

## THE INDIAN OCEAN, UNITED STATES AND PAKISTAN NAVY

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“The Indian Ocean area will be the true nexus of world powers and conflict in the coming years. It is here that the fight for democracy, energy independence and religious freedom will be lost or won.”<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract

The Indian Ocean is an area where much of the economic and strategic dynamics of the 21st century will be played out. Its importance in the world order as well as international economy, security and stability has steadily increased after the end of the cold war. The region today is an arena of contemporary geopolitics as through its turbulent waters the highest tonnage of goods in the world with nearly 65 percent of the world's known oil and 35 percent of the gas located in the Indian Ocean littoral passes. With the energy demand on the rise and sources of supply dwindling, the world is now entering a new epoch—the Geo-Energy Era in which disputes over vital resources will dominate world affairs. The new US Strategic Guidance 2012 has linked the US economy and security to developments in the Indian Ocean elevating India to the position of a long-term strategic partner serving “as a regional anchor” in the region. With its enhanced international profile, greater credibility, reach and staying power, Pakistan Navy (PN) can be a vital player in the Indian Ocean region as well as an instrument of the country's foreign policy. PN can furthermore act as a catalyst in reinforcing the nation's conventional and strategic deterrence. However, a clearly identifiable foreign policy remains the need of the hour.

**Key words:** Indian Ocean, United States, Pakistan Navy.

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<sup>1</sup> Robert D. Kaplan, *Monsoon: The Indian Ocean and the Future of American Power* (New York: Random House, 2011), flap cover.

## On the Shores

The greater Indian Ocean region encompasses the entire arc of Islam, from the Sahara Desert to the Indonesian archipelago.<sup>2</sup> With 47 countries washing its shores and dotted with several Islands,<sup>3</sup> the Indian Ocean is more than just a geographic feature. It is also an idea<sup>4</sup> “that provides an insightful visual impression of Islam and combines the centrality of Islam with global energy politics and the importance of world navies, in order to show a multi-layered, multi-polar world above and beyond the headlines in Iraq and Afghanistan; it is also an idea because it allows us to see the world whole, within a very new yet very old framework, complete with its own traditions and characteristics, without having to drift into bland nostrums about globalization.”<sup>5</sup>

On the Indian Ocean’s western shores, are the emerging and volatile democracies of East Africa, as well as anarchic Somalia; almost four thousand miles away on the eastern shores lies the evolving, post fundamentalist face of Indonesia, the most populous Muslim country in the world. No image epitomizes the spirit of our borderless world, with its civilizational competition on one hand and intense, inarticulate yearning for unity on the other, as much as an Indian Ocean map.<sup>6</sup>

## Great Power Interests

The Indian Ocean region is characterized by insecurity and instability, particularly in some sub-regions. Foreign powers have numerous interests herein and there is evidence of power projection.<sup>7</sup> Early 21st century geopolitics seems to be shaped by two phenomena: the relative shift in economic power and uncertainty in the security environment. While economic compulsions continue to affect national aspirations and military capabilities, security challenges have influenced nations and their interactions with one

<sup>2</sup> Robert D. Kaplan “Center Stage for the Twenty First Century, Power Plays in the Indian Ocean,” *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 88, no. 2 (March/April 2009): 17.

<sup>3</sup> See, Dr Ramesh Somasunderam, “The Indian Ocean: The Strategic Situation,” *South Asia Analysis Group*, paper no. 4520 (June 1, 2011): 1.

<sup>4</sup> Kaplan, “Center Stage for the Twenty First Century,” 17.

<sup>5</sup> Kaplan, *Monsoon*, Preface xiii.

See, also Blake Hounshell, “Robert Kaplan’s New Global Geography,” *Foreign Policy*, (October 27, 2010)

<sup>6</sup> Kaplan, *Monsoon*, 5.

<sup>7</sup> See, Executive Summary, “Proceedings From The Indian Ocean Maritime Security Symposium,” *Australian Defence College*, Canberra, Australia, April 15-17, 2009, 1, [http://www.jhuapl.edu/ourwork/nsa/papers/IOMSS\\_Proceedings09.pdf](http://www.jhuapl.edu/ourwork/nsa/papers/IOMSS_Proceedings09.pdf)

another. The maritime environment of the Indian Ocean region exemplifies this aptly.<sup>8</sup>

Among the aspects that engender great power interest in the region include the strategic location of the Ocean basin, the existence of natural resources, especially oil and gas; and the local rivalries. Oil is particularly concentrated around the Persian Gulf which is separated from most industrialized states by the long shipping route round the Cape. Nearly 65 per cent of the world's known oil and 35 per cent of the gas are located in the Indian Ocean littoral.<sup>9</sup> The extended sea routes render the supplies from the area extremely vulnerable.<sup>10</sup> Another major cause of extra regional and outside powers' interest and presence in the region is the enduring hostility between Pakistan and India since their overt nuclearization in 1998.

### A Global Trade Corridor

The Indian Ocean accounts for the transportation of the highest tonnage of goods in the world, with almost 100,000 ships transiting its expanse annually.<sup>11</sup> It is now the world's most important route for the movement of long haul cargo<sup>12</sup>, accounting for nearly one half of all the world's container traffic<sup>13</sup> and more than 80 per cent of the total traffic of petroleum products for the entire world.<sup>14</sup> Energy lifelines of many countries start and stop here. The United States, France and Japan are all major importers of energy from the Gulf and their dependence will only increase with time.<sup>15</sup> The east-west shipping route cutting right across the north Indian Ocean is one of the most important trade passages of the world and thousands of merchant ships move on it all the time.<sup>16</sup>

### A Geo Energy Era — 2012 and Beyond

<sup>8</sup> Admiral Nirmal Verma, the Chief of the Naval Staff, Indian Navy in an interview with USNI Proceedings, *USNI Proceedings* (March 2011): 30.

<sup>9</sup> Vice Admiral Premvir Das (retd), Indian Navy, "New Naval Concerns for India," *USNI Proceedings* (March 2010): 64. See also, Commander Muhammad Azam Khan, (retd), Pakistan Navy, "The United States, the North Arabian Sea and Pakistan," *USNI Proceedings* (May 2007): 38.

<sup>10</sup> Somasunderam, "The Indian Ocean: The Strategic Situation," 5.

<sup>11</sup> *Indian Maritime Doctrine* (2009): 57.

<sup>12</sup> Lee Cordner, "Progressing Maritime Security Cooperation in the Indian Ocean," *US Naval War College Review*, vol. 64, no. 4 (Autumn 2011): 73.

<sup>13</sup> See Kaplan, *Monsoon*, 7 and Somasunderam, "The Indian Ocean: The Strategic Situation."

<sup>14</sup> Cordner, "Progressing Maritime Security Cooperation," 73.

<sup>15</sup> Vice Admiral Premvir Das (retd), "New Naval Concerns for India," 64.

<sup>16</sup> Vice Admiral PS DAS, "Coastal and Maritime Security: Two Sides of the Same Coin," *Indian Defence Review*, vol. 24, no. 1 (Jan-Mar 2009): 124.

With the energy demand on the rise and sources of supply dwindling,<sup>17</sup> the world is now said to be entering a new epoch—the Geo-Energy era in which disputes over vital resources will dominate world affairs. In 2012 and beyond, energy and conflict will be bound ever more tightly together lending increasing importance to the key geographical flashpoints in our resource constrained world. A single incident at an energy “choke point” could set the entire region aflame, provoking bloody encounters, boosting oil prices and putting the global economy at risk.<sup>18</sup> The Strait of Hormuz connecting the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean occupies greater significance than any other passageway on the planet. According to the US Department of Energy, tankers carrying some 17 million barrels of oil—representing 20 percent of the world’s daily supply—pass through this vital artery.<sup>19</sup> It recently made world headlines after Iran threatened its closure in response to Washington’s tough new sanctions.<sup>20</sup> The global oil prices instantly soared.<sup>21</sup> Consequently President Obama has made it clear that even if CENTCOM ground forces were to leave Afghanistan, there would be no reduction in the command’s air and naval presence in the Greater Gulf area.<sup>22</sup>

### The Energy Security and Navies

Distinguished by a land rim on three sides, the access to the Indian Ocean is only possible through seven established gateways or choke points.<sup>23</sup> The choking of any one of these could cause disruption of seaborne trade, and volatility in oil commodity prices leading to upheavals in the global economy.<sup>24</sup> For instance, some analysts believe that any sustained blockage in the Strait of Hormuz could trigger a 50 percent increase in the price of oil and a full scale global recession or depression.<sup>25</sup> A former Indian Naval Chief has put this

<sup>17</sup> A new Harvard University report however suggests that global oil supplies are likely to rise by a net 17 million barrels a day to 110 million by 2020. See, George Monbiot, “A New Boom in Oil,” *Guardian* (London), July 4, 2012 as reproduced in *Dawn*, July 4, 2012.

<sup>18</sup> Michael T. Klare, “Energy Wars 2012-The Strait of Hormuz,” *Nation* (Lahore), January 13, 2012.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> “Iran Seeks to Block Hormuz,” *Business Recorder*, July 3, 2012.

<sup>21</sup> Tensions between Tehran and the West mounted further following the capture of an unmanned American spy plane. See, *Daily Mail*, December 14, 2011. See, also Commander Muhammad Azam Khan (retired), “The United States, the North Arabian Sea, and Pakistan,” 38. Also, *Indian Maritime Doctrine*, 56.

<sup>22</sup> Michael T. Klare, “The Energy Wars 2012.”

<sup>23</sup> These are the Suez Canal, the Strait of Hormuz, Bab-el Mandeb, the Cape of Good Hope, the Straits of Malacca and Singapore, the Sunda Strait and the Lombok Strait. See, *Indian Maritime Doctrine*, 56.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> See, Michael T. Klare, “The Energy Wars 2012”

more succinctly: “With hydrocarbons interest becoming transnational and extending world-wide, pipelines running across national boundaries and under the sea, it is anyone’s guess what kind of tensions and conflicts of national interest the future will bring. But one thing looks certain: navies will play a key role in energy security. So even if we disregard Huntington’s thesis, I would say that stakes are high, and seeds of conflict do lie embedded in the Indian Ocean Region.”<sup>26</sup>

### The Political Challenges

The Indian Ocean region contains a large percentage of the world’s failed and failing states, including eleven of the twenty states listed in the journal *Foreign Policy*’s 2009 “Failed State Index.”<sup>27</sup> The region is moreover debatably the most nuclearised of the seven seas<sup>28</sup> and includes nuclear Pakistan—India locked in lasting animosity accruing from unsettled issues that date back to colonial British India. There are also disputes on delimitation of maritime boundaries as much as lack of operative coastal security resulting from states with small naval forces of little effectiveness.<sup>29</sup> Conflicts in the Middle East; political instability and conflict in Yemen, Sudan, Myanmar, Bangladesh, Pakistan and “Talibanisation” extending from Afghanistan; social unrest and insurgencies in parts of India and a “failed” Somalia collectively render parts of the Indian Ocean to what was once described as the “arc of crisis.”<sup>30</sup>

### The Security Milieu

<sup>26</sup> Admiral Arun Prakash, PVSM, the Chief of the Naval Staff Indian Navy, “Maritime Challenges,” Keynote address delivered at National Maritime Foundation Seminar, “Maritime Dimensions of a New World Order,” February 16, 2006. *Indian Defence Review*, vol. 21, no. 1 (Jan-Mar 2006): 52.

<sup>27</sup> “The Failed State Index,” *Foreign Policy*, [www.foreignpolicy.com](http://www.foreignpolicy.com) (accessed May 2, 2012).

<sup>28</sup> Kaplan, *Monsoon*, 8.

<sup>29</sup> Cordner, “Progressing Maritime Security Cooperation in the Indian Ocean,” 75.

<sup>30</sup> In December 1978, President Carter’s National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski delivered a speech in which he stated: “An arc of crisis stretches along the shores of the Indian Ocean, with fragile social and political structures in a region of vital importance to us threatened with fragmentation. The resulting political chaos could well be filled by elements hostile to our values and sympathetic to our adversaries,” *Time*, January 8, 1979, [http://www.historycommons.org/entity.jsp?entity=zbigniew\\_brzezinski](http://www.historycommons.org/entity.jsp?entity=zbigniew_brzezinski) (accessed May 2, 2012). Also, *Time*, January 14, 1980, [www.time.com/time](http://www.time.com/time) (accessed May 2, 2012). Cordner, “Progressing Maritime Security Cooperation in the Indian Ocean,” 74.

It would not be an overstatement to say that no other region in the world today presents such a mass of diverse challenges, threats together with economic imperatives as the Indian Ocean. At one end of the spectrum is the paramount need for security of SLOCs and supply chain dynamics including ships, port security and choke points.<sup>31</sup> There are disparate states with governance challenges<sup>32</sup> as also grossly inadequate maritime surveillance and enforcement and intelligence capabilities.<sup>33</sup> Then there are terror groups<sup>34</sup> with adequate maritime capability<sup>35</sup> as demonstrated in the 26/11 Mumbai attacks.<sup>36</sup> The redefinition of maritime terrorism<sup>37</sup> by the Council for Security in Asia Pacific (CSCAP) Working Group on the heels of the Mumbai attacks to include “any act of terror that emanates from the sea route, whether its intended target is on land or within the maritime environment”<sup>38</sup> illustrates this fact. We also have growing incidents of piracy<sup>39</sup> as well as a range of other maritime crimes including drugs, arms and human trafficking. This milieu has justified more than five United Nations Security Council Resolutions since 2001 inducting several multinational coalitions of maritime forces<sup>40</sup> in the Indian Ocean. Add to this the “combined impacts of climate change and

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> The Region has a large proportion of the world’s failed and failing states, including eleven of the twenty states listed in the journal of *Foreign Policy*, 2009, “Failed State Index.” Lee Cordner, *Progressing Maritime Security Cooperation in the Indian Ocean*, 74.

<sup>33</sup> See, Executive Summary, “Proceedings From The Indian Ocean Maritime Security Symposium,” 1.

<sup>34</sup> These include Lashkar-i-Taiba, Jemaah Islamiya and New People’s Army. See, Muhammad Azam Khan, “Mumbai Attacks and the North Arabian Sea,” *Criterion Quarterly*, vol. 4 no. 2 (April/June 2009): 99. See also, *RAND Corporation*, “The Lessons of Mumbai,” [http://www.rand.org/pubs/occasional\\_papers/2009/RAND\\_OP249.pdf](http://www.rand.org/pubs/occasional_papers/2009/RAND_OP249.pdf)

<sup>35</sup> Rear Admiral Neil Morisetti, Royal Navy, “Importance of Secure Maritime Environment in Indian Ocean and Arabian Gulf: The Coalition Contribution,” Conference Proceedings, *1<sup>st</sup> International Maritime Conference*, Karachi, Pakistan, March 4-6, 2007, 96.

<sup>36</sup> VK Shashikumar, “Gaps in Maritime Security-1,” *Indian Defence Review Issue*, vol. 24, 1 (Jan-Mar 2009), <http://www.indiandefencereview.com/spotlight/Gaps-in-Maritime-Security-I.html>

<sup>37</sup> According to CSCAP definition, maritime terrorism is: “...the undertaking of terrorists acts and activities within the maritime environment, using or against vessels or fixed platforms at sea or in port, or against any one of their passengers or personnel, against coastal facilities or settlements, including tourist resorts, port areas and port towns or cities.” See, VK Shashikumar, “Gaps in Maritime Security-I.”

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> See, Capt Edward H. Lundquist, US Navy, “The Entire Indian Ocean is Up for Grabs,” *Proceedings*, July 2010, 19. Also, “TOR-ARC Pledges to Combat Piracy,” *Deccan Herald*, December 10, 2011.

<sup>40</sup> UNSCR include 1373 (2001), 1526 (2004), 1589 (2005), 1676 (2006), 1851 (2008).

environmental degradation”<sup>41</sup>—the former triggering some of the worst natural disasters<sup>42</sup> in recent decades. This is not to mention marine pollution and illegal fishing that result in loss of billions of dollars each year.<sup>43</sup>

### US and the Global Maritime Commons

A major goal that has traditionally driven the United States’ grand strategy is the “complete domination of the world’s oceans to further secure US physical safety and guarantee control over the international trading system.”<sup>44</sup> The fact that United States emerged from World War II not only with the world’s largest navy but also with naval bases scattered around the world changed the way the world worked.<sup>45</sup> From the end of World War II onward, the combined weight of all the world’s existing fleets was insignificant compared to American naval power. This highlights the single most important geopolitical fact in the world: the United States controls all the oceans—no other power in history has been able to do this.<sup>46</sup>

### Littoral vs. the Land Locked

In his seminal work, “The Influence of Sea Power on History,” Admiral Alfred Thayer Mahan, considered the greatest American geopolitical thinker, argues that control of sea equals command of the world.<sup>47</sup> The US-Soviet confrontation or the Cold War was a global conflict-quintessentially a competition over who would inherit Europe. Although there was vast military strength on both sides, the US had an inherent advantage. The Soviet Union was enormous but essentially landlocked. America was almost as vast but had easy access to the world’s oceans. While the Soviets could not contain the Americans, the Americans could certainly contain the Soviets. And that was the American strategy: to contain and thereby strangle the Soviets.<sup>48</sup> The United States created a massive belt of allied nations, all bordering on the Soviet Union. At every point where the Soviets had a port, they found themselves blocked by geography and the United States Navy.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> See, Lee Cordner, *Progressing Maritime Security*, 76.

<sup>42</sup> The 2004 Tsunami and 2008 Cyclone Nargis were the worst natural disasters in terms of human casualties in recent memory.

<sup>43</sup> Dr James Boutlier, “Security of Indian Ocean-A Global Naval Perspective,” *Proceedings*, 1<sup>st</sup> International Maritime Conference, March 4-6, 2007, Karachi, Pakistan, 93.

<sup>44</sup> George Friedman, *The Next 100 Years* (New York: Anchor Books, 2009), 44.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

It has accordingly been said and not without reason that the collapse of the Soviet Union originated in American sea power and also opened the door for US naval power to dominate the world. The subsequent US control of sea meant that the United States was able not only to engage in but also define global maritime trade—the cheapest means of transcontinental transportation. It could make rules or at least block anyone else's rules by denying other nations entry to the world's trade routes.<sup>50</sup>

The United States enters the twenty first century with the strongest navy in the world, one at least equal in global dominance to that deployed by Great Britain in 1815, at the time of the final defeat of Napoleonic France. The current US battle fleet is larger than the next 13 navies combined.<sup>51</sup> While the existing American dominance is global in capability, it is concentrated on Asian issues, with forces in the Pacific and Indian oceans and their contingent gulfs and seas.<sup>52</sup>

### The US Objectives and the Indian Ocean

The United States today has substantial interest in the Indian Ocean region as a whole, which it expects will play an even more important role in the global economy.<sup>53</sup> The strategic objectives of the United States in the Indian Ocean region reflect a paramount national objective that is underpinned by a broader foreign policy outlook. As the location, among other things, of much of the world's energy supplies, key trade routes, the incipient Sino-US and Sino-Indian rivalries, a belligerent Iran committed to a nuclear programme of uncertain purpose, Islamist extremists, besides a number of failed and failing states, the Indian Ocean region will, in the coming decade, command the attention of US policymakers and strategists in a way that will be matched by few other regions.

The US "Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Sea power" unequivocally articulates that "Credible combat power will be continuously postured in the Western Pacific and the Arabian Gulf/Indian Ocean to protect our vital interests, assure our friends and allies of our continuing commitment to regional security, and deter and dissuade potential adversaries and peer competitors."<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 24-25.

<sup>51</sup> See, Fareed Zakaria, "Be More Like Ike," *Newsweek*, August 23-30, 2010, 5.

<sup>52</sup> Bernard D. Cole, Edited by Toshi Yoshihara and James R. Holmes, *Asia Looks Seaward* (Westport: Praeger Security International), 46.

<sup>53</sup> See, "Quadrennial Defence Review Report," 2010, 60, <http://www.defense.gov/qdr/qdr%20as%20of%2029jan10%201600.PDF> (accessed May 3, 2012).

<sup>54</sup> "A Cooperative Strategy for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Sea power," October 2007.



In line with the US CENTCOM objectives<sup>55</sup> the US Navy Central Command (USNAVCENT 5th Fleet) has identified five objectives for its area of operation:<sup>56</sup>

- Maintaining Regional Maritime Security
- Ensuring Regional Access
- Countering Violent Extremism
- Degrading Proliferation of WMD
- Strengthening Maritime Capabilities of Regional Nations

In order to achieve these objectives, three UN mandated Combined Task Forces i.e. CTF 150 (in Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, Gulf of Oman and Arabian Sea), CTF 151 (Gulf of Aden, Somali Basin), CTF 152 (in Arabian Gulf), under the overall aegis of US NAVCENT and Combined Maritime Forces are currently operating in their respective areas in the Western Indian Ocean. These task forces conduct a range of operations including counter terrorism, regional maritime security and stability, expanding the capability and capacity of regional maritime forces as well as counter piracy.<sup>57</sup>

### **The Policy Shift 2012**

The year 2012 has seen a major shift in the US policy. The new “strategic guidance”<sup>58</sup> intended for the Department of Defence seeks to articulate the US priorities for defence in this century. As stated by President Obama, the document identifies US “strategic interests” and guides “defence priorities and spending over the coming decade.”<sup>59</sup> The “US economy and security are inextricably linked to developments in the arc extending from the Western Pacific and East Asia into the Indian Ocean region and South Asia, creating a mix of evolving challenges and opportunities”<sup>60</sup> holds the document. It also explicitly elevates India to be a long term strategic partner whom the US will

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<sup>55</sup> The 5 objectives include, Assist in setting conditions for regional prosperity, promote common interests in support of stability, defeat violent extremist organizations, counter proliferation of WMD and build partnership capacity. Vice Admiral Irby Fox USNAVCENT talk delivered at PN War College, January 4, 2011.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid. See also, “Combined Maritime Forces,” <http://combinedmaritimeforces.com/2012/05/31/usnavcent5th-fleetcmf-nsa-bahrain-honor-fallen-service-members-during-memorial-day-ceremony/> (accessed June 30, 2012).

<sup>58</sup> The document titled, “Sustaining US Global Leadership—Priorities for 21st Century Defence” was released by the US Department of Defence on January 5, 2012.

<sup>59</sup> Nizamani, “US Priorities for 21st Century.”

<sup>60</sup> “Sustaining US Global Leadership Priorities for 21st Century Defence,” January 2012, 2.

support “to serve as a ‘regional anchor’ and provider of security in the broader Indian Ocean region.”<sup>61</sup>

There are three main interconnected areas identified at the core of US national security interests. The US will seek its own national security along with those of the allies and the partners. It will work towards an “open and free international economic system.” Thirdly, it seeks “a just and sustainable international order where the rights and responsibilities of nations and peoples are upheld, especially the fundamental rights of every human being.”<sup>62</sup> The underlying US strategy in this region remains the maintenance of balance of power.<sup>63</sup> However, the focus on India in the new document and the deteriorating relations between the US and Pakistan could well mean a closer and more dynamic strategic relationship between China and Pakistan.<sup>64</sup>

### Preserving Dominance

The US Marine Corps Vision and Strategy 2025 document concludes that the Indian Ocean and its adjacent waters will be a central theatre of global conflict and competition this century.<sup>65</sup> Accordingly, the US aims not only to prevent foreign hegemonic control over this region but also check the rise of threats in the global commons.<sup>66</sup> The US Quadrennial Defence Review 2010, draws round the Indian Ocean as providing important SLOCs that are integral for the “global commerce, international energy security, and regional stability.”<sup>67</sup> The document also maintains that the US has an interest in keeping the Indian Ocean region stable and ensuring its open access to all.<sup>68</sup>

President Obama might have announced spending cuts of almost \$500 billion over the next decade<sup>69</sup> but this amounts to a light trim for a defence machine with an annual budget of \$650 billion, amounting to 45 percent of all military expenditure in the world.<sup>70</sup> On purely military level, two points stand out. The US might be cutting its army, but it has ruled out reducing its fleet of 11 aircraft carriers, each of which packs more punch than the entire air forces

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<sup>61</sup> Nizamani, “US Priorities for 21<sup>st</sup> Century.”

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Brahma Chellaney, “US Strategy in the Asia Pacific,” *Al-Jazeera Centre for Studies*, February 15, 2012.

<sup>64</sup> Daya Gamage, “US New Defense Strategy Focuses Asia: Nations Tied to China Need Re-thinking,” *Asian Tribune*, January 7, 2012.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Tellis, “Indian Ocean and US Grand Strategy.”

<sup>67</sup> See, “Quadrennial Defence Review Report,” 2010, 60.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> The new US military strategy announced in January 2012 includes \$487 billion in cuts over the next decade.

<sup>70</sup> “The battle for the Pacific will Reshape the World,” *Pakistan Today*, January 10, 2012.

of most countries. Secondly, the Obama administration has stressed its determination to invest in “intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance” and thus extend its lead in the most advanced combat systems.<sup>71</sup> Put simply, America’s military dominance will remain unchallenged for the foreseeable future.<sup>72</sup>

### From Land to Sea — The Air Sea Battle

The future of the land forces in the military has been under discussion since the US led wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Prominent analysts believe that the global military future shall be dictated by the navies and the air force since a full two-thirds of the world’s population—4 billion people—live within 400 kilometres of a seacoast.<sup>73</sup> Just over half the world’s population—around 3.2 billion people—occupy a coastal strip 200 kilometres wide (120 miles), representing only 10 per cent of the earth’s land surface.<sup>74</sup> Rapid urbanization will lead to more coastal mega-cities containing 10 million or more people.<sup>75</sup> Mumbai, Chennai, Karachi, Kolkata, Dhaka, and Jakarta<sup>76</sup> are few examples in the Indian Ocean region. By the end of the millennium 13 out of 15 of the world’s largest cities are projected to be located on or near the coast.<sup>77</sup> Navies will accordingly play a crucial role in protecting not only the economic interests but also the arena in which these interests may unfold. Small wonder, the United States sea power is now globally postured to advance American interests around the world.<sup>78</sup> Not to be left behind a restructuring strategy with an emphasis on multi-role platforms and weapons is currently also under way in the USAF.<sup>79</sup> In the emerging Pentagon operational concept called *Air Sea Battle* which observers believe as a refocusing of deterrence efforts toward

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid. According to Fareed Zakaria, the internationally acclaimed political cum security analyst; a CNN anchor and author of the international best seller, *The Post American World And the Rise of the Rest*, “China will not replace the United States as the world’s superpower. It is unlikely to surpass it on any dimension—military, political, or economic—for decades, let alone have dominance in all areas.” See Fareed, Zakaria, *The Post American World And the Rise of the Rest*, 92-93.

<sup>73</sup> Don Hinrichsen, “Ocean Planet in Decline,” <http://www.peopleandplanet.net/?lid=26188&section=35&topic=44> (accessed May 4, 2012).

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> “Interesting Ocean Facts,” *Save the Sea*, [http://www.savethesea.org/STS%20ocean\\_facts.htm](http://www.savethesea.org/STS%20ocean_facts.htm) (accessed May 4, 2012).

<sup>76</sup> See, Harshal T. Pandve, “Climate Change and Coastal Mega Cities of India,” *Indian Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2923420/> (accessed May 4, 2012).

<sup>77</sup> “Interesting Ocean Facts,”

<sup>78</sup> See, “A Cooperative Strategy for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Sea power,” 8.

<sup>79</sup> General Norton Schwartz, “Interview,” 34.

China, the USAF is gearing to conduct operations in a denied environment.<sup>80</sup> “We’re putting our intellectual effort toward understanding the environment, which includes the ability of others to inhibit our access, both to territory and the global commons, in the air, sea and space,” so maintains General Schwartz,<sup>81</sup> the Chief of Staff, US Air Force.

### The PLA (N) Factor

The United States would not want any single state in Asia to dominate the Asian continent or any region there.<sup>82</sup> As part of the hedging strategy against China, it is reinforcing its existing military relations and building new allies and partners, including roping in states that can serve as potential balancers in Asia. China too plays balance-of-power politics in Asia, but its balancing is primarily designed to keep its peer rivals bottled up regionally.<sup>83</sup>

The PLA Navy has progressively increased its maritime influence by transforming itself from a coastal defence navy to a force capable of sustained open-ocean operations.<sup>84</sup> In order to exert effective control of the seas, PLAN has disentangled itself from the previous coastal-oriented defensive strategy.<sup>85</sup> The current twin spike maritime strategy aims to first, prevent military forces of an adversary from entering an area (“anti access” or A2) and second, ensure effective operations within an area (“area denial” or AD).<sup>86</sup> Over the past decade and a half, PLAN has fervently engaged in expanding itself to become a blue water force. It has bought advanced naval weaponry from Russia and achieved considerable success in indigenously developing several weapon platforms such as conventional and nuclear submarines as well as SLBMs.<sup>87</sup> China also made headlines recently after its first aircraft carrier commenced

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Chellaney, “US Strategy in the Asia-Pacific,” 2.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> China’s 2006 Defence White Paper states that China’s “navy aims at gradual extension of the strategic depth for offshore defensive operations and enhancing its capabilities in integrated maritime operations.” China’s 2008 Defence White Paper adds that “the Navy has been striving ... to gradually develop its capabilities of conducting cooperation in distant waters.” See, Erickson, Andrew and Lyle Goldstein, “Gunboats for China’s New Grand Canals?,” *US Naval War College Review*, vol. 62, no. 2 (Spring 2009): 48.

<sup>85</sup> “China’s Submarine Force Awaits a Cultural Revolution,” *Jane’s Navy International*, (January/February 2008): 15.

<sup>86</sup> See, Admiral Jonathan Greenert, US Navy CNO, “Navy, 2025: Forward War Fighters,” *USNI Proceedings*, December 2011, 21.

<sup>87</sup> Admiral Arun Parkash, “China and the Indian Ocean Region,” *Indian Defence Review*, (Oct-Dec 2006): 12. Also, “China’s Submarine Force Awaits a Cultural Revolution,” 16.

sea trials for eventual commissioning in August 2012.<sup>88</sup> Although China may still be a long way from the full fledged blue water navy, naval developments are likely to be at the forefront of its foreign and defence policy for at least the next decade.<sup>89</sup> The launch of the carrier accordingly provides tremendous boost to PLA Navy's blue water aspirations.<sup>90</sup>

### Preparing for Showdown?

The new US strategic document names China and Iran as countries that are likely to use asymmetric means to counter US power projection.<sup>91</sup> But as Ashley Tellis of the Carnegie Endowment points out, even though serious security competition in the Indian Ocean region is not inevitable especially to the US, still it is possible and will largely depend on the strategic choices China will make.<sup>92</sup>

In January this year (2012), Iran on the other hand, demonstrated its ability to threaten shipping in the strategically important Strait of Hormuz during an exercise which included test firing of Qader and Nasr shore based anti-ship missile systems.<sup>93</sup> This along with the proliferation of other unconventional threats has led to a permanent great power naval deployment in the Indian Ocean.<sup>94</sup> Whether a US-Iran rivalry will lead to a full scale military showdown in the region only time will tell.

### The Rivals

For India, the Indian Ocean region is its backyard. China's actions and ingress in the Indian Ocean is therefore viewed with distrust. New Delhi feels that China continues to encircle it by making inroads in the region and the best way out is to build its own relations particularly in the neighbourhood with smaller neighbours.<sup>95</sup> To assert this claim, New Delhi has gone into an overdrive cultivating relations with countries up and down the length and breadth of the

<sup>88</sup> "China's First Aircraft Carrier to be Deployed in August," *Rediff News*, March 9, 2012, <http://www.rediff.com/news/slide-show/slide-show-1-china-s-first-aircraft-carrier-to-be-deployed-in-august/20120309.htm> (accessed May 2, 2012).

<sup>89</sup> "China's Three-Point Naval Strategy," *IJSS Strategic Comments*, vol. 16, Comment 37 (October 2010) <http://www.ijss.org/publications/strategic-comments/past-issues/volume-16-2010/october/chinas-three-point-naval-strategy/> (accessed June 30, 2012).

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Nizamani, "US Priorities for 21<sup>st</sup> Century."

<sup>92</sup> Tellis, "Indian Ocean and US Grand Strategy."

<sup>93</sup> The Qader or Ghader is an improved Iranian version of the Chinese C-802 with a claimed range of 200 km, while the Nasr is an Iranian version of the Chinese C-704 with a range of up to 35 km. See, *Janes Defence Weekly*, January 11, 2012, 16.

<sup>94</sup> Somasunderam, "The Indian Ocean: The Strategic Situation," 5.

<sup>95</sup> Parkash, "China and the Indian Ocean Region," 12.

Indian Ocean.<sup>96</sup> In February this year (2012) Indian Navy hosted naval exercises with 14 Indian Ocean countries on the Andaman Islands. Pakistan and China were not invited. India is also spending \$2 billion to set up a military command on Andaman Islands.<sup>97</sup> The competitive interests of the two rapidly growing economies for energy and transit can transform the Indian Ocean region into an area of bitter conflict in the near future.<sup>98</sup>

### **On the US Regional Anchor**

The above details aside, India is now the world's largest weapons importer according to a 2011 report by arms watchdog SIPRI accounting for 9 per cent of the world's international arms transfers. India will spend an estimated \$80 billion on military modernization programmes by 2015, according to the Washington-based Centre for Strategic and International Studies.<sup>99</sup> On the other hand, it was recently reported by Jane's Defence Weekly, that between 2011 and 2015, an estimated \$100 billion will be spent by New Delhi on defence procurement.<sup>100</sup> The Indian Defence spending for 2012-13 is meanwhile planned to reach a staggering 40.5 bn.<sup>101</sup>

### **The Naval Expansion**

In particular, India is focusing on sea power, a crucial new era competition. The country is planning to spend almost \$45 billion over the next 20 years on 103 new warships, including destroyers and nuclear submarines. By comparison, China's investment over the same period is projected to be around \$25 billion for 135 vessels.<sup>102</sup> In 2008, the Indian government approved a 15 year shipbuilding plan to build a fleet strength of 175 ships and to create a two line submarine building template to enable the Navy to write an ambitious vision document for the 21st century which is being supported by a vibrant economy.<sup>103</sup> The Indian Navy's emphasis appears to be on building up its strategic potential including SSBNs development of sea-based strategic missiles, force multipliers, quality of weapon sensors and networking

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<sup>96</sup> "India's Military Spending," *News*, March 26, 2012.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Bharat Verma, "From the Editor," *Indian Defence Review*, vol. 26, no. 2 (Apr-Jun2011): 3.

<sup>99</sup> See, "India's Military Buildup," *Foreign Policy*, Annual Special Issue, December 2011, 11.

<sup>100</sup> See, "India's Military Spending."

<sup>101</sup> Nizamani, "India's Strategic Policy."

<sup>102</sup> See, "India's Military Buildup," 11.

<sup>103</sup> Commodore Ranjit B. Rai, Indian Navy, "Quo Vadis? The Indian Navy in the Coming Years," *Naval Review*, vol. 96, no. 3 (August 2008): 237. Also, Taj M. Khattak, "The Forgotten Sea Frontier," *News*, January 29, 2011.

of platforms.<sup>104</sup> In addition to INS Arihant, Indian Navy has now acquired two Russian Akula-II class nuclear submarines.<sup>105</sup> The development of such a force structure continues concomitantly with stepped up efforts to improve India's defence industrial base.<sup>106</sup>

### **Collaboration — Dividends**

The ever enlarging strategic collaboration with the US as well as bilateral exercises between the USN and IN have meanwhile brought rich dividends for the latter in terms of increasing professional expertise and acquisition of advance naval hardware. The regularly scheduled Malabar series of naval field training exercises have grown in scope, duration and complexity over the years.

Besides earning dividends in training and advancing operational skills, the Indian Navy is now all set to receive custom built platforms. India will be the first country to receive Boeing P-8I,<sup>107</sup> a variant of the US Navy's Poseidon P-8A latest anti-submarine warfare, anti surface warfare and maritime patrol aircraft that is just beginning its operational testing this year to replace Lockheed Martin P-3C Orion. With 117 P-8As promised to be delivered to the US Navy over the next 11 years, the Indian variant is likely to be a huge change in the North Arabian Sea domain.

### **Pakistan Navy — A Makeover**

Over the past decade and since the war on terror began in 2001, Pakistan Navy (PN) has undergone a remarkable transformation. With a growing national realization on the importance of having a robust maritime force and greater resources committed for its development, the "tactics of the PN and its broader strategy in the northern Arabian Sea too have undergone a shift. An enhanced international profile and greater credibility for its role in the regional maritime order is gradually resulting in PN becoming a more

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<sup>104</sup> Admiral Sureesh Mehta, Chief of the Naval Staff, *Freedom to Use the Seas: India's Maritime Military Strategy*, 2007, Foreword v.

<sup>105</sup> S.M. Hali, "Indian Naval Upsurge," *Nation*, February 29, 2012.

<sup>106</sup> See, James R. Holmes and Toshi Yoshihara, "India's Monroe Doctrine and Asia's Maritime Future," *Strategic Analysis*, vol. 32, no. 6 (November 2008): 1007.

<sup>107</sup> India is currently the sole export customer for the P-8. The procurement contract with Delhi signed on 1 January 2009 and valued at USD 2.1 billion is for eight P-8I multi-mission maritime aircraft with options for four additional units. See, "Rising Star: Upgrades Fuel Poseidon's Ascent," *Jane's Navy International* (October 2011): 22.

confident and assertive player, and a major stakeholder in the regional maritime security regime.”<sup>108</sup>

### Coalition Operations

One contributory factor in this makeover has been the sustained participation of Pakistan Navy in the Coalition Maritime Campaign Plan (CMCP),<sup>109</sup> from 2004 onwards including four Command spells (fifth in progress) of the Combined Task Force 150. The consistent and drawn out operations in distant waters and transacting multidimensional maritime security challenges have effectively catapulted Pakistan Navy’s stature, interoperability potential as well as manpower skills. The participation has also opened new vistas of professional growth for PN in the transformed maritime environment which now focuses on asymmetric and non-traditional threats rather than the previous traditional roles the navies’ world over were expected to accomplish. PN relevance in the regional and international security matrix too has enlarged as a result.

PN’s credence got a further lift when a new anti piracy Combined Task Force (151) was constituted in 2009 to fight piracy off the coast of Somalia duly mandated under the UNSC Resolutions.<sup>110</sup> The steady deployment in long haul maritime operations has lead to the increase in reach and poise<sup>111</sup> of Pakistan Navy. Today PN makes its presence felt in large parts of the western Indian Ocean and beyond, including Horn of Africa, Red Sea, and Gulf of Aden over and above the north Arabian Sea. In short, PN of today is not only more relevant in line with contemporary and developing trends but has acquired reach to influence the entire spectrum of maritime environment as never before.

### Retaining Strategic Space<sup>112</sup>

<sup>108</sup> Abhijit Singh, “The Pakistan Navy: A Transformation from Fledgling Force to Fighting Machine,” *Journal of Defence Studies*, vol. 5, no. 4 (October 2011): 44.

<sup>109</sup> CMCP is the maritime component of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), the code name for the US counter terrorism operations in the region. The legal basis for OEF is UNSC Resolution 1373 adopted in September 2001. The multinational Combined Task Force 150 was constituted as part of CMCP.

<sup>110</sup> In 2008, UN passed four resolutions to curb Piracy off Somalia and Horn of Africa. The deployment of multinational naval forces by more than a dozen countries, improvements in reporting systems of merchantmen, and establishing of a safety corridor for transit of merchant ships have been part of this international effort. See, Lieutenant Commander Akash Chaturvedi, Indian Navy, “Two Faces of High Seas Crime,” *USNI Proceedings*, July 2010, 25.

<sup>111</sup> See, Admiral Noman Bashir, the Chief of the Naval Staff Pakistan Navy, “Interview,” *USNI Proceedings*, March 2011, 35.

<sup>112</sup> Lieutenant Commander Sajjad Akbar PN, “Pakistan Navy’s Participation in Coalition Operations-An Appraisal,” *Pakistan Navy College Review*, 2010-2011, 27.



The continued presence of Extra Regional Forces and some regional forces in areas close to Pakistan's shores following events of 9/11 meant a compromise of the vital strategic space and core areas of PN's immediate Area of Operations (AOO). One reason cited for PN joining the CMCP was the continued retention of the "freedom of action in her strategically vital areas" as any vacuum could have permitted forces hostile to Pakistan's national interest to fill the void. By joining Coalition operations, PN directly contributed to the conventional deterrence (a cornerstone of maritime military strategy) through a sustained military presence—24/7 and 365 days a year.

### **Responding to Cold Start — Proactive Operations<sup>113</sup>**

For a host of reasons, an ideal manifestation of India's threatening Cold Start Doctrine, now renamed as Proactive Operations, could be in the maritime domain. While, this new hit and mobilise doctrine is trumpeted to be more land and air oriented, the underlying objectives of rapid destruction and punitive response make it exceedingly relevant in the maritime domain. Any action contemplated by India in the South of Pakistan will definitely have a maritime dimension with Indian Navy effectively coming into play. All at once, the potential of a punitive strike at sea with no or minimal collateral damage makes maritime dimension even more tempting for India. Remaining cognizant of the threat that the Indian Navy could pose in the maritime domain during the Cold Start, Pakistan Navy therefore conducted a major conceptual exercise aimed at assessing and evaluating possible threat scenarios of the conflict at sea and to develop response options. Concluded in late 2010 and named Shamsheer-e-Bahr IV (Sea Sword), the exercise addressed the new Indian warfighting concept and prepared a comprehensive counter-strategy including development and employment plans.

### **Reinforcing Strategic Deterrence**

The rapid induction of Arihant and Akula class SSBNs and SSNs by India over the past few years has fundamentally altered the security paradigm in the Indian Ocean region. While it ensures completion of the most credible arm in the nuclear triad for India, it raises several security concerns for Pakistan in particular and the littorals in general. Fortunately however, Pakistan alive to the up-and-coming threat had been quietly pursuing development of its sea based second strike capability. An evidence of that came when the Headquarters of the Naval Strategic Force Command (NSFC) was recently inaugurated by the Chief of Naval Staff, Pakistan Navy, Admiral Mohammad Asif Sandila. Speaking on the occasion, the Commander, Naval Strategic

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<sup>113</sup> Commander Muhammad Azam Khan PN, (ret'd), "India's Cold Start is Too Hot," *USNI Proceedings*, March 2011, 42-47.

Forces Command, highlighted that the “HQ NSFC will perform a pivotal role in development and employment of the Naval Strategic Force.”<sup>114</sup> Designated as the custodian of the nation’s second strike capability, the advent of the sea based strategic force is not only reassuring but will reinforce Pakistan’s policy of Minimum Credible Deterrence and ensure regional stability.<sup>115</sup>

### New Acquisitions and Force Multipliers

In December 2010, the Chief of the Naval Staff, Pakistan Navy, Admiral Noman Bashir, while speaking on the sidelines of the Defence Services Asia (DSA) exhibition, commented that the Pakistan Navy was on the cusp of a dramatic transformation. The remark did not attract much attention at the time, but in the months that have followed, it has proven to be a realistic and accurate forecast of the PN’s future development.<sup>116</sup> Some quick acquisitions have followed in its wake. In May 2011, PN took possession of *PNS Alamgir*, ex-USS *McInerney*—an Oliver Hazard Perry (OHP) class frigate acquired from the US while few months earlier, China had delivered the third F-22-P Frigate (*PNS Saij*) to Pakistan. Indigenous construction of the fourth ship has already been completed at the Karachi Shipyard, and the ship is currently undergoing sea trials. Based on the Chinese Jiangwei class frigates, the F-22Ps are armed with eight Chinese C-802 surface-to-surface missiles (SSMs) and FM-90 Surface to Air missile. The ships are also equipped to operate an ASW capable Z-9EC helicopter.<sup>117</sup>

The induction of a squadron of the indigenous unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) *Uqab-II*—a mid range tactical vehicle designed for reconnaissance missions—in July 2011, in operational service will enable PN to conduct maritime interdiction operations in coastal areas. The locally developed UAVs have a range of 150 km, an endurance of 4 hours and a day and night operational capability. Needless to say, this is a capability that can also be employed for surveillance in areas close to Pakistani coast.<sup>118</sup>

Pakistan Navy has also been concentrating on building a small ship missile capability. Several indigenously manufactured missile craft, like the

<sup>114</sup> Vice Admiral Tanveer Faiz, Commander Naval Strategic Force Command - address on the occasion of inauguration ceremony presided by the Chief of the Naval Staff. See, “Naval Strategic Force Headquarters Inauguration,” *Navy News*, May 2012, 5.

<sup>115</sup> See, “ISPR Press Release no PR 122/2012-ISPR,” May 19, 2012.

<sup>116</sup> Singh, “The Pakistan Navy: A Transformation from Fledgling Force to Fighting Machine,” 44.

<sup>117</sup> “Sword/F-22P Class Frigates, Pakistan,” *Naval Technology*, <http://www.naval-technology.com/projects/sword-f22p/> (accessed June 30, 2012).

<sup>118</sup> “Navy Inducts Drones into Fleet,” *Dawn*, July 21, 2011. Also, Singh, “The Pakistan Navy: A Transformation from Fledgling force to Fighting Machine,” 47, <http://www.flightglobal.com/news/articles/pakistan-navy-inducts-first-uav-squadron-359842/> (accessed June 30, 2012).

*Jalalat* class, have been inducted since the late 90s.<sup>119</sup> Two Fast Attack Missile Crafts of *Jurrah* class were inducted in 2006 while two MRTP-33<sup>120</sup> and two MRTP-15 FACs were additionally procured from Turkey. The larger MRTP 33, with a displacement of 120 tonnes, can be used for littoral and high speed escort operations and is designed to carry Harpoon block 2 surface-to-surfaces Missiles (SSM).<sup>121</sup> Pakistan Navy is believed to be further contemplating to acquire six *Qing* class submarines from China, reportedly equipped with air-independent propulsion (AIP) systems.<sup>122</sup> Most recently PN inducted the first of the two *Azmat* class Stealth Fast Attack Craft (Missile) in its inventory armed with C-802A SSMs that have an extended range of 180 kms.<sup>123</sup> According to some sources, C-802 A also has Land Attack capability.

In February this year Pakistan Navy received two modified P3C (Orion) maritime surveillance aircraft. These P3Cs are equipped with latest avionics and sensors and are from a batch of six which Pakistan Navy is expected to receive.<sup>124</sup> Pakistan Navy has also acquired considerable expertise in developing maritime response options against aggressive doctrines like the Cold Start.<sup>125</sup> To cap, it may not be farfetched if in the foreseeable period Pakistan Navy fielded a strategic deterrence capability at sea mounted on conventional submarines—platforms that form the “core” of Pakistan Navy’s “anti access” strategy in the Indian Ocean.<sup>126</sup>

Seen in perspective, a new strategic heft in Pakistan Navy’s acquisition plans and thinking is becoming more than apparent.<sup>127</sup> With its forceful capability and newly acquired potential to influence complete conflict spectrum and all dimensions of maritime domain, Pakistan Navy can be more than a challenge against its contenders in the area of interest and is capable to extensively affect events on the land.

### As Instrument of Foreign Policy

<sup>119</sup> “Jane’s Fighting Ships,” 2010-11, 587.

<sup>120</sup> Multi Role Tactical Platform are fast patrol boats for operations in coastal or brown waters. The larger version i.e. MRTP 33 carries a crew of 20 and can be armed with short range surface to surface missiles.

<sup>121</sup> Singh, “The Pakistan Navy: A Transformation from Fledgling force to Fighting Machine,” 48.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>123</sup> “Stealth Missile Naval Craft Inducted,” *Dawn*, July 21, 2011.

<sup>124</sup> “Pakistan Navy Receives Two P3Cs,” *News*, February 22, 2012.

<sup>125</sup> See, Commander Muhammad Azam Khan, “India’s Cold Start is too Hot,” 42-47.

<sup>126</sup> See, Commander Muhammad Azam Khan, Pakistan Navy (retd), “S-2 Options for Pakistan Navy,” *US Naval War College Review*, vol. 63, no. 3 (Summer 2010): 85-104. Also, Singh, “The Pakistan Navy: A Transformation from Fledgling force to Fighting Machine,” 44.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., Singh.

The foreign policy of a state cannot be static even as some of its underlying concerns and norms have an enduring value. In a world of flux, its conduct demands flexibility and adjustment within its abiding parameters.<sup>128</sup> Pakistan's relations with the United States in the recent period have been on the lowest ebb since first established in 1947. On the other hand, the end of the Cold War allowed New Delhi and Washington to view each other in a new light. The reversal of Indian and Pakistani fortunes vis-à-vis the United States has been in full swing since 2000 when President Clinton spent five days in India and five hours in Pakistan.<sup>129</sup> It was almost the same with the visit of President Bush in March 2006. The 9/11 attacks offered only a short term fillip to US-Pakistan relations in the form of lifting of sanctions and the influx of military and economic aid.<sup>130</sup> A spate of events in the past two years and clash of disparate interests in Afghanistan have led Pakistan's Parliamentary Committee for National Security (PCNS) to table revised guidelines on terms of engagement with the United States. One may call such a step as too little too late.

### **What Sets Pakistan Navy Apart?**

While both land and air force have a national role to play and remain restricted to domestic turf, interaction and interplay with diverse international forces and operations in international environment is only inherent and an exclusive function of naval forces. On its part, Pakistan Navy has played a major role in pursuance of the country's foreign policy and diplomacy. The enduring participation in multinational coalition operations aside, the institution of International Maritime Conferences fastened to AMAN series of exercises every two years has enhanced both the national image as well as that of Pakistan Navy in the region and beyond. The holding of these events not only provide a counter balance to other regional alliances but expands the contemporary concept of "collective security" in a region that constitutes a vital link in the international commerce and security architecture. Furthermore, with maritime experts from renowned National and International institutions and organizations shedding light on various issues confronting the maritime domain,<sup>131</sup> the forum facilitates a useful input to the government for policy decisions and planning.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> Tanvir Ahmad Khan, "Parliamentary Oversight," *Dawn*, March 27, 2012.

<sup>129</sup> See, Michael Krepon, "The Big Shift in South Asia," *Dawn*, March 22, 2012.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> See, Vice Admiral Farooq Rashid (ret'd), Rector Bahria University, "Message," *Conference Proceedings*, 1<sup>st</sup> International Maritime Conference, March 4-6, 2007, Karachi, 11.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

In addition, whenever required, Pakistan Navy has also actively contributed in disaster relief operations both inland and abroad. To mention a few, PN ships and helicopters contributed significantly in rescue and relief efforts at Maldives, Sri Lanka and Indonesia during and after the Tsunami in 2005 and during the worst floods in the history of Pakistan in 2010. Even during the current year PN has been active in relief efforts in coastal areas of Sind province.<sup>133</sup> However given the current low in Pakistan-US relations and the latter's courtship with India, in the "reordered" foreign policy guidelines,<sup>134</sup> Pakistan Navy must delve into all means to advance its ties with the PLA Navy taking them to the strategic level.

At a time when Pakistan-US relations are at low ebb, PN's continued participation in two US sponsored Task Forces in the Indian Ocean is the only silver lining in this troubled relationship. At the same time, PN's involvement in the regional collective security arrangements and its enhanced reach as a result, has further provided the country influence in the geopolitical environment of IOR that can be exploited to redefine and seek fresh foreign policy objectives. Indian Naval involvement in the Malacca Straits and joint offshore ventures with Far Eastern countries like Vietnam much to the chagrin of China<sup>135</sup> provide pertinent examples of utilization of naval forces' reach and staying power in furtherance of foreign policy objectives.

### **In the Crystal Ball**

The simmering crisis on account of Iran's nuclear programme and Tehran's defiance against the West has already led to a huge US military build up in the region. Three US aircraft carrier strike groups plus a French carrier are soon expected to be in the Persian Gulf, the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea. They are the USS Abraham Lincoln, USS Carl Vinson, USS Enterprise and Charles de Gaulle nuclear powered aircraft carrier.<sup>136</sup> A fourth US carrier will be standing by in the Pacific Ocean, a few days sailing time from the waters off the Iranian coast. There's already a reason enough for the powers to be to invade Iran based on the accusations that she is in the process of manufacturing nuclear weapons. Whether true or not makes no difference, as

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<sup>133</sup> Rear Admiral Khan Hasham Bin Saddique, "Pakistan Navy Meeting Indian Ocean Security Challenges," Paper read at Galle Dialogue, 2011, <http://www.defence.pk/forums/pakistan-navy/141468-pakistan-navy-meeting-indian-ocean-security-challenges.html> (accessed June 6, 2012).

<sup>134</sup> "Parliament Sets out to Reorder US Ties," *Dawn*, March 21, 2012.

<sup>135</sup> See, Jaswant Singh, "Asia's Giants Colliding at Sea," *Pakistan Today*, October 27, 2011.

<sup>136</sup> "Massive US Military Buildup around Iran," *Pakistan Today*, February 2, 2012.

we saw with the “weapons of mass destruction” that have yet to be found in Iraq.<sup>137</sup>

The question that needs to be pondered is this: what would a US-Israel attack on Iran mean for Pakistan Navy? Much of what happens in the maritime area of interest to Pakistan and in turn to Pakistan Navy would depend on the foreign policy choices that Islamabad embraces. A clear stance like the existing on Iran gas pipeline<sup>138</sup> could solve many of the problems. However, the presence of ERF in the North Arabian Sea may pose serious challenges to Pakistan’s policy towards Iran. Any ERF action against Iran, and Pakistan’s commitments in Operation Enduring Freedom is just one such example. Protecting maritime interests against covert and overt actions of ERF will require as much military muscle as sagacity.

On the contrary, even a neutral stance would signal to Tehran that Islamabad is too reticent to defy the United States. In the event, Pakistan’s maritime interests in the region including those in coastal areas could become a legitimate target of attack by the Iranian Navy. Pakistan Navy will then be stretched to protect and preserve its sea lines and other interests; obviously not a good choice in any case. This will also be a windfall opportunity for India to exploit the situation in Balochistan as well as along the Makran coast to accentuate problems for Pakistan and Pakistan Navy. However, siding with Iran could also spell difficulties as the United States’ influence over multilateral financial and donor institutions could be brought to bear on Pakistan’s frail economy. In any case now that Pakistan has taken some bold decisions including retuning and recalibrating ties with Washington,<sup>139</sup> prudence demands Islamabad to examine all possible hypotheses, own courses as well as consequences of the emerging challenges in the Indian Ocean.

## Conclusion

The Indian Ocean region is all set to play a crucial role in the 21st century, most of which will be defined by the geo-energy politics. The region will also remain a hotbed of traditional and non traditional threats as well as other security challenges. While pushing for its dominance over the global maritime commons,<sup>140</sup> here in the Indian Ocean region the US is likely to continue investing in the IN to assemble it as a “constable”—a local hegemon. For the world at large and region in particular however, much depends on the eventual outcome of the currently building Iran nuclear crisis. “I have said that when it comes to preventing Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon, I will take no

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<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

<sup>138</sup> Foreign Minister Hina Rabbani Khar, “Govt to Go Ahead with Iran Pipeline,” *Dawn*, March 2, 2012.

<sup>139</sup> “Parliament sets out to Reorder US Ties.”

<sup>140</sup> Friedman, *The Next 100 Years*, 45.

options off the table, and I mean what I say,” is how President Obama recently described his approach to Iran.<sup>141</sup>

In this defining moment of country’s transition to re-chart relations with the United States,<sup>142</sup> a transformed and formidable Pakistan Navy with its newly acquired potential can play a crucial role both, as an instrument of foreign policy and image builder besides custodian of protecting and preserving the national maritime interests. With its potential, reach, skills and self assurance, PN can now project power across the conflict spectrum. It can further effectively reinforce conventional and, in near future, should be able to shore up strategic deterrence as well. This will be a formidable counter balance to what has been termed in the United States’ new “Strategic Guidance” as the “regional anchor.”<sup>143</sup> ■

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<sup>141</sup> President Obama was addressing AIPAC conference in Washington on April 1, 2012. See Barak Ravid, “Obama: All Options Remain on the Table to Prevent a Nuclear Iran,” *Haaretz*, April 3, 2012, <http://www.haaretz.com/misc/article-print-page/obama-all-options-remain-on-the-table-to-prevent-a-nuclear-iran-1.416405?trailingPath=2.169%2C2.216%2C2.217%2C> (accessed May 2, 2012).

<sup>142</sup> “US Accepts New Terms of Engagement with Pakistan,” *News*, July 3, 2012.

<sup>143</sup> “Sustaining US Global Leadership: Priorities for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Defence,” *Ministry of Defence*, USA, [http://www.defense.gov/news/Defense\\_Strategic\\_Guidance.pdf](http://www.defense.gov/news/Defense_Strategic_Guidance.pdf) (accessed July 3, 2012).