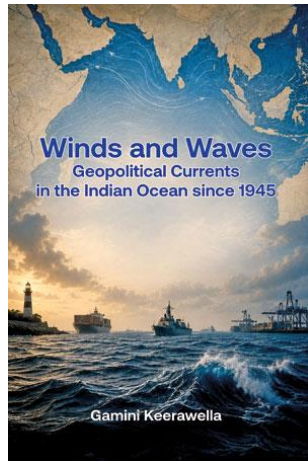


Winds and Waves: Geopolitical Currents in the Indian Ocean since 1945
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For an ocean long treated as secondary to the great strategic theatres of the Atlantic and the Pacific, the Indian Ocean has forced its way back to the centre of global attention. Recent disruptions in the Red Sea, renewed instability in West Asia, intensifying strategic competition between China, India and the United States, and mounting anxiety over the region's critical maritime chokepoints have reaffirmed the region's centrality to contemporary international politics. It has become a space where strategy, energy security, infrastructure investment and non-traditional threats like piracy and climate change now all converge on the same stretch of water.

It is against this backdrop that 'Winds and Waves: Geopolitical Currents in the Indian Ocean since 1945' by Professor Gamini Keerawella, arrives. Rather than interpreting the region solely through episodes of great-power rivalry or military competition, the book traces the deeper historical, political and economic forces that have shaped the Indian Ocean since. The book has been decades in the making. Its roots go back to Prof. Keerawella's own doctoral research on superpower naval rivalry in the Indian Ocean, begun in the early 1980s and shaped by the geopolitical turbulence of that period characterised by the Iranian Revolution, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the Carter Doctrine. What began as a doctoral thesis has been revisited and expanded across more than four decades, finally reaching publication. What eventually became this book, in other words, is not a project written in a year or two — it's the accumulated product of a career spent watching this exact ocean.

Structurally, the volume is organised as a gallery of great and middle powers moving through the same body of water: Britain's post-imperial retreat, the long and uneven hegemony of the United States, the Soviet Union and its Russian successor, China's rising tides, India's rise from regional custodian to global strategic actor, Japan's postwar reorientation, the European Union (EU)'s normative presence and a dedicated chapter on non-traditional security governance.

What holds together a book covering eleven chapters, eight decades and half a dozen major powers is not a single narrative but a consistent method. Professor Keerawella leans on two very different thinkers to build it: French historian Fernand Braudel, known for his idea of the *longue durée*, and Michel Foucault, whose interest lies in how ideas and narratives make certain arrangements of power feel natural, legitimate, even inevitable. The book's title captures this pairing directly. Waves stand for the visible, dramatic crises; winds represent the medium-term ideological and political shifts that reshape the field those crises play out on; and lastly, the currents inform the deepest layers of the slow structural forces that outlast any single government or headline. The pairing of the two very different thinkers allows the book to explore both why power shifted and how they were interpreted, justified and ultimately accepted.

Going further, the heart of the book lies with Sri Lanka. Initially framed as a "strategic fulcrum" shaped by what Prof. Keerawella calls a "dual strategic consciousness" — a defensive, wary instinct set against a more outward-looking, cosmopolitan one. It opens and closes at home, showcasing Sri Lanka first as a nation caught amid "winds and waves" and finally as a state "navigating power shifts" under the NPP government. This is the book's quiet thesis — the Indian Ocean is not merely a stage on which superpowers perform; it is also a lived condition for the littoral and island states that have little choice but to sit at its centre.

That framing carries through the historical chapters too, where Sri Lanka's geography is treated less as a fixed fact and more as something repeatedly claimed and redefined by whichever outside power happened to hold sway at the time — first the Portuguese, Dutch and British, and later the competing interests of larger neighbours and global powers. What the book seems to argue is that this condition never really ended with independence; it simply changed hands. Sri Lanka's postcolonial turn toward non-alignment and its championing of the Indian Ocean Zone of Peace

proposal are read not as idealism but as a deliberate attempt to finally set some of the terms of that exposure itself — converting centuries of being positioned by others into an actual strategy of its own.

Going beyond Sri Lanka, the volume demonstrates a broader ability to connect historical trajectories with contemporary geopolitical realities. As the Indian Ocean becomes increasingly central to strategic competition, shifting power balances and maritime security, the book shows that many of today's challenges have deep historical roots — that contemporary developments are neither sudden nor unprecedented, but the continuation of longer historical processes. Rather than reducing the Indian Ocean to great-power rivalry alone, the volume highlights the importance of historical legacies, economic interdependence, regional cooperation and the agency of littoral states in shaping the regional order.

Another real strength is that the volume refuses to collapse the Indian Ocean into a simple US-China story. Alongside the major chapters on the United States, Russia, China and India, Prof. Keerawella dedicates full chapters to Japan's gradual post-war strategic reorientation and the European Union's role as a "normative power" — arguing that maritime order in this region is sustained not only by fleets, but by rules, regulatory frameworks and development partnerships as well.

One of the more distinctive contributions of the volume is its dedicated treatment of non-traditional security. Rather than relegating these issues to the margins of Indian Ocean geopolitics, Prof. Keerawella demonstrates that climate change, piracy, maritime disasters, illegal fishing, environmental degradation and transnational crime have become integral to the region's security landscape. With intent, the author broadens the scope of the discussion and demonstrates that the future of the Indian Ocean will be influenced as much by shared security challenges as by interstate competition.

Equally impressive is the accessibility of the writing. Covering nearly eight decades of geopolitical developments across numerous states is not an easy undertaking, yet the volume maintains a clear and engaging narrative throughout. It consistently connects historical developments with why they continue to matter today.

As strategic competition across the region continues to intensify, understanding it requires an appreciation of the historical processes, shifting political narratives and enduring structural forces that continue to shape state behaviour. Rather than offering definitive answers, Prof. Keerawella equips readers with the tools to interpret an increasingly complex maritime region for themselves. In doing so, the book moves beyond a conventional account of geopolitical competition to illuminate the interplay between history, geography, ideas and strategic agency that continues to shape the Indian Ocean.

Winds and Waves constitutes a timely and important contribution to the study of international relations. It reminds readers that beneath the visible winds and waves of geopolitical competition lie deeper historical currents that continue to shape the region's strategic trajectory. For scholars, policymakers, practitioners and students alike, the volume provides both a valuable historical reference and a compelling framework for interpreting one of the world's most dynamic geopolitical spaces. Diplomats and analysts navigating today's Indian Ocean will find in it a working vocabulary for what they are seeing; students of international relations will find a rare case study where theory and current events are made to speak to each other directly; and general readers with an interest in the region will come away understanding why a stretch of water most of the world still treats as a shipping lane is, in fact, where a great deal of the twenty-first century is being decided.