CHAPTER II

Arabian Sea through the Ages
Arabian Sea during 16th & 18th Century

Arabian Sea has been played a very important role since 16th Century, though it had witnessed the heaviest traffic through its waters since antiquity. It is bordering only East Africa, South Asia (exclusive of Sri Lanka) and North-West Asia and serving Europe as well for commercial purposes. Europe situated too far up the Arabian Sea, traders could reach it only by covering part of distance overland, which considerably added to the cost of carriage. All Asian and most African countries used it as convenient halting stations for the vessels moving to and fro on the Arabian Sea and beyond it. Some of these halting stations had over the Centuries developed as entrepots for loading and unloading of Cargoes in transit.¹

Till recently Arabian Sea is much more rich in producing oil and other essential ores & cruades. Geographical attributes and advantages apart, the paradoxical role played by the Arabian Sea in the historical evolution of the sub-continent is a fact of life. Commercial intercourse and political manoeuvrability has always affected its insular character.

The merchants of under endowed Europeans attracted by India's legendary richness hastened eastwards to share in its highly lucrative trades. The portuguese adopted process was continued among others with English, the most advanced naval power of the day and

¹. R.C. Sharma : The oceans realities and prospects (Rajesh Publications, New Delhi, INDIA) Page 1.
who eventually ended as the Colonial rulers of the unsuspecting India.

Traffic-wise Arabian Sea seemed to have been practically free for all from ancient period. Though Oceanic intercourse was relatively more developed than overland trade, it was still minimal due to the sailing hazards, low volume of production, narrow range of market and undeveloped marketing facilities in a preimitive milieu, were some of the odds accounting for the sparing use of the sea. However, our evidence testifies to the constant movement of Indians and west-Asians, in their loaded ships and chinese in the huge junks filled with merchandise, frequenting the Arabian Sea. It may be assumed that the dominant spirit was to supplement each other's effort at transmission of goods from place to place. It was become strategically also important because of the intervention of a super powers after the withdrawal of British.

The Arabian Sea passed out of Asian hands from 1498 and became the dias of violent contests among the European Nations. The Portuguese supremacy was, unlike that of Arabs, marked with constant naval engagements, mutual piratic operations, ruthless suppression of rival naval powers. Further, being backed by their parent state, they were unable to conform to any rules, or displayed any sense of responsibility towards their new neighbours taking

2. Ibid, p. 2
3. Ibid, p. 2
4. Ibid, p. 3
advantage of their superiors being too far away. They lost all
sense of restraint. Consequently they failed to find any support
in their days amongst the local inhabitants of the areas where they
settled. Most importantly, as their challenge had dislodged the
Arab leaders, the Portuguese own decline, provided an opportunity
for other European nations, to enter the field in a big way but all
the time, avoiding the pitfalls of the Portuguese conduct exhibi-
ted, in the process of acquiring dominance over the Arabian Sea. Asians had once again being kept out of their old independent
oceanic trading activities, now by the Dutch and English successors
of the Portugues.

In 1622, the East India Company with the King of Persia as
ally, took the offensive and drove the Portuguese out of Hormuz,
thus breaking their hold over the vital north-western gateway. One
by one, the tentacles so adroitly spread over the Arabian Sea by
Albuquerque were cut and Portuguese sea power in the area waned.

By 1661, Portugal ceded Bombay to the British crown as part
of the spoils of their Infanta Catherine when she married King
Charles II of England. In 1662, the Crown leased Bombay to the
East India Company at a rent of £ 10 a year. Bombay, which super-

S. Ibid., p. 3

6. S. N. Kohli ; Sea Power and the Indian Ocean (Hill Publishing
Company Limited New Delhi), Page 7.
sed Surat as the main depot of the East India Company in 1686, was frequently besieged. In fact, up to the end of the Century, the position of the Company was often very shaky, especially during the Conflict between England and France (1689-97). England was fully occupied in Europe. The French sent a small fleet to India which captured many British ships. However, the East India Company managed to keep going, protected by its own navy, the Bombay marine.

During the later Mughals its naval power decreased from 3000 vessels to 768 and it could not succeed in standing up to the European Powers' navy in the Arabian Sea.\textsuperscript{7} The Marathas took keen interest in developing a navy and troubled both the Mughals and the Portuguese on the Arabian sea. Indeed Kanoji Angre was the most daring sea captain of his time. According to K.M. Pannikar: "A control of the Arabian sea waters remained in Indian hands even after the breakdown of the Chola naval power, till the arrival of the Portuguese. The Arabs, who succeeded after the decline of the Chola naval power, were only commercial navigators."\textsuperscript{8}

The Portuguese appeared more strong in the Arabian sea than Arabs and Indians joint resistance. Vasco-da-Gama set on foot Indian soil at Calicut in May 1498. In their first encounter, the naval forces of the Egyptians and the Zamorin of Calicut beat the Portuguese in 1507, but they were later defeated at Diu ( ).

\textsuperscript{7} Devendra Kaushik: The Indian Ocean (Vikash Publishing House) p. 8

\textsuperscript{8} Ibid. p. 8
Albuquerque conquered Hormuz in 1509 and Goa in 1510. The Portuguese also captured the island of Socotra. In 1538 the Turks captured Aden after a clash with the Portuguese, but acquisition on the fortress of Diu for the Portuguese were in a position to dominate all the ports whence ships could start for the Red Sea and in point of fact most of the Arab shipping agents soon left India. Thus, the Portuguese monopolized some sea routes and some commodities; Indian and other shipping could ply between specified ports by obtaining special licences on payment of substantial fees. Thus, Portuguese dominated the main trade-routes throughout the 16th Century.

Thus, the Portuguese inflicted a heavy blow to the Arab, Egyptian, and Persian trade relations with India, from which the latter could never recover. In the succeeding centuries (After 16th century), the Dutch, the Danes, the French and lastly the British maneuvered against one another in an effort to control India's trade with Europe. The Mughal Emperors were conscious of the growing power of the Portuguese in the Arabian sea. After Portuguese failure, the English, French and the Dutch came as traders in the Arabian sea in the opening years of the 17th century. They obtained trading charters from their home governments as well as customs concessions and the permission to build factories and lastly the purchase of lands and villages.

10. Ibid. p.10.
The British drove the Portuguese from Hormuz in 1622 in alliance with the king of Persia. The British also dislodged the French from Mauritius in 1810. Gradually with the seizure of Maldives and Aden in 1839, they had observed their undisputed mastery over the region. 11

The latter half of the 17th century, however, saw a brief revival of the sea power of the oriental peoples. In 1668 the Arabs of Oman drove the Portuguese out of Mascat and invaded Diu and Oman. 12 Towards the close of the century the Arabs seized Bombay, Zanzibar and Pemba. Later they clashed with the Persians and occupied most of the Persian Gulf islands. The same period also witnessed the rise of the Maratha navy. But the decline of the great Asian states during the 18th 13 century handicapped their rise as maritime power, with the result that the gifted Maratha and Arab sailors took to piracy.

The Admirals of the Mughals at Cambay and Janjira developed a naval power sufficiently strong to protect the commercial interests of the Rajputas. Sidi of Janjira offered their allegiance to the Mughals (1670) 14 to withstand the attacks of Shivaji and Aurangzeb gladly accepted it. The Moghul navy in Surat which never counted for much joined the Sids of Janjira who from that time, till the rise of British naval power in Bombay, were a major power on the west coast and played a notable part in naval history.

11. Ibid. p. 10
12. Ibid. p. 10
13. Ibid. p. 10
The strength of the Mughal naval power and Shivaji's own failure to reduce Janjira, led the Maratha King to consider the question of creating a fleet for himself. Though bases were constructed and fleets built shivaji's own efforts to command the sea met with only a moderate measure of success. The power of sids after recurring the support of Aurangzeb had grown greatly and they were able to command the Sea from Goa to Gujerat. It was this mastery of the Konkan coast that saved the Mughal power in the south during the life of Shivaji.

The power of the Sids on the Konkan coast was practically unchallenged till 1683.15 In that year Sidhoji Gijar the Maratha Admiral took Suwarngao and Vijayadoorg (Gheria) important bases on the coast. After the death of Sidhoji, Kanhoji Angre became Admiral. He had captured Colaba from the Sids and gradually recovered much of the sea board.16 His power grew without much support from the central government at Satara which was torn by dissensions. But when the Maratha Empire was reorganized under Balaji I, Angre started his career masterly on the Konkan sea. His first act was to fortify Gheria, because its ridges offered him a defensive strength to save the Maratha fleet when they were chased by the European nations in the river. A specially selected garrison was stationed there and the fortress was armed and provisioned to withstand both attack and blockade.17 Behind the citadel on the river front were situated Kanhoji's dockyards.

15. Op cit. p. 58
16. Op cit. p. 59
17. Op cit. p. 59
Thus he tried to move forward and establish observation posts and bases all along the Konkan coast.

Soon the Sidis, the Portuguese and the British realised that a new power had arisen on the sea. But after all both Sidis and Portuguese were not in a position to face the Karkhoji. It was only the British who met with serious opposition. When the Bombay council realised the menace, they began a system of Convoysing their ships under corvettes, acted as escorts, for protection against Karkhoji power but they did not frighten Karkhoji. It led to a continuous naval warfare only.

Angre levied a chauth on the sea and claimed that through the Maratha territorial waters, none could move without his permission and payment of Chauth. This became the reason of confrontation with the British system. Charles Boone, the Governor of Bombay proceeded to attack Gheria in 1717 but ended in failure. Again in 1718 Angre was attacked by Boone with a powerful force of 300 sailors and 2500 army men but this attempt also remained unsuccessful and the British Fleet then withdrew. Hearing of this disaster, the Govt. of the time was persuaded to send Commodore W Mathews in Bombay in Oct. 1822 to deduce the menace of a rival naval power on the Konkan coast. The support of the Portuguese was also invited and the viceroy of Goa cooperated the British

18. K.M. Panikkar. Op cit. p. 60
(Dowling. History of Indian Wars).

forces. They attacked on Kolaba but again remained unsuccessful in their attempt and Boone and Mathews retreated to the safety of Bombay and Portuguese fled on attack.

After this victory against the combined forces of the English and the Portuguese, Kanhoji's power on the Konkan coast was unchallenged. But the Dutch who had not yet come into conflict with the Marathas felt that their dignity had been injured when Kanhoji captured two of their ships. They sent a fleet to attack Cheria (1724) \(^{20}\) They also failed to get victory combined with Portuguese & English forces and the Maratha admiral as an English Historian declares "sailed the Arabian sea in triumph." \(^{21}\) Kanhoji tactics were the same as those of Kunjali 150 years earlier. Kanhoji, the greatest naval hero of India passed away in 1729. \(^{22}\) His successors were so weak that they were unable to maintain that greatness of Kanhoji and in 1735 the Bombay government decided to blockade Cheria. Commodore Bagwell set out with a strong force and anchored before Angre's capital. The Maratha Gallivats attacked and set fire to the ships. Bagwell retreating hastily with whatever vessels he could save and reported gloomily to the Bombay Govt. that our strength is not sufficient to withstanding him. The Dutch also had the same fate and as for the Portuguese, Sambhaji

\(^{20}\) Op cit. p.62

\(^{21}\) K.M. Pennikar, Op cit. p. 62

(Kincaid, History of the Maratha People, p. 240)

\(^{22}\) Op cit. p.62.
considered them as easy prey. In 1749 Toolaji fought off the British man-of-war Restoration. At that time the Maratha Navy was supreme from Cutch to Cochin in Arabian Sea.

The British Position had become serious now and a powerful expedition was therefore sent out under Admiral Watson. A strong military force underforce of 1400 men under Col. Clive arrived before Gherid. This force be siezed the fortress after two days battle Toolaji surrendered. The British ships had already forced the entrance into the river. The power of the Angrias on the sea was thus destroyed for ever.

Kamhoji and his successors were the main authority of Marathas naval power, as indeed of the 2morin at an earlier date should be clearly recognized but they had no oceanic policy. Then field of operations was restricted but remained successful against their opponents. A new power capable of challenging this supremacy had entered thare from the Eastern waters.

The French had appeared on the Malabar coast as early as 1527, but regular trade with India started only on 1601. It is significant in view that the first regular authority from the French Monarchy as French East India Company by Henry IV for trading in the Ocean was in respect of Madagascar and the Neighbouring islands.

Suffren had captured Trincomalies in August 1782, from which the communications with the west effectively cut. After this short interludes (1782-84), which only served to emphasise the importance of a continuous maintenance of the supremacy of the sea for the control of events in India, and a warning for the future. British authority in the Indian seas was never again questioned till 1941. 26

The first American expedition to the Arabian Sea dates back to 1784. Two years later American ships reached the Mauritius and India for trade in spices and tea. Russian sailors I. F. Krugenhanshtern and Y. F. Lisianskii also sailed in the sea in 1797 on board the vessels of the British navy. This was the period when the British were in alliance with Russia against the France. In 1793 a group of Russian naval officers were sent to Britain for practical training on the British fleet. 27

The 18th century saw the rise and fall of the French in India. This was decided primarily by their sea power. England’s great advantage over France was the greater volume of her merchant shipping. If, therefore there were equal losses on both sides, France was weakened to a great extent than England. This was one of the chief factors that led to France’s final defeat. In naval wars, which last for any length of time, the country with the biggest merchant navy is usually victorious. 28

26. Op cit. p. 70
27. Op cit. p. 71
Upto the middle of the century the motive of the British French conflict was purely commercial. It was really no more than a struggle between the two powers for control of the Arabian sea trade. British authority in India had always hung on the thread of safe naval communications. Until the middle of the 18th century, the British hold on India rose and fell with the tide of those communications.

In India, after 1787, the East India Company frustrated every attempt of the Indian potentates to build up an Indian Navy. The British crown assured the people of India that the Royal Navy would protect their shores and that they need not bother themselves about their sea routes. They were asked to appreciate the allegedly noble gesture of the Royal Navy and to be certain of the peace guaranteed by it. The Indian swallowed the policy complacently and were happy that India had not to spend on the naval service of the country. They little realised that the British policy made India a large prison house guarded on three sides by the Royal Navy and on the land frontiers by the British troops. The gigantic Royal Navy was controlled and financed by Great Britain. The Dominions supplied only a handful of ships to the Royal Navy, and these ships also came under the operational control of the British Admiralty.
Arabian Sea during 19th Century

In the 19th century, after the French fleet was annihilated at Trafalgar in 1805, Great Britain was the only naval power in the world. It was the century in which it could legitimately be said that Britannia ruled the waves. The mere presence of a British gunboat anywhere in the seven seas had decisive effects both for maintenance of peace and enforcement of policy. 29

The British naval policy in Asia stemmed from her necessity to dominate the colonial domains. It was also to protect the trade routes passing through the Arabian sea and the Mediterranean that a British fleet was stationed in the Mediterranean and the strategical centre gradually moved eastwards.

By 1815, both the Dutch and French had lost their main possessions in the Arabian sea. The British had seized the greater part of the region. The Anglo-French struggle (1740-48), continued through the seven years war (1756-63), the war of American Independence (1778-93) and the Revolutionary war (1793-1802), ending with the defeat of the French in the Napoleonic wars (1803-15). 30 The British after occupying Aden in 1839 established the most absolute hegemony of all times in the Arabian Sea. The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 was the most important event in the history

29. K.M. Pannikar : India and the Indian Ocean (George Allen & Unwin Pvt. Ltd. (INDIA), Bombay), p.72
of the Arabian sea. West Asia's old prominence was revived with opening of the Suez Canal route. The England attached tremendous importance to the security of the Mediterranean which linked her with the Arabian sea. She lost it once but recaptured it in 1805, ensuring herself supremacy on the seas.

The main aim of the British policy in the Arabian sea region before world war I was to enforce Britain's authority in India against other European contenders. To make her strategy in the Arabian Sea more effective, England spread her naval bases during this period from Aden to Bombay and Maldives. 31 The Arabian sea became virtually a British lake and almost every piece of land within it was occupied to prevent the hostile European powers from establishing bases. Upto W. 2. II Britain continued to be a predominant colonial and military power in most areas of the Arabian Sea region. The British had entrenched themselves in the Arabian sea by the early years of the 20th Century and there was hardly any power to oppose them even beyond the Sea. Thus, the shape of Britain's hegemonic strategy in the Arabian Sea and beyond had fully emerged by the middle of the 19th Century.

The one development in the 19th Century which affected the Arabian Sea, the construction of the Suez Canal, only strengthened British hold on the Seas. With her unchallenged supremacy in the Mediterranean, the Mediterranean route to India became a private

31. Ibid, p. 18
sub way for Britain. The Red sea became an exclusively British
sea lane, bolted and barred at both entrances. Aden assumed the
importance it possessed during the time of Egyptian and Arabian
navigation in the Arabian sea, and it may be well said that the
suez canal became the strongest link in the chain which bound India
to Britain. The construction of the canal restored the importance
of the traditional Red sea Route to Europe. The entire trade of
India with Europe had passed through this famous highway till Vasco
de Gama arrived at Calicut and open up the cape route. With the
opening of canal, India and the Arabian sea became many thousands
of miles nearer to the European basis of power and along with an
unprecedented development of trade, it also witnessed more effect-
ive control of the Arabian sea routes.

It was taken at the time that the opening of this route will
once again arouse the cupidity of Venice or her successors. The
Mediterranean nations, especially Italy, began to cast longing eyes
towards the Indian trade which had been once the monopoly of Venice.
The Canal gave to Britain an additional strength in the Arabian sea
which further secured her intruders from the west. The axiom of
the previous three centuries that the control of the Arabian sea
was a corollary to the mastery of the Indian Ocean and the Atlantic
was being definitely challenged as events proved, through this
aspect of the question was entirely ignored at the time. Britain's
supremacy was also challenged by Germany to make a conflict on the
seas by imposing blockades and causing economic paralysis.

32. Ibid. p. 18
Earlier, the English had no territory on the shores of the Persian Gulf; but, since they had almost a monopoly of the maritime commerce in the Gulf and were responsible for the security of navigation, they claimed political supremacy there. Great Britain tried to resist by all means in her power the attempt of any other nation to establish itself on the shores of the Gulf. In the Red Sea also, international rivalry had begun to show itself. France established herself at Jibuti, just across the Aden. Italy developed the colony of Eritrea and began examining the possibilities of developing a naval base at Massawa. She also claimed political interests in the territory of Yemenon the Arabian side of the Red Sea, thereby threatening the safety of the vital British centre of Aden. The Red Sea also entered into the calculations of German world strategy. Germany knew well enough that entry into the Arabian Sea and other from the side of the Atlantic was not possible for her, not only because of Britain's overwhelming naval might, but also because of the geographical position of the British Isles blocking her entry into the Atlantic Ocean. Colonial possessions on the African littoral of the Indian Ocean gave her no definite advantage against Britain. She had to reach the Arabian sea through another route. Germany under William II evolved the grandiose scheme of a direct entry from the side of land into the Persian Gulf. This was to connect Berlin with Baghdad by a direct rail route. It was historically a reply to Vasco da Gama's achievement: the attempt of the land power to outflank the sea.

34. Ibid, p. 19.
35. Ibid, p. 20.
The Persian Gulf had not played a part in the history of the Arabian sea after Bin Kassim led his seaborne forces into sind. The Berlin-Baghdad railway would have enabled it to regain the importance, it had lost and provided Germany with a safe back door entrance into the Arabian sea. The conversion of the Persian Gulf into a protected naval area from which the mastery of the Arabian sea could be challenged was utterly impossible for Germany whose industrial strength was situated thousands of miles away and whose communications with Baghdad had to pass through the territories of other industrially backward states. The Turkish Empire was not in a position to help the German allies to work through that scheme. At best it would have been a defensive measure protecting the flank of Turkey. The attack on Mesopotamia, undertaken across the sea from bases in India could no doubt have been effectively prevented, if the scheme had materialised but aggressive action to challenge the mastery of the sea would have been impossible. German submarines could have crept into the Arabian sea, harassed the trade of India like the pirates of old, but to achieve anything more than that a complete reorganisation of the hinterland would have been necessary. 36

The visit of Lord Curzon to the Gulf in 1903 was meant to demonstrate Britain's political control over it. At the time of the Anglo-Russian convention of 1907 37, Lord Grey stated definitely that the Persian Gulf lay outside the scope of the convention.

36. Ibid., p. 21.
37. Anges F. Dodd; A Short History of the British Empire (London J.M. Dent and Sons 1925) page
He added that the Russians had acknowledged the British interests in that region of the Arabian sea and that these interests were to be maintained by Great Britain as before.

From about the middle of the 19th Century up to the middle of the 20th Century Britain dominated India both economically and politically. Parts of the Arab world were also under her economic and political influence. After 1857 British suzerainty was finally established in India and in 1882 they occupied Egypt. One of the objects being the protection of their economic and political interests in the Indian Empire. The Ottoman Government had become weak both economically and politically and heavily indebted to European Powers, especially Britain. It was in fact the economic interest of Britain in the Ottoman Empire that kept 'the sick man of Europe' alive until the 20th Century. Furthermore, the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 and the final purchase of the majority of the shares of the company by Benjamin Disraeli established the supremacy of the British in the commercial activities in the Arabian sea. The British were now the main agents of trade between India and the Arab countries through Arabian sea. It is difficult to survey here with any justification the vast amount of imports and exports that took place between India and the Arab world during this period. During the later half of the 19th Century the beginnings of industrialization and better trade facilities could be observed in India. Fast developing parts, railway communications.

38. Ahmad Maqbul: Indo-Arab Relations (Page 92).
the exploitation of coal, the beginnings of the cotton industry in Bombay and Ahmedabad, all these factors must have boosted up trade relations with the Arab countries through Arabian sea. It may be observed that it was neither the Arab world nor India that benefitted directly by this trade. India's economy was geared to British interests. In fact, indigenous industries and handicrafts were destroyed by the British, while the export of raw materials continued to feed the industries of England through Arabian sea trade route.

The nineteenth century witnessed the disappearance of Indi-an-built ships from the high seas.

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20. Ibid. p. 93
The Position during World War I & II

Setting

The new post-war environment of the Arabian Sea is an extraordinary phenomenon of our times. In an explosion of political independence, as many as 36 free states have come into being within a quarter century, in place of the previous four. They are fired not only by a sense of belonging to their national homes but also to the continent in which they are located and the sea which washes their shores. That gives them a sense of patriotism, regional orientation, and continental destiny up to a point. This is because no other part of the globe is such a riotous mosaic of the rifts born out of the aftermath of imperial domination and colonialism, economic ideology and social outlook, racism of colour, and bigotry of belief. This is a region of stunning poverty and fabulous wealth, chronic depressions and new expectations, deep pacifism and habitual bellicosity, imperatives of peace and inevitabilities of war. Truly speaking, it has only now entered the world stage in its own right, and its future is still very much in the making.

From an open sea, inhabited by several independent peoples on its shores and its islands, to a sea dominated by one people, and to an open sea once again - such has been the Arabian Sea's historical cycle. A large number of independent states have come into being, larger than ever before. They have their characteristic outlook on the sea which, more than ever in the past, is compounded by affinities with the hinterland and beyond because of the fast relay of contacts and influence over the entire continent. The Arabian sea itself has assumed a different look and developed
additional attractions and situations. The lifting of the British imperial curtain has opened up new vistas that extend beyond the sea's conventional limits. No country can escape from the individual as well as cumulative effects of these happenings. And India in particular, for although no longer a sinecure of the orient as in the past, it has a special status because of its size and location. These effects emanate from the residual remnants of the past, emergence of new states, regional impacts, emotional and ideological factors, socio-economic pulls, and interests of the outside powers.

In this Indian Ocean region there were only two states more or less independent before the second world war - Egypt and Ethiopia. After the war, during the succeeding three decades, altogether independent states have emerged, - littoral and - island, located in Africa, the Middle East & the Indian subcontinent. They may be best viewed as lying in these regions, although some of them have a bi-regional character, such as those around the Red sea in the west which are actually on regional cross-roads.

The Arabian sea is dotted with strategically placed islands, some the territories of countries, others sovereign states. Of the latter, all went in for republican forms of government on achieving independence during the last decade. The assumption of nationhood by these countries coincided with the new strategic importance of the Arabian sea though it was not necessarily related to it. Yet in the last few years the island republics have not been able to keep too far away from the politics-strategic game being enacted
on their doorsteps and a system of interaction between the internal politics of the island republics and a new strategic character of the Arabian sea has taken root. This system of interaction, both elaborate and complex, is likely to grow as the Arabian sea acquires greater strategic sensitivity.

If there was a period when the Arabs could have formed a single state from the Atlantic to the Persian Gulf, it was the quarter century between the two W. Wars, when political texture was still being woven. Instead of unifying, the Arabs split and even Bahrain of 400 Square miles preferred to be sovereign and independent. Actually the formation of the new-Arab states was accompanied by memorable conspiracies and under-cutting among themselves, whatever the facade they presented over Israel. Indigenous nationalism has always taken precedence over Arab nationalism, even though both have displayed unusual strength.

**Arabian Sea during I & II W.W.**

During the I W.W., the Arabian Sea did not become an important theatre of operation. Hostilities were confined to two areas only - The middle East and East Africa, and the German submarines, so active in European waters did not extend their operations to the Arabian sea. The post W.W. I period saw many significant changes in the Arabian sea. The Middle East region, whose importance rose due to the substitution of oil for coal as the chief source of power, changed hands from the Turks to the British.

The picture that the Arabian sea presented in the period
immediately before the Great War of 1914-18 was something like this. Britain said the Arabian sea as an absolute mistress. Her power was overwhelming at every point, and no nation could have contested her authority in the slightest degree. But it was clear that the storms were gathering. The major European nations had acquired interests in the Arabian sea area and beyond this. France, Italy and Germany had territories on the African Coast and the names of Diego Suarez, Jubuti, Massawa and Mogadiscio were coming into prominence. Germany, a prisoner in the Baltic, was developing schemes for a land route which would give her an independent entry into the Arabian sea.

The war of 1914-18 eliminated Germany from the Arabian sea and the Indian Ocean. The establishment of the independent state of Iraq and the acquisition of interests in that country in the form of the Mosul oilfield were the replies, then considered adequate to a threat to the Arabian sea from the side of the Persian Gulf. But the tendencies that were apparent before 1914 became only more pronounced in the interlude between the two wars. At enormous cost, France developed Diego Suarez into a powerful naval base. Her object in doing so was in no way concealed from the world. The French Minister of Marine declared that the naval base will command the Arabian sea and neighbouring waters. Fascist

41. K.M. Pennick, India & the Indian Ocean, p. 76.
42. Ibid, p. 76.
43. Ibid, p. 76.
Italy was not to be cut down. Mussolini had made up his mind that the future of Italy lay on the sea. Massawa on the Red sea coast was converted into a great naval base and it was the boast of the Duce that he had cut the connection between India and Suez canal.

The acquisition of Abyssinia was also a part of this great scheme. Only the small hinterland of Eritrea, Massawa could not be much of a danger, but with a large territory with undeveloped resources and a climate in the higher altitudes suitable for European colonisation, an empire could be held and defended independently, even if communications were cut off with Italy. Abyssinia and Eritrea with a trained native army could meet any challenge coming from the sea. Besides, with the strength that such an empire can develop, Massawa will cease to be merely a naval station but a great base from which the Red sea can be controlled. 44

Between the Abyssinia and the Italian colony lay the small British colony of Somaliland, which it was not easy to defend. If in case of war the intervening area could be conquered then the new Abyssinian empire of Mussolini would not only have effectively cut the connection between the Mediterranean and India, but have entered the Arabian sea as a considerable naval power. Her position in the Red sea would have been impregnable. Aden would have not only been rendered useless for controlling the entrance, but itself menaced from the land side in view of the political relations established by Italy with Yemen which had taken a more definite shape. The war came five years too soon for Mussolini and his schemes for converting Abyssinia and Eritrea into a great land.

44. Ibid. p. 77.
empire were only half completed when the war broke out. Massawa
had surrender when the land campaign broke the power of Italian
and the dream of dominating the Red sea and controlling the Gulf
of Aden disappeared with it. It was demonstrated clearly that
overseas colonies for nations who do not enjoy mastery of the
seas are no more than hostage in the hands of the enemy. They
constitute no great threat to anyone and the British could afford
to enjoy Massawa and Diego Suarez in the period before the II
World War. The creation of a small Royal Indian Navy was the
matter of greatest significance. After the destruction of the
Maratha naval power in 1751, Indians were sailing the sea for the
first time in warships, no doubt small in size but symbolic of
the resuscitation of the old forces which had for at least two
millenia held the mastery of the Arabian sea and the Bay of Bengal
both. The surrender of Germans meant that the Royal Indian navy
had thereafter no serious rival at sea and the British Empire
could be considered safe against outside attacks because past
threats had come from the France, Germany, Italy and Russia in
this area. After I W.W., France became an ally, Italy and Germany
was beaten, and Russia lay in chaos. The wealthy united states
first time appeared in the world scene with desires. Japan was a
British ally too in the war. The Royal Navy's Mediterranean fleet
was the most powerful naval formation in the world between the two
world wars. But England soon had to give up her naval superiority

45. Ibid. p. 78.
46. Ibid. p. 78.
at the Washington Conference in 1922 and accepted equality with America. This treaty along with such other factors as the economic decline of England, obliged the British to review their presence in the Arabian sea region and the other Indian ocean regions also. The post war national awakening in Asia also added to the importance of the Arabian sea region.

In the second world war the Arabian sea was the scene of greater naval activity than during the I W. M. In August 1940, the Italian forces moved into somaliland, which resulted in a clash with the British. The allies sent their reinforcements to Russia via the Persian Gulf, and there was joint Anglo-Russian action in Iran to prevent Reza shah from taking sides with the Axis powers. Though deprived of the fruits of their mastery of the Bay, Japanese submarines began to appear in the Arabian sea and to take a heavy toll of mercantile shipping. Britain reacted with vigour by the occupation of French islands of Madagascar and Diego Suarez in Indian Ocean, but the Arabian sea could not be cleared of Japanese submarines and the west as well as the east coast of India remained exposed to the depredations of the under seacraft for a considerable time.

Oceanic strategy has therefore entered into the considerations of the Indian question with a dramatic suddenness which could

47. D.K. Kaushik, The Indian Ocean, p. 12
48. Ibid. p. 12
49. Ibid. p. 12
not have been foreseen before March 1942. The whole question of Indian defence had to be reconsidered both in the light of history and of recent events. The era of protected sea communications ended for India and the question of the control of oceanic areas surrounding India has again become important.

The period following the Second World War witnessed a veritable upsurge of national freedom in the area. The colonial powers of Europe had to withdraw from India and other neighbouring countries. India, Pakistan, Aden and Mauritius, became independent in 1947–48, 1956. By 1971, with the exception of the Trucial states in the Persian Gulf the entire Arabian sea littoral area consisted of independent sovereign states. Britain entered NATO SEATO and CENTO and tried to play the role of a great power. Many of these newly independent states like India, U.A.R. played an active role in the non-aligned movement and in the 3rd conference of the non-aligned states held at Osaka in 1970, adopted a resolution calling upon all states to establish a zone of peace in the Arabian sea and the Indian ocean. Britain's announcement to withdraw from the East of Suez was the most important factor to disturb the balance of power in the Arabian sea and also in the Indian Ocean. Western powers are still continuing their neo-colonial onslaught against the newly independent countries. Conspiracies are afoot to exploit the enormous natural resources of these states which are of great strategic and economic importance for the West.