

GS Paper 2

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Regional groupings /Agreements in South Asia

Indian Ocean Region

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Context

1) 21st June 2023---Naval ships deployed in the Indian Ocean region are visiting ports of friendly foreign countries and spreading the message of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' on International Day of Yoga forming an 'Ocean Ring of Yoga',

2) 2-4th June 2023----The **IISS Shangri-La** Dialogue took place in Singapore on 2–4 June. India stated, “India’s security architecture in the Indo-Pacific region and Indian Ocean Region to deter China’s aggressive designs including territorial claims is not based on military **alliances** but military partnerships with like minded countries including the USA”.

3) May 2023---6TH INDIAN OCEAN CONFERENCE (IOC)

Jointly organized by the Bangladesh's foreign ministry and the India Foundation, a New Delhi-based think tank.

Theme: Peace Prosperity and Partnership for a Resilient Future.

- It is a forum to discuss how the countries of the Indian Ocean region (IOR) can promote economic development while maintaining peace and stability. (First IOC was held in 2016 (Singapore))
- It provides a common platform to countries to deliberate upon the prospects of regional cooperation for Security And Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR).

4)April 2023--As per the report, China has, for the first time, announced 33 fixed reference sections to be surveyed by its ocean research vessels, which engulf significant regions in the South China Sea (SCS), Taiwan Strait, the western Pacific along with the eastern part of the Indian Ocean.

5)March 2023---The third edition of the France-led multilateral exercise La Pérouse is being conducted in the Indian Ocean region with participation by the navies of Quad countries—India, Japan and Australia and the US—and the UK's Royal Navy.

The first edition of the France-initiated La Pérouse multinational exercise was held in 2019 and saw the participation of the navies of Australia, Japan and the US. In the second edition in 2021, the Indian Navy joined in for the first time. The third edition will witness the participation of personnel, ships and integral helicopters of the five navies.

The indigenously built guided missile frigate INS Sahyadri and fleet tanker INS Jyoti will be participating in this edition

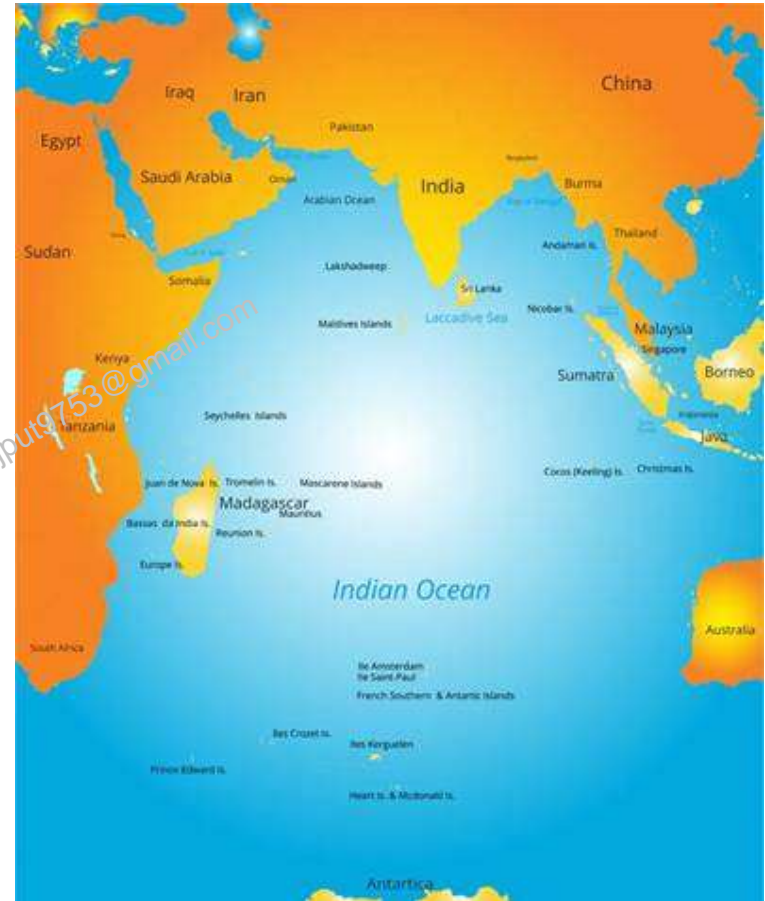
6) June 2022--- National Security Advisor Ajit Doval said the Indian Ocean Region has a potential for a **clash of interests** and that the country should be vigilant to protect its important asset.

7) August 2021--- India has proposed to convene an open debate of the UNSC on enhancing maritime security.

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What is IOR?

- The IOR consists of areas including littoral states of the Indian Ocean.
- It includes sub-regions, such as Australia, South East Asia, South Asia, the Horn of Africa and Southern and Eastern Africa.



Ques/-Indian Ocean Region (IOR) is important for ensuring Indian security. Considering this, discuss India's key initiatives in IOR or

Considering this, discuss India's policy of 'Security and Growth for All in the Region' (SAGAR) for IOR .

Ans/- Importance of Indian Ocean for India

1)Long Maritime Boundary

2)Home to 51 percent of India's proven oil reserves and 66 percent of natural gas reserves.

3)Abundance of natural Resources

4)Energy security

5)Trade security

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Three major Sea lanes of Communication (SLOCs) or major international choke points, plays a crucial role for energy security and economic prosperity.

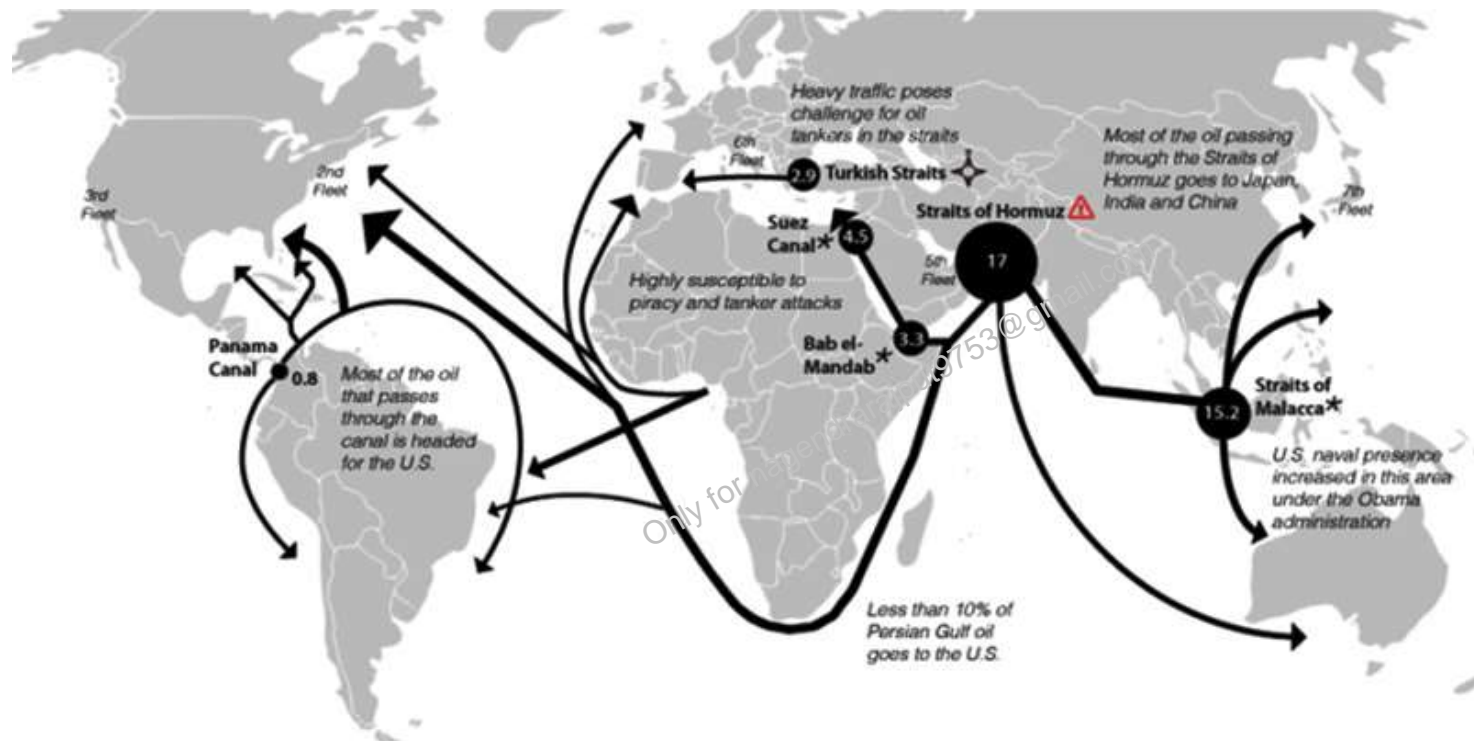
- ✓ **SLOC connecting the Red Sea to the Indian Ocean through the Bab al-Mandab** (that transports the bulk of Asia's international trade with its major trading partners in Europe and America),
- ✓ **SLOC connecting the Persian Gulf to the Indian Ocean through the Strait of Hormuz** (transporting the bulk of energy exports to **major import destinations like India, ASEAN and East Asia**),
- ✓ **SLOC connecting the Indian and Pacific Oceans through the Straits of Malacca** (integral to the smooth flow of trade with ASEAN, East Asia, Russia's Far East and the US)

6)Security threats (Traditional and non-traditional threats)

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Major Sea lanes of Communication or Major International Choke Points





India's key initiatives in IOR

I) India's 5 point framework for maritime security

On August 2021---Prime Minister Narendra Modi chaired a debate on maritime security at UNSC.

- i) Removing barriers to maritime trade. (e.g. SAGAR initiative)**
- ii) Maritime disputes “should be resolved peacefully and in accordance with international law,” adding that this was “extremely important for promoting mutual trust and confidence, and ensuring global peace and stability.” (e.g. India resolved its maritime boundary with Bangladesh)**

iii) **Countries jointly tackle maritime threats from non-state actors and natural disasters.** (India's role in the Indian Ocean has been that of a net security provider.)

iv) **Maritime environment and marine resources needed to be conserved, highlighting pollution from plastic waste and oil spills.**

v) **For responsible maritime connectivity, saying a structure was required to boost maritime trade,** with the development of global norms and standards.

2) Security and Growth For All in the Region (SAGAR) programme

The SAGAR project indicates:

- ✓ The primary responsibility for ensuring peace, stability and prosperity in the IOR would rest on those “who live in this region”.
- ✓ India’s role as a net security provider in the Indian Ocean region (IOR).
- ✓ Aims at sustainable development of all countries in the region.

Major focus under SAGAR initiative:

i.e. capacity building



1) Increasing capacities for protecting land and maritime territories and interests:

- ✓ India has held multilateral naval exercises called **Milan** in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands with 16 other countries and in the **Rim of the Pacific Exercise** (RIMPAC).
- ✓ Maritime cooperative action against piracy in the Gulf of Aden.
- ✓ Building of holistic naval base on Great Nicobar by India.

2) Increasing Engagement with countries

- ✓ Kaladan transport project leading to Sittwe port in Myanmar,
- ✓ the Trilateral Highway to Thailand,
- ✓ Chabahar port project in Iran.

3)Strengthening economic and security cooperation:

Blue economy emerges as a new pillar of prosperity Areas of focus.

4)Working towards sustainable regional development through enhanced collaboration

5)Disaster management:

- ✓ India's support to Madagascar which was ravaged by the Cyclone Ava in 2018.
- ✓ The Indian Navy and Air Force provided 1,000 tonnes of fresh water to Male to help Maldives which is suffering from an acute drinking water crisis.

6) Abidance to International Law:

India received **UNCLOS** tribunal award on the maritime boundary arbitration between India and Bangladesh.

7) Data Sharing

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III) Mission Sagar (Earlier we looked for Project SAGAR)

Mission Sagar was a COVID-19 relief mission launched by the government of India in May 2020 as a part of its efforts to provide essential aid to the Indian Ocean countries. Maldives, Mauritius, Madagascar, Comoros, and Seychelles were among the nations included.

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Ques: Discuss key challenges to India's Maritime Doctrine or approach to IOR.

1) Silos Approach in the Indian Ocean

2) India has comparatively lesser Hold on Strategic Chokepoint:

- China's first overseas military base was set up in the western Indian Ocean, in Djibouti in the Horn of Africa.
- Russia too recently acquired a base in Sudan, on the Red Sea coast, between the Suez Canal and Bab-el-Mandeb.

3) A continental bias

4)Increasing Chinese Assertiveness:

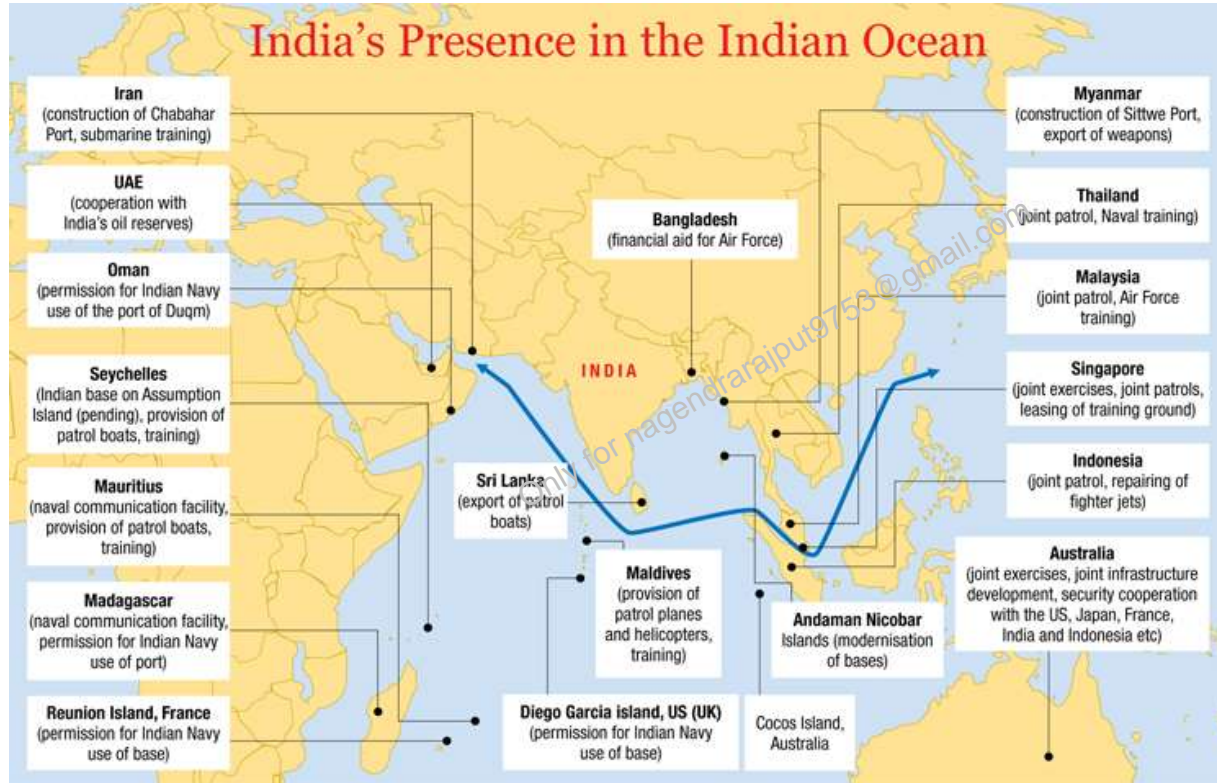
A Chinese defence official – “The Indian Ocean is not India’s ocean.”

Examples of China’s growing assertiveness in IOR:

- April 2023---As per the report, China has, for the first time, announced 33 fixed reference sections to be surveyed by its ocean research vessels, which engulf significant regions in the South China Sea (SCS), Taiwan Strait, the western Pacific along with the eastern part of the Indian Ocean.
- Continual monitoring of India’s tri-service military command based in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands by the Chinese navy.
- Increasing Chinese presence in Coco Island in IOR.

- Maritime Silk Road
- China is also associated with Myanmar naval bases at Munaung, Hainggyi, Katan Island and Zadaikyi Island. It is building radar, refit and refuel facilities at Khaukphyu, Mergui and Zadetkya Kyun.
- China is also constructing road and waterway links from its southern Yunnan province to Myanmar's Yangon port which will provide it direct access to the Bay of Bengal, obviating the need to cross the Malacca straits.
- In the south western Indian Ocean, China is increasing its dependence on Mauritius and the Maldives, thereby reducing Indian influence.

Way Forward



Conclusion

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