

**INDIA'S INTERESTS AND STRATEGIES IN THE
INDIAN OCEAN, 2004-2015**

*Dissertation submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the award of the degree of*

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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2016



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DECLARATION

I declare that the dissertation entitled “**India’s Interests and Strategies in the Indian Ocean, 2004-2015**” submitted by me in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy** of Jawaharlal Nehru University is my own work. The dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or any other university.


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We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

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Dedicated to
My Maa and Deuta

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Acknowledgement

This dissertation would not have been possible without the guidance and cooperation of many individuals who have contributed and extended their valuable assistance in one way or another in the preparation and completion of my dissertation. I wish to record my appreciation and gratefulness for the help and assistance that I have received from various quarters in the preparation of this dissertation. First and foremost, I record my gratitude to my Supervisor Dr. P. Sahadevan for pushing me to do better and being immensely helpful with his guidance and encouragement in the writing process. I am also grateful to the faculties of the Center for South Asian Studies for helping me in getting the foundation in the subject throughout my M.Phil. in JNU. My sincere gratitude also goes to the staff members of CSAS and the staff members of the Library of JNU for assisting me in getting materials necessary for my research work.

I also offer my heartfelt thanks to my seniors and friends especially, Divya di, Avisekh, Steffi, Diksha who have been the source tremendous support and helped me immensely in various ways throughout the writing process.

Last, but not the least, I am ever grateful to my parents and my family for their unflinching faith in me and for providing me with moral and emotional support. This dissertation is a result of their faith in me.

PLACE: NEW DELHI

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DATE: 26/07/2016

List of Abbreviations

A2AD	Anti-access Area Denial
ANC	African National Congress
ASBM	Anti-Ship Ballistic Missile
ASEAN	Association of South Asian Nations
BRICS	Brazil Russia India China South Africa
CBM	Confidence Building Measures
CTF 150	Combined Task Force 150- multinational coalition naval task force undertaking maritime security operations in the Horn of Africa region
CTF 151	Combined Task Force 151- multinational coalition naval task force undertaking anti-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden area
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
EU	European Union
FENC	Far Eastern Naval Command
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Association
IBSA	India Brazil South Africa Maritime- joint military exercises conducted by the Indian, Brazilian and South African
IMD	Indian Maritime Doctrine
IMMS	Indian Maritime Military Strategy
INF	Indian Naval Force
IONS	Indian Ocean Naval Symposium
IOR	Indian Ocean Region

IOR-ARC	Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation
IOZOP	Indian Ocean Zone of Peace
ISR	Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance
LTTE	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
MILAN	A multilateral naval exercise hosted by the Indian Navy in the Andaman Islands
MIO	Maritime Interdiction Operation
MOU	Memorandum Of Understanding
NACOA	National Advisory Committee on Oceans and Atmosphere
NAM	Non-Aligned Movement
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NDA	National Democratic Alliance
NOAA	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NPT	Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty
ONGC	Oil and Natural Gas Commission
OPEC	Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries
PLAN	People's Liberation Army Navy
PRC	People's Republic of China
RAW	Research and Analysis Wing
ReCAAP	Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SADC	South African Development Community
SAGAR	Security And Growth for All in the Region
SLINEX	Sri Lanka India Naval Exercise

SLOC	Sea Lanes of Communication
STANAVFORLANT	Standing Naval Force Atlantic
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UN	United Nations
UNHRC	United Nations Human Rights Council
UPA	United Progressive Alliance
US	United States
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republic
WFP	World Food Programme

CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

Maritime strategy is a long-term plan of action designed to achieve core objectives and aspirations of a country. It is premised on military power and politico-economic strength. Most of the great powers such as the US, Russia, China, etc. have developed substantial maritime infrastructure and capabilities. In the recent period, India has emerged as one of the key political and economic players at the global level. In order to make its mark as a major maritime power, it has adopted an ambitious plan of naval modernization. India has always maintained strong interest in the Indian Ocean and, hence, envisages itself as the natural leader of the Indian Ocean region.

The Indian Ocean is the third largest ocean in the world that occupies an area that is roughly equal to the total landmass of Asia and Africa together (Sticklor & Michel, 2012:09). The advent of the Indian Ocean in power politics undoubtedly raises the question about its importance in the contemporary period. Because of its rich possession of vast natural resources, along with its geographical, economic and military-strategic significance, the Indian Ocean has gained considerable importance in world politics. In the 21st century, the Indian Ocean has gained strategic importance and thus become a significant factor in India's foreign and security policy. The importance of the Indian Ocean in world politics could be ascertained by examining how the Ocean is different in terms of power politics and significant for the survival of world economics. The growth of Asian economies (including India), along with their increased needs for raw materials and energy supplies, has led to huge import and export business in the region. Moreover, the end of the Cold War and the crises in Iraq and Afghanistan have considerably diminished the importance of the Atlantic Ocean, leading to the increasing importance of the Indian Ocean as a channel for Western military supplies.

In the contemporary period, the IOR has emerged as the most dynamic and unstable region. Major sea lines of communication of the world, accounting for almost two-third of global trade traffic, pass through this region, which is surrounded by energy scarce developing countries. The Ocean has become a zone of immense political and economic influence. The region has experienced major geopolitical developments including power rivalries. Thus, using the Pivot to Asia and Maritime Silk Route policies, both the US and China respectively want to strengthen their dominance in the region by bringing the littoral countries under their sphere of

influence. At the same time, some of the littoral states depend on the developed states for export of their raw materials.

India is an aspirant for maritime, which is backed by its strategic location in the Indian Ocean. With India's rise as a great power, its interest in the Indian Ocean has gained renewed importance. This brings to the fore the question how successive governments in India have sought to promote the country's interests. A section of the Indian elites see strong correlation between their country's maritime ambitions and its search for great power status. As such, maritime concerns are viewed seriously by the ruling elite. In the recent years, India has sought to play an assertive role in the Indian Ocean region in order to protect its interests and strategic preponderance. India is also heavily dependent on the free flow of goods through the Indian Ocean. As an energy deficient developing economy, India has heavily relied on imported energy. Thus, any disruption or threat to the sea lines of communication in the Indian Ocean is bound to prove disastrous for the Indian economy. Apart from these, organised crimes, piracy and global terrorist networks in the Indian Ocean region could threaten India's security. A secure and stable neighbourhood is also in the interest of India and, hence, New Delhi has developed significant stakes in building a stable neighbourhood.

China's increasing role in the Indian Ocean region has also influenced India's Indian Ocean policy. China has increased its naval power projection and has engaged in building maritime infrastructure to strengthen its role. While some Indian experts view China's growing influence in the Indian Ocean region with a sense of disquiet, as a source of threat to India's interests, others try to underplay the Chinese activities and consider them to be necessary to protect China's economic interests. In this context, the present study tries to investigate whether the strategies adopted by the Indian government have been effective to achieve its strategic objectives in the region? It is interesting to note that India has sought to respond China's growing role in the Indian Ocean region as a major maritime power in several ways. First, India is trying to expand and strengthen its own power projection capabilities in the region. Second, India has pursued a policy of developing close relations with the littoral countries so as to enhance its ability to project power and counter China's dominance in the region. Besides, India is also seen to develop a security presence in and around the Malacca Strait as part of its strategy of securing the strategically important

maritime choke points (Brewster, 2010:07). All these initiatives are would be significantly discussed while analysing whether India is successful in strengthening its foothold in the region.

The Indian Navy has developed ambitious plans to become a predominant maritime security provider from the Red Sea to Singapore. It sees itself as having a significant security role in the Asia-Pacific, including the South China Sea. The Indian government considers the region encompassing the Persian Gulf in the West to the Straits of Malacca in the East as significant for its security. The security chokepoints in the region viz. the Straits of Hormuz, the Bab-el-Mandeb and the Indonesian straits have become a matter of great strategic importance for both energy and military security of India. Therefore, India's Indian Ocean strategy has, among other things, focused on countering the growing Chinese influence among the Indian Ocean littoral countries. In this context, the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government took various steps. It launched the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium that brought together the naval chiefs of all the littoral countries of the Indian Ocean to carry out professional exchanges and engagement to promote maritime security in the region. The Indian government also signed a trilateral maritime security agreement with Sri Lanka and Maldives in 2011. It is coordinated at the level of national security advisers of these countries to develop maritime security collaboration. Nevertheless, it was seen that the UPA government did not show enough dynamism to formulate a strong Indian Ocean policy.

However, the new government under Prime Minister Modi is seen to pursue an active Indian Ocean policy in pursuit of maritime power and influence. His visit to Sri Lanka, Mauritius and Seychelles reflects India's desire to engage the Indian Ocean littoral states under the 'neighbourhood first' policy. During his visit to Mauritius and Seychelles, Prime Minister Modi laid out a five-fold framework for India's maritime engagement with the Indian Ocean littoral countries. First, Delhi will do whatever necessary to secure India's mainland and island territories and defend its maritime interests at any cost. Second, Delhi would focus on deepening security relationships with the neighbouring littoral countries. Third, the Indian government would develop multilateral cooperative maritime security arrangements to strengthen regional mechanisms in combatting terrorism and piracy and responding to natural disasters. Fourth, the emphasis of the government would be on building sustainable economic

cooperation among the countries of the Indian Ocean region. Finally, the new government has displayed its willingness to cooperate with other major maritime powers of the region.

These statements, no doubt, reveal the decisive departure of the Modi government from the guarded ambivalence of the UPA government on the issue of developing India's maritime power. India's growing engagement with Japan, Australia and the US is also helpful to develop an active role in the Asia-Pacific. It is expected to strengthen its position in the Indian Ocean.

However, there are questions regarding how India would overcome the challenges to its dominance in the Indian Ocean region? Will India's diplomacy be effective in carving out niche in Ocean politics and be able to maintain its interests including strategic autonomy? Has India developed an effective strategy to counter China's growing influence in the Indian Ocean? The proposed study seeks to address these questions.

Review of the Literature

The available literature on the proposed theme of the study is classified into three broad categories. There is huge amount of literature dealing with maritime strategies and the role of Ocean in international politics and thus the first category would cover that. The second category focuses on how the Indian Ocean figures in world politics. The third category deals with India's interests and strategies in the Indian Ocean.

Politics of Ocean and maritime strategies

Maritime strategy is a part of a nation's grand strategy. It is interesting to note that some of the most important and classical works on maritime strategy are based on analysis of history. Mahan (1890) and Corbett (1911), for the first time, provided a sound theoretical understanding of the principles of maritime strategy to be followed by the nations during wartime. Mahan used naval history to develop maritime ideas that could be universally accomplished in maritime diplomacy. It could be noted that Mahan cited the instance of England's rise as a sea power to urge his countrymen to empower the navy to play a decisive role in increasing its global strategic reach. On the other hand, Corbett engaged his study on the success of British naval forces all through its conflict with Germany. Corbett's understanding of war and maritime

strategy were influenced by the writings of the Prussian General Carl von Clausewitz. Both the thinkers support the idea of a dynamic foreign policy to secure the command of the sea or to prevent the enemy from securing it. They advocate naval diplomacy in order to find alternative markets for domestic products. They also emphasise the need for vigorous strategies to safeguard and defend national waters and sea lines of communication so necessary to safeguard trade routes.

Castex (1927) argues that apart from land and naval strategy, there is a general strategy that integrates the actions of the armies and the fleets whenever situation arises. Recognising the importance of geography in the conduct of war, he maintains that even beforehand, during and the aftermath of a naval battle, strategy dictates the application of tactics. Much like Mahan and Corbett, Castex too held that the principal purpose of maritime operations was to acquire or challenge the control of the essential surface communications. He observes that “whoever wants to defeat the enemy fleet by combat must necessarily take the offensive without concern for its inherent risks.” Thus, he considers “strategic maneuver”, which is an amalgamation of strategic deployment and operational maneuver, as the cornerstone of his strategic concepts. Castex is also concerned with the effect of airpower on the war at sea. He believes in the prospect of employing aircraft in order to thwart maritime commerce and commercial ports of the enemy forces.

Wegener (1929) highlights that the utility of a naval battle comes into force when it is successful in eradicating hindrances that stand in the way of the execution of the strategic objective of the country in a war. He believes that war at sea is operated with the help of both tactical and strategic policy, where tactical portion is the action and strategic segment constitutes the effect. He observes that if the strategic segment of the war is deficient, then the effect is also lost. On the other hand, if the strategic objective of a naval war is absent, then the battle becomes purposeless. It must be noted that for Wegener, a naval battle forms a way towards a strategic objective, and is not an objective in itself. He argues that a naval battle can be termed successful only when it is able to inflict considerable damages on the enemy force without any considerable loss on itself and thereby facilitating its gradual advance towards greater sea control. While a strategic offensive has the ability to change the strategic position of a country, the strategic defensive helps in sticking to and vegetate

the strategic situation of a country. He argues that in case of unfavourable geostrategic position, a state cannot convert a restrained operational plan into an aggressive one.

Palmer (2005) highlights the role of leadership at the great sea battles where the issue of centralization versus decentralisation of command plays a pivotal role in determining the fate of a naval battle. He maintains that naval battles during the mid-17th century tended to be mutually destructive where the victor party was also equally affected. Centralising commands from the admirals held the subordinates in disapproval that, in turn, could not secure victories. The leaders who emphasised a decentralised command system won the respect of their subordinates and trained them carefully to respond in combat situations. This resulted in convincing victory of the force. While observing sea warfare during the 19th and 20th centuries, he argues that advancement in communications and information-processing technologies have not resulted in resolving the problem of command in battle.

Wenk (1972) was a very influencing figure in US ocean policy. Wenk's *Politics of the Ocean* describes and analyses issues, institutions, and personalities to ascertain how and why ocean policy issues arose. He gives a comprehensive overview of when, why and how guidelines took shape for international ocean policy such the creation and implementation of International Decade of Ocean Exploration; coastal zone management and development; the organization of national marine groups [the cabinet-level Marine Council, formation of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the National Advisory Committee on Oceans and Atmosphere (NACOA)] and the bureaucratic and political obstacles bound up in exploiting marine resources such as fisheries, petroleum, hard minerals and ocean industry.

Jacques (2003) and Smith (2003) have dealt with a range of environmental and security policy challenges in the oceans world over. Here, the authors have referred to the term 'world ocean' expressing the necessity to identify that all the oceans in the world are inter-connected and so their issues cannot be handled as a singular entity. They observe that resource paucity encourages competition that ultimately leads to conflicts and have the potential to turn into larger clashes. The authors have underlined the need to broaden the definition of security in ocean policy through the inclusion of resource competition problems and environmental security. They have

emphasised the need to regulate the oceans through greater international cooperation by way of forming explicit links between traditional military security issues and ecological security issues.

Hattendorf (2013) and Vego (2009) have provided similar views regarding the activities of states to protect their maritime interests. According to them, maritime strategy involves varied functions of state power that focuses on the safety and defence of market and trade; destroying the enemy force by a decisive action, containing enemy fleet, chokepoint control, and capturing enemy's positions and basing areas. It may be noted that Hattendorf also focuses on the relationship between naval history and maritime strategy. Vego (2009) gives a detailed analysis of sea control in all its complexities, and describes the main methods of maintaining and obtaining it. He also talks about the preconditions of conquest in naval warfare. He says that it is necessary to develop a concrete theory beforehand a naval operation as, in its absence, it is not feasible to control and guide the forces properly.

The Indian Ocean in World Politics

Vali (1976) has provided an overview of the Indian Ocean power structure that throws light on the activities of the great powers and also the regional power balances in the region. The author has divided the Indian Ocean into five sub-regions. In order to understand the political development in the Indian Ocean region, it is necessary to understand both sub-regional balance of power and the impact of extra-regional powers on the region. Vali tries to invalidate the fear that great power rivalry in the Indian Ocean will have negative or disastrous consequences. He says that the region has its own sphere of instability, which is endemic regardless of presence or absence of greater powers. Dowdy and Trood (1983) maintain that a geo-strategic region is characterised by all those elements that are globally influencing. For example, they point out the importance of location, movement, trade orientation, and cultural or ideological bonds. They view that the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) comprises of all these characteristics that make it a globally influencing region of the world.

Mohan (2013) argues that the growth of Indian and Chinese naval capabilities will strengthen the security dilemma between the two countries. He claims that with the increasing economic globalisation and development of interests far beyond their own territorial waters, both countries' naval foothold will overlap and generate the

basis for potential conflicts in the Indo-Pacific Region. Scott (2014) and Pant (2009) discuss the emerging importance of the Indian Ocean in global politics. They observe that the competition for influence in the international waters of the Indian Ocean between China and India has led to a new dimension of ocean politics.

Similarly, Kaplan (2004) underlines the growing importance of the Indian Ocean in world politics and identifies its implications for the US. He argues that emerging economies of China and India are shifting the global axis of trade and commerce that has concentrated on securing and policing major sea lines of communication in the Indian Ocean, considered vital for the uninterrupted supply of energy supplies and raw materials for the West. Kaplan envisages that the Indian Ocean region forms a significant factor in the emerging multipolar world order in the 21st century marked by the decline of American power. The rise of India and China will necessitate the US to coordinate with the other great powers to conduct the global governance.

Bastos (2014), Kapoor (2014) and Bajpai (2014) highlight the growing oceanic tension between India and China in the Indian Ocean. They observe that the strategic dynamics of the Indian Ocean has transformed substantially because of tenacious efforts by the new players of the region i.e. China and India to gain strategic influence in the IOR. With both countries currently enlarging their naval capacities, there are chances of conflict erupting between them. Under these circumstances, a multi-polar world order is expected to promote stability. Fatima (2015), Jamshed (2015), Scott (2013) and Pant (2009) observe that the increasing rivalry between China and India in the Indian Ocean and the US response to it have added new geopolitical dimensions. Though the unrestricted flow of energy and commerce constitutes China's interest for its involvement in the Oceanic waters, the Chinese activities are cautiously watched by India. They are of the view that though India is seeking to restrict the Chinese strategic foothold in the littoral states, there is a gap between rhetoric and reality of Indian power.

Bateman (2014), Chan (2014) and Albert (2015) view that China's rising global influence and India's rapid economic rise have resulted in enhancing the ocean's strategic value. They highlight that much of the world's trade in energy originates in the IOR and crosses the Indian Ocean to reach its supply destinations

around the world. Widespread concerns for energy security and the security of sea lines of communication (SLOCs) have resulted in renewed interest of extra-regional countries in the IOR. They maintain that the Chinese and Indian moves to develop influence in the ocean that includes deep-water port development in littoral states and military patrols have intensified the competition. Meanwhile, the United States has shifted its focus from the Middle East to South and Southeast Asia, thereby intensifying the rivalry in the Indian Ocean

Gupta (2010) argues that the Indian Ocean region is possibly one of the world's least understood regions. However, its standing in geopolitics has been growing continuously. He talks about the importance of looking at the Indian Ocean as an area for impending study of maritime systems and concludes that international maritime establishments could increase regional collaboration in the Indian Ocean towards building a new geopolitical region.

Potgeiter (2012) observes that Indian Ocean security has ceased to be under the realm of superpowers, but has turned into a multilayered and vibrant security arrangement than before. Emerging powers in the region such as India and China have become key players, and new alliances and strategic agreements in the littoral are shifting the scenario. However, global challenges have led to new maritime security problems in the region as various non-state actors' role and activities have increased the security concern of the state. This is a serious issue as most of the world's energy trade occurs in the region and is of crucial importance to world economy. The author also analyses the strategic significance of the Indian Ocean and its pertinent maritime security attributes. Basrur (2014) says that the politics of energy in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) has become a key focus of contemporary strategic interest owing to the rapid rise in demand for energy in Asia. The gap between supply and demand could produce tensions within the IOR and elsewhere.

Michel (2012), Sticklor (2012) and Herbert-Burns (2012) argue that the Indian Ocean represents a progressive avenue for global trade and security. Herbert-Burns looks into the current transfer of the geopolitical significance from the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans to the Indian Ocean, as prominent world naval powers have increasingly shifted their interests and assets towards the IOR. This change has been motivated by the astounding economic progress of China, the balanced upsurge in

India's commercial market and production along with cumulative exports of raw materials from developing countries, and rising exports of crude oil from the Middle East to Asia. This has led to better linking and communication between the producers and consumers across the Middle East, Africa, and Asia. Besides, global distribution networks are connecting the region more closely together by sea. Emerging problems like piracy, boundary disputes in the regional seas, and global environmental tensions carry significant governance complications for naval policymakers around the IOR. They also argue that the IOR now appears more evidently in the political concerns and mercantile designs of extra-regional powers such as the US, the European Union and countries like Japan, and China. Apart from that, littoral states and non-state actors in the Indian Ocean region have been increasingly influencing regional and international matters. Indeed, regional events now reflect in constituencies far beyond the Indian Ocean's physical reach. In general, the IOR constitutes the most politically unstable and potentially ignitable zones of the world.

Puttten (2014), Wetzling (2014) & Kamerling (2014) are of the view that one of the significant sources of insecurity in the Indian Ocean relates to the rise of new naval powers. While piracy and terrorism in the Indian Ocean are the fundamental problems, the Great Power rivalry has also led to some sort of security threat in the region. They observe that increasing maritime rivalry between India and China has made the Indian Ocean an area of potential tensions between the two rising powers. Swejis (2010) observes that the second major instance of potential Great Power rivalry in the Indian Ocean relates to the risk of spillover effects from maritime tensions in the western Pacific Ocean, including the East and South China Seas.

India's interests and strategies in the Indian Ocean

Panikkar (1945) strongly viewed that India should be the dominating force in the Indian Ocean, following the footsteps and filling the vacuum of the British Indian Empire. He also suggested that given the role of 'status' and 'symbolism' in Indian strategic thinking, India's avowed greatness accommodates Indian admirals' demand for a powerful navy. Cohen (2010), Dasgupta, (2012) Tanham (1952) are of the view that India has a culture of strategic restraint that is deep rooted in the Indian strategic psyche. They analyse whether India would abandon its traditional culture of strategic restraint and go for a comprehensive programme to balance Chinese power in Asia.

At the same time, although strategic restraint has been the preferred policy approach of the Indian government, it could not guarantee the prevention of chaos and conflicts in South Asia. On the Indian Ocean, they observe that India aspires to become a regional maritime power that wants to seek peace and stability and, at the same time, rejects the charges of being a regional bully. Similarly Rahman (2011) observes that “India’s approach to maritime affairs is amorphous, syncretic and incremental”. In his interpretation, India pursues to depict itself as being a benevolent sea power, for which maritime expansion is the necessary channel to expand its trade and diplomacy rather than having any agenda of pure power projection and create conflict. Further, he cautions that until and unless India’s strategic community lines up its strategic plan with the nation’s natural strategic position, its promised marine aspiration is likely to remain a distant dream, rather than a satisfying present.

Scott (2013) and Ranasinghe (2011) argue that India’s efforts to spread its influence across the entire Indian Ocean Region, is made through trade and investment, diplomacy and strategic partnerships. They are of the view that India has high aspirations in the Indian Ocean in terms of its preeminence and leadership. India’s maritime strategy primarily focuses on increasing its naval spending, strengthening its infrastructure, enhancing its naval capabilities, active maritime diplomacy, exercising in the Indian Ocean and keeping open the choke points. By following such strategy, India is hopeful of securing its own position and achieving its aspirations in the Indian Ocean, negotiated and supported by the supreme naval force in the region i.e., the US. Ranasinghe also highlights India’s efforts to strengthen influence and control over Indian Ocean chokepoints through security relationships with key littoral states such as Singapore, Mauritius and Oman

Nizamani (2014) Brewster (2014) and Patil (2014) focus on various aspects of the emerging Indian strategic thinking on the Indian Ocean. They throw light on the Indo-US strategic cooperation, the joint exercises with other regional players in the Ocean, the capability of INS Arihant and its future course, and the growing assertion of Chinese interests in the Indian Ocean region and the response of the Indian Navy to address its strategic concerns. They also deal with activities undertaken by the Indian Navy to enhance its domain of influence in the Indian Ocean. Brewster and Patil acknowledge that the exercise has been primarily more diplomatic than that of

practising and sharing technical skills. The primary emphasis is laid on building good relations with the navies of India's neighbours in South Asia.

Kumar (2006) and Scott (2007) maintain that being apprehensive of China's growing influence in its backyard, India is increasingly looking for consolidating its economic and military cooperation with the island states in the IOR. India has been trying to make cautious moves to regain or retain the traditional influence in Indian Ocean island states by expanding the economic and trade cooperation with them. To further enhance the cooperation with small Indian Ocean littorals, they suggest that New Delhi should make serious attempt to form some sub-regional groupings or rejuvenate the inactive Indian Ocean Rim-Association for Regional Cooperation (IOR-ARC).

Ramachandran (2014) argues that there are multiple developments taking place in the Indian Ocean Region. And, therefore, India should go for its own pivot in the region and start looking for regional partners such as Sri Lanka and the Maldives. India can term its pivot in the IOR as 'Maritime Asia' and initiate the Asian Sea Lane project where it can work with the IOR littorals in expanding its influence. In addition, it can carry forward projects pertaining to 'Blue Economy' and 'Search and Rescue operations' within the Non-Traditional Security framework. Mohan (2013) and Scott (2014) refer to the significant changes in the approach of the Indian government starting from Atal Behari Vajpayee to Manmohan Singh that has repeatedly emphasised the extended geographic span of India's maritime interests. They have referred to the official position about India's perception of "extended neighbourhood" outside South Asia, a term first used in the Ministry of Defence Annual Report 2000-2001. While talking about various policies followed by the Indian government, they also discuss the Indian Maritime Doctrine (2004 and 2009) and India's Maritime Military Strategy (2007). They observe that the Indian Navy has experienced a growing silhouette in the region of Indo-Pacific. Indian elite's approval to embrace military diplomacy as an essential element of its external engagement has proved beneficial in underpinning the recent proposition that India is a net security provider in the Indian Ocean Region and beyond. In matters of collective security, India seems to break away from its complex attitude and has participated in various collective security efforts.

Brewster (2013) observes that the disparity between India's rhetoric and actual capabilities, the instinct to seek the exclusion of other major powers like the US and China and its disregard to the calculation of costs and benefits to India on account of such tendencies have hampered India's great power ambitions. He highlights India's approach for warm ties with smaller and more dependent countries but weak and somewhat awkward relations with the so-called middle powers in the region such as South Africa and Australia. Pant (2009) analyses that in spite of India's high ambitions, the limited material capabilities and various political constraints imbibed by its political culture stand in the way of its achievements. Pant observes that India's desire to get superiority in the Indian Ocean would not be possible in distant future because of the involvement of significant stakes of the major powers in the region.

While reviewing all these studies, it can be found that a great deal of work has been done on the Indian Ocean. Various authors have tried to examine the causes and prospects of India's rising interests in the Indian Ocean. However, there is hardly any systematic and comprehensive work done on India's interests and strategies in the Indian Ocean since 2004. The period 2004-20015 is remarkable because it marks a departure from the previous ambiguous policies followed by the Indian elite on the Indian Ocean. In 2004, the UPA government was formed and the year 2015 witnessed a new prominence and commitment by the NDA government to enhance the maritime influence of the nation, which provides considerable avenues for critical thinking. The present study seeks to fill the gap.

The dissertation addresses certain critical research questions. One of the important questions is to analyse why the Indian Ocean has become so important in world politics. Apart from that, the study also covers the strength and weaknesses of the maritime strategies adopted by India in the Indian Ocean. Another interesting issue that the study has come across is exploring how India's strategies to further its maritime influence vary under the UPA and the NDA governments. Moreover, the study also deals with the amount of Chinese role and influence in the politics and economy of the littoral countries. At the same time, it has also tried to investigate whether the growing Chinese role has undermined India's interests in the Indian Ocean. Moreover, the study also attempts to highlight how diplomacy really works in advancing India's interests in the Indian Ocean.

While considering the various research questions stated above, the study essentially seeks to test two hypotheses. First, “India’s engagement in the Indian Ocean is inherently driven by its national security concerns and great power ambitions”. Second, “China’s growing role in the Indian Ocean and India’s increasing strategic interests have tended to set the stage for power rivalry in the Indian Ocean”.

The study, using the theories on maritime strategy and analysing the historical positions adopted by India on the Indian Ocean, has adopted a deductive method. A conceptual framework for analysing the varied maritime strategies adopted by the Indian government has been developed. The study has used both primary and secondary source materials. The primary data has been collected from government documents, texts of agreements, speeches, and statements of policy makers. The secondary sources include books, articles, and news reportage from magazines and newspapers.

The present study is divided into four substantive chapters in addition to Introduction and Conclusion. The first chapter titled “Maritime Power and Strategy in International Politics: A Conceptual Framework” provides an analytical framework based on various theories on maritime strategy and examine the changes in its forms and conceptualization. Besides, the role and importance of active naval diplomacy in strengthening one’s national interests is also analysed. The second chapter titled “Importance of the Indian Ocean in World Politics” examines the strategic significance of the Indian Ocean in world politics. It also assesses how the Ocean has played a significant role in connecting Europe with various parts of Asia, Africa and Australia. In addition, there has been significant analysis on the commercial importance of the Ocean given the fact that it possesses vast natural resources. Further, the chapter also assesses how the Indian Ocean forms a significant factor in global strategic rivalry. The third chapter titled “Nature and Dimensions of India’s Interests in the Indian Ocean” provides an in-depth analysis on the strategic significance of the Indian Ocean to the geo-political interests of India. The purpose of this chapter is to evaluate how India’s strategic interests in the Indian Ocean has played a significant role in articulating India’s position as a dominant power in the region. In addition, the chapter deals with the importance of the Indian Ocean for India’s economy and security. In the fourth chapter titled “Changing Contours of India’s Indian Ocean Strategy”, various strategies adopted by the Indian government

to address its maritime security concerns has been analysed. It also examines the variations in the strategies adopted by both the UPA and the NDA regimes. In the process, the strength and weakness of the various strategies adopted by the Indian government has been shown. Finally, the concluding chapter shows the significance and intensity of India's maritime diplomacy and its desire for greater power status. While summarising the arguments made in the previous chapters and testing the hypotheses, the chapter also assesses the challenges to India's Indian Ocean policy and the prospects for its power and influence in the region.

CHAPTER TWO

**MARITIME POWER AND STRATEGY IN INTERNATIONAL
POLITICS: A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

2.1 Introduction

Maritime power and strategy has always been an important tool of the foreign policy of major global powers. To understand how a nation's naval forces conduct their role to protect the national interests, knowledge of maritime concepts and principles becomes essential. This chapter intends to explain maritime strategies, define common maritime concepts and explore the conventional role of navies.

2.2 Understanding Maritime Strategy

Maritime strategy is a subdivision of a nation's grand strategy. Coastal nations desire to use naval ships to assert their sovereignty over adjacent seas and straits. With this desire has emerged a kind of maritime nationalism along with the inherent design of a maritime strategy. Naval strategy is basically concerned with the projection of a nation's military power and political prestige. Traditional naval powers were champions of mercantilism, which had an interest in deploying their warships at some distance from their own coastlines and not simply in adjacent waters (Booth 1987: 122). This maritime strategy focused on unrestricted deployment of naval forces, which extended the energy between naval mobility and maritime enclosure.

To understand the origin of maritime strategy, we need to posit the evolution of maritime security concepts within the wider security debate (Collins 2007). In course of time, the strategists of major maritime powers with traditional concerns of conventional war receded to include a new trend of ideas about national and international security. This trend tended to accentuate all forms of defence challenges that confront a state, notably non-traditional security issues (Rahman 2009: 3). In order to bring the oceans' vast resources into use and use them for increasing a nation's interests, various maritime strategies have been developed and used by countries worldwide.

Sea power essentially is about naval forces that comprise coast guard and marine or civil maritime organisations (Iliopoulos 2009: 1). Maritime strategies also reflect a nation's sea-based capabilities, both at sea and on land, to decide or influence events and developments around the world. The contemporary importance of maritime strategies can be seen from the fact that there is a noticeable shift in naval strategy and geopolitical emphasis from power acquired at sea to power acquired *from*

the sea (Till 2005: 3). Maritime strategies also include elements related to a nation's strategic culture, economy, political culture and political system (Iliopoulos 2009: 6). Emphasis on building maritime power helps build a maritime economy that encourages people to be aware of the significance of maritime trade in society and government. Furthermore, it facilitates the development of an efficient naval force as maritime strategists try to raise naval resources and the navy's outreach.

Generally, a nation's maritime strategy encompasses the entire scope of that nation's activities on the sea. The term "grand strategy" refers to a nation's comprehensive projection of power to achieve its specific national interests (Hattendorf 2013: 7). In that sense, maritime strategy means the projection of all facets of national power that is associated with that nation's interests at sea. Although a nation's naval force is built in to serve the purpose, maritime strategy also involves other functions of state power like diplomacy, the safety and defence of merchant trade at sea, fishing, and safety and regulation of exclusive economic zones (EEZs; Hattendorf 2013: 7).

Defining maritime strategy is a complex exercise. To begin with, maritime strategy involves a thorough knowledge of past maritime traditions and the various changes and developments maritime strategy has undergone. Studying the history of maritime strategy also requires one to be alert to the different times, outlooks, ideas, problems, mindsets, capabilities, decision-making structures and technologies (Hattendorf 2013: 1). It may be noted in this context that the most important works on maritime strategy relate to an analysis of history.

Various nations have exercised different maritime strategies for centuries, but they have been examined analytically by theoreticians and political scientists only for a relatively short period of time. Initially, maritime strategy concentrated largely on the navy's role in wartime. Some strategists opine that naval leaders in earlier periods did not think strategically nor had a definite maritime strategy to depend on. Others disagree. They say that there are various instances in history where naval leaders acted strategically.

It was the classical work of Alfred Thayer Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power in History 1660-1783*, published in 1890, and the publication of *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy* by Julian S. Corbett in 1911, that for the first time provided a

sound theoretical understanding of the principles of maritime strategy. Early theorists of maritime warfare focused on the advantages of utilising sea power. The Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch and English demonstrated the advantages of conducting maritime expansion in terms of expanding their colonial empire. Exponents of the strategic theory of maritime warfare advocated the use of warfare to further a nation's dominance in global affairs.

The work of Mahan, who is known as the father of modern naval history, was strongly inspired by the writings of the Swiss-born French General Antoine-Henri de Jomini (1779-1869). Mahan was influenced by Jomini to adopt the three vital concepts of a strategic central or interior position, the principle of concentration, and the loose relationship between logistics and combat (Crowl 1986: 456). Mahan notes that British control of the sea and the gradual decline of the naval strength of the other European major powers paved the way for British supremacy in military, economic and political power in the world. He supports the idea of a dynamic foreign policy for the USA so that the nation could search for alternative markets for the enormous amount of commercial and industrial goods produced domestically, and guarantee easy access to international markets through possessing a merchant navy, a battleship navy and a network of bases capable of providing necessary fuel and supplies for the expanded navy and maintaining secure lines of communication. Corbett, on the other hand, emphasises that strategists should first determine the actual nature and volume of the war so that they do not overreact. In his view, "the object of naval warfare must always be directly or indirectly either to secure the command of the sea or to prevent the enemy from securing it" (Corbett 1911: 92). Command over the sea would mean control of maritime communications, for which the possession of numerous classes of vessels specially adapted for pursuit is an utmost necessity.

Castex (1927) argued that apart from land and naval strategy, there is a general strategy that integrates the actions of the armies and the fleets whenever the situation arises. Much like Mahan and Corbett, he held that the principal purpose of maritime operations was to acquire or challenge the control of essential surface communications. To quote: "Whoever wants to defeat the enemy fleet by combat must necessarily take the offensive without concern for its inherent risks" (Keisling 1994: 11). For Castex, "strategic manoeuvre", which is an amalgamation of strategic deployment and operational manoeuvre, is the cornerstone of his strategic concepts.

Castex also believed in employing aircraft to thwart the enemy's maritime commerce and commercial ports. He argued about the necessity of having strong and transparent conceptual foundations for formulating a sound naval strategy so that it could be adjusted to changing circumstances.

Wegener (1929) highlighted that a naval battle is successful if it manages to eradicate hindrances to the execution of a nation's strategic objectives. In a war at sea, the tactical portion is the action; the effect constitutes the strategic segment (Herwig 1989: 88).

We can thus see that these maritime strategies were primarily based on an analysis of history. They advocated vigorous foreign policies to secure access to the seas and international markets by emphasising historical evidence. However, in course of time and with changing circumstances, maritime strategies also began to change. The recent scenario displays a much larger theoretical understanding that constructs, develops and modifies them. A new set of thinkers and strategists have advocated rigorous foreign policy and diplomacy to safeguard and defend national waters and sea lines of communication (SLOCs). They have also talked about the need to participate in regional and international concerns relating to the use of the seas.

2.3 A Glance at the 20th-century Maritime Strategies

In the 20th century, a variety of maritime strategies were developed and applied by a number of countries jostling for power. During World War II, the Allied Powers' maritime strategies were designed to challenge the near-successful maritime strategies of the Axis Powers by concentrating on cruising amphibious campaigns in the South-West and Central Pacific. Their strategy was to conduct carrier-to-carrier air battles in mid-ocean and by coordinated surface, air and submarine actions (Kennedy 2013: 72). In both world wars, the Allied Forces' maritime strategies were quite similar, in that they emphasised providing logistical support to armies engaged in war by hauling vast amounts of men and materials through contested waters from one continent to another. In addition, they enforced blockades on enemy shipping. New technological developments in the field of submarines, radio communications, etc. made available a number of innovative tools and machinery as well as challenges and varying strategies to respond to.

In the Cold War, the strategists of NATO and the Warsaw Pact developed mutually opposing superpower navies, employing nuclear-armed submarines. The smaller countries within the alliances contributed by delivering specialised functions such as minesweeping, air defence or anti-submarine warfare. In the mid-1960s, NATO also employed the concept of a Standing Naval Force Atlantic (STANAVFORLANT), a multilateral force where the authority rotated among national participants. In STANAVFORLANT, each participating country had an equal foothold with ships and shipmates from other countries. Over the years, NATO has resorted to common naval tactics, publications and communication equipment that has led to finer tuning in logistics and maintenance. These experiences have demonstrated that multidimensional naval exercises can also happen outside a strongly organised alliance through the authorisation of the United Nations, regional organisations or even ad hoc arrangements.

In the post-Cold War period, maritime nations have engaged in warfare in Iraq, Afghanistan, Kuwait, Vietnam, Korea and Haiti, extensively deploying and using maritime forces. They carried out military actions and also imposed blockades on enemy shipping without engaging in a full-scale war for sea control.

All these experiences clearly demonstrate that no maritime strategy is permanently hewn in rock. A nation's maritime strategy is entitled to variation with changes in the environment, national interest, technological development, possession of equipment and the structure of the naval force. Currently, we can find a much larger theoretical understanding of naval and maritime strategy that builds on earlier formulations. According to Hattendorf,

Maritime strategy involves varied functions of state power that include diplomacy; the safety and defence of market trade at sea; fishing; the exploitation, conservation, regulation and defence of the exclusive economic zone at sea; coastal defence; security of national borders; the protection of offshore islands as well as participation in regional and worldwide concerns relating to the use of oceans, the skies over the oceans and the land under the sea. (Hattendorf 2009: 7)

Among the maritime strategy theorists, Rear Admiral J.C. Wylie (1989) has been a pioneer in incorporating the central, service-oriented theories into a general theory of power control.

Milan Vego has also talked about the preconditions for success in naval warfare. He says that it is necessary to develop a concrete theory before a naval operation, as in its absence it is not feasible to control and guide forces properly. Littoral warfare necessitates the closest cooperation with the other services and also at times close collaboration with the forces of other nations. The main methods to assert control over the sea include destroying the enemy forces by decisive action, destroying enemy forces over time attrition, containing enemy fleet, chokepoint control, and capturing important enemy positions/basing areas. There is a basic difference between littoral warfare and warfare at open sea. Opportunities to plan and execute major naval operations being relatively rare in littoral warfare, the most prevalent method of employment of combat forces in littoral warfare is tactical action. Also, because of drastic variations in the tactical and operational situations, littoral warfare necessitates highly centralised command and control capabilities (Vego 2014: 31).

2.4 Branches of Naval Strategy

In the 19th century, there was a group of naval thinkers and writers – John Knox Laughton, Herbert Richmond, Alfred Thayer Mahan, Sir Julian Corbett, etc. – who had similar approaches to the role and functions of maritime forces. They were commonly concerned with individual national interest and specific weapons. This Anglo-American school of naval strategy was also called the historical school because of its emphasis on the analytical study of history (Hattendorf 2013: 6). The approach of the French *Jeune Ecole* or “Young School”, on the other hand, involved strategies, operations and tactics based on specific new technological innovations (Roksun 2007). The schools of naval strategy in Germany, Japan, Soviet Union and Italy more often associated themselves with operational and tactical doctrine and less with a broad maritime strategy. Another school of maritime strategists emerged in the 20th and 21st centuries, who have developed extensive declarations in the form of governmental white papers or green papers (Hattendorf 2013: 6) and intended to support a country’s multiple internal and external commitments. The United States is an example.

2.5 Fundamental Maritime Concepts

The following discourse on the generic naval concepts is based upon the maritime doctrine of South Africa (*General Maritime Strategic Concepts*, South Africa, 2006).

i) Sea Power

According to Mahan, naval power and maritime power comprises the two essential elements of sea power. These should be sustained by three essential support bases. First, a country must possess industrial potential and economic might to be able to conduct trade with other countries. Second, it should also have a powerful maritime trading class and shipping vehicles to carry out that trade. Third, it should possess an active and efficient navy with effective naval assets (ships) that can establish naval bases for securing its SLOCs. These auxiliary supports are connected by maritime trade on the one hand and naval logistical support on the other. To be a successful maritime force and global player in international maritime affairs, a nation must comprise all these elements.

ii) Command of the Sea

Command of the sea is the acquisition of such an amount of supremacy with respect to an adversary that it leads to a nation's unchallenged maritime operations at sea and also incapacitates the opponent from utilising the sea. Command of the sea could be achieved by complete devastation or neutralisation of the opponent's forces. But this 19th-century concept, which naval forces considered as the primary goal of maritime warfare, has been discarded over time. With the current advances in warfare, it is unrealistic for a navy to expect to be able to wield such complete command of the sea. Currently, naval forces are challenged by a range of new threats brought about by technological revolutions like mine, torpedo, submarine, aircraft, etc. Also, holding sea areas does not impart as many benefits as holding land areas does. While maritime operations concentrate on the use of the sea for movement of goods, it does not amount to ownership of the sea itself. Thus, the more limited concept of sea control has emerged as an acknowledgement that naval engagement is in essence about controlling movement at sea.

iii) Sea Control

Sea control is defined as the condition in which one has freedom of action and capability to manoeuvre one's territorial waters and beyond for one's own national interests for a definite period of time. It can also mean a situation where, if required, a nation can deny the use of the sea to an adversary in the airspace above, the waters itself, the seabed and electromagnetic spectrum.

iv) Sea Denial

Sea denial essentially means a situation where a naval force is equipped to retract the use of the sea to the opponent for a period of time. A nation may be involved in sea control in one region and sea denial in another. Sea denial may be in the form of maintaining a blockade of movement challenging the enemy forces, operating in exclusion zones, and also a campaign against the enemy's trade or logistics.

v) Force in Being

The concept of force in being implies a situation where a weaker power can avoid a head-on confrontation with a stronger power by compelling it to divert its resources from containing it, by way of forcing the latter to concentrate its forces or route its passage to its detriment and against its will, to many other strategically valued units or areas.

vi) SLOCs

SLOCs means the routes of communication through which nations carry out the movement of goods and services at sea. Protecting SLOCs becomes necessary because a modern economy would require protecting the routes used by merchant vessels in order to conduct trade benefiting the economy (General Maritime Strategic Concepts, South Africa 2006: 30). The methods of protecting SLOCs are innately dynamic and conditioned to variations because sea routes are never static.

vii) Battle Space Dominance

The concept of battle space dominance came into prominence as a result of the gradual indistinctness of boundaries between sea, land and air combat. It refers to a situation where there is a gradual assimilation of all combat elements. Battle space

dominance encompasses the control and authority over the vicinities of the entire battle space, the surface, subsurface, air, land, information environment and the electromagnetic spectrum. In general, helicopters are used in over-the-horizon information gathering to improve situational awareness. The attainment of battle space dominance in an area essentially implies sea control of that entire area. The concept becomes applicable during joint operations in the littoral region.

viii) Maritime Power Projection

After attaining sea control, a nation acquires the potential to equip the environs for more direct efforts in relation to land. Maritime forces have the capability to shape, influence and control this entire environment as well as, if required, to deliver combat forces on shore. This kind of delivery of forces from the sea is defined as maritime power projection. Maritime power projection may also be in the form of landing amphibious forces or the delivery of seaborne land forces, or bombardment by guided or unguided weapons from vessels at sea. Submarines have revolutionised the concept of maritime power projection. Maritime power projection by a nation depends on the degree to which force can be incompressible or used to threaten or is asserted. Maritime power projection forces can be dispatched at an early stage of a conflict to display resolve. Forces involved in maritime power projection are empowered to stay docile for extended periods with the capability to respond at short notice.

ix) Maritime Strategy and Modern Developments

With the advances in technological innovation, the capabilities of naval forces to initiate events in the air and on land have been rising. Advances in extended-range missiles like cruise missiles and guided weapons have led to the cumulative integration of air, sea and land battle. In an amphibious operation in a slow and challenging environment, traversing by naval forces may be supported by the use of hovercraft or helicopters to deliver ground forces internally. Deployment of naval and amphibious forces closely relates to improved battle space management systems. It also reflects the ability of naval units to observe the horizon and intervening terrain to arbitrate in land and land-air battles.

However, the revolutionary potentialities of seaborne forces may be challenged by revolutions in surveillance technology and anti-ship weapons. While

deploying the seaborne forces, a nation should therefore have beforehand a correct assessment of the opponent's capability, both offensive and defensive.

2.6 Role of Maritime Forces in Advancing National Interests

A nation's maritime strategy also prescribes a variety of peacetime considerations for the navy. Ken Booth says that a navy's traditional roles are military, policing and diplomacy (Booth 1977: 15).

i) Military Role

The military capacity is essentially the foundation upon which the diplomatic and the policing roles rest. Maritime forces carry out a nation's military role by conducting tasks both from the sea and at sea. Some of these functions are listed below:

- *Intelligence Collection and Surveillance*: Routine information gathering and inspection of EEZs and SLOCs.
- *Cover*: To provide support and assistance to the less powerful units or isolated elements of the military forces. These isolated units could be engaged in their own specific operations because of the success of the wider sea control that the central force has achieved but may require additional logistical and tactical support.
- *Maritime Strike and Interdiction*: Maritime interdiction is defined as "actions to divert, disrupt, or destroy the enemy before he can affect friendly forces (Carr 2002: 3). It involves engrossing the opponent forces from the sea. According to a NATO operational document, "a Maritime Interdiction Operation (MIO) encompasses sea-borne enforcement measures to interdict the movement of certain types of designated items into or out of a nation or specific area" (Allied Tactical Publication 2005: 71). Maritime interdiction measures may include enforcing economic sanctions via an embargo of a particular country's international trade.
- *Layered Defence*: Layered defence refers to the disposition of protective assets holding a mixture of anti-submarine, anti-surface and anti-air capabilities in layers of screens and patrol areas around units that are of high value or in crucial waters and chokepoints.

- *Naval Coordination and Guidance of Shipping*: This function is carried out to escort and protect friendly merchant shipping in a crisis through safe lanes/areas.
- *Containment*: Containment in maritime warfare basically means military containment that puts a geographic restriction on an opponent's freedom of action.
- *Maritime Mobility*: Maritime mobility refers to the capability of the naval forces to move their armed forces from one place to another and at the same time holding the ability to accomplish their principal assignment.
- *Land Strike*: Land strike is performed by naval forces to assist the land forces by way of aiming weapons at targets on shore.
- *Support to Operations on Land*: Apart from technical operations at sea, there are various other activities required to be performed by the maritime forces like command and control facilities, medical facilities and logistical support to land forces. These activities are included in the umbrella category of supporting operations on land.
- *Conflict Prevention*: Maritime forces also have the obligation to conduct peace support operation that may include diplomatic, civil and also military means, if necessary. This type of conflict prevention activities is conducted to observe and ascertain the root causes of conflict and accordingly take timely measures to prevent the manifestation, escalation, or re-commencement of hostilities.

After achieving some degree of control in wartime, a navy's most important functions are as follows:

- To protect and enable one's own and allied merchant shipping and military supplies at sea.
- To maintain safe passage for shipping through restricted waters as well as access to ports and harbours.
- To deny commercial shipping to enemy force.
- To protect offshore resources.
- To move and support troops and advanced bases.
- To gain and maintain local air and sea control in support of air and land (Frank 1994: 416).

ii) Policing Role

Maritime forces are also assigned to perform a policing role both in domestic and international waters. While carrying out their various tasks, the naval forces use force only for self-defence or as a last resort. The policing role ranges from the task of maintaining to enforcement. Some of the most prevalent policing functions involve peace operations, which may be of various forms that are undertaken by the maritime forces to support the diplomatic peace process or to enforce the regime mandated by an international organisation. Some of the peace operations are:

- *Peacekeeping*: Peacekeeping basically means positioning observer forces to sources of conflict to neutrally observe the situation and intervene, if necessary, with the support of international mandates.
- *Peace Enforcement*: Peace enforcement becomes necessary where one or more of the conflicting parties oppose intervention by international forces. Coercive action on the part of the maritime forces then becomes necessary.
- *Embargo, Sanctions and Quarantine Enforcement*: These are some of the major maritime components of peace enforcement.
- *Peace Building*: The concept of peace building applies where, after peacekeeping and peace enforcement, greater reconstruction of a state or region is undertaken. Naval forces become essential in assisting in such work, both in platforms and personnel.
- *Defence Force Aid to the Civil Power*: This involves providing logistical support to civil authorities arbitrating in a conflict having inadequate resources to do so.
- *Anti-Piracy Operations*: A nation's naval forces are internationally obliged to put down piratical activities in areas where piracy or armed robbery at sea interferes with commerce and other activities.
- *Quarantine Operations, Drug Interdiction and Prevention of Illegal Migration*: A nation's maritime forces with the assistance of government agencies play a considerable role in this operation.
- *Environmental and Resource Management and Protection*: Naval forces are also engaged in different types of environment and resource management activities such as fisheries protection in coastal and oceanic areas.

iii) Diplomatic Role

Most often, maritime forces are used as a tool of naval diplomacy and are used as a diplomatic instrument in support of a nation's political objectives and foreign policy. The significance of maritime forces in diplomatic manoeuvres arises from the fact that they are task-ready forces equipped and skilled in providing support to diplomatic engagements at various levels. Some of the critical functions carried out by the diplomatic role are:

- *Disaster Relief* in the aftermath of natural or man-made emergencies.
- *Assistance to Foreign Forces* in the case of any request for assistance and aid by a foreign force.
- *Presence*: Presence refers to activities where naval diplomacy is conducted in a general way comprising deployment, port visits and routine operating in areas of interest, to proclaim interest, reassure friends and allies or to put off opponents.
- *Evacuation Operations* are conducted to evacuate non-combatant population threatened in a foreign country to a safer place during a combat or civil unrest.
- *Coercion*: Coercion refers to the use of force or threat of force to compel the opponent force to accept and adopt a certain pattern of behaviour.

2.7 Conclusion

In a narrow sense, all the functions discussed so far reveal the maritime operations of the naval forces using their specialised skills and tools in their exclusive area – the sea. A nation's maritime strategy fundamentally emphasises its navy's power projection capabilities to protect and uphold its core maritime objectives. In the broader context, all of these roles are also closely connected to other facets of national power. A navy's role and functions are concomitant with the nation's broader maritime ambitions. In many cases, these functions become equivalent and correspond to the wartime functions of the other armed services. In peacetime, naval operations are short of open warfare. In other words, a nation's maritime strategy intends to provide a broader context of the navy's engagement and diplomacy in its backyard and on waters abroad during peacetime and also during maritime confrontations that are short of open conflict. A nation's naval forces are equipped to

respond to any sort of low-level or high-intensity conflict and remain in operation for regular naval engagements and occupation. Various countries have adopted maritime strategies to maximise and defend their interests at sea.

CHAPTER THREE

IMPORTANCE OF THE INDIAN OCEAN IN WORLD POLITICS

3.1 Introduction

This chapter analyses the strategic significance of the Indian Ocean, the third-largest ocean in the world, in world politics and assesses its significant role in connecting Asia, Africa and Australia with Europe. In addition, the chapter deals with the commercial importance of the ocean and highlights how it forms a significant factor in global strategic rivalry.

3.2 Oceans as a Source of Power and Resources

Oceans have always been an important factor in various nations' socio-economic interests. They cover over 70 per cent of the earth's surface and transmit about 50 per cent of the global primary production. The amenities of environmental system and natural resources produced by the oceans are critically important for the human life. Oceans are home to various marine organisms and support the biodiversity on the planet. They supply living and non-living resources like fisheries, marine biotechnology, minerals and various forms of non-renewable energy. The oceans comprise almost 80 per cent of the world's fish stock, 90 per cent of oil and natural gas reserves and a large number of other mineral resources (Sharma and Sinha 1994: 30). They produce more than 35 per cent of the planet's primary production. The oceans also control the earth system by transferring heat around the world and regulating the climate and weather systems. The oceans provide almost 99 per cent of the living space on earth.

One out of six jobs in the US is marine-related. More than 66 per cent of the earth's population lives within 100 km of the coastline and this proportion is growing. The oceans provide social and economic goods and services in the form of tourism and recreation, marine transport, and security, coastal protection, etc.

The oceans' social importance is also huge because they unify the cultures of many coastal countries. Because of the vastness of the oceans, most of the world's cultures and practices considered the oceans to be an infinite resource, which could not be overexploited. The oceans have become an open access resource because of their fluidity, vastness, interconnectedness and the resultant difficulty in enforcing property right regimes to any particular area. But with the globalisation of life and resources, the concept of infinity has dissolved and nations have been increasingly

drawn towards exercising property right regimes in the oceans. The Law of the Sea treaty, the extension of territorial waters to 200 miles offshore, international fishing commissions and the development of coastal zone management agencies are an indication of this trend. The problem of assigning and enforcing property rights to resources such as migratory fish populations, biological diversity and nutrient cycles is very difficult because they are interconnected with other ecosystems and thereby transcend several property right regimes (Costanza 1999: 204). The impact of growing population on the carrying capacity of the environment has also been a cause of serious concern for nations.

3.3 Significance of the Indian Ocean in World Politics

The Indian Ocean occupies an area that is roughly equal to the total landmass of Asia and Africa together. In the west, it lies towards continental Africa to a longitude of 20° East where it stretches south from Cape Agulhas. In the north, it covers continental Asia from the Suez Canal to the Malay Peninsula while its eastern border joins Singapore, the Indonesian archipelago, Australia to longitude 147° East and Tasmania. Its southern border is recognised till latitude 60° South in conformity with the Antarctic Treaty of 1959. The Indian Ocean is more than 10,000 km wide between the southern tips of Africa and Australia and has an area of about 73,440,000 km² (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, “Indian Ocean”). The ocean has been a major thoroughfare for global commerce throughout much of known history. Observers have usually viewed the Pacific and the Atlantic as having greater strategic importance, but now, with radical changes in the world’s power politics, this perspective has led to new interrogations.

For a long period of time, people have benefited from the Indian Ocean’s rich trade and maritime expeditions. As a result of the maritime adventures, which were either of cultural or religious nature or for conquest and slavery purposes, wide interactions developed among the local people and the voyaging groups. This sort of regional interactions and cohesion hugely influenced the lives of the people in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) and also the voyaging groups. In course of time, the powerful European naval powers were successful in establishing dominance and influence across the region, including the remotest corners of the IOR, paving the way for the globalisation of culture, demography and religious beliefs. The British,

because of their formidable naval prowess, were successful in creating a large Indian Ocean empire. However, with the starting of the decolonisation process, this British domination ended, and during the subsequent Cold War, the ocean became the arena for superpower rivalry between the US and the USSR. Yet again, when this period also ended, the countries of the IOR rediscovered some of the interconnecting aspects of social, economic and cultural nature among them, which turned the ocean into a conduit between Africa, Asia and Australia.

The IOR has some important seas, straits, chokepoints and island groups. It comprises 51 coastal and landlocked states, including 26 Indian Ocean Rim states, five Red Sea states, four Persian Gulf states, Saudi Arabia, France, Britain and 13 landlocked states. This demarcation covers an area of 101.6 million km², divided between an ocean area of 68.56 million km² and a land area of 33.05 million km² (Potgeiter 2012: 2). The region has a population of 2.6 billion that represents almost 39 per cent of the global population with a wide diversity in its political, economic and cultural pattern (Bouchard 2009: 6). The sea lanes in the Indian Ocean are among the most strategically significant in the world, as more than 80 per cent of the world's seaborne trade transits through the Indian Ocean chokepoints, with 40 per cent passing through the Strait of Hormuz, 35 per cent through the Strait of Malacca and 8 per cent through Bab el-Mandeb (Ranasinghe 2011).

Because of its rich possession of natural resources, along with its geographical, economic and military-strategic significance, the Indian Ocean has currently gained considerable importance in world politics. The Western and American industrial revolution during the 19th century along with the discovery of oil in the Middle East, at the commencement of the 20th century, boosted the strategic importance of the Indian Ocean. Geographically, the ocean provides the main link to the Atlantic and the Pacific. Strategically, it facilitates Europe to connect with East Africa, South and South-East Asia, Australia and Oceania.

The IOR contains about 40 per cent of the world's gas and 55 per cent of oil reserves (Potgeiter 2012: 2). The Gulf and the Arab states produce around 21 per cent of the world's oil, with daily crude exports up to 17,262 million barrels, which is about 43 per cent of international exports (*British Statistical Review of World Energy*, June 2008). The IOR is also rich in minerals such as gold, tin, uranium, cobalt, nickel,

aluminium and cadmium along with abundant fishing resources. The narrow Strait of Hormuz is the main connecting link between the oil-rich Persian Gulf region and the rest of the world. The strait is the passage for the transportation of approximately 17 million barrels, or one-fifth of the world's oil supplies per day, which is used by five of the world's major oil producing countries (Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Iran, Iraq and the United Arab Emirates) for their energy trade (Potgeiter 2012: 5). In 2012, the strait became the centre of conflict between Iran and the Western world, after the latter imposed an economic blockade on Iran's energy produce to arm-twist Iran about its nuclear research programme. In response, Iran warned about shutting down the strait. Given that half of the world's seaborne supplies traverse through the Indian Ocean, its regional security problems, both ashore and at sea are therefore bound to attract international apprehension. Many extra-regional powers, including the US, operate in the Indian Ocean waters.

The growth of Asian economies (including India), along with their increased needs for raw materials and energy supplies, has led to huge trade in the region. Moreover, the end of the Cold War and the on-going crisis in Iraq and Afghanistan have considerably diminished the importance of the Atlantic Ocean and boosted the significance of the Indian Ocean as a channel for Western military supplies. Apart from oil, the Indian Ocean caters for the raw material needs of the Western countries. Sugar from Mauritius; tea and cinnamon from the Seychelles; and tea, rubber and coconut products from Sri Lanka, etc. all contribute to hundreds of millions of dollars of business annually in the region.

Both China and India with their inspiring economic growth story are heavily reliant on energy resources transported through the Indian Ocean. India imports nearly 80 per cent of its energy needs (*Business Standard*, 8 April 2015). India is also on the verge of overtaking Japan as the third-highest energy consumer, just behind China and the US (Albert 2015, "Competition in the Indian Ocean", CFR Backgrounders). It has adopted policies to protect offshore platforms and ensure the security of ships carrying oil and gas to its shores (Potgeiter 2012: 5). As regards China, according to a recent Department of Defense Report, 84 per cent of China's imported energy resources passed through the Strait of Malacca in 2012 (*Annual Report to Congress*, Office of the Secretary of Defense, 2014). Thus, the rising global profile of China and India has tended to amplify the ocean's strategic value. The United States' policy of

“Rebalance to Asia”, which is a marked shift of its foreign policy previously overshadowed by the Middle East to one more focused on Asia, is also an important contributing factor in intensifying the dynamics of Indian Ocean security.

There are other areas where the significance and criticality of the Indian Ocean surface over the entire world. The Indian Ocean is a region where half of the world’s armed conflicts take place. The region includes two nuclear states, India and Pakistan, with their long-drawn territorial conflicts and hostility. The region also constitutes a key source of international terrorism. Moreover, the waters of the Indian Ocean are home to the constantly shifting strategic developments in the world such as the rise of China and India along with their competition for influence and control of the region, the US interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan, mounting prevalence of piracy in and around the Horn of Africa and the conflict of management of declining fishery resources (Ranasinghe 2011). All these problems are augmented by the increasing militarisation of the IOR, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and the rise in various non-traditional and unconventional threats (Potgeiter 2012: 2).

This apart, the IOR has countries with the widest disparities in terms of economic development. All the countries in the IOR are developing countries but their level of development, security and stability vary radically. In some regions, civil war and tensions determine national behaviour and relations with neighbouring states. In others, the risk of local military conflicts or the risk of broader regional conflicts influences the national behaviour (Cordeman and Toukan 2014: 9). Some of these conflicts have received global attention because of their inherent risks of exploding out of proportion. A report by the Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research has declared that 42 per cent of the conflicts in the world are related to the IOR (*Conflict Barometer 2008*, University of Heidelberg, Department of Political Science). In human terms, the IOR is one of the most complicated zones of the world, with its wide variety of races, cultures, religions and languages.

Indian Ocean security is no longer in the realm of the superpowers, but has become multi-layered and more vibrant than before (Potgeiter 2012: 1). New players in the region such as India and China have become major powers, and new alliances and strategic agreements in the littoral are shifting the security scenario. Also, despite being immensely rich in natural resources, countries in the IOR are known for their

economic weakness and insecurity. A number of them are dependent on economic aid from the developed countries and international organisations. The largest recipients of official development assistance in 2005 belonged to the IOR states, namely Afghanistan, Indonesia, Pakistan and Vietnam. In addition, several African states received development aid that amounted to 40 per cent excess of their total import value (Rumley et al. 2010: 10). The region is also the locus of about 70 per cent of the world's natural disasters.

There is heavy deployment of armed forces in the IOR by all the major world powers. The US has engaged the island of Diego Garcia as a major air-naval base and the logistics hub for its Indian Ocean operations. The US 5th Fleet is also present in the region, headquartered in Bahrain, plus troop deployments in Iraq and Afghanistan. In addition, in order to safeguard the flow of oil from the Persian Gulf, the US has deployed Combined Task Force 152 and Combined Task Force 150, to counter piracy from the Gulf of Oman to Kenya (Ranasinghe, *The Diplomat*, 2 March 2011). France has naval bases in Djibouti, Reunion and Abu Dhabi. There is also considerable military spending and militarisation in the region. Two of the top military spenders in the world in 2008 were Saudi Arabia and India. The armed forces of five states in the IOR surpass 400,000 men (India 1,200,000, Pakistan 610,000, Iran 440,000, Burma 439,000 and Egypt 423,000) and the military outlay of ten states of the region is above 3 per cent of their GDP (Oman 10.7, Saudi Arabia 9.3, Burundi 4.9, Sudan 4.4, Singapore 4.1, Djibouti 4.1, Kuwait 3.9, Brunei 3.6, Bahrain 3.4 and Pakistan 3.1) (Rumley et al. 2010: 5). India and China have developed blue-water naval capabilities with aspirations for greater influence in ocean affairs and management. China's aggressive soft power diplomacy such as providing loans on generous terms and investments in major infrastructure projects of the beneficiary countries has also played a role in influencing and transforming the strategic environment of the Indian Ocean. For some of these countries, befriending China and winning its trust provides a platform to escape the wrath of UN-imposed sanctions (through China's veto-wielding powers in the Security Council) for alleged human rights violations or international criticism for authoritarian rule.

3.4 The Indian Ocean as the Hub of Great Power Rivalry

The world's major sea lines of communication (SLOCs), accounting for almost two-thirds of global trade traffic, pass through this region. With the globalisation of markets and countries seeking integration with the global economy, the seas have assumed unparalleled significance in recent times. As hinterland communications among the Asia-Pacific countries are highly inadequate, these countries have sought to intensify their shipping activities in order to support their economic life. The necessity to allow unhindered access to sources of raw materials and markets for their products has also led countries to intensify their naval activities and diplomacy. While it is difficult to see any state-induced threats to the stability and security of the region, states seeking warm-water facilities in the Indian Ocean are indeed a matter of concern (Sakhuja 2000: 37).

The IOR appears more prominently in the geostrategic calculations of extra-regional powers like the US and the EU. Using the Pivot to Asia and Maritime Silk Route policies, the major powers want to strengthen their dominance in the region. It may also be noted that almost three-quarters of trade passing through the region does not belong to the littoral states but to states external to the region.

Historically, the Indian Ocean was mastered by the erstwhile colonial powers like the British, French, Dutch and Portuguese. The British enjoyed an overwhelming dominance in the region in the 19th century. However, towards the end of the century, the USA took a pioneering role in the navigation of the ocean because of the decline of Great Britain's relative power. The early 20th century also witnessed the emergence of two superpowers, the US and the USSR, whose Cold War politics got extended to the IOR. After decolonisation, the dominance of the colonial masters has lessened, but it has not meant the cessation of Western interests in the region.

The development of independent perspectives on security and development by the littoral countries has led them to pursue modernisation of their defence forces on the model of the West. They have actively carried on the purchase of arms and ammunition from the Western world. Beginning with the 1960s, the West has successfully penetrated into the economy and military of these countries. When the Arab countries imposed an embargo on oil deliveries to the West during the Arab-Israeli war of 1973, the USA reacted by upgrading its military facilities on Diego

Garcia. Thereafter, the Iranian Revolution of 1979 proved to be a landmark event in the Western policy towards the Indian Ocean. It made the US and its allies realise their vulnerability to any sort of disruption in the supply of oil and the need to develop adequate interventionist capabilities to ensure uninterrupted supply of oil and other raw materials.

China has generally followed a policy similar to that followed by the USA in the Indian Ocean. China responded favourably to the US decision to build a naval base in Diego Garcia, viewing the former USSR as the main threat to its stakes in the Indian Ocean. The Chinese have often justified the US presence in the Indian and Pacific Oceans. China has also continuously been developing a strong navy. China occupied the Paracel Islands in 1974 and has regularly talked about “the return of many islands captured by the enemy in this region”. As of today, China lays claim to more than 200 islands, shallows and reefs in the South China Sea.

The Indian Ocean has also attracted the attention of policymakers in the EU as geopolitical power shifts from the Atlantic to the Pacific because of the vast maritime region that lies between the two, which constitutes a significant part of the IOR. Almost all the major powers count on the connecting channel that stretches from the Cape of Good Hope to the Strait of Malacca for trade of necessary supplies. With the increase in the East Asian economies’ purchasing power parity, their need for securing the routes for energy needs has tended to affect the vital SLOCs along the strategic chokepoints in the Indian Ocean. These chokepoints have become congested with patrolling naval vessels, cargo ships, oil tankers, etc. (Kamerling et al. 2014: 1). Even smaller naval powers like Pakistan, Malaysia, Singapore and South Korea are increasing their activities in the region to protect their national interests. In the absence of a comprehensive multilateral agreement on maritime security in the Indian Ocean, all these dynamic engagements become highly challenging and chaotic (Kamerling et al. 2014: 2).

This precarious security situation is also responsible for the emergence of various non-conventional security challenges such as human and drug trafficking, piracy and maritime terrorism. According to UN estimates, more than 12 million people are engaged in forced labour, bondage, forced child labour and sexual enslavement in this region (Potgiter 2012: 11). Violent insurgent activities around the

Horn of Africa are a common affair. According to a report by the World Food Program (WFP), there are over 400,000 internally displaced persons and war-affected individuals in Yemen's northern region alone (WFP 2013: 152). Political instability, poverty and economic insecurity have led to wide-scale international migration, which has become a cause for serious concern. People from economically weaker states are increasingly moving on to more secure regions both legally and illegally. Illegal migrants have become an important source of conflict in the shelter countries. In various cases, the economic and political instability in the Indian Ocean countries is the result of foreign interference or foreign-funded insurgency. In certain situations, regional rivalries and power projecting policies of major powers create conditions of unrest, which ultimately interfere with peace and stability in the region.

There are currently three main sources of insecurity in the Indian Ocean. One source is sea-based terrorist activities and maritime piracy. Some of the prominent incidents of maritime terrorism have included attacks by al-Qaeda on a US warship in 2000 and on a French tanker in 2002 (Winner et al. 2012: 107). As regards maritime piracy, piracy in the Malacca Straits (especially up to 2005) and Somali piracy in the Gulf of Aden and the Western Indian Ocean since 2008 are well known (Van Ginkel and van der Putten 2010). There are also incidents where terrorist activities took the domain of the sea to attack targets on land such as in the case of the 26/11 Mumbai attack in 2008. Violent insurgent activities including maritime piracy have posed a serious threat to the security of the strategic chokepoints. This has prompted the EU and many other maritime powers to attempt to curb piracy in the region.

A second significant source of insecurity in the Indian Ocean is associated with the rise of new naval powers. The power rivalry between India and China has made the ocean an area of potential tensions between the two rising powers, even if it is not an immediate security threat (Kamerling et al. 2014: 3). Since the 1959 exile of the Dalai Lama to India and the 1962 Indo-China border war, tensions between these two Asian powers have existed. What complicates the situation is that China is a close security ally of Pakistan, which historically has a disturbed relationship with India.

The third major source of insecurity in the region relates to the risk of spill-over effects of maritime tensions in the Western Pacific, including the East and the South China Seas (Swejis 2010: 5).

Meanwhile, India's steady rise as an economic power has given it growing confidence to play a major role in the management of the ocean's maritime domain. The recent Indian purchase of 12 P-81 anti-submarine warfare aircraft from the United States denotes this trend (Tanchum 2014). The increase in China's role in the IOR has also influenced India's Indian Ocean policy. China has increased its naval power projection and has engaged in building maritime infrastructure. While some Indian experts view China's growing influence in the IOR with disquiet, others consider these Chinese activities to be necessary to protect China's economic interests. An important example in this regard is that since 2009, the Chinese navy (People's Liberation Army Navy, PLAN) has started naval operations in a bid to protect its shipping lanes from Somali piracy. China has so far maintained a continuous naval presence in the Gulf of Aden, on a rotating basis, with task forces consisting of two warships and one supply vessel. PLAN warships were deployed in order to provide onboard protection for Chinese commercial vessels (Kamerling et al. 2014: 3). It may be noted that PLAN has no permanent base in the region. Chinese ships are refilled through visits to various commercial ports around the Western Indian Ocean where logistical support is provided by Chinese companies operating there at the local level (Kamerling and van der Putten 2011). China's range of naval engagements is not limited to the Indian Ocean but extends further West. In various instances, PLAN has been involved in escorting Chinese commercial shipping and assisting in the evacuation of Chinese citizens in the face of a political or civil crisis. China's naval capability in the Indian Ocean is yet to be on par with that of India. Moreover, given China's longstanding policy of not establishing a military base outside its territorial boundaries, it is unlikely that it would go for a naval base in the Indian Ocean (Pant 2015).

Meanwhile PLAN presence is increasing in places like Seychelles and Maldives, which have a close relation with India (See <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2013/jul/11/inside-china-chinese-navycourts-seychelles/?page=all>). China has also been seen trying to develop close diplomatic and economic ties with a large number of littoral states in East Africa, the Middle East, South Asia and South-East Asia (Kamerling et al. 2104: 3). China's policy of extending China's diplomatic umbrella also includes selling arms to many of these nations and investing heavily in infrastructure, communication projects and port

construction. Moreover, Chinese shipping firms and commercial port operators are highly active in and along the Indian Ocean. Chinese fishing and offshore oil and gas activities in the region are also increasing (ibid.). All these policies and engagements by the Chinese government have been seen by the US and its allies as the “String of Pearls” strategy.

India has responded to these developments by expanding its navy and its ties with other littoral states and is increasingly looking to consolidate its economic and military cooperation with island states in the IOR. India has been trying to make cautious moves to regain or retain its traditional influence in these states by expanding economic and trade cooperation with them (Kumar 2006; Scott 2007). However, India’s approach of seeking to exclude other major powers like China and the US in conformity with its principle of strategic autonomy has not been of much help.

Competition for regional leadership in East and South-East Asia between China and the US has emerged as another great-power rivalry in the Indian Ocean. This rivalry has also resulted in maritime security issues as the zones of utmost strategic importance for both nations overlap in the East and South China Seas (Kamerling et al. 2014: 4). The US has a military presence in Japan and South Korea. (The US naval base in Japan is known as the US 7th Fleet.) What makes the matter grim is the United States’ indirect involvement in the territorial dispute between China and the Philippines, which is a US ally. The US also has a security alliance with Singapore, Taiwan and Thailand and has also improved its security cooperation with countries like Vietnam and Indonesia with whom China is in direct conflict regarding ocean jurisdiction and territorial waters (Kamerling et al. 2014: 5). Thus, the US has undertaken various measures to respond to the rising Chinese influence by improving its economic, military and diplomatic engagements throughout the IOR. The Sino-US rivalry in the region is closely entwined with the gravely problematic relationship between China and the United States’ close ally, Japan. Though Japan does not directly fall within the rim of the IOR, its rivalry with the Chinese state echoes in the waters of the Indian Ocean. Regional powers like India and Australia have provided a sense of solidarity to Japan in its conflict with China, especially in matters relating to territorial claims in the East China Sea and Chinese naval activity close to Japanese territory.

While China's supply lines crossing the region of the South China Sea are vulnerable to the United States' military influence, the supply lines of Japan and all other US security partners are vulnerable to China's military authority in the South China Sea. Hence, the presence and positioning of the naval forces of the US, Japan and China in the Indian Ocean for protecting their national and commercial interests. China is more likely to continue to be involved in the management of non-traditional security issues in the IOR and develop its regional influence by cultivating better economic and military relationships with the IOR littoral states (Kamerling et al. 2014: 6). But the US is still the master of the ocean with its various bases established in some of the most strategic locations of the IOR.

3.5 Conclusion

The IOR is an interesting arena for competing for influence and control by the major powers of the world. Given that the Indian Ocean is the great connector between the Pacific and the Atlantic, its significance in connecting Europe to other parts of Asia, Australia and Africa remains undiluted. For the past 600 years, the Indian Ocean has been witness to intense maritime activity, primarily for trade in silk and spices. Today, it is for oil, which is the primary energy source powering the economic-industrial sectors of major states. The economic significance of the Indian Ocean to the world lies in that the IOR contains one-third of the world's population, a quartile of the total landmass of the world, and a major part of the world's gas and oil reserves. Its sea lanes are among the most strategically significant in the world, as more than 80 per cent of the world's seaborne trade transits through the Indian Ocean chokepoints. Also, a major portion of the world's oil and gas reserves are found in the IOR.

That apart, the immense diversity and variation in the economic, political, cultural, demographic and geographical profile of the countries in the region are responsible for turning it into a centre of international attention. Growing levels of population, pollution of oceanic waters, maritime piracy, maritime terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, nuclearisation of South Asia and the recent upsurge of turbulence in the Islamic world intensify the security scenario of the region. The dependence of the major powers on the energy supplies through the ocean necessitates them to flex their muscles and get involved in the security and stability of

the region. This also leads to the classical security dilemma where most of the countries in the region are suspicious about the others' clandestine moves, which ultimately makes the region a hub of great-power politics.

Meanwhile, the shifting of power politics from the Atlantic and the Pacific to the Indian Ocean has resulted in making the IOR the most dynamic and unstable region. Certain local and regional conflicts in the region have received global attention because of their inherent risks of implosion. As such, various conflicts in the IOR have invited foreign political and military intervention. Using the Pivot to Asia and Maritime Silk Route policies, the major powers want to strengthen their dominance in the region by bringing the littoral countries within their sphere of influence. Hence, as noted by Kaplan, the Indian Ocean is going to be the centre of global politics in the coming decades.

CHAPTER FOUR

**NATURE AND DIMENSIONS OF INDIA'S INTERESTS IN THE
INDIAN OCEAN**

4.1 Introduction

India is an aspirant for maritime power in the Indian Ocean. In this, its strategic location and peninsular geography is a great asset. Given India's strategic position on the world map, any noteworthy initiative of expanding India's influence without any major obstacle can be realised only in the maritime domain. India has always maintained a strong interest in the Indian Ocean and hence envisages itself as the natural leader of the Indian Ocean region (IOR). In the recent period, India has emerged as a key political and economic player at the global level. Consequently, India's interest in the Indian Ocean has gained renewed importance. To make its mark as a major maritime power, it has adopted an ambitious plan of naval modernisation.

This chapter highlights the importance of the Indian Ocean to India's political, economic and security interests and analyses the nature and dimensions of India's strategic ambitions in the ocean. It also assesses how India's strategic position in the ocean has played a significant role in articulating India's position as a dominant power in the region along with highlighting how China's engagement has influenced India's strategic ambitions at sea.

4.2 India's Maritime Aspirations in the Indian Ocean

To understand India's aspirations in the Indian Ocean, there is a need to understand and analyse India's strategic culture. According to Johnson (1998),

Strategic culture is made up of a country's world view, judgment of subject-object relations and model of behaviors based on that country's geography, history and economic and political development. Interaction among these symbols can forge a collective national identity distinct from other countries, while also limiting the social and cultural environment of its strategic decisions.

A country's security culture is shaped by the strategic inclinations of the entire society and political elites on some policies and actions that are inherently different from those of other countries (Duffield 1999). As regards India's strategic thought, a report prepared by RAND Corporation in 1992 says that Indian strategic thinking has strong influences of geography, history, culture and British rule. The author of the report, George Tanham, interestingly observed that India, because it lacks a monolithic political entity, does not have any strategic thought or strategic culture. This observation led to a huge debate whether indeed India has a strategic culture (Xinmin 2014). In this context, Rodney W. Jones (2006) noted that India does have a history of

strategic thought, captured in the symbolism of the pre-modern Indian state systems and the Vedic civilisation which date back several millennia. David Scott (2010) observes that India has a meaningful degree of naval strategy for the Indian Ocean backed up by the government. It may also be observed that since 1992 there have been a number of government announcements and ongoing commentaries by renowned think-tanks like the National Maritime Foundation to the effect that “there may indeed be a strategy for the Indian Ocean in which a degree of consensus is noticeable over India’s aspirations in the IOR (Alatas 2015: 399).

In this context, Padukone’s following observation helps in understanding Indian strategic thinking:

India’s worldview took shape after independence when India took onto itself the project of securing the Indian subcontinent. Analysts have called this strategy as ‘India’s Monroe Doctrine’ – referring to the US foreign policy declared in 1823 which viewed any interference by European countries in North or South America as an act of aggression requiring US intervention. On similar lines, the Indian subcontinent was seen as a single geographic and strategic unit. This understanding, combined with the colonial experience convinced Indian policymakers that securing the strategic unity in the wake of new borders which were essentially ‘demographic and marginal’ and not strategic required a two-pronged approach. One, keeping the subcontinent united and two, denying extra-regional powers any presence in the region. The first aim was instrumentalised by denying autonomous tendencies of the smaller neighbours, particularly if they tried to bandwagon with extra-regional powers. The second aim was aided by Non-alignment, which was ‘meant to be the practice of realpolitik cloaked in idealism’. (Padukone 2014)

In terms of maritime strategic culture, India has three main maritime doctrines, namely, *Indian Maritime Doctrine* (2004 and 2009; hereafter *IMD*), *Freedom to Use the Seas: Indian Maritime Strategy for the 21st Century* (2007) and *Nonalignment 2.0: A Foreign and Strategic Policy for India in the Twenty-First Century* (2012). All these doctrines were formulated in the hope of answering certain fundamental questions regarding India’s attitude towards war and the use of military force in attaining political ends and to highlight if India’s maritime activism is informed by a definite strategic culture (Alatas 2015: 400).

IMD 2004 is a forceful and ambitious document, with its talk of India’s “maritime destiny” and “maritime vision”. Through the doctrine a proactive policing role is envisioned for the Indian Navy, enabling it to counter distant emerging threats and safeguard the sea lines of communication (SLOCs) through and from the Indian Ocean. It also highlights Indian concerns over Chinese “attempts to strategically

encircle India” and “China’s exertions that tend to spill over into our maritime zone” in the Indian Ocean (*IMD 2004: 54-71*).

The Maritime Military Strategy (2007) lays down that a nation’s maritime strategy can be defined as its overall approach to the oceans around it, to maximise national gains. It defines the country’s role in its maritime area of interest, highlighting that, for a strategy, the starting point is invariably a threat, whether real or perceived. The Indian Navy has clear enough aspirations for the Indian Ocean, equally supported by the government. It looks forward to the period 2007-2022 and identifies “power projection” as a feature of India’s naval diplomacy, specifically mentioning Mahan’s sea power framework (*India’s Maritime Military Strategy 2007: 72*). “[T]he professed strategy clearly is premised on deterrence with offensive undertones” (*Indian Maritime Military Strategy 2007: 131*).

The sense of consensus arrived between the Indian Navy and government on India’s involvement in the Indian Ocean to reclaim and enhance its strategic reach has led to India’s recognition of the “strategic imperatives” of India’s international relations or the “marine imperatives of Indian foreign policy” (Menon 2009: 15). Among the geopolitical considerations reinforcing Indian expectations and strategies in the Indian Ocean, one regular contextual feature is to utilise and emphasise the territorial advantages enjoyed by India in the IOR. At the same time, the Indian government wants to portray itself as a net security provider and regional peacekeeping power in the IOR without being seen as a bully or hegemon.

The Indian Navy has developed ambitious plans to become a predominant maritime security provider from the Red Sea to Singapore. It sees itself as having a significant security role in Asia-Pacific, including the South China Sea. The Indian government considers the region extending from the Persian Gulf in the west to the Straits of Malacca in the east as significant for India’s security. The then External Affairs Minister, Pranab Mukherjee, described the region as the primary area of Indian maritime interest. It covers the area from “the Persian Gulf in the north, to Antarctica in the south, and from the Cape of Good Hope and the East Coast of Africa in the west, to the Straits of Malacca ... and Indonesia in the east”.

4.3 Importance of the Indian Ocean to India's Geopolitical Interests

Geographically, India is a maritime state which is dominated by the world's third-largest ocean, the Indian Ocean. With India's rise as a great power, its interest in the Indian Ocean has gained renewed importance. This brings to the fore the question how successive governments in India have sought to promote the country's interests. India's strategic thinking has in the past generally tended to ignore the maritime dimensions of its geography, with its navy and the maritime domain receiving the least funding and attention from the government. India has had an ambiguous Indian Ocean policy approach. Historically, the British exploited India's attributes to become a dominant empire in the IOR. With the growth of its national power and capabilities, India has shown interest in regaining and extending its influence and control over the Indian Ocean. A section of the Indian elite has nurtured a dream of making the Indian Ocean "India's Ocean". K.M. Pannikar, one of India's foremost thinkers on naval diplomacy, called for the Indian Ocean to remain "truly Indian". He was convinced that India should be the dominating force in the Indian Ocean as did the British Indian Empire earlier. However, the Indian leadership immediately after independence showed little interest in building a blue-water navy with power projecting capabilities beyond South Asia. India's military threats were at the time perceived to be primarily originating from its north-western frontier. India also has a culture of "strategic restraint", which is deeply rooted in the Indian strategic psyche, as noted by various experts on India's strategic thought (Cohen 2010; Dasgupta 2012; Tanham 1952).

With the rise and growth of India's political and economic profile after the economic liberalisation of the 1990s, however, India's interests and strategies in the Indian Ocean have gained a new importance for its policymakers. After a gap of almost 60 years, India seems to have returned as the centre of gravity in the Indian Ocean. A section of the Indian elites see a close association between their country's maritime ambitions and its search for great-power status (Brewster 2010: 1). Many Indian maritime strategists view predominance in the Indian Ocean as having the potential of delivering critical influence in East Asia.

Indian strategic thinkers often cite the words of Alfred Thayer Mahan, that "Whoever controls the Indian Ocean dominates Asia. In the 21st century, the destiny of the world will be decided on its waters." A view has been developing among Indian

strategists that India's strategic location and its peninsular character around the vibrant waters of the Indian Ocean have more often designed its oceanic destiny and perceived maritime supremacy in the region. Its geographical location has put India in a uniquely advantageous position where its peninsular projection deep inside the ocean provides it a commanding position in the northern waters through which the international maritime routes connecting the global commerce in energy supply pass.

India lies between 9 and 37° North latitudes and 68 and 76° East longitudes. It has a 7500 km long coastline, with a large number of ports and a group of islands both in its eastern (Andaman and Nicobar) and western waters (Lakshadweep). Their location along with a large continental shelf and the vast resource-rich Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) provide India with the opportunity to become a great maritime power in the region. The nomenclature of an ocean after a nation, the only one in the world, fully justifies India's geographic and historic ascendancy on the Indian Ocean.

The importance of the Andaman & Nicobar Islands in enhancing India's influence and control in the ocean is huge, as about 30 per cent of India's EEZ is the product of its sovereignty over its islands (Kaul 2015: 62). The islands are 250 km from mainland Myanmar, 500 km from Thailand and 1300 km from mainland India (Sakhuja 2000: 33). Moreover, the Indian peninsula extends beyond 1000 nautical miles, thus providing it an extended sea exposure.

Most of India's neighbours are maritime states having long coastlines and extensive EEZs. The region has some important waterways that have both economic and military importance. Almost all the important chokepoints through which a major share of global maritime commerce passes are in the Indian Ocean, including the Strait of Hormuz and the Strait of Malacca. The relatively shallow Strait of Malacca is the main connecting link between the Indian and Pacific Oceans. It is the longest international navigational route through a strait which connects the Indian Ocean via the Andaman Sea on the west and the South China Sea on the east via the strait of Singapore. The Strait of Malacca is the shortest shipping route between East Asia and Europe. An alternative is the Sunda Strait, which is 50 nm long but is unsafe for large vessels. The Strait of Hormuz is the other important waterway in the Indian Ocean through which half of the world's traded oil passes. It is fairly deep and can take on

vessels up to 160,000 dwt (Sakhuja 2000: 34). All these shipping routes pass through India's neighbouring waters.

As an energy-deficient developing economy, India relies heavily on imported oil and gas through the SLOCs in the Indian Ocean. Organised crime, piracy and global terrorist networks in the IOR can also threaten India's security. The importance of the Indian Ocean to India's geo-political interests has intensified by China's increased naval power projection in the IOR. The Indian Navy's close objectives at sea also involve containing Pakistan and administering control over India's EEZ (Brewster 2010: 6).

i) India's Economic Interests in the Indian Ocean

As a maritime state with a long coastline, India needs to safeguard and protect its coastlines, island territories and the trade routes through which its trade passes. One significant agenda for Indian strategic thinkers is to secure India's ports and island territories along with carrying out developmental activities in its EEZ. Another important economic interest is to protect the important industrial towns, prestigious establishments, communication lines and refineries that are not very far away from India's coastal belt. In order to guarantee safe and secure operation of the ports and SLOCs on both its eastern and western seaboard, India has adopted an active maritime policy. Along with an expansion in naval capabilities, the Indian Navy has also been involved in increasing its influence all through the IOR (Brewster 2010: 3). India's security concerns are also related to the prevalence of peace and stability in the IOR.

India's economic interests in the Indian Ocean are of two kinds: (a) exploitation of resources such as oil and gas, fish and minerals in its EEZ, and (b) conducting trade with the countries in the Indian Ocean rim. India has established its legal control over two million sq. km EEZ through the Maritime Zone Act in 1976. Recent explorations have displayed great potential of oil, gas and mineral resources in the EEZ. India has an enormous continental shelf and a slope that covers about 1 million sq km, which is still being explored. A number of important minerals are found in India's continental shelf, particularly in the coast of Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Orissa that includes monazite, limonite, zircon, garnet, kyanite, etc. In fisheries, India is yet to fully utilise its catch in the EEZ.

India has undertaken a massive offshore oil development programme through its state company ONGC. Impressive oil and natural gas production from its off-shore wells has marginally reduced India's dependence on Gulf oil. India's interests also revolve around harnessing renewable energy, which is found in abundance in the Indian Ocean. However, the greatest potential sources for the generation of energy from the sea come from the presence of materials for atomic fission and fusion. It has been estimated that the thorium and uranium in the world's oceans can supply the power requirement of 6 billion people with a per capita requirement of 5 KW hours per day for some 700,000 years and the deuterium and hydrogen can supply fusion power for a period four times the age of the solar system (Malhotra 1980: 6-7).

India has extensive trade and commercial relations with a large number of countries in the IOR. Sea transportation accounts for almost 90 per cent of this trade. Any disruption in the Indian Ocean SLOCs is bound to prove costly for India's economic interests at sea. For example, during the closure of the Suez Canal in 1967 during the Arab-Israel War and war-like conditions prevailing at the time of the Iran-Iraq war in 1980, India incurred considerable losses in its trading relations. In a situation where Indian tankers and bulk carriers are unable to bring home oil from the Middle East and other essential commodities, the Indian economy would suffer greatly. Some of India's major trading partners in the region are South Africa, Australia, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Iran, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. The outward orientation of the Indian economy has facilitated India's stronghold in the Indian Ocean.

ii) India's Security Interests in the Indian Ocean

In a volatile security scenario in the region, the disruption in peace and stability is bound to adversely affect India's security concerns. The presence and involvement of extra-regional powers in the region is a reality, which cannot be ignored by India's security establishment. The position of the US navy as the successor to the British is unchallengeable in the region. Guided by its huge geopolitical interests in the region, the US has both established and stationed a huge fleet of naval forces in the IOR. India has no option but to accept this fact. Peace and tranquillity in the region is in the common interest of both India and the US. However, India can try to create

unfavourable opinion in the IOR countries regarding the extra-regional presence and guide them towards self-reliance in their security matters.

As the largest Indian Ocean littoral state, with a stable democratic polity and credible maritime power, India has an important and meaningful role in the security scenario of the region. India's peninsular character gives it a huge advantage and influence in the region. However, in the absence of an adequate security environment in the Indian peninsula and overall oceanic environment, these advantages cannot be exploited. According to *IMD*, "Control of the choke points could be useful as a bargaining chip in the international power game, where the currency of military power remains a stark reality." Ensuring the security and stability of India's ports and island territories and the security of the vast coastline including the EEZ is a necessity in terms of India's survival. The indivisibility of the sea and absence of strong naval power in the region were responsible for the British domination of India (Pannikar 1959: 89). "India never lost its independence till she lost the command of the sea" (Pannikar 1959: 7). India's long coastline and its ports are highly vulnerable to hostile attacks. India's lack of secured harbours with the exception to those in the Gulf of Cambay in the west and Visakhapatnam and Chilka Lake in the east necessitates the Indian government to secure the entire gamut of ports.

iii) India's Territorial Security Interests

India's maritime territory comprises its coastline, with about 1200 islands and islets along the west coast including Lakshadweep, Minicoy and Aminidive in the Arabian Sea and 667 small islands along the east coast and in the Bay of Bengal including the Andaman and Nicobar group. Besides, there are several artificial islands, including some newly emerged islands (Anand 1988: 169). The geographical significance and strategic importance of India's islands and other maritime territories is huge. The Great Andaman Group of islands is about 6647 km long and 51 km at the widest point. It possesses a number of harbours and safe anchorages, particularly Port Blair in the south, Port Carnivals in the north, and Elphinstone and Mayabandar in the middle. In terms of security considerations, Andaman and Nicobar is nearer to Indonesia and Myanmar than to mainland India and is thus more exposed to outside aggression. In this context, then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's statement that the old concept of India stretching from Kashmir to Kanyakumari should be replaced with the

new concept of India stretching from Kashmir to Port Blair is apt for India's strategic designs. These islands were targeted from both East Pakistan and Indonesia during the Indo-Pak War of 1965. During the 1971 war, the US positioned its naval fleet *Enterprise* in the Bay of Bengal to arm-twist India. The US decision to establish a naval base in Diego Garcia along with the fears of Chinese deployment of nuclear submarines have also contributed to India's heightened security interests in its maritime backyard.

Andaman and Nicobar is close to some of the busiest and vital international trade routes connecting East and West. Taking its strategic importance into account, the Indian government has created a new command at Port Blair called the Far Eastern Naval Command (FENC). The principal reason for upgrading Andaman's facilities into a full-fledged naval command was the growing Chinese activities in Myanmar that lies very close to these islands. The trafficking of arms and narcotics to India and elsewhere through the sea has also been a major security concern for India. As regards Lakshadweep, in this region superpower rivalry was at its height during the Cold War. Lakshadweep, which is 200-300 km off the coast of Kerala, comprises 27 coral islands, of which 10 are inhabited.

Another important maritime security interest of India is the defence of the newly emerged New Moore Island in the Bay of Bengal, 2-12 sq km in area. It is situated about 50 metres from the nearest Indian coastal point and 700 metres from Bangladesh (Gulati 1988: 162). On the basis of a map extrapolating data from a US satellite, Bangladesh contested that the island is situated east of the Bay of Hariabhanga River that divides the water feature of the Indo-Bangla border on land (*The Tribune*, 29 September 1981). Ownership of the island has extended India's maritime and other territorial rights by about 4000 sq km. The tussle for ownership of the island turned ugly, when Bangladeshi gunboats adopted an aggressive stance on India's unarmed survey ship *Sandhya* and the naval personnel stationed on the island (Mitra 1981: 215). There have been many other instances where the naval ships of either nation have trespassed into each other's territorial waters because the India-Bangladesh maritime boundary is not yet demarcated clearly. In order to achieve a diplomatic victory over Bangladesh, India could have gone for a moderate stand and allowed joint navigation of the New Moore island with its neighbour. S.C. Gangal observes that "When we are seeking to build a structure of peace, security and

harmony in the region, we should not be playing tough when moderation or accommodation would seem the preferable alternative, i.e., on the question of procedure or modalities” (Gangal 1982).

Another important development that has enhanced India’s strategic reach is the emergence of one more 30-metre-long island to the north of Andaman and Nicobar (*Indian Express*, 7 August 1980). This has enlarged India’s maritime zone around the archipelago and, at the same time, widened India’s security responsibilities.

a) India’s Security Interests in South-East Asia

The Indian Navy is known to have played an important role in South-East Asia in countering the threat to India’s security originating from that region that intruded on its vital interests directly or indirectly. India’s security environment is also helped by the location of Andaman and Nicobar, where base facilities have been established by the Indian Navy. This has empowered it to monitor or navigate the oceanic waters even close to the Malacca Strait. India’s security interest in the South-East Asia region is influenced by the fact that almost all South-East Asian countries have security ties with the US. In Thailand, the US, apart from providing security umbrella to the former, also works as advisor under their 1950 military assistance agreement. Thailand’s struggle with Chinese-supported communist insurgency and the Thai clash with Vietnamese troops during the latter’s struggle with Kampuchean insurgents in 1983 had a potential of escalation, creating serious security issues for the region.

Another cause of concern for India’s maritime security interests is Indonesia’s bilateral relationship with Pakistan. Indonesia supported Pakistan during the Indo-Pak War in 1965 by providing it two submarines, four OSA-class missile boats, and four MIG-21, MIF-19 and MIG 5s. Indonesia’s then naval commander-in-chief even proposed to occupy Andaman and Nicobar as a distracting move. He is also believed to have said that Andaman and Nicobar is an extension of Sumatra Island and that India should have no claim over it (Khan 1979: 45). However, after Suharto’s coming to power, India’s relationship with Indonesia improved considerably. Thereafter, India also took appropriate action about ensuring its security by arriving at a consensus regarding its maritime boundary with Thailand in 1975 and with Indonesia in 1977. Thailand also took the initiative of signing a trilateral maritime agreement in 1978

with India and Indonesia that contributed in bringing greater stability and security in the waters of the Bay of Bengal and the Andaman Sea.

India's security concerns also pertain to the growing fears of a Chinese encirclement of the Indian Ocean rim. Although the Indian Navy's primary interests include neutralising Pakistan's influence and enforcing control over India's EEZ, its principal apprehension is the probability of China projecting power into the Indian Ocean to India's detriment (Brewster 2010: 1-20).

b) India's Security Dilemma in the Gulf Region

The six Arab countries in the Persian Gulf region (Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, UAE, Oman, Bahrain and Qatar), constituting the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), have strong links with the US. The GCC came into being avowedly to achieve mutual cooperation in the field of economic development, defence and security against internal subversion and external threat (Rijvi 1982: 30-31). The GCC members also have strong bilateral security ties with Pakistan, which has a major role in the unified GCC air defence system. There are also other developments that have intruded upon India's security interests in the Gulf region. One such development is the Saudi-Pakistan bilateral understanding where Saudi Arabia grants unspecified amount of hard currency to Pakistan in order to buy military equipment, while Pakistan is obliged to provide military security to Saudi Arabia. Pakistan is eligible to station troops in Saudi Arabia for defending the latter's security. It also has the obligation to provide military personnel for manning the armed forces of some of the other less populated GCC countries (Sinha 1980: 357). It may also be recalled that Saudi Arabia provided overt support to Pakistan to buy naval hardware during the Indo-Pak War in 1971. Thus, the Pakistani Navy, despite its smaller size and reach, continues to be a concern for India's maritime interests.

4.4 Presence of Extra-Regional Powers

The presence of extra-regional powers in the region has presented India with different power equations and a dynamic security environment. In the words of L.J. Kavic, the external dimension of India's maritime security may be understood by examining the system of "ring fence" that comprises two concentric circles. The inner ring consists of countries like Pakistan, Maldives, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Myanmar. The outer

ring consists of Iran, UAE, Oman, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Horn of Africa, Chagos archipelago, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand (Kavic 1967: 9). In no circumstances should India ignore any politico-military developments in these countries that have the potential of adversely affecting India's maritime security. At the same time, given India's historic policy of strategic autonomy in the region, it is unlikely that India would follow the footsteps of imperial Great Britain by going for "alliance, integrity and neutralisation" towards its neighbours (ibid.). India's security interest in the neighbouring countries of the Indian Ocean is also influenced by the fact that most of the countries of the outer ring have already come under the influence of the US security umbrella. The Indian security establishment needs to carefully handle its foreign policy and diplomacy with those countries, given that Bahrain, UAE, Saudi Arabia and Oman have security alliances with the US. The US has also established base facilities in Kenya, Somalia and Oman along with the strategically significant Diego Garcia from where the US has the capability to move its sea, air and nuclear forces to any corner of the Indian Ocean. At the same time, the US, in a bid to balance the rising influence of China in the region, sees India as a potential contender for leadership in the IOR.

4.5 China's 'String of Pearls' Strategy and India's Interests in the Indian Ocean

China's recent engagements with the South Asian countries have been anticipated by Indian strategists as part of China's power projection into the Indian Ocean. Although China's involvement in the Indian Ocean has a long history, it did not concentrate on building a blue-water navy immediately after the formation of the republic. However, during the mid-1980s, the Chinese agenda of building a blue-water navy came into prominence. China's focus was particularly on defending its strategic concerns in the western Pacific in the Taiwan Strait (Brewster 2010: 5). China's naval capabilities in both quantitative and qualitative terms thereafter started to advance further than India's. But due to geographical constraint, China's ability to project power into the Indian Ocean has been marginal, as its southern ports are way too distant from the mainstream IOR. Further, China lacks logistical support in the Indian Ocean, which necessitates deploying its naval force only through the chokepoints, principally the Strait of Malacca (ibid.). China has sought to overcome these strategic limitations through engagement with the countries in South-East and South Asia.

China has a strong and time-tested relationship with Pakistan, based on their common enmity with India. China also has good political and economic relations with Bangladesh, Myanmar and Sri Lanka. There are reports that China has been involved in the expansion of military-related facilities in the region, including the construction of port facilities at Gwadar in Pakistan and communication facilities in Myanmar's Coco Islands in the Andaman Sea, both of which are claimed to have Chinese signals intelligence facilities (Chellaney 2008: 27). Chinese involvement in the region is also in the form of development of commercial port facilities in Myanmar, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, including frequent reports of China securing naval access rights in these countries (Maitra 2008; Ramachandran 2007). Indian strategic analysts have also been apprehensive about China's maritime engagement in anti-piracy efforts in the Gulf of Aden. They are also alarmed by the suggestions of a senior Chinese naval official for the establishment of a permanent base to support Chinese ships in the region (*Agence France Presse*, 29 December 2009).

However, Indian analysts' assertions of Chinese naval presence in Myanmar and the Andaman Sea seem to be exaggerated. In the view of proponents of this school of thought, China is following its legitimate interests to protect its commercial shipping from foreign interference in the IOR. China has not had a history of projecting power beyond its coastal waters or establishing bases in a foreign land. It is also pointed out that while China may desire to build capabilities to project military power into the Indian Ocean, it would require a long time to achieve that (Homes et al. 2008).

Another section of strategists, who admit to China's genuine interest in SLOCs security, maintain that China seems to be going beyond the mark in expanding its influence in the IOR and thus generating a security predicament for India. Interestingly, then UPA Minister of State for Defence, Pallam Raju, suggested that India might "assist" in providing maritime security to Chinese ships in the Indian Ocean, implying an important acknowledgement that China has legitimate security concerns in the Indian Ocean (*People's Daily*, 23 February 2010).

In this context, it is necessary to investigate whether the strategies adopted by the Indian government have been effective in achieving their strategic objectives in the region. India has responded to China's growing role in the IOR to become a major

maritime power in several ways. First, India is trying to expand and strengthen its own power projection capabilities in the region. Second, India has pursued a policy of developing close relations with the littoral countries to counter China's dominance in the region. India is also seen to be developing a security presence in and around the Malacca Strait as part of its wider emphasis on protecting the strategically important maritime chokepoints (Brewster 2010: 7).

4.6 Conclusion

India's unique geographical position in the Indian Ocean and its peninsular geographical shape provide it a strong command over the affairs of the ocean. The protection of its trading routes and its merchant shipping has inclined India to be more assertive and pragmatic in its approach in the maritime domain. Being surrounded by the dynamic ocean whose waters wash the shores of eastern and western India, India's maritime outlook and designs are in conformity with its search for great-power status in the world. Indian strategic thinkers have also devised plans to strengthen and enhance India's traditional influence over the countries of the IOR. In the last decade or so, India has focused on developing good security relationships with many states throughout the IOR. India is also seen to be developing a strong security presence in the central Indian Ocean across the east-west SLOCs. At the same time, the presence of extra-regional powers is a reality where external threats to the security and safety of India's EEZ and its ports need to be handled at multilateral levels. India's strategic stakes are not only in containing Pakistani interference or addressing Chinese encirclement of India but also in generating goodwill and positivism about greater Indian engagement in the vulnerable corners of the region. The need of the hour is a long-term vision and political will by the Indian government to move purposefully towards achieving the goals that India has set for itself.

CHAPTER FIVE

**CHANGING CONTOURS OF INDIA'S INDIAN OCEAN
STRATEGY**

5.1 Introduction

Being a maritime nation, India has high aspirations as regards the Indian Ocean. In this, its basic agenda is to utilise and emphasise the territorial advantages it has enjoyed in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). India's archetypal maritime character and vital geostrategic location are significant twin factors that have defined its growth as a nation and evolution as a cosmopolitan civilisation. Indian maritime aspirations in the Indian Ocean may be basically identified as seeking pre-eminence and leadership in Indian Ocean affairs. India's maritime diplomacy and aspirations were not realised to the fullest because of the Indian governments' neglect of the navy as against the army and air force. Indian strategic thinkers have always considered the most vital threats to India's security as originating from land, specifically from the north-west.

However, with changes of time and in global circumstances, India is increasingly warming up to its perceived legitimate rights and aspirations in the IOR and has formulated certain doctrines in this regard. These include the *Indian Maritime Doctrine* (2004 and 2009; hereafter *IMD*), *Indian Maritime Strategy* (2007) and *Non-Alignment 2.0* (2012) This chapter analyses these doctrines and also the changing contours of the strategies adopted by the UPA and NDA governments.

5.2 India's History of Strategic Autonomy and Maritime Strategies in the IOR

India's inclination towards strategic autonomy is deeply rooted in its colonial history. India's policymakers have been averse to the idea of strategic alliances with any superpowers for fear of losing the country's legitimate influence and autonomy in the region. The Indian Ocean has for centuries been dominated by extra-regional powers and no regional power has been formidable enough to establish its supremacy on the ocean and garner acceptance of such a claim. First Portugal, later Great Britain and now the United States have been and are regarded as masters of the Indian Ocean affairs. Historically, the British exploited India's attributes to become a dominant empire in the IOR.

Post-independence India started with an ambiguous Indian Ocean policy approach that stretched somewhere between its historical stance of non-alignment and its avowed keenness for strategic autonomy. Indian strategic thought has often been

criticised as having a culture of strategic restraint, which is deeply ingrained in its strategic psyche (Cohen 2010; Tanham 1952).

Things have, however, started changing in the current century, with an element of pragmatism aided with a neo-liberal approach replacing the ambiguity of Indian maritime aspirations. India is now increasingly refocusing its strategy and interests on the Indian Ocean, keeping in mind the ever-increasing stakes and activities in the ocean by extra-regional powers. The events of the last decade reveal that India's dependence on its maritime environment has expanded substantially along with the growth in its economic, military and technological strength. These have also led to increased global interactions along with the widening of India's national security imperatives and political interests that extend beyond the IOR.

Many defence strategists say that the current century will be the “century of the seas” for India and that the seas will have a vital aspect in its global resurgence (*Ensuring Secure Seas: Indian Maritime Security Strategy* 2015). In recent times, in response to the changing geostrategic and geo-economic circumstances around the world, the Indian Navy's role and responsibilities have expanded significantly. To address these issues, the Indian Navy and the Ministry of Defence formulated the *IMD* in 2004 (revised in 2009) with an innate global strategic outlook. Together with *Freedom to Use the Seas: India's Maritime Military Strategy* (2007), *IMD* has been fundamental in enunciating the Navy's maritime strategic outlook, outlining the parameters of its employment, and providing a comprehensive direction for its evolution as a combat force. India's naval doctrine is also subjected to periodic review to meet the exigencies of prevailing circumstances (*Ensuring Secure Seas: Indian Maritime Security Strategy* 2015).

Certain factors have played a critical role in the evolution of India's maritime strategy. One is the sweeping change experienced by the global and regional geostrategic environment. The gradual shift in geopolitical emphasis from Euro-Atlantic to an Indo-Pacific worldview along with the relocation of global economic and military might towards Asia has caused significant political, economic and social changes in the IOR environment. This has naturally impacted India's maritime environment profoundly, prompting it to respond adequately.

The second critical development is the significant variation witnessed by India's security-cum-threat perception mechanism in recent years. The rapid expansion of non-traditional threats to India's maritime environment along with the persistent traditional security challenges has made the security scenario in India more complex and unpredictable. The 26/11 attack in Mumbai in 2008, for example, has led to re-evaluation and reorientation of the Indian Navy's security perception, to place additional focus on coastal and offshore security, operating philosophy and force development plans.

The third critical factor is a clearer recognition of maritime security as a vital element of national progress and global engagement. With the recognition of the necessity to interact more actively with littoral states of the IOR in a bid to minimise Chinese influence in the region, there has been a more active maritime security engagement as a cornerstone of India's regional foreign policy initiatives. There is a wider appreciation of the determining role that the naval forces can play in strengthening and enhancing India's maritime security in the IOR.

In order to analyse the maritime strategies employed by the Indian state, there is a need to briefly review the various strategies adopted by it to enhance its maritime economic and military interests.

5.3 India's Strategies in the IOR

With the economic liberalisation of the 1990s, India has recorded an impressive annual growth rate of 7-8 per cent during the last 20 years or so. This has resulted in a wide expansion of India's global interests. To maintain the momentum of its economic growth, India needs to protect its overseas trade, investment and energy flows.

There have been certain key factors in recent times in deeply impacting India's evolving maritime thought. These were India's Look East policy leading to India's close engagement with China's neighbours in South-East Asia, China's increasing forays into the Indian Ocean, and the Indo-US bonhomie.

5.4 Maritime Strategies under the UPA Rule

India's capability to exercise its maritime aspirations were severely constrained during the Cold War, as the clash between the superpowers left little room for a regional entity like India, whose priority was to try to protect its territory from foreign aggression. However, the start of the 21st century witnessed active dynamism by the Indian state in the maritime domain, abandoning its longstanding ambiguity and low-key involvement in the maritime affairs of the IOR. The evolution of Indian maritime strategic thinking also reflects a gradual change in India's strategic orientation from a purely continental outlook towards a more balanced perspective that gives more weight to maritime concerns. With the adoption of *IMD* 2004, the Indian government for the first time provided a clear-cut conceptual framework, a common language and a uniform understanding of maritime strategy. Also in 2004 the Congress-led UPA government came to power at the centre, under whose leadership India emphasised its legitimate share in the leadership and management of affairs in the IOR. In this context, then External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee commented,

After nearly a millennium of inward and landward focus, we are once again turning our gaze outward and seaward, which is the natural direction of view for a nation seeking to re-establish itself, not simply as a continental power, but even more so as a maritime power, and consequently as one that is of significance on the world stage.

IMD 2004 was followed in 2007 by *Indian Maritime Military Strategy*, and two years later a revised version of *IMD*.

IMD 2004 is the benchmark of India's policy in the IOR. It is conceptual in nature and not strictly a policy statement. *IMD* 2004 includes all the attributes that a doctrine should, to provide for a common language and to appreciate the many roles that a navy should be prepared for, in peace and in war (<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/india/in-navy-doctrine.htm>). *IMD* lays down that the range of operations of a nation's naval forces is vast, from fighting a high-intensity war at one end to humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations at the other. The Navy's four main roles as envisioned by the *IMD* are Military, Diplomatic, Constabulary, and Benign. It may also be noted that *IMD* is a revised version of the Indian Navy's earlier defence doctrine, which particularly focused on coastal protection through an aggressive, competitive strategy, pursuing littoral warfare and dominating the IOR (*Frontline*, 26 September 2009).

Indian Maritime Military Doctrine (2007) was an extension of *IMD 2004* with some exceptions. The doctrine was released after the Indian Navy had attained hardware, systems and weaponry, as well as trained human resources indicative of a professional maritime force (Alatas 2015: 401). The 2007 document emphasises that though India is an emerging maritime power, it has three substantial doctrines, which focus on the need to “project power, catalyse partnerships, build trust and create interoperability, and when required, use convincing power to achieve national aims” (*Freedom to Use the Sea*, 2007). Chapters 1 and 2 of *Doctrine 2007* talk about India’s perceptions and implications of Indian maritime history. Chapters 3 to 9 deal with defining maritime trade and security of energy, maritime domain awareness, strategy for employment in peace, strategy for employment in conflict and strategy for force build-up.

Reflecting on India’s strategic maritime culture followed during the UPA regime, then Chief of Naval Staff, Admiral Sureesh Mehta, said in 2009: “In military terms, both conventional and non-conventional, we neither have the capability nor the intention to match China, force for force” (Geraghty 2012: 7). Even though India has time and again expressed its concern about China’s growing influence in the IOR, it is careful not to risk its fragile ties with China to turn the region into irrevocably hostile territory. While continuing to engage in clandestine plotting against each other in the struggle for power and position, the two countries’ effort seems to be to deal with tensions at the surface and avoid turning them into overall confrontation (Geraghty 2012: 8). India is somewhat tentative and unsure about the use of power.

To underline a definite strategic culture of the nation, an independent group of academics were tasked with examining India’s strategic environment. The product was *Nonalignment 2.0*, published in 2012, which has offered recommendations regarding India’s role in the international order (Khilnani 2012). *Nonalignment 2.0* is an attempt to identify the basic principles that should guide India’s foreign and strategic policy. It suggests that strategic culture always refers to power (hard and soft), and how, through this document, India has proven that a strategic culture is in the making. India’s legitimacy is summed up in the statement, “India must remain true to its aspiration of creating a new and alternative universality”, the key word here being universality. The report further states that India’s primary strategic interest is to ensure an open economic order.

Neo-liberalist theory suggests that India is slowly becoming prominent in economic liberalisation. Due to the growing post-9/11 global security challenges, India realises that its primary aim is to maintain territorial integrity of its land, sea and space frontiers. This aim also includes the protection of trade routes, access to resources and protection of the Indian diaspora. As part of its strategic culture, India has propounded the concept of conventional space being available under a nuclear overhang. This means that the shaping of India's military power must have a significant maritime orientation. "The role of hard power as an instrument of state is to remain ready to be applied externally or internally in pursuit of political objectives" (*Nonalignment 2.0* 2012).

India has been active in increasing its maritime ties with fellow littoral countries by initiating numerous confidence-building measures (CBMs). It conducts a regular naval exercise with IOR and South-East Asian navies, and in 2004 held its second joint exercise with China's People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN). The exercise provided an opportunity for the two nations to come closer and sort out issues of mistrust. It also facilitated assessing each other's capabilities and also reassuring China about its apprehension of being encircled by the United States. The exercise also enabled China to become more appreciative of Indian sensitivities regarding Chinese attempts to gain a foothold in the Indian Ocean, which had made many of the littorals wary and apprehensive (Ghosh 2009).

The Indian Navy has also made flag-showing visits to important ports in the IOR as an annual exercise. The naval training establishment under the Southern Naval Command at Kochi regularly provides training to naval personnel from South-East Asian and IOR countries. This facilitates building stronger and more influential relationships with friendly navies around the region. Moreover, bilateral and multilateral exercises are held at regular intervals with regional navies that include search-and-rescue drills, exchanges of information, anti-submarine warfare, advanced mine countermeasures and anti-terror tactics. Mutual goodwill visits with ASEAN countries, China, Japan and the United States were a regular feature during the UPA regime that included extensive cooperation in training personnel, hydrography, etc. (ibid.).

In the last decade, India has called for a much-expanded area of strategic interest in the Indian Ocean. The Indian Navy has developed ambitious plans to become a predominant maritime security provider from the Red Sea to Singapore. It sees itself as having a significant security role in Asia-Pacific, including the South China Sea. The Indian government considers the region extending from the Persian Gulf in the west to the Malacca Strait in the east as significant for its security and having a significant security role in areas beyond, including the South China Sea (*Annual Report 2000-2001*, Ministry of Defence). This area was also termed as “India’s sphere of influence” (*Times of India*, 13 April 2001) by the then Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh in the NDA regime and later on as “India’s strategic footprint” (PM’s Address at the Combined Commanders’ Conference) by the UPA Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. Then External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee described the region as the primary area of Indian maritime interest, covering the area from “the Persian Gulf in the north to Antarctica in the south, and from the Cape of Good Hope and the East Coast of Africa in the west to the Straits of Malacca ... and Indonesia in the east” (Admiral A.K. Chatterjee Memorial Lecture, Kolkata, 30 June 2007). India is viewed as the future dominant power in the extended area of the IOR by a host of Indian leaders and strategic thinkers. Then Foreign Secretary Nirupama Rao argued that as the main resident power in the IOR, India was well poised to play a leadership role in the region (Rao 2010, Speech to the National Maritime Foundation, 19 November). At the same time, India’s elites overwhelmingly see the country as an international leader and not as a hegemon. Admiral Nirmal Verma has said that “India does not aspire to play the role of a ‘headmaster’ ” in the region. At the same time, India’s strategists have a particular preoccupation with ensuring that other states recognise India’s special status in the IOR. According to Tanham (2010), Indian strategic thinking significantly revolves around the issue of gaining recognition of the country’s status in the region. He observes that Indians are particularly put out by the external powers’ failure to concede the fact of India dominating the Indian Ocean (Tanham 2010: 82-83). China has also refused to acknowledge India’s leadership in the IOR. On the other hand, the US is rhetorically encouraging India’s rise as a great power. Regional powers such as Australia, Indonesia and South Africa seem to be inclined to acknowledge an undefined leading role for India in the Indian Ocean.

Brewster (2014) has provided certain broad themes around which India's Indian Ocean strategy is followed:

- An instinct to exclude any extra-regional military presence in the IOR, which is now almost entirely focused on China. As the relative balance of power changes in the coming decades, India may also have less patience with the continuing US military presence.
- A perceived connection between India's ability to exercise an extended sphere of influence in the Indian Ocean and its claim to great-power status.
- The perceived importance of external recognition of India's leadership status.
- A desire to avoid multilateral security cooperation and a preference for cooperating only with small or weak states.
- A growing interest in protecting Indian ethnic minorities outside India.
- An inclination to expand India's influence outside of South Asia in a cooperative and non-confrontational manner.

i) Nature of India's Engagement with its South Asian Littoral Neighbours

India's position as a predominant power in South Asia naturally bestows upon it special rights and responsibilities in the management of its regional security. India's predominance in South Asia is established by many factors such as being the biggest economy, the largest state in physical and demographic size, and the largest and most capable military establishment in the region. The littoral states of South Asia consist of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and the Maldives. India is geographically connected with all the maritime states in South Asia except the Maldives. It is also involved in various disputes with its neighbours. The disputes vary from boundary settlements to maritime disputes to the issue of India's sensitivities about protecting its ethnic minorities. India's peculiar experiences in maritime South Asia elucidate India's strategic approaches and policies that can be functional elsewhere in the IOR.

a) Sri Lanka and Maldives

Sri Lanka and the Maldives are located close to the east-west trade routes across Northern Indian Ocean that are of crucial importance to the Indian economy. Good relations with these countries have the potential to further India's ability to project power throughout the region. India conducted military interventions in both these countries under the aegis of its regional security role in the region. India intervened in the Maldives in 1988 to protect the elected government from an attempted coup by foreign elements. The success of the intervention was widely viewed as a positive example of India's projection as a benign security provider in the region. However, India's intervention in Sri Lanka during 1987-1990 proved disastrous, being seen as interference in a neighbour's internal affairs. These episodes left a bitter memory and mistrust between India and Sri Lanka that still overhangs their bilateral relationship. They have also largely impacted India's Indian Ocean strategy to become more cautious and cooperative in regional engagements.

The UPA governments (2004-2014) adopted a non-interventionist policy towards Sri Lanka because of their coalition compulsions with the Tamil regional party Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK). At the same time, New Delhi remained quietly sympathetic to the Sri Lankan government's struggle against the Tamil insurgency, primarily concerning itself with combating and destabilising the LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam) insurgents who assassinated India's former Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi. The UPA governments indirectly supported the defeat of the Tamil insurgents in Sri Lanka, also truncating their linkages in India's domestic circles. India's Sri Lanka policy also shifted its emphasis from political intervention to economic engagement as the most effective tool for influencing its neighbour. In conformity with the Gujral Doctrine that aimed at reassuring its neighbours of India's non-hegemonic aspirations, New Delhi approved a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) giving considerable tariff concessions to Sri Lanka, leading to considerable growth in their bilateral trade and investment (Brewster 2014: 53). After this agreement, Sri Lanka became India's largest trading partner in South Asia and India became the second-largest investor in Sri Lanka by 2007-2008 (ibid.).

Keeping in mind India's willingness to strengthen its bilateral relationships, Colombo was also seen demonstrating preparedness to tailor its external relationships

to accommodate India's concerns. A sense of improved neighbourly relation was displayed by Colombo when it did not contest India's stand on a plan to lease oil tanks in Trincomalee to a Singapore company. Colombo then offered the oil tanks to India on a no-strings-attached basis (*Sunday Island*, 6 February 2005). All this was done by Colombo for presenting India with a further stake in bringing down Sri Lanka's Tamil insurgency. The UPA-I government was also successful in clinching a 35-year agreement where the state-owned Indian Oil Corporation acquired control over and renovated some 20 oil tanks at Trincomalee, which are currently being used to supply fuel to northern Sri Lanka from Indian refineries (*Asia Times Online*, 7 January 2013). Meanwhile, the UPA-I government under pressure from its coalition allies in Tamil Nadu displayed reluctance to provide any overt military assistance despite several "desperate" requests from Colombo. However, it did some intelligence sharing and limited coordination in the interdiction of LTTE supply lines across the Palk Strait (Chandraprema, 2012: 248).

At the same time, New Delhi was concerned about avoiding a repeat in Sri Lanka of its failed strategy in Myanmar, which focused on non-assistance to the military junta government unless it addressed the concerns of the democratic forces of the country. It is widely believed in the diplomatic circles in New Delhi that this stance proved disastrous for Indian interests in Myanmar, which in consequence opted for greater bonhomie with China and Pakistan, India's arch-rivals in the region. Thus, Colombo's shrewd diplomatic moves using such concerns as leverage for greater economic and military assistance resulted in the finalising of the Defence Cooperation Agreement in 2004. Under this pact, it was agreed to formalise the supply of equipment, training and joint maritime patrols, with the ultimate intention of formally superseding the 1987 Accord. However, due to Indian domestic reasons, the agreement could not be formally signed even though it was largely implemented by both sides. Meanwhile the Indian government's demand for the Palay airbase near Jaffna to be exclusively used for the Indian Air Force (IAF) was viewed by Colombo as indicative of India's hegemonic mindset and was put in abeyance (Gokhale, 2009: 122). Towards the later part of the UPA-I government, there was a substantial increase in Indian military assistance to Colombo, which played a substantive but largely unrevealed role in the destruction of the LTTE in 2009. New Delhi and the Sri

Lankan government under Mahinda Rajapaksa displayed considerable political coordination in this regard.

The LTTE's demise led to easing of India-Sri Lanka relations but also significantly decreased India's leverage in Sri Lanka, prompting the latter to intensify its economic relationship with China. New Delhi had sought to pressurise Colombo to come to a political settlement with the Tamil community, an approach that Colombo resisted. For a long time, New Delhi had supported Colombo in defending itself against Western-led criticism over its conduct during the LTTE's destruction. But as a corollary to Colombo's increasing bonhomie with Beijing, in May 2012 India voted in favour of a resolution in the UN Human Rights Council calling for an investigation of alleged war crimes committed by the Sri Lankan government. This led to some bad blood between New Delhi and Colombo, which has led to the blocking of the finalisation of the India-Sri Lanka Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement, which would have facilitated considerable expansion of Sri Lanka's access to the Indian market.

Since 2009, New Delhi has emphasised military-to-military relations with Colombo, particularly naval cooperation. As part of this change in tactics, it offered 1400 training places to the Sri Lankan armed forces. In September 2011, the navies of the two countries held the large-scale SLINEX exercises that involved asymmetric attacks of small vessels, in which the Sri Lankan Navy has particular expertise. It may be observed that the Sri Lankan Navy, which is less influential and has less access to resources than the Sri Lankan army, is more amenable to cooperation with India. In this context, then Sri Lankan Navy chief, Vice Admiral Thisara Samarasinghe, commented, "Our relationship with India is a role model for cooperation between two navies on a common problem" (Ranasinghe 2012: 27). In addition to regular patrols, the Indian Navy also conducts manned and unmanned aerial surveillance of waters around Sri Lanka. An annual security dialogue at Defence Secretary level commenced in 2012.

In the Northern Indian Ocean, the Maldives also is strategically very important to India as the east-west shipping routes across the ocean pass through the Maldives. The former British air and naval base on Gan Island in southernmost Maldives provides a potential base to dominate the central Indian Ocean. Since 1988, when

India intervened in the Maldives to prevent an attempted coup by foreign mercenaries, India-Maldives relations have been strengthened substantially. India has been providing training to Maldivian armed forces.

In recent times, deterioration in the Maldives' environment has increased that country's dependence on India for security. Rising sea levels, radical Islamisation, piracy, economic crisis compounded with political instability have threatened the archipelagic nation's stability, which has serious implications for India. New Delhi has also arranged for trilateral security cooperation with Sri Lanka and the Maldives. A framework agreement for development and cooperation was signed in November 2011 as part of a package to help develop the Maldivian economy possibly in areas like banking and financial infrastructure.

Chinese influence in the Maldives, which is primarily economics oriented, is growing. The Maldives government takes the view that New Delhi should not be worried about a Chinese security presence in Maldives territory (Raja Mohan 2012: 146). Despite heavy investments by China in the Maldives, Male is quick to downplay the commencement of any strategic relationship with China, reminding that the archipelagic nation is only 300 km away from the Indian city of Thiruvananthapuram (*South Asia Monitor*, 5 September 2012). It is thus seen that India has been able to exercise a comparatively better influence on the Maldives than on Sri Lanka through its various maritime strategies and initiatives to bring the former into its security network. It may incidentally be noted that the opening of the Chinese embassy in Male immediately prior to the SAARC Summit in November 2011 was construed as a way of reminding the SAARC members of China's legitimate interests in the South Asian region.

ii) India's Strategy in South-West Indian Ocean

The South-West Indian Ocean, which comprises Mauritius, Seychelles and France (through its occupation of Reunion), provides an interesting opportunity to India to build a greater leading role, if not the supreme sphere of influence. Since independence, India has shown a profound interest in being a maritime security provider throughout the south-west IOR basically through combating Somalia-based piracy and help in the policing of the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of the island nations. The Mozambique Channel is the major focus of maritime security in the

South-West Indian Ocean as it is the key route for shipping between the Middle East and the Atlantic Ocean.

a) Mauritius

Mauritius, which also has the nickname of Little India of the Indian Ocean, has always acted as one of India's friendly states. A US report has assessed that Mauritius' foreign policy has always tended to support India as a reflection of its Indian-majority-descent population. India has considered Mauritius one of its closest international partners and has acted more or less in cooperation with the US on issues relating to Mauritius. After the departure of the Royal Navy in 1974, India effectively played an important role in protecting Mauritius' security. India has helped establish the Coast Guard of Mauritius for policing its EEZ and has provided training and equipment to the security forces.

Highlighting the bilateral trust and goodwill between India and Mauritius is the fact that India provides the commander of the Mauritian Coast Guard and Police Helicopter Squadron (*Le Matinal*, 31 March 2011). The Indian Navy has also been providing maritime security to Mauritius' EEZ through periodic patrols since 2003. Maritime security provision has also included hydrographic surveys and anti-piracy patrols since 2009 (Ramachandran 2007). India has also installed a radar coastal surveillance system throughout the Mauritian island chain. It includes five stations on the islands of Mauritius and one each on Rodrigues, Saint Brandon and the Agalega islands (*Indo-Asian News Service*, 6 November 2009).

Since 2006, New Delhi has been discussing with Port Louis for long-term lease of the strategically significant Agalega islands to India ostensibly for tourism (*Times of India*, 25 November 2006; <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/india/in-navy-doctrine.htm>). But it has been widely speculated that New Delhi anticipates upgrading an airstrip on North Agalega to service Indian manned and unmanned surveillance aircraft (Forsberg 2007: 39). If this materialises, it would significantly improve India's air surveillance capabilities throughout the Western Indian Ocean, including the Mozambique Channel. A possible hitch to the deal is Mauritius' memories of the painful history of parting with the Chagos islands under the prime ministership of Sir Seewoosagar Ramgoolam in the 1960s, but a confidential US diplomatic report has concluded that

Port Louis may not be averse to the deal because of its traditional affinity to India (*The Hindu*, 2 April 2011). In July 2012 Mauritian Foreign Minister Arvin Boolell reportedly agreed to offer India the use of the Agalega islands in return for the retention of the double-tax treaty with India. He further commented that there was no problem on the issue of India using the North and South Agalegas for tourism, marine studies or “building a strategic presence in the Indian Ocean” (*Economic Times*, 6 July 2012).

In economic matters, India is a major trading partner of Mauritius. India-Mauritius bilateral trade doubled in 2010-2011. During the last decade until January 2010, Mauritius was the source of 43 per cent of global foreign direct investment in India. All this ensued because of a highly favourable double-tax treaty (referred to earlier) put in place in 1982 by the Indira Gandhi government that ultimately resulted in a so-called Mauritian route used by American, European and other offshore investors for making tax-free investments in India. In contemporary times, Mauritius has unfortunately also become a safe haven for black money generated in India, where the tax treaty is exploited for legalising black money by wealthy Indians.

b) The Seychelles

The Seychelles archipelago, which is strategically placed in the Indian Ocean, has been successfully balancing the demands of major powers for using it for military purposes while at the same time relying on India as a sort of benign security guarantor. India’s close relationship with the Seychelles started from the year 1982, when President Albert Rene sought India’s help to intervene in an attempted coup by foreign mercenaries and protect him. In 1986 India’s status as a benign security guarantor to the Seychelles was further recognised when an attempted coup against President Rene was prevented with the help of the Indian Navy. Coup threats against the Seychelles government receded by the late 1980s. Thereafter, the India-Seychelles security relationship focused on training the Seychelles security forces (Harrison and Subramanyam 1989: 263). Among other things, India has built the Seychelles Defence Academy in 1989 and is largely responsible for its management. India has also been policing the Seychelles’ EEZ under a bilateral defence cooperation agreement signed in 2003.

However, with the beginning of Chinese influence in the Seychelles, New Delhi has become concerned about a growing Chinese grip on the Seychelles under the veil of assistance. Therefore, it has adopted various strategies to restrict Chinese presence in the archipelagic nation. In 2005, India gifted an offshore patrol vessel to the Seychelles apparently under pressure to pre-empt offers of Chinese assistance to that country (Asia Times Online, 2 August 2007). By 2010, India focused on assisting the Seychelles to counter piracy in its neighbouring waters. This move was reportedly prompted by the visit of the Seychelles President to Beijing in May 2010, when Beijing is reported to have offered to supply an offshore patrol vessel.

In June 2010, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh announced India's decision to write off almost half of Seychelles' debt to India. This gesture was widely seen as a strategy to bring back the Seychelles from the growing incentives of Chinese assistance. In the months following Prime Minister Singh's announcement, the then Indian foreign minister S.M. Krishna and defence minister A.K. Anthony visited the Seychelles. During his visit, Anthony sought to strengthen Indo-Seychelles defence partnership by better institutionalising the previously ad hoc defence cooperation between the two countries.

Acting on its maritime strategy of bringing the littoral countries under its arena, India agreed to supply a second offshore patrol vessel to the Seychelles along with maritime surveillance aircraft that included one Dornier and two helicopters. India also provides training to the Seychelles Special Forces in VIP protection, commando operations and diving. Under its defence cooperation, India also acquired the privilege and power of supplying a maritime security advisor and naval advisor to the Seychelles President (Media briefing by Ministry of External Affairs, 27 April 2012). The Indian Navy is known to regularly conduct anti-piracy patrols and hydrographic surveys in the waters of the Seychelles. India has also started the construction of a coastal surveillance radar system in the Seychelles (*Strategic Affairs*, May 2012: 68).

The Seychelles has so far been successful in balancing the power struggle for influence by major Indian Ocean powers like the United States, the UAE and China to its own advantage. However, in the light of India's growing anxiety over PLAN's access to Port Victoria for the operational turnaround of PLAN vessels, New Delhi

was assured by the Seychelles President that India's status as the Seychelles' "main development partner" would remain non-negotiable.

c) France

France is the strongest power in and around the Mozambique Channel where the French Department of Reunion, about 200 km off Mauritius, is the headquarters of the French South Indian Ocean armed forces. France's security presence is supported by its large base at Djibouti and its ownership of Antarctic territories, which include the Kerguelen Islands, St Paul and Amsterdam Islands and Crozet Islands.

Historically, India has had a special regard for France for its semi-autonomous strategic posture within the Western alliance. However, their relations have not been without irritation, because of the politically restive Indian origin community in Reunion, where France resisted the opening of an Indian consulate till 1986 (Brewster, 2014:79). There was also a degree of low-level competition between India and France for strategic influence in Mauritius. When India initiated the formation of the Indian Ocean Region Association for Regional Cooperation (IOR-ARC) in 1997, France requested to be made a member of the association, but the request was ignored. India does not want a potentially influential competitor to its maritime power status in the IOR to gain further advantage in the region. France has therefore had to be content with the status of a dialogue partner in IOR-ARC.

However, since the last decade or so, particularly after the coming to power of the UPA government in India, the strategic relationship between India and France has improved, with France realising that India will rise as an influential power in Asia and so it should be engaged early on to shape the future strategic equations in the region. France has taken due note of India's growing naval ambitions and has anticipated that the Indian Navy is going to be a major force in the Indian Ocean in the near future and has become increasingly comfortable with an expanded Indian maritime security presence in the region. It has also encouraged India's growing role in policing the South-West Indian Ocean against pirates. However, while supporting India's rise, it has also tried to ensure that India would acknowledge its legitimate interests in the IOR. The consolidation of India's and France's strategic perspectives on the Indian Ocean was globally seen as part of a broader pattern of Indo-French defence cooperation in the Indian Ocean. The UPA government also invited France to be a

member of the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium in 2008. France has derived great satisfaction in that it was the only Western country to be invited by India for launching the IONS. But as regards the conduct of joint operations with the French Navy, the UPA government stuck to the Indian tradition of opting out of any coalition operations that are not under the aegis of the United Nations. As an alternative, New Delhi is seen organising anti-piracy operations as part of the recent IONS.

As part of its strategic partnership in the IOR, India has sought to include France in annual bilateral naval exercises, which have grown in size and complexity. For instance, there was the Varuna 2011 exercise involving Indian and French carrier groups in the Arabian Sea. France's most important strategic partnership with India concerns armament transfers, often a critical factor in its external relations. India's lucrative arms market has often lured defence industries the world over. France has won a series of contracts, including the transfer of six Scorpene submarines in 2005 and the upgrading of the Indian aircraft fleet of Mirage 2000 in 2010. Since 2012, New Delhi and Paris have worked on a new series of important orders: an agreement to co-develop and co-produce short-range surface-to-air missiles has reached the final phase, while advanced negotiations have been initiated for a US\$12 billion contract for the transfer of 126 Rafale fighter jets. New Delhi's policy of strengthening its strategic partnership with Paris also consists in defence and technology development.

Overall, it may be seen that France now appreciates India as a key partner in providing logistical support for the deployment of the French fleet and naval aviation in peacetime and a potential partner in regional crisis prevention (Boquerat 2003: 243).

iii) Africa in India's Indian Ocean Strategy

Africa forms the western wall of the Indian Ocean. India's economic, political and strategic influence in Africa has been growing continually ever since the period of decolonisation. India's strategic interests in Africa are primarily economic, where India intends to develop dependable sources of energy and also to gain access to a huge market for India's products. In diplomatic terms, India considers its expanding role in Africa as a way of augmenting its global status, including gathering support for its claims for a permanent seat in the UN Security Council. India's promotion of its role as a maritime security provider in the Western Indian Ocean also rests

significantly on its ability to exercise strategic influence in Eastern and Southern Africa. Among its key objectives in Africa, India envisages a close partnership with South Africa, evolving India's role as a maritime security provider in East Africa and preventing the growth of a Chinese security presence in the region.

During the 20th century, India was unable to develop a broader strategic role in Africa because of several constraints like financial weakness and inward-looking economic policies. Its ideological emphasis on achieving national liberation through non-violent means also prevented it from providing military support to the liberation movements of Africa, which opened the doors for competitors like China and Pakistan. However, with the strengthening of the Indian economy over the last decade, India has sorted out various measures to move past the limitations of the decolonisation era. India has sought to expand its strategic role in Eastern Africa by reflecting on its historical linkages with the region along with the wish to enhance its maritime role in the Indian Ocean. India's moves are also seen to be enthusiastically reciprocated by the East African countries by accepting Indian naval presence in their waters.

India's maritime diplomacy in East Africa includes various cooperation agreements and training programmes through which it provides limited defence aid to Kenya and Tanzania. Yet, India has not so far had much success in positioning itself as a maritime security provider in their waters. India's bilateral relationship with Tanzania has long been cordial, but with Kenya, the most powerful state in East Africa, it is relatively cold. Political frictions with Kenya on account of its treatment meted out to citizens of Indian origin have long been a spoiler in their diplomatic relationship.

India's strategy of being a maritime security provider to Mozambique has largely been successful. New Delhi has been successful in arriving at an understanding with Mozambique in 2012 to help police the Mozambique Channel, including Mozambique waters, against maritime terrorism and piracy, which has presented India with an opportunity to prove its credentials as a benign security provider in East Africa and to build a regular naval presence in the Mozambique Channel. As part of its programme of providing maritime security, the Indian Navy was deployed off Maputo to help provide maritime security for the African Union

summit in 2003 and also during the World Economic Forum in 2004 (Dubey 2016: 26). Under the UPA regime in India, the tempo of the India-Mozambique relationship was enhanced considerably, with several bilateral visits at Prime Ministerial or senior Minister level. In 2010, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh commented that defence and security cooperation was one of the “four pillars” of the India-Mozambique partnership (*The Hindu*, 1 October 2010). The UPA government was able to conclude several security agreements that included a 2006 defence cooperation agreement and a 2011 MOU dealing with maritime patrols along the Mozambique coast. There are also agreements for training, supply of defence equipment and services and the rehabilitation of military infrastructure (*Defenceweb*, 30 June 2011).

As regards South Africa, India considers that country as a key security partner in sub-Saharan Africa. During the apartheid era, India established a cordial relationship with the African National Congress (ANC) and with the South African government after the establishment of the black-majority government in that country. India’s first ever strategic partnership with South Africa was announced during President Nelson Mandela’s visit to New Delhi in April 1997. But the relationship has not prospered to the extent that was expected. A close relationship with South Africa, the largest economy in Africa, would have been beneficial for India but the economic relationship has remained relatively weak and unbalanced. A Preferential Trade Agreement has been in negotiation since 2003 which would have provided India with improved trade access to South Africa and other African partners. But unresolved issues like the export of pharmaceuticals to South Africa and restrictions on foreign investments in India have slowed down the economic relationship between the two countries. China in contrast to India has become South Africa’s largest trading partner, with bilateral trade worth \$45 billion in 2011.

The IBSA Dialogue Forum was established in 2003 by India, Brazil and South Africa, partly as an endeavour to bring themselves into a South-South global partnership. IBSA was avowedly intended to sum up the strategic commonalities of these three countries and collectively use their power as leverage in international fora. IBSA has also included security on its agenda and has resulted in the biennial IBSAMAR (IBSA maritime) naval exercises among the three countries since 2008 in the vicinity of the Cape of Good Hope. IBSAMAR exercises have included anti-air and anti-submarine warfare, visit-board-search-seizure operations and anti-piracy

drills (Dubey 2016: 26). IBSAMAR also included officers from other South African Development Community (SADC) states on South Africa's request.

But India's hopes of building a special relationship with South Africa through IBSA were set back by South Africa's entry into the competing BRICS grouping. South Africa's membership of BRICS has seemed to India as indicating South Africa's refusal to be enclosed into an Indian-sponsored grouping that did not include its major trading partner, China. The China-centric nature of BRICS has also overshadowed India's traditional role as an ideological leader of the global South. South Africa's closer relationship with China makes it an unlikely partner for India in constraining China's influence in the IOR.

India's Indian Ocean strategy with South Africa is based on India's desire for military cooperation, particularly with the South African Navy, that is intended to legitimise an expanded regional role for India. India and South Africa have active defence interactions that include regular high-level military delegations, a Joint Committee on Defence Cooperation and various defence agreements. India has been successful in creating a cordial relation with the South African Navy and since 2006 annual staff talks have been held between the two navies separately from the other armed forces. The UPA regime in India was also successful in carrying out several exchanges of ship visits and in assisting South Africa with maritime training. The Indian Navy has also participated in various exercises with other Southern African states that include Exercise Blue Crane in South Africa involving naval forces from some 12 Southern and East African countries. India also maintains sound defence relationships in Southern Africa through the maintenance of army and/or air force training teams in Zambia, Botswana, Namibia and Lesotho.

Both Indian and South African navies have the desire for greater cooperation, but this desire has been constrained by the South African Navy's limited capabilities and its overwhelming strategic focus on continental Africa. It should also be noted that the Indian Navy's engagement in the waters of one of South Africa's SADC partners (Mozambique) has been viewed with some unease by South Africa. India's expanding maritime security role in Africa could be seen by Pretoria as a competition for influence over its neighbours.

iv) India's Maritime Policies in North-West Indian Ocean

The North-West Indian Ocean is critical to India's economic interests because of India's dependence on energy resources from the Persian Gulf. For this reason, the North-West Indian Ocean is also called the strategic hub of the IOR.

India's maritime strategy has always looked to develop long-term strategic partnerships inside the politically volatile Gulf region. But this quest has been severely constrained by Pakistan's wide-ranging security relationships in the region. For several decades after independence, India's strategic role in West Asia was fortified by its relationship with Egypt by way of its prominent role in the Non-Aligned Movement. India also has a history of close relationship with Iraq because of its erstwhile regime led by Saddam Hussein, which was largely anti-Western, socialist and secular leaning. But the Gulf War in the early 1990s put an end to India's close relationship with Iraq. India's ambiguous response to the Gulf War because of its non-aligned rhetoric and concern for the welfare of some 180,000 Indian workers trapped in Iraq and Kuwait during Iraq's invasion of Kuwait further diminished India's influence in the Persian Gulf (Brewster 2014: 109).

After the end of the Cold War, several developments in global politics helped India in its search for influence in the Persian Gulf. India's departure from its non-aligned rhetoric to closer cooperation with the US has facilitated India's route for a greater security role in the Persian Gulf. The liberalisation of India's economy during the early 1990s also facilitated India's expansion of trading and investment links with the Gulf. Recognition of shared interests such as combating Islamic terrorism and better economic collaboration for regional cooperation also brought the countries of the Gulf region closer to India. New Delhi sought to give greater consistency to its regional strategy by launching a Look West policy in 2005 as a counterpoint to India's Look East policy in East Asia. In contemporary times, India's most significant security concerns in the Gulf include energy security, ensuring the safety of Indian migrant workers and the maintenance of regional stability (ibid.).

As India's economy is highly reliant on energy resources from the Gulf – which dependence is likely to increase considerably in the coming years – the need to secure the critical shipping routes of India's energy supplies has become ever more important. In this context, some security experts are of the view that China's

expanding influence and the prospects of Chinese naval presence around the Gulf region would create a so-called Hormuz Dilemma for India in Hormuz Strait (ibid.). This makes it imperative for India to actively strive to secure the strait by enhancing its security relationships with the states around the strait.

a) Saudi Arabia

After a long period of conflict, India's relationship with Saudi Arabia has improved over the years. In order to establish its credentials as a major maritime influence in the North-West Indian Ocean, it was essential for India to recognise that a political and security relationship with Saudi Arabia could act as a counterweight to Pakistan's influence in the Gulf region. In January 2006, New Delhi finalised an MOU with Saudi Arabia on information sharing on common interests related to counterterrorism. In September 2012, encouraged by Saudi Arabia's interest in joint training and naval cooperation in the Arabian Sea and the Gulf, a Joint Committee on Defence Cooperation was established between India and Saudi Arabia.

A deepening relationship between the two countries has also resulted in a change of Saudi Arabia's approach to the Indo-Pak conflict, whereby Saudi Arabia has urged that the matter should be solved bilaterally and peacefully, unlike its previous policy of putting its entire weight on Pakistan's side. Riyadh even proposed granting observer status to India at the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC), though Pakistan blocked the move.

India has also developed limited security relationships with several Gulf Arab states such as Oman, Qatar and UAE to help combat jihadi terrorism and also as a security guarantor and an alternative to the larger Gulf powers and their overwhelming influence on the politics of these smaller countries.

b) Qatar

Qatar has followed quite a stimulating foreign policy line. It has a close security relationship with the US and an unconventional relationship with Israel, though Qatar is an Islamic state.

India receives major portions of its LNG supplies from Qatar. Qatar also sought a greater security and diplomatic umbrella than what it settled for with the US.

Towards this objective, it asked India to have a closer security understanding with it. In 2008, New Delhi signed a security agreement with Doha, which included Indian security guarantees relating to maritime security and intelligence sharing. According to some Indian officials, this security arrangement is one of the most far-reaching that India has signed with any country and is “just short of stationing troops” (*Financial Times*, 11 November 2008). Although Qatar looked for a semi-permanent Indian naval presence in its territory, India was cautious not to undertake any action that might offend others in the region (Raja Mohan 2012: 163).

c) Oman

India’s relationship with Oman is the closest among all the countries in the Gulf. Oman has long used its security relationship with India to balance its relationships with its larger neighbours. India’s close relationship with Oman dates back to the 1970s, when Oman received independence from Great Britain. Oman’s admission into the United Nations was supported by India despite opposition from the majority of the Gulf states. Oman reciprocated this gesture with its support for India during India’s war with Pakistan in 1971. Oman sits astride the Hormuz Strait, which is critical for India’s energy imports.

Oman sees India as a reliable security partner having the capability of contributing to stability and security in the region. According to one confidential interview of a US official, Oman’s Deputy Prime Minister commented that Oman wants India to undertake greater diplomatic and political engagement in the region in order to balance the power equations in the region. However, Oman does not believe in India’s military presence in the region (US Embassy Muscat cable to US State Department, 2010).

India has secured numerous security agreements with Oman on a wide range of matters. There are annual naval and air exercises and regular military-to-military talks between the two countries. The IAF uses Oman’s Thumrait airbase that is operated by the US Air Force for conducting anti-piracy efforts. The Indian Navy also has secured the rights for using port facilities at Salalah (Brewster 2014: 112). Despite Oman’s close links with Pakistan and the US, New Delhi is seen as seeking to expand a direct maritime security presence in the region. Since October 2008, the Indian Navy has continuously deployed one or two vessels in anti-piracy patrols in the Gulf

of Aden, off Somalia. India, despite its refusal to participate in the US-sponsored Combined Task Force 151 in combating piracy in the region, has sought to demonstrate its ability in providing public goods to the region through its unilateral anti-piracy operations.

d) Iran

India has a long history of cultural connectivity with Iran through the centuries of rule over the Indian subcontinent by the Persianised Mughals. Though Iran's trajectory of political evolution from a secular to theocratic state has stood as a constraint for a better diplomatic relationship between the two countries, India has still considered Shi'a Iran to be closer to its ideas of a liberal world rather than the Wahabised Arab world. In strategic terms, Iran represents a natural strategic partner for India that has the potential of opening India's regional role in the entire Persian Gulf.

Iran's aspirations of playing an expanded security role after the British withdrawal from the Persian Gulf brought it closer to India, with whom it intended to develop a partnership as the dominant power in South Asia (Brewster 2104: 113). Iran wanted India to reduce its dependency on the Soviet Union and prevent Soviet access to Indian naval facilities. Iran also reached an agreement with India for staying away from the Persian Gulf and giving it greater space for handling regional affairs. India developed a strategic partnership with Iran in the 1970s that had the potential of changing the whole regional balance of power in the region.

However, the end of the Cold War led to greater strategic convergences between the two countries and both countries developed similar interests in the management of regional issues like peace and stability in the newly independent Central Asian Republics (CARs) or their united opposition to the Pakistan-backed Taliban regime in Afghanistan. During 2000-2003, there were a number of issues on which there was a convergence of opinion between New Delhi and Iran. This growing understanding resulted in the commencement of a new Strategic Partnership in January 2003, which was primarily of an economic nature but with significant strategic implications. This partnership included a plan for regular security dialogues and links between the national security councils in each country (*Jane's Intelligence Digest*, 29 January 2003).

India's most ambitious maritime policy as regards Iran during the UPA regime involved cooperation in the development of a north-south transportation corridor from the Indian Ocean to the CARs via Afghanistan and to Russia via the Caspian Sea. This arrangement also included Indian assistance to develop Iran's Chabahar port and the construction of a highway and rail link from Chabahar to the port city of Zaranj in western Afghanistan (Brewster 2016). The construction of the highway in Afghanistan was completed in 2009 by India's quasi-military Border Roads Organisation, but the railway project is yet to commence.

Chabahar being located on the Gulf of Oman between Gwadar and Hormuz Strait, the Chabahar port project has the potential of changing the strategic scenario in the Persian Gulf in favour of India. In August 2012, New Delhi reached an agreement with Tehran whereby the latter approved a \$100 million Indian project of expanding container facilities at the port. This deal also included approval by Afghanistan through a trilateral India-Iran-Afghanistan agreement.

While on the face of it India's interests in Chabahar are purely commercial, there are also unsubstantiated claims of granting access rights to Indian naval ports. Such an arrangement would go a long way in providing India easy access to the Strait of Hormuz and allowing to outwit the hype of Chinese construction and access to Gwadar. Signifying the deepening relationship between the two countries is the fact that India has unusually large consulates in Iran that include Zahedan, situated near Iran's borders with Pakistan and Afghanistan, and Bandar Abbas located on the Strait of Hormuz, which can be used for intelligence gathering, including signal intelligence (Berlin 2004). Since 2003, India has also been assisting in the maintenance of Russian-sourced equipment such as tanks and artillery in Iran and training of Iranian naval engineers. India's strategic declaration that its relationship with Iran reflects its independent approach to world politics and is not guided by US strategic concerns has been observed in various symbolic naval exercises held with Iran in the Arabian Sea during US preparations for its war in Iraq and also during US President George W. Bush's visit to the region (Brewster 2014: 117). But in the overall analysis, India-Iran relations have remained largely symbolic because of India's failure to implement a number of agreements. According to a US Congressional report, India-Iran relations have been too sporadic and low level to represent a major strategic alliance (Kronstadt and Katzman 2007: CRS-5).

India's growing relationship with the US and the United States' hostility towards Iran have constrained the prospects of a better India-Iran relationship. Since 2005, India has voted against Iran in IAEA resolutions in the UN Security Council. India is also faced with the dilemma of not endangering its access to crucial Israeli defence technology because of Israel's hostility to Iran. Indian strategists will have a hard time balancing these conflicting interests vis-à-vis India's relationships with newer allies like the US and Israel and at the same time arriving at an understanding with Iran to mutually enhance their potential to project power in the region.

v) India's Interests in North-East Indian Ocean

In the North-East Indian Ocean, India is the dominant naval power. This sector of the ocean is crucial for India's search for a maritime power status in ocean politics. It is the arena in which India has to defend itself from potential threats that may emanate from or through South-East Asia. Another critical interest in furthering India's control over this sector of the ocean is that if India acquires the ability to control the sea lines of communication (SLOCs) between the Bay of Bengal and the Andaman Sea finally crossing the Malacca Strait, it would provide much larger leverage to India's oceanic reach vis-à-vis other rival powers such as China.

India has a leading security role in the North-East Indian Ocean because of its geographically advantageous position in the ocean. India's domination of this sector of the ocean was consolidated in the 1971 war, when the naval blockade by the Indian Navy successfully established its control over the Bay of Bengal. Although India's position in this sector of the ocean was briefly challenged by Indonesia during the 1960s, India's control in the region remains unchallenged in contemporary times. However, India remains extremely sensitive to any possible extra-regional naval presence in the Bay of Bengal and the Andaman Sea. At the same time, India's maritime presence is increasingly accepted in the South-East Asian countries because of its relatively benign perception in the region.

A pivotal point of India's ambitions in the Indian Ocean is its aspiration to control the Malacca Strait. The Indian Navy has identified controlling this strait as part of its primary area of interest. It is been observed that India's ability to exert negative control over the strait would have major consequences for its strategic role in the entire IOR (Brewster 2014: 125). It is also claimed that the criticality of the strait

to India's strategic importance may be compared to the significance of the US foothold in the Panama Canal.

While the Malacca Strait is the primary chokepoint for sea traffic between the Indian and Pacific Oceans, India's position in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands provides it with a considerable measure of control over the western approaches to the strait. Hence, India has sought to develop an active security role in the strait, which is equally supported by the US, which is very comfortable with India's initiative of providing security in the strait (*India Defence*, 7 June 2006). Meanwhile, India's desire to play the role of maritime security provider in the North-East Indian Ocean is countered by the various political and legal issues surrounding its status. As the strait is largely within the national waters of Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore, there are limits to India's navigational freedom, because under the international Law of the Sea, foreign navies have only the right of transit and cannot conduct armed patrols.

a) Indonesia and Malaysia

Indonesia and Malaysia are particular about safeguarding their sovereignty and are highly sensitive to the presence of any external maritime security providers in the strait (Brewster 2014: 126). On account of this opposition, in 2004 they opposed the deployment of US forces under the United States' Regional Maritime Security Initiative. They have also refused to participate in the Japanese-sponsored multilateral ReCAAP initiative that involved the voluntary exchange of information on piracy and other security threats in the strait. The Indonesian Foreign Ministry publicly rejected India's overtures regarding a security role for itself in the Malacca Strait in 2005, and commented that responsibility for the safety of the strait lay only with Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore. In view of these developments, India has sought to publicly distance itself from any such foreign initiatives along with the insistence that any such initiatives must be subject to united consensus of the littoral states (Khurana 2008: 134).

However, it seems that the Indonesian military has taken a more benign view of Indian presence in the region compared to other extra-regional forces. India's strategy of gaining recognition as a maritime security provider in the littoral countries of the strait received tangible success in a meeting of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) in March 2009. An Indonesian military spokesman reportedly requested India

to take part in the maintenance of security in the Malacca Strait on the basis that with India's presence in the region, "all approaches to the Strait will be more secure for international shipping" (*Xinhua*, 5 March 2009). Indian maritime aspirations in the strait were also complimented when Indonesian defence minister Purnomo Yusgiantoro reportedly commented in 2010 that Indonesia had no reservations about India maintaining a security presence in the strait (*The Hindu*, 18 June 2010).

Malaysia, on the other hand, has generally countered any Indian role in the strait. It has declined to hold bilateral naval exercises or conduct "coordinated patrols" with the Indian Navy. Nevertheless, Malaysia has agreed to consent to an Indian role in providing air surveillance over the strait (*India Defence*, 17 August 2008). Since 2007, the IAF has provided training for the operation of the Malaysian Air Force's Russian-built SU-30 MKM aircraft along with an agreement to cooperate in maintenance and training for the French-designed Scorpene submarines deployed by the Indian and Malaysian navies.

Thailand's view about maritime security in the Indian Ocean is largely convergent with India's and it is increasingly accepting India's leading role in the Bay of Bengal and Andaman Sea. Since 2006, the navies of both countries have been conducting symbolic "coordinated patrols" in the Andaman Sea, primarily intended as a confidence-building measure between the two countries. During the UPA regime in India, an MOU on defence cooperation was also signed in January 2012 along with the establishment of an annual Defence Dialogue between the two countries.

b) Singapore

Singapore encourages India's position as a maritime security provider in the region. Singapore has performed the role of India's strategic anchor in the eastern ranges of the Indian Ocean and is also the hub of India's economic, political and strategic relationships in South-East Asia (Brewster 2009: 597). India's expanded security role in the IOR has always been advocated and encouraged by the leaders of Singapore, starting from Lee Kuan Yew to the current generation of Singaporean leaders. When India embarked on its Look East policy in 1992, Singapore enthusiastically responded by positioning itself as India's regional sponsor to all intents and purposes. Despite India's aversion to joining any military alliance following the Nehruvian legacy, Singapore made several unsuccessful attempts to persuade India to take a further

regional security role in South-East Asia. Nevertheless, India and Singapore agreed to sign a comprehensive defence cooperation agreement that provided for annual defence policy dialogues, joint exercises, intelligence sharing and cooperation in defence technology in 2003. Along with that, annual exercises have been conducted by the defence forces of the two countries since 2004. As part of the defence agreement, the Singapore Air Force was given access to Kalaikunda Airbase in India along with the permission to station troops of Singaporean army personnel and equipment at India's Babina and Deolali firing ranges (Brewster, 2014:133). The policy of allowing foreign defence forces on Indian territory represented a major policy change for the Indian government, which had a legacy of being averse to foreign military bases anywhere in Asia.

The navies of India and Singapore exercise together frequently in the Bay of Bengal and also sometimes in the South China Sea. As part of its strategy of expanding India's oceanic reach, Indian naval vessels frequently visit the Changi Naval Base. In light of this scenario, the possibility of developing a semi-permanent Indian logistical presence in Singapore is a possibility in the near future.

c) Myanmar

With Myanmar, India has had a relatively problematic relationship since Burma's independence in 1948. India's support for democratic protests against the Burmese junta and for Burmese exile groups has considerably strained its relationship with Myanmar.

India's primary interest in Myanmar is to restrict Chinese presence in the Burmese island ports and to persuade its government to act against the Indian separatist groups of the north-east residing in the non-governing areas of Myanmar. However, Myanmar's role in the Indian Ocean is constrained by its economic weakness and its preoccupation with internal threats. Given its history of strained relationship with Myanmar, India has shown more openness to greater US influence in the region, with a common agreement with the US over restricting China's regional influence. Myanmar's reconciliation with the Western world since the establishment of the reformist government under President Thein Sein has also presented India with considerable economic opportunities. It has revived New Delhi's dreams of improving east-west trade connectivity between India and South-East Asia through

Myanmar. India also hopes to gain transport access through Myanmar to the strategically significant Indian Ocean port of Sittwe as part of its strategy of expanding its maritime influence.

vi) Australia in India's Maritime Ambitions

Australia, with a coastline of more than 14,000 km, has the largest area of maritime jurisdiction along with an EEZ that amounts to approximately 3.88 million sq km. In spite of its history of emphasising its economic and security priorities in the Pacific Ocean, Australia is now paying significant attention to the Indian Ocean. While India has few direct security interests in the Australian continent, Australia is a potentially important partner for India's strategic ambitions in the Indian Ocean. But standing in the way of this aspiration is the fact that Australia has always lobbied for US military presence in the region and shuns the concept of the establishment of a regional maritime security order in the Indian Ocean.

Indo-Australian relations reached an all-time low when Australian Prime Minister John Howard characterised the 1998 Pokhran tests by India as "a grotesque status symbol" (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 February 1999). However, things have started to change during the last two decades, which were marked by several visits by Australian Prime Ministers and other senior ministers to Delhi to normalise relations following the gradual acceptance of New Delhi's nuclear status by the West. The improved political situation has led to several bilateral agreements on security-related matters that included a 2003 agreement on terrorism, a 2006 MOU on defence cooperation, a 2007 defence information sharing arrangement and a 2008 agreement involving intelligence dialogue, extradition and terrorism (Brewster 2014: 154).

In August 2007, the annual India-US Malabar naval exercise was transformed into a large-scale multilateral exercise in the Bay of Bengal. This exercise also included navies from Australia, Japan and Singapore. The gradual recognition of New Delhi's strategic might in the Indian Ocean was confirmed by Australia's 2009 Defence White Paper, which reflected the strong mutual interest of India and Australia in augmenting maritime security collaboration in the Indian Ocean (Brewster 2010). In November 2009, Australia and India reached a Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation which was anticipated to highlight the mutual strategic outlooks and also create a structure for further development of bilateral security

cooperation. In this context, a comment made by then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd in New Delhi in 2009 may be noted. He said that India and Australia were “natural partners” and should become “strategic partners” (Address to ICWA, New Delhi, 12 November 2009).

However, in the course of their deepening relationship, India and Australia have been cautious not to allow their relationship to be perceived as a strategic alliance against China. After China’s criticism of the Japan-proposed Quadrilateral Initiative in 2007 that involved Japan, Australia, the US and India, both Canberra and New Delhi have become hesitant about joining any initiative that appears offensive to China.

On the other hand, Australia’s hesitation to supply uranium to India for several years stood as an impediment in its relationship with India, where India considered this as indicating a lack of commitment to the relationship along with the refusal to acknowledge India’s great-power status (Brewster 2014: 156). But the gradual warming up of Australia’s uranium policy in 2011 towards uranium supply arrangements has largely removed this obstruction. India’s strategy of gaining a foothold in Australia also involves developing a greater economic relationship along with security partnership. India aspires to balance Australia’s economic relationship with China with its own through the proposal of an Australia-India FTA which, however, is making tardy progress.

In the maritime domain, both Australia and India have been working together to revive the IOR-ARC along with the shared interest in appreciating the development of “balanced” multilateral economic, political and security institutions in South-East Asia (Brewster 2014: 156). Another potential area for cooperation is maritime intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR), where India could make use of Australia’s considerable ISR capabilities in areas where their strategic interests overlap. Nevertheless, it should be noted that India’s maritime aspiration of expanding its influence in the southern quadrant of the Indian Ocean is not being encouraged by Australia with its obsession for multilateral security collaboration.

vii) US Predominance and India's Strategic Calculations in the Indian Ocean

With the changes in the global political and economic order, India's maritime strategists have made peace with the fact that the US is the dominant power in the IOR and is likely to remain so for decades to come. Accordingly, India has increasingly been appreciating partial collaboration with the US as a convenient way of attaining its longstanding objectives in the Indian Ocean (Brewster 2014: 163).

The strategic alliance between the US and Pakistan has always stood in the way of greater understanding and trust between India and the US, where the latter has more often sided with Pakistan in India's clashes with that country. Nevertheless, the end of the Cold War brought a fundamental change in India's strategic relationship with the United States. The liberalisation of the Indian economy also eased their political relationship despite certain major irritations from the Clinton administration's statements about human rights violations in Kashmir. However, things started to change when during the Kargil War, the US supported India and warned Pakistan to move out its infiltrators, thus proving its credentials as a useful diplomatic partner. Thereafter, US efforts to engage India accelerated under the Bush administration, which repeatedly tried to bridge the gap created by decades of Indo-US mistrust and antagonism.

The key factor that led the US to cooperate with India is the desire to build India as a regional counterweight to China as part of its strategy of the US Rebalance to East Asia. Over the last decade or so, the US has encouraged the expansion of India's naval ambitions and capabilities through much of the Indian Ocean. Washington appreciates India as a status quo power and net security provider in the Indian Ocean and wants to facilitate India in taking the lead in various security tasks in the Indian Ocean while at the same time retaining certain determining capabilities to influence regional security. There is an increasing realisation among US analysts that India's strategic interests are broadly aligned with that of the US and so they expect that India would play an important role in "burden sharing" (if not outsourcing) certain maritime security requirements in the Indian Ocean (Brewster 2014: 165). India with its sophisticated military capabilities and its proximity to unstable areas along with its experience in peacekeeping operations is seen as an important military power in the Indian Ocean.

The Indo-US strategic relationship is strongly based on military-to-military cooperation, particularly in the naval sphere. The UPA regime in India was successful in reaching agreements with the US on various strategic issues. A 2005 defence agreement provides for intelligence sharing and training, technology transfers and missile defence cooperation. Apart from the various joint military exercises, the navies of the USA and India hold four major annual bilateral exercises: Malabar, the premier fleet exercise; Habu Nag (naval aspects of amphibious operations); Spitting Cobra (explosive ordinance destruction); and Salvex (diving and salvage) (Brewster 2014: 171). The US and Indian Marine forces engage through the annual exercise Shatrujeet, a company-sized ground field exercise.

Of all the armed services of India, the Indian Navy is the most comfortable with the US relationship, while acting within the constraints imposed by the political establishment. The Indian Navy's maritime military document (2007) states that "while the option of formal alliances is not available ... we can, however, reach out to our maritime partners or collaborate with friendly nations to build deterrence" (*Freedom to Use the Seas: India's Maritime Military Strategy*, 2007). The central role of naval cooperation in the Indo-US security relationship was formalised in the 2006 *Framework for Maritime Security Cooperation*, which guarantees the two countries' commitment to "comprehensive cooperation in ensuring a secure maritime domain". For India, the expansion of navy-to-navy ties proved to be a politically low-cost way of strengthening the overall strategic relationship during the high-profile controversies over the civil nuclear deal (Percival 2010: 38).

Another significant area of Indo-US cooperation emerged in humanitarian assistance when, during the 2004 Tsunami, the Indian Navy played a very important role in rescuing and evacuating the victims of the neighbouring affected countries. The Indian Navy has also sought to develop its amphibious operations capabilities through various ways including the acquisition of the amphibious landing ship, USS *Trenton* (now INS *Jalashva*).

Despite the commonalities in interests between India and the US, there are many constraints in the relationship. The US is still widely perceived as a potentially unreliable strategic partner that may ultimately seek to dominate India. Although there is a general appreciation of the importance of improved relations with the US, there is

almost a visceral fear of India being entrapped and losing its strategic autonomy. Thus, India's objective of strategic autonomy is likely to constrain or delay the growth of Indian strategic influence in the region.

viii) China's Strategic Imperatives and India's Response in the Indian Ocean

China figures as a major factor in India's strategic aspirations in the Indian Ocean. China's need to secure its crucial SLOCs for secured supply of its energy supplies necessitates it to take an active role in the Indian Ocean. This has come into direct conflict with India's ambitions to dominate the ocean. China has sought to address its Malacca Dilemma in several ways. First, it is developing capabilities to project limited naval and air power into the Indian Ocean. It is also developing a considerable economic relationship with the littoral countries, but only limited security presence there. China is also seen to be attempting to reduce its vulnerabilities by diversifying its energy transport options in the region (<http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/indian-ocean-india-china-strategic-rivalry-tensions/1/271324.htm>).

China has embarked on a major naval expansion programme over the last two decades. This includes the development and acquisition of anti-ship ballistic missiles, submarines, aircraft carriers, destroyers and supporting ISR systems (*US Congressional Research Service*, 31 July 2012). China has also developed anti-access area denial (A2AD) capabilities, which have the potential to change the balance of power in the Western Pacific (Brewster 2014). While the A2AD threat is primarily intended to be in the Western Pacific, the range of China's land-based anti-ship ballistic missiles has the potential to hit parts of the Bay of Bengal/Andaman Sea and even the Arabian Sea. China's naval capabilities now exceed those of India both qualitatively and quantitatively by a considerable margin. But it is also true that the PLAN has extremely limited experience in projecting power beyond coastal waters.

In response to China's String of Pearls strategy, India has responded by developing its own presence near the maritime chokepoints, particularly in the Malacca Strait. India has also sought to exert pressure on China to confine its space in the Indian Ocean by increasing its own presence and involvement in the South China Sea (Brewster 2013). Over the last few years, it has also been observed that India has engaged itself in giving discreet support to ASEAN states in their territorial dispute

with China. It is also widely speculated that India intends to establish a naval base at Cam Ranh Bay in Vietnam in reprisal to Chinese activities in the Indian Ocean (Brewster 2014: 193). During the UPA rule, India was able to reach an agreement with Vietnam, which facilitated the Indian Navy's regular access to (and, perhaps, a limited presence at) the port of Nha Trang. According to an Indian official, such an arrangement would allow the Indian Navy to create a sustainable presence in the South China Sea (*Asian Age*, 26 June 2011). This enterprise in the South China Sea was anticipated as being an arrangement that endorsed something more than ship visits and something less than a military base (Brewster 2014: 193). Thus, a kind of security dilemma exists between India and China in the Indian Ocean, because any defensive moves taken by either are viewed as being directed against and reducing the other's security. However, there have also been certain developments where China has signalled its openness to discussions about a cooperative mechanism on sea lanes in the Indian Ocean. In 2009, Indian National Security Advisor Shivshankar Menon also talked about a cooperative security arrangement among the major Asian powers as well as the United States that would cover the Indian Ocean and the Western Pacific (Speech to the National Maritime Foundation, New Delhi, 11 September 2009).

In terms of strategic advantages, the Indian Ocean presents "exterior lines" for China and "interior lines" for India. In other words, India stands in a strategically significant geographical position that gives it a dominant position in the Indian Ocean, including SLOCs to its own bases and resources, whereas China is devoid of such advantages (Holmes 2012: 360). China would therefore be seen as wanting to rob India of its natural and legitimate sphere of influence in the ocean, which India considers as the gateway to its great-power status. Indian reaction to Chinese endeavours in the Indian Ocean is not only about just maintaining a bargaining chip (Brewster 2013), but also reflects an agenda more visceral than that.

5.5 Maritime Diplomacy under the New NDA Government

The new NDA government in India is seen to pursue an active Indian Ocean policy in pursuit of India's maritime power and influence. According to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India's maritime strategy including its industry will have to take precedence in order to establish India's position as a major maritime power. The new

Prime Minister made a symbolic gesture when he visited the Indian armed forces at sea soon after taking over as Prime Minister.

The commissioning of INS *Vikramaditya* into the Indian Navy in 2013 has made India the only Asian nation (other than pre-war Japan) to operate more than one aircraft carrier at a time. The Prime Minister visited the carrier on 14 July 2014, thus underlining his emphasis on building India as a resurgent maritime power. India's other carrier, INS *Viraat*, being 60 years old, India is constructing an indigenous carrier even though there is a shortage of funding. Apart from this, in October 2015, the Indian Navy revised its maritime security strategy, Ensuring Secure Seas. Focusing on deterrence, conflict, coastal and offshore security, maritime force and capability development, the new doctrine examines ways to shape a "favourable and positive maritime environment" (<http://thewire.in/16665/between-china-terror-and-the-deep-blue-sea-indias-new-naval-doctrine-takes-shape/>).

During his visit to Mauritius and Seychelles, Prime Minister Modi laid out a comprehensive framework for India as a maritime power. His visits to Sri Lanka, Mauritius and Seychelles reflect India's desire to engage the Indian Ocean littoral states under the Neighbourhood First policy. The Prime Minister's Sri Lanka visit partially focused on pushing India's soft power and project India's Buddhist links. His visit to Mauritius coincided with Mauritian National Day, which is celebrated on 12 March (the date of the launch of the Dandi Salt March) as a tribute to Mahatma Gandhi and the Indian freedom struggle (Ghisad 2015, VIF). The handing over of a warship, the *Barracuda*, to the coast guard of Mauritius, displayed India's agenda of affirming its interest in the littoral countries (Raja Mohan 2015). During his visit, the Prime Minister laid down a fivefold policy framework for engagement with the Indian Ocean littoral countries, as follows.

First, New Delhi will do whatever is necessary to secure India's mainland and island territories and defend its maritime interests at any cost.

Second, New Delhi will focus on deepening security relationships with the neighbouring littoral countries. The new government's emphasis is on elevating these critical strategic partnerships. Among other agreements, the Prime Minister also announced the launching of a coastal surveillance radar project. This radar initiative is a part of an ambitious project of India to build a maritime domain awareness network

across the Indian Ocean that includes the establishment of eight surveillance radars in Seychelles, six in Sri Lanka and ten in the Maldives. These radar systems will be linked to 50 sites on the Indian coast and connected to an integrated analysis centre in New Delhi.

Third, the Indian government will develop multilateral cooperative maritime security arrangements to strengthen regional mechanisms in combating terrorism and piracy and responding to natural disasters. The Prime Minister expressed the hope that the trilateral security initiative that India already has with the Maldives and Sri Lanka would be joined by Mauritius, Seychelles and other countries. If these countries become part of this security agreement, it would set the stage for very productive multilateral maritime security cooperation in the littoral Indian Ocean.

Fourth, the government's emphasis will be on building sustainable economic cooperation among the countries of the IOR. During his visit to Seychelles, the Prime Minister announced a joint working group in order to expand cooperation on the blue economy that would boost the understanding of ecology, resources and allow harnessing the ocean resources in the most sustainable manner (Raja Mohan 2015).

Fifth, the government has displayed its willingness to cooperate with other major maritime powers of the region, discarding the old policy of viewing itself as the sole guardian in the Indian Ocean. Signalling India's strategy of recognising the strong interests and stakes of major powers around the world, the Prime Minister said that "those who live in the region have the primary responsibility for peace, stability and prosperity in the Indian Ocean" (ibid.).

The new government's neo-liberal approach is essentially one of engagement with potentially hostile powers, including China. It is also true that India's area of security interest gives precedence to strategic challenges where China is certain to figure prominently. Strategically, India seems to be balancing with the US and Japan, rather than hoping for a less aggressive Chinese behaviour by acting as a regional moderator. India's growing engagement with Japan, Australia and the US will also be helpful in developing an active role for India in Asia-Pacific and strengthen India's position in the Indian Ocean.

i) Diplomatic Initiatives in North-West Indian Ocean

During his five-day tour of three Indian Ocean states, Prime Minister Modi visited Seychelles as his first port of call. The Prime Minister gifted a Dornier aircraft to Seychelles. During the visit, four agreements were signed on cooperation in hydrography, renewable energy, infrastructure development and the sale of navigation and electronic navigational charts. Another significant agreement involved the development of infrastructure on Assumption Island. This development provides New Delhi an opportunity to place strategic assets in the Indian Ocean. Among other maritime initiatives, the Prime Minister also launched a Coastal Surveillance Radar Project.

During the Prime Minister's visit to Mauritius, India and Mauritius signed five agreements on security cooperation. These cover the areas of ocean economy, cultural cooperation, the import of fresh mangoes from India, sea air transport in the Agalega Islands, medicine and homoeopathy. The more notable among these agreements were those on opening the ocean economy or "blue economy" and a key MOU that will enable India to take over responsibility to build transport infrastructure (sea and air links) for the Agalega Islands. This agreement would give India a strategic advantage in the IOR, working closely with the Mauritius Defence Force in guarding the outer islands of the nation. India has also extended a \$500 million Line of Credit for development of security projects in Mauritius. During the visit the 1300 tonne Indian-built coastal patrol vessel, MCGS *Barracuda*, was commissioned. The new vessel will go a long way in showcasing India's commitment to maritime security, particularly along the African coast that faces the problem of piracy. Ahead of the visit, two Indian warships, the destroyer INS *Delhi* and the hydrographic survey ship INS *Sarvaveshak*, were sent to the coast of Port Louis as a confirmation of Indian presence and assistance in the region.

Next in the Prime Minister's itinerary was Sri Lanka. With India rightly emphasising the cultivation of friendly relations with all its neighbours, Sri Lanka is considered important for the new approach (Tharoor 2015). As has been discussed earlier, New Delhi's bonhomie with Colombo has always been restrained by local politics involving the Indian state of Tamil Nadu. It was after a long time that an Indian Prime Minister was visiting Sri Lanka, after Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi

visited the island nation in 1987. During his visit the Prime Minister emphasised the issues of accommodating “the aspirations of all sections of society, including the Sri Lankan Tamil community”. He also spoke in favour of implementation of the 13th Amendment to the Sri Lankan Constitution, which guarantees greater devolution of powers to Tamils, and urged the new President Maithripala Sirisena to go beyond it. As part of the strategy of expanding Indian influence, several bilateral agreements were signed that included a customs pact, a credit line for \$300 million, visa on arrival for Sri Lankan passport holders, and a \$1.5 billion currency swap agreement to help the island nation stabilise its currency. India’s maritime interest in Sri Lanka was also evident in India’s announcement of support for the idea of Trincomalee becoming a petroleum hub, where it was agreed that Sri Lanka’s state-run Ceylon Petroleum Corporation and Indian Oil Corporation would drive the project.

This visit was intended to send a clear message to the nations in the IOR that India is ready to discharge its responsibilities as a maritime power in the region proactively. At the same time, it has been sought to convey that India is waking up to the importance and potential of its own position in the middle of the Indian Ocean (Tharoor 2015).

ii) The US and Other Major Powers in NDA’s Maritime Imperatives

The NDA government has done away with India’s longstanding reluctance to cooperate with the major powers, as India increasingly looks for greater cooperation with the US in the management of ocean affairs in the Indian Ocean. The new government’s strategy of greater engagement with the US was revealed during the visit of US President Obama to India in January 2015. During the visit, the two countries announced the renewal of their defence framework agreement and signed a broad framework for expanding cooperation in the Indian Ocean and Asia-Pacific. The two countries agreed to sign a follow-on 10-year defence framework agreement that focuses on aircraft carrier technology cooperation (Chaudhury and Kumar 2015). Ever since the coming of the new government in India, the Obama administration has been enthusiastic about stepping up US investment in India, outperforming US investment in China (*Economic Times*, 31 March 2016). The US is also working with India on its indigenous aircraft carrier development programme through the US-India Defence Technology and Trade Initiative.

India under the UPA government had declined to sign three “foundational agreements” which, at the time it was imagined, would append the Indian armed forces to US geostrategic purposes in the Indo-Asia-Pacific and beyond (*The Diplomat*, 13 May 2016). During his visit to India in April 2016, Defence Secretary Carter and India’s Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar gave the penultimate touches to a series of defence cooperation, technology sharing and research and co-production project-related agreements that were on the anvil for the past 18 months or so. It is reported that when the final details are worked out, the US and India will exchange an MOU to share naval logistics, an understanding to share US aircraft carrier technologies (particularly a catapult launch system), and the commencement of upgraded maritime dialogues, including on anti-submarine operations, at the official 2+2 as well as officer-to-officer level (*The Diplomat*, 13 May 2016). The two defence heads also re-authorized their defence framework agreement of 2015 for an additional 10 years. This agreement identified the security of free movement of lawful commerce and navigation across SLOCs as a newly shared national interest. It is anticipated that the agreement to share logistics in peacetime will go a long way in enabling the two navies to mitigate capability gaps in broader Indian Ocean waters that have seen a growth in operational commitments (*ibid.*).

India has also joined the United Kingdom in bilateral naval cooperation and joint naval exercises between India, Australia and the UK that resumed in September 2015. India has also negotiated to conduct naval exercises with Japan that would take place regularly, following a trilateral exercise that included the US in the Bay of Bengal in October 2015 (Chaudhury and Kumar 2015). India has also developed close cooperation with Vietnam and Japan, which are its two strategic partners in the Pacific, where Indian warships visit regularly along with naval patrols in the South China Sea. The NDA government has also displayed its interest in facilitating India to shoulder a greater degree of responsibility for shaping the region’s security architecture.

iii) China in India’s Maritime Strategic Ambitions

In recent times, the India-China relationship seems to be fluctuating between cooperation and competition. China’s strategic vision for the region would seem to be that it wants to weaken US influence and Indian maritime reach and make full use of

its economic might in doing so. To the north of India, China's so-called Silk Road Economic Belt is intended to roll out a network of Chinese infrastructure, commerce and strategic assets through Central Asia. And to the south, its Maritime Silk Road is intended to do the same across the Indian Ocean.

India's agenda on the maritime front is to counter China's growing expansionist policies in India's neighbourhood. The Indian outreach initiative bears the name SAGAR – Security And Growth for All in the Region. The word 'sagar' means ocean in Hindi. This move could be seen as a part of India's strategy of asserting itself in a growing global competition and also about countering China's expansionist policies in India's neighbourhood.

The Prime Minister's visit to the littoral countries of the Indian Ocean was also part of India's agenda of restricting Chinese influence in those countries, by seeking economic and security cooperation, collective action for peace and security and better cooperation for a sustainable development of the region. India's strategy is to build up naval capacities in those countries by giving them maritime assets.

In the light of the amazing response to Beijing's Maritime Silk Road proposal among Indian Ocean littoral countries, India is set to launch its own Project Mausam to counter Beijing's growing influence in the region. Titled Project Mausam: Maritime Routes and Cultural Landscapes across the Indian Ocean, the project is a transnational initiative that intends to restore India's old maritime routes and cultural linkages with countries in the region. It centres on the utilisation of natural wind phenomenon, especially monsoon winds. It is important to remember that these monsoon winds helped Indian sailors in early times in maritime trade that played an important role in maintaining communications between nations and societies connected by the Indian Ocean (*Times of India*, 16 September 2014). Project Mausam aims to explore the multifaceted Indian Ocean world extending from East Africa, the Arabian Peninsula, the Indian subcontinent and Sri Lanka to South-East Asia. Apart from this, the India-US Joint Strategic Vision Statement of 2014 included a paragraph affirming "the importance of safeguarding maritime security and ensuring freedom of navigation and overflight throughout the region, especially in the South China Sea". This clause was taken by many as the achievement of a consensus between the two

nations on the necessity to refute Beijing's assertive way of dealing with conflicting regional boundary disputes (Chaudhury and Kumar 2015).

5.6 Conclusion

Abandoning its longstanding reluctance to openly associate with extra-regional powers and jealously guarding the Indian Ocean zone as its core area of interest, India is now displaying its openness to cooperate with major stakeholders in the region. The beginning of the 21st century has seen rapid mobilisation of India's maritime interests through a series of energetic programmes of action and doctrinal promulgations. It is obvious that India's renewed interest in the IOR is stimulated by the need to restrict China's growing expansionist policies in India's neighbourhood. India's strategic circles have been alarmed by the immense Chinese enterprises in the IOR, which have been viewed as part of a policy of strategic encirclement of India. Moreover, India has gradually woken up to the idea of reclaiming its legitimate status as the natural leader in the Indian Ocean on account of its strategically critical geographical location. The realisation that India's search for great-power status will be possible only through the maritime domain has tended to make India more assertive and pragmatic in its handling of maritime affairs. The US policy of enabling India as a regional counterpart to China has also helped India in India's endeavour to gain and enhance its maritime reach in the Indian Ocean. India's departure from its longstanding fascination with strategic autonomy and aversion to strategic alliances with extra-regional powers is also being noticed as a significant shift in its maritime strategy. This policy change has also assisted India to garner greater acceptance from fellow littoral countries that have already been in strategic alliances or security cooperation with one or two major powers of the region.

CONCLUSION

A nation's maritime strategy fundamentally emphasises power projection capabilities of the nation's navy, which is professionally equipped to protect and uphold the nation's core maritime objectives. In the broader context, all these roles are interconnected with other facets of national power. A nation's maritime strategy also reflects that nation's global ambitions and power-wielding capabilities in its region. In many cases, these functions become equivalent and correspond to the wartime functions of the other armed services. When the nation becomes engaged in a wartime crisis, the navy along with the army and the air force conducts a unified attempt to thwart and defeat the enemy. Thus, a nation's maritime strategy proposes a multiplicity of concerns for the navy in varying situations. In peacetime, naval operations are short of open warfare. But non-war occupations of a naval power remain even in wartime. In other words, a nation's maritime strategy intends to provide a broader context of the navy's engagement and diplomacy in its backyard and on waters abroad during peacetime and also during maritime confrontations that are short of open conflict. A nation's naval forces are equipped to respond to any sort of low-level or high-intensity conflict and remain in operation for regular naval engagements and occupations irrespective of what situation it is. Thus, a nation's maritime strategy encompasses all the scope of activities at sea, which enables the country to exercise its legitimate share in the management of ocean affairs as well as to defend its interests at sea. Various countries have adopted a maritime strategy in order to maximise and defend their interests at sea.

For the past 600 years, the Indian Ocean has been witness to intense maritime activity, primarily for trade. In recent times, the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) has become a hotbed of great-power rivalry. The ocean's role as the great connector between the Pacific and the Atlantic and its significance in connecting Europe to Asia, Australia and Africa remains as important as ever. The difference is that in earlier centuries, the motivation of this maritime activity was for silk and spices. Today it is for oil, which is the primary energy source powering the economic-industrial sectors of major states.

The Indian Ocean's economic significance to the world is that the IOR contains one-third of the world's population, a quartile of the world's landmass, and a major portion of the world's gas (35 per cent) and oil (65 per cent) reserves. Its sea lanes are among the most strategically significant in the world, because more than 80

per cent of the world's seaborne trade transits through its chokepoints, with 40 per cent passing through the Strait of Hormuz, 35 per cent through the Strait of Malacca and 8 per cent through Bab el-Mandeb. The major powers' dependence on energy supplies from the IOR and through the Indian Ocean induces them to flex their military muscle and get involved in the security and stability of the region.

The immense diversity and variety in the economic, political, cultural, demographic and geographical profile of the IOR countries have also led to international focus on the region. Growing levels of population, pollution of oceanic waters, maritime piracy, maritime terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, nuclearisation of South Asia and the recent upsurge of turbulence in the Islamic world have intensified the security scenario of the region.

The shifting of power politics from the Atlantic and Pacific to the Indian Ocean has also resulted in intensifying instability in the IOR. Certain local and regional conflicts here have received global attention because of their inherent risks of far-reaching explosion and have drawn foreign powers' political and military intervention. With their Pivot to Asia and Maritime Silk Route policies, the major powers want to strengthen their dominance in the region by bringing the littoral countries within their sphere of influence. Hence, as noted by Kaplan, the Indian Ocean is going to be the centre of global politics in the coming decades.

India is an aspirant for maritime power in the Indian Ocean. In this, India's strategic location in the ocean and India's peninsular configuration are its major assets. To maximise and defend its interests at sea, India has adopted an ambitious naval modernisation. India's maritime engagement in the Indian Ocean is essentially a part of its wider goal to enunciate its status as a global power.

India's maritime diplomacy seeks to enhance the country's strategic outreach in the Indian Ocean and thus outdo the obstructions caused by its strategic rivalry with China and Pakistan. India has gradually woken up to the idea of reclaiming its legitimate status as the natural leader in the Indian Ocean. The intensity of India's maritime outlook marks India's shift from a vague and ambiguous maritime strategy to a more defined, articulated and robust one. Since 2004, the Indian establishment has intensified its efforts and agenda of further enhancing India's strategic reach along

with safeguarding the shipping routes that are essential for the escalating domestic energy demands.

India's maritime strategy essentially focuses on controlling the chokepoints in the Indian Ocean. To further this interest, India has been developing close security relationships with the littoral countries of the Malacca Strait and Strait of Hormuz. It is seen to be adopting measures that could bring the Indian Ocean littoral countries under an Indian security umbrella that would otherwise have drifted towards greater Chinese influence. In this, India has been particularly encouraged by the US to take a leading role in the management of maritime affairs in the IOR. The US through its policy of Rebalance to Asia has facilitated India's growth and development as a major maritime power through crucial transfers of weapons and technology to India.

India has tactfully followed a policy of association and cooperation with extra-regional powers, while at the same time adopting a policy of advocating regional cooperation between the littoral stakeholders of the region. India's maritime diplomacy essentially revolves around engagement with the US and other maritime powers and, at the same time, being careful of China's sensitivities to a US-Japan-Australia-India quadrilateral that could be perceived as being directed against China.. Since, the last decade, India has also focused on developing good security collaboration with several states in the IOR. India is also seen to be developing a strong security presence in the central Indian Ocean across the east-west SLOCs. The presence of extra-regional powers in the IOR is also a reality, where external threats to the security and safety of India's long EEZ and its ports need to be handled at a multilateral level. Thus, India's strategic stakes are not only involved in defying Pakistani interference or addressing Chinese encirclement of India but also to generate goodwill and positivism about greater Indian engagement in the vulnerable corners of the region. Being surrounded with the dynamic ocean whose waters washes down the shores of India's east and west, India's maritime outlook and designs are in conformity of its search for great power status in the world.

In order to tap India's narrative of its power projection capabilities in the Indian Ocean, it is necessary to understand what constitutes India's aspirations regarding the ocean. As has been discussed in the third chapter, India's political leaders view the country as a moral and benign global power which does not have any

territorial ambitions or claims to hegemony. In Tanham's words, India considers itself as a friendly policeman seeking to establish peace and stability in the entire Indian Ocean and, at the same time, create a consensus among the fellow littoral countries against the unwelcome intrusion of neo-imperialists. New Delhi sees itself as the main resident power and is not comfortable with neo-imperial powers intruding into the region's security and politics.

Indian strategic thinkers believe that India will achieve a dominant strategic role in the Indian Ocean by way of demonstrating its benign and principled leadership in the region. Chasing this dream, the Indian Navy has embarked on a policy of organising friendly states, providing them with public security goods. In doing so, India is helped by its lack of historical baggage of hegemonic activities in the region.

India has been described as a status-inconsistent power, because there are discrepancies between its perceptions of its own achievements and its ascribed international status. Indian strategic thinking has a perception that India has been unfairly denied its proper international status although it possesses certain great-power capabilities like nuclear weapons, large population and a large military along with the potential to acquire other powers like economic strength and military power projection capabilities. It seems that India sees its entitlement to a great-power status mostly based on its potential power rather than actual capabilities. India's strategic calculations also take cognisance of world hierarchy in international politics and its position in the hierarchy. This cognition causes India to generate relative openness in engaging with small states and to be cautious in its engagements with the region's middle powers which might seem reluctant to acknowledge India's special status.

As regards extra-regional powers (previously the US and now China) in the Indian Ocean, in the course of various dialogues with its South Asian neighbours, India has advocated that any Chinese security presence in the ocean would be unacceptable to it. However, India's claim to regional leadership is likely to be contested by the middle powers of the region. Also, many states in the region do not consider US predominance in the IOR in negative terms and in fact encourage greater US engagement in the region's security. Many of them also welcome China as a legitimate stakeholder in the region.

The period 2004-2015 is especially significant in India's maritime history. During this period India started displaying its openness to abandon its longstanding reluctance to be associated in any way, shape or form with any extra-regional power. With the changes in the global political and economic world, India's inclination of jealously guarding the Indian Ocean zone as its core area of interest has been replaced with the desire to cooperate with major stakeholders in the region. However, India's desire to return as the centre of gravity of the Indian Ocean is met with various uncertainties and complications arising out of its devotion to strategic autonomy and denouncement of multilateral security engagement with extra-regional powers.

The beginning of the 21st century saw rapid mobilisation of India's maritime interests through a series of energetic programmes of action and doctrinal promulgations. It is obvious that India's renewed interest in the IOR is stimulated by the need to restrict China's growing expansionist policies in India's neighbourhood. The IOR represents a critical arena for India as it is one of those areas where India has credible and legitimate interests in increasing its strategic foothold. In view of the menaces of the growing levels of population, pollution of oceanic waters, maritime piracy, maritime terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, nuclearisation of South Asia and the recent upsurge of turbulence in the Islamic world, India's role as a major littoral power in the management of affairs in the IOR is significant. Thus, India's security analysts have devised maritime strategy and planning to realise its much desired and legitimate role in the Indian Ocean to protect and enhance its strategic reach in the Indian Ocean. India's security and economic interests are conditioned by peace and stability in the region.

The realisation that India's search for great-power status would be possible only through the maritime domain has tended to make India more assertive and pragmatic in its handling of maritime affairs. The American policy of enabling India as a regional counterpart to China has also helped India in its endeavour to enhance its maritime reach in the Indian Ocean. This significant shift in India's maritime strategy from its longstanding fascination with strategic autonomy and aversion to strategic alliances with extra-regional powers has also assisted India to garner greater acceptance from fellow littoral countries that have already been in strategic alliances or security cooperation with one or two major powers of the region. Thus, we could conclude that the period 2004-2015 witnessed a sea of change in India's strategic

imperatives that got significantly reflected in India's increasing assertion and activism in the IOR during the last one and half decades.

However, India's ambitions in the Indian Ocean will be subject to both internal and external constraints. The most palpable constraint is the United States' military predominance in the IOR. Though it is increasingly seen that Washington has been willing to cede and encourage a major security role for India in the IOR, India's resistance to being perceived as acting on behalf of US interests in the region is a major constraint in realising its ambitions. Another constraint, apart from the United States' relationship with Pakistan, is the troubled US equation with Iran. India regards Iran as a potential strategic partner in its ambitions in the IOR.

India's maritime diplomacy also seems to have failed to develop strong and cooperative relations with the middle powers such as Indonesia, South Africa and Australia, though New Delhi has been successful in developing security relationships with smaller countries such as the Maldives, Mauritius, Mozambique and Oman. This failure may be because of India's lack of strategic direction or India's ego standing in the way of conceding to a regional power its self-avowed claims to regional status. Although the major powers in the region see considerable benefits in building strategic partnerships with India and may be willing to cede to it a leading security role, they would expect India to recognise their specific claims to regional status.

Where Pakistan is concerned, though that country does not represent a conventional military challenge to India in the Indian Ocean, its close security ties with the countries in the north-west will continue to be a major obstacle in furthering India's strategic ambitions in the IOR. Pakistan's ties with the Gulf countries as a security guarantor of the Islamic world tend to exclude India, with little probability of change, in the absence of major changes in the strategic environment. It is also no surprise that for many countries in the IOR, China is a more important economic partner. Although sustained economic growth since the end of the Cold War has facilitated India's expanding economic and political influence in the region, it is still far behind China in its ability to use its economic clout to its strategic advantage.

An internal constraint that India faces in its ability to project power and influence is its devotion to strategic autonomy. India has a culture of "strategic

restraint” that makes it cautious and restrained in its strategic behaviour. At the same time, this approach on India’s part has helped it develop a benign image in the region.

The most noteworthy feature of Indian diplomacy that challenges its search for maritime supremacy is India’s deep-seated aversion to forming security cooperation with other states. India’s foreign policy has consistently resisted entering into formal military alliances (although it eventually developed a friendship treaty with the erstwhile Soviet Union in 1971). Indian foreign policymakers also fear that cooperation with the US and even with lesser powers would in some way undermine India’s destiny to become a great power. This feeling of constraint is more prominent among the nation’s political minds rather than the military. Indeed, as discussed in the fourth chapter, left to its own resources, the Indian Navy has shown a strong keenness for such cooperation. It would be observed that India has an instinct for seeking cooperation only in politically non-controversial areas or for clandestine cooperation that would not raise the hackles among the other stakeholders in the region. India’s maritime strategies also suffer from the problem of a gap between rhetoric and capabilities.

While observing India’s prospects for leading a regional security order in the Indian Ocean, it could be said that India’s dreams of enhanced security role within the South Asian region or among the island states of the Southwest Indian Ocean seems possible. However, there are several obstructions in the realisation of its aspirations in other parts of the Indian Ocean. As observed in the fourth chapter, India’s aspirations in the South-East Indian Ocean show prospects of materialising, as the region houses several extra-regional powers, among which India is just one benign entity. The influence of the US and China is too strong in the South-Eastern Indian Ocean for India to be able to intrude and reduce their stakes in the region. In the northeast region, although the island states seem to welcome India’s enhanced security role, they are particular about India acknowledging their special status and rights in the region and giving them due space in handling their regional affairs. As regards the north-west, India has very delicate prospects of consolidating its position as the leading security provider of the region, given that its role is severely constrained by Pakistan’s security relationship along with the US security umbrella enjoyed by some of the Gulf States.

India's role in Africa is constrained by several events in Indian history like financial weakness and inward-looking economic policies. India's aversion to providing military support to the liberation movements in Africa on account of its ideological emphasis on achieving national liberation through non-violent means opened the doors for competitors like China and Pakistan to consolidate their influence in the region. Currently, China's economic influence among the African countries is too huge for India to claim a significant security role there.

Australia in its turn sees India as a potentially important security partner in the Indian Ocean, but does not consider it as a net security provider to Australia. Australia has always lobbied for US military presence in the IOR and does not favour the concept of establishing a regional maritime security order.

Recent strategies of the Indian government in terms of recognising the legitimate interest of extra-regional powers, whose presence in the Indian Ocean is a reality, do consider the organisation of a concert of powers among the IOR's major powers, which have substantial stakes in the region. In this regard, acknowledging China's role as a responsible member of a new multipolar strategic order would be consistent with India's desired objective of the development of a multipolar security order. The current Indian government has taken several measures to engage China and has refrained from taking steps that China could see as irksome.

Overall the study has tried to test two hypotheses. First, India's engagement in the Indian Ocean is inherently driven by its national security concerns and great power ambitions. Second, China's growing role in the Indian Ocean and India's increasing strategic interests have tended to set the stage for power rivalry in the Indian Ocean. In this study, the first hypothesis is proved as India's maritime engagement in the Indian Ocean is essentially driven by its national security concerns of protecting its vital sea lines of communication. India's maritime strategy reflects the wider goal of enunciating its status as a global power as any initiative for enhancing its strategic outreach is only possible through the maritime domain. The second hypothesis is also proved as China appears prominently in India's maritime designs and its diplomatic moves are designed to address those strategic concerns, thereby creating the stage for power rivalry in the Indian Ocean.

To conclude, India's maritime strategies in the Indian Ocean reflect India's aspirations of reclaiming its legitimate status in the region. In doing so, the most important challenge would be to accommodate China's interests, leaving behind India's obsession for restricting Chinese influence, and at the same time getting on-board the middle powers into its understanding of a regional security order in the IOR.

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