

The littoral states have begun to play a greater role in strategic affairs in the region. India, in particular, has embarked on an expansion of its naval power projection capability which concerns its neighbours and is potentially destabilizing. The nuclear proliferation issue in South Asia threatens not only India and Pakistan, but also the rest of the world. Conflicts like the Iran-Iraq war demonstrate that marginal powers can drag great powers into their quarrels, with untold consequences. Scarce resources will continue to trigger crises and hostility for the foreseeable future. With the Soviets withdrawing from Afghanistan, and the Iran-Iraq war ostensibly over, there is the potential for the superpowers to return the Indian Ocean to its traditional low-order priority in their strategic affairs. It is important that they do so. The superpowers need to be free to develop their cooperative confidence-building measures in this important region in order to be better able to manage the rapidly changing challenges to international peace and security.