CHAPTER - IV

US AND THE POLITICS OF MILITARISATION OF THE INDIAN OCEAN
The Indian Ocean policy of the US was initiated much before the British withdrew their forces from the region in 1968. It concentrated on various measures to strengthen its position in the region. After the British left the region the US justified its involvement as necessary for maintaining the power balance of the region.

With the advent of the US involvement in the region, the Soviet Union also began to show interest in the region. Thus, the region turned into an area of conflict with the Super Powers stepping in to fill the power vacuum in the region. Some observers in the West felt that the new nations of Asia and Africa bordering the Indian Ocean were very poor economically and vulnerable politically and that they were unable to protect their security. As a result the Western countries felt that they had the right to fill the

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1 Ronald Spiers, Director of the Bureau of Political-military Affairs of the State Department, in New York, pointed out that before 1948 the US set up a special command - called Middle East Force in the Middle East and Persian Gulf region. For details see US Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Affairs: Briefings on Diego Garcia and Patrol Frigate (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1974). Executive hearings held on 11 April 1974, but announced on 22 November 1974, pp. 2-3.

2 In 1951 it entered into an agreement with Saudi Arabia for providing an air base facility for its strategic air force at Alzahran. See K.S. Jawatkar, Diego Garcia in International Diplomacy (Bombay: Popular Prakashan private Ltd, 1983), p.34.


It accorded military aid to Pakistan which in turn became part of the US military block under the aegis of Central Treaty Organisation. The US also provided economic aid to India to protect it from the communist block. The US supplied military aid to India during the Sino-Indian war in 1962.

2 A typical Western view was expressed in the editorial of New York Times on 12 January 1968: "The harsh reality is that a complete British withdrawal... would leave a dangerous power vacuum over a vast and volatile area which the United States and Britain's other allies would find it extremely difficult to fill - a vacuum that would serve neither Britain's long term interest nor its stake in world peace and stability..." It was an interesting coincidence of international politics that while the West was worrying about the power vacuum and the Soviet Union was accusing it of trying to move into the area, the People's Republic of China along with the West, was accusing the Soviet Union of trying to fill the vacuum by stepping up its naval activity in the Indian Ocean. For details see New York Times, 12 January 1968.
power vacuum. Countering this premise the developing countries of the region were of the view that even if a power vacuum existed, the natural right to fill that vacuum rested with them and not with the external powers. Despite this criticism, the former "British Lake" became a victim of super power strategies and had to give in to the competition and rivalry of the external powers.

This chapter examines the following factors: the continuing US interest in maintaining Diego Garcia under its control; its opposition to the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace (IOZP) and its attempt to legitimise US presence in the Indian Ocean region.

**GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION**

The Indian Ocean is the third largest Ocean among the known five. It encompasses four continents namely Asia, Africa, Antarctica and Australia, constituting one third of the world's population. In the north, it touches the Asian shores, in the north-east and east it is separated from the Pacific by the Sunda isles and Australia. Its borderline crosses the northern entrance to the strait of Malacca along the northern end of Sumatra to the island of Phuket, close to the Malacca Peninsula and from the northern tip of Australia to the estuary of the Benebec river on the island of New Guinea. Its southern border runs from Cape Agulhas (South Africa) to the northern end of the Amsterdam island and Cape Leeuwin (South-western end of Australia). In the west it touches the African shores.

The Indian Ocean region as a whole is considered one among the world's poorest regions. It consists of forty seven littoral and hinter-land States. There are many sub-regions in it. They are South Asia, part of the Middle East, South West Asia, South East Asia, the Australian Continent, the Horn of Africa, East Africa and the South-Eastern part of the African Continent.

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5 For details see Indian Ocean Region Countries, Appendix IV, p.A-9.
THE BRITISH WITHDRAWAL FROM INDIAN OCEAN AREA

After the end of World War II, the British were unable to maintain its status as a great power. Gradually it had to withdraw from the mainstream of international power politics. It retained control over a few places and one among them was British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT) in the Indian Ocean. During the mid 1960s, due to economic crisis and inability to maintain the balance of power in the region, it lost its credibility and power status in the region. The US, which had little experience in the region insisted that Britain should remain there. It also expressed its willingness to aid Britain so that it could retain its security presence in the region. However, this proved to be futile, as Britain decided in 1964, to withdraw from the east of Suez. With the British withdrawal, the region turned into an area of conflict with the Super powers stepping in to fill the power vacuum in the region.

US ENTRY INTO THE INDIAN OCEAN

In the 1950s, when the US had to counter communism, the experts began to recognise the importance of a communication facility in the Indian Ocean. Although the US noticed serious lapses on the part of British Navy to uphold peace and stability in the region, yet it decided not to involve itself in the region, because of its prior commitments in the Western Hemisphere.6 Notwithstanding this sudden concern, it failed in its attempt to persuade Britain to maintain its hold in the region. In 1965, Britain separated three islands from Seychelles (i.e., Aldabra, Desroches, and Farquhar), and Chagos Archipelago from Mauritius and brought it under the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT).7 In December 1966, it signed an agreement with the US and

6Harry S. Truman, was the first US President, who recognised a threat from communist bloc to the West. When there was communist aggression in Greece and Turkey, he sanctioned $400 million military and economic aid to halt communist aggression. See Alexander De Conde (ed), Encyclopedia of American Foreign Policy, Vol.1 (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1979), p.194.

7Seychelles consists of 85 islands and islets. The French were settled in the island in the mid 18th Century. They were taken by British in 1814, became a dependency of the British colony of Mauritius until 1903 when it became a crown colony. Seychelles became an independent republic in 1970. See Encyclopedia Americana, Vol.24 (New York: Americana Corporation, 1976), p.644. Mauritius -an island State consists of three groups of smaller islands. The mainland situated about 550 miles east of Madagascar. It was first governed by the French between 1715 to 1810. In 1810 it was captured by the British. It gained independence from Britain in 1968. See Encyclopedia Americana, Vol.18 (New York: Americana Corporation, 1976), pp.451-452.
accorded it the BIOT on a 50 year lease with a clause for a further 20 year extension for military purpose.\textsuperscript{8} The US agreed to pay Britain an amount not exceeding $14 million at a time as the lessee.\textsuperscript{9} The signing of this agreement, led "the first of the Super Powers to establish a military base on foreign territory in the Indian Ocean area".\textsuperscript{10} The US appointed a team to survey the Archipelago for a suitable base site. The team first selected the island of Aldabra in Chagos Archipelago to serve as a military base, but it abandoned the idea as the wild life conservationists protested.\textsuperscript{11} Later, the team selected Diego Garcia.

DIEGO GARCIA: A BACKGROUND OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE US BASE

Diego Garcia was a part of Chagos Archipelago, consisting of six major islands. It was discovered by the Portuguese in 1532. However, it was only in 1786 that the British considered it as an area of strategic importance and decided to build a supply station. Diego Garcia is 13 miles long and 4 miles wide, with a land area of 11 square miles. It lies about 1000 miles away from the Southern tip of India, and about 10,000 miles from the US\textsuperscript{12} and is centrally located in the region.\textsuperscript{13} The US felt that this island in the Indian Ocean was strategically ideal for a base more than any other. A section in the State Department, however did not favour a naval presence in this area. They were of the opinion that there was no justification for maintaining a base at Diego Garcia which was more than 10,000 miles from the US. It further

\textsuperscript{10} International Herald Tribune (Paris), 19 June 1973.
\textsuperscript{11} The team felt that due to the military operations, the rare birds and giant turtles would go away. See Anita Bhatt, The Strategic Role of Indian Ocean in World Politics, (The Case of Diego Garcia) (Delhi: Ajanta Publishers, 1992), P.29.
maintained that the US presence would promote arms race in the region. An American Enterprise Institute's study also pointed to the irrelevance of the external powers' presence in the region. Consequently, the proposal was shelved temporarily in 1967. The Department decided to revive the proposal in 1968 for building a base on Diego Garcia. The Navy insisted that the US should build the logistic facility in order to check the Indian Ocean being transformed into a Soviet lake. It was of the opinion that it would facilitate greater US involvement in the region. The US Navy's intentions of building a naval and air base on Diego Garcia was to protect its oil interests in the Persian Gulf. This proposal was rejected by the State Department as this could increase the arms race in this area. Consequently, in 1968 the US armed forces' Joint Chiefs of Staff, submitted a plan to build a communication facility instead of a naval base. The estimated cost was $26 million. The next year, the Navy again requested an authorization of $9 million as the first installment to construct the naval communication base. It observed that the base was essential for surveillance of naval activities in the region. This proposal was opposed by the Senate Appropriations Committee, as it was an expensive exercise. In 1970 the proposal was again brought up

14. Much has been said about the crucial geographic position of the Indian Ocean. Some have contended that the region is destined to be a chess board for Super Power rivalry, but, just because the chess men are poised, the game need not be played. Others have argued that the dominant naval power in the region, will be able to influence the policies of the littoral States, but there is no necessity for an outside naval power to dominate any region. Cited in M.P. Awati, "Emerging Security Issues in the Indian Ocean: An Indian Perspective" in Selig S. Harrison and K. Subrahmanyam, (ed), Super Power Rivalry in the Indian Ocean (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989), P.117.

15. Cited in Rais, n.12, p.79.


17. The purpose of the setting up of a communication station were:
   a) to fill the US naval communication gap in the central and north-western regions of the Indian Ocean;
   b) to link the US communications base in Ethiopia with the north-western coast of Australia; and thus,


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by the Navy. This time, the Navy's demand met with a small measure of success due to political uncertainty in Ethiopia and the fact that the US had to withdraw its communications facility in Eritrea (Kagnew station). In one of the first series of Congressional hearings on the Indian Ocean, in 1971, Ronald I. Spiers, the Assistant Secretary for Bureau of Politico-Military Affairs in the Department of State (1969-1973) supported the Navy's demand and emphasized the US interest in the Indian Ocean on the following grounds:  

a. concern for the growing Soviet influence around the choke point to the Red Sea;  
b. regional instability that might adversely affect Western access to Persian Gulf oil; and  
c. the continued right of free passage for commercial and military traffic of the US.  

It was further contended that it was in the US interest that countries of this region did not pass under the control of forces hostile to it. The communication facility at Diego Garcia was not merely in response to increased Soviet naval activity in the region but it was, essentially, to fill the communication gaps that existed in the south, central and north east portions of the Indian Ocean. Finally, the US Congress gave the green signal for $5.4 million as the first installment for the communication facility at Diego Garcia. On 24 October 1972, another agreement was signed between the United Kingdom and the US, which enabled them to use Diego Garcia as a joint military base. In accordance with this agreement of October 1972, Britain authorized the US to develop a limited naval communications facility, which  

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19 Kagnew was originally a British base in the Indian Ocean and was established as a US communications facility in 1983 under a 25 years treaty between the US and Kagnew. Asmara was selected as a communications site because of its position near the Equator, which means low radio interference, and its altitude of 7,800 feet with good weather conditions. The main function of this base was to transmit, relay and receive communications from US diplomatic mission and military units around Africa and also to relay messages from the US and Europe to the Indian Ocean and the Far East. However many Ethiopians believed that Kagnew was a military base with secret underground weapon installations. There was a protest from the students against the US presence in Kagnew. For details see New York Times, 28 August 1970.  

20 Testimony of Ronald I. Spiers before the House of Representatives, Sub Committee on National Security Policy and Scientific Development of the Committee on Foreign Affairs; 92nd Cong, 2nd sess, 20, 22, 27, 28 July 1971, p.165.  

21 Ibid.
would provide a link to the United States defense communications and would also furnish it with improved communications support in the Indian Ocean for ships and aircraft. In the same year, the Department of Defense began the construction of a communication base on the Island, which became operational on 1 March 1973.

The reasons for the US to militarize the Indian Ocean and its interests in the region were:

a. Soviet Union's enormous size and population;

b. Soviet military strength;

c. Soviet totalitarian regime;

d. US interest in protection of its oil routes.

It emphasised that it was its responsibility to protect not only its interests but also those of its allies. The non-availability of oil could cripple its industries. The US was aware of this fact when the oil exporters decided not to export oil to the Western countries in 1973. The exporters secured control over their resources and sought to implement pricing without submitting to the Western oil companies. Though the US dependence on oil from the Gulf was less as compared to the littoral States, to counter this stance of the Oil Petrol Exporting Countries it reduced its oil imports and increased the use of alternate energy sources - nuclear energy/solar energy. Despite

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26 The October 1973 Arab - Israeli conflict led the Arab countries to form the oil and Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). Consequently the OPEC put an embargo on the Western countries in 1973. It announced on 5 November 1973 that it would reduce its oil production in November to 75% of the September output with an additional drop of 5% in December. See Facts on File (New York: Facts on File, Inc), Vol.33, no.1723, 4-10 November 1973, p.918.

27 It's oil imports increased from $6 million (mil) in 1973 per day to $8.7 mil per day in 1977. But it reduced its imports from $4.9 mil to 3.8 mil in 1983. The western countries also reduced their imports from $15.4 mil. barrels per day (b/d) in 1973 to $8.7 mil b/d in 1983. Japan also reduced its imports from 5.5 mil. b/d in 1973 to 4.1 mil. b/d in 1983. See "Oil and the Gulf - A survey" The Economist (London), 28 July 1984, p.14.

In terms of percentage in 1983 US external oil dependence reduced to 11.6%
this, the US maintained that it was essential for it to retain forces in the region to avoid a crisis in future. Besides oil, the US also depended on minerals, as they were necessary for industry and defense. It identified 35 materials, as indispensible and crucial, that were available in the region. 28

With the reopening of Suez canal in 1979, 29 the argument of the US was that once the canal was opened, the Soviets would be able to send ships from its Mediterranean or Black sea fleets to the Indian Ocean. 30 Instead of travelling 11,000 miles around the Cape of Good Hope (South Africa) it would have to travel only 2,200 miles. Further with its occupation of Afghanistan the USSR deployed MIG's, stationed in Afghanistan, would be able to reach the straits of Hormuz in the Persian Gulf within 10 minutes. Further the Red Army could mobilize a division to the Gulf. It was noticed that the canal was likely to be only 40 feet deep in the first phase, a circumstance that would favour the Soviets because their ships were lighter than those of the US. 31 Hence the US observed that its naval presence was necessary, and legitimized their increased presence in the region. In 1974, the executive branch proposed to expand the facility by providing support "for a flexible range of activities, including limited maintenance, aircraft staging in support of naval patrols, logistics support and enhanced communications". 32

Western Europe to 39.4% and Japan to 65.8%. In 1987, it was further reduced 5% by the US, 26% by Western Europe and 50% by Japan. See The Financial Times (New Delhi), 5 August 1987, p.1.


29. As a result of Israeli forces' occupation of the east bank of the canal in June 1967 Egypt closed the canal to all ships from 5 June 1967 to 5 June 1975. As a result of Egyptian - Israeli peace treaty on 25 April 1979, the Suez Canal was reopened. The first Israeli cargo ship passed through the canal on 30 April 1979. See The Encyclopedia Americana (Danbury: Grolier Incorporated, 1984), p.847.

30. For details see comparison of US and USSR Fleet-Mobility Augmentation Distances with and without the Suez Canal, Appendix. XXV, p.57.


ANGLO - AMERICAN ACCORD ON DIEGO GARCIA

On 5 February 1974, Britain endorsed the US proposal to convert the communication facility at Diego Garcia into a naval support base.\textsuperscript{33} The proposal was to increase fuel storage capacity, deepening of the lagoon to provide an anchorage, extension of the 8,000 feet runway and expansion of the airfield parking. Julian Amery, Minister of State in the Foreign Office of the UK, held that this proposal was required to balance Soviet activities in the Indian Ocean region.\textsuperscript{34} On 21 February 1974, Owen Zurhellen, the Deputy Director of the US Arms Control and Disarmament (1974-1975), placed the US stand before the House Sub Committee on Near East and South Asia.\textsuperscript{35} In his testimony, he stated that constructing a base at Diego Garcia was to keep intact the legitimate US interests. Its presence was to protect trade routes, its allies, and establish stability and peace in the region. He observed that since the sea belonged to everybody, the littoral States could not prevent the activities of the external powers in the Indian Ocean.\textsuperscript{36} Zurhellen justified the upgrading facilities of Diego Garcia base on the following grounds:

a. the US had no land connection with countries located in the Indian Ocean with which it had linkages;


\textsuperscript{35}US position in the Indian Ocean region:
1. The US has had long interests in the countries bordering the Indian Ocean and since it had no land bridge to these countries as the Soviet Union and others and the sea belonged to everybody the only way open to the US was the sea.

2. US has had long standing policy of retaining its presence in important centres for upholding the political and military needs in the US.

3. US military presence in the Indian Ocean was not a threat to any nation or nations in the area.


\textsuperscript{36}Ibid.
b. the US deployment in the region was consistent with the long standing pursuit of US national interest;
c. its military presence was not a threat to any nation in the area; and
d. it had no intention to involve itself in the arms race of the region.

Charles Wilson (Democrat - Texas) supported Zurhellen's proposal. He stated that the $29 million request to expand the facilities on Diego Garcia was less than the cost of building one destroyer and the fuel storage tanks considered for the base held less oil than a medium size oil tanker.

HOUSE FOREIGN AFFAIRS SUB COMMITTEE HEARINGS ON DIEGO GARCIA

The House Foreign Affairs Sub Committee decided to examine the importance of an air naval base in the Indian Ocean and the political, strategic and economic consequences, if the US Congress gave approval to a base in the region. The Director of the US State Department's Bureau of Politico-Military Affairs, Seymour Weise, testifying before the House Sub Committee on Near East and South Asia on 6 March 1974 justified the US presence in the Indian Ocean, due to the increase of Soviet presence.\(^{37}\) He referred to some of the events that occurred in the region viz: the oil crisis (1973) and the Soviet activities in the region which led the US to expand its base on Diego Garcia. However, the USSR refuted charges of such activities in the region. The US objective for building a naval base was to use it as a "bargaining chip", for persuading the Soviet Union to reduce its dominance in the region.\(^{38}\)

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\(^{37}\) The Director cited the following reasons:
1. Diplomatic presence in settling the local issues; including the West Asian crisis,
2. Deterrence against a force or a threat of force that might be employed by others.
3. Increase in the number of Soviet ships. In 1973 Soviet ships were 8,262 compared to 2,109 US naval vessels. These figures excluded ballistic missile submarines, Oceanographic and space operations.
4. Major powers were doubtful regarding the establishment of peace in the region (US, UK, France etc.)
5. Assurances for the US move over the Diego Garcia base by Pakistan, China, Iran and Singapore. For details see Seymour Weiss, Director of the Bureau of Politico Military affairs, hearings before Sub-committee on Near East and South Asia, 93rd Cong, 2nd sess, 21 February-20 March 1974, Proposed Expansion of US Military Facilities in the Indian Ocean, n.32, pp.21-49.

\(^{38}\) Cited in Bhatt, n.11, p.35.
Admiral Elmo R. Zumwalt, Chief of naval operations (1970–1974), justified the establishment of the base at Diego Garcia. He observed that non-establishment of the base would help the USSR; more so with its naval and air facilities at Berbera in Somalia; at Socotra Islands and Aden in the Yemen Democratic Republic; and at Umm Qasr, Iraq’s port on the Persian Gulf.

The opponents in Congress to Diego Garcia proposal asserted that the Indian Ocean was strategically not important to the US and problems in the area could be solved by diplomatic measures. It further contended that an arms race would be initiated with US getting involved in the region.

William E. Colby, the Central Intelligence Director (1972–1973), on 11 July 1974 expressed fears at a Congressional testimony that there would be Super Power rivalry in the Indian Ocean. He opined that the USSR was unlikely to build its fleet in the Indian Ocean unless the US did so in the region. He described the Soviet presence as relatively small and inactive and disclosed that by mid 1973 the Soviet force level in the Indian Ocean were: five surface warships - one gun armed cruiser or missile equipped ship, two destroyers or destroyer escorts, a mine sweeper and an amphibious ship. Hence, he categorically opposed the need for a US Indian Ocean fleet.

W. Averell Harriman, the US ambassador to the Soviet Union (1943–1946) stated on 15 August 1974, in Washington that the US should reduce its military expenses, and at least temporarily, abandon plans for a naval base in the Indian Ocean if it desired to improve relations with the Soviet Union. Gerald R. Ford, the President of the US (1974–1977), on 28 August 1974 gave

39 Zumwalt stated that the Diego Garcia facilities would provide flexible means with which to express support for friendly governments and for uninterrupted movement of oil and other commodities on the high seas. See Weekly Round Table (New Delhi), Vol.3, no.14 & 15, 9 June 1974, pp.6-7.
42 Ibid.
full support to the idea of the establishment of an air and naval facility on Diego Garcia.44

SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE HEARINGS ON DIEGO GARCIA

Admiral Thomas H. Moorer, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (1970-1974), testifying before the Senate Armed Service Committee on 12 March 1974 stated that the construction of a base on Diego Garcia was to procure a limited capability for forces to be stationed in the area. He supported the proposal and maintained that this was essential to counter the expansion of the Soviet influence in the region. However, he observed that it would not be a major base.45 Admiral Moorer agreed that the proposal "could provide facilities to aircraft tankers B-52 bombers and other heavy cargo aircraft. An assurance was given to the Committee that the US had no plans to have B-52 bombers stationed at Diego Garcia.

Before the Senate Armed Services Committee Hearings on Diego Garcia on 10 June 1975, James Schlesinger, the Defense Secretary (1973-1976), projected the Soviet activities at Berbera in Somalia. He showed the Committee the secret aerial reconnaissance photographs - satellite pictures of Soviet naval facilities at Berbera.46 The photographs revealed that the facility was designed to handle surface to surface missiles that could be fired by Soviet warships against enemy ships and air-to-air missiles that could be carried by Soviet planes flying out of Berbera.47

CONGRESS DELEGATES VISIT BERBERA

The supporters of Diego Garcia project raised the issue of alleged Soviet presence at Berbera base in Somalia in the Congress in 1975. However, the opponents, denied the Soviet presence. When Schlesinger showed the photographs of the Soviet naval facilities at Berbera, the Somalian government denied the Secretary's statement of Russian naval base at Berbera. The Somalian

44 Ford said at the news conference on 31 August 1974 "this particular proposed construction, I think, is a wise policy and it ought not to ignite any escalation of problems in the Middle East". Cited in Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report (Washington, D.C.), Vol.32, no.35, 31 August 1974, p.2349.
47 Ibid.
government invited the US to inspect Berbera. As a result, a Congressional delegation from both the House and Senate Armed Services Committee visited Somalia. The House team headed by Samuel Stratton (Democrat – New York) consisted of 7 other members and the Senator’s team headed by Dewey F. Bartlett (Republican, Oklahoma) consisted of 13 military and defense intelligence experts including James H. Noyes, Deputy Defense Secretary in the administration of Gerald R. Ford (1974–1977).

The Bartlett group reviewed the Soviet facilities in Berbera. It concluded that the Soviets had access to an airfield and port facilities and hence, the group justified the construction of a base on Diego Garcia. Bartlett during the Senate debate on 28 July 1975 noted that the Soviet Union was developing a naval and air station at Berbera. Further, he gave information about the fuel storage facility which was being expanded from 40,000 to 170,000 barrels. He explained that his group saw missile facilities at the site, with a capacity to take on any of the missiles in surface-to-surface or air-to-surface operations. It was contended that about 1,500 personnel of the USSR were at Berbera as compared to the 600 USpersonnel at Diego Garcia. He suspected the activities of USSR because his group was denied access into the facility.

Stratton also voiced a similar view about Berbera base. The facility, he argued, at Berbera "is the largest naval support facility available to the Soviet Union outside the Soviet homeland....". However, Robert L. Legett (Democrat – California), a member of the Congressional investigating team, who visited Berbera in July 1975 did not agree with Stratton as regards the Soviet access to the base at Berbera. The Berbera facility, he felt, was a modest base and it did not justify the expansion of Diego Garcia. He denied that

53 Ibid.
the Soviets had missiles at Berbera and contended that it only had a runway. He argued that expanding Diego Garcia would only lead to greater Soviet involvement in the region.  

A SENATE-HOUSE CONFERENCE REPORT (DECEMBER 1974)

The House sought to expand the construction of Diego Garcia, whereas Senate did not want to expand the base because it would instigate the Soviet to develop its activities further in the region. However, the differences solved at the conference held on 10 December 1974. The Navy requested $32.3 million for improving the facilities on Diego Garcia. The Senate passed $18.1 million. The House on its part approved the amount sought by the Navy i.e. $32.3 million. Since the Navy did not object to the reduction in funds by the Senate, the conference agreed to the Senate proposal.

PRESIDENT FORD'S CERTIFICATE ON DIEGO GARCIA EXPANSION IN US NATIONAL INTEREST

When the Senate-House conference of 10 December 1974 adopted a provision requiring the US President to certify to the Congress the need for the expansion of Diego Garcia, President Gerald Rudolph Ford, approved the base at Diego Garcia on 12 May 1975. He noted that the facilities were "essential in the national interest" of the US. However, he did not give any explanation as to how the expansion of Diego Garcia would fulfill the US interest.

Ford's intention of enhancing the US presence in the Indian Ocean was evident when he was the Vice President during December 1973-August 1974. In an interview to the US Navy's Sea Power Magazine on 14 August 1974, he stated "the US would have to actively explore the desirability of having an Indian Ocean Fleet". In his first press conference as President on 28 August 1974

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53 Congressional Record, n.52., pp.7654-7656.
54 The House wanted the base at Diego Garcia to be improved where as the Senate sought to develop it slowly. The Senate did not want to expand because it would instigate the Soviet to develop its activities further in the region.
56 Ibid.
58 Ford in his interview to the US Navy's Sea Power Magazine on 14 August 1974,
be favored "the limited expansion" of the base, as the USSR had three naval
operating bases (Aden in South Yemen, Berbara in Somalia, and Omm Quasr in
Iraq) in the Indian Ocean.\textsuperscript{59} Defending the establishment of the base at Diego
Garcia, Ford argued that it was a wise move and it would not escalate
problems (conflict between Arab-Israeli) in the Middle East.\textsuperscript{60} This position
was reiterated by the Presidential statement of 23 May 1975 which pointed out
that the facilities on Diego Garcia would enhance the US capability to provide
support to its forces operating in the Indian Ocean and would deter the USSR
naval presence in the region.\textsuperscript{61} It was contended that the location of the oil
shipping lanes in the region, made it necessary for the US to demonstrate its
capability to deploy its military forces in the Indian Ocean region.\textsuperscript{62}

**JAMES AKIN'S ALLEGATION ON SAUDI OFFER**

James Akins, US Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, testifying before a Senate
Foreign Relations Sub Committee on Multi-national corporations, on 4 May 1976
said that the US ignored the Saudi offer to provide economic and military aid
to Somalia to eliminate Soviet influence in that country. The Saudis offered
$15 million in economic assurance directly to Somalia and requested the US to
provide military aid to Somalia so as to reduce Soviet influence in the
region. The State Department did not take any interest in this matter.\textsuperscript{63} A
State Department spokesman did not comment on Akins' allegation but announced
that the situation in the Indian Ocean was "considerably more complex" than
Akins view.\textsuperscript{64}

\textsuperscript{59}However the Soviet News Agency (TASS) denied the existence of any Soviet
\textsuperscript{60}New York Times, 29 August 1974.
\textsuperscript{61}Congressional Quarterly Almanac, n.57, p.384.
\textsuperscript{62}ibid.
\textsuperscript{64}ibid.
MANSFIELD'S RESOLUTION

Michael Joseph Mansfield (Democrat-Montana), introduced a resolution in the Senate on 28 July 1975 to disapprove the certification for the expansion of Diego Garcia facility.65 This resolution was defeated by 53-43 votes.66 The Senate approved the construction of a Naval base on Diego Garcia in November 1975.67

CULVER AMENDMENT

Senator Culver (Democrat-Iowa) introduced in the Senate an amendment to the Military Construction Appropriations 1976 Bill calling upon the President to disclose before 1 November 1975 the question of relocation of the Diego Garcians to Mauritius by Britain.68 In response to his amendment, the US State and Defense Department submitted a report to the Senate on 10 October 1975. In the report, it disclosed the agreement i.e. Anglo-American Agreement signed on 30 December 1966 in London by the US Ambassador David Bruce and Lord Chalfont, a junior Minister at the British Foreign Office facilitating the US to have a naval base at Diego Garcia.69 In return, the US provided secretly a discount up to $ 14 million in December 1966 on polaris missiles purchased by Britain to evacuate the inhabitants and compensating them.70

Senator Culver made the State and Defense Departments to disclose the agreement to the Senate. This surprised most of the Senators, because earlier the US State Department stated that there were no inhabitants on the Diego Garcia island. Despite the opposition to the Diego Garcia base, the Senate on

65Congressional Quarterly Almanac, n.57, p.384.
66Ibid.,p.50-S.
68Congressional Record, Senate, 94th Cong, Vol. 121, no.133, 11 September 1975, pp. S.15865-15868. Britain purchased the island (Diego Garcia) from Mauritius for $8.40 million. It paid 650,000 pound to the Mauritius for the resettlement of the Diego Garcians. Though the people (about 1,200 to 1,400) were reluctant to move from their native place, the government brought them to Mauritius before 1972. See New York Times, 5 October 1975.
69For details see Anglo-US Agreement on Diego Garcia, Appendix V, pp.A-10-12.
70This was not submitted to the Congress for approval. See Congressional Record, n.67, p.S19452.
9 August 1976 passed the $104 billion Defense Appropriations Bill for the fiscal year 1977. President Carter of the Democratic party who assumed office of the President in January 1977, sought to have an agreement with the Soviets to limit the super power presence in the area. However, with the Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan and the Iranian hostage crisis in 1979 and Iran-Iraq war in 1980, the US decided to expand the base at Diego Garcia. In 1982 the Congress approved $55,395,000 for expansion of naval facilities and $4,550,000 for expanding the air force facilities at Diego Garcia.  

The US formed Rapid Deployment Force in 1980 to cover Diego Garcia and the entire region.

**RAPID DEPLOYMENT FORCE**

The US President, Jimmy Carter, announced in early October 1979 the formation of Rapid Deployment Force (RDF). It was established to increase the US capacity to send the Forces to areas where it did not have bases, particularly in the Persian Gulf. The establishment of RDF was either to control the middle eastern oil fields or to intervene to protect the pro-western allies in the region. This move enhanced the intervention any capability of the US with its force level and equipment mainly designed for the region. The major objective of this new US stance in the Middle East was not to confront the Soviets but a consequence of the oil shocks.

The US was concerned about the prospect of the oil exporting countries from the Middle East restraining oil to the West in 1973. This fear intensified consequent to the formation of the OPEC which included most of the oil supplying countries from the Middle East.

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72 RDF consisted of "a Marine Amphibious Force together with the necessary amphibious shipping to move its 50,000 men integrated air-ground team: these could commence movement when early warnings are received and could be positioned off-shore, independent of bases, when and where needed. Since 1980, there have been seven maritime pre-positioning ships already on station in the Indian Ocean, loaded with heavy equipment and supplies needed to support a 12,000 man marine amphibious brigade during an initial period of operations. Cited in *Christian Science Monitor* (Boston), 20 August 1980.

On 4 January 1980, the officials of Carter administration observed that the government decided to maintain permanent naval presence in the Indian Ocean as a result of the Afghanistan and Iran crisis.\textsuperscript{74} Thus the RDF came into existence on 1 March 1980. In 1980, when the US lost the access to the ports of Bandar Abbas and Chah Behar of Iran, the US administration felt the necessity to expand military facilities on Diego Garcia.\textsuperscript{75} It signed various agreements with some of the regional States, but not mentioned in the Congressional reports.\textsuperscript{76} Further, with the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, the US decided to make Diego Garcia into a base for its naval forces stationed in the Indian Ocean.

In 1980, Carter recontested the Presidential election. During the election campaign in November-December 1980, the hostage crisis became a major issue.\textsuperscript{77} The failure of the Carter regime in its rescue mission to Iran and


\textsuperscript{75} The regime of Shah Reza Pehalavi in Iran which supported the US was overthrown by the fundamentalists headed by Ayutollah Khomeni in 1980. Khomeini's new regime was totally anti US and it withdrew all the existent facilities which the US enjoyed in Iran under Pehalavi.

\textsuperscript{76} The US and Kenya signed an agreement in June 1980. According to this agreement the US had to give $50 million in economic and military aid and $27 million in foreign military sales during 1981-1982 to Kenya. In return Kenya had to provide military base for the US.

The agreement between the US and Oman was signed in 1978. The US agreed to provide $25 million in foreign military sales to Oman during 1980-1981. Oman agreed to provide military facility for the US.

Under the terms of agreement with the US, Bahrain agreed to provide military base for the US.


\textsuperscript{77} In 1978 the dissidents in Iran opposed the Shah's regime which was under the western influence. On 4 November, 1979, after the Shah flew to New York for treatment, several Iranian youth seized the US embassy in Tehran and took 66 members of the Staff hostage, demanding that the US send the Shah home. It became difficult for Carter to solve the problem. He did not take any military action but tried to solve the issue through diplomatic channels and economic pressures. He also sought the help of the UN Secretary General, Kurt Waldheim. Thirteen people were released on 19 November and ten were released on 20 November 1979 but others remained under custody. See Facts on File, Vol.39, no.2037, 23 November 1979, p.878.

In April 1980, the President authorized a military rescue operation. However, three of the eight helicopters faced technical problems. One of them involved in the operation developed engine trouble in the Iranian desert and eight
the subsequent loss of face internationally led the people to install Ronald Reagan in the White House in 1981. 78

Reagan was not happy with his predecessor’s policy towards the Indian Ocean region. He sought to strengthen US’ military presence in the region. In 1981, it was reported that the US was clandestinely stockpiling nuclear weapons on Diego Garcia by sending the weapons on a ship via West Germany and Netherlands. It should be noted that the US officials felt that in the Asian Continent, no city was beyond the US nuclear missile range from Diego Garcia. Despite all these claims made by the US, doubts were expressed by some of the writers about the importance of Diego Garcia. 79

Reagan decided to strengthen the RDF which had problems. 80 In early 1982, significant changes were made in the RDF and it was changed into the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force (RDJTF). The Purpose of establishment of a Joint Task Force was to plan, train, and exercise as well as prepare select units of the RDJTF for deployment. As a result, by the end of 1982, the Pentagon

people were killed and several others were injured. See Facts on File, Vol.40, no.2059, 25 April 1980, p.297.

79 *In standard United States and British military urge., a main base includes not only a deep water anchorage and good airfield but docks, barracks and an industrial complex with a skilled labour force. This means that large warships and advanced military aircraft can be permanently serviced and maintained. Such a base for Western forces does not exist in the Indian Ocean area and even Diego Garcia cannot therefore accurately be described as a "base". See David Rees, *Strategic Problems of Indian Ocean Defense* Asia Pacific Community (Tokyo), Vol.11, no.2, Winter 1981, pp. 77-78. Another naval expert, Kenneth Wimmel wrote: *Diego Garcia is a small, low, flat atoll and in this age of long range missiles, any facility built upon it would be very hard to defend, much less to use for launching significant offensive operations in times of war. The base, then, would appear to have little utility in the event of all - out war, especially a war putting the two Super Powers against each other*. Kenneth Wimmel, *Soviet and American Naval Force in the Indian Ocean: Arms race, Military Balance or Zone of peace*, (Rhode Island: US Naval College, 1976), p.23.
80 The RDF had problems of inadequate airlift and sea lift constraints on a rapid power projection. In early 1980s the air lift capacity of the US forces largely dependent on the airforce’s fleet of 75 C-5A Galaxy transports, 234 C-141 star lifters and 490, C-130 aircraft. See Christian Science Monitor, n.72.
deployed seven prepositioned ships around Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean which increased the US carrier battle group presence in the Arabian sea from one to two. It also made available 300 jet transports and 500 turbo prop transports for airlift. The government further sought Congressional approval for the purchase of eight freight and troop carriers that could reach Suez from the East coast of the US within 11-12 days.\textsuperscript{81}

The RDJTF was expected to intervene within a matter of days to protect a regime faced with an external threat or internal anti-regime challenge. On 1 January 1983, the US created its new US central command (USCENTCOM) to protect the US interests in the Indian Ocean from any threat.\textsuperscript{82} The objective of this command was to serve as a deterrent against Soviet action. To this end it was reported that the US had stationed the marines in the Indian Ocean and that they could send them to the scene of the crisis within 36 hours. In addition, it could deploy a 1200 man marine amphibious unit from the US fleet in the Mediterranean; a paratroop battalion from the 82nd Division of US army within 48 hours and a full brigade from the 82nd Airborne Division within 4 days either from Egypt, Sudan or Oman base.\textsuperscript{83} The (intention of) deployment of the forces in the region was not only to counter Soviet activities but also to maintain an "intervention capability" to handle conflicts in the region.

The US had a naval task force based around Diego Garcia.\textsuperscript{84} The naval deployment in the Indian Ocean gave a preponderant and superior position to the US as compared to the Soviets. Without a base at Diego Garcia, the US Navy would have been under various constraints.

\textsuperscript{81}Anderson, n.74, p.29.
\textsuperscript{82}The operational zone of this command officially included the territories of 19 states : Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Bahrain, UAE, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Yemen, Arab Republic, People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, Somalia, Sudan, Kenya, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Egypt, Jordan. It did not mean that it would not use forces against other countries. Cited in Andrei Krutskikh, \textit{U.S. Policies in the Indian Ocean} (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1984), p.85.
\textsuperscript{83}Anderson, n.74, p.32.
SUPER POWER RIVALRY OR COEXISTENCE

The term "Super Power rivalry" has often been used in the context of the US and USSR's involvement in the Indian Ocean and elsewhere. The two powers involved themselves in the domestic affairs of the littoral States. The competition between them was motivated by ideological and political considerations. Both of them tried to establish political parity in the region than strategic. For instance, during the Bangladesh crisis, the Soviets sent warships to the Indian Ocean in 1971 to strengthen its influence in the region rather than to counter the US which sent its Seventh Fleet to the Bay of Bengal to pressurize India to withdraw its troops from East Pakistan. Both the powers increased their presence in the region though they never had any rivalry amongst themselves in the Indian Ocean region. Their presence was justified because they felt that, since the regional States were unable to solve their problems among themselves, it was their duty, being Super Powers, to involve themselves and find a solution to the problems of the region. It is interesting to note that though the powers deployed their respective naval warships, neither of them was interested in suppressing the other. Each of them claimed that they had to increase their naval fleet to match the other, and neither of them decreased their deployment in that area. There was no evidence that the Soviet Union had any official treaty with any littoral State to have air/naval base in the India Ocean. However, some of the ports were being used by the USSR. On the other hand, the US had its base in the Indian Ocean (Diego Garcia) and had military linkages with Pakistan.

The main objectives of the USSR's presence in the Indian Ocean were as follows:

1. to strengthen its presence in the region;
2. to maintain its communication lines between the European and the East Asian

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85 There was no evidence that the Soviet Union had treaties/agreements with any of the littoral States. With regard to the harbours it used for refueling, repairs, or recreation for its crews. However, it must have had informal arrangements with them. In Egypt, Soviet forces were asked to leave with only a few days time and the Soviet forces withdrew from the use of Alexandria, Port Said, and Mersa Matruh. See Ference A. Váli, Politics of the Indian Ocean Region (New York: The Free Press, 1976), p.58.

There were some of the ports - Visakhapatnam (India), Hodeida (North Yemen), Aden (South Yemen), Berbera, and Mogadishu (Somalia), Umm Qasr (Iraq) and Chittagong (Bangladesh) used by the Soviets. See Ibid, p.178.
parts of the Soviet Union;
3. to protect its merchant shipping and fishing fleets in the Indian Ocean region;
4. to protect its crucial military, industrial sites located in the southern part of the country.
Thus, the presence of both US and USSR was not to wage a war against each other but to protect their interests in the region.

Both the US and the USSR had a common interest in the Indian Ocean. They wanted to solve the regional conflicts through intervention. They shared similar views with respect to the law of the sea, and did not want to allow a third power to emerge which would diminish their own influence in the region.

DEMILITARIZATION

In 1971, the littoral States put forward a proposal to declare the Indian Ocean as a zone of peace. Both the US and the USSR were refused to accept this proposal because it would foreclose them from deploying forces in the region. The Soviet Union, in 1977 changed its stance because it realized that it could not compete with the US and thus started supporting the proposal of the littoral States. However, since 1971, the majority of the littoral States insisted in the UN General Assembly and other international fora viz Non-aligned Summits to declare the Indian Ocean as a zone of peace.

89 The USSR supported the resolution No. 32/86 which was adopted on 12 December 1977 by a record vote of 123 to 0, with 13 abstained. See U.N.Year Book 1977, Vol.31, pp.49-51.
The Soviet Union came forward in August 1976 and favoured the proposal to eliminate bases of Western countries, particularly, the US. The bases that the Soviet leaders had in mind, was the US base at Diego Garcia. This became an irritant to the US, and the Carter administration shifted the declaration of the Indian ocean as a Zone of Peace (IOZP) to demilitarization. It was felt by the US that demilitarization was more possible than implementing IOZP. Thus, the Naval Arms Limitations Talks (NALT) between the US and the Soviet Union began in June 1977. The only difference between the IOZP and the NALT proposals was that the former advocated total liquidation of external military presence in the region, where as the latter was to limit the naval capabilities of the Super Powers. This was a game indulged by the US to subdue the voices of dissent against its presence in the Indian Ocean.

The President Carter was advised by the Congress in 1977 to further negotiate with the Soviets on an agreement to limit the deployment of the naval, air and land forces in the region. Perhaps the US was sincere in its approach, because in 1975, in the Senate, the funds for expansion of Diego Garcia facilities was delayed and was finally stopped. This was to convince the Soviets to accept the proposal for limitation of arms. This proposal was not a new one. In June 1971 Leonid I Brezhnev, the Soviet Communist Party General Secretary, announced his willingness for a mutual force reduction pact with US in the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean. In 1977 the USSR actively involved itself in the conflict between Somalia and Ethiopia in the Horn of Africa. This action of the USSR was criticized by the Americans. They

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90 Brezhnew complained about the double standard of the US regarding the naval presence in the Indian Ocean. He stated that the US objected to the Soviet naval presence in "the Mediterranean, the Indian Ocean and other seas", while at the same time considering it "normal and natural for their sixth fleet to be constantly present in the Mediterranean land by the side of the Soviet Union, as it were, and for the seventh fleet to be stationed off the coasts of China and Indo-china". The Soviet Union did not think "the navies of great powers" should be "sailing for a long time" away from "their native coasts" and would have liked to discuss the question with the US "but to make an equal bargain, as they say". Cited in Facts on File, Vol.31, no.1598, 10-16 June 1971, p.447.

91 In mid 1977 there was a conflict between Ethiopia and Somalia over Ogaden, territory in Ethiopia, inhabited chiefly by Somalis. In 1977, guerrillas supported by the Somali government moved into the area. The USSR supported Ethiopia to fight against Somalia-backed guerrillas in Ogaden and thus Ethiopia was able to send back the guerrillas back in 1978. See Encyclopedia
contended that on the one hand it was putting forth the NALT agreement and on the other, it was involving itself in the affairs of the region. Consequently, this led to the suspension of the negotiations that was scheduled to be held in February 1978.

In 1979, both the powers agreed to discuss limiting military involvement in the Indian Ocean. However, the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan placed the NALT on the back burner of international relations. Thus the two incidents - i.e., Soviet involvement in Somalia and Afghanistan placed the agreement in a limbo.

The US rejected the NALT proposal stating that the Soviet Union involved itself in Afghanistan's internal affairs. When the IOZP proposal was discussed in the UN General Assembly on 12 December 1977, President Carter, on 9 March 1977 proposed the demilitarization of the Indian Ocean. It was a bold decision. However, within ten days of his proposal, on 19 March he changed his stance and spoke of hoping to establish a "mutual military restraint in the Indian Ocean" with the Soviets. The reason for such a shift in his stance was because the Soviet Union had already adopted a diplomatic stance stating that it was advocating disarmament and as a result it was removing the fear from the minds of the world audiences, the fear of an outbreak of the third World War. Carter wanted to dilute the myth of peace that was created by the USSR. Another aspect was that there was nothing to loose by negotiating on demilitarization. By making the issue bilateral, it could be possible to delay the UN General Assembly resolution on IOZP seeking evacuation of the external military presence from the Indian Ocean region.


93 Kapur, n.24, p.144.
of demilitarization of the Indian Ocean and to stop arms sales to the developing nations.  

The second round of talks on demilitarisation of Indian Ocean began in September 1977 in Washington. At these talks, the Soviets proposed a ban on the deployment of ships and submarines armed with nuclear weapons in the Indian Ocean. It is very interesting to note that in the UN General Assembly President Carter on 4 October 1977 stated that neither the US nor the Soviet Union had a large military presence in the Indian Ocean and he further went on to state that there was no competition between them in deploying forces in the region. Carter also pointed out that both sides would consider measures that would lead to reduction of military activities in the Indian Ocean.  

The third round of talks between the US and the Soviet Union on demilitarization took place at Berne (Switzerland) in December 1977. Unfortunately, around this time the Soviet Union involved itself in the Somali - Ethiopian conflict in 1977. The US was unhappy with the Soviet action. Cyrus Vance, announced that in retaliation to the Soviet presence in Ethiopia, the US was slowing down its efforts to reach an agreement on demilitarization in the Indian Ocean. In 1979, the Afghanistan crisis further intensified and the negotiations were stopped. Thus, the entire exercise of purported demilitarization was put to an end without either of the countries taking any step towards limiting their presence in the Indian Ocean. 

From the above discussion, it is clear that the US is interested in maintaining Diego Garcia under its control, opposing IOZP, and legitimised its presence in the Indian Ocean region. 

The majority of the littoral States of the Indian Ocean are opposed to the external powers' presence in the region. The following chapter deals with littoral States, particularly India's response to the Super Power presence and activities in the Indian Ocean region. 