

EXTRA-REGIONAL POWERS IN IOR: IMPERATIVES FOR INDIA

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The rise and fall of maritime powers in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) has been a recurring theme throughout history. In the age of globalisation, a number of states of the Global South have gained economic clout, and have pursued a larger, dominant role, regionally and internationally. China, the foremost power to have risen to prominence in this process, has demonstrated spectacular economic resurgence, which has influenced and accentuated other dynamics of its national power, including maritime capabilities. This article posits that the steady ingress of Chinese maritime power into the Indian Ocean poses a challenge to the extant geo-political order, led by the United States. In the discussion, the article attempts to bring out the complex interplay of geo-politics and geo-economics that circumscribes the evolving contest between established and rising maritime powers, a phenomenon that has not been earlier seen in history on such a large scale. The article, therefore, identifies the implications for India, which has a natural, ancient association with the ocean named after it. It suggests a five-pronged approach for India to demonstrate its regional leadership and play the role of a responsible actor in promoting security and stability in the IOR.

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The Sanskrit phrase *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*, meaning ‘the world is one family’, aptly describes India’s philosophical approach to geo-politics.

INTRODUCTION

The Indian Ocean has, through centuries, attracted sea-farers from its rim and distant regions, for commercial and political reasons. With technological advancements, industrial needs grew and communities began to seek new sources of raw materials, and explore new markets, across the seas. Historian Milo Kearney, in his masterly work *Indian Ocean in World History* has described how the trading and imperial expansionist possibilities offered by the Indian Ocean were exploited by leading powers from the third millennium BC to the very recent past¹. A number of sea-faring communities, including the Sumerians, Egyptians, Chinese, Indians, Arabs and, later, the Europeans, held sway over the Indian Ocean trade at different periods in history. The economic destinies and wealth of contesting political entities invariably corresponded with their ability to exploit the seas advantageously.

India’s geographical and geo-political identity is intrinsically connected with the Indian Ocean. *La péninsule de l’Inde* extends into the Indian Ocean like a dagger, lending it cartographical prominence, and the privilege of having an ocean named after it. Civilisations in India had close contact with the seas surrounding the peninsula and exploited the oceanic medium for trade and cultural expansion. Therefore, geographically, politically as well as culturally, India’s engagement with the world and its transactions with its immediate neighbourhood have an intrinsic maritime dimension. The Sanskrit phrase *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*, meaning ‘the world is one family’, aptly describes India’s philosophical approach to geo-politics. However, a more realist, and less metaphysical, exploration is needed to understand India’s geo-political outlook towards the oceanic space around it.

1. Kearney has covered four periods in his work, namely the first assertion of Mediterranean European and Chinese influence, the Arab Golden Age, the first assertion of North Atlantic influence and the Cold War period. It has been stated that “which land has been in the lead in world wealth, power and creativity at any particular time has been determined to a significant extent by, or been correlated with, control of significant participation in the trade of the Indian Ocean and the lands of its periphery”. Milo Kearney, *The Indian Ocean in World History*, (London: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, 2004).

SUPERPOWER RIVALRY IN THE INDIAN OCEAN: A BACKGROUND

Superpower politics is not new in the Indian Ocean. During the colonial era, the European powers competed with each other for dominating the strategic trade routes to their colonies in Asia and Africa, for control of their holdings². Following the Napoleonic Wars, the long rivalry between the British and the French culminated in the Treaty of Paris of 1814³, ushering in a period of relative peace till World War I. Due to Britain's maritime preeminence, the Indian Ocean came to be described as a 'British Lake'. During World War II, the region witnessed a fierce contest between the Britain-led Allied powers on one side and the tripartite Axis powers on the other, with the navies of Japan and Germany pitted against their Allied counterparts. In the aftermath of World War II, the strategic space in the Indian Ocean was retained by Britain. However, war fatigue and economic constraints curtailed the strategic reach of the waning British Empire, which yielded space 'East of Suez' to the United States of America in the late 1960s⁴, marking yet another transition in great power politics. This period corresponded with rapid strides by the American economy, which had by then capitalised upon the strength it had gained during the inter-war period. Rapid industrialisation in the post-war economies of Europe, North America and Japan demanded a variety of resources, which brought prospectors to the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), where rich sources of energy and mineral resources were established. During the decades of the Sixties and Seventies, the Indian Ocean remained a playground of superpower rivalry, between the Western Alliance and Soviet Union, though the

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2. AT Mahan, *The Problem of Asia and its Effect Upon International Politics* (Boston: Forgotten Books 2012, originally Little, Brown and Company, 1900), pp 60-62.
 3. "The Napoleon Series, Government and Politics, The Treaty of Paris, 1814", http://www.napoleon-series.org/research/government/diplomatic/c_paris1.html. Accessed on June 9, 2015.
 4. The British decision to withdraw from bases 'East of Suez', in 1964-68, under Harold Wilson's Labour government, was widely recognised as the most significant step in Britain's retreat from a global role, as a first rank world power, yielding space to American power. The decision to withdraw from military bases East of Suez – Singapore, Malaysia, and the Persian Gulf – was taken in the midst of a severe economic crisis. P.L. Pham, *Ending 'East of Suez': The British Decision to Withdraw from Malaysia and Singapore, 1964–1968* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

primary focus remained on the control of the Eurasian landmass.⁵ The period saw the gradual emergence of the 'Third World', or the Global South, mostly consisting of the former colonies and formerly occupied territories. Following decolonisation, a number of Third World countries preferred to remain 'non-aligned' during the Cold War, though they were invariably affected by superpower politics in one way or the other. The wariness of IOR nations countries against militarisation in the region manifested in the form of the "Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace" resolution, adopted by the United Nations in 1971⁶. Given the harsh realities of superpower rivalry, the initiative remained mostly stillborn and could not deliver on its conceptual expectations. Through the Cold War, a number of military bases and facilities were developed in the IOR by extra-regional contestants. Decades since the Cold War ended, a number of these bases continue to be retained and maintained by the concerned nations, and have been actively utilised for operational purposes, including during conflicts and wars in the region.

INDIA AND SUPERPOWER RIVALRY

After independence in 1947, India found itself grappling with a multitude of problems and challenges, both internal and external, which were exacerbated by the trauma of Partition. In this backdrop, India's strategic approach to power politics in the Indian Ocean was characterised by a cautious reluctance to align itself with either of the partisan 'blocs', yet carving a moderate leadership role by lending support to African independence movements and promotion of Asian solidarity. India emerged as a prominent voice of the decolonised nations, characterised by its active role in the Bandung Conference and the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). Through this period, India endeavoured to maintain a balance in its relations with major powers such as the USA, USSR, UK, France, etc. However, the pressing need for defence modernisation following the Sino-Indian conflict of 1962 and Indo-

5. Selig S Harrison and K Subrahmanyam, eds., *Superpower Rivalry in the Indian Ocean – Indian and American Perspectives* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

6. United Nations, "Implementation of Declaration of Indian Ocean as Zone of Peace", December 16, 1971, <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/34/a34res80.pdf>. Accessed on June 2, 2015.

Pak War of 1965 took India closer to the Soviet Union. By then, Pakistan had joined the Southeast Asia Treaty Organisation (SEATO) (1954) and Central Treaty Organisation (CENTO) (1955), and as a consequence, had become a beneficiary of military aid from the Western powers. By the mid-Sixties, it had acquired formidable military capabilities directed against India. Banking upon US and Chinese support, Pakistan adopted an overtly hostile attitude towards India, resulting in tensions over Kashmir. In 1971, India was faced with an unprecedented humanitarian situation on its borders, following military action against the civilian population in East Pakistan. India sought, and received, Soviet diplomatic support in internationalising the issue, while Pakistan relied heavily on American backing to avert adverse scrutiny over the Bengali genocide by its troops.⁷ As the crisis blew into a full scale war between India and Pakistan, the Nixon Administration put its weight behind Pakistan. The denouement came in the form of 'gunboat diplomacy', when the USS *Enterprise*-led task force was despatched against India, from the South China Sea to the Bay of Bengal.⁸ This development, popularly remembered in India as the "*Enterprise* episode", further aggravated Indian insecurities regarding extra-regional interventions.⁹ All through the Indo-Pak crisis of 1971, India received Soviet support at international forums. This helped further deepen Indo-Soviet ties; however, it did not result in *quid pro quo* to the Soviets, in the form of basing rights or permission to establish military facilities.¹⁰ Essentially, even as India was perceived as being close to the USSR, its endeavour was to balance its interests on both sides, exemplified through sustained contacts with the West, through its diaspora, industrial and commercial linkages, educational scholarships, participation in the Commonwealth, military purchases and receipt of developmental assistance.

7. Gary Jonathan Bass, *Blood Telegram: Nixon, Kissinger and a Forgotten Genocide* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013).

8. Raghavendra Mishra, "Revisiting the 1971 'USS Enterprise Incident': Rhetoric, Reality and Pointers for the Contemporary Era", *Journal of Defence Studies*, vol. 9, no. 2, April-June 2015, pp. 49-80.

9. Bass, n.7.

10. Vice Admiral Mihir Roy (Retd), *War in the Indian Ocean* (New Delhi: Lancer Publishers, 1995) pp. 115-117.

INDIAN OCEAN IN THE AGE OF GLOBALISATION

The dissolution of the Soviet Union was an epochal event in Indian Ocean politics. Under President Gorbachev's policies of *glasnost* and *perestroika*, Soviet power structures were steadily dismantled during 1985-91, and as a result, Soviet military presence in the Indian Ocean rapidly diminished. The United States remained the world's only superpower. The American model of international free trade gained currency among a number of developing nations. This syncretised the process of free market access to multinational corporations, lowering of tariff barriers, erosion of state controls, spreading of cultural influences and flow of political ideas, that came to be described under the omnibus term "globalisation". A number of Third World nations, mainly in Asia, sought to embrace the prescriptions of the Washington Consensus, stressing upon the primacy of market fundamentalism. As a consequence, flow of global capital steadily diffused and the centre of gravity of the world economy began to shift from the West towards Asia. The economic success achieved by some states, in turn, enabled them to aspire and prepare for a larger role, regionally as well as globally, thus, creating a category of nations called the "emerging powers".

The changing dynamics of knowledge creation, manufacturing and international trade, resulted in perceptible economic changes in the Global South. The world order has since veered increasingly towards multipolarity, accompanied by signs of a decline of the established powers and the rise of new ones. In 2001, Jim O'Neill, an economist at Goldman Sachs, coined the acronym 'BRIC' to describe the rising economic importance of Brazil, Russia, India and China¹¹. The metaphor of 'BRIC', hinting at something concrete, connoted the potential of these countries to cumulatively surpass the economic indicators of the leading economies. BRIC was thereafter modified to BRICS, providing for the inclusion of South Africa, even as the grouping was formalised. The role of BRICS as an emerging collective voice in shaping international developments has gained significant momentum since the advent of the grouping. The group's advantageous economic position

11. Jim O'Neill, "Building Better Global Economic BRICs", in Goldman Sachs Global Economics Paper No 66, November 30, 2011, <http://www.goldmansachs.com/our-thinking/topics/brics/brics-reports-pdfs/build-better-brics.pdf>. Accessed on June 1, 2015.

has lent credibility to the demand for reforming international financial institutions and strengthening global governance. The BRICS, which have held six summits since 2009, have enhanced cooperation on a number of issues, including formation of a new developmental bank¹², establishment of a Contingent Reserve Arrangement¹³ and formation of a Business Council.¹⁴ Members of BRICS have growing economic interests in the IOR, with India and South Africa being littoral countries of the region.

EXTRA-REGIONAL PRESENCE IN THE INDIAN OCEAN AND THE CHINA FACTOR

Extra-regional presence in the IOR is a manifestation of the enduring interests of the concerned nations in the geo-political landscape circumscribed by the Indian Ocean. The drivers behind the extra-regional interest are varied and difficult to explain generically. However, broadly, they span the domains of geo-economics, geo-politics and political sociology, and need to be further delineated.

Geo-economics: Edward Luttwak called the rise of geo-economics a contest defined by the “grammar of commerce but the logic of war”.¹⁵ The race for resources, claims over maritime entitlements, disputes involving extra-regional powers and the growing interest of private, semi-private and non-governmental organisations exemplify the geo-economic importance of the IOR.¹⁶ The advent of the Trans-Pacific Partnership and Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, though focussed in the Pacific and Atlantic rims, could have long-term economic implications

12. PTL, “Next BRICS Summit to be Held in Russia”, *The Indian Express* July 16, 2014, <http://indianexpress.com/article/world/world-others/next-brics-summit-to-be-held-in-russia/>. Accessed on May 31, 2015.

13. Brazil Ministry of External Relations, VI BRICS Summit, Press Release, “Treaty for the Establishment of a BRICS Contingent Reserve Arrangement – Fortaleza, July 14”, www.brics6.itamaraty.gov.br/media2/press-releases/220-treaty-for-the-establishment-of-a-brics-contingent-reserve-arrangement-fortaleza-july-15. Accessed on June 7, 2015.

14. Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce Industry, “BRICS Business Council”, www.bricsbusinesscouncil.in. Accessed on June 12, 2015.

15. Mark Leonard, “An Uneasy Peace That Will Tear the Global Economy Asunder”, *Financial Times*, March 23, 2015, <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/182f36ba-d151-11e4-86c8-00144feab7de.html#axzz3cSmONY7k>. Accessed on June 9, 2015.

16. Report, “Global Trends 2030: Alternative Worlds, the National Intelligence Council of US”, <http://gt2030.com/>. Accessed on June 8, 2015.

Control of numerous islands and territories in the southern Indian Ocean offers resource ownership and maritime primacy to extra-regional states.

for the IOR. A similar geo-economic rationale also underpins China's ambitious Maritime Silk Road proposition, which covers a number of ports in the Indian Ocean.¹⁷ The growing economic focus of the leading powers is rooted in the fact that the IOR is home to half of the world's proven oil reserves, and two-thirds of its oil shipments, whilst one-third of bulk cargo and half of container traffic pass through its waterways.¹⁸ The Indian Ocean is a hub of global connectivity, with a number of submarine cables criss-crossing its depths.¹⁹ Its rich fishing grounds attract a growing number of foreign fishing fleets.²⁰ Economic considerations also underpin territorial and maritime issues in the region. Control of numerous islands and territories in the southern Indian Ocean offers resource ownership and maritime primacy to extra-regional states. For instance, the Chagos archipelago is primarily of political importance to the UK, which has leased the island of Diego Garcia to the USA until 2016 and declared a Marine Protected Area (MPA) around the archipelago. The territory is disputed between the UK and Mauritius over sovereignty and the related issue of displaced Chagossians. Mauritius, which has successfully challenged the MPA in the Permanent Court of Arbitration²¹, also attaches importance to the issue from the resource perspective (in addition to the

17. Xinhuanet, "China Unveils Action Plan on Belt and Road Initiative", March 28, 2015, www.news.xinhuanet.com/english/2015-03/28/c_134105372.htm. Accessed on June 6, 2015.

18. BP Statistical Review, of World Energy, June 2014, bp.com/statisticalreview and US EIA World Oil Transit Chokepoints, November 10, 2014, <http://www.eia.gov/beta/international/>. Accessed on June 9, 2015.

19. Telegeography, Submarine Cable Map, <http://www.submarinecablemap.com/>. Accessed on June 8, 2015.

20. Frédéric Le Manach, Pascal Bach, Léa Boistol, Jan Robinson and Daniel Pauly, "Artisanal Fisheries in the World's Second Largest Tuna Fishing Ground — Reconstruction of the Seychelles Marine Fisheries Catch, 1950–2010", https://sau-technical-reports.s3.amazonaws.com/690_La%20Manach%20et%20al_2015_Seychelles_FCRR.pdf? Accessed on June 7, 2015.

21. RT, "British, US Defense Interests Put Above Mauritius Rights in Chagos Is. – UN", March 20, 2015, <http://rt.com/uk/242529-uk-chagos-un-ruling/>. Accessed on June 7, 2015. Also see Maggie Ybarra, "Navy Base on the Line as Mauritius Tries to Pit U.S., U.K. in Island's Sovereignty Bid", *The Washington Times*, Wednesday, April 9, 2014, <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2014/apr/9/navy-base-on-the-line-as-mauritius-tries-to-pit-us/?page=all>. Accessed on June 7, 2015.

humanitarian angle), as it could gain control over an additional Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of nearly 638,556 sq km around the archipelago²². The US' Freedom of Navigation Programme²³ and Britain's close monitoring of waters around Chagos archipelago²⁴ are reflective of their concerns over safeguarding maritime resource and security rights. Likewise, resource considerations also underpin regional disputes involving France.²⁵ The *Terres Australes et Antarctiques*

Françaises (France's Indian Ocean Territories) are of high economic value to France, as they add about 2.7 million sq km to its EEZ, making it the world's second largest.²⁶

Geo-political: The IOR has witnessed increasing engagement of extra-regional powers in the regional geo-politics. Building upon the Cold War legacy, the extra-regional powers have established strong security relationships with a number of countries in the region, including through arms sales. US military installations and facilities are known to be present across the region, including in Australia²⁷, Bahrain, Diego Garcia (Chagos

The US' Freedom of Navigation Programme and Britain's close monitoring of waters around Chagos archipelago are reflective of their concerns over safeguarding maritime resource and security rights.

22 "Seas Around Us, Catches by Taxon in the Waters of Chagos Archipelago (UK)", <http://www.seaaroundus.org/data/#/eez/86?chart=catch-chart&dimension=taxon&measure=tonnage>. Accessed June 9, 2015.

23. US Department of State, "Maritime Security and Navigation: Freedom of Navigation Program", <http://www.state.gov/e/oes/ocns/opa/maritimesecurity/>. Accessed on June 9, 2015.

24. J Arockiaraj, "British Navy Apprehends Indian Fishermen", *The Times of India*, December 12, 2014, <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/British-navy-apprehends-Indian-fish>. Accessed June 9, 2015.

25. The French controlled island of Tromelin is disputed by Mauritius. Mayotte is claimed by Comoros, and Bassas da India, Europa Island, Juan de Nova Island and Glorioso Islands are claimed by Madagascar. "Field Listing Disputes International: France, The World Factbook", www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/fields/2070.html. Accessed June 11, 2015.

26 Beau Doherty, Johanna Herfaut, Frédéric Le Manach, Sarah Harper and Dirk Zeller, "Reconstructing Domestic Marine Fisheries in Mayotte from 1950–2010", https://saut-technical-reports.s3.amazonaws.com/175_Doherty%20et%20al_2015_Mayotte_FCRR.pdf <http://www.seaaroundus.org>. Accessed June 10, 2015.

27. "US Navy Ships Look to Establish Darwin Military Base, but China Won't be Happy, Warns Expert", ABC News, February 13, 2015, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-02-13/us-considering-permanent-naval-base-darwin-china-not-happy/6090884>. Accessed June 9, 2015.

archipelago), Djibouti²⁸, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Oman, Pakistan²⁹, Qatar, Seychelles, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen.³⁰ A number of these have proven critical during military operations and wars post the Cold War, including during the Gulf Wars, under the “Global War on Terror” and more recently, for drone operations in a number of countries in the littoral³¹. Through the fledgling Africa Command (AFRICOM), the US has undertaken a series of initiatives to engage the African nations in security relationships, including in the East African littoral. The UK, which has a military presence in the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT), and is a member of the Five Power Defence Arrangement³², has recently announced its intention to reestablish a military base in Bahrain³³. France has a dominant military presence in the southwestern Indian Ocean³⁴ and maintains a sizeable number of military assets at Reunion Island under the command of FAZSOI (*Commandant Supérieur des Forces Armées en Zone Sud de l’océan Indien*), a joint Services commander.³⁵ It also operates a small maritime base and a Foreign Legion Detachment at Mayotte.³⁶ In the north Indian Ocean, it operates

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- 28 Tick Nurse, “Uncovering the Military’s Secret Military”, August 3, 2011, <http://www.tomdispatch.com/blog/175426/>. Accessed on June 6, 2015.
29. Mark Mazzetti, Nicholas Kulish, Christopher Drew, Serge F. Kovalski, Sean D. Naylor and John Ismay, “SEAL Team 6: A Secret History of Quiet Killings and Blurred Lines”, June 6, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/07/world/asia/the-secret-history-of-seal-team-6.html?emc=edit_th_20150607&nl=todaysheadlines&nlid=50568392&r=0. Accessed on June 10, 2015.
30. “U.S. Evacuates Key Drone Base as Storm Brews in Yemen”, *The Japan Times*, *AP News*, March 22, 2015, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/03/22/world/u-s-evacuates-key-drone-base-as-storm-brews-in-yemen/#.VXRuHM-qkq>. Accessed on June 9, 2015.
31. Tick Nurse, “Secret Wars and Black Ops Blowback”, January 16, 2014, http://www.tomdispatch.com/blog/175794/tomgram%3A_nick_turse,_secret_wars_and_black_ops_blowback/. Accessed on June 6, 2015.
32. Globalsecurity, “Five Power Defence Arrangement”, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/int/fpda.htm>. Accessed on June 9, 2015.
33. “Britain to Build First Permanent Middle East Military Base in Four Decades”, *The Guardian*, December 6, 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2014/dec/06/britain-first-middle-eastern-military-base-bahrain>. Accessed on June 10, 2015.
34. Isabelle Saint-Mezard, “The French Strategy in the Indian Ocean and the Potential for Indo-French Cooperation”, *Policy Report 2015*, S Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University, March 2015.
35. “Code of Defence - French Law”, Code de la défense-Attributions des commandants supérieurs”, at <http://www.codes-et-lois.fr/code-de-la-defense/toc-principes-generaux-defense-dispositions-relatives-outr-mer-e96166c-texte-integral>. Accessed on June 9, 2015.
36. “History of the Foreign Legion Detachment in Mayotte”, at <http://foreignlegion.info/history/dlem/>. Accessed on June 9, 2015.

military bases in Djibouti³⁷ and Abu Dhabi (UAE).³⁸ Japan is also reported to have established military facilities at Djibouti.³⁹ Overall, militarisation in the region, including the presence of nuclear weapon platforms, has seen a rise in recent decades⁴⁰. Concerns over the spurt in Somali piracy in the later part of the last decade led to increase in naval deployments by multinational forces, including extra-regional navies, notably by the US led Combined Task Force 151, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's Operation Allied Protector and Ocean Shield, the European Union's Naval Force Operation Atlanta, and by 'independent deployers' such as Russia, China, Japan and South Korea.⁴¹ The activities of extra-regional non-state actors include illegal arms trade and privatisation of maritime security.⁴²

Socio-Political: Sociological factors play a catalysing role in the politics of extra-regional actors. The influence of language, culture, race and religion tends to buttress political and economic motives. In the IOR, extra-regional socio-political linkages are exemplified in the presence of foundations and institutions supporting social and political causes, the activities of non-governmental groups promoting culture and religion, and the educational scholarships proffered by governments. Former colonial states have long nurtured their unique strengths in this respect. The UK has supported the institution of the Commonwealth for over six decades, of which a large

37. Aly Verjee, "Forward Operating Base Djibouti: Africa's Leading Host for Western Military Operating", July 27, 2011, <http://www.ssrresourcecentre.org/2011/07/27/forward-operating-base-djibouti/>. Accessed on June 8, 2015.

38. Angelique Chrisafis, "France Opens Military Base in UAE Despite Iranian Concerns", May 26, 2009, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/may/26/france-military-base-uae>. Accessed on June 7, 2015.

39. Alex Martin, News, "First Overseas Military Base Since WWII to Open in Djibouti", *The Japan Times*, July 2, 2011, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2011/07/02/national/first-overseas-military-base-since-wwii-to-open-in-djibouti/#.VXRvH8-qkqp>. Accessed on June 9, 2015.

40. Iskander Rehman, "Murky Waters: Naval Nuclear Dynamics in the Indian Ocean", Carnegie Endowment for International Peace 2015, <http://carnegieendowment.org/2015/03/09/murky-waters-naval-nuclear-dynamics-in-indian-ocean>. Accessed on June 7, 2015).

41. United Nations Documents on Piracy, Security Council Resolutions on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia, United Nations Security Council Resolution 2020(2011), November 22, 2011, http://www.un.org/depts/los/piracy/piracy_documents.htm. Accessed on June 7, 2015.

42. Caroline Liss, "Privatising Anti-Piracy Services in Strategically Important Waterways: Risks, Challenges and Benefits", paper presented at "International Workshop on Maritime Piracy" organised by Graduate School of Public Policy, University of Tokyo, Ocean Policy Education and Research Unit, <http://www.pp.u-tokyo.ac.jp/>. Accessed on June 10, 2015.

number of members come from the IOR. The Commonwealth has helped Britain maintain political and cultural relations with the region, building on historical links, the appeal of its English language media and the popularity of the British educational system. Most island states of the southwestern Indian Ocean form a part of Francophone Africa. French culture is pervasive and popular in these countries, as reflected in the *lingua franca*, Creole, which is based on French. More recently, the forces of globalisation have helped to spread American culture across the globe, including in the IOR. Arguably, the popularity of American cultural attractions such as pop music, digital consumer durables, social media platforms, fashion apparel and fast food, also described putatively as “soft power”⁴³, help countervail and temper anti-Americanism in the world. Taking a cue from the *status quo* Western powers, China has steadily increased its cultural outreach in the IOR, through Chinese cultural centres, Confucius Institutes⁴⁴ and broadcast of China Central Television (CCTV), catering to the regional tastes⁴⁵.

The China Factor: As the *status quo* powers endeavour to preserve and protect their clout, China seeks to carve a niche and occupy space in the region, covering the political, economic and cultural arenas. Over the last few decades, China has demonstrated spectacular economic resurgence, riding on the back of a robust manufacturing and export oriented economy. Its growing economic prowess has also translated into steadily strengthening military capabilities, of which the naval dimension has received focussed attention. As China’s economic interests in the Indian Ocean have expanded rapidly, its profile in the maritime space of the Indian Ocean littoral has steadily diversified. It is along the key maritime routes of the Indian Ocean that the overwhelming majority of China’s foreign trade, over 90 percent by volume and more than 65 percent by value, is transported. The Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs) are essential to China for the export of finished

43. Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004).

44. University of Nebraska-Lincoln, “Confucius Institutes Around the Globe”, <http://confuciusinstitute.unl.edu/institutes.shtml>. Accessed on June 9, 2015.

45. “CCTV has Dedicated Channel in French”, see <http://cctvfrench.cntv.cn/> and an area specific channel for Africa, see www.iloveafrica.com. Accessed on June 8, 2015.

goods and the import of raw materials, including crude oil. China imports 60 percent of its crude oil requirements from the Persian Gulf and Africa.⁴⁶ China considers protection of these SLOCs as an imperative and is taking steps to enhance its ability to undertake security missions in the region. It has nurtured commercial linkages and cultural ties in the IOR for centuries, evidenced by the presence of the sizeable Chinese diaspora in the region. With its gradual rise to global prominence, this engagement has further intensified and diversified, including military relationships with a number of littoral countries. This is evident in the growing Chinese naval presence in the Indian Ocean Region, which includes the uninterrupted anti-piracy missions, entailing deployment of a total of 20 task forces till mid-2015⁴⁷, regular visits of warships for bilateral military exercises with the IOR littorals, operational turnaround of naval platforms at various ports in the littoral⁴⁸, deployment of conventional and nuclear submarines⁴⁹, presence and deployment of research and survey vessels for deep-sea exploration in the southwest Indian Ocean⁵⁰, humanitarian assistance missions involving a hospital ship⁵¹, deployment of naval and maritime assets for search and rescue⁵², etc.

46. United States Department of Defence, Annual Report to Congress – Military and Security Developments involving the People's Republic of China 2015', April 7, 2015. Accessed June 11, 2015.

47. Andrew S. Erickson, Austin Strange, The Jamestown Foundation, "China's Global Maritime Presence: Hard and Soft Dimensions of PLAN Antipiracy Operations", *China Brief*, vol 15, issue 9, May 1, 2015, [http://www.jamestown.org/programs/chinabrief/single/?tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=43868&cHash=41e27d4081351e4e8e357eb95cce0294](http://www.jamestown.org/programs/chinabrief/single/?tx_ttnews[tt_news]=43868&cHash=41e27d4081351e4e8e357eb95cce0294). Accessed on June 5, 2015.

48. "Chinese Naval Escort Ships Visit Seychelles", Ministry of National Defence, People's Republic of China, News Channels-Defence News, April 18, 2011 http://eng.mod.gov.cn/MilitaryExchanges/2011-04/18/content_4237668.htm. Accessed on June 6, 2015.

49. Vishnu Som, "Navy Alert to Chinese Nuclear Submarine Threat in the Indian Ocean", June 2, 2015, <http://www.ndtv.com/india-news/navy-alert-to-chinese-nuclear-submarine-threat-in-indian-ocean-767781>. Accessed on June 7, 2015.

50. "China's Deep-Sea Sub Jiaolong Dives in Indian Ocean", Xinhua, December 23, 2014, http://english.gov.cn/news/top_news/2014/12/23/content_281475028485708.htm. Accessed on June 7, 2015.

51. "Chinese Navy Hospital Ship Finishes Visit to Tanzania", *The People's Daily*, October 25, 2010, <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/90776/90883/7175618.html>. Accessed on June 8, 2015.

52. "Chinese Ship to Map Seabed in 'New Phase' of MH 370 Search", *The Hindu*, PTI, May 20, 2014, <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-in-school/chinese-ship-to-map-seabed-in-new-phase-of-mh370-search/article6026567.ece>. Accessed on June 8, 2015.

The traditional mentality that land outweighs sea must be abandoned, and great importance has to be attached to managing the seas and oceans and protecting maritime rights and interests.

Further, reports concerning China's interest in military basing rights and arrangements in the region, notably at Maldives⁵³ and Djibouti⁵⁴, give credence to speculation that it seeks a permanent and lasting military presence in the IOR. The takeover of the strategic Gwadar port in Pakistan by a Chinese company has strengthened the conjecture that the development paves the way for China's future naval presence in India's immediate neighbourhood⁵⁵. The proposed One Belt One Road (OBOR) initiative, of which the Maritime Silk Route is an integral part, also incorporates elements of China's energy strategy, as it seeks to reduce its dependence on sea routes for import of oil and natural gas, by developing overland pipelines for transportation of energy resources.

China's Evolving Oceanic Strategy: China's strategic thinking has long considered maritime outreach to distant regions as a natural requirement for achieving global prominence, a fact also obtained from the 'historic missions' delineated in its Defence White Papers. China's 2015 White Paper on Defence, the tenth in the series since 1998, highlights the evolution in China's strategic thinking. "The traditional mentality that land outweighs sea must be abandoned, and great importance has to be attached to managing the seas and oceans and protecting maritime rights and interests", it states⁵⁶. The 2015 White Paper signals a shift to a more maritime-oriented approach

53. Rajat Pandit, "Chinese Moves in Maldives Worry India", *Economic Times*, October 10, 2011, http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2011-10-10/news/30263293_1_indian-military-surveillance-systems-ins-tillanchang-maldives. Accessed on June 9, 2015.

54. Rob Edens, "China's Naval Plans for Djibouti: A Road, a Belt, or a String of Pearls?" *The Diplomat*, <http://thediplomat.com/2015/05/chinas-naval-plans-for-djibouti-a-road-a-belt-or-a-string-of-pearls/> May 14, 2015. Accessed on June 7, 2015.

55. Abhijit Singh, "Centre for Strategic and International Studies, PacNet #7 - A 'PLA-N' for Chinese Maritime Bases in the Indian Ocean", January 26, 2015, <http://csis.org/publication/pacnet-7-pla-n-chinese-maritime-bases-indian-ocean>. Accessed on June 9, 2015.

56. Dennis Blasko, "The 2015 Chinese Defense White Paper on Strategy in Perspective: Maritime Missions Require a Change in the PLA Mindset", *China Brief*, vol. 15, issue 12, May 29, 2015, [http://www.jamestown.org/programs/chinabrief/single/?tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=43974&cHash=d67db88687507367b668f71cd4199603#.VWUhwjSSfk](http://www.jamestown.org/programs/chinabrief/single/?tx_ttnews[tt_news]=43974&cHash=d67db88687507367b668f71cd4199603#.VWUhwjSSfk). Accessed on June 10, 2015.

and provides justification for the force structure as an evolutionary step necessitated by the growth in all aspects of China's comprehensive national power. The White Paper also states, "In response to the new requirements coming from the country's growing strategic interests, the armed forces will actively participate in both regional and international security cooperation and effectively secure China's overseas interests⁵⁷." Notably, the discussion on the national security situation concludes that "it is, thus, a long-standing task for China to safeguard its maritime rights and interests"⁵⁸. China, however, tends to play down concerns over its military outreach and has repeatedly emphasised that its rise will be peaceful⁵⁹.

Despite its assertions of a peaceful rise, there is an apparent gap in China's theory and practice, as evident in its defiant approach to various territorial disputes in the South China Sea. More recently, China's land reclamation activities at various reefs and rocks in the Spratly and Paracel Island groups, whose ownership is disputed, have sparked tensions with the United States, the Philippines, Vietnam, and even Japan, which has a separate, outstanding dispute with China over the sovereignty of Senkaku (Diaoyu) Islands⁶⁰. China looks determined to press ahead with its territorial consolidation plans and resist attempts to contain its activities in the South China Sea.^{61,62} Given China's rising assertiveness and brinkmanship in its neighbourhood, and

China looks determined to press ahead with its territorial consolidation plans and resist attempts to contain its activities in the South China Sea.

57. *China Daily*, Xinhua, Full Text: China's Military Strategy, "Missions and Tasks of China's Armed Forces", www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-05/26/content_20820628_2.htm. Accessed on June 9, 2015.

58. *China Daily*, Xinhua, Full Text: China's Military Strategy, "National Security Situation", www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-05/26/content_20820628_2.htm. Accessed June 8, 2015.

59. Blasko, n. 56.

60. "How Uninhabited Islands Soured China-Japan Ties", *BBC News*, Asia, November 10, 2014, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-11341139>. Accessed on June 6, 2015.

61. In May 2015, US surveillance aircraft which flew outside the 12 nautical mile limit from Fiery Reef were repeatedly instructed by Chinese military forces to leave the region. *Washington Post*, Editorial, "China's Dangerous Provocation Demands a Response from the U.S.", May 26, 2015, http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/chinas-dangerous-provocation/2015/05/26/cd1c5de0-03c5-11e5-a428-c984eb077d4e_story.html. Accessed on June 6, 2015.

62. Chen Heying, "Experts Warn of Military Conflicts in S.China Sea", *Global Times*, May 25, 2015, <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/923367.shtml>. Accessed on June 8, 2015.

gradual shift of the People's Liberation Army's (PLA's) focus from "offshore waters defence" to the combination of "offshore waters defence" with "open seas protection," it can be expected that Chinese military presence in the Indian Ocean will further increase in the coming years. Chinese power could be expected to fill voids and follow the pattern of economic, political and social consolidation, typified in the examples of *status quo* Western powers in the IOR. On the roulette of history it would mark another turn of the wheel in the saga of great power rivalry in the region.

THE NEW TURN OF THE WHEEL

The ingress of China in the Indian Ocean power politics has served to substantively complicate the medley of power equations in the region. In effect, China's geo-strategic focus on the Indian Ocean has challenged the extant United States led order, which has enjoyed sustained dominance since the end of the Cold War. Russia, which has been subjected to US and European sanctions over the Ukraine crisis, has fostered closer ties with China. In 2014, China and Russia sealed a 30-year agreement for supply of gas to China via two separate pipeline routes, making China the largest consumer of Russian gas. In May 2015, the two countries signed a joint declaration on the "new stage of comprehensive partnership and strategic cooperation"⁶³. The emerging geo-political polarisation, with the US and Western Europe alliance on one side and Russia-China entente on the other, raises the spectre of a new Cold War. Influential Western voices have advised moderation and better understanding in dealing with China's rise. To the question, "*Is China still a partner or primarily a rival*"?, in an interview given to a German magazine in 2008, Henry Kissinger, former national security adviser in the Nixon Administration and later secretary of state, replied, "China has to be treated as a potential partner. We must use all ingenuity to create a system in which the great states of Asia -- which really are not nation-states in the European sense but large conglomerates of cultures -- can participate. We

63. Raymond Johnston, "Russia China Reach 'New Level' of Strategic Cooperation", *Prague Post*, May 20, 2014, www.praguepost.com/world-news/39155-russia-and-china-reach-new-level-of-strategic-cooperation. Accessed on June 29, 2015.

have no choice”⁶⁴. Four years later, addressing the Third Annual US-China Track-II dialogue in 2012, he emphasised, “The 21st century’s most significant issues are global in nature...these are not issues in the resolution of which one country wins and another loses. They can be addressed successfully only through US-China consultation and cooperation. And it is in this context that the United States and China have an opportunity to explore a new direction together, beyond traditional forms of great power rivalry”⁶⁵. The jury is still out on whether Kissinger’s wise counsel has a fair chance of being heard in Washington and Beijing, but there are some signs of accommodation. At the 14th Shangri-La Dialogue conducted at Singapore in May 2015, Deputy Chief of General Staff, People’s Liberation Army, Adm Sun Jianguo, declared that there were “no changes in China’s will to safeguard the freedom and safety of navigation in the South China Sea, and no changes in China’s goal to uphold peace and stability in the South China Sea”⁶⁶. He also delineated China’s efforts to work out a “maritime and air liaison mechanism” with Japan and “Rules of Behaviour for Safety of Air and Maritime Encounters” with the US. On his part, US Defence Secretary Ashton Carter, who also spoke at the Dialogue, emphasised upon peaceful resolution of disputes and the importance of diplomacy, even as he strongly articulated US concerns over land reclamation and militarisation of disputed features in the South China Sea.⁶⁷

IMPERATIVES FOR INDIA

In the contestation between the dominant superpower, the USA and the emerging one, China, India is seen by some as a ‘swing state’, with the

64. Interview with Henry Kissinger, *Spiegel*, February 18, 2008, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/spiegel-interview-with-henry-kissinger-europeans-hide-behind-the-unpopularity-of-president-bush-a-535964.html>. Accessed on June 6, 2015.

65. Henry Kissinger, “Remarks on Behalf of the American Delegation to the Third Annual U.S. - China Track II Dialogue”, January 16, 2012, <http://www.henryakissinger.com/speeches/011612.html>. Accessed on June 7, 2015.

66. Xinhuanet, “China Committed to Upholding Peace, Stability in South China Sea”, June 1, 2015, www.xinhuanet.com/english/2015-16/01/c_134285794.htm. Accessed on June 9, 2015.

67. Voice of America, “US Defense Secretary Gives Keynote Address at Shangri-La Dialogue”, May, 30, 2015, <http://www.voanews.com/content/us-defense-secretary-gives-keynote-address-at-shangrila-dialogue/2800510.html>. Accessed on June 7, 2015.

potential to alter the balance of power⁶⁸. The US perceives India as an important partner in its pivot or “Rebalance to Asia” strategy, and this characterisation has strengthened over a period of time⁶⁹. Chinese voices, on the other hand, urge India to join hands to build “an Asian century of prosperity and renewal”⁷⁰. India’s strategic behaviour indicates that it would continue to desist from the politics of military alliances and will instead seek selective, closer engagement with multiple players, on mutually beneficial and supportive terms. India’s focus appears to be on strategic balancing and hedging against containment. In India’s traditionally defensive orientation, the self-preserving political instinct of ‘non-alignment’ was rooted in a preference to remain detached from superpower politics. In the era of globalisation, the desire for exercising “strategic autonomy” and freedom of making sovereign choices on geo-political issues, including neutrality, circumscribes India’s strategic approach⁷¹. New Delhi has steadily diversified its sources of military imports and import dependency for energy resources. Its endeavour has been to balance the influences of external actors on its domestic policies, so as to maximise the benefits of multipolarity in the world order. There is no reason to believe that this expedient approach has failed to serve India’s interests. India’s bilateral relations with all the major powers appear to be on an upswing, including with the main strategic contestants in the Asia-Pacific. The multifaceted relationship with the USA has further diversified, including growing military sales and a

68. Rajeev Srinivasan, “After the Obama Visit: India, the Swing State”, Rediff, <http://www.rediff.com/news/column/obama-india-after-the-obama-visit-india-the-swing-state/20150128.htm> January 28, 2015, Also see Sonia Luthra, “India as a ‘Global Swing State’: A New Framework For U.S. Engagement with India: An Interview with Richard Fontaine and Daniel Kliman,” July 22, 2013, <http://nbr.org/research/activity.aspx?id=354#Ue6exNKovzy>. Accessed on June 8, 2015.

69. “Leon Panetta in Delhi, Says India ‘Lynchpin’ for American Strategy in Asia”, *The Times of India*, June 6, 2012, <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Leon-Panetta-in-Delhi-says-India-lynchpin-for-American-strategy-in-Asia/articleshow/13871933.cms>. Accessed on June 9, 2015.

70. “China, India Usher in Asian Century: Xi” , September 17, 2014, <http://thebricspost.com/china-india-must-usher-in-asian-century-xi/>. Accessed on June 9, 2015.

71. Sunil Khilnani et al, Preface, *Non Alignment 2.0: A Foreign and Strategic Policy for India in the 21st Century* (Gurgaon: Penguin Books, 2014).

fledging Defence Trade and Technology Initiative⁷². Sino-Indian ties have also been improving following recent high-level visits. While deep divisions and divergences remain between the two Asian neighbours, including the intractable boundary dispute, support to Pakistan's stance on terrorist groups and nuclear issues, and periodic opposition to Indian initiatives and aspirations in various fora, there are many areas of convergence between the two, which have led the two sides to seek closer engagement, including more balanced economic ties and cooperation on defence matters⁷³. In dealing with China, a number of influential Indian voices advocate a more substantive engagement, based on issues of mutual interest⁷⁴. Overall, India has preferred to walk a tightrope act in diplomacy, with simultaneous emphasis on strengthening neighbourhood ties and fostering relations with the major powers.

Towards a Leadership Role in the Indian Ocean: Historically, the Indian Ocean has been central to India's world view. Ancient Indian literature bears testimony to the fact that, since the era of the Indus Valley Civilisation, there was considerable maritime interaction between India and other parts of the world, particularly Africa, Western Asia, the Mediterranean region and the Far East⁷⁵. The maritime ascendancy gained by India in the early period, however, fell into complacency during the medieval period, when the outlook turned more continental. Most continentally oriented kingdoms of India displayed a rueful 'sea blindness', resulting in neglect of maritime power, that ultimately facilitated the economic and political subjugation

72. "Strengthening India-US Defence Ties Top Priority: Ashton Carter", *The Economic Times*, Press Trust of India, February 4, 2015, http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2015-02-04/news/58795799_1_defence-technology-dtti-us-india-defence-relationship. Accessed on June 7, 2015.

73. Ministry of External Affairs, Joint Statement Between the India and China During Prime Minister's Visit to China, May 15, 2015, http://mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/25240/Joint_Statement_between_the_India_and_China_during_Prime_Ministers_visit_to_China. Accessed on June 9, 2015.

74. Ravi Bhootlingam, "Can the Chinese Connection Speed India's Development?" *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol - L, no. 19, May 9, 2015. Also see Shyam Saran, "On Foreign Policy, Modi Must Walk the Talk", May 20, 2015, <http://www.hindustantimes.com/analysis/on-foreign-policy-modi-must-walk-the-talk/article1-1348916.aspx>. Accessed on May 30, 2015.

75. Rear Admiral K. Sridharan (Retd) "Introduction", in *A Maritime History of India* (New Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1982).

In recent decades, the IOR has received a renewed focus in India's foreign policy discourse and the importance of maritime linkages has been rekindled in the national outlook, as also reflected in the 'Look East' policy of the early Nineties.

of the Indian subcontinent by extra-regional colonial powers⁷⁶.

In recent decades, the IOR has received a renewed focus in India's foreign policy discourse and the importance of maritime linkages has been rekindled in the national outlook, as also reflected in the 'Look East' policy of the early Nineties. The nationalist thought in India believes that India's civilisational legacy, demographics, economic strength and geographical attributes lend it the potential to become a great power in its own right⁷⁷.

Indian strategists see a natural leadership role for India in the region, given the numerous

favourable factors. The contours of India's evolving Indian Ocean policy were outlined by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his three nation tour covering the Indian Ocean island states of Sri Lanka, Seychelles and Mauritius, in March 2015.⁷⁸ Speaking at Port Louis, Mauritius, at the ceremony to mark the commissioning of the Coast Guard ship *Barracuda* (constructed at an Indian shipyard), he outlined the strategic importance of the ocean for the littoral states and its centrality in the progress and prosperity of the regional states. He highlighted India's historic connections with the IOR and its willingness to assume responsibility in shaping the region's future, jointly with others.⁷⁹ The apex-level focus on the maritime dimensions of regional security underlines India's resolve to play the role of a responsible actor in promoting security and stability in the IOR.

76. Vice Admiral Mihir Roy (Retd), "The Seas Around Us", in *War in the Indian Ocean* (New Delhi: Lancer Publishers, 1995), ch. 1, pp. 19-39.

77. "India as a Great Power : Know Your Own Strength", *The Economist* March 30, 2013, <http://www.economist.com/news/briefing/21574458-india-poised-become-one-four-largest-military-powers-world-en>. Accessed on June 8, 2015.

78. "SAGAR YATRA, Hon'ble Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Visit to Seychelles, Mauritius and Sri Lanka", <http://sagaryatra.narendramodi.in/#sagar-yatra-13>. Accessed on June 7, 2015.

79. Text of the PM's Remarks on the Commissioning of Coast Ship *Barracuda*, March 12, 2015, <http://www.narendramodi.in/text-of-the-pms-remarks-on-the-commissioning-of-coast-ship-barracuda>. Accessed on June 6, 2015.

It is apparent that India's existing vision of the Indian Ocean is of an accommodative, cooperative order, essentially based in an inclusive, collaborative approach. India's interests would be served by marshalling its unique strengths in crafting a leadership role for itself, to realise this vision. To that end, a five-pronged, multi-vector effort becomes imperative.

- **Contributions to Regional Security:** India has a strong track record in promoting regional security, with prominent contributions of its armed forces. This foundation could be built upon by steadily increasing defence engagement with the littoral nations, to counter threats and challenges such as terrorism, piracy and armed robbery, gun running, smuggling, human trafficking, poaching, illegal fishing, natural disasters, safety of mariners, etc. Sharing of expertise to build the security related capabilities of the littoral states, and assistance in human resource development, would be essential to strengthen India's contributions in its role as a "net security provider" in the region.⁸⁰
- **Cooperation and Collaboration with Partners:** India could play a constructive role in shaping an open and transparent security architecture in the IOR, by promoting meaningful cooperation among regional as well as extra-regional actors. To this end, harnessing the latent potential of existing forums such as the Indian Ocean Regional Association, Indian Ocean Naval Symposium, Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), and the nascent India-Sri Lanka-Maldives trilateral maritime security cooperation initiative⁸¹, merit closer attention. The resolution of the

India could play a constructive role in shaping an open and transparent security architecture in the IOR, by promoting meaningful cooperation among regional as well as extra-regional actors.

80. "Indian Navy: Net Security Provider to Island Nations in IOR: Antony", Press Information Bureau, Government of India, Ministry of Defence, October 12, 2011, <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=76590>. Accessed on June 8, 2015.

81. Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, Documents, "NSA Level Meeting on Trilateral Maritime Security Cooperation Between India, Sri Lanka and Maldives", March 6, 2014, <http://www.mea.gov.in/in-focus-article.htm?23037/NSA+level+meeting+on+trilateral+Maritime+Security+Cooperation+between+India+Sri+Lanka+and+Maldives>. Accessed on June 9, 2015.

maritime boundary delimitation issue between India and Bangladesh, by recourse to diplomacy and international maritime law⁸², has underscored India's credentials as a responsible regional actor⁸³. The positive precedent needs to be built upon by promoting mechanisms for strengthening maritime governance in the region, including freedom of navigation, and other rights enshrined in the UN Convention for the Law of the Sea.⁸⁴

- **Capitalisation on 'Soft Power':** The cultural factor endures in India's linkages with the IOR, for the earlier generations of the Indian diaspora arrived in the region as immigrants, many as indentured labour, during the colonial period. The strong appeal of Indian customs, religious beliefs, languages, culinary preparations, fashion wear, Bollywood movies, etc in the region bears testimony to the '*appravasi*' links between India and a number of littoral states. The Indian diaspora in some countries has strong economic and political influence. This aspect needs to be capitalised upon to diversify the level of engagement between India and the concerned countries.
- **Increasing Maritime Equity in the IOR:** There is a growing realisation that India's maritime strength can be optimally realised when its 'blue economy' develops in tandem with the land-based economy⁸⁵. In recent years, a thrust is visible towards harnessing the country's huge maritime potential, through development of ports, shipbuilding and boatbuilding

82. The Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA), in its judgement of July 7, 2014, awarded New Moore Island to India and 19,493 sq km of the 25,602 sq km disputed maritime zone to Bangladesh. Permanent Court of Arbitration, "Bay of Bengal Maritime Boundary Arbitration between Bangladesh and India", www.pca-cpa.org/showpage.asp?pag_id=1376. Accessed on June 11, 2015.

83. Statement of the official spokesperson, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, of July 8, 2014, "...we believe that the settlement of the maritime boundary will further enhance mutual understanding and goodwill between India and Bangladesh by bringing to closure a long pending issue. This paves the way for the economic development of this part of Bay of Bengal, which will be beneficial to both countries". <http://mea.gov.in/media-advisory.htm?dtl/23575>. Accessed on June 11, 2015.

84. Division for Ocean Affairs and Law of the Sea, United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, December 10, 1982, Table of Contents, www.un.org/depts/los/convention_agreements/texts/unclos/closindx.htm. Accessed on June 10, 2015.

85. "India and Seychelles to Establish Joint Working Group to Expand Cooperation on Blue Economy", March 11, 2015, www.articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2015-3-11/news/60008460_1_india-seychelles-india-seychelles-pm-modi. Accessed on June 12, 2015.

industry, fisheries, shipping, and inland waterways. Maritime capacity building is a potential area of cooperation in deepening India's engagement with the IOR nations. Cooperation on maritime issues such as shipbuilding, ship-design, buoyage, lighthouses, vessel traffic services, hydrographic surveying, cartography, communications, marine information services, search and rescue, administration, regulation, training etc., including sharing expertise and human resource development, could be actualised through avenues such as the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) scheme, Special Commonwealth African Assistance Programme, Technical Cooperation Programme (Colombo Plan)⁸⁶ and scholarships under the Africa-India Forum Summit⁸⁷ and other technical and financial programmes.

- **Deterrence Against Belligerence and Containment:** Development of deterrent capabilities to respond to the full spectrum of threats and challenges would remain a vital consideration for defending India against external aggression and containment. Further, induction of force multiplier capabilities would be essential, with emphasis on strategic delivery platforms, long range air power, and development of amphibious forces, including marines. To deter Kargil-like adventurism and covert support to Mumbai '26/11' like terror strikes from Pakistani soil, maintaining a convincing conventional military capability becomes imperative, given that Pakistan continues to progress its India-focussed nuclear weapons programme and receives substantial military aid from extra-regional actors⁸⁸.

CONCLUSION

The rising multipolarity in IOR geo-politics demands a proactive and sophisticated approach on India's part, aimed at promoting an open,

86. Ministry of External Affairs, India, Technical Cooperation Division, Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) Programme, <http://www.itec.mea.gov.in/>. Accessed on June 9, 2015.

87. Ministry of Commerce and Industry India, India Africa Business Partnership Summit, 'E-Brochure', October 12-13, 2011, <http://www.indiaafricapartnership.com/>. Accessed on June 6, 2015.

88. Rehman, n. 40.

inclusive and transparent order in the region. The acronym of SAGAR, denoting 'Security and Growth for All in the Region', which figured in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's speech at Mauritius⁸⁹, aptly captures the spirit behind India's evolving outlook to the IOR. In the backdrop of the precipitating power contestation, India must weigh regional responsibilities with due regard to its strengths, limitations and larger national priorities. The overwhelming challenge in front of the Indian leadership today is socio-economic emancipation of an incredibly large number of citizens, who remain excluded from the benefits of the Indian 'growth story'. The country faces unique developmental challenges, epitomised by repeated lower rankings on the Human Development Index⁹⁰ and the dubious distinction of being home to the world's largest number of hungry people⁹¹. Given these sobering realities, a sustained peace dividend, assuring internal stability and external peace, becomes a *sine qua non* for realising the aspirations of 'inclusive growth'. In the evolving power-play of regional and extra-regional interests in the IOR, India can lead the path to peace and development by synthesising a new compact, a trans-regional consensus, based on the pillars of stronger bilateral ties, enhanced multilateral cooperation, respect for sovereign rights and closer regional economic integration.

89. n. 79.

90. India is ranked 135 out of 187 countries in the 2014 Human Development Report, the lowest among the BRICS countries, and only slightly ahead of Bangladesh and Pakistan. See Prashant Jha, "Poverty Dips, but India Lags Behind on HDI: Economic Survey", *Hindustan Times*, February 27, 2015. <http://www.hindustantimes.com/business-news/poverty-dips-but-india-lags-behind-on-hdi-economic-survey/article1-1321308.aspx>. Accessed on June 9, 2015.

91. "Dubious Distinction: India Leads World Hunger List - State of Food Security in the World 2015, UN's Food and Agricultural Organization", *The Times of India*, May 28, 2015. <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Dubious-distinction-India-leads-world-hunger-list/articleshow/47451219.cms>. Accessed on June 9, 2015.