CHAPTER FIVE

SUPERPOWER RIVALRY IN THE
INDIAN OCEAN

A. Introduction

During the course of the seventies and the eighties, the Indian Ocean was an extremely significant factor in the global strategic paradigm between the two superpowers i.e. the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. A variety of events have been responsible for creating this geo-strategic significance. Among the factors contributing to this geo-strategic significance were the following: the perceived threat from the Islamic revolution in Iran to stability in the flow of energy supplies; the invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union in 1979 and the Iran-Iraq war. The net effect of all these political and military developments has been the expansion of U.S. naval capability in the Indian Ocean zone. Consequently, the U.S. naval base on the island of Diego Garcia has witnessed a quantum leap in terms of upgrading of military infrastructural facilities. From the Soviet perspective, the Indian Ocean was an important transshipment route between the European territorial sector of Russia and the Asian territorial sector of the Soviet Union. An added point of strategic magnetic pull was the deployment of powerful U.S. naval forces in the Indian Ocean. Additionally, the U.S. naval power projection capability especially in the North-West sector of the ocean area, presented a potentially dangerous threat to significant areas of the Soviet Union.
It would seem that the above mentioned factors would be more than sufficient to push for both interest and involvement of the superpowers in the Indian Ocean zone. Nonetheless, the strategic calculus that has evolved between the two superpowers has been much more complex and complicated than a strategic scenario produced purely by military factors. Broadly, it can be stated that the strategic paradigm between the two superpowers has been both complex and of a different level than what had prevailed generally in the past. This relationship has been different from both a qualitative and quantitative level.

Factors of geography, politics and economics influenced the approach of the superpowers to their regional security concerns. The United States was essentially restricted to creating a support position for its allies through the deployment of naval forces to areas of tension. Washington maintained an autonomous military presence at its naval base at Diego Garcia with a minimum reliance on and reference to certain friendly littoral powers for Rest and Recreation and logistics functions. It was a maritime strategy designed to ensure the safety and security of the sea lines of communication and was capable of projecting a high capacity of military and naval power into the littoral zone. By contrast, the Soviet Union had pursued a policy of land based military aid and intervention. It was a strategy designed to secure strategic advantage - in the Horn, South Yemen and Afghanistan - with minimum emphasis on developing and deploying its maritime assets. As a result, the Soviet Union has shown a greater political will to influence events militarily, especially through the utilization of proxy forces, such as the Cubans in the Horn of Africa, but also with their own military forces in Afghanistan.

Both superpowers had made decisions to intervene in the affairs of the region for a variety of strategic and political motives. Although the United States and the Soviet Union had frequently expressed interest in regional conflicts in the
Indian Ocean, this has not generally resulted in any significant heightening of political tension or military preparedness between them. Generally, they have been successful in balancing their global security requirements with the need to promote the political and economic interests of their regional allies.

A careful analysis of the programmes and activities of the superpowers in the Indian Ocean suggest that their primary purpose was not to produce a countervailing force, but rather to support their regional allies and to act as a deterrent against local attempts to upset the balance of power. As a matter of fact, the nature of their involvement suggests that their overriding strategic interests were similar. Essentially, the superpowers have a common interest in containing local conflicts and border disputes in order to promote global security. It can therefore be concluded, that while the Indian Ocean is a zone of increasing strategic relevance to Washington's and Moscow's global competition, its main strategic significance has a fundamental geopolitical quality and not a fundamental geostrategic quality.

The aim of this chapter is to outline and examine the development of the geopolitical relationship between the superpowers in the Indian Ocean Zone. The Indian Ocean region encompasses a complex geopolitical regional structure in which three overarching axes of conflict - East-West, Sino-Soviet and North-South - complicate the theoretical structure for the strategic analyst.¹

This chapter will attempt to show that a steady increase in superpower competition led to a state of affairs in the late 1970s whereby the Indian Ocean moved from being an area of

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low strategic priority, to one at the forefront of the strategic competition between East and West. An attempt will also be made to assess the impact of changing geostrategic circumstances on regional security relationships. The end of Soviet intervention and the termination of the hostilities generated by the Iran-Iraq war presented new opportunities for greater superpower cooperation for maintaining stability in the Indian Ocean region. At the same time, the resolution of these conflicts coincided with an increased level of strategic involvement by certain littoral states that brought about renewed superpower attention to regional issues.

B. The Geographical Context

One assumption underlying the overall study of superpower rivalry in the Indian Ocean is to view the Indian Ocean as a cohesive region for purposes of policy analysis. This assumption is not as straightforward as it might seem. There has been much debate of the Indian Ocean as a single region.\(^2\) In terms of a geographical perspective, there is a certain quality of wholeness to the entire area in that it is enclosed, except for its southern extremities by land masses, whose physical properties have tended to prevent the littoral states from developing close linkages with the hinterland. But from a cultural, linguistic or religious perspective, the various peoples, societies and ethnic groups surrounding the Indian Ocean have little in common. Likewise, in terms of their political and economic interaction, the littoral states have not developed close ties. It cannot be readily determined whether the lack of cohesion is a product of an historical underdeveloped level of communication between the various

\(^2\) For example, the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs has suggested four divisions of the Indian Ocean area: 1) East Africa and the ocean region east of it; 2) the northwest from Somalia around Iran, including the Red Sea, the gulf of Aden, and the Persian Gulf; 3) the Asian Subcontinent and the sea southward; 4) Southeast Asia and Australia. This and other examples of attempts to regionalize the ocean can be found in: Ferene A. Vali, \textit{op. cit.} 1976, p. 28
subunits, or if the influence of outside forces have hindered such development. It can be argued, that if the littoral states have not felt the need for greater cohesion in the Indian Ocean, outside forces have clearly recognised the advantages of pursuing a regional approach to it.\(^3\) As stated by one analyst, 'The Indian Ocean historically, and now in modern times, has simply become caught up in the cross-fire of extraregional rivalries.'

As stated very much earlier in the study, since the first explorations of the European navigators in the fifteenth century, there has been a succession of extraregional players interested in the unity and cohesion of the ocean zone for economic, trade, imperial and strategic dimensions. Consequently, this extraregional focus has led to competition and conflict as the European maritime powers sought to secure economic, strategic and political dominance over affairs of the Indian Ocean states. This led to overlapping rivalries and competition of interest in areas adjacent to, but not off, the Indian Ocean. Thus, the analyst is faced by problems of a long history of extraregional intervention, and an overriding degree of interregional and interregional interdependence. Thus, it can be stated fairly accurately that in many respects, the United States and the Soviet Union, are but the latest extraregional powers to demonstrated their political interest and assert their strategic objectives in the Indian Ocean within the broad framework of geopolitics and geostrategy.

\(^3\) Ibid., pp. 15-16. The British and American approaches are quite different and it is quite interesting to compare them. Whilst the British did not treat the Indian Ocean as a region for administrative purposes, militarily, they adopted a defector regional approach. The Indian Ocean became a "British lake" because the Royal Navy controlled the access points to it from its bases at Singapore, Aden and Simontown. In the State department, the United States has three regional bureaus - dealing with different areas of the Indian Ocean littoral. Militarily, responsibilities are split between the Commander-in-Chief Pacific, in Hawaii, and the US Commander in Charge of American land forces in Europe. Central Command, based in Florida, is responsible for the Gulf and Horn of Africa as well as Pakistan - thus dividing military responsibilities for South Asia.
C. The Historical Background

1. The United States and the Indian Ocean Region

Although the United States had military and political contact with the region prior to 1945, it was mainly during the period of Second World War that the Indian Ocean saw the beginnings of sustained US presence.\(^4\) During the Second World War, a US Middle East command was established in the Persian Gulf with a force strength 40,000 troops. In 1949, the Middle East Command was converted into a simple naval presence consisting of three obsolete ships stationed at a British base on Bahrain. This small naval force, known as the Middle East Force (MIDEASTFOR), exists today and has weathered all of the crises affecting US-Arab relations in the interval.\(^5\) Also in the Gulf, the United States and Saudi Arabia signed an agreement in 1951 giving the Strategic Air Command access to the airfield at Dahran. These arrangements have proved to be fortuitous as the United States has consistently been able to maintain, when challenged, that it is not a recent newcomer to the region but that it has maintained a long-standing permanent military and naval presence in the Indian Ocean.

Outside the Gulf region, the United States entered into a 25 year agreement to establish a linkage in its global military communications network and developed a military facility in the Eritrean region of Ethiopia in 1953. The US military

\(^4\) A Treaty of commerce and navigation was also signed between the United States and the Sultan of Muscat and Oman in 1832 but the relationship with the region in the modern era is considered to have begun in 1932, when US companies began to explore for oil in Bahrain. See: Speech by Ambassador Newsom at Georgetown University, 11 April 1980, U.S., Department of State, Bulletin, Vol. 80, No. 2041, \(\text{August, 1980,}\) p. 62.

\(^5\) The location of MIDEASTFOR in the Gulf simply confirms where the real US interest in the region lies. Access to the energy supplies of the Gulf has always determined US policy towards the region. The Indian Ocean is, of itself, of little military importance to the United States. See: U.S. Congress Senate. Committee on Foreign Relations. United States Foreign Policy Objectives and Overseas Military Installations Washington: US GPO, 1979., p. 84.
influence in Ethiopia was to remain strong until the end of the regime of Emperor Haile Selassie in 1974 when a military coup took over power. In the early part of the post-war period, therefore, the United States had demonstrated an embryonic strategic interest in the Indian Ocean region, although restricted to the north-west quadrant. This could not be interpreted as an excessive display of force, or of interest, and the purpose of these arrangements had more to do with the concern of the United States for its position in the Middle East than the Indian Ocean.

The key element to understanding the lack of a greater US military presence was, of course, the predominance of the British in the Indian Ocean. In simple terms, the Indian Ocean region was perceived by Washington to be a British area of responsibility which, from a historical perspective, was accurate. In the decade or two after the Second World War, the United States was fairly satisfied to keep a low profile in the region in order to focus its attention on more pressing areas of strategic concern, such as Western Europe and the Korean peninsula. Consequently, the Indian Ocean was not a key factor in the greater calculus of US rivalry with the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, the region was viewed as an area where Soviet expansionism had to be halted and, as such, the Indian Ocean featured strongly in the development of Containment Policy.

6 US support of the monarchies of Iran, Saudi Arabia and Ethiopia became known as the "Three Kings Principle." The relationship revolved around three basic shared goals: resisting foreign and domestic threats; active opposition to Soviet expansionism; and, the coordination of responses to common problems. See: Michael Ledeen and William Lewis, Debacle: The American Failure in Iran, New York 1982, p. 86.

The most important strategic role of the Indian Ocean in this early period lay in its contribution to the growth of the policy of containing communist expansionism through the development of regional collective security arrangements. Whereas, initially, the focus of containment was on the Middle East, the infrastructural and treaty arrangements developed in support of it were to have profound implications for subsequent US policy towards the major littoral states of the Indian Ocean, India and Pakistan, and for the region as a whole.

Before containment became the guiding light of US foreign policy, there had been concern over the future intentions of the Soviet Union in the Indian Ocean region. As part of the arrangement whereby lend-lease aid was passed to the Soviets during the war, the British and the Russians had occupied Iran. At the end of the war, the Soviet Union refused to withdraw its military forces from northern Iran and stated that it would hold a plebiscite to determine the wishes of the people. The 'Azerbaijan Crisis' proved to be the first direct confrontation of the post-war era and many observers regard it as the opening chapter of the Cold War.\(^8\) The issue was successfully resolved as a result of strong American and British pressure in the United Nations. The resolution of the 'Azerbaijan Crisis' was also brought about by the United States being the most powerful military player. Although, the resolution of the crisis did not involve the use of US ground forces, the confrontation with the Soviets attracted attention in Washington and served to strengthen US resolve just as the 'doctrine of containment' was about to be put forward as a policy option.

In fact, the 'Azerbaijan Crisis' was the first of three significant events in the evolution of containment policy as it came to influence the US-Indian Ocean relationship. The

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second, the victory of the communist revolution in China, presented at its most fundamental level, the specter of a monolithic communist bloc controlling the Eurasian landmass. This was to become a critical issue of strategic doctrine in the aftermath of the Sino-Indian border war of 1962. It seemed then that the communist forces were ready to invade India.

The year 1962, provided the proof that containment was both necessary and prudent if US interests were to be preserved. In fact, the Sino-Indian war simply confirmed the concern that had been rising in some quarters ever since the French defeat in Vietnam. The French collapse at Dien Bien Phu had raised the possibility of broader communist victories to come, leading to Eisenhower's description of the nations of South East Asia as a row of dominoes just waiting to be pushed over. During the Dien Bien Phu crisis, President Eisenhower wrote to Churchill that if Indochina "passes into the hands of the Communists, the ultimate effect on our and your global strategic position with the consequent shift in the power ratios throughout Asia and the Pacific could be

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9 This indicated the influence of the early theorists of geopolitics on US policy makers. In 1904, in "the Geographical Pivot of History," Sir Halford Mackinder presented his theory that Euro-Asia was the pivotal region in determining world power. Who controlled Eurasia, Mackinder's "Heartland", would rule the world. Mackinder's article, had considerable influence on the development of geopolitical thought. Nicholas Spykman, in 1944, modified Mackinder's theory on the basis of the experiences of World War II. According to Spykman, Mackinder's Heartland was subject to the control of the maritime powers operation in the "Rimland", the area between the sea and the Eurasian landmass. Hence, "Who controls the rimland rules Eurasia; who rules Eurasia controls the destinies of the world." See: Roger Kasperrson and Julian Minghi, eds., The Structure of Political Geography, Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1971 pp. 161-177. For an introduction and analysis of the ideas relating to geopolitics, see Derwent Whittlesey "Haushofer: The Geopoliticians" in Makers of Modern Strategy: Military Thought from Machiavelli to Hitler, ed. by Edward Mead Earle, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971, p.389-411. The ideas of Mackinder were utilised by Karl Haushofer, who made himself the alter ego of German geopolitics. The extent and influence of Haushofer's ideas on Nazi thinking can be seen in some ways from this extract of Adolf Hitler's Mein Kampf. "The foreign policy of a foolish State is charged with guaranteeing the existence on this planet of the race embraced by the State, by establishing between the number and growth of the population, on the one hand, and the size and value of the soil and territory, on the other hand a viable, natural relationship.... Only a sufficiently extensive area on this globe guarantees a nation freedom of existence...the area of a State has also another, military-political significance than as a direct source of nourishment of a people." Ibid., p.408
disastrous and, I know, unacceptable to you and me. The US therefore began to look for regional allies who could stand together and prevent the rest of the dominoes from falling. The alliance relationships thus developed were to have a significant impact on future US policy towards the Indian Ocean region. US concern over developments in Vietnam in the early 1950s was to lead to the beginning of the multilateral alliances which came to represent containment policy of the ground in Asia.

In 1951, Australia, New Zealand and the United States signed the Pacific Pact, or ANZUS alliance. In September 1954, the US Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, persuaded Britain, Australia, New Zealand, France, Thailand, Pakistan and the Philippines, to form the South East Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO). However, the absence of the two most populous nations in the region, India and Indonesia, together with Burma, was embarrassing and made the treaty arrangement look very much a western effort to control the security affairs of Asia.

President Eisenhower in a foreign policy briefing to President-elect Kennedy, made it clear that any expansion of

10 "In the same letter, President Eisenhower warned that "If I may refer again to history; we failed to halt Hirohito, Mussolini and Hitler by not acting in unity and in time. That marked the beginning of many years of stark tragedy and desperate peril. May it not be that our nations have learned something from that lesson?" Richard J. Barnet. The Alliance, New York: Simon & Schuster. 1983, p.158.


12 According to one analysis, "After the Geneva Accords had been signed, Dulles set about with lawyerly zeal to sign up the nations of Southeast Asia in a security organisation (SEATO) which he envisaged as the Asian counterpart of NATO" Ibid., p.160.
communist influence in South East Asia would be detrimental to American security interests and it was in America's interests to prevent such expansion. This, in summary, was the first declared policy objectives of the United States focus in part towards the Indian Ocean. This policy briefing could be considered as the beginning of US formal commitment to a region which was perceived to be vital to US interests.\textsuperscript{13}

Following the formation of SEATO, the Pact of Mutual Cooperation, or the Baghdad Pact, was signed in 1955 by Iraq and Turkey under US influence. The United Kingdom, Pakistan and Iran were subsequently to become members. Interestingly, the United States did not formally join the Baghdad Pact, or its successor, the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO), but acted instead as an observer. The US preferred to assert its political influence through bilateral relations with the individual nations, partly out of recognition of British political influence in the region, but also in order to maintain a low profile in an effort not to confront the local powers with an additional foreign presence. However, the overriding objective, at least as far as CENTO was concerned, was to encourage political stability in a pro-Western Iran under the Shah, and to develop Saudi Arabia and Iraq as conservative forces supportive of US policy.\textsuperscript{14}

The role of the United States in both alliances secured the development of the security relationship with Pakistan which has dominated United States-South Asian relations almost exclusively ever since. Pakistan was looked upon favourably by the United States because of its reputation as the home of a people with a martial tradition. This was


\textsuperscript{14} In fact, the symbolism of a US military presence was seen to be a more importance than the actual US military capability in the region. The broader security relationship, encompassing arms sales, and military and technical assistance, was felt to be of greater significance to US interests. See: U.S., Congress, Senate, Committee of Foreign Relations, \textit{United States Foreign Policy Objectives and Overseas Military Installations}, Washington: US GPO, 1979, p. 118.
Further reinforced by Pakistan's eagerness to build up a modern military establishment. The territory of what was then West Pakistan, was particularly sought after because of its historical role as the gateway to South Asia. Every historical land invasion of the Indian subcontinent had come through Pakistan and it was perceived to be of vital strategic significance. Conversely, a secure Pakistan would be an invaluable asset to the Untied States in overseeing and securing access to its vital interests in the Persian Gulf. The US eagerness to embrace Pakistan was based, at least in part, on the failure to sway Indian Prime Minister Nehru from his posture of non-alignment and his leadership role in that movement. The United States felt that South Asia was essential to the struggle against the growing communist threat. Dulles wanted to tighten and close the circle around monolithic communism; regional alliance were to be the means to this end, and in this context, US-Pakistan relations found a rich seed-bed.

Overriding this, of course, was Pakistan's own perception of its role in the region. To Pakistan, the regional threat was perceived to be from India. In order to achieve some measure of strategic balance with its more powerful neighbour, Pakistan needed great power support. Therefore, for Pakistan and the United States, the alliance structure was mutually beneficial. By 1960, there were increasingly close links between the two countries, and a corresponding alienation between the US and India. This has been a continuing pattern of US relations with the region ever since, with the notable exception of one brief period immediately following the Sino-Indian border war.

By 1965, however, South Asia had declined in security importance for the United States. The Sino-Soviet split appeared to be a long-term, if not permanent, affair. India and Pakistan were so wrapped up in their quarrels and had gone to war, so they had come to be of little relevance to the overall strategy of containing the communists. Indeed, as a
result of the India-Pakistan war of 1965, the United States immediately halted arms shipments to the region. This not only generated resentment in Pakistan,\textsuperscript{15} which was dependent on the US for its military equipment, but it also failed to gain the United States any political advantage with India. In fact, the US was upstaged by the Soviets, who mediated the dispute in the southern Soviet city of Tashkent. Nevertheless, the United States was beginning to establish an infrastructural framework in the Indian Ocean by which its global interests would be served.

In addition to the facilities in Eritrea and the Gulf, a Very Low Frequency communications station was opened at North West Cape in Australia in 1963. However, a major initiative taken during this period was to have far reaching strategic significance for the United States in the Indian Ocean. In 1966, a fifty-year agreement was entered into with the British for the use of Diego Garcia, an island in the Chagos Archipelago, lies almost in the geographical centre of the Indian Ocean. It has subsequently become the major US military facility in the region.\textsuperscript{16} Although elements in the US strategic community had been advocating for the building a facility for a long time,\textsuperscript{17} the acquisition of Diego Garcia

\textsuperscript{15} All credit sales of military equipment to Pakistan were ended and an embargo on cash sales of "lethal" weapons was enforced. As a result, following the events of 1965, US arms exports and military training became an insignificant factor outside the Gulf region. U.S., Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Foreign Policy Objectives and Overseas Military Installations, Washington: US GPO, 1979, p. 97.

\textsuperscript{16} Diego Garcia now has a 12,000 ft. runway, a dredged harbour capable of holding a carrier battle group, and enough fuel supplies to support a carrier battle group, and enough fuel supplies to support a carrier task force for 30 days. It is also home to prepositioned ships carrying heavy equipment and supplies for the Central Command (Rapid Deployment Force). Despite the obvious potential of Diego Garcia, successive administrations have consistently downplayed its importance. In 1979, for example, it was stated, "Current plans envision only the occasional use of the facility as a port for US warships, and in fact the facility is seldom used by Navy ships as it is not convenient to normal sailing patterns."

\textsuperscript{17} Plans to develop a facility on Diego Garcia had been developed as early as 1960. The island was selected because of its central location and future potential as a base—not simply to serve as an "austere communications facility." See: K.S. Jawatkar, Diego Garcia in International Diplomacy, Bombay: [ ] , 1983, p. 275. Moreover, by the late 1960s, communications requirements had largely been taken over by satellites and by facilities in Australia. See: Sick, "The Evolution of US Strategy
became the subject of intense debate in the US Congress in the early 1970s. In spite of the debate generated by the acquisition of Diego Garcia, the U.S. response was very much in keeping with the interventionist foreign policy initiatives taken by the Kennedy and Johnson administrations. This sentiment was well expressed by Admiral John McCain when he stated, "Here (Diego Garcia) is where the US should seek a base if we mean to contest the Russian bid for supremacy. As Malta is to the Mediterranean, Diego Garcia is to the Indian Ocean—equidistant from all points."  

The basic objective fueling the acquisition of the Diego Garcia facility, was to provide the United States with an inexpensive listening point and emergency support facilities covering a vast global area of great potential importance, whose use would be free of political constraints and limitations. Further, the value of Diego Garcia expanded with increased Soviet naval presence. An additional factor that increased the value of Diego Garcia was brought about when the Ruler of Bahrain asked MIDESTFOR to suspend its operations, as part of the general boycott against the United States that took place after the Yom Kippur War of 1973.  

For the greater part of the post-war period, therefore, US security policy towards the Indian Ocean evolved slowly. There was no pressing need for it to be otherwise. Although

Toward the Indian Ocean", p. 55. The need for a logistics base facility in the Indian Ocean area had been felt by the U.S. Department of Defence for a considerable length of time, probably going back to the late 1940s. The Long Range Objectives Group of the CNO detected "a vacuum of realistic planning to meet future national and navy needs in the Indian Ocean" even prior to 1960. It was this early realisation of the vacuum that led to the initiation of the political efforts that finally created British Indian Ocean territory and the subsequent base agreements that secured the Chagos Archipelago for UK-US defence purposes for 50 years. U.S., Congress, House, Subcommittees on the Near East and South Asia, Committee on Foreign Affairs. Proposed Expansion of US Military Facilities in the Indian Ocean, 93d Cong., 2d sess., 1974, pp.174-75.  


the United States had made incremental moves to enhance its position throughout the region, the Indian Ocean was essentially a "British Lake" and there was no overt threat to Western interests in the region. Besides, U.S. attention and resources were diverted by the war in Vietnam and the Indian Ocean had even lost its importance as a transit route for U.S. vessels following the closure of the Suez Canal in 1967. In fact, the U.S. navy had ended periodic deployments of its vessels in the region as a result of the demand on its resources from Vietnam. Indeed, aside from Vietnam, it has been argued that the Department of Defence resisted pressures from the White House to establish a permanent naval presence in the Indian Ocean because of competing interests in the Atlantic and Pacific. As a result, the United States was fairly satisfied to make the protection of the region the responsibility of the British.

In 1968, Prime Minister Harold Wilson of the United Kingdom made a major announcement relating to British Defence policy. This was the withdrawal of British military and naval forces east of Suez. The United States expressed its serious concern over this major shift in Britain's defence posture and attempted to pursued the British Government to reconsider its decision.²⁰ It was the view of security planners in Washington that a continued British presence in the Indian Ocean area was pivotal for Western interests.²¹

The Labour Administration in the United Kingdom was however firm in its commitment to carry out its withdrawal


²¹ According to one study, "Washington's anxiety was that the sudden withdrawal of Great Britain came at a time when the United states itself was preoccupied with Vietnam and domestic dimensions over its world peacekeeping role. The New York Times reflected Washington's feelings in a lead editorial that deplored the British withdrawal as creating a dangerous power vacuum over a vast and volatile area that the West would find difficult to fill. The projected power vacuum soon appeared as catastrophic in the light of an imminent Soviet entry into the Indian Ocean." Bezboruah, U.S. Strategy in the Indian Ocean: The International Response, p.27.
policy. The main aim of the Labour Government was stated to be the balancing of military tasks and resources.\textsuperscript{22} The supplementary statement on Defence policy which came out on 11 July 1968 finally shifted British strategic emphasis to Europe. With this strategic shift, the Labour Government of Harold Wilson concluded one chapter of British defence policy and started another.

The announcement of a firm schedule for withdrawal from east of Suez ended an era and generated criticism from many circles both from within the country and abroad. This was reflected well by the following extract from \textit{The Economist}, where it warned that it is a decision "to retire, except in Europe, to the role of a spectator. For half a dozen years in the 1970s, which many people in southern Asia think will be decisive for that region, Britain will possess no means of influencing the course of events except verbal persuasion and such weight as its trading position gives it. If this is what being a good European means, Mr. Wilson and Mr. Jenkins are very good Europeans indeed.\textsuperscript{23}

As a result of its heavy military involvement in Vietnam and also arising from the domestic political turbulence created by the anti-Vietnam movement, the United States was unable if not unwilling at that point to step into the "power


\textsuperscript{23} "The Washing of Hands," \textit{The Economist} (London) 226, n. 6491 (January 20, 1968); 17. There was strong opposition to the Labour Party's defence initiative relating to the withdrawal of British forces east of Suez from the Conservatives. Conservative Party circles felt that a continued British presence east of Suez was essential to protect Great Britain's trade and commercial interests. Some critics considered the policy of the Labour Party as both immoral and foolhardy. Subsequent economic difficulties faced by the United Kingdom moderated somewhat the initial criticism against Labour's decision to withdraw east of Suez. Alex Douglas Hume, the leading Conservative member and the shadow Foreign Minister noted that "No sensible person would argue that Britain can deploy power even on the scale that we used in past years. But Conservatives argue that a comparatively modest military presence, if it is to position with the consent of friends and allies, can secure political results out of all proportion to its size." \textit{Great Britain, Parliamentary Debates}, Commons, 5th series, vol.757, no.45, January 24, 1968, Column 426.
vacuum" created by British withdrawal. Whilst the United States retained an interest in the security affairs of the Indian Ocean region and reflected this, especially through naval deployments during the Bangladesh crisis and during the 1973 Yom Kippur October War, U.S. defence policy had become, in general, a victim to its overall strategic neglect of the region. Essentially, this was due to the fact that the United States had ignored a fundamental tenet of maritime power—that a seapower cannot function effectively without secure naval and logistics bases. During the period of British naval hegemony in the Indian Ocean region, the United States had been a beneficiary of the base facilities at the command of the British at such points as Aden and Singapore. With the announcement of the British withdrawal east of Suez, the United States had to develop a new strategy in the Indian Ocean zone. In the past, the approach of the United States was almost exclusively diplomatic, economic and political rather than of a military nature. The 1973 October War, suddenly forced the United States to focus its attentions on new strategic imperatives. The cardinal lessons promulgated by Admiral Mahan came back to haunt the strategic planners at the Pentagon. Mahan had reiterated many times the fact that secure bases constituted the necessary foundation for power upon the sea.24

Until the 1973 October War, the Gulf had been of little relevance to the Arab-Israel dispute. It was the impact of the Arab oil embargo that brought out the strategic significance of the Persian Gulf as a sub-region of the Indian Ocean. It was recognised that a U.S. military capability in the area would be extremely useful in any similar crisis in the future. Moreover, as a result of the war, the Indian Ocean took on a new importance in terms of the strategic relationship between

Israel and the United States of America. At the same time, the war aroused broader strategic concerns in Washington because the Soviet Union had doubled its naval forces levels in the Indian Ocean during the crisis. Nevertheless, although President Nixon decided to reestablish the pattern of regular naval visits into the ocean, he chose to focus the U.S. security effort on regional surrogates.

Within the framework of the so called "Twin Pillar" policy, American global policy dictated the buildup of Saudi Arabia and Iran as regional military powers in the Gulf region. In this respect, it was Iran that was the more important of the two. This emphasis on Iran as the regional superpower, was an outcome of President Nixon's Guam doctrine, which was intended to emphasize the necessity for America's allies and friends to play a greater role in their own national defence. Consequently, although deployments in the Indian Ocean from the Pacific fleet were increased, there was simultaneously, an increase of U.S. military reliance on Iran.

President Richard Nixon initiated a weapons technology and sales linkage with the Shah of Iran that was to have a major impact on the future shape of U.S. policy in the Indian Ocean zone. In addition to the arms deliveries, the United States despatched service and training personnel from the U.S.

25 In a House Committee meeting in 1976, Admiral Gayler, (Commander in Chief, Pacific) was asked by Congressman Solarz, "... Are there any plans in place to utilize Diego Garcia as part of a stepping stone that will be necessary to airlift materials to Israel in the event...alternative routes are not available?" The Admiral nonchalantly replied,"I think about it once in a while...". US Congress, House, Committee on International Relations, Subcommittee on Future Foreign Policy Research and Development, Shifting Balance of Power in Asia; Implications for Future US Policy, Hearings, 94th Congress, Washington: US GPO, 1976, p. 58.

26 In the Guam Doctrine, President Nixon proposed "...that the nations of Asia can and must increasingly shoulder the responsibility of achieving peace and progress in the area... with whatever cooperation we can provide". He further indicated that Asian countries must seek their own destiny:"...for if domination by the aggressor can destroy the freedom of a nation, too much dependence on a protector can eventually erode its dignity". J.L.S. Girling "The Guam Doctrine," International Affairs 46 (1), January 1970 p.50.
Armed Forces to assist the Iranians in the use of the modern weapons technology. Almost 11,000 Iranian officers and enlisted men received military training in the United States.\textsuperscript{27} With the military buildup of Iran, there developed the perception in Washington that the Shah was firmly in political control and his regime was unassailable.\textsuperscript{28} The Shah of Iran certainly intended that Iran should be an Indian Ocean power and that it should be able to make up for the withdrawal of Western naval influence from the area.\textsuperscript{29} The Shah of Iran also proposed a Gulf security system.\textsuperscript{30} The strategic misperception of the United States about the Shah's regime was almost semi-institutionalized. Subsequently, this strategic misperception and the intelligence failure with regard to the

\textsuperscript{27} Vali, \textit{Politics of the Indian Ocean Region}, p.114.

\textsuperscript{28} Iran's monarch, Mohammad Reza Shah predicted that Iran would become one of the five great powers in the world by 1985, equal in status to France, and 'The Japan of West Asia'. To achieve this geo-political goal, Iran had embarked on a crash industrialisation and a massive armament programme. The declared purpose of Iran's armament effort was to assure passage through the Hormuz Strait and within the Persian Gulf. \textit{Ibid.}, p.113. According to the same study, Iran's dramatic initiatives and the ambition to make itself a major power and to claim interest in areas distant from its national territory were prompted and supported by three developments -(i) the British withdrawal from the gulf; (ii) evolutions in the field of international politics (America-Soviet détente, Pakistan's dismemberment); and (iii) the bonanza resulting from the fourfold rise of the price of oil.

\textsuperscript{29} In December, 1972, he was quoted as saying, 'Iran is becoming an Indian Ocean power. In ten years time we are going to be right in it. T.T. Poulouse. ed. \textit{Indian Ocean Power Rivalry}. (New Delhi: Young Asia Publications, 1974), p.118. Generally, many observers were of the view that the United States was a critical buttress to the Shah's regime in Iran. (fn. One example of this is provided by the observation of Monoranjan Bozborouh that "The assistance of the United States in the creation of an efficient police state (in Iran) is an important reason for the continued Iranian support for US strategy in the Indian Ocean". Bozborouh. \textit{US Strategy in the Indian Ocean}, pp.189-190.

\textsuperscript{30} In this system the states of the Persian Gulf would 'form some type of mutual defense link similar to NATO without the big powers. The Shah of Iran believed that, in the absence of such a system, the Gulf area with its weak sultanates, rising wealth, and relatively small population will remain heaves for subversion and disorder. In this proposed pact, the Shah suggested that if the countries of the region agreed to the Iranian proposal, Iran would initiate and develop the security system and would seek to represent a profile of power, reason, and humanitarian aims in fulfilling its responsibilities in the region. The Gulf Security System did not, however, materialize. Although the United States favoured such an idea, the Arab countries in the region were not enthusiastic about an Iran-dominated security system.\textit{Ibid.}, p.190.
Islamic fundamentalist movement seriously affected U.S. policy responses to the Islamic revolution in Iran.

Another factor that accentuated the American naval presence in the Indian Ocean was the post-Vietnam disenchantment with land-based involvement in Asia. The US Department of Defence had come to look toward the navy with increased expectation. It was the view of US defence planners that it was better to engage potential Asian adversaries in the air and the sea, where they were visibly weaker, than on the land, where they seemed to be stranger. In the recalculated strategic atmosphere, the navy and the marines came to be viewed as the "most expedient forces in the Pentagon." An effective naval presence in the international water off the territorial limits was seen as the best way to exercise political leverage in the Indian Ocean Zone.

According to the Nixon Doctrine, the security structure of the 1950's would be recast to provide a more balanced Washington role, in the form of increased sharing of the burden and responsibility by allies and friends for their own security and a "more equitable sharing of the material and personal costs of security." This doctrine further stipulated that, in some instances and theaters, the United States would be militarily involved and in other instances involvement would be less likely. In the Indian Ocean area, it was the oil-rich Persian Gulf zone that specifically attracted the planners of strategy in Washington.

Consequently, the United States remained involved in the Indian Ocean, and emphasis was put on a balanced American role in the affairs of the region. This was emphasised in Nixon's 1973 message to Congress:

"The Nixon Doctrine recognizes that we cannot abandon friends, and must not transfer burdens too swiftly. We strike a balance between doing too much and thus
preventing self-reliance, and doing too little and thus undermining self-confidence."\(^{31}\)

The "grand ocean strategy" of the Pentagon for the Asian strategic scenario was dictated by geographic factors. In the Indian Ocean area, the United States could bring to bear conventional military force in efforts to influence local events only through naval power. In fact, it was sea power that has been able to perpetuate the myth of the United States being an Asian power. The possibility of increased use of sea power in limited wars, "including limited wars conducted almost entirely at sea," was seen as very strong for the near future.\(^{32}\) The strategic submarines deployed in the vast ocean areas all over the globe have allowed U.S. carriers to be used for such limited warfare roles. The United States thus was on much better footing in its efforts to deal effectively with small "brushfires," which it expected in great numbers in and around the Indian Ocean. Although the aircraft carriers have become increasingly vulnerable to missile attacks, and although some Soviet observers have already labeled them as "floating mortuaries," the aircraft carriers provided the U.S. Navy with a flexibility for limited faraway engagements that was unrivaled.

The new emphasis on the navy in the context of the United States' Indian Ocean strategy suited Washington's purposes. With the factors of flexibility, mobility, and relative independence from their location in international waters, the naval units seems to be uniquely fitted for the viable presence that the United States desired to provide in this zone.\(^{33}\) While the land-based forces in the area were often


\(^{33}\) U.S., Congress, Senate, Committee on Appropriations, Department of Defense Appropriations FY 1972, 92d Cong., 1st sess., 1972, pt. 3, Navy, p. 30. In the words of Admiral Zumwalt's, the Nixon doctrine implies "greater reliance on our mobile, controllable and politically independent sea-based forces." 9863-64.
faced with the problems overt resentment and tension arising from the host countries' populace, the U.S. naval presence in the Indian Ocean waters did not raise the issue in great intensity because of its location in international waters. On the contrary, it assured the United States that its will, interests, and calculations would be taken into account in local configurations.

Concomitant with the Nixon Doctrine and to the maintenance of a viable defense posture in Indian Ocean region was an increased emphasis on the concept of strategic mobility. The Diego Garcia atoll figured prominently in the navy's and the Department of Defense's "strategic island concept" plan of the late 1950s. The upgraded facility at the Diego Garcia atoll was viewed as crucial for peacetime power projection as well as wartime assignments of the U.S. Navy in the area. The possible U.S. naval missions in the Indian Ocean could be listed as the full range of deterrence, strategic nuclear capability, sea control, projection of power ashore, support of allies, and peacetime presence. These missions could be classified in four categories-strategic nuclear deterrence, sea control, projection of national power, and naval presence. They constitute a large role for the navy in strategic planning.

Broadly, the naval presence acts as a deterrent to actions that are adverse to U.S. interests and as an encouragement to


developments that further U.S. interests. The implications of deterrence through a naval presence in the Indian Ocean were also acknowledged by a Department of Senate official during the course of his testimony before the House Subcommittee on the Near East and South Asia. He stated that naval power will continue to contribute, "in a deterrent sense, not in an active involvement sense, "to making it clear that a condition of stability is the right way to settle problems.39

In the strategy of the Nixon doctrine, where the United States would not play the role of world fireman but would merely supply the fire trucks and the hoses in the case of a fire, the naval presence will remind the littoral countries of U.S. determination to keep its commitments while the indigenous affected parties essentially provide the wherewithal from their own defence capability.40 The Diego Garcia facility allowed the United States to "preposition" the necessary logistics supports for such contingencies. If sea power is fundamentally a matter of appropriate bases; Diego Garcia added tremendously to the naval capability of the United States in the region.41 Although originally a dimension of Kennedy's flexible response strategy, the fire-brigade concept-best described as garrisons in absentia-constituted a major part of the Nixon doctrine.42


41 From Diego Garcia a task force will take two days to reach any part of the Indian Ocean, whereas the United States took six days to sail to the Bay of Bengal (during the 1971 India-Pakistan war) through the Straits of Malacca. The United States would have needed 15 days if the Straits of Malacca were unavailable because it would have had to take the route south of Australia- a strong reminder of the geopolitical prominence of Diego Garcia. See H. Labrousse, "Will the Indian Ocean remain a Zone of Peace?" Defence Nationale (Paris) February 1976, 155.

Since "fleet times position equals sea power," the proximity of Diego Garcia contributed significantly to the effectiveness of sea power in the region. In the context of the Nixon Doctrine's "island strategy," which aimed at replacing land bases with outlying anchorages (Japan in the north to Indonesia and Australia in the south), Diego Garcia constituted a pivot of American naval power in the Indian Ocean.

In mid 1975, President Ford was successful in obtaining funding from Congress for the development of infrastructured facilities for U.S. forces operating on the island of Diego Garcia. A partial justification for this American response was the Soviet build-up of military facilities in Somalia. It was felt that a U.S. response was 'essential to the national interest.' In fact, the United States was put into a situation where it was compelled to develop a naval response to the expansion of Soviet influence in the Horn of Africa zone. A corollary of this was the evolution of the Indian Ocean zone becoming another zone for superpower competition.

U.S. economic interests in the Indian Ocean area were considerable and these interests were advanced for justification for a U.S. naval build-up in the region. According to Admiral Zumwalt, the Indian Ocean region has "become a focal point for US foreign and economic policies and has a growing impact on our security." The importance of economic interests in shaping U.S. foreign policy and the projection of American power and influence has to be taken into account. Consequently, the United States' strategy in the

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Indian Ocean has to be seen from the perspective of broad policy concerns rather than from a purely military perspective. As stated by one study, "U.S. economic interests in the Indian Ocean area centre on the key resources and the transportation routes that are used to carry these resources to the West. The economic impact of the area on Western societies was amply proved by the short oil embargo following the Mideast War of 1973".46 Primarily, the economic interests that the United States has in the Indian Ocean, centre on the importance of the Indian Ocean region as a source of energy supplies, as a market for U.S. goods and as a point for the investments of US commercial interests.47

The United States had consistently advocated a continued Western presence in the Indian Ocean zone, which provided almost a quarter of the entire UN membership and was home to a third of the world's population. A whole host of treaty arrangements, arms sales and aid agreements, executive arrangements, and informal understandings tied the United States to many of the Indian Ocean littoral countries. The United States had openly identified its policies and interests with the monarchical regimes of Iran and Saudi Arabia bordering the Persian Gulf region. Arrangements for a common defense policy necessitated a visible presence and a credible posture. The impact of British military withdrawal east of Suez, has made U.S. presence in the Indian Ocean of greater urgency and also as the symbol of continued Western interest in the security of the nations in the region. This strategic visibility and political presence added importance to the U.S. effort to offset the negative perception of the littoral countries of U.S. post-Vietnam policy. Subsequent efforts of the United States to enlarge its presence in black Africa has also been perceived to be dependent on a strong U.S. presence in the Horn of Africa, an important segment in the Indian Ocean region.

46 Bezboruah, US. Strategy in the Indian Ocean, p.43.

47 For an analysis of U.S. economic interests in the region, see Ibid., pp.42-45.
As stated by one writer, "In short the United States believes that neither its interests nor those of its littoral friends and allies would be served by a supposed U.S. inability to operate effectively in the waters. The United States believes that in an area as important as the Indian Ocean, it is dangerous to let the Soviet Union acquire a capability that would be substantially greater than its own. Thus, to the United States, its presence in the ocean becomes a matter of new urgency".48

2. The Soviet Union and the Indian Ocean Region

The Russian response toward U.S. strategy in the Indian Ocean Zone was a result of various interests and factors - historic, economic and strategic - that have influenced Soviet policies toward the same region.

During the same period of the developing American-Indian Ocean relationship, the Soviet Union was also steadily increasing its political influence and military presence in the region. From 1940-1968, the Soviet Union did not make any overt or covert claim to the Indian Ocean Zone and Soviet military writings and viewpoints "...did not give a single hint of potential interests or concern with the area in question."49


49 As explained by Alexander O. Ghebhardt, "The majority of these writings were, however, the product of a Soviet General Staff dominated by armor, artillery and infantry officers concerned primarily with the European theater of operations who did not seem to understand the importance of the flanks in strategic matters nor to appreciate the value of the Navy either in Europe or in operations outside Eurasia. Perhaps even more important was the absence of a powerful surface fleet capable of assuming important assignments in distant places". Alexander O. Ghebhardt "Soviet and U.S. Interests In The Indian Ocean" in Alexander O. Ghebhardt, "Soviet and U.S. Interests in the Indian Ocean." Asian Survey 15 (August 1975): 672-83. Evident of the contrary was the Soviet desire for warm waters to the south which featured prominently in the Russo-German Talk. Article 4 of the Secret Protocol of the talks clearly said that "The Soviet Union declares that its territorial aspirations center south of the national territory of the Soviet Union in the direction of the Indian Ocean." R.J. Sontag and J.S. Beddie,
In general, Soviet-Third World relations have dominated Moscow's Indian Ocean policy for most of the post-war period.

Historically, Russian interests go back much further. Peter the Great wanted to have a warm-water port on the Indian Ocean, and his goal has been widely regarded as the driving force or 'leitmotif' behind Soviet moves in the region ever since. Less well-known is the early Russian interest in the Horn of Africa. In the 1880s, Russian military advisers assisted Emperor Menelik II in consolidating the boundaries of Ethiopia. In 1888, a Cossack colony, sponsored by the Russian Orthodox Church, was established in what is now Djibouti, and a Russian hospital was opened in Addis Ababa in 1898. Subsequently, there was little Soviet involvement in the Horn until after World War II, when Moscow again opened a hospital in Addis Ababa—the first major Soviet aid project in Africa.50

Whereas U.S. policy towards the Indian Ocean has always been primarily strategic, Soviet policy towards the most important part of the region has been driven by its competition with China for influence in the Third World. Khrushchev made early efforts to advance Indo-Soviet ties, for example, a relationship which led from cultural exchanges and technical assistance in the 1950s and 1960s, to the signing of a Treaty of Peace, Friendship, and Cooperation in 1971. Other Soviet approaches to some of the littoral states—Egypt, the Sudan, Somalia, Iraq, South Yemen and Mozambique—were undoubtedly strategic but have been less than successful. Moscow was expelled from Egypt and the Sudan in the early 1970s. A Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation was signed with Somalia in 1974, but Moscow lost its foothold there in

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50 See: Paul B. Henze, Russians and the Horn, California, EAI Papers, No. 5, Summer 1983.
1977 when it switched allegiance to Ethiopia during the Ogaden War. Soviet ambivalence during the Iran-Iraq war brought its political linkage to a lower-profile. South Yemen, although firmly Marxist, had little to offer the Soviets where regional advantages were concerned, and Mozambique demonstrated pro-Western tendencies. India remains the Soviet Union's most important and only enduring friend and ally in the region.

Almost immediately after the British announced their withdrawal from "East of Suez", the Soviet Union sent a fleet into the Indian Ocean following the visit in February 1968 of Admiral Gorshkov, the Soviet Chief of Naval Staff to India. This visit of a Soviet naval squadron made up of a cruiser, a missile-carrying- destroyer, a nuclear-powered submarine and a navy oil tanker visited ports in India, Ceylon, Iran, Iraq, Somalia and South Yemen. This Soviet naval deployment, marked the first appearance of a Russian naval unit in the Indian Ocean since the ill-fated Russian Baltic Fleet passed through on its way to defeat by the Japanese navy at Tsushima in 1905.\footnote{D.C. Watt. "Britain and the Indian Ocean." Political Quarterly 42 (3), July-September 1971, 307.}

This early Soviet deployment filling the "power vacuum" in the Indian Ocean, rang alarm bells in the West but was almost certainly not a response to the British withdrawal.\footnote{One such example reads as follows, \textit{The appearance of these Soviet warships was watched with a great deal of anxiety by British naval observers, an anxiety which filtered easily through the Conservative Press to the party membership. Since the defeat of the French squadron under de Suffren in 1783, the Indian Ocean had been a purely British lake, British control only being challenged once, in the great Japanese irruption which ended with the repulse of the Japanese naval air attacks on Ceylon in 1942. It is true that the occasional German raider had caused more than a little alarm in both world wars, and there had been minor naval confrontations with French ships in the nineteenth century, but these had been the merest ripples on the placid surface of the Pax Britannica. Ibib., p.308 In this analysis, Watt puts forward two possible interpretations of Soviet intentions. "The first deduced that Soviet warships were intended to play roughly the same role that British ships had done throughout the period of British supremacy or at least, its mirror image. The second, tended to see the intentions of the Soviet squadron in more strictly maritime terms". Ibid., p.319.}
Others have argued that the Soviets were concerned that the United States was about to deploy ballistic missile submarines in the Arabian Sea and that Moscow was preparing for that eventuality. That this concern was serious cannot be denied.

The Indian Ocean has come to acquire greater strategic significance for the Soviet Union. With the increasing reliance on missiles technology and nuclear warheads, the ocean (the strategically located and third largest body of water) had come to be viewed as a "vast launching pad for missile-firing submarines." The submarine, a major technological innovation and a major facet of modern sea power, has indeed made every ocean a deployment zone and the waters have simply become a "continuum of threat." The third largest ocean (i.e. Indian Ocean) forms the soft underbelly of the Soviets, and thus naturally figures centrally in its superpower strategic perception.

From the early 1960s, the Soviet Union has been attempting to respond to the U.S. submarine-based strategic offensive. By the late 1960s, the Soviets officially recognized the full danger of the seaborne threat. The Soviet Defense Ministry publication History of Naval Art stated that, in line with the U.S. and NATO policies of according greater prominence to seaborne strategic forces, the Soviet navy would also opt for increased forward deployments.  

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54 Cited in Shinsaku Hogen, "The Present State of the Indian Ocean," in The Indian Ocean: Its Political, Economic and Military Importance, ed. Alvin Cotrell and R.M. Burrell, New York, 1972, p. 385. The publication observed: "In view of the way the navies of the United States and NATO are being utilised in the military field, it is becoming increasingly evident that the main role they are to be given in a future war tends to be the one as means of delivering strategic strikes... The fact that one third of the overall nuclear missile striking power of the United States is being concentrated in nuclear submarines and aircraft carrier forces, with the prospect that this level will be increased to one half by 1970, signifies that above mentioned tendency is there to stay... The primary mission of the Soviet Navy with its flotillas equipped with nuclear missiles, if required, are capable of destroying important land targets anywhere in the enemy territory."
The Soviet Union was fully conscious of the fact that a sea-based strategy offered the United States with superior advantages, as Moscow still lagged behind in the armaments race. The Indian Ocean, particularly the waters around the Persian Gulf, the Arabian Sea, and the Bay of Bengal, are vulnerable spots so far as Soviet defence was concerned. Although the Soviets initiated antisubmarine warfare, the American lead in underwater strategy kept Moscow off balance. With its major concentration on the military uses of the sea, the United States was well ahead of the Soviet Union in sea-based defense studies. The United States, for example, had "floating underwater nuclear bases" as early as the mid-1960s.\(^{55}\) The Soviet concern about the U.S. strategic naval advantage was clear from a \textit{Morskoi Sbornik} warning that the "struggle with the main forces of the enemy fleet" has acquired an "immeasurably greater significance" with the U.S. move to make the world oceans into a "vast arena containing the launch points for highly mobile, secretive vehicles carrying strategic missiles."\(^{56}\) According to Monoranjan Bezboruaah, the Soviet fear of its vulnerability of such Indian-Ocean-based missile-carrying submarines is genuine. The Soviets believe that the U.S. strategy for the area proceeds "not from present day realities but from a strategy devised during the Cold-War years which aimed to guarantee for the United States a dominant positions in the Indian Ocean."\(^{57}\) The spectre of three ocean base missile system which unable the United States to launch a second strike in the event of war between the two superpower adversaries was the nightmare to Soviet defence planners. The United States was perceived as having militarized the Indian Ocean. One Soviet analyst observed as follows:


The Indian Ocean is assigned a prominent place in the global strategic plans of the United States and Britain which want to turn this ocean, too, into a giant launching site for American strategic missiles, place the area fully under control, and ensure all conditions for pursuing a "policy of strength." ...\textsuperscript{58}

On the other hand, not only was the Indian Ocean an unattractive area for the operation of U.S. submarines, being too far from major bases in terms of sailing time, the Soviets only deployed limited anti-submarine warfare assets in the ocean. Similarly, Soviet threats to the oil shipment routes can be discounted in favour of other, more effective, means available to Moscow to disrupt the energy supplies to the West. The most plausible explanation for the Soviet naval deployment in 1968 lies in the emergence of a "Blue Water" capability under the guidance of Admiral Gorshkov, and Moscow's determination to be recognized as a global power.\textsuperscript{59} According to one analyst, it was not until 1967, that Admiral Gorshkov revealed the goals of the Soviet Union decision which apparently replaced the Stalinist post war long range plan with a radically new one. According to Admiral Gorshkov, the objective, he said, was to create an ocean-going fleet capable of accomplishing war objectives both in nuclear war and conventional wars and also protecting state interests in peace time.\textsuperscript{60} According to James M. McConnell, "...the contemporary Soviet navy seems to be the complex product of


\textsuperscript{59} For a good analysis see the contribution by James M. McConnell "Strategy and Missions of the Soviet Navy in the Year 2000", in Problems of Sea Power As We Approach The Twenty-First Century, ed. James L. George. (Washington, D.C: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1978). Admiral Gorshkov once wrote "For the first time in the country's history, our navy which has emerged on the expanses of the world's oceans, has become a long range armed force in the full meaning of the word". 'Gorshkov Boasts of Navy Might', Daily Telegraph, 8 February 1978; Guardian, 8 February 1978.

\textsuperscript{60} Robert W. Herrick, Soviet Naval Strategy, Annapolis. 1968, pp. 63-64.
a particular technological trend and of political decisions flowing from a certain softening to the ideological confrontation in the post-Stalinist era, centering on the concepts of peaceful co-existence and the recognition of an intermediate Third World between the two blocs. These factors in combination have apparently had the effect of strengthening the political aspects of naval activity even in war, enhancing the importance of peacetime uses of the fleet, and to some extent shifting the axis of Soviet naval activity from the main Euro-American area of concern to the Third World periphery. Consequently, the 'blue water' capability of the Soviet Navy in the late 60s and 70s centered around four basic naval tasks: (1) strategic strike, (2) sea control, (3) strategic defence and (4) interdiction of sea lines of communication.

Soviet naval deployments in the Indian Ocean have more to do with Moscow's need to demonstrate its right to be there, than with any significant strategic purpose. For example, Soviet naval deployments in the Indian Ocean have not matched the United States' presence quantitatively or qualitatively. Whereas its role as a deterrent to the U.S. forces is important, the Soviet naval presence serves more to extend Soviet political influence in the region and to counterbalance the political impact of Washington's naval deployments.

The sustained Soviet naval presence in the Indian Ocean has never approached that of the Americans, or even the French. In the past, Soviet naval deployments have tended to mirror American activity, that is, their presence increased as U.S. carriers were deployed, and returned to normal levels when the task forces withdrew. Whenever this situation resulted in a quantitative advantage to the Soviets, it was

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more than offset by the distinct qualitative edge to the U.S. presence. This loose equilibrium allowed the superpowers to avoid the monetary cost and political risk of a naval arms race in the Indian Ocean. Of course, Moscow has maintained significant numbers of warships in the region on occasion, but it has faced severe constraints on basing and resupply. During a war time situation, its position would be untenable. Nevertheless, Soviet behaviour in the Indian Ocean region, in the late 1970s, gave Washington cause to focus on the perceived Soviet threat to Western interests.

The Soviet leaders also tried to counter U.S. naval presence in the Indian Ocean by launching an offensive to buildup politicodiplomatic influence among the littoral countries.⁶² The Soviet politicodiplomatic offensive in the Indian Ocean area was very much a post-Stalinist phenomenon. During the Stalinist period, the ideological purity and the monolithicism of communism did not give way to realpolitik.

In the early years of the Cold War and bipolarity, the Indian Ocean littoral countries were seen as part of the imperialist camp and thus outcasts to the Communists world. Africa was still a colonial domain of the West. The few Asian nations that became independent of the West European powers were seen as mere appendages of the former metropolitan powers. In spite of their anti imperialist credentials, most of the national leaders remained suspect in the eye of the Soviet Union. Soviet political indifference was parallel by strategic indifference towards the region. Only to Iran, a country with both coastlines on the Indian Ocean and a common border with the Soviet Union, did USSR show any interest.⁶³ However, Stalin's attempt to create a puppet regime in a part

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⁶² Hanson Baldwin, however, sees in this Soviet offensive a "grand design" to dominate the entire area. Baldwin, Strategy for Tomorrow, New York 1970, Chapter 8.

of Iran (Azerbaijan) failed as the result of Western opposition.

The post-Stalin era saw considerable change and flexibility in the Soviet attitude toward the countries that have come to be called the Third World. Premier Khrushchev's de-Stalinization programme was accompanied by a new Soviet flexibility in external linkages. It is difficult to say what single factor could have contributed to the change in the Soviet attitude towards Afro-Asia. External developments as well as internal revisions of the Marxist-Leninist philosophy heralded a new Soviet attitude toward foreign policy, in general, and state-to-state relationships, in particular. At the same time, the intensification of the Cold War and attempts to contain Russia with a ring of bases and allies forced the Soviet leaders to develop a counterstrategy.

Although the Warsaw Pact attempted to respond to the threat from NATO, the Soviets had to look for additional political avenues to respond to SEATO and CENTO. The Soviet political and diplomatic defense against the Western effort at encirclement led to the recognition of the importance of the Indian Ocean littorals in the political and diplomatic arena where the East-West struggle itself was moving.

The support and encouragement of the non-aligned nations against their aligned neighbours were motivated by the Soviet strategy to weaken Western political influence in the area. In this the Soviets succeeded considerably. At least according the policy of non-alignment, the Soviet leaders came to acquire diplomatic standing among some of the important leaders of the Indian Ocean region. The fact that John Foster Dulles, U.S. secretary of state, did not regard non-alignment as even an honest foreign policy in the struggle against communism provided added weight to the Soviet acceptance of it as a viable and peace-oriented policy.
Although all Afro-Asian littoral countries acquired an importance in Soviet diplomacy, it was South Asia that was continuously given the greatest attention, particularly to India, the most populous and powerful of the littoral countries. While the Soviet goal was to expand its influence over the entire area, India acquired the central position in that drive. Moscow realized the potential role of India in matters affecting Asia and gave due attention to its India policy.\textsuperscript{64}

In 1977, there was a dramatic shift in Soviet policy in the Horn of Africa. In the 1960s, Moscow had built up a politico-security linkage with Somalia. The Somalis were given military training and equipment by Moscow in exchange for the use of a naval base at Berbera. However, the overthrow of Haile Selassie, the pro-US Emperor of Ethiopia in 1974, was a watershed in the affairs of the Horn. In early 1976, the revolutionary regime in Ethiopia approached the Soviets with a request for arms to fight the secessionist struggle in Eritrea. Moscow agreed on condition that Ethiopia's ties to the United States be cut. In April 1977, Addis Ababa terminated diplomatic relations with the United States and shut-down the Kagnew communications complex in Eritrea.

Whilst these political moves reflected the revolutionary Marxist bias of the Ethiopian regime it should not be forgotten that the United States was also reappraising its relationships in the region. Ethiopia had declined as a strategic player with the shut-down of the Suez Canal and the communications facility in Eritrean was less crucial for the U.S. global communications network development and

\textsuperscript{64} See Jukes, The Soviet Union in Asia. Also see Chester Bowles, "America and Russia in India," \textit{Foreign Affairs}, April 1971, pp. 636-51. The importance of South Asia was recognized even by Lenin when he said, "In the last analysis the future will be determined by the cold fact that Russia, China and India represent a crushing majority of the people of the world. The shortest route to Paris runs through Calcutta and Peking." (Cited in U.S., Congress, House, \textit{The Indian Ocean}, testimony of Chester Bowles, p. 53).
launching of satellite communications systems. This was further emphasised with the transfer of some of Kagnew's functions to Diego Garcia. Additionally, President Carter's concern for human rights encouraged a revaluation of America's traditional role in Ethiopia. All those elements, in combination with growing Arab political opposition to the Soviet presence in the Middle East, led Moscow to realign its support of Somalia in favour of Ethiopia during the Ogaden War.

Despite widespread indifference in Washington to the Soviet switch, it was clear to some observers that Moscow had scored a major strategic and diplomatic victory. The United States had suffered a net loss in its global rivalry with the Soviet Union. Moscow had gained a position in the most important country in the Horn, and Washington was politically unable to counter it. An about-turn in favour of Somalia, with its radical regime and strong anti-Israel stance, was simply not a viable option for the United States. Aside from extracting assurance from the Soviets that they would not permit the Ethiopians to violate Somali territory in their drive to recapture the Ogaden, the United States was unable to influence events in the region. To many observers, the weak US response to the crisis in the Horn of Africa can be blamed for all the subsequent foreign policy failures of the Carter administration. Zbigniew Brzezinski, Carter's national security adviser, provided the most melodramatic interpretation of the importance of the crisis in the Horn: "SALT lies buried in the sands of the Ogaden."65

The Ogaden crisis was rightly considered as a major test to the foreign policy strategy of the Carter Administration but it is important to note, for the purposes of this study, that it also marked a change in the focus of superpower attention in the Indian Ocean. It was the beginning of an emphasis on

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strategic issues between the superpowers in the Indian Ocean. Whereas the superpowers had previously, almost exclusively, aimed at securing influence in the littoral states, now they were explicitly pursuing a strategic advantage over their rival. Following the Ogaden War, the United States was given a brief scare with a "mini-crisis" in the Yemens and then suffered a major geopolitical defeat when the Shah of Iran was overthrown by the Islamic revolution. It was not surprising, therefore, that the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, in December 1979, was widely regarded as the proof that the Soviets had a masterplan to surround the crucial Gulf area with forces hostile to the United States. President Carter made clear his feelings regarding Soviet activities in the region, and raised the strategic stakes, with his State of the Union address on 23 January 1980.

Let our position be absolutely clear: 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 of America, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force.

The motives that underlay Soviet strategies and policies have not been adequately addressed. The Soviet invasion was a major shift from the normal pattern of Soviet intervention and from Soviet foreign policy. The Soviet action in Afghanistan was the first time that Moscow-had deployed its own military forces outside the Warsaw Pact Zone since the end of the Second World War. A variety of reasons could be put forward to explain the Soviet response. These included, among others, the following: a fear of widespread unrest and rebellion among the Muslim republics of the Soviet Union, arising out of the impact of the Islamic revolution in Iran; apprehension over possible US military intervention and


retaliation to rescue the US embassy hostages in Teheran then and the desire to rectify a rapidly deteriorating political situation in Afghanistan. On the other hand, it could simply have been an opportunistic response to an overall international situation where the U.S. was seen to be in a weak position. The net result of the Soviet intervention has been to damage seriously the image of the Soviet Union in the eyes of the Third World. The political cost to the Soviet Union of its military intervention in Afghanistan has been high.

The Soviet entry into the Indian Ocean Zone injected a new external power into the region. Geographically, the Soviet Union partially belongs to Asia, but in the Indian Ocean context it is an external power. The Soviet entry into the Indian Ocean provided an alternate force to the traditional external powers—United Kingdom, France, and the United States—adding a new visibility to the littoral countries' vision of external power presence and possible intervention. In an area filled with political turmoil and crisis, the influence of external powers can be multidimensional, and opportunities for the extension of Soviet influence exist.

In spite of its increasing profile, the Soviet naval presence in the Indian Ocean reflects the overall Soviet naval strategy, which according to Robert Herrick, is deterrent and defensive\(^\text{68}\) and at most a political strategy on the part of the Soviet Union. This security-oriented strategic posture is contrary to any notion of planned Soviet expansion\(^\text{69}\). The Soviet leaders fear U.S. strategic deployment in the Indian Ocean. Moscow already sees great danger in the continued U.S. forward deployment in the Mediterranean and Europe, on the one hand, and the Pacific, on the other. Faced with a stronger Western naval presence, the Soviet navy will have to

\(^{68}\) Herrick, \textit{Soviet Naval Strategy}, p. 24

think very carefully before it transforms its normal presence to something beyond a peacetime political strategy.

The most striking fact that emerges, as one begins to examine the various factors that over the years have affected and influenced Moscow's activities in the Indian Ocean, is that they cannot be ascribed to a monothematic explanation. The process of building up a Soviet political and military presence, has been very much the result of a complex interaction of a number of military, strategic, political and economic factors. These have been reinforced by domestic considerations and by politico-psychological factors such as a desire to live up to the status expectations of ones' position and role as a superpower, particularly in the eyes of the Third World nations.

D. Conclusion

President Jimmy Carter committed the United States to defend the Gulf as a response to a perceived threat to Western security interests, should free access to the energy supplies of the region be denied by a hostile power. The Carter Doctrine was, a formal reconfirmation of the historical U.S. policy objective in the Indian Ocean, which was both to secure access to the oil supplies of the Gulf, and to ensure the safety of the sea lanes of communication for their safe transportation. The United States considered the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan as a direct challenge to its fundamental security interests and reacted with a military build-up of its naval forces in the Indian Ocean. The war between Iran and Iraq, further reaffirmed Washington's justification for pursuing the military option and subsequently replaced the Soviet threat from Afghanistan as the fundamental strategic concern in the region.

When the United States deployed aircraft carriers in response to the crises in Southwest Asia, it had no military
alternative. However, from that time onwards, the United States has developed the capacity to offer a credible land deterrent to any Soviet move on the Gulf. New regional access arrangements, the upgrading of facilities at the US base on Diego Garcia, and the propositioning of heavy equipment in the region, ensure a rapid and sustainable reaction by the unified units of Central Command. Moreover, the industrialized world has not been idle since the oil crises of the 1979s. Measures taken to diversify supply and to develop alternative sources of energy, together with conservation efforts and emergency stockpiling, have reduced the risk factor of any termination of oil supplies. The world oil surplus depressed prices, and the organizational disarray in OPEC, all attest to the success of these initiatives in reducing dependence on Middle East energy supplies. The security of Persian Gulf oil supplies is simply far less significant than was the case at the time of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

These changes in the general overall strategic scenario represented improvements from the U.S. perspective, which were predicted on future Soviet challenges to Washington's interests in the region. However, if the Carter Doctrine served notice on the Soviets that the United States would tolerate no more Afghans, certainly the Soviet withdrawal from Kabul indicated that Moscow did not want any more either. The Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan triggered off U.S. responses which presented opportunities for confrontation at both the local and the superpower level. However, the responses did not correlate to the reality of the threats to Western interests in the region. If the Soviets could not defeat the Afghan resistance, then their chances of successfully subjugating Iran were obviously bleaker still. Hence, there is no legitimate conventional Soviet military threat to the Persian Gulf. Furthermore, the energy supplies of the Gulf are not at risk from maritime interdiction, in particular, not from Soviet naval forces in the Indian Ocean. In fact, the lesson of history is that the real threat to the Gulf zone which comes from instability in
Southwest Asia. The United States needs to develop policies and strategies to meet threats of a lower conflict-intensity—insurgencies, terrorism and sabotage—against its friends and allies in the Gulf region. Naval battle groups are not well suited for such tasks and their presence in the region is unnecessary.

A major consequence of the Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan was the abandoning of arms control and limitation measures to stabilize naval force levels between the superpowers in the Indian Ocean.\textsuperscript{70} The geopolitical situation in the Indian Ocean region then suggested that it was ripe for the consideration of Naval Arms Limitation Talks (NALTS) again. The initial assumption that underlay the NALTS talks, was that it was in the overall interests of both superpowers to reduce the potential for conflict and confrontation in a zone of relatively low strategic importance.

The naval deployments of both superpowers in the Indian Ocean have long been a cause for concern for the littoral states. Since 1971, efforts have been made through the United Nations to have the entire ocean declared a Zone of Peace. At the 29th Session of the United Nations General Assembly on December 9, 1974, another resolution on the "Implementation of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace" was adopted by 103 votes in favour, none against, with 26 abstentions.\textsuperscript{71} The resolution asked the littoral states of the Indian Ocean as well as the permanent members of the Security Council and other major maritime users of the Indian Ocean, "to give tangible support to the establishment and preservation of the Indian Ocean as a zone of peace." It also requested the great powers to refrain from increasing and asserting their military presence in the Indian Ocean area.

\textsuperscript{70} Naval Arms Limitation Talks, or NALTS, were part of a package of arms control measures, introduced early in the Carter Administration, designed to sound out the possibilities for cooperation with the Soviet Union.

\textsuperscript{71} UN General Assembly Resolution 3259 (XXIX), adopted by the twenty-ninth session.
The resolution requested all interested parties to enter into consultations and negotiations aimed at convening a summit-level conference on the Indian Ocean.

The promoters of the Zone of Peace proposal were very much convinced that the "instabilities, inherent in the Indian Ocean", bring about great power interference and intervention and that the rivalries of these powers would be "interacting with local conflicts, and then escalating." These supporters of the Zone of Peace proposal wished to prevent their countries from being involved in a possible conflict between the two superpowers. The supporters of the Indian Ocean proposal were of the view that a balance of naval power in the Indian Ocean area would not preclude the involvement of local countriès. Consequently, regional conflicts would become synchronized with the existing state of rivalry between the two superpowers. The United States and the Soviet Union, while taking sides with one regional power against another, would aggravate local tensions and conflicts. In the eventuality that one of the regional powers would emerge victorious from such a conflict, "the mutual balance between Great Powers could not be maintained over a period of time." The Indo-Pakistani war over Bangladesh was a factor that came to the minds of the policy analysts.

A careful analysis of the various Zone of Peace proposals and the United States resolution often presented an amalgam of contradictory elements. The objective of establishing a nuclear-free zone in the Indian Ocean was mainly directed against the United States and the Soviet Union, which may or may not deploy nuclear weapons in the Indian Ocean zone. However, in the context of India's reluctance and its acquisition of nuclear weapons technology marked by its explosion of a nuclear device in June 1974, it is highly unlikely that a policy of nuclear non-proliferation in

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72 As expressed by the report dated May 3, 1974.

73 Ibid.
the Indian Ocean region could be acceptable or effectively implemented. Simultaneously, both Moscow and Washington would not be willing to prohibit the entry or transit of their surface naval vessels or nuclear submarines into or across the Indian Ocean zone.

When this proposal was first introduced, by Sri Lanka with Indian support, it was taken to apply to all naval forces, local and external. The concept has since come to refer purely to the military presence of external powers, for obvious reasons of local self-interest. Although the ultimate hope of the Zone of Peace proposal is the elimination of all aspects of the superpower presence in the Indian Ocean, this is clearly viewed as a long-term goal. The superpowers, and other maritime nations, have consistently rejected the concept of a Zone of Peace arguing that it implies some sort of legal regime in international waters which could exercise constraints on the strategic maneuverability and deployment of their naval forces.

In reality, nobody questions the codified rights of passage according to the accepted norms of international law on the high seas. What is at issue, and where the greatest

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74 The Shah of Iran proposed the establishment of a "nuclear free zone" and also of a Common Market in the Indian Ocean area. The former proposal seems to have been directed against the Indian progress in the field of nuclear development. See New York Times, Oct. 9 and Nov. 2, 1974.

75 The objective of keeping the Indian Ocean free of great power rivalry and conflict was often voiced by spokesmen of South Asian countries. At the Commonwealth Prime Ministers Conference in Singapore in January 1971, the question "of the security of the Indian Ocean" was one of the principle items on the agenda and representatives of the South Asian countries were extremely active in debating this issue. Mrs. Bandaranaike of Sri Lanka presented a package programme to turn the Indian Ocean into a nuclear-free zone. Mrs. Bandaranaike firmly stated "Our concept of a peace zone totally excludes the intrusion of great power conflicts into the region, with their attendant defense systems." Cottrell and Burrell, ed. The Indian Ocean, p.243. At the same conference, Mrs.Bandaranaike put forward a proposal for an Indian Ocean community. This notion of an Indian Ocean community was linked to the idea of a Zone of Peace. Mrs.Bandaranaike stated, "In effect, a peace zone will provide the transitional minimum condition for the development of an 'Indian Ocean community', in which problems of security will be dealt with by orderly and institutional means for promoting peaceful change". Neither India or Pakistan showed any interest in the Indian Ocean community approach Ibid. p.244.
littoral-state concern lies, is the question of the permanent deployment of such forces. The fear of the littoral states is that they might unwittingly be sucked into a superpower confrontation as a result of the presence of their warships in the Indian Ocean. A naval arms limitation agreement, restricting outside force levels to a token permanent presence, would ease these fears and lead to general benefits for the superpowers in the form of better relationship with the littoral states. A variety of proposals have been put forward with regard to what would constitute the elements of such a naval arms limitation agreement. On the basis of the tangible improvement in energy supply security, and because of the new strategic elements introduced since 1980, there is little justification for the superpowers to maintain more than a nominal naval presence in the Indian Ocean. Indeed, there are far more effective ways, for the Soviet Union and United States to support their friends in the area.

As a confidence-building measure and demilitarization initiative, the NALTS proposal was both rational and major difficulty in negotiating a formal agreement is the fact that both superpowers have made active use of their navies as instruments of foreign policy in such conflicts as the 1971

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76 According to one study, a possible posture statement with reference to a naval arms limitation agreement might incorporate the following elements, (1) There will be no expansion of the airfield on Diego Garcia (in both the width and thickness of the runway) to take regular deployment of B-52s or any such bombers in the future (B-1s). The parking facilities, aprons, aircraft maintenance facilities, and personnel ashore will not be utilized for deployment of SR-7s or U-2s engaged in long-range surveillance. (2) There will be no stationing of ground forces on the atoll. The personnel ashore will be technicians and other related personnel essential for a logistics facility. The base will house fewer than 500 personnel. (3) There will be no storage for the support of combat units of any kind. (4) There will be no major ship repair workshops or facilities except for anchorages for tenders and repair ships. (5) There will be no additional requests for expansion of the Diego Garcia facility in accordance with the promise already made, in public, by the U.S. Navy. (6) There will be no deployment of naval units except for exclusive flag-showing purposes. At no time will such deployment exceed more than one combat flagship, three destroyers, and one aircraft carrier. (7) There will be no basing of any strategic submarines on the Diego Garcia or any other atoll of the Chagos Archipelago, so long as such units can enjoy their present basing rights in Rota, Spain, or any such base in the Mediterranean. (8) There will be no storing or emplacing of any nuclear weapons on Diego Garcia. Bozboruh, U.S. Strategy in the Indian Ocean, pp. 223-224.
Indo-Pakistani War and the 1973 Middle East conflict. At the same time there are a number of problems related to the technical and enforcement aspects of the agreement.\textsuperscript{77} Moreover, it was very attractive to national governments in the Indian Ocean zone. This point was not lost on the Soviet Union, which recognized the broader political advantages of a negotiated settlement in the area. Since the NALTS collapsed, Moscow has consistently called for its resumption. Diplomatic efforts towards this end, through the offices of the United Nations Ad Hoc Committee on the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace, have thus far been stymied by US insistence that any formal debate on the issue be linked to a Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan. Now that the question of Afghanistan has been resolved, it is incumbent on the United States to readdress Naval Arms Limitation Talks with the Soviets in the Indian Ocean.

The littoral states have begun to play a greater role in strategic affairs in the region. India, in particular, has embarked on an expansion of its naval power projection capability which concerns its neighbours and is potentially destabilizing. The nuclear proliferation issue in South Asia threatens not only India and Pakistan, but also the rest of the world. Conflicts like the Iran-Iraq war demonstrate that marginal powers can drag great powers into their quarrels, with untold consequences. Scarce resources will continue to trigger crises and hostility for the foreseeable future. With the Soviets withdrawing from Afghanistan, and the Iran-Iraq war ostensibly over, there is the potential for the superpowers

\textsuperscript{77} Commenting on this aspect, Alexander Ghebhardt writes An agreement based on equivalency in tonnage will give the Soviet Union a distinct advantage over the United States, while in an agreement based on numerical parity the reverse would be the case. This does not mean that consultations of an exploratory nature should not be undertaken by Washington and Moscow at the appropriate moment. Besides a formal agreement, other alternatives could be considered, such as informal understandings on the number and types of ships to be deployed in different parts of the Indian Ocean in different seasons of the year. The advantage of an informal agreement over a formal one is that in an emergency it would be easier to upgrade forces either by mutual consent or unilaterally without the fear of international legal implications or possible escalation. Each alternative, however, requires further serious study. The capabilities of the littoral states like India and Iran would also have to be taken into account. Ghebhardt "Soviet and U.S. Interests In The Indian Ocean, pp. 672-83."
to return the Indian Ocean to its traditional low-order priority in their strategic affairs. It is important that they do so. The superpowers need to be free to develop their cooperative confidence-building measures in this important region in order to be better able to manage the rapidly changing challenges to the international security environment.