

Changing Dynamics in the Global Environment: The Maldives Story

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Abstract— This paper analyzes the paradigm shift in the national security and the impacts this global change to the Maldives, how the nation could overcome the changing dynamics. While national security has traditionally been centered on the strategies of leaders in their pursuit of national interests, modern day threat spectrum has evolved to include interstate conflicts, civil wars marked by genocide, abuses of human rights, attacks on civilian populations by terrorist organizations, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, global pandemics, and the catastrophic effects of global climate change. This century has presented distinct and extremely impactful global events: from evolving and increasing terrorist attacks to civil wars, democratization movements across the Middle East, and refugee crises. In the backdrop of this global myriad of conflicts and challenges, Maldives needs to adapt in order to face and overcome these security threats. The threats emanate from the polarization of extremism and liberalism when it comes to religion, the economy's overdependence on tourism, the lack of diverse industries to support the economy, and climate change. This paper looks at some of the solutions to address the said issues by addressing the concern of rising extremist ideologies through rehabilitation programmes, and planning and developing sustainable economic projects from a holistic and inclusive approach.

Keywords— Security, Maldives, Threats

I. INTRODUCTION

National security has traditionally been centered on the strategies of leaders in their pursuit of national interests, with a focus on military, diplomatic, economic, and informational instruments of power. This century has seen that the number and character of threats have become more numerous and complex, with some threats crossing national boundaries and challenging the well-being of humanity as a whole. The modern day threat spectrum now includes interstate conflicts, civil wars marked by genocide, abuses of human rights, and attacks on civilian populations by terrorist organizations, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, global pandemics, and the catastrophic effects of global climate change. There is a paradigm shift in the notion of security. The traditional notion of security was deemed too narrow because it ignored the degree to which ordinary people felt threatened by day to day issues like crime, hunger, disease, and environmental hazards. While the traditional definition of security remains important, the broader concept of “human security” is the main focus of governments in the twenty-first century.

In today's increasingly globalized world, the Maldives stands at crossroads with respect to its socio-economic transformations, ideological transformations, and environmental

degradation. How well the nation of Maldives would cope with the aforementioned changes is a question all Maldivians ask.

The objective of the study is to discuss the main challenges faced by Maldives in the security environment and socio-economic, religious, and environmental arena and recommend paths that the country could follow to reduce any adverse impacts.

II. METHODOLOGY

This research is a qualitative analysis of the changing global environment and its effect on the Maldivian security environment. Major socio-economic, ideological, and environmental changes that accelerated in this century were analyzed with its implications to the Maldivian security environment. Some research documents in the above-mentioned fields were analyzed with its effects and repercussions in a Maldivian context as it relates to a small island state with a small population with limited resources and a limited economy.

Trends and patterns were analyzed to find and weed out contradictions so that reliable accepted trends agreed upon by the mainstay of intellectual community were discussed.

The research is limited in that there are very few researches done on the changing dynamics of small island states and Maldives is unique amongst even small island states with regard to its homogeneity and geo-strategic location in one of the most crucial Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs) in the Indian Ocean.

III. DISCUSSIONS AND RESULTS

A. Changing Security Dynamics of the Twenty-First Century

This century saw extremely important events in the security spectrum of the world. These include, but are not limited to the 9/11 attacks and the global war on terror, the rise of non-state actors like Al Qaida and ISIS, the democratic movement in the Arab world known as Arab Spring, the civil war in Syria, and mass exodus of refugees to name a few. After the end of the Cold War, the bi-polar balance of power gave way to a global hegemony: the United States of America. They were especially superior in conventional warfare. However, 9/11 proved the high impact of non-state actors and transnational nature of threats. Terrorist attacks orchestrated and carried out by various non-state actors across the world following the 9/11 attacks changed the threat spectrum. Terrorists had a new modus operandi: inflict as much damage as possible until killed. This determinant tactic made the superiority of the United States' superior conventional power inadequate to effectively address the issue, and regard it as a matter of changing, and eventually winning, the hearts and minds.

The militaries around the world need to understand that these transnational non-state actors will not try to directly engage them in a military conflict, but would rather try to conduct attacks on a wide variety of fronts using different techniques and tactics that does not call for a military response. The Global War on Terror and its ineffective use in Afghanistan and Iraq shows that the use of military as the preeminent element of national power should be limited to the first phase of the operations. The failure to understand the situation on the adversary's terms lead to a failure in the overarching national strategy in both nations. Today the common people of both Afghanistan and Iraq feel less secure than they felt before the invasion and the security environment in both nations have deteriorated further.

In today's globalized world, threats faced by nations are global in nature, most of the attacks are carried out by terrorist organizations of a global reach, which do not respect geographical boundaries or religious beliefs or ethnic makeup of a society. To counter these threats, it is important to strengthen the intelligence organizations and put mechanisms in place for inter-agency and international collaboration amongst the intelligence communities of the world (Carlson, n.d.). The movement of terrorism related finance, weapons trafficking, and terrorist communications can be thwarted if intelligence communities share timely actionable information across the board.

B. Global Maritime Security Domain and its Implications to Maldives

Maldives, being a nation that comprises of 99.7% ocean, depends on safe, secure, and clean seas and oceans for prosperity and peace. It is through adequate maritime security that we can maintain the rule of law in areas beyond national jurisdiction and protect our seas.

Though there is no set definition of maritime security, it is commonly accepted as absence of threats such as maritime inter-state disputes, maritime terrorism, piracy, trafficking of narcotics, people, and illicit goods, arms proliferation, illegal fishing, environmental crimes, or maritime accidents, and national and manmade disasters.

Maritime security is a major challenge for the poorer coastal and island countries of the Indian Ocean Region. The Indian Ocean has an area of around 73.5 million square kilometres and is the busiest trade route of the twenty-first century. The Indian Ocean region comprises all the littoral and island states of that ocean. There are forty eight littoral states of Indian Ocean. They are eighteen in Africa, eleven in the Middle East, seven in South Asia, six in Southeast Asia, five island states, and Australia.

Managing maritime security is a challenging endeavor that requires cooperation between regional countries. For the Indian Ocean region, there is a collaborative mechanism in Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS), which addresses shared maritime security challenges and threats.

In addition, Maldives, signed a tripartite maritime security pact with India and Sri Lanka with a view of enhancing Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) through Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) surveillance, training, and capacity building initiatives in areas of MDA, Search and Rescue, and Oil Pollution Response; and joint activities including trilateral exercises, maintaining lines of communication on illegal maritime activities, formulation of marine oil pollution response contingency plans, and cooperation in legal and policy issues related to piracy.

The way forward for maritime security is these collaborative mechanisms as the borders are porous when it is right next to international waters where merchant shipping vessels have right of way.

C. Ideological Dilemmas Facing the Muslim World and Maldives in Particular

The Muslim world in general and Maldives in particular are facing Ideological dilemmas. In this era of Islamic revivalism, the Muslim Brotherhood, the forerunner of Sunni revivalism and

the Shiite Islamism tended towards ideological convergence and collaboration. This can be seen from an article by the Muslim Brotherhood (Judeoscope, 2006):

Many commentators in the West still believe in the fairy tale that Sunni and Shia Islamists are at odds. Though most Sunni jihadis tend to see Shias as heretics and Hezbollah as a Zionist tool (go figure), the Muslim Brotherhood, by far the most popular of the Middle East's radical Islamists, and the Shia Islamists' history of mutual influence and collaboration traces back to the first Islamic revivalists of the 19th century and the political thought of the Brotherhood's own founder.

Throughout the twentieth century, Shiite and Sunni Islam had a very complex relationship with one another. The leading Shiite state of Iran (the cultural and theological centre of Shiite Islam) and the leading Sunni State of Egypt, (the cultural and theological centre of Sunni Islam) were the centres of Islamic revivalism. However, both movements have the same goal and ideals of a Pan-Islamist Unity. It is this concept of pan Islamic unity that is the driving force behind all streams of Islamist revivalism. It is also the main political tool that is used in the mobilization of a diverse people from all corners of the Muslim world in the service of a common political agenda. Both Sunni and Shiite Islamists often claim that the resistance against west requires that Muslims put aside their differences and this is the rhetoric used by Iran, Hamas, Hezbollah, ISIS, and Al Qaeda.

1) Extremism vs. Liberalism: The Maldives has a strong history of its liberal views on religion. However, the youth of today is facing a dilemma in regards to ideology. There is a strong polarization of extremism vs. liberalism occurring throughout the Maldives. The increased movement of Maldivian Foreign Terrorist Fighters travelling to Syria, the added exposure of hard lined clerics in the media, and the extremist views on dress codes, cultural etiquette like shaking hands, and vaccination are grave concerns, to name a few. Maldives need to propagate a comprehensive counter narrative to the extremist narrative if we want to remain the moderate Muslim Nation that we have been throughout history and to remain as the West's version of "Paradise on Earth."

2) Rise of Islamophobia and its Implications: Anti-Muslim sentiment has been on the rise in Western Europe and the United States following the increasing terrorist attacks by Islamist terrorist organizations. Recently, the degree of Islamophobia has been revealed on multiple occasions. For example, debates about the construction of an Islamic center near Ground Zero in New York City and mosque controversies in a dozen states in the United States; anti-veiling legislation in France; the 'minaret' row in Switzerland; and the killing of Turkish immigrants in Germany are some of the well-known examples. Reports prepared by the European Center for Monitoring of Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC) in Europe (EUMC, 2006) and by Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR, 2006) in the United States also pointed to the rise of Islamophobia. Furthermore, recent polls found that Western citizens have strong negative feelings about Islam and Muslims (Esposito & Mogahed, 2007).

In 1997, in its much cited report, "Islamophobia: A Challenge for us All", the Runnymede Trust described Islamophobia as "unfounded hostility towards Islam." It refers also to the practical consequences of such hostility in unfair discrimination against Muslim individuals and communities, and to the exclusion of Muslims from mainstream political and social affairs. By

and large, the Runnymede report has provided the most comprehensive definition of Islamophobia. This definition includes such themes as otherness, inferiority, and fear of Islam and the perception of Islam as an aggressive and violent religion prone to terrorism. Western citizens view Muslims as fanatical, violent, and supportive of terrorism because they perceive them to be threatening to their physical well-being and cultural values.

In recent clashes between Islam and Islamic civilizations and that of others, there has been a misconstrued understanding of the religion and its teachings. Islam is a religion that respects all religions, their Prophets, and holy books. Just as the any acts of terrorism cannot subject an entire people, society, or nation, it must be noted that isolated acts of terrorism by extremists cannot be blamed upon a population of 1.3 billion Muslims dispersed around the world.

Majority of the western media has widely depicted Islam with these negative characteristics to fuel the “phobia” side of this perception. A lot needs to be done to change this misperception. The media should emphasize the universal message of Islam; and by doing so, they can be a medium through which conflicts can be resolved. Media’s influence and role is that of a universal guardian; an institution that formulates religious, cultural, social, and political values. Its role must be played in a positive direction; one of unity and the advocator of the Oneness of all religions and faiths and increase the knowledge of Islam explained correctly. An informed citizenry may be less inclined to perceive a threat from all Muslims and hence may be the cure to the unfounded hostility and fear of Islam in the West.

3) Rise of Foreign Terrorist Fighters and the Success and Challenges in stopping their Movement: What is ravaging the Middle East right now is obviously deeper than ISIS. It has become commonplace over the last year to observe that we are witnessing the collapse of the post-Ottoman order. Sykes-Picot lines drawn in the deserts are being blown to dust. Though ISIS has religious, psychological, and technological faces, in most fundamental respects it is an anti-colonial movement that takes as its reference point Islam’s pre-colonial Sunni caliphate. Even if ISIS is crushed, this idea of “Caliphate” is likely to persist and return.

As far as Maldives is concerned, there is a fragmentation of religious consciousness in today’s youth. Contrast this with the observation by anthropologist Clarence Maloney in the 1970s: Islam in the Maldives was limited to washing, fasting and praying. What he meant was that Islam was largely a practice and there were no theological arguments at all. However, Islam has by now become the contest of vigorous disagreements. Islam is an object of vigorous talks, disputes, and theorisation.

There are a number of Maldivian youths joining the Al Qaeda’s Jabhat al-Nusra in Syria. For the youth travelling to Syria, the Maldives is under jahiliyya (religious darkness) and is ruled under a taghut (idolatrous system). Maldivians, they believe, should undertake hijra (migration to a pious land) and perform jihad (wage a holy war) against the non-believers.

The majority of Maldivian Foreign Terrorist Fighters have joined al-Nusra. The accusation that Maldivians are joining ISIS may not be factually correct as al -Nusra is not in agreement with ISIS and its ideology of an Islamic State in the current mode. Maldivian fighters who are with al-Nusra continue to portray ISIS as a deviant group.

However, it is irrelevant as to which group, the Foreign Terrorist Fighters belong. The government of Maldives is earnestly working to stem the foreign fighter flow from the Maldives and have been successful in stopping the jihadis from travelling to Syria. This has resulted in an increase in the number of youths with violent extremist ideologies who are frustrated because they were unable to fulfil their dreams of mansions in paradise. The government of Maldives needs to conduct very comprehensive deradicalisation and counter-radicalization programs to rehabilitate these youth back into the mainstream of Maldivian population.

D. Economic Security and its Impact on National Security – Maldives Story

1) Rise of Tourism: Maldives was traditionally a sea faring people. Their livelihood depended on fisheries and merchant shipping. The industry that transformed the face of Maldives started in 1972 with the opening of Kurumba Village with thirty guest rooms. Then nobody would have thought that a bunch of small islands scattered in the Indian Ocean is set to be one of the world's top tourist destinations today. However, today Maldives is on the front pages of most of the magazines of the tourism and travel industry and is considered to be the world's most prestigious destination.

2) Need for Diversification into other Industries: Both the fishing industry and the tourism industry are seasonal and fickle industries. Especially the tourism industry on which the whole Maldivian economy is dependent could be devastated by a natural or environmental disaster, a pandemic or terrorist incident, a travel ban or a Wall Street crash to name a few. This has led to the need for diversification of the economy. The lagoons of Maldives are natural habitats that could be economically viable for aquaculture. The hundreds of islands that are uninhabited could be used for the manufacturing industry, as there is an abundance of renewable energy such as solar, wave and geothermal energy available in Maldives and a network of airports throughout the nation for transport of goods.

3) Use of Maldives' Strategic Location: Today Maldives is set to utilize its strategic location straddling the main sea lines of communication in the Indian Ocean to its economic advantage. The "iHavan" project next to the 8-degree channel where most of the Indian Ocean merchant ships travel is set to transform the Maldivian economy by an order of magnitude. The "iHavan" project is an integrated project designed for the northern most atolls of Maldives. The project capitalizes on the strategic location of the atolls straddling the 8-degree channel, which is the main East- West shipping route of the Indian Ocean.

The components of the project include investments in transshipment port facility, airport development, and a cruise hub, yacht marina, bunkering services, dockyard, real estate and conventional tourism developments. More than US\$ 18 trillion worth of goods are transported across the 8-degree channel annually, with over 70,000 ships crossing the Indian Ocean every year.

A transshipment port stands to benefit from the growing trade volumes passing through the 8-degree channel because of strong growth in India and China. iHavan's central location in the Indian Ocean will have easy access more than thirty large cities within a radius of 4000

km presenting immense opportunity for online trading businesses and mass warehousing for large scale retailers.

Furthermore, the unrivalled natural beauty of the island's geography in the region has huge potential for high-end real estate and tourism development (Ministry of Economic Development, 2014).

4) Energy and Food Security: Maldives is a nation that is heavily dependent on the import of fossil fuel for nearly all its energy use and is highly susceptible to external shocks. The Maldivian government is concerned about environmental degradation, global warming, sea level rise, and emission of greenhouse gasses (GHG) and pursuing policy of using renewable energy wherever it is feasible. The use of solar energy is already on the rise in the electricity generation of the Maldives.

Maldives' 2015 energy balance shows that there was approximately 500 kilo tonnes of oil equivalent of energy consumed in the Maldives of which over 80% was from imported diesel oil. Energy consumption contributes to about 1.7 million tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions in 2016, which is about 0.003% of global emissions. Energy consumption in various sectors constitutes a major share of the country's GHG emissions. Maldives intends to take actions and undertakings to reduce unconditionally 10% of its GHG emissions by the year 2030 by incorporating extensive use of solar power.

Food security in Maldives is unique as the country depends on imports for most of its food needs. Fishing and subsistence agriculture are the main sources of food security and livelihoods for a vast majority of the people. Climate change is central to all discussions about food security in Maldives, because it is adversely affecting crops and fish stocks and reducing land area and the fresh water lenses of the islands as the sea level rises. Developing agriculture as the third pillar of the economy, after tourism and fishing, is one of the priorities of the National Development Plan of the Maldives.

E. Human Security from the Perspective of Maldives

1) Disaster Resilient Communities: Maldives, due to its low lying nature and the flat topography, regularly get affected by high frequent, low impact seasonal events such as monsoonal flooding, coastal erosion, salt water intrusion, and intense sea surges related flooding due to climate change and sea-level rise. Maldives is exposed in the open sea to Tsunamis that may develop in the active Sumatra fault. Therefore, the eastern sectors of the northern and central islands are highly exposed to tsunamis generated in the Indonesia Region. The northern islands have the greatest exposure to surge hazards and cyclones. Maldives experience thunderstorms, flash floods, and water shortage during the dry North east Monsoon.

Disaster resilience is the ability of individuals, communities, organisations, and states to adapt to and recover from hazards, shocks or stresses without compromising long-term prospects for development. The National Disaster Management Centre (NDMC) of Maldives is entrusted the mission to "save lives and protect livelihood" and are given a set of mandates (National Disaster Management Centre, 2016) to make Maldives a more disaster resilient nation. Their mandates include both natural disasters (tsunamis, sea surges, floods, heavy rainfalls etc.) and man-made disasters (fires, water shortages, oil spills etc.). NDMC has initiated successful

awareness programs and, in collaboration with UNDP, initiated disaster risk reduction and management programs and with UNICEF, have initiated the Low Emission Climate Resilient Development (LECRd) Programme.

2) Gender Equality: Empowering women and promoting gender equality is crucial to accelerating sustainable development. Ending all forms of discrimination against women and girls is not only a basic human right, but it also has a multiplier effect across all other development areas. Gender equality is one of 17 Global Goals that make up the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (UNDP, 2012).

This year, 55 percent of students passing out of high school in 2015 were girls. In August of 2016, the Maldivian Parliament approved the Gender Equality Act. The law that sets out the role of government, political parties, and businesses in bridging gender gaps in political, economic, and family life. The Gender Equality Act requires employers to provide equal opportunities and equal pay for men and women, set up committees to investigate complaints of discrimination, and take measures to eliminate obstacles to women's participation in the labour force.

Clearly, the success of women directly reflects the success of a society as a whole. Of all the criticisms leveled at Muslim countries by far, the most common is the position of women in society. Some have dismissed Islam as an inherently misogynistic religion that has no tolerance for gender equality, exacerbated by the false narrative perpetrated over decades that Muslims hold values that are incompatible with other nations or cultures. Men and women were described in The Quran as equal members of society. The movement towards true gender parity within the Muslim world will require efforts across generations and political divides. It will continue to rely on the bravery of women to challenge discrimination as well as on the support of men. Maldives is a shining example of gender equality to the Muslim World.

3) Climate Change and Sea-Level Rise: The Maldives believes that climate change is the twenty-first century's greatest development and security challenge. Climate change threatens the integrity of Earth's climate system and ecosystems. Negative effects are already taking place and these will gravely undermine our efforts towards sustainable development and threaten our very survival and the sovereignty of our nation. We have a right to pursue all means to ensure that our nation survives, and our legacy remains in these islands. We have an obligation to hand these beautiful islands over to the future generations.

According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), Small Island Developing States (SIDS) like the Maldives are the ones who will be hit first and hardest by global climate change. SIDS have not only contributed the least to climate change, they are also among the least equipped to respond and adapt to the effects of climate change. Additionally, these islands are in a special risk of being inundated as sea level rise. Land loss and beach erosion continues to increase and threatens food and water security. However, SIDS cannot do this alone; regional and global cooperation is imperative to put Small Island Developing States like Maldives on a pathway to build a climate resilient economy in order to mitigate and adapt to climate change. Therefore, international cooperation is essential to fight against climate change. Any failure to reach an agreement to radically cut emissions would jeopardize our

development and survivability. Recognizing this, the international community is actively engaged in minimizing the current effects and likely future adverse impacts through effective implementation of the provisions of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

Within the context of extreme vulnerability to climate change impacts and to address these impacts, the Maldives has developed a National Climate Change Policy Framework, to provide a blueprint to build resilience in partnership with our regional and global partners. In this context, the Maldives Climate Change Policy Framework (MCCPF) prescribes the government and the people of Maldives strategic policies for responding to climate change impacts over the next 10 years (2014–2024). The policy defines five thematic goals and strategies that the government and the people of Maldives have prioritized for implementation to ensure that safety and resilience are achieved.

IV. CONCLUSION

The post 9/11 security scenario is that the threat spectrum has shifted predominantly towards asymmetrical threats from non-state actors. For nations with International borders in the sea, the threat is going to emanate from the sea and there is need to have international and regional mechanisms to address the complex issues of maritime security. Being a 100% Muslim country, we are not immune from ideological dilemmas facing the Muslim world and need to formulate a national framework to address the issue of violent extremism and radicalization. The issue of climatic change threatens the very existence of low-lying nations like Maldives and we need to convince the international community to reduce the emission of Green House Gases to ensure the survivability of Small Island Developing States like Maldives.

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