CHAPTER VI
CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The 1971 was the turning point in the maritime history of post independent India. The country had never been a strong sea fearing nation, and there was hardly any appreciation amongst the Indian political leadership about the threats from sea. It was contrary to the British defence thinking where navy had a significant role to play. The neglect of maritime interest of India was, aptly reflected in the GOMs report as far close as in the beginning of this century, when it was said that little has been done over the years to understand or take action to create the infrastructure for the protection of India’s vast coastal areas.

India shares land border with six nations and maritime boundaries with seven countries, thereby extending India’s security from Persian Gulf to the Strait of Malacca. Our strategic location, astride the major sea lines of communications in the Indian Ocean, coupled with sea power put India in an eminent position, to play a responsible role for ensuring good governance of the oceanic area, not only in the interest of our security, but also that of other maritime nations.

Maritime security of India involves the freedom to exploit the maritime zone of influence (MZI) for economic, political and military dominance and the growth of nation. It includes the peaceful conduct of the sea trade and other economic activities in the IOR and beyond, maritime environmental issues like resolution of sea boundaries, besides
deployment and employment of India and of other maritime powers in the Indian Ocean

As a growing economy with sea dependence of 70 per cent, India has dominating stakes in the Indian Ocean. While the foreign trade policy of 2009-14, reflects a robust growth in the last five years i.e., from US $64bn in 2003-04 to US$ 168bn in 2008-09, the global merchandise trade rose in share from 0.83 per cent to 1.45 per cent. By 2014, India’s exports of goods and services are expected to double including its share in the global trade by 2020.

India was registered as a first pioneer investor 27 years back amongst the developing country extending her enormous sea area to turf. The country is also opening third research centre in Antarctica named Bharati by 2012. It will facilitate the scientific studies incl., environmental monitoring having all state-of-the art laboratories facilities. However, to strengthen its maritime status, there is a need to analyse achievements in areas of deep sea mining, pelagic fisheries, sea farming, offshore engineering, under water technology and polar instrumentation, demanding promotion of institutional capabilities in future incl., upgradation of military training, education, research in the field of oceanography. Engaging Indian Ocean is therefore becoming a necessity for India than an option to sustain, as the industrial and economic well being of a nation is not possible, unless her maritime assets are safeguarded and harnessed effectively.
India’s merchant navy though small for our needs and size remains a major factor in our maritime security planning. Further, operating out of 13 major and 176 small ports, the shipping has been badly effective due to various handicaps such as inadequate vessel capacity, lack of infrastructural development at ports, congestion of berth facility, adverse rail road transport connectivity, active mafia grouping and poor power, water and communication links. The security of our merchant ships, ports and sea lanes represents vital maritime interests to us.

Indian ocean is the most militarized water body in the world. Many countries outside these waters have a natural interest in the geopolitics of the region. For instance, US have a considerable military presence in the region furthering its ongoing operations in Afghanistan and Iraq supported by its western allies. France too has bases in the Indian Ocean as half of its energy needs are met from the gulf, while Russia and Japan have significant economic interface with littoral countries.

China in its bid for regional preponderance has created many defence partnerships in the IOR with countries like Pakistan, Myanmar, Bangladesh and Sri-lanka. She has also undertaken major arms transfers to a number of nations around the Persian gulf, especially Saudi Arabia and Iran, besides countries on the eastern coast of Africa. Chinese String of Pearl strategy attempting to strangulate India accompanied by expansion and modernization of its navy incl. enhanced under water potential makes it imperative for India to build a strong maritime capability.
Pakistan too driven by its deep seated and historic animus towards India singularly and in alliance with China is building a significant naval force capable of effective sea denial and sea control in a limited way. Their underwater and air attack potential is mostly limited to Arabian sea with a capability for SLOC interdiction from Hormuz to Indian ports. The small naval forces of countries like Thailand, Myanmar, Malaysia and Indonesia are operationally quite effective and are developing their potential in high-tech naval power. Any equation developing between these small fleets can be a cause of concern as they could confront Indian naval fleets well outside the Andaman sea and in the Bay of Bengal.

It is becoming quite evident that the epicenter of not just global terrorism but also missile and nuclear proliferation (Iran being in offing), lies in our neighbourhood. It gets bolstered by various other maritime challenges such as piracy, smuggling, organized crimes, poaching, drug and human trafficking, proliferation of small arms, illegal mining, security of the islands and offshore installations and other trans-national organized crimes etc. The event of 26/11 by the non state actors nearly three years back has further shown chinks in the coastal defence management. On the other hand, frequent breach of coastal areas by foreign ships amply reflects that much needs to be done.

The Indian navy presently possesses nearly 190 aircraft. These include an aircraft carrier and variety of sea warships such as destroyers, frigates, corvettes, offshore patrol vessels, minesweepers, landing ships fitted with missile capabilities, missile boats, training ships, survey and research ships, seaward defence forces etc.
Maritime Domain Awareness is considered a prerequisite to fulfil the role, mission and tasks of the Indian navy. It has also operationalised four Joint Operation Centers at Western, Eastern and Southern Naval Commands and Andaman & Nicobar Islands. To strengthen its guard, the Indian Navy had undertaken the exercise “Sagar Kavach”, (ocean shield) off the coast of Goa and Maharashtra along with Coast Guard, Customs, port and marine police. For providing security to vital military and strategic installations incl. protecting naval assets, bases and harbours on both west and east coasts of India, the navy has also raised a specialist force Sagar Prahari Bal. The force is provided with 15 fast-interception craft (FICs), which can effectively patrol almost up to 200 nautical miles.

Consequent to the Mumbai terror attack the Indian Navy has been designated with overall maritime security including coastal and offshore security which was earlier under the authority of Indian coast guard and Marine Police. In this regard, the ICG, state Marine Police and other central and state agencies are to assist the Indian Navy for the coastal defence of the nation. Since October 2008, Indian Navy has escorted around 644 ships in the Gulf of Aden and also prevented 14 piracy attempts on merchant ships during its deployment for anti piracy operations.

The Navy has also developed a maritime capability perspective plan for force development and modernization, spanning over the next three plan period i.e., 2005- 2022. Further, enhancing its capability to meet contemporary and future challenges, Indian Navy is building three
dimensional force to fulfill its larger responsibilities commensurating with country’s growing influence. This include Vikramaditya the aircraft carrier likely to be inducted into the Indian Navy by 2012 and the development of indigenous aircraft carrier (IAC) to be commissioned by 2014. Two other IAC of 45,000 tones has also been approved by the government incl. a range of warships, frigates, destroyers, corvettes, offshore patrol vessels, Landing Platform Docks and survey vessels, amphibious capability, support ships, conventional and nuclear submarines.

India plans to launch its first Military Use Satellite which will have around 1,000 nautical mile footprint over the Indian Ocean. The geosynchronous satellite will complement the “maritime domain awareness” as well the network centric warfare capability for the Indian warships. New Delhi also plans to set up radar chains in Maldives, Seychelles and Mauritius that will transmit real time data to Indian monitoring stations of the Navy and the Coast Guard which will cover the crucial and busy shipping lanes. At the same time, the availability of potent air and sea launched anti shipping missiles like of Brahmos could change the threat scenario and balance of power in the region by adding to TRIAD capability. The nuclear element adds another flavor to this capability. It suggests the recognition of the need to develop maritime infrastructure, to bolster international trade and economic growth. This will also increase India’s trade potential and the significant role of Indian navy.
The navy also possesses Harbour Protection Systems like diver-detection sonar, underwater physical nets and Scare chargers, which can detect any suspicious underwater activity of hostile divers or frogmen anytime. At present, Navy has set up 85 Automatic Identification System Transponders shore stations. To enhance the maritime security, the International Ship and Port Facility Security Code (ISPS Code) was also mandated by International Maritime Organisation in 2002 to avoid any disaster in the oceans. In this regard, was also seen demonstrative role of Indian navy in fighting natural disasters like tsunamis by providing assistance, restoration of infrastructure and supply of food and water, thereby providing humanitarian assistance to our island territories as well to the affected neighbouring countries.

In view of India’s increasing dependence on sea and the emerging strategic environment in the Indian Ocean Region, there is a need for coordinated, centralized and highly sophisticated development response. Indian navy has also undergone joint naval exercises with navies of Unites States, France, Britain, Japan, Australia and of ASEAN countries. There is a need to focus on intricacies of maritime challenges to India and develop concepts and strategies for integrated maritime security.

The enemy at sea needs not be a neighbouring country and navies are meant to fight where the interests of nation clashes. Thus the high tech land, air and under water capability with nuclear potential will provide India a sea control and sea denial potential incl. power projection in and beyond our areas of interest.
RECOMMENDATIONS

Indian ocean region is one of the key geopolitical/strategical regions in the world in which India by virtue of its location, size and vital interest has no choice, but to shoulder the responsibility of assuring stability in the region. In this background of increasing concern and interest at sea:-

- There is a need to adopt four pronged maritime strategies based on competition, capability, credibility and cooperation as the prime ingredients to make Indian navy an effective instrument of State structure in the Indian Ocean.

- By 2020 more than 80 percent of India’s energy needs would be imported. This also includes increasing number of tankers calling on the Indian ports and offshore oil assets likely to spread across an area of over 100,000 sq. km. on either side. The 95 percent of India’s overseas trade moves through the medium of sea. Keeping in view, the existing low tonnage shipping, ageing vessels and inadequate port facilities, there is a need for speeding augmentation and strengthening of existing capabilities to cope with escalating demands of the future.

- India’s important sea based assets, comprises enormous fisheries and seabed resources in its exclusive economic zone area. Currently, it is under exploited for want of adequate capability incl., lack of appreciable sea industry. A firm and well developed policy and its implementation to establish exclusive fishery product processing zones will provide enough opportunities to put the Indian fisheries on the world map. There is a
need, to enhance research activities in the Antarctica where India has been one of the dozen pioneer nations from the beginning.

- Non-traditional threats have begun to add complexity to the security scenario impinging upon safety of sea borne commerce and extending SLOC. In this regard trans-national challenges like Piracy, narcotics and drug trafficking, oil spills, small arms proliferation, poaching and smuggling calls for synergy between different government agencies as well cooperative engagements with countries, external to the region and those littoral to it.

- India’s concerns in the Indian ocean stretching in space from Aden to Malacca, offers a broad spectrum ranging from those relevant to the geopolitics of the region to those beginning to arise from non-state actors largely in the neighbourhood. With the growing economy security of energy and overseas trade will assume significant dimensions. The sea being medium through which they can be endangered, a credible maritime power will become a critical necessity.

- India seeks to play a more pro-active role consistent with our aspiration to become a major Asian power. The enhanced relationships with littoral countries which are significant to India’s geo-political interest will be an important pre-requisite. As the largest regional power, India must assume a leadership role in creating the required environment of mutual trust and confidence at sea or it gets abdicate to someone else.
Most of India’s refineries and nuclear plants are located in coastal areas, easily accessible from the sea. India’s long and mostly unguarded coastline is vulnerable to induction of men and material including explosives. The threats and challenges have become multi dimensional, demanding adequate response strategies in guarding infrastructural growth in the coastal areas.

The growing presence of regional and extra regional powers in the Indian ocean is a cause of great concern to India. While it is China and Pakistan which provide maritime equation in the regional strategic calculus, the United States maintain considerable military presence in the area. The increasing concern to India is the String of Pearl Strategy adopted by China incl., several unsavoury movements active in our neighbourhood. India needs to look at the Indian Ocean in its strategic envelope and build up capabilities at sea, seen as reassuring by those friendly to us and act as credible deterrence to the potential adversaries. Further, strengthening resources and facilities in the island territories, the Andaman and Nicobar island in particular will not only add to sea security, but also act as India’s strategic outpost.

Indian navy at present holds 5th position by way of its existing potential in the world. Cosmetically, it may look impressive, but the current naval share of 13 to 14 percent in the defence budget could certainly be the restraining factor in its promise to boost capabilities and planned induction of advance platform and technology incl., creation of modern infrastructure. There is a need to consolidate and critically examine the use of our current resources to address navy’s acquisition program,
keeping in view delays and cost overruns in our naval ship building projects; including those to be procured from other countries.

• India took nearly 57 years to frame its maritime doctrine later rechristened as policy in 2005. Lately the Ministry of Shipping have also released Maritime Agenda 2010-2020, bringing out in detail various national maritime developments programmes. Both in its policy charter as well in maritime programmes were brought out new strategic naval designs as well promotion and enhancement of infrastructural growth pertaining to naval and maritime sector. There is a need to appraise and monitor such policies and programmes on continuous basis given our past experience of only episodic attention.

• The coastal security of India has been enhanced since the unfortunate event of Mumbai carnage. However, the naval revision assessment, consequent to attack by non-state actors on the Mumbai coast has made Indian navy once again incharge of policing the coastline. There is a need to strengthen the Coast Guard and Marine Police incl. newly raised Sagar Prahari Bal with enhanced surveillance capabilities making them accountable for any breach of security on the sea coast. Providing additional responsibility to the Indian navy will only distract it from its primary charter of becoming a Blue Water Navy in the long run.

• Cooperative maritime interface is important and must be fostered. Such a mechanism would need to include bilateral and multilateral security arrangements, domain awareness and dispute resolution mechanisms. It would further serve to quell regional and sub regional tensions. India has
already undertaken such measures using its maritime power in concert with diplomacy and interactions through ship visits, exchange of personnel, joint military naval exercises and assistance forming it an important element of its maritime strategy.

India must develop a strong navy which can decisively influence events in her favour anywhere in the Indian ocean region. She has to have a suitably big mercantile marine to help lift her strategic cargo and engage in profitable trade with other nations. The Indian society must be educated about maritime matters. Maritime commercial enterprises needs to be encouraged so as to harness the bounties of the ocean in term of its energy resources, food security, wealth generation, future prospects and job opportunities. India must learn to develop and harness the strategic leverage of sea power in international affairs by the ability to dominate the Indian Ocean Region; after all, how many countries have oceans named after them. India is singularly blessed and so its ability to be its sole custodian.