

Maritime Security Dynamics of Archipelagic States: The Case of Maldives

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Abstract

Maldives is an archipelagic state situated in the birth place of maritime civilization- the Indian Ocean. In recent years, Maldives has seen a growing attraction towards its maritime space with the expanding economy fuelled by growing international tourism, shipping, overseas trade and fisheries. Owing to the strategic position of the country and its proximity to vital Sea Line of Communication (SLOC) that are infested with rising threats and crimes. Though Maldives does not have any territorial disputes with neighboring countries, the country is facing great challenges in dealing with narcotics, ERF and other non- traditional maritime threats especially environmental challenges. Maldives is facing various threats for her existence other than the issues faced due to climate changes. In order to meet these challenges it is proposed in this paper, the re-conceptualizing of Maldivian maritime management. An umbrella organization of Maritime Authority is proposed to synchronize the operations and information gathering of the Marine Police, Customs Services and Immigration department. Increased regional cooperation is proposed in order to tackle the collective non-traditional maritime security threats faced by the region as a whole. This paper does an extensive comparative analysis of the practices held in the regional and other archipelagic countries to draw lessons for Maldivian case study.

Keywords: Indian Ocean, Archipelagic State, Non-traditional Security, Maritime Threats

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1. Maritime Character of Maldives and Scope of the Study

Characterized by its surrounding vast seas, Maldives is a coastal state situated in the birthplace of the Maritime Civilization - the Indian Ocean. The very reason of its birth and evolution as a nation was seen through its important geographic position when sailors and traders who traversed the Indian Ocean stopped their vessels in these islands to take refuge from adverse weather conditions, where this eventually led to the settlement of its earliest inhabitants. Maldives was formed up by two chains of disconnected tiny islands, placed in north-south direction, the ocean is where all of its security and economic interests lie, either within or interlinked.¹ Marine resources are the country's main natural endowments and the seas are its climate regulator, transport route, and trade route of the nation. The reliance on the seas for sustenance and security defines the country's maritime identity.

This research work is intended to study and critically analyse only non-traditional maritime security threats and risks in the Indian Ocean which are detrimental to the security and future of Maldives. The research will not address traditional threats, and therefore security issues arising from political or military rivalry in the region are out of the scope of this research paper. Due to the ongoing restructuring of the country's Defence forces, this research becomes quite pertinent to provide essential policy recommendation for the new Defence doctrine to cope up with the emerging challenges to the maritime security of the country. For the purpose of this research a qualitative research study is conducted. Qualitative research compared to quantitative research

2. Threat Infestation and Maldives' Concern

The world has witnessed an evolving strategic environment in the IOR post- Cold War. The shift of focus from a Euro-Atlantic to the

¹ "Maldives History - Early Settlers, Conversion to Islam, Maldivian Heroes, The British Protectorate, Independence". Accessed 12 October 2019. <http://www.vermillionmaldives.com/maldives-history.htm>.

Indo-Pacific region and repositioning of global economic and military power in the Asian continent has resulted in significant political, economic and social changes in the Indian Ocean Region. Some of the drawbacks of this shift of global focus towards the Indian Ocean are seen in the form of evolving and increasing maritime threats. Maldives, as a small nation maintaining its non-aligned status in the world politics would not be directly affected by the power struggle among regional and extra-regional powers in the Indian Ocean. In other words, the real adversary of Maldives in the maritime domain is non-traditional maritime threats resulting from the changing geo-strategic environment.

Maldives is in dire need of modern approaches to maritime security, especially at this particular juncture of history as Maldives has embarked upon new economic ambitions with future development plans which are hinged to the maritime environment. Suppression of maritime threats and closing the threat gaps is absolutely essential for the success of these national aspirations and ensuring national security. It is believed to be more challenging for any nation to guarantee its territorial integrity, prosper and expand in the future, without appropriate measures against growing threats and challenges at sea. The transnational nature of these threats pose a great challenge to the countries across the region, and more so to small coastal countries like Maldives.

3. Non-traditional Threats for Maldives

According to various studies the non- traditional maritime threats to any archipelagic state are divided into three categories:

- i. Threats due to natural phenomena which includes, wave and tidal surge, Coastal erosion, flooding due to monsoon rain, extreme high winds threatening the vegetation and infrastructure and effects of climate change and sea level rise, including coral bleaching. Further he highlighted that these threats basically challenged physical existence of an island and therefore makes people to migrate for safer places causing other socio economic challenges.

- ii. Threats nefarious criminal activities and threats of non-state actors. These threats include religious extremism, radical cults, drug trafficking, illegal fisheries, environmental pollution, Sabotage to National infrastructure.
- iii. Impact of geo-strategic equation of Indian Ocean and Maldives Government's or Institution's involvement in the great powers rivalry. This could lead to potential militarization of Maldives and attract unwanted and unnecessary attention, making Maldives more vulnerable.

a. Piracy: This is a phenomenon which has evolved over the centuries and millions of dollars have been spent by the maritime community to overcome this challenge. Piracy for archipelagic states is a challenging threat to tackle as pirates can utilize multiple fronts to maintain an element of surprise. The overall security of maritime traffic throughout the region is a key strategic priority, for nations in and outside the IOR. The threat of piracy currently seems to be mainly around waters between the Red Sea and the Indian subcontinent and the South-East Asia.² Straits of Malacca and Singapore are highly infested, International Maritime Bureau (IMB) has given multiple cautionary notices to the travelers and merchant ships to remain vigilant when travelling through South East Asia and Indian sub-continent even in February 2020.³

² "Piracy Report Indian Ocean: Maldives, Mauritius, Seychelles", n.d. <https://www.onboardonline.com/industry-article-index/piracy-reports/piracy-report-indian-ocean-maldives-mauritius-seychelles/>.

³ Administrator. "Piracy & Armed Robbery Prone Areas and Warnings". Accessed 20 January 2020. <https://www.icc-ccs.org/index.php/piracy-reporting-centre/prone-areas-and-warnings>.

Figure 1: International Maritime Bureau live piracy map



Source: IMB live piracy map (<https://www.icc-ccs.org/index.php/piracy-reporting-centre/live-piracy-map>)

There has been no case of piracy reported since 2011 in and around Maldives. However, there were 42 Somalis apprehended in different incidents between 2009 and 2011, found in small skiffs within the littorals of the Maldives. All the apprehended Somalis were handed over to International Committee of the Red Cross in 2014.⁴ Another foreseeable threat related to piracy is a huge large community of fishermen remain within the EEZ of Maldives with small fishing vessels with limited communication facilities yet they tend to approach the foreign vessels around their vicinity. These activities are a major source of concern as these activities can be mistaken as an act of piracy, which may result into legal action against them as well as it is likely that they may face life threatening consequences.

⁴ Bureau of Crime Records. "Piracy". *Maldivian Police Service*, 17 February 2020. Stat No:A2(a)2020/051.

b. Maritime Terrorism: In the history of Maldives many incidents of maritime related terrorism have been witnessed due to the weakness in terms of maritime security and easy accessibility of the sea route to the terrorist organizations. In December 1752, Malabar (a group belongs to Indian Territory between Karnataka and Kerala) invaded Maldives through the sea route and ruled the country till 7th April 1753, which is a classic example of how vulnerable Maldives is to maritime terrorism.ⁱ This was the situation till 1st January 1981 when Maldives then President Maumoon Abdul Gayyoom officially introduced maritime security component, Coast Guard. Though maritime security force is established, due to the lack of concern among the security forces, 3rd November 1988 terrorist attack took place through sea which resulted into the death 19 Maldivians, including 11 casualties of security forces. Such incidents increased the importance of change in the approach of security paradigm. Significant improvements in maritime security - particularly MNDF CG - has been observed Nevertheless, due to the geographic location and the nature of formation of atolls and islands it is agreed that monitoring of all the boundaries of Maldives is still afar-fetched dream. The fragile state of maritime security was observed when former Vice president of Maldives escaped his trial by leaving the country on a cargo vessel.

c. Illegal Unregulated and Unreported (IUU) Fishing: Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing is a term which covers various activities involves in fishing. IUU fishing can be observed within the territorial waters and beyond. IUU fishing is a big challenge for the maritime nations where large population depends on the financial benefits from the fishing industry as well as their daily meal is based on seafood. IUU fishing goes against the rules, enacted to manage and conserve the marine life and as a result it effects the long-term sustainability of marine resources in the respective country or the region.

Furthermore, IUU fishing violates the rights of those fishers who obey and follow the regulations and act responsibly.⁵

IUU fishing is a prominent threat in the Indian Ocean, especially in the important tuna-rich waters of Seychelles, Madagascar, Mauritius Comoros and Maldives. Overfishing and depletion of certain fish stocks and species in the Indian Ocean are impacting food security in a broader sense with added loss of economic benefits to countries like Maldives dependent on fisheries and marine resources. World fishing fleets are moving towards the Indian Ocean due to the depleting marine resources in other parts of the world and the increased global demand for fish. Every year, the region loses \$2bn worth of fish to illegal fishing, and apart from depriving the region of revenue, overfishing reduces fish stocks, reduces the share of local fishermen and harms the marine environment.⁶

The mission of Maldives fisheries sector is “to strengthen the fisheries sector in order to increase its competitiveness and sustainably manage all marine living resources in the maritime zones of the Maldives” and the vision is “to transform the fisheries and agriculture sectors into a sustainably managed and market-oriented system that contribute to socio-economic growth, food security and sustainable management of natural resources”.⁷ To achieve these objectives Maldives fisheries regulation says that allows fishing other than net fishing:

⁵ “What Is IUU Fishing? | Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing | Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations”. Accessed 17 October 2019. <http://www.fao.org/iuu-fishing/background/what-is-iuu-fishing/en/>.

⁶ Dr. Teale N. Phelps Bondaroff. “The Illegal Fishing and Organized Crime Nexus: Illegal Fishing as Transnational Organized Crime”, 2015. https://www.unodc.org/documents/congress/background-information/NGO/GIATOC-Blackfish/Fishing_Crime.pdf.

⁷ Ministry of Fisheries Agriculture Marine Resources and, “Stakeholder Meetings with the Blue Prosperity Coalition Have Commenced to Discuss the Marine Spatial Planning of the Maldives”, *GOV.MV*, 12 December 2019

⁸Maldives is a country where only pole line, long line fishing are allowed to sustain the fish stock and to protect living resources but IUU fishing is a challenge to achieve desired results. In 2019 alone, more than 20 fishing vessels were captured in the Maldivian territory on the charges of illegal fishing.⁹

d. Climate Change: The Indian Ocean is considered one of the most productive oceans and has witnessed global warming at a rate of 1.8 degree Celsius over the last century which is very high and sea level raising compared to global surface warming up to 0.8 degree Celsius during the same period.¹⁰ Small Island States are at forefront of climate change impact. Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report warns the low lying small states that global temperature are likely to increase by 1.5 degrees between the year 2030 and 2052.¹¹ Due to the unique geographical features, including coral landscape of over one thousand and two hundred, in the context of climate change Maldives is considered one of the island nations most likely to be vulnerable to impact due to global warming.

These small low lying islands are constantly at risk of coastline erosion and storm tidal waves. Growing pressure to the coral reef due to human development and rising temperature of both, water and air, cause imbalance on the ecosystems. Maldives is going to face extreme weather patterns, such as extensive precipitation and storms. Maldives vulnerability to climate change has been awakened especially after tsunami resulting from the Indian Ocean earthquake,

⁸ Government of Maldives, "General Fisheries Regulation", Attorney General Office, n.d., www.mvlaw.gov.mv/pdf/gavaid/minFisheries/10.pdf).

⁹ MNDF CG. "Apprehended Vessels 2019". Annual, 2019.

¹⁰ Dinesh C. Sharma. "Climate Change in Our Backyard: Warming of Indian Ocean Threatens Fish Catch", n.d. www.firstpost.com/world/climate.

¹¹ Ministry of Environment and Energy. "What You Do for Small Islands, You Do for the World." 2018. <http://www.environment.gov.mv/v2/wp-content/files/publications/2018-1106-pub-what-you-do-for-small-islands-you-do-for-the-world-2015-2018.pdf>.

which hit the island in 2004.ⁱⁱ As a result, the National Disaster Management Centre (NDMC) was established, but risk management and adaptation policies developed, especially on the community level are still inefficient.

Figure 2: Erosion of Island



Source: a Local from Raa Atoll Kinolhas, January 2020

e. Maritime Pollution: Major accidents arising from oil bunkering, shipwrecks and collisions at sea can have serious consequences to the marine environment. Oil pollution can be regarded as an inevitable outcome of the dependence of a rapidly growing world community on oil-based technology. Apart from this, deliberate discharge of harmful quantities of oil and other hazardous substances, garbage, cargo residues, ballast water and sewage renders severe environmental damage to the ecosystems and even impact economies of the countries. Maldives is a country where economy is dependent on tourism, clear lagoons, underwater beauty and sandy beaches are reasons tourists travel from all over the world. Oceanic damage such as oil pollution would have detrimental effects on the country's economy.

f. Drug Trafficking: The country is a small archipelagic state combined of 100% Muslim nation, however influenced by many external illegal activities such as drug trafficking. Number of

young citizens have become drug abusers and solving the issue of narcotics is a challenge for the law enforcement agencies. According to Maldives Police service records more than 2000 drugs cases are being investigated for past 5 years.¹² Country's porous maritime borders with limited resources to counter drug trafficking situation makes things worse each passing year. In 2006 more than a ton of hash oil, packed and hidden in the lagoon near Dhiffushi Island, in a depth of 30 meters was captured by law enforcement authorities.¹³ In 2019 in a joint operation conducted by Maldives Police Service and Maldives Coast Guard, a vessel carrying more than 150 kgs of drugs was found at North of Maldives.¹⁴

Afghanistan and India's Andhra Pradesh is notorious for producing hash oil and other types of drugs. In 2019 alone, Maldives Coast Guard has apprehended two Iranian vessels suspected of carrying Drugs.¹⁵ Meanwhile India's Kerala state exercise enforcement squad (SES) reported that drugs transported from Andhra Pradesh to Maldives through Kerala is a new trend that they have observed in the recent past.¹⁶ Hindustan Times reported that Maldives is used as a transit destination to carry drugs from Pakistan to India.¹⁷

4. The Maritime Security Structures Various Archipelagic States

Every Nation has its own way of formulating and executing measures irrespective of national security or maritime security or any other national matters. It mostly depends on the national interests, economic power, geography, customs and tradition and so on. In this

¹² Maldives Police Service. "Crime Stats". Annual. Maldives, 2006.

¹³ Maldives Police Service. "Crime Stats". Annual. Maldives, 2006.

¹⁴ "Raajje Sarahadhhdhun 150kg Ge Drugs Athulaigenfi", *Mihaaru*, accessed 16 December 2019, <https://mihaaru.com/news/62559>

¹⁵ MNDF CG. "Apprehended Vessels 2019". Annual, 2019. MNDF CG, "Apprehended Vessels 2019".

¹⁶ "Kerala Akee Raajje Ah Drugs Etherekuraa Hub Eh: SEES". *Mihaaru*. Accessed 16 December 2019. <https://mihaaru.com/news/59080>.

¹⁷ "Pakistan in India Ah Drug Fonuvan Raajje Beynunkura Kamah Thuhumathkoffi". *Mihaaru*. Accessed 16 December 2019. <https://mihaaru.com/news/58023>.

regar, it will be difficult to decide a particular country to follow but certain features can be adapted. Maldives Coast Guard's former Commandant Col. Mohamed Ibrahim (at present, Commander Central Area) said *"Given the context of Archipelago there is no particular archipelagic country's model that we can follow. Nevertheless there are certain aspects of security parameters applied in small states that can be applied for Maldives"*.¹⁸ Following paragraphs we will look into Maldives, Indonesia, Philippines and Mauritius, their philosophy, concepts and their way of doing things with the reference of the literature review.

a. Maldives: Coast Guard is the naval or military arm of MNDF. As the nation's only maritime force among the four military arms, Coast Guard stands firm and proactive in safeguarding the nation, its people and the legitimate government of the Maldives. To be more precise, the mission of this unique maritime force as stated in Strategic Defence Directive 2012 is to defend the independence, sovereignty and peace of the nation. The MNDF Coast Guard has multiple roles, with the strategic military application settling within the parameters of national defence and territorial integrity as the primary task.¹⁹ Towards fulfillment of this huge responsibility, Coast Guard engages in:

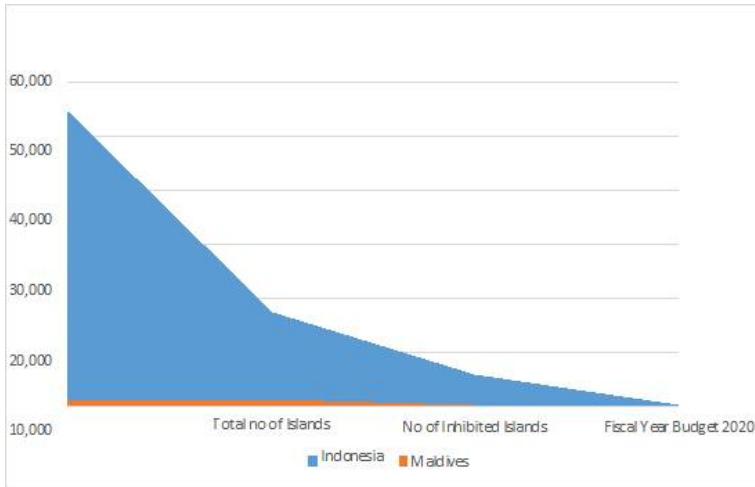
1. Maritime Security.
2. Maritime Mobility and Law Enforcement.
3. Maritime Defence and Force Protection.
4. Disaster Response and Relief.
5. Maritime Safety and Search and Rescue
6. Maritime Pollution and Protection of marine environment.
7. Port Security.
8. VVIP Security.

¹⁸ Col Mohamed Ibrahim, "Which Archipelagic Sates Maldives to Follow", 17 December 2019.

¹⁹ Maldives National Defence Force, "Reshaping the Defence Sector for a Secure Maldives" (MNDF, 2012).

b. Indonesia: Indonesia is the largest archipelago in the world, located in a strategic location at the heart of link between India and Pacific Ocean. Due to this geographic location, imposes an obligation to protect vital sea line of communication (SLOC) and gives the opportunity to access the plenty of marine resources that are there at the disposal of Indonesia.

Figure 3: Comparison between Maldives and Indonesia



Indonesian President in 2014 declared his Global Maritime Fulcrum (GMF) vision to the world. His message was that Indonesia's livelihood both drives from and depends upon the sea. His vision is to transform its maritime economy and transform Indonesia into a leading maritime power.²⁰

According to assessment conducted by RAND, Indonesia also faced non-traditional threat similar to Maldives which includes, smuggling, IUU fishing, piracy and terrorism. Indonesia has eleven key actors in implementing and executing maritime policies and regulations while Maldives has Maldives Coast

²⁰ Lyle J. Morris and Giacomo Persi Paoli, "A Preliminary Assessment of Indonesia's Maritime Security Threats and Capabilities:". Product Page, (2018), https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2469.html.

Guard as a key player and Marine Police as law enforcement agency along with Coast Guard in territorial water.

Indonesia has Indonesian Water Police (POLAIR) and Directorate of Customs and Excise (BDC) for security and law enforcement, Indonesian Task Force to Combat Illegal Fishing (SATGAS115) to control illegal fishing and protect marine resources Indonesian Search and Rescue Agency (BASARNAS) to formulate and execute search and rescue operations, Directorate General of Sea Transportation to command the Indonesia Sea and Coast Guard, Maritime Security Agency (BAKAMLA) to conduct joint maritime operations at sea and also Indonesian Navy to defend the maritime borders of Indonesia. All these agencies have their independent assets, relevant arms and legal framework to carry out assigned tasks.

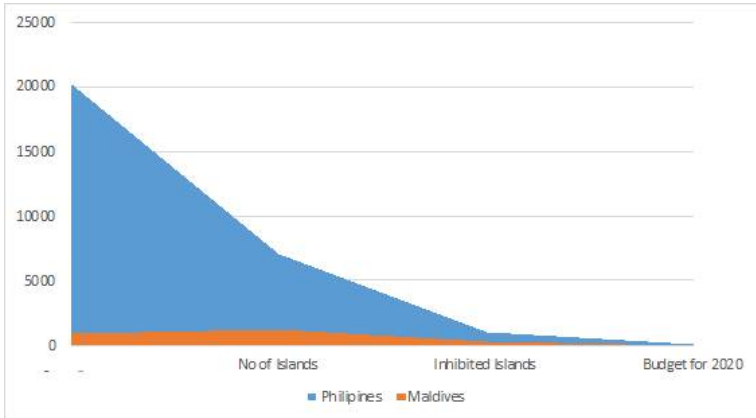
Indonesia is planning to build 24 seaports and deep seaports and enhancing the facilities in the existing 5 ports to fill the infrastructure gap. Indonesia is also looking for innovative methods to upgrade their maritime domain awareness in-terms of satellite data which will also cover the vessel monitoring system.²¹

c. Philippines: Philippines geographically isolated from mainland East Asia, consisting of 7107 islands out of which only 1000 islands are inhabited. Philippines covers coastline of 20107 km. Maritime Security is crucial for Philippines, an archipelagic state in Southeast Asia which has so far struggled to maintain its sovereignty and engaged in disputes at South China Sea. Philippines strategic focus changed from internal disharmony to maritime security when president then Aquino took over in June 2010. President Aquino vowed to modernize the Armed Forces of Philippines and formed the Department of National Defence (DND).

²¹ Morris and Persi Paoli, "A Preliminary Assessment of Indonesia's Maritime Security Threats and Capabilities".

To achieve President Aquino’s vision, Philippines launched a naval build-up program worth USD10 billion for the acquisition within 15 years period. In this project Philippines navy procure six frigates, 12 corvettes, 18 OPVs, 26 naval and multi-purpose helicopters.²² Philippines is a strategic partner of the United States in the region since cold war era, besides that Philippines is also part of the Indo-Pacific with United States and Japan.

Figure 4: Comparison between Maldives and Philippines



To counter these threats, Philippine Navy has a functioning fleet of law-enforcement naval assets consisting mostly of fast patrol boats. Philippine Navy also has capabilities, coastal patrol, troop carrying capability and disaster relief assets.²³

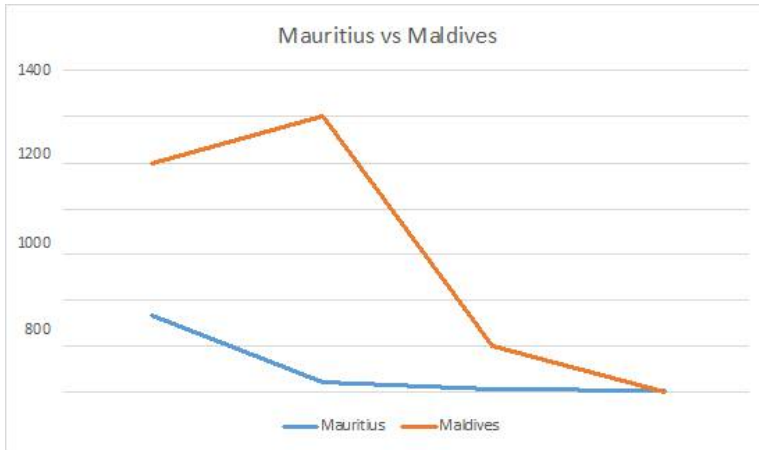
d. Mauritius: Mauritius and Maldives belongs to two different continents, the former belongs to Africa. These two archipelagic states have common features with respect to maritime environment. Mauritius has a coastline of 330 km with a population of approximately 1.3 million is believed to be one of

²² Renato Cruz De Castro, “The Philippines Discovers Its Maritime Domain: The Aquino Administration’s Shift in Strategic Focus from Internal to Maritime Security”, *Asian Security* 12, no. 2 (3 May 2016): 111–31.

²³ Castro, Renato Cruz De, “The Philippines Discovers Its Maritime Domain: The Aquino Administrations Shift in Strategic Focus from Internal to Maritime Security” *Asia Security Journal*, Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2016), 05, accessed 22 November 2019.

the countries which will effect most due to global warming and sea level rise.

Figure 5: Comparison between Maldives and Mauritius



Mauritius is facing similar non-traditional maritime threats as of Maldives ranging from Drug trafficking, Piracy, IUU fishing environmental challenges. Maritime Security largely depends on Indian assistance and joint maritime surveillance with India.²⁴

Mauritius has joint military force under the Mauritius Police force which comprising of Anti-Drug Smuggling Unit, Central Investigation Division, and Helicopter Squadron, National Coast Guard, Port Luis North Division, Rodrigues Police, Special Mobile Force, Special Supporting Unit, Traffic Branch and Western Division.²⁵

A conference of ministers on maritime safety and security in 2010 acknowledged, that to tackle the direct and indirect threats in the maritime domain, a comprehensive strategy is essential and should encompass the emerging challenges and

²⁴ Insp LR Rose, "Mauritius Security Force", 5 November 2019

²⁵ "The Mauritius Police Force - Branches", accessed 7 January 2020, <http://police.govmu.org/English/Organisation/Branches/Pages/default.aspx>.

threats. In 2019 during the Western Indian Ocean Maritime Security Conference, Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport Mr. Nandhcoomar Bodha stressed the importance of maritime information sharing mechanism between the regional states.²⁶ Understanding the importance of the maritime domain for sustained economic development by Mauritius is the first major step and Initiating the creation of national maritime safety and security strategies by conducting audits of maritime capacities in the operational, financial, legal and regulatory domains could be the second step.²⁷ With these strategic plans and mainly with the assistance of allies Mauritius is moving forward for a safer maritime security environment.

5. Government Strategies – Strengthening Maritime Boundaries of Maldives

In 2018, newly elected Maldivian President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih has stressed the importance of making efficient use of maritime domain on many occasions. He has also stressed the importance of strengthening the maritime security rather investing on land forces. Therefore, development of MNDF Coast Guard becomes his government's priority. These promises bring hope not only to maritime seafarers but for every citizen of the country since Maldives is a country where every individual is bound to use sea for their lives. In January 2020 during the President's visit to northern atolls he launched a survey exercise with blue peace prosperity coalition in association with Maldives Marine Research Institute to understand the condition of Maldivian seas which will enable utilization of marine resources in a healthy and environmental friendly manner.²⁸

²⁶ "Republic of Mauritius- Cooperation and Complementarity among States Key to Address Maritime Security Issues, Says Minister Bodha". Accessed 22 December 2019.

²⁷ Republic of Mauritius. "Embracing a Brighter Future Together as a Nation", 2019. http://budget.mof.govmu.org/budget2019-20/2019_20budgetspeech.pdf.

²⁸ "Government and Blue Prosperity Coalition Launch Scientific Expeditions to Explore Maldives' Ocean", *The President's Office* accessed 29 January 2020, <https://presidency.gov.mv/Press/Article/22935>.

a. Ruling Party Manifesto: “Jazeeraa Raajje” is the theme given for the Ruling party of Maldives 2018 election’s manifesto. Jazeeraa Raajje which means Archipelagic Maldives or simply the island nation. In its introduction it describes the features of island state, from the natural features to some inherent features of communities living in island states. Then the manifesto covers the theme of “Blue Economy”. Under the blue economy it is mentioned that livelihood of Maldivians and the economy will depend on the environment, protection of sea, lagoons and reefs. Developing and protecting marine resources and fishery industry, development of aqua culture, establishing a sea transport network across the country and tourism.²⁹To execute ruling party’s manifesto, it is common to bring amendments to existing laws and introduce new laws in Maldives.³⁰

b. Changes and Developments within MNDF: When the present government came into power in November 2018, the Commandant Coastguard was not from a maritime background, due to this fact Coast Guard faced challenges to implement maritime safety measures and bring necessary changes as per international maritime norms. In July 2019 Chief of Defence force appointed one of the most experienced and knowledgeable maritime officers as Commandant Coast Guard. This positive change brought trust among the sailors and also among civil maritime community of the Maldives.

c. Maritime Environment - Backbone of Economy: Since the ancient times, the economy of the Maldives depended mainly upon fisheries and other marine resources. As history suggests, these rich marine resources also attracted colonizers towards Maldives. In 1558, when the Portuguese forces raided the capital Male, their focus was to take over the trade of cowries

²⁹ Maldives Democratc Party (Ruling Party), “Manifesto: Jazeeraa Raajje”, 2018.

³⁰ Government of Maldives. General Fisheries Regulation. Attorney General Office, n.d. www.mvlaw.gov.mv/pdf/gavaid/minFisheries/10.pdf).

and other artifacts extensively being traded from Maldives.³¹ Ranked by the United Nations as one of the world's least developed countries in the early 1990s, Maldives had a GDP based 17 percent on tourism, 15 percent on fishing - which is undergoing further development - and 10 percent on agriculture.³² In a generation, it has gone from being South Asia's poorest country to the region's highest per-capita income. Economic growth was powered mainly by tourism, the backbone of the economy, and associated businesses. This section analyses trade and economy of Maldives, new economic aspirations of the government, the security implications of these projects and the envisaged effect on sea power, sustainability, challenges and its protection.

Maldives is ranked 166 among the exporting nations of the world. In 2017, Maldives export figures were \$309M and imports costed \$1.39B, resulting in a negative trade balance of \$1.08B. In 2017 the GDP of Maldives was \$4.87B and its GDP per capita was \$16.7k.³³ The main export of the Maldives remains fish-based products contributing 84.2% of the total exports while top import of the country is petroleum products representing a figure of 47% of the total. The country is increasingly depending on imports due to lack of adequate agricultural activity, fossil fuel resources that match the growing demands and the growth of tourism industry. More than 90% of the overseas and internal trade is through sea routes. The seas, therefore, play a very vital role in the trade and economy of the nation. Maldives is a mixed economy mainly centered on tourism, fisheries and shipping.

d. Fisheries: Fishing provides for a large percentage of Maldivians and has been the oldest form of occupation and practice. Until 1985, it was the largest contributor of Maldivian

³¹ "Maldives - HISTORY". Accessed 23 February 2020. <http://countrystudies.us/maldives/1.htm>.

³² Ibid.

³³ "OEC - Maldives (MDV) Exports, Imports, and Trade Partners". Accessed 23 February 2020. <https://oec.world/en/profile/country/mdv/>

GDP. Maldivians employ the most sustainable method of pole and line for tuna fishing. Currently, marine capture fisheries account for 9% of GDP, 17% of employment and 66.3% (by value) of the export commodities of Maldives.ⁱⁱⁱ

e. Tourism: Tourism introduced in 1972, the country has experienced a boom as a high-end tourist destination for foreign holiday-makers.³⁴ Today tourism has become the largest revenue generator of the country accounting for 60% of its GDP. Presently 145 resorts, 521 guest houses with more than 45000 beds are there to facilitate tourists and it continues to expand. Maldives is a dream destination with marine ecology and marine environment forming the base of the tourism industry.³⁵

6. Analysis an outcome

Because of ongoing conflicts, economic interests of the world's major powers deployed their maritime presence in Indian Ocean region. Indian navy's presence in Mauritius, Madagascar, Seychelles, and Maldives and US presence in Bahrain, and Diego Garcia, Afghanistan with other technical and financial aids to regional archipelagic and small states from their partners Japan and Australia makes the countries in the India Ocean region to remain under their influence. On the other hand, China along with its allies also try to exercise its economic influence.

Non-state actors here are referred to as the non-state maritime actors that pursue political or socio-economic objectives. Having mentioned that only rare cases it would be pure maritime based or land based, its most of the time maritime actors will be operating collaboration of land actors or vice-versa. Modern day pirates operate with modern equipment with the objective of various crimes such as arms robbery, murder, hijacking and many more.

³⁴ "Tourism Industry in Maldives", accessed 23 February 2020, <https://www.tourism.gov.mv/pubs/TourismIndustryinMaldives/overview.htm>.

³⁵ "Maldives to Open 20 New Resorts in 2019", *Maldives Insider*, 10 February 2019, <https://maldives.net.mv/29628/maldives-to-open-20-new-resorts-in-2019/>.

International Maritime Organization annual report 2009 shows that most affected areas include areas where great number of archipelagic states exists, particularly South China Sea, Caribbean and the Indian Ocean. A total of 406 cases of piracy and armed robbery incident cases attempted or occurred in 2009 were reported compared to that of 223 cases reported to IMO in 2018.³⁶

As world population is increasing at a faster pace, marine resources are in decline, challenge and concern for the IUU fishing control is also growing.³⁷ Increasing population will demand to increase food production, to overcome this challenge various conventions and regulations have passed domestically and internationally. UN General Assembly held in 2015 to discuss about the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda which read “Climate change is one of the greatest challenges of our time and its adverse impacts undermine the ability of all countries to achieve sustainable development. Increases in global temperature, sea-level rise, ocean acidification and other climate change impacts are seriously affecting coastal areas and low-lying coastal countries, including many least developed countries and small island developing States. The survival of many societies, and of the biological support systems of the planet, is at risk”.

7. Regional Responses against Maritime Security Threats

Regional cooperation is essential for developing countries to break the shackles of poverty and underdevelopment. Exchange of expertise and resources can increase the pace of development in comparison to pursuing the goal of economic progress in isolation. European Union (EU) is a role model for all the regional organizations across the world. The cooperation among 6 European countries started in the sector of coal and steel which expedite the

³⁶ IMO, “Reports on Acts of Piracy and Armed Robbery Against Ships”, *Annual* (London, 2018 2009).

³⁷ Leo J. Bouchez, “The Future of the Law of the Sea: Proceedings of the Symposium on the Future of the Sea Organized at Den Helder by the Royal Netherlands Naval College and the International Law Institute of Utrecht State University 26 and 27 June 1972” (*Springer*, 2013).

rehabilitation of their economic after two world wars. Since then they have come a long way and number of EU countries now have a single currency and the freedom of travel enjoyed by European citizens cannot be witnessed in any other region of the world. Even ASEAN has developed strong cooperation mechanism in order to come up with a joint disaster response. AHA center is established which not only facilitate the synchronization of response across the region but also organize courses for capacity building of member states to enhance their disaster and emergency response capacity.³⁸

Unfortunately, no such collective efforts are to be found at the forum of SAARC. Most of the South Asian countries are either engaged in inter-state conflicts or embroiled in intra-state disputes. This bleak scenario has prevent the region from realizing its true economic potential.³⁹ Maritime is one such domain where this lack of cooperation can be observed, despite facing more or less similar non-traditional maritime security threats. However, south Asian states have adopted some measures and have gone through structural changes individually which can be helpful for Maldives to device their own response mechanism by emulating those practices as per the peculiarities of Maldivian maritime predicament.

Measures taken by the regional and different archipelagic states regarding the improvement development of maritime security are discussed in the subsequent sections.

a. India: Although India and Maldives are incomparable and too different in terms of size, national interests, national objectives, security interests, defense and security capabilities are similar and the country is the closest maritime neighbor and largest trading partner of Maldives. Therefore Maldives is prone to many of the non- traditional security threats that circle around India. In response to sweeping changes in the regional and global geostrategic environment, significant

³⁸ Petz, Daniel. "Strengthening regional and national capacity for disaster risk management: the case of ASEAN" *Brookings-LSE Project on Internal Displacement* 14 (2014)

³⁹ Dubey, Muchkund, "SAARC and South Asian economic integration". *Economic and Political Weekly* (2007) 1238-1240

change in India's security calculus and also because of its national outlook towards seas with maritime security being a vital element of national progress, India had developed a maritime strategy in 2007 and a follow up promulgation titled "Ensuring Secure Seas: Indian Maritime Security Strategy" in October 2015.

India's maritime development and the vision of leading the Indian Ocean region as a maritime power is becoming more realistic than ever before with the world attention to Indo-Pacific. The phrase "Indo-Pacific" is vibrant for many reasons, ensuring stable balance of power, monitoring and deterring threats from Iran and North Korea, directing various maritime security operations such as counter-terrorist, counter-trafficking and counter-piracy mission.⁴⁰ Currently India is working in collusion with the United States, Japan, Australia and many other smaller nations. With these developments, India is increasing its maritime presence and surveillance networks which includes the regular maritime surface patrol, Helo operation and Surveillance radar network across the Maldives.

b. Pakistan: Pakistan Maritime Security Agency (PMSA) is primarily responsible for protection of maritime domain in Pakistan from non-traditional maritime security threats. The country has comparable maritime sector and faces challenges of IUU Fishing, poaching by foreign fishing vessels, marine pattern, environmental challenges and illegal trafficking. Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) has become of paramount significance for Pakistan at national as well as regional level. Therefore, in 2013, Pakistan established Joint Maritime Information Coordination Center (JMICC). The purpose behind establishing such body was to increase coordination among

⁴⁰ David Michel and Ricky Passarelli, "Sea Change, Evolving Maritime Geopolitics in the Indo-Pacific Region" (Stimson, 2014), <https://www.stimson.org/wp-content/files/file-attachments/SEA-CHANGE- WEB.pdf>.

⁴⁴ Naghmana Zafar, "Building Maritime Security in Pakistan – The Navy Vanguard," in *Capacity Building for Maritime Security*, ed. Christian Bueger, Timothy Edmunds, and Robert McCabe (Cham, Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, 2021)

different security agencies by invoking early warning mechanisms in order to tackle any maritime related threats. Five areas come under the scope of JMICC. Those are; Piracy, Maritime Crimes (drug trafficking and human smuggling), Maritime Terrorism, Illegal use of EEZ (fishery crimes, unauthorized resource exploitation), search and rescue (protection of fishermen and helping seafarers in distress). JMICC brings 46 institutions under its ambit for the sake of timely information sharing. Some key institutions include; Naval force, Research Institutes, port authorities, anti-narcotics force and customs. It also regularly engages with the industrial sector and the civil society to ensure the elements of inclusivity and transparency.⁴¹ With the growing institutional memory it is evolving in terms of its predictive and analytical capacity. This is essential for Pakistan to become a preventive force rather than engaging merely in rescue and responsive activities.⁴² Maldives can also follow the suit and establish such inter-organizational coordination at national level may be, body which can ensure early response and preventive capacities to deal with aforementioned maritime security threats.

c. Sri Lanka: Sri Lanka is located in the north-east of Maldives approximately 448 miles away, occupying a strategically important position in the Indian Ocean. It is the second closest neighboring country of Maldives. The waters of the country were heavily infested with terrorist activities of LTTE before they were defeated in 2009. Sri Lanka is facing similar threat as of Maldives after the civil war, such IUU fishing, human and drug trafficking and India-China maritime power competition.⁴³

⁴¹ Baber Ali Bhatti. "Joint Maritime Information Coordination Center: A milestone toward Maritime Domain Awareness in Pakistan" see at : <https://www.maritimestudyforum.org/joint-maritime-information-coordination-center-a-milestone-toward-maritime-domain-awareness-in-pakistan/>

⁴² Malik, Hasan Yaser. "Role of Pakistan Navy in Indian Ocean Blue Diplomacy." *Defence Journal* 21.8 (2018): 33-25

⁴³ "Sri Lanka's Maritime Security Dilemma", *South Asian Voices*, 16 August 2019, <https://southasianvoices.org/sri-lanka-maritime-security-dilemma/>.

Indian Ocean provides a vital sea route linking the Orient and the west. Beside Sri-Lankan Navy, Sri-Lanka is increasing the capability of Sri-Lankan Coast Guard to further strengthening the maritime boarder security as well as maritime law enforcement. Sri-Lanka, Maldives and India have an agreement signed on July 8, 2013 on coordinated handling of maritime security threats such as piracy, gunrunning and terrorism in the Indian Ocean.⁴⁴

8. Measures taken by Maldives

a. Humanitarian Efforts by MNDF-CG: Maldives has large sea area with limited facilities. Due to the dependence of majority of the population on sea for their livelihoods, they are bound to face weather related challenges. To counter this challenge MNDF-CG have increased their number of search and rescue operations. Following are details of the distress calls received by MNDF-CG and their responses in 2019.

INCIDENT REPORT 2019 - MNDF CG				
#	DETAIL	TOTAL DISTRESS CALLS	ASSISTED (DIRECTLY)	ASSISTED (INDIRECTLY)
1	Vessel Aground	225	123	96
2	Engine Breakdown	318	129	186
3	Accident	27	12	15
4	Maneuvering Failure	24	12	12
5	Fire Incidents	27	21	12
6	Missing person	33	21	12
7	Diving Accidents	30	24	06
8	Medical Evacuation	399	399	00
9	Others	330	240	90

Table 3: Incident Report 2019 - MNDF CG *Info: Maritime Rescue Coordination Center (MRCC), MNDF CG*

⁴⁴ "Sri Lanka And Maritime Security", *Colombo Telegraph*, 9 September 2013, <https://www.colombotelegraph.com/index.php/sri-lanka-and-maritime-security/>.

Due to the peculiarity of Maldivian predicament, the country has to come up with some indigenous measures with incorporation of best models available regionally and globally and are best suited to address the challenges faced by Maldives.

b. Fisheries Act: On 5th September 2019 Fisheries act was passed from the parliament and then ratified by the President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih on 16th September 2019. Following changes observed in the new law with respect to blue economy and maritime security;

- With the introduction of the new Fisheries Act, aqua culture was included, which did not mention and in sustainable aqua culture fishery policy and development is addressed in the objectives of the new law which is not mentioned in the previous law (5/87).
- In objectives of the new law it is asked from concerned authorities to formulate a regulation to prevent IUU fishing.
- To reach bilateral agreement with the regional countries to invite foreign investment and also facilitate the Maldivian fishermen to operate without fear in the territorial waters of other countries
- Any sort of net fishing and use of explosives to catch is banned under this law.

Under the new the fishery monitoring, controlling and surveillance authority is given to Maldives Coast Guard, Maldives Police Service and Maldives Customs Service whereas in 5/87 fishery law it is the mandate of MNDF Coast Guard.

9. Conclusion

Increased geopolitical and geostrategic significance of IOR in the recent years have led to the presence of innumerable threats and challenges of maritime dimension in the region. As the third largest oceanic division of the world connecting vital sea lanes east-west carriers containing one-fourth of entire world's marine cargo and two-thirds of oil. The shift of global focus on the Indian Ocean because of its changing geo-economics and geo-strategy has led to the presence of extra-regional powers in IOR. This change in the new world order has seen an exponential rise of maritime activities with introduction and rise of maritime threats of varying nature. Existence of inter-state and intra-state armed conflicts, poverty, corruption and political instability have also contributed largely to the increasing challenges at sea.

In addition, climate change, IUU fishing, environmental degradation and other non-traditional maritime threats pose great challenges to the region and are affected by all countries in the region. These challenges are more pronounced on small island nations such as Maldives. As a maritime nation, Maldives has been dependent on its marine environment for growth, sustenance and prosperity since time immemorial. The economy of the country is built on its seas with tourism, fishing and shipping forming the backbone. As Maldives is comprised of more than thousand tiny islands dispersed far and wide with its unique fragile geographic features, effects of climate change and natural disasters are of utmost concern.

Maldivian economy and infrastructure can also be devastated by natural disasters, as the country has experienced during the 2004 Tsunami. Further, the coastal integrity and the national security of Maldives has already been threatened with past incidents of transnational crimes which range from piracy, gunrunning, maritime terrorism, drug trafficking and threats arising from religious extremism. These threats and challenges are likely to grow in the future as Maldives has embarked upon new economic initiatives

which include the development of Special Economic Zones (SEZ), expansion of tourism and fisheries sector. The sea power of the Maldives will take a big leap with these aspirations put into action, provided only if commensurate measures are taken to protect the elements of sea power.

Maldives in its security paradigm is unique. Maritime security is the key to ensuring the territorial integrity of the Maldives and is a constituent ingredient of national security. The complexities and uncertainties of our seas persist as the security environment would continue to evolve in view of past and current trends. This would lead to an expansion of Coast Guard's defence and constabulary role in addressing plausible activities of maritime transnational crimes, resource exploitation and other crimes of maritime nature.

With an overview of the threats and challenges associated with Archipelagic States and Maldives in particular, certain significant strategic objectives for Maldives, can be drawn out for addressing the maritime security in Maldivian waters. The primary objective would certainly be to attain and sustain maritime territorial integrity and sovereignty, security of the islands against all possible non-traditional threats via sea, other maritime economic infrastructure and assure freedom of navigation in accordance with UNCLOS. Secondly, it is important to implement effective conservation, protection and management of the marine environment while implementing measures against effects of climate change.

Asserting effective, sustainable control over fisheries activities, exploration and exploitation of other marine resources in areas within the national jurisdiction is an important objective to promote economic development. A key objective would also be to ensure the integrity of maritime shipping routes throughout Maldivian waters. Enacting new laws, amendment of existing laws to close existing gaps and converge all national efforts/ resources (both public and private) and delineation of roles/ responsibilities of different stakeholders would be absolutely necessary.

The objective of defeating maritime threats and challenges, therefore, need a coherent effort at the national level as well as regional level.. Ensuring the security of own waters is ensuring the security of the region and beyond, because the net security profile of the region or the globe for that matter, is the security of individual countries put together. Maldives, as a maritime nation whose economic well-being and other components of national security is dependent totally on its seas, maritime security must be the top priority. In this regards, some recommendations are appended below:

- Minimize the creation of artificial islands and reduce the usage of one time use plastics for a better maritime environment.
- Expansion of fishing up to EEZ will attract more localized foreign fishing vessels and would generate a better amount of revenue from the fishing industry. This will prompt better regulatory measures dealing with governance, fisheries management, monitoring, control and surveillance.
- Maldives does not have a strong shipbuilding industry as yet. It can, however be argued that a substantive increase in seaborne trade would lead to development in shipbuilding industry due to the increase in demand for merchant vessels. Shipbuilding industry could go a long way in establishing a robust industry and reduce nation's dependence on foreign –flagged vessels for trade.
- Regional collaboration should be enhanced amongst all countries for improved maritime management in the region.
- Regional state should work more closely on information sharing & response mechanism

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