



# A Secure Indian Ocean

## Why in News

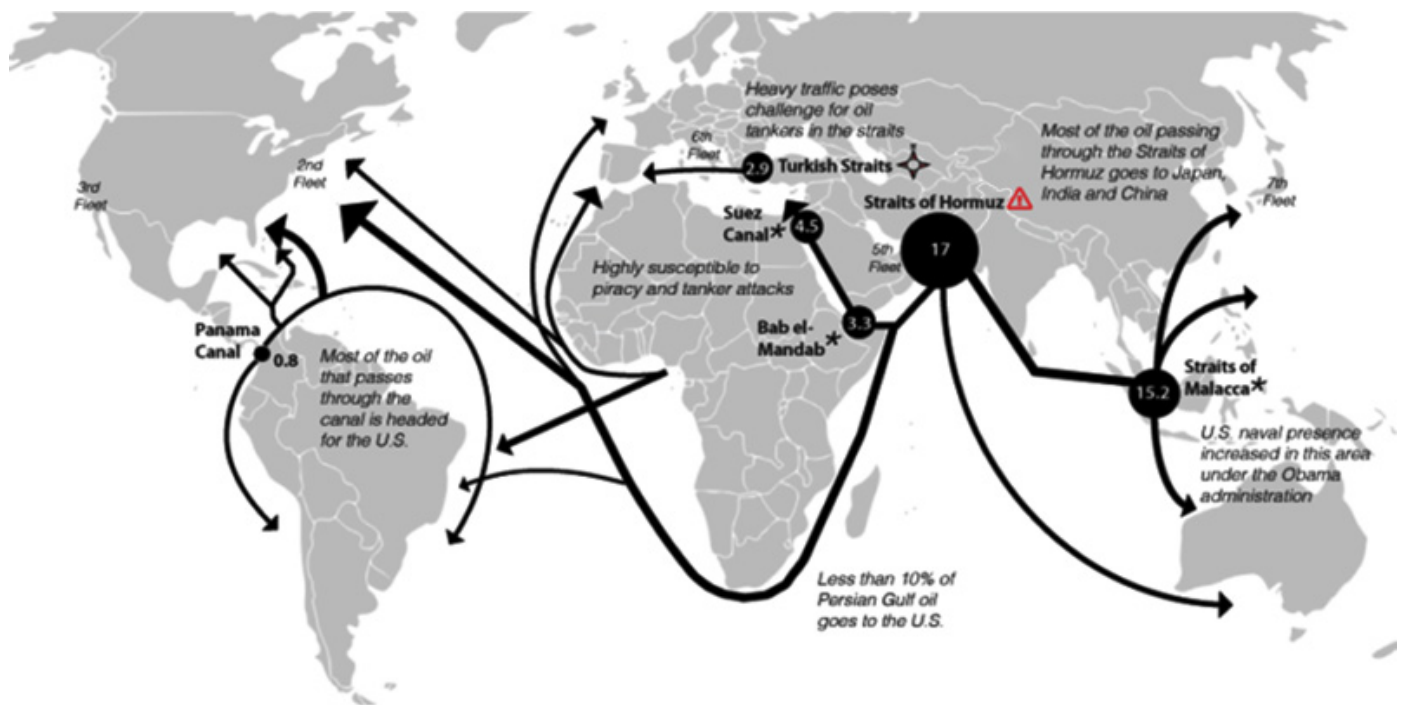
Recently, India has proposed to convene an open debate of the [UN Security Council \(UNSC\)](#) on enhancing maritime security.

- The objective of this debate is to **highlight effective international maritime cooperation** to respond holistically **to natural and manmade threats to maritime security**.
- It also reflects **India's international evolution as a maritime nation**.

## Key Points

### ▪ Importance of Indian Ocean for India:

- **Long Maritime Boundary:** With a coastline of over **7,500 km**, India has a natural interest in enhancing maritime security.
- **Securing Sea lanes of Communication:** In the Indian Ocean, **three major Sea Lanes Of Communication (SLOCs)** play a crucial role in the 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).
- The Indian Ocean region transports **75% of the world's maritime trade and 50% of daily global oil consumption**.



### ▪ India's Maritime Initiatives:

- **Disaster Management:** The fallout of the 2004 tsunami, which took a heavy toll on human and natural resources, led to the creation of an [Indian Ocean Tsunami Warning and Mitigation System](#) by the UN in 2005.
  - Through this, an international network seeks to prevent a recurrence of such devastation.
- **Anti-Piracy Operations:** Faced with the increased threat from piracy originating off the coast of Somalia since 2007 to shipping in the western Indian Ocean, the Indian Navy participated robustly as part of a **UNSC mandated 60-country Contact Group on Piracy off the coast of Somalia**.
- **Security and Growth for All (SAGAR) Policy:** India's SAGAR policy is an integrated regional framework, unveiled by **Indian Prime Minister during a visit to Mauritius** in March 2015. The pillars of SAGAR are:
  - India's role as a **net security provider** in the Indian Ocean region (IOR).
  - India would continue to **enhance the maritime security capacities and economic resilience** of friendly countries in IOR.
  - A more integrated and cooperative focus on the future of the IOR, which would enhance the prospects for the **sustainable development** of all countries in the region.
  - The primary responsibility for **peace, stability and prosperity in the IOR would be on those "who live in this region"**.
- **Abiding by the International Law:** India accepted an [United Nations Convention for the Law of the Sea \(UNCLOS\)](#) tribunal award on the maritime boundary arbitration between India and Bangladesh.
  - It envisaged contributing a new impulse to effective international economic cooperation among the littoral states of the Bay of Bengal (**BIMSTEC**).
- **Data Sharing:** Sharing data on threats to commercial shipping is an important component of enhancing maritime security.
  - In this context, India established an [International Fusion Centre \(IFC\) for the Indian Ocean region](#) in Gurugram in 2018.
  - IFC is jointly administered by the Indian Navy and Indian Coast Guard.
  - IFC serves the objective of generating Maritime Domain Awareness on safety and

security issues.

## Way Forward

- **International Cooperation:** Sustaining international cooperation to enhance maritime security requires two supportive frameworks in the policy and operational areas.
  - **Rule-of-law Based Approach:** There is a need to review the operational effectiveness of the UNCLOS.
    - Especially regarding the enforcement of its provisions on freedom of navigation, the sustainable exploitation of maritime resources, and the peaceful resolution of disputes.
  - **Securing the Sea Lanes of Communication:** Securing SLOCs that traverse the oceans is of central importance to enhancing maritime security.
    - Thus, the global debate must focus on ensuring equal and unrestricted access to SLOCs by states while resolving differences through peaceful means.
- **Engaging Private Sector:** There is a need for an increasing role of the private sector in the maritime domain, whether it is in shipping, sustainable development through the [Blue Economy](#).
  - Further, the use of the maritime domain can be leveraged to provide the critical submarine fibre-optic cables supporting the [Digital Economy](#).
- The ability of the UNSC to respond to the debate by endorsing a multiple stakeholder approach to enhancing maritime security would be a significant outcome, setting a paradigm for upholding “**multi-dimensional**” security in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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