CHAPTER - II

INDIAN OCEAN - A ZONE OF CONFRONTATION

i) The Third World and Super Powers: Security Perception in the Indian Ocean:

'Super Powers' and 'The Third World' are both terms, which invite controversy. It is particularly exciting for the Super Powers, to intervene in the control of the Third World.

The Super Power Intervention in conflicts around the Third World is of a distinct category of analysis because of a number of factors. Their intervention combination of several syndrome depends on their Geographical remoteness also from the actual sphere of conflict. But this does not fully explain the phenomenon. The Super Powers - The Third World relationship, in its political, military and economic manifestations, displays an inequality in power. Quantitatively, this inequality is so great that it assumes a qualitative dimension also. The power distribution in the International system is so rigid that the post-1945, hierarchy has remained intact even today. Super power Intervention in the Third World is part of their global strategy to maintain this inequality. As two perceptive Third World scholars have pointed out, "to fight out their battles in the Third World is one way of ensuring that their own worlds are not touched by their conflicts according to the needs of their
relationships",¹ and "whereas the old imperial motto was 'Disarm the natives and facilitate control', the now imperial cunning has translated it into 'Arm the natives and consolidate dependency'. While the big powers once regarded it as profitable to modernise 'tribal warfare' - with lethal weapons".² If these two arguments are put together we would have a more deeper understanding of the rationals for great power intervention in the Third World.

The Indian Ocean is different from the others in that it is landlocked in the north and does not extend into the cold regions towards South. The northern entrance are controlled by narrow and easily monitorable waters, and its reaches in the South are farthest away from the Super Powers. Thus, whichever power controls the Suez canal, the Malacca Straits, the Cape of Good Hope; and the Australian waters can exercise sizeable influence over the Indian Ocean region. Interestingly, its physical configuration is such that it can be used for strategic weapon deployment against the vast mixed European & Ariatic descent eurasian mass of the Soviet Union but cannot be used against the USA which is altogether in a different hemisphere. The Indian

1. Sisir Gupta, "Great Power Relations World Order and the Third World", Foreign Affairs Reports, July-Aug,

Ocean is also an ocean of the non-aligned and developing countries. Among its Thirty-six littoral and Eleven hinterland countries only South Africa, Australia and Israel are developed countries, and excepting these three and Thailand the rest are non-aligned countries. On the other hand, it should be kept in mind that nearly six hundred and forty billion barrels, or more than 56% of the world's oil is to be found in the West Asian region. Resources of the Indian Ocean area, by and large still exploited not by littoral states but outside powers.

Some artificially created local conflicts were used by the big powers to extend their presence in the Indian Ocean, to suit their strategic interests. These strategic interests centred around the importance of this region in the global balance of power. As Admiral Zumwalt Chief of U.S. Naval Operations points out: "The Indian Ocean has become the area with the potential to produce major shifts in the global power balance over the next decade. It follows that we have the ability to influence events in the region is an essential element of such influence. That, in my judgement, is the crux of the rational for what we are planing to do at Diego Garcia". Because of such perceptions, the Indian

Ocean littoral region has become the focus of a new cold war rivalry between the Super Powers. Because of conflicts and tensions in Afghanistan, India-Pakistan, Iran-Iraq, West Asia, Horn of Africa and Southern Africa and between the Super powers get an opportunity to focus presence in the region by proxy.

The Indian Ocean assumed strategic importance from the early sixties, when in the war-planning a strategic trials was introduced, consisting of nuclear missile submarines, Inter-continental ballistic Missile and the long-range bomber. After the oil embargo of 1973, this significance became more acute. By this time, the US had shifted emphases from land-based to sea-based strategic nuclear strike systems. The value of this approach was that the sea-based nuclear strike system could be withheld and preserved from first nuclear exchange and then used to influence the subsequent stages of a war. This was a shift in the US strategic planning and major Soviet Union needed and equal sea-based nuclear strike capability to preserve its strategic reserve. This would involve and extension of the operational concepts and the Soviets navy subsequent shift to forward deployment.  

Developments in the Indian Ocean are to be analyzed in the perspective of a geographical factor that the Soviet Union dominates the Eurasian landmass, is closer to the Indian Ocean and that it has intervened in one of the littoral states, i.e. Afghanistan. Whereas there is no doubt that the Soviet power on the Eurasian landmass has a vital bearing on the issues relating to the Indian Ocean and its littoral, yet the U.S. exploitation of the geography of Indian Ocean to turn the area into an asymmetric deployment zone of its strategic arsenal will adversely affect the Soviet security perceptions and policies.

11) **Arms Race in the Indian Ocean Area:**

The littoral of the Indian Ocean has become the main focus of a new cold war Rivalry between the two Super Powers. In the region there are conflicts in South-West Asia, Afghanistan, Iran-Iraq, West Asia, Horn of Africa and South Africa. Arms are being pumped by the major arms suppliers to the countries in the North Western Indian Ocean area. The entire concept of the Indian Ocean as a zone of peace was being nullified by this exaltation of military preparation for instance in the wake of

Iran-Iraq war, at one time, there were in the ocean three air-craft carriers with nuclear weapons on board, besides fleets of number of extra regional powers to counter this threat, the conference of the Foreign minister ninety one Non-aligned members of the UN together with Palestine Liberation Organisation and South West Africa People's Organisation meeting in Delhi from Feb. 9 – 13, 1981. Expressed serious concern over the dangerous tension in the area, caused by the expansion of foreign bases, military installation disposition of nuclear weapons, and weapons of mass destruction and warned of the dangers of any actions that would provide pretext for the intervention by the Super Powers.

From the earlier 1960's the naval Arms began between the two Super Powers which was triggered off by the advent of the weapon system based upon Nuclear Propulsion and Submarine Launched Ballistic Missile (SLBM) (Science dealing with projectile (bullets) with the perfection in 1962 of the Polaris Missile with a range of 2002 - 2,500 nautical miles and the establishment in 1967, the North-western Cape of Australia of a very low frequency communication bases, it was obvious that US was planning to develop capabilities to deploy these weapons in the Indian Ocean unless this system is replaced by the Under Sea Long Ranges Missile System (ULMS) and there are no indications that it is being

replaced just now - any reduction in the strategic nuclear weapons system in the Indian Ocean is not foreseen. 7

A Soviet response to the US challenges in the form of Soviet navy in the ocean came about in 1968. 8 Actually the reversal of the Soviet policy had started taking shape from 1961 and that was a response to the rapid build up of both strategic and conventional forces announced by President Kennedy, soon after his occupation of the August Office in 1961. 9 The Soviet Union had no taste with apprehension the shift in US emphasis from land based to sea based strategic Nuclear Strike System. The Soviet Union felt that it would need a matching sea based nuclear strike capability to contribute to the strategic reserve and secondly the development of some means countering the US system because a sea based system could be used to deny the use of pressure of Europe as an alternative socio-economic base in the post-exchange phase of a war. 10 The initial Soviet response was to extend the outer defence, zone to 1500 nautical

miles circles from Moscow, covering the threat from carrier strike force stationed in the Norwegian sea and the Eastern Mediterranean, and secondly the extension of the area of naval concern upto 2500 N.M., circle of threat, thus including the Eastern half of the North Atlantic and the Northern Half of the Arabian Sea.11

President Brezhnev can relevantly be quoted in the communist party conference for arms control agreement in respect of submarines. He said, "we are prepared to come to term on limiting the deployment of new submarines - Ohio type by the U.S.A. and the similar ones by the USSR. We could also agree to banning modernisation of existing Ballistic Missile and Development of new ones for these submarines."12

Brezhnev was wanting to solve the problems, so he proposed again in 1971 to discuss the naval forces of the Super Powers present away from their respective coasts in the Mediterranean Sea and the Indian Ocean. Even earlier in 1968 the USSR proposed that agreement be reached for the cessation of patrol by Nuclear-Armed Submarines in areas where the borders of parties to the agreement are within a range of their missiles. These proposals


did not yield any positive consequences. President Reagan also made some proposals recently to decrease the strategic warheads but the proposition was limited to land based weapons.

In the year 1977, there was a discussion between the two major powers related to the freezing of military in the Indian Ocean did predict something but the talk was suspended in 1978 on the pretext of Soviet support to Ethiopia in the war with Somalia and the presence of Cuban forces in the Horn of Africa.

There was some hope of peace in the Indian Ocean when discussions commenced between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. in 1977 on limitation and freezing military presence in the Indian Ocean. But, soon, these discussions were suspended, in February 1978, by the U.S. because of Soviet support to Ethiopia in the war with Somalia and the presence of Cuban forces in the Horn of Africa.

There is a real problem for the Soviet navy in the face of meeting the threat nuclear missiles of the United States. Strategically speaking the problem is not of locating or identifying

an American submarine in the Indian Ocean i.e. relatively easy. The real problem is utilizing it in peace time and destroying it in the war time. The POLARIS can go as deep as 2,000 ft. under the sea, can remain there for a long period and can achieve a very fast speed. To constantly back it is practically impossible. The Soviet Navy could only keep in contact with it constantly and through this close proximity could eliminate it if and when necessary. This can be done by constantly stationing a sufficient force of destroyers, Frigades Hunter Killer submarines, anti-submarines helicopters in the Indian Ocean. The Soviet presence in the Bab-al-Handab area, can partly be explained by these strategic considerations. From this point the Soviet Union may expect to neutralize the U.S. naval presence in the Arabian and the Red Seas. Comparing the naval capabilities of the two Super powers in the Indian Ocean area it is obvious that the U.S.A. has several advantages over the U.S.S.R. Besides the air-craft carriers the U.S.A. has two communications bases in Diego-Garcia and Australia, to facilitate the operation of deep submerged vessels. So far there are no reports that the Soviet Union also enjoys the facilities for a Very Low Frequency Communication (VLFC). Similarly, whereas the U.S.A. and the Allies can operate from almost any point in the Indian Ocean — Australis, Thailand, Pakistan, Maldives, Bahrain, Masira, South Africa and many British Islands in the Indian Ocean, the Soviet Union at the most can
operate from the one corner of the Indian Ocean i.e. Somalia and South Yemen. 15

In 1979, the Congressional Research Service for the U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations prepared a report, "United States Foreign Policy objectives and overseas Military Installations", and it states: "The U.S. has both a conventional and perhaps a careful planning to meet an end in the Indian Ocean region. Military Objectives for U.S. conventional forces include the capability to (i) protect U.S. Economic interests in the Persian Gulf regions, (ii) employ or threaten force in support of U.S. diplomatic objectives in the Middle East, (iii) secure the Indian Ocean air and sea routes against harassment of interdiction, (iv) intervene in support of other objectives in the littoral, and (v) relative to all of these balance Soviet forces in the region attain superiority in the crisis. The United States also possesses a potential strategic nuclear military objective of deploying, when necessary or convenient, ballistic missile submarines targeted on the U.S.S.R." 16

The United States Air Force satellite tracking Station at Mahe, which serves as a communication link between Diego-Garcia and other U.S. bases. The Diego Garcia base has crucial communication facilities that enable the Poseidon and Trident Submarines to operate effectively from this area. The air base on this Island makes it possible for the shore-based anti-submarine and maritime reconnaissance planes (P3c Orion and SR-71) to gather reconnaissance and patrol the area. Diego Garcia, Masira and Cocos Islands form a jumping ground from where the U.S.A. can operate its interventionist diplomacy bases in Bahrain. The North-West Cape communication Station in Australia is a vital part of U.S. Global command and control network to operate nuclear submarines.\(^\text{17}\) In Exchange for arms and worth $40 million the U.S. acquired, in 1981, access to facilities in Berbera, Somalia.\(^\text{18}\) Reconnaissance facilities are available at Nasirah, off the coast of Oman at Mombasa, Kenya.\(^\text{19}\)

The interests of the United States in the Indian Ocean were spelt out by President Jimmy Carter: "an attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will

\(^{17}\) Ibid., p. 96.


\(^{19}\) K.R. Singh, The Indian Ocean, p. 191.
be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States. And such an assault will be repelled by means necessary, including military force. "Vital interests being military power to the forefront of policy consideration. The United State's vital interests in this region are the security of access to West Asian Oil resources, and the preservation and if possible improvement in her Geographical balance of power vis-a-vis the Soviet Union. The U.S.A. and its allies are not only by and large dependent upon the oil from the West Asia but have invested billions of dollars in the oil industry. The geographical fact is that the Soviet Union is contiguous to the States overlooking the Persian Gulf, Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean. Soviet military power, based on Internal Ground lives of communication and resupply, can be directly projected into the littoral. The airborne assault capability of the U.S.S.R. in the region greatly foreshortens warning and response time of the U.S. forces. Soviet military bases in Yemen, Ethiopia and Vietnam are situated on maritime strategic choke points. What the Soviet Union can do was illustrated by the events in Afghanistan and the long-range air-lifted intervention in the Horn of Africa in 1977-78. It was

in this context that the U.S. decided to raise the Rapid Deployment Force (RDF). 21

The U.S. interests in the Indian Ocean area were spelled out in the State of the Union message of President Carter in January 1980. An attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States. And such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force. These 'vital interests' revolve around the concept of the "wells of power". Any potential strangulation of the industrialized economies has always haunted the West, at least since 1973 (Ref. H. Kissinger, quoted in IDSA News Review on West Asia, Feb. 1975). There have always been analyses of the prospects of continuation of oil supplies, if necessary by forcible seizure of the oil fields.

The Western strategists do not hesitate in acknowledging that the target for the RDF is Saudi Arabian and Hormus straits can be swiftly captured by the RDF in the face of any Soviet threat.

A separate Indian Ocean command has been set up by the U.S. Rapid Deployment Force of 230,000 men and they have been entrusted with the task of carrying out punitive operations in the Indian Ocean particularly in the Persian Gulf if and when the need arisen.

The Rapid Deployment Force is to be the main instrument of U.S. policy in and around the Indian Ocean. It was conceived in 1980 immediately after the Russian occupation of Afghanistan.

The RDF will be truly awesome military force consisting of not less than 5 army divisions, 2 Marine divisions, 2 wings of B-52 Bomers, 3 aircraft carriers and a large number of escort and supply ships. It would be served by a separate Indian Ocean Command directly under the Junior Chief of Staff.

The Goal of the RDF is not only to stop Soviet infiltration or invasion but also any kind of instability that might prove dangerous to U.S. interest in the Area. In the Persian Gulf the RDF is intended explicitly to give the U.S. the capability to force its way in and not wait for an invitation from a friendly Government.

The U.S. is building an entirely new type of long distance transport plane, the Mc Mx which scheduled to be operated in 1983.
To make the RDF fully effective it needs huge stockpiles of combat ready weapons, within the area and base facilities in Egypt, Moscow, Oman, Kenya and Somalia. Their most important base for effective deployment of the RDF is Israel.

Israel in future is not only to maintain a process of power balance in West Asia, but it is to become an integral part of the American strategic design. Under this strategic collaboration with Israel, they will stockpile in Israel heavy artillery, armoured troop carriers, communication and other war material required for a conventional engagement in the region. Israel can offer what no other region can, namely an effective air defence for the arms stockpile.

If Israel is the Western Sheet anchor of America’s evolving strategy for rapid intervention for the West and S.W. Asia, Pakistan has been elected to be its eastern plank.

Like Israel, Pakistan has presented itself as a crucial strategic asset for the U.S. when the Reaganites came to power on the crest of a tide of hawkish sentiment it was easy for Pakistan to persuade them to accept its offer of cooperation in their anti-Soviet crusade. Nor was the Reagan advice particularly disturbed by the fears expressed regarding the Zia stability for that Pakistan clandestively embarked a nuclear
programme. Zia obtained a large assistance package of $8.2 billion including the most sophisticated F-16 Fighter Bombers.

The U.S. search for bases, the establishment of a Rapid Deployment Force and augmentation of facilities at Diego-Garcia are directed not against the Soviet threat but against the non-Soviet threats to the U.S. interests, particularly the continued flow of oil to the industrialized countries. The U.S. has an interest in other resources of the Indian Ocean littoral also, and has considerable trade interest in this region. Also, most of the surplus petro-dollars of the Gulf countries are invested in the Western banking system. The image of the U.S. power deployed in the Indian Ocean induces many West Asian regimes, who perceive themself to be insecure, to seek security through large-scale arms purchases from the U.S. It was in this context that the U.S. power projection in the Indian Ocean has to be seen.

iii) **Zone of Peace:**

An argument which was used to justify the increasing Western presence in the Indian Ocean right from the very beginning was the so-called 'Vacuum Theory' when the British Government decided to curtail its commitment East of Suez. The Vacuum theory which decided the British curtailment of its commitment East of Suez was the best argument produced by the Western province to justify
their increasing presence in the Indian Ocean. This was taken as a move to create a power vacuum which of not feared by the Americans would be feared by the U.S.S.R. May be by sheer coincidence. This British decision of withdrawal was followed by the entry of a small Soviet Naval Task Force in the Indian Ocean in 1968. These two moves were not interconnected. American nuclear presence in the Indian Ocean was increasing and this was threat to the Southern flank of the Soviet Union which has exposed to any attacks from U.S. Submarines in the Indian Ocean. The Soviets concerns had aggravated after the closure of Suez canal after June 1967 war which had blocked all lines of communication from the black and the mediterranean sea to the Indian Ocean.

Even if British had not decided to withdraw this American threat would have been there and the Soviet Union would have to counter that U.S. threat. But it is wrong to believe that the Britain was completely withdrawing from the Indian Ocean as she had entered into an alliance with the U.S.A. to operate jointly in the Indian Ocean. It is therefore wrong to correlate this supposed British withdrawal and the Soviet entry into the Indian Ocean. Such a correlation has been advocated only to justify the increased U.S. presence in the area.
According to the U.N. General Assembly Resolution number 1832 (XXVI) the Indian Ocean was to be designated perpetually as a zone of peace. This resolution asked the big powers to enter into consultation with the Indian Ocean littoral States, so as to half the proliferation of their military presence in the area and elimination of all the military weapons and bases. The resolution also called upon all the concerned States - littoral and hinterland states, permanent members of U.N. Security Council and the Maritime Users of the Indian Ocean to establish a system of Universal Collective Security without military alliances and to work for regional cooperation. Next year on December 15, 1972 the U.N. General Assembly established (resolution 29992 -(XXVII) a 15 member Ad hoc Committee for implementation of the earlier proposal. By June 1982 this committee consisted of 46 member states besides these a number of General Assembly resolutions aimed at establishing the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace: 3080 (XXVIII) 6 December 1973, 3259 (XXIX) 9 December 1974, 3468 (XXX) December 11, 1975, 31/88 of 14 December 1976, 32/86 12 December 1977, S 10/2 of 30 June 1978, 33/68 14 December 1978, 34/80 HNB of 11 December 1977, 35/150 of 12 December 1980 and 36/90 of 9 December 1981.

23. Ibid.
On the basis of all these resolutions in 1979 the General Assembly decided to convene a Conference in Colombo in 1981 to find ways of implementing this idea of Zone of Peace, but because of irreconcilable difference between the two Power blocs in the Ad hoc Committee this Conference could not be convened. Another meeting of the Ad hoc Committee was held in Geneva in August 1982 but no consensus could be reached about the commencing of the Conference. The great difference was between the Eastern bloc and the non-aligned countries on the one hand and the Western bloc on the other. The former maintained that the Indian Ocean should be isolated from the Super Power rivalry whereas the latter were looking at the issue from the cold war perspective, reiterating the right of collective self defence to justify the military and naval presence of extra regional powers in the Indian Ocean area. The littoral states and the non-aligned have constantly been demanding a halt to in space proliferation and introduction of nuclear weapons in the hitherto nuclear weapon free Indian Ocean.

The plea of the Western powers is that non-proliferation (to grow or increase) is restricted only to horizontal proliferation i.e. acquisition of nuclear by new states, and the concept of nuclear weapon free zone covers only land and adjacent waters and not the high seas, infact this plea was only a rationalization of their present military deployment in the area.
In fact both the sides could be blamed for these bickerings because no such preconditions were demanded at the time of nuclear non-proliferation Treaty nor when the Tiaestco treaty was proposed. It may be noted at this juncture that when the December 1971 resolution (2832) was introduced both the Two Power Blocs had voted against it, this situation continued till 1976, when the Eastern Bloc changed its strategy and obtained. It was only in 1977 that they voted in favour of the resolution actually in the beginning this concept of peace zone was not considered a cold war issue but for different reasons the two sides were opposed to the concept.

The policies of the Super powers in pursuit of competitive naval deployment in the Indian Ocean area in defence of their interest are largely counter productive, Iran under the Shah is a point in case, the Shah was deposed by his own people which itself with him much too closely had to pay a heavy price for the identification, later on the massive are supplies by the two Super Powers to Iran and Iraq were ostensibly for stabilisation of their regional situation and for the production of the region.


Infact, this only seemed to destroy the oil installations of these two countries and to reduce the available oil supplies to the world. Earlier the justification of military deployments in the Indian Ocean area was to secure the safety of oil supply lanes. Now the justification is to meet the deterioration in the International political system, actually the presence of extra regional powers in the region as itself led to such deterioration.

Indian Ocean area will not be free from military presence of the two powers until and unless they both cooperative decide to do so. In the U.N. General Assembly both of them refused the note on the question regarding their debasing themselves from the area, this indicates their disunity on this point. The talks which took place in Moscow, Washington, and Bern in reference to converting Indian Ocean into a zone of peace, show that in the near future they do not intend to do so, nor do they intend the Indian Ocean a nuclear free zone, but they did promise to limit their activity in the area, which the United States wanted to free freeze the deployment of the military might of the super powers at the present levels the Soviet Union wants U.S. nuclear vessels not to enter the Indian Ocean region. So there was no consensus


regarding the demilitarising issue between the Two Super Powers. However, it looks that the Super Powers not only formalised the question of their naval actively in the Indian Ocean at a time when the littoral countries are trying hard to multi lateralize it through the United Nations.

iv) Indian Response:

Indian attention was focussed in the main on five aspect of the Indian Ocean development. There were (1) The high profile U.S. naval presences built rapidly in the Indian Ocean Waters and Speciality on Diego-Garcia and to a considerably lesser extent, the Soviet naval response. (2) The near indefinite postponement, mainly as a result of U.S. opposition, of the conference convened by the United Nations to declare the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace. (3) The U.S. search for the acquisition for base facilities in several countries on the Indian Ocean littoral. (4) The transfer of a substantial quantity of U.S. arms including F-16 aircraft to Pak and reported Pakistan willingness to give the U.S. base facilities in certain contingencies, and (5) Threat posed by these developments to India's security, its sovereignty over its territorial waters and the economic zone.
Official spokesman in and out of Parliament made it clear that the Govt. of India were closely monitoring the naval movements of the U.S. and the Soviet Union in the Indian ocean. However, except on a half a dozen occasions official statements to "great power presence" and "Super Power" rivalries in the Indian Ocean, rather main mention the U.S. by name. Similarly while at the United Nations, Indian delegates strongly criticised the "negativism of certain countries, however powerful", with regard to the holding of the Indian Ocean conference the U.S. was hardly mentioned by name. Govt. spokesman told members of the Parliament that India's grave power concern about the great power military build up in the Indian Ocean had been convened to the Government concerned. Members of the Parliament as well as the members of the Elite urged the Government to "take the initiative" to mobilize the littoral countries to put an end to great power presence in the Indian Ocean and to declare the Ocean as a Zone of Peace. The Government, however, made sympathetic noises but did not undertake any major diplomatic initiative or was served by the ineffectiveness of whatever low level initiatives it took. Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi confessed in the Parliament in June 1980 that no Indian initiative would "affect the confrontation of bigger powers who wanted to play out their rivalries away from their shores"
confessing helplessness she added, "we cannot match the strength of the major powers, but we are trying to maintain defence preparedness.... much as we would like to think as does not have any effect on big powers".

Only on one occasion an official spokesman observed that the crisis in Afghanistan "dash strike" on the Indian Ocean development generally, the Government tried not to offend either Super Power. As the New Delhi correspondent of the Hindu reported on November 21, 1980 " in his replies to (question in Parliament) Mr. Narsimha Rao took a great care not to offend the Soviet Union by equating it with the United States, or even among Washington by treating its refusal to participate in the proposed conference in Colombo as a negative response to the very concept of transforming the Indian Ocean into a Zone of Peace". The External Affairs Affairs Minister, however, had no hesitation in deploaring "Western move in 1980 to station an International naval armada in an around the Gulf-region. The Prime Minister on more than one occasion reminded members of the Parliament that the U.S. naval build up in the Indian Ocean preceded the Soviet Intervention in Afghanistan and discounted reports that the U.S.S.R. was seeking an outlet to the Indian Ocean through Pakistan.
Joint Communique issued after talks between Indian leaders and heads of Governments or States of more than fifteen countries stressed the urgency of declaring the Indian Ocean a Zone of Peace and of ridding the waters of great powers rivalries. Among the countries that joined India to reiterate this well entrenched littoral position were Seychelles, Iran, Madagascar, U.A.E., Kuwait, Bahrain, Tanzania, Guinea, Mozambique, Iraq, Egypt and Saudi Arabia. However, when the President of India visited Colombo last year, the Sri Lanka President remained silent on the Peace Zone proposed, though the visiting leader made a pointing reference to it.

Indians generally did not see the U.S. naval build up in the Indian Ocean as a response to a Soviet threat. Typical was the view expressed by a generally pro-western strategic analyst, Ravi Rikhye in 1979. "The Soviet navy never has been, and cannot now be, in any position to challenge an American build up in the Indian Ocean. Soviet naval capabilities has been deliberately exaggerated by the West. There is no Soviet military threat to oil routes the threat is entirely political". 30

The crucial problem here is the endemic instability in the region. To the extent that the regional powers do not come

30. The Times of India, April 14, 1979.
to terms with the fact that regional cooperation is the solution to their security problems, they are going to find increased presence of the extra-regional powers in their neighbourhood. There would be more of the super power intervention and confrontation in this region, each availing itself of such countermeasures that are available to protect its vital interests in the region.