CHAPTER – V

Strategic Environment of Indian Ocean and South Asian Countries
The strategic environment of India has a direct perception and security scenario of the South Asian countries. The May atomic blasts of India and Pakistan has altered the old parameters in South Asia. It has affected the overall security scenario of whole South Asian region. Indian Ocean is situated in this part of the globe. Its strategic location has invited worldwide attention. In this chapter, we will discuss the importance of strategic environment of Indian Ocean on South Asia and its implications on international security system. The Indian Ocean is the third largest of the four major oceans in the world, after the Pacific and Atlantic oceans. It covers an area of 74 million sq.km. Comprising some 20% of the total area of water in the world, and includes, amongst others, the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf, the Arabian Sea, the Bay of Bengal, and the Andaman Sea.\(^1\) Although its waters border three continents of the world – Africa, Asia, and Antarctica – it is considered to constitute a distinct region.\(^2\) It is the only ocean to be named after a major state whose share it reaches.

A special feature of the ocean is that it is virtually surrounded by land on three sides; in the west by the eastern and southern parts of Africa and the Southwestern part of Asia; in the north by Southern Asia; and in the East of Southeastern Asia and western Australia. It is only the southern part of the ocean, which easily links up with both the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. In view of the vast distances of these se routes for the alternative sea lines of communication increases considerably.

\(^1\) The Hindu, New Delhi, April 14, 1995.
Such sea route not only enable the supply of crucial energy sources and the transportation of trade within the Indian Ocean, but provide for shorter, and more economical routes for shipping between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. The more important of these in the western part of the Indian Ocean include the Suez Canal, which connects the Red Sea to the Mediterranean Sea, and the Strait of Hormuz, which links the Persian Gulf to the Gulf of Oman. Meanwhile, the straits of Malacca, Singapore, Sunda, Lombok, and Ombai-wetar, located in the eastern part of the Indian Ocean, provide the critical link with the Pacific Ocean.

These continues to be some confusion as to the enact number of states which can be considered to be part of the Indian Ocean region. The numbers range from a low of 35 to a maximum of 47 sovereign states, including littoral states (30), islands (5), and landlocked countries (12), depending on the source of the counting. Similar confusion exists in relation to the number of rim countries of the Indian Ocean, ranging from 28 to 31.\(^3\)

For the purpose of this research, the number of sovereign states of the Indian Ocean can be put at 47, and that of the rim, 28. In addition, France and the U.K., amongst the non-Indian Ocean States possess island territories in the region.

A common feature of virtually all these countries is that, at one time or another, they were colonized by major European powers especially the British, French, Dutch and Portuguese. Hiel a few of these countries became independent in the late, 1940s and early 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. This

indicates a relatively limited period of time as sovereign entities in the world. All of them are categorised as developing states, with the exception of Australia and Israel (industrial countries).\(^4\) The population of the Indian Ocean countries is about 2 billion, which represents just over a third of global population.

Another major feature is the sheer diversity amongst the countries of the region. This relates to their size (Australia vis-à-vis Singapore), their population (India's 920 million people vis-à-vis the 72,000 people of the Seychelles), and the nature of their political systems (the world's largest democracy vis-à-vis authoritarian and military regime). In terms of economic development as well, considerable differences are present. This region consists of countries whose Gross National Product (GNP) varies from $255,100 million in the case of India, to $467 million for Djibouti, and GNP per capital of $19,760 for Singapore to $74 for Mozambique.\(^5\) This region includes a number of weak economies, as well as the fastest growing ones of Southeast Asia. The continuing pace of liberalization and globalisation in India is also expected to make the country a powerful economic force in the world in the near future. The positives on the economic front in the region however is largely overshadowed by one development in the late 1990s i.e., the overt nuclearisation of the subcontinent. It has serious ramifications for the region considerable concern continues to be expressed over the perceived threat of a major war between Indian and Pakistan, especially one which could well take the form of a nuclear exchange in the region. The

development and acquisition of sophisticated conventional weapons, and the nuclear capabilities of both countries add to these concerns.⁶

The proliferation of small arms and the growth of drug trafficking is of increasing concern to countries of the Indian Ocean region. Not only these factors encourage and exacerbate the dominant form of warfare globally at present, but increase tension in the region. This is especially true of Indo-Pakistani relationship.

In view of the nature of the war fought against the erstwhile USSR in Afghanistan during much of the 1980s the vast quantities of weapons supplied to the Mujahideen forces were of the small arms variety. A large proportion of these weapons, over the years, as diverted in Pakistan itself, and they have been used in the Indian provinces of Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir. During the seven year period from mid-1988 to mid-1995, for example, the weapons and ammunition seized by the Indian security forces in Jammu and Kashmir included 13,894 AK series of assault rifles, 844 machine guns, 601 rocket launchers and 1,667 rockets, 499 pistols/revolvers, over 2 million rounds of assorted ammunition, and 8,622 kg. Of explosives.⁷ Some of these arms were also transported across the sea and off-loaded on the Indian coast, as was seen from the Bombay blasts of 1993.

Such a state of affairs is further exacerbated by the connection between the supply of arms and the production and trade in narcotics in the

region, resulting in the lethal mix of narco-terrorism, two of the three countries comprising the world's largest drug rowing area, the golden crescent, are of the Indian Ocean littoral-Pakistan and Iran. To make matters worse, two of the three countries of another vast drug producing area, the golden triangle, are again of the Indian Ocean, Myanmar and Thailand. The cultivation and trafficking of drugs encourage the establishment of alternative powerful non-state actors, as well as covert channels of distribution within the region. This essentially provides funds for the purchase of sophisticated small arms and light weapons, and their distribution amongst militant and groups in the region for disruptive purposes.

The Indian Ocean is dotted with a number of small island states, which are sovereign entities such as the Seychelles, Maldives, and Comoros. These states have limited, if any, defence against threats such as organized attempts to overthrow the existing political regimes. All these three states have the threat at coups d'etat at one time or another.

The most vivid example is the coup attempt in the Comoros in September, 1995 planned and led by a well known French mercenary, Bob Denard, and his gang of thirty men. Each of them had been paid Fr. F.80,000 for their role in the plot. This attempt to oust President Dlahor and Prime Minister El Yachroutu, was finally brought to an end with the intervention of French armed personnel, and led to the capture of the mercenaries.\(^8\) Just over two months later, in December 1995, another attempted coup in Comoros was suspected the personnel involved were

believed to have been paid over a million Comoros Francs each, as well as provided 150 litres of motor fuel.\(^9\)

A few years earlier, in November 1988, timely military action had played a crucial role in maintaining the sovereignty of the Maldives islands. At the request of the legitimate Maldivian government the Indian Navy had sent armed forces to the area to bring to an end the coup attempt in progress the Indian Navy’s warships were successful in locating, and then apprehending, the mercenaries who had set soil abroad a captured merchant ship.

With the easy availability of small arms in the international market, and the growing nexus with narcotics in the Indian Ocean region, it is important to ensure the security of small island states. This needs to be planned and undertaken in an organized and effective manner, thereby attempting to deter any coup attempt in the first place.

THE CHINESE NAVY IN THE INDIAN OCEAN

While China’s assertive policies towards the South China Sea, and more recently, Taiwan have gained international publicity, its increased interest in the seas around India has not been adequately noted. Since the middle of 1992, reports have persistently indicated Chinese assistance in the construction of naval and electronic facilities in Myanmar. These essentially relate to the modernization of the naval base on Hianggyi island at the mouth of the Bassein river, the construction of a signals intelligence

\(^9\) The Indian Ocean Newsletter, No.700, January 6, 1996, p.4.
Although preliminary assessments indicate that the Hianggyi base, when fully built, will be too small to host Chinese warships of the size required for effective operations in the Indian Ocean, it may be too early to reach such a conclusion. Moreover, it could be used to support Chinese submarine operations in the area.

Chinese activities on the strategically located Coco Island, at a distance of only 30 nm. From the Indian Andaman chain of islands, is of particular concern to India. In 1993, some 70 Chinese naval and technical personnel were believed to have arrived on the island to install new radar equipment. This could enable Chinese military personnel to monitor Indian naval communications in the area, and possibly even India's ballistic missile tests off its eastern coast. In the past five years, China has also provided Myanmar with over $1.6 billion worth of arms. Chinese interests in the region include important defence ties with Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Myanmar, as well as shipping in the Indian Ocean.

The demise of the Cold War and the disintegration of the erstwhile Soviet Union ended an important aspect of American naval presence in the Indian Ocean – that of rivalry with the erstwhile Soviet navy in the region (since the late 1960s). Nonetheless, the United states as a global power continues to maintain other equally important interests in the region, especially to ensure the supply of oil and trade through the Persian Gulf and

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the Indian Ocean, as well as the security of friendly states in the region. The importance of these interests was clearly brought out during the Gulf crisis in 1990, and the subsequent "Operation Desert Storm" in early 1991. In view of the absence of superpower naval rivalry the United Nations Resolutions of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace (IOZOP) has been rendered obsolete.11

The establishment last year, for the first time, of a permanently deployed independent fleet for operations in the western Indian Ocean, indicates increased American commitment to the region, and represents a crucial aspect of American naval doctrine. American military presence in the Indian Ocean has also increased considerably with the new Fifth Fleet in the Persian Gulf; Warships of the Seventh Fleet deployed in the central and eastern Indian Ocean, additional rotationally deployed forces and forward stationed forces in the area (including those on the island of Diego Garcia).

American naval doctrine in the post-Cold War world has also undergone a dramatic transformation. Form its focus on open-ocean war fighting on the sea, it has increasingly shifted to one of power projection and the employment of naval forces from the sea, in order to influence events in the littoral regions of the world. This strategic concept has been further expanded to encompass the employment of naval expeditionary forces and joint missions. In essence, therefore, the creation of the Fifth Fleet represents this fundamental aspect of American naval policy. This is

especially true in relation to the two countries in the region with which the United States has difficult relations at the best of times, Iraq and Iran.

The only other major power, which maintains a standing naval force in the Indian Ocean, is France. The French Indian Ocean squadron, deployed in the southwestern zone of the ocean comprises about eleven surface warships, including four principal combatants and aircraft. French interests in the area include territory (the department of Reunion, the territory of Mayotte, the archipelagoes of Croret and Kerquelen, and the islands of St. Paul and Amsterdam); links with the islands and neighbouring countries, and defence arrangements with some of the states in the area.

Amongst the Navies of the 35 littoral and island states of the Indian Ocean, only 14 possess principal surface or sub-surface combatants. The majority of the Navies simply consist of patrol and coastal combatants, especially patrol and amphibious craft, with a few corvettes; only some of these are armed with anti-ship missiles. Five of the major Indian Ocean navies are located in the Persian Gulf/Red Sea region, three in Southern Asia, and five in South-east Asia/Australia. None of the Navies of the Navies of Eastern or Southern Africa with the exception of South Africa, possess principle combatants (Table 1). Amongst the 14 major littoral Navies of the region, the Indian Navy continues to remain the largest, followed by those of Pakistan, Australia, Indonesia, Thailand, Egypt, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Bangladesh, Malaysia, South Africa, Singapore and Iraq.

<table>
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<th>Name of Country</th>
<th>Number of Aircraft Carriers</th>
<th>Number of Patrol Submarines</th>
<th>Number of Destroyers</th>
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Figures in bracket indicate warships being built (including procurement confirmed or launched, but not yet commissioned. Figures updated from Jane's Fighting Ships 1995-96 (1995).
During the past five years, the Indian Navy suffered considerable budgetary constraints and problems over the supply of spare parts: the latter due to the disintegration of its primary supplies of weapon systems, the erstwhile USSR. Although the Navy's financial situation is improving it will face an alarming reduction in force levels, by as much as a fourth, till the end of the decade.¹⁴ This is due to its stress on indigenous defence production, and the limited capacity of shipyards in the country. It will have a grave effect, especially on the aircraft Carrier component, and the submarine force of the Navy.

Meanwhile, the Pakistani Navy continues to improve its Combat capability, with a $1 billion order for three advanced technology submarines from France (September 1994) and the provision of a much delayed naval arms package from the United States. The supply of the three conventional Agosta 90-B submarine equipped with the MESMA Air Independent Propulsion (AIP) system, and Exocet SM-39 anti-ship missiles, will gravely decrease the Indian Navy's edge over the Pakistani Navy in Warfare.¹⁵ In terms of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, Pakistan was the second largest recipient of warships in the Indian Ocean, and the fifth largest in the world during the 1992-95 period. Six of the seven warships procured were Type-21 frigates from Britain, subsequently armed with

¹⁴ Hindustan Times, New Delhi, July 26, 1995.
Harpoon anti-Ship missiles. In contrast, the Indian Navy didn’t acquire a single warship from any foreign source in the 1992-95 period.16

Considerable naval activity is also taking place in two other regions of the Indian Ocean, the Persian Gulf and the South East Asia. In view of the perceived threat emanating from Iran's acquisition of conventional submarines, countries in the region are in the process of substantially upgrading their Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) capabilities. The most prominent is the United Arab Emirates (UAE), which is believed to have provided $2 billion for this purpose. The UAE Navy recently signed an arms deal with France for seven Eurocopter Panther helicopters and five super Puma helicopters, and is seeking new Maritime Patrol Aircraft (MPA), minesweepers, and additional petrol and coastal combatants. A formal requirement for up to four modern frigates has also been issued.17 The Iranian Navy may well attempt to counter these acquisitions.

A major naval arms build-up is also currently taking place amongst the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) member states. This may be due to a number of factors, including the additional naval responsibilities in the new international law of the sea; uncertainties due to a perceived American military withdrawal from the region, rivalry amongst the states themselves; the rapidly growing economies, and perceptions of threat from an assertive Chinese Navy in the region.18

The most dramatic naval expansion has been that of Thailand, which has nearly doubled its strength in recent years.\textsuperscript{19} During the 1992-95 period, Indonesia was, by far, the largest recipient of warships in the world. According to the United Nations Register of conventional Arms. All the 27 Warships received from Germany during this period, however, were patrol or coastal combatants Malaysia and Singapore are also enhancing their naval capabilities.

A critical aspect of this naval arms build-up is expected to take the form of modern submarines. At present, only two ASEAN states possess submarines in their navies; this is expected to increase to four, with the additional of Thailand and Malaysia, and the number of boats are present to as many as 14 by the year 2002-2003.\textsuperscript{20}

In view of the nations of the major warships to be acquired in the near future, the order of naval forces in the region is expected to change. The most notable would be those of Australia, which could become the second largest littoral navy and Thailand, whose acquisition of an aircraft carrier by the middle of the next year, will make it only the second country in the littoral to possess a warship of this class. The acquisition of submarines by a number of states in the near future would also affect the order to naval forces in the region.

Thus the Indian Ocean region – manifests various symptoms and sources of insecurity, most of which are by no means restricted to that area

but many of which are therein present in an especially virulent form. They include the spread of conventional armaments from an ever-eager Soviet Union which had traditionally directed its arms supplies to the Middle East and Indian Ocean regions and from an American administration no longer committed even in principle, to treating arms sales as an exceptional instrument of foreign policy. Such militarization may not be considered entirely negative; it may be through to contribute to the stability of specific regimes to create or maintain regional balances of military power or to stave off pressures for nuclear proliferation. Equally, however, on the debit side, regimes stabilized by arms programs in the short term may become massively undermined in the longer term; the pursuit of regional balances of power can provide the stimulus to unending regional arms competitions; and the source of supply in the superpowers can led to the unhealthy polarization of regional states around antagonistic superpower patrons. No subregion of the Indian Ocean has remained immense to such adverse developments. Likewise, and from competing perspectives, the issue of nuclear proliferation has become firmly placed on Indian Ocean security agendas.

Likewise, and from competing perspectives, the issue of nuclear proliferation has become firmly placed on Indian Ocean security agendas. Concern about this phenomenon has been most vocally expressed with regard to Southern Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia. But even within a country such as Australia, which has thus far resisted pressures for serious contemplation of the nuclear option the occasional alarm has been sounded at any prospect of proliferation in Southeast Asia, in general, or in a country such as Indonesia in particular.
Whether the prospect of increasing nuclearization in the Indian Ocean region contributes to insecurity depends upon overall viewpoints. To some, proliferation is by definition a dangerous thing. To others it may be seen as having a positive side. Apart from such general positions, however, two issues of contention seen to be especially, germane to a discussion of the Indian Ocean. First, on the negative side, is the fear that the embryonic stage of national nuclear programs may invite osirak-style raids. Second, more positive is the view that a regional nuclear capacity would under rite the autonomy of the Indian Ocean from the superpowers and that such proliferation is necessary to induce serious arms control, negotiations between the United States and the USSR.

Another source of regional insecurity and instability can be foreseen in the new ocean regime and the extension of national jurisdiction over economic zones. At the very least, developments in the law of the sea and the used for policing new jurisdictions, will certainly make additional demands on the navies of littoral states.

The above specific issues must be looked at in conjunction with persistent sources of conflict in the region deriving from problems of economic distribution, ethnic and religious divisions, secessionism, and internal political instabilities. All these are a present, and foreseeable, characteristic of the Indian Ocean landscape. Whether or not they have been aggravated recently, and whether the trend is toward deterioration, is impossible to assess with accuracy.
The policies of the erstwhile Soviet Union and the United States in the Indian Ocean arena, and the exacerbation of relations between the two, had generated considerable concern in the world community in the past. In the mid 1980s it was believed that if the world was in the incipient phase of a second Cold War, then the general consensus was that its epicenter was to be found in the northwestern segment of the Indian Ocean.

Not until the 1970s did the Indian Ocean acquire the attributes of a separate region attracting international interest as a source of major international conflict. The states of the ocean were viewed in the content of greater geopolitical unites without reference to the Indian Ocean. This the East African coastal states were viewed in the content of Africa, the littoral states in that of the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf in that of the Middle East, South East Asia in that of the Pacific and of China and so on. Yet the importance of the ocean itself couldn’t be overlooked. The Arab Israeli wars and the closure of the Suez Canal for eight years increased the importance of sea transport in the Indian Ocean region. One-fifth of the world's maritime transport uses the ocean. More than 80% of Japanese oil consumption and 56% of European oil consumption reaches those countries via the Indian Ocean passage.

While the Diego Garcia base was strengthened, the small but regular Soviet naval presence in the ocean increased gradually. By the 1970s the Soviet Union concluded its first long-term bilateral friendship and mutual assistance treaties with Egypt, Indian and Iraq and advocated "collective
security for Asia”. The Indian Ocean thus became a major theatre of Cold War tensions.

The post cold-war era doesn't herald the era of demilitarization of the Indian Ocean. There are two factors that make the island states, at least theoretically susceptible to military intervention: (1) the continued military presence of the French and (2) the Diego Garcia base which, as evidence shows, was used by the U.S. for military purposes during the Gulf war.

France has always perceived herself as a regional power of the Indian Ocean by virtue of her “Department d’outre mer” – Reunion. While the post-Cold War era might put in question the American base of Diego Garcia, French presence in the Indian Ocean (through Reunion and her cultural hold over the other Creole islands seems to be on a more firm and acceptable footing).

The Indian Ocean region has been a zone of fairly intense superpower competition during the final decades of the Cold War. The United States and Russia Contended with one another for political advantage in the region, while the US and Russian navies used for refueling facilities and bases in places such as Socotra island in the former South Yemen, Gan in Maldives, Asmara in Ethiopia, port Victoria in the Seychelles, and Diego Garcia in the British Indian Ocean territory.

Apparently, the Indian Ocean was also significant in terms of the nuclear arms race between the United States and the USSR in that both navies employed these waters to operate their ballistic missile submarines. This occurred partly because hiding of the submarine there is facilitated by
the particular thermal properties of some areas of the Indian Ocean. The superpowers, and because India and some other Indian Ocean states saw these power as intruders and interlopers in their region, the United Nations General Assembly in 1971 declared that the Indian Ocean, "within the limits to be determined, together with the airspace above and the ocean floor adjacent to it, "be designated as a zone of peace. A year later, the UN formed an Ad Hoc Committee on the Indian Ocean to try to find ways to implement this Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace (IOZP).

To date, and despite some 450 meetings of this committee, the contemplated Zone of Peace still has not come to be. Moreover, the key western members of the committee withdrew from this body in 1989, arguing that superpower rivalry in the Indian Ocean had been diminished with the end of the Cold War and, therefore, creation of a Zone of Peace would be a purposeless exercise. A statement in 1987 by the US Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, followed this to the effect that the Ad Hoc Committee is an example of the financial wastefulness of the United Nations and should be disbanded (this recommendation – perhaps for the best – was disregarded).

These observations by the US and Western delegates were likely on the mark to one degree or another during some of the 1990s, immediately after the Cold War ended. It was in this period that observers hoped we were beginning to see a "New World Order" characterised by less confrontation and competition among states, including the major powers. However, from the vantage point of 2002, this does not appear to be how the international
system has evolved and, to an increasing degree it is confrontation and rivalry, not concord, that today characterize interstate relations in the IOR.\(^{21}\)

There are a variety of factors that are contributing to the intensifying strategic rivalry in the Indian Ocean region. By and large, these are not the same explanatory factors that prevailed during the 1970s and 1980s. Rather, these imperatives are more powerful and probably less transient than those operative at that time.

Certainly, one of these is the growing importance of oil, energy, and other vital resources. Obviously, the key prize is the Persian Gulf, which is only accessible via Indian Ocean shipping routes. Currently, about 25 per cent of the total oil used by the United States comes via the Indian Ocean sea-lanes and the Persian Gulf region. The United States also depends on the Indian Ocean for the movement of about 50 different strategic materials, including manganese, cobalt, titanium, chromium, platinum, tin, nickel, tungsten, iron, lead and copper. Burma and Bangladesh, which are adjacent to the Bay of Bengal and are rich either in gas, oil or both, may also be seen by a variety of key states as factors in their future energy calculations.

Michael Klare has argued that the world is witnessing a growing competition over access to vital economic assets. “Because an interruption in the supply of natural resources would portend severe economic consequences, the major importing countries now consider the protection of this flow a significant national concern.... Large energy importers, such as China, Japan, and the major European powers, have made ensuring the

\(^{21}\) Monday Times, Male, November 12, 2001
stability of their supplies a top priority".22

A second factor in the growing strategic salience of the Indian Ocean region is the so-called "rise" of India, the most important of the states on the ocean's littoral. As this long-term process evolves, New Delhi's interest in the affairs of this Ocean will grow, and this will be accompanied by a growing interest by others especially major states in these waters, either to check India or to ally with it.

China will be particularly motivated to counter New Delhi in the IOR. For Beijing, a key consideration is the one-third of China's GDP attributable to foreign trade and the salience of the Indian Ocean in that trade. All Chinese commerce with Europe and all petroleum imports from the Middle East transit the Indian Ocean. Under these circumstances, China will not let India have a free hand in these waters, and will seek to establish a security posture in the area that will allow Beijing to protect "its" SLOCs. India's sea-lanes, obviously, also transit the Indian Ocean, and overlap those of China. These overlapping SLOCs will cause each to protect these routes. These measures, in turn, will increase the sense of insecurity of each of these powers.23

China also will be concerned that India would have a geo-strategic advantage in the Indian Ocean in any conflict along their land border and could try to compensate for continental power inadequacies by taking action against Chinese interests in the Indian Ocean. China also needs Indian

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Ocean access because, in the event of conflict with the United States or Japan in East Asia, a strong Chinese posture in the IO would help secure one of China's backdoors. Chinese access to the IO, moreover, would make it more difficult to sever Chinese lines of communications -- an element in Beijing's so-called "southern strategy."

These Chinese concerns are the mirror image of one of the key motives of the United States in increasing its profile in this region in recent years and in its plans to do so even further in the future. For the United States, this "rise" of China provokes the normal set of concerns of any status quo power as it reacts to the challenge posed by any rising state. The United States, mainly since around 1995, has been acting to contain China through a series of security initiatives and bilateral arrangements in East and Southeast Asia. More recently, however, the US has begun to strengthen its security posture in South Asia and the Indian Ocean so as to more tightly constrain China and consolidate US-centric security architecture there before Washington is faced with an already "risen" Middle Kingdom. It is in this context that we should regard the recent strengthening of US-Indian relations and the statement of Secretary of State designate Colin Powell to the effect that "... India has the potential to help keep the peace in the vast Indian Ocean area and its periphery. We need to work harder and more consistently to help them in this endeavor...".

The increasing salience of the IOR as a locus of nuclear weapons competition also has increased the region's profile. The key developments in this respect have been the Indian and Pakistani nuclear tests in 1998,
continuing nuclear and missile developments by both New Delhi and Islamabad, and the ongoing work on the development of nuclear weapons and missiles by Iran. In addition, a number of states either are now using, or likely soon will employ the IO as a patrol zone for submarines or surface warships equipped with nuclear-armed cruise missiles. The admiral commanding India's navy, for example, recently reaffirmed India's intention—consistent with New Delhi's draft nuclear doctrine—to disburse his country's deterrent equally among the three military forces. A Pakistani naval spokesman has said his country has similar plans. Moreover, it is possible that Israel, reacting to nuclear weapons developments in Iran, area is deploying nuclear-armed submarines to conduct IO patrols. In the coming years, the IO likely also will be a patrol zone for Indian, Pakistani and, at some point, Chinese submarines and surface warships.

The IOR also is becoming more strategically significant because it is home to the world's greatest concentration of Muslims. Some decades ago, this may not have been a consideration of importance. Today, however, for a variety of reasons, Islamic civilization often finds itself at odds with the West—including Israel—and Hindu India and it will be in the IOR that this contest

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26 In June 2000, the London Sunday Times reported that Israel test-fired cruise missiles capable of carrying nuclear warheads from two German-built Dolphin-class submarines. The tests occurred in the Indian Ocean off Sri Lanka the previous month. At that point, however, Jane's doubted that Israel had yet put in place a sea-based nuclear deterrent. Their view was that "given the 30-day endurance of Israel's three diesel-electric submarines, the geographic constraints imposed by the Bab al Mandab and Hormuz straits, and the emerging anti-submarine capabilities of Iran and Saudi Arabia it would be very difficult to maintain a boat on such a station". "Claims About Israel's Nuclear Capability Doubted", Jane's Sentinel (18 July 2000).
frequently will play out.\textsuperscript{27} This is what occurred, in a broad sense, when the United States intervened in Somalia, when US embassies were the targets of terrorism in Kenya and Tanganyika, when the USS Cole was attacked in Aden, and when New Delhi established a new command in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, prompted partly by concerns about Islamic extremism in Indonesia's Aceh province.

A final factor elevating the I0R's strategic importance is the promising outlook for increased commerce, investment, and cultural and political interactions between Europe and the Asia-Pacific region. Ties of this sort are well developed between North America and Europe, and between North America and the Asia-Pacific, but the third side of the triangle – between the Asia-Pacific and Europe is underdeveloped. However, as both of these regions gain political and economic importance, which is highly probable, this state of affairs will change and, to a large extent, it will be through the air and sea-lanes of Indian Ocean, and via its key cities, that this increased interaction will occur.

The principal states that are contending for power and influence in the FOR are the United States, India, and China. Other states also pursuing this end, albeit less forcefully, are Japan, Iran and Israel.

\textbf{United States}

The growing US strategic profile in the FOR has been characterised by a continuing enhancement of the US military presence in the region, by

\textsuperscript{27} Huntington, S.P., \textit{The Clash of Civilization and the Remaking of World Order} (New York: Simon and Schuster,)PP-12-19. Despite this work's numerous critics, his analysis is looking even better and more prescient with the passage of time.
renewed security links with Pakistan, and by the new and growing relationship with India.

The United States began to ramp up its existing Indian Ocean strategic infrastructure in the years following the 1991 Persian Gulf War, and particularly since 1995 when the Clinton administration shifted towards a more robust and interventionist international posture. The 2001 Quadrennial Defence Review, notably, directs the Secretary of the Air Force to "increase contingency basing in the Pacific and Indian Oceans, as well as in the Arabian Gulf" and directs the Secretary of the Navy to shift some Marine Corps pre-positioned equipment from the Mediterranean toward the Indian Ocean and Arabian Gulf to be more responsive to contingencies in the Middle East." The US 5th Fleet was established in 1995 to oversee US military activities in the region. Tasked with operations in the Persian Gulf, Arabian Sea, Red Sea and the western, Indian Ocean, the 5th Fleet commander also serves as the US Central Command naval chief. Warships of the US Fifth Fleet in the Persian Gulf and Red Sea executed the US missile strikes against targets in Afghanistan and Sudan in 1998 More recently, in late 2001 and early 2002, US warships in the Indian Ocean played a major role in the


US military operations against the Taliban and Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan.

**Diego Garcia**

The 11 sq. miles Diego Garcia Island was detached from Mauritius in 1965 and bought by the British to incorporate it in the British Indian Ocean territory. Diego Garcia was subsequently leased to the USA by Britain and has now become the most important base for the furtherance of US strategy in the Indian Ocean and also the most difficult stumbling block in any future plan to demilitarise the Ocean and establish a zone of peace here.

India had understood the ominous implications of Diego Garcia as early as 1965 and it had sought and obtained an assurance from the British Government that the Island will never be used as a military base. Indian Parliament was informed: "They (British) have given us a categorical assurance that these islands will not be used as military bases."

Following the "forward base" concept possibly to fight another war, if necessary, away from home, the USA has built over 60 naval bases in foreign countries in the post-war years. US fleets have been involved in nearly 20 armed conflicts in different parts of the world including China, Greece, the Philippines, Korea, Guatemala, Lebanon, Laos, Cuba, Vietnam, Panama, Congo and Cambodia. In 1970 America declared its intention of converting Diego Garcia into a full-fledged naval base. The immediate reason for this development was perhaps the growing fear of communism close on the heels of the Islamic resurgence in the Gulf.

The great advantage of a full-fledged base are sometimes sought to be minimised by saying that no naval forces are stationed there. Under
normal conditions no ships need be permanently based there, but the inherent mobility of maritime forces enable them to be brought to this ocean within a matter of days. Diego Garica with its recently enlarged facilities for anchorage of a large number of ships including the largest aircraft carriers and nuclear submarines, an airfield complex for long range reconnaissance aircraft, supply aircraft and strategic bombers and the necessary support and logistic facilities would then be capable of meeting all the needs of the ships and aircraft to enable sustained operations in the Ocean area. The littoral States have legitimate misgivings at the presence of this powerful base in the center of the Indian Ocean.

The original inhabitants of Diego Garcia Island were not shown much consideration by the US authorities when it was decided to establish a base and the request of Mauritius to the British authorities for the return of the Island was turned down. Mauritius, however, is continuing its campaign at various forums for the return of Diego Garcia.

**Trincomalee**

Another important development is the permission granted by the Sri Lankan Government to allow the crew of American warships in the Indian Ocean to go ashore for rest and recreation to Trincomalee, which is a one time strategically important British Naval base on the eastern coast of Sri Lanka. Trincomalee is also to serve as refueling station for American warships in the Indian Ocean.

**India**

After the United States, India is the second most important party to be
enhancing its posture in the FOR. As in Washington's case, India is simultaneously strengthening its political and military posture in this region.

The principal focus of Indian political efforts has been in the eastern Indian Ocean, specifically Burma, and the other states of Southeast Asia, and Australia. The emphasis on strengthening relations with various Southeast Asian states is characterised as the "Look East" policy.30

For New Delhi, one of the most important zones of emphasis is necessarily Burma. Relations between Burma and China have been close in the past decade and India has been troubled by a variety of Chinese activities in Burma including road building, the construction of military facilities, strong military-to-military relations, and especially the probable presence of Chinese intelligence and other facilities in the Andaman Sea. This Beijing-Rangoon relationship took another step forward when Jiang Zemin visited Burma in December 2001 and the two sides signed a variety of agreements, including a border security pact.

Responding to these activities, India has countered in the past year or two by dispatching senior officials to Burma, and has requested permission to re-open its consulate in Mandalay — where — currently only China has an official presence. India has agreed to start large energy projects with Rangoon to help exploit and deliver natural gas to India's huge energy market. India also recently completed construction of a new road to Mandalay from Manipur in India's Northeast region. This last initiative may be

30 Indian 'Look East' Policy to Succeed, STRATFOR (17 January 2001).
seen as a response to Chinese strategic road-building activities in Burma.31

Elsewhere in the region, India also has sought to strengthen relations with Indonesia, a nation with which it has historically had a difficult relationship. To this end, New Delhi and Jakarta recently signed a defence cooperation agreement that committed the two sides to a new defence and security relationship including a commission to coordinate activities in fields including training, technical assistance and supply of defence equipment and materials. The Indian Navy also has begun conducting joint exercises with its Indonesian counterpart in the Andaman Sea and the Bay of Bengal.

New Delhi also has forged closer ties with two other parties with significant naval forces in or near the Indian Ocean: France, and Australia. The Indo-French defence relationship got a boost after French Defence Minister Alain Richard visited India in mid-2000. The visit resulted in an agreement for the two sides to conduct annual combined naval maneuvers, and an accord in which they agreed "in principle" on New Delhi's acquisition of 6-12 1500-tonne Scorpene submarines, to be built in Bombay.

Ties with Australia were strengthened as a result of the visit to New Delhi of Australian Prime Minister Howard in July 2000 and the reciprocal visit of the Prime Minister Vajpayee to Canberra in October 2001. The two sides have now initiated a series of annual meetings.

**China**

Beijing's most important connections with the IOR have been its links with Pakistan and Burma, and to a lesser extent with Bangladesh and Sri

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Lanka. However, unlike its apparent rivals in the FOR, China's profile in the IOR — probably due to the recent countervailing initiatives of several other states, especially the Untied States — has been growing less rapidly of late.32

Three recent Chinese initiatives, however, are worth noting. One was the November 2001 agreement with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to establish a Free Trade Area within the next decade. As several of the ASEAN states are located on the Indian Ocean littoral, an FTA — if it materialises — would give China an economic advantage, and increased influence, in this part of the IOR.

A second development was Beijing's dispatch, concurrent with New Delhi's recent threat to go to war against Pakistan, of five ships the port of Karachi loaded with unassembled Super 7 and F7 combat aircraft and a variety of other weapons. Pakistani chief executive General Musharraf, moreover, visited China twice at the height of those tensions.

Third, and finally, China announced on 22 January 2002 that it is pledging $4 billion to finance construction of a railroad, part of the ESCAP-sanctioned Trans-Asian Railway (TAR), between Kunming in Yunnan Province and Bangkok, Thailand. The $4 billion will help finance construction of the segment from Bangkok through a Burmese salient of about 100 miles and on to Kunming, according to Malaysia's transport minister. Over the long term, the planned rail line could constitute an alternative to the so-called

"Irrawaddy corridor" to the Indian Ocean that is described below.  

Notwithstanding these developments, all positive from Beijing's perspective, the direction of Sino-Pakistani and Sino-Burmese relations has been more mixed.

Beijing's ties with Pakistan have been its most important source of influence in the FOR. This has consisted of important military-to-military relations, critical and continuing Chinese assistance with Pakistan's nuclear weapons programmes including M-11 missiles, and Chinese work on the new Pakistani port at Gwadar, a facility China, and probably elements of the PLAN, will presumably use. Beijing also is involved with Pakistan in joint production of Pakistan's trainer aircraft and its main battle tank.

Notwithstanding these links, China's relative influence in Pakistan, while still quite significant, appears to have waned recently, as US influence has increased (see above). The recent US military presence at Pasni in Pakistani Balochistan is of special concern to Beijing, which has postponed all construction work by Chinese companies involved in developing the port at Gwadar, the inland Makran coastal highway leading to it, and several oil and gas pipeline projects. Beijing has long wanted to establish a base along the Balochistan coast as a bulwark against the US presence in the Gulf region. But, no progress has been possible on these highly classified projects since the first US troops arrived in the region after 11 September and it is Unlikely to resume in the near future.

The other key element in China's Indian Ocean posture has been

Burma. As in the case of Sino-Pakistani relations, the trajectory of ties lately has been more static than upward.

Here, the most significant Chinese markers have been its military presence, apparently mainly on Burma's coast and nearby islands in the Andaman Sea, China's continuing influence on the Burmese military, and Beijing's hopes and plans for a security and commercial alternative to the Pacific Ocean – an "Irrawaddy corridor", linking China directly to the Indian Ocean through Burma.34

Burma and Pakistan will remain critical elements in China's long-range aspirations in the IOR, and Beijing remains Burma's and perhaps Pakistan's most important foreign influence. For the moment, however, some developments notwithstanding, the Chinese "advance" in the IOR – unlike those of some other players – does appear to have slowed.

Implications of Rivalry

The renewed rivalry in the Indian Ocean is not surprising, but it is troubling.

It is not surprising, because it is consistent with the normal power-consciousness of states, and especially of major powers. Moreover, the current IO drama, however slow-paced, certainly was anticipated by the security observers of the 1970s and 1980s, and it was this concern that led them down the road – blocked through it was – towards an "Indian Ocean zone of Peace".

The renewed rivalry is troubling because it increases the prospects of more lethal forms of violence in a region where this was once quite unlikely. In World War II, for example, the region was mainly spared of the horrors that were inflicted in other regions, including Europe and East Asia.

The intensified competition is also troubling because it is increasing the likelihood of conflict between China and India, the world's two most populous nations. The Sino-Indian rivalry in the IO suggests that these parties may wage war here, and not solely along their continental frontier. Any conflict between these parties would be highly unfortunate, but one in which the IO is a theatre of the war could be extremely destructive for the peoples of the littoral.

This rivalry, finally, is troubling because the IOR and East Asia have been distinct and largely autonomous security sub-regions. Wars in Korea, Vietnam or Kashmir have been limited geographically. Now, however, the new rivalry in the IO is linking the East Asian security sub-system with that of South Asia and, to that extent, future conflicts will become less geographically limited and more dangerous.

The Indian Ocean has often been characterised as "the neglected Ocean". This is unlikely to remain so.