

Colombo Security Conclave (CSC)

Why in news?

Recently, India's National Security Adviser (NSA), took part in the 6th NSA meeting of the Colombo Security Conclave (CSC) which agreed upon a road map for the year 2024.

What is Colombo Security Conclave?

- It is a **regional security grouping** initially known as the Trilateral for Maritime Security Cooperation.
- **Established in - 2011**
- **Aim** - To promote a safe, secure, and stable Indian Ocean, with India playing a leadership role.
- **Membership - 4**
 - **India, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives** were part of trilateral maritime security collaboration, while **Mauritius** joined at 5th meeting of grouping in Male in 2022.
- **Observer status - Bangladesh and Seychelles**, now they have received invitations to become active participants in the group.

The CSC countries are all members of the 2 region-wide Indian Ocean groupings, the [Indian Ocean Rim Association \(IORA\)](#), and the [Indian Ocean Naval Symposium \(IONS\)](#).

- **5 pillars**
 - Maritime safety and security
 - Countering terrorism and radicalisation
 - Combating trafficking and transnational organised crime
 - Cyber-security and protection of critical infrastructure
 - Humanitarian assistance and disaster relief
- **Permanent secretariat - In Colombo**, established in 2021 to coordinate all activities and implement decisions made at the National Security Advisor (NSA) level.
- **Meeting** - It happens at the level of NSA and deputy NSA.
- **Security-focused exercises** - In 2021, India, Sri Lanka, and Maldives conducted **Exercise Dosti XV** in Maldives and they subsequently conducted their 1st joint exercise in the Arabian Sea named as **Table Top Exercise (TTX)**.
- **Significance** - Since 2021, it has investigated terrorism and terror financing, narcotics trafficking, cybercrime and security, marine pollution, maritime law, and coastal security.
- **Conducting conferences** - In 2022, for the 1st time, the organisation held a
 - Conference of oceanographers and hydrographers

- Conference on coastal security and the next iterations of these conferences are scheduled for 2024.
- **Joint working groups** - It is to focus on terrorism, cyber-security, humanitarian aid and disaster relief (HADR), trafficking and transnational organised crimes.
- **Collaborating on capacity-building** - In sectors such as counter-terrorism, police, law enforcement, and cyber-security.

What is the changing dynamics of CSC?

- **Disruption** - It started in 2011 but it came to a standstill after 2014 due to rising tensions between India and the Maldives which led to the **suspension of meetings between 2014 and 2020**.
- **Revival** - **In 2020**, India pushed for the revival and thus it was **rebranded as Colombo Security Conclave**.
- India also expressed interest in expanding the CSC to the Seychelles and Bangladesh who are currently observer nations.
- **Reason for revival** - It is due to increasing importance of Indian Ocean in an evolving multipolar world today, with extra-regional powers competing to make inroads in the region.
- It is partially linked to the increased Chinese presence in Indian Ocean along with its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) projects.
 - China has established a base in Djibouti and controls Sri Lanka's Hambantota port.
- **Space for India's leadership** - It offers India an opportunity to institutionalise its role, shape the regional security architecture, and better address the existing and emerging threats.
- India plays as the 1st responder in the IOR, be it to avert coups or to offer humanitarian and economic assistance during COVID-19 and multi-faceted crises.

What are the challenges faced by CSC?

- **Domestic politics** - It remains vulnerable to domestic political changes in member-states, as evidenced by the Maldives' absence from the recent meeting.
- **Chinese influence** - All member-states being democracies may continue to play nationalist and pro-China cards for domestic and external benefits as the Indo-Pacific region grows in prominence.
- **Emerging Sub-regionalism** - The convergence of 6 Indian Ocean region countries within the CSC signifies the emergence of sub-regionalism on a unified maritime and security platform.

What lies ahead?

- Uphold a common strategic vision emphasizing the importance of not being hindered by the escalating Chinese influence in the region.
- Avert points of contention with neighbouring countries and foster collaboration in the region.

References

1. [The Hindu | Evolving role of CSC](#)
2. [Hindustan Times | CSC roadmap for IOR](#)

