

Paper-II  
Question # 7

Discuss Russia's return to South Asia and United States' Indo-Pacific Strategy.

1. Introduction:

"In the global discourse of Connectivity, South Asia is the nexus, where trade routes, cultural exchanges, and shared aspirations converge, fostering the bonds that transcend borders."

Prq-Natasha Singh

Historically South Asia has been the point of concern for global and regional powers. Because of its immense geopolitical, economic, and diplomatic importance it has been the eye catching region for big powers. For instance Russia has been impacting the region since the time of the cold war. With the disintegration of USSR, after several decades Russia is resurging and expanding its influence as a big power in multipolar world.



For South Asia, Russia has multiple ambitions ranging from geo-political, economic, diplomatic to security. On the other hand, the U.S. has its own goals and ambitions for Indo-Pacific. It is working on security, technology, human rights and alliances to curb the rising perceived threat from China. However, with the engagement of Russia in South Asia, it can become a source of tension for both Russia and the U.S.

## 2. South Asia and resurgence of Russia:

### a. Russia's engagement in South Asia during Cold War:

Historically, Russia has been engaged in South Asia in context of the decades long cold war. The then, USSR established close ties with India. India was the recipient of arms and technology from Russia. However, with the disintegration of USSR, South Asian region was not involved in any politics of USSR, as it was during the cold war.

One huge development was that Soviet Union helped in India's nuclear program.

## b. Resurgence of Russia and its economic interests in South Asia.

### \* Arms Sale:

Russia has been the biggest arms supplier to South Asian region. It benefits Russia economically and establishes bilateral ties with the South Asian states for cooperation in other areas as well. For example Russia has signed various defense agreements and arms sale agreements with India.

### \* Energy Cooperation of Russia with South Asian States:

Energy Cooperation with South Asian Countries provides Russia with huge economic benefits, as it became a big market for Russian energy supplies.

Russia has sought to further increase energy cooperation with South Asian states.

For example discussions on oil and natural gas projects in energy have taken place.

## c. Geopolitical Interests of Russia in South Asia:

Russia is playing a balancing act in South Asia. Given its historic relationship with India and recent engagement with Pakistan, it is well

aware of the sensitivity of the region because of these two nuclear armed arch rivals. Russia is involved in geopolitical consideration of Region. For example Afghanistan is of core interest for Russia as far as geo-politics is concerned. It has been involved in Afghanistan since the time of the cold war.

#### d. Security Interests of Russia in South Asia:

Afghanistan is a sort of concern for Russia. As the stability of the whole region is shaped by Afghanistan. Therefore Russia is well aware of the Spill over effects of any kind of unrest in Afghanistan that is why involved in it. Because, it is the region Russia shared cultural, historical, and economic ties.

#### e. Diplomatic engagement of Russia in South Asia:

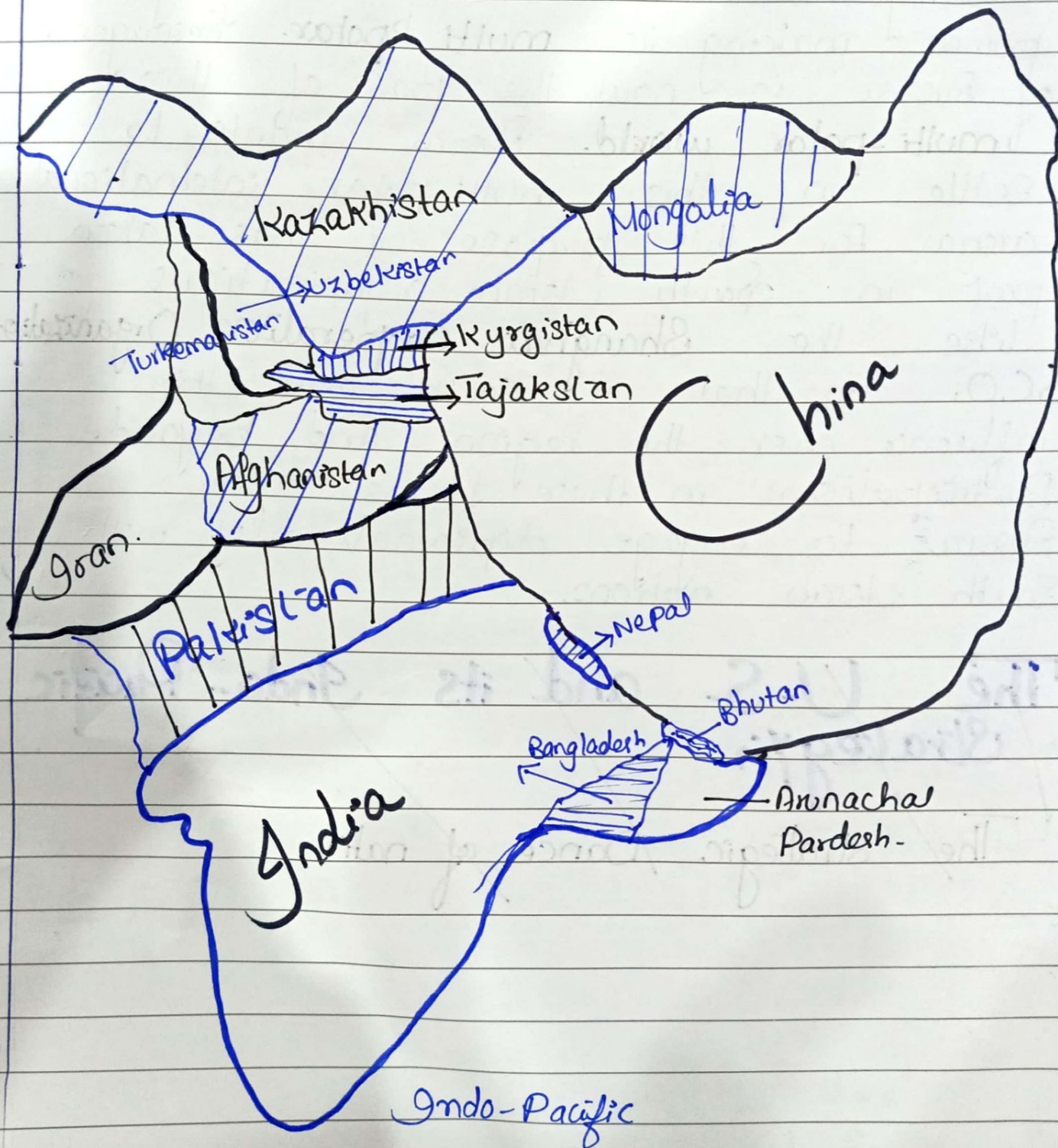
Russia has involved diplomatically to find a peaceful solution to the conflict in Afghanistan. It has hosted conferences and participated in multilateral initiatives aimed at fostering dialogue between the Afghan government and various stake holders including Taliban.

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## e. Organizations in South Asia and multipolar influence of Russia:

After the disintegration of USSR, the world became Uni-polar. But 21<sup>st</sup> Century saw the rise of emerging powers making it multi-polar. Resurgence of Russia is now the part of this multi-polar world. Russia wants to settle in this multi-polar international arena. For this purpose it has taken part in South Asian organizations like the Shanghai Cooperation Organization S.C.O. so that it could exert its influence over the region and beyond. Participation in these forms allows Russia to engage diplomatically with South Asian nations.

Russia



### 3. The U.S. and its Indo-Pacific Strategy:

"The strategic dance of nations in the Indo-Pacific is a symphony of interests, where alignments and partnerships compose the music of geopolitical stability in a dynamic and interconnected world."

#### Prof. Mei Lin, IR theorist

Indo-Pacific region is a nexus of strategic, economic and geo-political importance. Indo-Pacific is home to vital trade routes, economic powerhouses, and emerging markets. The U.S. recognizes the region's role in shaping future of world order.

#### A-The U.S. and free and open Indo-Pacific (FOIP):

Because of the importance of Indo-Pacific in shaping the future of world, the U.S. has advocated for the free and open Indo-Pacific, emphasizing the principles of a rules based international order, promoting free and fair trade, and open investment environment. This vision of the U.S. is aimed at economic prosperity and development in the region.

## b. Security and defense objectives of the U.S.

### \* Military Presence of the U.S. in Indo-Pacific

The U.S. has maintained military presence in the Indo-Pacific for what it perceives necessary for regional stability. It includes partnerships and alliances with countries like Japan, Australia, and South Korea.

### \* Policies of the U.S. and South China Sea:

The U.S. has expressed concerns about the militarization of South China Sea and the assertive behavior of China in this regard. To counter the China's influence in the region U.S. has been making alliances like, QUAD, AUKUS, B3W etc.

## c. Alliances of the U.S. and the Indo-Pacific:

In his book "Asia's Cauldron: The South China Sea and the End of a Stable Pacific" **Robert D Kaplan** says that the Asia-Pacific is a simmering pot for potential conflicts.

In order to minimize rising Chinese



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influence in the Indo-Pacific, the U.S. has been making alliances.

### \* QUAD:

In the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue the United States, Japan, India and Australia are the member countries. QUAD aims to develop regional security and address common challenges, including those related to infrastructure development, connectivity, and pandemic response.

### \* B3W:

The U.S. has proposed the Build Back Better world initiative. It seeks to mobilize public and private sector capital to address infrastructure needs in the Indo-Pacific region. This is seen as a counter to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

### \* AUKUS:

AUKUS is a tri-lateral strategic partnership between Australia, the UK and the U.S. announced in September 2021. As per the IPRI policy brief AUKUS is a tri-lateral partnership focused on maritime security and technology sharing which could

Shift the strategic balance in the Indo-Pacific.

### d. The U.S.' role in technology and innovation in Indo-Pacific:

The U.S. has been advocating for the technological cooperation with the Indo-Pacific Countries to bring about innovation and technological cooperation in the region, for the betterment of economic and security landscape.

For example Cooperation in Capacity building and skill development, Public-Private partnerships and cybersecurity cooperation with Indo-Pacific countries.

### e. Climate Change and Health Security in Indo-Pacific and role of the U.S.:

The U.S. has been actively engaged in portraying and playing its leadership role in order to tackle the climate and health security issues in Indo-Pacific region.

For Example the initiatives taken by the U.S. during the Pandemic, the COVID-19.

## f. Role of the U.S. in promoting Democratic values and Human Rights:

The Indo-Pacific Strategy of the U.S. is emphasized often on promoting democracy, good governance and respect for Human Rights. It is in contrast to the authoritarian influence in the region. For example the U.S' ideology is based on **democracy** and that of China is based on **Socialism**.

### 4. Analysis:

Russia's return to South Asia and the U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy introduces complex geo-political landscape. The region may witness increased competition, economic dynamics and shifting alliances, having implications for regional security and stability. The U.S. and Russia while potentially competing in some areas, can find areas of cooperation and engagement in addressing common challenges in the Indo-Pacific and South Asia keeping in view the sensitivity of their tense relations.

## 5. Conclusion:

The resurgence of Russia has multifaceted dimension of interest in South Asia. Keeping in view its historical presence in the region. It has economic, diplomatic, geopolitical and security interests in the region. On the other hand the U.S. is advocating for its Indo-Pacific strategy which comprises of strategies of free and fair Indo-Pacific, Technological innovation, and military presence in the region. It also promotes its democratic values and Human rights in the region. Given both Russia and <sup>the</sup> U.S. as historic arch rivals South Asia and Indo-Pacific have the potential to escalate any conflict so, collaboration is needed on the behalf of two big Powers for the stability and security of both regions.

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