

INDIA'S DRIVE FOR A 'BLUE WATER' NAVY

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Introduction

Since the late 1990s India's attempt to strengthen its maritime status has gathered decisive pace. This all involves India's drive, seen in its 2006 Navy Day of "transforming itself from a 'brown water' coastal defense force to a formidable 'blue water' fleet."¹ It reflects the Indian Navy's own 2003 slogan, and play on words, of *Tacking to the Blue Waters*.² Technically, a 'blue water' navy is taken as one able to operate over 200 miles (320 kilometres) from shore, in other words long range, deep water, oceanic maritime projection bringing with it seapower.

Politically, a 'blue water' navy is long range extension of the state's presence. As Admiral Jayant Nadkarni, Chief of Naval Staff 1987-90, once put it "legitimate use...of a Blue Water navy is power projection which is necessary" for a "power like India."³ In doing so, India's own 'blue water' drive is coming up against the similar 'blue water' drive by another rising power, the People's Republic of China. China's "turn to Mahan" is similar to India's, as is Japan's.⁴ This brings the Chinese Navy out into the Indian Ocean, with China's 'string of pearls' strategy across the Indian Ocean causing concern for Indian strategists and leading to further deployments by the Indian Navy. Indeed,

¹ "From Brown Water to Blue," *India Express*, 5 December 2006.

² Indian Navy, *Tacking to the Blue Waters. Indian Navy - The Year That Was*, <http://indiannavy.nic.in/events2003.pdf>. 'Tacking' is a deliberate play on words, between 'taking' and 'tacking', the latter the term for sailing with the wind and a euphemism for policy in general.

³ "The Admiral J G Nadkarni Chat," *Rediff on the Net*, 30 December 1996, <http://www.rediff.com/chat/navychat.htm>.

⁴ Toshi Yoshihara and James Holmes, *Chinese Naval Strategy in the 21st Century: the Turn to Mahan* (London: Routledge, 2007); Toshi Yoshihara, 'Japanese Maritime Thought: If Not Mahan, Who?' *Naval War College Review*, 59:3 (2006), pp. 23-51.

such China-related factors further push India's 'blue water' drive. This maritime drive by India for a 'blue water' navy can be considered in terms of her strategic intentions, her naval capability-capacity, and her actual naval deployments.

Strategic Intentions

India's maritime needs have long been stressed in some quarters. Here, there many echoes with Alfred Mahan's advocacy and stress, at the end of the nineteenth century, on the potential efficacy of 'seapower'. Mahan viewed the sea, and in particular the Pacific Ocean, as the domain for America to stride forth. His vision of the Pacific Ocean was geo-political, but also geo-economic, where "the convergence there of so many ships...will constitute a centre of commerce, inter-oceanic encounters" between states.⁵ It was "one whose approaches will be watched jealously, and whose relations to the other centres of the Pacific by the [maritime] lines joining it to them must be examined carefully."⁶ All one has to do is change 'Pacific Ocean' for the 'Indian Ocean' and one has India's naval setting. Consequently, Mahan strongly advocated the construction of long range ships, "the modern monsters of the deep."⁷ For India's naval advocates, their 'deep' is the Indian Ocean and its extensions, ocean ranges to be similarly traversed and molded by modern day equivalents of Mahan's blue water 'monsters'.

Mahan was an influential geo-political figure, a confidant of President Theodore Roosevelt, and involved in America's push across the Pacific. State interests were

⁵ Alfred Mahan, *The Interest of America in Sea-Power, Present and Future* (London: Sampson Low, Marston & Company, 1898), p. 44.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

prominent for Mahan; his naval advocacy buttressed state policy, “a sober recognition of what our reasonable sphere of influence is, and a candid justice in dealing with foreign interests within that sphere.”⁸ Such types of sentiments are recognizable in India’s current ‘blue water’ drive for an appropriate *de facto* sphere of influence, with the Indian Ocean considered as a zone of natural preeminence, for India and with India candidly dealing with other foreign interests within such a maritime sphere of influence. America’s rise as a Great Power at the start of the twentieth century is echoed by India’s rise as a Great Power at the start of this twenty-first century. Mahan’s ‘seapower’ tenets have a continuing potency for Indian horizons, “our [American] interest and dignity require that our rights should depend upon the will of no other state, but upon our own power to enforce them...freedom of inter-oceanic transit depends upon predominance in a maritime region.”⁹ Mahan’s “control of a maritime region is insured primarily by a navy; secondarily, by positions, suitably chosen and spaced one from the other, upon which as bases the navy rests, and from which it can exert its strength.”¹⁰ India’s control of a maritime region was to focus on the Indian Ocean. India’s “Grand Strategy” has indeed involved such “Mahanian visions” for India’s place in the Indian Ocean.¹¹ A ‘blue water’ navy serves as India’s primary instrument to achieve Mahanist ‘seapower.’

On the eve of Indian independence Kavalam Panikkar was advocating such far reaching naval power projection for India in his *India and the Indian Ocean: An Essay*

⁸ Ibid., p. 55.

⁹ Ibid., p. 102.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 102.

¹¹ David Scott, “India’s ‘Grand Strategy’ for the Indian Ocean: Mahanian Visions,” *Asia-Pacific Review*, 13:2 (2006), pp. 97-129.

on the Influence of Sea Power on Indian History (1945).¹² This book was a deliberate echo of Mahan's earlier 1890 opus *The Influence of Seapower on History*. Panikkar's treatise left a strong legacy in "the 'blue water' thinking of Indian officers, who in training still [2005] read Panikkar's book".¹³ Another contemporary, Keshav Vaidya was also advocating 'blue water' naval projection for a newly-independent India in his *The Naval Defence of India* (1949). Vaidya explicitly acknowledged Mahan's *Influence of Sea Power Upon History*, as well as Tunstall's *Ocean Power Wins* (1944).¹⁴ Thus, for Vaidya, India's strategic needs in 1949 meant "developing an invincible navy...to defend not only her coast but her distant oceanic frontiers with her own navy...the points which must be within India's control are not merely coastal, but oceanic, and far from the coast itself...our ocean frontiers are stretched far and wide in all directions".¹⁵ However in strategic terms a 'continental mind-set' held sway until the late 1990s, with a consequent neglect and languishing of the Indian Navy.

Nevertheless, a strong maritime strategic drive has been evident since the late 1990s, underpinned since 1998 by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Congress-led administrations, and facilitated by India's stronger economic performance in recent years. The BJP domestic input was with regards to its generally more assertive nationalism and readiness to engage in power politics. Strong criticism were posed by them of India's preceding military neglect, and naval forces in particular; Jaswant Singh arguing "today, the Indian navy faces a crisis in terms of its rapidly declining force

¹² Kavalam Panikkar, *India and the Indian Ocean: An Essay on the Influence of Sea Power on Indian History* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1945).

¹³ Peter Brobst, *The Future of the Great Game. Sir Olaf Caroe, India's Independence, and the Defense of Asia* (Akron: The University of Akron Press, 2005), pp. 26 and 30.

¹⁴ Both cited Keshav Vaidya, *The Naval Defence of India* (Bombay: Thacker, 1949), 95. Also ch. 8, "India as a Sea Power," pp. 91-100.

¹⁵ Vaidya, *The Naval Defence of India*, pp. 9 and 29.

levels, lack of sufficient funding, and limited warship construction programmes” a “deplorable state of affairs.”¹⁶ The Vajpayee government, with Jaswant Singh as Minister for External Affairs, made a conscious decision to start increasing funding and warship construction, all in order to shape ‘blue water’ capacity for India. The Congress-led administration of Manmohan Singh, which came into office in May 2004, has maintained this naval support. The importance of India’s Navy was clearly expressed by her External Affairs Minister, Pranab Mukherjee in June 2007. In a wide ranging speech *International Relations and Maritime Affairs – Strategic Imperatives*, he stressed: “within the larger maritime canvas, it is our nation’s military maritime power - as embodied by the Indian Navy...that is the enabling instrument that allows all the other components of maritime power to be exercised.”¹⁷ It was “these ‘enabling’ functions that provide centrality to the Indian Navy within the country’s overall maritime strategy and allow it to act as a versatile and effective instrument of our foreign policy.”¹⁸ India’s economic surge not only provides more sustainable funding for the Indian Navy but also strengthens concerns for long range defense of Indian economic interests on the high sea. This push for a ‘blue water’ navy by India is connected to its own growing economic needs for trade and access to energy resource which necessitate protecting energy sea-lanes across the deep waters. All in all, such developments means there is now a much more overt military and political readiness to establish ‘blue water’ capability.

¹⁶ Jaswant Singh, *Defending India* (London: Macmillan, 1999), p. 127.

¹⁷ Pranab Mukherjee, “International Relations and Maritime Affairs - Strategic Imperatives,” 30 June 2007, <http://meaindia.nic.in/speech/2007/06/29ss01.htm>.

¹⁸ Ibid.

The Indian Navy has been given the domestic go ahead to develop 'blue water' capacity. In the Indian Navy's own words, "*it is vital, not just for India's security but also for her continued prosperity, that we possess a Navy which will protect the nation's vast and varied maritime interests...and underpin India's status.*"¹⁹ Long range military operative capability and deployment was seen as reflecting equally long range political purposes; Indian officers commenting in the wake of tsunami operations in 2004-5 that "we have proved the Navy can be used as a diplomatic instrument in support of our political and geo-strategic objectives. Unlike the Army and Air Force, the Navy is a trans-national force, not circumscribed by a country's international boundaries or airspace."²⁰ As Chief of Naval Staff, Arun Prakash was explicit enough, 2 December 2005, "India aspires to a certain position in the world and so we must have a navy commensurate to our needs," able to project that position and safeguard those needs, far and wide.²¹ In terms of strategic intentions, clear signals were given by Admiral Sureesh Mehta who took over as Chief of Naval Staff on 31 October 2006. Immediately he was telling the media "we want our Navy to operate in waters far away from home. Our ships have to be placed at distant places. If our ships are present far away from home, we can do something to raise the prestige of the nation," a widely recognized 'blue water' conceptualization.²² Indeed, the Indian Navy's 'blue water' capability was seen as his "mantra".²³ Three weeks later, and Mehta was reported asserting with some justification "our ships now operate across the oceans...the Navy now plays a world

¹⁹ Arun Prakash, "At a Seminar on Warship Building," 22 March 2006, http://indiannavy.nic.in/cns_add6.htm.

²⁰ Rajat Pandit, "Navy Makes a 'Blue Water' Mark," *Times of India*, 7 January 2005.

²¹ S. Hali, "INs Force Projection," *The Nation*, 28 December 2005.

²² "New Chief Calls for Expansion of Navy," *Indian Express*, 1 November 2006. Also "Indian Navy Will Reach Far Beyond Indian Waters," *India Daily*, 1 November 2006.

²³ Pandit, "Blue Water Navy is the Aim," *Times of India*, 1 November 2006.

role. Especially so since the country's economy has been growing at the rate of over eight per cent during the past three years.”²⁴

The reasons for this strategic emphasis are several. Internal dynamics, ‘bureaucratic politics’, are one. India’s own indigenous shipbuilding and defence industries are now more able to provide, but also more able to push for, greater naval orders.²⁵ To some extent there has been the growth of Indian institutions with vested bureaucratic interests in maintaining and expanding India’s naval programme. However on its own such bureaucratic factors are insufficient to account for why it is only in the last decade that India has successfully initiated a drive for a ‘blue water’ navy. It is not so much the bureaucratic factors, but the politics factors that are crucial. At the broadest level, one political factor is that national prestige has also become a lever for the Indian Navy, a sense of the need for a suitable great navy to reflect a Great Power. India’s push for maritime projection is also connected to its nuclear deterrent, itself an aspect of India’s rise as a Great Power.

The Indian Navy itself seems to have made its voice more heard amongst India’s political elite. As such, the Indian Navy has been able to make itself seen as a particularly useful instrument of the state and foreign policy establishment. Consequently Vice Admiral Madanjit Singh, Chief of Western Naval Command, was arguing in 2004 that in the “last few years, we have been showing our presence in most parts of the Indian Ocean and beyond. We are also doing bilateral exercises with many other navies...Naval diplomacy has always been there. For the last so many years,

²⁴ “Navy Ready for Requirements in Extended Battlefield: Admiral Mehta,” *The Hindu*, 24 November 2006; “Indian Navy Chief Says the Country Needs to Project Power Across the World’s Oceans,” *International Herald Tribune*, 24 November 2006.

²⁵ Amit Gupta, “Determining India’s Force Structure and Military Doctrine: I Want My MiG,” *Asian Survey*, 35:5 (1995), pp. 441-58, esp. pp. 442-4 for early 1990s discussion of ‘bureaucratic pressures’ and ‘threats’.

among the three services, the navy has had a larger role in diplomacy and will continue to have so.”²⁶ Naval deployments are a readily available and particularly public demonstration of diplomacy, of showing the flag, of showing support, more dramatically and more visually showing India’s presence in an immediate, flexible, and readily redeployable manner. Sleek stealth destroyers like INS Talwar lend themselves to long range diplomatic deployments, explicitly highlighting India’s naval capability and implicitly showcasing India itself as an advanced high tech power in the world. *Soft power* prestige and credibility is something that naval deployments can facilitate. Port calls can bring in a rapid range of countries within a matter of days and weeks, as shown by India’s naval odyssey around the Pacific Asia Rim during Spring 2007. Such naval deployment remains swathed in general talk of ‘win-win’ situations that are not aimed at any third party. Yet in reality, “the exquisiteness of India’s naval diplomacy is that the objective of balancing [China] is being undertaken” not through direct confrontation with China, but through fostering cooperative ‘blue water’ frameworks with nations far and wide in the Indian Ocean and beyond.²⁷ It is no coincidence that stress has been laid by the Indian Navy on ‘naval diplomacy’, a refrain picked up in turn by Indian’s Ministry for External Affairs.²⁸

However, the trend towards India’s naval voices being more readily heard is also due to wider external factors concerning India’s various strategic needs and perceived threats that it faces. Threats are also a lever for India’s ‘blue water’ naval expansion.

²⁶ Madanjit Singh, “Interview with Vice Admiral Madanjit Singh,” *Force*, 2:3 (November 2004), <http://forum.keypublishing.co.uk/showthread.php?t=34309>.

²⁷ Amit Kumar, “A New Balance of Power Game in The Indian Ocean,” *Strategic Comments* (IDSA), 24 November 2006, <http://www.idsa.in/publications/stratcomments/AmitKumar241106.htm>

²⁸ Vijay Sakhuja, “Naval Diplomacy: Indian Initiatives,” *Bharat Rakshak Monitor*, 6:1 (July-August 2003), <http://www.bharat-rakshak.com/MONITOR/ISSUE6-1/Sakhuja.html>

Islamist *jihadi* groups operating across the Indian Ocean, the Gulf and Southeast Asia are one such threat. Last, but certainly not least, comes the question of competition with other states. This is not so much to do with Pakistan, where a local 'brown water' fleet would suffice for maintaining India's security. Rather, state competition is all to do with China, the other Asian giant, where geography brings clearly overlapping, indeed conflicting, geo-political imperatives. This China dimension was raised in *The Indian Maritime Doctrine* (2004). Interestingly enough, Panikkar in his own tract back in 1945 had also commented on a future rise of China posing a maritime challenge to India. By 2005 Prakash was raising the issue of China's "determined drive to build a powerful blue water maritime force" and of the "imperative for India, therefore, to retain a strong maritime capability in order to maintain a balance of maritime power in the Indian Ocean, as well as the larger Asia-Pacific region".²⁹ In short, India's own naval rise has also been in part a reaction by India to China's own 'blue water' aspirations and appearance in the Indian Ocean. China has triggered India's concerns over being encircled in and around the Indian Ocean. To some extent India has responded to China's appearance in the Indian Ocean, not only by augmenting its own power in the Indian Ocean, but also by projecting Indian maritime presence further eastwards into China's own maritime backyard of the South China Sea and beyond, for which it needs a 'blue water' navy. This China dimension remains an ongoing factor in Indian maritime thinking. Not surprisingly, it will be encountered at various points in this study.

All of these reasons converged during this past decade. As Chief of Naval Staff, Admiral Arun Prakash had been eloquent during 2005-6 over the Indian Navy's maritime potentiality. For him, in *Emerging India: Security and Foreign Policy*

²⁹ Prakash "Shaping India's Maritime Strategy," November 2005, http://indiannavy.nic.in/cns_add2.htm.

Perspective, “a self-confident and vibrant India looks towards achieving its manifest destiny in the years ahead.”³⁰ Prakash felt, in his *Future Strategy* speech, that “an economically resurgent India has vast and varied maritime interests” necessitating “sea control in all three dimensions in the distant reaches.”³¹ Prakash frequently emphasized this theme of distant reaches, “the will to project our power overseas...to safeguard our emerging vital interests overseas...to build adequate sealift and airlift capability to have a credible and sustainable trans-national capability...vital interest to us lies in the expanse of the seas.”³² To safeguard these oceanic interests, an oceanic-going navy was needed. This ‘blue water’ capability was central to what Arun Prakash described as “this bigger picture...of making India a great maritime power.”³³

Such naval aspirations have become reflected in naval and government policy formulations, such as the *The Strategic Defence Review: The Maritime Dimension - A Naval Vision* (May 1998), *The Indian Maritime Doctrine* (April 2004), the Indian Navy’s *Vision Statement* (May 2006), *Roadmap to Transformation* (October 2006), and *Freedom to Use the Seas: India’s Maritime Military Strategy (IMMS)* (September 2007). *The Indian Maritime Doctrine* was a particularly substantive 148-page document, with a suitably appropriate subtitle of *The Maritime Dimension - A Naval Vision*. It was drafted by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government and re-affirmed by the new Congress government that came into office in May 2004. Prakash’s ‘Forward’ on India’s “maritime destiny” was developed in its sections on ‘Geo-Strategic Imperatives for India’ and

³⁰ Prakash, “Emerging India: Security and Foreign Policy Perspectives,” 1 September 2005, http://indiannavy.nic.in/cns_add1.htm. Also Prakash, *India, Maritime Destiny* (New Delhi: Lancer Publishers, 2007) for speeches and articles.

³¹ Prakash, “Future Strategy and Challenges for the Indian Navy,” *RUSI Defence Systems*, Autumn 2005, pp. 31-33, 31-32.

³² Prakash, “Future Strategy and Challenges for the Indian Navy.”

³³ Prakash, “Sailing into Future,” *Sainik Samachar* (Ministry of Defence), 53:6 (16–31 August 2006), <http://mod.nic.in/samachar/aug15-06/h2.htm#12>.

'India's Maritime Interest.'³⁴ The review set the benchmark for India's current "Mahanian vision" of maritime strength.³⁵ For Prakash, *The Indian Maritime Doctrine* was an attempt to set out India's "three-dimensional blue water force," a navy able to play an important role on the surface, underwater, and in the air.³⁶ A proactive role was envisaged for the Indian Navy, enabling it to counter distant emerging threats and protect extended 'Sea Lines of Communication' SLOC through and from the Indian Ocean, "an exposition of power projection beyond the Indian shores."³⁷ In classic Mahan style, the *The Indian Maritime Doctrine* highlighted the need to control choke points, important islands and vital trade routes. Consequently, 'naval diplomacy' was pinpointed as one of the primary tasks of the Indian Navy during peacetime. Geographically, it also pinpointed 'blue water' horizons, "the Indian maritime vision for the first quarter of the 21st century must look at the arc from the Persian Gulf to the Straits of Malacca as a legitimate area of interest."³⁸

Central to India's current strategic thinking is the Indian Ocean, the thrust to make the Indian Ocean 'India's ocean'. The Indian Ocean is currently described as part of India's 'extended neighbourhood'; and as such somewhere for India's diplomatic, security and economic interests to be safeguarded by the Indian Navy. In doing so, the earlier but premature speculations of Kavalam Panikkar's *India and the Indian Ocean. An Essay on the Influence of Sea Power on Indian History* (1945) are now being

³⁴ Tariq Ashraf, "Doctrinal Reawakening of the Indian Armed Forces," *Military Review*, 84:6 (2004), 53-62, 61; Sayan Majumdar, "Naval Doctrine - an Analysis," *IDC Analysis*, 4 July 2004. <http://www.indiadefence.com/navaldoct.htm>; Rahul Bedi, "A New Doctrine for the Navy," *Frontline*, 21:14 (3-16 July 2004), 46-8; Reshmi Kazi, "India's Naval Aspirations," *Peace & Conflict*, 7:9 (2004), pp. 4-5.

³⁵ Varun Sahni, "India and the Asian Security Architecture," *Current History* (April 2006), pp. 1-6, 4.

³⁶ Prakash "Shaping India's Maritime Strategy," November 2005. http://indiannavy.nic.in/cns_add2.htm.

³⁷ Huma Siddiqui, "Towards a Nuclear Deterrence Capability," *Sainik Samachar*, 51:23 (1-15 December 2004), <http://mod.nic.in/samachar/dec01-04/body.html>.

³⁸ Indian Navy, *The Indian Maritime Doctrine* (New Delhi: Ministry of Defence, 2004), p. 56.

realized; with his sense of “the primary responsibility lying on the Indian Navy to guard the steel ring created by Singapore, Ceylon, Mauritius and Socotra...the Indian Ocean must therefore remain truly Indian.”³⁹ Thus, the Indian Navy *Vision Statement* (2006) starts by emphasizing the Indian Navy’s role “of safeguarding our maritime interests on the high seas and projecting combat power across [and around] the [Indian Ocean] littoral.”⁴⁰ It is in this vein that India’s Prime Minister Manmohan Singh talks of how “our strategic footprint covers...to the far reaches of the Indian Ocean. Awareness of this reality should inform and animate our strategic thinking and defence planning.”⁴¹ Such a wide-ranging role around the ‘far reaches’ of the Indian Ocean implies an oceanic ranging navy.

Further strategic directions are forming around India’s energy needs, ever more important within India’s burgeoning economic drive; itself the underpinning for India’s sense of itself as a Great Power for the coming century and for the economics-driven approach taken to international politics by Manmohan Singh.⁴² Within that setting, secure extended SLOCs, Sea Lines of Communications, are crucial for India’s imports from the Gulf and from Southeast Asia, and with it the naval maintenance of secure access and passage. Her new Chief of Naval Staff, Sureesh Mehta, considers “we are not only looking at countering threats but to protect the country’s economic and energy interests. This task has extended our area of operations. This might necessitate our operating in distant waters.”⁴³ This, Mehta said, was necessary for protecting New

³⁹ Panikkar, *India and the Indian Ocean*, pp. 95 and 84.

⁴⁰ Indian Navy, *Vision Statement*, 25 May 2006, <http://www.indiannavy.gov.in/vision.pdf>. Signed by A. Prakash.

⁴¹ Manmohan Singh, “PM’s Address at the Combined Commanders Conference,” 24 October 2004, <http://pmindia.nic.in/speech/content.asp?id=37>.

⁴² Clearly outlined by Manmohan Singh, “Speech by Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh at India Today Conclave, New Delhi,” 25 February 2005, <http://meaindia.nic.in/speech/2005/02/25ss01.htm>

⁴³ Cited in “Indian Navy Gears Up for Energy Security Role,” *Times of India*, 2 December 2006

Delhi's interests in its 2.02 million square km EEZ, Exclusive Economic Zone, in the Indian Ocean; as well as also guarding new offshore oil blocks that Indian companies had acquired in areas like the Sakhalin Islands and off the Venezuelan coast! Venezuela might be far away for naval deployment, but the sea lines between India and Sakhalin are not; with the first consignment of Sakhalin oil arriving at Port Mangalore in December 2006. Thus, "as the Indian economy grows, the country is making increasing investments in distant places to ensure the availability of energy flow to maintain this growth. This is gradually defining what may be called our secondary area of maritime interest," alongside her primary area of maritime interest in and across the Indian Ocean.⁴⁴ Such 'blue water' oceanic interests raise the question of how far India has got the naval capability, the capacity, to match such strategic intentions?

Capability-capacity

A serious building and purchasing program has reshaped the Indian Navy. The results have been what the Indian Navy now officially claims are "its bluewater capabilities."⁴⁵ This buildup was started by the BJP administration of Atal Behari Vajpayee (1998-2004) and maintained under the Congress administration of Manmohan Singh (2004 onwards). Mahan's maritime flame is indeed "alive" as India exemplifies Pugh's role for "state naval power in the international system," with New Delhi mobilizing resources and priorities for its navy.⁴⁶ The Indian Navy's allocation of the Defence Budget rose from \$7.5 billion for the years 1997-2001 to \$18.3 billion for 2002-

⁴⁴ Cited in *ibid*.

⁴⁵ Vinay Garg, "PM's Day at Sea. Indian Navy Displays its Blue-Water Capabilities," *Sainik Samachar*, 53:10 (16-31 May 2006), <http://mod.nic.in/samachar/may15-06/h1.htm>.

⁴⁶ Michael Pugh, "Is Mahan Still Alive? State Naval Power in the International System," *Conflict Studies Journal*, 16:2 (1996), pp. 109-23.

2007. Its service-share of the Defence budget, having fallen to 11.2 per cent in 1992-93, saw its first real increase in 1998-99 to 14.5 per cent. A clear “momentum” had been established by 2004, in terms of increasing naval expenditure.⁴⁷ This has been maintained with the Indian Navy allocated 17.3 per cent in the 2005-2006 and 2006-7 Defence budgets. The 2007-8 Defence Budget saw another increase; the Indian Navy allocated 18.26 per cent.⁴⁸ Twenty per cent seems achievable.

India has certainly shaped an image of naval power. Consequently, the Indian Navy’s first-ever International Fleet Review in Mumbai (February 2001) was seen as “the Indian Navy’s coming out party.”⁴⁹ The large Indian contingent of 55 ships was headed by its aircraft carrier INS *Viraat*. The then Chief of Naval Staff, Shushil Kumar, considered it “an opportunity to showcase India’s maritime potential.”⁵⁰ His successor, Arun Prakash, was able to state with some real confidence in *Shaping India’s Maritime Strategy* (2005) that “today the IN [Indian Navy] has weapons of formidable range and our naval forces are deployed across vast distances from the Arabian Sea to the Bay of Bengal and the farthest reaches of the Indian Ocean.”⁵¹ The Indian Fleet Review of 2006 proudly unfurled the world’s fourth biggest navy; showcasing over 50 naval vessels, including her aircraft carrier (with 55 aircraft), submarines and advanced stealth frigates, “an emphatic and stylised bout of power projection.”⁵² For India’s Ministry of

⁴⁷ “Building a Modern Navy,” *The Hindu*, 19 November 2004.

⁴⁸ Though still considered too small by some naval advocates like N.V. Subramanian “Oceanic Insecurity - I. India Faces a Strategic Dead-end by Failing the Navy,” *NewsInsight*, 18 April 2007, <http://newsinsight.net/archivedebates/nat2.asp?reco=1592>, including his call there for a still greater still “tearaway expansion programme.”

⁴⁹ Thomas Barnett, “India’s 12 Steps to a World-Class Navy,” *Proceedings. U.S Naval Institute*, 127:7 (2001), pp. 41-5, 41.

⁵⁰ Cited in Josy Joseph, “At Sea. Welcome to the Navy’s Big Splash,” *Rediff on the Net*, 2 February 2001, <http://www.rediff.com/news/2000/feb/02josy.htm>.

⁵¹ Prakash, “Shaping India’s Maritime Strategy – Opportunities and Challenges.”

⁵² Balaji Reddy, “Indian Navy Eyes China in the East - Plans to Go Global to Make its Presence Felt,” *India Daily*, 12 February 2006.

Defence, this was “blue water capabilities” on show by its navy.⁵³ The TROPEX ‘Theatre-level Readiness Operational Exercises’ carried out during February 2007 saw India’s biggest ever naval war game. It involved 50 Indian warships, including its aircraft carrier INS Viraat, stealth Talwar class frigates, Rajput class missile destroyers and indigenous Delhi and Brahmaputra and Ganga class warships. Drawn from both Western and Eastern Fleets, operating across the Arabian Sea, and centred on the theme of ‘Maritime Manoeuvre From the Sea’. It was a clear signal of India’s ability to operate and project power around the Indian Ocean littoral. Currently, autumn 2007, the Indian Navy fleet strength stands at 156 ships; part of “the naval arms race in Asia” currently carried out by China, Japan as well as India.⁵⁴

Specific elements of the Indian Navy have been strengthened in order to augment long range power projection. As former Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Madhvendra Singh noted in summer 2006, “the Indian Navy of 2010-20 is already being built.”⁵⁵ The pace of India’s acquisitions and construction program continues to advance, with its revamp on “full throttle.”⁵⁶ Arun Prakash’s stint as Chief of Naval Staff saw major augmentation of India’s naval forces, and orders, in his words, “fulfilling India's dream to have a full-fledged blue-water navy”.⁵⁷ Thus, in March 2006, Prakash had been proud to announce “currently, the Indian Navy has on order, 27 ships which include fast attack craft, landing ships (tank), frigates, destroyers, submarines and an aircraft carrier; and there are more in the pipeline...I doubt if the ship-building industry of

⁵³ Cited in Garg, “PM’s Day at Sea. Indian Navy Displays its Blue-Water Capabilities”.

⁵⁴ Paul Kennedy, “The Rise and Fall of Navies,” *International Herald Tribune*, 5 April 2007. He is famous for his book *The Rise and Fall of Great Powers* (1989), with India being on a Great Power rise now. Also see his *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery* (2001).

⁵⁵ Madhvenra Singh, “The Indian Navy in 2020,” *Security Research Review*, 2:2 (July 2006), http://www.bharat-rakshak.com/SRR/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=21&Itemid=26

⁵⁶ Shiv Kumar, “Navy Revamp on Full Throttle,” *The Tribune*, 16 February 2006.

⁵⁷ Prakash, 2 December 2005, cited in Hali, ‘INs Force Projection.’

any other country can look forward to such an attractive and 'mouth-watering' prospect."⁵⁸ Further announcements of new acquisitions and building programs brought the comment from Sakhuja that "a cursory glance at the contours of the naval shipbuilding programmes" of India "suggest that these vessels and aircraft are certainly not for littoral operations, but rather power projection, designed to undertake long-range operations that could stretch the entire maritime swath from western Pacific Ocean through the Straits of Malacca into the Indian Ocean."⁵⁹ India's navy can be divided into three elements, its presence on water, under the water, and over the air - evoking the Indian Navy's description of itself as a 'three-dimensional' force.

On water, India's aircraft carrier program has been a particularly important high profile element in India's drive to 'blue water' maritime status. For a long time India was the only Asian state with an aircraft carrier, INS Vikrant (formerly HMS Hercules) commissioned in 1961 and joined by INS Viraat (formerly HMS Hermes) in 1987. There is now a drive to expand her aircraft carrier numbers to three. As India's Chief of Naval Staff, Admiral Shishil Kumar, had explained in 1999, three new aircraft carriers would establish the Indian Navy as a true "bluewater Navy, with fleets in the Arabian Sea, Bay of Bengal, and Indian Ocean, on the same lines as the US Pacific, Atlantic, and Mediterranean fleets."⁶⁰

An aircraft carrier program has become one potent symbol of India's naval drive. Despite some critics of aircraft carrier programs, India's drive for aircraft carriers is

⁵⁸ Prakash, "At a Seminar on Warship Building," 22 March 2006, http://indiannavy.nic.in/cns_add6.htm.

⁵⁹ Vijay Sakhuja, "Emerging Contours of Asian Naval Power," *Opinion Asia*, 5 February 2007, <http://www.opinionasia.org/EmergingContoursofAsianNavalPower>.

⁶⁰ Cited in Nick Smith, "Grand Delusions. The Psychology of Aircraft Carriers," *Harvard International Review*, 24:3 (Fall 2002), <http://hir.harvard.edu/articles/1068/>.

correctly envisaged “as a priceless tool of power projection.”⁶¹ No other Asian state, including China, has aircraft carrier capability. In such a vein, India’s existing aircraft carrier INS Viraat (INS Vikrant having been phased out in 1997) is being extended in service until 2012. In turn she is being joined by another aircraft carrier, the ‘Admiral Gorshkov’ brought from Russia in 2004 and renamed as INS Vikramaditya. Under refit in Russia, she was due to be handed over to the Indian navy by the end of 2008, but with some slippage of completion dates subsequently pushing this back to 2009/2010.⁶² Vice Admiral Kailash Kohli’s judgment remains valid, “Gorshkov will represent a quantum jump for our maritime capability.”⁶³ It has a sea endurance of 30 days, and its range of nearly 22,530 km (14,000 nautical miles), in contrast to the 8,050 km (5,000 miles) range of INS Viraat, indeed represents “a massive boost in reach.”⁶⁴ Moreover, its complement of Mig-29K aircraft have a range of 2,300 km (1,430 miles). With these sorts of features, analysts see it as a “real force projector for the country...the Indian Navy’s blue water aspirations have received a boost as it now has the capacity to put a carrier task force as far as the South China Sea and the Persian Gulf”.⁶⁵ Certainly, the importance of the purchase was widely accepted in the Indian media, typified in Bhattacharyya’s “India must rule the waves,” where “India’s carrier force gives the country both its flag and force, to show the former and use the latter, should the need arise...the carrier’s role as a force-multiplier in a turbulent ocean” for India.⁶⁶ Even more forcefully, the Janipura *Daily Excelsior* felt “clearly the aircraft carrier is a weapons

⁶¹ Dean Matthew, “Aircraft Carriers: An Indian Introspection,” *Strategic Analysis*, 23:12 (March 2000), 2135-58, 2135.

⁶² Pandit, ‘India demands answers on Gorshkov’, *Times of India*, 2 November 2007

⁶³ Kailash Kohli, “Naval Gazing Into The Future,” *Indian Express*, 13 December 2003; Alok Gupta, “An Aircraft Carrier for Strategic Advantage,” 12 February 2004, <http://www.indiadefence.com/Admgorshkov.htm>.

⁶⁴ Abhijit Bhattacharyya, “India Must Rule the Waves,” *The Pioneer*, 10 June 2004.

⁶⁵ John Cherian, “The Gorshkov Deal,” *Frontline*, 21:3 (31 January-13 February 2004), 21-3, 22. Cf. G. Raghuvanshi, “Will Gorshkov Propel India into a ‘Blue Water Navy’?,” *Business Line (The Hindu)*, 22 January 2004.

⁶⁶ Bhattacharyya, “India Must Rule the Waves”.

system for those with imperial ambitions, who wish to wage war far away from their mainland," deep in the oceanic reaches.⁶⁷ Prakash was clear enough on their role, "we aim to exercise selective sea control in the waters of the Indian Ocean by deploying task forces built around the core of aircraft carriers".⁶⁸

Meanwhile India's 'Project 71' envisages a complete new generation of indigenous aircraft carriers, Prakash's "quest".⁶⁹ In doing so, India would join an elite club of nations able to construct their own aircraft carriers, hitherto the preserve of only US, UK, Russia and France. Here, the keel of the 'Indigenous Aircraft Carrier' (IAC, formerly known as Air Defense Ship ADS) was cut at Cochin Shipyard in 2005, for launching in autumn 2010, and delivery to the Indian navy by 2012, a development followed in the Chinese media.⁷⁰ Like Gorshkov, there may be some slippage in delivery, but not of final outcome.⁷¹ Not only will the IAC be still bigger and much more advanced than INS Viraat, but her range of endurance of 12,070 km (7,500 nautical miles) is also truly oceanic. A further second IAC carrier construction is envisaged, to be commenced at Cochin shipyard in 2010, as the first IAC comes out the shipyard, with service by 2017.⁷² With a two-carrier projection scheduled by 2009/10, and a three-carrier projection by 2017, India's maritime presence will be noticeable for the Indian Ocean and beyond.⁷³

⁶⁷ N.S. Kohli, "Naval Expansion," *Daily Excelsior*, 24 July 2005.

⁶⁸ Prakash, "A Vision of India's Maritime Power in the 21st Century," *Journal (USI)*, July-September 2006, 454-63, http://www.usiofindia.org/article_july_sep06_12.htm.

⁶⁹ Prakash, "India's Quest for an Indigenous Aircraft Carrier," *RUSI Defence Systems*, Summer 2006, pp. 50-2.

⁷⁰ "Indian Navy to Have Two Aircraft Carriers by 2011," *People's Daily*, 9 March 2004; "India Begins Construction of Aircraft Carrier," *China Daily*, 12 April 2005.

⁷¹ Pandit 'After Gorshkov, another Navy project hit by delay', *Times of India*, 10 August 2007.

⁷² "Navy to Project Three Carrier Force From 2008," *Reports (India Defence)*, 2673 (14 November 2006), <http://www.india-defence.com/reports/2673>.

⁷³ "Indian Navy Three Aircraft Carrier Force By 2017," *Reports (India Defence)*, 32094, 17 May 2007 <http://www.india-defence.com/reports/3204>.

Other elements of India's strength on water are coming into place. Her warship range is particularly credible, especially with its growing indigenous production.⁷⁴ At the destroyer level, her indigenously produced Delhi-class destroyers include INS Delhi (commissioned 1997), INS Mysore (1999) and INS Mumbai (2001). The next generation Kolkata-class 'Project 15a' destroyers are underway; INS Kolkata launched in March 2006 (for commissioning 2010), to be followed by two more sister ships in 2011 and 2012 respectively. At the frigate level, India has obtained highly advanced ships. In 2003, the navy took delivery from Russia of INS Talwar and INS Trishul, ships armed with sophisticated 200 km range missile systems, followed in 2004 by INS Tabar. These three Talwar-class high-tech stealth frigates constitute a task force centred on the aircraft carrier INS Vikramaditya. The then Chief of Staff, Madhvendra Singh stressed concerning INS Talwar's longer range, that "this ship has much larger range and sensor capability than any ship of the Indian Navy has today. It will enable India to target more further away."⁷⁵ His comment on inspecting INS Talwar was that "we are a blue water navy and we operate like a blue water navy."⁷⁶ In turn, Indian comments on INS Trishul were emphatic, "the Navy is poised to extend its Blue Water battle space capability" through its acquisition, "an ideal symbol of the Navy's leanness and meanness" where "India is getting a destroyer for the price of a frigate."⁷⁷ May 2006 saw the Indian Navy, at the cost of \$665 million, "racing" to purchase three more similar stealth frigates from

⁷⁴ "Indian Navy Capable of Developing Nuclear Powered Warships," *Reports* (India Defence), 2670 (11 November 2006), <http://www.india-defence.com/reports/2670>.

⁷⁵ Vinay Shukla, "INS Talwar to Add Punch to Indian Navy," *Rediff on the Net*, 18 June 2003, <http://www.rediff.com/news/2003/jun/18ship.htm>.

⁷⁶ V. Mohan Narayan, "Navy Acquires Stealth Frigates," *The Tribune*, 13 August 2003.

⁷⁷ Kapil Chandni, "INS Trishul: the Trident Arrives Home," Autumn 2003, <http://www.bharat-rakshak.com/NAVY/Articles/Article16.html>.

Russia, to be armed with supersonic BrahMos cruise missiles, and to join the existing Talwar-class trio.⁷⁸

Maritime missile technology further increases the Indian navy's punch. The BrahMos medium range cruise missile, with a 250-300 km (155-186 miles) range, has been a particularly successful addition to India's armoury. It is also supplemented by the Dhanush ballistic (Project 'K-15' Prithvi-II adapted) missile, successfully tested in 2004.⁷⁹ This was inducted into the Indian Navy in summer 2006, generally for the Sukanya-class large patrol crafts with immediate installation on INS Subhadra and INS Sukanya.⁸⁰ It has a 300-350 km (186-217 miles) range, and can carry a 750-1000 kgs warhead (conventional or nuclear-tipped).

Meanwhile 'Project 17' has seen indigenous adaptations, bigger versions of INS Talwar, carried out by India in the shape of the Nilgiri-class stealth vessels, INS Shivalik (launched 2003, commissioned into service September 2007), INS Satpura (launched June 2004, for commission into service December 2007) and INS Sahyadri (launched May 2005, for commission into service March 2008). Tenders were invited for the purchase of seven more of these types of vessels at the end of 2006, 'Project 17A'. India's own indigenously constructed Brahmaputra-class guided missile frigate, INS Brahmaputra, was joined by INS Betwa in 2004 and INS Beas in 2005. It was significant that Defence Minister George Fernandes asserted, 14 April 2000 at the launching of INS Brahmaputra, that India's maritime "area of interest ... extends from the north of the Arabian Sea to the South China Sea."⁸¹ These warships have been used for long range

⁷⁸ "Indian Navy Seeks Approval for More 'Stealth' Warships," *Agence France-Presse*, 10 May 2006.

⁷⁹ "Prithvi's Naval Variant is Successfully Test-Fired," *Times of India*, 28 October 2004.

⁸⁰ Rajat Pandi, "Navy, IAF Inducts Prithvi," *Times of India*, 22 August 2006.

⁸¹ Fernandes cited in "India Challenges China in South China Sea," *Asia Times*, 27 April 2000.

maritime diplomacy, as India has shown her flag far and wide in the Indian Ocean and beyond.

Other elements of the Indian Navy have been strengthened with oceanic capabilities in mind. Thus, in April 2000, the Indian Navy commissioned a 24,000 ton fleet replenishment tanker, INS Aditya. A low profile acquisition, INS Aditya can double as a command platform, and is a necessary component for a naval force to operate for long periods of time at sea, that is to say, into the Indian Ocean and beyond. The purchase in April 2006 of a Landing Platform Deck, the USS Trenton, recommissioned into the Indian Navy in June 2007 as INS Jalashwa, "represents a quantum jump in the Navy's integral sealift and airlift capabilities;" a significant 'blue water' addition since "the Jalashwa will increase India's power projection capabilities well into the Indian Ocean and beyond."⁸² At 17,000-tonnes it is India's second-largest warship, second only to her 28,000-tonne aircraft carrier INS Viraat. India's interest in purchasing the Trenton's sister ship, USS Nashville was also made public in July 2007. A Magar-class landing ship, INS Shardul, was also commissioned in January 2007, to be based at the Southern Command at Kavar.

Underwater, various elements have been overhauled. 2004 saw the Indian Navy upgrading its Russian Kilo Class submarines "as part of measures to give punch to its undersea fighting arm" and arming them with Klub-S cruise missiles; cruise missiles with strike capability to hit warships as well as surface targets from a standoff distance of up to 65 km (40 miles) from ocean bed. The longer-range Dhanush ballistic (Project 'K-15' Prithvi-II adapted) missile, with a range of 300-350 km (185-220 miles), is also

⁸² Gurpreet Khurana, "Indian Navy's Amphibious Leap: A Little Help From America," *Reports* (India Defence), 1703, 7 April 2006, <http://www.idsa.in/publications/stratcomments/gskhurana030406.htm>; Raeeefa Shams, "Indian Navy Takes Big Strides Towards Blue Water Capability," *JINSA Online*, The Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs, 24 July 2007.

capable of being fired from submarine depth. India's navy is also involved in developing India's nuclear deterrence capability. In Madhvendra Singh's words (2002) "we have a triad of weapons for a second strike and one of the triad is at sea. The most powerful leg of the triad is in the navy and is hidden underwater and moving."⁸³ *The Indian Naval Doctrine* (2004) put forward the need for a sea-based nuclear deterrent.⁸⁴ This was further stressed in *Freedom to Use the Seas: India's Maritime Military Strategy* (2007). This deterrence capability is centered around the more powerful Sagarika 'Oceanic' missile, which finished successful test flights in September 2007, for installation on India's ATV nuclear submarine in 2008, and which is capable of delivering a 500-kg nuclear warhead some 1,500 km (932 miles).⁸⁵ This brings a secure "credible" sea-based second strike nuclear capability against Pakistan and China within India's reach, and completes India's triad of nuclear delivery systems.⁸⁶ The successful testing in April 2007 of India's Agni III missile, with some 3,500 km (2174 miles) range, puts China still more firmly within India's nuclear sights, and was coupled with news of Agni III's future development for submarine launch.⁸⁷

More widely, in 2006 the government cleared a 30-year submarine building program, necessitated by India's current older submarine units mostly dating back to the 1980s. This renewal has been kick started by the agreement reached with France in February 2006 for the construction at Mazagoan docks in Mumbai of six advanced, state of the art, Scorpene attack submarines for India. Construction started in December

⁸³ Robert Norris, William Arkin, Hans Kristensen and Joshua Handler, "India's Nuclear Forces, 2002," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, 58:2 (2002), pp. 70-72, 72; also "Indian Navy Chief Claims Preparedness," *Dawn*, 17 January 2002.

⁸⁴ Rahul Bedi, "India Outlines Vision of Future Nuclear Navy," *Jane's Weekly*, 41:25 (23 June 2004), pp. 30-2.

⁸⁵ Vivek Raguvanshi, "India Working on Sea-Based Nuclear Missiles," *Defence News*, 15 October 2007.

⁸⁶ Pandit, "N-submarines Will Make India's Nuclear Deterrent Credible," *Times of India*, 24 September 2007.

⁸⁷ "Agni III Submarine Launched Version To Be Developed: DRDO," *Reports* (India Defence), 13 April 2007, <http://www.india-defence.com/reports/3035>.

2006, with the first one due to be delivered to the Indian Navy by December 2012, with annual completions envisaged through to 2017. A second range of submarines is envisaged with international bids, 'Request for Proposals' (RFP), floated in Spring 2007 to acquire and build six new range of submarines. The Russian fourth generation Amur class submarines armed with vertically launched KLUB-S Missiles and new generation of German HDW submarines with their air-independent propulsion systems are the leading contenders. June 2008, should have the Indian Navy commissioning INS Chakra, a 12,000-tonne Akula-II class nuclear-powered attack submarine, started in Russia, completed with Indian finance and ready for leasing for around ten years.⁸⁸ The leasing of a second Akula-II class nuclear submarine was seemingly agreed on Manmohan Singh's trip to Russia in November 2007. Meanwhile there is India's own indigenous nuclear submarine project, the ATV 'Advanced Technology Vessel'. The ATV is due to be launched from Vishakapatnam during 2008, with subsequent sea trials in 2009 and induction into the Indian navy. The government gave the green signal in 2006 to the Navy and Defence Research and Development Organisation DRDO to build two more indigenous nuclear submarines, around 2009, after the first ATV is inducted. As Sakhuja noticed back in 2001, "Indian naval strategists and naval planners are convinced that acquisition of a nuclear submarine will provide the most reliable deterrence," will "give the navy a true blue water status" and will "add to great power status" for India.⁸⁹

In the air, the Indian Navy has pushed for longer range capacities in its surveillance and communications program. Already, the Indian Navy is also raising

⁸⁸ Sandeep Unnithan, 'The Secret Nuke Sub Deal: How a Stealthy Agreement with Russia Gives India an Undersea Platform to Launch Nuclear Weapons,' *India Today*, 3 September 2007.

⁸⁹ Sakhuja, "Sea-based Deterrence and Indian Security," *Strategic Analysis*, 25:1 (April 2001), pp. 21-32, 31.

three squadrons of Israeli-built Heron II unmanned aerial vehicles, UAVs, with a 300 km (185 miles) range. In addition, discussions for the purchase in 2008-9 by the Indian Navy of advanced long range maritime surveillance aircraft, some eight-ten Boeing P-8A or Airbus spy planes to replace its eight Tupolev Tu-142s at the cost of \$800 million and due to serve for 15 years, are also set to augment the reach of the Indian Navy. The plans announced in April 2007 for an expanded naval air station near Rameshwaram was significant, "a naval air station will enable us to make our presence more felt and we can cover the entire Indian Ocean" according to Commodore P.E. Van Haltren, naval officer-in-charge, Tamil Nadu.⁹⁰ India has had long range surveillance and reconnaissance capacity for some time, as with the purchase of TU-142m aircraft from the Soviet Union in 1988; with a range of over 12,000 km (7460 miles), capable of flying from Mumbai to Johannesburg and back without mid-air refuelling. Mehta's take, as new Chief of Naval Staff, was that their replacements would be important for ensuring India's "long-range surveillance capability to keep track of goings-on in the region between the horn of Africa and Malacca Straits and even beyond in South China Sea."⁹¹ It was for this reason that a "staggering" Rs 1,965 crore was allocated to the Navy to buy aircraft in the 2007-8 Defence Budget, up from its allotted Rs 1,172 crore in the 2006-7 Defence Budget.⁹² Meanwhile, there is the Indian Navy's drive for a satellite networked-force with maritime surveillance capabilities to keep tabs on the entire Indian Ocean.

⁹⁰ "Indian Navy To Set Up Air Station Near Rameshwaram," *Reports* (India Defence), 3027 (11 April 2007), <http://www.india-defence.com/reports/3027>.

⁹¹ "Navy to Go in For Long-Range Spy Planes," *The Hindu*, 3 December 2006.

⁹² "Defence Budget up 11.6% to Rs 96,000cr," *Business Standard*, 28 February 2007.

A summation of the whole capability-capacity question can be seen in Gaurang Bhatt's 2005 "blueprint for a future Indian Navy" in which 'blue water' projection was central.⁹³ For Bhatt, "the top priority is a buildup of blue water ships, quiet submarines and a substantial and independent air-arm for the Indian Navy."⁹⁴ Within that, "the big bucks spending should be for a nuclear powered submarine with sea-based ballistic nuclear missiles of long ranges to serve as retaliatory deterrent" from under the water. All in all, "twenty-four modern submarines, thirty blue water navy frigates and destroyers armed with missiles, helicopters and ABMs, about 100 land based naval aircraft for reconnaissance, rescue, Anti-Submarine Warfare and equipped to attack ships and submarines, and two nuclear powered submarines with nuclear missiles would ensure India's safety."⁹⁵ Such under water, on water and above water additions to the Indian Navy are where India's accelerating acquisition and construction programme is taking her; as well as her aircraft carrier programme, which Bhatt questioned on grounds of expense cost-benefit ration and of vulnerability, but which has been pushed by India over the last decade for the future.

The final aspect of India's capability is its infrastructure, in other words naval bases and berthing facilities. Traditionally its main command centres have faced outwards from its two coastlines - Mumbai for the Western Command and Visakhapatnam for the Eastern Command, both more geared up for local operations. However India's strategic reach has been significantly augmented by new bases. Summer 2005 saw the final initiation of India's new naval base at Kavaratti on the Kanakal coast, officially termed INS Kadamba. This is the biggest deep water anchorage east of

⁹³ Gaurang Bhatt, "A Blueprint For a Future Indian Navy," 3 July 2005, <http://www.boloji.com/rt2/rt178.htm>

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

Suez, can hold India's aircraft carrier (unlike the problems encountered at Mumbai and Visakhapatnam), is dedicated solely for Indian Navy use, and indeed is "a base for a blue-water navy."⁹⁶ As the Southern Command, INS Kadamba's location at Kavaratti opens up the Indian Ocean depths. This is buttressed by the news in April 2007 of the development of the naval air base at Uchipulli, near Rameshwaram, from which Commodore P.E. Van Haltren, naval officer-in-charge, Tamil Nadu, felt "a naval air station will enable us to make our presence more felt and we can cover the entire Indian Ocean".⁹⁷ In these southern oceanic depths, the activation by the Indian navy of a monitoring station, with some anchoring facilities, on the northern tip of Madagascar in July 2007 was another sign of India's infrastructural reach.⁹⁸ The current discussion on developing maritime infrastructure for the Indian Navy on the Mauritian island of Agalega is a further recent development.⁹⁹

Meanwhile, the current setting up of FENC, the Far Eastern Naval Command at Port Blair in the Andaman islands, was correctly seen as a move by the Indian Navy "to give it 'blue water' status;" since it enables enabling longer range operations in the Bay of Bengal, Malacca Straits and further eastward.¹⁰⁰ Plans were also announced in autumn 2006 for the construction of another deep water base, 50 kilometres south of Visakhapatnam, to house India's two new aircraft carriers. Its construction was "designed to help protect the country's trade with Southeast Asia," will "contribute to increasing India's naval presence in the Bay of Bengal and the Indian Ocean," and "is

⁹⁶ Ravi Sharma, "A Base for a Blue Water Navy," *Frontline*, 22:11 (21 May - 3 June 2005), 90-4. Also Adam Wolfe, Yevgeny Bendersky, and Federico Bordonaro, "India's Project Seabird and the Indian Ocean's Balance of Power," *Power and Interest News Report*, 20 July 2005; Sudha Ramachandran, "Indian Navy on the Crest of a Wave," *Asia Times*, 18 June 2005.

⁹⁷ Cited in 'Indian Navy to Set Up Air Station Near Rameshwaram,' *Reports* (Indian Defence), 3027, 11 April 2007.

⁹⁸ Ramachandran, "Delhi All Ears in the Indian Ocean," *Asia Times*, 3 March 2006; "Indian Navy Activates Listening Post, Monitoring Station in Madagascar, Indian Ocean," *Reports* (India Defence), 3466, 18 July 2007.

⁹⁹ Steven Forsberg, "India Stretches Its Sea Legs," *Proceedings* (U.S. Naval Institute), 133:3 (March 2007), pp. 38-42.

¹⁰⁰ Ramtanu, "India Bids to Rule the Waves," *Asia Times*, 19 October 2005.

intended to balance China's influence there and to facilitate ongoing Indian naval exercises in the South China Sea."¹⁰¹ Delicate explorations have taken place with Vietnam on naval berthing rights for Indian Ships at Cam Ranh deep water bay.

Naval Deployments

On the basis of growing capability-capacity, "India's blue water reach" has been shown through active deployments of such assets.¹⁰² Through such deployments "India's blue water reach is reflected in the recent [summer 2007], unprecedented programme of fleet exercises and visits throughout Asia" and the Indian Ocean.¹⁰³ This has been an increasing tempo, as the Indian Navy (IN) put it 2003 "tacking to the blue waters...with naval activities throughout the oceanic areas of our interests."¹⁰⁴ The Indian Navy stresses such deployments, for 2005 arguing that "the Indian Navy's vision of 'Tacking to the Blue Waters' has resulted in increasing deployments both, within and Indian Ocean Region, as well as beyond it;" so that "over the past few years, the outlines of this policy have sharpened significantly, with IN ships and aircraft becoming increasingly visible at sea and in ports and harbours near and far."¹⁰⁵ Such deployments "showcases to the world the maritime, economic and technological prowess of the nation...the ships have projected a brilliant picture of a military strong, vibrant and confident India."¹⁰⁶ Such deployments represented "adroit naval diplomacy" in which "the growing blue water assets of India" enabled a "revved up military diplomacy, with

¹⁰¹ Ramachandran, "India Navy Drops Another Anchor," *Asia Times*, 17 October 2006.

¹⁰² "India's Blue Water Reach: Naval Strategic Issues in South Asia," *Asian Analysis Newsletter* (ANU), September 2007, <http://www.aseanfocus.com/asiananalysis/latest.cfm?#a1059>.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ Indian Navy, *Tacking to the Blue Waters. Indian Navy - the Year That Was*, <http://indiannavy.nic.in/events2003.pdf>. Also "Navy Tacking to the Blue Waters," *The Tribune*, 6 August 2003.

¹⁰⁵ Indian Navy, *Reaching Out to Maritime Neighbours. 2005. The Year That Was*, <http://indiannavy.nic.in/events2005.pdf>, 6.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 7.

the Indian Navy at the cutting edge’;” and with “the country finally acquiring the wherewithal and showing the willingness to box in its correct weight.”¹⁰⁷

India’s naval “footprints” have been well established in and around the Indian Ocean in the past few years.¹⁰⁸ Quite simply, for Rear Admiral Rakesh Chopra “the Indian Navy today has tacked to ‘the blue waters’ and seeks a dominating role in the Indian Ocean”.¹⁰⁹ Alongside tangible economic issues of energy resource access and competition with China, there is a wider intangible sense of this region being seen as India’s particular zone. If not a sphere of influence then at least India’s own neighbourhood, within which her preeminence and central location should make it ‘India’s Ocean’, a suitable backyard for a rising Great Power. India’s naval projection has already taken the Indian Navy from its earlier coastal and localized setting to a ‘blue water’ deep sea status, in particular to the west, south and eastern reaches of the Indian Ocean. This “new naval activism far from its own shores reflects the nation’s growing economic interests in distant lands and the navy’s determination to defend them by transforming itself from a ‘brown water’ coastal defense force to a formidable ‘blue water’ fleet;” in other words “a blue water navy that is plugged firmly into the security politics of the Indian Ocean.”¹¹⁰ In terms of naval deployments, the Indian Ocean has seen long range Indian surveillance and operations established during the past decade to its extremities, from the Gulf of Aden and the Gulf to the Straits of Malacca, and deep southwards to the Mozambique Channel.

¹⁰⁷ Bharat Karnad, “Indian Nuclear Paradigm,” *South Asian Journal*, 3 (January-March 2004), <http://www.southasianmedia.net/Magazine/journal/indiannuclearadigm.html>.

¹⁰⁸ Scott, “Indian ‘Footprints’ in the Indian Ocean: Power Projection for the 21st Century,” *Indian Ocean Survey*, 2:2 (2006), pp. 1-26; also Donald Berlin, “India in the Indian Ocean,” *Naval War College Review*, 59:1 (2006), pp. 58-89.

¹⁰⁹ Rakesh Chopra, “The Maritime Dimension of Energy Security,” *Journal (USI)*, July-September 2004, http://www.usiofindia.org/article_Jul_Sep04_5.htm.

¹¹⁰ Amit Kumar, “From Brown Water to Blue,” *Indian Express*, 5 December 2006.

In the western reaches of the Indian Ocean, Indian ships now regularly operate in the Arabian Sea, for example the TROPEX 2007 exercise, and further beyond. The visit of her aircraft carrier INS Viraat and two other ships to the United Arab Emirates in March 1999 set the scene. Within the Gulf, INS Mysore and INS Godavari, on a goodwill visit to Saudi Arabia in March 2002, conducted exercises with Saudi vessels in waters off Jubail. A more substantial three-week seven-ship deployment by the Indian Navy took place in September 2004, involving two destroyers INS Mumbai and INS Delhi, the advanced missile frigate INS Talwar; as well as INS Kulish, INS Pralaya, INS Sindhuraj and the support tanker INS Aditya. Visiting Oman, Bahrain, Iran and the United Arab Emirates, this flotilla could indeed be interpreted by China as Indian “efforts to use its navy to project power” outside its own coastal waters.¹¹¹ This naval presence is an essential part of India’s new ‘Look West’ policy announced in 2005. It was in this vein that when Suresh Mehta took over as India’s Chief of Naval Staff, his first trip overseas was to Abu Dubai in the United Arab Emirates in February 2007, and with it talk of further Indian naval projection into the region.¹¹² A flotilla of frontline missile corvettes and guided-missile cruisers, made up of INS Rajput, Beas, Betwa, Delhi and Jyoti, was dispatched to the Gulf in August-September 2007, a major long-range 48-day deployment where they made port calls and took part in bilateral naval exercises at Oman, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, and Kuwait.

The Gulf of Aden has also seen ongoing Indian naval surveillance and joint exercises carried out with friendly Russian and French flotillas. Naval exercises, INDRA

¹¹¹ “India Deploys Warships in Gulf Region,” *Xinhuanet*, 12 September 2004. Also “India Positions Naval Fleet in Persian Gulf Area,” *Pakistan Times*, 13 September 2004; Vimala Vasani, “Navy for Expanding Ties With Gulf States,” *Business Line (The Hindu)*, 20 September 2004

¹¹² “Navy Chief For Enhanced Ties with UAE,” *The Hindu*, 8 February 2007; B. Raman, “Indian Navy Begins to Look West,” *Papers* (South Asia Research Group), 2128 (9 February 2007), <http://www.saag.org/papers22/paper2128.html>.

2003, with Russian ships took place off Socotra in 2003. May 2004 saw INS Dunagiri deployed in the Gulf of Aden on an official 'Presence-cum-Surveillance Mission', and concluding with a port-call at Djibouti. November 2005 witnessed VARUNA 05, joint exercises with the French navy carried out in the Gulf of Aden, near the Bab-el-Mandeb entrance to the Red Sea. Indian forces were substantial, five units of the Western Fleet, led by aircraft carrier INS Viraat, with advanced guided missile destroyer INS Mysore, advanced guided missile frigate INS Talwar, INS Godavari, and a submarine. India's presence around that choke point was demonstrated again by maritime patrols picking up and tracking incoming Chinese destroyer/tanker combination as soon as it emerged from the Red Sea and was passing Socotra in March 2006, India keeping a vigilant eye some 2300 kms away from its own mainland.¹¹³ Indian units were deployed again in the Gulf of Aden, following their Gulf deployment, during September 2007 for the VARUNA 07 exercises with France, the destroyer INS Rajput, the guided missile frigate Beas and the supply tanker INS Jyoti taking place in anti-submarine exercises.

Further naval projection, into the distant Mediterranean, has also taken place in recent years. During 2004, the advanced guided missile destroyer INS Mysore, INS Godavari, INS Ganga and fleet replenishment tanker INS Shakti were deployed to the Gulf of Aden and Mediterranean Sea, where they visited ports in Israel, Cyprus, Egypt and Turkey. The summer of 2006 saw four Indian vessels dispatched across the Indian Ocean, the guided missile destroyer INS Mumbai accompanied by advanced missile frigates INS Betwa and INS Brahmaputra and the fleet replenishment tanker INS Shakti. Initially on general tour of the eastern Mediterranean, they were then sent to Beirut on 'Operation Sukoon', to evacuate over 1,770 Indian nationals caught up in the Lebanon

¹¹³ Pandit, "Indian Navy "Spooks" New Chinese Destroyer," *Times of India*, 9 February 2006.

fighting. Prakash's retrospective analysis of the Beirut operation was to stress how it had been conducted simultaneously with relief operations to Fiji, far flung 'blue water' deployments to the far West and far East, and both outside the Indian Ocean.¹¹⁴

In the southern reaches of the Indian Ocean, India's "quiet sea power" has become noticeable through ongoing and accelerating deployments.¹¹⁵ Noticeable maritime links are apparent with Mauritius. Indian warships have been regular visitors there in recent years, INS Savitri in September 2004, her advanced missile frigate INS Tabar in July 2004, and INS Sharda in April 2005.¹¹⁶ Survey work carried out by INS Sarvekshak around Mauritius in April 2006 gave rise to talk, already mentioned, of possible basing rights at Mauritius' Agalega Island. Apart from general port call flag waving, these visits have also been part of the Mauritius-Indian agreement drawn up in 2003, whereby the Indian Navy would henceforth monitor Mauritius' Exclusive Economic Zone. Assistant Chief of Naval Staff (Operations) Rear Admiral R Contractor considered this "an acknowledgement of our reach and capability" and "in keeping with the Indian Navy's guiding principles of 'Tacking to the Blue Waters'."¹¹⁷ Consequently, the warship INS Suvarna as well as INS Gaj and INS Sharda carried out this operation in 2003. Similar arrangements were made in 2004 and 2005.¹¹⁸

This distant south-westwards quadrant has taken Indian ships along the African coast, INS Ranjit and INS Suvarna were deployed in June-July 2003 for training and security purposes in and off Maputo, including providing protection to the African Union

¹¹⁴ Prakash, 'Sailing into Future'.

¹¹⁵ Ramachandran, "India's Quiet Sea Power," *Asia Times*, 2 August 2007.

¹¹⁶ Mohammed Alam, "India and Mauritius: Maritime Cooperation on the Upswing," *Conflict & Analysis*, 7:9 (September 2004), pp. 6-7

¹¹⁷ Cited in "Indian Navy to Guard Mauritian Waters," *Hindustan Times*, 3 July 2003.

¹¹⁸ Sudhir Chadda, "India Start Showing Signs of a Budding Superpower - India, Mauritius to Jointly Survey for Hydrocarbons," *India Daily*, 31 March 2005.

Summit taking place in Mozambique. INS Sujata and INS Savitri provided security cover to the three-day World Economic Forum in Mozambique during June 2004. Links with Mozambique have been strengthened, the two countries signing a Memorandum of Understanding in March 2006, whereby India agreed to mount maritime patrols off the Mozambique coast. South Africa has been the scene for further naval outreach. June 2005 saw INS Trishul and INS Aditya docking at Durban, followed by the arrival of INS Delhi and INS Ganga at Cape Town, and combined naval drills with the South African navy - events followed by the official Chinese media.¹¹⁹ Indian Naval units are also due to be dispatched, probably to the waters around Cape Town in May 2008, in order to take part in tri-lateral exercises with the navies of Brazil and South Africa.

In the eastern reaches of the Indian Ocean, deployments have taken Indian vessels far and wide. Her Far Eastern Naval Command on the Andaman Islands has been the springboard for 'blue water' deployments in the eastern quadrant of the Indian Ocean. In part this has been through multilateral exercises. Thus, MILAN 2003 saw naval units from Australia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand, Sri Lanka and Singapore exercise with the Indian navy. The substantive naval exercises Malabar 07-2 saw Indian ship arrayed around the Andaman islands during September 2007; her aircraft carrier INS Viraat and six other warships joining American, Japanese, Australian and Singaporean vessels. Typical of India's emerging maritime power projection in these eastern reaches of the Indian Ocean was the dispatch of a powerful naval group, consisting of INS Viraat, accompanied by the guided missile destroyers INS Rajput and INS Ranjit, the indigenously built missile corvette INS Khukri and the replenishment

¹¹⁹ "Indian Naval Ships Visit South Africa," *People's Daily*, 7 June 2005.

tanker INS Shakti. These were deployed to Singapore, Port Kelang-Malaysia and Jakarta-Indonesia during July and August 2005.

India's naval deployment has gone particularly further eastwards, out of the Indian Ocean into other seas and oceans. The immediate gateway is the Malacca Straits, where the question raised by Gaurang Bhatt was "in the event of a war with China, there must be sufficient [Indian] naval power and assets to blockade the Straits of Malacca, the bottleneck of oil transit to China."¹²⁰ The answer to the question was that India has sufficient power and assets to do this, hence its increasing deployments into this area and beyond. As Prakash noted more widely, "for India, the Asia-Pacific region holds immense promise for political, economic and military cooperation, and the key role that maritime forces can play, makes the Indian Navy a key component of any national strategy towards this region."¹²¹ The navy enables a Pacific "presence" for India.¹²² Economic trade and energy access play their part in India's eastward naval projection, but a significant part is played in giving clear signals to China of India's presence. Whether this increased Indian naval presence also increases regional stability through a balancing of China, or whether it destabilizes the situation by fostering increased Chinese suspicions and 'security dilemma' reactions is a wider question for elsewhere.

Certainly, the South China Sea, waters claimed by China, has been one emerging field for deliberate, significant and maintained long range Indian naval

¹²⁰ Bhatt, "Blueprint For a Future Indian Navy."

¹²¹ Prakash, "We Have a Long Way to Go," *Rediff on the Net*, 23 February 2005, <http://in.rediff.com/cms/print.jsp?docpath=/news/2005/feb/23inter1.htm>. Also Lawrence Prabhakar, Joshua Ho and Sam Bateman (eds), *The Evolving Maritime Balance of Power in the Asia-Pacific: Maritime Doctrines and Nuclear Weapons at Sea* (Singapore: World Scientific Publishing, 2006), for India's maritime role in the Asia-Pacific.

¹²² Scott, "Strategic Imperatives of India as an Emerging Player in Pacific Asia," *International Studies*, 44: 2 (April-June 2007), pp. 123-40.

appearances. One milestone was reached in 2000, when a powerful naval flotilla of five capital ships (INS Delhi, INS Kora, INS Sindhuvir, INS Rajput, and INS Kuthar), one submarine and a tanker (INS Aditya) entered and operated in the South China Sea; with elements of it also making port calls in Singapore, Vietnam, South Korea, Japan and Indonesia. Indian naval officers described it as part of a “detailed plan to expand the horizons of our maritime diplomacy.”¹²³ This deployment lasted over one month, and was rightly judged by Mehta to be “a quiet show of strategic reach” by the Indian Navy.¹²⁴ It was also seen as a “challenge” to China in China’s backyard and in an area claimed by China; with China raising a “diplomatic furore” when the plans were first released, but then allowing a friendly enough port call at Shanghai.¹²⁵

India’s presence in these far eastern waters has been maintained since then. Three separate appearances by Indian units into the South China Sea were seen in 2004. In May INS Rana, INS Khukri, INS Ranvir, INS Kora and INS Udaygiri were deployed for ‘Presence-cum-Surveillance Missions’ through the Malacca and Sunda Straits into the South China Sea. Similar ‘Presence-cum-Surveillance Operations’ were carried out by INS Savitri in the Malacca Straits and South China Sea during August. Finally, October-November saw another substantial entry of India into the South China Sea, “to further project its blue water capability.”¹²⁶ Again, this was not just one lone vessel. Instead the Indian Navy deployed five of its frontline warships - two Kashin-class destroyers INS Ranjit and INS Ranvijay, the frigate INS Godavari, the missile corvette

¹²³ Cited in Joseph, “Navy Hails Successful South China Sea Visit,” *Rediff on the Net*, 17 October 2000, <http://www.rediff.com/news/2000/oct/17spec.htm>.

¹²⁴ Ashok Mehta, “India’s National Interest had Been Made Coterminal with Maritime Security,” *Rediff on the Net*, 4 December 2000, <http://www.rediff.com/news/2000/dec/04ashok.htm>.

¹²⁵ “India Challenges China in the South China Seas,” *Asia Times*, 27 April 2000; Joseph, “Navy Hails Successful South China Sea Visit.”

¹²⁶ Vishal Thapar, “Navy Deploys Warships in South China Sea,” *Hindustan Times*, 18 October 2004.

INS Kirch, and the offshore patrol vessel INS Sukanya, as well as its fleet tanker INS Jyoti. Indian commentators saw this as “in line with the larger objective of carving out a greater role for itself in the strategically important South China Sea...to enhance India’s maritime security requirements...an exercise in power projection.”¹²⁷ Donald Berlin reckoned that they were being deployed specifically in order “to familiarize the navy with a potential theater of operations - the South China Sea - that probably would be important in any contingency involving conflict with China;” and that generally “as stated by an Indian Navy spokesperson, the deployment would also demonstrate the navy’s ability to operate far from home.”¹²⁸ Naval diplomacy was in evidence as bilateral exercises and port calls were carried out with the Philippines, Vietnam and Indonesia, as well as South Korea and Japan.

India’s naval presence in these sensitive waters has been maintained since 2004. February-March 2005 saw more Indian units appearing in the South China Sea, “blue water bound.”¹²⁹ Here the Kashin-class destroyers INS Rajput and INS Ranvijay, the frigate INS Gomati, the Indian-built corvettes INS Kora and INS Karmuk and the fleet tanker INS Jyoti made up a strong Indian flotilla operating with Singaporean units in their SIMBEX 2005 exercises. A similar strength flotilla, INS Rana, Rajput, Jyoti, Kirpan and Kulish operated in the South China Sea during June 2006. April 2007 saw India’s five-ship flotilla steaming through the South China Sea on its way to exercises further afield in the Far East.

¹²⁷ “To Improve Ties, Navy Takes South China Sea Course,” *Indian Express*, 14 October 2004.

¹²⁸ Berlin, “Navy Reflects India’s Strategic Ambitions,” *Asia Times*, 6 November 2004.

¹²⁹ “Indian Navy - Blue Water Bound,” *Analysis* (India Defence Consultants), 28 February 2005, http://www.indiadefence.com/navy_ex.htm.

Vietnam has long been a strategic partner for India. They have common concerns over restraining Chinese expansionism, and both have fought wars with China - India in 1962 and Vietnam in 1979. Defense agreements drawn up in 1994 and 2000 have strengthened their naval links. August 2005 saw India's dispatch of INS Magar, an amphibious ship, with 900 boxes weighing 150 tons of Petya and missile boat spares for Vietnam's navy. Such naval deployments and discussions lie behind Karnad's sense in 2005 of India's "strategic and theatre level reach and punch...east of Malacca Straits, including Vietnam."¹³⁰ Joint exercises with the Vietnamese navy took place in May 2007.

India's naval presence has been creeping further and further around the Pacific Asian littoral. Consequently, India's naval strength and its reach now make it a factor in the current maritime balance of power in the Taiwan Straits.¹³¹ Still further along, bilateral defense links have been established with South Korea and Japan, with bilateral exercises by Indian ships in these distant waters. A four-ship flotilla from the Indian Navy participated in the International Fleet Review in South Korea in October 1998, sent by India "as part of its policy to raise its profile in the Asia Pacific."¹³² Bilateral naval exercises were carried out in 2000, 2004 and 2006. An even bigger Pacific splash was caused by the four-month dispatch of a powerful Indian flotilla deep into the Asia-Pacific in Spring 2007, made up of the frontline advanced guided missile destroyers INS Mysore, INS Rana and INS Ranjit, as well as the guided-missile corvette INS Kuthar

¹³⁰ Karnad, "India's Future Plans and Defence Requirements," in N. Sisodia and C. Bhaskar (eds), *Emerging India. Security and Foreign Policy Perspectives* (New Delhi: Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, 2005), pp. 61-76, 63.

¹³¹ John Daly, "Can the Dragon Swim? The Naval Balance in the Taiwan Strait," *China Brief*, 20 January 2004, http://www.jamestown.org/publications_details.php?volume_id=395&issue_id=2901&article_id=23477.

¹³² G.V.C. Naidu, "Whither the Look East Policy: India and Southeast Asia," *Strategic Analysis*, 28: 2 (2004), pp. 331-46, 346 fn. 21.

and fleet tanker INS Jyoti. Joint exercises, SIMBEX 2007, were carried out with the Singapore navy, before the Indian flotilla made its way through the South China Sea, to carry out joint war game exercises with American ships off Okinawa for the MALABAR 07-1 exercises in April 2007. Trilateral exercises with American and Japanese units were then carried out by INS Mysore, INS Kuthar and INS Jyoti off Yokosuka; with INS Rana and Ranjit exercising with the Chinese Navy off Qingdao. The whole Indian flotilla subsequently reunited to go northwards for the INDRA 2007 exercises, rendezvousing with elements of the Russian Pacific Fleet off Vladivostok, and near to the oilfields of Sakhalin. On their return from INDRA 2007, further maritime exercises were carried out with Vietnam and the Philippines during May. Altogether, Spring 2007 witnessed a particularly significant 'blue water' deployment by the Indian Navy in terms of size, distance and length of time.

The Pacific Basin has been increasingly visited by Indian naval units. India has strengthened its involvement in WPNS, the Western Pacific Naval Symposium. Though still an 'observer', her destroyers INS Mysore and INS Tarasa (having participated in the inaugural maritime security exercise at Singapore in May 2005) were dispatched to the 10th WPNS held 29 October- 2 November 2006 at Hawaii. Long range Indian naval deployment into the South Pacific has also been part of India's maritime diplomacy. INS Tabar - India's advanced Talwar-class missile frigate was sent deep into the Pacific during summer 2006, as "India showcases maritime capability."¹³³ She left the Indian waters and headed eastwards towards Indonesia and then Australia in June 2006. From there she went outwards to New Zealand, a visit picked up by PRC sources, who

¹³³ Venkat Raman, "India Showcases Maritime Capability," 15 July 2006, <http://www.indiannewslink.co.nz/2.htm>.

considered INS Tabar having “an impressive range of weapons.”¹³⁴ At a reception in New Zealand for INS Tabar, the Indian Commissioner Kadakath Ernest stressed how “as India emerges steadfastly as a major global economy, it is important that the country establishes itself as a maritime nation;” in which “the oceans of the world, their wealth and the maritime lines of communication are all central not only to trade and commerce but also the security and integrity of India.”¹³⁵ From New Zealand, INS Tabar then went further into the Pacific, to Tonga and Fiji, before returning to the Indian Ocean via Papua New Guinea and Singapore. May 2007 saw Indian ships working with New Zealand naval forces, on their way back from exercises with various other navies in East Asia.

Conclusions

Is the Indian Navy a ‘blue water’ navy? The answer remains ambiguous in some senses, though a substantive and tangible trend is clear enough. It is ambiguous in comparative terms, where the Indian Navy remains overshadowed by American naval strength, replete for example with its dozen aircraft carriers and deployment in the Atlantic, Pacific and Indian Oceans. On the other hand Indian-American naval cooperation throughout the Indian Ocean has become firmly established in recent years, with India being given the space to strengthen and project its own ‘blue water’ capacity. Potentially a future American re-emphasis on the Pacific dovetails with India’s growing presence in the Indian Ocean, and the prospects of India’s growing naval projection enabling it to become ‘India’s ocean’. Meanwhile, in Asian terms, the Indian

¹³⁴ “India Navy Vessel Visits NZ,” *People’s Daily*, 3 July 2006. Also Sandeep Chandra, “India-NZ Defence Co-operation to Grow,” *The Global Indian*, 21 July 2006

¹³⁵ Cited Raman, “India Showcases Maritime Capability”.

Navy has already got a leading long range position in terms of capability-capacity and deployment. In terms of military comparisons with China, the PRC may have the advantage in land and nuclear forces, but India has the edge at sea. This is of continuing significance for wider Asian capabilities and perceptions. Lee Kuan Yew has noted "India would be a useful balance to China's heft" in Southeast Asia, a role for which a 'blue water' Indian Navy presence is the visible security component.¹³⁶ Sino-Indian maneuverings on the high seas and in terms of naval diplomacy is set to continue for the foreseeable future, as they both continue to expand their 'blue water' capabilities.

Admittedly some elements, of India's navy are weaker than others, its submarine components in particular. Earlier neglect is still making its effects felt. Former Chief of Naval Staff Arun Prakash pointed out that "while we currently have government approval to maintain certain force levels, they will steadily keep reducing till 2012, because the ships being de-commissioned will outnumber new entrants. This has resulted because of very few new orders placed with our shipyards in the period, 1985 to 1995."¹³⁷ Moreover, he reckoned "we also have a force imbalance, because a large proportion of the force level comprises 'brown-water' units or smaller ships of limited capability. This imbalance needs to be rectified with the addition of more 'blue water' capability."¹³⁸ There is also some potential slippage of time in the delivery of the

¹³⁶ Simon Elegant and Michael Elliot, "Lee Kuan Yew Reflects" (interview), *Time Asia*, 5 December 2005. See also Anindya Batabyal, "Balancing China in Asia. A Realist Assessment of India's Look East Strategy," *China Report*, 42:2 (2006), pp. 179-97; Scott, "The Great Power 'Great Game' Between India and China - 'The Logic of Geography'," forthcoming, *Geopolitics*, 13:1 (2008).

¹³⁷ Prakash, "Time is Running Out," *Rediff on the Net*, 24 February 2005, <http://in.rediff.com/news/2005/feb/25inter1.htm>.

¹³⁸ Prakash, "Time is Running Out."

Gorshkov aircraft carrier, and in the completion of the first IAC Indigenous Aircraft Carrier and Scorpene submarines.¹³⁹

However, the trend is clear for India; sustained and long term projects put in place and now delivering the required elements. For the moment, India's total number of naval vessels may still be going down in quantity, but they are becoming more and more modern; the Indian Navy is much leaner and meaner. It is also becoming more fit for its strategic purpose, 'blue water' projection. Such purchases and constructions are giving India more and more tangible 'blue water' capacity. Former Chief of Staff Madhvendra Singh's judgement is that, "starting off as a "Brown Water" Navy, our Navy is today [summer 2006] a "Regional Blue Water" Navy. We must work towards becoming an 'Oceanic Blue Water' Navy."¹⁴⁰

This 'blue water' build up is precisely where India's work has lain. Her maritime 'footprints' are already clear enough at long range in and around the Indian Ocean, its extensions (the Gulf and Red Sea) and littorals. Moreover, India has already shown the ability to deploy multi-task force flotillas outside the Indian Ocean, in one direction into the Mediterranean, and in another direction into the South China Sea and Western Pacific. Her 'naval diplomacy' has seen similar oceanic missions to the Indian Ocean, Mediterranean, South and West Pacific. The technological elements for a 'blue water' navy are already in place, and able to be deployed, with more on the way over the decade. Consequently, India is set to be a significant player in the global maritime pecking order for the coming century, with a substantive 'blue water' navy now operating in various long range deep water settings.

¹³⁹ Ramachandran, "India's Blue Water Dreams May Have to Wait," *Asia Times*, 21 August 2007.

¹⁴⁰ Singh, "The Indian Navy in 2020."

Vaidya and Panikkar would be happy that their 'blue water' aspirations for India, of half a century ago, now seem being realized. Mahan would recognize how his injunctions, a century ago, on maritime 'seapower' are being translated into 'blue water' reality for India. Of course some of Mahan's precepts are questionable. Mahan's focus on coal bunker depots is anachronistic in the 21st century, with India's mobile oil tanker naval units like INS Aditya now enabling long range ongoing deployment. Mahan's emphasis on large-gun battleships predated the development of the aircraft carrier and the submarine, let alone the Talwar-class high-tech stealth frigates deployed by the Indian Navy. Mahan reflected his times, "it is imperative to take possession, when it can be done righteously, of such maritime positions as contribute to secure command" of the high seas.¹⁴¹ However, whereas Mahan could envisage unfettered territorial annexation of Pacific islands like Hawaii and Guam, India does not have that luxury, or indeed particular intention, with regard to Indian Ocean islands. However India has the same imperatives for securing berthing rights and general access to Sea Lines of Communication, SLOCs. Above all it has the same imperatives for constructing a long range 'blue water' fleet, reflecting the technologies of the 21st century. That is what India is now doing.

In maritime terms, it is indeed clear that "India will be a significant player for the first time in its history, sitting astride key sea lines of communication for energy security and projecting power" and in which "India's rapidly growing [naval] capabilities and new intentions in the coming decade" are significant structural trends as India emerges as a

¹⁴¹ Mahan, *The Interest of America in Sea-Power*, p. 53.

“maritime power.”¹⁴² The Indian leadership seems well aware of the potential for development of India’s seapower. The External Affairs Minister Shri Pranab Mukherjee stressed in June 2007, “we are once again turning our gaze outwards and seawards, 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 upon the global stage.”¹⁴³ Such a stage demands a ‘blue water’ fleet capable of deployment outside India’s immediate neighbourhood. Mahan’s words remain essential here, in his discussion on *The Future in Relation to American Sea Power*, that ultimately the oceans “must be traversed in the last resort by a navy, the indispensable instrument by which, when emergencies arise, the nation can project its power beyond its own shore-line.”¹⁴⁴ If one looks at the future in relation to Indian seapower, ultimately a ‘blue water’ navy enables long distance power projection, ‘hard’ and ‘soft’, a role for which the Indian navy is being consciously shaped for now.

¹⁴² Andrew Winner, “India as a Maritime Power?,” *Paper*, Annual Meeting of the International Studies Association, San Diego, 22 March 2006, http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p99655_index.html.

¹⁴³ Mukherjee, “International Relations and Maritime Affairs - Strategic Imperatives.”

¹⁴⁴ Mahan, “The Future in Relation to American Naval Power,” *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine*, 91 (September 1895), pp. 767-76, 770.