the two projects than was the evaluative literature. Indeed, the sustainability of these projects was held in doubt by some interviewees: “Both [of these projects] achieved a lot. This should be acknowledged. However, these projects have been so bureaucratic that by the time we got to implementing anything, the major problems...especially with IUU fishing...had evolved and needed new responses that that the project plans had not considered” (Researcher Interview: Former Chairman of the Ocean Economy Commission, Government of Mauritius). Said another respondent: “In my view, these projects are great at using the availability of lots of budget [sic] to make things happen in the moment. But you take away that funding...I think SmartFish just ended...and what compels our islands to keep cooperating with the same energy? A lot of what these projects achieved may not be sustained” (Researcher Interview: Former Chief Fisheries Officer, Government of Mauritius).

The purpose here is not to evaluate the efficacy of the above projects. However, commentary raising doubts about the sustainability of these initiatives is relevant to considering whether these projects have really been able to go beyond “functional” cooperation towards promoting deeper integrative ties among participating states, including the islands. The above perspectives, while not wholly authoritative, suggest not. Said the Chief Diplomatic Advisor to the Government of Seychelles, speaking of his time serving as Secretary-General of the IOC: “I am proud of both projects. They have allowed cooperation to happen that might not have happened [otherwise]. European funding and the EU’s project management expertise played a big role in helping us with this. But is it sustainable? Sort of, but I am not sure we have done enough to build on our mutual cooperation in these projects and to ensure that this cooperation would inevitably continue afterward. A lot has changed for the positive, but it could have been more” (Researcher Interview: Chief Diplomatic Advisor, Government of Seychelles).

Relating the above commentary back to the issue of “mandate creep” among inter-governmental organisations, one of the main observations about these projects, and a factor that was seen to raise doubt on their sustainability, was the extent to which they duplicated many of the same activities, usually while trying to meet the same objectives. Both projects, for instance, included parallel efforts to develop training curricula and to organise practical training for vessel observers. The two projects also introduced parallel efforts to provide

training and technical input into the development of fisheries surveillance MIS', as well as promoting interventions focused on improving scientific data collection for catch volume assessments. Finally, both projects introduced initiatives geared towards improving community-level area management practices for the surveillance of coastal (non-tuna) fishing (IOC, 2016; Researcher Interview: Former Chief Fisheries Officer, Government of Mauritius). Some of this duplication was well-intentioned, with parallel initiatives potentially acting to reinforce each other. Given the IOC's mandate to undertake project-based technical initiatives, none of the above are particularly out of place in the context of this body's scope of work.

However, it is not clear that the above duplication was done with complementarity as a priority. Administratively, "these were separate projects with no management overlap, no real coordination and no real sharing of results" (Researcher Interview: Former Chief Fisheries Officer, Government of Mauritius). Perhaps most important, in the context of "mandate creep", is that while the IOC was the lead implementing body for both projects, initiatives focused on vessel observer training, MIS development and catch volume data collection were implemented under the auspices of the IOC for SmartFish but under SWIOFC for SWIOFish. This is in spite of the fact that, with the partial exception of catch volume data collection, these themes are not traditionally under SWIOFC's remit. A review of the minutes from a meeting of MCS officials from the Ninth Session of SWIOFC, held in South Africa in 2018, points to concerns around this institutional set-up, with talk of "inefficiencies in project implementation" and "lack of project administration experience in SWIOFC, which has hindered some aspects of project implementation" (SWIOFC, 2018b).

Said the Government of Mauritius' Former Chief Fisheries Officer: "It made little sense to house these projects in two different organisations. Through SmartFish, the IOC had a track record in being able to manage projects. The IOC Secretariat had a branch dedicated to project administration and knew where to find good project-based technical expertise. SWIOFC was more of a scientific and technical policy body, but it did not have much of a project management function. But members [of SWIOFC] decided that SWIOFC would benefit from project funding and the World Bank was happy to give funding to a UN [FAO] organisation" (Researcher Interview: Former Chief Fisheries Officer, Government of Mauritius). The decision to give SWIOFC project management responsibilities outside of its traditional remit would not have been so problematic had there been active coordination between it and the IOC, particularly if this coordination would have allowed the IOC to share its technical and project management expertise. However, "there was very little coordination between the two organisations. It is interesting. The two organisations [IOC and SWIOFC] have member states

in common and want the same results, but the actual technical staff in their Secretariats guarded their turfs and project activities were done in a very siloed way” (Researcher Interview: Former Chief Fisheries Officer, Government of Mauritius). The end result was duplication, often with very similar activities between the two projects happening at roughly the same time: “I remember we [at the Comorian DGRH] took part in a training session for onboard vessel observers in Port Louis in November 2015. This was hosted by the IOC and this was for SmartFish. Two weeks later, we had almost exactly the same training in Mombasa, hosted by SWIOFC, with just a slightly different [training] curriculum for SWIOFish. They were good trainings, but there was no logic in the repetition” (Researcher Interview: Fisheries Officer, DGRH).

KIs also noted that the two projects’ parallel efforts to assist Western Indian Ocean MCS authorities strengthen their surveillance MIS’ served primarily to undermine both initiatives: “The two projects were really engaged in assisting member states establish [Management Information] Systems. This addressed a pressing need where we had very little capacity. But while we thought that both projects would combine their resources and help us [IOC/SWIOFC member states] develop a single MIS, we actually found ourselves developing duplicate systems simply because both projects had a deliverable to the donors based around MIS development. It put a real burden on our surveillance [CNCSP] personnel and we are frankly still trying to harmonise these Systems into something that is more coherent” (Researcher Interview: Fisheries Officer, DGRH). This example points to the fact that even with improved digital connectivity in the Western Indian Ocean, which should allow for considerable improvements in the technical parameters of MCS systems and their interoperability across national borders, bureaucratic inefficiencies are preventing these benefits from being fully realised.

To further compound the duplication between SmartFish and SWIOFish, both the IOTC and IORA also launched, over the period 2015 to 2017, their own donor-funded initiatives, albeit at much smaller-scale, around vessel observer training and catch volume assessment analysis (IORA, 2016, 2017a; IOTC, 2017b). In the case of the IOTC, these themes did fit within the organisation’s core mandate, but there was again no project-level coordination with the IOC or SWIOFC to ensure that these initiatives complemented the similar efforts made by SmartFish and SWIOFish on these focus areas. Said the Secretary-General of the IOTC: “We knew we were simply adding on to the types of initiatives that they [the IOC and SWIOFC] had implemented through SmartFish and SWIOFish. Our observer training and our scientific analysis trainings were narrowly-focused and mostly within our remit, but I know

they served as yet another somewhat repetitive training for member state [MCS] officials. Could we have coordinated more effectively to make sure there was not no such duplication? Yes, probably so.” (Researcher Interview: Secretary-General, IOTC). For its part, IORA’s FSU also hosted a series of repeated trainings for member state MCS officials on methods for catch volume data collection, data analysis and reporting. While not problematic in itself, this training again overlapped with the initiatives on this theme already being duplicated through SmartFish and SWIOFish. The end result was an almost constant demand being placed on the Western Indian Ocean island states (and coastal East African states) to make fisheries MCS personnel available for a consistent agenda of duplicated and (usually) uncoordinated initiatives from all of the different inter-governmental organisations.

What does the above mean when it comes to the political dynamics being fostered among the Western Indian Ocean island states through these inter-governmental organisations? Lack of coordination and resulting duplication of technical initiatives places a considerable burden on participating states’ financial and human resources, particularly if they are to try and participate in a *meaningful* way in all of these different initiatives. From a financial standpoint, there is an expectation that the states participating in the inter-governmental organisations’ MCS projects will at least partly contribute to the costs of sending their MCS officials to attend trainings and will cost-share in core technical work, such as MIS design and maintenance as well as surveillance asset sharing, to name just two examples (Researcher Interview: Ocean Governance Advisor in the Department of Blue Economy, Government of Seychelles). Logically, it thus seems prudent to contend that the financial burden to be borne in order for the island states to participate in a single initiative relating to a particular MCS focus area is lower than the financial burden that must be borne to participate in three or four discrete but structurally similar initiatives.

A coordinated and rational approach among the inter-governmental organisations towards fisheries MCS would necessitate: a) that particular MCS focus areas are housed within those inter-governmental bodies with the clearest founding mandate to address them; something that is not really possible given the existence of “mandate creep”; or b) that the different organisations are compelled to pool shared energies into fully coordinated initiatives (e.g. where three or four separate trainings for onboard vessel observers becomes a single coordinated training). This acts as a challenge due to the nature of donor-funded projects, which is itself seemingly a central driver behind “mandate creep”. Returning to the issue of development disparities between the Western Indian Ocean island states, discussed in Chapter 4, the upshot of uncoordinated duplication is considerable difficulty for all of the island states,

but particularly for resource-poor Comoros and Madagascar, to make the financial commitments required to actively and consistently take part in key initiatives. Referencing the aforementioned example of Comorian MCS officials attending two duplicate vessel observer trainings within a two-week span for both SmartFish and SWIOFish, the Fisheries Officer with the Comorian DGRH stated: “Our overall budget [for the DGRH and CNCSP] is very small. Carving out the funds to send our officials to one of these trainings [for onboard vessel observers] is difficult. Managing two of these trainings even more so. We felt it was worth having a presence at both trainings, but it was a financial headache. IORA had another training later [that year, 2015] and we only sent one [MCS] official because we could not afford another workshop. Even here, the official only went because IORA’s funding was able to cover the full cost” (Researcher Interview: Fisheries Officer, DGRH).

Financial considerations were also highlighted by the Secretary-General of the IOTC, who noted that while MCS officials from Mauritius and Seychelles are mainstays of all of the organisation’s MCS working groups and scientific committees, their counterparts from Comoros and Madagascar are not. Indeed, this KI recounted a series of six quarterly MCS working groups over an eighteen-month period, from the start of 2014 to the end of 2015, in which a representative from Comoros was present for only one meeting, while a representative from Madagascar was present for only three meetings (Researcher Interview: Secretary-General, IOTC). This is backed-up by a review of meeting minutes from these committees (IOTC, 2014, 2015). While this period coincided with periods of political instability in both countries, the reasons for this absence were seen to be readily apparent: “I think there are too many burdens placed on these countries with too many meetings and workshops. We [the IOTC] bear costs and do help our poorer members participate. But there is still some financial commitment required on their side and a country...Comoros is probably the best example...just cannot handle it” (Researcher Interview: Secretary-General, IOTC).

Related to these financial burdens are the related burdens that come with the island states being able to dedicate adequate human resources to participating in all of the varying inter-governmental organisation initiatives. It was noted in Chapter 4 that a continuous turnover in personnel among island fisheries ministries, particularly in Comoros and Madagascar, hindered the establishment of strong working relationships between ministry officials that would usually serve as a precursor to Pacific island-style fisheries integration and regime-building. Turnover in personnel is relevant in the context of the work done through inter-governmental organisations as well, particularly when this turnover produces a lack of continuity in the MCS officials involved in different types of inter-related initiatives. There is

a close link, for example, between MCS officials being trained to effectively collect quality catch volume data and to then make optimal use of a fisheries surveillance MIS to input, process and analyse these data. In the case of both SmartFish and SWIOFish, turnover – mainly in Comorian and Malagasy MCS personnel – was seen as a factor that did undermine prospects for these two states to maximise their technical gains from project participation (Researcher Interview: Fisheries Officer, DGRH; Researcher Interview: Former Chief Fisheries Officer, Government of Mauritius).

Equally important, however, is that for each of the island states, but especially for Comoros and Madagascar, the key national MCS bodies – the Comorian CNCSP and the Malagasy CSP – are typically understaffed and/or overburdened even when not experiencing rapid turnover in personnel. Indeed, these MCS bodies have technical remits of their own that are often inflated and which go well-beyond traditional MCS functions. The Comorian CNCSP, for example, is not merely responsible for typical MCS responsibilities, but is also expected to play a role in coordinating scientific research and (given the dearth of human resources in Comorian fisheries institutions more broadly) has even been expected to allocate time and energy towards supporting the national government's efforts to source funding for the moribund Comoros National Fishing Company (Researcher Interview: Fisheries Officer, DGRH). A similar broad mandate exists for the Malagasy CSP, while for Mauritius and Seychelles, better-resourced and more “professionalised” MCS bodies play a narrower and more technically-focused role (Ramariandrasoa, 2017; Researcher Interview: Chief Diplomatic Advisor, Government of Seychelles; Researcher Interview: Former Chief Fisheries Officer, Government of Mauritius).

The result of the above limitations is once again an inability of Comorian and Malagasy MCS officials to meaningfully participate in a large number of inter-governmental organisation initiatives, particularly when so many of these are duplicated and place additional time burdens on overstretched personnel: “I would happily have tried allocating more time for CNCSP personnel to take part in trainings, on the [Management Information] System development, on more types of experience exchanges like we had with Seychelles...but the demands on our time for participation are too much. We do not have that many MCS personnel and they cannot be freed up for training after training, particularly when so many of these have the same content” (Researcher Interview: Fisheries Officer, DGRH). Reflecting on his time heading the IOC, the Chief Diplomatic Advisor for the Government of Seychelles noted: “We have perhaps made a mistake looking at all the funding available for fisheries development in our region without necessarily trying to rationalise how it is used or to really think of how all of us [island

states] involved in these projects can fully benefit given our capacity [constraints]” (Researcher Interview: Chief Diplomatic Advisor, Government of Seychelles).

The above discussion relates somewhat back to the insights of Bueger and Wivel (2018), introduced in Chapter 2, in their commentary on Seychelles as an exemplar of small state diplomacy. These scholars posited that for many “small” and “micro” states, the limited funds available for them to spend on diplomatic efforts, as well as the limited human resources they could draw upon to staff their diplomatic corps, acted as a constraint on their ability to maintain a consistent or sizeable presence at international fora. These authors argued that to overcome these constraints, “small” and “micro” states had to leverage strategic positioning to attract material and financial investments from larger powers, they had to develop niche expertise and they had to adopt “activist” foreign policies. In many respects, the Western Indian Ocean island states’ enthusiasm for being part of these four inter-governmental organisations lies with the fact that membership in these bodies makes it more likely that they will be able to “gang up” and pursue these strategies. However, the reality of “mandate creep” within these organisations and the fact that organisational members, including the island states, appear more committed to using these bodies as avenues to access donor funds, even if this comes at the expense of a rationalised set of mandates, seems likely to undermine at least some of these organisations’ effectiveness.

The above factors all serve to reinforce the same types of inter-island political dynamics highlighted in Chapter 4. At the state-to-state ministerial level, these dynamics were, at least in part, characterised by differences in the level of professionalisation among the island states’ respective fisheries ministries. Unable to contribute a stable roster of technically-proficient ministry officials due to their own internal political dynamics, the ability of both Comoros and Madagascar to contribute substantively to key discussions around MT&Cs was seen to be inherently constrained. This, in turn, placed limits on the degree to which the island grouping *as a whole* could realistically pursue the creation of integrative fisheries regimes. In the discussion of relevant fisheries-focused inter-governmental organisations, specifically in the context of MCS, differences in professionalisation in fisheries institutions remain relevant, with MCS officials from Comoros and Madagascar again unable to engage as fully as the other islands in the complete range of organisational fisheries initiatives. In this case, however, it is at least partly the structure of the inter-governmental organisations themselves – donor-driven, characterised by “mandate creep” and prone to duplicating a wide range of technical MCS initiatives – that creates a challenging financial and human resource burden that the less developed island states struggle to overcome.

None of the above means that these organisations are failing to foster important types of “functional” cooperation between the Western Indian Ocean island states, or within the Western Indian Ocean more broadly. However, as can be interpreted from the concerns presented earlier about the sustainability of these organisations’ cooperative endeavours, it is not apparent that inter-governmental bodies operate in ways that will foster deeper fisheries cooperation or integration among the Western Indian Ocean island states. Indeed, in spite of the degree of technical cooperation that the different organisations have fostered between the islands on MCS, not least through SmartFish and SWIOFish, there remains a notable absence of Ruggie’s (1975: 570) “mutual expectations, rules and regulations, plans, organisational energies and financial commitments, which have been accepted by a group of states” when it comes to fisheries MCS.

For example, there remain no formalised agreements among the island grouping as a whole when it comes to the sharing of surveillance assets, a process which remains largely *ad hoc* (Researcher Interview: Ocean Governance Advisor in the Department of Blue Economy, Government of Seychelles). For both Comoros and Madagascar, involvement in the exchange of surveillance assets, including vessel observers, is still mainly contingent on project budgets and project-based activities, rather than forming part of core fisheries budgets or being institutionalised as a practice within either the Comorian CNCSP or the Malagasy CSP (Ramariandrasoa, 2017; Researcher Interview: Fisheries Officer, DGRH). Cooperation in scientific data collection, in the form of catch volume assessments, remains, for all of the islands, driven more by project funding or funded directives from a body like the IOTC, rather than by consistent financial allocations made available by the islands themselves (Researcher Interview: Secretary-General, IOTC). Finally, while both SmartFish and SWIOFish took aforementioned efforts to develop fisheries surveillance MIS’, there is little to suggest that agreed commitments exist to further these Systems’ development. In fact, it does not appear that the MIS development begun under SmartFish has continued at all post-project, while the ongoing efforts to build on the MIS under SWIOFish appears to have stalled since the end of project-based funding for this activity in 2017 (IOC, 2018; Researcher Interview: Fisheries Officer, DGRH).

The above factors all reiterate the concerns raised by KIs around the likelihood of inter-governmental organisation initiatives being sustained without the presence of donor funds. They also point to the failure of the Western Indian Ocean island states to develop Ruggie-style tangible regimes in fisheries MCS. Evident technical cooperation within inter-governmental structures does not seem to be translating into lasting plans, institutional energies

or financial commitments that would ensure the existence of a “regional” MCS framework among the islands. To be fair, some of these regimes (e.g. state-funded surveillance asset sharing and joint vessel patrol protocols) are evident on a bilateral basis between Mauritius and Seychelles, mainly through the Joint Area Management Agreement they have in regards to the Mascarene Plateau. For the island grouping as a whole, however, these regimes are conspicuously absent. While inter-governmental organisation “mandate creep”, the duplication of technical initiatives and the resulting overburdening of scarce resources among the two less-developed island states are not the sole cause of this outcome, it was stated that: “if you want to talk about a real regionalism among our islands, I do think the lack of coordination between the different [inter-governmental] organisations has undermined our progress. These organisations and our governments, to be honest, have looked at quantity of cooperative projects as a priority. This may be at the expense of real vision or buy-in from all of our islands” (Researcher Interview: Chief Diplomatic Advisor, Government of Seychelles).

Before moving onto the next section of this chapter, it is worth briefly contrasting the above analysis with the context of inter-governmental fisheries organisations in the Pacific. The comparison is not entirely apt since the composition of inter-governmental bodies in the Indian Ocean is far more diverse, particularly within IORA and the IOTC. Even SWIOFC, which (after the failure of WIOTO) may be the inter-governmental body that stood the best chance of evolving into an institution equivalent to the FFA in the Pacific, has a membership that is inclusive of the Western Indian Ocean island states plus a range of diverse coastal African states (as well as Yemen). The political diversity within these organisations exceeds anything that could be found within an FFA or PNA comprised of relatively like-minded Pacific island states.

However, purely from the perspective of institutional functioning and coordination, the FFA went to great lengths to ensure that its areas of competence were well-defined and that it maintained coordinating linkages with other inter-governmental fisheries bodies operating in the region. This includes those organisations, like the PNA, which emerged directly from the FFA itself, but also other inter-governmental bodies like the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) and the South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organisation (SPRFMO), both of which were formed as separate UN organisations to take on various technical aspects of fisheries management in the high seas (Aqorau, 2002; Researcher Interview: Ocean Governance Advisor in the Department of Blue Economy, Government of Seychelles).

When asked about the existence of “mandate creep” among these bodies, the Ocean Governance Advisor from the Seychelles’ Department of Blue Economy recounted her own telling experience: “There is far less fragmentation among the Pacific IGOs [inter-governmental organisations]. I would not claim there to be no duplication in some of their initiatives, but there is a level of coordination there that is not evident among the organisations here [in the Western Indian Ocean]. Member states of the FFA acknowledge it as something of a coordinating body for all of the Pacific IGOs. But the FFA itself does not try to take on everything and there are regular meetings between the Secretariats of each organisation to coordinate and even try to act as joint partners on some donor-funded projects. That type of arrangement is starting to emerge here, but it is certainly not the norm in the [Western] Indian Ocean” (Researcher Interview: Ocean Governance Advisor in the Department of Blue Economy, Government of Seychelles).

Notably, the types of Ruggie-like regimes identified above as lacking at an island grouping-level in the Western Indian Ocean, such as agreements on the sharing of surveillance assets, committed efforts to maintaining a harmonised “regional” fisheries surveillance MIS, as well as financial allocations towards joint scientific research, are clearly evident among the Pacific islands (Fry and Tarte, 2015). Moreover, the maintenance of these regimes, while undoubtedly supported by (and even implemented through) bodies like the FFA, have also been institutionalised into the fisheries policy frameworks, budgets and operational strategies of each island state (Hanich, Parris and Tsamenyi, 2010). There is thus a robustness and sustainability to these regimes that is conspicuously absent in the Western Indian Ocean.

4. Island State Foreign Policy and Divergence in Support for Inter-Governmental Organisations

The preceding section provided a technical argument for the failure of inter-governmental organisations to foster political dynamics conducive to deepening fisheries integration and regime-building among the Western Indian Ocean island states, particularly in relation to MCS. However, additional factors are also at play, linked less to the technical workings of these organisations and more to broader issues of island state foreign policy and regional politics. These issues are often related only tangentially to fisheries, but nonetheless have an apparent impact on shaping the inter-island political dynamics that affect fisheries cooperation. Of particular importance is the comparative – and markedly different – political value that each of the island states assigns to each of the inter-governmental organisations.

Of all the Western Indian Ocean island states, Seychelles follows a foreign policy that is most directly guided by fisheries interests. As highlighted in Chapter 3, the tuna fishery's dominant position in providing formal employment and in generating export revenues, gives the sector a level of importance in Seychelles that is not as evident in the other islands: "There are two main foundations of our [Seychelles'] diplomatic approach. First, we want to ensure that the tuna fishery is managed well, in our waters [EEZ] and on the high seas. If stocks are healthy, we have jobs, exports and our [IOT] cannery will be viable. Second, we want to generate buy-in, with the other islands, but really globally, for what we envision as the blue economy" (Researcher Interview: Chief Diplomatic Advisor, Government of Seychelles). As Chapter 3 recounted, Seychelles has been at the forefront of trying to operationalise the concept of the "blue economy" into a workable set of detailed policies that can be used to guide the country's sustainable development. These policies are also intended to serve as models that other small island states can emulate (Michel, 2016). Bueger and Wivel (2018) in their detailed analysis of Seychellois diplomacy, further note the centrality of the tuna fishery and the tangible realisation of "blue economy" objectives as domestic and foreign policy priorities.

This emphasis on effective fisheries management and technocratic policy development has been accompanied by a clear prioritisation by successive Seychellois governments on building technical competence within its broad array of ocean governance institutions, including those dealing with fisheries. The SFA and the Department of Blue Economy are two such institutions that this study has detailed as being technically proficient, even if achieving this proficiency has meant occasionally sourcing expertise from outside the country's borders (Researcher Interview: Chief Diplomatic Advisor, Government of Seychelles; Researcher Interview: Secretary-General, IOTC). Said the Ocean Governance Advisor within the Department of Blue Economy: "I think this Department and Seychelles' fisheries institutions in general, are represented foremost by technical strength. All of us in this Department, in the SFA, the FIQCU [Fish Inspection and Quality Control Unit] are trained in how the industrial tuna fishery should be managed. Fisheries are not political here and technical proficiency and competence matters above everything" (Researcher Interview: Ocean Governance Advisor in the Department of Blue Economy, Government of Seychelles).

The above perspective is perhaps unsurprising. The professionalisation of the SFA was contrasted in Chapter 4 with the lack of comparable professionalisation within the Comorian and Malagasy fisheries ministries. This disparity was seen to contribute to the misalignment in the countries' respective fisheries political and policy priorities, which in turn undermined prospects for regionness within the island grouping. The high technical quality and consistency

of Seychelles' fisheries institutions was also presented in the previous section of this chapter as allowing the country to be a consistent contributor to the various inter-governmental organisations' fisheries initiatives, even when these were uncoordinated, duplicated and necessitated considerable resource allocations. Equally interesting, however, is the implication this professionalisation has on Seychelles' political attitudes towards the different inter-governmental organisations. With the effective management of the tuna fishery being of central importance to Seychellois policymakers, a considerable level of importance is placed on the Victoria-based IOTC and its emphasis on setting the ground rules that guide the overall governance of this fishery.

While the mere fact that the IOTC is based in Seychelles undoubtedly contributes to its importance to national policymakers, equally important is the fact that the IOTC's technocratic "rules-setting" nature provides ample opportunity for Seychelles' coterie of technical fisheries experts to play leading roles in setting the organisation's agenda and in leading its technical initiatives: "They [Seychellois] play a huge role within the organisation [IOTC]. Seychelles is quite unique in that while it is one of our smallest member states, they have an enormous amount of knowledge of the tuna fishery, how it functions, how it can best be managed and how the whole [tuna] value chain ties together. With a lot of our MCS initiatives, in particular, you see the Seychellois serving as mentors to officials from other member states" (Researcher Interview: Secretary-General, IOTC). The Government of Seychelles' Chief Diplomatic Advisor offered a similar perspective: "The mandate of the IOTC, or at least its core mandate since I acknowledge there has been an ongoing expansion of its mandate, is suited to our national expertise. We look at fisheries as a technical issue to be managed and the IOTC's focus on the minutiae of fisheries management means that this expertise can be really be utilised" (Researcher Interview: Chief Diplomatic Advisor, Government of Seychelles). These sentiments seem to be supported by background documentation, which shows Seychellois officials, mainly from the SFA, chairing more IOTC working groups and committee meetings than officials from any other IOTC member state (IOTC, 2018a, 2018b).

The central importance of the IOTC to Seychelles does come, at least to an extent, at the expense of the country's engagement in the other three inter-governmental bodies: "I was Secretary-General of the IOC and I know that we [Seychelles] do not invest as much time or energy in the IOC as in the IOTC. This does not mean we do not participate in the IOC. Seychelles was a major participant in SmartFish, for example. But the IOC is more political and, at least with fisheries, I think Seychelles gets impatient with the give-and-take within the IOC, between Mauritius and Madagascar, Madagascar and France, and so on. We look for

concrete outcomes in finding ways to better manage the fishery and the IOTC is the agency that best helps us meet these outcomes” (Researcher Interview: Chief Diplomatic Advisor, Government of Seychelles). When asked whether this sentiment was widely held among Seychelles’ fisheries policymakers, the Department of Blue Economy’s Ocean Governance Advisor broadly concurred: “Yes, I think it’s true that the IOTC is our priority organisation. Part of it is the balance between the technical versus the political. The IOTC is less political, as is SWIOFC, but the IOTC is more focused on the tuna fishery. IORA, for us, is a little nebulous. It’s this big organisation and everything moves slowly and it’s often about big picture ideas about fisheries management that do not always seem practical. The IOTC is practical” (Researcher Interview: Ocean Governance Advisor in the Department of Blue Economy, Government of Seychelles).

The above points around organisational prioritisation are particularly important in light of Bueger and Wivel’s (2018) arguments about the limitations of diplomatic capital available to small island states like Seychelles. While the previous section of this chapter established that Seychelles is an active contributor to the projects and programmes initiated by each of the four inter-governmental bodies, it is prudent to suggest that it is still impossible for a state with limited diplomatic resources to channel its political capital equally between each organisation. At least for the KIs interviewed for this study, there was little doubt that the IOTC was something of a linchpin in the country’s efforts to ensure the sound management of its lucrative fisheries resources.

For Mauritius, by contrast, fisheries do not enjoy the same exalted status as a domestic or foreign policy priority. The country’s aforementioned efforts towards developing an ‘Ocean Economy’, with the Freeport Seafood Hub at its centre, undoubtedly gives the sector importance to Mauritian policymakers. However, with its diversified services-based economy, Mauritian KIs indicated that fisheries were seldom at the forefront of the country’s diplomatic considerations: “I do not think I would be speaking honestly if I said that Mauritius gave the same importance to fisheries or to the blue economy as Seychelles. For those guys [Seychellois] fisheries are their lifeblood. For Mauritius, fisheries are important but the sector is also a little at odds with the high-tech trading island that Mauritius envisions itself to be or at least wants to become” (Researcher Interview: Former Chairman of the Ocean Economy Commission, Government of Mauritius). This perspective was echoed by other KIs and was seen to have an impact on changes to the country’s diplomatic orientation: “You ask me about our ties with our neighbouring islands. They are important. But we see our diplomatic potential is lying beyond our region, frankly. Through our diaspora, we have ties with India

that should only become more important over time. We are in the middle of the Indian Ocean, so we see our role as bridging India, Singapore, Australia...those countries...with Africa” (Researcher Interview: Mauritian Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs for Regional Integration).

In contrast with Seychelles, in other words, where the national interest is very much in-line with what would be expected from a maritime-focused small island state, Mauritian national interests are far more expansive. Indeed, there is a considerable literature around Mauritius’ efforts to establish itself as an Indian Ocean entrepôt and services hub for finance and information technology (Beri 2011; Vines and Oruitemekai, 2008). Since 2017, the Mauritian government has actively promoted an investment-focused national development strategy that is geared towards emulating the Singaporean model of economic growth and diversification (Tang, Shaw and Holden, 2019).⁵¹

The upshot of adopting these priorities has been a shift in diplomatic approach that sees Mauritius investing less time and energy in engaging with its near island neighbours and instead allocating more of its diplomatic resources towards engagement with more distant Asian neighbours, especially India. Said the Mauritian Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs for Regional Integration, with a specific mandate on fostering cooperation with the other Western Indian Ocean island states: “Starting around 2010, I would say, my division [Regional Integration] has seen a fairly consistent reduction in budget and staff. We have a cultural, linguistic and geographic affinity with the other islands, but as a practical consideration, I think you can understand that a country like India offers Mauritius far more economic potential as an investment and trade partner than do Comoros, Madagascar and Seychelles. The result is that more of the Ministry’s [Foreign Affairs] resources have been allocated to diplomacy outside our immediate region” (Researcher Interview: Mauritian Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs for Regional Integration).

Turning the focus back to fisheries-focused inter-governmental organisations, one of the apparent implications of Mauritius’ more expansive foreign policy and resulting diplomatic orientation is a political prioritisation of IORA, somewhat at the expense of the country’s political engagement in the other three inter-governmental bodies. Just as the IOTC gained favour in Seychelles due to its alignment with Seychelles’ strategic interests and national skills base in the more technocratic aspects of fisheries management, so too does IORA align with the strategic interests of Mauritian foreign policymakers. Said the Government of Mauritius’ Former Chief Fisheries Officer: “IORA is the most strategic organisation for Mauritius. The

⁵¹ See the following link: <<https://www.ft.com/content/b8c0f8aa-8434-11e7-94e2-c5b903247afd>> (accessed 14 March 2020).

organisation is headquartered here, which means it allows our government to present the country as being at the heart of the Indian Ocean rim. I don't know if this means Mauritius actually plays this role, but the symbolism matters. IORA also gives Mauritian diplomats a platform to engage with India, with Australia, with Singapore and Malaysia. It helps Mauritius expand its diplomatic horizons and visibility" (Researcher Interview: Former Chief Fisheries Officer, Government of Mauritius).

When queried whether he concurred with this sentiment, the Mauritian Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs for Regional Integration was in general agreement: "The IOC does not really expand our horizons. It funds useful projects, to be sure, but it also keeps us tied to France, in my view. The IOTC and SWIOFC are important for what they do and we participate, especially in their research. But they are niche organisations and fishing is less all-important for us than for Seychelles. IORA is the organisation that, whether in fisheries or elsewhere, we can have dialogue with more partner nations and this is what best suits our interests" (Researcher Interview: Mauritian Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs for Regional Integration). Just as Seychellois officials played a seemingly outsized role in leading the technical committees and working groups within the IOTC, a review of IORA documentation indicates that Mauritian officials constitute just under half of all key positions in the organisation's Secretariat (IORA, 2017b, 2018). Mauritian officials, often at a senior level, have been a consistent presence at IORA fora, including those hosted by the FSU, while being increasingly unreliable as participants in IOC and IOTC meetings (IOC, 2017, 2018; IOTC, 2018a; Researcher Interview: Former Chairman of the Ocean Economy Commission, Government of Mauritius). Finally, IORA has established a Chair in Indian Ocean Studies at the University of Mauritius, which is intended to serve, at least in part, as a platform for training Mauritian natural and social scientists, as well as business leaders, on issues relevant to IORA's current and projected areas of focus (IORA, 2018, 2019).

Some caution undoubtedly needs to be applied when it comes to over-interpreting the above information and what it says about the political values ascribed by Mauritian authorities to IORA versus the other three inter-governmental bodies. However, the perspectives and documentary evidence presented do suggest a close alignment between IORA's objectives of closer integration among the Indian Ocean Rim countries and Mauritius' strategic diplomatic goals of establishing itself as a central player in a wider Indian Ocean economy. Contrary to Seychelles with its intense focus on fisheries as a foreign policy and diplomatic priority *in itself*, the fisheries sector is largely subsumed into a wider set of expansive diplomatic objectives for Mauritius. IORA, seen as too nebulous and non-technocratic by Seychellois

officials, provides a dialogue-based forum that allows Mauritian diplomats to forge closer connections with the states like India and Singapore, which they see as central to their country's future development.

For Comoros and Madagascar, foreign policy and diplomatic priorities are, perhaps unsurprisingly, different yet again. For these two countries, wracked by political instability and economic underdevelopment, obtaining international legitimacy after periods of authoritarian governance and political conflict, along with the foreign aid that comes with such legitimacy, are key drivers of diplomatic action. In the case of Comoros, the Fomboni Agreement of 2001, which established the country as a federal state with the national presidency rotating between the islands of Anjouan, Grande Comore and Mohéli, was intended to establish lasting peace after decades of inter-island rivalry and conflict (Caminade, 2010). The failure of this accord, largely resulting from the efforts of political elites on Grande Comore to maintain their traditionally privileged access to power, has fostered ongoing separatist tensions. These culminated in the brief separatist takeover of Anjouan in 2008, which was forcefully suppressed. Since this time, levels of foreign aid to Comoros have fallen by two-thirds while diplomatic contacts have remained limited due to donor doubts about the Comorian government's commitment to democracy and human rights (Caminade, 2018).

For Madagascar, the 2009 *coup d'état*, which unseated the elected government of Marc Ravalomanana in favour of a military-backed government led by Andry Rajoelina, saw the suspension of the country's membership in both the African Union and SADC. Like Comoros, Madagascar suffered an almost two-thirds reduction in its foreign aid in the months after the coup, including the loss of almost all direct budget support from donors (Andriamahazo, 2012). Aid levels have modestly risen since this time, but with levels of diplomatic engagement with the international community remaining well-below previous levels. One consequence of foreign aid reductions has been a dramatic rise in absolute poverty from 40% of the population in 2007 to 70% of the population in 2016 (Ramariandrasoa, 2017).

Unlike in Seychelles and Mauritius, it was not possible to gain insights directly from Comorian or Malagasy KIs with direct knowledge and experience of national diplomacy. However, the respondents from the two countries' fisheries sectors did express their own clear opinions on the key factors underlying their nations' respective foreign policy objectives: "For Comoros, I think our key issue is the need to tap into ODA [Overseas Development Assistance]. You see the loss of this even with the cancelling of the EU-Comoros SFPA [Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreement]. The government here in Moroni knows that getting these funds back is all that really keeps the country afloat" (Researcher Interview:

Fisheries Officer, DGRH). Said a Malagasy KI: “This country [Madagascar] has been on the verge of collapse since 2009. Unless the Chinese are going to come to our rescue, we need the Europeans to restore previous aid levels. I think this is what keeps our government up at night” (Researcher Interview: Vice-President, National Association for Fish Collectors and Exporters of Madagascar).

With these types of considerations, fisheries in these two countries are – like in Mauritius but unlike in Seychelles – generally tied into a broader set of strategic national objectives. For Comoros, fisheries are (or at least could be) an important part of the aid relationship the country has with the EU, especially if the bilateral SFPA is ever re-instated. However, it is the restoration of aid *in general*, and the (admittedly questionable) perception by the Comorian government that a normalisation of relations with the EU will provide the country with leverage in negotiating with France over the political status of Mayotte, that are Moroni’s overarching objectives. For Madagascar, fisheries are certainly deemed important as an economic driver, but the country’s core political cleavage, between a governing elite drawn from the highlands around Antananarivo and the historically marginalised coastal areas, is also seen to contribute to a side-lining of “ocean-relevant issues” as a diplomatic priority among Malagasy policymakers (Martial, 2019). For the Malagasy government, like its Comorian counterpart, fisheries are thus important to the extent that they serve broader diplomatic ends rather than necessarily serving as a core diplomatic issue in itself.

When it comes to the political value placed by the different islands on the four inter-governmental organisations, this prioritisation by the Comorian and Malagasy governments on diplomatic normalisation with donor states and on the restoration of aid flows, leads to a political preference for the IOC. However, rather than the IOC being valued by these two countries as a platform for inter-island integration, the IOC’s key value is seen as lying with the opportunities it provides these states to engage diplomatically with France and the European Union (and to a lesser degree with China) in order to push for development funding (Ramariandrasoa, 2017; Martial, 2019). Some of this funding is provided to support fisheries-focused projects like SmartFish and SWIOFish, while other funding is provided to support technical projects in sectors like tourism, maritime transport and agriculture (to name just a few). The point, however, is that the IOC is the most developmentally-focused of the four inter-governmental bodies, which allows it to most directly meet the immediate diplomatic objectives of the Comorian and Malagasy governments: “We [at the DGRH] take part in IOC projects and IOC meetings. The organisation has really stopped being about promoting the unity of the four independent islands. The IOC is really there now so that each member, but

especially us [Comoros] and Madagascar, can access development funds. This is important because these funds are not so easy to access bilaterally” (Researcher Interview: Fisheries Officer, DGRH).

The IOC’s value to Comoros and Madagascar also lies with the fact that the organisation’s limited membership gives these two countries a platform that is unavailable to them in the other three inter-governmental bodies with their much broader memberships: “I attended a few IOTC and IORA meetings as part of a national [Comorian] delegation. We had no visibility and no influence. These organisations are dominated either by big countries like India or very invested countries like Mauritius and Seychelles. For a poor country like us, where we send small number of delegates to meetings...we can participate [in these organisations] but not with any actual influence on the direction these organisations take. The IOC is different. It is small and is built on a principle of rotating leadership of the Secretariat” (Researcher Interview: Fisheries Officer, DGRH). Said the Vice-President of the National Association for Fish Collectors and Exporters of Madagascar: “The thing with the IOC is that it provides Madagascar with a chance to throw its weight around. We are the biggest of all the islands, but only in the IOC can we really project our size. In the other organisations, we either aren’t that big compared to the Asian countries or we aren’t technically proficient enough to have influence, which I think is our issue in the IOTC” (Researcher Interview: Vice-President, National Association for Fish Collectors and Exporters of Madagascar).

A review of organisational documentation indicates that, as of 2019, Comorian and Malagasy nationals comprised around half of the permanent positions in the IOC Secretariat versus none within the IORA and IOTC Secretariats. Also, whereas a review of project meeting minutes and committee reports indicated that Comorian and Malagasy officials had not chaired any fisheries-related meetings within IORA, the IOTC or SWIOFC, officials from the two countries had frequently presided over working group and committee meetings within the IOC, particularly in relation to SmartFish (IOC 2016, 2017). Once again, none of the above should be taken to suggest that Comoros and Madagascar are wholly more invested in the IOC at the expense of the other three inter-governmental organisations, but the evidence does suggest a much higher level of engagement in an IOC in which these two states feel they have more to gain from engaging development partners and where the more limited number of member states provides them with greater opportunity to establish influence.

Given the above analysis indicating that the various Western Indian Ocean island states ascribe political priority to different inter-governmental organisations, it is necessary to ask what this means for the inter-island political dynamics fostered through these organisations.

With each of the islands having different foreign policy and diplomatic priorities, as well as varying perspectives on which inter-governmental organisations are most relevant in addressing these priorities, the result is that *none* of the inter-governmental bodies emerges as a vehicle able to consistently harness common energies for sustained fisheries cooperation. Rather than allocating their limited amounts of diplomatic capital – whether in the form of financial commitments or fisheries personnel – towards mutual cooperation in a single institutional framework (as the Pacific island states have broadly done through the FFA), the Western Indian Ocean island states allocate their political capital in different directions. This does not prevent any of the four inter-governmental bodies from fostering useful types of technical fisheries engagement between the islands. However, whereas the FFA was allowed to emerge as a singular institutional space in which the Pacific island states could develop ever-deeper working relationships and – over time – create durable fisheries regimes, this singular institutional space simply does not exist in the Western Indian Ocean.

Admittedly, the fact that the islands hold such strikingly different diplomatic objectives, within which fisheries play (except for Seychelles) an often-secondary role, is in itself a sign that the islands may be too heterogeneous for the sector to produce a constructivist's sense of shared political identity or regionness. This again marks the Western Indian Ocean islands as being different from their Pacific counterparts, where the importance of fisheries and the joint work undertaken through the FFA to establish regimes such as the Nauru Agreement, do constitute a core component of a shared “regional” identity. Such a conclusion, however, is something of an indictment of the IOC. After all, the IOC is expressly mandated to promote a common sense of *Indianocéanie* among the islands, including through common fisheries endeavours. The fact that the IOC has largely failed to inspire political cohesion among the islands (being valued instead as a mechanism through which donor development funding can be accessed) and that Mauritius, the most politically and economically dynamic of the islands, sees its strategic priorities as almost wholly lying outside the island grouping, once again raises doubts about whether *Indianocéanie* exists as a real political motivator for any of the islands. At the very least, *Indianocéanie* in the context of fisheries does not seem to exist as a means through which these islands can meaningfully articulate the types of transnational interests that Hettne and Söderbaum (2000) identify as being so important to the construction of regionness.

5. France as a Disruptor of Regional Fisheries Cooperation within the IOC

The final factor that plays an apparent role in hindering inter-governmental organisations from fostering political dynamics conducive to deepening fisheries cooperation,

integration and regime-building in the Western Indian Ocean, is the role of France. Bouchard and Crumplin (2011) have written provocatively about the “two faces” of France in the Western Indian Ocean. On one hand, France’s sovereign control over both Mayotte and Réunion means that France is itself a “regional” state with some of the same economic and sustainability concerns as the four independent island states. Alternatively, France is an external power that sees the Western Indian Ocean as part of its (diminishing) sphere of influence in Africa. This France, Bouchard and Crumpling argue, is committed primarily to leveraging its sovereignty over Mayotte and Réunion as a means to assert both economic and security interests. This includes asserting territorial claims over the Scattered Islands and over Tromelin Island, which are claimed by Madagascar and Mauritius, respectively. Sovereignty over these disputed territories is, in itself, of limited value. However, the sizeable EEZs that accrues to France from control over these territories brings with it potential economic benefits from both fisheries and from oil and gas extraction.

As Chapter 3 indicated, neither Mayotte nor Réunion are themselves major components of the Western Indian Ocean tuna fishery. While some tuna extraction does take place in the EEZ around Mayotte, these two islands are somewhat situated outside the core tuna migration routes. Réunion does import both fresh and canned tuna from the other islands, most of which is for internal consumption and a small amount which is re-exported to France and the wider EU. For the most part, however, France does not currently have the same vested interest in the tuna fishery as do the four independent island states. This would potentially change were France to fully press its territorial/EEZ claims in the region since both the Scattered Islands and Tromelin Island *are* situated within the core tuna migration routes. For the moment, however, fisheries are largely a side-interest for France, important in the context of the commercial and donor relationships the country leads, through the SFPAs, with the islands on behalf of the EU, but not necessarily a pressing political or diplomatic issue for Paris or its constituent islands. Where French influence in the Western Indian Ocean does impact fisheries is in a more indirect way, with France using its clout within the IOC to (often successfully) play the other islands off against each other in order to press acceptance of its territorial claims. Fisheries cooperation and integration through the IOC becomes something of a casualty of the stoked internal divisions that arise between the independent island states as a result of this French approach.

It should be noted that in spite of the two French islands not being major commercial centres for the tuna fishery, Réunion possesses highly specialised fisheries research and competent MCS capabilities. These largely exist to support France’s administration of the

French Southern and Antarctic Lands (TAAF). TAAF is inclusive of the Scattered Islands, but its administration is focused more on the governance of France's sub-Antarctic island territories, all of which are important in the context of Southern Ocean fisheries where IUU fishing – particularly in relation to Patagonian toothfish – remains a major problem. Réunion's technical expertise is valued and has played a central role in the work done by SmartFish and SWIOFish around upgrading all of the islands' respective MCS systems (Researcher Interview: Chief Diplomatic Advisor, Government of Seychelles). However, there is also a broad sense of distrust of French intentions among fisheries officials from the other islands: “France, or at least the administration in Réunion, often plays a really constructive role. But every time we're gathered around a table with the French, especially at the IOC, there is this sense that we're being lectured to and that our only option is to accept the French way of doing things. Perhaps our anti-colonial mindset still exists and makes us resistant to this. There is a general resistance among the rest of us [independent island states] to accept French advice or other support” (Researcher Interview: Former Chairman of the Ocean Economy Commission, Government of Mauritius).

According to interviewed KIs, the roots of antipathy towards France are based, at least in part, on what is seen as a politicisation of the IOC in favour of French interests. The most contentious of France's territorial claims in the Western Indian Ocean is over Mayotte, which has a majority Comorian population, but which voted in referenda in both 1974 and 1976 to retain links with France rather than join the other Comorian islands in independence. Comoros has continued to lay sovereign claim to Mayotte, though with little credible chance of bringing the island back into its fold, particularly since most *Mahorais* continue to demonstrate a clear preference for remaining under French rule (Caminade, 2018). Largely to avoid open conflict with Comoros, France has accepted Mayotte's exclusion as a full member of the IOC. For their part, Madagascar, Mauritius and Seychelles all officially support Comorian claims over Mayotte, though only Madagascar has supported Comoros in strongly pressing the issue (Researcher Interview: Chief Diplomatic Advisor, Government of Seychelles). However, France has used its bilateral ties with these other islands, as well as IOC fora, as a means to press the other island states into ending their support for Comoros' claim: “When I was Secretary-General of the IOC, France played a very quiet and but very skilled game in playing the islands against each other. This was especially the case with Madagascar and Comoros, whereby the French would promise some increase in foreign aid or investment to Madagascar in exchange for the Malagasy dropping their support, or at least vocal support, for Comoros over Mayotte” (Researcher Interview: Chief Diplomatic Advisor, Government of Seychelles).

This was acknowledged by a representative of TAAF based in Réunion: “I was at a few IOC meetings. We [the French] really wanted the Mayotte issues resolved. It’s a headache. We thought one way to do that was to get Madagascar, which France is close to but which also tends to be most agitated about our claim over [the Scattered Islands] Bassas da India, Glorioso and so on...to stop vocally giving support to Comoros over Mayotte in exchange for a promise to re-visit sovereignty over the Scattered Islands in the future” (Researcher Interview: Senior Fisheries Administrator, TAAF Governance Authority). Indeed, driving a wedge between Comoros and Madagascar, with Antananarivo dropping its robust support of Comoros in exchange for increased aid and a fair consideration of its territorial disputes with France, appears to be a common motivator for France taking an active role in IOC affairs (Caminade, 2018). There is little sign that France has a real interest in negotiating sovereignty over the Scattered Islands with Madagascar, but doing so “Buys time. Mauritius and Seychelles consider Mayotte a low priority. Madagascar...it is dependent on France...but at the same time it still has an anti-colonial streak. An alliance between Comoros and Madagascar over disputed territories...it wouldn’t succeed...but it would create instability and France especially does not want that in a part of the world they see as under their national influence” (Researcher Interview: Chief Diplomatic Advisor, Government of Seychelles).

While France typically engages in bilateral diplomacy with Madagascar to press Antananarivo on its support for Comorian territorial claims, there is recognition by France that fully resolving the “Mayotte issue” requires putting the issue to rest within the IOC: “The IOC no longer plays any real political role, but it has a lingering symbolism as an anti-colonial project. So yes, I would argue that if France wants to resolve its territorial disputes with the other islands, having the IOC legitimise these claims is pretty essential” (Researcher Interview: Former Chairman of the Ocean Economy Commission, Government of Mauritius). The other territorial dispute that France seeks to resolve through the IOC relates to Tromelin Island, over which it has disputes with Mauritius. In this dispute, France also appears to be using both bilateral diplomacy and IOC structures as a means to find favour for its interests. France has occasionally reached out directly to Mauritius, suggesting support for Mauritian claims over the Chagos Islands (currently under British sovereignty and used primarily as an American airbase following the forced re-location of its residents to Mauritius in the late 1960s) in exchange for an acceptance of French claims over Tromelin Island (de l’Estrac, 2011).

France has also sought to engage directly with the other islands to press its claims over Tromelin. This includes engaging with the Seychellois government with promises of increased aid for maritime security in exchange for recognising French rather than Mauritian claims over

Tromelin and its EEZ, as well as with Madagascar over, yet again, the possibility of considering Malagasy territorial interests over the Scattered Islands in exchange for Madagascar's acquiescence over France's claim to Tromelin (Researcher Interview: Chief Diplomatic Advisor, Government of Seychelles). The IOC is again seen as central to French policymakers in resolving these disputes, not least for the fact, noted earlier, that both Comoros and Madagascar deem the IOC to be useful as a means of accessing French/EU development funds: "I don't know how important the IOC really is as a political organisation. But from a French perspective, I think we know there is leverage there with Comoros and Madagascar. If the aid the EU provides through the IOC is what is most important for those countries, then France sees it as worthwhile to use its leverage in the IOC to try and resolve these remaining territorial claims and consolidate its influence. This is especially important as we know China and India are going to become major players in this region eventually" (Researcher Interview: Senior Fisheries Administrator, TAAF Governance Authority).

For the purposes of this study, these territorial disputes are not necessarily relevant in themselves. What matters is what these disputes mean for the relations between the four independent island states, particularly in light of France's occasional efforts to play the islands against each other within the IOC. In this regard, there is evidence of at least some loss of trust, which in turn has a knock-on effect on the intensity of the islands' mutual cooperation on fisheries. Said the Chief Diplomatic Advisor for the Government of Seychelles about his time leading the IOC: "You ask if the French have somewhat undermined the unity of the four [independent] islands. Yes, I think to some degree they have. This does not mean that all France does in our region is bad. Far from it. But it is common knowledge among the islands that the French are using promises of aid, promises of recognising territorial claims...all of this...to get the islands to go against each other on some pressing issues. I wouldn't overstate the issue, but some trust has been eroded for sure" (Researcher Interview: Chief Diplomatic Advisor, Government of Seychelles). This erosion of trust has been felt in regards to fisheries cooperation, with Comoros and Madagascar temporarily downgrading their levels of contact over fisheries – including between their MCS officials and their scientific researchers – over a two-year period from 2014 to 2016, when there was a perception by Comoros that Madagascar was willing to countenance the possibility of lessening its diplomatic support for Moroni over Mayotte (Marital 2019; Researcher Interview: Fisheries Officer, DGRH).

Mauritius and Seychelles experienced a similar dip in levels of cooperation, including a reduction in joint vessel patrols at the time France was trying to convince Seychelles to support its claims over Tromelin Island in exchange for enhanced security cooperation: "One

of the few things that can poison relations between Mauritius and Seychelles is Tromelin. Not because Seychelles cares about the issue, but because France thinks they can boost their leverage by giving Seychelles goodies to turn against the Mauritian position. I don't see this approach by the French as working, but they seem to insist on it and it can temporarily undermine cooperation" (Researcher Interview: Former Chairman of the Ocean Economy Commission, Government of Mauritius). Indeed, there is little actual evidence that France has been able to successfully drive a wedge between the islands in any lasting or substantive way. The islands continue to generally support each other's territorial claims and have resisted recognising those of France, including through votes within the IOC.

However, even if the political pressure applied by France has not changed inter-island relations in a lasting way, it has served to periodically seed doubts among island officials about whether their counterparts can be trusted to maintain solidarity. This, in turn, creates periods of mistrust that undermine cooperation, including in fisheries. This mistrust may be short-lived, but even in temporarily reducing contacts between officials or halting practical joint initiatives like vessel patrols, it halts momentum towards the types of deeper cooperation and integration that are required for effective regime-building. This pressure also undermines the trust that the islands are willing to place in the IOC as a prospective driver of enhanced cooperation. If the institutional framework of the IOC is being used by France as a means to drive diplomatic wedges between the islands, it is unsurprising that the credibility of the organisation as a catalyst for *Indianocéanie* would be intrinsically limited.

6. The Western Indian Ocean Islands as a Socially-Constructed Region: Considerations from the Perspective of Inter-Governmental Organisations

Just as Chapter 4 argued that the political dynamics evident between the Western Indian Ocean island state's fisheries ministries were not conducive to moving these islands beyond "functional" cooperation towards the enactment of Ruggie-style regimes, this chapter has made broadly the same argument when it comes to the region's inter-governmental organisations. Each of the IOC, IORA, IOTC and SWIOFC play a meaningful role in fostering fisheries-based dialogue and cooperation between the islands – and between the islands and their maritime neighbours in Asia and East Africa. None of the evidence presented in this chapter suggests that these organisations lack value. However, the absence of clear coordination *between* the different inter-governmental bodies, accelerated by donor-driven "mandate creep", has produced a great deal of overlap and even outright duplication in the types of fisheries projects and programmes these organisations seek to facilitate. This, in turn, places a heavy

burden on the island states' limited human and financial resources and it prevents each of the islands, but especially under-resourced Comoros and Madagascar, from fully participating in inter-governmental organisation initiatives in a uniform manner. The upshot is that none of these organisations' fisheries initiatives play the role they ideally should in incentivising deepening cooperation, integration and collective action among the islands.

In addition, the effectiveness of the four inter-governmental organisations in fostering a sense of *regionness* among the islands is undermined by the fact that each of the island states ascribes a different value to each organisation. Seychelles' political preference for the IOTC, Mauritius' preference for IORA, as well as the Comorian and Malagasy preference for the IOC, are all rooted in these countries' respective foreign policy and diplomatic priorities, of which fisheries (except in Seychelles) are seldom at the forefront. With the island states' scarce diplomatic resources being prioritised for different organisations, the result is that none of these bodies emerge as a uniformly accepted vehicle able to harness the political capital of the islands as a grouping. From a fisheries standpoint, this means that no institution equivalent to the FFA in the Pacific, which singularly coordinates the sustained interactions between island states required to foster durable regimes, exists in the Western Indian Ocean.

The influence of France in the Western Indian Ocean, borne of both the country's sovereign control over Mayotte and Réunion, as well as its ambitions to project power and influence in a region of former French colonial rule, produces both positive and negative outcomes. Among the latter are stoked internal divisions among the four independent island states, occasionally played off against each other by France as Paris seeks to gain acceptance for its territorial/EEZ claims in the region. The IOC, symbolic as the inter-governmental body meant to represent the "anti-colonial" interests of the independent islands (even if it has long stopped playing this role in practice), is seen by France as an important avenue through which to press its claims. The result is that the IOC has itself come to be somewhat delegitimised as an organisation that fosters divisive political dynamics rather than the cooperative dynamics required for deepening fisheries integration.

As in Chapter 4, it must again be asked what the above observations say about the Western Indian Ocean islands as a socially-constructed region. The sheer scale of the technical cooperation that is fostered through each of the IOC, IORA, IOTC and SWIOFC makes clear, yet again, the existence of technical fisheries linkages between the islands – and between the islands and the wider Indian Ocean rim community. Each of the organisations provide platforms for engagement between the islands' respective fisheries officials, while projects like SmartFish and SWIOFish ensure the availability of substantial funding to facilitate

“functional” fisheries cooperation. Nye’s (1968: xii) definition of a “region” as “a limited number of states linked together by a geographical relationship and a degree of mutual interdependence” thus remains an apt minimum standard definition that the islands’ engagement through inter-governmental organisations would easily meet. The above would also indicate that the islands easily meet Powers and Goertz’s (2011: 2389) simple definition of a “region” as “geography plus something”, with the “something” encompassing a wide array of cooperative endeavours, particularly in relation to fisheries MCS.

At the same time, the fact that, with the exception of the IOC, the inter-governmental organisations discussed in this chapter have memberships that extend beyond the Western Indian Ocean island states and also encompass a much wider Indian Ocean geography, raises legitimate questions about whether it is even appropriate to speak of the islands as a *stand-alone* “fisheries region”. Perhaps they should instead be considered in the context of a wider Western Indian Ocean that also includes the fisheries interests of East Africa and even South Asian states like Maldives and Sri Lanka. More important is whether the islands represent anything approximating Hettne and Söderbaum’s (2000: 461) “new regionalist” definition of “a geographical area transformed from a passive object to an active subject capable of articulating the transnational interests of the emerging region.” As with inter-ministerial relations outlined in Chapter 4, there are enough “functional” linkages between these islands, as well as dedicated inter-governmental organisations and organisational initiatives, that it is likely unfair to consider the islands merely as a “passive object”. However, from the evidence presented in this chapter, it also remains unclear as to whether the islands truly possess a commonly understood set of “transnational interests” when it comes to fisheries.

Much of the “functional” cooperation being promoted by inter-governmental organisations, through projects like SmartFish and SWIOFish, is donor-driven. It is doubtful whether these initiatives would have got off the ground (or whether the political will exists to sustain them) in the absence of this funding. The islands’ diverging foreign policy and diplomatic goals, and the fact that only Seychelles appears to see fisheries as a driving force in its foreign policy, also suggests that transnational’ fisheries interests, even where they seem to exist, are not ascribed the same level of importance by each island state. As was said about interactions between the islands’ fisheries ministries in Chapter 4, what seems to also exist at the inter-governmental organisation level are interactions that are largely fragmented, *ad hoc* and defined more by cooperative opportunism rather than anything resembling a shared strategic vision for the fisheries sector.

Looking again at the typology of *regionness* introduced by Hettne (2005: 548), in which states can constitute a “regional space”, a “regional translocal system”, a “regional social system”, a “regional international society”, a “regional community” or a “regionalised institutional polity”, it is possible to offer a further judgment as to where the islands’ interactions through inter-governmental organisations place them on a fisheries-focused regionness spectrum. The islands easily meet the standard to be seen as a “regional space” (“a geographic area, delimited by more or less natural physical barriers”) and a “translocal social system” (“the region is organised by human inhabitants, at first in relatively isolated communities, but more and more creating some kind of trans-local relationship”). The islands clearly constitute a physically separate geographic grouping and have reasonably sophisticated political and economic relationships with one another that go well beyond the translocal, regardless of whether they are being considered through the lens of inter-ministerial relations or at the level of inter-governmental organisations.

The more sophisticated “regional social system”, defined by Hettne as involving “ever widening translocal relations, in which the constituent units are dependent on each other, as well as on the overall stability of the system”, inspires more interesting questions. Translocal relations between the island states are reasonably sophisticated, with considerable technical or “functional” ties fostered by each of the inter-governmental organisations. However, it is not at all apparent that the inter-governmental organisations themselves provide a coherent “stable system” on which fisheries-based regionness has been (or even can be) established. Instead, what seems to exist are four separate inter-governmental organisations, mostly dependent on funding from donors outside the region, acting independent of each other rather than harnessing their founding mandates to create a cooperative system defined by technical complementarities. The inter-governmental organisations do create a degree of regional “dependence” to the extent that they are primarily facilitators of fisheries-related funding, but it is not apparent that these organisations themselves are truly building sets of foundational regimes upon which fisheries cooperation can be deepened.

For the islands to be deemed a “regional international society”, meanwhile, they must be “characterised by norms and rules which increase the level of predictability in the system.” In this regard, the inter-governmental organisations present a mixed picture. The two rules setting bodies, the IOTC and SWIOFC, have adapted international norms regarding fisheries management, particularly in regards to MCS, and have been successful in having these be adopted by the islands. However, the fact that the islands have not institutionalised a predictable set of regimes around MCS – such as protocols on joint vessel patrols, MCS

training protocols, or dedicated financial commitments to the sharing of surveillance assets (to name just a few), suggests that at least in this particular aspect of fisheries management, the inter-governmental organisations have not had much success in fostering regionness. Hettne's "regional community" takes shape "when an enduring organisational framework facilitates and promotes social communication and convergence of values and behaviour throughout the region." Each of the inter-governmental organisations, in theory, should play this role. Were the organisations broadly coordinated rather than duplicating each other's efforts, these bodies very well could facilitate the types of rationalised collective action that would make the convergence of values and behaviour possible. Similarly, when it comes to whether the islands constitute a "regionalised institutional polity" that "has a more fixed structure of decision-making and stronger actor capability", it is again unclear that a real meaningful level of *actorness* (the capacity to act on commonly-defined priorities) is produced by the inter-governmental bodies. Or, more specifically, while it appears that actorness in the region can be galvanised in a short-term manner by donor funding, the inter-governmental bodies do not necessarily provide a fixed structure of decision-making that will allow for this actorness to be sustained over time.

Reflecting again on the issue of SIDS diplomacy, the analysis presented in this chapter should reiterate the fact that complex political dynamics, and not "islandness" by itself, plays a determining role in the extent to which SIDS view "ganging up" with each other as a political and diplomatic priority. At least in the context of the Western Indian Ocean SIDS, island state foreign policies are considerably more diverse than what might be assumed if these states' diplomacy was merely conditioned by their vulnerability. It is because of this diversity that the islands choose to allocate their political capital towards different inter-governmental organisations. In this island context, diversity in national interests has not necessarily served to make "ganging up" unimportant, but it is also clear that inter-island cooperation is seldom seen as a main motivator of diplomatic behaviour.

While both Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 largely focused on inter-island political engagement over fisheries at the government-level, Chapter 6 will now take a very different focus, turning attention to the role of non-state actors in facilitating cooperative dynamics and a sense of regionness over fisheries.

CHAPTER 6: Non-State Actors and the Building of Sustainable Fisheries Regimes in the Western Indian Ocean

1. Introduction and Chapter Overview

Building on the previous two chapters and their focus on inter-island political dynamics at the state-level, this chapter takes a different turn and explores these dynamics in the context of non-state actors. A key difference between the “new regionalism” discussed by scholars like Hettne and Söderbaum (1998, 2000), Hurrell (1995) and Shaw (2000), and the more realist-oriented “old regionalism”, is the view held by the former that non-state actors – encompassing a broad swath of transnational civil society – can be just as central to the process of region formation as are political elites acting within formal government structures. Indeed, a constructivist’s sense of regions as being formed through ongoing social interactions, typically requires non-state actors to play a leading role in creating common norms and values that governments can draw upon when pursuing formal processes of *regionalisation*. Following a similar investigative approach as the previous two chapters, this chapter asks how engagement between the island grouping’s non-state actors is incentivising (or not incentivising) political dynamics between the islands that are conducive to deepening fisheries cooperation, integration and regime-building (or at least regime-influencing) in fisheries.

In both Chapter 4 and Chapter 5, it was argued that the political dynamics at play between the island states over fisheries, while helpful in fostering “functional” cooperation at the technical level, were not conducive to bringing these islands together in the integrative manner required for them to collectively form sustainable fisheries regimes. At the state-to-state ministerial level, this is due to the development disparities evident between the islands, as well as the economic competition between them over fisheries investment from DWFNs. These factors create different political and policy incentives which make Pacific-style fisheries regimes difficult to establish for these states. At the level of the Western Indian Ocean’s fisheries-focused inter-governmental organisations, political dynamics conducive to closer integration are undermined by the lack of coordination between these inter-governmental bodies and the resulting duplication of many of their core activities. This duplication stretches the islands’ financial and human resources very thinly and prevents the islands (particularly under-resourced Comoros and Madagascar) from participating *fully* in the initiatives of the IOC, IORA, IOTC and SWIOFC. Inter-island political cooperation over fisheries is also weakened, at least to a degree, by the fact that the islands have very different foreign policy and diplomatic priorities, within which fisheries are not necessarily an overriding focus. This has the effect of driving the islands towards allocating their political capital towards supporting

different inter-governmental organisations, meaning that *none* of these organisations has the opportunity to emerge as an FFA-style linchpin for unifying the islands' fisheries interests. Finally, the role of France – as both a “regional” state and as an external power with geopolitical interests in the Western Indian Ocean – is often contentious. Successful French efforts to play the islands against each other within the IOC, the organisation with arguably the most potential to channel the islands' shared interests, undermines the islands' confidence in the IOC and serves to hinder this body's potential to serve as a driver of fisheries integration.

At the non-state level, the nature of engagement between the islands once more fails to incentivise the types of political dynamics that are sufficient to bring about sustained fisheries cooperation, integration and regime-building. There are two key reasons for this. First, in an echo of the issues identified in the previous two chapters, state weakness in both Comoros and Madagascar is mirrored by the weakness of civil society in these two countries. Fisheries focused NGOs, Boat Owners' Associations, scientific research institutes and independent associations of fisheries experts all exist in Comoros and Madagascar. However, they lack the organisation, political freedom and access to financial resources required to be pro-active and to serve as dedicated contributors to an inter-island epistemic community. This stands in contrast to Mauritius and Seychelles, where these actors are more organised, enjoy greater access to funding and have comparatively more political freedom. Fisheries-oriented civil society groups in Mauritius and Seychelles are consequently better equipped to develop inter-island ties. The upshot of this is something of a bilateral fisheries epistemic community emerging between Mauritius and Seychelles, which is often highly effective and which tends to dominate the island grouping's scientific and research bodies. However, this epistemic community largely excludes consistent representation from Comoros and Madagascar, thus limiting its “regional” scope.

Second, in spite of these disparities in civil society strength between the four independent island states, civil society in *all* of the islands often struggles to act in a manner that is truly independent from the state. Partially as a product of these countries' common “smallness”, opportunities for funding or project engagement for non-state actors tends to come almost exclusively through opportunities facilitated by national governments – and particularly through appointments to the boards of government-led initiatives. While not problematic in itself, this means that these non-state actors have relatively little room for independent maneuver and their opportunities to engage across borders tend to be closely tied to the engagement that takes place at the state-level. As the previous two chapters have demonstrated, this state-level engagement is seldom adequate in incentivising deepening cooperation,

integration and regime-building. Non-state actors' difficulties in forging independent pathways of inter-island cooperation tends to make them relatively ineffective in changing this overall dynamic.

With non-state actors within the Western Indian Ocean island grouping too often lacking strength and/or autonomy, they are unable to make a strong contribution to the development of political dynamics that are conducive to sustained fisheries cooperation, integration or regime-building. Once again, this marks the Western Indian Ocean island context as being different from that of the Pacific. In the latter island grouping, non-state actors face many of the same limitations. However, non-state actors in the Pacific have developed a number of collaborative structures, particularly through institutions like the University of the South Pacific, that provide more opportunities for organisation and for the regularised interactions required to construct common values. As in the previous two chapters, relevant points of comparison between the Pacific and the Western Indian Ocean will be highlighted in order to reinforce key points.

The chapter will present its evidence for the above arguments through the examination of the role played by various non-state actors, particularly NGOs, marine research institutes and the epistemic communities of technical experts supporting them, to develop and rollout cooperative inter-island measures to combat IUU fishing.

2. Inter-Island Disparities in the Strength of Non-State Actors: The Challenges of Creating a Truly “Regional” Epistemic Community in the Western Indian Ocean

In Chapter 3, a cross-section of non-state actors was briefly introduced from each of the Western Indian Ocean island states. While not an exhaustive classification, these non-state actors can be broadly placed into five groups. The first of these are the associations of fishers that can be found in most coastal communities where fishing is a significant livelihood. These associations, typically referred to in each of the islands as Boat Owners' Associations, are primarily concerned with local issues, such as the upkeep of fisheries infrastructure (e.g. landing sites) and the pricing for their catches in local markets. However, they have also emerged in each of the islands, to varying degrees, as civil society movements concerned with government regulations that impact on coastal fishing.

For instance, ongoing efforts by the Malagasy government to designate select coastal waters as Marine Protected Areas, with circumscribed access for both traditional and artisanal fishers, has galvanised the associations to band together as a loosely organised activist movement (UNEP, 2015). Efforts by Mauritian policymakers to introduce marine spatial

planning as part of that country's Ocean Economy Strategy, has had a similar effect as local associations of fishers band together to try and protect customary access to long-held fishing grounds (Researcher Interview: Former Chairman of the Ocean Economy Commission, Government of Mauritius). The local focus of these associations, connected to the fact that they are almost exclusively concerned with matters pertaining to near-shore traditional and artisanal fisheries, unsurprisingly limits their interest in (and scope for) acting on a transnational basis. However, some connections have been forged between Mauritian and Seychellois Boat Owners' Associations.

The second prominent group of non-state actors are NGOs, most locally-founded and national in scope, but enjoying some financial support from international donors and often serving as sub-contracted programme implementing partners for international organisations like WWF. Relatively few of these organisations take fisheries as an exclusive focus, instead adopting mandates that tie fisheries into a wider emphasis on marine and coastal conservation, as well as sustainable livelihoods development. Among the most prominent of these NGOs are the Seychelles Island Conservation Society (SICS), Nature Seychelles, the Mauritius Marine Conservation Society (MMCS), Blue Ventures (an international NGO with a dedicated operation in Northern Madagascar), Madagascar Marine Conservation (MMC) and the Mohéli National Park Conservation Society in Comoros. Like the Boat Owners' Associations, these NGOs are largely concerned with traditional and artisanal fisheries and take a predominantly national focus. However, some have had opportunities to engage across borders as part of project-focused meetings and networking events coordinated by the IOC and SWIOFC – typically under the auspices of SmartFish and SWIOFish.

The third key group of non-state actors consists of the scientific research, training and other technical fisheries bodies found in each of the island states. In most cases, these bodies are administratively autonomous from their national governments, though the degree to which this autonomy is operationalised in practice will be considered later in this chapter. A number of these bodies incorporate fisheries into broader technical mandates and with officials from these organisations sometimes serving concurrently as technical advisers within the Secretariats of inter-governmental bodies like the IOTC and SWIOFC (Ramariandrasoa, 2017). Examples of these organisations include the Albion Fisheries Research Centre (in Mauritius), the MOI, the MMTA, the Seychelles Maritime Academy and IRD (in Réunion), as well as IHSM and CNRO (both in Madagascar). It also includes WIOMSA, which is Mauritius-based but acts as a dedicated “regional” research body. As was noted in Chapter 3, these technical bodies do engage on an inter-island basis, often in the form of organising

workshops, participating in staff exchanges and, in the case of training institutes like the Seychelles Maritime Academy, providing direct training to maritime officials (including fisheries observers) from across the different islands.

The fourth group of non-state actors are somewhat linked to the above, but consist of more academically-focused research bodies tied into national universities. The two most prominent of these are the Chair in Indian Ocean Studies, housed at the University of Mauritius and with a small research staff funded by IORA, as well as the James Michel Blue Economy Research Institute (BERI) based at the University of Seychelles. These initiatives are both relatively recent, with both the Chair in Indian Ocean studies and BERI being established in 2015. They are also very small in scope, with the research complement at the University of Mauritius being six individuals and that of BERI consisting of eight researchers (only three of whom are at a senior-level) (Researcher Interview: Director of BERI; UoM, 2018). Comparative university-based research institutions do not seem to exist in either Comoros or Madagascar, likely the result of near-continuous reductions in public funding for tertiary education over the past ten years, (Caminade, 2018). These university-based institutes are intended to serve, over the long-term, as regional “hubs” for both natural science and social science research relating to fisheries and the wider “blue economy”. At present, they play this role only to a limited degree, though this may change in the near future once these institutes are able to obtain long-term stable financing (Researcher Interview: Director of BERI).

The fifth group of non-state actors is somewhat less defined than the other four groups, consisting of unaffiliated technical experts, most of whom previously served in senior management or technical roles within their respective national governments and/or within the Secretariats of bodies like the IOTC. This group of experts, most from Mauritius and Seychelles, consist of around 20-30 individuals who make-up something of a floating roster of consultants who typically advise on government fisheries policies and who play important roles in the design of inter-governmental organisation projects like SmartFish and SWIOFish (Researcher Interview: Former Chief Fisheries Officer, Government of Mauritius; Researcher Interview: Secretary-General, IOTC).

From the above, it should be apparent that a wide-range of fisheries-focused non-state actors operate within the Western Indian Ocean island grouping. The question then becomes to what extent these different non-state actors serve to form the type of inter-island epistemic community that scholars like Keck and Sikkink (1998) see as being essential when it comes to shaping the norms and values that underpin integrative cooperation and region-formation. The answer to this question, perhaps unsurprisingly, is complex and it speaks to the national

disparities within the island grouping that have been a consistent discussion point throughout this study.

In the context of both Mauritius and Seychelles, the above non-state actors enjoy reasonably high and consistent levels of funding. For the Mauritian and Seychellois NGOs noted earlier, around 40% of their core funding comes from sources linked to the state, including through the government appointment of NGOs to serve on the boards of state-led fisheries projects and programmes (Researcher Interview: Former Chairman of the Ocean Economy Commission, Government of Mauritius; Researcher Interview: Chief Diplomatic Advisor, Government of Seychelles). Additional finance comes from national and international fundraising from individuals/charities, as well as from international donor agencies. The British Department for International Development (DfID), the *Agence Française de Développement* (AFD) and the European Commission are the three main international donors to development projects in the Western Indian Ocean. Each of these agencies typically view national NGOs as ideal implementing partners (or co-implementing partners to state agencies) for funded initiatives (Researcher Interview: Chief Diplomatic Advisor, Government of Seychelles).

The high visibility of both Mauritius and Seychelles as international eco-tourism destinations, combined with the two countries' reputations for clean government, means that there is no shortage of funding for development programmes in these islands, including for those that adopt a focus on coastal and marine conservation or sustainable fisheries livelihoods. Said the Executive Director of Nature Seychelles: "Seychelles...and I suppose Mauritius...are both sexy countries. We are known globally as places people want to come for holiday. This, and I think our governments being seen as honest and transparent, means that we don't suffer from lack of attention. We [Nature Seychelles] present ourselves well, but it's rare that we have to scramble for funding" (Researcher Interview: Executive Director, Nature Seychelles).

The same situation largely holds true for Mauritian and Seychellois academic and technical research institutes. Like these countries' NGOs, technical research and training bodies all receive a combination of state-funding and funding from international donors. Bodies like the MOI, the Seychelles Maritime Academy and WIOMSA, to provide arguably the three most prominent examples, also receive funding indirectly from donors through the IOC (MOI, 2017, 2018; WIOMSA 2019). Universities in Mauritius and Seychelles are publicly-funded, but again with international donors playing an important role as financial contributors – IORA in the case of the University of Mauritius and the European Commission in the case of BERI: "Our funding projections are reasonably stable. Either our [Seychellois]

government, the IOC or some other donors like the EC [European Commission] have provided our core programme funding. Whether this funding is reliable for the long-term is something we'll need to watch closely, but I certainly think we [BERI] are in a stable position” (Researcher Interview: Director of BERI).

Stable funding for non-state actors in Mauritius and Seychelles is complemented by the existence of reasonably well-developed platforms for civil society organisation in both states. In Mauritius, the national Civil Society Forum (CSF) serves as a platform for discussion between NGOs, universities and the leaders of national research institutes. While CSF brings together non-state actors on a wide range of thematic areas, it includes a sub-platform for Marine Conservation and Fisheries, which draws together the full gamut of non-state actors noted earlier, including representatives from Boat Owners' Associations. In Seychelles, the Citizens Engagement Platform (CEP) serves much the same purpose as the Mauritian CSF, with CEP's sub-platform on Environmental Sustainability bringing the country's Boat Owners' Associations, NGOs and technical research institutes together in regular fisheries-focused discussion forums (CEP, 2018). Said the Executive Director of Nature Seychelles: “We engage quite a lot with other organisations and with national researchers who share our interests, including in fisheries. Yes, CEP is certainly part of this, but we don't need that formal platform to engage with each other. CEP helps us build relationships, but once these have been formed, we get into the habit of interacting with each other” (Researcher Interview: Executive Director, Nature Seychelles).

The platforms for civil society organisation present in Mauritius and Seychelles provide more than just a coordinating mechanism. They also serve as mechanisms for civil society strengthening, with both CSF and CEP engaging in internal exchanges of experience among members on issues of organisational capacity-building, advocacy, as well as research and dissemination. Both platforms have also brought in outside expertise, including representatives from the Africa-EU Civil Society Forum, to expose members to a range of capacity development measures related to the above issues (Researcher Interview: Executive Director, Nature Seychelles). The upshot of these efforts is a small but reasonably robust civil society in the two countries, with even loosely organised bodies like Boat Owners' Associations demonstrating internal organisation and professionalism. This, in turn, allows them to engage fairly effectively in advocacy on fisheries matters that are of concern to them: “Civil society here [in Seychelles] is fairly robust. This civil society is small...everyone knows each other...but it is effective. Very few of our fisheries policies ever get enacted without a rigorous vetting by NGOs, researchers and the like. I do think the same is true in Mauritius, at least

based on my discussions with colleagues there” (Researcher Interview: Ocean Governance Advisor in the Department of Blue Economy, Government of Seychelles).

Potentially counterbalancing these strengths are questions around the degree to which Mauritian and Seychellois non-state actors are truly *non-state*: “If you really begin interrogating these different organisations and [technical and research] institutes, you would find that their distance from the state is pretty minimal. Lots of people involved in fisheries move between the government and the NGO sector, for example. It is a bit incestuous and what you’re calling non-state actors are not always that useful in acting as a civil society watchdog on government decisions” (Researcher Interview: Former Chairman of the Ocean Economy Commission, Government of Mauritius). The negative implications of limited non-state actor autonomy from government institutions will be interrogated in the next section of this chapter. For the moment, it is worth drawing attention to the benefits that these close linkages provide; namely, the opportunities that each of the above non-state actors from Mauritius and Seychelles have to engage with each other as partners on government-led initiatives.

The two countries’ JMA over the Mascarene Plateau, which represents the closest thing that exists to an integrative set of (bilateral) ocean governance regimes among the Western Indian Ocean islands, provides a case in point. In 2017, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) launched a JMA Demonstration Project in order to equip Mauritian and Seychellois government officials – including those from the two states’ fisheries ministries – with guidance on the policy measures and good practices that would need to be introduced for the JMA to be successful. Included in the project, at the behest of the government officials involved in the project design, were a number of the non-state actors noted earlier. Academic staff from the Seychelles Maritime Academy and the Mauritius Maritime Training Academy were brought into the project to develop a joint training curriculum for fisheries surveillance personnel, ship repair personnel and naval officers tasked to undertake common naval security exercises geared towards the prevention of IUU fishing (Researcher Interview: Deputy Director, Seychelles Maritime Academy).

The MOI and the Seychelles Centre for Marine Research and Technology (SCMRT) were brought into the project to co-create key performance indicators that could be used to inform the design of a common Monitoring and Evaluation system for assessing the environmental impact of economic activities like fishing and seabed mining within the JMA (Researcher Interview: Executive Director, MOI). Finally, representatives from Boat Owners’ Associations and NGOs were participants, alongside government officials, in the design of a

civil society financing mechanism, initiated by the UNDP and eventually passed to the control of the Mauritian and Seychellois governments, that was to emerge as a side-benefit from the establishment of the JMA (Researcher Interview: Executive Director, Nature Seychelles). Interactions between these non-state actors also took place in the context of both the SmartFish and SWIOFish projects, with representatives from bodies like MOI, SCMRT and SMA all serving as members of the two projects' respective steering committees or at a minimum serving as part of a "consultative roster" of project civil society advisors (Researcher Interview: Deputy Director, Seychelles Maritime Academy).

For the Mauritian and Seychellois KIs interviewed for this study, the opportunity to engage on a transnational basis through the UNDP JMA Demonstration Project and through initiatives like SmartFish and SWIOFish, was instrumental in forging ties between non-state actors in the two state that may otherwise have never emerged: "There were a few particular instances where civil society in the two countries had the chance to interact. I would not overstate the frequency of these interactions, but connections were forged. We [at MOI] developed a working relationship with our sister institution [SCMRT] in Seychelles. We started to exchange ideas and we continue to do so now even outside the context of these [projects]. We have developed some common ideas on how to support our countries realise parts of the "blue economy" and we try to push some harmonisation in these ideas between Mauritius and Seychelles" (Researcher Interview: Executive Director, MOI). Notably, improved digital connectivity serves as a tool that appears to allow non-state actors participating in the JMA Demonstration Project to collaborate and coordinate their actions – through digital sharing platforms, common scientific databases and even through social media.

A similar perspective was shared by the Director of the Seychelles Maritime Academy, highlighting the experiences of his institution and other technical training institutes: "SmartFish and the UNDP [JMA Demonstration] project provided a foundation for short-term interactions between people from Mauritius and Seychelles. Not just government, but even our colleagues from our sister institute in Mauritius [Mauritius Maritime Training Academy]. We worked together to develop training curricula for these projects and now we still exchange ideas on this, on teacher training and appraisal and...of course, we sometimes exchange students and staff for short-term exchange placements. These interactions are all recent, but I think they are really good in bringing our countries closer together" (Researcher Interview: Deputy Director, Seychelles Maritime Academy).

What appears to exist at present is something of a bilateral epistemic community emerging between Mauritius and Seychelles. KIs were adamant that the existence of this

community should not be overstated: “Mauritius and Seychelles interact more now because of the JMA [over the Mascarene Plateau]. This agreement provides a rationale and platform for interaction, I’d say both for government officials and for non-state actors. But this is all fairly recent. There were always interactions before between fisheries scientists and researchers in the two countries, but the regularity and depth of interaction has only really taken off in the last ten years, again thanks in large part to the JMA” (Researcher Interview: Ocean Governance Advisor in the Department of Blue Economy, Government of Seychelles). The Mauritian Consul to Seychelles, in a brief interview, noted: “Part of my job is to facilitate meetings between Mauritian and Seychellois companies, researchers, institutions and so on. If you’re talking about fisheries, I’d say the last ten years have really seen an increase in the interest that both countries’ technical people have in engaging with each other. [The] JMA matters in this regard. I’d say these different fisheries projects from the IOC [SmartFish and SWIOFish] matter and so too does the idea of the blue economy. It gives a common strategic rationale for closer integration” (Researcher Interview: Honourary Consul of Mauritius in Seychelles).

Material evidence of this closer collaboration, in the form of technical reports, scientific publications, joint projects between institutions, or even minutes from meetings between civil society groups from the two countries, is admittedly limited. A partial exception exists in the form of WIOMSA, where a cursory review of published reports from 2017 and 2018 indicates that Mauritian and Seychellois marine scientists have been co-authors on around a third of publications (WIOMSA, 2018). However, it is difficult to derive too many conclusions from this since a large number of these publications also include researchers from outside the island grouping. It was not possible for this study to interview a representative from WIOMSA, but the Ocean Governance Advisor within the Seychelles’ Department of Blue Economy, also a contributor to WIOMSA publications, stated: “When talking about scientists, I’d say there is a general consensus between Mauritius and Seychelles, interestingly not always in agreement with the French scientists based in Réunion, on what is important to research, around common research methodologies and on how to disseminate research. This makes them allies.” (Researcher Interview: Ocean Governance Advisor in the Department of Blue Economy, Government of Seychelles).

This same respondent also noted, however, that this engagement did not necessarily constitute a fully-fledged epistemic community: “Linkages between Mauritius and Seychelles are growing. They’ve existed for a long time between governments and now they’re growing between your non-state actors. But they’re still much looser relationships than what you see in the Pacific, for example, where the FFA and the University of the South Pacific have been

working for a long time on developing and really preserving scientific collaboration” (Researcher Interview: Ocean Governance Advisor in the Department of Blue Economy, Government of Seychelles).

What emerges from the above perspectives is an acknowledgment of, if not a fully-fledged epistemic community with sophisticated linkages between Mauritius and Seychelles, at least a growing network of inter-island contacts and evolving avenues of cooperation between them. The JMA over the Mascarene Plateau has provided the two countries with a formalised set of agreements within which to situate some of this cooperation. While it may be too hasty to suggest that these linkages are evidence of evolved levels of *regionness*, they at least point positively towards a social constructivist’s sense of consistent interactions leading to the gradual development of closer ties and the emergence of common ideas/perspectives among non-state actors. Looking at this issue from the perspective of the island grouping *as a whole*, however, it is readily apparent that the growing linkages between Mauritian and Seychellois non-state actors are not replicated when it comes to the inclusion of their Comorian and Malagasy counterparts. At a fundamental level, this is due to the weakness of civil society in these latter two island states.

Comorian civil society, whether pertaining to fisheries or broader issue areas, is poorly organised and lacks access to funding. Equally important, however, is that the inter-island political cleavages that define the country also characterise its civil society. The majority of non-state actors, which include Boat Owners’ Associations and a small coterie of local NGOs focused on coastal conservation and support for traditional fisheries livelihoods, are organised at an individual-island level rather than on a national basis (Caminade, 2018; Researcher Interview: Representative from the Grande Comore Union of Boat Owners). While there are occasional instances of organisations forming national umbrella bodies, it is more common for civil society groups to be reliant on funding (and even outright patronage) from political elites based in the individual island capitals, many of whom are dedicated to the independence (or at least deep autonomy) of their respective islands (Caminade, 2018). The result of this is that Comorian civil society lacks organisational scale and its activities are extremely local in scope: “Our civil society, if you can call it that, is curtailed. The central government does not tolerate pressure groups and neither do the leaders in the individual islands. Our NGOs are small, very constrained in where they operate and what they do. They don’t have much political sway” (Researcher Interview: Fisheries Officer, DGRH).

The same situation generally holds true for Comorian fisheries research bodies. Like their Mauritian and Seychellois counterparts, there are questions about how autonomous these

actors are from state control. However, even a nominally national entity like CNDRS has been undermined by the fact that the organisation's ties with its sub-national components in Anjouan and Mohéli have become progressively weakened, mainly as autonomy-seeking political elites on these islands apply pressure to limit the influence of national organisations based in Moroni: "Our fisheries research institutes have the potential to become quite effective. But there is a problem in that the central government struggles to establish its authority in the rest of the country and we no longer have much mixing of people from the different islands among your non-state actors. This makes it easier for a power-hungry leader in Anjouan say, to tell our fisheries institutes on that island to pay no attention to what people in Grande Comore are saying. This has become a real problem here" (Researcher Interview: Fisheries Officer, DGRH). Comorian civil society, poorly organised and lacking funding, is made weaker by inter-island divisions. Indeed, these divisions largely prevent the country's limited array of non-state actors from achieving any type of national footprint. No civil society umbrella organisation akin to the Mauritian CSF or Seychelles CEP exists in the country and there appears to be no prospect of this type of entity emerging in the near future (Researcher Interview: Representative from the Grande Comore Union of Boat Owners). With Comorian civil society not able to effectively organise, it is logical to suggest that it will struggle to develop transnational connections with civil society actors from the other islands.

Malagasy civil society is better resourced and more effectively organised than in Comoros. However, the authoritarian political climate that has emerged in the country since the 2009 coup has made it difficult for civil society actors to organise. Large reductions in foreign aid over the last decade have also made it challenging for the country's local NGOs, in particular, to maintain strong funding levels (Hery, 2016). As in Comoros, Madagascar's existing political cleavages present barriers to some of the country's non-state actors. Madagascar's political elites, drawn from the Merina ethnic group and based primarily in the highlands around Antananarivo, have long viewed ethnic groups residing in coastal areas with suspicion, particularly given the fact that coastal areas have emerged as centres of political opposition to the military-supported governments that have led the country since the coup (Ramariandrasoa, 2017). Since most of the country's marine conservation and fisheries-focused organisations, including Boat Owners' Associations and local NGOs, are based in these coastal areas, they tend to come under political pressure and have even been subject to random closure: "There were a few Boat Owners' Groups and marine conservation NGOs in Mahajanga, Antsiranana and Toamasina [three main coastal cities] dealing with fisheries that were harassed by the government. Mobilising for coastal interests can sometimes raise

suspicion of political activity. This invites a response and it limits the space available to these groups to operate” (Researcher Interview: Associate Editor, Madagascar Tribune).

The majority of Madagascar’s fisheries scientific research institutes are, somewhat oddly, all based in inland Antananarivo and do not face harassment from the state. However, these bodies have borne the cost of international aid reductions: “Organisations like the *Institut Halieutique et des Sciences Marines* or the *Centre National de Recherches Océanographiques*...these used to be strong institutions producing quality scientific research. But now, to be honest, I think they are hollowed-out. Over the last decade, a lot of our best scientists were put out of work, moved to France, moved to Réunion. The money to support the research...it didn’t disappear but it wasn’t what it was before” (Researcher Interview: Vice-President, National Association for Fish Collectors and Exporters of Madagascar). This view was corroborated by the Ocean Governance Advisor in the Seychelles’ Department of Blue Economy, speaking in relation to WIOMSA: “Malagasy fisheries and marine science institutions are less robust than they were. Speaking of WIOMSA, we don’t necessarily have fewer Malagasy contributors than before, but you find that many of them are now associated with French research bodies and not Malagasy ones. I don’t know if this is a problem, but I guess it does point to the difficulties that the Malagasy organisations face, which I assume are largely funding-related” (Researcher Interview: Ocean Governance Advisor in the Department of Blue Economy, Government of Seychelles).

It should be noted that there are some positive signs of civil society strengthening in Madagascar, not least the founding of the Civil Society Alliance (CSA) – referred to in Malagasy as *Hina* – in 2015.⁵² CSA is intended to play the same civil society coordination and capacity-building role as Mauritius’ CSF and Seychelles’ CEP. For the moment, however, CSA’s membership remains relatively small and, while inclusive of civil society organisations from across the country, it lacks significant representation from the fisheries and marine conservation sectors: “*Hina* has potential. I think it will help Madagascar begin to re-build the strength of civil society groups. But it will take time and we will have to see whether organisations from the coastal areas are properly represented” (Researcher Interview: Associate Editor, Madagascar Tribune). Regardless, Malagasy non-state actors, like their counterparts in Comoros, are generally weak and evidently lack any of the financial and organisational advantages that are enjoyed by comparable non-state actors in both Mauritius and Seychelles. Also, it is apparent that civil society actors in Comoros and Madagascar are

⁵² See the following link: <<https://scalingupnutrition.org/news/madagascar-officially-establishes-its-civil-society-alliance/>> (accessed 16 July 2020).

not yet benefitting from improvements in digital connectivity, which could allow them to strengthen both their internal coordination and to engage across national borders: “Over time, I do think you will see countries like Madagascar and Comoros become more visible...civil society here [in Madagascar] could Skype with civil society in Mauritius, for example. But we’re not there yet. Our connectivity is still only beginning here” (Researcher Interview: Associate Editor, Madagascar Tribune). The previous two chapters have drawn attention to the role that development disparities and differences in political cohesiveness between the Western Indian Ocean island states play in preventing the emergence of truly “regional” political dynamics over fisheries. A similar dynamic, based on the above assessment, is at play at the non-state level.

Mauritian and Seychellois non-state actors enjoy an enabling environment conducive to effective organisation and financing. Their close links to their respective countries’ state institutions provide them with opportunities for transnational engagement, at least on a bilateral basis, through initiatives like the Mascarene Plateau JMA and through projects like SmartFish and SWIOFish. These opportunities, in turn, have enabled at least the beginnings of sustained interactions between the two countries’ Boat Owners’ Associations, NGOs and scientific research personnel. While these interactions may not constitute clear evidence of the type of inter-island epistemic community that exists in the Pacific, they do suggest the potential for non-state actor regionness to emerge over time. The clear weakness of civil society in Comoros and Madagascar, with non-state actors unable to effectively organise or improve their capacity to operate, even within their respective countries, would seem to preclude the possibility of them engaging on a transnational basis. Indeed, there is no documented evidence of Comorian or Malagasy NGOs joining their Mauritian and Seychellois counterparts as part of the SmartFish or SWIOFish project steering committees. The participation of Malagasy researchers in WIOMSA (or at least Malagasy researchers based in Madagascar and working with Malagasy institutions) is minimal, while the participation of Comorian researchers in WIOMSA is essentially non-existent.

While Chapter 3 provided examples of some non-state actors from Comoros and Madagascar engaging with their Mauritian and Seychellois counterparts, these interactions are rarely sustained beyond the lifetime of project-based funding. Comorian and Malagasy non-state actors may not be fully absent from inter-island interactions, but they are not present consistently enough or at a scale required for them to be members of an (embryonic) epistemic community that is “regional” in scope: “Our [Comorian] NGOs and research institutes...if there is a regional dialogue around fisheries among civil society, they won’t be a big part of it.

Maybe they can be involved through some donor projects, but there is no momentum towards our civil society having a regional voice” (Researcher Interview: Fisheries Officer, DGRH).

3. Non-State Actors and Autonomy from the State: Limitations in the Forging of Cooperative Pathways – The Case of IUU Fishing

In the previous section, it was noted that the islands’ respective non-state actors generally lack autonomy from state institutions. This close relationship with the state does provide some advantages, at least for non-state actors in Mauritius and Seychelles, who are able to piggyback on state-level cooperation to pursue modest engagement through fisheries and broader ocean governance projects. However, lack of autonomy from the state, represented in part by the fact that the leaders of many NGOs and research institutes previously served in public sector roles, is also seen to dilute the operational independence of many of the islands’ non-state actors and limits the degree to which they are likely to serve as watchdogs on government actions. Connected to this, limited autonomy from the state seems to increase the likelihood of the islands’ non-state actors toeing their governments’ respective lines on various aspects of fisheries governance. This, in turn, limits (or even closes off) some of the cooperative pathways that could otherwise be available to a prospective “regional” civil society. A short case study, focused on the fight against IUU fishing, highlights this issue.

Under the auspices of SmartFish, civil society organisations from each of the island states were intended to collaborate in order to form a “civil society taskforce” focused on generating ideas for combatting IUU fishing – within island state EEZs and on the high seas (IOC, 2012, 2014). Established as part of the SmartFish implementation plan in 2010 and intended to be operational over the remaining four years of the project, the proposed task force experienced a wide range of problems that hindered its development. The first of these, relating back to the previous section of this chapter, was the difficulty of soliciting participation from Comorian and Malagasy NGOs or research institutions: “The task force was intended to encompass all of the islands but it was pretty clear from the beginning this would be a struggle. A couple of Comorian NGOs signed up to the [taskforce] MoU [Memorandum of Understanding], but it became clear that even with funding support from the project [SmartFish], they lacked the capacity to participate or contribute anything of value. Malagasy organisations were in a state of chaos after the coup in 2009. They weren’t necessarily prepared to participate and the EU was wary of any project funds going to organisations that had murky ties to the new regime in Tana [Antananarivo]. So, there wasn’t much participation from

Madagascar either” (Researcher Interview: Chief Diplomatic Advisor, Government of Seychelles).

Over time, the taskforce did manage to obtain nominal participation from two Malagasy institutions: IHSM and CNDO. For the most part, however, it remained a predominantly Mauritian and Seychellois-led initiative, with some participation also from French civil society bodies based in Réunion (Boucher, 2015). The taskforce was initiated with some fanfare, being seen as a way to both raise awareness of IUU fishing in the Western Indian Ocean among island state populations, as well as to use civil society mobilisation as a means to hold governments accountable for engaging more forcefully with DWFNs over IUU fishing within island state EEZs – including, ideally, through the enactment of MT&Cs: “This taskforce had some very good objectives. The idea was right. All of the islands, even Seychelles with a more conservation-minded focus, was sometimes too meek in the face of DWFNs when their [DWFN] vessels were found to be engaging in IUU fishing. In democracies, which Mauritius and Seychelles certainly are, civil society mobilisation should be a way to encourage behaviour change in policymakers” (Researcher Interview: Former Chairman of the Ocean Economy Commission, Government of Mauritius).

Indeed, the taskforce had some striking successes in raising the profile of IUU fishing in the public consciousness, with IOC and SmartFish-branded print advertisements, radio and television ads, as well as newspaper publications being produced (IOC, 2014; Researcher Interview: Chief Diplomatic Advisor, Government of Seychelles). Said an Associate Editor of the Madagascar Tribute: “Even in Madagascar, where I don’t think we really had a huge level of involvement with the initiative [taskforce], we were aware of the increased focus on IUU fishing and the threat it poses to our fish stocks, especially tuna. People were certainly more aware and at least economically, if not looking at the environment, it became an issue of discussion in our country” (Researcher Interview: Associate Editor, Madagascar Tribune).

The taskforce was less successful in actually influencing behaviour change among *policymakers*. This was not seen to be the result of a failure to mobilise civil society, but rather a failure of civil society in each of the islands to embrace a role as a watchdog for government accountability. For the KIs interviewed for this study, there was one main reason for this: “Our NGOs and our research institutes...you need to understand that they aren’t always that independent from the state. International donors fund NGOs in the region, but often the money is directed through state institutions, maybe the Ministry of Finance or a fisheries ministry. Especially in fisheries, we have a lot of state-driven development projects or environmental initiatives, with what you’re calling non-state actors being...sort of auxiliary support, I guess.

Civil society provides a nice face for international donors on these types of initiatives, but that doesn't mean they're providing an independent voice. They [civil society actors] know where their money comes from" (Researcher Interview: Former Chairman of the Ocean Economy Commission, Government of Mauritius).

While perhaps a cynical take, this perspective was more modestly echoed by the Executive Director of Nature Seychelles, an organisation widely respected for having an independent voice: "I don't agree with what your other interviewee said about civil society lacking a voice. I think it does have a voice [in Seychelles], but especially for a lot of smaller organisations, with less visibility than us [Nature Seychelles], there's an imperative to not antagonise the government. And Seychelles is a democracy, so this shouldn't be an issue, but in a small country like ours, relationships are very personal. Personal antagonisms have larger effects than they might in a larger country where you don't have everyone knowing everyone else" (Researcher Interview: Executive Director, Nature Seychelles). Non-state actors in Mauritius and Seychelles, at least from the above perspectives, are financially and reputationally tied to government. The fact that this is the case in the two most robust democracies in the island grouping should give a sense as to what the situation is like in more authoritarian Comoros and Madagascar. Indeed, scholars like Caminade (2018) have documented the close links between Comorian civil society and state benefactors, while Hery (2016) and Ramariandrasoa (2017) have done the same in the context of Madagascar.

Lack of autonomy from the state does not appear to only be a matter of preserving funding and reputation. It is also linked to what is termed a "revolving carousel" among officials in each island state, between public service in state institutions and service in nominally "non-state" organisations. The Executive Director of Nature Seychelles, building on the point raised above about the importance of personalised relationships, further noted: "In Seychelles and I think in the other islands too, there is not a clear line where you have people involved with the state on one side and people involved in civil society on the other. People go back and forth constantly. Maybe a fisheries expert from the SFA gets tired of working for the government, so they go to a research institute for a while or they go teach at the [Seychelles Maritime] Academy. But then they miss the better salary working with government, so they come back. This is actually really good for building relationships between government and non-government bodies, but it does come at the expense of these non-state actors really holding policymakers' feet to the fire. People in the non-state sector expect to be working for the state eventually and they don't want to burn bridges" (Researcher Interview: Executive Director, Nature Seychelles).

A similar reality appears to exist in the other islands. In Mauritius, there is a notable literature that discusses the role that politicians from the country's two main political parties – the MSM and the Labour Party – continue to play in occupying leadership positions in the country's research institutes, unions and NGO sector (de l'Estrac, 2009). There is less discussion of this issue in relation to Comoros and Madagascar, though the aforementioned lack of political space existing for civil society in these two countries would suggest considerable inter-linkages between the state and non-state sectors here as well: "In Comoros, the government is really the only stable employer. Everyone wants to work in the public sector. I even remember the leader of one of the Boat Owners' Associations here in Grande Comore getting a job and working with us at DGRH. He knew someone who had connections and who could get him a job. He used to be one of our main critics!" (Researcher Interview: Fisheries Officer, DGRH).

In Madagascar: "If you have the right connections, you want to be working with the Ministry [of fisheries]. We do have legitimate civil society activists in Madagascar, though I wouldn't say so much in fisheries, unless you count the Boat Owners and their lobbying against coastal fishing restrictions. But the research institutes, for sure the aim is often to use employment in those institutes as a springboard to working for government, even if you don't particularly like the government of the day" (Researcher Interview: Vice-President, National Association for Fish Collectors and Exporters of Madagascar). The above perspectives all reflect governance traits that are readily identified in much of the literature on small states: namely, the dominance of the public sector and a personalised rather than formalised approach to governance and state-society relations. Non-state actors in the islands, where they exist, are seldom independent or, at the very least, tend to be led by individuals who have intimate connections with state actors. This is true for multiple sectors and not just fisheries.

Returning to the discussion of the IUU civil society taskforce established under SmartFish, this lack of operational independence for non-state actors proved to be extremely important. As noted in previous chapters, the Freeport Seafood Hub is a central pillar of Mauritius' Ocean Economy strategy and of the country's export-led fisheries development. Two increasingly important sources of investment for the Seafood Hub have been the Chinese and South Korean governments and their respective state-owned enterprises and *Chaebols* (Villary, 2010). At the same time, one of the main sources of IUU fishing in the Western Indian Ocean pertains to Chinese and South Korean long liners, who have been found to be fishing for tuna and other species like swordfish without possessing updated licenses and

without adhering to Mauritian EEZ entry regulations or port controls (Researcher Interview: Former Chairman of the Ocean Economy Commission, Government of Mauritius).

The Mauritian government's response to this IUU fishing has been largely to downplay it, offering mild admonishments but avoiding taking substantial legal action against DWFN vessel operators: "I think the reasons for this are pretty clear. The Seafood Hub is central to our [Mauritius'] economic plans and that Asian investment is an important component. Downplaying the IUU fishing then makes sense for the government, but I think the most striking thing was that there was no pushback from Mauritian civil society on this [SmartFish IUU] task force. Why? They were not willing to go against the government and make noise that could upset the DWFNs and maybe risk the investment in the Seafood Hub" (Researcher Interview: Former Chairman of the Ocean Economy Commission, Government of Mauritius). There is admittedly little documentary evidence to corroborate this claim, though it was echoed to some degree by the Executive Director of the MOI, who led his organisation's role on the taskforce: "I'm not sure it's fair to say we downplayed anything. Our researchers, sometimes working with our colleagues in Seychelles...we raised the issue [of IUU fishing by Asian long liners]. What we didn't do is turn the issue into something where we tried to get the public onboard to put pressure on the government. We used our own channels [of communication with government] to raise the issue and we hoped that the close contacts we had with the government, including our former Chairman, who is now a consultant with the Ministry [of Fisheries, Shipping and Ocean Economy] would be enough to get IUU fishing more play. We did this even though we knew it would be a challenge for the government and the private operators looking for investment in the Seafood Hub. Could we have been more forceful in pushing this issue? Yes, certainly so" (Researcher Interview: Executive Director, MOI).

The SmartFish IUU task force struggled on a number of fronts when it came to non-state actors effectively raising the issue of IUU fishing within their own borders. As with Mauritius' desire for investment in the Seafood Hub, the Comorian government's ongoing desire to secure funding for the Comoros National Fishing Company has had similar implications for non-state actors: "The Boat Owners' Associations, particularly those dealing with artisanal fisheries who travel further offshore...they were concerned about IUU fishing and they tried to make an issue of it, even bringing it to the civil society taskforce under SmartFish. However, our research institutes, under-resourced and undermanned as they are, were often asked by the federal government to be part of the effort try to secure investment from the Chinese in the National [Fishing] Company...the same country whose vessels were

doing the IUU fishing. You can imagine it was difficult for our researchers to go and raise a fuss on the issue” (Researcher Interview: Fisheries Officer, DGRH).

It was only in Seychelles, in which the government’s generally consistent policy approach to combatting IUU fishing was in line with the objectives of the taskforce, where civil society was able to play a truly meaningful role in the SmartFish initiative. Even here, however, this success says little about the country’s non-state actors serving as constructive watchdogs for policymaker accountability: “Civil society in Seychelles has strengths, but with the initiative you speak of [the SmartFish civil society taskforce] our researchers, scientists, NGOs...all played a role because they were aligned with government priorities and these priorities were in line with that taskforce. Had those priorities not matched, our civil society would not have been any more effective than in the other islands” (Researcher Interview: Executive Director, Nature Seychelles).

The example of the IUU taskforce points to the limitations that arise when non-state actors lack autonomy from state interests. Whether due to financial dependence or close interpersonal relationships, civil society in the island states does not always have the opportunity to identify and seize on its own interests. The objectives of state-level policymakers often become, by default, the interests of non-state actors as well. One of the main implications of this, as the IUU taskforce demonstrates, is that potentially cooperative avenues between non-state actors can become closed off. IUU fishing was broadly recognised as a concern that the islands’ respective civil society interests could have united behind (at least to a degree). However, because civil society lacked distance from the state and since state actors were less committed to addressing this issue, non-state actors lacked the will to take true initiative. This points to non-state actors in the islands as lacking the *actorness* that a “new regionalist” thinker would identify as being central to the fostering of common regional values.

4. The Western Indian Ocean Islands as a Socially-Constructed Region: Considerations from the Perspective of Non-State Actors

Both Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 argued that at the state-level – whether between the islands’ fisheries ministries or through inter-governmental organisations – the political dynamics evident between the Western Indian Ocean island states were not conducive to moving these islands beyond “functional” cooperation towards true integration based on the development of shared regimes. Non-state actors clearly do not have the same power as government officials to facilitate integration between states or to enact formal regimes. However, they can play the role of “norm entrepreneurs” (Keck and Sikkink, 1998) who work

to construct the values that influence regime formation. This chapter has painted a mixed picture regarding the ability of non-state actors in the Western Indian Ocean to play this “norm entrepreneur” role in a truly regional sense.

Civil society in both Mauritius and Seychelles is reasonably robust, benefitting from high levels of funding and from the existence of platforms like CSF and CEP which aid in organisation. The close ties that Mauritian and Seychellois NGOs and research institutes, in particular, enjoy with their national governments allows many of them to piggy-back on cooperative opportunities developed at the state-level, including through projects like SmartFish and SWIOFish. While still fledgling, non-state actors in Mauritius and Seychelles have developed closer ties on the back of these cooperative opportunities, deepening their interactions and building working relationships that are slowly helping to create what may be termed a *bilateral* epistemic community between these states. Non-state actors in Comoros and Madagascar are far weaker, lacking in funding and opportunities for organisation, while also coping with an absence of real political space in which to operate. With NGOs, research institutes and universities in these two islands unable to project influence within their own borders, it comes as little surprise that their prospects for engaging transnationally are inherently limited. The result is that a “regional” epistemic community, defined by strong contributions from each island state, remains difficult to envision.

At the same time, the fact that non-state actors in all of the Western Indian Ocean islands struggle to achieve distance from their respective governments, means that civil society in the islands seldom plays a meaningful role when it comes to holding state authorities accountable. The civil society taskforce created through SmartFish to deal with IUU fishing is a case in point. An issue that could have provided civil society from each of the islands with an opportunity to find common cause for advocacy amounted to little since these civil society actors wished to avoid antagonising state officials – whether due to fears about what this antagonism might mean for their funding or because so many of those involved in the non-state sphere have ambitions to work in the public sector. The end result was a clear missed opportunity for a transnational civil society to demonstrate its potential.

What do the above observations say about the Western Indian Ocean islands as a socially-constructed region? On one hand, the technical linkages between non-state actors in the different island states cannot be dismissed. Some of these linkages, whether between oceanographic research institutes and training academies, or within the confines of research bodies like WIOMSA, are valued by non-state actors and appear to be growing even if they are somewhat biased towards involving actors mainly from Mauritius and Seychelles. The

simplistic definitions of “region” provided by Nye (1968) or Powers and Goertz (2011), which emphasise geographical proximity and some type of interdependence, still seem appropriate as minimum thresholds that the islands’ non-state actors can readily meet. The island grouping’s non-state actors surely do not meet Hettne and Söderbaum’s (2000: 461) “new regionalist” definition of “a geographical area transformed from a passive object to an active subject capable of articulating the transnational interests of the emerging region.” Non-state actors from Comoros and Madagascar are barely able to engage on a transnational basis and while linkages between Mauritian and Seychellois civil society are becoming increasingly evident, these linkages tend to still emerge on the back of project-based initiatives like the UNDP JMA Demonstration Project rather than taking place organically and outside the cooperative structures defined at the state level.

In spite of the above assessment, “new regionalism” clearly indicates that regionness is a concept that periodically adjusts to higher or lower levels within a grouping of states. As such, the possibility of non-state actors collectively attaining a stronger transnational focus should not be ruled out. However, for this to happen, the islands’ collective civil society would need to generate a much higher level of *actorness*, which in turn would seem to depend on improvements in the political climates of both Comoros and Madagascar. Indeed, it seems necessary that non-state actors in these islands have greater opportunity to organise and be active *domestically* before they can hope to be in a position to seize opportunities for transnational engagement.

Looking once more at the typology of regionness introduced by Hettne (2005: 548), inter-island political dynamics at the non-state level can be used to offer a further assessment as to where the islands sit on a fisheries-focused regionness spectrum. As with interactions at the ministerial level and through inter-governmental organisations, the islands clearly meet the criteria of being both a “regional space” and “translocal social system” at the non-state level. This is based on the fact that there are clearly identifiable interactions taking place between island state civil society, even if engagement by Comorian and Malagasy non-state actors is comparatively infrequent. The more sophisticated “regional social system”, defined by Hettne as involving “ever widening translocal relations, in which the constituent units are dependent on each other, as well as on the overall stability of the system”, seems to be an overstatement in the case of the islands’ non-state actors. As the failure of the civil society taskforce for IUU fishing demonstrates, there are presently no *strong* structural foundations in place to organise transnational civil society within the island grouping and no mechanisms through which to

generate issue-based alignment between these actors, who instead tend to align themselves with the dominant policy and political positions of their respective national governments.

For the islands to be deemed a “regional international society”, they must be “characterised by norms and rules which increase the level of predictability in the system.” There is little evidence that non-state actors in the different islands are acting as “norm entrepreneurs” in the fisheries sector. This may change over time, particularly at the bilateral level between Mauritius and Seychelles, since civil society in these two island states should continue engaging in ever-more regularised interactions. However, these non-state actors are not yet playing a substantive role in driving the creation of norms or even developing among themselves a platform (“system”) for transnational cooperation. Hettne’s “regional community” necessitates “an enduring organisational framework that facilitates and promotes social communication and convergence of values and behaviour throughout the region.” There is no evidence at all to suggest that non-state actors are playing this type of role, though as emerging efforts continue (e.g. the mutual design of fisheries training curricula by national maritime training academies), this convergence may become more evident.

Unsurprisingly, when it comes to whether the islands constitute a “regionalised institutional polity” that “has a more fixed structure of decision-making and stronger actor capability”, there is no evidence to suggest that such a level of regionness is even close to being attained at the non-state level in the Western Indian Ocean. Actorness (the capacity to act on commonly-defined priorities) appears to be a key ingredient that is missing at the non-state level among the islands. A set of distinct and transnationally-focused civil society goals – and mechanisms on which to achieve them – are not yet evident. This contrasts with the Pacific context, where fisheries-based civil society in the various island states has established dedicated platforms for cooperation through the University of the South Pacific and through the FFA, which provide predictable platforms for civil society participation and organisation on fisheries issues (Fry and Tarte, 2015).

The result of the above is that it is impossible to look at engagement among non-state actors in the Western Indian Ocean and see evidence of socially-constructed region-building. Interactions between the islands’ respective civil society actors are evident, but are not institutionalised and do not appear to have a life of their own outside of the (often superficial) cooperative structures created by the different islands at the state-level. As such, it is not really possible to see these actors as doing much to facilitate inter-island integration or regime-building in the fisheries sector. With the study’s core analytical exploration complete, Chapter

7 will now bring together the varying strands of the study's argument into an overall summary, conclusion and set of recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 7: Conclusion: Inter-Island Political Dynamics, Collective Diplomacy & Constructed Region-Building in the Western Indian Ocean

In Chapter 1, this study posed one primary and two secondary research questions. The primary question asked how existing political dynamics between the Western Indian Ocean island states incentivise (or fail to incentivise) deepening cooperation, integration and collective diplomacy among these states in the fisheries sector? The study's secondary research questions asked: 1) to what extent do these existing political dynamics allow for the Western Indian Ocean island grouping to be thought of as a distinct and socially-constructed *region* – particularly one characterised by commonly-held and actionable fisheries regimes?; and 2) to the extent that signs of inter-island cooperation and collective diplomacy can be found within this island grouping, is there evidence to suggest that “ganging up” has allowed these island states to boost their collective bargaining power and achieve impactful diplomatic outcomes on fisheries issues?

This concluding chapter provides a response to each of these questions, summarising the key arguments made throughout the study and further tying these arguments back to the overarching theoretical perspective, based on “new regionalism” and the social construction of regions, that has underpinned the study's focus. Because this study has concentrated on a particular thematic sector in a particular island geography, the degree to which “analytical generalisations” can be generated should not be overstated. In spite of their common “smallness”, the politics of the Western Indian Ocean island states are multifaceted and the factors that shape cooperation, integrative regime-building, collective diplomacy and region-building are surely too complex for a single instrumental case study to capture in full. However, looking in-depth at a particular thematic issue area in fisheries and drawing on the insights of a wide array of KIs, as well as information gleaned from relevant secondary documentation, it is possible to draw some conclusions that can serve as a foundation for future research. After sharing its final perspectives on each of the study's research questions, this chapter will conclude with modest ideas on what form this future research should take.

1. Inter-Island Political Dynamics and the Incentivising of Fisheries Cooperation, Integration and Regime-Building among the Western Indian Ocean Island States

This study has argued that regardless of the lens through which the Western Indian Ocean island states are examined – whether in relation to engagement at the state-to-state ministerial level, within the context of inter-governmental organisations or in relation to non-state actors – the political dynamics that exist between these islands are not conducive to

moving these states beyond technical or “functional” cooperation in the fisheries sector and towards the deep cooperation, integration and regime-building that is clearly evident in the comparable island grouping of the Pacific. Technical cooperation between the Western Indian Ocean island states in fisheries is clearly evident. In most cases, this cooperation is highly valued by the island states, whether it occurs in the form of trainings, experience exchanges among fisheries personnel, the sharing of surveillance assets or in the implementation of practical exercises such as joint vessel patrols (to name just a few examples). This technical cooperation is a core component of the work carried-out by each of the four main inter-governmental organisations focused on promoting fisheries cooperation among the islands – IOC, IORA, IOTC and SWIOFC – and is at the heart of the two main fisheries-related projects implemented within the island grouping: SmartFish and SWIOFish. This study has not sought to downplay the importance of this technical cooperation and the clearly impactful role it is playing in improving at least some aspects of “regional” fisheries governance.

However, taking “new regionalism” and its social constructivist ethos as a pathway towards exploring political engagement between these islands, this type of technical cooperation is not, *by itself*, sufficient to indicate a real sense of unity and shared purpose among the islands – the very notion of *Indianocéanie*, which some of the islands’ political elites identify as a unifying force, but which this study found little evidence of in practice. The oft-mentioned definition of regionness, provided by Hettne and Söderbaum (2000: 461) as “a geographical area [being] transformed from a passive object to an active subject capable of articulating the transnational interests of the emerging region” aspires that technical cooperation evolve into something *more*, ideally a catalyst towards the development of regimes that institutionalise this cooperation and allow it to be deepened over time through regularised social interactions, whether at the state or non-state levels.

It has been argued throughout this study that the political dynamics that exist between the Western Indian Ocean island states do not, at present, allow for the emergence of converging transnational interests or expectations over fisheries. A number of reasons have been put forward to explain this situation. The disparities in levels of socio-economic development and political cohesion between the Western Indian Ocean islands, mainly between Mauritius and Seychelles on one side and less-developed Comoros and Madagascar on the other, give the islands’ governing elites widely varying policy and political priorities. At the state-to-state level, looking at engagement between the islands’ respective fisheries ministries, the failure of the islands to enact common MT&Cs to govern the conditions of DWFN vessel access are largely a product of these different priorities. For Mauritius and

Seychelles, with well-developed fisheries industries and a stable footing on different components of the fisheries value chain (particularly for the tuna fishery), strategic initiatives like MT&C enactment and the longer-term sustainability measures such enactment would require, have considerable value. For Comoros and Madagascar, which have both experienced the loss of structural aid for their fisheries sectors (from the cancelled SFPAs with the EU), widespread poverty and a resulting need to prioritise sectoral growth make the enactment of regimes like MT&Cs less politically compelling. When this is combined with the fact that the fisheries ministries in Comoros and Madagascar lack the professionalism and resourcing to be actively engaged in fisheries diplomacy in the way that their Mauritian and Seychellois counterparts are, it becomes difficult for the islands to ever arrive at a unified starting point in order to undertake coordinated action.

Disparities in development and political cohesion among the islands also affect political dynamics in the context of inter-governmental organisations and in relation to non-state actors. With the former, the islands were identified as all having different political preferences as to which inter-governmental bodies they would prioritise when allocating their political capital. Seychelles pursues a diplomatic strategy most akin to a “typical” small island state, with “blue economy” and ocean governance objectives as major priorities. The country’s skilled technocratic fisheries personnel find something of a home in the highly technocratic IOTC. Mauritius’ much larger ambitions to serve as an Indian Ocean services hub and link between Asia and Africa, reflect the sophistication of the country’s economy and explain Port Louis’ political preference for IORA. For impoverished Comoros and Madagascar, on the other hand, the IOC is the inter-governmental body assigned the most weight. However, this preference has nothing to do with the organisation’s founding mandate to promote inter-island solidarity, but rather with the fact that the IOC is a useful mechanism through which to obtain EU development funds, which neither country can so easily access on a bilateral basis. For both Comoros and Madagascar, fisheries are not a diplomatic priority in itself, but rather a means to realise other policy objectives. This makes it difficult for these states to engage as national actors truly interested in deepening fisheries cooperation or developing robust fisheries regimes.

At the non-state level, stark differences in political cohesion between the islands mean that while civil society in Mauritius and Seychelles is generally quite vigorous (if small), with good access to funding and platforms for organisation, the same cannot be said for civil society in Comoros or Madagascar. In these countries, non-state actors lack both access to financing and the political space to organise amidst authoritarian political climates defined by different

types of cleavages. The result is that while Mauritian and Seychellois non-state actors have been able to piggyback on state-led cooperative efforts to form something of an embryonic *bilateral* epistemic community, their Comorian and Malagasy counterparts have almost no opportunity to do the same and this emerging epistemic community fails to be representative of the island grouping as a whole.

Besides inter-island disparities in development and political cohesion, the political dynamics between the Western Indian Ocean islands were also seen to be affected by the institutional architecture for fisheries that exists within the island grouping. This is particularly evident at the inter-governmental organisation level, where “mandate creep” and the lack of coordination *between* the four organisations create a considerable degree of overlap and even outright duplication in the types of fisheries projects and programmes being facilitated. For each of the islands, but especially for resource-poor Comoros and Madagascar, ensuring *uniform* and *quality* participation in a large number of administratively separate but otherwise identical fisheries initiatives requires an outlay of financial and human resources that the islands cannot always consistently manage. The result is an uneven level of participation by the islands in most inter-governmental organisation initiatives, including SmartFish and SWIOFish. An emphasis on implementing an abundance of fisheries initiatives rather than a well-coordinated and more rationalised set of initiatives, means that none of the Western Indian Ocean’s inter-governmental bodies provides a platform for regularised and coordinated engagement between all of the islands’ fisheries officials. This, in turn, makes it difficult for any of these bodies to emerge as the type of linchpin for constructed interactions over fisheries that take place in the Pacific through the FFA.

The third factor that this study has shown to affect inter-island political dynamics relates to the role of outside actors, particularly DWFNs, in undermining prospective solidarity between the islands. At the state-to-state ministerial level, it was shown how competition over fisheries related investment from DWFNs, often stoked by these nations through promises of investment in the islands’ respective value-added fisheries infrastructure, undermined the islands’ collective will to establish shared DWFN vessel access and licensing fees. The study also demonstrated how the role of France in the Western Indian Ocean, valuable from a technocratic fisheries standpoint, has also served to undermine inter-island trust. Paris’ use of the IOC, in particular, as a mechanism through which to play the islands against each other in efforts to secure their recognition of French territorial claims in the region, were shown to have a knock-on effect in stoking tensions between the islands that undermined direct fisheries cooperation and integration. Taken together, the above factors all make it extremely difficult

for the islands to move beyond “functional” cooperation and generate cooperative spillovers that could build momentum towards the creation of Ruggie’s (1975: 570) “mutual expectations, rules and regulations, plans, organisational energies and financial commitments, which have been accepted by a group of states.”

2. The Western Indian Ocean Island States as a Socially-Constructed “Region”

In each of the study’s core chapters, efforts were made to situate the Western Indian Ocean island states on Hettne’s (2005) typology of regionness. This typology refers to a group of states as constituting a “regional space”, a “regional translocal system”, a “regional social system”, a “regional international society”, a “regional community” or a “regionalised institutional polity”. It was argued that regardless of the lens through which the islands are examined, they clearly meet the standard of being a “regional space” and a “regional translocal system”, both defined by geographic proximity and evidence of at least basic “functional” linkages. However, the extent to which the islands can be considered as a “regional social system” defined by a degree of state inter-dependence and reliance on a stable system of exchange, is more debatable. Inter-dependence does exist, to an extent, at the economic level, with the islands locked into a linked fisheries value chain (especially for tuna). There also exists an institutional architecture that sees the Western Indian Ocean SIDS exchange surveillance assets, engage in shared scientific research and engage through dedicated technical committees and working groups in fisheries governance institutions like the IOTC and SWIOFC. While participation in this institutional architecture is not equal among the islands, the mere fact that this architecture exists and is commonly accepted by each country, gives credence to the idea of considering these islands a “regional social system”.

Hettne’s “regional international society”, which is “characterised by norms and rules which increase the level of predictability in the system”, is where the islands begin falling short as a group of states with identifiable regionness. Norms and rules governing the fisheries sector are by no means absent among the islands, but nor are they standardised, codified and interpreted in exactly the same way by each of the islands. The failure of the island grouping to enact common MT&Cs is the most obvious example of this. Unlike the Pacific islands, where national expectations and interests over fisheries converged over the Nauru Agreement and the PNA, no similar converge has happened among the Western Indian Ocean island states. Norms and rules do appear to be emerging on a bilateral basis between Mauritius and Seychelles, largely thanks to their mutual JMA over the Mascarene Plateau. However, neither Comoros nor Madagascar have the same political incentive to make strategic and long-term

norm creation in the fisheries sector a national priority. This suggests that attaining the level of regionness akin to a “regional international society” will continue to take some time.

Hettne’s “regional community” takes shape “when an enduring organisational framework facilitates and promotes social communication and convergence of values and behaviour throughout the region.” Interestingly, while an organisational framework clearly exists to facilitate this level of regionness among the islands, in the form of the four inter-governmental organisations, there is little to suggest that this framework is promoting a convergence of values and behaviours. This is due to both the inefficiencies within this organisational framework (“mandate creep” and the duplication of fisheries initiatives by each organisation) and because the islands’ broader foreign policy interests prevent them from pooling their collective political capital behind the same components of this institutional framework. The “regionalised institutional polity” “has a more fixed structure of decision-making and stronger actor capability.” This appears to be the level of regionness that the Pacific SIDS have achieved through the PNA. In the Western Indian Ocean, however, the fisheries sector is clearly not governed by anything resembling a fixed decision-making structure. There is also little to suggest that these states possess a high level of *actorness* – the capacity of states to act on commonly-defined priorities. Merely defining shared transnational interests on fisheries seems to be a considerable struggle for the Western Indian Ocean islands. Acting on them would require a much greater sense of shared identity around this sector, likely defined by the existence of clear and mutually-accepted regimes.

As has been noted at various points in this study, regionness is a mutable concept. Levels of regionness can change (and should be expected to change) over time. As such, there is nothing to suggest that the Western Indian Ocean island states cannot achieve a higher level of regionness in future, particularly if a common set of MT&Cs is enacted, if some rationalisation in the work of the four key inter-governmental organisations is pursued and if non-state actors in *all* of the islands find the opportunity to organise and interact on a more frequent basis. For any of these to happen, however, it seems logical to suggest that there must begin to be a greater convergence in the levels of socio-economic development and political cohesiveness between the different islands. This requires positive political change in both Comoros and Madagascar that is difficult to envision at present.

Ultimately, “new regionalism” and the social constructivism on which it is based requires a “region” to be defined based on whether it reflects the professed ideas and values that political and social actors (at the state or non-state levels) profess to hold. The Western Indian Ocean SIDS continue to be discussed as “islands, close and united” (IOC, 2013) and the

concept of *Indianocéanie* continues to exist as an idealised sense of shared identity among these islands. At least in fisheries, however, there is no clear evidence that this professed sense of closeness truly exists in reality.

3. The Merits of “Ganging Up” as a Diplomatic Approach for SIDS

Returning to the initial issues that motivated this study, whether the vulnerability, peripheral nature and low levels of bargaining power among SIDS could be ameliorated by a greater focus on collective action or “ganging up”, the evidence from this study points in somewhat contradictory directions. The Pacific island states mark a clear example of this “gang up” approach achieving remarkable success. These islands, acknowledging their individual weaknesses and the risk of continuing to be played off against each other by DWFNs over vessel access conditions and fees, made a conscious political decision to follow Schiff’s (2010) advice to “gang up” and create a formal negotiating bloc to represent their interests. Interactions between members of this bloc produced the Nauru Agreement and the regimes associated with it, all of which have been deepened and made more sophisticated over time. The end result for these states has been overwhelmingly positive, with these islands taking greater control over their fisheries resources, managing their sustainability and achieving higher economic returns.

In the Western Indian Ocean, by contrast, a similar political calculus has not been evident. This is not because the underlying conditions facing the two island groups are that different. The same types of factors that motivated MT&C enactment in the Pacific also exist in the Western Indian Ocean. For various reasons, however, the Western Indian Ocean island states have not seen the same political incentive to “gang up” as their Pacific counterparts, with the most prominent reason for this being the differences in strategic outlook – short-term sectoral growth vs. long-term fisheries sustainability – that represents an important cleavage between the islands. Similarly, while the Pacific island states have chosen to pool their collective interests towards reinforcing the strength of a single inter-governmental body to provide fisheries coordination (the FFA), the Western Indian Ocean island states hold far more diverse interests, of which fisheries are not always at the forefront. This makes it more difficult for these islands to channel their political capital in a common direction.

Key lessons that can be taken from this study are: a) that a “gang up” approach to cooperation and collective diplomacy can be extremely effective for SIDS when it comes to boosting their collective bargaining power; but b) the decision on whether to “gang up” has relatively little to do with “smallness” or “islandness” *per se*, and more to do with the political

considerations of each island state. The Western Indian Ocean example suggests that while SIDS may indeed have more motivation to “gang up” than other states, it is not inevitable that they will choose to do so. Complex and messy political dynamics are also at play in informing the degree to which SIDS will see collective action with each other as being a desirable diplomatic strategy. The takeaway from this is that SIDS may not be that different from other types of states. “Smallness” and “islandness” are not destiny and these states are complex political actors seeking to balance a multitude of competing priorities.

4. Final Thoughts and Ideas for Future Research

It was noted in the description of the research methodology in Chapter 1 that this study initially began as an effort to compare inter-island political dynamics and cooperation across multiple sectors. For practical reasons, this was not possible in the context of this study. However, a series of further instrumental case studies looking at cooperation among the Western Indian Ocean SIDS in thematic areas like renewable energy, transportation, agriculture and tourism (to provide just a few examples) would shed further light on both the politics and international relations of this island grouping. This type of comparison, particularly if adopting a similar “new regionalism” perspective, would allow for an examination of whether regionness and evidence of constructed identity is more evident in these other sectors than in fisheries. Also, while this study did compare and contrast the Western Indian Ocean and Pacific SIDS contexts, it did provide a fully-fledged comparative analysis. This type of analysis, whether focused on fisheries or other issue areas, could be extremely useful in drawing out a more complete set of lessons learned.

There may also be value in carrying-out more in-depth research on particular issues highlighted in this study. The JMA between Mauritius and Seychelles over the Mascarene Plateau has the potential to serve as a foundation for a wide range of technocratic and political engagement between these states. This study only touched on particular aspects of the JMA, but it may be worth considering whether this type of agreement and its associated regimes could serve as a blueprint for similar types of initiatives that may be more inclusive of the island grouping as a whole.

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