

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Canada does not have a military presence in the Indian Ocean, nor is it conspicuously threatened by strategic developments in the region. Nevertheless, events in the Indian Ocean have an important impact in Canada's economic, foreign, and defence policies and Canadians should be aware of the significance of the region to their national interests.

The Indian Ocean is home to many of Canada's partners in the Commonwealth and strong cultural, economic and aid ties will continue to grow with the region. The energy supplies of the Persian Gulf are not of crucial importance to Canada but they are vital to the economic well-being of many of our friends and allies. Obviously, any interruption of the supplies of oil from the Gulf, would have a negative impact on Canada's economy.

To preserve the free-flow of oil to the Western industrial economies, the United States has played a growing military role in the Indian Ocean in recent years. The Soviet Union has also been active in the region for its own strategic purposes. At one level, the United States and the Soviet Union have simply incorporated a new region into their broader global rivalry. However, the Indian Ocean itself has clearly become an object of their attention in its own right. The following paper surveys the role of the superpowers in the Indian Ocean and assesses future trends in the region.

After the British decided to withdraw from "East of Suez" in 1968, the Indian Ocean saw a steady increase in military activity by the Soviet Union and the United States. A series of events at the end of the 1970s--the Ogaden War in the Horn of Africa, the Iranian revolution, and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan--combined to bring the Indian Ocean to the forefront of global strategic rivalry between the US and the