

aircraft carriers should not be discounted. The naval expansion can therefore be viewed as a response to all those -- particularly in the United States -- who are not persuaded that India really is moving toward great power status. As one analyst has put it: "The American image of India is still dominated by snake charmers, naked fakirs, and starving peasants."⁵⁷ A navy deploying nuclear-powered submarines would ensure India of the recognition it feels it deserves as a major world power -- a recognition which heretofore only the Soviet Union has consistently granted, and continues to grant.

It is unclear what limits India sees to its growing power profile. If it is to be confined to the Indian Ocean region, no policy statements indicate to what degree the navy and the South Asian Doctrine support each other. As yet, there is no indication that the Indian navy, with its recognised power projection limitations, has an identifiable role beyond the Indian Ocean. The lack of a declared policy explaining the naval build-up, and the conspicuous absence of a maritime threat to India's position, offers a clue to the nature of New Delhi's naval developments.

Military expansion in general, and naval build-ups in particular, require long lead times before construction is completed. The force structure emerging in India's navy today reflects responses to threat perceptions from at least ten years ago -- and almost certainly earlier -- that do not have a bearing on contemporary strategic circumstances. India appears to have entered the naval competition in the Indian Ocean on the basis of a perceived threat to its security stemming from the Enterprise incident during the Bangladesh war and Western responses to crises in the Persian Gulf and Southwest Asia. If, as postulated, India chose to build-up its maritime forces in response to increased levels of superpower involvement in the region, then its build-up continues in response to circumstances that have lost their momentum. Indeed, there will likely be a continuing decline in extra-regional force levels in the Indian Ocean once the Iraq crisis is settled.

⁵⁷ Harrison, Selig. *Los Angeles Times*, November 2, 1984.