

Analyze major power politics in Indian Ocean Region with special reference to USA, China, Russia, and India. What are the prospects for Pakistan?

1. Introduction:

Robert D. Kaplan in his famous book 'Monsoon: The Indian Ocean and the Future of American Power' writes

"The Indian ocean is the epicenter of the 21st century's strategic competition, shaping global geo-politics and economics."

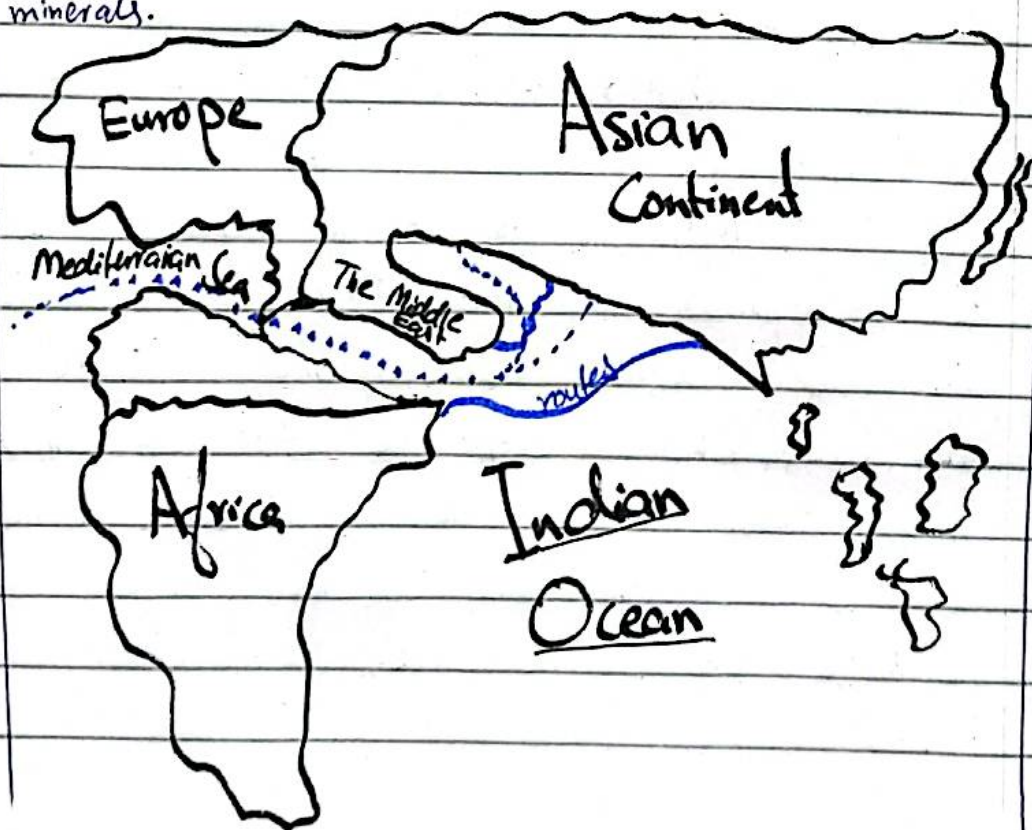
This signifies that Indian Ocean is a major hub of geopolitical, geostrategic, and geoeconomic powers. The gravity of powers of all major countries is shifted in this region because of its multipurpose importance. All major powers have their strategic and economic interests in Indian ocean, which shape the fate of current world order. Pakistan has significant opportunities and challenges in this competition ranging from geostrategic to geo-economics.

2. Significance of Indian Ocean: A

3)

Quick Overview:

Indian ocean a significant sea route for global trade and commerce. Carnegie Endowment Funds estimates that 80% of world's oil cargo and oil shipments pass through it. Moreover, it is a major connecting route, which connect Asia, Africa, Australia, and Middle East with each other. It also connects Europe and Mediterranean Sea with Indian ocean through Suez Canal. The ocean is rich in natural resources such as fish, marine species, oil and other crucial minerals.



3) Major Power Politics in Indian

Ocean Region (IOR) :-

Power politics between major countries is significant in this region, having particular interests of each country.

A) Geo-strategic Interest of the USA :-

The USA has major geostrategic interests in this region.

(i) Maintenance of military Presence in Asia:

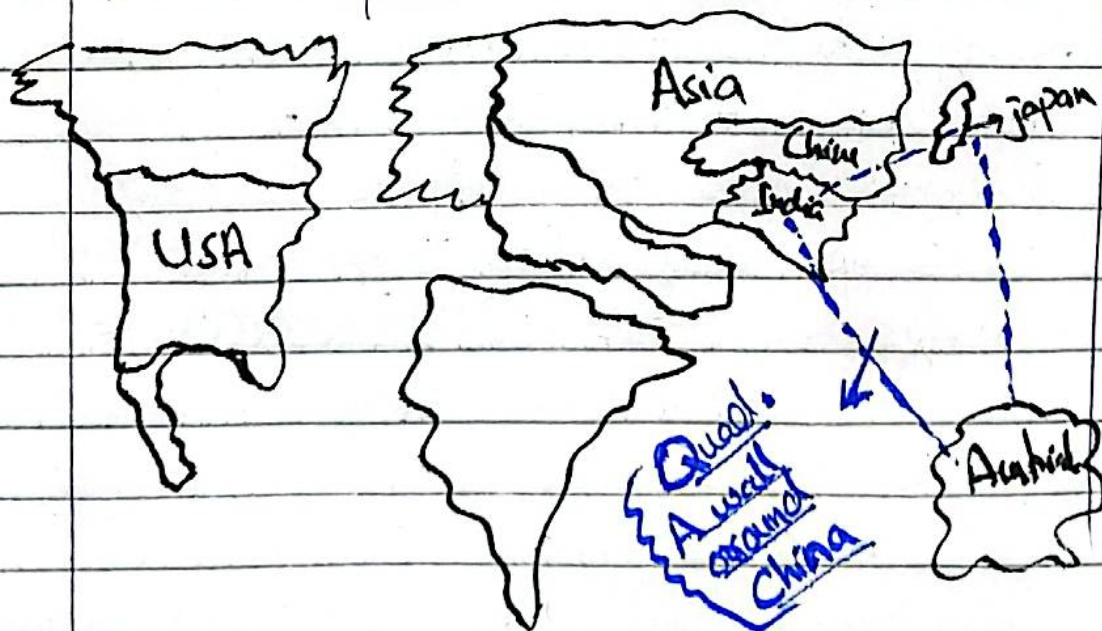
It is necessary to maintain military presence in Asia for USA to sustain its global hegemony. Therefore, the country is consistently building up military here. The major military base of Diego Garcia is here. Moreover, it has military base in Kuwait as well, with recently existed period of 10-year agreement.

ii) Countering rise of China with the help of India:

India is a major ally of USA in this region. It has been building its naval base with the help of India of help countering rise of China. It has recently carried out joint military and naval exercise in Indian Ocean with India.

iii) QUAD: a major strategic Partnership:

Quad is a group of four countries: India, USA, Japan, and Australia, in Indian ocean region aim at countering rise of China and countering Russian presence here.



iv) Ensuring check on Middle East, Pakistan, and Afghanistan.

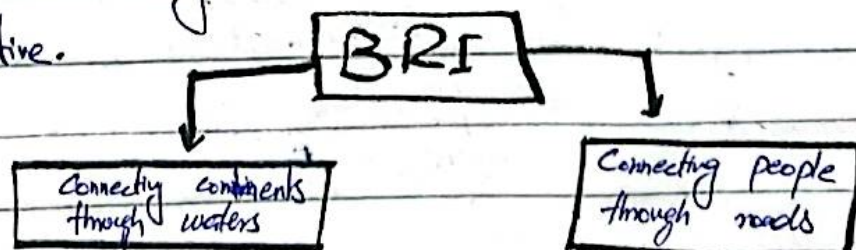
The instability in Middle East, Pakistan, and Afghanistan is a major challenge for US-led liberal order. Middle East has been a major ally of USA; Pakistan's tilt towards China; and terror and Opium rise in Afghanistan may shake the US interest in the region.

B) Geo-economic Interests of China

China has major geo-economic interests in this region along with geo-strategic.

i) Completion of Belt and Road Initiative:-

Belt and Road Initiative is a major policy framework of Chinese economic growth. China want its economic engagement in the region via Belt and Road Initiative.

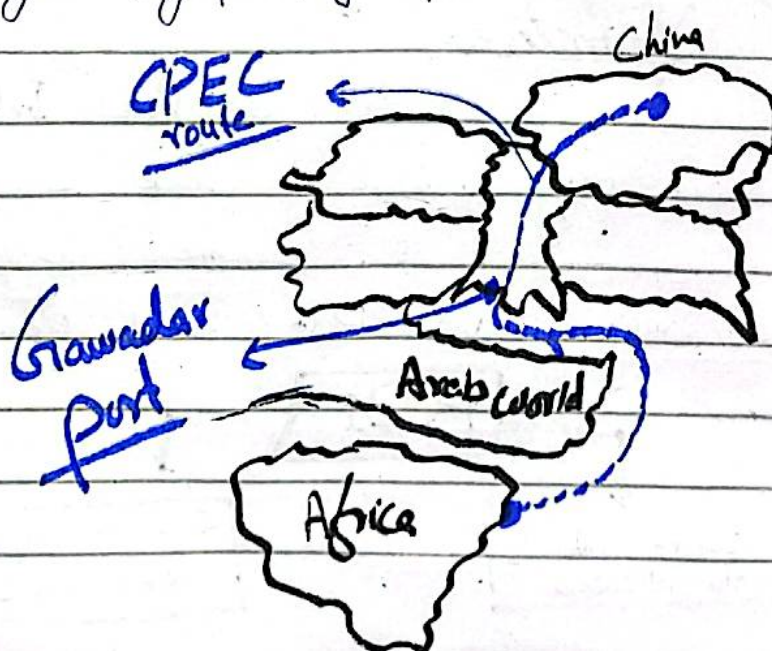


ii) Boosting naval presence in the region:

China aims at boosting naval power in the region. Pakistan is a major ally of China in this regard. China and Pakistan hold frequent naval drills and joint exercises in this region.

iii) Engagement with Arab world and Africa through CPEC:

China aims at the shortest route of engaging with Arab world and Africa. Africa is a rising ally of China, and Middle East is the major oil supplier to it. It is possible through flagship project of CPEC.



C) Russian Interests: Revival of Lost Prestige:

Russia wants to ensure its revival in this region which was lost after the disintegration of Soviet Union.

i) Strategic alliance with Iran and India:

India and Iran are major ally of Russia in Asia and IOR. Russia want to revive its lost prestige in IOR via Indian and Iranian cooperation and broader engagement with Arab world.

ii) Countering the military might of USA:

Russia and USA are major rival having opposite ideologies. Russia want mutual engagement with Asian partners and counter the military presence and economic engagement of USA. Kamsan Bukharin says,

“The growing engagement of Russia with Asian partners reflects its geostrategic interests in Indian Ocean”

D) Hegemonic Tendencies of India.

i) Claiming hegemony over IOR.

India is a major player in IOR, claiming its complete right over it. The growing naval power of India indicates its assertiveness in the Indian ocean.

ii) Countering rise of China:

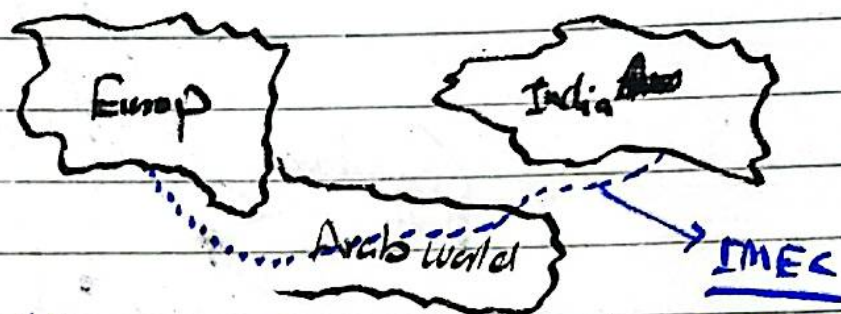
India use IOR as a region to counter the rise of China's economic and military power. In this regards, India has been extending its arms towards western powers to gain strategic legitimacy.

iii) Launching-ground against Pakistan.

Indian security policy majorly revolve against Pakistan. The growing naval power in the IOR reflect its intentions to use waters as a launching-ground against Pakistan in any future escalation.

iv) Broadening global connectivity:

Recently launched India-Middle East-Europe Corridor (IMEC) is a potential tool of India to ensure its broader connectivity from Middle East to Europe and then America-



4) Competition in Indian Ocean and Prospects for Pakistan:

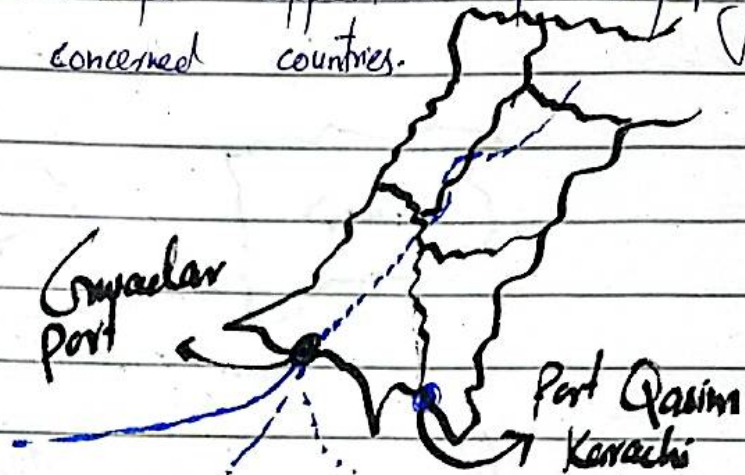
A) Opportunities for Pakistan:

(i) Alliance with major Powers:

Pakistan may build alliance with all major powers such as Russia, China, the USA, and other countries in this regard. It may overcome its security and economic needs.

ii) Gwadar: a hub for global trade:

Pakistan can use Gwadar as a hub for global trade. The deep port provide multiple opportunities of shipping companies and concerned countries.



iii) Provide larger connectivity to Central Asia:

Pakistan has potential to provide larger connectivity to central Asia, as they are landlocked countries. The country may get economic leverage and partnership from it.

iv) Boost Naval power:

Pakistan may boost its naval power by ensuring cooperation with allies. Moreover, it can get military cooperation from it.

B) Challenges for Pakistan:

i) Indian aggression:

Rise of Indian military and naval power in IOR is a major threat for Pakistan. It may deteriorate its defense and create security dilemma.

ii) Difficulty in Balancing foreign policy with the

rising competition in the IOR Pakistan may face difficulty in balancing relations with major powers. Pakistan want balanced foreign policy with China, USA, Russia, and all Muslim countries.

c) Conclusion:

Indian ocean is a hotspot of world politics carrying weight in geopolitics and geo-economics. The rising competition may harm the balance of power in the region and push the countries towards another major war. Pakistan is at the edge of this competition, which should maintain its policy toward any move.