From ages, the Indian Ocean has been important to maritime travellers as a bridge between east and west. It was a bridge over which people moving from Europe and Africa passed when going to Asia and Australia and vice versa. The Egyptians were the first to explore the Indian Ocean in their search of gold and incense. Then came the Phoenicians who appeared in the Red Sea and continued their migration till the seventh century B.C. The Persian empire, active in the sixth century B.C. was content with dominating the rimlands. By the fifth century B.C. the Indian Ocean had become attractive to many nations because of its rich resources. It had also become a highway, promoting intensive economic and cultural links between east and west. The potential of the area for the effective exertion of maritime power was realised by the Indians and Chinese at various stages. Chinese activity was significant in the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries A.D. when they voyaged as far afield as the Persian Gulf, the Red Sea etc. At one stage the Indian Hindu kings and the Mughal Empire had a large navy but the empire collapsed before the arrival of the invading European powers in the eighteenth century.

In the fifteenth century, the Portuguese gained control of many of the key points in the Indian Ocean and established European maritime supremacy for the first time. By the seventeenth century, only Holland, France and Britain remained rivals and the British finally gained complete control of the Ocean by the middle of the nineteenth century. The British controlled the strategically important areas in the Indian Ocean and they established a very significant presence in Malaysia, Singapore, Australia and the Cape of Good Hope. All are geographic features which remain of considerable significance to maritime strategists today.
However, after the Second World War Britain withdrew her military from the Indian Ocean region. Subsequently, the Soviet Union and the United States have conducted sustained fleet deployments in the Indian Ocean. Of the twenty-three countries possessing a maritime force, only Australia, India, Indonesia, Pakistan and South Africa are improving their naval capabilities.

In the early twentieth century Australia neglected the Indian Ocean because of historical factors and was rather more interested in the southeast of the Australian continent as this area had more population and the industrial infrastructure was largely concentrated here. This led to a traditional threat perspective from the east coast. Post-World War II Australia however realised the significance of the eastern Indian Ocean. Subsequently, maritime strategic interests have developed which currently encompasses South East Asia, the South Pacific and the eastern reaches of the Indian Ocean and naval bases in west, north-west and southeast Australia.

Australia's emerging interest in the Indian Ocean is mainly to protect its offshore territories, seaborne trade, offshore resources etc. Australia's area of offshore jurisdiction in the Indian Ocean is about 70 percent of the mainland itself. The Cocos and Christmas Islands are the most significant from the strategic point of view but all generate large EEZs. Australia's seaborne trade represents nearly 8 percent and 13.3 percent of world seaborne trade. Over 50 percent of the tonnages of cargo shipped to and from Australia comes via the Indian Ocean. Australia has an extensive continental shelf extending into the Indian Ocean which is potentially rich in resources and very significant for Australia's future. More than 70 percent of Australia's undiscovered oil resources are thought to be offshore. Australia also wants through its maritime strategy
to be actively involved in marine affairs and management of the ocean adjacent to its shores. This is useful for the maintenance of marine transport and communications.

As far as maritime capabilities are concerned there has been tremendous development in the maritime capabilities and both RAAF and RAN forces have been upgraded. The naval bases have been undergoing major reconstruction. On the west coast, Stirling has undergone substantial expansion as more RAN units are stationed there. Most of the new *Collins*-class submarines have been deployed at Stirling naval base and up to two boats have been despatched to Fleet Base East. Other naval base like Garden Island and Anglesea Barracks have been modernized. Among the Indian Ocean nations Australia has the most formidable naval air strike forces because it possesses the longest range capability in the region followed by Pakistan.

From the Australian mainland's perspective, its security concerns are based on two main factors which relate to the immediate neighbours and the areas beyond these neighbouring states. The immediate neighbours are Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, the South Pacific and the Southeast Asia. Currently, these regions are not immediate territorial threats to Australia. In fact, they do have the potential to threaten Australia's interests and, more generally, the stability of the immediate region. Australia's most immediate neighbour, Indonesia, has neither the motive nor the capability to threaten Australia with a military assault. The South Pacific and Papua New Guinea have the potential power to gain access as military base in this region, which would have direct and important implications for Australia's security interests. Nonetheless, the air and sea gap to Australia's east would pose a formidable problem to any national army that would have to protect long and vulnerable lines of communications. In South East Asia there are threats to Australia because it has three main interval problems such as settlement
problems, conflict over the Spratly Islands in the South China Sea and the instability that the Myanmar military junta has created for its neighbouring states.

Australia looks beyond the neighbouring states or their immediate difficulties; the prospects for regional stability are affected by the uncertainty surrounding the long-term intentions of large regional powers such as China, Japan and India. Recently these countries have asserted their naval presence in both the Indian and Pacific Oceans. In the wider regional context, Japan will play a security role in the Asia-Pacific and this will involve the rise of its military forces outside of the established role defined for the direct defence of Japan, whereas China and India will develop greater force projection capabilities and the roles resulting in enhanced influence South East Asia. Therefore, the assessment of Australian Defence planners is that, though China and Japan are potential regional adversaries, a particular threat to Australia's interests may not be imminent. Both Japan and China are pre-occupied with strategic problems and security concerns in their own areas and have little or no motivation to threaten Australia and possess a limited capability to do so.

India is one of the most capable naval powers in the Indian Ocean. The question remains however as to whether Indian military developments during the next ten years will adversely affect Australian security. It may not be so because India's power projection capabilities will still be limited and in the next ten years they will not have sufficiently developed to threaten mainland Australia. But even if India develops sufficient power projection capabilities it may not be interested in attacking Australia because India perceives threats from Pakistan and China and not from Australia. Secondly, India is faced with many internal security concerns and will have little
attention left to devote to Australia. Indeed, Australia looks outwards to find threats to its security. In contrast, India looks both inward and outwards to find threats.

Richard Ned Lebow has identified the different sources of conflict in international politics - how India could use its hypothetical force projection capabilities against Australia. Real conflicts are a mixture to varying degrees of three ideal types, called by Lebow "pure hostility", "clash of interest" and "misunderstanding". The first source of international conflict is pure hostility. According to Lebow there are a number of examples of pure hostility in the world today, such as ethnic, territorial and ideological tension. In case of India and Pakistan being a prominent example because of territorial tension, ethnic tension in Sri Lanka, Yugoslavia etc. Fortunately, this does not exist in the Australian-Indian security relationship. The 'conflicts of interest' are a natural part of international politics to be expected, given the nature of the international system and security. But so are shared interests. In this case, India might attack shipping but it has correctly been pointed out that India also has an interest in safe shipping. There is a need to see the bilateral Australian-Indian security relationship in the multilateral context of international security. But there have been no conflicts of interest so far between India and Australia, involving use or threat of use of military force against each other. Lastly, there are conflicts due to misunderstanding. In South Asia for example, the neighbouring countries pose a potential threat to each other and their military establishments are defensive in nature whereas in the case of Australia-India relations, mistrust and hostility do not come into the picture, and there is no misunderstandings till today. It is important for Australia to realize that growing Indian military capabilities are not driven by an Indian desire to threaten Australia but by threats particularly in South Asia.
In fact, India has and continues to have power projection capabilities in the 1990s but Australia's security will not be substantially threatened. The fact is that not only in Australia is beyond the reach of India's limited power projection capabilities and will remain so during the next ten years, but Australia is also outside India's area of strategic concern and whatever conflicts that arise between India and Australia are manageable by diplomacy even if India were to gain even more power projection capabilities. Given these considerations, the appropriate Australian policy response is diplomatic activity to reduce misunderstanding, to clarify and ameliorate, where possible, conflicts of interest, and to work together with India on international issues where the countries interests coincide and to enhance elements of order in the international system that benefit Australian national security.

Australia's defence planners faced with the region's considerable complexity, concluded however, in the 1990s that Australia continues to be one of the most secure countries in the world and it faces no identifiable military threat. In the nearer region, the Indian Ocean, Southeast Asia and the South Pacific the situation is basically stable and favourably inclined to Australia and the latter has the most capable military forces in the neighbourhood. There is a military build-up in the broader Asian region with less predictable alliances. Australia is concerned also with the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and advanced conventional weapons in the region. An alliance with the US is likely to prove a more difficult task in the years ahead.

Therefore, Australia is stressing more on self-reliance in the next century rather than depending on the great powers to tackle regional problems. *SR 1993* confirms that the important defence capabilities of Australia are the following: command and control, intelligence and surveillance; communications (real-time and secure); combat systems
(design and integration); and through life support. These are key force multipliers for a small force like the Australian ADF for operations in the twenty-first century.

ISSUES AND FUTURE PROSPECT: AUSTRALIA'S ROLE

(a) United Nations Peace Operations

Australia did not confine the scope of its international relations to the region but widened it to global problems rather than security capabilities. "Our national interests are served both by conflict prevention, management and resolution through UN mechanisms and by the UN playing an active role in alleviating international disasters caused by natural disasters, political turmoil and war."1 Australia's support for the UN and other multilateral activities is a national effort, involving many government agencies and non-governmental organisations. Australia also committed its forces to UN and other multinational peace operations after the Cold War as shown in Map 1.

The main reason of Australia's armed forces taking part in UN peace operations is direct support to Australia's strategic interests. It is also to reaffirm the principle that outright aggression by one country against another is intolerable to the international community and should not go unchallenged or unanswered, like in the case of the Gulf War 1990-91. Australia took part in UN peace operations in Cambodia, Somalia, Mozambique, Iraq etc. which provided a constructive basis to increased regional cooperation. In this way, Australia makes opportunities available to the countries in the region so that this type of cooperation activities may entail closer cooperation and build confidence in security arrangements in the region. Australia gives high priority to

providing armed forces contingents to UN and other multinational peace operations. The UN often actively seeks specialised capabilities from Australia. And Australia in turn has gained lots of experience and recognition for its contribution to maintenance of international peace and in attempting to limit the proliferation of weapons. This policy has proved effective and Australia will continue to support UN peace operation policies.

(b) Arms Control

Ever since Australia became one of the 37 members of the Conference on Disarmament (CD) in Geneva in 1976, it has been active in issues of arms control and disarmament which are not just for the major powers to resolve. One of the prominent features of Australian foreign policy after the Cold War has been to resist aggression and limit the destabilising proliferation of weapons, especially weapons of mass destruction, and giving priority to the UN policy. As regards Australia's attitude towards nuclear testing. Australia has supported the creation of nuclear weapon free zones and played a leading role in the negotiation in particular of the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone (SPNFZ) Treaty or Treaty of Rarotonga, which came into force in 1986 and which prohibits the testing, production, acquisition, possession or stationing of nuclear weapons within the region.2 The concept of nuclear weapon free zones is also making headway in the region such as an African Nuclear Weapon Free Zone (ANWFZ) and the ASEAN countries continue to discuss a proposed South East Asia Nuclear Weapon Free Zone (SEANWFZ), which has been on the ASEAN agenda since 1983. In the Indian Ocean and the Middle East, the existence of operative nuclear weapon states and the policy of

---

2 G. Evans Grant, Australia's Foreign Relations in the World of the 1990s (Melbourne, 1990), p.83.
AUSTRALIA DEFENCE PARTICIPATION IN MULTINATIONAL OPERATION, 1994

free zones made these issues more complex than was the case with the South Pacific or Latin America.

In fact, Australia shares a global concern about reducing the risks of countries acquiring or using weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missile. Australia has a strong direct method in ensuring that such weapons are not acquired by countries or terrorist groups which could use them against or threaten Australia and also the region might turn into a theatre for a missile race which would destabilise regional security and further complicate defence planning. Australia has been playing an active role to prevent proliferation and to establish effective global regimes such as the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention. However, Australia will continue to support and, if possible, strengthen these regimes and ensure they are fully implemented and effectively verifiable. The Australian defence establishment will continue to promote and implement regional non-proliferation and arms control measures. Australia is indeed strongly committed to transparency as a way to build trust and reduce unfounded suspicions and dangerous misunderstandings in strategic affairs, especially within its own region.

(c) Balance of Power

Australia as a medium power in the region is likely to view its own interest as best served by the preservation of an equilibrium among the three or four great powers over the coming decade. In 1977 Bull observed that medium powers are likely to feel threatened by the domination of the region by any one great power and to regard some measure of checking or balancing of each by the other as the condition of their own
security and freedom of manoeuvre. This fundamental strategic principle remains true. The key to maintaining a favourable balance of power in the region is the United States. The Cold-War concept of a Western worldwide strategic community has now gone and Australia's primary interests in the alliances lies in continuing to engage US military interests in the Asia-Pacific region. The US alliance system in the region is unlikely to be replaced by a new multilateral alliances or concert of regional powers in the foreseeable future. There is no doubt that the United States will remain the predominant global power into the next century but it will have difficulty coping with the multiple new strategic challenges of the post Cold War era and at the same time attending to its own serious economic and social problems. However, the US will continue to have important strategic interests in Asia, especially, in northeast Asia because of its alliance with Japan and other relationships.

In the Asia-Pacific region, China's strategic influence will grow over the next century because of its economic factor in the Asian security equation. China will compete with Japan, India and the United States in the years ahead for regional and global leadership in the twenty-first century. Japan and India will essentially remain regarded as powers in military terms. India will continue to dominate its immediate region and clearly has great power ambitions but its truition depends on the extent of China's expansion in the Indian Ocean region. The Japanese are increasing their presence in South-East Asia and the South Pacific. The nature of the relationship between Japan and China is one of the key strategic uncertainties over the coming decade and could lead to competition for influence in the region.

---

The evolving strategic order in the Asian region is a natural focus for Australia's long-range security planning. Australia's broader national enmeshment with Asia is predicated on the region's continuing economic growth and political stability, but that stability depends crucially on the maintenance of a balance of power in the region that is favourable to Australian interests and the interests of Australia's allies and regional associates.

(d) Maritime Confidence and Security Building Measures

Australia actively supports the maritime confidence and security building measures (MCSBMs) in the region. The MCSBMs are to be distinguished from naval arms control which comprises structural measures to limit or reduce the quantity or quality of naval equipment, as well as operational measures to restrict particular types of naval activity to specific geographical areas.4 In the case of the MCSBMs there is no atmosphere of suspicion and adversarial relations. The capabilities to threaten may be present but not necessarily the motive or the intention. The confidence building measures (CBMs) are a potentially appropriate response to reduce conflict and uncertainty associated with the real or assumed intentions of an adversary.5

In the post-Cold War period one of RAN's activities with confidence building was its Maritime Studies Program (MSP) through which the RAN has been engaged in the regional security dialogue over the last four years. Its contribution has included a significant number of papers at conferences in the region dealing with matters including

---


SLOC security, maritime cooperation in the South Pacific, law of the sea, maritime issues in South East Asia, maritime security issues in the Indian Ocean and the development of MCSBMs in the region. Australia wants to establish in the region something similar to the European experience, known as the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE). Various conventional arms limitations measures have also been introduced. To some extent there are some maritime confidence building measures in South East Asia. There is now the Biennial Western Pacific Naval symposium, which embodies the meeting of the naval Chiefs of all Western Pacific navies. The first of those meetings was held in Sydney in late 1980s and the last in Bangkok in November 1990. Such meetings, which bring together the naval chiefs of the ASEAN states, the US, Japan, China, PNG, Australia and New Zealand provide an opportunity for a frank exchange of views on a wide range of issues including Law of the sea and SLOC protection. ⁶ They are a unique forum and a significant stop towards better understanding between regional navies.

The prospects for MCSBMs in the Indian Ocean depends on factors like the geostrategic scope of sub-regions such as the east coast of Africa; an area without significant maritime forces, South East Asia including the Persian Gulf and South Asia and some smaller and weaker countries. However, recently India has undertaken some initiative; Admiral Ramdas has stated in a recent conference "we have made determined and assiduous efforts to engage our immediate neighbours in an ongoing constructive dialogue." ⁷ This refers to Pakistan and includes proposals for regional naval cooperation separate from foremost alliance and agreements. There is also a specific proposal for

---


an Indian Ocean Forum, a 'Panchayat' which would involve joint exercises, greater transparency and a joint naval task force to respond to natural calamities like cyclones, floods and famines. There is great scope for ocean management to be more useful as a catalyst for regional cooperation and dialogue. The agenda can include environmental issues, marine scientific research, resource development, marine safety and shipping issues. To overcome some of the geographic problems already alluded to, it might be feasible to select areas such as the North East Indian Ocean for a new initiative in ocean management which would be a MCSBM in the most basic of terms. The area could include: India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Myanmar and perhaps Australia. This could result in India becoming willing to engage in a regional security dialogue and could bring other regional countries to accept India as a partner in the dialogue.

(d) Regional Cooperation in the Indian Ocean

There are many regional cooperation organisations in the Indian Ocean such as the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) which was established in 1963. It originally comprised 32 members but recently expanded to 53 with the abolition of post-apartheid South Africa. The organisation engaged in actively promoting intra-regional trade and in social areas such as AIDS education etc. The other African body relevant to the Indian Ocean is the Southern African Development Community (SADC) established in 1992 as successor to the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC). The SADC works on energy, food, agriculture, natural resources, industry and trade. The Indian Ocean Commission (IOC) was formed in 1982 with the general aim of fostering economic development through regional cooperation.
The only Indian Ocean-wide organisation in the Indian Ocean today is the Organisation for Indian Ocean Marine Affairs Cooperation (IOMAC) which was established in 1985. It now consists of 35 member countries (not all regional) and is concerned especially with maritime issues, including transport and marine sciences, and marine living and non-living resources. Besides, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) was formed in 1985, to promote economic growth, cultural development and self-reliance among its members. The SAARC has signed the South Asian Preferential Trading Arrangement (SAPTA) in 1993.

Yet another international organisation was launched by fourteen countries belonging to three continents of Asia, Africa and Australia. The meeting was held at Mauritius on 5-7 March 1987 by the foreign ministers level. This new organisation was called Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation (IORARC). The IORARC main objectives was to bridgehead between Africa, Asia and Australia and to promote in the area; trade liberalisation, investment, infrastructural development, science and technology, tourism and human resource development.

Marine affairs are a common interest of all littoral and island Indian Ocean states. They are concerned about developing a strategy which enhances the economic development of the Indian Ocean states through the ocean-related activities in the development process and a policy of integrated ocean management. Therefore, they have an excellent and largely apolitical, catalytic function for dialogue and cooperation among them. There has been a workshop between Australia and India on maritime security in the Indian Ocean. This was held in New Delhi in November 1992; the two countries

---

8 IORARC members are, India, Mauritius, South Africa, Australia, Singapore, Oman, Kenya, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Indonesia, Yemen, Tanzania, Mozambique and Madagascar.

discussed the security issues of natural concern to them and proposed a multilateral forum of Indian Ocean islands and littoral states to address marine affairs of common interest.

Australia is an island continent, her strategic role depends on maritime power because ninety percent, is water and only to the north of Australia is the 'sea-air gap' anything but open ocean. In fact, the depth in defence policy is the backbone of maritime strategy which is the ability to detect and engage hostile forces with a layered series of capabilities from distant surveillance and strike through maritime and air patrol and interdiction forces, to air defence and land forces on its own territory. In recent years the government has made a substantial investment in surface ships and submarines. This is a reflection of the concept of depth in defence. There is a clear picture that Australia will continue to upgrade its maritime strategic effectiveness in the twenty-first century in order to deny an adversary operational freedom near Australian territory. This will be a major constraint in the level and type of conflict initiated against Australia, and will make the land defence of Australia's northern areas more manageable. The intensity and posture of operations conducted by Australia could contribute significantly to Australia's and its regional ability to manipulate the centre of gravity of conflict.

Australia's emerging maritime interests in the Indian Ocean as well as in the Pacific Ocean, is based on the assessment of possible political, economic and military developments encompassing both oceans and its national security concerns which are to defend Australian territory and society from threat of military attack and the protection of Australian interests in the surrounding maritime areas, to avoid a global conflict, and to maintain a strong defence relationship with the United States and New Zealand. Australia also wants to promote a sense of strategic community with its neighbours in the