

MAURITIUS FOREIGN POLICY (1968—1987)

**Dissertation submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University
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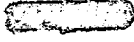


DECLARATION

This is to certify that the dissertation,
entitled, "MAURITIUS FOREIGN POLICY (1968-1987)",
submitted by Mr. M. CHANNA BASAVAI AH in partial
fulfilment of six credits out of total requirements
of twenty-four credits for the Degree of MASTER OF
PHILOSOPHY (M.Phil) of the University, is his original
work according to the best of my knowledge and may be
placed before the examiners for evaluation.

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PREFACE

In the aftermath of second World war, emergence of the UNO, proliferation of small states and assertation of their own independent foreign policy postures in line with their respective national interest imperatives, challenged the prevalent popular notion of 'power' in international relations. The prominence of small states of Third World  in the enlarged international system led to reformulation of views on the nature of international relations and stress on the growing importance of small states in the contemporary international arena.

This study is a humble attempt to trace the foreign policy of Mauritius, a tiny island of south-west Indian Ocean region. The study covers the period between 1968 to 1987. In this nineteen-years span, the island's government was headed by mainly two coalitions, first by the MLP, under the leadership of Dr. Seewoosagur Ramgoolam and second by the MSM, under the leadership of Aneerood Jugnauth. Dr. Ramgoolam, who assumed the Prime Minister's office before the island became independent, was re-elected in the first post independent general elections in

1976 and continued in office till his party's defeat in 1982. Later, Aneerood Jugnauth, who came to power in the wake of 1982 elections, was re-elected in 1983 midterm and 1987 elections. The present study covers the foreign policy of both the regimes.

The dissertation consists of ~~four~~ chapters. The first is devoted to the study of objectives and determinants of Mauritian foreign policy. It examines the geographical set up and strategic significance of the island's location, the nature of political and economic set up.

The second chapter deals with the external policy of Mauritius from 1968 till the end of Dr. Ramgoolam's first term in 1975. It traces the island's relations with Britain, France, India, Soviet Union, China and the French-speaking African countries of OCAM along with South Africa, during the period. The chapter also deals with the island's stand on different international issues at the United Nations.

The third chapter discusses the role of Dr. Ramgoolam as Chairman of OAU in 1976-77. A critical study

of Mauritian relations with Britain in the light of Diego Garcia problem is made. It also examines the island's relations with France, India and South Africa during the period between 1976 to the end of Dr. Ramgoolam's era in 1981.

The fourth presents the new shifts in Mauritian foreign policy under left-wing MMM government in 1982-83 along with foreign relations of present Jugnauth's regime till 1987. A study of Mauritian ^Cin_Acreasing trade relations with the US and France is made. An attempt is made to analyse Jugnauth's attempts at regional cooperation with Madagascar, Seychelles, Comoros and Reunion and formation of an Indian Ocean Commission (IOC). The chapter also deals with island's relations with Britain, South Africa and India.

In the completion of the work, I am indebted to many. First and foremost, I owe a profound debt of gratitude to Prof. Anirudha Gupta, who with patience and determination critically read my drafts


(iv)

and guided me in the completion of the work. Particularly his affection has been a greater contribution in my academic pursuit. I am thankful to my former teacher Dr. Rama Melkote, who advised me to work on African studies. I am also grateful to Amitabh Mishra, for being concerned about my academic as well as personal problems, going way out to help me.

My obligations are to Sri. K. Adinarayana and family, my friends, Vidya Sagar, Sreekanth, Jannu, Jagadish and Firoz, who helped me in different ways. I express my gratitude to the staff of J.N.U., I.C.W.A., I.D.S.A. and External Affairs libraries for their cooperation.

Last, but not least, I owe a lot, that words fail to explain, to my sister, Smt. Chandrakala and brother-in-law, Sri. Kashinath, for their continuous support and encouragement rendered in the completion of the course.

New Delhi.


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ABBREVIATIONS USED

ACR-	Africa Contemporary Record
AR-	African Recorder
ARB (Pol.)-	Africa Research Bulletin (Political, Social and Cultural Series)
ARB (Eco.)-	Africa Research Bulletin (Economic, Financial and Technical Series)
ASS-	Africa South ^{of} Sahara
CAM-	Comite d'Action Musalman
EPZs-	Export Processing Zones
IFB-	Independent Forward Bloc
IOC-	Indian Ocean Commission
MLP-	Mauritian Labour Party
MMM-	Movement Militant Mauricien
MSM-	Movement Socialiste Militant
OCAMM-	Organization Commune Africaine et Mauritius Malagache
OAU-	Organisation of African Unity
PMSD-	Parti Mauricien Social Democrate
PSM-	Parti Socialiste Mauricien
UNGAOR-	United Nations General Assembly Official Records

CHAPTER-I

MAURITIUS FOREIGN POLICY: OBJECTIVES AND DETERMINANTS

The foreign policy basically concerns relationships with actors external to the domestic political system and international arena as a whole. The basic objectives¹ of foreign policy of the developing countries, including the tiny island states are to secure for themselves stability, security and status in the international system. These three-fold foreign policy objectives should not be considered as equally important at all times, as one or the other may get precedence at a given point of time, depending upon the fluctuations in domestic as well as international environment.

The small states, unlike the states with greater power potential, have less manoeuvrability

1. Objectives have been defined as, "the particular limited, fairly stable, conscious and deliberate ends or targets sought by policy at a given moment." See for details, David O. Wilkinson, "Comparative Foreign Relations: Frame Work and Methods," Belmont, 1969., pp.17-18. and William Wallace, "The Possibility of an International Discipline of International Affairs," INTERNATIONAL STUDIES QUARTERLY, Vol.15, no.3., 1972., pp.296-7.

in the international system² and in view of existing domestic, regional and global constraints, they have far less of option and choices. However, this does not mean that the foreign policies of small states are inevitably and necessarily reactive to the environment. Within the existing imbalanced world system, small states have not only survived but have increasingly proliferated as a consequence of the process of decolonization. The small states have not only numerical superiority but also they have effectively exploited various contradictions of the international system to further their interests.³

The foreign policy of Mauritius, like that of small and developing states, is based on the above mentioned objectives, which rest upon various determinants, such as the geographical setting and strategic significance of the country, the political set-up and the economic structure.

2. Willam Wallace, "Foreign Policy and Political Process". (London, 1971), pp.21-22.

3. Annette Barker Fox, "The Small States in the International System 1919-1969.", INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL, Vol.24.,1968-69.,p.754.

GEOGRAPHICAL SETTING AND STRATEGIC SIGNIFICANCE:

Mauritius is a tiny island, with a total area of 2,040 square kilometres, including its outlying territories, namely, Rodrigues and Agalega. It lies in the south-west portion of the Indian Ocean, 800 kilometres east of Malagasy Republic and some 3,040 # kilometres south-west of Kanniya Kumari, the southern most tip of India. It occupies central position in the group of islands in the south-west Indian Ocean, with Seychelles archipelago in the north, Reunion in the south-west, Comoros archipelago in the north-west and Madagascar in the western side.

The strategic significance of Mauritius can be seen in the context of the Indian Ocean assuming an important place in the Great Power strategies since sixteenth century. The Portuguese were the first to use the island as watering and recreational spot for their ships and sailors in sixteenth century. In 1634 and 1664 the Dutch attempted in vain to establish themselves. The strategic location of island attracted the French, who established their supremacy on the island in 1720s and used it as a centre to supply essential

provisions to their fleet in the Indian Ocean and as a base to operate against the rival British ships there. This led to Anglo-French rivalry in the Indian Ocean ultimately resulting in the British seizure of the island in 1810. Since then ^{the} island served Britain's military interests in the Indian Ocean for several years.

The continuous strategic importance of the Indian Ocean in super power strategy⁴ is an important factor in the Mauritian foreign policy making. The vast mineral resources of the Indian Ocean region⁵ and

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4. Commenting on strategic situation in the Indian Ocean region, P.R. Chari gives three important factors, "first the political and military interests of external powers in the region, second, asymmetries between intra-regional littoral/hinter land powers, and third, the interaction between political, military interests of external powers and intra-regional asymmetries." See, P.R. Chari, "Strategic Situation in the Western Indian Ocean," in Shanti Sadiqu Ali and R.R. Ramchandani (ed.), Indian and the Western Indian Ocean States, (New Delhi., 1981), p.225.
 5. The mineral resources of the Indian Ocean region accounts 90 percent of total world production of rubber, tin, jute and tea, 60 percent of worlds oil resources, 90 percent of diamonds, 60 percent uranium, 40 percent of gold, besides it has rich endowments of cobalt, tungston, bauxite copper, manganese ore, silver, sulphur and coal. See, S.N. Kohli, inagural address in "Proceedings of an International Seminar", (Allaha-bad, 1987) and for detailed information See. A.J. Corbell and Burrell (ed.), "The Indian Ocean: Its political, Economic and Military Importance". (New York, 1972).

the commercial importance⁶ are important factors with regard to the East and the West. The existing hostile ideological differences between the two power blocs, contradicted respective economic, commercial and political interests in the region leading to massive military operations.

To the West, Indian Ocean area is well located geographically to cover many Soviet as well as Chinese targets. Particularly, the islandsⁱⁿ the region provide base facilities for their military operations. Diego Garcia, a 'U' shaped atoll of the Chagos archipelago, detached by the British from Mauritius before its independence in 1965 for Anglo-US joint military purposes, became focal point in the western military strategy in the Indian Ocean. Starting with a naval communication station, Diego Garcia now emerged as a sophisticated military base under the continuous

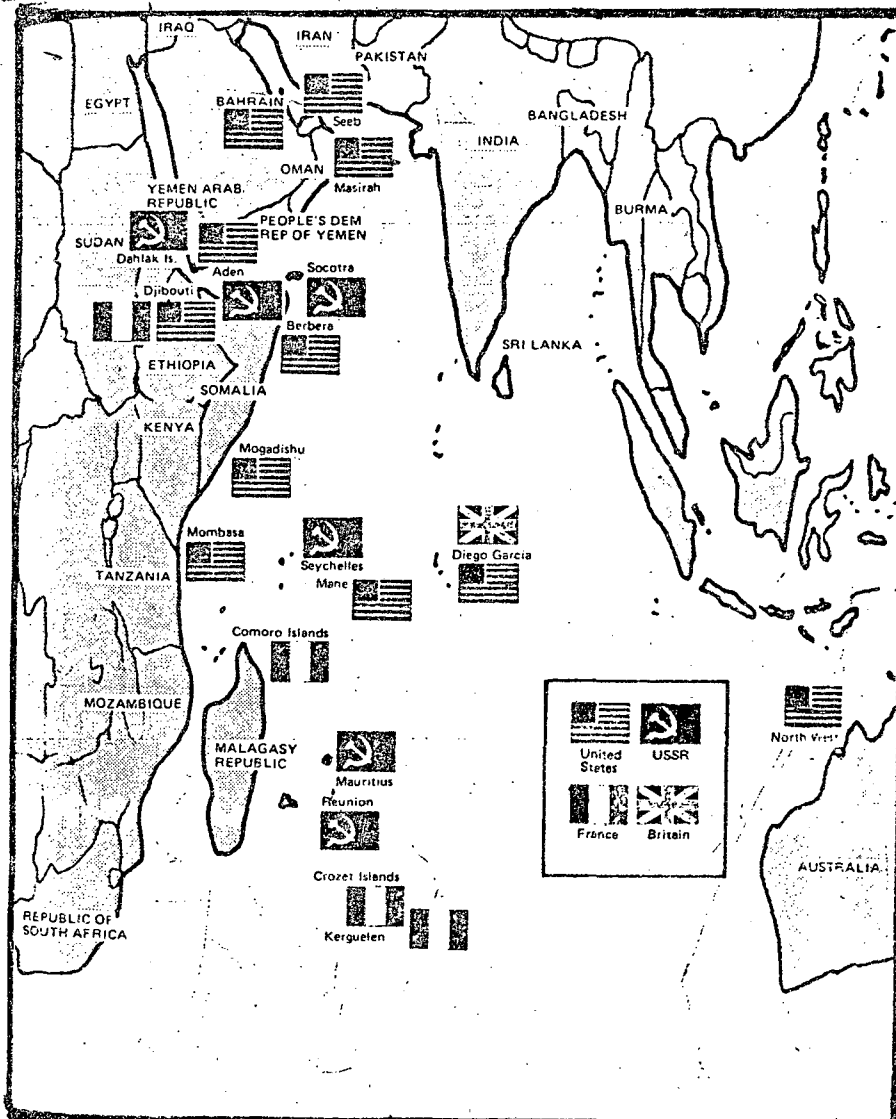
6. Trade of Indian Ocean countries is West oriented (almost 90 percent) the littoral countries provide large markets for the finished goods of industrialised world, more than 80 percent of Japan's oil, 50 percent of European oil consumption and 40 percent of the US oil consumption uses the natural passage-way of Indian Ocean., See. Ibid.

supervision of Pentagon.⁷ The USAF has communication facilities in Seychelles island and a radar navigation aid station in Reunion.⁸ The French, a former colonial power of the region, is also increasing its military presence on the islets around the Mozambique channel.⁹ Apart from direct military presence, the West has racist South Africa as its major ally against the "communist bogey", which in turn provides military facilities on

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7. Diego Garcia presently equipped with, "Highly classified intelligence and communication facility, a satellite tracking station, a 3,660 metre long run way, a large natural harbour which can accommodate a cruiser led naval force, fuel storage capacity of 380,000 barrels of aviation spirit and 320,000 barrels of fuel oil of ships enough to fuel a carrier battle group for 30 days, an anchorage, and 500 feet long berth for loading and unloading." See, J.P. Anand, "Indian Ocean: US Bases and Military Facilities.", STRATEGIC ANALYSIS, Vol. XII., no. 5., p. 578.
 8. Seychelles archipelago provides, Mahe (an island of the group) to USAF to maintain a satellite control facility and the French overseas department, Reunion island provides an OMEGA radio navigation aid station, which is one of eight such very low frequency (VLF) stations established around the world by the US. See, Ibid., p. 568.
 9. The French set up a navigation communication station on Tromelin, Meteorological net works and other facilities on Juan de Nova, Europa Glorieuses and Basa da India, which provide refueling and replacement points for French air craft and it has land based head quarters as well as support base for the Naval operations on its overseas department, Reunion island. See, J.P. Anand. "Indian Ocean: French Military Presence and Strategic Interests". STRATEGIC ANALYSIS, Vol. XI., no. 2., pp. 1459-61.

MILITARY BASES AND FACILITIES

IN THE INDIAN OCEAN



its territory, at the Simonstown and the Durban ports.¹⁰
It also works as a regional surrogatery for the Western interests.¹¹

The Soviet bloc, unlike the West, is of course, not having any permanent bases in the Indian Ocean region. However, increasing Soviet naval presence in the region since 1968 serves its interests. The Soviet navy pays friendly visits to the ports of the Indian Ocean littoral countries, such as, Vishakapatnam, Madras, Port Louis, Zanzibar and other East African ports. It established mooring buoys or anchorages in the Western Indian Ocean. Besides these facilities, its fishing fleet and other auxiliary units were said to be engaged in electronic surveillance and intelligence gathering activities.¹²

10. Besides Simonstown and Durban naval bases, a super multi million dollar communication and surveillance station Project Advokat, dug into the side of a mountain at silvermine near Simonstown in the Cape peninsula, seperating waters of the Indian Ocean from Atlantic has clandestine links with NATO headquarters. It effectively provides a minute to minute record of all maritime and air traffic around the Cape of Good Hope with a range of 5,000 nautical miles passing on information to Washington. See, J.P. Anand, op. cit. no.7.,p.568.

11. Rama Melkote. "Importance of Mauritius", AFRICA NEWS LETTER., July-December, 1987.,vol.2.,p.4.

12. Oye Ogubadjo. "Diego Garcia and African Security". THIRD WORLD QUARTERLY, April, 1982.,vol.4.,no.2., p.106.

This increasing military presence in the Indian Ocean makes the environment vulnerable, in terms of military pressures on all the littoral countries and the islands of the region. These features of geographical setting and strategic significance are important parameters which the Mauritius policy makers should take into consideration while conducting their external relations.

POLITICAL SET UP:

Unlike Madagascar, Comoros islands and other African countries, the Mauritian socio-economic structure was not superimposed on its indigenous structure, as it was uninhabited until the European arrival. The political, economic and social life of the islanders is a direct result of the island's colonial history. Hence, "Colonialism in Mauritius was not some thing which came from outside, it was built into the fabric of the whole society."¹³

13. Jean Houbert, "Mauritius: Independence and Dependence", THE JOURNAL OF MODERN AFRICAN STUDIES, vol.II., no.9., March., 1981., p.70.

When the British captured the island in 1810, the French plantocracy had already established its hold over economy. The British agreed to preserve all existing French institutions, such as, the legal system, schools, cultural institutions and the position of the Roman Catholic Church. The abolition of slavery in 1835 and massive influx of Indian indentured labour, to meet the growing needs of sugar plantations, altered the existing social structure of the island. By 1860, Indians constituted two-thirds of the Mauritian population as ^a result ^{of which} the French plantocracy was reduced to a minority. But, paradoxically, it is the same minority Franco-Mauritians who set the cultural tone of the island even today.

The actual political activity on the island started in 1930s, when the Labour Party was formed by Dr. Cure and other Creols. Later, Dr. Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, Pandit Sahadeo and H. Ramnarayan joined the party. All of them were western-educated and exposed to western ideas. The Creole and Indian workers were organised under the banner of the Labour Party. Its activities and international developments in the post second world war era gave birth to the 1947

constitution, which provided limited franchise on the basis of education and property.¹⁴ The Indo-Mauritians, who at one time were deprived of any fundamental rights, consolidated their political strength. Dr. Ramgoolam, later on assumed leadership of the MLP. The victory of the party in the 1955 elections gave way to more constitutional reforms and universal adult suffrage in 1959.

The MLP, under the leadership of Dr. Ramgoolam, sought support from all sections of the society, particularly from the workers. The heterogeneity of the island's society,¹⁵ which was divided into different communities, such as, the majority Indo-Mauritians, who were divided into Hindus and Muslims (the Hindus were further divided into different castes and linguistic groups, mainly, Bhojpuri, Tamil and Telugu), the minority, Franco-Mauritians and Creoles, gave birth to different political parties, in order to protect their own sectional

14. The constitution provided franchise to any Mauritian adult to vote provided he could ostensibly write his name and address in English, French, Chinese or any one of the oriental languages or having a yearly income of Rs. 250/-. See, Ranbir Singh, "Mauritius The Key to Indian Ocean," (New Delhi, 1980), p. 60.

15. The total Mauritian population of one million can be categorised into different categories, the Indo-Mauritians 69% (Hindus 53% and Muslims 16%), the Creoles 26%, the Franco-Mauritians 2% and the Chinese 2%. See. AFRICA SOUTH OF SAHARA 1988, p. 620.

interests. The conservative Parti Mauricien (PM), subsequently renamed as Parti Mauricien Social Democrite (PMSD), was formed by a Franco-Mauritian Gaetan Duval. The PMSD took support from Franco-Mauritians, literate French speaking and Roman Catholic Creoles and, to some extent, from Tamil and Telugu speaking Hindus.¹⁶ Two sectarian parties, one, on the lines of Indian Jana Sangh, Independent Forward Bloc (IFB) was formed by some Hindus, and the other, on the lines of Indian Muslim League, the Comite d'Action Musulman (CAM) by the Muslims. The PMSD opposed moves of independence put forward by the MLP and demanded 'association' with Britain. The IFB and CAM sided with the MLP in support of independence at the constitutional conference in London in September 1965. According to the majority opinion, ultimately the power was transferred to the Mauritians on March 12, 1968. But, the conflicting sectional interests led to communal tensions on the eve of independence.

16. Rama Melkote., op. cit., no.11., p.12.

In the post-independence period, in addition to ethnic question, the problems of economic nature like, inflation, shortage of capital and unemployment dominated the political scenario. The emergence of left-oriented Movement Militant Mauricien (MMM) under the leadership of a Marxist influenced Creole, Paul Berenger and its control of trade unions under the banner of General Workers Federation (GWF) resulted in a series of paralising strikes, which inturn resulted in the declaration of emergency in 1971 and extention of parliament till 1976 by the ruling coalition. In 1976 general elections, the MMM's popular slogans such as, land reforms, nationalisation of major industries, return of Diego Garcia and anti South African foreign policy postures, transcended ethnic and religious groups. Although the MMM emerged as a single largest party in the Parliament with 34 seats it could not form the government, as Dr. Ramgoolam tactically managed to form coalition government of the MLP and the PMSD.

However, in the 1982 general elections, due to mounting economic problems alongwith factionalism and casteism within the MLP, the MMM scored () victory over

the MLP. The MMM in alliance with the Parti Socialiste Mauricien (PSM), a new party mainly comprising of the low-caste Hindus who came out from the MLP in 1979, captured all the 60 seats and formed the government. The chief architect of MMM's policies, Paul Berenger took the Finance portfolio, his Indo-Mauritian partner, Aneerood Jugnauth assumed the office of Prime Minister. But the alliance could not survive long, as the disagreement within the alliance over Paul Berenger's stringent economic policies and his attempts to make 'Creole' as the national language resulted in his resignation. In 1983 the Prime Minister Jugnauth dissolved the House and announced fresh elections. Once again, the ethnic question assumed prominence in the 1983 elections. Jugnauth formed a new party called, Movement Socialiste Militant (MSM), by absorbing PSM, and fought elections in alliance with MLP and PMSD. The alliance secured 41 seats out of the 62 seats and formed the government. Paul Berenger was defeated in his own constituency, but, he later secured seat in the House on the basis of best-looser system. In spite of strains within the alliance, the new government of Jugnauth showed good performance in the economic

field. For instance, the GDP growth rate increased to 7.1 percent, the inflation was brought to zero, and above all the unemployment was reduced to minimum extent by the year 1987. Alongwith ethnic factor, it was the economic performance, which brought Jugnauth's alliance into power once again in 1987.

ECONOMIC STRUCTURE:

Mauritius is plantation monocrop economy, which it has inherited from colonial rule.¹⁷ Sugar is the main export earner of the economy, amounting to 60 percent of its total foreign exchange earnings. The other crops cultivated are, tea and tobacco and little subsistence farming is also carried out. Since colonial period, Mauritius is totally dependent on food imports.

The sugar occupies over 90 percent of total cultivable land, i.e. a total of 84,400 hectares, of

17. The sugar cultivation was first introduced by the Dutch in 1641, but, other crops such as cotton, coffee, indigo and nutmeg were also cultivated. In 1820s with the opening of English markets for Mauritian sugar, the cultivation of other crops were completely abandoned and encouraged only sugar cultivation. See, Edwardes de Burgh S.B., "The History of Mauritius", (London, 1921), p.61.

which 48,000 hectares of cultivable land is owned by twenty one large estates, each having its own processing facilities. The remaining land under sugar cultivation is owned by 452 big planters and 32,000 small planters.¹⁸ The sugar industry provided employment to 70,000 workers during the crop season, from July to December, every year and 60,000 during the inter crop period.¹⁹ The production of sugar depends mostly on the demand in the Western markets and partly on climatic conditions. Most of the Mauritian sugar was exported to the UK under "imperial preference"²⁰ during the colonial days, and later, under Commonwealth Sugar Agreement (CSA). In 1975 the CSA was replaced by a protocol of the first Lome convention. The 1975 protocol and its two successors, Lome II and Lome III provided an annual quota of 500,000 metric tons under the guaranteed prices.²¹ But, in practice major share of

18. ASS. 1987., p.628.

19. Ibid.

20. The imperial preference, under which Mauritius colonial sugar was guaranteed by Britain with reduced customs duties. See, Hazare Singh. "History of Indians in Mauritius." (Hong Kong, 1975), p.124.

21. ASS., op.cit., no.18., p.629.

the quota goes to Britain. The other important customers are the US, Canada and New Zealand.

The colonial legacy of one-crop specialization has limited the potential of diversification of the economy. In seventies, the government policy of export diversification and promotion brought certain structural changes in the economy. In 1971, Mauritius Export Processing Zones (EPZs) were established with five industries, providing 1,000 new jobs. By 1985, the projects numbered 225 with total employment of 50,047. The textiles and clothing sector, consisting one half of the total firms, occupies major position accounting for over 60 percent of EPZ exports. Other important sectors are electronics, precision engineering, skilled crafts, rattan furniture, plastic goods, tyres etc.²² The EPZ exports its finished products mainly to the EEC countries (about 85 percent), the US, Canada, Australia, Japan and South Africa.²³ The government provides many incentives like, infrastructure,

22. Ibid.

23. Ibid.

space at low rents, cheap energy, duty free raw material, tax holiday and the guarantee against nationalisation to attract foreign investments.²⁴

More than half of the industries are owned by locals, the remaining, mainly owned by other countries, namely, France, Britain, South Africa, Hong Kong, Federal Republic of Germany, India and Pakistan.

Tourism is the third most important foreign exchange earner of the island's economy. It also depends on the flow of tourist traffic from France, South Africa, West Germany, Britain, Italy and Switzerland.

What is discernible from the above discussion is that, the island's monoculture economy, making it totally dependent on outside world for its very survival, is an important factor which the policy makers should take note of while formulating the external policy.

24. Jean Houbert., op.cit.,no.13.,p.39.

CHAPTER-II
MAURITIUS FOREIGN POLICY
(1968-75)

Transfer of power on March 12th, 1968 gave Mauritians the right to conduct their own external affairs. Like all other African countries the foreign policy making was entirely a new field for Mauritian leaders, as it was in the hands of metropolitan country until the moment of independence. On the eve of independence Mauritius was in the midst of many problems, which were varied in size and nature, starting from the problems of economic diversification, population explosion alongwith rapidly growing unemployment to political instability and ethnic riots.¹ Taking into account all these domestic constraints, Mauritian leaders followed a policy of pragmatism in their external relations and went on developing relations

1. It had a population of 850,000. The density of population being 382 people per Sq.Km. Compared to Britain there were 222 per Sq.Km. In India there were 155 people and in Australia one. The population growth rate was 2.3 percent or 17,000 persons a year. There were 50,000 unemployed. The island was also rocked with ten days of communal violence at the time of independence. See, THE OBSERVER (London), 12th March, 1968,, and Dr. Ramgoolam's speech in UNGA., 1643rd meeting, 24th April, 1968. UNGAOR., (New York, 1970).

with all, the West and the East, Afro-Asian countries and economic ties with South Africa. The Prime Minister Dr. Ramgoolam said, "We are friends with all countries and enemies to none. We have avoided partisan and ideological approaches and have done our best to prevent big power^e intervention in our affairs just as we refuse to interfere in the internal affairs of other countries."² With the independence, Mauritius became the 12th African Commonwealth member and within a year it joined United Nations Organisation (UNO), Organisation of African Unity (OAU) and Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).

Mauritius started its post-independence relations with Britain by signing a defence agreement on the very day of independence, granting Britishers a right to use the island for defence purposes in return for the promise to defend the island in the event of any internal or external threat.³ The agreement, valid for six years,

2. Seewoosagur Ramgoolam. "Our Struggle: 20th Century Mauritius." (New Delhi, 1982), p.187.

3. THE DAILY TELEGRAPH (London).., March 13th, 1968, and Africa Research Bulletin (Political, Social and Cultural Series).., Vol. 5., No. 3., 1968., p.1005.

also provided for continuation of existing British military facilities on the island, including a naval radio station, "HMS Mauritius" and British assistance in training and equipping the island's police and security personnel. The relations with Britain came under strain when Mauritius signed an agreement with Soviet Union in July 1970, allowing its port facilities for the use of Soviet Navy. The British foreign office spokesman reacting to the deal said, "Any Russian presence in Mauritius has implication which we will continue to examine for over all defence of the area."⁴ Some of the newspapers were of the opinion that, the agreement violated the Mauritian defence treaty with Britain as the Soviet agreement could permit its trawlers equipped with sophisticated electronic devices to interrupt the British and allied ships in the Indian Ocean. The Radio Johannesburg also made similar comments on the agreement.⁵

4. KEESINGS CONTEMPORARY ARCHIVES., Vol. XX., 1975., p. 26378.

5. On July 17th, reacting to the Mauritius-USSR agreement Radio Johannesburg said, "...the fact of the matter is that, for the first time in the history, Russia is gaining a base for her naval operation in the waters far south of the Equator.....What, Africa could rightly expect of Mauritius is that she prevent Russians from using the island as naval link in the chain with which they are encircling Africa, for an encirclement could be prelude to communist control of Africa." See, ARB (Pol.)., Vol. 7., No. 7., 1970., p. 1823.

Feared by British statements, the Prime Minister Dr. Ramgoolam rushed to London and assured the British that the USSR would not be allowed to build naval base in the island. However, he defended the agreement, saying, "We are merely giving the Russians the same rights as other nations have for their fishing vessels.... It is not new for Russians to use the port, they have been using it since colonial days."⁶ To appease the British, the Foreign Minister Gaetan Duval, went a step further and offered Britain a naval base in the island to meet the threat of Soviet navy in the Indian Ocean. He suggested Mauritius as an alternative to the controversial Simonstown base in South Africa. He was of the opinion that the British naval base on the island would resolve differences between the UK and many Commonwealth countries, which oppose Britain's arms sales to South Africa.⁷ But the British did not decide building a base in the island as it would have been a costly affair and moreover the island lacked the resources as they are available in South Africa.⁸



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6. The Daily Telegraph (London), 6th August, 1970.
 7. The Times of India (New Delhi), 17th January, 1971.
 8. The Financial Times (London), 26th June, 1974.



After this short lived diplomatic flurry, Mauritian relations with Britain were unhindered. Dr. Ramgoolam was successful in obtaining a grant worth Rs. 37 million (\$ 7.5 million) for a port development project and an interest-free loan of £ 5 million for the four year development plan.⁹ The British continued to dominate the external trade of the island. For instance, a total of 77.8 percent of all its exports went to Britain in 1975 and imports from there accounted for 16.85 percent during the same year.¹⁰

Mauritius was once called as "Ile de France". It was the French who were the first permanent settlers on the island. The 158 years of English rule and even the independence in 1968 could not change the position of Franco-Mauritian plantocracy, which controlled the economic power and set the cultural tone of the island. With these strong historical connections, the Mauritians developed relations with France. In fact, when the

9. Africa Research Bulletin (Political, Social and Cultural Series), Vol. 10., No. 7., 1973., p. 2824., and Vo. 10., No. 9., p. 2894.

10. ASS 1977-78., p. 591.

island became independent, Paris was the second to receive Mauritian ambassador after London.

The French, since very beginning emphasised on economic aspects. It opened its first bank in the island in January 1972. The bank called as Banque Nationale Pour le Commerce et L'Industrie, Indian Ocean, a branch of the States Banque Nationale de Paris, was started with initial capital of 5 million francs.¹¹ It granted a loan worth 350,000 francs for the development of survey work, housing and town planning, under the agreement signed by the Prime Minister Dr. Ramgoolam and the French ambassador Raphael Touze on October 23rd, 1972.¹² Dr. Ramgoolam paid a visit to Paris in May 1975 and had discussion with the French Prime Minister, Jacques Chirac on the issues of bilateral cooperation in different fields. Later he signed an agreement with the French Defence Minister providing Port Louis as a port of call to the French fleet.¹³ However, he denied the

11. ARB (Eco.), Vol. 9., No. 1., 1972., p. 2270

12. Ibid., Vo. 9., No. 10., 1972., p. 2541.

13. ARB (Pol.), Vol. 12., No. 5., 1975., p. 3608.

possibility of defence treaty between Mauritius and France while answering a question on future defence plans of Mauritius as the British defence agreement was due to expire by 1976, at a press conference at the end of his visit.

The Mauritian relations with France were very important in the context of its access to European Economic Community (EEC), along with active cooperation of the French-speaking African countries. Mauritius was the first Commonwealth country to join the EEC as associate member under the "Yaounde Agreement", in 1972. After a week long negotiations between the Mauritian delegation led by the Prime Minister Dr. Ramgoolam and the EEC's executive commission, an exchange of letters at ceremony in Brussels on March 8th, 1972 formalised the accord for Mauritian admission to the EEC. Subsequently a full fledged agreement providing full associationship with EEC was signed in Port Louis.¹⁴ Under the terms of agreement Mauritius was provided preferential treatment to trade with the EEC countries, which included EEC tariff-cuts on Mauritian products, a duty free entrance to EPZ products and nonrefundable

14. ARB. (Eco.), Vol. 9., No 2., 1972., p. 2312.

developmental aid from European Development Fund (EDF). Later, Commonwealth Sugar Agreement (CSA) was replaced by a permanent annual quota of 500,000 tonnes under the guaranteed prices. But, in practice, a major share of the quota went to Britain. Thus even with larger access to the European Common Market (ECM), it was Britain, which dominated the external trade of the island.

It is the geographical factor which binds Mauritius with African continent. Except the colonial legacy, the island is entirely different from African countries in other aspects like, culture, tradition and social set up. It was the linguistic factor which led Mauritians to be associated with the French-speaking African countries. They are also important for Mauritius to develop the relations with France and the EEC to diversify its exports and sources of help. Mauritius applied for the membership of the Afro-Malagasy Joint Organisation (OCAM)¹⁵ immediately after it attained independence. Dr. Ramgoolam attended the Kinshasa

15. The Organisation had fourteen countries, Cameroon, Zaire, Congo Republic, Dahomy, Upper Volta, Gaban, Malagasy Republic, Niger, Central African Republic, Senegal, Chad, Togo, Ivory Coast and with the accession of Mauritius grouped fifteen countries.

conference of the OCAM in January 1969 as an observer and appealed member-states of the OCAM to help and cooperate with Mauritius in the economic, cultural and social spheres. A year later, in the sixth conference of the Organisation, Mauritian membership was confirmed. It was also announced at the conference that the Organisation would, henceforth, be known as the "Afro-Malagasy and Mauritius Joint Organisation (OCAMM)."¹⁶ All the members of the organisation supported the Mauritian appeal to press its association with the EEC under the terms of the "Yaounde Agreement". Since then Mauritius was an active participant in the organisation. In 1973 it hosted the ninth summit conference of the Organisation. The Port Louis conference considered to re-define the task of the Organisation after taking into account the political, economic and social developments in the continent. A ministerial commission was appointed for this purpose, under the chairmanship of Mauritian Foreign Minister Gaetan Duval, to obtain the opinions and suggestions from different member states. Speaking on the occasion of its closing session Dr. Ramgoolam said that the summit gave a new "raison d'etre" to the Organisation and he described it as

16. The conference was held in Jan-Feb., 1970 in Yaounde. See., ARB. (Eco.), Vol. 7., No 1., 1970., p. 1583.

"new departure."¹⁷

Contrary to the expectations of Dr. Ramgoolam, resentment among different members of the Organisation resulting in the withdrawal of Zaire in 1972,¹⁸ followed by Cameroon, Chad and Madagascar in 1973, just after the Port Louis summit,¹⁹ weakened the Organisation. The Organisation failed in its tasks, such as, its plans to set up industries on a regional basis were not materialised, a plan to set up an OCAMM shipping company failed as a proposed insurance project and a project to control meat production led to rivalry among different members as all members wanted it to be established in their respective countries. Thus,

17. Ibid., Vol. 10., No. 4., 1973., pp. 2207-8.

18. In a communique issued on the question of withdrawal, Zaire stated that, ".....It is obscure to continue to belong on behalf of the French language alone to a regional organisation, when Zaire's interests lay well beyond any linguistic consideration." See, ARB. (Pol.), Vol. 9., No. 4., 1972., p. 4331.

19. Madagascar was of the opinion that the Organisation was "out dated", Foreign Minister of Madagascar said that the new military government will concentrate its efforts on the OAU. See, Ibid., Vol. 10., No. 8., 1973., p. 2949.

the Organisation failed in its tasks due to two important factors which are critical to the functioning of any regional organisation. They are, first, lack of capital and second, lack of commitment and political will on the part of the members of the Organisation.

Besides participating in OCAMM, Mauritius also attempted at regional cooperation with the islands of south-west Indian Ocean. Dr. Ramgoolam visited Madagascar in June 1969.²⁰ He discussed his intentions to have regional cooperation with the Malagasy President. As a result of efforts of the two countries, a permanent Committee for Agriculture Cooperation came into existence in October of the same year. The Committee also grouped Reunion, discussed problems pertaining to their agriculture sector, such as campaign against the 'fiji' disease (a virus which attacks sugar cane). It was agreed to establish a station in Madagascar to test the resistance of various kinds of sugar canes to the virus and all the three islands agreed to exchange technicians, research workers and equipment.²¹ But, Mauritian relations with English-speaking African countries were negligible, except for signing a

20. Ibid., Vol. 6., No. 10., 1969., p. 1432.

21. ARB. (Eco.), Vol. 6., No. 10., 1969, pp. 1500-01.

trade agreement with Zambia in 1969, under which Mauritius agreed to import 'high quality beef' from Zambia in return for its sugar and tea exports.²²

The Prime Minister Dr. Ramgoolam, being an Indo-Mauritian, made no secret of his desire to strengthen Mauritian relations with India, particularly in the economic field. He visited India twice just before the island's independence. India sent a high power delegation led by B.R. Bhagat, Minister of state for External Affairs, to Mauritius on the eve of its independence.²³ Dr. Ramgoolam along with his Foreign Minister Gaetan Duval visited India for the first time after independence in December 1969. The Prime Ministers of the two countries discussed the international situation and called for denuclearisation of the Indian Ocean zone. In ^{the} field of bilateral cooperation, India agreed to establish a fertilizer plant in Mauritius and to provide expertise to the Mauritian air services.²⁴

22. Ibid., Vol. 6., No. 11., p. 1530.

23. The Times of India (New Delhi), 12th March, 1968.

24. African Recorder, February 12-25., 1970., pp. 2456-7.

With his mission to strengthen the relations between two countries, Dr. Ramgoolam paid another visit in April 1970. This time trade delegation accompanied him and Mauritius got assurance from India that it would import 100,000 tonnes of fertilizers after the completion of the island's fertilizer factory.²⁵ In June 1970, Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi visited Port Louis on an official invitation. She laid foundation stone for the Mahatma Gandhi Institute at St. Pierres in the island and offered basic support to the institute. In her address to the Mauritian Parliament, she pointed out the commonalities of tradition and culture between the two countries. Dr. Ramgoolam in his welcome address, praising India, said, "India was the birth place of the ancestors of many Mauritians and as such they had special interest in India's friendship, progress and prosperity."²⁶ The official delegations of both the countries held discussions on the issue of bilateral cooperation. Indian delegation promised to provide teachers in Hindi, Marathi and Gujrathi along with laboratory and library equipment, for Mauritian schools. It also offered technical assistance to develop agriculture, fisheries,

25. Amrita Bazar Patrika (Calcutta)., 18th April, 1970.

26. AR., July 16-29, 1970., p.2578.

live-stock and mining. India sent more than forty experts to Mauritius under the Indian Technical and Educational Cooperation Scheme (ITECS).²⁷

Despite the frequent visits and bilateral discussions between the leaders and officials of the two countries, they could not improve economic ties and thus the relations between the two countries remained cultural. Dr. Ramgoolam presided over the International Conference of Arya Samajists at Alwar in 1972, and the first Hindi World Conference at Nagpur in January 1975. Earlier, on his visit to India he signed the Indo-Mauritian cultural agreement in 1973. The agreement envisaged exchange of teachers, writers, artists, publications and exhibitions, apart from award of scholarships. The Government of India awarded 11 scholarships to Mauritian students to study medicine, architecture, planning, education and Indian classical dance and music in India.²⁸ By 1975 Mauritius became the biggest recipient of Indian scholarships numbering 19 and there were 1,200 Mauritian students at various Indian universities for higher studies.²⁹

27. The Economic Times (New Delhi), February 2nd, 1975.

28. Mauritius Times (Port Louis), 5th April, 1974.

29. The Economic Times op.cit.

Indian assistance to Mauritius took a definite form in 1974. India gifted a sea ward boat "AMAR", to Mauritius navy. Commenting on the Indian gift a leading weekly, Mauritius Times, wrote, "Without fuss or publicity Mauritius learnt that the Government of India has donated a real patrol ship.....this is humble beginning we are having our own little naval force, thanks to India. All Mauritians should be thankful to the Indian Government for the precious donation."³⁰ India also made a gift of a helicopter, "CHETAK". The first ever passenger service by sea from India to Mauritius was started on 22nd April, 1975.³¹ The luxury liner "HARSHAVARDHAN" owned by the Shipping Corporation of India started covering Port Louis enroute to Mombasa and Dar-es-Salaam.

Under the agreement signed by Mauritian Minister of Economy and Planning Kher Jagat Singh and Indian Finance Minister C. Subramaniam, India agreed to grant commercial credit of Rs. 10 crores for the purchase of heavy machinery, transport equipment and electric generators for various projects in Mauritius.³² Indian

30. Mauritius Times (Port Louis)..,12th April, 1974.

31. The Economic Times (New Delhi)..,26th April, 1975.

32. Ibid.,10th January, 1975 and ARB. (Eco.).., Vo.12., No.1.,1975.,p.3374.

assistance to Mauritius in the field of fish food processing, mechanization of the island's fishing boats and supply of marine engines increased when Mauritian Minister of Fisheries signed an agreement with India in December 1975 in New Delhi.³³ But, the trade with India remained 'one way' as it had only imports from India. In 1973 Mauritius imported goods worth Rs. 30.6 million from India and in 1975 ~~the~~ imports amounted to Rs. 57.7 million. In spite of this numerical increase, there was a decline in Indian contribution to Mauritius' total imports (from 3.34 percent in 1973 to 2.98 percent in 1975).³⁴

Dr. Ramgoolam's pragmatism did not leave the Soviet Union and China. Keeping in view the East-West power struggle and the island's strategic location in the Indian Ocean, he established relations with the USSR and China in order to diversify sources of help, and to increase the island's bargaining power in pursuing its national interests. He visited Moscow and

33. The Hindustan Times (New Delhi), 24th December, 1975.

34. For figures of 1973 See, ASS-1975., p.551 and for figures of 1975 See the same of 1977-78., p.591.

established diplomatic relations with the USSR. He signed a fisheries agreement with Soviet Union in 1970, providing its port facilities to the Soviet fishing fleet. The Soviet Union, in turn, agreed to assist the island's fishing industry through scientific research, technical and economic studies.³⁵ Another agreement signed in Port Louis on 17th April, 1974 envisaged establishing a joint fishing venture.³⁶ Mauritius had conceded landing rights to Soviet planes at Plaisance international air port in the island, earlier.

In April 1972 Dr. Ramgoolam visited Peking on the invitation of the Chinese government and announced Mauritian recognition of the People's Republic of China, officially, and also agreed to establish diplomatic relations with Peking.³⁷ Following his discussions with Chinese Premier, Chou En Lai, a communique was issued regarding the two governments' agreement to develop friendly relations and cooperation on the basis of the five principles of mutual respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty, mutual non-aggression and

35. ARB. (Eco.), Vol. 7., No. 7., 1970., p. 1777.

36. Ibid., Vol. 11., No. 4., 1975., p. 3110

37. ARB. (Pol.), Vol. 9., No. 12., 1973., p. 2603.

non-interference in each others internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit and peaceful co-existence. According to an agreement reached in August 1972, China provided an interest-free loan worth £ 13.5 million to build an international air port on the island.³⁸

But, Mauritius could not strengthen relations with Moscow and Peking due to different reasons. The nature of the island's economy is monocrop and totally export-oriented. The Western countries, Britain and France, and of course, South Africa are important customers for its exports and imports. In this kind of situation, it is necessary for Mauritians to find markets for its exports in order to strengthen its relations with Soviet Union and China. Mere consideration of the island's strategic location is not sufficient. Unfortunately, Moscow and Peking could not provide any market for Mauritian sugar and EPZ products. The USSR and China at least do not have cultural similarities with the island, like France and India, so as to influence its external policies. The two percent Sino-Mauritians of the island can not influence its policies. Because, these people came to Mauritius before the revolution in China and so they

38. ARB. (Eco.), Vol. 10., No. 12., 1973., p. 2603.

could not keep contacts with their main-land like Indo-Mauritians, whose contacts with India were regular in different fields such as, cultural, educational and to some extent economic field. Another important point in this regard is that the Sino-Mauritian population is strong neither economically nor politically to influence the island's external relations. Lastly, as the island's trade is totally Western oriented and its strategic location is also important for the Western interests, naturally, the West does not like the island's moves towards Soviet Union and China.

Mauritius was one of the active participants at the United Nations. It stood with the Afro-Asian countries on different issues. It opposed colonialism in Africa and supported national liberation movements in Portuguese territories and Namibia. It called for comprehensive mandatory sanctions against the Ian Smith's regime in Rhodesia. Condemning apartheid in General Assembly Dr. Ramgoolam said, ".....apartheid is repugnant to human dignity, it can only foster hatred and unrest. Man must be free and my country unreservedly condemns any form of society that denies human beings their basic rights."³⁹ On the question of Idi Amin's

39. UNGAOR., 24th session., 1725th meeting., 25th Sept. 1969.

expulsion of Asians from Uganda, he equated Amin's policy with that of South African apartheid, saying, ".....to my mind South African policy of apartheid and discrimination against our brothers and sisters in Africa has paled into insignificance against recent action of Uganda."⁴⁰ He appealed to Ugandan President to reconsider the situation. Mauritius recognised Bangladesh as early as in February 1972 and supported its admission to the United Nations. Dr. Ramgoolam appealed to China to reverse its stand regarding Bangladesh and not to pursue the path of ostracism due to which she herself was denied for over a quarter of century a rightful place in the organisation.⁴¹ He welcomed the Simla agreement of July 1972. Commenting on the agreement in General Assembly he said, ".... normalisation of relations between India and Pakistan will contribute in large measure to the solution of out-standing differences between Pakistan and Bangladesh."⁴²

Mauritius, being an island, called on the members of the UN General Assembly to take appropriate

40. Ibid., 28th session, 2040th meeting, 26th Sept., 1972.

41. Ibid.

42. Ibid.

steps on the utilization of ocean floor and sub-soil resources beyond the limits of national jurisdiction. Dr. Ramgoolam was of the opinion that the ocean resources beyond the national jurisdictions should be used for the benefit of mankind as a whole.⁴³ He supported the UNGA resolution 2832 (XXXVI) declaring Indian Ocean as a zone of peace and called for denuclearization of the ocean. But, surprisingly, he continued to entertain naval visits from all sides. At one time, in August 1974, warships from Britain, United States and France were mooring in the harbour of Port Louis.⁴⁴

Despite its continuous pronouncements against apartheid regime in South Africa at all international forums, Mauritius maintained economic and commercial relations with South Africa. Particularly the Foreign Minister Gaetan Duval was very active in developing South African ties. He even denied his country's representatives' stand on apartheid in the UN General Assembly stating that their ambassador to the UN did not represent government's policy and

44. Africa Contemporary Record, 1974-75., p.B249.

that, "Mauritius did not want to become involved in moves against South Africa."⁴⁵ Further emphasizing South African ties, he said in an interview to newsmen in November 1973 that, "Mauritius should avoid giving the impression that she was one of the leaders of the tirade against South Africa."⁴⁶ Moreover he was of the opinion that the trade relations were nothing to do with political stand on the apartheid—"We do not believe in making trade as a political weapon," he said in the same interview. He also abstained from the OAU's condemnation of British arms sales to South Africa earlier in 1970, stating, "We can not accuse Britain of strengthening apartheid.... Her only aim is to ensure the defence of the sea route around the Cape."⁴⁷

Mauritius attended a regional tourism cooperation conference in Fort Johnston (Malawi) in August 1970 along with Lesotho, Swaziland, South Africa and Portugal. All the countries agreed to set up a

45. ARB. (Eco.).., Vol. 10., No. 11., 1973., p. 2934.

46. Ibid.

47. ARB. (Pol.).., Vol. 7., No. 7., p. 1825.

regional tourism cooperation organisation to promote tourism in the region, regardless of political, ideological and racial differences.⁴⁸ By the end of 1972, they all signed an agreement to set up a Southern African Tourism Council (SARTOC) and the Council was launched officially in the ministerial meeting held in Port Louis in March 1973.⁴⁹ The meeting appointed Mauritian Foreign Minister Duval as chairman of the Council with Swaziland's Minister of Industry, Mines and Tourism, Simon Nuxmbo, as his deputy. With the launching of SARTOC, Mauritius took a number of new tourist development projects in the island. The Southern Sun Hotels group of South Africa, was granted a contract to open a tourist complex along with five star Hotels, on the north coast of Mauritius.

The opening of Export Processing Zones (EPZ) in the 1970s, initiated South Africa's entry into the Zone, a number of offers made by Mauritian government such as, a corporate income tax holiday, exemption

48. ARB. (Eco.), Vol.7.,No.7.,1970.,p.1756.

49. Ibid.,Vol.10.,No.2.,1973.,p.2645.

from payment of import duty on capital goods, etc., encouraged South African investors to invest and market their products in other African and European countries with a "Made in Mauritius" label.⁵⁰ Along with these benefits, cheap labour in Mauritius and the geographical proximity of the island were considered important factors by the South African investors. Here it should be made clear that not only Foreign Minister Gaetan Duval was alone in encouraging South African economic and commercial relations, but, the Prime Minister Dr. Ramgoolam also continued to maintain economic ties with South Africa after the former's dismissal in December 1973.⁵¹ He awarded a turnkey textile mill project to a South African firm, valued at Rs. 180,000 in 1974.⁵² All his members of the cabinet, senior government officials and leading industrial and commercial heads have welcomed

50. Ibid., Vol. 7., No. 8., 1970., p. 1792.

51. ARB. (Pol.), Vol. 10., No. 12., 1973., p. 3674.

52. ARB. (Eco.), Vol. 11., No. 12., 1974., p. 3369.

South African investors, saying, "South Africa must move in here. It is imperative in the long run that we get aid from them."⁵³ In trade, South Africa ranked second in the total imports, they increased from 7.43 percent in 1969 to 9.66 percent by 1975.⁵⁴

53. Ibid., Vol. 7., No. 8., 1970., p. 1792.

54. ASS. 1972., p. 538., and ASS. 1977-78., p. 591.

CHAPTER-III
MAURITIUS FOREIGN POLICY
(1976-81)

The year 1976 was significant in the contemporary Mauritian political history because of two events. First, it was in this year that Port Louis hosted thirteenth summit conference of the OAU and Dr. Ramgoolam became the chairman of the Organisation. Second and more important event was the first general elections since the island gained independence and the emergence of the left-wing MMM as the single largest party in parliament.¹ Both these events influenced the ruling groups' foreign policy perceptions to some extent. Particularly in claiming sovereignty over Diego Garcia and over Tromelin island (located between Mauritius and Madagascar, where France had built weather station as well as an air-strip) and in denouncing diplomatic

1. The general elections after independence were to be held in 1972. The declaration of the emergency by the ruling coalition in 1971 resulted in extension of the parliament's period up till 1976. See, Alfred Latham Koeing, "Shadow of Marxism over Mauritius", ROUND TABLE, No.226., April, 1977., pp.76-82.

relations with Israel along with taking firm stand on 'Zionism' in all international forums.²

Mauritius, which had maintained a low profile in the affairs of OAU till 1975, now started showing interest in the Organisation's affairs. It attended the Addis Ababa emergency summit conference in January 1976. On the question of recognition to Angolan Peoples Liberation Movement (MPLA), or its reconciliation with Angolan National Liberation Front (FNLA) and National Union for Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), Mauritius argued in favour of recognition, alongwith majority members.³ It also supported the resolution in favour of African National Council (ANC) of Rhodesia to intensify its armed struggle against the white minority regime. Dr. Ramgoolam attending the OAU's liberation committee meeting in the same month in Lourenco Marques (later Maputo, in Mozambique), condemned

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2. Until 1976 Mauritius used to abstain on the question of Zionism at UN and other international forums. For instance, it abstained in 1975 UNGA session. See, ARB. (Pol.), Vol. 12., No 11., 1975., p. 3842.
 3. Of the total fortyseven members present, twenty three recognised MPLA and twenty two members called for reconciliation between MPLA, FNLA and UNITA, and two members were abstained. See, Ibid., Vol. 13., No. 11., 1976., p. 3883.

South African involvement in Angola and called for all the members to support South-West African Peoples Organisation (SWAPO) in strengthening its armed struggle.⁴

Yet, despite their overtly critical stand over the apartheid regime, Mauritian dealings with Pretoria were open secret. Dr. Ramgoolam had hard time declaring a close season for all South Africans, on the eve of OAU summit conference. All the South African pass port holders were asked to leave the island, South African-made wine bottles were re-labeled as 'Made in Mauritius', even the South African made lavatory papers were removed, the new hotel 'St. Geran' was not put at the disposal of the visiting heads of state and government as it was owned by a South African company, instead it was allotted to journalists. However, when some African journalists came to know about the hotels ownership they packed their bags and left, refusing to pay their bills.⁵ Despite these troubles the summit was held in

4. Ibid.

5. The Times, (London), July 1st, 1976.

peaceful atmosphere, the delegates though could not find African flavour, ^{were} impressed by the island's charming beauty.

Dr. Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, who was elected as Chairman of the Organisation, spoke against racism in South Africa to foster anti-apartheid stand in front of the leaders of the continent. He said, "Human memory will place Soweto alongside Sharpeville in the tragic history of repression and oppression of our brothers and sisters of the southern part of the continent of Africa.....The whole of the southern Africa is in flames. Fires of conflicts have been lit throughout this part of the continent."⁶ Describing it as a new threat to World peace and security, He singled out France in the conference for its decision to sell nuclear reactors to South Africa and appealed France to reconsider its decision.⁷ Dr. Ramgoolam reiterated the OAU's previous condemnations of Israel for its

6. ARB. (Pol.), Vol. 14., No. 4., 1976., p. 4078.

7. Ibid.

continued defiance against world opinion and called on members to deploy all possible efforts in order to restore a lasting peace in Lebanon.

Dr. Ramgoolam as the Chairman of the OAU, actively involved in the continent's affairs. He condemned attempts towards secession of Shaba in Zaire and assured OAU's support to General Mobutu. Appreciating the French and Moroccan initiatives in this regard in an interview to AFP in Paris, he said that General Mobutu was right in seeking friendly support.⁸ He successfully intervened in the dispute between Kenya and Uganda, which arose due to Israeli raid on Entebe. He criticised Israel for creating conflict between two countries and appealed Ugandan president to settle the problem peacefully. He played an active part in the African boycott of Montreal Olympic Games in 1976.⁹

During the same period (1976-77), Mauritius was elected to the Security Council. According to the decision of OAU, the Mauritian representative in Security

8. ARB. (Pol.), Vol. 14., No 4., 1977., p. 4401.

9. ACR. 1976-77., Vol. 9., p. B285.

Council led a protest move against the entry of Transkei, a puppet state in South Africa, into United Nations. He condemned South African regime for creating 'home lands' in order to perpetuate the inhuman policy of apartheid. He criticised persistent military activities of the apartheid regime against neighbouring states. Characterizing apartheid as international problem, he called upon the world assembly members to eradicate racism in South Africa. Mauritius along with Benin and Libya sponsored a resolution on mandatory sanctions against South Africa, though it was vetoed down by the UK, the US and France.¹⁰ Addressing General Assembly in 1976, Dr. Ramgoolam challenged the permanent members' veto power in blocking the admission of new nations like, Angola and Vietnam. He said that, "Neither Africa, with its forty eight states, nor Latin America enjoys such a privilege,..... There is no reason why five states should in this day and age still enjoy the special privilege of another age and thus place the rest of the world at an unacceptable disadvantage."¹¹

10. ARB.(Pol.)..Vol.14.,No.10., 1977.,p.4623.

11. UNGAOR., 31st session, (New York, 1976).

However, as soon as his Chairmanship term was over, Dr. Ramgoolam went back to his neutral stand. For instance, he, who spoke of Comoros legitimate claim on Moyotte island in support of its territorial integrity and criticised the French occupation of Mayotte, changed his stand and took a neutral stand by abstaining on the same issue in the thirty first session of OAU's ministerial council meeting in Khartoum on June 11th, 1978.¹² He also abstained on the resolution which called for Reunion's self-determination in the same meeting.

Mauritius, despite its outbursts against apartheid, did not take any steps to lessen the dependence on South Africa, rather its economic ties with South Africa were strengthened during the period. This increasing South African economic ties can be seen in the context of two important factors. Firstly, emergence of leftist regimes in Madagascar in 1972 and Seychelles in 1977 made unstable situation for South African investors,

12. ARB. (Pol.), Vol. 15., No 7., 1978., pp. 4910-11.

which resulted in the transfer of South African investment to Mauritius, whose fast growing EPZ sector with wider EEC market appeared more beneficial. Secondly, increasing budgetary deficit from Rs. 29 million in 1975-76 to Rs. 236 million in 1977-78 and further to Rs. 500 million in 1979-80 and increasing debt service payments from Rs. 200 million in 1978-79 to Rs. 461 million in 1980-81 (an increase of 28 percent)¹³ alongwith devastating cyclones in 1975 and 1980, worsened the economic situation, which made Mauritian leaders to approach South Africa for help. South Africa was the biggest market for Mauritian tea production, amounting to seventy percent of its tea exports under favourable prices. Following the visit of a high level delegation of South African government and businessmen to Port Louis in November 1979, the tea quotas were further renewed.¹⁴ During the visit of Minister of Housing, Lands, Tourism and Country Planning, Elizer Francois, to Pretoria in 1981, Mauritius got an assurance for a R. 15 million loan to repair and reconstruct the roads and houses on the island which were damaged due to the 1980 cyclone. The South African

13. ASS. 1977-78., p.589 and ASS. 1979-80., p.663 and ARB. (Eco.), Vol.17., No2., 1980., p.5432 and No.10., p.5715.

14. Ibid., Vol.16., No.10., 1979., p.5292.

government also offered a R. 1.6 million loan for the improvement of island's tea industry.¹⁵

According to South African Foreign Trade Organisation (SAFTO), South African exports to Mauritius amounted to about R. 8 million a month during 1981, accounting for 20 percent of Mauritian total imports, making South Africa the top exporter in that year, distantly followed by Britain whose contribution was 13 percent.¹⁶

Mauritian relations with Britain during the period centred around the issue of Diego Garcia. The issue was first raised by the left wing MMM as part of its election campaign in 1976 and later in the parliament. The ruling coalition, consisted of Dr. Ramgoolam's MLP, PMSD and CAM, had never raised the issue before. Even when they came to power second time in 1976. The issue of Ilois people, inhabitants of Chagos group of islands who were exiled in Mauritius against their will, when the British detached the archipelago, was also not taken

15. Ibid., Vol. 18., No. 2., 1981., p. 5829.

16. Ibid.

up by the government. It was the MMM which took the issue by forming a joint Ilois committee to wrest their demands. Forced by the opposition demands, Mauritius Government negotiated the compensation agreement with Britain. The British government sanctioned £ 650,000 in 1978 as the 'full and final' discharge of HMG obligations.¹⁷ But, the amount was not sufficient and it was meant for only 434 Ilois families, out of 790 in 1978. Again in 1979, the British government made another 'full and final' offer of £ 1.25 millions.¹⁸ This time it was on the strict condition that the exiles were to sign a document stating, 'never to return the island and further abandoning all claims and rights on the archipelago.' The offer and its obligation were not accepted by the majority Ilois. During 1980, the Ilois joint committee held a number of hunger strikes in protest against the terms and demanded compensation of £ 8 million.

17. John Mandeleley, "Diego Garcia: An Indian Ocean Storm Centre", ROUND TABLE, July, 1981., p.225.

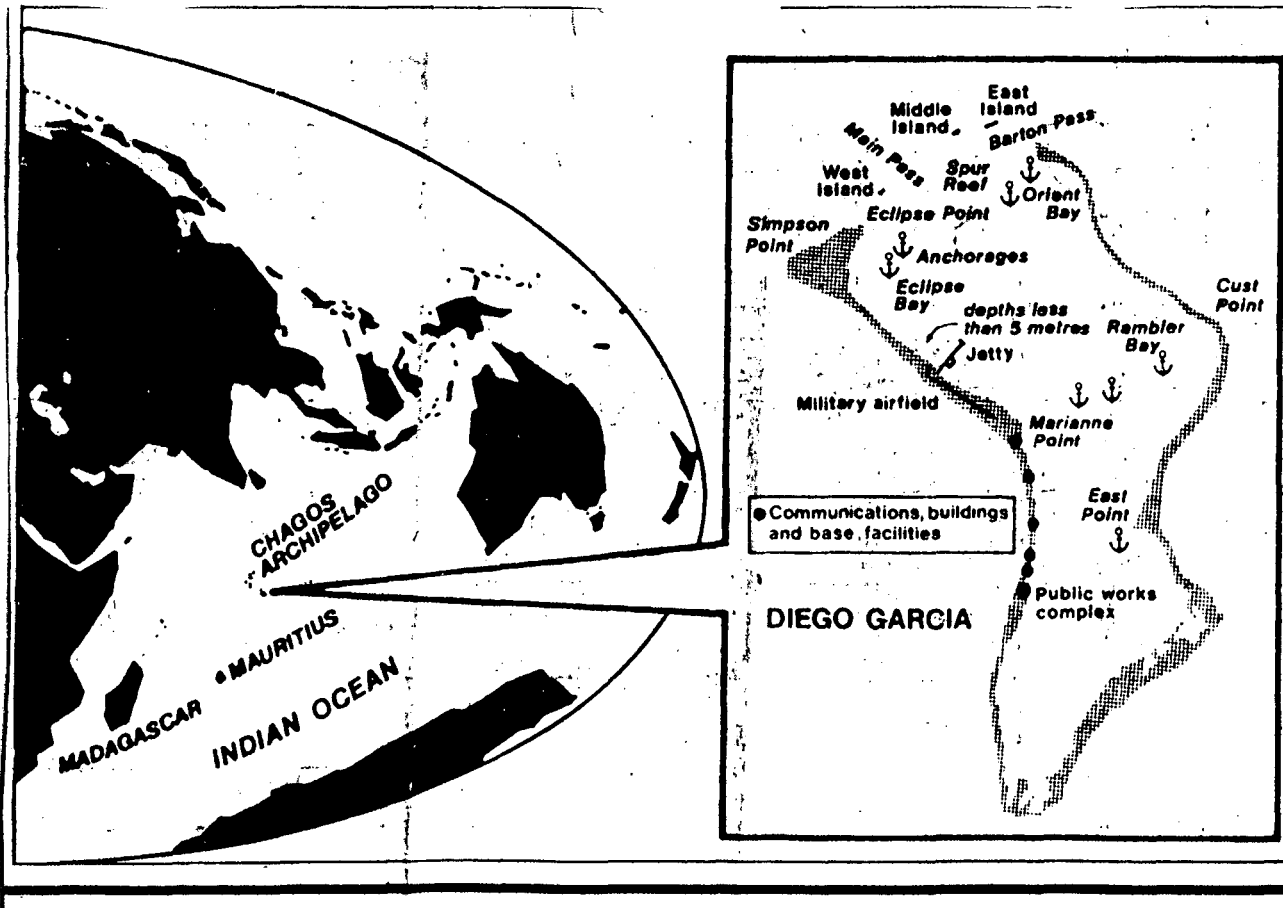
18. Ibid.

Forced with these domestic developments, Dr. Ramgoolam for the first time on June 27, 1980 demanded fresh claims with Britain for the return of Diego Garcia.¹⁹ Later in July, he put forward the resolution claiming sovereignty over the Chagos archipelago in the seventeenth annual summit of the OAU, held in Freetown (Sierra Leone). Eventhough the issue was not on the agenda, the summit endorsed Dr. Ramgoolam's claim and passed the resolution unanimously. The resolution declared that any military activity in Diego Garcia as a threat to Africa and to the Indian Ocean zone.²⁰ It asked Britain to cede the archipelago unconditionally to Mauritius.

Dr. Ramgoolam visited London in the same month. He discussed the issue with the British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. In the course of his discussion, he referred to original understanding reached in 1965, which allowed building only a communication station in Diego Garcia. The British, violating the understanding, allowed Pentagon to expand it as a sophisticated military base (see the map) in the island. There was no answer

19. A R B. (Pol.), Vol 17., No. 6., 1980., p. 5724.

20. Ibid., Vol. 17., N o. 7., 1980., p. 5732.



by the British Prime Minister. But the London foreign office only said that the demand would be examined in the context of treaty obligations.²¹ However, Dr. Ramgoolam on his return to Port Louis on 17th July, 1980, stated that it had been agreed by the British that it would return the island without any compensation, when it was no longer needed to its defence purposes. He said that his government would seek world opinion in support of Mauritian claim on the archipelago.²² On the question of compensation to the Ilois, the talks were held between Mauritius and Britain in June 1981 at London foreign office. But the talks could not bring any consensus as the British offered only £ 300,000 against the Mauritian demand of £ 8 million.²³ Paradoxically, Dr. Ramgoolam's claim on Diego Garcia has nothing to do with demilitarization of Indian Ocean as he was infavour of continuation of military base in the island. Addressing the

21. The Times of India (New Delhi)., July 8th, 1980.

22. ARB. (Pol.), Vol.17.,No7.,1980.,p.5754.

23. Ibid.,Vol. 18.,No.6., 1981.,p.6096.

UN General Assembly in October 1980, he said that, "the United States should make arrangements directly with Mauritius for the continued use of the island for its defence purposes."²⁴

Unlike the British, Mauritian relations with France, during the period, were more on economic lines through frequent visits of delegations between two countries and with the regular attendance to the Franco-African annual summits. Among the total industries of EPZs, half of them were locally owned, of the remaining half, the French owned predominantly. The French introduction of favourable air freight rates was another important step to increase its economic relations. It charged only seven francs a kilo for the first 300 kilos of weight.²⁵ This facility benefitted EPZ companies to air freight all their raw material requirements from Europe and air freight the finished products back. In 1976, Mauritius awarded a port development project to Keir International of the French

24. UNGAOR. 35th session, 30th meeting, 9th Oct., 1980.

25. The Times (London), 30th June, 1976.

Kier group. The contract worth £ 4 million, aimed at construction of quays, deepening of the harbour in front of the quays and reclamation of land behind quays.²⁶

Another important factor in Franco-Mauritian relations was the bilateral aid. During the same period France was number one bilateral aid giver to the Island.

Under the agreement signed with French Central Fund for Economic Cooperation (CCCE) in the end of 1976,

France provided loan worth 27 million francs to the development of island's electricity production. The

CCCE provided three million francs for irrigation

project and 1.8 million for staff training and for

Development Works Corporation of the island in April

1977. And in 1979, it provided a long term loan worth

17.5 million francs for a telecommunications programme.²⁷

The French also granted several loans under the EEC's

European Development Fund (EDF) during the period.

The trade between two countries increased.

France became chief buyer of Mauritian EPZ products.

26. ARB. (Eco.), Vol. 13., No. 2., 1976., p. 3823.

27. Ibid., Vol. 13., No. 10., 1976., p. 4080., Vol. 14., No. 4., 1977., p. 4279., Vol. 16., No. 6., 1979., p. 8186.

Mauritian exports to France increased from 5.64 percent in 1975 to 19.62 percent in 1981.²⁸ Eventhough Dr. Ramgoolam claimed sovereignty over the French occupied island Tromelin in his parliament speech in November 1977 and made representation to Paris, nothing had come out from his discussion with the French government.²⁹ It was again reaffirmed by the Foreign Minister Harold Walter in an interview to "Le Mauricien" in March 1978. He said that, "In view of the existing fraternal links between France and Mauritius, we will find a solution for this tiny speck of land in the Indian Ocean."³⁰ But, Dr. Ramgoolam during his frequent visits to Paris, never raised the issue again with the French Government.

Mauritian relations with India, during the period, went on as usual. The year 1976 was a landmark in the Indo-Mauritian cultural cooperation. Firstly, Mauritius hosted the second World Hindi

28. For 1975 figures see ASS.1977-78.,p.591 and for 1981 figures see, ASS, 1983-84.,p.584.

29. ARB. (Pol.)..Vol.14.,No.11.,1977.,p.4655.

30. Ibid.,Vol.15.,N o.3.,1978.,p.4798.

Convention in Moka, for which India sent a large 200 member delegation led by Dr. Karan Singh. The convention signified the heritage of Hindi literature. Thanking Mauritius government for hosting the convention Dr. Karan Singh said that, "The name of Mauritius would be written in golden letters for its role in propogation of Hindi and entire Hindi World was under deep debt of gratitude to Mauritius Government and People."³¹ Secondly, the visit of Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi on her way to East African countries signified the inauguration of the Mahatma Gandhi Inistitute on October 9th, whose foundation stone was also laid by her in her first visit to the island six years ago in 1970. Of the total construction cost of the institute Rs. 170 lakhs, India contributed Rs. 70 lakhs.³² She assured Dr. Ramgoolam, all possible assistance to Mauritius in its efforts to develop and diversify its economy. India agreed to set up an industrial training institute for training local man-power. Earlier, in

31. The Times of India (New Delhi), August 31st, 1976.

32. ARB. (Pol.), Vol. 13., No. 10., 1976., p. 4205.

March, Indian Minister for Steel and Mines Chandrajit Yadav attended the 40th anniversary of the MLP. After the anniversary function Dr. Ramgoolam held talks with Yadav on the possibilities of collaboration with India in setting up paper and steel rolling mills. He also sought Indian help in the island's electricity expansion programme.³³

Dr. Ramgoolam visited New Delhi in November, 1977 after the new Janata Government came to power in India. After his discussions with the new Prime Minister Morarji Desai and his cabinet colleagues on different bilateral and international issues, he said at a ^{press} conference that, "Each time I come to India I find something more to take away to a country where my forefathers brought the message of brother hood and unity."³⁴ Mauritius celebrated its tenth anniversary of independence in March 1978. India sent Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Minister for External Affairs to the function. Dr. Ramgoolam held talks with Vajpayee,

33. The Hindu, (Madras) ., 8th March, 1976.

34. Indian Express (New Delhi) ., 5th November, 1977.

and later, both signed an agreement on economic, technical and cultural cooperation, which emphasised to set up a joint commission.³⁵ India offered a commercial credit of Rs. 11.5 million for the purchase of capital equipment and intermediate goods and agricultural commodities in an agreement signed by the two countries in the same month.³⁶ The credit was extended further for the supply of transport and heavy machinery equipment, under a separate deal finalised in October 1978. Mauritius also decided to purchase 24,000 tonnes of rice from India.³⁷

In 1981 both the countries signed a convention to avoid double taxation and prevent tax evasion on income and capital gains between two countries.³⁸ The main objective of the convention was to stimulate the flow of capital, technology and personnel from one country to the other for increasing economic and trade relations. But, contrary to the expectations of the

35. AR., March 12-25-. 1978., p.4759.

36. ARB. (Eco.), Vol.14., No.3., 1978., p.

37. The Times of India (New Delhi), 24th Oct., 1978.

convention, Mauritian trade with India showed a gradual declining trend during the period. Whereas imports from China showed a positive trend, Indian imports accounted 4.66 percent in 1979 were declined to only 3.74 percent in 1981. In 1979 imports from China accounted to 1.60 percent were increased to 3.76 percent in 1981.³⁹ Despite the similarities in culture and traditions, Mauritius could not develop strong economic ties with India, due to different reasons. Firstly, India cannot import Mauritian sugar and tea, as it is also one of the leading exporter of the same. Similarly, India can not import Mauritian EPZ products as it has sufficient industries of the same nature along with market facilities both within the country and abroad. Thus Mauritius can only import food, machinery and other technology from India, it cannot export any thing. Secondly, Indian investors continued to be reluctant since the opening of the EPZs in Mauritius, because,

38. AR. December 3-16-.1981, p.5795.

39. For 1979 figures see, ASS. 1979-80., p.664 and for 1981 figures see ASS. 1983-84-.p.584.

whatever the offers made in Mauritius can be offered in India along with cheap labour and accessibility to the raw materials, which are again not available in Mauritius. Lastly, whatever the industries Mauritius have are small-scale and limited to only few sectors, such as, textiles and ready made garments, modern electronics, plastic goods, furniture and handi-crafts, etc., again all of them are based on import substitution, in which Indian intermediate technology and other heavy machinery technology is of no relevance. Options are only in few fields, training manpower within the island or India, sending expertise to the island, contributing in the field of heavy machinery equipment such as marine engines and other mechanization process for the island's fishing industry, contributing in the field of road transport and air services and 'one way' foreign trade from India to Mauritius.

CHAPTER IV
MAURITIUS FOREIGN POLICY
(1982-87)



The second general elections held in June 1982, were important in the Mauritian political processes. The left wing MMM, which emerged as the single largest party in 1976 elections, allied with newly formed Parti Socialiste Mauricien (PSM). The left alliance in its election manifesto put forward new programmes, in domestic as well as in external policies, such as, relative nationalization of sugar industry and creation of more jobs, campaign for the return of Diego Garcia, demilitarization and denuclearization of Indian Ocean, policy of strict non-alignment between the power blocs and severing economic links with South Africa. In order to protect the interests of the West, Britain started fresh negotiations with the MLP government on the issue of Ilois people. The British sent a delegation led by Leonard Allison, Under Secretary of State, to Port Louis. The delegation signed an agreement with Prime Minister Dr. Ramgoolam, offering £ 4 million for the settlement of the displaced

Ilois.¹ However, it had no impact on the elections. The left, MMM and PSM alliance, captured all the 60 seats in the elections and formed the government. The architect of MMM's policies, Paul Berenger took finance portfolio and his Indo-Mauritian partner, Aneerood Jugnauth assumed office of the Prime Minister.

The new left government clearly defined its foreign policy ——— "genuine non-alignment; support for just causes; recognition of the Saharavi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR); support for the Palestinian and Namibian liberation movements; a nuclear free peace-zone in the Indian Ocean; the return of Diego Garcia; support for the struggle against apartheid and withdrawal from economic links with South Africa."² It took a firm stand on the issue of Diego Garcia and pledged to stop the biweekly flights, which carried 330 Mauritian

1. ACR. 1982-83., p.B.235.

2. Ibid., p.B.234.

labourers to Diego Garcia base under the contract signed by the former government, when the term of contract expires in March 1983.³ The new parliament unanimously approved a bill on 7th July, 1982, declaring Diego Garcia, which belonged to Mauritius till it got independence, to be a part of Mauritius. An agreement was signed with Britain for the payment of £ 4 million compensation for the displaced Ilois. Although the agreement described as a 'full and final' once again, the new government did not accept it as final. The Foreign Minister  Jean Claude de l'Estrace said, the agreement was signed "without foregoing, implicitly or explicitly, claim of Mauritius to the Chagos archipelago, including Diego Garcia."⁴ The Foreign Minister discussed Mauritian claim with the British Foreign Secretary,  Francis Pym, in his visit to London in July 1982. But there was no response from the British foreign office when he suggested seeking world court arbitration.⁵

3. The International Herald Tribune (Paris), 21 June, 1982.

4. Patriot., 10th June, 1982.

5. Ibid., 23rd July, 1982.

Speaking in the UN General Assembly in October 1982, the Prime Minister Jugnauth appealed to the world assembly members to support Mauritian claim of sovereignty over Chagos archipelago.⁶ Further, reiterating the claim, Paul Berenger insisted that the 1965 ACT, by which the British government detached the archipelago, was null and void by the virtue of previous UN resolutions voted in 1960, forbidding the breaking up of a territory, which had yet to become independent. "There fore", he said, "We do not recognise the 1965 Act which created the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT)."⁷ The new government appointed a select committee in July 1982 to enquire into the Diego Garcia issue, and the committee submitted its report on 10th June, 1983. The committee report contradicted Dr. Ramgoolam's claim that his party never agreed to the detachment, and confirmed that the former Prime Minister and his ministers

6. UNGAOR., 37th session, 34th meeting., 1st.Oct., 1982.

7. BIOT was created in 1965 with islands of Deshroches, Farquar, Alderba and Chagos archipelago in order to utilize them for military purposes. When finally Diego Garcia was selected by Pentagon as best suited one, the first three were abandoned, when Seychelles got independence.

approved the detachment of the archipelago in 1965.⁸ The Committee produced a telegram dated 5th November 1965, which declared that the then Council of Ministers gave its assent to the detachment. It said in its report that, neither the British government nor the Mauritian government had the right to break up the national territory without the consent of the population concerned.⁸ The new government also raised the claim of Tromelin, when the French President's special adviser on African affairs Guy Penne visited Port Louis in June 1982. Penne confirmed Mitterand's stand, to start official negotiations on the issue.⁹

The important development in new government's external relations was its efforts at regional cooperation. The Malagasy delegation led by Georges Solofoson, Minister for Industry and Commerce, visited Port Louis in the first week of July, 1982. He proposed to have

8. ARB. (Pol.P., Vol.20., No.6., 1983., p.6887.

9. Ibid., Vol. 19., No.7., 1982., p.6540.

a bilateral trade agreement to import manufactured goods from Mauritian EPZs in return for its fruits, fish and meat exports. The proposal was accepted by the government, and an agreement to that effect was signed a week later, following the Foreign Minister De l'Estrace's visit to Antananarivo.¹⁰ The Seychelles President, Albert Rene visited Port Louis in the same month. He was the first head of the state to visit Mauritius after the new government came into existence. Following talks between him and the Prime Minister Jugnauth, a joint communique was issued. It expressed to set up an economic zone between the two countries and a committee to review commercial relations between the two countries. The communique also requested the EEC to help the two countries for a regional shipping line.¹¹ Later, an Indian Ocean Commission (IOC) grouping three countries, Mauritius, Madagascar and Seychelles, was announced. The Commission held its first foreign

10. ACR. op.cit.,p.B234.

11. Ibid.,p.B235.

ministers' meeting in December 1982, in Port Louis. The meeting emphasized promoting regional cooperation in all sectors, especially economic and communication development. The meeting considered to harmonise tariffs between the member states and to indentify common products that would increase trade in the region, as foremost task. Later, it decided to hold another meeting in Mahe (Seychelles) in March 1983 to discuss the proposed summit conference of the Commission.¹² Meanwhile, both Madagascar and Seychelles agreed to support Mauritian bid to reposses the Chagos archipelago.

The new government stood with non-aligned countries on different international issues. Supporting the non-aligned call for the New International Economic Order (NIEO) at UN, the Prime Minister, Jugnauth said that, "The major and continuing threat to the dignity of man come from the prevailing economic order characterized by built-in self-perpetuating inequality..

12. ARB.(Eco.)..,Vol.20.,No.1., 1983.,p.5716.

.....It is patent that this system can not be allowed to continue."¹³ Jugnauth went to attend the 19th annual summit conference of the OAU at Tripoli in August 1982. As the summit did not take place because of the Polisario dispute, he attended the informal meeting and recognised the SADR officially.¹⁴ The new government recognised the PLO as the sole representative of the Palestinian people and extended full support to it. Speaking in the UN General Assembly Jugnauth condemned Israeli invasion of Lebanon and appealed Israel to stop its "cold blooded carnage" of innocent civilians in Beirut.¹⁵ The new government condemned apartheid and even promised to lessen its traditional dependence on South Africa. But, it could not take any steps in practical terms as it is impossible, untill and unless it finds new market for its import and export. South Africa, not only ranked first in the island's total imports but also in its regular tourists

¹³. UNGAOR., op.cit.

¹⁴. The previous government of Dr. Ramgoolam did not recognise the SADR. He attending the OAU council of ministers meeting on 2nd Feb., 1982 in Addis Ababa, supported the resolution infavour of King Hassan II of Morocco. See, ARB. (Pol.), Vol.19., No.2., 1982., pp.6353-62.

¹⁵. UNGAOR., op. cit.

providing 50 percent of the island's tourist sector earnings, very much needed to sustain its economy. Taking practicalities into consideration, Paul Berenger ruled out drastic step with regard to South African economic links and stopping its tourists, saying, "one has to face the facts..... South Africa is our largest source of imports and the alternatives are much more expensive."¹⁶ Instead, he pledged to take gradual steps. Thus, the new government's stand on South Africa clearly shows how important are its economic interests and how they contradict and dominate the political rhetorics in pursuance of the foreign policy.

The left wing coalition could not stay for long. It collapsed within a year in June, 1983, due to reasons as mentioned earlier. The Prime Minister, Jugnauth dissolved the House and formed a new party called Movement Socialiste Militant (MSM) by absorbing the PSM. The MSM in alliance with the MLP and the PMSD, won the 1983 elections. The new government

16. AR. August 13-26., 1982., p.5985.

was headed by Aneerood Jugnauth as Prime Minister again and Gaetan Duval as deputy Prime Minister. Thus, the return of old group once again, resulted in the resumption of old policy in the foreign affairs. The Prime Minister Jugnauth defined his new government's foreign policy as "pragmatic and realistic"¹⁷ rather than "strict non-alignment."

The Diego Garcia issue became central theme in its foreign policy strategy to increase the bargaining power with the West. While continuing to uphold the claims to sovereignty at all international forums, Jugnauth's new government quietly dropped all the demands for closure of the base and for any appeal to the International Court of Justice (ICJ). The Prime Minister, instead decided to take full advantage of the economic opportunities offered by the base. He abandoned his earlier decision to ban the recruitment of Mauritian labour by the US to work on the base and renewed the contract to supply labour and other essential goods to the base.¹⁸ The increasing bargain can be

17. ARB. (Pol.), Vol. 21., No. 11., 1984., p. 7439.

18. Alfred Latham Koeing, "Mauritius: Political Voltaface in the Star of Indian Ocean", ROUND TABLE, April, 84, p. 171.

seen in the context of growing trade relations with the US. Following the talks between the US delegation and Mauritian government in Port Louis on 5th September 1986 a trade agreement was signed to export five categories of textile products manufactured in EPZs.¹⁹ The agreement also provided for an annual quota on the five categories of textiles. According to a survey prepared by the US embassy in Port Louis, Mauritian exports to the US were increased, from \$ 28 million in 1983 to \$ 182 million in 1986, a four-fold increase in three years. This has established the US as the island's third largest export market, after Britain and France. The trade balance with the US favoured the island as imports from the US were negligible, as is evident from its imports in 1987 which amounted to 2 percent only.²⁰ The US aid to the island for the developmental projects is also cited^{as} another example in increasing Mauritian relations with it. The US signed an agreement with Mauritius in May 1987 to assist the Mauritian fishing industry, it provided aid worth \$ 20 million for the tuna fishing canary.²¹ Both the

19. ARB. (Eco.).., Vol.23., N o.19., 1986., pp.8412-13.

20. New York Times, January 3rd, 1987: STRATEGIC DIGEST Vol. XVIII., No.3., March, 1988., p.470.

21. Strategic Digest., op. cit., p.470.

countries signed another agreement in the same year to set up the coast guard to combat trafficking, for which the US had agreed to provide sophisticated communication equipment worth \$ 60,000.²² The British, of course, could not retain its position its position in the island's imports, but continued to dominate in exports, for instance in 1984 the islands's exports to Britain amounted 50.55 percent.²³

Mauritian relations with France under Jugnauth's regime further improved. The aid from France under the CCCE continued to increase every year. The CCCE provided Rs. 2.2 million to Mauritian Development Bank (BDM) in September 1982, 25 million francs loan for the development of telecommunications in November of the same year; 71.3 million francs in December 1985 for the construction of a landing strip at Agalega and in 1987 it provided maximum number of loans, 49 million francs in April, 9 million francs in May, 12 million francs in July and 35 million francs in November, for different develop-

22. Ibid.,

23. ASS., 1987., p.697.

ment works, such as telecommunications, hidro-electric power generation, etc.²⁴ Besides providing loans, the French economic activity in the island's industrial sector strengthened. The French set up a factory to produce pellets with the by-product of sugar cane called bagasse in October 1984. The factory named as "BAGAPEL" was the first of its kind in the world out side the US. It also agreed to set up seven such units in the island.²⁵ The Compagne Francaise pour le Development des Fibres Textils, already operating in Chad and Madagascar was awarded a project to increase the cotton production and to improve the island's textile industry in April 1987.²⁶ After 1983 France became the second important market for the island's exports. It replaced South Africa from its first position in imports and became chief market for the Mauritian imports. The French also replaced

24. Ibid., Vol.19.,No.11.,1982.,p.6682; Vol.22.,No.12., 1985.,p.8020; Vol.23.,No.4.,1986.,p.8179, No.5., p.8209.,No.11.,p.8454.; Vol.24.,No.7.,1987.,p.8762, No.11.,p.8871.,No.12.,p.8907.

25. Ibid.,Vol.21.,N o.10.,1984.,p.7461.






26. Ibid.,Vo. 24.,No.4.,1987.,p.8641.

South Africa's place in supply of tourists to the island by 1985. The recent reduction of fares to 12 percent by the French government further boosted the tourist traffic from France.²⁷

The present regime of Aneerood Jugnauth continued the economic and commercial relations with South Africa due to the different reasons, geographical, historical and economic, as discussed in the previous chapters. Until and unless the vanguard countries against apartheid provide collective alternative, if not individual, to the front-line States along with the islands in vicinity of South Africa, they cannot curtail their dependence on South Africa. Unlike the leaders of frontline countries, Jugnauth was more realistic in his country's ties with South Africa. Although he continued to denounce apartheid at international plane, he admitted and defended the island's trade and tourist links with South Africa openly. In an interview to "AFRICA" (an economic and political magazine published from London) in October 1984, he questioned — "Why

27. Ibid., Vol. 24., No. 2., 1987., p. 8569.

the Indian Ocean island should be singled out for condemnation when some of the African frontline states were having dealings with South Africa?"²⁸

For the first time Mauritius participated in the "RAND SHOW" in April 1985, to demonstrate its industrial capabilities and tourism potential. In the same year, Mauritian trade representative in South Africa,  Jean Michel de Seneville, held negotiations with the Pretoria government to drop import duties on the island's exports.²⁹ The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Tourism and Emigration  Anil Gayan signed a contract in April 1985 with the director of Sun International,  Solomon Kerzner, to build a new five star hotel in the island.³⁰ A sixty-member delegation of South African business executives visited Port Louis in September 1986 and met the deputy Prime Minister  Gaetan Duval.  Duval in his discussions with them encouraged their companies to establish business concerns in Mauritius and to take advantage of facilities offered in the EPZs.³¹

28. The Times of India, 11th Oct., 1984.

29. ARB. (Eco.), Vol. 22., No. 3., 1985., p. 7631.

30. Ibid., Vol. 22., No. 4., 1985., p. 7693.

31. ASS. 1988., p. 683.

The new government of Aneerood Jugnauth continued the regional cooperation efforts initiated in 1982. The three countries, Mauritius, Madagascar and Seychelles came to an understanding on the terms of constitution of the IOC in 1983. They signed first regional cooperation agreement in the second ministerial meeting held in January 1984 in Victoria.³² All the three countries keen in promoting regional cooperation on the lines of South-South cooperation, held their first experts' meeting in Antananarivo in July 1984. The experts' meeting was also attended by the observers from Comoros, Reunion and EDF.³³ The experts held a long ranging discussion on the proposed projects of the regional organisation of tuna fishing, new and renewable energy, a regional agreement on cottage industries and the development of tourism in the Indian Ocean, in particular. Other projects, such as, the development of rice production in Madagascar to meet the needs of the member-states and the establishment of a maritime transport and shipment services were also discussed. Madagascar also hosted the

32. AR. Vol. XXIII., No. 5., 1984.

33. ARB. (Eco.), Vol. 21., No. 7., 1984., p. 7663.

Commission's third ministerial session in January 1985.³⁴ The official admission of the Federal Islamic Republic of Comoros into the Commission as well as the acceptance of the French presence as a representative of Reunion were the concrete decisions of the ^rthird ministerial session. As all the member-countries of the Commission lacked the capital to invest in the proposed projects, the French presence in the Commission helped to get aid from the EEC. The EDF granted 20 million Ecus for the acquisition of tuna fishing boat for community fishing in the region.³⁵ The EEC also agreed to provide means to the projects of new and renewable energy and for the regional beef market. Another ministerial level meeting of the Commission was held under the presidency of Mauritian deputy Minister of External Affairs Kishore Deerpal Singh in January 1986 in Port Louis.³⁶ The meeting further examined the proposed projects closely. The imperfections of the air link between islands in the region, revealed. Madagascar, which has relatively good maintenance service




34. Ibid., Vol. 22., No.2., 1985., p. 7585.

35. Ibid.

36. Ibid., Vol.23., No.2., 1985., p.7588.

agreed to help other countries. A report from an ad hoc committee on trade was adopted. It presented a series of recommendations for freight and sea tariffs. Once again the incapacibilities of the member-states in the technical field resulted in requesting the EEC for technical assistance to study the complexities of recommendations of the committee and evolve necessary structures for the regional trade. Another important decision taken was to set up a regional association for tuna fishing by the four members, namely, Mauritius, Madagascar, Comoros and France. Seychelles decided not to take part in the project as it does not meet its needs. The participants in the meeting also discussed the possibility of setting up a permanent secretariat for the Commission.

Besides actively involving in the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC), Mauritius under Jugnauth's premiership made efforts at regional cooperation at bilateral level with the region's islands, particularly with Madagascar. The Finance Minister, Lautchem-

naraidoo signed an agreement in September 1985 on the preferential customs tariffs with Madagascar.³⁷ The deputy Prime Minister  Duval led an important economic and commercial delegation of sixty six members along with the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Cooperation  Karl Offman, in October 1985.³⁸ They expressed pleasure at the lifting of political obstacles and discussed the possibilities of improving bilateral trade. Both the countries agreed to work out a joint monetary agreement which would allow trade to be carried out in each country's respective currencies. The principle of creating a compensation chamber was accepted.  Pascal Rakotomavo, Malagasy Minister of Economy and Finance, had expressed his desire to see Madagascar's agricultural potential co-managed by the two countries. Madagascar showed its interest in Mauritian manufactured products in return for its agricultural products. These efforts at regional cooperation between the island states of the south west Indian Ocean can benefit Mauritius to certain extent. Mauritius having a relatively high industrial potential in the region can export its products to other islands, as they were least industrialized and in return can import

37. Ibid., Vol. 22., No. 11., 1985., p.7951.

38. Ibid.

the agricultural products from them. Eventhough it can not take out the dependence of the region, the regional cooperation between the island states favours Mauritian national interests due to its EPZ sector. The major problem in the regional cooperation is that all the islands of the region are having the West-oriented trade patterns, which they inherited from colonialism, and due to a lack of capital and technical know-how. This inturn might transform "national dependence to regional dependence,"³⁹ rather than meanigⁿful economic cooperation and development.

The Prime Minister, Jugnauth, just after two days of assuming the office, declared his desire to strengthen the ties of friendship with India. He further stated that his first foreign trip will be to New Delhi and it was to the Indian Prime Minister that the new government first extended an

39. Rama Melkote, "Indian Ocean Commission and the Political Economy of Island States", Seminar paper, presented at the National Seminar on Regional Organisations in the Third World A Comparative Perspective., held in Osmania University., Hyderabad., February, 3-5., 1988.

invitation to visit Mauritius.⁴⁰ The Indian Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, visited Port Louis in August 1982. The two Prime Ministers during their talks expressed common opinions on different international issues ranging from Diego Garcia to world peace and apartheid in South Africa. On the issues of bilateral cooperation, India agreed to give a credit of Rs. 100 million, apart from this it also agreed to help in processing crude oil up to 1,50,000 tonnes a year in Indian refineries. India agreed to help Mauritius in the maintenance and security checks of air crafts in the field of civil aviation. It was also agreed upon that India would help Mauritius in setting up a State Trading Corporation and a shipping corporation.⁴¹

Jugnauth visited New Delhi in February 1983. He held talks with Prime Minister Mrs. Gandhi and Minister for External Affairs P.V. Narasimha Rao on the issues of bilateral trade and aid to Mauritius. India granted, this time, Rs. 21 million assistance for a hospital project and also agreed in principle to assist in setting up a joint shipping venture between the

40. The Times of India., 16th June, 1982.

41. Ibdi., 25th August, 1982.

two countries.⁴² The bilateral economic commission held a discussion on the proposed shipping line in February 1984 in Port Louis. It was agreed to set up the shipping line with the initial capital of \$ 11 million and the two countries agreed to provide one ship each for the company. The vessels will carry sugar from Port Louis to European countries and fertilizer from Africa and Europe to India.⁴³

Though the new government expressed its desire to increase its economic relations with India, it could not improve practically. An important development in the recent past is the increasing assistance from India for the island's developmental projects. In 1985 Indian government provided a \$ 6.25 million credit loan in the form of flour and \$ 3 million for the small projects in agriculture, biogas, communication and energy conservation.⁴⁴ During the visit of Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in 1986, India agreed to open two new credit

42. Tribune, 10th February, 1983.


43. ARB. (E.C.O.), Vol. 21., No.2., 1984., p.7204.

44. Ibid., Vol.23., No.4., 1985., p.7701.

loans totalling Rs. 100 million. The first credit loan amounting to Rs. 50 million will be payed through Export Import Bank of India to the Mauritian Development Bank at commercial interest rate for the purchase of Indian engineering equipment for small and medium-size industries in the island and second, Rs. 50 million through the government to government basis on the concessional interest rates.⁴⁵ In the field of cultural cooperation both the countries signed new agreements. In December 1986 an agreement on comprehensive cultural exchange programmes, in the field of women's rights and family, etc., was signed in Port Louis. In February 1987, the first ever tourist agreement with India, allowing Indian currency in Mauritius, was signed by the deputy Prime Minister Duval and the Indian External Affairs Minister, N.D. Tiwari.⁴⁶ The agreement was signed basically to rectify the trade balance with India. In the May of the same year, both the countries signed a memorandum

45. Ibd., Vol.23., No.7.,1986.,pp.8305-06.

46. AR. Vol.XXXVI.,No.3.,1987.

of understanding to cover the cooperation in the field of information, radio, television and films.⁴⁷ Thus, under the present regime of  Jugnauth, Mauritian relations with India were improved in aid and help. But, Mauritian trade with India showed a continuous declining trend. Indian imports ^{which} accounted to 3.74 percent in 1981 were declined to 2.49 percent in 1984.⁴⁸

47. Ibid., Vol. XXXVI., No. 13., 1987.

48. ASS. 1987., p.691.

CONCLUSION

Colonialism in Mauritius left deep impact on its social, political and economic life. Particularly, the economy based on plantation monocrop exposed the island to adverse supply-demand condition of the world capitalist market. Domestic economic constraints made it imperative for the Mauritians to have good relations with those countries, which not only provided the market for the island's exports and imports but also have the capacity to provide generous aid for the island's development. Taking into account the inherent constraints of smallness, economic underdevelopment and strategic location in the Indian Ocean, Mauritian leaders followed "pragmatism" in their external relations.

After independence, Mauritian leaders continued to maintain relations with Britain. The defence agreement concluded on the very day of independence provided for a continuation of British military facilities in the island. Provision of a guaranteed quota for sugar exports, made Britain as a chief economic partner of the island. British aid to the developmental projects was another contribution, in continuing strong economic relations.

The emergence of left wing MMM as the single largest group in parliament, in the wake of 1976 elections, and its firm stand on Diego Garcia issue, brought pressure on ruling coalition. Since then, most of the island's relations with Britain centred around the Diego Garcia issue. Though, Dr. Ramgoolam has taken up the issue of displaced Ilois and claimed sovereignty over Diego Garcia, he was basically compromising. On the one hand he gathered world opinion in support of the OAU and the Non-Aligned Movement, on the other hand, when negotiations were held with British foreign office, he accepted the answer, that "Diego Garcia would be returned, when the West no more needs it for defence purposes." Similarly, his stand on denuclearization of the Indian Ocean and his support to the peace zone concept were also contradictory, as he was in favour of continuation of the Diego Garcia base, as discussed in third chapter. It was precisely due to this compromising attitude of Ramgoolam that Mauritian relations with Britain were unhindered.

Being pragmatic in their approach, Mauritian leaders always tried to diversify their relations. Mauritius, in association with the French-speaking

African States of OCAM, developed relations with France. The French, which has linguistic and cultural influence on Mauritius, alongwith economic influence in the islands surrounding Madagascar, Comoros and Reunion was also infavour of strengthening economic ties with Mauritius. With the combined efforts of OCAM States and France, Mauritius secured associationship in the EEC under the terms of Yaounde agreement. Mauritius was provided preferential treatment to trade with the EEC countries. Non refundable developmental aid from EDF was another major contribution. Later, by 1975 Commonwealth Sugar Agreement (CSA) was replaced by a fresh EEE agreement. But, in practice, a major share of the quota went to Britain.

Thus, despite access to the European Common Market (ECM), it was Britain which was to dominate the island's exports. For instance, a total of 77.8 percent of all exports went to Britain in 1975.

Thgough, Dr. Ramgoolam expressed his desire to have strong economic ties with India, in practice, Mauritian relations with India remained cultural rather

than economic. The West-oriented trade pattern of Mauritian economy did not suit Indian interests. Also, export of similar products by both countries did not favour bilateral trade. Hence trade remained one sided, with imports coming from India. The offer of expertise to train local man-power formed an important contribution of the Indian government. The frequent visits of leaders and officials along with cultural exchanges underpinned Indo-Mauritian relations all over the period of Dr. Ramgoolam.

It is the geographical factor which binds Mauritius with the African continent. In other aspects, society, culture, tradition and language, it is less close to the main land. Mauritius joined the OAU in 1969, but maintained a low profile with the Organizations's activities until Dr. Ramgoolam became its Chairman in 1976. As Chairman, Mauritius actively intervened in continental affairs. Dr. Ramgoolam's role in boycotting Olympic games and expulsion of South Africa from international athletics was significant. Another important step was abandonment of diplomatic relations with Israel and condemnation of "Zionism". But, as discussed in third chapter,

as soon as his Chairmanship term was over, Dr. Ramgoolam went back to his neutral stand and even contradicted the stand on different issues, when he held the Chairmanship.

On major international issues, Mauritius adopted the Non-Aligned stand. It supported African national liberation struggles and condemned apartheid in South Africa. But, its political stand on apartheid at international forums could not cope with practical economic compulsions. It was economic interest, which led Mauritian leaders to have economic and commercial ties with South Africa, which provided market for the bulk of Mauritian tea exports. Moreover, regular tourist flow from South Africa was an important contribution to sustain the economy of the island. South Africans control number of industries in EPZ sector, tourist complexes and five-star hotels in the island. Even when it has the Chairmanship of OAU, Mauritian relations with South Africa were not severed, rather the economic ties between two countries strengthened. As discussed in third chapter, during Ramgoolam's second term (1976-82), South Africa became chief market, accounting over 20 percent in the island's imports.

The left alliance of 1982, introduced many changes in the Mauritian foreign policy. It defined its foreign policy as "genuine non-alignment": recognised the SADR, the PLO and promised to lessen dependence on South Africa. It took a firm stand on the Diego Garcia issue. The new parliament unanimously approved a bill, declaring Diego Garcia a part of Mauritius and appointed a committee to enquire into the issue. The left wing government successfully negotiated compensation agreement with Britain. The Foreign Minister during his meeting with the British government, put forward his country's claim of sovereignty over Chagos archipelago. When the British foreign office spokesman reiterated the old stand, the Foreign Minister threatened to take the case to the International Court of Justice (ICJ). But, regarding dependence on South Africa, Paul Berenger took practicalities into consideration and advocated gradual steps in curtailing relations with South Africa. Though efforts were made, we cannot assess the success of the MMM because it stayed for short period.

The collapse of left alliance and emergence of the MLP and the PMSD under the new leadership of Aneerood Jugnauth's MSM, resulted in the resumption of old policies of Ramgoolam. Jugnauth quietly resumed the contract with the US to send labour to work on Diego Garcia base and to supply essential commodities, which were abandoned by the MMM government. The new shift in increasing Western ties can be seen in the context of relations with the US. The US, which had marginal trade relations with Mauritius, became the important export market, after Britain and France. Increasing aid for developmental projects, as discussed in fourth chapter, can be cited as another example in strengthening relations with the US.

Under present Jugnauth's regime, Mauritian relations with France were further improved. Besides becoming a major bilateral aid giver, as cited in fourth chapter, the French investment in the island's industrial sector increased. The French presence in the IOC, as a representative of Reunion, resulted in

increasing influence in the region. Adding to these, provision of concessional freight charges improved Mauritian trade relations with France. The French replaced South Africa in the island's imports and in contribution to tourist industry. Despite these developments, as is evident from the discussion in previous chapter, Britain continued as chief export market, receiving more than fifty percent of island's exports.

Relations with India under Jugnauth's regime remained usual. The new government signed fresh agreements in the field of media cooperation, education, and tourism, emphasising further cultural ties. The only important development made in the recent years was the increased contribution of aid from India. But, trade remained marginal.

Aneerood Jugnauth was successful in the formation of an Indian Ocean Commission (IOC), grouping of Mauritius, Madagascar, Seychelles, Comoros and Reunion. Members of the Commission showed interest in regional cooperation and proposed many projects, particularly in the field of trade, industrialization, transport, fisheries and self sufficiency in food. But, the Commission with its own problems, such as lack of

capital, technical know-how and personnel, did not succeed in overcoming dependency, rather French presence, increased its influence in the region.

Mauritius continued to maintain substantial economic and commercial relations with South Africa. Though the new government promised to lessen dependence on South Africa, it could not find alternatives. As discussed in earlier chapters, a combination of economic and geographical factors led to establish economic ties with South Africa. The dependence can be curtailed only when the island secures alternative markets elsewhere in the world for its import and export. But, where would alternative markets be found? It is not possible for India to provide alternative because India is itself an exporter of similar products. Also, other African countries can not be alternatives, as they too have West-oriented trade patterns, heavily depend on South Africa. Thus, one can see the alternatives only in the Western world. Recent French replacement of South Africa in imports and tourists can be cited as an example. But how far this trend will continue in future is doubtful.

Above all, one may say, all these constraints can be overcome if the island develops a self sufficient independent economy. But, structural changes in the little monoculture economy is again a question mark. Thus, as alternatives are not visible, skilfull manipulation of the various factors in the domestic, regional and international spheres, is essential for Mauritian leaders to achieve their foreign policy goals and serve national interests.

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