CHAPTER II

SUPERPOWER RIVALRY IN THE INDIAN OCEAN
Since the end of the fifteenth century the Indian Ocean has been dominated by the West Europeans - the Portuguese, the Dutch, the French and the British. They controlled the ocean and the various narrow sea lanes leading to it. At first they limited themselves to the occupation of strategically important points and to lucrative trading centres. However, by the end of the eighteenth century, the British had succeeded in restraining their rivals and establishing a position of predominance in the region. Later the British extended their dominance into the region and the adjoining landmass as well as a few islands. This British supremacy ended only after the Second World War and gradually Britain gave up most of its possessions in the region.

By the early 1960s the superpowers, United States and Soviet Union, emerged in the Indian Ocean after the British withdrawal. Their main objective was to fill up the power vacuum which had resulted after Britain's exit and the articulation of political, economic and strategic interests. Since then the region has become a theatre of geo-strategic significance to the superpowers who deployed their naval power, with increasing threat to each other. After the Second World War the United States had emerged as the most powerful nation and was unchallengeable on both land and the seas, the Soviet Union became a giant land power. The US and the Soviet Union had identified the Indian Ocean as an area where their armed forces could promote and defend national interests. In the sixties both the US and the Soviets introduced their naval forces in the Indian Ocean and sought supporting naval facilities in the Gulf for oil. In the mid-seventies the superpowers' substantial naval build-up and support facilities were responsible for the general military build-up and nuclearization of the Indian Ocean.

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region. The US in its bid to win over local powers, pumped economic and military aid in its sphere of influence, thus creating differences among the countries of the region. The Soviet Union also developed friendly ties with several states in the area. Thus, the Indian Ocean region was never free from superpower rivalry and regional tensions.

I. SUPERPOWER RIVALRY

(a) United States of America

The US presence in the Indian Ocean dates back to the eighteenth century. The American pioneers were active in piratic expeditions and looked on to the high seas for slave-trade and smuggling activities. In 1783, a peace agreement was signed between America and Britain. Since then the American state interested themselves in expanding its trade into the Indian Ocean region by abrogating the trade monopoly of the East India Company. In 1784 the first American expedition was dispatched to the Indian Ocean and its merchant fleets expanded consistently. American ships sailed to Mauritius and India in 1786, and in 1789 the United States sent 47 ships to the Indian Ocean region. In the early 1800s America consolidated its commercial position in the approach lanes to India through the coastal areas of Africa, Iran and Arabia. Gradually the Americans made their way to Burma, Afghanistan and the countries along the Red Sea. In the middle of the nineteenth century, the Indian Ocean countries came to be regarded more and more as important markets for American manufactured goods. Later the US was to use any possible method to expand trade into the Indian Ocean and closely linked it with

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3 Auguste Toussaint, Historical Studies in the Indian Ocean in Historical Relations Across the Indian Ocean, p.159.

US military, political and ideological expansion. Trade was conducted under the protection of the frigates, cannons and the muskets of the US marines.

With the coming of the nuclear weapons systems such as the land-based intermediate range ballistic missile (IRBM), the inter-continental ballistic missile (ICBM) and submarine launched ballistic missile (SLBM) the United States adopted a new strategy into the Indian Ocean region. It was in 1954 that the US attained naval superiority with the programme of nuclear propulsion for surface vessels as well as for submarines. Simultaneously it began to experiment with guided missiles fired from naval vessels. The US successfully armed a few cruisers and destroyers with surface-to-air guided missiles. The Soviet Union had no such modernised naval programme. Only in 1959 the ice-breaker, Lenin was launched and it was the first nuclear-powered surface vessel.\(^5\) In July 1960 the US perfected the Polaris missiles, such as A-1, A-2 and A-3 with a range between 1,200 to 2,500 miles. In July 1964 the US navy conducted Operation Sea Orbit consisting of three nuclear powered surface vessels; the *Enterprise*, *Long Beach* and *Bainbridge*. They started on a long cruise of 30,500 miles from the Mediterranean to USA. They circled Africa via the Cape of Good Hope, touched Karachi briefly while crossing the Indian Ocean and proceeded to Australia and went around the Cape Horn in South America to reach Norfolk, USA after fifty-seven days.\(^6\) Indeed, the US had demonstrated its superiority in naval power, mobility and striking power and then entered into the Indian Ocean region for her national interests.

After the end of World War II US interests focussed in the Pacific and the Indian Oceans to prevent Communist influence in these regions. In 1948 the US established its

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\(^6\) ibid, p.23.
Middle East Force (MIDEASTFOR) based in Bahrain as a guest of the British Navy. It was a three-warship naval force comprising a command and communication ship and two destroyers to show the flag in the Gulf and the Red Sea.\textsuperscript{7} In the fifties the US signed important and long lasting treaties with Manila in 1954, with the countries of Southeast Asia known as the Southeast Asian Treaty Organisations (SEATO) comprising of the US, Great Britain, France, Thailand, Philippines, Australia, Pakistan and New Zealand. The main objective of SEATO was to check the Southeastern expansion of communism. But SEATO was dissolved in 1977. At the Southeastern reaches of the Indian Ocean a treaty was formed called ANZUS-Australia, New Zealand and the US in September 1951 in apprehension of British withdrawal from the east of Suez.\textsuperscript{8} The ANZUS was established as a security linkage against potential threats from Indochina, China and Japan. The Baghdad Pact was formed in 1955 and can be traced to the Soviet involvement in the Indian Ocean and in 1958 this pact was transformed into the Central Treaty Organisation (CENTO).

The US navy officially landed in the Indian Ocean in 1964 and took definite steps to tackle the communist influence in the region. The US had already deployed Polaris missiles in various regions targeting the Soviet Union and China. It deployed the Polaris A-1 ballistic missile submarines in 1961 which is a long-range aircraft of the carrier group. This was based at Holy Lock in Scotland, from where Moscow and Leningrad could be attacked. The Polaris A-2 with its range of 1,600 nautical miles was deployed in the Eastern Mediterranean and could strike the major industrial centres of the Ukraine.


the Baku oil fields and areas of Soviet Central Asia within range of submarines. The third \textit{Polaris A-3} with its range of 2,500 miles was deployed in the Indian Ocean and could attack China and Soviet Union.

In 1962 the Sino-India war broke out. The US had sent its \textit{Seventh Fleet} into the Bay of Bengal through the Straits of Malacca but the task force was recalled at the end of the conflict. But after the Sino-India war, the Chinese constantly interfered in the internal affairs of the Pacific and the Indian Ocean countries. The US decided to intensify patrolling of different parts of the Indian Ocean. Since then US naval ships were first sighted in the Indian Ocean in December 1963 and they have been intensifying their activities. Besides this, the US experience in Vietnam War led to the realisation of the strategic importance of the Indian Ocean. The US navy earlier appeared in the Indian Ocean in November 1963 when it participated in the CENTO naval exercise code named MIDLINK held off Karachi in which the US aircraft-carrier, \textit{USS Essex}, submarines and other vessels had taken part. These naval exercises were carried out to ensure security in the Persian Gulf and the Arabian sea. In the same year an agreement was signed between the US and Australia because Australia was in the unique position of a connecting link between the South Pacific and the Indian Ocean. Australia helped the USA in constructing radio communications station in north-western Australia which is 700 miles north of Perth. The US also established important bases in the Indian Ocean. A strategic communication base with relay and satellite tracking station and

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\textsuperscript{9} Geoffrey Jukes, "The Indian Ocean in Soviet Naval Policy", \textit{Adelphi Papers}, 87 (India, 11135), May 1972, p.5.

\textsuperscript{10} Singh, n.5, p.15.
communications network was established near Asmara in Ethiopia. In the Seychelles Island group a communication station came to function at Mahe and tracking was set up near Tananarive, the capital of Malagasy. The US has been using the facilities of tracking and telemetry naval radio station and air field at the British naval radio station at Vacoas in Mauritius.

In April 1964 the US task force called 'Concord Squadron' fleet entered into the Indian Ocean and spent about six weeks at the port of Diego Suarez in Madagascar. Before the British withdrawal from the Indian Ocean in August 1964 an Anglo-American joint survey was carried out in the Indian Ocean to select military bases. Gradually the US established a number of bases in different strategic corners to protect its geo-political interests. Again in May 1965 a joint Anglo-American survey team selected the islands of Agalega, Aldabra, the Cocos and Diego Garcia as possible military bases in the region. In November 1965 the British government decided to set up a new colony known as the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT) which consisted of the Chagos Archipelago (including islands of Aldabra, Farquhar and Desroches) and the atoll of Diego Garcia in the western region of the Indian Ocean, previously under the Seychelles administration. In December 1966 Britain and the United States entered into an agreement which allowed the US to use BIOT as a base for fifty years with the option

12 ibid, p.13.
13 Singh, n.5, p.25.
of a further twenty year extension. The US and the UK developed Diego Garcia as a regular nuclear base for long-range missile carrying P-3 aircrafts which are primarily used to look out for Soviet submarines. Thus US and Britain jointly operated a communications post and an air strip at the Diego Garcia base.

Diego Garcia became one of the most vital ancillary to the US in the Indian Ocean. Diego Garcia is a horse-shoe-shaped coral atoll 14 miles long and 4 miles wide with a land area of 11 square miles and its mouth opens towards the north. It is situated in the middle of the Indian Ocean which is 1,200 miles from Cape Comarin of the Indian coast in the southern tip of India, 2,100 miles from Esden, 2,600 miles from Bahrain, and 10,000 miles from the US. Diego Garcia is strategically important and potentially a major naval base. Admiral John McCain stated that "as Malta is to the Mediterranean, Diego Garcia is to the Indian Ocean." The actual construction of Diego Garcia was in 1971 by the US with the budget of $5.5 million and $29 million in 1974 to create a permanent naval and air base. In the eighties the airstrip was extended so as to include B-52 bombers to operate from the base. It had become a dream of the US navy to inherit the disintegrated British Imperial legacy east of Suez. The US had lost its access from the Iranian port of Bandar Abbas and Shah Shar and had to withdraw its forces from Vietnam but Diego Garcia became the new ground for the US navy to expand its role with massive investments in naval technology and bases.

16 UN General Assembly, n.11, p.11.
18 ibid, p.91.
The British prime minister announced on 16 January 1968, that Great Britain would take out its troops from its bases east of Suez Canal by the end of December 1971. In fact the British withdrawal was an invitation to the Communist countries, therefore Britain had already shared defence responsibilities with the US. On the other hand, the Soviet Union sent its first naval ships to the Indian Ocean in March 1968 and visited the ports of South Asia, Arabian Sea, Persian Gulf, Red Sea, and East Africa. After that Soviet naval ships started cruising in the Indian Ocean there was a gradual increase in the activities of US naval ships\(^{20}\) (see Annexure I/A&B), signalling the beginning of the Cold War in the Indian Ocean between the US and the Soviet Union.

When the Soviet Union emerged in the Indian Ocean and the US made every effort to increase its naval power and influence in the region. The US tried its best to supercede the Soviet Union by deploying its latest technology weapons like destroyers, submarines and the Seventh Fleet in the Indian Ocean. In 1971, the US sent its nuclear frigate *Truxcon* on a high speed run through the Indian Ocean.\(^{21}\) Even during the Indo-Pakistan War in 1970-71 the US sent its nuclear powered carrier *Enterprise* into the Bay of Bengal. But this task force was closely shadowed by the Soviet naval unit.

In the seventies the US gradually occupied various strategic islands and the littoral ports (see map 2.1). In Thailand, the US established seven air bases at the following places: Ulapao, Korat, Dhol, Nakon Phonom, Takhil and Nom Phong. These bases were very active during the Sino-India conflict in 1962. The US set up its naval base at the Clark air base and the Subic Bay in the Philippines which extended up to the Indian Ocean. In South Asia, the US navy played a vital role and established a communication

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\(^{21}\) Anita Bhatt, *The Strategic Role of Indian Ocean in World Politics* (New Delhi, 1992), p.16.
base near Peshawar in Pakistan and called it ‘spy nest’. In Australia the US had a strong naval base as it lay in a strategic position to the east of the Indian Ocean. The US had set up about 33 installations of different natures ranging from balloon launching stations to space tracking stations to conduct both civil and military research programmes. The US naval communication station was established at the North-West Cape and was known as Harold E.Holt. In Western Australia the defence global communication system for submerged submarines had been set up to detect Soviet submarines. In Southern Australia in Woomera, defence space communication station as a ground terminal was established which is involved with satellites. A similar station was set up at Alice Springs in the Northern Territory. The Australian Government also offered facilities to the US at Lockburn Sound near Perth in the southwest coast of Australia and Cocos and Christmas islands in the north west of Australia for naval bases.

The US acquired an extensive range of facilities from Oman in 1978, which was of immense strategic value to the US rapid deployment forces in Tuff on the Gulf of Oman; Seeb airport, Shalah-airfield and port, Khasab-airfield and port of Qaboos. These port facilities had advantages for the US force for sea control and marine-air operation from the choke point of the Strait of Hormuz. In 1980 Kenya allowed the US to use air and naval facilities at Mombasa, Nanuyuki and Nairobi. Mombasa became a vital port for US naval strategy and large ships like the US Midway, an aircraft carrier with

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23 ibid, pp.581-2.
24 ibid, p.582.
more than 8000 men and helicopter carrier Tarawa with a total of 4000 troops have visited it.26 Mombasa port lies in the east coast of Africa and had the advantage of enabling to offer the US naval forces to assist sea control operation in the Indian Ocean. Somalia also agreed on airfields at Mogadishu and Berbara. These ports are considerably significant for the US in its Middle East strategy. The US selected Ras Banas in Egypt which lies at the tip of the Red Sea because it can provide staging activities to fighter and bomber support.27 In the late eighties Egypt became the second largest recipient of US aid after Israel. The US Defence Department also set up bridge staging facilities at Kuwait which would be operational toward the end of the current decade.

The US dispatched the Honcock in 1972 and made a declaration that such naval patrolling would be a regular feature in future US strategy.28 The US navy participated in the CENTO exercise ‘MIDLINK’ in 1975 which covered the whole of the Arabian sea. It described as the biggest exercise held in the Indian Ocean which involved fifty warships and the nuclear submarines among them. In 1975 a group of Seventh Fleet vessels headed by the aircraft carrier, Enterprise, conducted another naval exercise in the Indian Ocean with the United Arab Emirates. The US navy gradually became very strong in the late 1970s and 1980s and set up permanent submarine stations in the Indian Ocean. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 and the Iranian hostage crisis alarmed the US strategic planning for the north-western parts of the Indian Ocean which

reflected a strategic evolution in American global posture. The US deployed its most powerful long-range B-52 bombers in Diego Garcia and highly sophisticated AWACs combat control aircraft in Egypt. The operational area of that Rapid Deployment Forces covers several littoral countries, i.e., Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Egypt, Sudan, Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia. The Rapid Development Forces (RDF) was formed in 1980 and comprised over 25,000 trained men armed with different types of weapons including tactical nuclear weapons. The RDF unit is permanently stationed in Diego Garcia, Egypt and Israel.

During the eighties the Reagan administration had brought a remarkable change to the US naval policy in the Indian Ocean. The foremost was that budget allocation to naval forces was increased from 43,000 million dollars in 1979 to 72,000 million dollars. This was to improve naval armed forces to counter the Soviet navy in the region. The Pentagon's plan by 1984-88 was to modernise US armed forces and top priority was given to the Gulf and the Indian Ocean region instead of North America and Europe. After Reagan's re-election, the US had decided that 30 million dollars will be available to build up US forces in the Indian Ocean region. The US saw the Soviet naval deployment of 30 to 36 ships of various types in the region as a challenge to the US naval supremacy. In reaction to this the US heavily deployed naval forces into various ports and bases in the region between 1982 and 1985 (see Annexure II). Besides this the US had established a control command which operates in nineteen littoral and

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32 *ibid*, p.150.
hinterland states. The main objective was to mobilise forces in action whenever the necessity arose in the region. In fact, Diego Garcia has emerged as the key point for the US in the Indian Ocean. P. Dasgupta states that.

the acquisition of Diego Garcia completes the US naval strategic triangle in the Indian Ocean. The apex of the triangle is the island itself with its other two corners in South Africa and Australia. 33

The US main objective focussed on the Indian Ocean after the Second World War due to the strategic neglect and the British withdrawal of her troops from the region. The US sees the regional political changes especially in Iran and the Soviet Union emerging into the Indian Ocean and the intervention in Afghanistan. The US took a firm policy to prevent the Communist influence and to ensure that Western interests are adequately accommodated in the changing balance of political forces. On the other hand, the US experience during Vietnam War, Indo-Pakistan War and Arab-Israel conflict made it realise the strategic importance of the Indian Ocean in the future.

Besides, the US also had to ensure access to secure oil supplies at reasonable prices, to balance Soviet presence, and to maintain stability and peace in the region and advance the Middle East peace process while guaranteeing the security of Israel. 34

(b) Soviet Union

Russian interests in South and South West Asia dates back as early as 1675 when Tsar Alex Romanov tried to cultivate relations with India but could not succeed due to the religious belief of Aurangzeb. It was during the reign of Peter The Great between 1678 and 1725 that a broader political and strategic outlook was developed. Peter the

33 Chopra, n.32, pp.150-7.
34 Survival, 22, July/August 1980.
Great was greatly impressed by the economic development and prosperity of Britain in India and he tried to open a land route through Afghanistan and Turkistan but the expedition was a disaster due to the hostilities of the Khiva. In 1770, with the Russian possession of Kinburn, Yenikale and Kertsch in near Crimea and retention of Azov on the Black Sea Coast, Russia somehow emerged as a new naval power in the Mediterranean which was the key communication link to the Indian Ocean.

Gradually Russia expanded her territorial possessions in Central Asia and posed a potential danger to the British interests in the East (India). Russia made an attempt to oust Britain from India through Bokhara and Kashmir to reinstall the Moghul Emperor of Delhi dominance but could not succeed due to the difficulties of terrain. A French-Russian alliance was concluded between 1798 and 1801 and they often attempted to wrest the British possessions in South Asia but this did not materialise because of Napoleon’s heavy schedule in Egypt and the Italian campaign. The Russian Tsars, despite setbacks, never changed their active policy of territorial expansion in Islamic Asia, i.e., Persia and Central Asia, primarily motivated by economic and security reasons. The Russian Tsars pursued a cautious policy and took care to avoid confrontation with Great Britain.

The objective of Soviet strategy in the Indian Ocean after the Second World War was to counter the US sea power and at the same time to maintain a large Russian Navy in recognition of the significance of sea power. Alvin J. Cottrell and R.M. Burrell commented that "Soviet interests in the Indian Ocean is an extension of the old Czarist

36 Rias, n.1, p.107.
37 Terway, n.35. p.9.
thrust for an outlet to the South, dating from the time of Peter the Great.\textsuperscript{38} Since then Soviet naval forces were well equipped and the USSR built a powerful fleet that moved into the Indian Ocean region to defend the sea approaches and to promote political and strategic objectives in the adjacent regions. The main threat to post-war Soviet naval strategy was an 'area defence' which included outer and inner defence parameters, the outer zone guarded by submarines.\textsuperscript{39} Thus, the basic role of the navy was to defend territorial waters and adjoining zones against the western threat. Besides this the Soviet Union had experienced conflict with China at the border and as one of the important national security considerations, the Russians designed strategically and tactically to outflame the Chinese in every possible way in the sea region.

Soviet Union was basically a giant landpower and could not afford to allow the US and other European powers with nuclear weapons near its territories in the Indian Ocean. The Soviet Union adopted two objectives to further her naval strategy and influence in the Indian Ocean. Firstly, to increase its economic and political influence in the littoral and hinterland states and secondly, to counter the US naval strategy and the western powers in the Indian Ocean regime. "...Soviet, territorial aspirations centre south of the national territorial of the Soviet Union in the direction of the Indian Ocean."\textsuperscript{40}

Soviet naval power began to develop substantially after 1960 to counter the accelerated naval programme launched by the USA. Indeed, the Soviet Union had been trying since 1955 to break through the Western cordon in the region and in 1964 had

\begin{tabular}{ll}
39 & Elmo R. Zumwalt, Jr., "Gorshkvo and His Navy", \textit{Orbis}, vol. 16, no. 24, Fall 1980, p. 500. \\
40 & USSR Secret Protocol During 1940 Molotov-Ribbentrop Talks. \\
\end{tabular}
succeeded in making its political presence felt in almost all the Indian Ocean states. But the Soviet Union did not have any naval presence when the US naval task force entered in 1964. The Soviet Union knew that it was difficult to form its naval strategy from a land-based fleet to an ocean fleet but finally found a place in Cuba in 1962 which had a serious impact Soviet naval strategy and at the same time threatened US naval policy. Gradually the Soviet Union began to construct nuclear-powered submarines as well as conventional submarines, with cruise and ballistic missiles armed with nuclear warheads. Such development programme were undertaken by the Soviet Union during the period when the US deployed Polaris A-1, A-2, A-3 ballistic missile submarines in 1961 and posed a threat to the Soviet Union. The threat from the Polaris missiles and the Soviet Union's increasing global commitments, commensurate with its superpower status, brought a change in the Soviet naval strategy. The Soviet navy also adopted forward deployment which was meant to break the arc of the SLBM threat. Its first priority was naval operations and the way to counter threats from the sea would be the destruction of the enemy's nuclear powered missile submarines. After 1962 the Soviet navy because highly developed and there was an accelerated programme to arm cruisers, destroyers with guided other missiles, vessels with surface-to-air and surface to surface missiles. The Soviet Union developed a short range missile called Strela (100 miles), Shaddock (400 miles) which were called supersonic. The Soviet destroyers and frigates were armed also with long-range missiles thus posing a threat to the US navy. Since then Soviet naval capacity remained high allowing it to first operate in the Baltic, the North Sea and the Atlantic and then gradually move into the Mediterranean Sea and the Pacific Ocean.
The first time the Soviet Union entered into the Indian Ocean was in March 1968, with three Soviet warships viz., the *Krupny class* guided missile destroyer Gordy, the *Soverdlov class* cruiser Dimitriy Pozharskiy and the *Kashin class* destroyer Stere Gushchiy\(^{41}\) visited the port of Aden, Ceylon (Sri Lanka), India, Pakistan, the Persian Gulf and Somalia. Since then the Soviet navy has made every effort to increase its influence in the Indian Ocean and its neighbouring states (see Annexure I/A&B).

In 1970, the Soviet navy enhanced its squadron from 9 to 72 ships including destroyers, fleet minesweepers, oiler, supply ships, hydrographic or oceanographic ships and cruisers in the Indian Ocean. In December 1971, during the Indo-Pakistan war, the Soviet naval ships advanced to the Indian Ocean and trailed three days behind the US task force *Enterprise* into the Bay of Bengal to support India but the Soviets were discouraged by the US naval ships advances and its support to West Pakistan. During the Middle East crisis in October 1973 (Arab-Israel War) the Soviet Union sent additional ships into the Indian Ocean, which raised the strength of the squadron to 10 surface combatants and four submarines.\(^{42}\) The Soviet Union gave political backing to the Arabs and her built up good relations with Libya, Iraq, Iran and Kuwait but on the other hand the US supported Israel in this crisis. In this way, whenever any political crisis occurred in the Indian Ocean region both the US and the Soviet Union were directly involved and always added more war ships in that particular region. The Soviet ships were mostly deployed in the eastern part of Indian Ocean in the Aden-Somalia area in the Gulf of Aden and the Arabian Sea in the seventies (see Map 2.1).

\(^{41}\) Bhattacharya, n.7, p.811.  
\(^{42}\) ibid.
The Soviet Union developed its first significant naval presence in the Indian Ocean at the southern end of the Red Sea, in the Gulf of Aden. It gained access to the port of Berbera in 1974 and invested it into a major naval base. The port had facilities like a naval communication station, expanded airstrips, POL storage tank as well as missile storage and handling sites. After the downfall of Emperor Haisle Selassie in 1974 the Soviet leaders accumulated political gains in Ethiopia as well. The Soviet Union started supplying the same arms to Ethiopia as to her rival. The Ogaden War was fought in 1977 between Somalia and Ethiopia and the Soviet Union backed Ethiopia. The Soviet presence was terminated from the port of Barbara by Somalia in 1977 and this was a serious setback to the Soviet Union. However, the Soviet Union acquired the Ethiopian port of Arab and Massawa on the western side of the southern entrance to the Red Sea. The Soviets also established a naval base on the Eritrean Red Sea island of Dahalak. The Soviet Union was interested in the western Indian Ocean, the Horn of Africa which was of considerable geopolitical importance in the context of Persian Gulf oil resources and the Middle East which was also important to influence the Suez Canal. The Soviet navy acquired at the Horn many facilities and gained regional alliance with the liberation movement in Southern Africa. In the eighties Soviet navy was deployed in the Indian Ocean largely due to the US acquisition of port Berbara from Somalia. In reaction, the Soviet navy deployed in 1982-85 (see Annexrue-II).

The Soviet Union also expanded its naval activities at Aden and South Yemen. Aden became a base for Tu-16 bombers for Soviet surveillance of the Arabian Sea. The first Soviet carrier task force to be deployed in the Indian Ocean comprising of the


carrier Minsk, with its VTOL jets and the new amphibious warfare ship Ivan Rogov visited Aden in May 1980 to demonstrate support to the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen. The Soviets had lost their anti-ship missile site at Berbara. Still Aden and Socotra facilities could be expanded as major naval facilities in the Arabian Peninsula. Apart from the Indian Ocean the Soviet Union had substantially built up the major Vietnamese base of Cam Ranh Bay in Southeast Asia for her naval and air forces. The Cam Ranh Bay became important to the Soviet Union as it could be a base for the Pacific Fleet to serve warships halfway between Vladivostok and the Indian Ocean. The Cam Ranh Bay expanded its facilities and accommodated the biggest Soviet warships\(^{45}\) and facilities to service nuclear submarines. Such facilities greatly enhanced a Soviet presence in the Indian Ocean. One of the advantages of Cam Ranh Bay is that Soviet aircraft can reach Malacca straits within two hours and it can cover Sumatra, the west coast of Malaysia and the strategically important oil tanker route from the Persian Gulf to the countries of Southeast Asia and Japan.

The Soviet navy established an impressive chain of deep sea mooring buoys off the islands of Socotra at the mouth of the Gulf of Aden near the Seychelles, west northwest of Diego Garcia and off Mauritius east of Madagascar.\(^{46}\) The Soviet Union has also established a reader station in Diego Smarez and has acquired air and naval facilities in Toamasina, where a limited number of Soviet reconnaissance planes were stationed.\(^{47}\) The Soviet Union gained important supply points through alliances, treaties of friendship and navigation base rights and over-flight and landing rights but the


\(^{46}\) Rais, n.1, p.197.

Soviets had limited naval access to India, Iraq, Singapore and Mozambique. On the other hand, the Soviet Union preferred to keep its naval presence to a maximum in the Indian Ocean following the loss of Berbara. But the Soviet naval presence in the Indian Ocean, regardless of its present size continued to pose a serious challenge to US and Western security interests.

The successful Soviet navy deployment in the Indian Ocean indicated that the Soviet navy has acquired blue water capability in a short period. After gaining access ports and bases from the region, the Soviet navy geared up to prevent the US sea power from reaching its interest region. Thus, the Cold War in the Indian Ocean commenced between the US and the Soviet Union for their own geostrategic, politico-economic and security interests.

II. OTHER OUTSIDER INTERESTS

(a) Britain

The British navy which maintained its supremacy in the Indian Ocean for one and a half centuries had a number of bases at different strategic locations to protect her maritime trade and political interests in the region. But following World War II Great Britain gradually reduced its naval power because her forces were greatly over-extended making the force east of Suez relatively expensive and incapable of meeting any serious military crisis in the region. Great Britain recognised its limitations and launched a process of withdrawal from its bases and other outposts which implied abandoning its claims to be a global power.

In January 1968 the Labour Government had announced that Britain's military forces would be withdrawn east of Suez by the end of 1971. Then Great Britain
gradually reduced its naval presence such as, the number of frigates or destroyers and naval vessels which used to patrol different parts of the Indian Ocean. The deployment of British combat vessels excluding auxiliary and service ships in the Indian Ocean was gradually going down after the decision of withdrawal of the British forces from east of Suez Canal was announced\textsuperscript{48} (see Annexure I/A).

By the end of 1971 Great Britain closed down all her outposts and withdrew troops from east of the Suez Canal. In November 1967 Britain had withdrawn her troops from the base of Aden, in October 1971 from the Far East Command in Singapore and by December 1971 from the Sharjah air base and Bahrain naval base in Persian Gulf. The British Defence Secretary declared in March 1975 that forces would be withdrawn from Gan Island in Maldives and Mauritius. In a relatively short period of time between 1947-1971, London gave up most of its Asian and African possessions in the Indian Ocean region.

As of today the only remaining British possessions in the Indian Ocean is the strategic islands of Chagos Archipelago, it is known as the BIOT consisting of three islands Aldara, Farquhar and Desroches, plus Diego Garcia island where both Britain and the United States jointly have a naval base (see Map 2.1). Besides this, Britain maintains her presence in the Indian Ocean under the Five Power Defence Agreement (FPDA) signed in 1971 comprising the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia and Singapore. The main objective of this power Defence Agreement was to protect and support Malaysia and Singapore from armed attack or threat from external powers. In the Persian Gulf, the United Kingdom maintains naval bases at Bahrain, Qatar and the

\textsuperscript{48} UN General Assembly, n.20, p.9.
United Arab Emirates where the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force continue to make periodic visits to the waters.49

Though the United Kingdom had withdrawn her major naval forces from the region, her interests in trade and navigation are still paramount in the Indian Ocean. At any given time, about one-fifth of Britain's merchant fleets are found in the area and trade with the region amounts to 22 percent of the total overseas transaction. About 46 percent of British overseas investment are based in this region not for the development of its own oil fields in the north sea. Indeed Britain maintains cordial relationship with Persian countries because she needs to continue to purchase a significant amount of petroleum from the Middle East.

The British no longer could exercise naval power over the Indian Ocean but her objective of dominating the region still remained unchanged. Strategically she was trying to achieve this through cooperation with the United States, Australia and South Africa because the region was beyond her single-handed domination.

(b) France

France was the only power which continued to keep sizeable and permanent bases for a long period of time and was keen to strengthen its positions by establishing a number of bases especially in the western part of the Indian Ocean (see Map 2.1). France set up its base in Madagascar, Reunion, Comoros Island and established its colony in the Gulf of Tadjoura with the capital Djibouti in the Somalian coast. The Djibouti base situated in the territory of Afars and the Issas had an airfield, harbour,

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radio station, and naval base. Djibouti, strategically situated at the entrance to the Red Sea from the Gulf of Aden and opposite the south-western tip of the Arabian Peninsula across the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait, is very important as it is easy to monitor the movement of ships between the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean. An agreement was made between France and the newly independent Democratic Republic of Madagascar, according to which the French were allowed to use Diego Suarez base till June 1975 and this came to an end ninety years after the French presence there. The French had the determination to hold several islands in the western part of the Indian Ocean which is evidently crucial for naval strategic purposes. They are located along the sea lanes leading to and from the Suez Canal and along the Cape route down the east coast of Africa. They are, Tromelin off the northeast coast of Madagascar, Europe, Juan Nova and the Glorieuses in the Mozambique Channel and the other islands like Mayotte in the Comoros groups. The French had set up an airfield and meteorological station. Besides this, at Isle Amsterdam, Crozet and Kirgulea islands in the south-west of the Indian Ocean were also established meteorological stations.

The announcement of the British in 1968 that they were willing to withdraw naval presence from the Indian Ocean region by the end of 1971, alerted the French who then increased its naval vessels in the region. Deployment of French combat naval vessels excluding auxiliary and ship service increased during the 1968 to 1973 in the Indian region (see Annexure-I/A).

In early 1980, France was maintaining a permanent military presence with 4,000 men along with detachments of the Foreign Legion and the Air crew of Mirage squadron

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50 Isle Amsterdam island is situated in the southern-most and central ridge of the Indian became and mid-way between south-west Australia and South Africa.

51 UN General Assembly, n.20, p.5.
and thus was one of the larger Western military presence close to the Gulf and the Bab-
el-Mandeb Strait and the Soviet installation there. Indeed, French forces in the Indian 
Ocean in the strategic triangle between Djibouti, Reunion and Moyotte consisted of some 
twenty vessels, such as guided missile frigates, five other frigates and five mine 
sweepers. During the Iran-Iraq war, the French deployed additional naval units including 
the Suffren. Modern guided missile frigates were sent to the area, in consultation with 
the United States, Britain and Australia and thus gradually built up naval bases in the 
western Indian Ocean.

The French naval presence in the Indian Ocean is to protect its political and 
economic links in the region. France projects a strategy connecting the Mediterranean, 
the Red Sea and the southern part of the Indian Ocean as an alternative to the US-British 
strategy connecting the Atlantic and Pacific Fleets. The French wish to maintain an 
independent status vis-a-vis the two superpowers in the Indian Ocean region. 
Approximately 80 percent of French oil supplies come from the Gulf states, a portion 
passing through Mozambique Channel and around the Cape. In fact France has 
expressed some concern over the stability of the region and possible future unrest in 
other areas because naval activities had already reached a high peak in the region. On 
the other hand, France maintains cordial relations with the US navy and is watchful of 
Soviet activities in the region. France is next only to the Soviet Union and the United 
States in naval deployment in the region and France will continue her collaboration with 
US-UK in the foreseeable future.

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SUPERPOWERS' NAVAL AND AIR FACILITIES IN
1970-1980s IN THE INDIAN OCEAN

Map 2:1

(c) China

In the 1940s and 50s the Chinese objectives in the Indian Ocean region were not clearly defined. Chinese strategic interests were not clearly defined in terms of armed strength and the national defence policy was primarily land based. The Chinese totally changed their strategic policy in the early sixties due to the announcement in 1968 by Britain to withdraw her troops from the east of Suez Canal. Both Soviet Union and the United States had already geared up to fill the power vacuum in the region which led to an arms race between the superpowers and the extension of extra regional rivalry into the Indian Ocean. By seeing the attitude of US and USSR the Chinese began viewing the Indian Ocean from an ideological, politico-strategic perspective. Peking has accused both Moscow and Washington for their supremacy in the region. China sees Russian attempts to obtain a dominant position in the Indian Ocean as part of the overall Soviet strategy to encircle China from the sea. The Chinese leaders perceived that only the US could offer a counter-balance to the Soviet Union. Later, the US and China became friendly, especially from 1977 onwards and there have been numerous reports of strategic understanding between the two countries in order to neutralise Russian moves for strategic gains in the Indian Ocean.

As a matter of fact, Peking's long-term desire is to see the Indian Ocean free from the superpowers, thus, allowing for expansion of Chinese influence both in the littoral and hinterland states and gains through bases in the region. In east Africa the Chinese recognised the independence of Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda in 1969.

53 ibid, p.150.
Countries like Zambia, Mozambique, South Africa and Rhodesia were influenced by the Chinese ideology and China sent massive economic and military aid to these states. In West Asia the Chinese have been active in supporting the struggle of Palestinians. In the Gulf, countries like Oman and Yemen also adopted Chinese ideology and this caused a great concern to the US and the USSR. The Chinese also influenced some island states and the first was Zanzibar called 'Chinese Cuba'. Countries like Sri Lanka, Mauritius, Seychelles and Madagascar received substantial economic and military aid and technical cooperation.\(^{56}\)

The Chinese Navy has not obtained any important bases like the US and the Soviet Union but her influence and ideology is the fastest growing in the region. The extension of Soviet Navy in the Indian Ocean in the late seventies was described as 'encirclement' by the Chinese as the former sought a maritime route from the Mediterranean through the Indian Ocean to the Western Pacific and Sea of Japan.\(^{57}\) Thus in the early seventies China renewed its efforts in the littoral states of the Indian Ocean and thereafter its endeavour was directed against the Soviet Union, while the US was treated with indulgence. Gradually, the Chinese consolidated an edge over the Soviet Union wherever possible. In 1987, the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan caused a shift in Peking's South Asia Strategy. Fearing potential expansion by the Soviet Union, China cooperated with South Asian countries like India's neighbours and this policy has been partly successful.

In the eighties the Chinese navy possessed 34 major surface combat ships, 103 attack submarines and coastal patrol, 13 destroyers, 21 frigates, 12 patrol escorts, 44

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\(^{56}\) "New Review on South Asia Indian Ocean", *Strategic Analysis*, IDSA (New Delhi), vol.24, no.9, September 1992, p.675.

\(^{57}\) *Peking Review*, n.60, p.17.
patrol craft, 120 coastal and river patrol craft and 23 ocean minesweepers. The first ICBM has been tested with a range of 8,000 miles which it could launch into the Indian Ocean. Another ICBM, the CSS-4, tested with a range of 13,000 kms. At present the Chinese submarine force is not only the third most numerous force in the world but it is undergoing major technological changes. In late eighties the Chinese navy set up a base in Myanmar (Burma) on the island of Haigyi which lies at the mouth of base in River Great Coco island which is 100 miles away from Andaman and Nicobar Island and near the maritime border with India (see Map 2.1). The Chinese are also involved in helping the Burmese at Akyab to build a modern base near Bangladesh and at Mergmi close to Thailand. The Chinese sold arms like jet fighters, tanks, rockets and coastal ships to Myanmar which has worried the neighbouring states.

After the Cold War ended in August 1991, Chinese emerged as a hegemon in the South China Sea. She claimed Spratly Islands as Chinese territory and set up four installations on Mischief Reef. Besides China, countries like Vietnam, Malaysia, Taiwan, Philippines and Brunei also claim these islands but they dare not oppose China with force. China's desire to play an important role in the region stems from both its historic association and its view of the waters as an area of vital national interest. Chinese efforts to develop a sphere of influence have been visible in the entire Indian Ocean region, most prominently in East Africa, Burma and South China Sea. If China

60 Times of India, 15 September 1994; Sunday (New Delhi), vol.21, 1-7 May 1994, p.12.
61 Asia Week, 14 April 1993, p.36.
maintains the tempo in the region she is going to play a crucial strategic role in the near future.

(d) Japan

Japan is the country which is dependent upon the Indian Ocean region, for it is dependent on the goods and services that the Indian Ocean carries for it. Japan can play a significant role in politics because of her economic strength and the capability to project a naval image to protect them. No country can deny and forget that crucial period, during the Second World War, when Japan established its naval supremacy over the Western Pacific Ocean and dominated the Far East and Southeast Asia. The post-war economic reconstruction of Japan, and major advances made by it in the technological field have once again projected that country as a potential big power, whose policies can affect the Indian Ocean region. During the Cold War period Japan was concerned by the rapid expansion of Soviet Union and US naval competition and the uncertainty created by them especially around the Persian Gulf.

Japan has vital interests in the Indian Ocean region because she depends on the Indian Ocean sea-lanes; she obtains 85 percent of her oil and some 70 percent of her iron ore from the Indian Ocean littoral and has substantial markets there for its industrial manufacturers. Nearly half of Japan's foreign trade traverses the Indian Ocean. Japan had experienced the political crisis in the region and uncertainties of oil and raw material supplies during the 1973 oil crisis, the more recent Iranian turmoil, the Iraq-Iran war and

63 Bhasin, n.61, p.91.
65 Iqbal Singh, n.56, p.29.
the Gulf war. Japan therefore plays an active economic and diplomatic role in the littoral states in the region. Japan maintained cordial relations with two littoral states, Australia and South Africa in the Indian Ocean region. Australia drew up a symbiotic relationship characterised by a high level of interdependence, exchanging finished products with supplies of raw materials. As for Japan and Australia have a more significant role in politics and economics in the context of the Pacific region. Japan and South Africa, both these countries are interested in promoting their relationship. South Africa is the biggest exporter and fourth largest importer of Japanese goods. Japan plays a crucial role in Southeast Asia because of its position between the Pacific and Indian Ocean and her priority to maintain diplomatic relations with ASEAN\(^66\) in both economic as well as in politics in the Indian Ocean.

Apart from the economic stakes Japan also has keen interests for her navy to be active in the region. The Japanese navy appeared in the Indian Ocean on a flag-showing mission in September 1969, when a squadron of four Japanese destroyers visited Malaysia, the same year in October it visited 12 Pacific and Asian countries in the course of a training cruise and good will tour.\(^67\) In 1970 the Defence Minister, Nakasone visited Washington and stated that "the role of the Japanese 'Self Defence' force should also include an ability to protect Japan's trade routes and overseas investments. Thereafter, the level of defence expenditure increased and Japan has become a significant military power."\(^68\) Japan has a modest Maritime Self Defence Force (MSDF) as a wing of the tri-service self defence force; as for the imperial navy it ranked twelfth in

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66 The members of ASEAN are: Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand.


the world. The core of the MSDF consist of 17 submarines, 15 tactical submarines, 55 frigates, 7 destroyers, 38 mine sweepers, 12,000 strong MSDF air arm, and 31 FF. In the event of a major crisis in the region, Japan may embark upon a major naval expansion because she has resources and the technical know how to embark upon such an expansion rapidly.

III. REGIONAL RESPONSES

The Afro-Asian states have expressed great concern over the growing naval competition between the United States and the Soviet Union which poses a grave threat to regional peace and security. The Indian Ocean countries rejected the vacuum theory and totally opposed the superpowers establishing strategic-nuclear weapons and conventional-interventionist forces. They also experienced temptation to establish close military collaboration with one of the superpowers for the local disputes at the same time superpowers have tended to use military presence to support their client states. However, most of the Indian Ocean states strongly desire the conversion of the Indian Ocean into a zone of peace.

(a) South Asia

In South Asia countries like India strongly opposed the United States establishment of a nuclear base at Diego Garcia, one of the major bases in the Indian Ocean. On the other hand, India did not oppose the Soviet naval deployment in the region because she received a massive military aid from the Soviet Union. The Indian navy underwent a massive armament programme which made it the largest naval power

in Asia. Indian experience of the Sino-Indian War in 1962, and Indo-Pakistan War in 1970-71 led to the launch of a programme of rapid deployment and modernisation of the naval fleet. In the seventies China and America revived their relationship and Indian ties with the Soviet Union gradually changed her Indian Ocean Policy. The non-aligned conference was held in 1970 at Turaka and India strongly supported the call for declaring the Indian Ocean as a zone of peace and since then India has been appealing to the UN to recognise this proposal. On 16 December 1971 the UN General Assembly declared the Indian Ocean as a ‘Zone of Peace’ but could not implement it due to the non-cooperation by the superpowers.

Pakistan supported the US presence in the Indian Ocean and allowed the US navy to use the ports of Karachi and Gwadar. In return the US offered them F-16 aircrafts, tanks, harpoon missiles and destroyers. Pakistan's navy plays a major role in protecting her coastal zone, access to the Red Sea, coastal trade with Oman and other states in the Persian Gulf. Pakistan's Navy was comparatively small but after the Indo-Pakistan war in 1971 she adopted a modernisation programme. Pakistan was of strategic importance to the US because the Soviet military had occupied Afghanistan, Pakistan could now play a crucial role in the Arabian Asia and the US considered Pakistan as a front-line for western defence in the Gulf. Pakistan government had no objection to Diego Garcia being converted into an American base.

Pakistan also consistently voted for the Indian Ocean as a zone of peace (IOPZ) proposal and had expressed great concern about the dangers inherent in the presence of

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the superpowers naval forces. Pakistan also proposed a Nuclear Weapon Free Zone in South Asia (NWFZSA) which it considers complementary to the IOPZ proposal.

Sri Lanka is a country, which is surrounded by the Indian Ocean on all sides and entirely depends on the ocean. It was Sirimavo Bandaranaike who in 1964 raised her voice for the first time against the danger of military alliances and supported the conversion of the Indian Ocean into a zone of peace.

(b) Gulf States

Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Oman, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Bahrain are considered as pro-West. They need US protection because of the Islamic revolution in Iran and interminable Iran-Iraq war in the eighties. These countries had formed the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in 1981, which emphasised on security and stability at home and to participating states to combat local and imported subversion. The GCC sought closer ties with the US and received equipment, shared intelligence reports and training. During the Gulf war the US was allowed to use Saudi Arabian airfields for refuelling the US Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACs). The US also offered to upgrade Kuwaiti airspace. The US presence in the Gulf region is essential for the GCC states as well as for stability and deterrence against potential Soviet or Iranian attack.

(c) Africa

The sub-region of the Red Sea and the Horn of Africa, underwent fundamental change in the seventies when the superpowers emerged in the Indian Ocean. Countries like Sudan, South Yemen, Somalia and Egypt were pro-Soviet and Moscow had extensive

right to use port facilities. Only Ethiopia was pro-Western and maintained close ties with Israel and the US. Ethiopia had agreed to prevent the Communists from the Indian Ocean. Later Somalia and Egypt resumed relationship with the US and opposed Soviet naval policy in the region.

South Africa was pro-West, offering excellent facilities at Simonstown base to the US navy which was the gatekeeper to the Indian and the Atlantic Oceans when the Suez Canal was closed. South Africa was given the signal for the conservation of Diego Garcia. The Soviets tried to fill up the vacuum in South Africa after British withdrawal in the region but could not succeed.

(d) South-East Asia

The Southeast Asian countries like Singapore, Philippines, Thailand, and Indonesia are also directly involved with the superpowers for their national interests. Singapore and Indonesia do not oppose the presence of superpowers in the Indian Ocean. Indonesia situated at a key-point in the eastern Indian Ocean, controls all the sea lanes such as the Straits of Malacca and Sunda. She desired to have a strong naval fleet and to extend into the Indian Ocean region. Philippines and Thailand are pro-West. The US naval base at Subic Bay in the Philippines serves as a link between Guam and Diego Garcia. Thailand is a member of SEATO and depends upon US assistance for her economic development and military preparedness.

(e) Australia

Australia is known as the gateway to the south for the external powers to gain access and influence in the Indian Ocean. Australia fully supported the US policy in the
region because Soviet naval presence would be a threat to her national interests. Australia encouraged the US and European countries to increase their presence for security and political reasons. Indeed, Australia has become an indispensable part of the US global communications network. Australia and New Zealand decided to support the IOPZ resolution in the UN in 1971 and Australia joined the ad-hoc committee, but would like to maintain its links with the US under ANZUS.73

Until the end of the 1960s the Australian west coast facing the Indian Ocean was protected by Britain's strong position in that region. In fact, Western Australia was being developed economically with the result that Australia's Indian Ocean coast and its ports gained in significance. Since Britain had announced that her military presence would be withdrawn from Suez Canal in the 70s this caused a panic in Australia because the Soviet Union had already deployed her naval forces in the Indian Ocean on a regular basis and with a possible major offensive by the Chinese navy in the eastern Indian Ocean, Australia perceived a threat of a new kind.74 Gradually over the years the Australian government increased its interest in supporting the United States in the Indian Ocean as essential to regional peace and power balance. During the Korean conflict in 1950, Australia strongly supported the US policy75 and made available warships and aircrafts to the United Nations' force to support South Korea. The vessels and aircrafts operated under United States command. In 1951 the United States, New Zealand and Australia formed a Pacific Security Pact called ANZUS.

73 The members of ANZUS are: Australia-New Zealand and the United States.


75 Allan Watt, The Evolution of Australian Foreign Policy, 1938-1965.
The Labour Government (1972-75) headed by Gough Whitlam had tried under the umbrella of the United States to get an undertaking from both superpowers that they would limit their presence by mutual agreement in ‘this region’ which included Indian Ocean, but in vain. However, Gough Whitlam’s government decided to support the IOPZ resolution in the UN in December 1972 and joined the ad-hoc committee. It was the new Liberal Party’s government under Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser who changed course. The Fraser government had seen that the Soviet naval force was expanding in the Indian Ocean and Australia felt that the United States should immediately strengthen its presence so as to counter balance the naval power of the Soviet Union. The Australian government also experienced changes in northeast Asia where Vietnam occupied Cambodia and witnessed increased military cooperation between Hanoi and Moscow. Vietnam occupied the Ranh Bay formerly used by America. Other changes like the Iranian crisis and finally the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan led Australia to take its stand firmly alongside the ASEAN countries in agreement with the United States, Japan and China and against the Soviet military manoeuvre in the region. Australia reacted to the Soviet Union’s intervention in Afghanistan and in the Gulf crisis deployed an aircraft carrier task force into the Indian Ocean to show her American allies that they were not alone in facing the situation. The task force was the biggest ever sent by Australia in these waters.

In the 80s, the Australian government totally changed its foreign policy which openly opposed the presence of Soviet Union in the Indian Ocean and supported the United States. Indeed the Soviet Union’s presence in the Indian Ocean was a threat to

76 Rais, n.1, p.2.
Australia because 50 percent (by tonnage) of her imports and exports passed through the Indian Ocean which included about 65 percent of her oil requirements which came from the Persian Gulf and Australia exported to the Gulf states raw materials and goods from Western Australia, Heard and McDonald Islands in the southern Indian Ocean and Christmas and Cocos Islands in the eastern Indian Ocean belong to Australia. In mid 1970 the Cocos and Christmas Islands had set up military infrastructure, especially for the airforce which was also used by US air force. A 200 mile fishing zone around these islands was declared in 1979. Australian intention was to protect its offshore and for shipping safety in the Indian Ocean without any interruption by the superpowers. Also Australia's interests in the Indian Ocean area lay in two sub-regions, the ASEAN countries and southern Africa, and these interests are chiefly economic and strategic.

The expansion of superpowers in the Indian Ocean became more complex and complicated in the region, therefore under ANZUS activities Australia dispatched some naval units and the aircraft carrier Melbourne to the Strait of Hormuz and took part in joint naval exercises there in the eastern Indian Ocean. In addition, Australia requested US to incorporate the Darwin air force base into the strategic B-52 bomber network and prepared to open the naval base at Cockburn Sound on the Indian Ocean to the US navy. In return Australia's air force took part in long-distance reconnaissance over the Indian Ocean from Diego Garcia. Australia also made available military installations which were of great value to the United States in the supra-regional strategic balance of the superpowers. The three most important of these have been in operation from the late 1960s and ever since they have consistently been extended. They are the Exmouth communications centre (North-West Cape) which specialises inter alia in very low-

frequency communications with submerged submarines, the Nurrungar early warning satellite station which has the task of detecting enemy missile attacks, and the Pine Gap reconnaissance station which is linked to a geostationary looking into Soviet and Chinese territory.79 The Pine Gap's operation is being enlarged and this is obviously connected directly with the threat and deterrence potential of the superpowers.

Australia indeed has increasingly adopted an integrated policy approach to the Indian Ocean issues along with the United States. It is obvious that Australia is incomparable with the Soviet Union and China in military strength, and at the same time her economy depends on the Indian Ocean, therefore, she needs to ally herself with and support the US. Indian Ocean area's strategic significance to Australia and her responsibility to protect her western coastline and offshore resources and the security of Christmas and Cocos Islands, along with an interest in regional security that protects and promote western interests has influenced Australia's Indian Ocean policies.

IV. THE POST-COLD WAR ERA

The Cold War ended in August 1991 and gradually the Indian Ocean region witnessed drastic political changes. American and the former Soviet Union's missiles are no longer targeted on each other's territories. The ownership of the former Soviet navy is disputed and it has been clear since December 1991 that the former Soviet Union will have extremely limited power projection capabilities in the 1990s. Russia has signed a treaty of friendship and peace with the United Kingdom. The United States and Soviet naval competition has declined practically all over the Indian Ocean region although the

presence of the US is still prominent. America has increased its naval ships to 600 in response to the immediate crisis in the region. Between 1988-90 nuclear capable ships and submarines in the US navy declined by 167 units, from 292 to 136, while that of the Soviet Union declined by 68 units, from 633 to 565. Even the number of US and Soviet naval nuclear weapons declined from 15,429 to 13,934 during the same period. Furthermore, the START-I agreement placed constraints on strategic weapons, and resulted in the 1991 initiatives and June 1992 was the actual period for the reduction of strategic and non-strategic weapons because both of them no longer deem it desirable to continue to struggle for supremacy.

One of the prime factors for the superpowers to discontinue their supremacy in the Indian Ocean is that the Soviet Union had disintegrated into fifteen Republics. Secondly, the Gulf War shows the supremacy of the United States, in which the US and thirty-six other nations acted against Iraq in early 1991 after Iraq’s aggression against Kuwait. The presence of foreign ships in the Indian Ocean reached a new peak and the US became the power and controlled the Indian Ocean region. Russia is not interested in confrontation with the United States because it has a limited role to play. Also it no longer has the capability to establish any bases in the region. In fact, it has even withdrawn from Vietnam and Cambodia. Today Russia, the West-sponsored successor of the Soviet Union is politically preoccupied with serious economic problems at home. According to the World Bank, economically it has been reduced to the status of a Third World country and consequently, its military manoeuvrability has been eclipsed by its new political-economic orientations. Therefore, it cannot be a countervailing power against the West.

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On the other hand due to the US focus on West Asia and other part of the region it is not likely to reduce its strength in the region. The US has strengthened her naval position, since the Soviet rival has vanished. In February 1992, the US Defence Secretary, Dick Cheney, stated in the Congressional Committee that "the US was going to expand its presence in West Asia and its Rapid Deployment Forces for swift, decisive victory if the US has to fight against any Third World country in the regional wars". 81 This is in order to prevent wars and to preserve the US interests in the region. Under these circumstances, the US is willing to deploy any number of ships and cruise missiles in the north-western part of the Indian Ocean and there will be no counter-move by Russia or the Commonwealth of Independent State.

The US is also interested in the southeast and eastern part of the Indian Ocean due to their economic and strategic importance. The US President, George Bush, during his visits to Australia, Singapore and Japan in January 1992 said that "though the Cold War has come to an end and Russia is no longer a threat to the US interests anywhere in the world, the US is not going to withdraw totally from any part of the region which is of vital interest to her and is going to stay involved in this part of the world." 82 In real strategic terms, Russia can never be a US adversary in the Indian Ocean region at least till the end of the twentieth century if not more.

In the post Cold War period, the United States policy is to ensure that no rival superpower is allowed to emerge in Western Europe, Asia or in the territories of the former Soviet Union. 83 The US is to maintain sufficient military might to deter any


nation or groups of nations in the region. The US strengthened its position in the southeastern part of the Indian Ocean by finalising a deal with Singapore, in Tokyo in November 1990. Singapore accepted the increasing of US defence burden in the east. The ASEAN expressed the opinion that the US presence in Singapore would be contrary to the goal of making Southeast Asia a Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality (ZOPFAN). The US has withdrawn her naval presence from the Philippine base due to the less urgent strategic requirements and compulsion of domestic economy imposing arms-cut. However, it is unlikely that there will be any decline in US naval presence in the Diego Garcia facilities in the Indian Ocean region. The US fears a threat to her interests from Third World countries particularly China, Iran and Pakistan, owing to their efforts to develop nuclear weapons. China has been assisting Pakistan, Iran and North Korea in their nuclear programmes. China, already a declared nuclear weapon state can disturb the strategic balance in the Indian Ocean and Pacific Ocean regions.

Today the challenge to the US hegemony in trade and technology comes not from Russia but from Japan and Europe. The merchant trade rivals of the US, depend on the Indian Ocean region for raw materials and minerals as given below.

Percentage of total requirement of key minerals of some European states supplied by Indian Ocean states


Mineral | France | FRG | UK  
--- | --- | --- | ---  
Chromite | 31 | 68 | 78  
Manganese ore | 40 | 67 | 49  


The Gulf War in 1991 was fought by the US-led military coalition in the Persian Gulf for economic predominance in the region. Oil has been the key element in the US Indian Ocean policy particularly since 1971, when for the first time America imported a part of its oil from the Persian Gulf area.

In the 1990s, the US had to rely on imported oil for as much as 44 percent of its total oil requirement, 30 percent of which came from the Persian Gulf. Moreover, the US allies are more seriously dependent on the oil from the Indian Ocean region. Japan imported 63 percent, Italy 34.5 percent, France 42.1 percent and Germany 16 percent of their total oil requirements from the region at the time of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990.87 Seymour Wels, Director, Bureau of Politico-Military Affairs, in a statement before a sub-committee of the House of Representatives, stated,

the oil resource of the area, primarily in the Persian Gulf, are vital for our allies and are of significant interests to us.... Western Europe and Japan, the two areas of the free world of greatest importance to the US security, are absolutely dependent upon oil supplies from the Middle East, and the fact alone makes it of interest to us".88

At present, the per capita income of middle class households in an industrialised Western country is approximately times higher ($18,000) than the per capita income of an average

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rural household in South Asia. It means an Asian peasant has to work for more than six months to earn what a Western city dweller earns in two days. This is why Western countries are still interested in dominating the Indian Ocean region and will continue to do so in the coming years.

It is perceived that in the emerging world order the Indian Ocean region will be one of the important economic battle-zones between the US and its trade rivals for domination of its resources. In this rivalry, the Indian Ocean states can play a vital role, whether the issues of control over the resources culminates in military conflict or the economic contenders collude and share these resource among themselves in one way or another.

The post-Cold War, Australian security interests are focussed on the need for defence self-reliance and the development of a policy of strategic partnership with Southeast Asian countries. The Australian government's strategic concerns are also now primarily focussed on development to the north in Southeast Asia and to a lesser extent, northeast Asia. In the 1994 Defence White Paper, 'Defending Australia' had recognised that India may become a key element of the wider strategic balance in Asia.

Self-reliance means the ability to handle credible low-level threats without the assistance of any foreign combat forces. Therefore, Australia's defence force structure is determined by the requirement to predominate in the sea-air gap surrounding the continent. In the Indian Ocean this means being able to protect Australian territories in the Cocos and Christmas islands, which are about 100- nautical miles from the mainland and the maritime approaches to the West. It is believed that the potential threats are


90 Seyed Sadrohi, Indian Ocean in the Emerging World Order, the Super Power Factor (New Delhi, January 1994), pp.1392-42.
mostly likely to come from or through Australia’s northern and northwestern areas. In 1991 the decision was made that the Force Structure Review to over the major submarines base and significant elements of the destroyer frigate force to Western Australia. The other element Australian Defence Force (ADF) like army brigade and forward fighter bases are being moved to the north of Australia where the Pacific and Indian Oceans meet. With the coming of the new Collins-class submarines, additional numbers of F-IIIIs and the flight refuelling for its F/A-18s, Australia will improve its ability to project a military presence.

The idea of strategic partnership is also based on the geographic proximity of Southeast Asia and the view that in a rapidly changing world, Australia will increasingly share strategic concerns with immediate neighbours, who are also middle powers. In this regard Australian interests are focussed on Indonesia, Singapore and Malaysia at the eastern end of the Indian Ocean. With the end of Cold War there are changes in the relationship of the major powers in Asia: China, Japan, India, the United States and Russia. The future role and power of China in particular, is uncertain. However, Australia believes that Japan and India could have a significant role to play in future by ensuring that no one power emerges as the hegemonic power.