

incident. Sixty-one states voted for the resolution, but fifty-five other countries abstained including the major maritime powers. The only states unequivocally in favour of it were Sri Lanka, Tanzania and India.<sup>9</sup> Since then, the Zone of Peace proposal has become a perennial feature of the United Nation's agenda although it is no closer to being implemented than it was back in 1971.<sup>10</sup> However, the proposal has become a useful political tool by which India has consistently argued for the exclusion of external powers from the Indian Ocean. Such a condition would, of course, effectively leave the Indian Navy in a position to control the ocean.

As US-Soviet detente broke down in the late 1970s, a series of crises -- in the Horn of Africa, the Yemens, Iran and Afghanistan -- led to the permanent deployment of US and Soviet naval forces in the Indian Ocean. The development of US naval facilities on the island base of Diego Garcia, together with the establishment of the Rapid Deployment Force -- which was specifically charged with intervening in India's perceived security region -- aroused further concern in New Delhi's strategic circles. Having consistently failed to reduce superpower force levels through UN resolution, New Delhi was persuaded at the end of the 1970s to pursue the development of its own "blue-water" naval capability. It is evident, however, that India does not require a blue-water fleet to meet any threat from its regional neighbours. Many observers feel that the pattern of Indian naval expansion, together with a regularly demonstrated willingness by New Delhi to use force in support of its foreign policy objectives, points to a long-range goal of achieving the military means to dominate the wider Indian Ocean region.

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<sup>9</sup> "...other countries either voted without comment or else expressed misgivings over the operational parts of the resolution (particularly Iran, Malaysia and Indonesia.) Altogether about half the Indian Ocean littoral states shared such misgivings." See: Braun, Dieter. *The Indian Ocean*, London: C. Hurst & Company, 1983. pp.172-186.

<sup>10</sup> Nor do its prospects look good for the future: "The United States, Britain and France have announced that they are quitting the United Nations Committee on the Indian Ocean in protest of what they said was its practice of reaching decisions without consensus and of blaming big powers for the region's problems." *India Abroad*, April 27, 1990.