

-- and most recently its neutral stance on Kashmir -- have been recompensed by a New Delhi's greater acceptance of the US role in the region.

Whether or not there is a correlation, India's anti-American rhetoric has faded since the Sri Lanka operation and relations have steadily improved between Washington and New Delhi. It is too early to predict whether this new relationship will lead to a mutually satisfactory balance of naval forces in the Indian Ocean. It is unlikely that the Indian naval build-up will lead to clashes with the United States under foreseeable circumstances, nevertheless, it is equally unlikely that New Delhi will quietly accept any enhancement of the US position in the region. As the stimulus for Washington's naval presence in the Indian Ocean remains the security situation in the Persian Gulf, and given its past support of Indian interventions in the region, the prospects for an increased level of US activity to a degree that would upset New Delhi seem remote.

Conclusion

There are probably a mixture of motives driving Indian naval policy and New Delhi obviously has a legitimate right to defend its many interests in the Indian Ocean. Beyond the legitimate economic need to control its large EEZ, it has been argued that India's objective is to prevent loss of flexibility and control in the Indian Ocean by creating a strong, permanent presence throughout the region. Like the late argument regarding the need for Canadian nuclear-powered submarines in the Arctic, New Delhi believes that if its forces are not patrolling the Indian Ocean, somebody else's will be. Therefore, to demonstrate an active assertion of a national security interest, it is necessary to deny other naval powers free reign in the Indian Ocean. Clearly, the potential of a future threat from China is also a consideration.

Others hold that the naval build-up simply reflects an emotional response to India's need to be recognised as a legitimate regional power. A strong fleet suits India's perception of itself as an emerging power with regional security responsibilities and a leadership role in the Third World. In addition, the prestige attached to the acquisition of a nuclear-powered submarine and