CHAPTER II

INDIAN OCEAN AS A ZONE OF PEACE
On 12th October, 1971, the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka, Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike introduced a resolution to turn the Indian Ocean into a zone of peace at the twenty sixth session of the United Nations General Assembly. The resolution stipulated that, "the Indian Ocean within limits to be determined, together with the air space above and the ocean floor subjacent thereto, is hereby designated for all time as a zone of peace."\(^1\) The Sri Lankan proposal was in keeping with the sentiments of the Non-aligned nations who had expressed their concern at the Conference held at Lusaka in 1970 on the dangers posed by great power rivalry in the Indian Ocean. The objective behind this move was to strengthen the sovereignty and the independence of the Indian Ocean states against the hegemonic drives and struggles of the major world powers.\(^2\) The dangers of external military presence in the area was amply demonstrated, when the U.S.A. sent a naval task force lead by a nuclear-powered aircraft carrier to the Indian Ocean during the Indo-Pakistan conflict of

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1971. This show of force served to demonstrate a dangerous implication of great power presence in the region i.e. potential source of military intervention in the regional political developments. The great power presence in the Indian Ocean increased further with the intensification of the Cold War.

**A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE INDIAN OCEAN**

The Indian Ocean has played a significant role in influencing socio-economic and political developments of the littoral countries as well as in the strategies of the leading powers since ancient times. The history of navigation in the Indian Ocean goes back to about 2300 BC to the time of the Pharaohs. The ships of the Egyptians, the Greeks, the Sumerians and the Arabs plied the waters of this ocean. The first real war fleet in the region was possessed by India. China also had close links with this ocean from 1200 AD to 1433 AD. However, Asia's maritime supremacy in the Indian Ocean came to an end with the arrival of the Portuguese. Within 15 years of the rounding of the Cape of Good Hope they were in total

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6 Toussaint, n.4, p.74.
control of the key points of the Indian Ocean overcoming the strong resistance posed by the Arabs and the Indians. The Portugese were followed by the English, the Dutch and the French. For the next 400 years the history of the Indian Ocean was one of colonial rivalries and armed struggle among the Western powers. Finally, Britain triumphed and succeeded in the creation of an extensive and longlasting presence in this region. The Treaty of Vienna of 1815 established the British supremacy in the waters of the Indian Ocean. Franco De Almeida, once told the king of Portugal that, "Let it be known to your majesty that if one is strong in ships the commerce of the Indies is yours; and if you are not strong in ships, little will avail you any fortress on land." Franco was indeed very correct in his assessment. Britain could sustain a large Asian empire for centuries mainly because of her strong naval and maritime capabilities. Later, a revival of French, Dutch and Portugese activity and appearance of Italian and Germans did not change the status quo much.

The predominant British presence in the Indian Ocean continued without any major challenge, until after the Second

7 K.M. Pannikar, Asia and Western Dominance (London, 1959), p.94.

World War, which brought about widespread changes in the global power structure. First, the traditional big powers - the victors and the vanquished alike became incapable of maintaining their economic and military supremacy. The emergence of the two super powers, namely the United States and the Soviet Union - relegated Britain to the position of a second grade power.9

The second major development was the beginning of a process of decolonisation. At present there are 36 independent littoral and hinterland states in this region which are developing countries (with the exception of Australia and South Africa) deeply immersed in the process of development and nation building. The existence of a political, economic and militarily vulnerable situation within these countries coupled with the escalating competition between the two super powers and their allies compelling them to secure advantageous strategic location to strike militarily against each other in case of an armed conflict, gradually integrated the Indian Ocean area into their global strategic network.10

Today the combination of a variety of factors are responsible for the involvement of the external powers in the

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9 Later, the decision of Britain to withdraw from the East of Suez in 1968 clearly revealed that she had come to accept a lesser role in the international affairs. For detail see Roy E. Jones, The Changing Structure of British Foreign Policy (London, 1974) pp.69-79; Also see Peter Calvocoressi, The British Experience 1945-75, (London, 1978), pp.213-17.

political, economic and strategic development in the Indian Ocean region. The geopolitical location of the Ocean, the rich natural resources of the area and the military potential has been largely responsible for the presence of the external powers navies in the Indian Ocean.

Geopolitical Location

There are a variety of definitions offered by scholars regarding the geographical extent of the Indian Ocean. However, in 1974, the Secretary General of the United Nations offered a comprehensive definition of the Indian Ocean area in his report to the UN General Assembly, on 'Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a Peace Zone'. According to this report the Northern limits of the Ocean are well defined. It fixed 60 degrees O'min south latitude as the line separating it from the Antarctic Ocean. The dividing line between the Pacific and the Indian Ocean is to be the meridian of South-East Cape of Tasmania (147 degree O'min E), the western exit of the Bass Strait and the meridian line between North West Australia and the Malay peninsula (the Cape of Talbot through Timur, Sumba, Flores and Sunda Islands up to Sumatra). The meridian of Cape Agulhas (20 degree O'min E) was to separate the Indian Ocean from the Atlantic. This has been accepted as the definition of the Indian Ocean area by most of the countries in the world.

For a brief account of these versions see, K.S. Sidhu, The Indian Ocean: A Zone of Conflict (New Delhi 1983), pp.2 & 3; Also see for details Ranjan Gupta, The Indian Ocean: A Political Geography (New Delhi 1979).
The geo-political features of the Indian Ocean make it susceptible to control at five places called the 'Choke points'. They are, Cape of Good Hope, the Bab-el-Mandeb, the Strait of Hormuz, the Strait of Malacca and the Sunda Strait. The first of these overlooks the shipping route from Africa; the second is situated in the southern tip of the Suez; the third stands sentinel over the oil flow by sea from the Persian Gulf and the Arabian Peninsula and the fourth and fifth control the sea borne traffic from the Western Pacific Ocean.¹²

In comparison to other oceans of the world the Indian Ocean offers most suitable navigational environment throughout the year with the exception of its southern parts. The winds are below gale force and predictable and are free from fog, mist and strong treacherous currents. Despite its cyclones and storms, the ocean remains in the opinion of the sailors the mildest of all oceans.¹³ The limited number of access routes to the Indian Ocean also gives rise to well defined shipping paths.¹⁴

The sea approach to the ocean have retained their earlier importance because the Indian Ocean states have comparatively more trade with countries outside the region than within. They


¹³ Sidhu, n.11, p.4.

mostly export raw materials and import finished goods and technology. In the mid-1970s, by far the greatest proportion of the Indian Ocean States' total trade was with Western Europe 33%, Japan 19%, USA 13%, USSR and East European countries 5% and Africa and Latin America 12%. Regional trade in 1976 was only 18%. Oil exports by Indian Ocean producers (including Indonesia) make up 26% of the region's total exports.\(^{15}\)

Moreover, every year nearly 3000 ships, out of which 1500 are tankers, travel the sea routes which are very important for the economy of the West - through the Indian Ocean, Suez canal, Bab-el-Mandeb Straits and to a lesser extent through the Sunda Straits in the Indonesian archipelago. On an average two tankers an hour pass through the Strait of Hormuz, and forty ships a day through the channel between Mozambique and Madagascar, and almost as many through the Malacca Strait. Although oil is the most valuable commodity, other important products and strategic materials are also shipped through the Indian Ocean Sea routes. It is also significant to note that one third of all international air routes also cross the Indian Ocean.\(^{16}\)

Due to the geographical peculiarities, the region does not provide good overland routes and the nature of trade which


\(^{16}\) Le Monde Diplomatique, February 1980, p.15 cited in Braun, *ibid*; Also see Bradley Hahn, "Indian Ocean: Sea Lanes becoming more vulnerable, more important", *Asia Pacific Defence Forum* (Hawai), vol.17, no.3, September 1990, pp.8-11.
mostly favours bulk carriers makes the waterways of the ocean important for the littoral states.17

Furthermore, about 80% of Western Europe's oil and growing proportion of that of USA passes through the Indian Ocean. Nearly 70% of the strategic materials used by NATO countries follow the same route. Over 90% of Japan's oil needs and a significant quantity of other imports follow the same pattern. The trade with the West is going to increase further when the Suez Canal is widened to accept the supertankers of 2,60,000 dwt.18

Resources

The Indian Ocean region offers important minerals and raw materials. The single most important item which the region provides is petroleum. The economic development and industrial progress of the developed and the non-oil producing developing countries are crucially dependent upon the oil supply from the Gulf and the Arabian Peninsula. Apart from oil, the region abounds in 20 out of the 40 raw materials of strategic importance imported by the West. These include uranium, thorium, beryllium, coal, iron, copper, manganese, tin, mica, bauxite, chromite, nickel, cobalt, antimony, etc. 19 The latest discovery of rich mineral nodules from the Indian Ocean seabed


has further increased the importance of the ocean area. Moreover, one-fifth of the world's arable land lies in this region while the ocean offers a variety of rich marine resources.20

The vast but untapped mineral resources and raw materials offers an allurement to the developed nations located outside the region. The desire to exploit these resources not only creates rivalry among the big powers but also provokes regional and intra-regional conflicts.21

Encouraged by the abundance of resources, water and cheap labour, the Western countries and Japan have made huge investments in various fields of industry which are emerging in this area. The pattern follows the norms of:-

i) Large scale manufactures for domestic markets in the populous countries like India, Indonesia, Pakistan etc.

ii) Export oriented manufacture and extractive industries in the South East Asian countries.

iii) Direct investment in oil as in the Middle East.

iv) Plantation interests in tea, tobacco, etc. in Africa and South Asian countries.22


21 For details see, S.S. Bhattacharya, Economic Interests of Big Powers in the Indian Ocean, (New Delhi), January-March 1978 pp.261-287

Strategic Significance

The American strategic thinker Alfred Mahan once observed that, "Whoever controls the Indian Ocean dominates Asia. The Ocean is the key to the seven seas. In the twenty first century the destiny of the world will be decided on its waters."23

One of the most important developments in the Indian Ocean in the post Second World War period is its strategic and nuclear significance to the great powers.24

The four important factors which have broadly influenced the Indian Ocean's Strategic importance are:

(i) The Indian Ocean littoral consists mostly of developing countries who are faced with enormous internal turbulances resulting from religious, ethnic, linguistic and tribal conflicts. With uneven economic developments, these diverse conflicts spill across borders and invite external intervention.

(ii) The East West power rivalry also increases the importance of this region. While the West is interested in having as many allies as possible, to hem in the Soviet Union through a renewed policy of containment based on strategic links and alliance systems, the Soviet Union is


equally determined to foil this attempt and expand her influence in the region. This was most evident during the Cold War period.

(iii) The Western powers claim enormous stakes in the vast energy and other mineral resources of the region and declare them as their vital interests. The logic then is that it is entitled not only to an access to these resources but also to defend or topple the local ruling elites as it deems fit if they threaten their vital interest. While the American strategy is to perpetuate the Anglo-American linkages, the Soviets would like to see them weakened.

(iv) There is a renewed emphasis by the traditional and new maritime actors on doctrines of sea power. The importance of ocean resources and the development of new naval warfare and weapon systems have raised the stakes of the great powers in the Indian Ocean.25

NUCLEARISATION OF THE INDIAN OCEAN

The nuclear arms race in the Indian Ocean is one of the central concerns of the littoral states of the region. The five nuclear weapon powers have about a third of their nuclear weapon stockpile with the naval forces, which include anti-submarine, anti-air and anti-ship weapons. The nuclearisation of the oceans have been accentuated with the deployment of cruise

25 ibid.

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missiles by USA and USSR in their naval arsenals from 1984 onwards and this is one of the central elements of the modernisation programme of the US navy.

The nuclear arms race in the Indian Ocean has four important dimensions. First, the introduction of the submarine launched ballistic missiles in the 1960s by the US. With the development of Polaris A-3 SLBMs (range 2500 nm) the Arabian Sea became an attractive area for deployment of U.S nuclear submarines which could be targetted on developed industrial regions of USSR. The development of Polaris SLBMs coincided with the establishment of communication base facilities in Diego Garcia in North West Cape in Western Australia by the USA.26

The second level of nuclear arms race in the Indian Ocean refers to deployment of cruise missiles and other nuclear weapons in the Indian Ocean. The third level of nuclear arms race pertains to the actual storing of nuclear weapons in the region, particularly in the base facilities. According to William Arkin, USA had contingency plans since 1975 to deploy nuclear weapons in Diego Gracia in case of a crisis or war time.27

The Rapid Deployment Force (RDF) has also its nuclear dimension which serves two purposes. first, it forms a key component of the overall nuclear first strike strategy which


could be resorted to in the event of a confrontation with USSR in South West Asia. Second, it can be used to intimidate littoral states which are hostile to US strategy and policies in the region.

The fourth feature of nuclear threat is the presence of nuclear infrastructure in the region, which are useful for research development, testing and especially integrated into the command, control and communication (C3I) structure of the two super-powers.28

The Indian Ocean's proximity to at least two major powers namely the Soviet Union and China, enhances its importance for the Western military strategists.29 The defensive and offensive possibilities of the deep sea floor have added importance to the Indian Ocean. To cite an example, the ninety east ridges of the Bay of Bengal, one of the straightest undersea mountain ranges, provide an ideal place for deploying strategic nuclear devices. It is widely believed that in the future the missile systems may be deployed in the sea-bed.30 The numerous islands and coral atolls have also become handy for the outside powers to establish their military bases in the area. The Anglo-American

28 Raja Mohan n.26 p.259.
29 T.B. Millar, "Geopolitics and Military/Strategic Potential" in Burrell & Cottrell, n.14, Ch.4, p.64.
30 Bezboruah, n.12, p.4.
military base at Diego Garcia provides a good example. The deployment of long range submarine launched ballistic missiles by the Western Powers in the Indian Ocean has made the southern regions of the Soviet Union more vulnerable. Moreover, the Persian Gulf region also provides bases to the West, for direct hits on vital Soviet industrial and military installations.

The Regional Matrix

One of the factors which makes the situation in the Indian Ocean area more complex is the endemic political instability, economic backwardness and low level of solidarity among the Indian Ocean littoral and hinterland states, which makes them very vulnerable to the interventionist policies and pressure tactics of the great powers. The level of intra-regional cooperation amongst them has been at best bilateral or sub-regional.

As in other Third World countries the Indian Ocean region is marked by deep rooted and long standing bilateral conflicts.


32 For details see Mohammed Mughisudin, ed., Conflict and Cooperation in the Persian Gulf (New York, 1977), pp.13-

and disputes which have lead to many conflicts in the region. Roots of many of the intra-regional conflicts can be traced to colonial legacies, lingering shadows of imperialism and the impact of global economic and strategic imbalances. The last but not the least source of insecurity and conflict in the Third World, including the Indian Ocean region, is the widespread internal turmoil and disorder which get stimulated, intensified and complicated by the impact of the other two factors, namely intra-regional conflicts and great power rivalry and competition. The matrix of these three sources of conflict and insecurity varies from one sub-region to another and one situation to another. Like Europe, the Indian Ocean region has had no major experience of stability and peace. 34

Another important politico-strategic dimension in the Indian Ocean area is that, none of the littoral states have a powerful navy. India, Australia and Indonesia do have large navies but they are no comparison to the naval forces of the great powers. 35 The economically weak and militarily vulnerable area of the Indian Ocean does certainly offer an opportunity to the major outside powers to influence the course of events in a


manner that will improve their position in this region and their role in world politics.

Endowed with enormous natural wealth, with a network of vital trade routes and occupying a vital strategic position, 'the Indian Ocean is destined to play an important role in future world politics'. The multiple interests of the external powers and the divergence of regional political aspirations tend to convert the Indian Ocean into an area of multipolarisation and multiple rivalries. On account of this, the Indian Ocean has been characterized by Robert Manning as "the area possessing the potential to bring about major shifts in the global power structure."

EXTERNAL POWERS IN THE INDIAN OCEAN

Interests of the outside powers in the region are as follows:

(a) Energy needs - one of the major sources of conflict today can be encapsuled in a single word oil. The energy needs of the industrialised world dictate a profound concern regarding access to the resources in the Persian Gulf and about the security of the tanker routes across the

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38 Times of India, 1 December 1975.
Indian Ocean.\(^3\)\(^9\)

(b) Economic considerations- Besides onshore resources of this area, the heavy financial investments by outside powers, in the seabed resources in terms of marine food, minerals, metals and energy, holds great promise for the future. Besides, the industrial backwardness also makes the area most suitable for the dumping of finished goods.\(^4\)\(^0\)

(c) U.S.A., USSR, UK and France account for the bulk of the arms export in the world and most of this is imported by the developing nations. The countries of the Indian Ocean region have shown a pronounced tendency towards diverting their scarce resources on defence spending.

(d) Political ideology - In extending their political and ideological influences, both USA and USSR have entered the Indian Ocean area in a big way. With near stabilisation in Europe and the powerful US influence in Latin America, the thrust is now towards the Asian and African continents. The extension of political ideology is a part of the multi-pronged quest for strategic, political and economic advantage.

(e) Regional power balancing - On most occasions the littoral states have sought super power umbrellas before confronting


\(^4\)\(^0\) ibid.
or balancing their adversary at any point of time. Their credibility and prestige is also linked with their physical presence and their ability to influence events to their clients' gain and also their own advantage. 41

**USA**

The importance of the Indian Ocean to the US naval strategy has been repeatedly stressed by Admiral Elmo R. Zumwalt of the US navy. The Indian Ocean according to him:

..... has become an area with potential to influence major shifts in the global power balance in the next decade. It follows that we must have the ability to deploy our military power in that area, and the capability to deploy our military power in that area is an essential element of such influence. 42

US interests which have led to the deployment of naval forces in the Indian Ocean region can be broadly divided into three categories viz. politico-strategic priorities, economic priorities and strategic-security priorities.

The prime motivating factor was to perpetuate Western dominance in the region, especially after Britain's withdrawal from the, 'East of Suez' in 1971 that had allegedly created a power vacuum which the Soviet Union rushed in to fill. As Guido Geroso emphasized, "the shadow of the hammer and sickle today extends over the entire Indian Ocean. The Russian bear has replaced the British lion. A Tsar's dream has, by a historical


paradox, been realized by the humdrum bureaucrat Brezhnev".43

The second politico-strategic priority is to ensure freedom of navigation in high seas for the 'free world'. The embayed character of the Ocean with its choke points demands America's special attention to the region.44

Lastly, the US is anxious to maintain stable relations with the littoral and hinterland states. The former President Jimmy Carter had proposed a regional defence alliance covering North Africa, the Horn of Africa, the Gulf and as far as Pakistan and Nepal. As this proposal did not materialise, the US naval presence became all the more necessary to symbolize what E.R. Zumwalt called, a 'gesture of friendship, note of assurance, implication of threat, glimpse of world power.45

But it is indeed the vital economic priorities the US has in this region that was transformed the US quest for a strategy here from a purely military matter into a broad policy


44 Bezboruah, n.12, p.36.

Among them the most vital one is the purchase and safe transport of oil. The United States has provided billions of dollars in economic and military assistance to countries of this region. Besides, it has $10 billion commercial investment in the area, including about $3.5 billion in oil.

The Gulf supplies nearly 60% of the oil imports of Western Europe, 90% of Japan's, 65% of Australia's and 2 million barrels a day to US. Hence the Carter Doctrine envisaged: "Let our position be absolutely clear. An attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America. And such an assault will be replied by any means necessary".  

America's large scale transfer of conventional arms to this region is also a result of economic interests. In the last decade, 64% (158 billion dollars) of its total exports have been absorbed by this region. Moreover, US imports, strategic minerals like thorium, titanium, uranium, chromite, ore etc. used for missile and space industry come from this region. At hearings before the subcommittee on mines and mining, Alexander Haig, the then Secretary of State, voiced concern and warned of a potential resource war in the Indian Ocean region.  

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48 Dalal, n.18, p.135.
Prior to 1945, USA had no defense arrangement or naval presence in the Indian Ocean. Even in the fifties, America was content in playing an ancillary role to UK. But the British withdrawal from the East of Suez and the Cold War changed all this. The US rushed in to fill the so called power vacuum.

This was augmented by Richard Nixon's Guam Doctrine. Enunciated in the aftermath of the Vietnam 'shock', it attempted to reduce the US defence commitments to its allies in terms of direct intervention, but envisaged greater military aid so as to create an "archipelago of allies" by assisting "regional influentials", like the ex-Shah of Iran. To alleviate the fear-psychosis of its surrogates, the US increased its naval presence to some degree in the region.49

The US deployed its naval forces for the first time in January 1948, when it based three warships at Bahrain as Middle East Forces (MIDEASTFOR).50 In December 1963 the US 7th Fleet cruised in the Indian Ocean to participate in the CENTO exercises. This was followed by an active phase of acquisition of base facilities and growth of naval forces.51

49 B.R. Mishra, n.43, p.67.
From a strategic security perspective, the US strategy in the Indian Ocean is 'offensive' while that of the Soviet Union is 'defensive'. The emergence of new weapon systems, especially Polaris A-2 and A-3 and Poseidon missiles, has provided the US with an advantage over the Soviet Union. These missiles could be targeted to almost any place in Asiatic and European Russia from the Indian Ocean, covering as far north as Leningrad and the main industrial heartland from the Ukraine to Kuzlas.52 Besides, these missiles could strike all the vital points of China. This is in addition to the areas covered from the Pacific and the Atlantic. The Soviet Union and China do not have a strategic 'third area' which the US has in the Indian Ocean.

Moreover as the Soviet Union developed very high yielding and reasonably accurate ICMBS, the US missile silos became vulnerable. Hence, there was a need to move out the US strategic deterrence to the oceans where submerged nuclear submarines would have relative invulnerability and ensure stability of the deterrence system.53

The Indian Ocean is also likely to play an important part in the US Strategic Defence Initiative Programme. In the event of a nuclear warfare, space satellites will play a key role in


communication, reconnaissance, electronic intelligence, early warning, etc., and hence destruction of adversary's satellites would cripple its capacity in a war. A variety of anti-satellite weapons are being developed for this purpose and the US has established a world-wide network of space observation centres called 'Ground based electro-optical deep space surveillance (GEODSS) system. Diego Garcia located in the heart of the Indian Ocean is one of the five such stations.\(^{54}\)

In future, the Arabian Sea could be an important location for deployment of ballistic missile defence systems of the United States. One option being studied is the "pop-up" missile system based on a submarine which can employ a nuclear-pumped X-ray laser device capable of destroying Soviet missiles as they leave their silos in the Southern parts of USSR. Also the Soviet satellites are most vulnerable from this region as in their orbit they are closest to the earth at this point. All these strategic priorities have converged in the US naval strategy.

The Congressional Research Service prepared a report titled, 'United States Foreign Policy Objectives and Overseas Military Installations' in 1979. This report clearly stated:

The US has both a conventional and perhaps a strategic nuclear military interest in the Indian

Ocean region. Military objectives for US conventional forces include the capability to:
(1) protect US economic interests in the Persian Gulf region; (2) employ or threaten force in support of US diplomatic objectives in the Middle East; (3) secure the Indian Ocean sea and air routes against harassment or interdiction; (4) intervene in support of other objectives in this area, and (5) related to all these balance Soviet forces in the region and attain superiority in a crisis. The United States also possesses a potential strategic nuclear military objective of deploying submarines when necessary or convenient, armed with ballistic missiles to hit targets in China and the USSR.55

In 1961 the USA had 689 combat vessels which dropped to 443 by 1976. This long downward trend for the US Navy was reversed in the early 1980s when a steep hike was made in the navy's budget. Between 1980 and 1985 the navy's budget rose by 63 per cent in real dollars, more than the entire Pentagon budget, which increased by 53.6 per cent. A programme for a 600 ship fleet was launched. This maritime strategy also took a very aggressive turn.56 The present disarmament negotiations between the US and Soviet Union has not yet taken naval arms reduction within its purview. The navy still occupies a unique position in America's history as a maritime nation with overseas interests that could only be maintained with naval power and the US appears to be in no mood to surrender the strategic and


56 Michael L. Ross, "Disarmament at Sea", Foreign Policy, (California) no.77, Winter 1989-90, pp.94-95.
tactical advantages it enjoys at sea specially in the Indian Ocean.

**USSR**

The Soviet interests in the Indian Ocean can be traced to the year 1885, when a Petersburg newspaper urged an advance towards the Indian Ocean to fulfil Russia's historic destiny indicating the country's ambition. This was also obvious in the Secret Protocol of 1940 in which the Soviet Union declared that her territorial aspirations centre South in the direction of the Indian Ocean. During the time of the Korean War, a deliberate attempt was made for a naval presence around the world. But it was not till the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962 that made Soviet Union realise the implication of sea power.57

The Soviets did not have any naval presence in the Indian Ocean area on the eve of the entry of the US Naval Task Force in 1964. It was only in March 1968 that the Soviet Union entered the Indian Ocean with a small part of its Pacific Fleet. This was principally a result of growing Soviet fears regarding its own global security position in the international ballistic missile confrontation with the US and the vulnerability of its own southern flank. The Soviet view is that it cannot remain indifferent to the US efforts to militarise the Indian Ocean.58

According to the Soviet Union the US 'began to create material


58 For details see Jeoffery Juke, 'The Indian Ocean in Soviet Naval Policy', n.52.
base for its permanent military presence in the Indian Ocean in 1970s' and entered into bilateral agreements for ports and airfields facilities. This was in addition to its own naval and air base on Diego Garcia island, fitted out as a support facility for strategic components of the armed forces. The Soviet Union has also economic, political and security interests which are as follows:

(i) The Indian Ocean forms an all-weather transit route for transfer of fleet units between the Soviets Far Eastern Fleet and their Black Sea, Baltic and Northern Fleets. Moreover, 80% of Soviet trade between her eastern and western wings passes through the Indian Ocean and the USSR operates one of the largest merchant fleets at sea;

(ii) Soviet drive for Afro-Asian market for sale of arms to the Indian Ocean states constitute 10% of Soviet exports;

(iii) Soviet fishing in the Indian Ocean accounts for one-third of her annual catch. It also demonstrates great interest in oceanography, exploring sea wealth and Antarctic research.

Admiral Gorshkov underlined the Soviet interest in the Indian Ocean when he said,

The Indian Ocean takes about 1/10 of world's shipping. The economic importance of the Indian Ocean lies essentially in the fact that along it run world trade routes from the Black Sea and the Baltic ports of the USSR to the ports in Far East and also to India, Pakistan Bangladesh, Indonesia, Burma and other countries.

(iv) Sustaining political relations and extending Soviet influence in the Third World, by supporting allies and friends besides liberation movements.

(v) Ensuring the safety of its southern flank. One of the major objective is to counter the strategic nuclear threat


from the ocean. She maintains surveillance and defence against US nuclear missile submarines in the Indian Ocean which can hit strategic targets in the Soviet Union.

(vi) Moscow has been a consistent supporter of African liberation movements and it sees military presence as important to bolster these movements. 61

Another correlated factor is the extension to the region of the Space warfare scenario. In early 1977 the Soviets alleged that the US intends to use the Indian Ocean region for its 'Star Wars' programme. When the US completed installation of the satellite surveillance station in early 1987, 62 the Soviet Union was compelled to deploy its space-operations related task force in the Indian Ocean (The surveillance satellites of both US and the Soviet Union are placed in a polar orbit). In the southern hemisphere the US has satellite tracking stations at Mahe in the Seychelles in the Indian Ocean, 63 at Alice Springs in Central Australia and a standby station in South Africa. The Soviet Union does its satellite tracking with a task force of ships stationed in the Southern Indian Ocean. These satellite systems are essential for


verification of military movements and arms control agreements.

There is an equally strong incentive which flows from the desire of Soviet Union to serve as a global super power. The Soviet navy has become oceanic in its range – a seven-ocean blue water navy.64 The Soviet Union has naval facilities in Dahlak, Perim Island, Socotra and Aden. The Soviet navy also makes use of unmanned ‘Mooring buoys’ at various points, viz. off Mauritius, Seychelles, Mozambique Channel, etc.65 Admiral Gorshkov once observed, "overseas bases are undoubtedly attractive assets for ease of supply and maintenance and above all extending air cover. But we have seen in Albania, Egypt, and Somalia how unreliable such facilities are ....We must have the ability to establish sea control in areas of our choosing such that our strategic missile forces can achieve their task unmolested".66

The Soviet Union while taking necessary steps to counter the western naval build up in the Indian Ocean has remained strategically on the defensive. This has been one of the


65 For details see, Lewis Young, n. 61.

compelling reasons for the Soviet support for establishment of a peace zone in the Indian Ocean.67

The Super Powers Action-Reaction Process

In this highly complex interacting process, it would seem that the super power expansion into the Indian Ocean was initiated by USA68. When the capability of launching ballistic missiles underwater became a major component of the US strategy, the oceanic area began to acquire an exceptionally important position in American thinking. The Indian Ocean was seen to offer some striking advantages - perhaps more than other oceans. First, the narrow and easily motorable waters at the northern entrance make it possible to exercise a control over the ocean itself. Any power that is able to control the 'Choke Points' can control all the major movements of her adversaries; second, 67 For details regarding Soviet views on Indian Ocean as a zone of peace, see, A. Alexeyer and A. Fialkovsky, "Peace and Security for the Indian Ocean", International Affairs, (Moscow), No.9, 1979, pp.51-56; A commentator's view, "The Imperialist Threat in the Indian Ocean", International Affairs, No. 6, 1980, pp.101-105; D. Nikolayev, "For Peace and Security in the Indian Ocean", International Affairs, No.9, 1982, pp.57-64; A. Ladozhsky "The USSR's efforts to turn the Indian Ocean into a zone of peace", International Affairs, No.8, 1981; pp.40-46, M. Zarkovic,"Converting the Indian Ocean into a zone of peace and cooperation",Review of International Affairs, vol.682, September 1978; Radovan Vukadinovic "The Indian Ocean - A zone of Peace",Review of International Affairs, (Moscow), vol.689, December 1978, pp.18-28; Yuri Vinogradov, "The Indian Ocean: The problem of demilitarization", International Affairs, No.7, July, 1987, pp.58-64.

68 Kaushik, n. 5, p. 37; Poulose, n. 33, p. 190, Bezboruah, n.12, p.33; While this view has been questioned by some other authors like K.P. Mishra (n. 61, p. 53). He suggests that it was the Soviet Union who first entered the Indian Ocean in the mid 1950s and they have maintained their presence continuously since then in the area.
the physical configurations of the Indian Ocean are such that they can be used for strategic weapon deployment against Soviet Union but cannot be used against USA.\textsuperscript{69} The importance of this new development can be gauged from the fact that the US sea-based nuclear strike system can be withheld from the initial nuclear strike and can be used to influence subsequent stages of the war.\textsuperscript{70}

Moscow's options in this situation were, first, to build a countervailing Soviet presence in the Indian Ocean, second to seek a bilateral accord with Washington for mutual abstention from any deployment of nuclear weapons in the area. Since Soviet Union was unable to exercise the first option as her strategy was primarily non-naval in the initial stages, she presented a proposal in the United Nations in December 1964 to declare the Indian Ocean a nuclear free zone.\textsuperscript{71} Despite support of the littoral countries the proposal was rejected by USA. Evidently a superpower, which was weaker in the then existing scales of military balance, was presenting a political solution to neutralize a strategic disadvantage.

Under the circumstances, the Soviet Union had no choice but to resort to her first option — the option of strengthening her anti-submarine warfare capability. Since the early 1960s,

\textsuperscript{69} K. Subrahmanyam, "Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace" (Allahabad, 1987), pp.29-31.


the Soviet naval build up has become phenomenal. Its forward deployment strategy has also been operationalised. Both the USA and Soviet Union are actively present in the oceanic area, and both are deeply involved in an escalating spiral, constantly seeking to eliminate the own disadvantages, and to neutralize the advantages of the adversary.

The political fall out of this major oceanic strategic build up is unavoidable. The two superpowers are deeply involved in designing policies to seek friends and to deny the other the possibility of exercising any major influence in the area. The Soviets however feel that the discussions on the Indian Ocean have shown that the positions of the USSR and of most of the Indian Ocean countries are either identical or are very close. Nevertheless it is sometimes claimed that tension in the Indian Ocean area stems from the "rivalry of great powers". Such allegations distort the true state of affairs and can only undermine the struggle of the non-aligned countries for setting up a zone of peace in that area..... this argument ignores the principled stand the Soviet Union has always maintained." The littoral states of the Indian Ocean and the hinterland have, therefore, become a major ground for intense rivalry between the USA and the Soviet Union.

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Apart from the two superpowers, three other members of the elite nuclear club have shown interest in this region, although at a lower level.

U.K.

After the decision to withdraw from the East of Suez, Britain has withdrawn considerably from the Indian Ocean region and has opted for a low-key policy. However, she still possesses substantial economic and politico-military interest in the region and intends to protect them by maintaining residual military forces and actively supporting an increasing US military presence in the ocean. She still exercises considerable diplomatic influence and her fleet continues to visit this area.

The reason for continuing British interest are many. Britain is under obligation to honour a number of commitments with certain South and South East Asian countries. She has also to provide protection to the crown colony of Hong Kong. Britain also wants to maintain the line of communication with and across the Indian Ocean region to South East Asia and the Far East. The staging-bases in this area provide her with strategic mobility. The British Indian Ocean Territory was created in 1965, including Chagos Archipelago (of Mauritius), islands of

74 For details see, Roy E. Jones and Peter Calvocoressi, n.9; Dick Wilson, "The Indian Ocean Frontier", Far Eastern Economic Review, vol.57, No.11, 14 Sept, 1967.
Aldabra, Farquhar and Desroches (of Seychelles). At present she enjoys full base facilities at Diego Garcia and naval facilities at Mombasa (Kenya). In an emergency she can also use the Simonstown base in South Africa. It has overflying, training and defence agreements with Kenya and is working closely with Zimbabwe. It has concluded treaties of friendship with Bahrain, Qatar, and the UAE.

U.K. has created its own 5,000 strong Rapid Deployment Force (RDF) and shares responsibility with the US for the security of the Gulf. It has seen its interest as sufficiently parallel to those of the United States to permit the American navy to use the support facility at Diego Garcia. That suggests a continued British strategic interest in developments in the Indian Ocean, which it periodically demonstrates with naval visits. British warships cruise through the Indian Ocean regularly. She also carries out joint exercise with navies of Malaysia, Singapore, Australia and New Zealand as part of the Five Power Defence Arrangement.

Finally, since its trade with Indian Ocean countries amounts to approximately 22 per cent of its overseas transactions and as 45 per cent of its overseas investments are based in this region, it has vital interest in protecting the

76 Dalal, n.18, pp.140-41.
77 Wriggins, n.33, p.148.
78 Dalal, n.18, ibid., Wall, n.39, pp.32-35.
trade routes and freedom of navigation on the ocean. It is reluctant to support measures that appear designed to limit the freedom of ships of all kinds to move in the high seas.

France

Unlike Britain, France maintains her military presence independently to justify her status and prestige as a great power.\(^\text{79}\) French interests in the Indian Ocean are mainly economic, political and military. France started reinforcing its military presence in the Red Sea and the North-West quadrant of the Ocean as a part of President Pompidou's policy of wooing oil-producing nations in West Asia and protecting French interests in its overseas territories and former colonies.

The French Government, since the early 1970s clinched spectacular long-term oil-for-arms and oil-for-trade deals worth millions of dollars with Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, UAE, Iraq and Iran. France has also supplied aircraft, warships, missiles and other weapons to South Africa, Pakistan, India and Australia. Moreover, France has expressed its willingness to construct nuclear power stations in Bangladesh and Pakistan and reconstruct the damaged reactor in Iraq. Arms traffic, it is feared could lead to intensification of regional conflicts in

\(^{79}\) For details regarding the history of French presence in the Indian Ocean see, Jean Houberth, "France in the Indian Ocean", *The Round Table*, vol.298, April, 1986, pp.145-66.


102
the Indian Ocean region.81

Besides protecting her economic and political interests, she is committed to safeguarding the SLOCS through the Red Sea and the Suez Canal and protect its island territories of Reunion, Illes Crozet, Kerguelen and Moyotte.82

It has two military bases in the region, one in Djibouti (since 1977) and the other in Reunion. France currently maintains the second largest naval fleet in the Indian Ocean. France has also raised a RDF of 47,000 men for protecting her interests in the Third World. Besides strengthening the air force base in Djibouti, two attack submarines of Polaris type have been recently added to the Indian Ocean fleet.83 The French contribution to Indian Ocean security is often overlooked. It is important to realise that France possesses two major base sites at Djibouti and the Reunion Islands and possesses a number of other islands which could be used as bases. France is the only Western nation other than the two superpowers to operate an Indian Ocean Fleet.

The French Naval Chief of staff Admiral Marc de Joybert said that their politique de pavilllion (show-the-flag) is going to pay dividends.84 France along with other great powers is

81 ibid; See also, Jacques Fremand, "Western Europe and the Indian Ocean", in Cottrell and Burrell, n.14, p.426.
84 Anand, n.80, pp.1146-7.
seeking to justify its military presence by advancing arguments relating to freedom of navigation in international waters, protection of sea lanes and oil-routes and protection of her dependencies in the region.

China

It has been observed that "China's drive towards modernization, its search for a more significant role within the international community, and its proximity to the Indian Ocean region, all point to the likelihood of Beijing taking an increasingly important role in the region's affairs". 85 The visit of two Chinese naval ships—a missile destroyer and a supply ship to the ports of Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka in November, 1985 was a demonstration of this desire. 86 The 1980 trip to the South Pacific to test the missile and the voyage to Antarctic with the Scientific vessels had proved the long range Chinese naval capability. 87

Two years after displaying its interest in the Indian Ocean, the Chinese navy undertook its largest ever naval exercise that involved a combined ocean-going formation of


various ships, in October-November, 1987. The Chinese Flotilla toured the Indian Ocean ports. This represented the fact that the Chinese navy is a 'blue water' force with the objective and capability to operate outside the confines of the Western Pacific Ocean and South China Sea.88 After the completion of this exercise, China announced her plan to set up a satellite ground station for telecommunications across the Pacific and the Indian Ocean. This was yet another indication of the growing Chinese interest in the Indian Ocean.89

The Chinese interests in the Indian Ocean are as follows:

(a) Offset Soviet and American influence on the Eastern Flank of the Indian Ocean area and South East Asia;

(b) Break the Western ring of anti-Chinese regimes and seek a foothold in the Indian Ocean area with an eye on the facilities in Bangladesh and Pakistan, which would also scuttle Indian influence in the region; and

(c) Use her naval power along with other means to prevent being encircled by nations close to the USSR.

The Chinese naval expansion is keeping in tune with the


89 For further details see, Chintamani Mahapatra, "Chinese Navy: Development and Diplomacy", Strategic Analysis, vol.12, No.8, November, 1988, pp.866
similar undertakings of the extra-regional great powers.\textsuperscript{90} China's rivalry with the Soviet Union and the growing convergence of Sino-US strategic objectives in the Indian Ocean region has made her more critical of the Soviet presence.\textsuperscript{91} Now that China is fast developing SLBMs, it will include sea-based missiles against the Soviet Union and its other adversaries and the Indian Ocean will soon assume great strategic importance for China.\textsuperscript{92}

The great American naval strategist Alfred T. Mahan's rationale for naval build up may have undergone some changes due to rapid advancement in the frontiers of Science and Technology and because of the changing pattern of global politico-security environment, but the significance of the navy's role in modern warfare still persists. Echoing a similar sentiment, Admiral Gorshkov, founder of modern Soviet navy said that navy, "has been for many centuries the solitary branch of the armed forces capable of protecting the interests of a country beyond its borders" and added that, "many examples are known where the presence alone of a powerful navy in one sector or another has

\textsuperscript{90} ibid., pp.867-71; Also see for details, Huang Caihang, "Chinese Navy Modernization" \textit{Navy International}, (Surrey), March 1988; Sung Joo Han, "China's Nuclear Weapons Development and Policy", \textit{Asian Perspectives} (Hong Kong), vol. L, Fall 1977, p. 218; Bradley Hahn, "PLA Navy's Strategic Missile Force" \textit{Camilit} (Hong Kong), November 1982, p. 42.

\textsuperscript{91} Bajpai, n.24, p.97; Braun, n.15, p.83.

In general we may say that the broad objectives of the external powers in the Indian Ocean region are as follows:

(i) Unrestricted use of Ocean, ports, airports, and passages for trade, aid and communication purposes: (a) for normal international intercourse (b) for training and experimentation, and (c) to obtain positions of strength that can be used at a time of decision.

(ii) Use of the Ocean, ports, airports and passages for military purposes: (a) for protection of dependencies, (b) for training and experimentation, (c) for military aid to or pressure upon littoral states, and (d) for military pressure upon or in times of conflict with other major powers.

The objectives of the littoral states on the other hand are the retention of national power and the maximization of economic standards, national security, and international status.

**EVOLUTION OF THE PEACE ZONE CONCEPT IN THE INDIAN OCEAN**

The move to establish a peace zone in the Indian Ocean was one of the first of its kind in the world. So far attempts had

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94 T.B. Millar, "Geo-Politics and Military Strategic Potentials", in Burrell and Cottrell, n.14, p.68.

95 ibid.
been made to create such zones on land territories and in space. Moreover, the existing peace zone and nuclear free zone treaties declares illegal, the acquisition and deployment of nuclear weapons in the regions where it does not exist. The proposal for the Indian Ocean seeks not only to remove nuclear weapons from the region but also to remove the presence of foreign powers' military presence from the area.

The evolution of the idea of Indian Ocean as a zone of peace goes back to 1964, when at the Second summit of the Non-aligned Conference at Cairo the demand for the removal of great power military presence from the Indian Ocean. Sri Lanka's Prime Minister, Mrs. Bandaranaike urged that the concept of nuclear free zone should be applied to the oceans, especially to one like the Indian Ocean which had remained till that period of time free from the presence of nuclear weapons. Her suggestions were incorporated in the Cairo declaration, known as 'the Programme for Peace and International Cooperation'.

The Third Non-aligned Summit Conference held at Lusaka in 1970 demanded the establishment of a 'Peace Zone' in the Indian Ocean. The participating states expressed the desire to do away with great power rivalries in the Indian Ocean by calling for an elimination of all bases, whether of army, navy or airforce, from the region. In September 1971, the United Nations


97 ibid..
declared the Indian Ocean as a zone of peace. It asked the great powers to desist from further expansion of their military presence and also sea and air base facilities. The area was also to be free of nuclear weapons. It urged all the states to respect the Indian Ocean as a zone of peace.98

The idea of establishing a peace zone in the Indian Ocean also figured prominently in the Commonwealth meetings. There are nearly fifteen Commonwealth members who are either states bordering the Indian ocean, or are located in the immediate hinterland. The Singapore Conference of the Commonwealth Heads of states held in January 1971 formulated a programme of action for the Indian Ocean community. It asked for the reversal of the trend towards militarization of the Indian Ocean and for the promotion of economic, technical and social cooperation among the Indian Ocean states which are members of the Commonwealth.99

The Prime Minister of Sri Lanka, Mrs. Bandaranaike, expressed her earnest desire for the early evolution of a formula acceptable to everybody regarding the maintenance of the Indian Ocean as a peace zone and a nuclear free zone.100

As mentioned at the very outset at the initiative of Sri Lanka, the Twenty-Sixth U.N. General Assembly, in 1971, discussed the question of making the Indian Ocean a zone of

98 ibid.
99 K.P. Mishra, n61, p.68.
100 Devendra Kaushik, n5, p.188.
The declaration which the Assembly adopted can be broadly divided into two parts. The first part provides the reasons for the Indian Ocean to be declared a zone of peace, and the second part suggests the measures to be taken to implement the concept. The resolution starts with the support for the people of the littoral and hinterland states of the Indian Ocean to preserve their independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity and to resolve their political, economic and social problems under conditions of peace and tranquility.\textsuperscript{102} It also viewed that the great power rivalry and establishment of military bases will lead to increasing tension, armament race, and divert the scarce resources urgently needed for development and socio-economic reconstruction. The resolution expressed its concern at the extension of the armament race into the area and showed conviction that, 'the establishment of a zone of peace in the Indian Ocean would contribute towards arresting such development, relaxing international tension and strengthening international peace and security', which would be in accordance with the purposes and principle of the Charter of the UN.\textsuperscript{103} It also urged that the area be free from nuclear weapons.

In the later part, the resolution declared that 'the air space above and ocean floor subjacent thereto is designated for

\textsuperscript{101} ibid.

\textsuperscript{102} \textit{U.N. Document, A/Resolution/2832 (XXVI), December 16, 1971. This resolution was adopted on the Reports of the First Committee.}

\textsuperscript{103} ibid.
all times as a zone of peace'. 104

The great powers were asked to enter into immediate consultation with the littoral states of the Indian Ocean for (a) halting further escalation and expansion of their military presence in the Indian Ocean; (b) elimination of military bases, installations, and logistical supply facilities; (c) finally, the disposition of nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction and any manifestation of the great power military presence in the Indian Ocean conceived in the context of the great power rivalry. 105 The resolution which was initiated by Sri Lanka, however, did not object to the right to free and unhindered passage by the vessels of all nations. This freedom was not given in absolute terms, and was tempered by an earlier provision of the resolution, which said that vessels of all nations can freely use the Indian Ocean waters, but the warships and aircrafts carrying nuclear and conventional weapons or related materials should not stop in the Indian Ocean except in an emergency. 106

An important implication of the peace zone was that the countries of the Indian Ocean region would have to renounce the nuclear weapons option and would not permit the deployment of nuclear weapons of other states on their territories. The

104 ibid; Also see, S.S. Bhattacharya, "The Indian Ocean: Towards a Zone of Peace", Strategic Analysis, vol.12, No.8, November, 1990), pp.933-46.


advocates of the peace zone claimed that theirs is an international security approach.107

To study the implications of Indian Ocean as a peace zone, the twenty-seventh session of the U.N. General Assembly set up an Ad-Hoc Committee in 1972. It had representatives from fifteen nations and held over eleven meetings. The report produced by the committee provided information about the issues raised, but contained no recommendations as to how the growing military build up by the great powers could be checked. The Committee was of the view that, "(a) a common view point among the littoral and hinterland states of the Indian Ocean should be achieved through close consultations; (b) these states should affirm their resolve to settle disputes between them through peaceful means and without resorting to force in conformity with the principles of mutual respect for the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of the states without prejudice to the exercise of the right to use force in self-defence and attaining self-determination; and (c) there was need to promote and ensure conditions of security within the region so as to strengthen the independence and territorial integrity of the states".108 The Committee also felt that the elaboration of a common view among the regional states would enable them to


108 Year Book of the United Nations (New York, 1972), pp.29-30; Also see, Philip Towle, "The United Nations Ad Hoc Committee on Indian Ocean: Blind Alley or Zone of Peace" in L.W. Bowman and Ian Clark, eds., The Indian Ocean and Global Politics (Colorado, 1982), pp.207-208.
enter into consultation with external powers to implement the aims of the UN declaration.

While in the year 1971 the number of states voting in favour of the resolution was sixty one, in 1972 the number went up to ninety-five and that included almost all the littoral states of the Indian Ocean, some of which had previously abstained. However, this trend must be understood as an endorsement of a general concept rather than any specific undertakings. The twenty-eighth session of the U.N. General Assembly did not debate in detail, and in the sessions held later, resolutions were adopted calling for an international conference on the Indian Ocean.

Proposal for an International Conference on Indian Ocean

The U.N. Ad Hoc Committee on the Indian Ocean in 1974, recommended the holding of an International Conference to decide upon the Indian Ocean as a zone of peace.109 A meeting of the littoral and hinterland states was held in July 1979, which adopted without vote, principles of agreement for implementing the 1971 declaration. Another significant step forward was taken when the UN General Assembly adopted Resolution 34/80B of 11 December 1979, recommending convening of the Conference in 1981 at Colombo. The US and its allies are opposed to the holding of the Conference. The Soviet Union voted for the Resolution and stated its readiness to participate.

109 U.N. Resolution 3259A (XXI); Also see Philip Towle, in Bowman and Clark, n. 106, pp. 208-219.
in the Special Committee. The US and its allies questioned the basis of a regional group of states' attempt to declare a legal regime for the seas which the other states were expected to follow. Their position further hardened after the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan in December 1979. The Western countries allies do not want the Conference to be held so long as a threat exists to its "vital interests". They also assert that it is essential to secure complete harmonization of views and convergence of positions on the substance of the matters for discussion and negotiation at the conference before the conference is held. The UN General Assembly has been noting with regret since 1980 that the conference scheduled to be held in 1981 has still not been convened. It has been renewing the mandate year after year and urging the sorting out of differences and carrying out its instruction to convene the conference.

Moreover, there are at present two specific proposals before the UN Ad Hoc Committee. The one brought forth by the German Democratic Republic is positive and covers a wide area. The proposal calls for quantitative restraints on military activities of extra-regional powers and suggests a gradual approach for the removal of military bases from the region. It also lays down guidelines for the safety of international sea


111 Chandra Kumar, "The Indian Ocean: Arc of Crisis or Zone of Peace?", International Affairs, No.1, No.2, Spring, 1984, p.242; Also see, Raja Mohan, n.26, p.272.
lanes and air communications in the region. However, it makes no mention of verification measures and is too general in nature. The second proposal although containing many useful ideas, incorporates many general principles which are outside the scope of the United Nations Declaration on the Indian Ocean as a zone of peace.\textsuperscript{112}

\textbf{THE POLITICS OF PEACE ZONE}

The evolution of the peace zone concept has also changed qualitatively over the years. From the initial objective of establishing a peace zone by eliminating external foreign power military presence it has now come to include the denuclearization of the states surrounding this area. Pakistan and Sri Lanka proposed that along with the withdrawal of the external powers from the region, the states of the Indian Ocean should also renounce the nuclear weapon option permanently and the peace zone concept should be extended to the landmass. Moreover, application of peace zone to the Ocean area has now been sought to be emphasized in relation to the South Asian region, especially on the insistence of Pakistan since 1974 with the support of Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. Over the years in the United Nations General Assembly these countries have stressed the dual objectives of creating a zone of peace in the Indian Ocean, namely to exclude great power rivalry and to strengthen

\textsuperscript{112} Muni, n.34, "a list of substantive measures and principles" identified for consideration at the level of a working group for the establishment of a zone of peace in the Indian Ocean", p. 138.
regional security by denuclearization of the region and regional arms control measures.\textsuperscript{113}

The political, military and strategic development in South Asia since 1971 has been primarily responsible for the divergent attitude adopted by the littoral states of South Asia. Besides the wide gulf that exists between India and her neighbours in terms of size, resources, economic and industrial development, the detonation of a peaceful nuclear device in 1974 and the expansion of especially the Navy seems to have further strengthened their apprehension.

India has continued her nuclear research programmes without conducting any more nuclear tests although it is viewed by some observers that she may have stepped up her nuclear programme in response to Pakistan's rapid progress in this field and the consequent failure of the super powers to stop Pakistan in its relentless pursuit of the bomb.\textsuperscript{114} Although officially India has persistently denied any intentions of making the bomb, however, it is felt that:

\begin{quote}
Nuclearisation of India could make regional cooperation more difficult and may also prompt some of the smaller neighbours like Sri Lanka, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Burma to seek protection from other nuclear powers like China, the USA and even
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{113} For details see, Yearbook of the United Nations from 1976 onwards. However to cite, some specific references may be seen in vol. 30, 1976, pp. 27-32; vol. 33, 1979, p. 49; vol. 35, 1981, pp. 54-56; vol. 38, 1984, pp. 78-80.

\textsuperscript{114} David Albright and Tom Zamora "India, Pakistan's Nuclear Weapons: All the Pieces in Place", Bulletin of Atomic Scientists (Chicago), vol. 38, No. 5, June 1989, p. 59. This aspect has been dealt in details in Chapter III.
Pakistan. To offset the Indian nuclear threat some of the littoral states of the Indian Ocean like Sri Lanka, may go for the US nuclear security guarantees which would further worsen the security environment in the sub-continent.115

India possesses aircraft carriers, missile destroyers and ocean going submarines. Possession of two replenishment ships, five support tankers and one repair ship enables India to sustain a naval task force in more distant waters of the Indian Ocean.116 Among the recent acquisition was the second aircraft carrier from U.K. and a nuclear submarine which was leased from USSR, for three years in the year 1988.117 There are enough fleet escorts to sustain a second carrier battle group.

In 1969, the navy ranked third among the services in total capital construction, but by 1974 the situation had reversed itself and the navy ranked first, retaining its position in capital expenditures ever since.118

Since 1971, India's navy has also expanded significantly. According to Ashley Tellis, "The latest rationale seems to underscore the protective logic of safeguarding of territorial integrity in the face of superpower confrontation in the Indian

115 Bhabani Sengupta, Nuclear Weapons: Policy Options for India (New Delhi, 1982).
Ocean, a response no doubt reinforced by India's experience with the 'US's Enterprise' in the Bay of Bengal in 1971.119 He summarises India's maritime interests as having four discernible facets:

(1) the protection from threats via the sea to India's independence; (2) India's new capabilities for exploitation of the vast mineral and fish resources of the seabed; (3) India's growing seaborne trade and its particularly heavy reliance on it for critical supplies of energy and high technology imports, in addition to its exports of agricultural and industrial products; and (4) the growing Indian perception of the importance of the Indian Ocean, both as a way to promote its influence with the independent states in the littoral region and as an avenue for exercising its power in order to enforce outcomes favourable to its interest.120

In December 1982, India signed an agreement with Soviet Union which may be one of the largest naval acquisition since World War II.121 India has also made substantial non-Soviet purchases as well. In late 1981 India signed an agreement with Howaldtswerke of erstwhile West Germany for construction of two Type-1500 submarines and the supply of 'Packages' for the building of two more submarines at Mazagaon Shipyard in Bombay.122

Despite India's general naval predominance, her ability to

120 ibid., p. 1191.
project power ashore is still limited.\textsuperscript{123} This, however, is not the view of the states of the South Asian region. They feel that the naval presence of the extra-regional powers would provide them security and from the perceived Indian dominance in the region. Sri Lanka, had formally proposed the peace zone idea for the Indian Ocean. It was seen that when the Diego Garcia base was sought to be expanded it did not cause any crisis in ties between Washington and Colombo. Beyond expressing disappointment and misgivings, Colombo refrained from advocating any international action. It is said, "although Ceylonese leaders would never openly admit it, a United States

interest in the Indian Ocean is welcome as long as it is directed to counterbalance Soviet activity" and India. 124 Successive Pakistani regimes have also pointed out that, "India's purchase of aircraft carriers and aircraft and rapidly increasing maritime power projection capabilities", also a threat to the other South Asian states. 125 It is also interesting to note that the countries of this region have not expressed any concern over the Chinese military and naval buildup and the recent spurt in Japanese military preparedness. 126

Besides discussing the Indian Ocean Peace Zone proposal at the U.N. level, each succeeding summits of the Non-aligned countries starting from Aligers in 1973 to the Belgrade Summit of 1989, resolutions have been adopted demanding the demilitarization of the Indian Ocean. It also figured quite regularly in meetings of prominent leaders. Mrs. Indira Gandhi, the Indian Prime Minister, had rejected from the very beginning the theory of 'power vacuum' advocated by some great powers. 127


127 The advocates of the power vacuum theory maintain that the British naval hegemony till 1960s had given stability to the Indian Ocean region. But after the withdrawal of Britain from the East of Suez, a power vacuum has been created. This is because no regional power had a navy large enough to police the region. Hence it should be done by some other powers now. This theory has been rejected by the Indian Ocean states like India. Times of India, 29 April 1973.
Thus, it is now nearly two decades that the littoral countries had been voicing their concern for the Indian Ocean to be freed from big power military presence.

THE FALLACY OF BALANCED PRESENCE

There is also a view expressed by some states of the Indian Ocean region that it is utterly unrealistic to pursue a policy of a peace zone when the Indian Ocean has already been militarized, and at best what is possible now is a "balanced presence", of the great powers.\textsuperscript{128}

The exponents of 'balanced presence' idea include Malaysia, Somalia, Mauritius, a number of Gulf nations and some South Asian countries like Pakistan.

Although Pakistan has denounced the great power rivalry in the region and has supported the call for elimination of great power military presence, however, its stand has differed on this issue because she has felt that small nations cannot dictate terms to the great powers and more importantly that, the presence of more than one big power is better than the presence of only one big power. In other words, "...more the number, the greater the neutralization of their presence....."\textsuperscript{129}


\textsuperscript{129} Late Prime Minister Z.A. Bhutto's interview to Asahi Shinbunin Tokyo, on 8 February 1976. For the text of the interview see Pakistan Foreign Affairs, (Islamabad), February 1976, pp.12-25.
Pakistan has also stressed the need for proper conditions of security and self-restraint at the regional level in order to pave the way for the establishment of a peace zone in the Indian Ocean. According to Pakistan, the elimination of great power presence and military build up could only be brought about if the littoral and hinterland states put their houses in order and take steps to ensure an atmosphere of security in the region. She argued in favour of establishing a political regime and a code of conduct to guide the relations among the Indian Ocean states. An important element as envisaged by Pakistan was an arrangement among the major littoral states to maintain a reasonable ratio in their naval and military forces, as well as an undertaking not acquire or introduce nuclear weapons in the region.\textsuperscript{130} Cheok, an official of the Singapore Foreign Office said that, "Yes, of course we would like to see the Indian Ocean declared a zone of peace. But the reality on the ground and on the water will not allow this, so we would like to have a balanced situation with multipowers maintaining parity".\textsuperscript{131}

This is however, a narrow approach. A policy is not measured only by the yardstick of its attainability, but also by its wider ramifications. The demand for elimination of great power military presence from the region is also a continuation of the struggle against colonialism and its modern manifestations. Secondly, outside influence in the region would

\textsuperscript{130} Samina Ahmed, "Indian Ocean Peace Zone Proposal", Pakistan Horizon (Karachi), vol.32, Nos.1 & 2, pp.136-37.

\textsuperscript{131} Michael T. Kaufan, "Build-up in Indian Ocean", (Strategic Digest, Vol.II, no.6, June 1981), p.507.
conflicts. Countries like Australia and the Gulf states prefer a exacerbate local 'balanced presence' of super power navies rather than elimination, mainly because of their alignment with particular blocs. Thirdly, this theory runs parallel to the theory of balance of deterrence which has led to continuous vertical proliferation (of nuclear arms). Since technology does not stay static and the two sides to the arms race do not have symmetrical weapons systems there is an inbuilt escalation in this concept. Hence, the idea of balanced presence does not hold much water as a viable alternative.

The Indian Ocean Peace Zone concept which has now acquired a fairly long history is, however, even now faced with the difficulty of the lack of a common understanding on the basic principles. The external foreign powers first objected to the implementation of the idea of the peace zone as the precise limits were not cleared defined. This objection was turned down by the Ad Hoc Committee's first report which said that the, "need for such accurate definition was not necessary at the initial stage". Another objection of the great powers was that the peace zone contravenes the principle of freedom on the high seas. As mentioned earlier, this is not true in reality. Moreover, the freedom of the high seas, which was devised to secure free commerce and other peaceful activities, have been abused as a cover up for unrestrained military activities and

132 For details see, the UN General Assembly Ad Hoc Committee Report, 1972.
intervention and domination by powerful maritime nations. The great powers also asserted that such regional efforts may undermine the global disarmament measures that were being pursued at the U.N. level. The great powers also expressed doubts regarding the method and mechanism of regulating and checking the presence of foreign military forces. Both the Socialist and Western power blocs defended and tried to justify their military build-ups on the pretext of the other's presence.

Further, there was a lack of agreement among the Indian Ocean states on the modalities of establishing the peace zone. Pakistan and India adopted different strategies although they accepted the peace zone concept in principle. Hence, the lack of an unified approach as well as the existence of local rivalries has made the Indian Ocean peace zone concept even more complex. Despite all these differences in approaches and methods, there exists a common set of objectives, shared by almost all the Indian Ocean states. These include the elimination of great power rivalry and all forms of militarization and also to do away from this area all weapons of mass destruction and nuclear weapons. Finally, all forms of arms race and arms build up is to be eliminated from the peace zone area. A common driving force behind the desire for a peace zone concept.

133 ibid.
zone is still the deep seated suspicion (which the countries of
the Indian Ocean share) of the activities of the super powers in
the region. However, this apparent unity at the surface
should not be overlooked as their approaches to the problems is
widely divergent.

THE NAVAL ARMS LIMITATION TALKS

Prospects of establishing a peace zone looked up when
President Jimmy Carter took office in January 1977. He proposed
that the US would seek to establish Soviet willingness to reach
an agreement on mutual restraint in the Ocean. The dialogue
between the two superpowers proceeded on hopeful lines. Three
rounds of talks were held in 1977 at Moscow in June, at
Washington in September and at Berne in December. The
'understanding' reached was to stabilise their naval presence,
to avoid escalation of arms race and further, consider reducing
progressively their military activities in the Indian Ocean
region. The talks got bogged down after the fourth round at
Berne in February 1978. Finally, the talks were virtually


137 For details see, Ashok Kapur, "Carter's Diplomacy and the
Indian Ocean Region", in Bowman & Ian Clark, eds., n.108,
pp. 131-48; Chandra Kumar, "Indian Ocean-Arena of Conflict

Analysis, vol. 1, No. 11, February 1978, p.8; Ashley T. Tellis, "The Naval Balance in the Indian Subcontinent",
Contd...
abandoned due to the onset of the second cold war and a chain of subsequent events like the Ogaden War, border conflict between North and South Yemen, developments in Iran and Afghanistan, and the Gulf war between the Iran and Iraq.\textsuperscript{139}

The security situation in Europe and the Indian Ocean region are fundamentally different. But due to the Eurocentric nature of strategic thinking which has been arrived through arms control and confidence-building measures at the Helsinki and Stockholm Conferences, the same methods are frequently sought to be applied in the Third World region.\textsuperscript{140} However, without rejecting them, outright, they may be tried in the Indian Ocean context, provided a realistic evaluation of the security situation is done of this region and the confidence building measures are not at the cost of the ultimate objective of securing the Indian Ocean as a zone of peace.

Contd ...


The confidence-building measures in the Indian Ocean region can take place at three levels. First, improvement at the level of great power relationships which may have a benign effect directly or indirectly on the region. There are a few instances which can be cited in this context. The 1972 understanding between USA and USSR to prevent accidents and incidents of conflict between naval vessels and military aircraft overflying the high seas. Although unsuccessful, Naval Arms Limitation Talks in 1977-78 between the two superpowers in the context of the Indian Ocean was also an effort in this direction. In the ensuing phase of detente, Mikhail Gorbachev, in an interview to the Indonesian paper Merdeka, in July 1987, spelt out some specific proposals in this regard. These include: (a) restricting the movement of vessels carrying nuclear weapons; (b) curbing anti-submarine warfare activities in specified zones; (c) limitations on naval exercise, etc.\(^{141}\) The Joint US-Soviet study on, "Requirements for stable co-existence in United States-Soviet Relations", released in May 1988 is also pertinent in this context.\(^{142}\)

Although the enhanced prospects of peace and stability due to superpower rapprochement which started during the Regan-

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141 Gorbachev's interview to Merdeka. The full text in Soviet Review (Moscow), No.50, 1987, pp.3-15; cited in Muni, n.34, p.133.

142 ibid.,
Gorbachev era has been welcomed, "the underlying principle of the superpower detente is management of conflict rather than its complete elimination". Moreover, the other nuclear powers like China, France and U.K. have kept away from the process of evolving detente and the reduction of armaments levels.

The second level of confidence-building measures pertains to relations between extra-regional nuclear powers and the countries of the Indian Ocean region. Their quest of the great powers to extend their power and influence only partly explains their military presence in the Indian Ocean region. A large part of it is meant to protect their perceived national interests and for promoting their desired objectives in relation to the countries of the region.

As mentioned earlier, an international conference on the Indian Ocean towards confidence-building measures was originally scheduled to be held in 1980. However, the Western Powers have frustrated this attempt by insisting that it would not serve any purpose unless improvement in the security situation in and around the Indian Ocean took place and there was harmony in the security perceptions of the regional countries. It is now realised that the Western Powers' opposition is in reality a tactical posture to cover the steady growth of their military presence in the region.144

143 ibid.
144 ibid., pp.135-36; Also see, Yuri Nikdayev, n. 110, pp. 88-91.
It is also seen that 'without taking much positive note of the sub-regional groupings (like for example the establishment of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, the Southern African Development Coordination Committee and the Gulf Cooperation Council) in the context of Indian Ocean as a zone of peace, they have mostly highlighted the negative aspects of the sub-regional security situations in order to delay the conference on the Indian Ocean. Their efforts to encourage divisive moves is also perceived in their attempts to foster concepts like NWFZs in South Asia, proposed by one of the close Western allies, Pakistan and, a single-country peace zone idea, moved by Nepal. While the second is conceptually fuzzy, the first is incompatible with the guidelines laid down by the United Nations'.

The continued extra-regional great powers presence in the Indian Ocean has so far prevented the establishment of a peace zone in the Indian Ocean. The external powers have tried on one pretext or another to keep their navies and expand their base facilities in the region. Not only have they opposed the proposals themsevles but have also tried to undermine it by creating divisions within the states of the region who are economically, politically and militarily dependent on them by resorting to diversionary tactics (the Pakistan proposal for establishment of a nuclear weapon-free zone in South Asia is one such measure). The improvement in the superpower relations also offer hardly any opportunity for establishing a peace zone in the Indian Ocean.

145 ibid., p. 137.
CONCLUSION

The second cold war which began in the early 1980s made the high seas the most dangerous battle-grounds of the world. The U.S. and Soviet navies both undertook large shipbuilding programmes in order to keep ahead of the other. The importance of the navy went up significantly in the military strategy of the super powers, leading to increased numbers and dimensions of naval exercises and deployment of new nuclear weapons to project power globally. But with improvement in the East-West relations the superpowers' "navies now find themselves stranded in receding waters".\(^{146}\) Yet both the navies remain uniquely exempt from arms control negotiations that will reshape the land and air forces of the two superpowers. Until the two governments agree to place certain limits on their naval forces, each will continue to build and deploy naval weapons and vessels that the other finds threatening.

In a series of speeches and press interviews, Gorbachev and his advisers have offered a plethora of proposals for bilateral and multilateral naval cutbacks including withdrawing U.S. and Soviet forces from the Baltic Sea, the Mediterranean Sea and the Indian Ocean.\(^{147}\) The naval arms race which had peaked in 1986 later started declining with the improvement of U.S.-Soviet ties. Large cuts were made in Soviet military and

\(^{146}\) For details see Ross, n.56, p.94.

\(^{147}\) ibid. For a brief summary of these proposals see, pp.103-106.
The Soviet Union has every incentive to engage the West in naval arms control as the Soviets cope with an unfavourable balance of sea power (more so in the Indian Ocean), and a fast shrinking military budget. The Soviet Government has made a political virtue of economic necessity. Although the US Navy acknowledges that the Soviet cuts are real, they also contend that the Soviet Navy is getting stronger and more capable due to the induction of new Soviet ships and submarines.

The US Navy has blocked any form of arms control at sea because such a move it feels will level off America's naval advantages over the Soviet Union and deny America any influence in the developments in the World. Even confidence and security building measures are seen by the US Navy as detrimental developments. The navy's antipathy towards arms control is compounded by what it perceives as its uniquely global role. The US Navy Under Secretary, Lawrence Garrett III, testified in March 1988:

Since 1955 the Navy has been called upon in 153 cases to respond to crises involving international conflict, tension or terrorist activity to protect US assets or citizens abroad... These actions represent roughly 80% of the instances where American armed forces have been employed in this

148 The size of the Soviet fleet has also begun to diminish, as scores of older Soviet vessels are retired. The Soviets removed more ships active service in 1988 than in any other year in recent history. Ibid., p.104.
period. Sea based forces are often the only forces available to react immediately in defence of national interests.\footnote{149}

The Persian Gulf escort operations in 1987-88 emphasized the navy's role in Third World disputes. According to the US Navy, any arms control agreement with the Soviet Union would unacceptably tie its hands in Third World conflicts.

The US Navy has also stressed that the number of US military bases overseas will thin out in the decade ahead. It argues that a large fleet, well stocked with aircraft carriers, can serve as a series of floating foreign bases to compensate for disappearing overseas facilities. As the danger of an East-West conflict has faded, the US Navy has pointed to low-intensity Third World conflicts as a reason to maintain a large fleet and avoid arms control.\footnote{150}

This is in direct opposition to the very rationale of establishing a peace zone in the Indian Ocean, i.e., elimination of external great power military presence from the region to ensure peace, security and development of the Indian Ocean states.

\footnote{149 ibid, pp.106-7.}
\footnote{150 ibid.}