Introduction

National security depends upon a number of factors that span the field of Geo-strategy, Geo-politics, National Interests and International relations with their neighboring countries. Geo-strategic location is one of the most important factors for the security of the nation. India's location in the world map has been a constant factor for its security. The Himalaya's in the north and Indian Ocean in the south had served in the past as a natural barrier of India's security against aggressions by foreigners. But in the changed circumstances of present time, heights of mountain and depths of the sea are no more barrier. China therefore, could succeed in fulfilling its ambitions in the Himalayas and United Kingdom & United states of America could succeed their ambitions for establishing strong naval bases in the world oceans.

India's location as a littoral countries in the east of Arabian sea is one for its being dominant committed to the establishment of peace and stability in this region, as well as its own security. In the past the British never relaxed their hold on Arabian sea due to its Geo-political location surrounded by India, Pakistan, Iran, Oman, P.D.R. Yemen, Dijibuti, Somalia and Maldives. It formed a vital point of India's security in the west. Its location caused the Government of India to watch the development in all the littoral countries of the Arabian sea. An other important British interest in the Arabian sea was the trade from India to west through Red sea, Swez canal to Mediterranean sea, both the security of India and the development of trade routes between India and littoral countries of Afro-Asian countries and European countries.
India is a maritime nation. Most of its growing foreign trade passes through international straits such as Malacca, straits of Hormuz, Bab-al-Mandab. India exports 70% oil through Hormuz straits. Suez canal is also of vital importance to India as 80% of the Indian ships passes through the canal. So, India needs uninterrupted passage for its ships and overflights in the Arabian sea.

Great powers interested in the Gulf region & Arabian sea are the U.K., France, the USA and USSR. Throughout the last century and a half, Indian ocean, Arabian sea & Persian Gulf remained a British lake. The British interest was to promote their trade and political influence in the Gulf under the pretext of curbing the slave trade and piracy. With march of the twentieth century British oil interests in the Gulf increased and the British Navy, which switched over to oil from stean before world war I was inextricably bound to the persian Gulf oil through Arabian sea. With the opening of Suez canal U.K. got a very easy intance to send their novel forces to Gulf region and Arabian sea from their home ports via Suez taking about a week or so to do so, as compared to about five week around the cape of good hope. But at present U.K. is no longer capable of playing there like USA & USSR as it had played for two centuries before.

French interests are mainly economic, the import of petrol products and export of weapons, industrial plants and advanced technology. The US sixth fleet from its bases in the eastern Mediterranean also conveniently sent its task forces in the Indian ocean through Red sea & Arabian sea taking only 4 days or so.
The USSR derives considerable strategic advantage from the opening of waterway at as it has considerably shortend the route of their warships. It can now send its ships from the black sea base at sevastapol 2200 miles from the Arabian sea via swez rather than 1100 miles long trip around Africa or the 9000 miles long trip from Vladivostak - the time taken being reduced from about 22 days to just 5 days. Such a short-cut route would facilitate quick Soviet access to the Indian ocean through Arabian sea.

Concluding by it may be said that the ostensible justification for world powers military present in the region is stated to be mainly the protection of maritime routes, especially oil supply lines to and from. The persian Gulf oil fields against hostile naval presence in Arabian sea. The real intentions of the great powers to assist the colonial regimes in the littoral countries influence oil producing countries of Arabian sea to strengthen moderate regimes and support their allies in the area, to protect their economic and other interests.

The Sino-Pak collision can be a threat to Indian security in the Arabian sea. Where they can jointly mobilize their naval powers with help of America against India. The opening of Karakoram highway through Khunjreb pass in Pak occupied Kashmir i.e. Kashgar, Gilgit Karachi road has a great significance for China as it gives her direct overland access to the Arabian sea. The Pecking Islamabad axis is a game deeper than what meets the naked eye. To the Pakistan leadership observed with fear of India, friendship with China has become sacrosant. They had contributed their role as a bridge between washington and Pecking.
Although Arabian sea is a small sea yet with the bulk of the world population living along its shores, can not over emphasized. The interruption of the big powers in the Indian ocean as well as its interests in the person Gulf countries had made the security problem of the region further complicated. Thus there is great need for the establishment of security system in the Arabian sea. The fall of shah of Iran, the USSR presence in Afghanistan and occurance of Iran-Iraq war has emerged a new power vaccum in the littoral countries of arabian sea. As a result U.S. has started to provide a massive military aid to Pakistan for making their strong power balance influence in the region. China is a great supporter of US-Pak allience. The collaboration of US-Pak-China has emerged new horizons of Geo-strategical, Geo-political appraisal in Arabian sea for the security of India.

**Geo-Historical Background**

The Arabian sea and the littorals surrounding it have figured prominently in history since time immemorial. The ancient civilizations of Babylon, Mespotamia and India have flourished along its shores. The Persian, Greek, Arab and Indians have left their imprints on these littoral lands. The Portuguese, Dutch and the French have each ventured into these waters in the not too distant past, and the British converted this area of sea in to their personal lake only 100 years ago. While the united states is prepared to use force to protect what it considers to be, its vital interests in this region, the Soviet a few hundred kilometres away, are most concerned with recent developments just beyond their southern borders.
The Persian Gulf an extension of Arabian sea has become the focus of attention of almost the entire world. It is only the deposits of carbon that have given this area such as strategic importance. Are regional ambitions likely to effect the peace and stability of South Asia? How is USA & USSR going to respond such problem in future and what impact does Arabian sea area has on India's security.

To answer these questions a detailed analysis of the Geo-political and Geo-strategic significance of the Arabian sea will be necessary. This study will address itself to the factors which play a significant role in determining an area's political and strategic importance and then examine these in relation to contemporary developments in the Arabian sea. The domestic pressures in each countries, the regional conflicts and the relation of these littoral nations with outside powers will also be analysed with a view to identifying the problem and prospects of peace in the Arabian sea area in foreseeable future.

Geostrategic & Geopolitical Significance

Arabian sea is located in the North-western part of the Indian ocean in between 0° to 25° North Latitudes and 50° to 80° Eastern Longitudes : It has 6500 kms. of coast line, with about 1200 islands and 578 islets, including Lukshadeep, Minicog and Maldives. It covers only about 7% of the total area of the Indian Ocean. It receives 9% of Global river runoff. It is separating the two peninsulas India and Arabia. The northern boundary of the sea is land locked and it receives waters of high salinity from the Gulf and the red sea. The Gulf water flows through the Hormuz strait which has a maximum sill-depth of about 100 m while the red sea water flows through the
strait of Bal-el-Mahdab with the maximum sill depth of 125 ms. These are the only two water masses of the Arabian sea which originates from the north. The presence of the Gulf and the Red sea water masses have been traced all over the Arabian sea up to the equator. The Gulf water can be identified in the depth range 100 to 300 ms and Arabian sea has relatively fewer ports and harbours. The eastern sea board of Arabia is over 4000 miles long but there is hardly any major port before Aden. Bushire, Bandar, Abbas and Chahban are minor harbours in south Iran, linked with the hinterland only by road. Pashni another minor port in Baluchistan which is connected by road with Kalat and Queta. Pakistan and India also have few ports in this region with good facilities for ships including dry docks. The principal seaways in this region connect Aden and the Persian Gulf to Karachi & Bombay.

The geographical boundaries of the sea have been a subject of much discussion and are not yet finally settled. Generally, the description offered by the International Hydrographic bureau is accepted. Accordingly its western boundary lies along the meridian of Cape Agulhas (20° east latitude) and also at the western coast line countries are UAE, Oman, Yemen, Aden, Somalia and north western coastal countries are Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar. The southern coastal countries are Maldives, Scychelles and Chagos Archipelgo and the eastern boundary is made by the western coastal line of India.

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Ibid,
The Gulf of Aden, situated at the entrance of Red sea in western Arabian sea. It is the only way through which all the ships passes from east to west via Suez canal. The Gulf constantly narrow from its western end to the straits of Bab-el-Mandeb, situated at the lower entrance to the Red-sea. Aden is the fuelling station for both the naval and merchant ships and is, therefore of vital strategic & geopolitical importance. Further off the Gulf of Aden, in the north is the Arabian sea.

The Gulf of Oman corrects the Arabian sea with the Persian Gulf. Opposite the eastern coast of the Indian peninsula lies the triangle shaped Bay of Bengal. Thus on the different sides, the Arabian sea washes the coasts of African countries, Arabia, Iran, Pakistan and India.

There are three Archipelagos, the Laccadives, Maldives and Chagos between the meridian's 70 and 75. The Laccadive is situated off the Malabar coast opposite Calicut in the Arabian sea. Below the Laccadives lie a group of 17 atolls and a huge number of smaller islands which together constitute the Maldivian group. More than 300 are inhabited. The chagos Archipelago lies to south of Maldivian islands. It has a total area of about 76 square miles and only about 1000 people. The only inhabited island of this group is its harbour of Diego-Garcia. It measures 13x6 mile. It is situated in the belt of tropical trade winds and has a moderate climate. It is at present under the influence of Americans, who have turned it into military base.

In the west of the Arabian sea along with the meridian 55 are
situated the islands of Schychells. The Archipelgo comprises of 92 islands. Male is the most important and lies 40° and 50° south latitude and 55°-56° east longitude. It 17 mile long and 4-7 miles wide. The strategic importance of the 92 islands of scychells is great, for they are the first land pieces on the Bombay-Africa run.

The territory, about 200-300 kms. off the coast of Kerala, consists of a group 27 coral islands. Only 10 of which are inhabited. The total area is 32 sq.kms. the HQS of administration are located on the Kavaratti island. The island up till now under the influence of primitive agricultural practices is undergoing changes.

The Lakshadeep group straddles international maritime route to end from the red sea Persian Gulf and the Arabian sea ports to Colombo and beyond, the outpost has immense strategic value along India's south-west flank. in crisis situation-monitoring the activities of foreign traders and hostile aircroft. Moreover, these several uninhabited islands and islets along the west coast which can be used for questionable activities smuggling anti-national and other activities.

It needs to be mentioned the US multi purpose logistic base on Diego-Garcia about 1250 kms. Further south supports US CENTCOM operations in the Arabian sea Persian Gulf region. US aircroft and warships to and from the base have been operating close to India's ocean territories. Though the moves pose no threat to India, it gives the supper power the capability of exerting pressure on India at a time of its choosing.
Arabian sea in Relation to Pakistan and India

Alfred Mahan is supposed to have said: "Whoever controls the Indian ocean dominates Asia. This ocean is the key to the seven seas. In the 21st century the destiny of the world will be decided on its waters." This statement may be exaggerated, but seems to contain some truth. From old the Indian ocean has been an arena where the rivalries of the great powers are played out.

The strategic importance of Arabian sea for India is mainly due to its geographical location. The important sea routes which traverse it, and rich natural resources of the densely populated countries on its shores. The sea routes of the Arabian sea connect by way of the Persian Gulf and Red sea. In the region are located rich natural resources, mainly wool, jute, tea, tin, rubber, gold, copper and magnesium. In addition to its most important natural resource, namely oil in the western Arabian sea. In recent years the United States, Western Europe and Japan have become increasingly reliant on oil from the Persian Gulf and this dependence is likely to persist into the future. Most of these oil movements have to go through the Arabian sea.

Thus, Arabian sea region has become very sensitive sea area of the world. Touching it's coast oil producing countries this area has become very important from military point of view. India's maritime boundaries are connected with Pakistan in this sea region which still have not settled. The absence of delimitation of mari-

time boundary with Pakistan a continuing irritant—is likely to create some problems. There have been frequent cases of poaching by Pakistan trawlers and fishing boats, harassment of Indian fishermen and hijacking of merchant vessels by the Pakistan Navy and its maritime security Agency in the Lakhpat-Okha region and off the coast of Saurashtra. In January 1988, Pakistan seized six Indian merchant vessels on way to the coast of Saurashtra from the Gulf ports, two trawlers, some fishing boats and apprehend some fishermen. In early 1988 there were 230 Indian fishermen and fishing boats in Pakistani custody, while 200 Pakistani fishermen and 20 boats illegally poaching in Indian water were in India’s custody. However, as a gesture of goodwill, it was agreed on February 12, 1988 by both governments to release the boats and fishermen.

Pakistan has not approached India to delineate the maritime boundary: it seems to be interested in keeping the cauldron boiling for reasons best known to it. However, given the goodwill, there can be no reason why maritime boundaries with Bangladesh and Pakistan can not be settled within the framework of an international law on the subject. Minister of state for external affairs Natwar Singh told the Lok Sabha on March 2, that India was taking steps to enter into negotiations with Pakistan for demarcation of boundary.

Instability in this maritime theatre and carving spheres of influence by outside power on western flank in Arabian sea by outside power pose a potential threat to India’s Ocean territories. Such a conflict spectrum brings in sharp focus the strategic location off-shore installations and far-flung island groups. The importance
of naval defence has been enhanced by India's decision to exploit under water resources in exclusive economic zone (EEC). Defence K.C. Pant told the parliamentary committee of the defence ministry of February 18, 1988. India can ill-afford to ignore great power and their proxies or opportunistic client states amassing sophisticated weapons exuberating tensions, shifting the focus of cold war close to its waters of geographical proximity. Despite the UN General Assembly resolution declaring the Indian Ocean Zone of Peace in December 1971, the great powers have stepped up their naval deployment and upgraded and created new military facilities increasing insecurity, tensions and instability on India's western flank.

Finally, I will be grateful to the readers for their valuable suggestion (if any) to improve this work.

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