

quandary. A greatly reduced US naval presence in the Indian Ocean would represent a significant strategic gain to the Soviet Union because of the surrogate force it has created in the Indian Navy.

Relations between Moscow and New Delhi are long-standing and mutually beneficial. The Soviets have consistently been faithful to India's self-image as a great power and have actively stroked New Delhi's ego through the judicious distribution of advanced weapons systems. Apart from supplying India with the first nuclear-powered submarine ever offered to a developing country, the Soviet Union has also outfitted the Indian air force with the top of the line *MiG-29* fighter aircraft. The Soviets have also been keen to sell their long-range *Tu-142M* naval reconnaissance aircraft to India. Indeed, Gorbachev has encouraged New Delhi to play a more independent role in the region.

It is important to note, however, that even though India aspires to become the dominant power in the Indian Ocean and to deny any extra-regional power a role in the affairs of South Asia, its military potential is tied to Soviet largesse. The clearest evidence, of course, lies in the leasing of the nuclear-powered submarine from Moscow, which also demonstrates that India is not yet in a position to pursue an unambiguously independent regional security agenda. In spite of this, Moscow's influence over India has limitations and is facing a decline. The Soviet Union simply cannot provide India with the technological expertise it needs to expand its industrial base, nor is Moscow a fruitful market for India's exports. There is a growing awareness in India that closer ties with the West, and the United States in particular, are essential if it is to develop fully its economic and military potential. Nobody is predicting an about turn in India's basic foreign policy orientation, but Moscow must be somewhat concerned at the prospect of ultimately losing its influence over the Indian military. Therefore, it seems somewhat strange that discussion of the leasing of the nuclear-powered submarine invariably revolves around India's possible purpose in acquiring such a weapons system. The more interesting question concerns Soviet motivations in supplying India with the submarine. By offering nuclear-powered submarines to India, the Soviet Union retains New Delhi's goodwill, fosters continued Indian military dependence on Moscow, reinforces India's image as a