Chapter 4

India's Aspirational Naval Doctrine[1]

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Introduction

A 'springboard',[2] 'a central triangle',[3] 'a never-sinking aircraft carrier'[4] – or, for the more dramatic, a 'dagger'[5] plunged deep into the surrounding waters – there has been no dearth of vivid metaphors describing India's enviable position at the heart of the Indian Ocean. A simple glance at a map should provide ample evidence of India's maritime destiny.

An array of land-driven concerns has, however, since Independence, had a way of dragging India back to shore, thwarting its sporadic thalassocratic ambitions. Blessed by its geography, India is cursed by its neighbourhood. The pan-oceanic vision nurtured under the Raj and shared by great post-Independence figures such as Nehru and K.M. Pannikar[6] has been buried under the 'sacred soil' of the numerous territorial disputes and festering insurgencies that have convulsed the subcontinent and consumed much of its leadership's strategic attention for the past six decades.

The Indian Navy, arguably the most strategic-minded of the three services, has had to grapple for years with its 'Cinderella service'[7] status, which has left it with

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1 The author would like to thank Professor Sumit Ganguly, Walter C. Ladwig, and an anonymous referee for their helpful comments on an earlier draft, as well as Professor Daniel Deudney for his invaluable assistance in helping him achieve a more profound understanding of military doctrine.

2 Ashley Tellis, 'Securing the Barrack: The Logic, Structure and Objectives of India's Naval Expansion', *Naval War College Review* (Summer 1990): 80.

3 K.M. Panikkar, 'The Defence of India and Indo-British Obligations', *International Affairs*, 22(1) (January 1946): 85–90.

4 Zhang Ming, 'The Malacca Dilemma and the Chinese Navy's Strategic Choices', *Modern Ships*, 274 (October 2006): p. 23.

5 Cheng Ruisheng, 'Interview: Reflections from China', *Journal of International Affairs*, 64(2) (Spring/Summer 2011): 213.

6 Kavalam Madhava Pannikar was an influential Indian diplomat and historian who wrote Mahanesque texts on the role of sea power in Indian history and the need for the country to look seaward. Although he was prolific, his most famous and oft cited work remains *India and the Indian Ocean: An Essay on the Influence of Sea Power on Indian History* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1945), p. 9.

7 Admiral Arun Prakash, 'Is the Future Beneath the Waves?', *Livefist Blog Post*, Sunday 21 December 2008, available at http://livefist.blogspot.com/2008/12/admiral-arun-

but a meagre portion of the defence budget. Having played a mostly peripheral part in most of India's past conflicts[8] the Navy has also been hard pressed to define and justify its role. In such a context, the latest edition of the *Indian Maritime Doctrine*[9] issued by the Naval Headquarters, which builds upon both an earlier version released in 2004 and India's Maritime Strategy (2007)[10] provides a vital insight into how the Navy draws its inspiration and conceives of its present and future mandate in a strategically dynamic era.

This chapter aims to provide a better understanding not only of the *Indian Maritime Doctrine* but also of the larger context surrounding it. Doctrinal developments do not emerge from a vacuum, and are best understood from both a cultural and organizational perspective. It will be argued that in the Indian context, the nation's complex civil-military and inter-service relations are key to better gauging some of the motivations underlying the Maritime Doctrine.

The study proceeds in three parts. Section one focuses on the essence of the maritime doctrine itself, as well as on the complex institutional setting which provides its backdrop. The document's lofty ambitions, when juxtaposed with the study of current realities, suggest that it may be more advocatory and aspirational than genuinely reflective of reality. The second section ventures that India's naval thought can best be understood as syncretic, with a variety of traditions shaping the service's vision and evolution.

Four different traditions or schools of thought are identified:

- The Indian Continentalist School: more inward than outward-looking, and which has seldom let maritime issues seep through the mental barrier of the Himalayas.
- The Raj Pan-Oceanic School: developed at the height of the British Empire when the Indian Ocean was unified for the first time as a common strategic space.
- The Soviet School: which is more defensive in orientation, and which focuses largely on the control of chokepoints and area defence.
- The Monrovian School: through which India, in the tradition of most regional powers with enviable maritime positions, seeks to extend sea control over what it perceives to be its maritime backyard.

The third and final section draws on these four models in order to chart out different potential trajectories for the Indian Navy in terms of its organization. Depending

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prakash-is-future-beneath.html.

8   The 1971 conflict, during which the Indian Navy's Osa class missile boats launched a daring attack on the Karachi harbour constitutes a notable exception.

9   Integrated Headquarters, Ministry of Defence (Navy), INBR-8, *Indian Maritime Doctrine*, 2009.

10   Integrated Headquarters, Ministry of Defence (Navy), *Freedom to Use the Seas: India's Maritime Military Strategy*, 2007.

on changing geopolitical circumstances and shifts in the institutional makeup of India's Armed Forces, one, or several of these schools will take pride of place. This will have a sizeable impact on the Indian Navy's deployment patterns, force structure, and planned future acquisitions.

The Essence of the Maritime Doctrine

An Ambitious Blueprint for a Multidimensional Service

India's Maritime Doctrine frequently resembles a catalogue of core military concepts for readers to absorb and integrate, retracing, for example, the etymology of the word doctrine to the Latin *doctrina*, a 'code of beliefs' or a 'body of teachings'.[11] Military doctrine is defined as providing 'the conceptual framework for understanding the role, scope, and application of military power, and underpins the formulation of military strategy'.[12] The document's pedagogic vocation is clearly laid out by the then acting Chief of Naval Staff, Admiral Sureesh Mehta, who states in the foreword that the doctrine 'provided a common language and a uniform understanding of maritime concepts', as well as serving as the 'foundation for the Navy's operating, planning, organizational and training philosophies'.[13]

Although Admiral Mehta claims that 'in view of the ongoing transformation of both the nation and our navy, a review was overdue',[14] the changes made in the latest version of the maritime doctrine seem more subtle than substantial. Many of the more important modifications in the doctrine appear to flow from the lessons and reforms put in motion after the devastating 2008 terrorist attacks in Mumbai, in the wake of which the Congress-led government decided to entrust the Indian Navy with the overall responsibility for coastal security, bringing both the State Coastal Police and Coast Guard under its wing. As a result, the 2009 version attaches greater importance to 'synergy' and 'intelligence-sharing', both viewed as being sorely lacking when Pakistan-trained militants slipped in from the Arabian Sea to leave a trail of bloody mayhem. Some of the former chapters, such as those outlining the 'concepts of maritime power', or 'India's maritime environment and interests' have been revamped somewhat, and an entirely new chapter on 'Naval Combat Power' has been added. This chapter, however, remains in the same abstract and didactic mould as most of those preceding it, merely outlining in half a dozen pages the fact that naval combat power comprises three elements: conceptual, physical and human, and listing different categories of vessels. This educational aspect of the Indian Navy's doctrine stands in interesting contrast to those promoted by its sister services, the Indian Army and Air Force,

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11 Integrated Headquarters (Navy), *Indian Maritime Doctrine*, 2009, p. 3.
12 Ibid.
13 Integrated Headquarters (Navy), *Indian Maritime Doctrine*, 2009, Foreword.
14 Ibid.

who both define their warfighting roles in detail. This difference in approach is clearly recognized in the opening of the doctrine, which states the following: 'The doctrine primarily addressed the military-strategic level, whilst it also covers the operational level. Tactical issues have been deliberately kept outside the purview of this doctrine, as several other naval publications comprehensively address these aspects'.[15] This self-carved doctrine, moulded from a professedly higher strategic level, and which merely skims tactical issues rather than directly addressing them, is key to understanding what distinguishes the Navy from the other branches of the Indian Armed Forces. Indeed, the Navy views itself as being a multidimensional service, capable of taking on many roles, of which warfighting is but one aspect.

This is reflected in the most absorbing section of the maritime doctrine, which lays out four roles for the Indian Navy: military, diplomatic, constabulary and benign. These four roles echo to a certain degree those already identified more than 10 years prior in the Indian Navy's first Strategic Defence Review, which were then defined as the following: sea-based deterrence, economic and energy security, forward presence and naval diplomacy.[16]

Two important elements are worth noting, however. First, what was defined as naval diplomacy in 1998 has been split into two different roles – benign and diplomatic – in 2009. The Indian Navy has long recognized the potential offered by vessels in terms of diplomacy and soft power projection. This has been reflected both in words, via the earlier version of the maritime doctrine, which defined the Navy as an 'effective instrument of India's foreign policy by generating goodwill through maritime diplomacy';[17] and in actions, as over the past decade the Indian Navy has frequently displayed with a certain panache its desire and capacity to be viewed as a provider of public goods as well as a reliable partner. Indian ships have thus taken part in a wide range of humanitarian and disaster relief operations over the years, whether it be in the wake of the devastating 2004 tsunami, or in 2008 after the Nargis cyclone. India has also engaged in NEOs or Non-Combatant Evacuation Operations, such as in 2006, when four Indian warships successfully evacuated more than 2,000 Indian, Sri Lankan and Nepalese citizens from a war-torn Lebanon. Interestingly, NEOs are classified as being a form of 'maritime mission and support', thus falling under the Navy's diplomatic, rather than its benign role, in the 2009 doctrine. This provides an indication of the growing elasticity of the Navy's perceived soft power role, where set distinctions are blurred and seem to overlap. Through its multiple and increasingly institutionalized naval exercises with both regional and extra-regional navies, and its hosting of multilateral initiatives such as the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium, the Indian Navy, as some US Naval War College analysts have noted, 'clearly sees a comparative advantage

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15   Integrated Headquarters (Navy), *Indian Maritime Doctrine*, 2009, p. 11.

16   See Rahul Roy-Chaudhury, *India's Maritime Security* (New Delhi: Knowledge World, 2000), pp. 125–6.

17   Integrated Headquarters (Navy), *Indian Maritime Doctrine*, 2004, p. 83.

for their service as a diplomatic instrument for New Delhi'.[18] The 2009 version of the maritime doctrine goes so far as to wax in lyrical terms that the mere presence of an Indian warship with its multi-ethnic and multi-religious crew in a foreign harbour will contribute to India's image as a vibrant democracy abroad.[19]

Another interesting evolution is the sheer width of the gamut of potential military roles laid out for the Indian Navy, which, crammed into a small box, appear to encompass every possible wartime function.

Table 4.1   Military objectives, missions and tasks

Objectives	Missions	Tasks
• Deterrence against war or intervention • Decisive military victory in case of war • Security of India's territorial integrity, citizens and offshore assets from seaborne threat • Influence affairs on land • Safeguard India's mercantile marine and maritime trade • Safeguard India's national interests and maritime security	• Nuclear second-strike • MDA • Sea control • Sea denial • Blockade • Power projection • Expeditionary ops • Compellance • Destruction • SLOC interdiction • SLOC protection • Special ops • Protection of offshore assets • Seaward defence • NCAGS ops	• Surveillance • Maritime strike • Anti-submarine ops • Anti-surface ops • Anti-air ops • Amphibious ops • Information ops • Electronic warfare • Special ops • Mine warfare • VBSS • Harbour defence

Source: *Indian Maritime Doctrine*, 2009, p. 92.

The question is whether the Indian Navy currently has the requisite ability to accomplish all these tasks, whether simultaneously or even sequentially. But before engaging in such a discussion, it is necessary to pinpoint the more advocatory elements to what remains first and foremost the doctrine of an individual service in a country where no official National Security Strategy yet exists, and where both civil-military and inter-service relations remain exceedingly complex. In his seminal study of civil-military relations, Samuel Huntington identified four

18   James R. Holmes, Andrew C. Winner and Toshi Yoshihara, *Indian Naval Strategy in the Twenty-First Century* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), p. 73.

19   'The warship, with a relatively young crew, hailing from all parts of India, symbolizes a mini-India and succinctly epitomizes all that modern India stands for a vibrant, multi-ethnic, multi-religious, secular democracy, firmly on the track to economic and technological development'. Integrated Headquarters, Ministry of Defence (Navy), *Indian Maritime Doctrine*, 2009, p. 113.

potential roles for the military in politico-military affairs: advisory, representative, executive and advocatory.[20] Doctrines, especially when they are released by individual service headquarters, can serve as vital advocatory platforms. This is even more the case in countries such as India, where, as it shall be shown, military leaders have, for various reasons, almost systematically been marginalized from the decision-making process in matters of national security.

A Complex Institutional Backdrop

Studies of inter-war doctrinal development in Europe have pointed to the centrality of domestic politics. Indeed, while military doctrine is ultimately preoccupied with state survival, it also provides a reflection of the allocation of power within a state. Therefore, in order to understand the interests that civilian and military officials bring to bear in the formulation of doctrine, one must also take 'into account the cultural dimension of domestic politics and organizational life'.[21] In India's case, civil-military relations, long marked by Nehruvian fears of creeping praetorianism, have led to a highly unwieldy and cumbersome system which has had an acutely deleterious effect on doctrinal and organizational development. Fearful of a drift towards a militaristic state in the vein of Pakistan, India's post-Independence leaders rigorously implemented a tight bureaucratic control of the young nation's armed forces.[22] The Raj-era post of commander-in-chief of the Indian military was abolished, and the service headquarters were downgraded to become 'attached offices', organizationally external to the MOD and therefore removed from major decision-making. Political scientists have noted that 'over time, concerns about the distribution of military power within a state become institutionalized and shape decision makers' opinions about military policy'.[23] In India this has led to a dysfunctional state of affairs in which although 'Indian power is growing each year, no single agency in the country combines military, diplomatic, economic and intelligence capabilities into a coherent national strategy'.[24] The prolonged absence of a Chief of Defence Staff despite a widespread recognition of its urgent

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20   See Samuel L. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State, The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press/Harvard University Press, 1981), pp. 560, and Andrew J. Goodpaster and Samuel L. Huntington, *Civil-Military Relations* (Washington DC: American Enterprise Institute Monograph, 1977), p. 23.

21   Elizabeth Kier, *Imagining War: French and British Military Doctrine between the Wars* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), p. 19.

22   See Kotera M. Bhimaya, 'Civil-Military Relations: A Comparative Study of India and Pakistan' (Diss., Rand Graduate School, 1997), retrievable at www.rand.org/pubs/authors/b/bhimaya_kotera.html.

23   Kier, *Imagining War*, p. 26.

24   Stephen P. Cohen and Sunil Dasgupta, *Arming without Aiming, India's Military Modernization* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2010), p. 147.

necessity[25] means that the prime forum for inter-service discussion continues to be the COSC, or Chief of Staff Committee, which has no decision-making powers, but which is chronically 'plagued by the ills inherent to a committee'.[26]

In private, Indian officers, while not questioning civilian control over the military, deplore the 'unholy alliance between corrupt bureaucrats and unscrupulous politicians',[27] with more than 80 per cent of those polled for a 1997 Rand monograph stating that their vision of the nation's interest frequently differed from that of the government. In public, officers affiliated to academia or think tanks call more tactfully for a greater 'cross-pollination of national security structures with military expertise', 'which could pave the way for institutional equity'.[28] In their recent study of India's military modernization, Professors Sunil Dasgupta and Steve Cohen observe that many of the IAS officers seconded to the Ministry of Defence are bereft of solid expertise, despite their overwhelming influence.[29] The problem seems to be not so much the civil-military relationship in itself (that is, between the military and elected officials) but rather the extent of technocratic ossification which has occurred over the years and which, in the view of the military, presents a formidable 'bureaucratic barrier preventing them from making a direct appeal to political leaders'.[30] This has led to some incidents where the Navy has locked horns with the Ministry of Defence and Ministry of External Affairs, most notably over the 2008 decision to conduct anti-piracy operations off the coast of Somalia. Some have ventured that the tension may have revolved around the MEA's initial refusal to allow the Indian Navy to conduct naval interceptions.[31]

Caught in such a difficult institutional setting, it is natural for the Indian Navy to seek to relay its interests and perceptions through indirect means, most notably via the widespread diffusion of a doctrine. The desire to influence and impact decision-makers, as well as the public writ large, is made clear from the very beginning: 'The Indian Maritime Doctrine is the capstone doctrinal publication of the Indian Navy, which is aimed at not just the professional sea warrior, but also

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25 There is hope that this will change however, as it was recently announced that a task force was to be set up to review the reforms in the management of national defence. In 2001 the Group of Ministers submitted their recommendations on 'Reforming the National Security System' and argued for the creation of a Chief of Defence Staff. For 10 years, due to an unsavory blend of bureaucratic and inter-service infighting, this recommendation has remained unimplemented.

26 Colonel S.A. Rehman, 'Jointmanship: The IDS Way', Articles by Officers of Headquarters of the Integrated Defence Staff, http://ids.nic.in/art_by_offids/Jointmanship/Rehman.pdf.

27 Bhimaya, *Civil-Military Relations*, p. 155.

28 Harinder Singh, 'Assessing India's Emerging Land Warfare Capabilities, Prospects and Concerns', *Asian Security Journal*, 7(2) (2011): 162.

29 Cohen and Dasgupta, *Arming without Aiming*, p. 147.

30 Bhimaya, *Civil-Military Relations*, p. 161.

31 See David Brewster, 'An Indian Sphere of Influence in the Indian Ocean?', *Security Challenges*, 6(3) (Spring 2010): 4.

the thinker, planner, supporter and stake-holder amongst the Navy, other armed forces, government, think tanks, media and the larger public of India'.[32]

The reticence of India's politico-bureaucratic nexus to expedite the institutionalization of an overarching military command structure has also had a negative impact on inter-service relations and interoperability. Although the strategic conceptualization of a blue-water navy has been present in India since Independence, the Indian Navy has traditionally been the least favoured branch of the Indian armed forces in terms of resources. This is due in part, as we shall see, to India's long-standing continentalist tradition, but also to more prosaic immediate post-Independence concerns.

Indeed, after a series of brutal frontier conflicts in which navies played at best a secondary role, India's main priorities were to strengthen its land borders and build up its Army and Air Force, which were the primary actors in the event of a conflict with China or Pakistan. The Indian Navy, no longer considered as relevant, was relegated to the backseat, its share in the defence budget even plummeting at one stage to a dismal 3 per cent. Under the tenures of Indira and Rajiv Gandhi, the Navy spasmodically regained impetus, but it has only really been over the past 15 years that India's political leadership has actively endorsed an ambitious blue-water role. Nevertheless, to this day the Navy's share of the defence budget remains considerably lower than that of the Army or the Air Force, and even the most optimistic predictions for its future allocation doubt it will climb much above 20 per cent in years to come.[33] Former Naval Officers' frustration with their service's continued 'Cinderella status' and over what they perceive to be a ponderous, strategically myopic Army is occasionally made manifest,[34] as is the long-standing tension between the Navy and Air Force over the sensitive issue of naval aviation.[35] Both in its doctrine and Maritime Military Strategy document, the Indian Navy appears intent on overcoming these inter-service squabbles and 'trying to carve out a role for itself in support of joint operations-particularly support

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32   Integrated Headquarters (Navy), *Indian Maritime Doctrine*, 2009, p. 1.

33   The Navy only captured 15 per cent of the defence budget in 2010–11.

34   For instance, in a recent article for the Woodrow Wilson Center in Washington DC, former Chief of Naval Staff Arun Prakash writes the following: 'The Indian Army has been driven into an intellectual and doctrinal cul-de-sac by 20 years of insurgency which demands an ever-increasing number of boots on the ground'. See Arun Prakash, 'The Rationale and Implications of India's Growing Maritime Power', in *India's Contemporary Security Challenges*, ed. Michael Kugelman (Woodrow Wilson International School for Scholars Asia Program Publication, 2011), p. 86.

35   A recent example would be the alleged spat between the Navy and Air Force over the Air Force's RFI for six new amphibious aircraft in March 2010. Shiv Aroor, one of India's best known defence journalists, reports on his blog that the Indian Navy did not take kindly to the Air Force's request for amphibious aircraft, viewing such a capability as falling under the Navy's purview, and announcing a few months later its own identical procurement effort. See http://livefistblogspot.com/2011/01/after-iaf-navy-now-wants-amphibian.html.

for armed forces in wartime'.[36] Former Chief of Naval Staff Arun Prakash, while railing against the 'intellectual and doctrinal cul-de-sac' that the Indian Army 'has been driven into', also suggests that the Navy can provide the Army with valuable tactical options by applying 'intense seaward pressure on the enemy'.[37] The idea that the Indian Navy can be highly effective as a game-changing flanking force is one which has gained some credence since the Navy's 'silent Kargil victory'.[38]

It is maybe not a coincidence if the service with the smallest portion of the defence budget is also that with the most active official publication record, with the release of two only marginally different versions of the same doctrine in an interval of five years, interspersed with the release of a Maritime Military Strategy in 2007. In the Navy's view, everything must be done to awaken India's sluggish maritime consciousness.

The Underlying Motivations of an Aspirational Doctrine

Theorists have identified three core motivations driving military organizations' quest for more influence: the wish for enhanced autonomy, the desire for greater prestige and the more functional hunt for additional resources, all of which are frequently interconnected.[39] These three core motivations can all be discerned in some way or another in India's Maritime Doctrine.

Indeed, the 2009 maritime doctrine indicates that the Indian Navy is clearly demonstrating its desire for:

- *Greater Prestige* by having a greater say in the definition of the country's core security interests.

This is accomplished through a sustained defence of how the sea can bolster overall national strategy, as well as by the advancement of the unwavering 'logic of geography'.[40] India's centrality in the Indian Ocean and peninsular formation, it

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36   Holmes, Winner and Yoshihara, *Indian Naval Strategy in the Twenty-First Century*, p. 65.

37   Prakash, 'The Rationale and Implications of India's Growing Maritime Power', p. 86.

38   During the Kargil conflict, the Indian Navy deployed a large task force composed of destroyers, submarines and frigates 13 nautical miles off the major Pakistani port of Karachi, displaying India's latent capability to enforce a blockade and penning in the Pakistani fleet. Some have argued that this show of strength ultimately convinced the Pakistanis to begin withdrawing their troops from disputed territory. See David Scott, 'India's "Grand Strategy" for the Indian Ocean Region: Mahanian Visions', *Asia-Pacific Review*, 13(2) (2006): 107.

39   See Barry Posen, *Sources of Military Doctrine: France, Britain and Germany Between the World Wars* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986), p. 288.

40   'The Asian continent forms a roof over the Indian Ocean northern extent, and distinguishes it from the Pacific and Atlantic, which lie from north to south like great highways without any roof. The Indian Ocean is nearly 10,000 km wide at the southern tips

is argued, are sure indicators of the nation's maritime destiny, and therefore, as a corollary, of the Navy's great importance. Mention is also made of the pivotal role the sea plays in India's economic development, as close to 90 per cent of India's external trade is maritime. The Navy, therefore, is to some extent the ultimate guarantor of India's sustained economic development, by virtue of its role in upholding freedom of navigation and ensuring the safety of SLOCs.

- *Greater Autonomy* by becoming the core element in India's second-strike nuclear deterrent.

This is maybe one of the more important aspects of the document, and one which has the greatest transformational potential for the Indian Navy. Both the 2004 maritime doctrine and the 2007 Maritime Military Strategy placed emphasis on the need for India to invest in a triad of aircraft, sea-based assets and mobile land-based missiles in order to vaunt a credible second-strike capability. The 2004 doctrine professes that 'It has become an unstated axiom of the post cold war era that an independent foreign policy posture is inexorably linked with this … deterrent capability',[41] and the 2007 Maritime Military Strategy adds that 'the most credible of all arsenals in a second strike is the nuclear-armed missile submarine'.[42] Since then, India's first indigenously launched nuclear submarine, the ATV (Advanced Technological Vessel) has been launched, and it was recently announced that the construction of its second submarine at a classified facility in Visakhapatnam had been initiated.[43] The second submarine should be ready for sea trials by 2015, by which time India will also have been operating an Akula II class nuclear submarine on lease from Russia. In the 2009 maritime doctrine, sea-based nuclear strike is given pride of place as a key element in the Indian Navy's overall ability to deter, which is designated as 'the primary military objective for the IN'. The maritime doctrine then adds, 'The ways and means of deterrence by the IN would include developing a sea-based nuclear second-strike capability, in keeping with the Indian Nuclear Doctrine that lays down a "No First Use" Policy'.[44] Reprising the arguments put forward in the 2007 Maritime Military Strategy, the document

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of Africa and Australia, and extends nearly 13,500 km from the Persian Gulf to Antarctica. The great Indian peninsular landmass, jutting out for a thousand miles, characterizes the Indian Ocean and lends it its name'. *Indian Maritime Doctrine 2009*, p. 56.

41   Integrated Headquarters, Ministry of Defence (Navy), *Indian Maritime Doctrine*, 2004, p. 49.

42   Integrated Headquarters, Ministry of Defence (Navy), *Indian Maritime Military Strategy*, 2007, p. 76.

43   Manoj K. Das, 'India Begins Work on 2nd Nuclear Submarine', *Deccan Chronicle*, 10 July 2011, retrievable at www.asianage.com/india/india-begins-work-2nd-nuclear-submarine-184.

44   Integrated Headquarters, Ministry of Defence (Navy), *Indian Maritime Doctrine*, 2009, p. 93.

states that, in order to be 'credible and survivable',[45] India's nuclear second-strike capability needs to also be sea-based.

Despite this intense focus on paper, it remains unclear whether in the short-to-medium term the Navy is both willing and able to make the high degree of economic and technological investment required for deploying and sustaining a nuclear submarine fleet. Experts have pointed out that if the Indian Navy were to maintain a flotilla of four to five missile-armed submarines on constant patrol, this would engulf much, if not all of its present budget.[46] It remains unclear, as of now, whether the financial burden of India's nascent underwater deterrent will be shouldered by the Navy or by specific government-funded allocations. If this financial millstone is tied around the Indian Navy's neck, it will require a far larger slice of the defence cake. If not, it appears impossible for it to be able to both remain a carrier-centric force and simultaneously pursue its nuclear ambitions. Some difficult trade-offs and cornelian choices will need to be made, and it is revealing that when the official announcement of the construction of a second ATV was made, there was reportedly some grumbling amongst the more carrier-focused officers of the IN, who expressed their desire to see 'the focus … also shift to the surface vessels that need to be part of the flotilla that normally accompanies the Air Defence Ship[47](India's first indigenous aircraft carrier, currently under construction)'.

It is also unclear when the submarines will be truly operational. The INS *Arihant*, which was launched with great fanfare in 2009, had been described at first as a 'technology demonstrator' rather than as a combat vessel. Recently however, statements from the Naval Chief of Staff have indicated that the INS *Arihant* will be deployed on deterrent patrols as soon as it is commissioned in 2012.[48] Furthermore, information surrounding the precise armament system of the ATVs is shrouded in opacity. The vessels, which were constructed with extensive Russian assistance, seem to be lighter versions of the Soviet Charlie class submarine, a model of which the Indian Navy operated on lease for three years from 1988 to 1991. It remains unclear whether India's Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO) intends to equip the submarines with short-range ballistic missiles under the Sagarika Programme, or with nuclear-tipped cruise missiles. In both cases, the relatively short range of the planned strike systems will compel the submarines to be on constant vigil uncomfortably close to the prospective target.[49]

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45   Ibid.

46   Cohen and Dasgupta, *Arming without Aiming*, p. 91.

47   Das, 'India Begins Work on 2nd Nuclear Submarine'.

48   Sandeep Uthinan, 'INS Arihant to Sail on Deterrent Mission after Commissioning', *India Today*, 2 December 2010, retrievable at http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/ins-arihant-to-sail-on-deterrent-patrol-after-commissioning/1/121885.html.

49   What little information has been given regarding the DRDO's Sagarika Project would suggest that the K-15 SLBM currently under development would only have a range of 750–800 km. This means that if the Indian Navy wishes to enact credible nuclear

For the short-to-medium term, it may be in the Indian Navy's functional interest to work towards a latent sea-based nuclear capability rather than to expend its valuable resources in deploying a task force of operational submarines, thereby applying subtle pressure on the Indian government to increase its share of the defence budget.

Beyond the simple desire for additional resources, however, the integration of the Indian Navy as the central pillar of the nation's nuclear triad would grant it considerable institutional prestige, as well as a degree of operational autonomy. In order to fulfil their role as a survivable deterrent, nuclear submarines on patrol must dissolve into the lower levels of the ocean, where their acoustic signature is the most reduced. While cruising at such depths, maintaining communications with shore-based national command centres is a great degree more challenging than for land-based nuclear forces.[50] The survivability of the nuclear submarine as the ultimate vector for LAA (launch after attack) hinges upon its furtiveness and absolute discretion as to its precise patrol route. The induction of a submarine-centred nuclear deterrent will therefore need to be accompanied by a revamped system of command and control which, while leaving critical second-strike decisions in the hands of elected officials, would also entrust a far greater degree of operational responsibility to the Indian Navy than ever before.

- *Greater Resources* by stressing the need for a large blue-water fleet capable of accomplishing the exceptionally wide range of war and peacetime roles laid out.

The tasks set out for the Navy in the Maritime Doctrine are multiple and wide-ranging, whether it be in peacetime or in war. While it is clearly stipulated that

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deterrence vis-à-vis China for, its submarines will need to be on constant patrol in the South China Seas and other closed maritime spaces near Chinese shores – a suboptimal state of affairs. A 3,500 km range SLBM, the K-4, is reportedly under development, but is unlikely to be fielded before 2018.

50   Contact with deep-cruising submarines can be maintained through the use of extremely low frequencies (ELF) whose signals penetrate the ocean's deeper layers and are immune to the atmospheric disturbances caused by nuclear detonations, and through laser communication. Open sources suggest that India has invested in ELF and studied laser communications since the 1980s (there is reportedly a VLF or very low frequency broadcasting station at Vijayanarayanam in Tamil Nadu which can broadcast several metres below seawater) but it is unclear whether an effective communications system for great depths is yet operational. See Mark Gorwitz, 'The Indian SSN Project: An Open Literature Analysis', Federation of American Scientists Report, December 1996, retrieved at www.fas. org/nuke/guide/india/sub/ssn/part01.htm, and Ranjit B. Rai, 'Underseas Communications for India's Nuclear Boats: The Next Challenge', *India Defence Update*, March 2008, retrievable at www.indiadefenceupdate.com/news93.html.

the Indian Navy is to remain a carrier-centric fleet focused on sea control,[51] the service is also expected to be capable of enforcing blockades, enacting sea denial, mine warfare, harbour defence and anti-submarine warfare. A Carrier task force is presented as being a versatile force-multiplier: 'a self contained and composite balanced force, capable of undertaking the entire range of operational tasks'.[52] Yet India currently only floats one ageing carrier, which is rasping its last after several refits, in the hope that its successor, the *Vikramaditya*, will not fall prey to further delays. Walter Ladwig's detailed assessment in a previous chapter of the force structure and procurement patterns of the Indian Navy reveals that the Indian Navy is modernizing, but not growing. Indeed, while India's fleet now boasts more advanced platforms than at the end of the 1990s, it has in fact stagnated in purely numerical terms, contracting from 51 capital ships in 1991 to 50 today.[53] The gradual withering of its submarine fleet, in particular, is cause for concern, as is the Navy's relative paucity in terms of anti-submarine warfare capability. This puts into question the Indian Navy's ability to enact a credible strategy of sea denial geared towards an extra-regional power such as China and suggests that the fleet may be becoming increasingly unbalanced in favour of surface ships.

It appears clear that to be able to accomplish all the different tasks, missions and objectives outlined in the doctrine, the Indian Navy would need to undergo an exponential increase in size and resources. And yet, as retired naval officer Ashok Sawhney recently highlighted, the Navy's capital budget, that is, the portion of the budget devoted to funding new acquisitions, amounted in 2009 to 2.5 billion dollars out of a total of 4 billion.[54] This amount, notes Sawhney, remains very modest when compared with some of the other naval budgets in Asia such as China, Japan or South Korea, pegged respectively at 32,[55] 11.6 and 4.2 billion dollars. Although the Navy's overall budget will continue to expand in nominal terms due to the overall increase in the defence budget enabled by India's sustained GDP growth, it will be hard pressed to fulfil the terms set out in its own doctrine if it does not receive a more generous allocation. The issue of budgetary shortfalls becomes even more stark if one considers, as mentioned previously, the prohibitive costs associated with developing and sustaining a viable sea-based nuclear deterrent.

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51   'Sea control is the central concept around which the IN is structured, and aircraft carriers are decidedly the most substantial contributors to it', Integrated Headquarters, Ministry of Defence (Navy), *Indian Maritime Doctrine*, 2009, p. 125.

52   Ibid., p. 125.

53   See Walter C. Ladwig III's detailed analysis in 'Drivers of Indian Naval Growth', in *The Rise of the Indian Navy: Problems and Prospects*, ed. Harsh Pant (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012).

54   Ashok Sawhney, 'Indian Naval Effectiveness for National Growth', S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies Singapore Working Paper no. 197, 7 May 2010, retrievable at www.rsis.edu.sg/publications/WorkingPapers/WP197.pdf, p. 26.

55   Most estimations of Chinese defence budgets are mere attempts at informed approximation, as the PLA's lack of transparency when it comes to military budgetary issues is notorious.

A reprioritization of the Navy over other services will only occur, however, once the fossilized continentalist tradition which still holds sway over the higher echelons of India's leadership has given way to the more strategically minded outlook evident in the maritime doctrine. The latter must therefore be viewed above all as a well-crafted statement of aspiration, and as a savvy demonstration of what the Indian Navy could be … rather than what it currently is.

India's Syncretic Naval Thought

After having assessed the organizational and functional motivations apparent in India's Maritime Doctrine, what are the intellectual influences or traditions that can be drawn upon in order to better understand its underlying vision? In the past, writers and theorists have attempted to gain a sense of India's naval thinking by applying Western concepts, invoking the more sea-drenched chapters of the nation's past, or by applying binary divisions of Indian naval officers into different schools of thought. It will be suggested here, that, as always when it comes to India, its thinking on naval matters can best be understood as variegated and syncretic. Different traditions and schools of thought have been absorbed and studied, rejected or re-crafted, and none can be put forward as the overriding or definitive model for fully apprehending such a complex maritime outlook. This section proceeds to outline four tentative traditions or schools which can serve as useful stepping stones in the understanding of the syncretic naval thought undergirding the maritime doctrine: the Continentalist tradition, the Raj-era pan-oceanic vision, the Soviet school, and the Monrovian Ambition.

India's Continentalist Tradition

India has a rich maritime history, both as hub of trade between the western and eastern hemispheres, and as a source of peaceful seaborne religious diffusion.[56] Yet its martial history has largely been continental and India has 'until recently been a land-bound nation framed against the open ocean'.[57] Two main factors can be advanced to explain the weight of continentalism in India's strategic thinking: the perennial quest for internal consolidation, and the mental barrier of the Himalayas.

The perennial quest for internal consolidation   Much of India's early history was characterized by a perpetual struggle between unity and fragmentation, between the settlements of the dusty plains and the dark stretches of forest which escaped

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56   See Iskander Rehman, 'An Ocean at the Intersection of Two Emerging Narratives', Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, New Delhi, July 2011, retrievable at www.idsa.in/issuebrief/AnOceanatTheIntersectionofTwoEmergingMaritimeNarratives.

57   Robert D. Kaplan, 'South Asia's Geography of Conflict', Center for a New American Security Report, 9 August 2010, retrievable at www.cnas.org/node/4952, p. 14.

the bounds of loose sovereignty. Until the advent of the Raj, the subcontinent was never completely unified as a common strategic space. Even at the height of the Mauryan and Gupta empires, the tropical, sea-faring lands of the Dravidian south remained distinct cultural and political entities, divided from the northern expanses of the subcontinent by language, snaking waterways and luxuriant jungles. To this enduring north/south divide must be added the divisions within earlier Indian polities themselves, whose foremost security concerns revolved around domestic, rather than foreign affairs. The Laws of Manu, which can be dated to the second century BC reflect the primacy of domestic concerns, advising the king, after settling his country 'to constantly make the utmost effort to clear out the thorns'.[58] Similarly, the Arthashastra, viewed by many as the seminal Indian text on statecraft, devotes equal, if not more attention to internal secessionist or clandestine activities as it does to external threats.[59] William J. Brenner ventures that in addition to the system of concentric circles, or 'mandala' which is famously applied in the Arthashastra to distinguish between allied and rival states by virtue of spatial adjacency, one can also detect a 'circle of anomie' between the civilized residents of the plains, and the unbending nomadic inhabitants of the forests.[60] Romila Thapar, a renowned Indian historian, notes that the Arthashastra advises the king not to trust forest-chiefs and that 'from the mid first millennium AD onwards there were references to the uprooting of forest-dwellers, or to their conquest and assimilation becoming necessary to the foundation of new kingdoms'.[61] The forest was to early Indian polities what the steppe was to Imperial China – a wild ungoverned territory, whose inhabitants lived on the fringes of civilized society, and who were to be shunned in times of weakness, or cleansed in times of strength. In both cases, topography 'played a role in fostering and perhaps shaping opposition to imperial unity'.[62] This struggle for internal consolidation, one could argue, persists to this day, whether it be via the numerous insurgencies that India has experienced throughout its post-Independence history, or, more strikingly, in the jungle-swathed stretches of the Naxalite belt where tribal, impoverished inhabitants wage a slow, grinding conflict against the Federal State which bears troubling resemblances to the conflicts of the past. This perennial quest for internal consolidation has fastened India's political class to the ground, stymied the development of an outward-looking maritime perspective, and resulted in

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58   Quoted by William J. Brenner in 'The Forest and the King of Beasts: Hierarchy and Opposition in Ancient India (*c.*600–232 BCE)', in *The Balance of Power in World History*, ed. Stuart J. Kaufman, Richard Little and William C. Wohlforth (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 107.

59   Ibid.

60   Ibid., p.116.

61   Romila Thapar, *The Penguin History of Early India: From the Origins to AD 1300* (Delhi: Penguin Books, 2002), p. 56.

62   Brenner, 'The Forest and the King of Beasts', p. 116.

the creation of a gargantuan paramilitary apparatus, as well as in the continued deployment of large numbers of Indian troops in places such as Kashmir.

The mental barrier of the Himalayas   Historically, India's maritime vision has been stifled under the mental barrier of the Himalayas whose frozen passes, throughout Indian history, would be anxiously scrutinized by the people of the Gangetic plains for Central Asian invaders. After Independence, a series of short, brutal territorial conflicts with India's two largest trans-Himalayan neighbours only served to sustain Delhi's northern fixation. The continued preponderance of the Army, which dwarfs its sister services in both size and resources must thus be viewed in this light.

Andrew C. Winner notes that in the absence of an official Indian National Security Strategy, the closest India has to 'a publicly articulated strategy' are the annual reports of the Ministry of Defence, and that maritime issues are barely mentioned. He then notes that the contrast between the centrality of the Indian Ocean in the Indian Navy's statements and 'its relative absence in those of other official Indian pronouncements' serves as a powerful reminder of the continued prevalence of land-centric views in Delhi,[63] where, some add, 'the service (the navy) lacks real political influence'.[64] The Indian maritime doctrine displays an awareness of the challenges that reside in attempting to unfetter India's strategic thinking from its continental shackles-most notably in its opening section 'Maritime Doctrine in Perspective' which attempts to unmoor India from its continental tethers by crafting a viable historical maritime narrative. Nevertheless, it remains highly uncertain whether the Navy will prove to as persuasive as the 2009 doctrine would suggest.

The Raj's Pan-Oceanic Vision

At the height of the Raj, a unified British India sat squarely in the midst of a pacified Indian Ocean, where its influence stretched from rim to rim. After the French Admiral De Suffren left the bay of Bengal in 1783, the Indian Ocean was unified for the first time in history as a common strategic space: a British lake, where no foreign power could afford to stage a sizeable military presence without attracting the immediate attention of the Royal Navy, whose attitude in the Indian Ocean was both proprietorial and assertive. In 1905, when the Russian Admiral Rozhestvensky steamed his ramshackle fleet of antiquated ships from Kronstadt around the Cape of Good Hope and towards the East China Sea where it was to be eventually sunk by the Japanese, he was contemptuously shadowed by British

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63 Andrew C. Winner, 'The United States, India, the Indian Ocean, and Maritime Elements of Security Cooperation', in *India's Contemporary Security Challenges*, ed. Michael Kugelman (Woodrow Wilson International School for Scholars Asia Program Publication, 2011), p. 101.

64 Cohen and Dasgupta, *Arming without Aiming*, p. 91.

heavy cruisers for thousands of miles.[65] British India, the Empire's 'garrison in eastern seas', served as a staging point for expeditionary warfare. This could range from punitive 'butcher and bolt' expeditions such as the one launched in 1867 against an unruly Abyssinian emperor, and which comprised more than 13,000 British and Indian soldiers accompanied by 26,000 camp followers,[66] to mass-shipments of Indian troops to fight in both worlds wars, where they served everywhere from the dry deserts of the Sahara to the mud-caked fields of Flanders. Ships were dispatched from Bombay and Madras to patrol the Persian Gulf and protect sea lanes from rapacious Arab slavers and pirates. The two-centuries-old peace dividend in the Indian Ocean came to a brutal, shuddering halt in 1942 when Singapore, the great bastion of the east, fell to the Japanese. As the emperor's troops blitzkrieged their way through Malaya, and the first bombs started to rain down on Calcutta, the moral and physical collapse of Britain's Eastern Empire 'seemed an event so extraordinary and unprecedented that panic spread through the civilian population (in India) across thousands of miles'.[67] With the intrusion of Japanese ships into the Indian Ocean, the Raj's pan-oceanic vision had come to an end.

Recently, however, certain Indian strategists have been calling for a revival of Raj-era pan-oceanism. Chief amongst the revivalists is C. Raja Mohan who, in the vein of the famed Indian historian K.M. Pannikar, draws on the Raj's history of expeditionary warfare to encourage India to become a more assertive maritime power and extend its influence over the entire Indian Ocean region.[68] External analysts have astutely noted that ' in the past five years all three branches of the Indian armed forces have articulated the need to be able to operate beyond India's borders',[69] and that the 2007 maritime strategy places great emphasis on the need for the Navy to be able to 'project power' abroad. This focus on power projection is equally evident in the 2009 maritime doctrine, which outlines what appears to be a Raj-like pan-oceanic vision with primary and secondary areas of maritime interest. The primary zone stretches as far as the Persian Gulf, whose narrow channels were once patrolled by the British Indian fleet, and the secondary zone, interestingly, extends all the way to the Red and South China Sea.[70] This pan-oceanic vision seems to be shared, to some extent, by elements of the civilian

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65 Jan Morris, *The Spectacle of Empire: Style, Effect and the Pax Britannica* (London: Faber & Faber, 1982), p. 147.

66 Niall Ferguson, *Empire: How Britain Made the Modern World* (London: Penguin 2004), p. 177.

67 Christopher Bayly and Tim Harper, *Forgotten Armies: Britain's Asian Empire & the War with Japan* (London: Penguin Books, 2005), p. 192.

68 See Raja Mohan, 'The Return of the Raj', *The American Interest*, May–June 2010.

69 Walter C. Ladwig III, 'India and Military Power Projection: Will the Land of Gandhi Become a Conventional Great Power?', *Asian Survey*, 50(6): 1162.

70 Integrated Headquarters, Ministry of Defence (Navy), *Indian Maritime Doctrine*, 2009, pp. 65–6.

leadership in their official statements. Former BJP Prime Minister Vajpayee, for example, stated in 2003 that India's 'security environment ranged(s) from the Persian Gulf to the Straits of Malacca across the Indian Ocean … and South-East Asia',[71] and his expansive definition was then reprised a year later by his Congress successor Manmohan Singh who declared that India's 'strategic footprint covers the region bounded by the Horn of Africa, West Asia … South-East Asia and beyond, to the far reaches of the Indian Ocean'.[72]

While it seems evident that there is a tendency in India to view the Indian Ocean as India's Ocean, one should not presume, however, that this will induce India to attempt in the short-to-medium term to turn what remains a vague sentiment or aspiration into a more fungible reality. As Harvard historian Sugata Bose wisely cautions, 'One has to be careful about switching too easily between the past and present tenses of Empire'.[73] India's geopolitical circumstances in this century are wildly different from those of the Raj in its heyday. Segmented and truncated, India no longer has the subcontinental unity which enabled the Raj to project such power into Central Asia, the Persian Gulf and beyond. A revisionist and resurgent China breathes heavily at India's door, and Delhi can no longer shelter behind a 'Finlandized' Tibet in order to keep it at bay. The vast imperial military machine which rolled out from the peninsula at the time of the Raj came at a prohibitive cost, and alienated its Indian subjects who toiled and wilted under colonial rule. It has been estimated, for instance, that Army expenditure accounted for 41.9 per cent of the Indian Government budget in 1881–82 and rose to 51.9 per cent by 1904–1905.[74] With a defence budget that has rarely risen above 3 per cent of GDP, modern-day India seems ill placed to revive such a militaristic legacy. Shifting geopolitical circumstances, however, such as a pacified subcontinent, may encourage India to look further afield and develop its expeditionary capabilities. Army officer Harinder Singh, for instance, predicts that 'in the forseeable future the Indian Army could … be an important security provider with sufficient force projection capabilities',[75] and Ladwig brings a balanced assessment of future trajectories by stating: 'In the medium term the limitations of political will and military capacity will prevent India from achieving some of the more ambitious

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71   Cited by S. Kapila in 'India Defines Her Strategic Frontiers', SAAG Paper, 832, 4 November 2003, available at www.saag.org/papers9/paper832.html.

72   M. Singh, 'PM's Address at the Combined Commanders' Conference', 24 October 2004.

73   Sugata Bose, *A Hundred Horizons*: *The Indian Ocean in the Age of Global Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), p. 40.

74   Michael Greenberg, *British Trade and the Opening of China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951), p. 8.

75   Harinder Singh, 'Assessing India's Emerging Land Warfare Capabilities, Prospects and Concerns', *Asian Security Journal*, 7(2) (2011): 153.

power projection goals … On the other hand, the idea that India will continue to reject military power projection is untenable.[76]'

The Soviet School

In a seminal report written for the US Naval Institute in 2001, Thomas P.M. Barnett divided the Indian Navy into two broad strategic factions, which he dubbed the British school and the Soviet school.[77] Whereas the officers in the so-called 'British school' were focused on international coalition-building and the protection of sea lines of communication, the members of the Soviet school were more intent on enforcing a strategy based on deterrence and sea denial. Barnett even introduced a geographical distinction between the Eastern Fleet based at Visakhpatnam, which he claims was long considered the 'Russian half' and the Western Fleet stationed at Mumbai (now also at Karwar). It is no secret that throughout much of the Cold War, the Indian armed forces shared close strategic ties with the Soviet Union – but to what extent, if any, can Soviet naval thinking be discerned in India's doctrinal development?

The Indian Navy's rapprochement with the Soviet Union only occurred at the beginning of the 1960s, before which the Indian Navy's principal mentor was the Royal Navy, where most of the young nation's senior officers had been trained. The first four Commanders-in-Chief of the Indian Navy were Royal Navy officers, as were the fleet commanders, and every year the fleet would take part in multilateral exercises off the former British naval base of Trincomalee, in Sri Lanka, with the British Navy and other Commonwealth countries. As the Cold War unfolded, however, and bipolarity rigidified, the Indian Navy's partnership with it former colonial overseer began to slowly crumble. In 1964, an Indian request for help from London in establishing a submarine arm was rejected, and the Indian Navy turned to an eager Soviet Union for assistance, receiving its first batch of vessels in 1965.[78] From then on, and until the end of the Cold War, the Soviet Union was to remain a privileged partner, assisting the Indian Navy in the construction of a major naval dockyard along its eastern seaboard at Visakhpatnam, and leasing New Delhi a Charlie Class SSN. Both navies, while not engaging in formal joint military exercises, reportedly occasionally coordinated their ASW capabilities to monitor American submarine patrols in the Arabian Sea.[79] Indo-Russian naval interaction focused largely on the hybridization of Russian weapon systems and

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76   Walter C. Ladwig III, 'India and Military Power Projection: Will the Land of Gandhi Become a Conventional Great Power ?', *Asian Survey*, 50(6): 1166.

77   Thomas P.M. Barnett, 'India's 12 Steps to a World-Class Navy', *US Naval Institute Proceedings* (July 2001): 41–5.

78   See Admiral J.G. Nadkarni (Retd), 'The Russian Connection', 23 March 2000, at www.rediff.com/news/2000/mar/23nad.htm.

79   See Alexander O. Ghebhardt, 'Soviet and U.S Interests in the Indian Ocean', *Asian Survey*, 15(8) (August 1975): 672–83.

Indian hulls, which was viewed by Indian naval planners as a vital first step in the progressive indigenization of the fleet.[80]

Despite a rich legacy in terms of service-to-service cooperation, however, Indian naval officers, when questioned, seem hesitant to acknowledge any lasting Soviet influence on their thinking. Despite the fact that many of the current acting senior naval officers received some training in the Soviet Union, people such as the retired Admiral J.G. Nadkarni profess that 'the Soviets were generous with their equipment but not with their knowledge – they passed on no tactical know-how or doctrine.[81]' Indian Naval personnel were frequently disconcerted by their Soviet partners' obsessive 'secretiveness', rigid ideological indoctrination and strict system of vertical specialization.[82] The interflow of ideas was further stemmed by the presence of an enduring language barrier between both navies: few Soviet commanders could speak fluent English, the working tongue of their South Asian counterparts. Another Indian officer, when recently interviewed, argued that the 1971 missile attack on Karachi, when India surprised Pakistan (and allegedly the Soviet Union) by towing Osa class missile boats best suited for coastal defence across the Arabian Sea, is a prime example of how 'India would take Soviet equipment but then use it creatively in its own way'.[83]

At first glance, therefore, the Soviet Union seems to have left little long-lasting impact on its South Asian protégé's naval thinking. Nevertheless, if one is to apply the logic of Barnett, there are may be certain parallels that can be drawn, most notably between the intense focus on SLOC and chokepoints in the *Indian Maritime Doctrine*, and the Soviet concept of 'area defence'. Area defence was a somewhat malleable concept which revolved primarily around the rapid seizing of local sea control around key chokepoints in order to better secure the safety of the Soviet Union's home waters and SSBN bastions while preventing enemy carrier task forces from getting into strike range of Russian shores.[84] Area defence, while being tactically offensive, was strategically defensive in nature, centring on the use of key chokepoints to establish naval chains which would lock out conventionally superior forces from the USSR's 'inner defence perimeter'. In both versions of *India's Maritime Doctrine*, heavy emphasis is laid on the control of chokepoints and SLOC interdiction, the 2004 edition noting that the 'control of choke points could be useful as a bargaining chip in the international power game where the

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80   For a comprehensive account of the Indian Navy's Russian acquisition patterns during the second half of the Cold War see Vice Admiral G.M. Hiranandani, *Transition to Eminence: The Indian Navy 1976–90*, Integrated HQ Ministry of Defence (Navy) (New Delhi: in association with Lancer Publishers, 2005), pp. 124–34.

81   Nadkarni, 'The Russian Connection'.

82   Hiranandani, *Transition to Eminence*, p. 124.

83   Interview of Commander S.S Parmar, New Delhi, July 2011.

84   See Michael McGwire, 'Naval Power and Soviet Global Strategy', *International Security*, 3(4) (Spring 1979): 170–1.

currency of military power remains a stark reality'[85] and its later avatar stating that both SLOC interdiction and SLOC protection are 'important operational missions for the IN', 'in view of the nation's heavy independence on the seas for trade'.[86] The document recommends the use of submarines, observing that 'these are also quite effective at chokepoints',[87] with the support of surface and air elements.

Monrovian Ambitions

Early America's Monroe Doctrine, and the concept of a maritime manifest destiny, has frequently been depicted as the most adequate lens through which to view India's naval mindset. Professor James R. Holmes of the US Naval War College and several of his colleagues argue that 'the Monroe Doctrine, has … entered the foreign policy lexicon', and that it can be used 'as a kind of proxy to discern potential futures for Indian maritime strategy'.[88] Indeed, Indian leaders and naval officers themselves have frequently couched their aspirations in Monrovian grammar. The oft-cited example is Nehru's speech in 1961, prior to the eviction of the Portuguese from Goa, during which he said the following:

> Even some time after the United States had established itself as a strong power, there was fear of interference by European powers in the American continents, and this led to the famous declaration by President Monroe of the United Sates that any interference by European powers in the American continents would be an interference with the American political system. I submit … that the Portuguese retention of Goa is a continuing interference with the political system established in India today … Any attempt by a foreign power to interfere in any way with India is a thing which India cannot tolerate, and which, subject to her strength, she will oppose.[89]

> The notion that any interference from external powers in India's South Asian backyard will be viewed with a high degree of mistrust in New Delhi is one that has proven itself true throughout history, whether it be under Nehru, or under Indira and Rajiv Gandhi.[90]

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85   *Indian Maritime Doctrine 2004*, p. 64.

86   *Indian Maritime Doctrine 2009*, p. 95.

87   Ibid.

88   Holmes, Winner and Yoshihara, *Indian Naval Strategy in the Twenty-First Century*, p. 45.

89   Jawaharlal Nehru, *'India's Foreign Policy: Selected Speeches, September 1946-April 1961'* (Delhi: Government of India, 1961), pp. 114.

90   See also: James R. Holmes and Toshi Yoshihara, 'India's 'Monroe Doctrine' and Asia's Maritime Future', *Strategic Analysis*, 32(6) (November 2008): 997–1009.

Figure 4.1 The Indian Navy's potential doctrinal and organizational trajectories

	Continentalist	Raj–pan-oceanic	Area defence	Monrovian
Geopolitical circumstances and state of internal stability	India remains tethered to subcontinental instability and mired in insurgencies. China's forays into the Indian Ocean are perceived as a long-term threat which need not give birth to a large-scale Indian naval build-up.	Indo-Pakistani relations are stabilized and there is lasting peace in the subcontinent. India finally completes its process of internal consolidation by putting an end to long-standing insurgencies and more equitably sharing the fruits of its economic growth. India can afford to extend its influence deep into the Indian Ocean and beyond.	Indo-Pakistani relations continue to be subjected to sporadic bursts of volatility. India's insurgencies lower in intensity but there is still a lingering fear of serious communal and ethnic unrest. China's forays into the Indian Ocean increase and heighten Indian concerns.	Pacified Subcontinent, and greater internal consolidation. Pakistan is no longer viewed as a serious conventional threat, and India's strategic attention swivels eastward towards China, and southwards towards the Indian Ocean.
Institutional setting and Indian Navy's share of the overall defence budget	Sustained continentalism in Indian strategic thinking and continued preponderance of the Army. Civil-military relations remain unwieldy and dysfunctional. Lack of inter-service cooperation and jointness. The Navy's share of the defence budget continues to flicker between 15 and 20 per cent.	Harmonious civil-military relations. Massive rebalancing of the defence budget in favour of the Navy, which now oscillates between 35 and 40 percent. Greater tri-service synchrony.	Civil-military relations remain dysfunctional, as do inter-service relations. Slight rebalancing in favour of the Navy, which has now captured more than 20 per cent of the defence budget.	Although there are still conflicts of interest, most notably between the MOD's bureaucracy and the new Chief of Defence Staff, and inter-service turf wars, civil-military relations are far more functional than before. The Navy now enjoys between 30 and 35% of the defence budget.

Perceived primary missions	Constabulary and diplomatic roles prioritized over wartime roles. Regional deterrence and seaward pressure in support of the Army are the primary military objectives. The Indian Navy continues to rely to a certain degree on the US security umbrella for securing access to the global commons and SLOCs. Nuclear second-strike remains a latent capability.	Command of the Sea. India no longer relies on the US for preserving the sanctity of the global commons and establishes uncontested naval primacy in the region. New Delhi becomes a net security provider in a unified strategic space under its tutelage. Nuclear second-strike is one of the IN's primary roles.	Area defence. The Indian Navy now focuses on interdicting Chinese naval penetration of the Indian Ocean by establishing local sea control in key chokepoints. Sea-based nuclear deterrent is active, but under-developed.	Sea Control. The Indian Navy seeks to extend its influence over the entire Indian Ocean, but not to unify it as a common strategic space. Its primary focus is on barring external powers – most notably China – from violating what it perceives as its *mare nostrum*.
Force structure evolution	Limited blue-water capability, with a fleet suffering from acquisition delays and too great a focus on surface ships. The dwindling of the submarine fleet and lack of focus on anti-submarine warfare leaves the Indian Navy in a state of vulnerability in the event of a conflict.	Powerful-balanced blue-water fleet with a full spectrum of capabilities. Nuclear submarine flotilla and a large amphibious warfare element are core elements of the fleet.	Rebalancing of the Fleet towards anti-submarine warfare and sea denial. Submarine fleet prioritized, and surface ships are all equipped with towed-array sonars. Air support from enlarged land bases in places such as the Andaman and Nicobar Islands is privileged over carrier-based aviation.	Blue-water capability with a prioritization of the Eastern Fleet over the Western Fleet. Sea-based nuclear deterrence via SSNs equipped with long-range ballistic missiles capture almost half of the Navy's budget.

In reality, the Monroe Doctrine and its Indian variation are simple reiterations of the policies employed by rising powers in their maritime neighbourhoods throughout history, whether it be Ancient Rome and the *mare nostrum* of the Mediterranean, or present-day China's with its expansive claims over its supposedly historically territorial waters which encompass almost the entire South China Sea. Nevertheless, despite the universality of such behaviour, its codification under the Monroe Doctrine enables India to utilize ready-made concepts and instantly recognizable vocabulary in the crafting of its maritime vision. This is reflected in official naval publications, with then Chief of Naval Staff Sureesh Mehta drawing on the concept of maritime 'manifest destiny'[91] in the foreword to the Maritime Military Strategy. The latest edition of the *Indian Maritime Doctrine* also seems to unravel, as was noted previously, a certain geographical logic to India's primacy in the region.

What would distinguish the Monrovian school, however, from the Raj pan-oceanic school? In both cases India asserts its desire to extend its control over the Indian Ocean, but whereas the Raj pan-oceanic school envisions an Indian Ocean unified as a common strategic space, whole and at peace, the Monrovian school's overriding concern is to keep potentially threatening external forces out. The Raj pan-oceanic vision is that of a future overwhelmingly self-confident power in the Indian Ocean, whose primacy is uncontested. The Monrovian school, on the other hand, envisions a navy geared towards the possibility of an external threat. The 2009 maritime doctrine operates a useful distinction between 'sea control', the core concept around which the Indian Navy is said to revolve, and 'command of the sea'. Command of the sea, the doctrine points out, is 'unqualified by time and space', and is 'rarely, if ever, achievable'.[92] Control of the sea, on the other hand, 'provides no guarantee of protection from outside attack'.[93] From this one can posit that the Raj pan-oceanic vision is one which chases after a hypothetical 'command of the sea', whereas the Monrovian school, more pragmatic and threat-based, seeks merely 'control of the sea'.

Doctrinal Evolutions and Organizational Trajectories

India's Maritime Doctrine is the result of a highly syncretic fusion of different schools of thought, historical perceptions, and ways of viewing the world. Over the centuries, India has consistently demonstrated its capacity to absorb, integrate and re-craft new ideas. The latest version of India's Maritime Doctrine is therefore not etched in stone. Depending on institutional evolutions within India and shifting geopolitical circumstances, different strands of India's naval thinking will become

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91　Integrated Headquarters, Ministry of Defence (Navy), *Indian Maritime Military Strategy*, 2007, Foreword.

92　Integrated Headquarters, Ministry of Defence (Navy), *Indian Maritime Doctrine*, 2009, p. 77.

93　Ibid.

more salient, and this will have a sizeable effect on the size and composition of India's fleet. Moreover, since the end of the Cold War, the Indian Navy has become the central pillar of India's military diplomacy, institutionalizing bilateral and multilateral exercises with a host of different navies, ranging from France to Singapore. Exchanges with naval institutes across the globe have flourished, and Indian naval officers now have access to an unprecedented wealth and diversity in terms of naval thinking. It may be too early to evaluate the precise impact this overture has had on India's doctrinal evolution, but there is little doubt that increased contact and the importation of new military hardware will heavily influence the way in which the Indian Navy views the maritime sphere.

In this third and final section, different potential organizational trajectories are laid out for each of the four aforementioned traditions, depending on whether or not they become the dominating feature in Indian naval thinking.[94]

Conclusion

India's 2009 *Maritime Doctrine* is the latest effort by India's most politically minded – and resource-deprived – armed service to lay out a clear path for its desired future. Didactic in tone, advocatory in intent, the document is also highly aspirational, charting out roles and missions for the Navy it would like to be, rather than for the force it currently is. The naval thinking at the heart of its vision is a fascinating fusion of different concepts and traditions, which gives credence to the notion that India's true strength lies in its innate syncretism. Strategically minded and outward-looking, the Indian Navy could add a much-needed direction to India's slow drift towards great power status. But in order for it to do so, both India's elephantine bureaucracy and wary political leadership will need to cast off the outdated perceptions which needlessly tether India to the shore. The nation's largely khaki-clad military will also need to undergo a profound transformation, which helps give birth to a more harmonious civil-military relationship, while producing a rebalancing in favour of a more powerful navy. India's rise in wealth, power and influence is manifest. The path to greatness, however, does not lie in the dusty plains and frozen passes of its northern reaches. If it is to be found at all, it will be at sea – out in the great dark blue of the Indian Ocean.

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94 These projections are predicated on the notion that India will continue to enjoy high rates of economic growth for the next few decades. This will allow India's military to entertain the different options listed, as its funding increased in nominal terms even as it share of the GDP remains relatively stable.