

In later speeches Gorbachev did pay more attention to the Indian Ocean, perhaps in response to Indian pressure, but also undoubtedly out of the realization that significant gains could be made there. Accordingly, during his four-day visit to India in November 1986, Gorbachev said:

... the Soviet Union and India support the United Nations decision to convene not later than in 1988, an international conference for the purpose of implementing the United Nations declaration on the Indian Ocean as a zone of peace. Demilitarization of the Indian Ocean must finally get underway."<sup>53</sup>

In an interview with the Merdeka newspaper in Indonesia the following July, Gorbachev continued his confidence-building theme and argued that: "...there are many useful things that could be done to strengthen security in the Indian Ocean."<sup>54</sup> More specifically, he highlighted the uncooperative US attitude towards the concept of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace:

The United Nations adopted the declaration on making the Indian Ocean a zone of peace more than 15 years ago. For a number of years, preparatory work has been going on to convene, under the aegis of the United Nations, an international conference on the Indian Ocean. ... However, we still cannot be sure that it will take place, for experience shows that as soon as the talks begin to make progress Washington foils them."<sup>55</sup>

Obviously, this leaves the United States on the horns of a dilemma. If it does not respond positively to the Soviet challenge by showing a willingness to reduce its forces in the region, it runs the risk of alienating regional influentials such as India and Indonesia. However, if Washington does make significant reductions in its force levels in the Indian Ocean then it is mortgaging its regional strategic concerns to its uncertain future relations with the regional states. Moscow essentially has nothing to lose and everything to gain from Washington's

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<sup>53</sup> See: *Foreign Broadcast Information Service* (Soviet Union), p. D9, November 28, 1986.

<sup>54</sup> See: "Mikhail Gorbachev's Replies To Questions Put By The Indonesian Newspaper *Merdeka*, July 21, 1987." Moscow: Novosti Press Agency Publishing House, 1987, p. 9.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*