CONCLUSIONS

In the preceding pages we have discussed the politics of the Indian Ocean region with reference to three conflicts that has entailed the continued pressure of the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. The Indian Ocean region, on the whole, has been a complex geo-political entity. A few important themes can be discerned pertaining to the politics of the Indian Ocean region, while presenting the concluding part of the study in the following manner.

Being the third largest ocean, the Indian Ocean region comprises a wide variety of states functioning under its main sub-regions. By and large the states from the region appear similar due to their colonial past, economic and technological backwardness and constant struggle to build stable political regimes. What is more, developmental objectives continued to be of paramount importance among these states. Not withstanding such obvious similarities it would be inappropriate to be unmindful of disimilarities that have characterised the Indian Ocean region. Such disimilarities manifest themselves in diversity of religion, culture, racial and ethnic groups on the one hand and resource endowments of the states on the other hand. To put it tersely, the Indian Ocean has housed religions like Islam, Christianity, Hinduism and ethnic groups mainly belonging to the black and brown races. Also the region has states like India which are endowed with vast resources. It also has small island states like Sri Lanka. Due to the
diversity and conflicting interest among states it is inconceivable to expect harmony of ties among states in the region.

Furthermore, the Indian Ocean has enormous geo-strategic significance. First, the Indian Ocean region has been a major sea lane of communication for the U.S.A. as well as the western powers.

Second, it has major deposits of world's richest minerals such as petroleum, uranium, ironore molybedinum and so on.

Third, the mineral wealth of the ocean has arrested the attention of major western powers which are keen to extract such resources; and.

Finally all the major powers have also been involved either in building the naval bases at strategic points or cultivating strategically important littoral states to gain access to the waters of the Indian Ocean.

Among the major powers the presence of the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. can hardly be under estimated. The U.S.A. actually executed two of its military pacts by cultivating its allies in West Asia and South East Asia in the fifties and the sixties. After the seventies, the operation of the Diego Garcia and Subic Bay bases, indeed gave an overt manifestation of the U.S. military might in the region. Compared to the U.S.A. the U.S.S.R. was a late entrant to the politics of the
region. In the seventies the U.S.S.R. literally announced its presence in the ocean with naval build up and cultivating allies such as Iraq, Yemen, Somalia, Ethiopia Mozambique and so on. In substance the U.S.A. and its Western allies continued to hold on and consolidate their presence in the region. Whereas the Soviet Union and its allies began to emerge as opponents of the U.S. led states.

The trajectory of ever-increasing competition among the superpowers to control the region was also shaped by diverse inter-state conflicts within the region. It would be difficult to offer a single causal explanation for such conflicts. However one of the similarities in the three cases of conflict that have been studied was that some of these states were unwilling to accept the territorial frontiers inherited after decolonisation. The frontiers drawn by the colonial powers were generally unacceptable because there was no correspondence between national or ethnic frontier and state frontiers. Evidently, Pakistan could not build a notion of nationhood without treating Kashmir as an indivisible part of Pakistan. Somalia could not accept a notion of Somali nation without bringing together the people of Somali origin in North Eastern Africa. Thus it was the undeviating urge to revise the status quo that prompted Pakistan to seek external assistance particularly that of China and U.S.A. to resolve its problems. Similarly Somalia went as far as to attack Ethiopia to integrate Ogaden within its boundary.
Geo-strategic location as well as abundance of petroleum reserves induced the states of Iraq and Iran to wage war with each other. In crude terms the major Gulf states were contesting for the over lordship of the Persian Gulf region through the control of waterways, straits and oil reserves. In addition the differences between the Shia and Sunni population of Iran and Iraq respectively as well as their political regimes added fuel to the fire. Iran and Iraq offered an example of protracted conflict essentially aimed at mastering the strategic space of the Persian Gulf.

It is always difficult to compare conflicts which occur under different spatio-temporal conditions. However we are providing a few major dimensions of the three conflicts. First the conflict between India and Pakistan was the conflict between two uneven powers. India took full advantage of internal or the domestic troubles in Pakistan and accelerated the pace of liberation of Bangladesh. It was evident when the Pakistan state faced a challenge from within it broke down and the emergence of Bangladesh offered a glorious evidence of this proposition.

In the case of Somalia even though it tried to integrate Ogaden under the project of Greater Somalia, the constitution of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) which upheld the inviolability of frontiers proved too strong for it to achieve its aim. Moreover, in military terms Somalia was not equal to Ethiopia. Finally in the case of Iraq's conflict with Iran it could be stated that the two powers were more or less equal
in their strength and in their determination to resolve the war in their favour. This led to protracted conflict.

Among all the three conflicts it appears evident that the Indo-Pak conflict was decisive in establishing India’s supremacy in the sub-continent owing to the disintegration of Pakistan. The Ethiopia-Somalia conflict in the end was resolved in favour of Ethiopia because Somalia failed to achieve its objective through military means. However unlike the above two conflicts, the Iran-Iraq conflict led to a prolonged war which virtually drained out the resources of both the states without any concrete results.

Finally, the U.S.A. and U.S.S.R. continued to be significant forces in all the case studies of conflict under review. In fact they were responsible in globalising the conflicts which emanated within the context of the sub-regions of the Indian Ocean. In the Indo-Pakistan conflict the U.S. stepped out to protect the territorial integrity of Pakistan. It was indifferent to human right abuses and genocides committed by the Yahya Khan regime in East Pakistan or Bangladesh. The Soviet Union by signing the twenty year treaty with India almost ensured the non-interference of major powers like the U.S.A. and China in the sub-continent. India was emboldened to back the Mukti Bahini in its bid to liberate Bangladesh because of its treaty with the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union in its turn supported India at the U.N.O. by vetoing three resolutions initiated by the U.S.A. against it.

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In the Ethiopia-Somalia conflict the policies of the U.S.A. and U.S.S.R. were guided primarily by geo-political rather than ideological considerations. This was evident from the fact that they were willing to change their allies in the region. Thus the support to the socialist state of Siad Barre was withdrawn in favour of Ethiopia’s revolutionary regime by the Soviet Union. In contrast the human rights abuses in Ethiopia prompted the Carter administration to support Somalia’s “Socialist” rule. In brief, both the super-powers were desperately in need of a naval base in the Horn of Africa. In order to serve the expedient reasons they were willing to change their ideological orientations. It must be also noted that this conflict acquired global dimension when U.S.A threatened to stall its ongoing Strategic Arms Limitations Talk (II) with the U.S.S.R.

Finally, during the Iraq-Iran was the U.S.A. was placed in a slightly disadvantageous position in comparison to the U.S.S.R. This can be explained by the fact that the Shah’s regime in Iran an ally of the U.S.A. had collapsed in 1979. The Islamic revolutionary regime in Iran was ill-disposed towards the U.S presence in Iran and the Gulf. This prompted the Iranian regime to hold U.S. diplomats as hostages till 1981. Furthermore the U.S.A. did not have cordial relations with the Iraqi regime because the U.S.S.R. had signed Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with Iraq 1972. In view of these circumstances the U.S. became overtly involved in the Iran-Iraq crisis only after 1983. Thereafter it was actively involved in the conflict often participating in the ongoing war. Furthermore the U.S.A was responsible for introducing the resolution 598 at the U.N. calling for an end to hostilities in the Persian Gulf.
The U.S.S.R.'s involvement in the region was shaped by multiple factors including the presence of Soviet troops in Afghanistan, the presence of the Tudeh party in Iran and shared common land borders with Iran. The Tudeh party was however eclipsed with rise of the Islamic Revolution in Iran. The U.S.S.R. was therefore interested in maintaining stability in the region because of the Soviet presence in Afghanistan and more so because Iran's hostilities were more pronounced towards the U.S.A than the Soviet Union. Hence in the case of the Persian Gulf the U.S.A was trying to undermine the Soviet presence by reinstalling its power. The U.S.A aided Saudi Arabia and its allies to bolster its presence in the region.

The U.N.O. also provided a forum for rivalry between the two super-powers when the U.N. resolution 598 was being drawn at the Security Council regarding secession or the war between Iran and Iraq while the resolution was being drafted the U.S.A. was keen to impose an arms embargo against Iran which the U.S.S.R. opposed. The final resolution without any embargo against any party was accepted and supported by the Soviet Union. This reflected the conciliatory approach in the attitude between the U.S.A and the Soviet Union in the phase of detente.

In general, the U.S. - U.S.S.R. relationship has been characterised by two contradictory realities such as rivalry as well as co-existence, ever since the cold war began. Because of their urge to rival as well as coexist no conflict under review has reached a stage of
unmanageable proportions. In the light of India’s growing strength the U.S.A. did not put its entire weight behind Pakistan and chose to withdraw its Seventh fleet from the Bay of Bengal. In the case of the Horn of Africa both the powers were satisfied as long as they secured a strategic foothold in the region. Finally in the case of Iran-Iraq war eventhough the U.S.A. tried to rival the U.S.S.R. the two super powers eventually promoted the project of peace. Indeed peace in the Persian Gulf was essential for the U.S.A. and its allies to ensure trade flow and energy security through oil. Similarly the Soviet Union under Gorbachev after the mid eighties refrained from confronting the western powers outside its frontiers to avoid the cost of such encounters. Thus the three conflicts that erupted in the region were partly resolved by the policies of the contending parties themselves and partly by the nature of super-power relations.