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# India's "Extended Neighborhood" Concept: Power Projection for a Rising Power

DAVID SCOTT

## Introduction

In recent years Indian governments, whether led by the BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party) after 1998 or by the Congress Party after 2004, have woven the term *extended neighborhood* into their foreign policy formulations. In doing so, they have responded to concerns of Indian commentators in 1997 that "India should break out of the claustrophobic confines of South Asia."<sup>1</sup> The regions within South Asia, the Indian subcontinent, the members of SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation), represent India's immediate neighborhood. The regions beyond South Asia represent India's extended neighborhood. This article first looks at India's extended neighborhood concept in terms of its theory, pinpointing India's concerns and aspirations in its extended neighborhood conceptualization. The article then looks in detail at India's extended neighborhood concept in terms of its practice; measuring how far such Indian concerns and aspirations have been realized, how far an extended neighborhood policy has been successfully implemented.

This vision of an extended neighborhood involves power projection by India; be it hard power military and economic projection or be it soft power cultural and ideational strands. The extended neighborhood has become the conceptual umbrella for India; eastwards, southwards, northwards and westwards; amidst what some have called an omnidirectional "360-degree vision" of the opportunities available to India outside South Asia.<sup>2</sup> This was well expressed in 2006 by the Minister for External Affairs, Pranab Mukherjee; "India's foreign policy today looks at India's environment in expanding circles . . . starting with the immediate

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neighbourhood . . . moving on to . . . the extended neighbourhood.”<sup>3</sup> This circles metaphor has become something of a mantra for Indian policy-makers, Foreign Secretary Shiv Shankar Menon telling British audiences in 2007 that “as we move beyond Southern Asia to India’s extended neighbourhood . . . from the broader perspective, we regard our security as lying in a neighbourhood of widening concentric circles.”<sup>4</sup>

India’s extended neighborhood concept can be distinguished from the earlier globalist rhetoric of Jawaharlal Nehru and from the subsequent South Asian focus of Indira Gandhi. The concept was pushed with some vigor under Atal Bihari Vajpayee’s BJP administration of 1998–2004, which quickly announced “our concerns and interactions go well beyond South Asia. They include other neighbours, and countries immediately adjoining this region – our ‘extended neighbourhood’.”<sup>5</sup> Whereas the term “extended neighbourhood” was absent for the Ministry of External Affairs’ *Annual Report* of 1999–2000, it appeared in the *Annual Report* for 2000–01 as something to be distinguished from India’s “immediate neighbourhood.”<sup>6</sup> As the then Minister for External Affairs, Yashwant Sinha, explained in 2004; “this Government, over the last six years, has assiduously promoted the idea that India is a major power . . . We have articulated the concept of an extended neighbourhood for India.”<sup>7</sup> This indeed represented a change, for Indian commentators like C. Raja Mohan it was a “bolder” foreign policy, reflecting “a new awareness . . . of India’s ‘extended neighbourhood’.”<sup>8</sup> By 2004 the Indian government was affirming “the concept” of an extended “extended neighbourhood for India which stretches from the Suez Canal to the South China Sea and includes within it West Asia, the Gulf, Central Asia, South East Asia, East Asia, the Asia Pacific and the Indian Ocean Region.”<sup>9</sup> The Congress Party under Manmohan Singh, which took office later in 2004, has reiterated the importance of the extended neighborhood within Indian security and foreign policy formulations. Such a concept has also lodged itself within the official bureaucracy, diplomatic services and military circles.

### Concerns and Aspirations

Geo-economic considerations are an explicit element of India’s concerns in its extended neighborhood concept. There is a sense that South Asia, India’s immediate neighborhood, is too small an economic space for India. Such economic considerations have been further strengthened under the Congress administration, where the *Manmohan*

*Doctrine* emphasizes economic development as a driver for foreign policy, in shaping India's strength, interests and relationships. In such an economic vein, Manmohan Singh explained that "our approach to the wider Asian neighbourhood has been so influenced by economic factors."<sup>10</sup>

If one looks at trade by regions (Table 1), it is clear that India's trade is developing closer links with the regions comprising its extended neighborhood.<sup>11</sup> If we couple export/import shares of India's trade by region then noticeable variations emerge when comparing April–June 2008 figures with those from April–June 2007. At the global level, the EU and the US remain important trade partners for India, their April–June 2008 respective exports/imports share of India's trade being 22.05/28.19 (EU) percent and 10.44/5.12 (US) percent. Russia, despite close military links, is a small economic partner, accounting for 1.18/0.64 exports/imports shares of India's trade. Equally marginal is India's immediate neighborhood of South Asia, its April–June 2008 export/import share of India's trade being 5.33/0.64 percent. Overall a look at the period 2003 to 2008 (Table 2) shows South Asia's already small 3.52 percent share of India's trade in 2003–04 declining still further to a 2.83 percent share by 2007–08.

TABLE 1  
INDIA'S EXPORTS AND IMPORTS BY REGIONS (\$US MILLION)

% Share	April–June 2007	< = Exports	imports = >	April–June 2008	% Share
23.80	11,446.62	1) Europe		15,187.19	19.56
22.05	10,606.92	1.1 EU		10,384.14	13.37
6.77	3,254.91	2) Africa		4,630.79	5.96
1.91	919.19	2.1 Southern Africa		1,359.31	1.75
1.50	722.38	2.2 West Africa		3,099.27	3.99
0.17	79.84	2.3 Central Africa		116.13	0.15
3.19	1,533.49	2.4 East Africa		56.08	0.07
11.13	5,351.95	3) North America		4,368.15	5.63
3.22	1,547.10	4) Latin America		3,085.34	3.97
53.52	25,742.06	5) Asia & N. Africa		48,504.75	62.47
0.85	408.90	5.1 Australasia/S. Pacific		2,316.80	2.98
12.43	5,980.72	5.2 ASEAN		6,863.52	8.84
20.46	9,839.97	5.3 W. Asia/N. Africa		24,614.58	31.70
14.45	6,949.53	5.4 NE. Asia (inc. PRC)		14,214.36	18.31
5.33	2,562.93	5.5 South Asia		495.50	0.64
1.07	514.37	6) CIS & Baltics		1,424.26	1.83
0.13	61.69	6.1 Central Asia		53.40	0.07
0.94	452.68	6.2 Others (inc. Russia)		1,370.86	1.77
0.50	241.43	7) Unspecified Region		438.89	0.57
100.00	48,098.43	Total		77,639.39	100.00

TABLE 2  
SOUTH ASIA'S PERCENTAGE SHARE OF INDIA'S TRADE

	2003–04	2004–05	2005–06	2006–07	2007–08
Sri Lanka	1.07	0.92	1.03	0.87	0.83
Bangladesh	1.28	0.87	0.71	0.59	0.77
Pakistan	0.24	0.32	0.34	0.54	0.54
Nepal	0.67	0.58	0.49	0.40	0.51
Afghanistan	0.13	0.11	0.08	0.07	0.07
Bhutan	0.10	0.08	0.07	0.06	0.07
Maldives	0.0	0.02	0.03	0.02	0.02
Total	3.52	2.90	2.75	2.55	2.83

Conversely, India's trade patterns show an increasing focus elsewhere to its extended neighborhood. ASEAN's April–June 2008 figure of 12.43/8.84 percent export/import trade share with India overshadows South Asia's figure 5.33/0.64 percent export/import share. The increase in Indian exports to ASEAN of 122.78 percent between the April–June 2007 and April–June 2008 figures being the most rapid increase of all, with ASEAN jumping ahead of North America as the biggest regional destination for Indian exports. Within the West Asia/North Africa region, it is the states in India's extended neighborhood of the Gulf/Middle East that showed the biggest increases and share; namely the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Iran and the Yemen. Within Africa, it is the Indian Ocean littoral (India's southwestern extended neighborhood) of East Africa that has seen the next biggest advances when comparing April–June 2007 and April–June 2008, some 81.64 percent increase in exports, whereas West Africa's share of India's exports shrank by 30.50 percent! Whilst the overall volume of trade with Central Asia is low, energy imports are soaring, resulting in the April–June 2008 import figures showing a rise of 128.54 percent from April–June 2007, the highest regional growth, with the exception of micro rogue figures from Central Africa.

Energy is a particularly significant aspect of India's trade in its extended neighborhood.<sup>12</sup> Growing consumer demand, ongoing industrialization and high tech advances all mean a growing demand for oil and gas energy imports in India, and with it lines of trade to secure, and perhaps defend? The *Hydrocarbon Vision 2025* report, presented to the Indian government in February 2000, set out India's energy security predicament in stark terms. A decline in India's crude oil self-sufficiency from 65 percent in 1989–90 to 30 percent in 2000–01 was envisaged as

dropping still further, with rising demand outstripping domestic production, necessitating rising imports, and leaving crude oil self-sufficiency at a low 15 percent by 2024–25.

Resultant "energy diplomacy" imperatives have been evident, Manmohan Singh noting that that "our concern for energy security has become an important element of our diplomacy and is shaping our relations with a range of countries . . . in West Asia, Central Asia."<sup>13</sup> The government's logic is that "in order to enhance energy security of the country, the government are encouraging oil public sector units (PSUs) to pursue aggressively equity opportunities in the oil and gas sector overseas."<sup>14</sup> The main commercial vehicle for meeting India's energy requirements has been the state-owned ONGC (Oil and Natural Gas Corporation), through its international subsidiary OVL (ONGC Videsh Limited). OVL's role is publicly and politically recognized by the government, "one of the major initiatives taken towards enhancing energy security in the country is the concerted efforts to acquire equity oil and gas abroad and participating interest in producing or prospective properties. ONGC-Videsh Limited (OVL) and other National Oil Companies are already involved in 14 countries."<sup>15</sup> The Indian government is clear enough on the security implications of this; "you only have to look at the investments ONGC Videsh is making in extra-regional but energy-rich areas such as Sakhalin, Sudan . . . to realize how our maritime interests are growing."<sup>16</sup>

Military figures have taken this energy focus on board. As Chief of Staff of the Indian navy, Arun Prakash's analysis was stark, "we have an energy crisis of serious proportions, looming over us"; from which if India was going "to invest such vast amounts of national resources in locations as far afield as Middle East, Africa, Central Asia and SE Asia, it is essential that we take adequate security measures to safeguard our assets and interests" in those extended regions.<sup>17</sup> His successor as Chief of Naval Staff, Sureesh Mehta, similarly argued the need "to protect the country's economic and energy interests. This task has extended our area of operations. This might necessitate our operating in distant waters."<sup>18</sup> However, such energy considerations bring India up against China in many parts of India's extended neighborhood, with energy rivalry particularly evident in Central Asia and Southeast Asia.

If we turn from geo-economic to geo-strategic references, India's extended neighborhood concept has moved out from the immediate South Asia neighborhood focus of the *Indira Doctrine*. On becoming

Minister for External Affairs, Jaswant Singh was announcing in Singapore in 2000 that “South Asia was always a dubious framework for situating the Indian security paradigm”; for “India’s parameters of security concerns clearly extend beyond confines of the convenient albeit questionable geographical definition of South Asia.”<sup>19</sup> This logic was not just coming from Jaswant Singh. Other parts of the BJP administration followed a similar path. Indian embassies in 1999 were already arguing that our “extended neighbourhood . . . applies not only in a geographical sense, but also in relation to the large issues of development, and security.”<sup>20</sup>

Within the subsequent Congress-led government of Manmohan Singh, Defence Secretary Shekhar Dutt argued that “given the size of the country and its role in the comity of nations, our security concerns are not limited to our immediate neighbourhood . . . India’s area of security interest extends beyond the confines of the conventional geographical definition of South Asia”; for “India’s security environment extends from the Persian Gulf to the Straits of Malacca across the Indian Ocean, including the Central Asian region in the North West, China in the North East and South East Asia.”<sup>21</sup> Such a “security environment” is none other than India’s extended neighborhood. This strategic perception can be traced further up the political chain. The Congress Minister of Defence A. K. Antony told the Army Commanders Conference in 2007 that “India’s enhanced stature will demand that it plays a role commensurate to its stature, potential and aspirations. It need not be over-emphasised that our strategic interests extend far beyond the South Asian region.”<sup>22</sup> Pranab Mukherjee, Minister for External Affairs, argued at the start of 2007 that “India’s vision for the future . . . has essentially been to expand India’s strategic space . . . engagement with our extended neighbourhood . . . has become at once intense and broad ranging.”<sup>23</sup>

This strategic sense of India’s extended neighborhood has generated military considerations. This was why the Indian Ministry of Defence pointed out that “India is making every effort to enhance its defence ties with its extended neighbourhood in Southeast Asia, Northeast Asia, Central Asia, the Gulf and Middle East regions.”<sup>24</sup> Its Minister, A. K. Antony, was blunt enough in his explanation, “with our growing stature, the need of the hour is to develop stronger defence capabilities to safeguard our interests”; in which “we will be called upon to play an increasingly significant role in ensuring peace and

stability in our immediate as well as extended neighbourhood."<sup>25</sup> India's navy is playing a prominent part in this extended neighborhood setting; deployed to India's south, east and west in deliberate wide-ranging naval diplomacy. In the words of the Indian navy, "a sharply increased tempo of operational activities . . . makes the Indian navy a key component of the nation's foreign policy initiatives."<sup>26</sup> A sense of impact is palpable in naval circles, the Indian navy noting of such naval deployments "the ships have projected a brilliant picture of a militarily strong, vibrant and confident India. This year too [2005], Indian naval ships have comprehensively established their footprint in areas of our maritime and strategic interest within the Indian Ocean Region and beyond, visiting 45 ports in 30 countries in Europe, the Persian Gulf, the Red Sea, the Indian Ocean Region, and, the South China Sea."<sup>27</sup>

Four concerns have so far been identified as underpinning India's extended neighborhood framework, namely trade, energy, security and military concerns. Comparative concerns also enter the picture, where competitive nuances are at play in India's concerns in its extended neighborhood. Two particular competitors have been apparent for India. One is the established near neighbor Pakistan. The generally hostile India-Pakistan relationship within South Asia has spilled over into the wider extended neighborhood; into Central Asia, West Asia, the Indian Ocean, and Southeast Asia. Even bigger competitive elements are apparent *vis-à-vis* China in India's extended neighborhood; be it in terms of China and India's respective unilateral power projection there, in their bilateral relations with other countries there, and in their roles in the varied regional organizations operating there.

The Sino-Indian extended competition has been recognized by many Indian and Chinese commentators, even if the two governments publicly stress win-win economic cooperation. China, along the disputed Himalayan borderline, is a problematic factor for India in its immediate neighborhood, further exacerbated by Indian fears of Chinese encirclement within South Asia through China's strategic proxies like Bangladesh, Pakistan and perhaps Nepal. However, the Sino-Indian encounter and competition extends much further afield. As Zhang Guihong admitted, "an emerging India does mean a strong competitor for China from South, West, Southeast and Central Asia to Indian and Pacific Oceans where their interests and influences will clash."<sup>28</sup> From the Indian side, for Kapila, "India's definition of her strategic frontiers



clash and will be in conflict with those of China. This is painfully so . . . China cannot be India's 'natural ally' in any of the regions incorporated in India's strategic frontiers, because of competing strategic interests."<sup>29</sup> India's extended neighborhood (its "strategic frontiers") cuts into China's own backyard in Central Asia and Southeast Asia, and both states seek to project their presence and power into the Indian Ocean.

All this raises the question of how successful India has actually been in translating its extended neighborhood rhetoric into reality. In other words, how far has it been successful in trade, energy, security and military settings in its extended neighborhood? Such challenges can now be tracked in India's extended neighborhood to the south, east, north and west of South Asia.

### **Implementation – Southwards**

A southerly implementation of India's extended neighborhood drive has become well established throughout much of the Indian Ocean and its littoral, where India's strategic "footprint" is becoming noticeable.<sup>30</sup> Maritime means and Mahanian "visions" shape this strategic drive by India.<sup>31</sup> This outreach had been quickly enunciated by the BJP government, its Ministry of Defence *Annual Report* announcing in 2001 that "given its size, location, trade links and extensive Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), India's security environment extends from the Persian Gulf in the west to the Straits of Malacca in the east . . . to the Equator in the south"; and was something to be safeguarded by the presence of the Indian navy.<sup>32</sup> The essential thing for Pranab Mukherjee, as the then Minister of Defence, was that "India sits astride the Indian Ocean . . . therefore, maritime security is a major preoccupation for India . . . in the Indian Ocean."<sup>33</sup> India's navy is well aware of its potential role, "the Indian Navy is . . . ideally suited to further the foreign policy objectives of India. It has the added advantage that the Indian peninsula juts into the Indian Ocean thus providing access to the littorals of far-flung countries of Asia and Africa and also to Australia and Antarctica."<sup>34</sup> India's concerns in the Indian Ocean have been threefold: to deter hostile powers from operating against India, to maintain SLOC (Sea Lines of Communication) for general trade and particularly energy supplies, and to project India's general presence and power.

One manifestation of this growing Indian naval role in the Indian Ocean has been India's deployment of powerful naval units to exercise with the navies of extra-regional powers in the Bay of Bengal, Arabian Sea, Gulf of Aden, and Cape of Good Hope. These exercises have achieved noticeable range during the last decade. They involve India with France (VARUNA exercises since 2001), Russia (INDRA exercises since 2003), Britain (KONKAN exercises since 2004), Brazil and South Africa (IBSA exercises commencing 2008) and above all the US (MALABAR exercises since 1992, suspended 1998, resumed 2002). Such exercises have been complemented by India's hosting of the MILAN exercises since 1995, organized from India's FENC (Far Eastern Naval Command) at Port Blair in the Andaman islands. These exercises in the Bay of Bengal initially involved five nations; India, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Singapore and Indonesia. The numbers of navies participating in the MILAN exercises have gradually increased over the years; five in 1995, seven in 1997, seven in 1999, eight in 2003, nine in 2005, and thirteen in 2008. In 2008, apart from the nine ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) countries, the navies of Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Australia and New Zealand were also invited to participate in the MILAN exercise. Neither Pakistan nor China was invited to participate.

India's formation and hosting of the IONS (Indian Ocean Naval Symposium) in February 2008 was another clear and successful sign of India's naval diplomacy for the region; India's navy chief Admiral Sureesh Mehta explaining "many navies of the Indian Ocean Region look to India to promote regional maritime security," in effect to show some regional leadership.<sup>35</sup> Chinese sources were quick to report the comments by Rear Admiral Pradeep Chauhan, Assistant Chief of Naval Staff, that the IONS would "obviate the dependency on extra regional players in the region," and thereby enable India to take a lead and show its clear regional preeminence.<sup>36</sup> Whilst official statements about the IONS were fairly bland, a "non-hegemonistic, cooperative consultative gathering," Indian media sources were clear enough, that "with India's growing clout . . . the navy has floated a maritime military bloc" for the Indian Ocean, led in effect by India.<sup>37</sup>

India's naval assets have taken on an increasingly long-range capacity. A growing number of advanced warships are deployed on naval diplomacy around the Indian Ocean. India's drive for nuclear submarine capability and expanded aircraft carrier capacity is with long-term long-range seapower projection in mind. A localized coastal-hugging

brown-water fleet is being replaced by a blue-water fleet able to operate throughout the Indian Ocean.<sup>38</sup> A different sort of progression for India has been that of its airpower over the Indian Ocean. The plans announced in April 2007 for an expanded naval air station near Rameshwaram was seen by Commodore Phillip Van Haltren, naval officer-in-charge Tamil Nadu, as significant: “a naval air station will enable us to make our presence more felt and we can cover the entire Indian Ocean.”<sup>39</sup> India has had long-range surveillance and reconnaissance capacity for some time, as with the purchase of TU-142M aircraft from the Soviet Union in 1988, aircraft with a range of around 7,500 miles, which have been capable of flying from Mumbai to Johannesburg and back without mid-air refueling. Currently these Tupolev aircraft are being replaced by more advanced Boeing P-8A spy planes. Sureesh Mehta’s sense was that this would maintain India’s “long-range surveillance capability to keep track of goings-on in the region between the horn of Africa and Malacca Straits and even beyond in South China Sea.”<sup>40</sup>

An extension of India’s maritime extended neighborhood has been evident as India’s involvement has reached past the Equator. Admittedly US military power is ensconced at Diego Garcia in the middle of the Indian Ocean, but India is looking still further southwestwards. India’s then Chief of Naval Staff, Arun Prakash, judged that an “area of vital interest to us lies in the expanse of the seas; the island nations of the Indian Ocean . . . Mauritius, Seychelles and Comoros” where “we cannot afford to have any hostile or inimical power threatening it . . . Our armed forces are always prepared to help . . . in policing their waters or airspace.”<sup>41</sup> Consequently, neighborhood naval diplomacy has seen regular dispatch of Indian vessels to those distant Indian Ocean island states during the last decade. Mauritius is of particular significance, given its majority Indian population. A *Memorandum of Understanding* in 2005 initiated India’s patrolling of Mauritius’ Exclusive Economic Zone. Such has been this extension past the equator that the Antarctic has been brought into India’s purview, the government pointing out “the importance of Antarctica as a major maritime interest of India;” so that in the Indian Ocean “the primary area of interest ranges from the Persian Gulf in the north, to the Antarctica in the south,” with the Antarctic being a “treasure house of potential mineral resources, including petroleum.”<sup>42</sup>

Such neighborhood creep in the Indian Ocean has also taken India further southwestwards to the African littoral. India set up a radar surveillance monitoring station in northern Madagascar in 2006, the first of its kind for India to be located in another country. Across the Mozambique Channel, India has established a naval presence in and around Mozambique; over 3,500 miles from India. Indian naval vessels were deployed off Maputo to provide protection for the African Union summit of 2003 and the World Economic Forum in 2004. Such extension was formalized in March 2006 with the India–Mozambique *Memorandum of Understanding*, under which India agreed to mount ongoing maritime patrols off the Mozambique coast. Naval diplomacy and showing the flag has become an established feature of India's presence along the African littoral during this past decade, with rising numbers of units deployed and with greater frequency. Typical of the established nature of such deployments was that of four Indian warships, *INS Delhi*, *INS Talwar*, *INS Godavari* and *INS Aditya*, which paid port calls to Mombassa (Kenya), Dar es Sallam (Tanzania), other east African ports, Madagascar and Mauritius during a two-month deployment from July to September 2008.

India has developed strategic and economic links with South Africa, with the Cape of Good Hope treated as a strategic entry point into the Indian Ocean, a gateway that India can and does keep track of. Naval cooperation between India and South Africa was apparent by 2000.<sup>43</sup> 2004 saw the Indian Air Force conducting combined exercises with its South African counterpart. Indian Mirage 2000 fighters were deployed from north-central India and flew, aided by newly acquired Il-78 aerial tankers, to South Africa via Mauritius. India and South Africa conducted combined naval drills off the South African coast in June 2005. Such was India's interest and capability that November 2005 saw an Indian TU-142F long-range reconnaissance plane tracking a Chinese cargo ship carrying two Kilo-class submarines, the Indian plane following the Chinese ship as it traversed and went across the Indian Ocean from the Cape of Good Hope back to China. Indian naval vessels were deployed across the Indian Ocean to take part in a ten-day trilateral IBSAMAR exercise with South African and Brazilian naval units in the waters off Cape Town during May 2008. Khurana's sense of its importance was clear enough; the 4,000-mile deployment by India "signals the increasing reach and sustainability" of the Indian navy, and "is indicative of an increasing realisation

among policy-makers . . . of the imperative of safeguarding their geographically expanding interests and meeting their international obligations as [a] potential major power.”<sup>44</sup>

In security terms India has been fairly successful in its extended neighborhood of the Indian Ocean. India’s presence in the southwestern quadrant around Mauritius, Mozambique and Madagascan waters is particularly noticeable. The ability of Pakistan to effectively challenge India on the high seas has largely disappeared, potential challenges from Indonesia and Australia have faded, and the United States has evolved into a cooperative and supportive presence rather than an antagonistic presence, ready to step aside to some extent as it concentrates more on the Pacific and the Gulf. The United States, increasingly working with India in a growing strategic partnership, seems ready to accept this growing Indian role in the Indian Ocean; in the words of the US Secretary of Navy, Donald Winter, welcoming India “taking up the responsibility to ensure security in this part of the world.”<sup>45</sup>

Whilst the Indian Ocean has been the focus for a marked and quite successful Indian naval presence and projection, what of India’s economic and energy aspirations? If one looks at trade figures (Table 3), within the Indian Ocean the island states like the Comoros, Seychelles and Reunion are too small to have much trade significance, though Mauritius is more significant. Mauritius also happens to have a majority Indian ethnic makeup, and strong security links with India. The littoral states have greater importance, South Africa and Kenya in quantity terms, with Kenya and Mozambique increasing their share of India’s trade during 2003–08 from 0.19 to 0.40 and 0.07 to 0.12 percent respectively. Trade to India’s southeast, to Western Australia, accounted for

TABLE 3  
INDIA’S TRADE WITH SOUTH/EAST AFRICA AND THE INDIAN OCEAN  
BASIN (US\$ MILLION)

	2003–04	2004–05	2005–06	2006–07	2007–08
S. Africa	2,438.53	3,181.70	3,998.67	4,714.47	6,270.46
Mozambique	92.76	122.86	178.15	219.86	493.21
Tanzania	285.10	305.53	363.21	386.63	751.79
Kenya	271.41	473.36	625.06	1,370.90	1,665.24
Mauritius	210.56	265.38	206.77	750.45	1,096.11
Madagascar	44.19	44.09	59.01	64.82	73.88
Reunion (Fr)	8.38	12.64	18.18	27.23	45.82
Comoros	2.43	2.59	8.98	22.46	11.80

around US\$4.5 billion in 2007–08, about half of India's entire trade with Australia.

The Indian Ocean remains important as a maritime through-route, hence the importance of keeping SLOC secure for India, and consequently its deployments of naval strength around the region. This lay behind government statements at the start of the decade that the Indian navy "undertakes frequent Presence-cum-Surveillance Missions . . . aimed at monitoring the IOR [Indian Ocean region] and safeguarding the interests of the country in its region."<sup>46</sup> With regard to maintaining security of SLOC it is significant that deployment of the Indian navy has been seen at all exit points from the Indian Ocean in recent years, off the Cape of Good Hope, the Strait of Bab el Mandab, the Strait of Hormuz and the Strait of Malacca. It is of significance that there is growing acceptance in Southeast Asia of India's presence for arrangements concerning security and passage through the Strait of Malacca, initially seen in 2002 with Indian warships providing security cover for shipping coming along the Straits. This Indian role is related to common concerns in the region over piracy, but it also has implications for India's wider role in Southeast Asia and for China. Malacca operations have been carried out from India's Andaman islands, Indian territory seen by Prakash as "a bridgehead to South-East Asia and beyond."<sup>47</sup> India's FENC (Far Eastern Naval Command), established there in 1999, has been further upgraded to a FEC (Far Eastern Command) of all three military services. It is to the east we can now turn.

### Implementation – Eastwards

A different sort of extended neighborhood is encountered eastwards, where general trade is more evident alongside energy and military nuances, wrapped up evocation of historical and cultural links.<sup>48</sup> India's *Look East* policy was formally announced in the early 1990s.<sup>49</sup> Initially this was economics driven, emphasizing Southeast Asia and its regional organization ASEAN. This is what Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee had in mind in 2004: "I also naturally look at India's extended neighbourhood in South-East Asia. This is a region where truly historic socio-economic transformations are taking place."<sup>50</sup> India became a Sectoral Dialogue Partner of ASEAN in 1992, a member of the ARF (ASEAN Regional Forum) in 1995, and a full Dialogue Partner of ASEAN in 1996. Annual summit meetings between India and ASEAN commenced in 2002.

TABLE 4  
INDIA'S TRADE WITH ASEAN REGION (US\$ MILLION)

India's	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08
Imports	7,433.11	9,114.66	10,883.68	18,069.64	22,663.48
Exports	5,821.71	8,425.89	10,411.30	12,603.86	16,376.24
Overall	13,254.82	17,540.55	21,294.98	30,673.50	39,039.72

India's economic links with ASEAN and Southeast Asia have been quite successful. India's total trade with ASEAN (Table 4) is much more significant than its trade within South Asia. India's trade with SAARC countries, including Afghanistan, was valued at US\$4.0 billion in 2003-04, representing some 3.52 percent of India's overall trade; whereas ASEAN's trade with India was valued at US\$13.25 billion, representing some 9.62 percent of India's overall trade, a share gap of 6.10 percent. This gap has widened still further, both in terms of quantity and relative share. In 2007-08, India's trade with SAARC countries was valued at US\$11.4 billion, representing a lower 2.83 percent of India's trade; whereas ASEAN's trade with India was valued at US\$39.0 billion, representing some 9.55 percent of India's overall trade, a share gap of 6.72 percent. Faced with the paralysis in the SAFTA (South Asia Free Trade Agreement) of 2004, a more lucrative FTA (Free Trade Agreement) was finalized between India and ASEAN in 2008. However, India is still trying to catch up with China, whose trade with ASEAN of US\$105.9 billion in 2004, US\$160.8 billion in 2006 and US\$202.5 billion in 2007 is now over five times that of India.

Certain countries (Table 5) within ASEAN are more important trade partners for India, with such geo-economic trends overlapping with wider general diplomatic and security relationships. India's trade with individual ASEAN countries has generally gone up in terms of quantity during the last decade. India's trade with Malaysia, though still relatively large in quantity, has remained static as a proportion of India's trade. India's trade links with Indonesia and the Philippines, though also growing, have receded in relative importance. Myanmar's trade, though rising in volume, now accounts for a smaller proportion of India's overall trade, although the energy component has become more significant for India. The smaller states of East Timor, Laos and Cambodia remain fairly economically irrelevant for India. Brunei's increases are a matter of increasing oil imports by India, and with it a

TABLE 5  
INDIA'S TRADE WITH ASEAN COUNTRIES (US\$ MILLION)

	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	% share 2003-08
Singapore	4,210.20	6,652.01	8,779.06	11,549.45	15,485.18	2.97-3.74
Malaysia	2,939.31	3,383.07	3,577.47	6,593.96	8,572.48	2.07-2.07
Thailand	1,440.73	1,767.27	2,286.89	3,187.47	4,108.91	1.30-1.11
Indonesia	3,249.26	3,950.34	4,388.31	6,192.31	6,982.82	2.29-1.69
Vietnam	448.65	642.46	822.06	1,149.36	1,775.76	0.32-0.43
Myanmar	498.65	519.11	636.66	921.87	994.88	0.35-0.24
Philippines	443.64	599.62	730.16	749.33	823.29	0.31-0.20
Brunei	4.93	5.60	43.82	293.32	236.15	0.00-0.06
Cambodia	18.88	18.38	24.97	53.70	56.30	0.01-0.01
Laos	0.56	2.70	5.58	2.74	3.94	0.00-0.00
E. Timor	1.36	1.58	0.44	1.13	0.45	0.00-0.00

greater sense of the strategic importance of the Strait of Malacca. It is trade with Singapore and Vietnam which have been noticeably increasing as a share of India's trade, with those two countries being particularly close to India in strategic-defense matters as well. During the period 2003-08, trade with Singapore trade went up from 2.97 to 3.74 percent of India's overall trade, and trade with Vietnam almost tripled in quantity, up from 0.32 to 0.43 percent of India's overall trade. Amidst this rising trade pattern, India's imports from Southeast Asia have remained more than its exports there.

What of India's eastern energy hopes? In Southeast Asia, some energy successes have been enjoyed in Myanmar. OVL has been part of the consortium developing the A-1 (20 percent participating interest share) and A-3 (20 percent participating interest share) shallow water blocks on the Rakhine coast. The total recoverable reserves of gas from the A-1 and A-3 blocks are estimated to be about 4 trillion cubic feet, with the first gas extractions anticipated in early 2011. That such deals have a state purpose can be seen by Shri Murli Deora, the Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas, accompanying the OVL Chairman for the signing of the contracts for three more deep-water exploration blocks there; AD-2, AD-3 and AD-9. OVL has 100 percent participating interest for those three fields, and will carry out exploration over the next seven years, with subsequent production thereafter to be shared between OVL and MOGE (Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise). The Indian government explained that this particular deal was part of a process whereby "in order to enhance energy security of the country, India is pursuing the option of acquiring equity in



oil & gas assets overseas.”<sup>51</sup> The politics of these events is one reason why India has been reluctant to press the Myanmar military regime too strongly on human rights abuses. The politics can also be seen in the rivalry in Myanmar with China for general geo-strategic influence and for geo-economic deals, areas where China has had some advantages over India.

Vietnam became OVL’s first partner country when OVL signed a petroleum sharing contract in May 1998 with PetroVietnam for three blocks, 06, 12E and 19, in Nam Con Son basin, about 230 miles offshore Vietnam. OVL started seismic surveys in the same year. In 2005, OVL gained a 45 percent share in the Vietnamese Block 6.1, which produces 7.5 million standard cubic meters of gas per day. However, cooperation with Vietnam brings India up against China’s rival territorial claims in the South China Sea. Production-sharing contracts for offshore blocks 127 and 128 were signed by OVL and Vietnam in 2006, only to be denounced as illegal by China in 2007.<sup>52</sup> This brought angry Indian comments that “this Chinese declaration has come as a frontal attack against India’s pursuit of energy security”; a threat in which “China is bullying countries like India . . . China is hitting India’s soft belly at will and India should do something serious about it . . . the time has come for India to assert itself.”<sup>53</sup> This points to military-security issues in the region, which India is also becoming involved in.

The *Look East* policy has now gone beyond just increasing trade and institutional linkage with ASEAN and its members, with what has been called a *Look East Phase Two* policy.<sup>54</sup> In Yashwant Sinha’s mind “the new phase . . . marks a shift from trade to wider . . . security issues” by a “resurgent India in Asia.”<sup>55</sup> India’s navy has been a prominent feature of this new face of India’s Look East projection, with naval diplomacy yet again appearing as a highly visible and cost-effective arm of the Indian government. The presence of Southeast Asian navies in India’s Bay of Bengal MILAN exercises is being increasingly reciprocated by India’s naval deployments into Southeast Asian waters, where the distrust of India still lingering in the 1990s has largely dissipated. Typical of India’s emerging maritime power projection in these eastern reaches of the Indian Ocean was the dispatch of a powerful naval group, consisting of *INS Viraat*, accompanied by the guided missile destroyers *INS Rajput* and *INS Ranjit*, the indigenously built missile corvette *INS Khukri* and the replenishment tanker *INS Shakti*.

These were deployed to Singapore, Port Kelang in Malaysia and Jakarta in Indonesia during July and August 2005. India's agreement, in October 2008, to start training East Timorese naval personnel is another sign of India's growing maritime influence in the region.

In such a Southeast Asia context, India and Singapore have been conducting joint naval exercises since 1994; with a wider Defense Cooperation Treaty signed in 2003 and further strengthened in 2007. Most of these SIMBEX joint exercises have been held in the Bay of Bengal, but SIMBEX has also brought Indian deployment into the Strait of Malacca and further east into China's backyard of the South China Sea in 2005 and 2009. Maritime relations with Indonesia have changed from naval rivalry to cooperation, in part because of shared concerns over China's maritime claims in the South China Sea. Strategic defense agreements have also been signed with Vietnam in 2000, with ongoing naval cooperation. India's dispatch, by sea, of naval supplies to Vietnam in 2005 brought the comment that "Indian Navy officials said Vietnam was an important part of India's extended maritime neighbourhood," and thereby to be actively supported by India.<sup>56</sup> Two visits by Indian navy units to Vietnam in May and September 2008 showed an increasing tempo in Indian deployment in eastern waters. China's support of Pakistan in India's backyard can indeed be counterbalanced by India's support of Vietnam in China's backyard, the "Vietnam Card."<sup>57</sup> It is not surprising that various Indian commentators like Anindya Batabyal see such Indian projection in Southeast Asia as attempts by India to balance China.<sup>58</sup>

One milestone of India's presence in the region was reached in 2000, when a powerful naval flotilla of five capital ships (*INS Delhi*, *INS Kora*, *INS Sindhuvir*, *INS Rajput*, and *INS Kuthar*), one submarine and a tanker (*INS Aditya*) entered and operated in the South China Sea. Indian naval officers described it as part of a "detailed plan to expand the horizons of our maritime diplomacy."<sup>59</sup> This deployment lasted over one month, and was a show of strategic reach by the Indian navy. India's presence in these Far Eastern waters has been maintained since then. Further naval deployments took place in 2003. Three separate appearances by Indian naval units in the South China Sea were seen in 2004. They were prefigured by government statements in 2004 about an "extended neighbourhood for India which stretches . . . to the South China Sea."<sup>60</sup> *INS Rana*, *INS Khukri*, *INS Ranvir*, *INS Kora* and *INS Udaygiri* were deployed in May 2004 for

presence-cum-surveillance missions through the Malacca and Sunda Straits into the South China Sea. Similar presence and surveillance operations were carried out by *INS Savitri* in the Strait of Malacca and the South China Sea during August 2004. October–November 2004 saw another substantial entry of India into the South China Sea. Again, this was not just one lone vessel. Instead the Indian navy deployed five of its frontline warships; two Kashin-class destroyers *INS Ranjit* and *INS Ranvijay*, the frigate *INS Godavari*, the missile corvette *INS Kirch*, and the offshore patrol vessel *INS Sukanya*, as well as the fleet tanker *INS Jyoti*. The fact that these Indian warships carried out joint exercises with Indonesia, Vietnam, the Philippines, South Korea and Japan, but not China, was significant, and attracted Chinese attention.<sup>61</sup> More deployments by the Indian navy into the South China Sea took place in 2005, 2007, 2008 and 2009.

In turn, India's *Look East* extended neighborhood policy has been expanded geographically, still further out beyond Southeast Asia and the South China Sea. Yashwant Sinha explained that the "new phase of this policy is characterised by an expanded definition of 'East'," whereby in "talk of the extended neighbourhood, it certainly is all the countries including Australia and New Zealand, all the countries of East Asia."<sup>62</sup> The Congress administration under Manmohan Singh has continued this eastern neighborhood creep. India's participation in the East Asia Summit meetings of 2005 and 2007 were part of India's claims to be an involved partner in East Asia.

In economic terms, how has India fared in these further easterly settings beyond ASEAN, in East Asia and Australasia (Table 6)? Trade has gone up in all sections, but with trade with China becoming much more noticeable, increasing from US\$8,500.97 million (6.85 percent share)

TABLE 6  
INDIA'S TRADE WITH EAST ASIAN/AUSTRALASIAN COUNTRIES  
(US\$ MILLION)

	2003–04	2004–05	2005–06	2006–07	2007–08	% share 2003–08
China: PRC	7,008.29	12,713.86	25,734.49	17,627.15	37,931.15	4.94–9.15
Hong Kong	1,492.68	1,730.13	2,206.98	2,481.91	2,699.18	1.91–1.07
Japan	4,376.96	5,363.04	6,542.36	7,452.48	10,177.02	3.08–2.46
S. Korea	3,594.03	4,550.45	6,391.06	7,315.02	8,889.42	2.53–2.15
Taiwan	141,991.66	195,053.38	252,256.27	311,866.78	414,343.32	0.92–1.00
N. Korea	159.83	133.24	111.11	596.70	1,011.59	0.11–2.4
Australia	3,233.51	4,544.77	5,769.14	7,926.59	8,986.98	2.28–2.17
New Zealand	164.86	221.18	358.53	768.55	494.59	0.12–0.12

in 2003–04 to US\$40,630.33 million (11.22 percent share) in 2007–08; albeit alongside a rising trade deficit. Moreover, this is trade with China primarily funneled through China's maritime provinces in the Far East, rather than through any overland routes from Tibet or Yunnan. India's old linkages with Hong Kong, established from the days of the British Empire, are reducing in relative importance, following the reincorporation of Hong Kong back into the PRC in 1998. Despite India's strategic partnership, trade with Japan is relatively less marked, increasing in quantity but not as a share, the same can be said of South Korea. To the southeast, India's economic links with Australasia have increased in quantity but not in relative share.

Further energy success has been gained in the Far East. OVL has a 20 percent stake in the Sakhalin-1, India's single largest investment abroad. Production started in October 2005 reaching full capacity in 2007, with OVL's share being 50,000 barrels per day. Further stakes are being sought by India in the Sakhalin-3 field. These energy reserves give India a stake in keeping the SLOC open in East Asia. Arun Prakash's naval sense was clear enough: "a new development is our acquisition of oil and gas fields stretching across the globe, from Sakhalin in the Russian Far East," offshore energy fields which "will warrant some thought for their protection in the future. These invaluable maritime assets . . . must be safeguarded at all cost."<sup>63</sup>

India's burgeoning security-cum-strategic partnership with Japan, "natural allies" with "common concerns," is now bringing India into Japanese water, where passage exercises were conducted with the Japanese navy in October 2008 in the East China Sea.<sup>64</sup> The Strategic Partnership agreement signed in November 2008 was widely seen as China-related.<sup>65</sup> One clear sign of India's extended strategic reach was the dispatch of a five-ship Indian flotilla to East Asian waters during April–May 2007. At various points these Indian warships carried out joint naval maneuvers with American forces off Okinawa as part of the MALABAR 2007 exercises, rendezvoused off Vladivostok with the Russian fleet as part of the INDRA 2007 exercises, and carried out further trilateral exercises with Japanese and American units off the Japanese coast. This was indeed long-distance marine diplomacy, a trilateral format repeated in April 2009 in the MALABAR exercises off Okinawa, which also reflected India's "rising ambitions with an eye on China" in the Asia-Pacific.<sup>66</sup> Such trends have meant that India is becoming a "Pacific player," at least in the western Pacific reaches.<sup>67</sup>

The WPNS (Western Pacific Naval Symposium) set up in 1988 has had India as an observer from 1998 onwards. *INS Kanwar* gave an evident Indian naval presence in the WPNS for 2004, *INS Mysore* and *INS Tarasa* for 2005, and so forth down to two more warships for 2008, at Pusan in South Korea. With China outside the WPNS, it is not surprising that some Indian commentators see India's attempts to gain full membership, likely to succeed, as "being a move that is aimed at countering China."<sup>68</sup>

In such a Pacific frame of mind, India's Ministry for External Affairs highlighted wider South Pacific arenas in its 2003–04 *Annual Report*, noting that "India continued to pursue closer relations with South East Asia in keeping with its Look East Policy," but going on to flag that "India also articulated the expansion of its Look East Policy to Phase II, beyond South East Asia to the Pacific region"; India's 2003 Dialogue meeting with the PIF (Pacific Island Forum) being treated alongside India's ASEAN summit.<sup>69</sup> The logic of reaching out to the PIF was clear enough for Indian analysts, that "greater involvement with the Pacific Islands Forum would also increase India's influence and leverage in the region," a region now envisaged as part of India's extended neighborhood.<sup>70</sup> The dispatch of the Indian navy to these further waters has started to be seen; *INS Tabar* carrying out cooperative naval exercises in Australia, New Zealand, Tonga, Fiji (with a 40 percent Indian population) and Papua New Guinea during August 2006.

### Implementation – Northwards

India's presence is starting to be seen in Central Asia, as a "small but not insignificant player in the 'New Great Game' in Central Asia."<sup>71</sup> In pre-Islamic and Islamic times, links between India and Central Asia were frequent and recurring. However, the arrival of Russian and then Soviet control in Central Asia had curtailed such northerly links. It was in this setting that Atal Vajpayee drew a clear enough distinction between such older, vaguer, soft power cultural links between India and Central Asia and emerging hard power opportunities. As he noted in his 2002 trip to Central Asia, "historically, this extended neighbourhood of ours has been very close to our hearts. It is linked to India through ties of history, culture and spirituality" from olden days.<sup>72</sup> In addition, "with the countries of Central Asia becoming independent, a new geopolitical reality, of great significance to us, has come into being in this part of the world after the end of the Cold War," in which "India wishes to strengthen her ties with all the countries of the region."<sup>73</sup>

Certainly the collapse of the Soviet Union enabled India to reconsider its previous neglect of the region, and instead start to assemble a geopolitical and geo-economic presence. History continues to be invoked by India, but underpinned by modern needs. Indian diplomats argue that "both bonds of history and geo-strategic location of the Central Asian States (CAS) in an extended neighbourhood make India's relations with them a matter of priority. The region has profound strategic and economic importance for us," so that "since independence of these countries seven years ago, conscious efforts have been made to strengthen and diversify relations and to bring a contemporary focus to our age-old ties."<sup>74</sup> India gained observer status with Central Asia's regional organization, the SCO (Shanghai Cooperation Organization), in 2005.

In general economic terms, there have been some Indian advances into Central Asia during the past decade, as Table 7 shows. One feature of this is that India has enjoyed a general trade surplus with the Central Asian region as a whole during the past decade, the reverse of situations in Southeast/East Asia where India faces trade deficits. However, in quantity terms, Central Asia has not become a big trade arena for India, particularly when energy is taken out of the picture. In 2003–04 the entire region recorded US\$201.62 million trade with India, which by 2007–08 had risen to US\$344.42million, a modest quantitative increase which actually reflected a decline in India's overall trade from an already low 0.15 percent share to a still lower 0.09 percent share, with fluctuations seen in various countries within the region (Table 8).

As India has moved into the region it frequently denied any competitive undertones. Yashwant Sinha, during his visit to Central Asian states in 2003, stated that "we are not in Central Asia to replace any one. We see Central Asia as part of India's extended neighbourhood and our presence there is to promote a mutually inclusive relationship."<sup>75</sup> Nevertheless rivalries can be discerned, with Pakistan and China.

TABLE 7  
INDIA'S TRADE WITH CAS CENTRAL ASIAN STATES REGION (\$US MILLION)

	2003–04	2004–05	2005–06	2006–07	2007–08
Imports	50.79	62.43	72.15	142.85	112.03
Exports	151.83	168.47	174.18	191.41	232.19
Total	201.62	230.90	246.33	334.26	344.42

TABLE 8  
INDIA'S TRADE WITH CENTRAL ASIAN COUNTRIES (\$US MILLION)

	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	% share 2003-08
Kazakhstan	84.07	96.81	117.16	171.41	188.64	0.06-0.05
Uzbekistan	42.84	52.81	50.57	63.51	56.37	0.03-0.01
Turkmenistan	28.55	26.12	31.18	45.86	44.64	0.02-0.01
Tajikistan	8.42	10.68	12.13	15.50	22.10	0.01-0.01
Kyrgyzstan	38.74	50.19	29.57	37.98	32.47	0.03-0.01

Competition with India's traditional rival from its immediate neighborhood, Pakistan, is clear enough in India's extended neighborhood in Central Asia.<sup>76</sup> India's own push into Central Asia has been likened to Kautilya's *mandala* (circles) logic that immediate neighbors were likely to be enemies, but states on the other side of a neighboring enemy state were likely to be allies.<sup>77</sup> Whilst Pakistan has sought to project into Central Asia in order to achieve "strategic hinterland," Indian moves to establish closer links with Central Asian states were explained by Ministry of Defence officials as "building strategic space for India in the region and to encircle Pakistan."<sup>78</sup> India's military links with Tajikistan cast a northern shadow on Pakistan. India's presence in Central Asia also brings it up against China.<sup>79</sup> The PRC is well aware of India's arrival in Central Asia, the *People's Daily* judging in 2003 that "after successful diplomacy in Southeast Asia, India is now primed to replay its historical role in Central Asia."<sup>80</sup> India's presence is admitted by itself in IR *realism* terms as one appropriate for "the neighbours of the Central Asian area, perhaps as a balancing measure [against China?]. As far as we are concerned, as I mentioned, it is our extended neighbourhood. It is of geo-strategic importance to us."<sup>81</sup> Indian commentators are more direct than the government, "India and China are two geopolitical rivals and their interests clash both in the political and economic arena. Both are vying for the same markets" in which "India calls the Central Asian region its 'extended neighborhood' while to China it is the 'strategic backyard'."<sup>82</sup>

Sino-Indian competition has been most clear in Kazakhstan, exemplified when India lost out in 2005 to the PRC over negotiations to buy PetroKazakhstan. Chinese sources were clear enough, "it marks a victory for China in its rivalry with India."<sup>83</sup> It is no coincidence that it is China that has achieved much greater trade with Kazakhstan; over US\$6 billion in 2006 and over US\$14 billion in 2008 compared to

India's US\$188.64 million for 2007–08. Moreover, India's trade surplus with Kazakhstan was reversed in 2006–07. Some modest energy success in Kazakhstan has nevertheless been gained by India. In the wake of the failed Kurmangazy oil field deal, OVL was offered medium-sized exploration blocks at Satbayev and Mukhanbet in the Caspian region in 2005. Nevertheless, China's success has been the more evident. Consequently, oil flows are settling down into easterly dispensation through the overland pipeline built between Kazakhstan and China, which started operations in July 2006. Some indication of this continuing China–India rivalry was seen in 2008 when OVL outbid Sinopec to take over Imperial Energy and its operations in oil-producing bloc in the Tomsk region of Western Siberia in Russia and Kastanai in Kazakhstan. Indian commentators saw this as “a major ‘strategic victory’ for OVL that has been at the receiving end of Sinopec of China during the last few years” in Central Asia.<sup>84</sup> Geographical distance is involved here, Kazakhstan being China's immediate neighbor whilst furthest away from India amongst these Central Asian states.

Conversely, it is with Tajikistan, the nearest of the Central Asian states, that India has the strongest political–security links, even though the level of trade is accurately enough described by India as “meagre.”<sup>85</sup> Common concerns over Taliban Afghanistan, and then wider Islamist fundamentalism, drew India and Tajikistan together in the late 1990s. Such a Tajik–India convergence was quickly noticed in China.<sup>86</sup> Tajik–Indian security cooperation was initially with regard to using the Farkhor airbase to funnel supplies to the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance resistance forces. Joint exercises between Indian and Tajik special forces were held in February 2003, and a defense–security agreement signed later that year. Biannual trips between Heads of State have operated since 2000, in 2001 (Rakhmonov to India), 2003 (Vajpayee to Tajikistan), and 2006 (Rahmon to India). Subsequently, Indian engineers reopened Ayni airbase in 2007, to be shared between the air forces of Tajikistan, Russia and India.

Similar imperatives have operated between India and Uzbekistan, where common unease over the Taliban regime in Afghanistan and Islamist radicalism has brought subsequent wider security cooperation, entwined with economic openings sought by India.<sup>87</sup> Manmohan Singh's trip to Uzbekistan in April 2006 also saw the extended neighborhood theme deployed, “both countries share longstanding ties and deep rooted cultural and civilizational links. Uzbekistan is an important country in the Central Asian region which we consider part of our



extended neighbourhood,” in which “we hope to build on our traditional ties in providing them with new meaning and substance including in the political, economic, defence, energy, science and technology and cultural fields.”<sup>88</sup> On the economic front, an ongoing trade deficit was suddenly reversed in 2007–08, a 35.86 percent growth in exports overtaking a 21.37 percent increase in imports to give India a trade surplus of US\$24.23 million. The dispatch of army training teams to Uzbekistan in 2007 was quite rightly seen by Nitin Gokhale as showing how “the army is shedding its traditional reluctance to get involved in India’s extended neighbourhood,” all “in consonance with India’s recent forays into Central Asian republics.”<sup>89</sup>

Along this southern tier of Central Asian states, India has also cultivated Turkmenistan, where greater energy links are being sought by India, amidst rivalry with China; particularly in participation in prospecting and eventual exploration and production in the offshore Caspian blocks of Turkmenistan. Here, the OVL–Mittal joint venture acquired a 30 percent share in the exploratory Block 11-12, offshore Turkmenistan in the Caspian Sea in October 2007. The *Memorandum of Understanding* signed between India and Turkmenistan in April 2008 brought the comments from India’s Vice President Mohammad Hamid Ansari, visiting Turkmenistan, that “India, with its vast requirement of energy and dependence on imports to meet it, is Turkmenistan’s natural partner.”<sup>90</sup> Here, it is no coincidence that the India’s former Petroleum and Natural Gas Minister, Mani Shankar Aiyar stressed “the interface between foreign policy and quest of energy security,” in which “we are fortunate to be placed at the vortex of an extended neighbourhood which has some of the largest gas resources in the world.”<sup>91</sup> Consequently, Aiyar went on to note, “to our north lies Turkmenistan, which has projected ample gas resources . . . consideration could be given to augmenting available supplies there from Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan and the Astrakhan littoral on the Russian shore off the Caspian”; and judged that “the proposed North–South energy corridor which would run from the Kazakhstan port of Akhtau to the Iranian port of Chah Bahar on the Arabian Sea is another exciting prospect” for India.<sup>92</sup> This leads us, as it does India, to Iran, and India’s extended neighborhood to the west.

### **Implementation – Westwards**

With regard to Iran, Indo-Iranian links have caused concern in Washington, and some pressure to be applied by the US (and also

Israel) for India to pull back from too strong an embrace of Iran.<sup>93</sup> India's links with Iran emerged in the 1990s and are officially enshrined in their joint 2003 *New Delhi Declaration and Road Map to Strategic Cooperation*.<sup>94</sup> Three purposes are served for India through such strategic cooperation. Firstly, it helps India to geopolitically jump over and thereby constrain Pakistan, with military cooperation between Iran and India being a feature of recent years.<sup>95</sup> India's presence at Chahbahar is a counterpoint to Pakistan's recent opening up, with Chinese help, of Gwadar.

Secondly, Iran enables Indian access to important energy resources. In January 2004, OVL negotiated a deal in Iran, whereby it gained a 10 percent stake in the Yadavaran field, with India agreeing to buy 7.5 million metric tons of liquefied natural gas from Iran per annum for 25 years. This was though overshadowed later on in the year in October, when Iran negotiated a negotiated a \$70 billion deal with Sinopec, giving the Chinese company a 51 percent stake in the field's development. Some compensation was gained by India as OVL gained a 100 percent stake in the Jeyfr oil field, with its estimated capacity of 30,000 barrels per day; only for this stake to be transferred in 2006 to Belorusneft, the national oil company of Belarus, with OVL seeking a doubling of its Yadavaran holding in compensation. The OVL–Hinduja consortium is also keen to develop the Azadegan oil field in Iran, which is projected to hold over 40 billion barrels of oil. Further success was gained in an exploration service contract for the offshore Farsi Block gas fields which was won by an OVL-led consortium, consisting of OVL (40 percent share, and the operator), IOC (Indian Oil Corporation, 40 percent share) and OIL (Oil India Ltd, 20 percent share). By 2007, these explorations had revealed large reserves, estimated at over 12.8 trillion cubic feet. A combined OVL–Hinduja combine, set up in 2006, is eyeing the large South Pars field in Iran, with gas from the South Pars field due to feed the proposed IPI (Iran–Pakistan–India) pipeline.

Thirdly, Iran serves as an important link for India with Central Asia and with the Middle East/West Asia. Until recently, the Middle East/West Asia has been a relatively neglected part of India's strategic constellation, despite earlier geopolitical linkages with British India. In a diplomatic sense India has been marginalized and rendered rather irrelevant to the political debates and dispositions of the Middle East, for example those surrounding Iraq, or the Palestine–Israel quagmire.

As late as 2004, C. Raja Mohan was still wondering “can the Manmohan Singh Government complement India’s eastern initiative by launching a badly needed ‘look west’ policy?”<sup>96</sup> The rhetoric has picked up though. A few months after his lament, the new Congress government was announcing “West Asia constitutes an integral part of India’s extended neighbourhood,” in which “links between the two regions can be traced back to antiquity, just as developments in West Asia today have a direct impact on the economy and society of India.”<sup>97</sup> A formal *Look West* policy was announced in August 2005, a policy immediately noticed by China.<sup>98</sup> Comparisons were also made with the established *Look East* policy, by the Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and by the Minister of State for External Affairs E. Ahamed.<sup>99</sup>

Initially India has focused most on the Gulf. Pranab Mukherjee encapsulated India’s economic and political concerns in the Gulf, that “beyond the immediate region, India has vital interests in the Gulf . . . the Gulf forms parts of our strategic [extended] neighbourhood” as an “important source of energy, home to over 3.5 million Indians, and a major trading partner. Parts of it are also a source of ideology, funding and recruits to the cause of Islamic radicalism and terrorism.”<sup>100</sup> Economics, and energy access, remain a central feature of India’s interest in the Gulf, Manmohan Singh considering that “the Gulf region . . . is part of our natural economic hinterland.”<sup>101</sup>

A framework agreement for economic cooperation was signed between India and the GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) in August 2004. March 2006 saw the first joint ministerial meeting of the six-state GCC and India. Final negotiations for a Free Trade Agreement were started in January 2006, and set for signature in 2009. The Gulf region has increased in relative economic importance for India. In 2003–04 it accounted for 9.69 percent of India’s trade, almost triple that with South Asia of 3.52 percent. By 2007–08 the Gulf had more than doubled its share to 20.97 percent. A closer look at individual countries within the Gulf shown common and divergent patterns (Table 9). Saudi Arabia, Iran and the UAE have maintained the biggest shares, reflecting their bigger sizes in the case of Iran and Saudi Arabia. One striking feature is the way India’s trade balances have shifted in the Gulf region. India enjoyed trade surpluses across the Gulf in the earlier parts of the decade, but then faced growing trade deficits after 2006 with Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Bahrain, and Saudi Arabia. The simple reason for such deficits were rising imports from the Gulf, especially

TABLE 9  
INDIA'S TRADE WITH WEST ASIA COUNTRIES (\$US MILLION)

	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	% share 2003-08
Iran	1,184.93	1,641.60	1,890.81	9,071.52	12,863.85	0.83-3.10
Iraq	75.30	132.31	157.99	5,725.02	7,100.22	0.05-1.71
Kuwait	461.57	727.38	975.59	6,601.33	8,371.65	0.33-2.02
S.Arabia	1,861.07	2,713.21	3,442.11	15,959.59	23,107.61	1.31-5.58
Bahrain	186.15	278.33	381.81	654.04	1,080.99	0.13-0.26
UAE	7,185.41	11,988.98	12,945.87	20,673.54	29,097.41	5.60-7.02
Qatar	315.49	882.27	1,160.96	2,397.82	2,994.08	0.22-0.72
Oman	309.87	288.28	674.02	1,089.77	2,070.86	0.22-0.50
Yemen	247.31	277.23	288.82	3,194.31	2,486.51	0.17-0.60
Somalia	49.79	54.58	51.21	104.12	129.17	0.04-0.03
Djibouti	74.87	131.74	233.72	309.55	462.25	0.05-0.11
Eritrea	10.97	9.43	9.17	6.98	112.10	0.01-0.03
Egypt	465.69	597.38	892.87	2,502.06	3,379.00	0.33-0.82
Israel	1,393.73	1,993.87	2,232.69	2,399.24	3,030.18	0.98-0.73

energy.<sup>102</sup> In this energy setting, OVL has a 100 percent exploration share of Qatar's Najwat Najem field, and a 100 percent share of Iraqi Block 8.

Admittedly, India's economic presence in the Gulf still remains overshadowed by America's far more overt, and paramount, military deployment. Nevertheless, India is becoming a military factor in local calculations. The visit of India's aircraft carrier *INS Viraat* and two other ships to the UAE in March 1999 set the scene. A substantial three-week deployment by the Indian navy took place in September-October 2004, involving two destroyers *INS Mumbai* and *INS Delhi*, the advanced missile frigate *INS Talwar*; as well as *INS Kulish*, *INS Pralaya*, *INS Sindhuraj* and the support tanker *INS Aditya*. Their visit to Oman, Bahrain, Iran and the UAE was interpreted by Chinese sources as Indian "efforts to use its navy to project power" outside its own immediate coastal waters.<sup>103</sup> Altogether around 40 Indian naval vessels were dispatched to Oman and the Gulf during 2005-07. August 2007 saw another powerful five-ship Indian flotilla deployed into the Gulf; with port calls at Muscat, Qatar, Abu Dhabi, Manama, Al Jubail, before going across to Djibouti. December 2007 saw further dispatches of Indian warships to the UAE.

As elsewhere, naval diplomacy forms a prominent part of India's wider diplomatic projection, Pranab Mukherjee explaining to an audience in the UAE in May 2008 that "the steady expansion of our political and economic ties, the interactions between our security and defence

personnel and the visits of our naval ships have added a new dimension to our relationship.”<sup>104</sup> The India-Oman Thammar Al Tayyib joint exercise has been a regular naval feature since 2003. It was in this vein that when Sureesh Mehta took over as India’s Chief of Naval Staff, his first trip overseas was to Abu Dubai in the UAE in February 2007, and with it talk of further Indian naval projection into the region.<sup>105</sup> During Manmohan Singh’s trip to the Gulf in November 2008, his visit to Oman saw agreement on strengthening maritime exercises, whilst his visit to Qatar saw a defense maritime cooperation pact signed alongside discussing increased liquid gas supplies.

Neighborhood creep has been seen further westwards, to the Strait of Bab el Mandab, the waters off Djibouti which link the Indian Ocean and Red Sea via the Gulf of Aden. India keeps a vigilant eye on this strategic choke point. Typical of India’s long-range reconnaissance prowess was the way in February 2006 that a new Chinese destroyer and accompanying oil tanker were detected, tracked and photographed by a Tupolev-142M maritime patrol aircraft, flying from the Goa naval airbase, almost as soon as the Chinese vessels had emerged from the Red Sea via the Bab Al-Mandab Strait, a sighting over 1,400 miles away from the Indian mainland.<sup>106</sup> Visits to Djibouti have been maintained through the years by Indian naval vessels: *INS Sindhuraj* in January 2002, *INS Sindhuratna* in November 2002, *INS Talwar* in August 2003, *INS Dunagiri* in May 2004 and *INS Rajput* in September 2007. In the face of piracy attacks off the Somali coast, the Indian navy was eventually, after some hesitation, deployed into the Gulf of Aden in October 2008, with successful interceptions carried out there by *INS Tabar* in November, with subsequent heavier fire-power provided by *INS Mysore*. Interestingly, this deployment was explained in wider geo-economic terms by the Indian Ministry of Defence: “the Gulf of Aden provides access to the Suez Canal through which sizable portion of India’s trade flows. Indian Navy’s presence in the area will help to protect our sea-borne trade.”<sup>107</sup>

The Gulf of Aden and the waters around Socotra were also the setting for India’s naval exercises with Russia, INDRA-2003 and INDRA-2009. This setting was also seen with the VARUNA 05 India-France exercises of November 2005, which also took place in the Gulf of Aden; and which included deployment of India’s aircraft carrier *INS Viraat*, the guided missile destroyer *INS Mysore*, the guided missile frigates *INS Talwar* and *INS Godavari* and the tanker *INS Aditya*.

Indian naval units from the exercise also visited Djibouti then. Similar Indian deployment into the Gulf of Aden was carried out by *INS Rajput*, *INS Beas* and *INS Jyoti* in September 2007 for joint exercises with French maritime forces in VARUNA 07.

Such neighborhood creep is bringing India up from the Gulf of Aden into the Red Sea and gates of the Mediterranean. In part this is because of securing energy supplies from Sudan. OVL has a 25 percent share of the Greater Nile Oil Project in the Sudan, albeit behind the 40 percent stake held by the China National Petroleum Corporation. In the Sudan, OVL has a 25 percent share in the 5A oil field, and has completed a pipeline linking Khartoum to Port Sudan. This economic presence along the Nile has been matched by the waving of India's naval flag. *INS Delhi* and *INS Talwar* paid a call to the Egyptian port of Safaga on the Red Sea during August 2008. Further up the Nile valley, OVL has a 70 percent share Egypt's North Ramadan field in the Gulf of Suez. At the top end of the Red Sea, the Suez Canal was specifically included in government definitions of India's extended neighborhood.<sup>108</sup> Indian naval units are now using the Suez Canal to transit into the Eastern Mediterranean; with India-Israeli strategic links spanning the whole waterway back out into the Gulf of Aden. These Mediterranean waters have become familiar to the Indian navy in the past few years. In 2004, *INS Mysore*, *INS Godavari*, *INS Ganga* and *INS Shakti*, having been deployed to the Gulf of Aden, were then sent up the Red Sea and into the Eastern Mediterranean, visiting ports in Egypt, Israel, Cyprus, and Turkey. *INS Godavari* and *INS Aditya* visited the Syrian port of Refaet-al-Assad in August 2008.

India's readiness to apply its extended neighborhood concept deep into the Middle East was evident in July 2006, when India's response to conflict in the Lebanon was the dispatch of three powerful warships, *INS Mumbai*, *INS Brahmaputra* and *INS Betwa*, and the tanker *INS Shakti*. Their successful evacuation of South Asian nationals was a sign of India's long-range ability to project naval power, the ships already returning from their regular preceding deployment in the Eastern Mediterranean. In retrospect, India's then Chief of Naval Staff, Arun Prakash, reckoned that "the world noticed it. The Indians we rescued were proud of their Navy, and its power and reach."<sup>109</sup> Manmohan Singh explained to the Indian Parliament that in rescuing Indian nationals, it had been shown that "West Asia is our extended neighbourhood and tensions in that region affect our security and our vital

interests.”<sup>110</sup> Bertram Weale’s comments from 1910 were “would not the flying of an Indian naval flag in the Persian Gulf, in the Arabian Sea, in the Red Sea, and even in the Mediterranean . . . convince all Europe and Asia that a new giant was growing up.”<sup>111</sup> He was right!

## Conclusions

India’s extended neighborhood concept has become part of a new national consensus in foreign policy, shared between the BJP and Congress parties/governments. The language and concept remains loaded on this; for K. R. Singh it has been a question of replacing “a subcontinental mindset that had virtually confined it to a small portion of the Afro-Asian region, so-called South Asia” a mindset that had “denied India its rightful place in the extended neighbourhood” beyond South Asia.<sup>112</sup>

This begs the question of what exactly is India’s self-envisaged “rightful place” for itself in its self-perceived extended neighborhood. Already within its immediate neighborhood of South Asia, there has been a “hiatus between India’s self-perception as a status quo power and its perceptions by the neighbouring states as a regional bully.”<sup>113</sup> Similar ambiguities and divergences between India’s perception of itself and others’ perception of India could arise in India’s extended neighborhood as New Delhi projects a greater presence there. For some Indian commentators, India’s talk of a growing extended neighborhood presence can seem like delusions of grandeur; “talk about an extended neighbourhood . . . in terms of an emerging imperial power . . . are quite quixotic.”<sup>114</sup>

Nevertheless, hegemony whispers for the ocean waves at least, Pardesi arguing that “a rising India will aspire to become the regional hegemon of South Asia and the Indian Ocean, and an extra-regional power in the Middle East, Central Asia and Southeast Asia.”<sup>115</sup> What India can see as its rightful place, particularly in the Indian Ocean, others can see as a hegemonistic threat. Indonesia, Australia and Pakistan have all expressed concerns in the past over India’s power projection there – although the first two have now moved closer to India in security terms over the past decade, in part because of concerns about China. Of course there remains a practical constraint against the Indian Ocean becoming *India’s Ocean* – namely the significant military presence of the United States at Diego Garcia. However, there may be some division of labor emerging between these two strategic partners,

as America shifts towards the Pacific and in effect moves aside to let India shoulder more of the Indian Ocean. Meanwhile, China's blue-water drive is bringing the PRC further into the Indian Ocean and western Pacific, into India's own extended neighborhood, and with it rising Indian maritime concerns about China.<sup>116</sup> Whilst India is starting to play a balancing role in the South China Sea, it is increasing its maritime strength in the wider Indian Ocean region relative to China, although China's links with Pakistan, Bangladesh and to some extent Sri Lanka are conversely impacting within India's immediate maritime neighborhood.

India's *soft power* projection is something that may increase in the future. Certainly, India has talked about old cultural links from the past, and to some extent is trying to use them. Buddhism for one may prove of some wider use within an easterly setting, for Ramachandran, "as the Sino-Indian battle for influence in East and Southeast Asia intensifies, India is backing its political and economic diplomacy with soft-power diplomacy. To counter China's efforts to keep India out of the region on the grounds that it is an 'outsider', India is drawing attention to its solid Buddhist credentials."<sup>117</sup> This is somewhat ironical, given Buddhism's virtual disappearance in earlier centuries from the land of its birth, India; although India's sheltering of the Dalai Lama, and China's crackdown on Tibetan Buddhist dissent in 2008 probably does give India some extra credit in Buddhist circles in East and Southeast Asia. However, any such Buddhist soft power linkages are of little use within the westerly and northern extended neighborhood settings of the Islamic world. India's growing economic profile is likely to give it more general soft power credibility as a modernizing credible power on the rise. Its multi-cultural and multi-faith background may give it a particular role to play in a world faced with potential *clashes of civilization*, though India could itself face internal fracture lines of conflict.

Finally, there is India's often talked about position as the world's largest democracy and questions over how far this affects its foreign policy operations, and the extent to which this serves as a normative model for other states in India's extended neighborhood. On paper the Indian government has a pro-democracy bent in its external leanings. In its own words, "as the world's largest democracy and a country with well-established democratic institutions and practices, it is natural for India to support forums that recognize and seek to promote



democratic governance.”<sup>118</sup> Whereas China does not link the question of development with question of democratization, India does, asserting that “the Indian experience corroborates the inter-linkages and shows that implementation of proactive development policies and economic reforms, when coupled with a liberal democratic polity, leads to overall stability and growth.”<sup>119</sup> However, India has been hesitant in any overt “democracy promotion” in its relations with surrounding regions.<sup>120</sup> Any such normative agenda of promoting democracy values has, so far, been rather pushed aside by other considerations, pulled as India is by other energy and China-balancing considerations in regions like Central Asia.<sup>121</sup>

How activist is India going to be then in its extended neighborhood, and what sort of hard/soft power might it choose and be able to operate? How far will India intervene militarily outside South Asia? How far will India push economic development or democratic institutions in its extended neighborhood? There are some signs of India’s greater willingness to intervene militarily, in a constabulary role, as witness in deployments and arrangements emerging in the Indian Ocean, Strait of Malacca, Qatar and Gulf of Aden. India may hope for democratization in its extended neighborhood, in part to reduce religious extremism, but seems unwilling to push this too strongly. Economic development is the most noticeable arena for India in its extended neighborhood, in part because economic development gives greater political stability and bigger markets.

Within that hard power economic thrust, rising energy needs (to fuel India’s burgeoning economic rise) is a factor that will in all likelihood increase in importance for India, and which will pull India still deeper into involvement with its extended neighborhood, especially north, west and east. Other factors magnify India’s concerns with its extended neighborhood. Islamist *jihadi* groups operate in all four quadrants of India’s extended neighborhood, and as such increase India’s preventative concerns. Last, but by no means least, India’s encounters with China are taking place around much of India’s extended neighborhood. There is something of a Great Game between these two giants and India’s extended neighborhood is a scene for much of it.<sup>122</sup>

Structurally, then, the concept of extended neighborhood serves to bridge the gap between India’s established role as a local power in its immediate neighborhood region of South Asia, and its hoped for role as a global power.<sup>123</sup> There is the possibility that India may be over-extending

itself with regard to its extended neighborhood concept. It would be overdoing it to say that India sees itself as a Great Power that should have Great Power sphere-of-influence paramountcy in its extended neighborhood. The presence of other strong states in those extended areas makes that an unrealistic scenario. Instead, whilst India perhaps seeks some preeminence – or perhaps even a degree of unipolar hegemony – in its immediate neighborhood, India seeks to deny such a situation to other powers in its extended neighborhood, especially to China. Within this strategic denial setting, India's easterly and southerly projections into the extended neighborhood of Southeast Asia and the Indian Ocean have been most substantive, with a degree of preeminence being sought in the Indian Ocean for India, as India continues its economics-driven rise.

#### NOTES

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