UNSC Debate on Maritime Security - A Secure Indian Ocean

What is the issue?

- India convenes an open debate of the UN Security Council (UNSC) on enhancing maritime security.
- In this regard, here is a look at the challenges and priorities for India with respect to the security of the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).

What are the challenges?

- The Indian Ocean region transports 75% of the world's maritime trade and 50% of daily global oil consumption.
- India has a long coastline of over 7,500 km.
- Climate-related events and piracy threats.

What is the SAGAR policy in this regard?

- India's Security and Growth for All (SAGAR) policy, unveiled in 2015, proposes an integrated regional framework to meet the security objectives in the Indian Ocean.
- 5 pillars of the SAGAR policy are:

    1. India's role as a net security provider in the Indian Ocean region (IOR).
    2. Active engagement with friendly countries in the IOR.
    3. Developing a network to take effective collective action for advancing peace and security.
    4. More integrated and cooperative focus on the future of the IOR; enhance the prospects for the sustainable development of the IOR countries
    5. The primary responsibility for peace, stability and prosperity in the IOR would be on those "who live in this region".

What are the highlights of the UNSC debate?

- It revives focus on the enforcement of UNCLOS's provisions on freedom of navigation, sustainable exploitation of maritime resources, and peaceful resolution of disputes.
- There were allegations of abuse of maritime resources and disrespect of territorial sovereignty rights of nations.
- These were mainly against the U.S., on the one hand, and China and Russia on the other.
- The debate brought to the fore new challenges to peace and security including from non-state actors.

- India brought to the forum a five-prong plan to enhance maritime security worldwide through cooperation. These are:

    1. removing barriers to legitimate maritime trade
    2. settling maritime disputes peacefully and based on international law
    3. jointly facing natural disasters and maritime threats created by non-state actors
    4. preserving maritime environment and resources

5. encouraging responsible maritime connectivity

What are the key priorities in enhancing maritime security?

- **Securing the sea lanes of communication (SLOCs) -** The debate must focus on ensuring equal and unrestricted access to SLOCs by states, while resolving differences through peaceful means.
- In the Indian Ocean, 3 major SLOCS that play a crucial role in the energy security and economic prosperity –

    1. SLOC connecting the **Red Sea to the Indian Ocean** through the Bab al-Mandab (transports the bulk of Asia's international trade with its major trading partners in Europe and America)
    2. 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)
    3. SLOC connecting the **Indian & 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)

- **Sharing data on threats to commercial shipping -** India established an International Fusion Centre (IFC) for the IOR in Gurugram in 2018.
- It is jointly administered by the Indian Navy and Indian Coast Guard, and works for generating Maritime Domain Awareness on safety and security issues.
- 40 international liaison officers from partner countries will eventually be located at the IFC.
- **Others -** Increasing role of the private sector
- Using the maritime domain to provide the critical submarine fibre-optic cables to support Digital Economy.

What lies ahead?

- UNSC should endorse a multiple stakeholder approach, which would set a paradigm for upholding "multi-dimensional" security
- UNCLOS is the only comprehensive framework of laws available to maritime powers to assert their rights.
- So India must advocate for ratification of UNCLOS by all major maritime powers, including the U.S.

Source: The Indian Express, The Hindu

SHANKAR IAS PARLIAMENT
Information is Empowering