

117TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 3696

To highlight the Indian Ocean’s role in the Indo-Pacific, strengthen engagement with countries in the Indian Ocean region, promote economic and security cooperation with the governments in the Indian Ocean region, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JUNE 4, 2021

Mr. CASTRO of Texas introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs

A BILL

To highlight the Indian Ocean’s role in the Indo-Pacific, strengthen engagement with countries in the Indian Ocean region, promote economic and security cooperation with the governments in the Indian Ocean region, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Indian Ocean Region
5 Strategic Review Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress makes the following findings:

1 (1) The Indian Ocean region is a vitally impor-
2 tant part of the Indo-Pacific where the United
3 States has political, economic, and security interests.

4 (2) The United States has an interest in work-
5 ing with partners in the Indo-Pacific, including
6 India, Japan, and Australia, to address regional gov-
7 ernance, economic connectivity, and security chal-
8 lenges including threats to freedom of navigation.

9 **SEC. 3. STATEMENT OF POLICY.**

10 As a part of the United States engagement in the
11 Indo-Pacific, it shall be the policy of the United States
12 to strengthen engagement with the countries in the Indian
13 Ocean region, including with governments, civil society,
14 and private sectors in such countries to—

15 (1) promote United States political engagement
16 with such region, including through active participa-
17 tion in regional organizations, and strengthened dip-
18 lomatic relations with United States partners in
19 such region;

20 (2) enhance United States economic
21 connectivity and commercial exchange with such re-
22 gion;

23 (3) defend freedom of navigation in such region
24 from security challenges, including related to piracy;

1 (4) support the ability of governments and or-
2 ganizations in such region to respond to natural dis-
3 asters;

4 (5) support and facilitate the role of regional al-
5 lies and partners as net providers of security to such
6 region and as partners to the United States in ad-
7 dressing security challenges in such region, including
8 through assistance to such allies and partners to
9 build capacity in maritime security and maritime do-
10 main awareness;

11 (6) continue to build the United States-India
12 relationship in order to regularize security coopera-
13 tion through the negotiation of agreements con-
14 cerning access, communication, and navigation, in-
15 cluding through foundational agreements; and

16 (7) promote cooperation with United States al-
17 lies in the Indo-Pacific, including Japan and Aus-
18 tralia, and major defense partners, including India,
19 and NATO allies, including the United Kingdom and
20 France, to support a rules-based order in such re-
21 gion.

22 **SEC. 4. STRATEGY.**

23 (a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days after the
24 date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of State,
25 in coordination with the Secretary of Defense and the Ad-

1 administrator of the United States Agency for International
2 Development (USAID), shall submit to the appropriate
3 congressional committees a multi-year strategy for United
4 States engagement to support United States interests in
5 the Indian Ocean region. Such strategy shall—

6 (1) define United States political, economic,
7 and security interests in the Indian Ocean region;

8 (2) outline challenges to the interests of the
9 United States in such region;

10 (3) outline efforts to improve cooperation be-
11 tween the United States and members of the Quad,
12 including India, Japan, and Australia, through co-
13 ordination in diplomacy and development priorities,
14 joint military exercises and operations, and other ac-
15 tivities that promote United States political, eco-
16 nomic, and security interests;

17 (4) outline efforts to support economic
18 connectivity in such region, including through the
19 United States-India-Japan Trilateral Infrastructure
20 Working Group, the Asia-Africa Growth Corridor,
21 and other efforts to expand and enhance connectivity
22 across the Indo-Pacific, including with the countries
23 of Southeast Asia, that maintain high standards of
24 investment and support for civil society and people-
25 to-people connectivity;

1 (5) describe how the United States can engage
2 with regional intergovernmental organizations and
3 entities, including the Indian Ocean Rim Associa-
4 tion, to promote United States political, economic,
5 and security interests in such region;

6 (6) review the United States diplomatic posture
7 in such region, including an assessment of United
8 States diplomatic engagement in countries without a
9 permanent United States embassy or diplomatic mis-
10 sion, and an assessment of ways to improve the co-
11 operation with the Maldives, the Seychelles, and
12 Comoros;

13 (7) review United States diplomatic agreements
14 with countries in such region that facilitate United
15 States military operations in such region, including
16 bilateral and multilateral agreements, and describe
17 efforts to expand United States cooperation with
18 such countries through the negotiation of additional
19 agreements; and

20 (8) include a security assistance strategy for
21 such region that outlines priorities, objectives, and
22 actions for United States security assistance efforts
23 to governments of countries in such region to pro-
24 mote United States political, economic, and security
25 interests in such region.

1 (b) INCLUSION.—The strategy required under sub-
2 section (a) may be submitted as a part of any other strat-
3 egy relating to the Indo-Pacific.

4 (c) REPORT ON IMPLEMENTATION.—Not later than
5 one year after the submission of the strategy required
6 under subsection (a) and one year thereafter, the Sec-
7 retary of State shall submit to the appropriate congres-
8 sional committees a report on progress made toward im-
9 plementing such strategy.

10 **SEC. 5. UNITED STATES-CHINA ECONOMIC AND SECURITY**
11 **REVIEW COMMISSION.**

12 (a) IN GENERAL.—Subparagraph (E) of section
13 1238(c)(2) of the Floyd D. Spence National Defense Au-
14 thorization Act for Fiscal Year 2001 (22 U.S.C.
15 7002(c)(2)) is amended—

16 (1) by inserting “, including in the Indian
17 Ocean region” after “deployments of the People’s
18 Republic of China military”; and

19 (2) by adding at the end the following new sen-
20 tence: “In this subparagraph, the term ‘Indian
21 Ocean region’ means the Indian Ocean, including
22 the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal, and the lit-
23 toral areas surrounding the Indian Ocean.”.

24 (b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by
25 subsection (a) shall take effect on the date of the enact-

1 ment of this Act and apply beginning with the first report
2 required under section 1238 of the Floyd D. Spence Na-
3 tional Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2001 (as
4 amended by such subsection) that is submitted after such
5 date.

6 **SEC. 6. DEFINITIONS.**

7 In this Act:

8 (1) **APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMIT-**
9 **TEES.**—The term “appropriate congressional com-
10 mittees” means the Committee on Foreign Affairs
11 and the Committee on Armed Services of the House
12 of Representatives and the Committee on Foreign
13 Relations and the Committee on Armed Services of
14 the Senate.

15 (2) **INDIAN OCEAN REGION.**—The term “Indian
16 Ocean region” means the Indian Ocean, including
17 the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal, and the lit-
18 toral areas surrounding the Indian Ocean.

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