

- **Geostrategic positioning:** Indian Ocean encompasses about 1/5th of the world's sea area and the Indian Peninsula extends 2000 kms into the sea, bringing approximately 50% of the Indian Ocean within a 1000-mile arc ascribed from Indian Territory. This is coupled with the presence of **major maritime chokepoints and Sea Lanes of Communications (SLOCs)**
 - This provides for a **dominant position for India in the middle of the Indian Ocean** linking its national and economic interests.
- **Assistance in wake of natural disasters and calamities:** India has been regularly conducting exercises to deepen the Humanitarian Aid and Disaster Relief (HADR) cooperation and coordination among our neighbours with the focus on sharing expertise and assisting building capabilities.
- **Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS):** It was conceived by the Indian Navy in 2008. It is a forum that seeks to enhance maritime cooperation among Navies of the littoral states of the IOR and helps to preserve peaceful relations between nations.

Impediments to India for being a Net Security Provider

- **Resource Availability vs Requirement:** Achieving the status of net security provider can put enormous strain on country's finite resources and calls for manifold increase in existing military hardware.
- **Existing Civil-Military Relationship:** The ambiguous civil-military relationship existing in India not only manifests itself in serious differences and lack of clarity over strategy formulation but also over undistorted execution of formulated policies.
- **Non-alignment Policy:** India has ideologically followed the principle of military non-alignment with any super power so as to retain its strategic autonomy which limits opportunities for deeper security partnerships with other countries.
- **Past Experience of Overseas Deployment of Armed Forces:** The recipe of net security provider does encompass 'Overseas Deployment' as a vital ingredient. However, the **experiences in Sri Lanka** continues to have a dragging effect on any thought process involving overseas deployment.
- **Shifting US Policy:** Uncertainty in Indo-Pacific policy of US would leave a vacuum in the IOR, which China would be more than obliged to fill. Consequently, for India, this would greatly increase the scope of maritime conflict with China, singly or collusively with Pakistan.
- **Frequency of resurgence and occurrence of non-traditional threats:** These include piracy, maritime terrorism, drug trafficking, illicit weapons trafficking, illegal migrants, etc. as well as, vagaries of climate change.

Approach needed for Net Security Provider

- **Focus on capacity building and military diplomacy:** India can easily enhance capacity building (mainly training) & military diplomacy as activities as they are largely uncontroversial and cost effective.
- **Higher Defence Organisation:** This would enable coherent application of strategic thoughts vis-à-vis a myopic threat assessment by individual services, which is the case at present.
 - In addition, it would also **facilitate establishing clearly defined priorities of defence acquisitions** and an assured budget for the same, which are pre-requisites for strategic planning.
- **Formulation of a National Defence Policy:** An assertive defence policy would inspire confidence, not only within India but also amongst the small littoral nations of IOR regarding India's intent, desire and capability to become a net security provider in the region.
- **Coherent IOR Strategy:** Instead of a piecemeal strategy on stand-alone basis with each IOR nation, coherent strategy would help in exerting a positive influence over these nations and help the smaller nations overcome any potential inhibition towards gauging India through the prism of 'Big Brother' syndrome.
- **Development of Andaman, Nicobar and Lakshadweep Islands:** This includes Infrastructure up-gradation in these islands and their development as a potent military base.
- **Capability Enhancement of IOR Nations** particularly their respective navies, would accrue immense benefit for the entire IOR. India is already involved in training of naval personnel from various IOR nations as part of exchange programmes.