

M. Cariappa has said of the Indian Ocean, "To India, the security of this region is of paramount importance, as oceanic routes across this ocean carry the bulk of her overseas trade." It is apparent that oceanic space dominates Indian defense strategy.

"Neglected Ocean"

Rear Admiral Matthew W. Cagle, US Navy, has called the Indian Ocean the "neglected ocean." This is strange since the Indian Ocean is a vast theater of history. It washes the African coast from the Republic of South Africa to Somaliland, the southern shore of Arabia, the vast peninsula of India, and the western shores of Burma, Malaya, Sumatra, and Australia. Western seapower in the Indian Ocean made possible the dominance of England, France, Portugal, and the Netherlands over vast regions of the east. This was the dominance of maritime power over the land masses of Asia. India's subordination to foreign rule resulted from the strength of foreign seapower.

The surrounding ocean still holds peril for India. Only recently, India faced danger from Indonesia on her southeastern sea frontier. The Andaman and Nicobar Islands are only 20 miles from the Indonesian coast. The Indonesian danger has receded with an anti-Communist government in power in Djakarta. However, if a

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pro-Communist, expansionist regime should replace the existing government, India again would encounter peril.

This is not the only danger. If Communist China were to launch another attack against India's northern borderlands, trying for a deep penetration of the country, the Indian Union would be in grave trouble unless it had adequate seapower to counter Chinese forces moving along the vital coastline.

Soviet Seapower

Another danger would be the emergence of Soviet seapower in the Indian Ocean on a large scale. The Indian Ocean was considered a British "lake" until World War II. British control over this oceanic space made possible political control of the Indian subcontinent. If the Indian Ocean became a Soviet lake, the consequences for India would be fateful. This is more than a remote possibility in view of the British withdrawal from Aden at the mouth of the Red Sea and the Soviet government's request for airbase rights in Yemen. If the Soviets had a strong fleet in the Indian Ocean, India would be in a political vise made in Moscow.

One other aspect of seapower with respect to India concerns the protracted struggle in which India and Pakistan are engaged. John L. Sutton and Geoffrey C. Kemp in *Adelphi* Paper Number 28, London, October 1966, wrote:

Within the framework of the Kashmir problem, sea power has played a very small role. However, in a long war of attrition between the countries sea power could prove important.

They further observed that, if India obtained submarines from the

USSR, "India will have the foundation of a naval capacity that could make her an important maritime power in the Indian Ocean area in the future."

Seapower also is important to India in fulfillment of her national destiny. India's power may be at low ebb today, but if Communist China were fragmented in the 1970's, then India would be in a position to compete for the mantle of Asian leadership and dominance. Moreover, India has large populations in east Africa which she feels a need to protect. Naval show-the-flag missions to east African countries are an effective means of deterring these nations from taking any severe action against those parts of their populations which are of Indian descent.

Maritime History

While India has sent one cruiser around Africa on such a cruise, her naval resources are limited at present. The Indian Navy is a small service with 17,000 men and 34 ships. Nevertheless, India is a nation with an ancient and proud maritime tradition. Seapower has played a significant part in the history of the peoples who occupied the Indian subcontinent.

Archaeological excavation has uncovered the foundations of India's maritime history. It is known, for instance, that there was oceanic trade between India and Babylon as early as 3000 B.C. In the period between 2000 B.C. and 500 B.C., there were Indian sea voyages along the coasts of Persia and Arabia. By the time of Alexander the Great's invasion, India was well advanced in ship construction and sailing methods. Before 400 B.C., Indians had penetrated to the Malay archipelago and to Java. This

region, which came to be known as Farther India, was of considerable importance to Indian merchants in later centuries. Hindu colonial kingdoms came into being in this part of the Orient.

By the end of the period of Hindu supremacy, the Arabs had gained a stronghold on overseas trade in the Indian Ocean. M. Mujeeb has written that the "medieval history of India begins with the arrival of the first Muslim Arabs on our western and southern coasts." The Mogul empire in India did not appreciate the importance of seapower, however, and this continental outlook helped pave the way for the conquests of the European powers.

Naval Resistance

It should not be imagined that the peoples and governments of India failed to offer naval resistance to the Europeans. In 1501 and 1503, flotillas of the Zamoein of Calicut (Kozhikode) attacked and severely damaged Portuguese ships. These attacks were not followed to a successful conclusion, however, and the failure to destroy the Portuguese Fleet nullified the Indian victories.

The last of the outstanding Indian admirals was Kanjoji Angre who, between 1717 and 1724, defeated a combined British, Dutch, and Portuguese naval force.

Thereafter, Indian seapower rapidly declined. Then, with supremacy at sea, the British were able to proceed with the humbling of the governments on shore.

After native Indian seapower was crushed and the British rose to ascendancy, the maritime defense of the subcontinent became the responsibility of the Royal Navy. Britain pro-

tected India and controlled the Indian Ocean by forces based on Singapore, Aden, and Simonstown at the Cape of Good Hope. This control was virtually unchallenged until a Japanese fleet sailed into the Indian Ocean during World War II. Fortunately, for the British in India, Japanese war plan-

dia and Pakistan, the former received approximately two-thirds of the assets of the Royal Indian Navy.

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The Vikrant aircraft carrier

ners directed their aggressive moves elsewhere than against India's coastal cities.

Throughout much of the period of British rule in India, there was a small harbor and coastal defense force known as the Indian Marine. This may be described as the forerunner of the Royal Indian Navy which came into existence after World War I. In World War II, units of the Royal Indian Navy fought alongside the Royal Navy and distinguished themselves in a variety of duties. When the subcontinent was divided into the two states of In-

dia and Pakistan, the former received approximately two-thirds of the assets of the Royal Indian Navy. As a result of sales or transfers by Great Britain, the Indian Navy now has one of the strongest naval forces in Asia. Between 1945 and 1966, India gained—by transfer—one 16,000-ton aircraft carrier, two cruisers, and nine destroyers and destroyer escorts. There were eight frigates ordered as new construction in the 1950's. In addition, three *Leander* class frigates are under construction at Mazagon Dockyard in Bombay. The Indian Defense Minister also has announced that India will purchase six submarines from the Soviet Union. This naval force protects a merchant marine consisting of 354 vessels of 1.5 million gross tons.

The Indian Navy is considerably larger and more powerful than the

Pakistani Navy which has only 8,680 men. Pakistan's largest naval vessel is a light cruiser. It also has one submarine acquired from the United States. The merchant fleet of Pakistan consists of 153 ships with a total gross tonnage of 400,000.

India's naval balance with respect to Indonesia reveals a markedly dif-



Deputy Prime Minister Morarji R. Desai

ferent situation. India has nothing to compare to the 19,200-ton *Sverdlov* class cruiser *Irian* that the Indonesian Navy has in commission, nor the 12 *W* class Soviet-built submarines also in Indonesia's fleet. India is, indeed, fortunate that the present counter-revolutionary government of Indonesia apparently is without ambitions in the Indian Ocean.

Among India's vulnerable offshore territories are the Andaman, Nicobar, and Laccadive Islands. The Andaman and Nicobar Islands are in the Bay of Bengal approximately 700 miles east of the subcontinent. They are the natural steppingstones to India from the east and occupy a strategic position on the trade route between India

and Southeast Asia. The two island groups are characterized by a number of safe harbors. Port Blair in the Andaman Islands long has been appreciated as being one of the most perfect natural harbors in the Orient. In 1964, the Indian Navy established a communications station and various base facilities at Port Blair.

The Laccadive Islands are a group of tiny islands in the Arabian Sea about 150 miles from the Malabar coast. They are about 42 square miles in size and have a population of approximately 24,000.

Port Development

An important element in India's maritime posture is port development which has been underway since 1950. The Port of Bombay is the major seaport and served as the naval headquarters even in British times. The size of Indian port activity may be gauged by the fact that, in 1963-64, the Indian ports handled 46.4 million tons of cargo. The government of India hopes that, by 1970-71, the country's seaports will handle in excess of 80 million tons.

In recent years, new berths have been constructed at Calcutta, Madras, and Cochin. Among the improvements completed or in process are modernization of the docks at Calcutta, dredging of the Bombay entrance canal, electrification of cranes, and construction of a new dock at Madras.

Port improvements are being accompanied by a keen interest in ship construction. The latest development in this field came in mid-August 1967 when the government of India approved the construction of a new shipyard at Cochin. It is hoped that the first keel will be laid at the new yard in 1971. The project will be carried

out in collaboration with Mitsubishi Heavy Industries of Japan. The Indian and Japanese collaborators envisage production of two types of bulk carriers of 33,000 and 53,000 tons respectively. The new shipyard also will be able to drydock and serve ships up to 100,000 tons.

National Maritime Day

India's interest in all facets of seapower is evidenced by the government proclamation establishing 5 April as National Maritime Day. On 5 April 1919, India's first passenger vessel made its maiden voyage from Bombay to London. As early as 1947, the Indian Government endorsed the objective of the Shipping Policy Committee that India secure a merchant marine with a tonnage of two million.

The first oceangoing ship launched after national independence was the 8,000-ton *Jala Usha*, built in the Vishakhapatnam shipyard in 1948. This yard has a production capacity of four vessels a year with a stated goal of six ships a year in the future. India did not acquire her first oceangoing tanker until 1961 or her first bulk carrier until 1962.

While buildup of India's commercial and naval fleets is a protracted enterprise, because of the condition of the country's economy, Indians are highly sensitive to developments affecting seapower in the Indian Ocean. For example, establishment of the British Indian Ocean Territory in 1966, reportedly as a preliminary to creation of joint Anglo-American naval and airbases in the Indian Ocean, came under heavy fire in India.

M. C. Chagla, India's Foreign Minister, has said that his country is "opposed to the establishment of military bases in the Indian Ocean area as it

might lead to an increase in tensions in this region." The Indian press viewed the development with equal suspicion and questioned whether the bases were genuinely meant for countering the Chinese menace.

These comments indicate that, while India lacks the capacity to maintain a naval presence throughout the Indian Ocean, she looks askance at Free World nations developing their naval presence in this vast oceanic region. Yet the fact remains that the West has a pressing need for bases in the Indian Ocean. Strategic planners in the United States are concerned about the dangerous gap between the 7th Fleet in the Pacific and the 6th Fleet in the Mediterranean.

Cause for Concern

The reaction of India to plans for a naval base in the Indian Ocean is not surprising. For all her military deficiencies at the present time, India thinks of herself as a large, independent power with a significant place in Afro-Asia now and in the future. India has a complex set of relations with the West and is most desirous of maintaining her independence of the United States.

The Chinese threat to all free countries in Asia may seem to Americans to necessitate an active, working defense partnership among these states, but this is not Indian opinion. India is far from making common cause with the United States, Australia, New Zealand, the Republic of Vietnam, the Republic of China, and other free states. Indeed, India's increasing defense ties with the Soviet Union give the United States and her allies cause for concern.

Regardless of this policy on the part of the Indians, a number of Free

World countries have a vital interest and strategic stake in the Indian Ocean. The bulk of Japan's fuel, used to power that country's giant industrial machine, is moved across the Indian Ocean from the oil-rich countries of the Middle East. The Japanese supertankers pass through what the Indians consider to be home waters. If Japan's oil traffic in the Indian Ocean were not secure, that country would be in great jeopardy.

Thus, the dimensions of the naval security problem in the Indian Ocean are increasing and pose more complex problems than India has acknowledged in the past. In the future, India will be unable to ignore the fact that other Free World countries will require assurances that adequate defense arrangements exist in the Indian Ocean.

Japan's naval needs with respect to the Indian Ocean are underscored by the increasing economic links between India and Japan. Visiting Tokyo in August 1967, Morarji R. Desai, India's Deputy Prime Minister, told the press that efforts made by Japan to knit the Southeast Asian nations into closer economic community could result in a powerful bulwark being created to check "the imperialist march" of Communist China. Indian Government spokesmen used this occasion to observe that "the rapid expansion of trade between India and Japan in recent years is one of the most important aspects of their economic relations."

Nearly 40 percent of India's exports to Japan are metallic ores—an important phase of ocean traffic. In addition, Japan is collaborating in the estab-

lishment of a fisheries center at Mangalore in Mysore state. The Japanese also are offering assistance in setting up a shrimp trawler base at Cochin. In view of the increased Japanese shipping to and from India, both countries will have to rethink the problem of naval protection for merchant vessels—the first and basic task for any navy.

The strengthening of India's maritime posture is likely to take place within a large timeframe because of the acute economic problems confronting India. Nevertheless, a new generation of Indian defense leaders is becoming aware of the opportunities and challenges involved in seapower. They are speaking out frankly on the vital defense issues.

Captain D. R. Mehta of the Indian Navy, writing in the *United States Naval Institute Proceedings*, has said:

If involved in a fighting war with China, India would also be justified in taking such measures as are within its power to restrict the enemy's capacity to wage war. The interdiction of Chinese shipping would be a relevant role for the Indian Navy. China is increasingly dependent on oil and petroleum products from overseas. To ease the pressures on our northern landward defenses, these supplies would have to be cut off, or restricted, and this can best be achieved by the use of naval forces.

In the final analysis, the great awakening to the maritime security needs of India will come when large numbers of Indian opinion shapers appreciate what Dr. K. M. Panikkar has written: "Whoever controls the Indian Ocean has India at its mercy."