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# GEOSTRATEGIC OPTIONS FOR THE MALDIVES

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# Table of Contents

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<i>List of Illustrations</i> .....	iii
<i>List of Abbreviations and Acronyms</i> .....	v
<i>Abstract</i> .....	vii
<i>Statement of Candidate</i> .....	ix
<i>Acknowledgements</i> .....	xi
 <b>Chapter 1: Introduction</b> .....	<b>1</b>
1.1 Problem Statement .....	3
1.2 Research Question .....	5
1.3 Significance of the Research .....	6
1.4 Methodology .....	8
1.5 Organisation of the Study .....	12
 <b>Chapter 2: Review of Literature on Small States</b> .....	<b>15</b>
2.1 Small States Studies .....	16
2.2 Small State – The Concept .....	21
2.3 Theorising Small State Behaviour .....	24
2.4 Small States Security Dilemma .....	29
2.5 Determinants of Foreign Relations .....	33
2.6 Summary .....	34
 <b>Chapter 3: Indian Ocean, India and China</b> .....	<b>37</b>
3.1 Indian Ocean .....	37
3.2 India–China Relations .....	40
3.3 Power Cycle .....	45
3.3.1 India .....	48
3.3.2 China .....	49
3.4 Summary .....	50
 <b>Chapter 4: Maldives – Security and Foreign Policy Factors</b> .....	<b>53</b>
4.1 Systemic Context .....	53
4.1.1 Physical geography .....	54

4.1.2 Interactions with colonial powers .....	56
4.1.3 Systemic issues .....	58
4.2 Societal System.....	60
4.2.1 Macroeconomic concerns .....	60
4.2.2 Social issues .....	63
4.3 Role of Policymakers.....	66
4.3.1 Ibrahim Nasir (1957–78) .....	66
4.3.2 Maumoon Abdul Gayyoom (1978–2008).....	68
4.3.3 Mohamed Nasheed (2008–12).....	71
4.3.4 Mohamed Waheed Hassan (2012–13).....	75
4.3.5 Abdulla Yameen (2013–present).....	78
4.4 Summary.....	82
<b>Chapter 5: Conclusion and Way Forward.....</b>	<b>85</b>
<b>Bibliography.....</b>	<b>93</b>

# List of Illustrations

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## Tables

Table 1: Synopsis of Small States Studies .....	18
Table 2: Comparative defence statistics, China and India .....	46
Table 3: Tourist arrivals and market share of top 10 markets, 2013 .....	61
Table 4: Comparison of unemployment in small island states, 2010 .....	62

## Figures

Figure 1: GDP and human development of small states compared with big states.....	24
Figure 2: Major IR theories .....	25
Figure 3: Trade with Africa, 2013, US\$ billion.....	40
Figure 4: Composition of real defence spending increases, 2013–14 .....	47
Figure 5: Human cost of piracy in the Western Indian Ocean Region, 2010–14 .....	58
Figure 6: Real GDP growth at 1995 constant prices, 1985–2010 .....	62
Figure 7: Drug seizures by Maldives Police Service, 2009–12 .....	64
Figure 8: Maldives fiscal indicators, 2007–14 (% of GDP) .....	74

## Maps

Map 1: Maldives .....	1
Map 2: Indian Ocean.....	38
Map 3: India–China (disputed) border.....	42
Map 4: Political map of Maldives.....	55



# List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

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AIIB	Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank
AOSIS	Alliance of Small Island States
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
DWP	Defence White Paper of the Maldives
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
EU	European Union
FOSS	Forum of Small States
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GFC	Global Financial Crisis (2007-8)
GoM	Government of Maldives
GNP	Gross National Product
IDC	Island Developing States
IOR	Indian Ocean Rim
ICJ	International Court of Justice
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
IR	International relations
ISIS	Islamic State or Islamic State in Iraq and Syria
ISRO	Indian Space Research Organisation
LDC	Least Developing Country
LLDC	Land Locked Developing Countries
MDP	Maldives Democratic Party
MSL	Maldives Shipping Limited
MNDF	Maldives National Defence Force
MSR	Maritime Silk Route
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NSP	National Security Policy 2012
OBOR	One Belt One Road Initiative
PLA	People's Liberation Army
PLOTE	People's Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam
PPM	Progressive Party of Maldives

SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SIDS	Small island developing states
SLOC	Sea lines of communication
STO	State Trading Organisation
UK	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
UN	United Nations
UNITAR	United Nations Institute for Training and Research
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
US	United States
US\$ / USD	United States Dollar
USR	United Suvadive Republic
WTO	World Trade Organisation
WWII	Second World War

# Abstract

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In the power politics of strategic manoeuvring and counter balancing in the Indian Ocean region, smaller states attract the attention of all the major powers and are subjected to external pressure. Maldives, though a small state with limited resources and diplomatic clout, plays a vital role in the regional geostrategic dynamics mainly based on its geographic location. By examining the foreign policy of the Maldives, this study provides insight into the country's relations with India and China, and attempts to display its political autonomy amid the strategic manoeuvring in the Indian Ocean by the two big states. This study documents the changes in the Maldives' foreign policy during all its presidencies, from independence till 2015, by taking it as a synchronic case study that could be a useful resource for other small states in articulating foreign policies. By applying Rosenau's explanatory factors of foreign policy and Knudsen's variables for maintaining small state autonomy, this study establishes that the Maldives' exploitation of alliance strategy compounds its insecurities. It also raises concerns for the Maldives' external behaviour, as the political leadership could be eliciting a higher-than-anticipated cost through a compelled revision of interests. Against this backdrop, this study outlines behavioural and policy changes the Maldives can adopt to mitigate its insecurities, and safeguard its interests and autonomy.





# Statement of Candidate

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I certify that the work in this thesis entitled “Geostrategic Options for the Maldives” has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree to any other university or institution other than Macquarie University.

I also certify that the thesis is an original piece of research and it has been written by me. Any help and assistance that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself have been appropriately acknowledged.

In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

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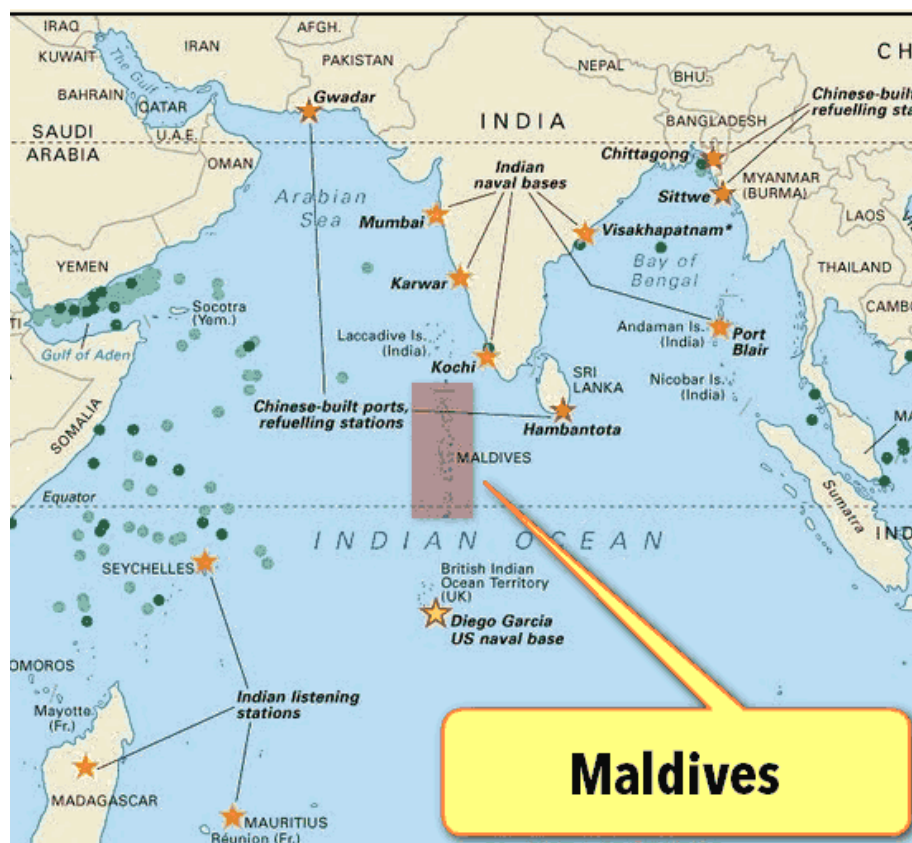
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# Chapter 1: Introduction

Maldives, though a small state with limited resources and diplomatic clout, plays a vital role in the regional strategic dynamics mainly because of its geographic location in the Indian Ocean. The archipelagic state is located 780 kilometres southwest of Sri Lanka and 500 kilometres south of the Indian peninsula, stretching from latitude 7 degrees north to 1 degree south (see Map 1). It spans over 823 kilometres from north to south and 130 kilometres east to west.<sup>1</sup> This geographic location puts the Maldives at the centre of Indian Ocean sea lines of communication (SLOC)<sup>2</sup> and geostrategic paradigms (see Map 2).



Map 1: Maldives<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *National Security Policy 2012* (Malé: The President's Office, 2012) p. 7.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.

<sup>3</sup> Mrunal, 'Why is Maldives Important for India', *Mrunal.org* [web blog], 11 December 2012, [mrunal.org/2012/12/diplomacy-maldives-coup-reasons-implications-nasheed-gmr.html](http://mrunal.org/2012/12/diplomacy-maldives-coup-reasons-implications-nasheed-gmr.html) (accessed 20 September 2015).

A small state like the Maldives, though located at a strategic location is constrained by the strategic interests of the big powers in the region, particularly when strategic competition between states appears to be one of the main global concerns in the 21st century.<sup>4</sup> A survey in Global Agenda 2014 underlines the “rise of geostrategic competition as the second most global trend”.<sup>5</sup> Arguably, geostrategic competition is most prominent in Asia. The shift in the global political order towards Asia is attributed to the rise of China and its uncertain role in global politics.<sup>6</sup> The role of India is perceived differently to that of China despite India’s at times non-peaceful methods.<sup>7</sup> In the current context of the construct of the Indo-Pacific region in which China, India, Russia and the United States (US) aim not only to increase their respective dominance and vested interests in this region but also try to patronise the small states. India continues to enforce its dominance in the Indian Ocean by reinforcing area/access denial, mainly to a rising China, and has installed strategic assets such as Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) centres,<sup>8</sup> military installations along the periphery of the Indian peninsula, and listening posts at various Indian Ocean Rim

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<sup>4</sup> *Outlook on the Global Agenda 2015* (Geneva: World Economic Forum, 2014) pp. 17 – 19.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, p. 17.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, p. 18.

<sup>7</sup> When India became independent, the 564 princely states that were not under direct British rule (but under Britain’s paramountcy through treaties) did not automatically become territories of India. As India began to exercise its direct control over these small states, a handful of them refused to be absorbed within the Union of India. India used whatever measures it could to capitulate these states into the union. It annexed Hyderabad in 1948 through a week-long military confrontation. Junagadh, a small principality in western India connected to India on all borders except the sea, was annexed through a plebiscite after India blocked the borders and stopped all movement of goods, transport and post. Portuguese enclaves Goa, Daman, Diu, Dadra and Nagar Haveli were integrated after defeating Portugal in an armed battle. Upon defeating the Portuguese, Indian Administrative Service officer K.G. Badlani, who was previously appointed as chief administrator of Dadra and Nagar Haveli, was designated as the prime minister of Dadra and Nagar Haveli so he could sign the agreement of integration into the Union of India as head of state. Sikkim, a border state between India and China, was annexed through a referendum in 1975 facilitated by the Indian Reserve Police and the Indian Army, which was in control of this small state before the referendum, similar to Russia’s annexation of Crimea in 2014. Most recently, in June 2015, Indian Special Forces crossed the Myanmar border to attack militants. India’s information minister, Rajyavardhan Rathore, considered the “operation a ‘message’ to countries such as Pakistan that it will not hesitate to pursue threats outside” Indian borders. Rathore (a retired colonel) further stated, “We will strike when we want to”.

See: Sunil Sethi, ‘Treaties: Annexation of Sikkim’, *India Today*, 18 February 2015, <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/did-india-have-a-right-to-annex-sikkim-in-1975/1/435037.html> (accessed 4 August 2015); Touqir Hussain, ‘Kashmir Dispute’, *Regional and Ethnic Conflicts: Perspectives from the Front Lines*, eds. Judy Carter, George Irani and Vamik D. Volkan (Oxon: Routledge, 2009) pp. 41 – 46; ‘Dadra Nagar Haveli’, *Savera India Times*, 2014, <http://www.saveraindiatimes.co.in/dnhaveli.php> (accessed 3 August 2015); Jasjit Singh, *India’s Security in a Turbulent World* (New Delhi: National Book Trust, 2013) p. 16; ‘Indian military operation along Burma border opens new rift with Pakistan’, *The Guardian*, 16 June 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jun/16/india-pakistan-burma-border-tension> (accessed 2 September 2015).

<sup>8</sup> For a list of ISRO centres, visit ‘ISRO Centres’, *Indian Space Research Organisation* [website], 2014, <http://www.isro.gov.in/about-isro/isro-centres> (accessed 22 March 2015).

(IOR) states (see Map 1). At the same time, China, finding itself vulnerable mainly for the safety of its SLOC, has formulated a *string of pearls*<sup>9</sup> and initiated the Maritime Silk Route (MSR) to extend its regional footprint. The US naval and air presence at Diego Garcia south of the Maldives aims to counter balance a rising China and ensure freedom of navigation from India.

## 1.1 Problem Statement

In this game of big power politics of strategic manoeuvring and counter balancing, smaller states in the Indian Ocean region are attracting the attention of the big players and are being subjected to external pressure. Based on its geographic location, the Maldives is important for any state aspiring to strategically dominate the Indian Ocean. As a result, the Maldives must cope with the big states pressures to influence its domestic and foreign policies. Maps 1 and 2 illustrate the strategic significance of the Maldives.

Witnessing the big powers' strategic rivalry, understanding its own weaknesses, and considering other challenges and threats, the Maldives developed its National Security Policy (NSP) in 2012 as the overarching policy directive for all other strategies "of the state towards protecting and promoting its political independence, national sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well as the well-being of Maldivians".<sup>10</sup> It recognised the Maldives' geostrategic location in the global and regional security context and the power projection plans of the big powers in the Indian Ocean.<sup>11</sup> The NSP admitted to the alarming extent of "external actors" trying to exert "political influence on the Maldives", and stressed the importance of effective management of the Maldives' external dependence (in political, economic and security areas).<sup>12</sup> On a similar note, at the 67th UN General Assembly in 2012, President Mohamed Waheed Hassan of the Maldives urged the big states not to misjudge the capacity of small states in shaping their own destiny. He further appealed to

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<sup>9</sup> The *string of pearls* is a contested concept within Chinese scholars/policymakers and the rest of the world. Chinese scholars refuse to recognise the *string of pearls* as a theory or a strategy within China's grand strategy; rather, they postulate a "harmonious ocean" theory that China strives to build. Harmonious Ocean Theory was widely accepted by Chinese policymakers and scholars after President Hu Jintao of China used the concept in 2009 on the occasion of the sixtieth anniversary of its navy. For details see: Yves-Heng Lim, *China's Naval Power: An Offensive Realist Approach* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2014) pp. 2 – 5.

<sup>10</sup> *National Security Policy 2012*, n. 1, p. 5.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 5 – 24.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, p. 30.



the big states not to “interfere in the domestic politics of small States”.<sup>13</sup> Complementing this complexity, the Maldives Defence White Paper (DWP), published in the same year, pledged to base its defence and security policies “on its own assessment”,<sup>14</sup> as against external influence on security policies in the past. The DWP identified defence as “one aspect of national security policy and foreign policy”,<sup>15</sup> while the NSP advocated pursuing an independent foreign policy to enhance national security.<sup>16</sup> The DWP and NSP presented a coherent picture of the country’s geopolitical and geostrategic risks and challenges.

President Abdulla Yameen, elected to office on 17 November 2013, issued his foreign policy document on 20 January 2014 (Foreign Policy 2014).<sup>17</sup> This eight-page policy document aimed to increase economic opportunities for the Maldives and promote its national interest through increased international engagement and “innovative approaches”.<sup>18</sup> This was the first written foreign policy document of the Maldives. Before that, foreign policy of the Maldives, according to the DWP, was “based on the principles of mutual respect, non-belligerence, non-alignment and non-interference”.<sup>19</sup> Foreign Policy 2014 did not associate itself with any past policies or directives, and overlooked the claim of external political influence on the autonomy or interests of the Maldives apparent in presidential statements and the NSP. However, it did signal a shift in the country’s foreign relations and policy postures towards India and China.

Even though Foreign Policy 2014 overlooked foreign influence over the Maldives’ political autonomy, in the Address to the Nation on 26 July 2015 on the golden jubilee of independence, President Yameen admitted that attempts to “interfere and intervene in domestic affairs of small and less developed countries, under the guise of ideology and cultural norms” was “a reality” that must be countered and condemned.<sup>20</sup> He also

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<sup>13</sup> Mohamed Waheed Hassan, *Statement by the Maldives at the General Debate of UN General Assembly* [Speech given by the President of the Republic of Maldives at the General Debate of the Sixty Seventh Session of the United Nations General Assembly], para. 15 (New York: UN, 27 September 2012) [http://gadebate.un.org/sites/default/files/gastatements/67/MV\\_en.pdf](http://gadebate.un.org/sites/default/files/gastatements/67/MV_en.pdf) (accessed 9 August 2015).

<sup>14</sup> *Reshaping the Defence Sector for a Secure Maldives: National Defence Policy 2012* (Malé: Ministry of Defence and National Security, 2012) p. 12.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 11 – 12.

<sup>16</sup> *National Security Policy 2012*, n. 1, p. 34.

<sup>17</sup> ‘President Yameen launches the Foreign Policy of Maldives’, *The Presidency*, 20 January 2014, <http://www.presidencymaldives.gov.mv/?lid=11&dcid=13890> (accessed 3 March 2015).

<sup>18</sup> *Foreign Policy of the Maldives* (Malé: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 20 January 2014) p. 1.

<sup>19</sup> *Reshaping the Defence Sector for a Secure Maldives: National Defence Policy 2012*, n. 14, p. 11.

<sup>20</sup> *Official translation of the Address to the Nation by His Excellency Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayyoom, President of the Republic of Maldives, at the Official Function to Celebrate the Golden Jubilee of National*

mentioned that Minicoy Island (or Maliku, as it is known in the Maldives) was once part of the Maldives.<sup>21</sup> Minicoy, the southernmost island of Lakshadweep Islands, now belongs to India. This was the second time a Maldivian official had associated Minicoy with the Maldives. The first time was by Minister Abdulla Hameed in 1982, causing a diplomatic crisis with India that President Maumoon Abdul Gayyoom had to personally intervene to diffuse.<sup>22</sup>

## 1.2 Research Question

This study examines the security policy and foreign relations behaviour of the Maldives within the context of the strategic competition between India and China in the Indian Ocean. This research focuses on the developments in the Maldives since 11 December 1957, when Ibrahim Nasir was elected prime minister of the second sultanate.<sup>23</sup> The geographic location of the Maldives, and unfolding opportunities and challenges, would direct policymakers to look beyond India and China in articulating policy options. However, perspectives towards the US, Russia, Iran, Pakistan, Arabian Peninsula states, Sri Lanka, East Asia and Australia fall outside the scope of this study.

The primary research question guiding this study is, “What is the extent of influence on small states (taking the Maldives as a case study) by big states in geopolitically sensitive regions (such as the Indian Ocean), and what strategies are adopted or could be adopted by small states to preserve their autonomy and interests in such an environment?”. Based on this question, the two primary research questions the study seeks to examine are:

1. What are the geostrategic options for the Maldives in the evolving geostrategic

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*Independence*, para. 17 (Malé: The President’s Office, 26 July 2015), <http://presidencymaldives.gov.mv/Index.aspx?lid=12&dcid=15689> (accessed 31 August 2015).

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> Ramesh Trivedi, ‘India-Maldives Relations’, *India’s Relations with her Neighbours* (Delhi: Isha Books, 2008) p. 177.

<sup>23</sup> The Maldives was a sultanate ruled by sultans and sultanases (kings and queens) since 1153. The Maldives became a republic on 1 January 1953 following a referendum. Owing to a scarcity of essential commodities and overspending of public funds by the president, the republic was overthrown in 7 months and 26 days and the sultanate restored. Following the overthrow of the first president on 21 August 1953, the state was administered by a committee selected by the people. On 21 February 1954, Muhammad Fareed was elected sultan of the Maldives, and Ibrahim Ali Didi (popularly known by his state title, Ibrahim Faamdhayri Kilegefaanu) as prime minister. For details, see: Abdul Hakeem Hussain Manik, *Iyye* [Yesterday] (Malé: Novelty Printers and Publishers, 1997) pp. 115 – 119.

competition between India and China in the Indian Ocean?

2. How is the security policy and foreign relations of the Maldives shaped to preserve autonomy and pursue national interest amid the power play between India and China?

Emanating from the central research questions, the following four sub-topics or secondary research topics arise:

1. What is the policy posture of the Maldives and why has it adopted that posture?
2. What are the most significant challenges and opportunities arising from the strategic power competition between India and China to influence the Maldives' security and foreign policy?
3. How is the Maldives responding to these challenges and opportunities?
4. What would be the strategic depth the Maldives can contribute towards the strategic interests of India and China in the Indian Ocean?

### 1.3 Significance of the Research

This multi-layered research intends to contribute to small states studies, both towards the academic discipline and the interests of policymakers of small states. This study is prompted by the Maldives' claim of interference in its political autonomy by big states, and evading that claim in Foreign Policy 2014 without denouncing it.

Small states studies have become more relevant in international relations (IR) than ever before because the majority of the world's sovereign states are small states. It is often argued that big states use threats or coax small states to achieve their self-interest,<sup>24</sup> which is another reason to study small states. An important goal of this study is to better understand the influence of small states in the Indian Ocean region against the notion that big states dictate the foreign policy of smaller states,<sup>25</sup> and contribute to theoretical perspectives on small states security policies, particularly foreign policy.

While small states in Asia attempt to preserve their political autonomy against pressures

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<sup>24</sup> Iver B. Neumann and Sieglinde Gstöhl, *Lilliputians in Gulliver's World?: Small States in International Relations* (Reykjavik: Centre for Small State Studies, 2004) p. 2.

<sup>25</sup> David Vital, *The Inequality of States: A Study of the Small Powers in International Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972) pp. 5 – 6.

originating from the strategic competition between India and China, their aspirations linger. Against this backdrop, the Maldives is trying to maintain its strategic autonomy, increase its sphere of influence, chart out adequate foreign policy measures, and attract greater prominence. This study aims to provide a coherent picture of the autonomy of the Maldives by analysing its security policy and foreign relations behaviour in a strategically charged geographic region.

So far no comprehensive study on the geopolitical or geostrategic security perspectives of the Maldives has been attempted. Therefore, it is important for policymakers and practitioners to understand how the Maldives has responded to geopolitical and geostrategic threats, challenges and opportunities to craft the contours of its strategic policy. Furthermore, in-depth knowledge of the competing national interests of India and China in the Indian Ocean, and the strategic depth the Maldives could contribute to their interests could be significant in devising security policies and international engagement. In striking a balance between preserving self-autonomy and foreign dependence, such an analysis could provide the epistemological foundation required for constructing as well as implementing policies.

Being a small island state stranded in the middle of a power competition, many threats and challenges exist for the Maldives and its security. Limited security capabilities compared to other states in the region, limited capacity for preparedness for crises and security challenges, limited funds allocated for its defence and foreign affairs sectors, geographic location, small population, economic security challenges, weak border control mechanisms, brain drain, and lack of priority accorded to security policies by the political leadership pose unique national security dilemmas to this small state. Within this context, this study seeks to identify the challenges to the national security of small states amid big states' strategic power competition and options to overcome vulnerabilities and challenges. In the process, the behaviour of India and China towards the Maldives in achieving their strategic objectives will be better defined.

The scholarship on small states security is largely limited to small states in Europe, involving the European Union (EU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO),

predominantly applied within the perceptions of neorealism<sup>26</sup> (see Table 1). This study highlights the need to look beyond Europe in small states studies.

## 1.4 Methodology

Historically, two main models have been used to analyse the foreign relations behaviour of small states. The conventional model based on the traditional understanding of international relations assumes “small states are fundamentally similar to large states”.<sup>27</sup> The second, or alternative, model proposes a “fundamental difference between the foreign policy of small and large states”.<sup>28</sup> This study considers the alternative model as more relevant, especially owing to two categories (the small state of Maldives and the big states of India and China) analysed.

Consequently, this study adopts the eclectic approach as a framework of analysis. Analytic eclecticism is defined by Sil and Katzenstein as “an intellectual stance that supports efforts to complement, engage, and selectively utilize theoretical constructs embedded in contending research traditions to build complex arguments that bear on substantive problems of interest to both scholars and practitioners”.<sup>29</sup> Therefore, eclectic analysis constitutes any approach that seeks to “extricate, translate, and selectively recombine analytic components – most notably, causal mechanisms – from explanatory theories, models, and narratives embedded in competing research traditions”.<sup>30</sup> This methodology is adopted to overcome the gap of quantitative analysis, present the array of unfolding security challenges for the Maldives, identify the options for it to overcome these

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<sup>26</sup> EU member states have committed themselves to a Common Foreign Security Policy. The European Security and Defence Policy aims to strengthen the EU’s external ability to act by developing civilian and military capabilities in Conflict Prevention and Crisis Management. For details, see the works of: Elizabeth Shaver Duquette, ‘The European Union’s Common Foreign and Security Policy: Emerging from the U.S. Shadow’, *Davis Journal of International Law and Policy*, vol. 169, 2001, pp. 170 – 196; Anton A. Bebler, ‘Security Policy of a Small Central-European Candidate for the Enlarged EU: Slovenia’, *Small States Inside and Outside the European Union: Interests and Policies*, ed. Laurent Goetschel (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1988) pp. 125 – 138.

<sup>27</sup> Maurice East, ‘Foreign Policy-Making in Small States: Some Theoretic Observations Based on a Study of the Uganda Ministry of Foreign Affairs’, *Policy Science*, vol. 4, 1973, p. 491.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> Rudra Sil and Peter Katzenstein, ‘Analytic Eclecticism in the Study of World Politics: Reconfiguring Problems and Mechanisms across Research Traditions’, *Perspectives on Politics*, vol. 8, no. 02, June 2010, p. 411.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

challenges, and contribute to small states scholarship. Similarly, this approach could be used to assess the behaviour and policies of India and China. Owing to the limited availability of unclassified policy documents, the eclectic approach helps to accommodate open sources that translate the security policy behaviour (particularly foreign policy behaviour) of states through *document analysis*.<sup>31</sup>

In this approach, speeches of diplomats, presidential statements, press releases, memoirs, long-term national plans, country strategy papers, media briefs on policy, and daily occurrences reported in the print media are the primary sources. In some cases, news and documents in Dhivehi (the native language of the Maldives) have been translated by the author into English. This study uses the memoirs of Ali Umar Maniku (*My Log Book 1947–2008*), who served in two presidencies for over 50 years in various diplomatic and senior positions, including vice-president (under President Nasir) and special advisor (under President Gayyoom),<sup>32</sup> and the book *Iyye*<sup>33</sup> (literally meaning ‘Yesterday’) by journalist Abdul Hakeem Hussain Manik (popularly known as Hakeem) based on his eyewitness accounts in the political landscape as reliable literature on the policies of President Nasir<sup>34</sup> as other sources are limited. Since there exists a plethora of literature on Indian and Chinese policies, foreign engagement and aspirations, the relevant literature will be sifted to relate to the topic.

In following this methodology, the study adopts the five variables of foreign policy analysis proposed by James N. Rosenau, who is considered as the father of foreign policy analysis,<sup>35</sup> and the six variables proposed by Olav F. Knudsen. This blended framework is adopted to examine the factors responsible for analysing the foreign relations behaviour of

<sup>31</sup> A document is any material that “can be read; have not been produced in the purpose of social research; are preserved so that they become available for analysis; and are relevant for to the concerns of the social researcher”. Alan Bryman, *Social Research Methods* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) p. 543.

<sup>32</sup> Ali Umar Maniku, *My Log Book 1947 – 2008* (n.p., 2010) p. 1.

<sup>33</sup> The Ministry of Information and Arts confiscated and banned the book *Iyye* on 4 September 1997 for its political commentary (Announcement No: MIAC-D/97/30), just 26 days after publication. The ban was lifted on 11 March 2007 upon the request of the publisher after soft copies began circulating on the Internet. The book was re-published on the same day by the publisher (as the author had deceased by then). See: Ali Hussain, *Dhivehi Digest (Independence Edition)*, vol. 11 (Malé: Novelty Printers and Publishers, 1 July 2014) pp. 24 – 31; *Public Announcement No: MIA-J/2007/08* (Malé: Ministry of Information and Arts, 11 March 2007).

<sup>34</sup> Following a referendum on 1 April 1968, the Maldives abolished its sultanate and declared itself a republic (for the second time) on 11 November 1968 with Ibrahim Nasir as the first president of the Second Republic. He had previously been the prime minister governing the Maldives under Sultan Mohamed Fareed.

<sup>35</sup> Jeanne A. K. Hey (ed.) ‘Introducing Small State Foreign Policy’, *Small States World Politics* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers Inc., 2003) pp. 27 – 93.

the Maldives and the circumstances of external influences over it. This approach will also determine whether small states choose strategies, and not outcomes, like the big states,<sup>36</sup> as argued by Stein, and whether Maldives has or ever had a *grand strategy*.<sup>37</sup>

Rosenau's explanatory factors form the basis of evaluating the security policy of the Maldives, while Knudsen's variables form the contours of the analysis of India and China. Rosenau identified five variables as sources of small states' external behaviour: idiosyncratic, societal, role of policymakers, governmental and systemic (international system).<sup>38</sup> Idiosyncratic refers to the personal attributes and psychological predisposition of policymakers, while societal refers to all non-governmental factors that influence decisions of a state.<sup>39</sup> Knudsen identified six external variables for preserving small states' autonomy: (1) strategic significance of a small state's geographic location as viewed by great powers, (2) degree of tension between leading states, (3) phase of power cycle, (4) historic relations between a small state and a leading state, (5) policies of leading states towards a small state in challenging other leading power(s), and (6) presence of multilateral frameworks of security cooperation that can stabilise disparity in power.<sup>40</sup>

The variables proposed by the two scholars are applied with modifications in this study. Owing to the limited availability of information and the nature of 'role of policymakers' and 'idiosyncratic', the two variables are combined. 'Governmental setting' is also

<sup>36</sup> Arthur A. Stein, 'Realism, Liberalism, and Dilemmas of Strategic Choice', *Why Nations Cooperate – Circumstance and Choice in International Relations* (London: Cornell University Press, 1990) p. 16.

<sup>37</sup> The term *grand strategy* was popularised by British military historian Sir Basil Liddell Hart during the mid-20th century. He limited his definition of grand strategy to the conduct of war. Currently, grand strategy is considered adapting all the resources at the disposal of a state and using them in a concerted manner to achieve national security in times of both peace and conflict. As grand strategy is a realist subject, discussion of the term was considered contemptible due to the perceptive analysis of IR theories in Chapter 2. This study adopts grand strategy "as the theory, or logic, that binds a country's highest interests to its daily interactions with the world", as proposed by Hal Brands. For details, see: Basil H. Liddell Hart, *Strategy* (New York: Praeger, 1967) pp. 333 – 372; Richard Rosecrance and Arthur A. Stein, 'Beyond Realism: The Study of Grand Strategy', *The Domestic Bases of Grand Strategy* (London: Cornell University Press, 1993) pp. 3 – 21; Hal Brands, *The Promise and Pitfalls of Grand Strategy* (Carlisle: US Army War College Strategic Studies Institute, August 2012) p. 3.

<sup>38</sup> James N. Rosenau, 'Pre-theories and Theories of Foreign Policy', *Approaches to Comparative and International Politics*, ed. Barry R. Farell (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1966) pp. 27 – 93; Hey, n. 35, p. 9.

<sup>39</sup> Robert L. Farlow, 'Romania and the Policy of Partial Alignment', *The Foreign Policies of Eastern Europe: Domestic and International Determinants*, ed. James A. Kuhlman (Leyden: A. W. Sijthoff International Publishing Company B. V., 1978) p. 194.

<sup>40</sup> Olav F. Knudsen, 'Analysing Small State Security: The Role of External Factors', *Small States and the Security Challenge in the New Europe*, eds. Werner Bauwens, Armand Clese and Olav F. Knudsen (London: Brassey's, 1996) p. 9.

integrated within ‘role’ as government in the Maldives has transformed under each presidency.<sup>41</sup> Knudsen’s variables are used in analysing India’s and China’s aspirations in the Indian Ocean. The overlapping variables between both scholars are examined within the analysis of Rosenau’s variables to avoid repetition. This model does not espouse Maldives as a *buffer state*<sup>42</sup> in its traditional view; nonetheless agrees with Knudsen that a different type of analysis is required to study how a small state deals with two big powers simultaneously.<sup>43</sup>

This study also examines small states foreign policy against the current backdrop of *smaller* states in the Indian Ocean region being attracted by India and China through their soft power machinations (see Map 1). The Maldives was adopted as the case study based on factors such as rising global geostrategic competition in Asia,<sup>44</sup> geostrategic significance,<sup>45</sup> “external dependence in political, economic, and security spheres”,<sup>46</sup> and low probability for any other small state to be as challenged as the Maldives. These factors reflect the challenges and options for other small states in similar circumstances. Moreover, the literature on small states is analysed to support the hypothesis that despite an array of challenges, the foreign policy of the Maldives has not assimilated the guidance offered by small states scholarship.

The Maldives is a small state in strictly empirical terms (see Chapter 2 for definitions and Chapter 4 for details). This study does not define classes of states but recognises the small states concept through “a *relational* perspective which defines the size of a state in relation to a specific constellation of power”.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> This combination is not an adoption of John Spanier’s popular ‘three-dimensional view’ for analysing international politics based on state-system, nation-state, and decision-making. For details, see: John Spanier, *Games Nations Play: Analyzing International Politics* (New York: Praeger Publishers Inc., 1972) pp. 8 – 61.

<sup>42</sup> Mathisen (1971) defined a *buffer state* as a “small independent state lying between two larger, usually rival, states (or blocs of states)”. For details, see: Michael Greenfield Partem, ‘The Buffer System in International Relations’, *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, vol. 27, no. 1, March 1983, pp. 3 – 26.

<sup>43</sup> Knudsen, n. 40, p. 9.

<sup>44</sup> *Outlook on the Global Agenda 2015*, n. 4, p. 17.

<sup>45</sup> *National Security Policy 2012*, n. 1, p. 5.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid*, p. 30.

<sup>47</sup> Heiner Hänggi, ‘Small State as Third State: Switzerland and Asia-Europe Interregionalism’, *Small States Inside and Outside the European Union: Interests and Policies*, n. 26, p. 79.



## 1.5 Organisation of the Study

This study is developed in five chapters. The first chapter (Introduction) describes the background, purpose, research questions, and approach followed.

The second chapter explores existing literature on small states studies, related issues and challenges, and the theoretical suppositions applied in understanding small states' foreign relations and security policy. Existing literature on small states is compared with the case study (of the Maldives) to examine some of the theoretical assertions and also contribute to small states scholarship. In this approach, Knudsen's sixth variable (multilateral security frameworks) is concisely looked in within the analysis of IR theories. Though the variable could be applied to South Asian regionalism, it is considered unworthy of detailed analysis due to the lack of any "collective security measures within the region" owing to "the principle of non-interference" within the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC).<sup>48</sup>

The third chapter explores the importance of the Indian Ocean for India and China. The attitude of cooperation and influence of these two big states are examined against Knudsen's foreign policy variables. Since Knudsen's variables coincide in part with Rosenau's, his variable four and five are posited within the analysis of Rosenau's factors. This chapter clarifies the strategic competition between India and China, and elucidates the first primary question to a vast extent. It also explores the strategic depth the Maldives can offer India and China (the last secondary question of the study).

The fourth chapter provides the context of the Maldives' strategic policy based on Rosenau's variables of systemic, societal environment, and the role of policymakers. The government setting, 'role' and 'idiosyncratic' factors are collated under the rubric 'role of policymakers' to illustrate the existing political milieu, as government setting is mostly an arrangement decided by the political leadership. The geostrategic significance of the Maldives is another important policy component examined in this chapter. This chapter also describes the position (posture) of the Maldives' foreign policy during successive presidencies. This chapter explicates the primary and secondary research questions, except

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<sup>48</sup> Hideyuki Takahashi, 'Maldivian National Security – And the Threat of Mercenaries', *The Round Table*, vol. 88, no. 351, 1999, p. 438.

the last secondary question.

The fifth and final chapter summarises the research findings, addresses the research questions, and suggest recommendations for the Maldives to strategise its foreign relations to achieve its political and national interests. Other small island states can use the research findings as a guide to engage with power blocs or big states.



# Chapter 2: Review of Literature on Small States

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*... right, as the world goes, is only in question between equals in powers, while the strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must.*

— Thucydides,  
*The History of Peloponnesian War*, Book V, Chapter 17

As of 2015, there are 193 UN member states.<sup>1</sup> Of these, 17 have a population less than 100,000; 33 have fewer than 500,000 residents; and 10 have a population of half a million to one million. Fifty states have a population of less than 1.5 million and another 58 have 1.5 million to 10 million inhabitants.<sup>2</sup> Where the line should be drawn to separate *small states* has always been debated, but statistics indicate there are a substantial number of small states globally. Currently, 105 states are members of the UN-backed Forum of Small States (FOSS),<sup>3</sup> co-founded by Singapore as an informal caucus to bring “solidarity to small state positions”<sup>4</sup> in the UN and manoeuvre their position vis-à-vis big states.<sup>5</sup>

This chapter consists of six sections. The first section describes the progress in small states studies. The second section compares various definitions of small states to highlight the significance of small states studies. The third section construes the major IR theories applied in understanding the external behaviour of states to assess its impact on small states’ security policy. The fourth section studies the security dilemmas of small states, and the

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<sup>1</sup> ‘Member States of the United Nations’, *United Nations* [website], 2015, <http://www.un.org/en/members/index.shtml> (accessed 18 May 2015).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*; ‘Population’, *World Bank* [website], 2015, [http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL/countries?order=wbapi\\_data\\_value\\_2013%20wbapi\\_data\\_value%20wbapi\\_data\\_value-last&sort=asc&display=default](http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL/countries?order=wbapi_data_value_2013%20wbapi_data_value%20wbapi_data_value-last&sort=asc&display=default) (accessed 18 May 2015).

<sup>3</sup> Godfrey Baldacchino, ‘The Security Concerns of Designed Spaces’, *Small States and International Security: Europe and Beyond*, eds. Clive Archer, Alyson J.K. Bailes, and Anders Wivel (Oxon: Routledge, 2014) p. 243.

<sup>4</sup> Alan Chong, ‘Small State Security in Asia’, *Small States and International Security: Europe and Beyond*, n. 3, p. 216.

<sup>5</sup> Arunas Molis, ‘The Role and Interests of Small States in Developing European Security and Defence Policy’, *Baltic Security and Defence Review*, vol. 8, 2006, p. 81.

fifth section examines the determinants of small states' foreign relations. The final section summarises the key findings of the previous sections.

## 2.1 Small States Studies

Though small states have existed for long, specific interest in small states studies originated in the 18th and 19th centuries in Europe, particularly among German scholars. This interest diminished by mid-19th century, mainly because of the impetus garnered by the “idea of the nation-state”; small German states were perceived as obstacles to a unified Germany, thereby making “small states look increasingly unattractive”.<sup>6</sup> Academic interest in the study of small states' security re-emerged after World War II (WWII), mainly to address the survival of small states, and was partially rekindled by Fox's *The Power of Small States: Diplomacy in World War II* (1959).<sup>7</sup> In this study, she inquired how Turkey, Finland, Norway, Sweden and Spain maintained neutrality in WWII, and proposed that the most potent instrument of small states in a balance of power situation was skilful diplomacy.<sup>8</sup>

One of the first academic works to appear on the challenges faced by small states was *Problems of Smaller Territories* in 1967.<sup>9</sup> Edited by Benedict, this work originated from a seminar on universal opposition to colonialism.<sup>10</sup> In the same year, Vital published his seminal work, *The Inequality of States: A Study of the Small Powers in International Relations*, listing “the practical political implications of the material inequality of states”.<sup>11</sup> He emphasised the need to examine the “strength and weakness of states and their long-term viability not in terms of current, typical international practice, still less in terms of legal and moral rights”.<sup>12</sup> States should develop their own policy, pursue it, and have the

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<sup>6</sup> Iver B. Neumann and Sieglinde Gstöhl, *Lilliputians in Gulliver's World?: Small States in International Relations* (Reykjavik: Centre for Small State Studies, 2004) p. 7.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, p. 8.

<sup>8</sup> Annette Baker Fox, *The Power of Small States: Diplomacy in World War II* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1959).

<sup>9</sup> Jacques Rapaport, Ernest Muteba and Joseph J. Therattil, *Small States & Territories: Status and Problems* (New York: United Nations Institute for Training and Research, 1971) p. 12.

<sup>10</sup> Colin Clarke and Tony Payne (eds.) *Politics, Security and Development in Small States* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1987) p. ix.

<sup>11</sup> David Vital, *The Inequality of States: A Study of the Small Powers in International Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972) p. 3.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, p. 4.

capacity to take pressure. He also addressed three important areas of national security: “(a) the practical consequences for the small power of the material inequality of states, (b) the limits of the small power’s strength and, in particular, its capacity to withstand great external stress, and (c) the type of national policies that are open to the small states to pursue”.<sup>13</sup>

The initial focus of small states study was on describing the concept and the survival of small states among big states in an anarchic international system. Scholars such as Rothstein (1968), Vital (1971), Mathisen (1971), Azar (1973), Höll (1978), and Harden (1985) analysed alignment policy “as a means to compensate for the capability of small states to guarantee their own security”.<sup>14</sup> On the discussion on small states viability, a new hypothesis emerged regarding the relationship between global stability and the growing number of small states. It was argued that the creation of new states with weak economic structures and domestic political instability would contribute to global instability through “connected problems of international armaments and proliferation of nuclear weapons”.<sup>15</sup> Scholarly analyses such as the works of Vital, Rothstein, Osgood, Liska, and Keohane discussed alliances and nonalignment as foreign policy alternatives.<sup>16</sup> Subsequent research explored strategies for small states to mitigate structural constraints of *smallness* and preserve security, while many scholars (such as Vogel and Frei) focused on the influence of small states on world politics.<sup>17</sup>

According to Höll, small states studies received renewed attention in the 1960s. Firstly, the increased attention given to great powers and the US compelled scholars in smaller European communities to fill in the IR gap in the academia, which focused on big power rivalries.<sup>18</sup> Secondly, the “rapid social changes at the end of the 1960s brought traditional political science approaches into question; and thirdly, increasing international interdependence underlined as to how states with limited capacities coped with the costs of

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 4 – 5.

<sup>14</sup> Neumann and Gstöhl, n. 6, p. 8.

<sup>15</sup> Peter R. Baehr, ‘Small States: A Tool for Analysis’, *World Politics*, vol. 27, no. 3, April 1975, p. 458.

<sup>16</sup> Robert O. Keohane, ‘Lilliputians’ Dilemmas: Small States in International Politics’, *International Organization*, vol. 23, no. 2, March 1969, p. 292.

<sup>17</sup> Neumann and Gstöhl, n. 6, p. 9.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, p. 8.

dependence”.<sup>19</sup>

The study of small states as a distinct research category attained its peak amid decolonisation in the 1970s. New projections emerged in economics (on economic prosperity and economic dependence) and political science. Neorealists argued that the relative power capabilities of a state would define its behaviour in IR. Therefore, states of the same size were expected to follow similar behaviour. These hypotheses were later refuted by scholars such as East (1973), Baehr (1975), Höll (1978), Vogel (1979), and Handel (1981).<sup>20</sup> Baehr’s study showed that “the concept of small states was not a useful analytical tool in understanding world politics”.<sup>21</sup> As a result, comparative studies on small states attracted little attention in the 1980s and 1990s. The limited literature developed on small states too focused on specific issues limited to European countries. Kramer (1993) argued that the cessation in theory-driven research was due to “middle-range theories bound in time and (European) context”.<sup>22</sup> Table 1 charts the developments in small states studies.

**Table 1: Synopsis of Small States Studies**

	1950s-1970s: heyday	1980s: standstill	1990s-today: revival
Historical events	Cold War conflict, proliferation of small states through decolonization	decline of the U.S. hegemon and rise of global interdependence	end of Cold War, globalization and regional integration, proliferation of small states through disintegration
Dominant IR theory	realism/neorealism	neorealism vs. neoliberal institutionalism	rationalism vs. social constructivism
Small state topics	definition of small states, size and foreign policy, security issues, small and micro-states in international organizations	small states and economic interdependence, development issues	small states in European integration and in globalization processes, ethno-political conflicts

Source: Neumann and Gstöhl, *Lilliputians in Gulliver’s World?: Small States in International Relations* (Reykjavik, 2004).

Interest in the consequences of the smallness of emerging states in the international system resulted in the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) undertaking a study in 1971 on the problems of small states and their role in global affairs. *Small States*

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 9 – 10.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

& *Territories: Status and Problems* presented issues and problems of small states with reference to their role and participation in world affairs and the assistance that could be provided to them by UN institutions.<sup>23</sup> Other multilateral institutions also began to look into small states' challenges and issues. In 1985, the Commonwealth released a noteworthy study, *Vulnerability: Small States in the Global Society*. The study was commissioned in 1983 by the Commonwealth Secretariat to study the precarious situation of small states, pursuant to the US military intervention in Granada; before this, the Commonwealth had focused on economic challenges. The report examined the military, political, economic, technical, social and cultural aspects of vulnerability. On the "vagaries of vulnerability", it covered issues on external interference, economic vulnerability, and the possible range of threat scenarios. The report made a list of real and occurring threats, and identified the geopolitical importance of the Maldives.<sup>24</sup> The same year, The David Davies Memorial Institute of International Studies published a study titled *Small is Dangerous: Micro States in a Macro World*, looking into the problems of the very small states as well as the narrow economic and human bases in small states. It discussed capacity building measures for the security sectors of small states, factors contributing to political stability, importance of economic considerations, and intervention.<sup>25</sup>

Another important work is *Politics, Security and Development of Small States* (1987), which discussed the political aspects, social features, and economic issues of small states. Economic weakness was found to have a devastating effect on small states due to limited resources for the defence sector to deter interference from big states. It identified, through case studies, that small states have the capacity to repel attacks by mercenaries. It also suggested resorting to careful diplomacy to avoid confrontation with big states.<sup>26</sup> It argued that "small states which survive into the next century will develop a stronger sense of nationhood as an expression of their identity and their determination to maintain a separate political existence".<sup>27</sup> To address internal threats, small states will have a tendency to be self-reliant. Alliances and integral political links with big states were suggested to

<sup>23</sup> Rapaport, Muteba and Therattil, n. 9, p. 9.

<sup>24</sup> *Vulnerability: Small States in the Global Society* (London: Commonwealth Secretariat, 1985).

<sup>25</sup> Sheila Harden (ed.) *Small is Dangerous: Micro State in a Macro World* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1985).

<sup>26</sup> Clarke and Payne, n. 10, p. 227.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*



overcome military threats.<sup>28</sup>

With the end of the Cold War, the international context faced by small states changed dramatically. The Commonwealth recognised the importance of reassessing the political, social, economic and environmental concerns of small states in 1995. Subsequently, in 1997, an updated report on existing threats and challenges was published, titled *A Future for Small States: Overcoming Vulnerability*. Vulnerability was considered on the basis of two linking factors: (1) risks and threats experienced by the state, and (2) resistance and resilience of the state in response to its risks and threats. The report included the concerns such as “possible marginalisation of small economies as a result of progressive liberalisation of global economy and the evolving trends towards regionalism; likely to have disastrous consequences for small states that will resonate from global warming and climate change, environmental fragility; vulnerability to criminal activities, such as money laundering and drug trafficking; and possible threats to security arising from the trans-boundary movement of hazardous waste and nuclear material”.<sup>29</sup>

Through the two pioneering studies, the Commonwealth convinced other global institutions to address the specific issues faced by small states. As a result, in 1998, the Commonwealth Secretariat and the World Bank created a joint task force on small states “to assess the case for special treatment and to consider ways of addressing their unique problems, such as their vulnerability to marginalisation, natural disasters, and external economic shock”.<sup>30</sup>

Though small states studies has again become a progressing discipline since the 1990s, after a brief cessation in the 1980s, epistemological contribution towards the discipline has reduced considerably (see Table 1). Small states studies renewed with EU expansion due to scholars such as Dosenrode-Lynge (1993), Goetschel (1998), and Thorhallsson (2000), and has therefore has remained mainly EU centred.<sup>31</sup> The focus is mainly on the role and dependence of small states on the EU. Resonating this theme, a recent publication by Steinmetz and Wivel illustrated that not only small states survived the odds in the global system but also emerged prosperous, influential, innovative and “smart” in the post-Cold

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<sup>28</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 214 – 221.

<sup>29</sup> *A Future for Small States: Overcoming Vulnerability* (London: Commonwealth Secretariat, 1997) p. vii.

<sup>30</sup> Ronald Sanders, ‘The Commonwealth as a Champion of Small States’, *The Contemporary Commonwealth: An Assessment 1965-2009*, ed. James Mayall (Oxon: Routledge, 2010) p. 98.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*, p. 11.

War period.<sup>32</sup> In the studies focused outside Europe, the theme has predominantly been on small states' vulnerability to climate change and exogenous shocks. The focus on economic security reflects in part the economic vulnerability after the global financial crisis (GFC, 2007–08).<sup>33</sup>

## 2.2 Small State – The Concept

Though 'small states' is a regularly used term in general discourse as well as in scholarly studies, there exists no consensus on its definition. The concept is not merely contested in theory, but also in the practice of IR.<sup>34</sup> Definitions of small states are problematic mainly due to the perception of convenience.

Population, geographical area, and economic capacity are the most commonly used criteria in defining small states. For instance, Clark and Payne defined a small state as a state with less than 1 million population,<sup>35</sup> while East held the mark at 23.7 million people.<sup>36</sup> Vital identified two classes of small states: (a) population of 10 million–15 million for economically advanced countries, and (b) population of 20 million–30 million for underdeveloped countries.<sup>37</sup> He left out 'micro-powers', asserting that microstates would "constitute yet another class of states with reasonably distinct and characteristic problems of their own".<sup>38</sup>

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the Commonwealth consider any state with a population of less than 1.5 million as a small state.<sup>39</sup> The World Bank also adopts a similar interpretation. However, the World Bank and the Commonwealth also add Jamaica,

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<sup>32</sup> Robert Steinmetz and Anders Wivel (ed.) *Small States in Europe: Challenges and Opportunities* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2010).

<sup>33</sup> Neumann and Gstöhl, n. 6, p. 12.

<sup>34</sup> Baldur Thorhallsson and Anders Wivel, 'Small States in the European Union: What Do We Know and What Would We Like to Know?', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, vol. 19, no. 4, December 2006, p. 652.

<sup>35</sup> Clarke and Payne, n. 10, p. xvii.

<sup>36</sup> Maurice A. East, 'Size and Foreign Policy Behavior: A Test of Two Models', *World Politics*, vol. 25, no. 4, July 1973, p. 563.

<sup>37</sup> Vital, n. 11, p. 8.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*, p. 9.

<sup>39</sup> K. Dwight Wenner, 'Small States Facing Big Challenges', *Development Outreach* (Washington DC: International Monetary Fund, December 2009) p. 25.

Lesotho, Namibia and Papua New Guinea to the list of small states even though their populations are above the upper limit.<sup>40</sup> The UN recognises small island developing states (SIDS), adopted after the 1992 Earth Summit (UN Conference on Environment and Development). Island developing states (IDC), that has been previously used, was discontinued in 1994 to focus on small states.<sup>41</sup> At the Earth Summit, SIDS was defined “as a distinct group of developing countries with specific economic, social and environmental vulnerabilities”.<sup>42</sup> The “vulnerabilities of SIDS in light of changing global circumstances and new insights” was revisited at the Third International Conference on SIDS, held in September 2014.<sup>43</sup> SIDS as a separate category has led to the creation of landlocked developing countries (LLDC). These categories have limited significance outside the UN framework and are seldom recognised by other multilateral institutions. When SIDS wanted special status at the World Trade Organization (WTO), it preferred to identify which economies can be considered small. A literature review by the WTO Secretariat concluded “each small economy is unique”.<sup>44</sup> Yet small economies performed well in terms of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) levels, national growth, and social indicators.<sup>45</sup>

Rothstein (1968) and Keohane (1969) chose the extent of influence a state has over its neighbours as the defining criterion for categorising states.<sup>46</sup> Rothstein argued that “a small power is a state which recognizes that it cannot obtain security by use of its own capabilities, and that it must rely fundamentally on the aid of others”.<sup>47</sup> Keohane said “a small power is a state whose leaders consider that it can never, acting alone or in a small group, make a significant impact on the system”.<sup>48</sup> Goetschel (1988) recognised a small

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<sup>40</sup> Stephanie Medina Cas and Rui Ota, *Big Government, High Debt, and Fiscal Adjustment in Small States* [IMF Working Paper WP 08/39] (Washington DC: International Monetary Fund, 2008) p. 5.

<sup>41</sup> *Is Special Treatment of Small Island Developing States Possible?* (New York and Geneva: United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, 2004) p. 7.

<sup>42</sup> *Small Island Developing States: Challenges in transport and trade logistics* (Geneva: United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, 15 September 2014) p. 2.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> *Small Economies: A Review of the Literature* (Geneva: World Trade Organisation, 23 July 2002) p. 13.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> Moosung Lee, ‘Definition of Small States’, *How do Small States Affect the Future Development of E.U.* (New York: Nova Science Publishers Inc., 2006) p. 32.

<sup>47</sup> Robert Rothstein, *Alliances and Small Powers* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968) p. 29.

<sup>48</sup> Keohane, n. 16, p. 296.

state as any state “perceived as no danger to neighbouring states”,<sup>49</sup> while Steinmetz and Wivel (2010) defined small states in terms of capabilities, namely “the possession of – or lack of – power resources in absolute or relative terms”.<sup>50</sup> Though population size and capabilities were the main criteria for defining small states, there was a third view. Barston adopted Vital’s population size and Rothstein’s relative capabilities and influence, and said small states have “low levels of economic development and their gross national product (GNP) are normally below, in some cases critically lower than, approximately one billion US Dollars”.<sup>51</sup>

A review of small states literature by Hey reveals that at least three different communities were considered when scholars discussed small states. The communities were: microstates (mostly in the Caribbean) with less than 1 million citizens; developed states in the developed world such as Austria, Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Switzerland; and small states in the third world (in Africa, Asia and Latin America).<sup>52</sup> All these studies faced the same challenge of establishing a clear demarcation between a small state and a *normal* state.<sup>53</sup> But a study by Easterly and Kraay (2000) found “small states are no different from large states, and so should receive the same policy advice that large states do”.<sup>54</sup> A 2013 IMF study found small states are comparable with other states on GDP or human development indices (see Figure 1).<sup>55</sup>

<sup>49</sup> Laurent Goetschel (ed.) *Small States Inside and Outside the European Union: Interests and Policies* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1988) p. 13.

<sup>50</sup> Robert Steinmetz and Anders Wivel (ed.) ‘Introduction’, *Small States in Europe: Challenges and Opportunities* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2010) p. 5.

<sup>51</sup> Ronald P. Barston, *The Other Powers: Studies in the Foreign Policies of Small States* (Oxford: Alden & Mowbray Ltd, 1973) pp. 15 – 16.

<sup>52</sup> Jeanne A. K. Hey (ed.) ‘Introducing Small State Foreign Policy’, *Small States World Politics* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers Inc., 2003) pp. 2 – 3.

<sup>53</sup> Lee, n. 46, p. 32.

<sup>54</sup> William Easterly and Aart Kraay, ‘Small States, Small Problems? Income, Growth, and Volatility in Small States’, *World Development*, vol. 28, no: 11, 2000, pp. 2013 – 17.

<sup>55</sup> *Macroeconomic Issues in Small States and Implications for Fund Engagement* (Washington DC: International Monetary Fund, 20 February 2013) pp. 14 – 16; Sarwat Jahan and Ke Wang, ‘A Big Question on Small States’, *Finance and Development*, vol. 50, no. 3, September 2013, p. 45.

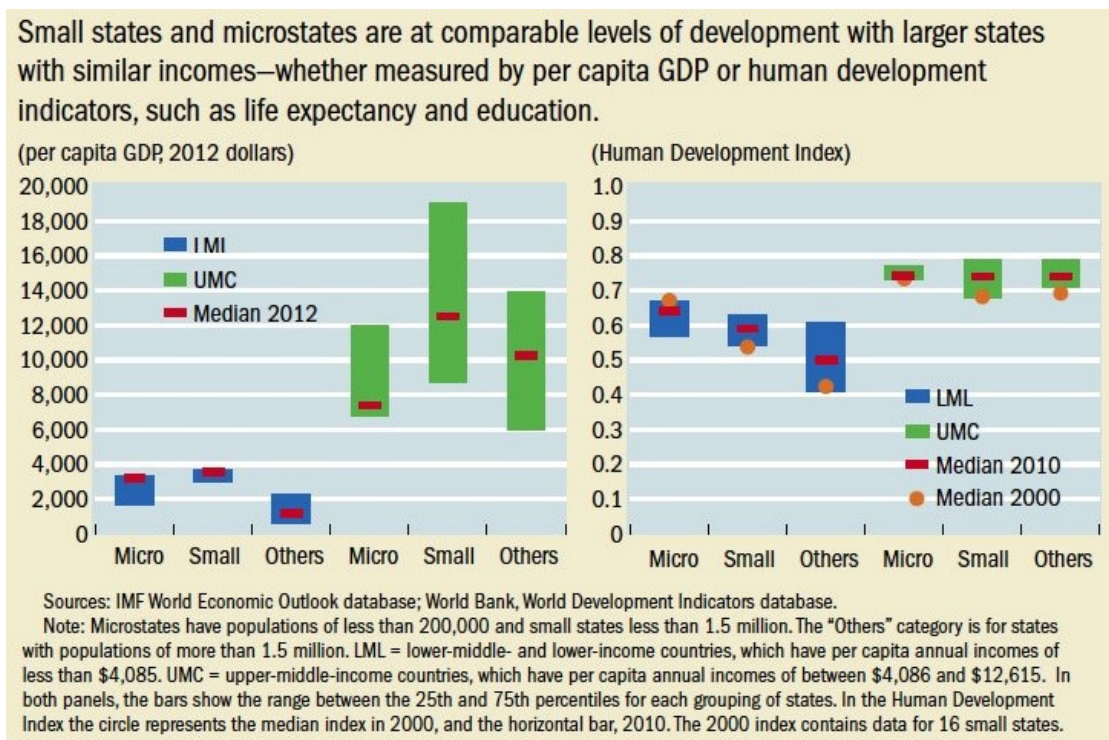


Figure 1: GDP and human development of small states compared with big states<sup>56</sup>

## 2.3 Theorising Small State Behaviour

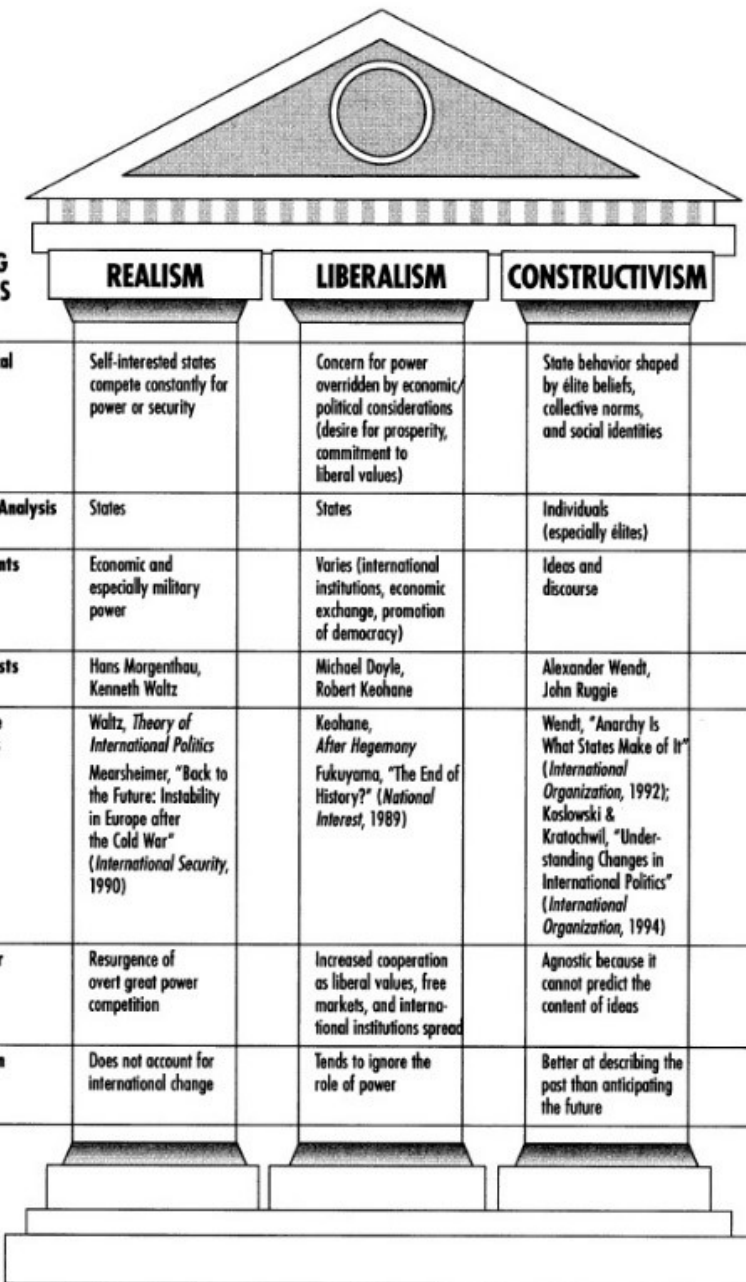
International security studies theories, or major IR theories (see Figure 2), fail to illustrate the behaviour of small states because mainstream security theories originated largely in the *West*, and therefore focus on the developed world. Nueman and Ayoob argue that most theorists tried to apply their theoretical models developed for the *West* on the rest of the world, irrespective of geographic location or point of time, thereby showing “little apparent reference to objective reality” in the context of the third world.<sup>57</sup> The same could be said for small states<sup>58</sup> and middle powers<sup>59</sup>.

<sup>56</sup> Jahan and Wang, n. 55, p. 45.

<sup>57</sup> Stephanie G. Neuman (ed.) ‘International Relations Theory and the Third World: An Oxymoron?’, *International Relations and the Third World* (London: MacMillan Press Ltd, 1998) p. 2.

<sup>58</sup> Neumann and Gstöhl, n. 6, p. 12.

<sup>59</sup> Middle powers or states is another vague subject in international security studies and IR. Here, the term is used to imply states that can be considered neither as a small state nor as a great power.



COMPETING PARADIGMS	REALISM	LIBERALISM	CONSTRUCTIVISM
<b>Main Theoretical Proposition</b>	Self-interested states compete constantly for power or security	Concern for power overridden by economic/political considerations (desire for prosperity, commitment to liberal values)	State behavior shaped by elite beliefs, collective norms, and social identities
<b>Main Units of Analysis</b>	States	States	Individuals (especially elites)
<b>Main Instruments</b>	Economic and especially military power	Varies (international institutions, economic exchange, promotion of democracy)	Ideas and discourse
<b>Modern Theorists</b>	Hans Morgenthau, Kenneth Waltz	Michael Doyle, Robert Keohane	Alexander Wendt, John Ruggie
<b>Representative Modern Works</b>	Waltz, <i>Theory of International Politics</i> Mearsheimer, "Back to the Future: Instability in Europe after the Cold War" ( <i>International Security</i> , 1990)	Keohane, <i>After Hegemony</i> Fukuyama, "The End of History?" ( <i>National Interest</i> , 1989)	Wendt, "Anarchy Is What States Make of It" ( <i>International Organization</i> , 1992); Koslowski & Kratochwil, "Understanding Changes in International Politics" ( <i>International Organization</i> , 1994)
<b>Post-Cold War Prediction</b>	Resurgence of overt great power competition	Increased cooperation as liberal values, free markets, and international institutions spread	Agnostic because it cannot predict the content of ideas
<b>Main Limitation</b>	Does not account for international change	Tends to ignore the role of power	Better at describing the past than anticipating the future

Figure 2: Major IR theories<sup>60</sup>

In defining small states, scholars have considered three contexts. In the first context, or the realist philosophy of power, the importance of power forms the core of the argument.<sup>61</sup> Capabilities of the state decide its ability to survive and ensure security in the international

<sup>60</sup> Stephen M. Walt, 'International Relations: One World, Many Theories', *Foreign Policy*, no. 110, Special Edition, Spring 1998, p. 38.

<sup>61</sup> Baldur Thorhallsson and Anders Wivel, 'Small States in the European Union: What Do We Know and What Would We Like to Know?' *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, vol. 19, no. 4, December 2006, p. 656.

fora, where every state seeks its own national interest.<sup>62</sup> In such a system, dominated by powerful states, weak states have limited individual influence, and are thus forced to ally with a big state or other weaker states.<sup>63</sup> This realist perspective needs to be reconsidered as small states have survived regardless of the lack of power.<sup>64</sup> Except in Europe, no regional security setup exists for weak or small states to converge their interests. As for South Asia, there has never been a convergence of concerns, but there has been a convergence of interests. One example is the Maldives' security cooperation with India, which began after the end of Gayyoom's government in 2008. Details of which are discussed in Chapter 4.

The second context is the liberal school of thought.<sup>65</sup> The contemporary reinterpretation of liberalism as neoliberalism or liberal intuitionism is often preached as the way of international order, whereby multilateral institutions are projected to hold a constructive role in international problems with immense power and capabilities. In reality, the power projected through/by multilateral institutions does not match the support or acceptance by big states. The debates on membership of small powers in multilateral institutions since the creation of the League of Nations confirms the veiled interests of big powers. For example, the League of Nations denied membership to Liechtenstein, a small state, in 1920 citing lack of an army, which is an element of the realist philosophy. Consequently, Monaco and San Marino did not seek membership of the League of Nations.<sup>66</sup> Based on this experience, Liechtenstein initially did not seek UN membership, but rather applied for membership to the International Court of Justice (ICJ). In the debate for ICJ membership, Liechtenstein faced resistance.<sup>67</sup> In the same manner, when the Maldives, with a population of less than 90,000, sought UN membership immediately after independence in 1965, it "ignited a debate as to whether microstates even deserved full member status".<sup>68</sup> U. Thant, then secretary-general of the UN, proposed to "re-examine the criteria for the admission of new

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<sup>62</sup> Hans Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, 5th edn. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf Inc., 1968) pp. 29 – 34.

<sup>63</sup> Stephen M. Walt, 'Alliances: Balancing and Bandwagoning', *The Origins of Alliances* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1990) pp. 110 – 111.

<sup>64</sup> Thorhallsson and Wivel, n. 61, p. 656.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> Harden, p. 15.

<sup>67</sup> Bengt Borms, 'States', *International Law: Achievements and Prospects*, ed. Mohammed Bedjaoui (Paris: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1991) p. 55.

<sup>68</sup> Timothy S. Rich, 'Integrating Microstates into Cross-National Research: An Explanatory Analysis', *Journal of International and Global Studies*, vol. 6, no. 1, November 2014, p. 4.

members and introduce some form of associate membership”.<sup>69</sup> Impelled by the US, after two years, the UN Security Council revived its Standing Committee on Admissions, which had remained dormant since 1949, for a vigorous and careful scrutiny of UN membership criteria.<sup>70</sup> Therefore, behind the façade of liberal institutionalism (or neoliberalism), realism is the dominant wisdom for the big states.

Small states demonstrate more interest in regional organisations to overcome their vulnerabilities as regional organisations serve their economic imperatives.<sup>71</sup> The Maldives’ initiative in establishing SAARC and participating in a number of multilateral institutions implies its support for global institutions. A closer examination provides a contrasting picture. For example, when the Commonwealth alleged the Maldives violated the principles of the organisation, President Yameen sought parliamentary counsel in July 2015 over continuing as a member of the Commonwealth.<sup>72</sup> This also establishes the extent of consent for institutional liberalism within small states. In another such instance, President Waheed expressed doubts on the adherence to rule of law by international institutions, benchmarked by those institutions, at the High-level Meeting of the 67th Session of the UN General Assembly on the Rule of Law, on 24 September 2012,<sup>73</sup> indicating the anarchic condition of the international system. SAARC, the only organised body in South Asia, has “not affected the politics of the region”,<sup>74</sup> owing to its modest economic and political

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<sup>69</sup> Harden, n. 25, p. 17.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 17 – 19.

<sup>71</sup> Thorhallsson and Wivel, n. 61, p. 656.

<sup>72</sup> ‘Motion over Commonwealth withdrawal reaches parliament’, *Haveeru Online*, 20 July 2015, <http://www.haveeru.com.mv/news/61194> (accessed 3 September 2015).

<sup>73</sup> At the High Level Meeting on the Rule of Law, in his statement, President Waheed said, “National governments and international organisations alike, have a solemn duty to promote the rule of law. There is no debate on the importance and on the need for a code of principles and rules in the international arena. International organisations define for us the meaning of rule of law. They set the benchmarks against which the application of rule of law is measured. And they prescribe what changes are needed to improve a country’s performance on the rule of law. But let me pause to reflect whether international organisations subject themselves to the same standards they set for member States. The recent experience of Maldives suggests that the answer is no to the question whether the weakest of our global family of our nations feel safe and secure.” See: Mohamed Waheed Hassan, *Statement of the President of the Republic of Maldives at the High Level Meeting on the Rule of Law* [Statement by His Excellency Dr Mohamed Waheed, President of the Republic of Maldives at the High Level Meeting on the Rule of Law at the National and International Levels], para. 17 – 19 (New York: UN General Assembly, 24 September 2012), <http://www.unrol.org/files/Statement%20by%20Maldives.pdf> (accessed 6 October 2015).

<sup>74</sup> Barry Buzan and Ole Waever, ‘South Asia: Inching Towards Internal and External Transformation’, *Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) p. 103.



significance. SAARC member states' interest, evident in the Dhaka Declaration (1985),<sup>75</sup> validated Hey's argument that small states participate in multilateral institutions to attain foreign policy goals,<sup>76</sup> which are defined by political ambitions and national interests.

The third context is of constructivism,<sup>77</sup> which disapproves material focus and argues that the core ingredient of IR is 'social' rather than 'material'. The focus is on the shared ideas, beliefs and understanding between states because the political world is not a physical state. The global order is based on the acceptance of ideas or beliefs within a group of people, and the acceptance of a belief as the norm with respect to time. Therefore, when new ideas progress into IR, the order inevitably changes. If states accept the anarchic nature of the world (realism), then people will create new norms that are far different from the existing norms.<sup>78</sup> In such a system, inter-subjective ideas and beliefs take over as the foundation.

After the Cold War and with the rise of nationalism, small states behaviour was analysed through constructivism, which was based on identity, ideas and international norms.<sup>79</sup> Constructivism enables small states to define their identity and interests. Keohane and Hey's definition of small states, based on the perception of people deciding whether a state is small or not, reflects the constructivist view.<sup>80</sup> Unlike material oriented theories (realism and liberalism), constructivism focuses on the impact of ideas.<sup>81</sup> Small states are said to behave in a way that overcomes domestic political constraints through economic engagement. Wæver, in analysing small states domestic discourse, found that small states' foreign policies mostly explain their problems and dilemmas.<sup>82</sup> The small states in Europe would derive huge economic benefits from European integration than from free trade in the global market.<sup>83</sup> Europe centred constructivist literature explains small states behaviour (reluctant or positive) towards the EU, but falls short in describing the sudden policy shifts of small states.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> *The Dhaka Declaration of First SAARC Summit* (Dhaka: SAARC, 8 December 1985).

<sup>76</sup> Hey, n. 52, p. 4.

<sup>77</sup> Thorhallsson and Wivel, n. 61, p. 657.

<sup>78</sup> Robert Jackson and Georg Sorensen, 'Social Constructivism', *Introduction to International Relations Theories and Approaches*. 3rd edn. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006) p. 162.

<sup>79</sup> Neumann and Gstöhl, n. 6, p. 12.

<sup>80</sup> Lee, n. 46, pp. 22 – 23.

<sup>81</sup> Walt, n. 60, p. 40.

<sup>82</sup> Thorhallsson and Wivel, n. 61, p. 657.

<sup>83</sup> Neumann and Gstöhl, n. 6, p. 11.

<sup>84</sup> Goetschel, n. 49, p. 6.

The above discussion on the applicability of the main IR theories over small states indicates that combining the perception of different theories could be useful in understanding small states' external behaviour.<sup>85</sup> The applicability of theories over small states security policy could vary at different points of time, geopolitical contexts, and historical variations.

## 2.4 Small States Security Dilemma

Small states have “emerged, survived, disappeared, re-emerged throughout history in one form or another, and their right to existence has not been challenged very often in the past merely on the ground that they are too small to merit a separate existence”.<sup>86</sup> While many small states have been conquered or absorbed into their larger neighbours, others have remained independent. The fear of occupation or assimilation into larger polities looms large in the security policies of small states.<sup>87</sup> Even in this contemporary era of sovereign equality and multilateral institutions, this fear exists. The invasion of Grenada by the US Navy in 1983;<sup>88</sup> the invasion of Kuwait by Iraqi forces in 1990;<sup>89</sup> the control of Georgia by Russian ground troops in 2008;<sup>90</sup> and the Russian ingression into eastern Ukraine in 2014<sup>91</sup> are recent occurrences that make policymakers in small states fear the possibility of armed or political aggression by their neighbouring big states. Even today, the fear of a Russian

<sup>85</sup> Thorhallsson and Wivel, n. 61, p. 657.

<sup>86</sup> Rapaport, Muteba and Therattil, n. 9, p. 11.

<sup>87</sup> This fear was evident in the speeches of the leaders of small states. For instance, the Prime Minister of Lesotho, in his Statement before the UN General Assembly on 25 September 1967 said: “May I at this stage venture to speak for all the smaller countries, including those which have recently been somewhat derisively categorized as the mini-states. Implicit in this description is the suggestion that they have no place in the international community, that they should forthwith surrender sovereignty and national identity and accept incorporation in some large political entity. I have three comments to make on this view. The first, as I have already indicated, is that my people did not struggle for over a hundred years to achieve anonymity and oblivion. Secondly, I believe that such a view does not truly reflect the collective opinion of this Assembly and that it would violate the spirit and the intention of the Charter. Thirdly, I believe that the smaller states have a specific and vital contribution to offer in the field of international relations”. *Prime Minister Jonathan's Statement at General Assembly*, para. 12 – 13 (New York: UN, 25 September 1967), <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/NL7/104/97/PDF/NL710497.pdf?OpenElement> (accessed 17 May 2015).

<sup>88</sup> Clarke and Payne, n. 10, p. vii.

<sup>89</sup> George H. W. Bush, *Address on Iraq's Invasion of Kuwait on 8 August 1990* (Miller Center, 2015), <http://millercenter.org/president/bush/speeches/speech-5529> (accessed 19 May 2015)

<sup>90</sup> Emmanuel Karagiannis, ‘The 2008 Russian – Georgian war via the lens of Offensive Realism’, *European Security*, vol. 22, no. 1, 2013, pp. 74 – 93.

<sup>91</sup> ‘Kiev claims ‘intensive’ movements of troops crossing from Russia’, *Yahoo News*, 2 November 2014, <https://en-maktoob.news.yahoo.com/kyiv-claims-intensive-movements-troops-crossing-russia-123248755.html> (accessed 23 May 2014).

invasion runs deep through Lithuania. In January 2015, Lithuania published a manual advising its citizens how to best respond to a Russian invasion and occupation.<sup>92</sup> The above examples indicate that small states are extremely vulnerable and potentially easy targets for aggression.

As the NSP and the Maldivian presidential statements state, small states domestic politics are not immune from the interference of big states. When Sri Lanka favoured China instead of maintaining a balanced foreign policy posture, India interfered in Sri Lanka's 2015 presidential election to help the opposition oust incumbent President Mahinda Rajapaksa.<sup>93</sup> The newly elected government immediately reversed the pro-China foreign policy and made other shifts in its policy posture.<sup>94</sup> India allegedly influenced the 2013 Maldivian presidential elections too.<sup>95</sup> Similarly, China allegedly interfered in Zambia's presidential polls in 2006 to protect its economic interests.<sup>96</sup>

Small states also face the threat of armed non-state actors. Mercenaries have been involved in many conflicts in the past, either by governments or rebel movements in small states such as Comoros, Seychelles and many more. On 3 November 1988, Maldivian dissidents tried to overthrow the Maldivian government by involving mercenaries from the People's Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE), a secessionist group in Sri Lanka. The attack was repelled through Indian military intervention.<sup>97</sup> After the failed invasion of PLOTE, the Maldives submitted a draft resolution, "Protection and Security of Small

<sup>92</sup> The manual can be downloaded from the Lithuanian Ministry of Defence website. See: *KĄ TURIME ŽINOTI: apie pasirengimą ekstremaliosioms situacijoms ir karo metui* [What Do We Have to Know: About readiness in emergency situations and war] (Lithuania: Ministry of Defence, January 2015), [http://www.kam.lt/download/46714/ka%20turime%20zinoti%20\(knyga%202014\)%20sk56.pdf](http://www.kam.lt/download/46714/ka%20turime%20zinoti%20(knyga%202014)%20sk56.pdf) (accessed 26 September 2015).

For details, see: 'How to Survive a Russian Invasion', *The Atlantic* [website], 21 January 2015, <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/01/how-to-survive-a-russian-invasion/384692/> (accessed 23 May 2015).

<sup>93</sup> 'Insight: Indian spy's role alleged in Sri Lankan president's election defeat', *Reuters*, 18 January 2015, <http://in.reuters.com/article/2015/01/18/sri-lanka-election-india-idINKBN0KR03J20150118> (accessed 20 September 2015).

<sup>94</sup> Peshan Gunaratne and J. Berkshire Miller, 'Sri Lanka: Balancing Ties Between China and the West', *The Diplomat*, 26 May 2015, <http://thediplomat.com/2015/05/sri-lanka-balancing-ties-between-china-and-the-west/> (accessed 20 September 2015).

<sup>95</sup> See Chapter 4 for details.

<sup>96</sup> Zhigun Zhu, 'Why does China Still Play Second Fiddle?', *The Diplomat*, 19 September 2013, <http://thediplomat.com/2013/09/why-does-china-play-second-fiddle-2/> (accessed 20 September 2015).

<sup>97</sup> Hideyuki Takahashi, 'Maldivian National Security – And the Threat of Mercenaries', *The Round Table*, vol. 88, no. 351, 1999, p. 436.

States”, to the UN General Assembly. Adopted in December 1989,<sup>98</sup> the resolution emphasised the vulnerability of small states to external threats and urged the secretary-general “to pay special attention to monitoring the security situation of small states”.<sup>99</sup> The mandate has remained dysfunctional except for the creation of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) in 1990 to “raise awareness of the vulnerability of small island states to environmental threats”.<sup>100</sup>

Small states are often conflicted in choosing between preserving their autonomy and the desire to be internationally influential. When a small state increases its influence through multilateral institutions, it faces risks to its autonomy. As Goetschel argued, small states may not “be entitled to decision-making as equal partners”, and the core values of their national security and foreign policy “might be questioned, or that they might be forced to participate in international actions which do not fit their interests”.<sup>101</sup>

Historically, small states sought protection and economic support from neighbouring big states.<sup>102</sup> The traditional literature on small states security focuses on their capability to resist armed aggression.<sup>103</sup> But the policymakers in small states, even before the end of the Cold War, were more concerned about political rather than military threats.<sup>104</sup> Sufficient attention has not been given to the new threats and risks that have “become the most frequent concrete challenges to small states” such as “human and animal epidemics, cyber security, infrastructure breakdowns, interruptions of supply, and natural disasters (whereby, for instance, a single volcano may close most of Europe’s airports for days)”.<sup>105</sup>

The 1985 Commonwealth report provided a working definition of national security as “the absence of threat to the capacity to govern, protect, preserve and advance the state and its peoples consistent with the principles of respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity of other states”.<sup>106</sup> The report acknowledged the threat to security as “any type of specific

<sup>98</sup> *A Future for Small States: Overcoming Vulnerability*, n. 29, p. 145.

<sup>99</sup> *General Assembly Resolution No: A/RES/44/51* (New York: United Nations, 8 December 1989).

<sup>100</sup> *A Future for Small States: Overcoming Vulnerability*, n. 29, p. 145.

<sup>101</sup> Goetschel, n. 49, p. 17.

<sup>102</sup> Alyson J.K. Bailes and Baldur Thorhallsson, ‘Instrumentalizing the European Union in Small State Strategies’, *Journal of European Integration*, vol. 35, no. 2, 16 July 2012, p. 100.

<sup>103</sup> Neumann and Gstöhl, n. 6, pp. 13 – 14.

<sup>104</sup> *Vulnerability: Small States in the Global Society*, n. 24, p. 15.

<sup>105</sup> Bailes and Thorhallsson, p. 100.

<sup>106</sup> *Vulnerability: Small States in the Global Society*, n. 24, p. 16.

action or situation which could damage national integrity”.<sup>107</sup> Accordingly, three are major categories of security threats: “threats to territorial security resulting from incursions to both military and non-military sources; threats to political security, which can involve a broad range of actions that are deliberately intended to influence, and in some cases bring about a specific change in the threatened state’s national policies; and threats to economic security, involving action that can have the effect of undermining a state’s economic welfare and which, additionally, can also be used as an instrument for political interference”.<sup>108</sup> It is therefore apparent that foreign policy and security policy are the two components of a national security policy.

The threat to small states varies over time and within regions. Geopolitically, relative closeness to emerging or regional powers could render small states additionally vulnerable to a variety of illicit activities conducted by groups with advanced weaponry and gadgets, and based in the bigger states. In playing out their ambitious power rivalry, big states could use small states in strategic locations for their own military bases or facilities. Unlike the Pacific small states, the Indian Ocean small states are spread far apart. The remoteness makes it easier to disconnect the small state from global communication and transportation links, but does allow increased security from external aggression. Isolation and limited infrastructure make small states further vulnerable.<sup>109</sup>

Geographic location determines the weakness or strength of small states. In some cases, geographic location makes a country weaker even though its relative power exceeds that of its neighbours. For example, Israel would consider itself a weak state as it compares its military power with all the Arab states around it.<sup>110</sup> Small states are far vulnerable to attack due to lack of space (strategic depth) to withdraw in an attack. Their manoeuvrability being very limited, the first loss in a battle will end the war (such as the defeat of the comparatively powerful Portugal by India over Portuguese enclaves in the Indian Peninsula). Geographic isolation may also be advantageous for states at the periphery of the international or regional system. New Zealand and Chile avoided direct conquests for a

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<sup>107</sup> *Ibid*, p. 23.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 27 – 31.

<sup>110</sup> Michael Handel, *Weak States in the International System* (London: Frank Cass and Company, 1981) p. 52.

long period for this reason.<sup>111</sup>

## 2.5 Determinants of Foreign Relations

Small states have three broad foreign policy choices. The first choice, “passive policy”, can be adopted when a state envisages no conflict or when decision-makers lack the confidence to create “a safe national base”, thereby questioning its own viability as an independent state. The second choice, an “active strategy”, is “designed to alter the external environment of the state to its advantage either by (a) reducing the discrepancy in strength between state and the external forces that matter; or by (b) widening the limits of freedom of political choice and manoeuvre; or else by (c) increasing the total resources of the state, and therefore strengthening the safe base by *external* increment”.<sup>112</sup> The third option, “defensive strategy”, relies on the strength of the state “through *internal* increment”.<sup>113</sup>

In the international or regional system, the small state is part of an “asymmetric system”.<sup>114</sup> While many small states have adopted passive or defensive strategies, their foremost and ultimate interest is to preserve autonomy.<sup>115</sup> The strategy adopted depends on their capability and external environment. Multilateral institutions are schemed in such a way that small states can attain their goals.<sup>116</sup> The Maldives Foreign Policy 2014, designed to exploit multilateral institutions in achieving the country’s political objectives, seeks to “enhance the security and national sovereignty of the Maldives through increased bilateral and multilateral engagement”.<sup>117</sup>

Amid the vulnerabilities, some of the small states have influenced the big states’ policies in an asymmetric system. Vietnam battled and won against the mighty US. Cuba persevered with Castro’s foreign policy against American influence.<sup>118</sup> Therefore, small states are not

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<sup>111</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 70 – 72.

<sup>112</sup> Vital, n. 11, p. 111.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid*, p. 112 [original emphasis].

<sup>114</sup> Steinmetz and Wivel, n. 32, p. 15.

<sup>115</sup> Ana Bojinović, ‘Geographical Proximity and Historical Experience as a Basis for Active Foreign Policy Strategy of Small European States – the Case of Austria and Slovenia regarding the Western Balkans’, *Journal of the Central European Political Science Association*, vol. 1, no. 1, November 2005, p. 9.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 17 – 18.

<sup>117</sup> *Foreign Policy of the Maldives* (Malé: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 20 January 2014) p. 2.

<sup>118</sup> Handel, n. 110, p. 50.

entirely weak; rather, “they have important internal sources of strength which they have learned to use to their advantage. They have also learned to manipulate the strength of the great powers on their own behalf, and to draw on this external source of strength to further their own national interests”.<sup>119</sup>

## 2.6 Summary

States, regardless of size and population, are defined by the common characteristics of statehood.<sup>120</sup> Size is relevant while comparing states empirically, according to Easterly and Kraay. Size is an important factor in explaining the differences in the behaviour of states, albeit not a conclusive factor to hypothesise a particular security or foreign policy for states of similar physical characteristics. Though academic literature has moved away from defining small states, the UN categories (SIDS, LLDS and AOSIS) highlight the need for a working definition to classify their challenges and behaviours. Such a construct would facilitate them to overcome their vulnerabilities and threats as a group, more consistently.

The small states scholarship on security policy or foreign policy is mainly limited to small states in Europe. The discipline is relatively underdeveloped without much ongoing research. Scholars need to concentrate on regions other than Europe, which is exceedingly different<sup>121</sup> to other regions and regional setups. Irrespective of the geographic location, small states continually strive to gain maximum benefit from multilateral institutions. Their participation and activities in multilateral institutions may not always be identified as their acceptance of liberalism or constructivism as they also concur the anarchic nature of the international system. Therefore, a new epistemological narrative is required in IR to understand and forecast small states external behaviour as existing theories are inadequate.

Regardless of the sovereign equality of states and the role of multilateral institutions, small

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<sup>119</sup> *Ibid*, p. 51.

<sup>120</sup> For details of characteristics or “elements of statehood” see: Joseph Frankel, ‘States I’, *International Relations in a Changing World*, 4th edn. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988) pp. 19 – 24.

<sup>121</sup> Small states in Europe can choose between a bilateral alliance with a major power, alliance of small states, membership of a multilateral framework of security cooperation, or neutrality. For details, see: Håkan Wiberg, ‘Security Problems of Small Nations’, *Small States and the Security Challenge in the New Europe*, eds. Werner Bauwens, Armand Clese and Olav F. Knudsen (London: Brassey’s, 1996) p. 36.

states face territorial, political and economic security threats. The fewer incidents threatening territorial security do not imply a diminished risk, especially due to the intimidating actions of big states and growth of global private security. Remoteness, geographic layout, dependence on other states for essential commodities and services, smallness of the institutional infrastructure, and weak security apparatus can also be used by big states as instruments to influence the domestic policies and external behaviour of small states. Small states do not have many options to stand against a hostile big state, and would ally with a neighbour that would serve their political interest. Therefore, the key determinant of security policy and foreign relations is how friendly a state considers its neighbouring big states. Amid these odds, small states have successfully played asymmetric games with larger adversaries.





# Chapter 3: Indian Ocean, India and China

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*Whoever controls the Indian Ocean dominates Asia. The ocean is the key to seven seas. In the 21st century, the destiny of the world will be decided upon its waters.*

— Alfred Thayer Mahan

This chapter is divided into four sections to extrapolate Knudsen's variables. The first section briefly explains the significance of the Indian Ocean for India and China, and the emergence of *realpolitik* in it. The second section explores the historic relations between India and China and the tensions between them. The third section briefly examines the power cycle of India and China. The last section summarises the previous sections.

## 3.1 Indian Ocean

The Indian Ocean is a vast water body stretching from Africa to Asia to Australia, covering 101.6 million square kilometres (see Map 2). There are 26 Indian Ocean Rim (IOR) states, five Red Sea states, four Persian Gulf states, Saudi Arabia, British overseas territories, and French territories exposed to the Indian Ocean, while 13 landlocked states depend on it for trade and communication; the region also has 2.6 billion people, or 39 per cent of the world population.<sup>1</sup> The region possesses rich energy, mineral and fisheries resources. The continental shelves, covering about 4.2 per cent of the Indian Ocean, are expected to be rich in minerals such as tin, uranium, nickel, aluminium, gold and cadmium.<sup>2</sup> It is estimated that half the global oil is transported through the Indian Ocean via sea tankers, while 36 per cent of the oil is produced in the IOR states. Therefore, more than 80 per cent of the global oil passes through the Indian Ocean straits of Hormuz, Malacca, and Bab-el-Mandeb.<sup>3</sup> Half of

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<sup>1</sup> Christian Bouchard, 'The Indian Ocean regional geo-strategic and maritime context', *Proceedings from the Indian Ocean Maritime Security Symposium* (Canberra: Australian Defence College, April 2009) p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Raja Javed Afzal, 'A Regional Perspective on Indian Ocean Maritime Issues', *Proceedings from the Indian Ocean Maritime Security Symposium*, n. 1, p. 40.

<sup>3</sup> Dennis Rumley, 'Indian Ocean Maritime Security: Energy Security', *Proceedings from the Indian Ocean Maritime Security Symposium*, n. 1, p. 12.

the world's container traffic also passes through the Indian Ocean, while 30 per cent of world trade is handled at ports in the Indian Ocean.<sup>4</sup>

The Indian and Chinese economies are maritime dependent owing to the significant seaborne trade and the massive economic resources of the sea. When the worth of oil alone that passes through the Straits of Hormuz and Malacca is over US\$200 billion and US\$60 billion respectively,<sup>5</sup> the security of trade along the SLOC in the Indian Ocean becomes absolutely essential for both states. Furthermore, safeguarding the Indian coastline, islands, Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), and SLOC are in India's maritime interests,<sup>6</sup> as the Indian Ocean forms a significant component of India's security construct.



Map 2: Indian Ocean<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Afzal, n. 2, p. 40.

<sup>5</sup> 'The Regional Security Environment', *Annual Report 2011 – 2012* (New Delhi: Ministry of Defence, 2013) p. 8.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> 'Making waves in Indian Ocean: Modi building bridges to island states', *Hindustan Times*, 15 March 2015, <http://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/making-waves-in-indian-ocean-modi-building-bridges-to-the-island-states/article1-1326500.aspx> (accessed 23 May 2015).

Over six decades ago, a leading Indian geopolitician, K.M. Panikkar, argued that the future of India depended on the Indian Ocean, and “the Indian Ocean must therefore remain truly Indian”.<sup>8</sup> Encouraged by this view, and perhaps due to India’s strategic interest in the Indian Ocean, most Indian thinkers relate India with the Indian Ocean, and consider it as India’s “backyard”.<sup>9</sup> Owing to the importance of the Indian Ocean for India’s economic growth, the Indian Maritime Military Strategy is designed to exploit its geographic advantages “by adopting an oceanic approach [...] rather than a coastal one”.<sup>10</sup> The Indian Navy’s expansion plan considers India “an island state” in “all intents and purposes”.<sup>11</sup> India’s second navy chief, Vice Admiral Sir Edward Parry, reinforced this impression within the navy by relating to India’s foreign trade, almost all of which is ferried through the sea.<sup>12</sup>

Being a key thoroughfare, all the big powers, including China, give prominence to the Indian Ocean. Both Indian and Chinese scholars derive their inspiration from Mahan’s statement (quoted above).<sup>13</sup> Consequently, China has expressed concerns against India’s desire for dominance in the Indian Ocean because both states vie for influence in the Indian Ocean for achieving similar objectives. Their economies depend heavily on the Indian Ocean for access to energy and freedom of trade (as an illustration, see Figure 3 for trade with Africa). Every year, over US\$100 billion of China’s trade makes its way through the Indian Ocean.<sup>14</sup> Protecting its SLOC is a strategic imperative for China in the Indian Ocean, with around 40 per cent and 82 per cent of China’s oil imports passing through the Hormuz and Malacca Straits, respectively. To mitigate this vulnerability, China developed its capabilities and infrastructure to project its power in the Indian Ocean.<sup>15</sup> China refuses to accept the Indian Ocean as India’s *backyard*, and is “not prepared to let the Indian Ocean become India’s Ocean”, as stated by the director of the Chinese Academy of Military

<sup>8</sup> Dennis Rumley, Timothy Doyle and Sanjay Chaturvedi, ‘Securing’ the Indian Ocean? Competing regional security constructions’, *Journal of the Indian Ocean Region*, vol. 8, no. 1, 2012, p. 11.

<sup>9</sup> Donald L. Berlin, ‘India in the Indian Ocean’, *Naval War College Review*, vol. 59, no. 2, Spring 2006, p. 60.

<sup>10</sup> *India’s Maritime Military Strategy* (New Delhi: Integrated Headquarters, Ministry of Defence (Navy), 2007) p. 11.

<sup>11</sup> Rahul Roy-Chaudhury, ‘The Indian Experience: Technology Integration and Self-Sufficiency’, *Positioning Navies for the Future*, ed. Jack McCaffrie (Sydney: Healstead Press, 2006) p. 173.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> Chunhao Lou, ‘US–India–China Relations in the Indian Ocean: A Chinese Perspective’, *Strategic Analysis*, vol. 36, no. 4, July – August 2012, p. 624.

<sup>14</sup> Nazery Khalid, *The Tides that Bind: Maritime Trade in the Indian Ocean and its Growth Prospectus* (Kuala Lumpur: Maritime Institute of Malaysia, 2007) p. 9.

<sup>15</sup> David Brewster, *Submission to Inquiry into the Indian Ocean region and Australia’s foreign, trade and defence policy* (Canberra: Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, 5 April 2012) p. 3 – 4.

Science, General Zhao Nanqi.<sup>16</sup>

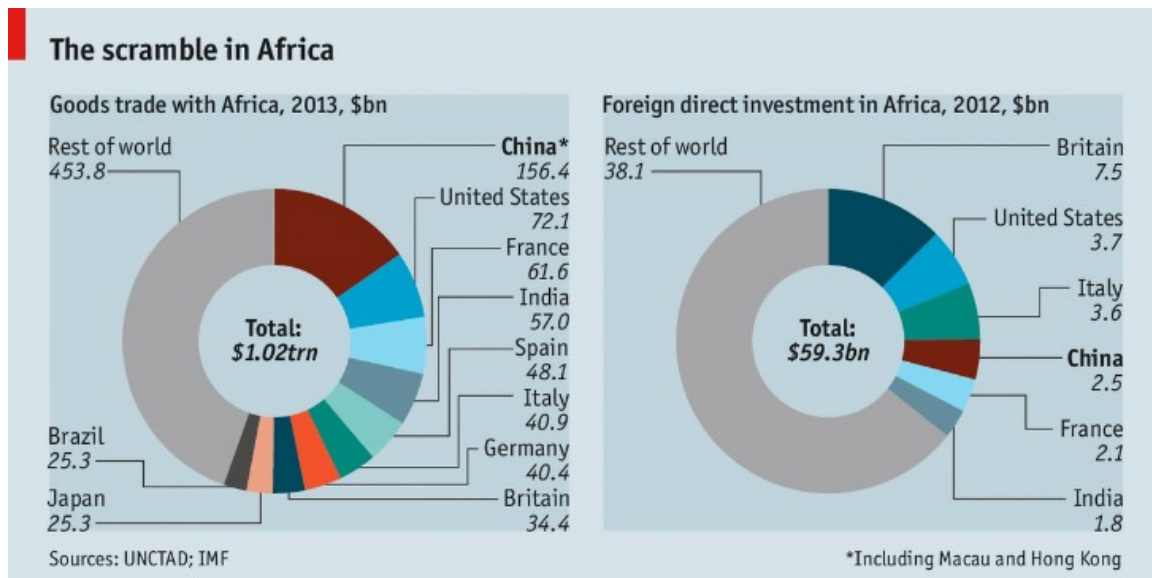


Figure 3: Trade with Africa, 2013, US\$ billion<sup>17</sup>

### 3.2 India–China Relations

After the triumph in the civil war in 1949, China aspired to recover the territories such as Tibet that had seceded during the Manchu (Ching) Dynasty and civil wars of the Republican era.<sup>18</sup> From India's independence in 1947 until the onset of the Cold War, India and China maintained close ties. The slogan *India China bhai bhai* (India and China as brothers) emerged in 1950s, described their strong interest in cooperation.<sup>19</sup> However, the tensions of the Cold War and ideological differences fractured the fledgling relations between them. China considered the Cold War as a “global struggle against imperialist powers”, while India saw it as an “East–West conflict” that the “south should avoid through non-alignment”.<sup>20</sup> This ideological difference spilled over the border dispute between the two states and over Tibet. The unsettled Sino–Indian border issue, China's military build-up

<sup>16</sup> Wayne Bert, ‘Burma, China and the U.S.A.’, *Pacific Affairs*, vol. 77, no. 2, Summer 2004, p. 272.

<sup>17</sup> ‘China in Africa: One among many’, *The Economist*, 17 January 2015, <http://www.economist.com/news/middle-east-and-africa/21639554-china-has-become-big-africa-now-backlash-one-among-many> (accessed 1 August 2015).

<sup>18</sup> Patrick C. Bratton and Hayoun Jessie Ryou, ‘Himalayan Rivalry: Sino-Indian Cold War Security Competition’, *China and International Security: History, Strategy, and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Policy*, eds. Donovan C. Chau, and Thomas M. Kane (New York: Praeger, 2014) pp. 197 – 198.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 199.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

near the borders, revolt in Tibet, the Dalai Lama seeking refuge in India, and Chinese officials' narrative on the underlying factors for the revolt in Tibet pushed the two states towards war.<sup>21</sup>

After establishing control over Tibet in 1950, to sustain its control, China built infrastructure and a highway from Xinjian to Tibet through Aksai Chin, which was claimed by India.<sup>22</sup> India felt threatened by the presence of Chinese military in Tibet, and therefore attempted to extend its control over the eastern sector (See Map 3). India took control of Tawang in 1951, which Tibet sternly protested.<sup>23</sup> In April 1954, India renounced any special rights it had on Tibet by entering into a Sino-Indian agreement on Tibet and accepting China's control over Tibet.<sup>24</sup> This was the first accord in which the popularly known 'Panchsheel' or 'Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence' were formally enunciated.<sup>25</sup> Although India declined to support the Tibetans at the UN, it provided them material support. In 1958, it was revealed that Tibetan rebels were financed and trained in Indian territory by the US (CIA) and Chiang Kai-shek's agents. Following an uprising in Tibet against Chinese occupation in March 1958, when the Dalai Lama escaped into India from Tibet, India provided him refuge. The Chinese forces following the rebels clashed with the Indian Army at Longju.<sup>26</sup> India's conduct during the riots infuriated Chinese leadership and they publicly lambasted the Indian government, affecting their relations.<sup>27</sup>

In the next two years, India and China intensified their military deployments in disputed border regions, resulting in clashes. China offered to recognise India's border claims in the east in April 1960, in return for India recognising China's claims in the west. India did not accept this offer due to increasing domestic pressure to deal with China decisively. This pressure continues even now, partly explaining the complexity of border disputes with China. Rather than accepting China's proposal, India decided (and that decision remained

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 200.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> Hongzhou Zhang and Mingjiang Li, 'Sino-India Border Disputes', *ISPI Analysis*, no. 181, Italian Institute for International Political Studies, June 2013, p. 4, [http://www.ispionline.it/sites/default/files/publicazioni/analysis\\_181\\_2013.pdf](http://www.ispionline.it/sites/default/files/publicazioni/analysis_181_2013.pdf) (accessed 21 September 2015).

<sup>24</sup> Bratton and Ryou, n. 18, p. 200.

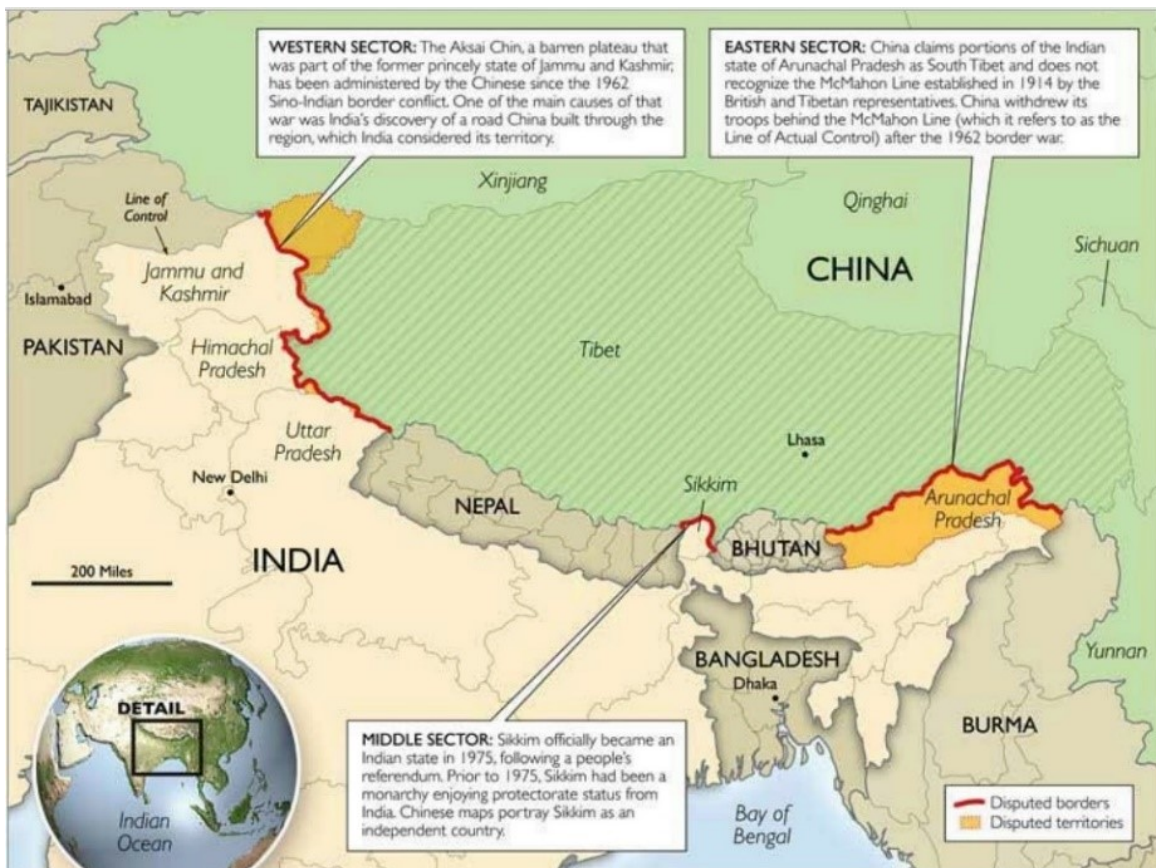
<sup>25</sup> In the Agreement on Trade and Intercourse between Tibet region of China and India signed on 29 April 1954, India and China agreed on the following principles: (i) mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty, (ii) mutual non-aggression, (iii) mutual non-interference, (iv) equality and mutual benefit, and (v) peaceful co-existence. For details, see: *Panchsheel* (New Delhi: Ministry of External Affairs, June 2004) p. 1 – 3.

<sup>26</sup> David M. Malone and Rohan Mukherjee, 'India and China: Conflict and Cooperation', *Survival*, vol. 52, no. 1, February – March 2010, p. 140.

<sup>27</sup> Bratton and Ryou, n. 18, pp. 200 – 201.



alive for decades) not to negotiate until Chinese forces withdrew from the disputed territories. India soon deployed troops in the disputed territories and established forward posts, in a provocative ‘forward policy’ rather than laying defence in depth.<sup>28</sup> India also reached out to the US and the Soviet Union to gain international support for India’s position. In the 1960s, India considered China its most immediate threat.<sup>29</sup>



Map 3: India–China (disputed) border<sup>30</sup>

Reacting to the ‘forward policy’, China attacked and ravaged the forward posts in 1962. Upon fulfilling its mission, China offered a ceasefire, which India rejected. Instead, on 24 October 1962 India asked for US military support, which was approved on 19 November 1962. By the time US assistance arrived, China had declared a unilateral ceasefire and withdrew its troops to the positions in 1960.<sup>31</sup> China’s win over India was not just a military victory but also a political and strategic success as it changed the way newly independent

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid*, p. 201.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*, p. 202.

<sup>30</sup> Catherine Richards, *China-India: An analysis of the Himalayan territorial dispute* (Canberra: Australian Defence College, February 2015) p. 4.

<sup>31</sup> Bratton and Ryou, n. 18, p. 202.

countries looked at India. Until the defeat, India was considered the “leader of the newly independent countries”.<sup>32</sup>

Tensions and border confrontations reoccurred throughout the Cold War. China gave assistance to various insurgent groups in the Indian northeast in the 1960s and 1970s. During this period, there was also the tension over the nominally independent Kingdom of Sikkim, which peaked in 1967 with skirmishes between Indian and Chinese forces and again in the 1970s when India formally annexed Sikkim.<sup>33</sup>

China expelled two Indian diplomats in 1967 for alleged espionage, which was reciprocated by India.<sup>34</sup> China’s and India’s close relations with Pakistan and the Soviet Union respectively stemmed from their mutual antagonism. China tested its first nuclear weapon in 1964. India followed in 1974, focused on China. The impasse between the two states eased with Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi’s visit to Beijing in December 1988. India agreed to drop its long-held precondition of settlement of border disagreements before discussing other issues. In return, China agreed to take a neutral position on Kashmir.<sup>35</sup> Yet, doubts and bitterness between the two neighbours continues, as seen in the letter Indian Prime Minister Vajpayee sent to the US president on 11 May 1998, the day it carried out nuclear tests.<sup>36</sup>

China’s land border with India is undefined (both on maps and on ground). Yet, the two states have maintained cordial relations in the 21st century, setting aside their unresolved border disputes and beginning to cooperate. In June 2003, during Prime Minister Vajpayee’s visit to China, Sikkim was recognised as a territory of India and removed from China’s list of independent countries, both on the foreign ministry website and its annual

<sup>32</sup> Shaila Pant, *History of India’s Diplomatic Missions* (New Delhi: Shakti Book House, 2008) p. 51.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 36 – 37.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 203 – 205.

<sup>36</sup> A portion of the letter reads as follows:

“I have been deeply concerned at the deteriorating security environment, especially the nuclear environment, faced by India for some years past. We have an overt nuclear weapon state on our borders, a state which committed armed aggression against India in 1962. Although our relations with that country have improved in the last decade or so, an atmosphere of distrust persists mainly due to the unresolved border problem. To add to the distrust that country has materially helped another neighbour of ours to become a covert nuclear weapons state. At the hands of this bitter neighbour we have suffered three aggressions in the last 50 years”. For the full contents of the letter, see: ‘NUCLEAR ANXIETY; Indian’s Letter to Clinton on the Nuclear Testing’, *New York Times*, 13 May 1998, <http://www.nytimes.com/1998/05/13/world/nuclear-anxiety-indian-s-letter-to-clinton-on-the-nuclear-testing.html> (accessed 31 July 2015).



survey, ‘China’s Foreign Affairs 2004’.<sup>37</sup> India considers its relations with China “mature” and a global relationship that should not be restricted to South Asia.<sup>38</sup> In 2004, Indian Foreign Minister Yashwant Sinha called on Chinese leadership “to show greater sensitivity to [India’s] security concerns”.<sup>39</sup>

Despite the positive trends, there have always been occasional squabbles and enduring suspicions, aggravated by Sino–Pakistan and Indo–US relationships.<sup>40</sup> Their “potential future conflict” has extended beyond South Asia to the Indian Ocean.<sup>41</sup> Since the 1990s, Beijing has increasingly involved itself in economic assistance and projects in Myanmar, Pakistan and other states, and apparently developed a land based contingency trade route to keep its economy rolling even if maritime passage were disrupted. China’s *string of pearls* initiative of constructing seaports across the Indian Ocean is considered by some Indian analysts as China consolidating its support in the region and undermining US influence in the region. The *string of pearls*, extending from Hainan Island, Woody Island (in South China Sea), Chittagong (Bangladesh), Gwadar Port (Pakistan), and Hambantota (Sri Lanka), is expected to project China’s geopolitical influence in the region. India is closely following China’s initiatives and assistance packages. To counter China’s activities, India outbid China in 2008 to develop a port in Myanmar.<sup>42</sup> After the change of government in Sri Lanka in 2014, India appears to have weakened China’s closer relations with Sri Lanka. India’s outmanoeuvring China on relations with the Maldives will be discussed in the next chapter.

Against India’s prognostications, evolving Sino–Sri Lanka cooperation and the visit of Chinese naval submarines to Sri Lankan ports in September 2014 took Indian strategists by surprise.<sup>43</sup> The clarification on the issue in the Indian Parliament illustrates the concerns of

<sup>37</sup> Mohan Malik, ‘India-China Relations: Giants Stir, Cooperate and Compete’, *Asia’s Bilateral Relations*, vol. 5, October 2004, p. 3.

<sup>38</sup> Yashwant Sinha, *The Emerging India – China Relationship and its Impact on India / South Asia* [Speech of Indian External Affairs Minister, Yashwant Sinha at Admiral RD Katari Memorial Lecture], 22 November 2003, <http://www.mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/5454/Admiral+RD+Katari+Memorial+Lecture+by+Shri+Yashwant+Sinha+Honble+Minister+of+External+Affairs> (accessed 29 July 2015).

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> Jing-dong Yuan, ‘Sino-Indian Relations: Peaceful Existence or Pending Rivalry’, *The Ashgate Research Companion to Chinese Foreign Policy*, ed. Emilian Kavalski (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2012) p. 215.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 216.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 217.

<sup>43</sup> ‘Chapter Six: Asia’, *The Military Balance 2015*, vol. 115, no. 1 (International Institute for Strategic Studies, February 2015) p. 218.

the Indian government.<sup>44</sup> Indian television channels even organised intense debates on the issue.<sup>45</sup> The Minister of External Affairs informed the Upper House of the Indian Parliament that “India closely monitors foreign military presence in India’s neighbourhood”, and when the foreign ministry took the issue to the Sri Lankan government, Colombo assured the ministry that it would not do “anything against the security interest of India”.<sup>46</sup>

Border tensions between India and China continued in 2014, notwithstanding the two states signing a border management agreement in October 2013. The 2014 skirmish continued for two weeks.<sup>47</sup> Almost a year after, the two states are in another face-off in northern Ladakh (Burte area of Depsang plains) over a surveillance structure erected by the Chinese Army (PLA). With the assistance of the Indian Army, Indo-Tibetan Border Police halted the construction on 18 September 2015. Both states with their reinforcements appeared to be on the brink of confrontation. The two states had had a 21-day stand-off in the same area in 2013 with encampments just 300 metres away from each other. The stand-off was resolved on 5 May 2013, following which both states withdrew their forces and India dismantled its military structures in the disputed Chumar sector alleged as threatening by China.<sup>48</sup>

Despite the border issues and strategic concerns, there are overlapping economic interests between India and China that cannot be dismissed. India’s joining of the China-led Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) illustrates cooperation in areas of mutual interest.

### 3.3 Power Cycle

In Knudsen’s model, the sum total of resources allocated by a state to external engagements

<sup>44</sup> *Question No. 516 to be answered on 27 November 2014: Chinese Submarines Docked in Sri Lankan Port*, Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, 27 November 2014, <http://www.mea.gov.in/rajya-sabha.htm?dtl/24359/Q+NO+516+CHINESE+SUBMARINES+DOCKED+IN+SRI+LANKAN+PORT> (accessed 13 September 2015).

<sup>45</sup> Vijay Sakhuja, ‘Chinese Submarines in Sri Lanka Unnerve India: Next Stop Pakistan?’, *China Brief*, vol. 15, No. 11, 29 May 2015, p. 15.

<sup>46</sup> *Question No. 516 to be answered on 27 November 2014: Chinese Submarines Docked in Sri Lankan Port*, n. 44.

<sup>47</sup> *The Military Balance 2015*, n. 43, p. 213.

<sup>48</sup> ‘Ladakh again: India, China in standoff over surveillance structure by PLA’, *The Indian Express*, 13 September 2015, <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/india-china-troops-face-off-near-lac-in-ladakh/> (accessed 13 September 2015).

explains the extent of extroversion or introversion in its foreign policy.<sup>49</sup> While military and economic factors are the main ingredients of power projection, the current scheme of activities in India and China proves their extrovert outlook and desire for expansion of power and influence. See Table 2 for a comprehensive accumulation of defence power by the two states. Knudsen's view that small states are at risk during a great power's decline, and a small state's viability increases when a big state is at its peak of power,<sup>50</sup> is an opportunity for the Maldives as both India and China are emerging powers.

Table 2: **Comparative defence statistics, China and India**

Weapons	China	India
Inter-Continental Ballistic Missile (Launcher)	66	00
Bomber Aircraft	136	00
Ballistic Missile Nuclear Powered Submarine	4	00
Active Personnel	2,333,000	1,346,000
Armoured infantry fighting vehicles	4,182	1,455
Main battle tanks	6,540	2,874
Artillery	13,380	9,702
Attack/Guided missile submarines	65	4
Aircraft carriers	1	2
Cruisers, Destroyers & Frigates	71	25
Principal amphibious ships	3	1
Tactical aircraft	1,835	848
Attack helicopters	150	20
Heavy/medium transport helicopters	341	105
Heavy/medium transport aircraft	65	37
Tanker and multi-role tanker/transport aircraft	14	6
Airborne early-warning and control aircraft	18	5

Source: *The Military Balance 2015* (International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2015)

<sup>49</sup> Olav F. Knudsen, 'Analysing Small State Security: The Role of External Factors', *Small States and the Security Challenge in the New Europe*, eds. Werner Bauwens, Armand Clese and Olav F. Knudsen (London: Brassey's, 1996) pp. 7 – 9.

<sup>50</sup> Knudsen, n. 49, p. 12.

Both states are spending heavily on defence. China spent US\$129.4 billion on defence in 2014, making it the world's second-largest defence budget, while India holds eighth place with a defence budget of US\$45.2 billion (see Figure 4 for a regional composition of real spending).<sup>51</sup> While China is expected to have three aircraft carriers in the ocean by 2016, India hopes to have the same number by 2017.<sup>52</sup> China's economic growth rate has been steady at 7.5 per cent in 2014 (it was 7.7 per cent in the previous two years). The increased investments in India improved the economy in 2014, with a projected growth of over 5 per cent (it was below 5 per cent in the previous two years).<sup>53</sup>

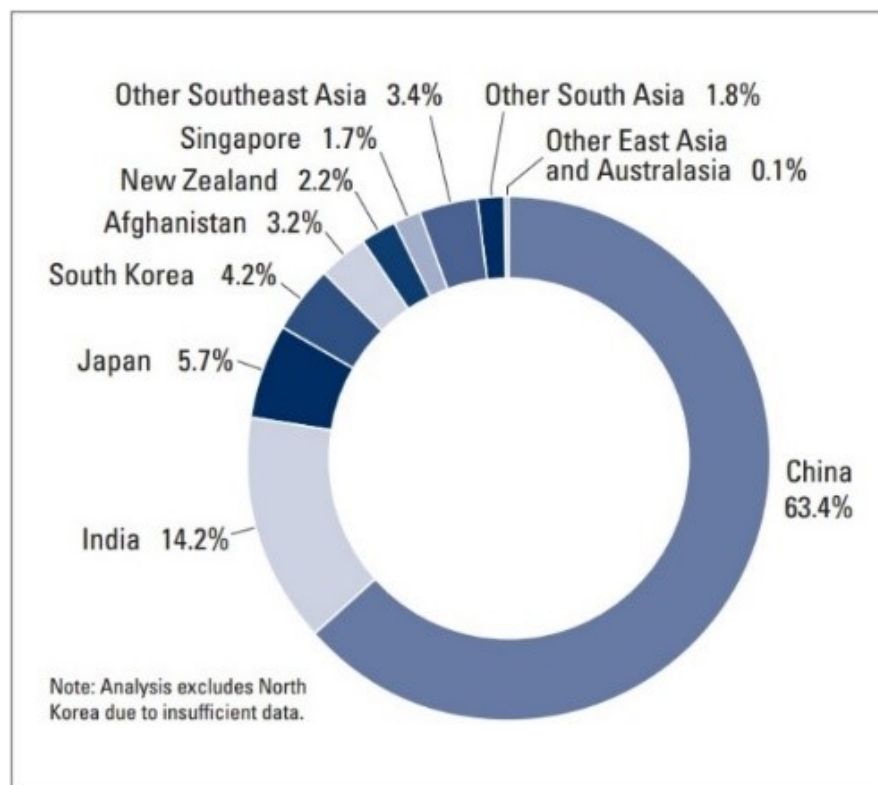


Figure 4: Composition of real defence spending increases, 2013–14<sup>54</sup>

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid*, p. 21.

<sup>52</sup> 'India to add Navy Bases, Expand Coastline Security Sensors', *Defence News*, 14 May 2013, <http://www.defensenews.com/article/20130514/DEFREG03/305140010/India-Add-Navy-Bases-Expand-Coastline-Security-Sensors> (accessed 30 July 2015).

<sup>53</sup> *The Military Balance 2015*, n. 43, p. 209.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid*, p. 211.

### 3.3.1 India

In 1947, the Indian Navy had 33 surface ships with 538 officers and 4,121 non-commissioned officers. India unveiled its first 10-year plan within 10 days. The plan outlined India's leadership aspirations among Southeast Asian states while providing security to its merchant shipping. The navy's second 10-year plan envisioned expanding it to include an aircraft carrier taskforce (with two aircraft carriers) by 1958. However, India could commission its first aircraft carrier in 1961.<sup>55</sup> By 2009, the Indian Navy became a 'blue-water' navy, capable of projecting power in the Indian Ocean long distances away from its bases. India began modernising its fleet and by 2010 started decommissioning obsolete vessels to replace with modern vessels. But the ambition of having a 140-ship naval fleet was compromised with the air force and army receiving more of the defence budget.<sup>56</sup>

India has doubled its defence spending since 1997 with an average annual growth rate of 6.3 per cent. Its 2015–16 defence budget was US\$39.8 billion (an 11 per cent increase from the previous year). India has become the world's largest buyer of conventional arms. It is expected to invest more than US\$100 billion on modernising its defence within the next 20 years to overhaul its obsolete stock. Newly acquired weapons from Russia and Israel would enhance India's capabilities in reconnaissance, precision-strike, command and control.<sup>57</sup>

To train aviators and enable shore support for its second aircraft carrier, INS *Vikramaditya*, a new facility was commissioned at Hansa in January 2014. India has commenced building a new naval base at Rambilli, near Eastern Naval Command Headquarters, under the code name Project Varsha. When the project finishes by 2021–22, it could be the base for INS *Vikrant*, an indigenous aircraft carrier under construction, and other warships and submarines.

India has established a Far Eastern Naval Command at Port Blair (Andaman Islands), which is 190 nautical miles away from Great Coco Island, where China has a listening post.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>55</sup> Roy-Chaudhury, n. 11, pp. 174 – 175.

<sup>56</sup> Lindsay Hughes, 'Examining the Sino-Indian Maritime Competition: Part 4 – India's Maritime Strategy', *Future Directions International*, 30 January 2014, pp. 2 – 3, [http://www.futuredirections.org.au/files/sap/Examining\\_the\\_Sino-Indian\\_Maritime\\_Competition\\_Part\\_4\\_-\\_Indias\\_Maritime\\_Strategy.pdf](http://www.futuredirections.org.au/files/sap/Examining_the_Sino-Indian_Maritime_Competition_Part_4_-_Indias_Maritime_Strategy.pdf) (accessed 22 September 2015).

<sup>57</sup> Walter C. Ladwig III, 'Indian Military Modernization and Conventional Deterrence in South Asia', *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, vol. 38, no. 5, 2015, pp. 731 – 732.

<sup>58</sup> Jason J. Blazevic, 'Defensive Realism in the Indian Ocean: Oil, Sea Lanes and the Security Dilemma', *China Security*, vol. 5, no. 3, 2009, pp. 59 – 71.

India is erecting radars across the Maldives to counter China's influence in the region.<sup>59</sup> India has established strategic alliances with many Asian nations and has gained US support, which coincides with the US policy of containing China.<sup>60</sup>

### 3.3.2 China

China is the world's fourth largest country with a population exceeding 1.5 billion (of which 92 per cent are Han Chinese). It has 'unified' lost territories during various eras, including Inner Mongolia and Hong Kong, except Taiwan, under the 'one China' policy.<sup>61</sup>

A rising superpower, China's assertive regional security policies, particularly in the East and South China Seas, intensified tensions with neighbours and global powers in 2014. China conducted its first military exercise in south-eastern Indian Ocean in February 2014, and increased its overseas exercises. China has undertaken mass production of hi-tech naval vessels such as destroyers (Type-052D), frigates (Type-054A), and corvettes (Type-056) to project power in the Indian and Pacific Oceans.<sup>62</sup>

China has become an engine of global growth. It has demonstrated a desire for a global leadership role and wants to be perceived as a responsible power. In the aftermath of the 2004 Asian tsunami, it dispatched its military on humanitarian missions to affected regions.<sup>63</sup> However, China still maintains a "low profile", perhaps following Deng Xiaoping's advice to "adopt a sober perspective; maintain a stable posture; be compose; conserve your strength and conceal your resources; don't aspire to be the head; do something eventually".<sup>64</sup> This statement also contributes to foreign apprehension about

<sup>59</sup> B. Chandranmohan, 'India, Maldives and the Indian Ocean', in *Institute for Defence Studies & Analysis*, 13 October 2009, [www.idsa.in/publications/stratcomments/BalajiChandramohan131009.htm](http://www.idsa.in/publications/stratcomments/BalajiChandramohan131009.htm) (accessed 15 March 2015).

<sup>60</sup> Daniel Twining, *The Strategic Implications of China's Trade and Investments in Continental Asia: The Testimony before the U.S – China Economic and Security Review Commission* (Washington DC: US – China Economic and Security Review Commission, 20 May 2009), <http://origin.www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/transcripts/5.20.09HearingTranscript.pdf> (accessed 1 August 2015).

<sup>61</sup> Harold W. Rood, 'China's Strategic geography and its Consequences', *China and International Security: History, Strategy, and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Policy*, n. 18, pp. 5 – 10.

<sup>62</sup> *The Military Balance 2015*, n. 43, p. 213.

<sup>63</sup> David M. Lampton, *The Three Faces of Chinese Power* (California: University of California Press, 2008) pp. 3 – 5.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid*, p. 16

China's future intentions.<sup>65</sup> Nevertheless, despite the immense growth of China's power since the 1980s, its incidences of use of force have not increased.<sup>66</sup> Johnston (1998) found that in almost all instances where China used its military, it was regarding a border dispute. China has therefore asserted "control over its boundaries, either through negotiated border settlement or force".<sup>67</sup>

In 2013, China has "raised the initiative of jointly building the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road", which is shorthanded as One Belt One Road (OBOR) Initiative, to promote "flow of economic factors", efficiently allocate resources, and integrate markets along the Belt and Road.<sup>68</sup> Though the current priority of OBOR is connecting infrastructure, the next phase will involve in the establishment of AIIB and a creation of US\$40 billion Silk Road Fund. Along with another 56 countries, India and the Maldives are expected to be members of this initiative.<sup>69</sup>

### 3.4 Summary

India considers the Indian Ocean as a core part of its security environment and grand strategy, ignoring the ocean's regional significance. India seeks to project itself as the main power in the Indian Ocean to the world, unwilling to tolerate polarisation of the Indian Ocean. China, recognising India's aspirations, refuses to allow total control of the Indian Ocean to protect its national interest (economic growth) and political interest (global power).

The disputed borders between India and China have resulted in many incursions and skirmishes. As both states continually battle for land (over border issues), there are chances

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<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>67</sup> Alastair Iain Johnston, 'China's Militarized Interstate Dispute Behaviour 1949-1992: A First Cut at the Data', *China Quarterly*, no. 153, March 1998, p. 28.

<sup>68</sup> *Vision and Actions on Jointly Building Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road* (Beijing: National Development and Reform Commission, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Commerce, and State Council of People's Republic of China, March 2015), [http://en.ndrc.gov.cn/newsrelease/201503/t20150330\\_669367.html](http://en.ndrc.gov.cn/newsrelease/201503/t20150330_669367.html) (accessed 23 November 2015).

<sup>69</sup> Helen Chin, Fong Lau, Winnie He, and Timothy Cheung, *The Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road* (Hong Kong: Fung Business Intelligence Centre, May 2015) pp. 2 – 3, 11, <https://www.fbicgroup.com/sites/default/files/The%20Silk%20Road%20Economic%20Belt%20and%2021st%20Century%20Maritime%20Silk%20Road%20MAY%2015.pdf> (accessed 23 November 2015).

for further armed encounters between the two states. Just as ideological differences exacerbated tensions between the two states during the Cold War to the extent of a war, today there exists a myriad such circumstances, including overlapping strategic interests, unrealistic expectations (particularly regarding their borders), market competition, vessels crossing the other's path in sea and air, and so forth.

They have begun to cooperate in areas of mutual interest. Nevertheless, it is no conclusive indication that they have shed all their wariness towards each other. The rapprochement could be affected by the slightest impact on their sense of security or restructuring of Asian geopolitics. The strategic interest towards Indian Ocean is one such factor. As they march on their respective power trajectories, relations (foreign policy postures) in Asia and other regions could change, and geopolitical realignments could occur. Enlargement of their ever-expanding economies and strategic interests could be characterised by more competition than cooperation.





# Chapter 4: Maldives – Security and Foreign Policy Factors

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*Peoples and nations today insist on the right to be heard and take active part in shaping the world development, politically and economically. We must not, therefore, allow the politics of strength to dominate our work or policies of suppression to return to penetrate into our ranks. The achievements of freedom, peace and equality which we have been able to foster together must be protected and enhanced further.*

— Fathulla Jameel, Maldives Minister of Foreign Affairs,  
Address to the 35th Session of the UN General Assembly

This chapter looks at the security context of the Maldives and factors that could influence its strategic policy. The first section focuses on the external environment around the Maldives, while its internal structures and systems (societal and governmental) are examined in the subsequent sections. The second section, ‘Societal System’, looks into the non-governmental factors influencing foreign policy. The final section, ‘Role of Policymakers’, looks into the governance under various presidencies, individualities of the presidents, and their foreign policies.

## 4.1 Systemic Context

The systemic variable comprises international and regional events, practices, as well as behaviour of certain states that intensely impact the Maldives’ foreign policy. The timeframe considered for the study overlaps with many global events such as the decline of the British Empire, end of the Cold War, securitisation of climate change through the

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC),<sup>1</sup> emergence of the “fourth wave of terrorism”,<sup>2</sup> new pandemics and uncontrolled spread of diseases, maritime piracy, and Russia’s revisionism, to name a few. Security issues of concern from a regional perspective include South Asian regionalism (mainly through SAARC), the 1997 Asian financial crisis, acquisition of nuclear capability by India and Pakistan, and re-emergence of *realpolitik* in the Indian Ocean. Rather than discussing all the aforementioned issues, this study focuses on the issues pertinent to the research question: geographic features, encounters with colonialist powers, maritime piracy, and climate change.

#### 4.1.1 Physical geography

The Maldives consists of 1,192 coral islands formed within 26 natural atolls across the equator in a north-south strip (see Map 4).<sup>3</sup> Dispersed over 115,300 square kilometres in the Indian Ocean, only 300 square kilometres constitute land. Including the EEZ, the territorial area of the Maldives covers 929,400 square kilometres. Sri Lanka and India are the nearest neighbours.<sup>4</sup>

Most islands of the Maldives are very small, measuring less than a kilometre in breadth, with an average elevation of 1.6 metres above sea level.<sup>5</sup> Of the 1,192 islands, people dwell on 188,<sup>6</sup> while another 110 are used as tourist resorts.<sup>7</sup> The remaining islands are uninhabited, except the 34 islands allotted for industrial use.<sup>8</sup> Of the inhabited islands, 86 have fewer than 1,000 residents, of which 20 islands have fewer than 500 residents; other than the national capital Malé, only seven islands have a population of over 5,000 inhabitants.<sup>9</sup> The Maldives is the smallest country in Asia both demographically and

<sup>1</sup> J. T. Houghton, G. J. Jenkins and J. J. Ephraums (eds.) *Climate Change: The Scientific Assessment* (Cambridge: Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, Cambridge University Press, 1990).

<sup>2</sup> Adopted from: David C. Rapoport, ‘The Four Waves of Modern Terrorism’, *Attacking Terrorism: Elements of a Grand Strategy*, eds. Audrey Cronin and J. Ludes (Washington DC: George University Press, 2004) pp. 46 – 73.

<sup>3</sup> *National Security Policy 2012* (Malé: The President’s Office, 2012) p. 7.

<sup>4</sup> *Fifth National Development Plan* (Malé: Ministry of Planning, Human Resources and Environment, 1997) pp. 25 – 26.

<sup>5</sup> *National Development Plan 1994 – 1996* (Malé: Ministry of Planning, Human Resources and Environment, 1994) p. ix.

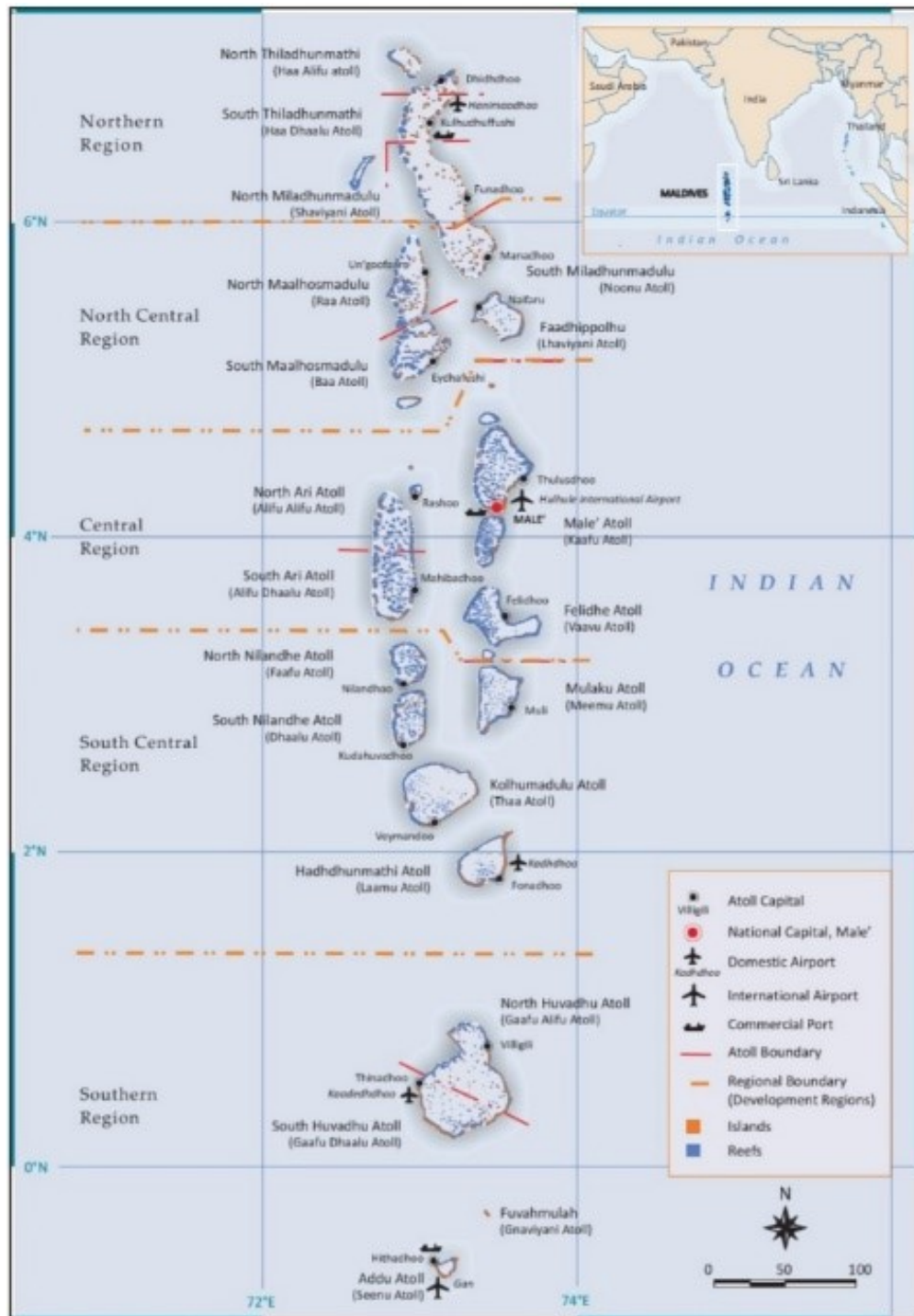
<sup>6</sup> Since the figure varies even within government records, it was calculated from: *Voters Register for Parliamentary Elections 2014* (Malé: Elections Commission, 2014).

<sup>7</sup> *Tourism Year Book 2014* (Malé: Ministry of Tourism, 2015) p. 3.

<sup>8</sup> *Common Core Document* (Malé: Government of Maldives, 2010) p. 4.

<sup>9</sup> *Voters Register for Parliamentary Elections 2014*, n. 7.

geographically,<sup>10</sup> with a population of 341,256 (Census 2014).<sup>11</sup>



Map 4: Political map of Maldives<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> *Maldives Disaster Knowledge Network* (New Delhi: South Asia Disaster Knowledge Network, 2009), [http://www.saarc-sadkn.org/countries/maldives/country\\_profile.aspx](http://www.saarc-sadkn.org/countries/maldives/country_profile.aspx) (accessed 31 March 2015).

<sup>11</sup> *Population and Housing Census 2014 (Preliminary Results)* (Malé: National Bureau of Statistics, 4 March 2015) p. 2.

<sup>12</sup> *Seventh National Development Plan 2006 – 2010* (Malé: Ministry of Planning and National Development, 2007) p. vii.

### 4.1.2 Interactions with colonial powers

Owing to its geographic location, the Maldives continually interacted with colonial powers from the 7th to mid-20th century. The earliest colonial power interested in the Maldives was Portugal because Southeast Asian ships chose the Maldives over the Malabar Coast to replenish supplies. Portugal conquered the Maldives in 1558, and ruled it for 15 years until it was liberated. An attempt was made to re-conquer it in 1649, but was repulsed.<sup>13</sup> This defeat of the Portuguese determined Maldives' relationship with the Dutch after they annexed Ceylon (Sri Lanka). When the British occupied Sri Lanka, the symbolic tribute previously paid to the Dutch was paid to the British until it was removed through an agreement in 1948.<sup>14</sup>

Maldives joined the British Empire as a protectorate on 16 December 1887.<sup>15</sup> The sultan (ruler) was vested with powers to conduct its domestic affairs.<sup>16</sup> The UK did not physically occupy the Maldives until WWII. During the war, Gan Island in Addu Atoll (see Map 4), the southernmost atoll of the Maldives, was used as an air and naval base,<sup>17</sup> but was vacated at the end of the war.<sup>18</sup> When Ceylon wanted to close Britain's military bases at Trincomalee and Katunayake in 1955, within a year, the geostrategic significance of the Maldives spiralled, and Gan became an important strategic alternative for protecting UK interests in the region.<sup>19</sup> British troops arrived at Addu Atoll for the second time on 25 November 1955 to re-establish the base at Gan.<sup>20</sup> By then, bilateral relations were strained as the Maldives was seeking complete independence under Prime Minister Nasir,<sup>21</sup> who was elected to office on 11 December 1957.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>13</sup> 'The Portuguese and the Maldives', *Portuguese Encounters with Sri Lanka and the Maldives*, ed. Chandra R. de Silva (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2009) pp. 173 – 180.

<sup>14</sup> C. H. B. Reynolds, 'The Maldivian Islands', *Asian Affairs*, vol. 1, No. 6, 1975, p. 41.

<sup>15</sup> 'Correspondence Regarding the Agreement of 1887 (Eastern No: 172)', *Affairs of the Maldivian Islands: Correspondence 1930 – 1933 (Reference No: 882/12/9)* (Surrey: UK National Archives, n.d.) pp. 68 – 69.

<sup>16</sup> Kenneth J. Panton, *Historical Dictionary of the British Empire* (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015) pp. 311-12; *Affairs of the Maldivian Islands: Correspondence 1930 – 1933*, pp. 62 – 63.

<sup>17</sup> Naseema Mohamed, *Rebellion of the Southern Atolls* (Malé: National Centre for Linguistics and Historical Research, n.d.) p. 1.

<sup>18</sup> Ali Fahmy Ahmed, *Suvaadeeb* [United Republic Suvadive] (Malé: Corona Press, 2012) p. 64.

<sup>19</sup> Mohamed, n. 17, p. 2; Panton, n. 16, p. 312; Reynolds, n. 14, p. 42.

<sup>20</sup> Ahmed, n. 18, p. 69

<sup>21</sup> Ali Hussain, *Dhivehi Digest*, vol. 12 (Malé: Novelty Printers and Publishers, 15 July 2014) p. 42; Abdul Hakeem Hussain Manik, *Iyye* [Yesterday] (Malé: Novelty Printers and Publishers, 1997) p. 117.

<sup>22</sup> Mohamed, n. 17, p. 3.

To maintain political control over the Maldives, and intrigued by the strategic importance of having a base in the Indian Ocean, the UK invoked its ‘divide and rule’ policy.<sup>23</sup> As a result, on 13 March 1959, the southernmost three atolls – Addu, Fuvahmulah and Huvadhu – revolted against the central government in Malé, and set up a breakaway state called United Suvadive Republic (USR).<sup>24</sup> In the wake of these strained relations with the UK, and its support to USR, the Maldives sought assistance from other countries. It began engaging with India, Pakistan, Egypt, China, and the Soviet Union, ignoring the protectorate agreement with the UK that inhibited the Maldives from conducting political relations with other countries. On 1 December 1962, the *Ceylon Daily Mirror* reported the Soviet Union’s interest in having a military base in the Maldives.<sup>25</sup> It is often suggested that the Soviet–Maldives relations played a pivotal role in the downfall of the USR by September 1963.<sup>26</sup>

Two years later, on 26 July 1965, the Maldives achieved independence, and UK troops left Gan in 1976.<sup>27</sup> The Soviet Union, Iran, Libya, India, China, and other states expressed interest in using Gan for military purposes, but were refused.<sup>28</sup> The rationale could be the obligation towards the UK that the Maldives undertook in its independence agreement not to allow any foreign state to use any part of its territory for military purposes without the approval of the UK until 15 December 1986.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Hakeem, n. 21, p. 117.

<sup>24</sup> Abdulla Mufeed, *Dhivehi Igireeseenge Gulhun adhi Addu Baghaavaai* [Maldives – Britain Relations and Addu Rebellion] (Malé: Novelty Printers and Publishers, 2013) p. 9.

<sup>25</sup> The reliability of this information cannot be verified, but on that same date, Sultan Mohamed Fareed inaugurated a Soviet film festival in Malé. See: *Dhivehi Digest*, vol. 11, Independence Edition (Malé: Novelty Printers and Publishers, 1 July 2014) pp. 134 – 145.

<sup>26</sup> In February 1960, Maldives signed an agreement with the UK authorising the latter to use Gan as an air base and erect a radio station in Hithadhoo Island for 30 years, while the UK agreed to non-intervention in the internal affairs of the Maldives, non-recognition of any government in the Maldives other than the sultan’s government in Malé, and to foster conditions in Addu Atoll to enable the rule of sultan there. The UK did not honour this agreement until the Maldives–Soviet Union relations began. In September 1963, the UK relocated the president of USR and his family to Seychelles despite opposition from the Maldives’ government. Hakeem, n. 21, pp. 124 – 126; Ahmed, n. 18, p. 138.

<sup>27</sup> Panton, n. 16, p. 312.

<sup>28</sup> David Brewster, *India’s Ocean: The Story of India’s Bid for Regional Leadership* (Oxon: Routledge, 2014) p. 59; Balaji Chandramohan, ‘China and India’s String of Pearls’, *Atlantic Sentinel*, 5 October 2010, <http://atlanticsentinel.com/2010/10/china-and-indias-strings-of-pearls/> (accessed 1 April 2015).

<sup>29</sup> *Agreement between Her Majesty’s Government in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of the Maldivian Islands*, art. 3 (Colombo: British High Commission, 26 July 1965). The Agreement with Annexes can be available in: *Dhivehi Digest*, vol. 12, n. 21, pp. 180 – 196.

### 4.1.3 Systemic issues

The land area of the Maldives constitutes less than one per cent of its territory. The vast sea domain and limited resources for monitoring its territory is a constant challenge for its security forces. Marine resources, tourist resorts, shipping and luxury vessels, and national infrastructure are vulnerable and at risk. Some of the perceived threats include maritime piracy, subversion through non-state actors, transnational crime, and terrorism. Other than these threats, there exists grave risk to its economy and food supply as the country depends on importing basic food products from other countries, most of which are transported by sea.

In the early years of the 21st century, maritime piracy became a lucrative business like in the 17th century. The security situation in the Western Indian Ocean deteriorated gravely from 2005 to 2012; to counter it, naval and military forces from several states initiated coordinated fleets to protect global shipping lines. As a result, pirate attacks were reduced by 2012 (see Figure 5). This decline was achieved through intelligence driven proactive initiatives of security forces, strict adherence to *Best Management Practices for Protection against Somalia Based Piracy* by the shipping industry, and increased use of armed guards aboard vessels.<sup>30</sup>

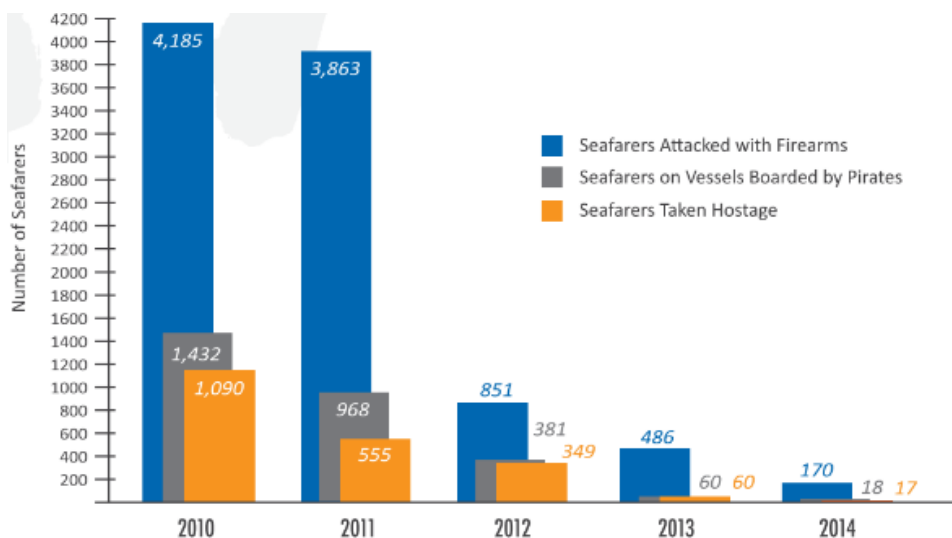


Figure 5: Human cost of piracy in the Western Indian Ocean Region, 2010–14<sup>31</sup>

<sup>30</sup> *The Human Cost of Maritime Piracy 2012* (Broomfield: One Earth Future Foundation, 2013) p. 3.

<sup>31</sup> *The State of Maritime Piracy 2014* (Broomfield: One Earth Future Foundation, 2015) p. 3.

The threat of piracy even extended to Maldivian waters. Somali pirates seajacked an Iranian cargo ship off the Maldives in March 2012. Maldivian security forces coordinated with India to free the ship. By then, the Maldives had arrested many Somali nationals drifting in its waters.<sup>32</sup> The “increasing incidences of piracy in the Indian Ocean” were a “major concern”<sup>33</sup> for the Maldives, which then developed a joint strategy to counter piracy in coordination with India and Sri Lanka.<sup>34</sup> As a result, the joint naval exercises conducted between the Maldives and India since 1991, code named DOSTI, were expanded to include Sri Lanka in 2012.<sup>35</sup> Before this exercise, pirate boats spotted in Maldivian waters were deterred by Indian vessels. India conducted surveillance of the Maldivian EEZ to secure the zone from pirate activities, and also gifted a fast attack craft in 2011.<sup>36</sup> As the Maldives has no anti-piracy laws to prosecute the apprehended Somalis, in December 2013, with the assistance of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Maldives repatriated 40 Somalis held in detention.<sup>37</sup>

Climate change has been a dominant foreign policy issue for the Maldives. It is one of the countries that emits the least greenhouse gases, yet is being affected most by manmade climate change. IPCC emission scenarios predict that sea levels would rise by 0.18–0.59 metres by 2090. With over 80 per cent of the land area being less than a metre above mean sea level, the Maldives is extremely vulnerable to climate change. The natural ecosystem of the Maldives is coral reef dependent. Rising sea temperatures would bleach the coral reefs and endanger the entire ecosystem,<sup>38</sup> and have serious repercussions for the Maldives.

<sup>32</sup> ‘Somali pirates seize ship off Maldives’, *BBC News*, 26 March 2012, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-17518631> (accessed 11 June 2015).

<sup>33</sup> Ahmed Sareer, *Implementation of the Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace* [Statement of Maldives Permanent Representative, Ahmed Sareer, to the UN on Agenda Item 90: Implementation of the Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace], para. 3 (New York: Permanent Mission of Maldives to the United Nations, 30 October 2013).

<sup>34</sup> ‘Somali pirates seize ship off Maldives’, n. 32.

<sup>35</sup> *Press Release: Joint ‘DOSTI’ Exercise by Indian Coastguard with Maldives and Sri Lanka* (Malé: High Commission of India in the Maldives, 27 October 2014) <http://www.hci.gov.in/male/?3628?000> (accessed 9 August 2015).

<sup>36</sup> ‘India to base anti-piracy patrol plane in Maldives’, *Hindustan Times*, 18 October 2011, <http://www.hindustantimes.com/newdelhi/india-to-base-anti-piracy-patrol-plane-in-maldives/article1-758784.aspx> (accessed 10 June 2015); Abdullah Jameel, ‘Indian Navy aircraft patrols Maldivian waters’, *Haveeru Online*, 19 October 2011, <http://www.haveeru.com.mv/news/38239> (accessed 10 June 2015).

<sup>37</sup> *Maritime Crime Programme* (Nairobi: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, March 2014) p. 19.

<sup>38</sup> *National Assessment Report 2010* (Malé: Department of Climate Change and Energy, 2010) p. 14.



## 4.2 Societal System

This section examines the societal factors that affect security policy. The geographic factors affecting social development, economic factors, terrorism, organised crime, public corruption, and health care are the issues examined in this section.

The wide dispersal of the population across a vast area and smallness of the islands poses immense challenges to the individuals, society, and Government of Maldives (GoM) in communication, transport, health and security. Identical social and physical infrastructure has to be setup in each island,<sup>39</sup> resulting in a huge cost for providing and maintaining socio-economic services – almost four to five times more than the continental developing countries and many other island states.<sup>40</sup> The distance between islands increases the cost of internal transport and slows down economic development. The small number of goods and fewer people travelling between islands makes scheduled transfer services uneconomical. The economic worth of the islands is reduced to tourism due to lack of minerals and barren soil. As there exists no fresh water supplies such as rivers, streams or lakes, the residents depend on water lenses, which can easily get depleted.<sup>41</sup>

### 4.2.1 Macroeconomic concerns

The Maldives' economy is predominantly driven by tourism and fisheries. In fact, tourism and related sectors constitute more than two-thirds of the economy.<sup>42</sup> The natural beauty of the coral islands and the 'one-island, one-resort' concept makes the Maldives a popular destination for foreign tourists. In 2013, the number of foreign tourist arrivals exceeded the 1 million mark for the first time (see Table 3 for major markets).<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> For example, there are 86 inhabited islands with a population of fewer than 1,000 residents. The government has the obligation to provide public infrastructure such as harbours, clean water, health centres, schools, administrative offices, police stations, etc. in the same way it would provide to any of the other islands. (The figures are calculated from *Voters Register for Parliamentary Elections 2014*, n. 7.)

<sup>40</sup> *Sixth National Development Plan 2001 - 2005* (Malé: Ministry of Planning and National Development, 2001) p. 14.

<sup>41</sup> *National Development Plan 1994 – 1996*, n. 6, p. 1.

<sup>42</sup> *Maldives Economic Diversification Strategy* (Malé: Ministry of Economic Development, 2013) pp. 17 – 19.

<sup>43</sup> *Tourism Yearbook 2014* (Malé: Ministry of Tourism, 2014) pp. 1 – 7.

Table 3: **Tourist arrivals and market share of top 10 markets, 2013**

Rank 2013	Country	2013		2012		Rank 2012
		Arrivals	Market Share (%)	Arrivals	Market Share (%)	
1	China	331,719	29.5	229,551	24.0	1
2	Germany	93,598	8.3	98,351	10.3	2
3	United Kingdom	85,869	7.6	91,776	9.6	3
4	Russia	76,479	6.8	66,378	6.9	4
5	Italy	57,854	5.1	62,782	6.6	5
6	France	54,328	4.8	56,775	5.9	6
7	Japan	39,463	3.5	36,438	3.8	7
8	India	38,014	3.4	31,721	3.3	9
9	Switzerland	34,102	3.0	35,457	3.7	8
10	Korea	30,306	2.7	23,933	2.5	10
<b>Total</b>		<b>841,732</b>	<b>74.8</b>	<b>733,162</b>	<b>76.5</b>	
<b>Total Arrivals to the Maldives</b>		<b>1,125,202</b>		<b>958,027</b>		

Source: Ministry of Tourism

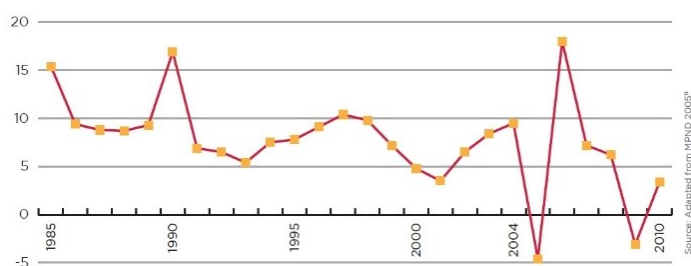
Source: *Tourism Yearbook 2014* (Malé, 2014)

Though tourist arrivals, particularly from China and India, are increasing exponentially, the fiscal deficit has not improved much. Since 2001, government spending has overtaken the GDP growth, leading to budget deficits. The 2004 Asian tsunami and the GFC aggravated the fiscal deficit. By 2012, with a domestic debt of 39 per cent, the nation's debt escalated to 72 per cent of GDP (US\$1.6 billion).<sup>44</sup> As small states with limited resources often change their security policies based on the soft aid and grants of leading states in the region, this macroeconomic factor could affect the policy posture of the Maldives.

As previously cited, two pioneering studies by the Commonwealth identified the economy of the Maldives as highly vulnerable to global travel trends and shocks such as the 2004 Asian tsunami and the GFC (see Figure 6), while small states such as Singapore and Mauritius had shown resilience to such global crises. Decline in foreign tourists following the two events resulted in serious consequences to the cost of living, national development initiatives, essential public services, employment, and other economic activities.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 28 – 29.

<sup>45</sup> *Maldives Economic Diversification Strategy*, n. 42, p. 20.

Figure 6: Real GDP growth at 1995 constant prices, 1985–2010<sup>46</sup>

Though the economy has been prospering, steered by tourism and related activities, it has not fulfilled the demand for jobs. Unemployment is a national concern, hitting an all-time high of 28 per cent (2010). Youth unemployment is worse – 32 per cent of those aged 20-24 years are neither working nor studying.<sup>47</sup> The unemployment rate of the Maldives exceeds that of most small states (see Table 4). Yet, it faces a shortage of qualified technicians and personnel for middle and upper management jobs as the education system has proved ineffective in producing a sufficiently skilled workforce for the job market. Consequently, it attracts foreign workers, with over 100,000 expatriates working in the Maldives in mid-career and management positions in various industries, including tourism, banking and finance.<sup>48</sup>

Table 4: Comparison of unemployment in small island states, 2010

Country	Total	Male	Female
	(% of total labour force)		
Maldives	14.4	7.9	23.8
The Bahamas	14.2	14.4	14
Malta	6.9	7	6.8
Trinidad and Tobago	5.3	3.5	6.2
Barbados	8.1	6.8	9.4
Seychelles	5.5	6.1	4.9
Mauritius	7.3	4.4	12.3
Belize	8.2	5.9	13
Tonga	1.1	n.a.	n.a.
Sao Tome and Principe	16.7	11	24.5

Source: South Asia HDU, 2012.

Source: *Maldives Human Development Report 2014* (Malé, 2014).<sup>46</sup> *Ibid*, p. 15.<sup>47</sup> *Household Income and Expenditure Survey 2009 - 2010* (Malé: Department of National Planning, 2012) pp. 30 – 32.<sup>48</sup> *Maldives Development Update* (Washington DC: The World Bank, April 2014) p. 11.

### 4.2.2 Social issues

Religious radicalisation too has become a looming threat for the Maldives as it could not veil itself from the radical Islamic terrorism pervading the world.<sup>49</sup> When radicalism crept into the society in the 1990s, the Maldives enacted a special law to mitigate and address the issue in 1994.<sup>50</sup> The law failed to keep the tolerant nature of society from turning towards a radical and more violent form of Islam. On 29 September 2007, the detonation of a home-made bomb in Malé (the capital city) targeting foreign tourists marked the beginning of religious violence in the Maldives. It was followed by a bloody confrontation between violent extremists in Himendhoo.<sup>51</sup> Maldivians began to actively engage in terrorism beyond Maldivian borders in 2009.<sup>52</sup> In an effort to patch legal loopholes, the Maldives enacted a new regulation (deriving powers from the Terrorism Law)<sup>53</sup> and its first Counter Terrorism Strategy both in 2011.<sup>54</sup> Since 2011, Maldivians fighting with Lashkar-e-Taiba and al-Qaeda for the liberation of Kashmir began to return to the Maldives, realising their cause was not religious but an inter-state conflict. Many of the returnees were arrested for being “possibly associated with violent extremism”, but the feeble legal framework limited the number of convictions.<sup>55</sup> About 100 radicalised Maldivian youths are fighting in Syria alongside Islamic State (ISIS).<sup>56</sup> Despite the intensification of the threat/issue, the foreign relations of the Maldives have never been affected by radicalisation as almost all long-term plans (such as the NSP and policing plans<sup>57</sup>) identified terrorism and violent extremism as prominent domestic threats.

Unemployment has become another significant issue for GoM. Unemployment puts the

<sup>49</sup> *National Security Policy 2012*, n. 4, p. 10.

<sup>50</sup> *Protection of Religious Unity Act*, 3 June 1994, Maldives, Law No. 6/94.

<sup>51</sup> Himendhoo (also spelt as Himandhoo) is a small island north of Malé with a population of around 600 residents. Himendhoo was like a magnet attracting extremists from all over Maldives. As a result, the population of the island was divided between extremists and moderates. Many of the extremists in the islands had migrated from other parts of the Maldives to settle there, while the moderates are natives of the island.

<sup>52</sup> See *National Security Policy 2012*, n. 4, p. 10 for a list of some of the incidents.

<sup>53</sup> *Regulation on Protecting Religious Unity of Maldivian Citizens*, 17 September 2011, Maldives, Regulation No. 2011/R-40.

<sup>54</sup> *National Counter Terrorism Strategy* (Malé: Ministry of Defence and National Security, 2011).

<sup>55</sup> *Country Reports on Terrorism 2013* (Washington DC: United States Department of State, April 2014) p. 192.

<sup>56</sup> Animesh Roul, ‘The Maldives-Syria Connection: Jihad in Paradise?’, *Terrorism Monitor*, vol. 12, no. 22, November 2014, p. 3.

<sup>57</sup> Since 2007, all strategic plans on policing addressed the issue. See: *The Way Foreword* (Malé: Maldives Police Service, 25 April 2008) pp. 1 & 16; *Strategic Plan 2011 – 2013* (Malé: Maldives Police Service, 2010) pp. 15 – 17; *Strategic Plan 2014 – 2018* (Malé: Maldives Police Service, 2014).

youth in a cycle of social vulnerability. A survey conducted by the Asia Foundation in 2012 identified unemployment as a key factor in driving youth into criminal gangs.<sup>58</sup> The crime rate has been increasing since 2007, while gang violence has also been rising since 2011. Malé alone is estimated to have over 40 criminal gangs,<sup>59</sup> which are increasingly exploited by politicians and business leaders (see below).<sup>60</sup>

Police data illustrates rapid increases in drug offences, from 1,824 in 2011 to 2,534 in 2012 and 3,969 in 2013.<sup>61</sup> Figure 7 illustrates the extent of the drug problem (market increase) in the Maldives. Drug related crimes such as theft and gang violence too have been increasing, resulting in fear and insecurity in society.<sup>62</sup> The NSP identified high levels of criminality as the foremost internal security threat.<sup>63</sup>

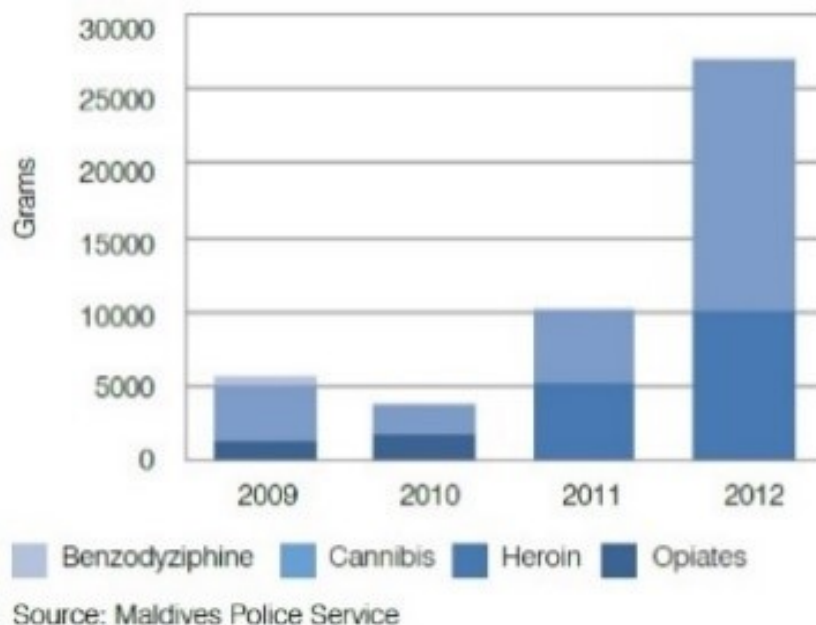


Figure 7: **Drug seizures by Maldives Police Service, 2009–12**<sup>64</sup>

<sup>58</sup> *Rapid Assessment of Gangs in Malé* (Colombo: The Asia Foundation, 2012) p. 14.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 8, 16.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>61</sup> *Youth in the Maldives: Shaping a New Future for Young Women and Men through Engagement and Empowerment* (Washington DC: The World Bank, 3 October 2014) p. 40.

<sup>62</sup> *Maldives Human Development Report 2014* (Malé: Ministry of Finance and Treasury and the United Nations Development Programme in the Maldives, June 2014) p. 47.

<sup>63</sup> It links this problem with unemployment, lack of opportunities for the youth, overcrowding (in Malé), broken families, large proportion of citizens abusing narcotics, a weak criminal justice system, etc. For details see: *National Security Policy 2012*, n. 4, p. 15.

<sup>64</sup> *Maldives Human Development Report 2014*, n. 62, p. 46.

In 2012, GoM recognised corruption as a national security threat.<sup>65</sup> The 2013 Global Corruption Barometer found the Maldives Parliament as the most corrupt institution in the country.<sup>66</sup> It was supported by a local survey in 2014, where over 42 per cent of the participants were convinced of corruption within politically appointed positions.<sup>67</sup> The 2012 Gang Assessment established the connection between politicians and criminal gangs.<sup>68</sup> Notwithstanding, on 16 November 2014, Ahmed Nihan, leader of parliamentary group of Progressive Party of Maldives (PPM) – the ruling party and parliament majority party – said “there are no gangs operating in the country” and the government would not accept youth labelled as “gangs”.<sup>69</sup> His statement exemplifies the crime–politics nexus in the Maldives.

Another social issue the NSP recognises as a “security concern” is the “standard of health care”.<sup>70</sup> Maldivians depend on other states for medical treatment for severe illnesses and chronic diseases. The NSP believes this dependence “increases the chances of foreign dominance of the nation’s health sector”.<sup>71</sup> Furthermore, this is a huge drain on the foreign currency reserves of the country.<sup>72</sup> Over 24 per cent of the nation’s total health expenditure is spent overseas.<sup>73</sup> The geographical dispersion has been a challenge to the growth of the health sector. Consequently, GoM is the sole provider of inpatient care in the atolls.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> *National Security Policy 2012*, n. 4, p. 20.

<sup>66</sup> Deborah Hardoon and Finn Heinrich, *Global Corruption Barometer 2013* (Berlin: Transparency International, 2013) p. 17.

<sup>67</sup> *Corruption Perception of Civil Servants Survey Report 2014* (Malé: Anti-Corruption Commission, December 2014) p. 9.

<sup>68</sup> The tasks given by politicians to gangs include participation in political protests, conducting riots, assaulting, destroying property, or initiating an inter-gang fight to divert attention from a political issue. For such tasks, gang leaders could get MRF 1 million (US\$65,000). See: *Rapid Assessment of Gangs in Malé*, n. 58, p. 18.

<sup>69</sup> Fathimath Aruma, ‘Youngsters not gangsters, no gangs in Maldives, says MP Nihan’, *Haveeru Online*, 17 November 2014, <http://www.haveeru.com.mv/news/57568> (accessed 21 June 2015).

<sup>70</sup> *National Security Policy 2012*, n. 4, p. 21.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> *Maldives National Health Accounts 2011* (New Delhi: World Health Organisation, January 2013) p. 19.

<sup>74</sup> The GoM health facilities include 1 main referral general public hospital in Malé (Indira Gandhi Memorial Hospital – IGMH), 6 regional public general hospitals, 13 atoll hospitals, 132 health care centres, and 108 health aid posts. The private sector runs 1 tertiary hospital in Malé and approximately 50 clinics throughout the country. See: *Maldives Human Development Report 2014*, n.62, p. 77; *WHO Country Cooperation Strategy for the Republic of Maldives: 2013–2017* (New Delhi: World Health Organisation, 2013) p. 24.

### 4.3 Role of Policymakers

Since Rosenau argued that idiosyncratic factor, related to decision-makers' personal experiences and worldview would affect foreign relations, this section aims to establish the relationship between personal histories (including education and life experiences) and Maldives' foreign relations under different leaderships.

#### 4.3.1 Ibrahim Nasir (1957–78)

##### *Idiosyncratic*

Ibrahim Nasir studied in Sri Lanka through a government-funded program for families of the elites. He was groomed into politics by his uncle, Ibrahim Mohamed Didi, a prominent politician. After completing his studies, Nasir served at many political positions until his elevation as deputy prime minister on 3 February 1956.<sup>75</sup>

Nasir was a silent achiever who was respected for his word and not glossing over his efforts and achievements. Instead of making public statements,<sup>76</sup> he followed rule of law and insisted on “rule by discipline” without bestowing favours.<sup>77</sup>

##### *Governance*

Nasir was elected prime minister in 1957 at a time when the Maldives was not just economically backward but also lacked the necessary resources, means and workforce to administer the state. He carved out an identity from a primitive system ruled by the sultans for hundreds of years to build a nation-state. When he assumed office, the only way the Maldives could earn foreign currency was by exporting dried fish to Sri Lanka. The natives were poor, illiterate and famished.<sup>78</sup> When the Maldives became a republic on 11

<sup>75</sup> *Dhivehi Digest*, vol. 12, n. 21, pp. 81, 99 – 101.

<sup>76</sup> After signing the agreement of independence from the UK in Ceylon, his arrival to the Maldives was also not celebrated like many of his other endeavours. He seldom travelled to the islands. Therefore, many did not even know how he looked. See: Ali Umar Maniku, *My Log Book 1947 – 2008* (n.p., 2010) pp. 21, 214; Hakeem, n. 21, pp. 138, 211.

<sup>77</sup> Maniku, n. 76, p. 21.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 3 – 5; Hakeem, n. 21, pp. 119, 145 – 146.

November 1968, Nasir was elected president. He quit politics in 1978.<sup>79</sup>

Nasir's rule both as prime minister and president was a one-man-rule.<sup>80</sup> However, he had the same set of laws for all, and showed no partiality to friends and family. When obsolete practices and customs were to be changed, he did so through the consent of the Parliament.<sup>81</sup> He laid the foundation of modern Maldives by reforming the fisheries sector, raising living standards, providing education, and facilitating trade of essential commodities to the Maldives from overseas by overcoming the non-economic viability of moving fewer goods.<sup>82</sup>

### ***Foreign relations***

Except for the aforementioned sectors, Nasir freed and liberalised the economy, which had been monopolised by Borah merchants from India since 1857,<sup>83</sup> and ended the secession in the southern atolls. His foreign policy or grand strategy was based on achieving strategic objectives. Therefore, bilateral relations were fostered when and where necessary to achieve national interest.<sup>84</sup> Notwithstanding the acrimonious relations with the UK, the Maldives established political relations with India and other countries, infringing the protectorate agreement the Maldives had with the UK. This shift was based on the political will to end the Southern Rebellion and capitulate Addu Atoll. Bilateral relations with Egypt and other Muslim nations stagnated when they refrained from assisting against the UK or providing weapons for the security forces to confront secessionists in Addu Atoll.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Maniku, n. 76, p. 205 – 206.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid*, p. 1.

<sup>81</sup> By law, the Sultan, Council of Ministers, Legislative Council and People's Assembly had the power to enact legislation. However, Nasir preferred to enact changes through the consent of the Parliament. For example, when he wanted to make Malé a free port, it was done through new legislations, Law No: 7/65 and Law No: 10/65 in January 1963. See: *Constitution of Maldives*, Art. 23, 1932, Maldives; Hakeem, n. 21, p. 165; Maniku, n. 76, p. 214.

<sup>82</sup> Maniku, n. 76, pp. 3 – 5, 214.

<sup>83</sup> Hakeem, n. 21, p. 147.

<sup>84</sup> Relations with the Soviet Union could not progress due to the binding clause in the independence agreement. Bilateral relations with the UK continued (even after independence) as she provided aid and assistance such as donating the first hospital in Malé open to the public on 7 October 1967. When the Maldives became independent in 1965, it recognised Israel and maintained cordial relations. See: Hakeem, n. 21, pp. 153 – 168; Maniku, n. 76, pp. 69 – 77.

<sup>85</sup> Maldives sent a high-level delegation to Egypt and other countries seeking political support in resolving the Southern Rebellion. Egypt assured to supply weapons to the Maldives' security forces, but it never happened despite the Maldives sending two ships to collect arms from Egypt. See: Maniku, pp. 69 – 77.



Though the reason for establishing relations with India was to obtain support against the UK for quashing USSR, the friendship grew to serve national interests. Soon, Maldivian youth were sent to Indian health and nursing institutions to study.<sup>86</sup> Later, Maldives relocated its overseas and commercial operations from Sri Lanka to India when Ceylonese protectionist thinking began to affect the Maldives' economic and commercial interests. Accordingly, Maldives Shipping Limited (MSL) was relocated to Bombay in 1974, and Maldives Trading Organisation was opened in Singapore the next year to conduct other commercial activities from Singapore.<sup>87</sup> In response, India was quick to open facilities and create regulatory exemptions for the Maldives.<sup>88</sup> The only instance when India–Maldives relations suffered during Nasir's rule was when GoM took a harsh stance to remove the Borah merchants' monopoly over the Maldives' economy in 1962. When the Borah merchants complained, India intervened and summoned the representative of Maldives in Sri Lanka to the Indian High Commission. The issue was resolved through negotiation.<sup>89</sup> In 1974, a branch of State Bank of India was opened at the request of GoM in Malé as the country's first bank. As time passed, dependency on India (on health, education, and import of essential goods) increased.<sup>90</sup> Nasir did not seek membership of the Commonwealth.

### 4.3.2 Maumoon Abdul Gayyoom (1978–2008)

#### *Idiosyncratic*

Maumoon Abdul Gayyoom spent most of his youth in Egypt, studying Islamic Shari'a law. Upon his return to the Maldives in 1971, after 23 years, his first occupation was teaching. The next year, he became the manager of a government shipping department. While in Egypt, he criticised President Nasir for establishing political relations with Israel and his

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<sup>86</sup> Hakeem, n. 21, p. 150.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>88</sup> MSL was the major operator between the Gulf countries and the Indian peninsula. The fleet was responsible for catering to Sri Lankan needs until Sri Lanka established its own shipping corporation. The complex relations between Sri Lanka and the Maldives reached such a low that the Maldives closed its consular office in Sri Lanka citing interference in "Maldivian affairs". The Maldives was welcomed to operate MSL in India as Conference Line ships could not serve the Red Sea ports following the closing of Suez Canal in 1956, while MSL sailed between these ports every 15 days transporting fresh stock. See: Maniku, n. 76, pp. 70 – 173.

<sup>89</sup> Maniku, n. 76, pp. 91 – 94.

<sup>90</sup> Hakeem, n. 21, pp. 164 – 165; *Dhivehi Digest*, vol. 12, n. 21, pp. 158 – 160.

tourism policies.<sup>91</sup> Unlike Nasir, Gayyoom craved public support and notice.<sup>92</sup> His administration's diatribes against Nasir<sup>93</sup> helped gain public support.

### ***Governance***

President Gayyoom inherited the autocratic governance framework of Nasir, but was quick to expand executive power through constitutional means. The new Constitution, adopted on 1 January 1998 (referred as 1997 Constitution as it was enacted in 1997), made provisions for the president to appoint the cabinet, judges, and one-sixth of the Parliament. It vested the power of administering justice in the president and courts, subjecting the judiciary to executive control. As the highest authority in administering justice, the president was empowered to review High Court decisions. Perhaps due to Gayyoom's Islamic educational background, the president was made the supreme authority to propagate the tenets of Islam.<sup>94</sup> Gayyoom created a super powerful executive to practise an authoritarian and autocratic rule.<sup>95</sup>

After Gayyoom had ruled the Maldives oppressively for 25 years as president with absolute power, people began to rebel against his rule. In 2003, following the murder of a prisoner in the central prison by security forces, riots erupted throughout Malé. Continued demonstrations demanding good governance forced Gayyoom to initiate reforms.<sup>96</sup> He announced his 'Reform Agenda' in the Presidential Address of 2004, by declaring to establish a civil policing body (policing was previously a function of the military) and a statutory body to protect human rights, reform governance and judiciary, and assemble a special citizens' council to amend the 1997 Constitution.<sup>97</sup> Consequently, good governance

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<sup>91</sup> Maniku, n. 76, p. 141.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid*, p. 4.

<sup>93</sup> After allegations of an attempted *coup d'état*, the government banned anyone from speaking of the merits of Nasir's administration or supporting Nasir. Those who spoke were banished or jailed. See: Ali Hussain, *Remnant Memories of what I saw and Heard*, vol. 1 (Malé: Novelty Printers and Publishers, 2013) p. 290.

<sup>94</sup> *Constitution of the Republic of Maldives*, 1 January 1998, Maldives.

<sup>95</sup> Gabriela Knaul, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers* (New York: UN General Assembly, 21 May 2013) p. 5,

[http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/RegularSession/Session23/A-HRC-23-43-Add3\\_en.pdf](http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/RegularSession/Session23/A-HRC-23-43-Add3_en.pdf) (accessed on 9 August 2015).

<sup>96</sup> Richard Harding and Neil Morgan, *Strengthening Custodial Services in the Maldives*, (Malé: Attorney General's Office and Ministry of Home Affairs, December 2004) p. 3.

<sup>97</sup> Maumoon Abdul Gayyoom, *Presidential Address 2004 (Unofficial Summary Translation)* (Malé: The President's Office, 26 February 2004) p. 3 – 5.

mechanisms were introduced.<sup>98</sup> The most significant achievement was the adoption of a modern Constitution on 7 August 2008, which allowed the establishment of democratic rule and separation of powers (*trias politica*).<sup>99</sup> Two months later, when the Maldives held its first multiparty election, Gayyoom lost to Mohamed Nasheed.<sup>100</sup>

### ***Foreign Relations***

In his inaugural speech after taking the oath of office as president on 11 November 1978, President Gayyoom said he would follow President Nasir's foreign policy, "based on the principles of establishing, maintaining and strengthening friendly relations with other countries".<sup>101</sup> Contrary to his words, Gayyoom severed diplomatic relations with Israel and strengthened relations with the Arab world.<sup>102</sup> His foreign policy was based on continuing to modernise the country through foreign aid while increasing his personal popularity.<sup>103</sup>

Even though the 1988 PLOTE attack was repelled with Indian military assistance, until 2006, Gayyoom's administration maintained a *status quo* relationship with Pakistan, China and India.<sup>104</sup> India had always wanted to be a closer ally than China and Pakistan and

<sup>98</sup> *Maldives: Towards a New Dawn (An Update on the President's Democratic Reform Agenda)* (Malé: Strategic Communications Unit, The President's Office, January 2007).

<sup>99</sup> Constitution of the Republic of Maldives, 7 August 2008, Maldives, trans. Dheena Hussain, *Functional Translation of the Constitution of the Republic of Maldives 2008* (Malé: Ministry of Legal Reform, Information, and Arts, 2008).

<sup>100</sup> Knaul, n. 95, p. 5.

<sup>101</sup> "President's Speech" [Translation of the Address by President Maumoon Abdul Gayyoom on 11 November 1978], *Moonlight Weekly* (Malé, 17 November 1978) pp. 1 – 2.

<sup>102</sup> Gayyoom also forged and strengthened relations with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). An embassy of PLO was established in the Maldives, and a joint venture airline with PLO was also established with the Maldives flag, named as Maldives Airways International in 1984. For details see: Maniku, n. 76, pp. 227 – 231.

<sup>103</sup> President Gayyoom tried to bring President Nasir (who was living in Singapore after quitting politics) back to the Maldives to face charges on multiple crimes. His main effort after assuming office was to erase the achievements of Nasir and portray them as his or of Nasir's predecessors. Nasir was charged with embezzlement *in absentia*. The charges were later (after Gayyoom's rule) found to be fabricated. His relations with other countries such as India, Pakistan, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, etc. helped to the development of the Maldives. In 1982, Gayyoom wanted to build the largest mosque in the country through state funds and foreign aid. Brunei (US\$2 million), Saudi Arabia (US\$3 million), Malaysia and Pakistan contributed to this grand mosque, which was opened in 1984. See: *President Maumoon Abdul Gayyoom's Letter to the Speaker of People's Majlis (Parliament) of Date 23 November 1983* [in Dhivehi] (Malé: The President's Office, 23 November 1983); Maniku, m. 76, pp. 219 – 226.

<sup>104</sup> *Presidential Addresses 1979 – 1983* (Malé: The President's Office, 1 July 2007); *Unofficial Summary Translation of Presidential Address 2004* (Malé: The President's Office, 26 February 2004) p. 2; *Unofficial Translation of the Presidential Address 2005* (Malé: The President's Office, 27 February 2005) p. 14; *Unofficial Translation of the 2007 Presidential Address* (Malé: The President's Office, 22 February 2007) pp. 4 – 5.

offered assistance in various areas.<sup>105</sup> With domestic political activism against him increasing from 2003, Gayyoom had to regain public confidence to win the 2008 presidential election.<sup>106</sup> The economic slowdown following the 2004 Asian Tsunami, increased external debt, and the need to boost the economy before the elections made him look beyond India towards China. His visit to China in September 2006 deepened relations between the two countries.<sup>107</sup> China provided project assistance and equipment support, including the construction of Ministry of Foreign Affairs building and National Museum. In May 2008, the Maldives opened its embassy in China.<sup>108</sup> Consequently, India was distanced.

### 4.3.3 Mohamed Nasheed (2008–12)

#### *Idiosyncratic*

Nasheed studied in the UK and earned a bachelor of science in maritime studies. He started his career as a journalist by writing political commentary. He was arrested more than 10 times during Gayyoom's rule, mostly for political activism.<sup>109</sup> President Nasheed advocated liberal democratic principles and detested communism.<sup>110</sup>

<sup>105</sup> Manu Pubby, 'India bringing Maldives to its security net', *Indian Express*, 13 August 2009, <http://www.indianexpress.com/news/india-bringing-maldives-into-its-security-net/501583/0> (accessed 30 March 2015)

<sup>106</sup> The 2008 Constitution allowed multiple parties to contest in the presidential elections for the first time.

<sup>107</sup> 'Cooperation', in *Embassy of Maldives in China*, n.d., <http://www.maldivesembassy.cn/maldives-china-relations/china-and-maldives-friendship-through-history/> (accessed 24 July 2015).

<sup>108</sup> Abdulla Shahid, *Statement by the Minister of Foreign Affairs on the Occasion of the Opening of the Embassy of Maldives to China* (Malé: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 26 May 2008).

<sup>109</sup> 'Political Career and History of Persecution Against Mohamed Nasheed', *Petition to United Nations Working Group On Arbitrary Detention in the Matter of Mohamed Nasheed, Citizen of the Republic of Maldives Vs. Government of the Republic of Maldives*, 30 April 2015, pp. 9 – 12, <http://www.freedom-now.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Nasheed-Mohamed-Maldives-UNWGAD-Petition-4.30.15.pdf> (accessed 1 August 2015).

<sup>110</sup> Mohamed Nasheed, *Statement at the UN General Assembly* [Statement by His Excellency Mohamed Nasheed, President of the Republic of Maldives to the General Debate of the 64th UN General Assembly] para. 3 – 8 (New York: United Nations, 24 September 2009)

[http://www.un.org/ga/64/generaldebate/pdf/MV\\_en.pdf](http://www.un.org/ga/64/generaldebate/pdf/MV_en.pdf) (accessed 5 October 2015);

Raajjeyge amilla radio channel eh kamavvaa DhiFM ge "one to one" showge 2010 vana aharuge furathama programge mehmaanegge gothun raeesul jumhooriyya Mohamed Nasheed baiverive vadaigen dhevvi basdheegathun [President Nasheed's interview to "One-to-One" show on DhiFM Radio Channel, as the programme's first invitee], interview transcript (Malé: The President's Office, 1 January 2010) p. 20.

## Governance

President Nasheed assumed office following the first democratic elections held on 28 October 2008 in the Maldives, backed by a coalition of political parties.<sup>111</sup> As a result, the cabinet comprised coalition partners.<sup>112</sup> Within a year, President Nasheed and his Maldives Democratic Party (MDP) developed fissures with the coalition partners for failing to conform to the coalition agreements.<sup>113</sup> His administration also got entangled in a series of problems with the new Parliament elected in May 2009. The conflict with the Parliament reached a precipice and the cabinet resigned *en masse* on 29 June 2010. The cabinet was reconstituted on 7 July 2010, after which leading parliamentarians (including current President Yameen) were arrested. The courts found these arrests illegal and unconstitutional.<sup>114</sup> The executive arm also developed differences with the judiciary and other state institutions. Therefore, Nasheed's rule witnessed a power struggle and conflicts among the various arms of the government and state institutions that ultimately ensued his resignation on 7 February 2012.<sup>115</sup>

Soon after Nasheed came to power, both India and China sent high-level delegations.<sup>116</sup>

<sup>111</sup> In the elections, Nasheed and his running-mate, Dr Mohamed Waheed Hassan, contested on a coalition footing of two different political parties, namely MDP and Gaumee Itthihaadh, respectively. In the first round of elections, no candidate could secure over 50% of votes cast. Maumoon Abdul Gayyoom (Dhivehi Rayyithunge Party) received 40.63%, Mohamed Nasheed 25.09%, Dr Hassan Saeed (independent candidate) 16.78%, Gasim Ibrahim (Jumhooree Party) 15.32%, Umar Naseer (Islamic Democratic Party) 1.40%, and Ibrahim Ismail (Socialist Liberal Party) 0.78%. A run-off election was held on 28 October 2008 between the two candidates who had secured the maximum number of votes. In the run-off election, Nasheed was backed by all other political parties under a negotiated agreement and emerged winner with 54.21% of votes cast. See: 'General Political Context', *Report of the Commission of National Inquiry* (Malé: Commission of National Inquiry, 2012) pp. 29 – 30.

<sup>112</sup> The Cabinet comprised five members from President Nasheed's Party (MDP), four from Jumhooree Party, two from Gaumee Party, two from Vice-President Waheed's Gaumee Itthihaad Party, and one from Social Liberal Party. See: *Maldives People's Majlis (Parliamentary) Elections* (London: Commonwealth Secretariat, 13 May 2009) p. 4.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>114</sup> Mohamed Nasheed, *Speech of President at the Press Conference After Reappointing the Cabinet* (PRO/RMN/2010/109) (Malé: The President's Office, 7 July 2010);

*Gasim Ibrahim v. State* [11 July 2010], dec. 2010/SC-A/19, Supreme Court, Maldives.

*Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayyoom v. State* [11 July 2010], dec. 2010/SC-A/20, Supreme Court, Maldives.

<sup>115</sup> *Report of the Commission of National Inquiry*, n. 111, pp. 31 – 37.

<sup>116</sup> Special Envoy of China and Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hu Zhengyue visited the Maldives in December 2009. Bilateral consultations were held at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Maldives.

'Special Envoy of the Government of China and Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs calls on the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Maldives', *Ministry of Foreign Affairs* (Malé, 27 December 2009)

<http://www.foreign.gov.mv/v3/?p=news&view=sep&nid=3192> (accessed 14 March 2015).

Likewise, Indian delegations also visited the Maldives. Notable among these was the high-level delegation led by Indian Defence Minister A.K. Antony in August 2009 to discuss maritime security and other important security issues. The intention of the visit was to "get a firmer foothold in the Indian Ocean". The discussions brought Maldives under the Indian security grid. For details, see: 'Maldives to join Indian

Upset with Gayyoom's foreign policy shift, India availed the opportunity to become a closer ally than China or Pakistan. India not only sent delegations to Malé, but also hosted President Nasheed in New Delhi in December 2008, barely a month after he assumed office. During his visit, India extended a Standby Credit Facility of US\$100 million. India (through State Bank of India) also purchased the entire lot of USD Treasury Bonds in December 2009 to ease the severe foreign exchange crisis in the Maldives.<sup>117</sup> India officially became the closest friend of the Maldives with the introduction of the "India First" policy in August 2009.<sup>118</sup> India donated an Advanced Light Helicopter (renamed as 'Kurangi') to the Maldives National Defence Force (MNDF) in 2010. A platoon from the Indian Air Force is stationed at Gan as the crew of 'Kurangi' to provide "operational support".<sup>119</sup>

Nasheed came to power pledging to "prevent narcotics abuse and trafficking", create a transport system connecting all islands, decrease "the cost of living, provide affordable housing, and make available quality healthcare for all".<sup>120</sup> While a power struggle was continuing within the three arms of the government, public confidence deteriorated as coalition partners began to back the opposition. Amid these challenges, foreign assistance (grants and concessional aid) also decreased after the Maldives was promoted from UN's Least Developing Country (LDC) designation on 1 January 2011 (see Figure 8).<sup>121</sup> By 2011, Indian assistance declined. India's commitments such as a police academy, advanced passenger information system, dog squad, etc. were delayed. Discussions were held regarding the pending aid projects in January 2011 when a high-level Indian delegation visited Malé.<sup>122</sup> Nasheed's administration required funds to accomplish its election pledges,

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security net during Antony's visit', *The Times of India*, 13 July 2010, <http://www.timesnow.tv/articleshow/4324705.cms> (accessed 15 July 2015).

<sup>117</sup> 'India – Maldives Relations', *Ministry of External Affairs* (New Delhi, January 2012) pp. 1 – 2, <http://mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/Maldives-January-2012.pdf> (accessed 10 September 2015).

<sup>118</sup> Ahmed Shaheed, *Vision of India-Maldives Relations in the Context of Democratization of Maldives* [Speech by Dr Ahmed Shaheed, the Maldives' Foreign Minister at Indian Council of World Affairs], Dhivehi Observer, 14 August 2009, <http://doreview.blogspot.com/2009/08/vision-of-india-maldives-relations-in.html> (accessed 15 July 2015).

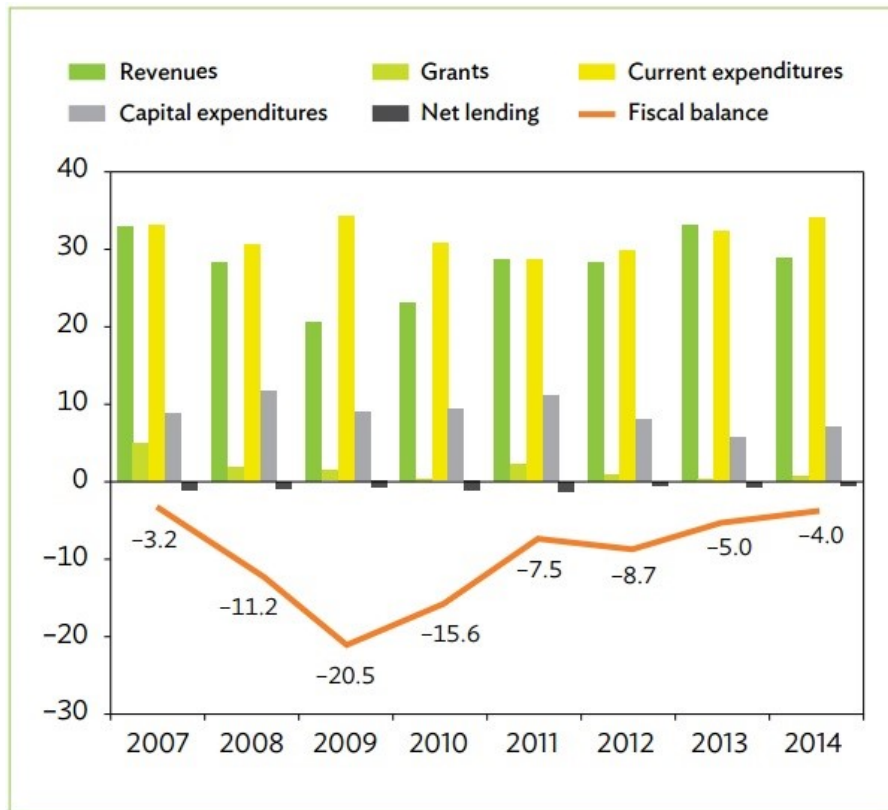
<sup>119</sup> *Press Release: Recent media reports on about India-Maldives defence and security co-operation* (Malé: Indian High Commission, 12 February 2015) <http://hci.gov.in/male/?3841?000> (accessed 22 September 2015).

<sup>120</sup> Anezh Dhivehiraajje: *The Other Maldives (Manifesto of the Maldivian Democratic Party – Alliance 2008 – 2013)* (Malé: The President's Office, 1 February 2009) pp. 18 – 37.

<sup>121</sup> *ADB Evaluation Study: The Maldives* (Manila: Asian Development Bank, September 2011) p. 39, <http://www.oecd.org/countries/maldives/49049206.pdf> (accessed 10 September 2015).

<sup>122</sup> For a list of the assistance projects, see: 'Maldives and India hold Official Talks', *High Commission of Maldives in UK* (London, 2 January 2014) <http://www.maldiveshighcommission.org/news/news-from-maldives/item/381-maldives-and-india-hold-official-talks> (accessed 10 September 2015).

gain public confidence, and overcome fiscal imbalances and debt distress (see Figure 8). As in the case of Gayyoom, President Nasheed also looked towards China to fill that gap.



GDP = gross domestic product.  
GDP is valued at basic prices.  
Source: MMA (2015b).

Figure 8: **Maldives fiscal indicators, 2007–14 (% of GDP)** <sup>123</sup>

The reorientation of the Maldives' foreign policy towards China commenced with President Nasheed's meeting with Chinese President Hu Jintao in China on 2 May 2011. The visit of Wu Bangguo, chairman of China's National People's Congress Standing Committee, the country's top legislature, in May 2011 further deepened relations. China's offer to assist the Maldives against global warming through mutual cooperation in energy-saving and environmental protection, and financial aid for housing and environmental protection

<sup>123</sup> *Maldives: Overcoming the Challenges of a Small Island State* (Manila: Asian Development Bank, 2015) p. 9.



enabled this shift.<sup>124</sup> China opened its embassy in Malé days before the 17th SAARC Summit was held in the Maldives in November 2011. India did not take this softly despite its close military cooperation with the Maldives.<sup>125</sup>

#### **4.3.4 Mohamed Waheed Hassan (2012–13)**

##### ***Idiosyncratic***

Waheed studied in Lebanon (bachelor's degree in English) and the US (master's degree and a doctorate in political science). In the Maldives, he took teaching as a profession initially, and later offered his services in the education sector. In 1989, he was elected to the Parliament with popular support though he was not backed by the government. He left the Maldives in 1991 due to political intimidation. After that he worked with UN agencies in other countries, and in 2005 he left a long and illustrious career at the UN to return to the Maldives.<sup>126</sup> He formed the Gaumee Ithihaad (a political party) in 2008, and contested the 2009 presidential election as Nasheed's running-mate.

##### ***Governance***

Waheed took the oath of president on 7 February 2012 following Nasheed's resignation. He formed a 'national unity government' comprising all political parties except MDP, which declined the offer of three cabinet portfolios.<sup>127</sup> Therefore, similar to the initial government of President Nasheed, President Waheed's cabinet consisted of representatives of other political parties. Throughout his presidency, the political environment remained strained and highly tense, with regular protests by MDP supporters. His administration got

<sup>124</sup> 'Maldives President Mohamed Nasheed Met with Chinese Commerce Minister Chen Deming', *Ministry of Commerce* (China, 23 August 2010), <http://english.mofcom.gov.cn/article/newsrelease/significantnews/201008/20100807097814.html> (accessed 15 July 2015).

<sup>125</sup> C. Bryson Hull, 'Cold war in the tropics: China, India vie for Maldives', *transcurrents*, 16 November 2011, <http://transcurrents.com/news-views/archives/6030> (accessed 15 July 2015).

<sup>126</sup> 'Dr Waheed's Biography', *Dr Waheed* [website], n.d., [http://www.drwaheed.com/dr\\_waheeds\\_biography](http://www.drwaheed.com/dr_waheeds_biography) (accessed 17 July 2015).

<sup>127</sup> *Maldives Presidential Election, and Re-Run of Maldives Presidential Election, and Maldives Presidential Run-Off Election* (London: The Commonwealth Secretariat, 19 November 2013) p. 4.



very limited opportunity to perform its duties due to prevailing political upheaval and acrimony.<sup>128</sup>

### ***Foreign relations***

Owing to India's dissatisfaction with President Nasheed, India tried to make the best of the "situation by being the first to recognise the new government" of President Waheed.<sup>129</sup> In three months, Waheed paid a state visit to India in which financial assistance worth US\$90 million was confirmed.<sup>130</sup> In September 2012, India stepped up its military cooperation.<sup>131</sup>

One of the main contentions that remained in the political landscape of the Maldives since 2010 was the concession agreement of Ibrahim Nasir International Airport to an Indian company, GMR Group, for 25 years despite objections from the Parliament. There were attempts to halt the agreement before GMR could begin operating the airport.<sup>132</sup> When GMR imposed airport development charges (US\$25) and insurance charges, Dhivehi Gaumee Party filed a civil lawsuit and blocked the operator from collecting those charges.<sup>133</sup> Then the government (of President Nasheed) decided to deduct the airport development charges from the government's share of the concession. This resulted in demonstrations and public rallies against the concession agreement. It was a national issue for which Waheed had to find a solution. Waheed appointed a cabinet committee to look into the legality of the contract. On 27 November 2012, the cabinet committee submitted

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 4 – 5.

<sup>129</sup> Brewster, *India's Ocean: The Story of India's Bid for Regional Leadership*, n. 28, p. 61.

<sup>130</sup> 'Indian government will provide assistance worth \$90m: President Waheed', *Sun Online*, 16 May 2012, <http://www.sun.mv/english/3187> (accessed 17 July 2015).

<sup>131</sup> India decided to permanently station a defence attaché in the Maldives, upgrade the helicopter previously donated, deploy Indian flying instructors in the Maldives to train the MNDF air wing, and deploy another Advanced Light Helicopter in the North Province for evacuation. See: Rajeev Sharma, 'With Eye on China, India Embraces Maldives', *The Diplomat*, 17 September 2012, <http://thediplomat.com/2012/09/with-eye-on-china-india-embraces-maldives/> (accessed 17 July 2015); Brewster, n. 28, p. 61.

<sup>132</sup> People's Alliance (a political party) filed a lawsuit in the Civil Court on 30 June 2010 seeking an interim order to halt the agreement until the integrity of the awarding process could be established by the Anti-Corruption Commission. See: *People's Alliance v. Anti-Corruption Commission* [24 August 2010], dec. 1667/MC/2010, Civil Court, Maldives.

<sup>133</sup> 'Civil Court rules Airport Development Charge Invalid as GMR opens airport office complex', *Minivan News*, 8 December 2011, <http://minivannewsarchive.com/politics/civil-court-rules-airport-development-charge-invalid-as-gmr-opens-airline-office-complex-29198#sthash.TZJh4dOj.dpbs> (accessed 10 September 2015).

its report, saying the agreement was invalid from the outset (*void ab initio*).<sup>134</sup> The cancellation of the contract with GMR affected bilateral relations, as India considered it was done “without due consultation [...] or efforts at arbitration”.<sup>135</sup> Before the cancellation, India had warned that cancelling the agreement before exhausting the legal processes would have “adverse consequences” for bilateral relations. India’s Cabinet Committee on Security, chaired by the prime minister, “reviewed overall ties with Maldives” on 3 December 2012.<sup>136</sup> Soon after, India tightened visas to Maldivians,<sup>137</sup> which hurt the Maldivians visiting India for medical treatment. India also suspended a US\$25 million financial commitment to the Maldives.<sup>138</sup>

The relationship further deteriorated when Nasheed took refuge in the Indian High Commission in Malé in February 2013 to avoid arrest.<sup>139</sup> The Maldives’ Foreign Ministry summoned the Indian high commissioner to the Maldives to hand over a protest note.<sup>140</sup> India, by now, favoured Nasheed over Waheed and wanted him to contest in the presidential election scheduled in September 2013.<sup>141</sup> When the new Indian high commissioner, who

<sup>134</sup> *Malé International Airport GMR kunfunyah kuyyah dhinumah koffaiva muaamalaathaai behey gothun vazeerunge comitee in koffaivaa masakkathuge report* [Report of the Ministerial Committee on the Investigation of the Concession Agreement of Malé International Airport to GMR Consortium] (Malé: Attorney General’s Office, 27 November 2012) p. 41.

<sup>135</sup> *Official Spokesperson’s response to a question on termination of agreement with the GMR Group in Maldives* (New Delhi: Ministry of External Affairs, 27 November 2012) <http://mea.gov.in/media-briefings.htm?dtl/20851/Official+Spokespersons+response+to+a+question+on+termination+of+agreement+with+the+GMR+Group+in+Maldives> (accessed 17 July 2015).

<sup>136</sup> ‘GMR airport glitch: Govt reviews ties with Maldives as case comes up for hearing’, *NDTV*, 3 December 2012, <http://www.ndtv.com/india-news/gmr-airport-glitch-govt-reviews-ties-with-maldives-as-case-comes-up-for-hearing-506329> (accessed 10 September 2015).

<sup>137</sup> Mohamed Wisham, ‘India tightens free visa for Maldives’, *Haveeru Online*, 17 December 2012, <http://www.haveeru.com.mv/news/46259> (accessed 10 September 2015).

<sup>138</sup> Saurabh Shukla, ‘India freezes Maldives aid as relations hit an all-time low’, *Daily Mail India*, 3 December 2012, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/indiahome/indianews/article-2241924/India-freezes-Maldives-aid-relations-hit-time-low.html> (accessed 10 September 2015).

<sup>139</sup> President Nasheed was facing charges for abducting the Chief Judge of Criminal Court in January 2012. See: *Response of Indian External Affairs Minister to Starred Question No: 157 of Rajya Sabha* (New Delhi: Ministry of External Affairs, 7 March 2013) <http://mea.gov.in/rajya-sabha.htm?dtl/21299/Q+157+FORMER+PRESIDENT+OF+MALDIVES+TAKING+SHELTER+IN+INDIAN+HIGH+COMMISSION> (accessed 18 July 2015).

<sup>140</sup> ‘Indian High Commissioner summoned to Foreign Ministry’, *Sun Online*, 17 February 2013, <http://www.sun.mv/english/9721> (accessed 18 July 2015).

<sup>141</sup> On 22 August 2013, India’s external affairs minister was questioned in the Upper House of the Indian Parliament on India’s role in the Maldives election (Question No: 1441), “whether the Indian Government had asked for a reassurance from the Maldives Government that Mr. Mohamed Nasheed be allowed to participate in the said elections”, indicating India’s support for Nasheed. For details see: *Question No. 1441 Indian role in election in Maldives* (New Delhi: Ministry of External Affairs, 22 August 2013) <http://mea.gov.in/rajya-sabha.htm?dtl/22105/Q+NO+1441+INDIAN+ROLE+IN+ELECTION+IN+MALDIVES> (accessed on 20 July 2015); N. Manohanran, ‘An Agenda for the New Government: Policy Options for India in Maldives’,

presented credentials on 10 April 2013, met with the Maldives Election Commission on 27 September 2013<sup>142</sup> after disregarding the existing diplomatic protocols, he was summoned by the Maldives Foreign Ministry on 28 September 2013 to show discontent over the Indian involvement in domestic affairs, and the ministry called all “foreign parties to refrain from interfering with internal matters”.<sup>143</sup>

Amid the political chaos, the Maldives favoured China over India. President Waheed visited China on an official trip in August 2012.<sup>144</sup> Indian security analysts opined that the GMR contract was cancelled with Chinese influence as it occurred shortly after the China visit. China offered a US\$500 million loan to the Maldives following the visit,<sup>145</sup> and bilateral agreements on cooperation were signed in the Maldives in October 2012.<sup>146</sup> Sino-Maldives relations reached new heights under President Waheed, who praised China’s policy of non-interference in small states’ internal affairs “unlike other influential countries”.<sup>147</sup>

### 4.3.5 Abdulla Yameen (2013–present)

#### *Idiosyncratic*

Abdulla Yameen, half-brother of President Gayyoom, studied in Lebanon (bachelor’s degree in business administration) and the US (master’s degree in public policy). After his post-graduate studies, he returned to the Maldives in 1982 to join Gayyoom’s

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*Institute for Peace and Conflict Studies*, March 2014, [http://www.ipcs.org/pdf\\_file/issue/IB250-Manoharan-Maldives.pdf](http://www.ipcs.org/pdf_file/issue/IB250-Manoharan-Maldives.pdf) (accessed 18 July 2015).

<sup>142</sup> The run-off presidential election was scheduled on 28 September 2013 as no candidate could secure over 50 per cent votes in the presidential election held on 7 September 2013. It was in the late hours of 27 September 2013 that the Election Commission cancelled the run-off election scheduled for 28 September 2013. For details, see: *Maldives Presidential Election, and Re-Run of Maldives Presidential Election, and Maldives Presidential Run-Off Election*, n. 127, p. 33.

<sup>143</sup> ‘Foreign Ministry summons Indian High Commissioner’, *Sun Online*, 28 September 2013, <http://www.sun.mv/english/16335> (accessed 17 July 2015).

<sup>144</sup> ‘President Waheed departs to China’, *The Presidency*, 31 August 2012, <http://www.presidencymaldives.gov.mv/?lid=11&dcid=7840> (accessed 17 July 2015).

<sup>145</sup> ‘Maldivian President lauds China’s ‘non-interference’’, *The Hindu BusinessLine*, 2 September 2012, <http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/news/international/maldivian-president-lauds-chinas-noninterference/article3851013.ece> (accessed 14 July 2015).

<sup>146</sup> ‘China, Maldives eye furthered cooperation to boost ties’, *CCTV English*, 20 October 2012, <http://english.cntv.cn/20121020/105688.shtml> (accessed 14 July 2015).

<sup>147</sup> ‘Maldivian President lauds China’s ‘non-interference’’, n. 145.

administration. He worked in the Trade Ministry for 20 years in senior positions, including director-general and minister. In June 1997, he was appointed Chairman of the State Electric Company. He also served as Chairman of State Trading Organisation (STO); Chairman of Island Aviation Services (the national airline); Minister of Higher Education, Employment and Social Security (2005–07); and Minister of Tourism and Civil Aviation (2008). He was elected to the Parliament in 1993 and served as a lawmaker for four consecutive terms until he was elected president. He projected himself as an economist in the 2013 presidential election and often involved himself in economic issues deliberated in the Parliament.<sup>148</sup>

In May 2009, President Nasheed set up a presidential commission to investigate embezzlement of state funds that had come to light through state audit reports.<sup>149</sup> The commission submitted a case of “illegal trade of oil worth US\$800 million” by Yameen as Chairman of STO.<sup>150</sup> Yameen publicly dismissed the allegations on several occasions. As mentioned earlier in the chapter, Yameen had been arrested in Nasheed’s presidency and was held under protective custody of the military.<sup>151</sup>

### **Governance**

Yameen won the 2013 run-off presidential election, supported by other political parties against Nasheed, and formed a coalition government.<sup>152</sup> However, owing to differences,

<sup>148</sup> ‘President Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayyoom’, *The President’s Office*, n.d., <http://www.presidencymaldives.gov.mv/Index.aspx?lid=171> (accessed 19 July 2015).

<sup>149</sup> *Presidential Decree No: 16/2009* (Malé: The President’s Office, 16 May 2009).

<sup>150</sup> The commission collected information through Grant Thornton UK LLP, a global accountancy firm. After the change of government, President Waheed’s administration was alleged to have paid the firm £4.6 million to stop investigating the scam. The matter was raised for the last time at the 23rd sitting of the second session of Parliament on 2 August 2011. The Parliament’s floor forwarded the agenda item to the National Security Committee for investigation. For details, see: *Maldives Asset Recovery Bank of Maldives/European Investment Bank Draft Report* (London: Grant Thornton, 31 August 2010) <http://minivannews.com/files/2013/08/Grant-Thornton-Bank-of-Maldives.pdf> (accessed 9 August 2015); ‘Case of US\$ 800 million oil trade to be submitted to PG’, *Sun Online*, 31 January 2012, <http://www.sun.mv/english/1109> (accessed 19 July 2015); *2011 vana aharuge devana dhauruge 23 vana jalsage khulaasa* [Summary of the 23rd Sitting of the Second Session of the Year 2011] (Malé: The People’s Majlis, 2 August 2011) pp. 4, 8 – 10; J. J. Robinson, ‘Government paying Grant Thornton £4.6 million to halt STO oil trade investigation’, *Minivan News*, 15 September 2013, <http://minivannews.com/politics/government-paying-grant-thornton-4-6-million-to-halt-sto-oil-trade-investigation-65581#sthash.bHtnON9b.dpbs> (accessed 21 July 2015).

<sup>151</sup> *Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayyoom v. State* [28 October 2011], dec. 1820/MC/2010, Civil Court, Maldives; *Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayyoom v. State* [11 July 2010], dec. 2010/SC-A/20, Supreme Court, Maldives.

<sup>152</sup> *Maldives People’s Majlis Election* (London: The Commonwealth Secretariat, 2014) p. 7.

the coalition was dissolved in seven months. When political appointees belonging to other parties were dismissed, some of them, including ministers, left their party to join PPM to secure their political posts. Some Members of Parliament also switched sides to PPM,<sup>153</sup> making PPM the majority party in the Parliament. With other major developments within the government, the government obtained the support of other state institutions also.<sup>154</sup>

### **Foreign Relations**

India–Maldives relations were at an all-time low when President Yameen was inaugurated. To repair the discord, Yameen visited India in January 2014 and admitted that “relations between India and Maldives went through a rough patch following scrapping of the airport development deal with GMR”.<sup>155</sup> In the visit, agreements on cooperation in the health sector, extending the memorandum of understanding on the manpower requirements of Indira Gandhi Memorial Hospital (the largest public hospital in Malé, donated by India),

<sup>153</sup> Ahmed Rilwan, ‘Jumhooree Party cabinet member and two MPs join President Yameen’s PPM’, *Minivan News*, 17 June 2014, <http://minivannews.com/politics/jumhooree-party-cabinet-member-and-two-more-mps-join-president-yameens-ppm-87122#sthash.veesxTK2.dpbs> (accessed 17 July 2015); Zaheena Rasheed, ‘Government begins purge of political appointees’, *Minivan News*, 31 May 2014, <http://minivannews.com/politics/government-begins-purge-of-jp-political-appointees-86147#sthash.PFjqrFmX.dpbs> (accessed 17 July 2015).

<sup>154</sup> The current prosecutor-general, Muhthaz Muhusin, was nominated to office by President Yameen after the former prosecutor-general resigned in November 2013 when a motion of no-confidence was filed against him in Parliament. In November 2014, the auditor-general was dismissed and replaced by a loyalist following an amendment to the *Audit Act*. The amendment has been contested as it contradicts the Constitution (2008). The amendment was put into effect after the release of a Special Audit Report of Maldives Marketing and Public Relations Company (MMPRC) implicating Tourism Minister Ahmed Adeeb in a US\$6 million scandal. See: Fathmath Aruma, ‘Hassan Ziyath’s name sent to Majlis for consideration as Auditor General’, *Haveeru Online*, 13 November 2014, [http://www.haveeru.com.mv/auditor\\_generals\\_office/57508](http://www.haveeru.com.mv/auditor_generals_office/57508) (accessed 25 July 2015).

In the same manner, in December 2014, Chief Justice Ahmed Faiz and Justice Mu-uthasim Adnan (Supreme Court Bench) were dismissed by amending the *Judicature Act* by reducing the Supreme Court bench from seven to five. The justices were considered judges whose opinions were not in favour of PPM. Their dismissal was deemed a “procedurally irregular decision” by many local and international bodies. The UN urged the Maldives to reconsider the decision. See: S. Chandrasekharan, ‘Maldives: Removal of Inconvenient Judges – Another setback to Democracy’, *South Asia Analysis*, 18 December 2014, <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/node/1682#sthash.wFLjcQH0.dpuf> (accessed 20 July 2015); ‘Maldives: UN expert concerned at ‘unacceptable’ dismissal of Supreme Court justices’, *UN News Center*, 20 December 2014, <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=49661#.VbMfKbOqqko> (accessed 25 July 2015).

On 21 July 2015, Vice-President Dr Mohamed Jameel Ahmed was impeached by the Parliament *in absentia*. The next day, Tourism Minister Ahmed Adeeb was appointed vice-president. See: ‘VP impeached, removed from office through no-confidence vote’, *Sun Online*, 21 July 2015, <http://www.sun.mv/english/31197> (accessed 25 July 2015).

<sup>155</sup> ‘Ties with China ‘very close’, ‘far more precious’ with India: Abdulla Yameen’, *The Economic Times*, 5 January 2014, [http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2014-01-05/news/45882662\\_1\\_indian-ocean-india-and-maldives-china](http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2014-01-05/news/45882662_1_indian-ocean-india-and-maldives-china) (accessed 27 July 2015).



and allotment of land in New Delhi for the high commission of the Maldives were signed. Commitments on the “security of the Indian Ocean and South Asia” were also assured by both countries.<sup>156</sup> It was also agreed to enhance maritime security in the Indian Ocean “through joint patrolling and aerial surveillance”, exchange information, develop a legal framework on counter piracy, and assist in capacity building. India eased visa restrictions for Maldivians that had come into force in 2012. India also assured support for the Maldives’ candidature for a non-permanent seat in the UN Security Council for 2019–20.<sup>157</sup>

China continued the cordial relations it had had with the previous government. On 5 December 2013, China allotted 50 million yuan in “grant aid” to the Maldives.<sup>158</sup> Yameen visited China in August 2014, following which China pledged to provide 100 million yuan as free financial aid and further assistance in constructing a bridge between Malé and Hulhulé.<sup>159</sup> On an invitation from President Yameen, Chinese President Xi Jinping visited the Malé in September 2014 and signed nine agreements to foster cooperation on bilateral, trade and health issues.<sup>160</sup> During this visit, Maldives for the first time agreed to enhance defence cooperation with China.<sup>161</sup> The first session of the Maldives–China Joint Committee on Trade and Economic Cooperation was held on 16 December 2014 to further strengthen trade and economic cooperation between the two countries. The Maldives also became a partner in the MSR envisioned by China.<sup>162</sup>

The relations with India took a U-turn when Indian diplomacy failed to bring a breakthrough on the criminal case against Nasheed. Resenting Nasheed’s 13-year prison sentence (pronounced on 13 March 2015), India not only cancelled Prime Minister

<sup>156</sup> *Joint Statement on the occasion of the State Visit of President of Maldives to India* (New Delhi: Ministry of External Affairs, 2 January 2014) <http://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/22706/Joint+Statement+on+the+occasion+of+the+State+Visit+of+President+of+Maldives+to+India> (accessed 20 July 2015).

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>158</sup> ‘Maldives and China sign Grant Aid Agreement of 50 million Yuan’, *Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, 5 December 2013, <http://foreign.gov.mv/v2/en/media-center/news/article/603> (accessed 27 July 2015).

<sup>159</sup> Fathimath Aruma, ‘Chinese president to visit Maldives on Sunday’, *Haveeru Online*, 10 September 2014, <http://www.haveeru.com.mv/news/56574> (accessed 25 July 2015).

<sup>160</sup> ‘President of China concludes State Visit to the Maldives’, *Maldives High Commission in UK* (London, 16 September 2014), <http://www.maldiveshighcommission.org/news/news-from-maldives/item/578-president-of-china-concludes-state-visit-to-the-maldives> (accessed 24 July 2015).

<sup>161</sup> *Joint Press Communiqué between the Republic of Maldives and the People’s Republic of China* (Malé: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 15 September 2014) <http://foreign.gov.mv/v2/en/media-center/news/article/971> (accessed 27 July 2015).

<sup>162</sup> ‘Maldives and China hold First Meeting of the Joint Committee on Trade and Economic Cooperation’, *Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, 16 December 2014, <http://foreign.gov.mv/v2/en/media-center/news/article/1024> (accessed 27 July 2015).

Narendra Modi's visit to the Maldives scheduled in March 2015,<sup>163</sup> but also suspended its aid package. India had reserved a seven-fold aid budget increase to the Maldives for 2015-16, compared to the previous year.<sup>164</sup> While India opted to distance itself, China-Maldives relations continued to grow with new agreements coming into action. Diplomatic visits increased, and President Yameen visited China for the second time in June 2015.<sup>165</sup> The Maldives became a founding member of the China envisioned AIIB and MSR.<sup>166</sup>

#### 4.4 Summary

Physical geography poses developmental challenges to the Maldives. Its economy is extremely vulnerable to many external events, including natural disasters. The Maldives' overdependence on tourism is recognised by policymakers, and its Economic Diversification Strategy 2013 lays a strategic framework to exploit its advantages to realise economic goals.<sup>167</sup>

Systemic factors can potentially influence security and foreign policy but only when they affect the interests of a big state in the region. For instance, Maldivians' involvement in terrorism (against Indian interests) has not affected bilateral relations with India. Rather, the problem encouraged in bilateral cooperation in security matters. In the same manner, when maritime piracy increased in Maldivian waters, India extended assistance.

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<sup>163</sup> Suhasini Haidar, 'PM drops Maldives from Indian Ocean tour', *The Hindu*, 6 March 2015, <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/pm-drops-maldives-from-indian-ocean-tour/article6966095.ece> (accessed 25 March 2015).

<sup>164</sup> Sudha Ramachandran, 'India's surging aid to Maldives points to its strategic location', *Asia Times*, 20 April 2015, <http://atimes.com/2015/04/indias-surging-aid-to-maldives-points-to-its-strategic-location/> (accessed 25 July 2015).

<sup>165</sup> 'President Yameen meets Vice President of China', *Press Release Ref: 2015-197* (Malé: The President's Office, 11 June 2015), <http://www.presidencymaldives.gov.mv/?lid=11&dcid=15604> (accessed 24 September 2015).

<sup>166</sup> Abdulla Yameen, *Keynote Speech by the President of the Republic of Maldives, at the Opening Ceremony of the 10th China-South Asia Business Forum*, para. 18 (Malé: The President's Office, 12 June 2015), <http://www.presidencymaldives.gov.mv/Index.aspx?lid=12&dcid=15600> (accessed 20 July 2015).

<sup>167</sup> There exists doubts on the practicality of achieving the economic strategic objectives as it does not represent a national development perspective, mainly because none of the internal institutions have adopted the plan within its strategic framework of action. Furthermore, the Maldives had multi-sectoral and multi-spectral "national development plans" from 1994 to 2013. The current government is yet to develop such a national development plan.

Since the 17th century, the Maldives has been strategically important to any state that aspired to extend strategic control over Indian Ocean SLOC. The inclusion of a clause to debar the Maldives from hosting foreign military facilities in its independence agreement signifies the importance of its geographic location. The Maldives has always played an asymmetric game with big powers – for example, to offset the threat from Portugal, it leaned to the Dutch; when the UK threatened its national integrity, it established relations with the Soviet Union; and more recently, it has aligned with China to counter the influence of India. Undoubtedly, the Maldives compromised with the big powers when it had no choice, but when two big states were involved, it counterbalanced one by aligning with the other.

Societal issues also affect foreign policy, but a real shift occurs when it overlaps with political interest. Societal issues dominate external policy where vulnerabilities and challenges could attract foreign aid or the assistance of multilateral institutions to overcome those problems and challenges. The social threats or challenges identified in the NSP are real. One such threat is crime, which is looked at differently by different state institutions. Yet no consistent effort exists within the government to delineate a credible policy framework.

While the systemic and societal variables' influence cannot be fully negated in foreign policy, this study finds idiosyncratic factors as the deciding factor in external behaviour. President Nasir's reluctance to join the Commonwealth appears to be linked with his practical contacts with the British, either in the Maldives or Ceylon. In a similar vein, President Gayyoom's initial approach towards the Arab world could be attributed to his personal experiences in Egypt. His policy shift towards China could also be linked to his aspirations to repossess power in the 2008 presidential election. President Nasheed's dislike of communism or exposure in the UK to liberal democracy must have defined his government's early relations with China and India. The three presidents adopted policy postures against their aversions at a later stage for achieving their political objectives; Nasir worked with Britain after independence, Gayyoom shifted from Arab world to India and later to China, and Nasheed inclined towards China even though he did not like communism in an effort to regain public confidence by fulfilling his electoral pledges when his popularity waned and Indian grants reduced.

The same could be said about President Yameen. He was arrested by Nasheed in a political



tumult in 2010. Yameen won the 2013 presidential election narrowly (by 2.78 per cent) competing against Nasheed, thereby making Nasheed his strongest political opponent (possibly even in the next presidential election). This reason/factor and the wrongful arrest might have been the main reasons for the rushed trial of Nasheed even though India's resentment was foreseeable. The underlying factors for the deeper Sino–Maldives relations and diminished India relations could be twofold: India's continued backing of Nasheed and the need to achieve Yameen's electoral pledges (particularly to connect Malé and Hulhulé by a bridge).

# Chapter 5: Conclusion and Way Forward

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This study identified two primary research questions and four secondary questions to examine the extent of influence on small states by big states in geopolitically sensitive regions and the policies adopted (or could be adopted) by small states to preserve their autonomy and interests. The Maldives was chosen as a case study due to the country's smallness in all aspects (geographic size, population, relative power and economy), geostrategic location, and strategic manoeuvring in the Indian Ocean by two emerging Asian powers, India and China. As this study intends to contribute to small states studies, the main theoretical inclination was on small states studies, albeit it accommodated broader concepts of international relations (IR). Major IR or international security theories were applied on small states to evaluate relevance or applicability. As the intention was not to test the theories, they were not directly applied on the Maldives, although inferences were drawn on the Maldives' external behaviour. This chapter provides an overview of the pertinent findings of this study and foresee the Maldives' foreign relations in the context of India and China.

There remains an inherent agreement among scholars, states and multilateral institutions on the legal equality of states in the international system and the inequality of their material power. Owing to the inequality, small states face multifaceted security challenges, far severe than the bigger states. Upon realising this vulnerability, many multilateral institutions commissioned studies to assess the precarious situation of small states. However, the international system is yet to find an institutional mechanism for small states to seek when their autonomy or interests are threatened covertly by bigger states. The increasing membership of FOSS and President Waheed's statement at the 67th UN General Assembly underlines this need while projecting small states' inability in preserving their own security and interests.

Mainstream IR theories have always been a reflection of the perspectives of the *west* originating in their philosophy and history, or the "Eurocentric framing of world history".<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Amitav Acharya and Barry Buzan, 'Why is there no non-Western international relations theory?', *Non-Western International Relations Theory Perspectives on and beyond Asia* (Oxon: Routledge, 2010) p. 6.

In a similar manner, the theoretical construct for external behaviour or security policy of small states has always been influenced by the *western* viewpoint as seen from a belvedere in Europe or North America. The study of three mainstream IR theories – realism, liberalism and constructivism – found that small states reflect mixed features of these theories, indicating the need for a new framework for theorising small states external behaviour.

Scholars attempted to define small states until the 1980s. Thereafter, the literature accepted the terminological differences in the definitions of *small state*, but made no effort to conceptualise a new definition. Small states literature consistently defines small states by using weak qualitative characteristics (size, population and military capability), even though small states have not always been weak. Though they are far disadvantaged compared to the big neighbours or regional players, small states have played asymmetric games with their much larger ‘adversaries’ through alliancing or exploiting their geostrategic influence. A definition is important not only to group states based on their common vulnerabilities but also for creating a global mechanism to manoeuvre their position vis-à-vis big states. Despite the lack of categorisation of states for UN membership, the UN has always recognised the importance of grouping member states for the sake of developmental assistance. SIDS and LLDS are UN categories based on geographic characteristics. The categories could be extended into small state scholarship.

International politics is mainly dominated by competing large states. Small states come into this frame when their geostrategic or geopolitical situation becomes relevant in the strategic competition of large states.<sup>2</sup> With the emergence of *realpolitik* in the Indian Ocean, the Maldives has come into the geostrategic frame of India and China. The relations between the Maldives and the leading two states of the region are based on a convergence of concerns or interests. However, there have been periods when the bigger powers coerced the Maldives to achieve their long-term interests. The admissions in the NSP and DWP regarding attempts to influence the autonomy and interests of the Maldives, and praise for China for non-interference in domestic matters by President Waheed, implies India’s undue influence. It can be countered by adopting intelligent external behaviour. The following are the key options for the Maldives in the evolving strategic competition between India and

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<sup>2</sup> Arunas Molis, ‘The Role and Interests of Small States in Developing European Security and Defence Policy’, *Baltic Security and Defence Review*, vol. 8, 2006, p.81.

## China in the Indian Ocean.

- (1) Multilateral institutions have always been vocal in raising pertinent issues. The Commonwealth has been one of the few vigilant institutions on the challenges faced by small states. It has been advancing the concerns of small states, backed by two pioneering studies depicting the real challenges and helplessness of small states. It has actively sensitised the special needs of small states since 1985. Since its last assessment (conducted in 1997), which depicted the vulnerabilities and challenges of small states, the systemic environment around small states has changed, requiring a new assessment. Being a member of the Commonwealth, the Maldives can forward this interest to reassess the situation of small states.
- (2) In the same manner, Maldives could engage other multilateral institutions, particularly the UN, to press for a new assessment. “The UN is the most important international organisation for all small states”.<sup>3</sup> It can guarantee small states security and improve their wellbeing. As the Commonwealth proposed in its second report, small states should seek to reform and develop initiatives to “advance their interests”.<sup>4</sup> The UN General Assembly’s resolution mandating additional responsibility to the secretary-general to pay special attention to the security needs of small states has not been followed in its true spirit. This also provides an avenue to reassess small states. Such a motion, especially on political threats or threats to autonomy, could find sponsors owing to the current situation in Eastern Europe.
- (3) The Maldives has exploited alliance strategy since the 17th century against stronger adversaries such as Portugal (alliancing with the Netherlands) and the UK (alliancing with the Soviet Union). These alliances were established when its political autonomy or national interests were threatened. In the absence of such threats, the Maldives adopted a non-alignment policy in the past. However, since 2007, even in the absence of a real threat (of previously mentioned nature), the Maldives has been favouring inconsistently one regional power over another for political interests. This behaviour has excessively threatened its security, both for the government<sup>5</sup> and the public.<sup>6</sup> The ad hoc favouring of India over China or China

<sup>3</sup> *A Future for Small States: Overcoming Vulnerability* (London: Commonwealth Secretariat, 1997) p. xii.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> By accepting to be part of India’s security grid in 2009, it made itself more vulnerable when it made alliances with an adversary of India.

<sup>6</sup> For example, the Maldives’ overdependence on tourism, and both India and China being dominant markets, will increase its economic risks.

over India has provided economic gains for the Maldives, but not to the extent of transgressing its autonomy or interests. Though the Maldives has been promoted from the LDC category to Middle Income Country, there exist opportunities within multilateral institutions that come with a far lesser price than following the soft power machinations of big states. Therefore, the government needs to reconsider its long-term social and economic policies and resist the soft power options of regional big powers assistance in pursuit of their regional, global, political and strategic interests. Alliancing or taking sides in the big power rivalry merely for economic interests could compromise the autonomy of the Maldives to decide its foreign policy. Therefore, the Maldives should adopt a carefully calibrated security policy approach.

- (4) Ever since independence, the foreign policy of the Maldives has been decided by political ambition, dominated by the idiosyncrasies of the incumbent president. For example, current President Yameen's foreign policy shifted towards India over China before favouring China over India. This swing appears to be based on India trying to influence local politics, while China decided to provide grant aid to build a bridge between Hulhulé and Malé.<sup>7</sup> The disconnection between NSP and Foreign Policy 2014, and the swinging external behaviour in short spans in favour of political interests, stresses the absolute necessity for an efficient foreign policymaking framework to promote the country's national interests. Policymakers have to decide which broader strategy should the Maldives adopt amid the growing geopolitics around it as the existing foreign policy (written as well as in practice) validates no known types (*passive*, *active* or *defensive*).<sup>8</sup>
- (5) Prevalent domestic issues such as dependence on other states for the treatment of chronic and critical illnesses, community safety (crime and drug dependency), public corruption, and economic overdependence on tourism fail to substantiate the need for a US\$300 million bridge. Wellbeing of the society is the core element of national security. Any nation must apply all elements of its national power effectively to overcome risks and vulnerabilities, and satisfy the demands of its

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<sup>7</sup> China agreed to provide US\$100 million as free aid to construct the bridge between Hulhulé and Malé. The expected total cost of the project is US\$300 million. China would also provide 85% of the remainder (US\$170 million) as loan aid. See: 'MVR 4.6 billion estimated as bridge project cost', *Channel News Maldives*, 9 July 2015, <http://cnm.mv/english/f?id=9949> (accessed 7 August 2015).

<sup>8</sup> David Vital, *The Inequality of States: A Study of the Small Powers in International Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972) pp. 117 – 122.

domestic security. “In many cases, the greater the degree of domestic security, the less is the vulnerability to external threat”.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, the Maldives ought to introduce more measures to be self-reliant as it often solves internal threats.<sup>10</sup>

- (6) Climate change could be a tool for maintaining focus on the Maldives in the global fora. It could garnish enough friends, small and big, from other regions.
- (7) Small states studies is a marginalised discipline that needs to be promoted. The Maldives is in a good position to promote small states studies. Fora of AOSIS, SIDS, FOSS, the Commonwealth and the UN are avenues to proffer research and special consideration for the security challenges of small states. Furthermore, it could promote small states studies through exchange programmes with other countries, while providing higher education scholarships on small states studies to its high achieving citizens.

South Asia is undergoing an intense competition among major players to bring smaller states within their strategic fold and dominate the region. India and China are enhancing their power profiles and influence. India’s approach on cooperation with the Maldives lacks consistency as its only strategy appears to be influencing small states through soft power or punitive measures. Therefore, the relationship between the Maldives and India has been chaotic since 2007. Unlike India, China attempts to maintain its forward policy even when India–Maldives relations deepens or when the Maldives takes China lightly compared to India. Amid the convergence or divergence of interests between the Maldives and the two big states, the geographic location provides leverage to the Maldives. Since 2009, the Maldives has compromised to some extent this grip through the “India First” policy and defence cooperation with India. The recent intensifying of relations with China appears to repeat that.

The Maldives has not recognised the challenges it may have to face amid the strategic power competition between India and China. Small states lean towards big states for security (particularly protection), partnerships and resources. The Maldives’ inclination could elicit a higher-than-anticipated cost by compelling a revision of interests. A pertinent desire of the big powers would be to integrate the Maldives into their “global strategic network by way of their hosting bases”.<sup>11</sup> The Indian troops stationed in Gan could be a

<sup>9</sup> *Vulnerability: Small States in the Global Society* (London: Commonwealth Secretariat, 1985) p. 36.

<sup>10</sup> Colin Clarke and Tony Payne (eds.) *Politics, Security and Development in Small States* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1987) p. 221.

<sup>11</sup> *Vulnerability: Small States in the Global Society*, n. 9, pp. 30 – 31.

tactic in securing it as a strategic outpost. In the same manner, Chinese soft aid (particularly the costly bridge between Malé and Hulhulé) could be a strategy for China to sway the Maldives towards China's sphere of influence. When a small state, particularly an isolated state such as the Maldives, gives up any leverage, it would be extremely difficult to regain the leverage due to lack of a geopolitical group in the region (as in the Pacific).<sup>12</sup> Therefore, instead of favouring one big power over another, the Maldives should cooperate with both states without making itself a disputed portion in the strategic ambitions of the big powers.

The Maldives should also recognise the methods India used to integrate the princely states, the recent offensive tactics of big powers such as Russia and Iraq against their smaller adversaries, India's and China's strategic interest in Indian Ocean domination, India's continual support for President Nasheed 'interfering' in the presidential election in the Maldives in 2013 and in Sri Lanka in 2014, and India's recent raid in Myanmar. India will not be watching silently when China makes its way into India's historic and political sphere of interest. India has been continually demonstrating its power as a big state in the region with the capacity and will to induce other states to adopt lines of conduct or policy they might otherwise not pursue, and the capacity to resist the pressure of other states from diverting its desired course (towards achieving its national interest or political interest).

China's strategic interest is growing stronger in the Indian Ocean region, based on economic and energy interests, security and political interests. However, the number of choke points it has to cross to reach the Indian Ocean makes it difficult to find friendly ports in the Indian Ocean to project power there. Therefore, attaining ports or facilities where its naval vessels and submarines can berth appears to be in the long-term interests of China. Any attempt by the Maldives to deflect India from its policy will result in a row and difficulties for the Maldives to an extent that it will be left with no other option but stick with China even when the relations provide no economic stimulus to the (then) slackening Maldivian economy. Though small states can balance their weakness through alliances, when such strategic and political dynamics are involved, the price of alliances will result in a "sacrifice of autonomy in the control of national resources and loss of freedom of political manoeuvre and choice".<sup>13</sup> The number of chokepoints China has to overcome to project power into the Indian Ocean and the current support India gets from Japan and the

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31.

<sup>13</sup> Vital, n. 8, p. 5.

US should be considered.

Maldives ought to promote its relations with all the big players in the region in a way it does not affect its own national interest and marginalise a big player. The policymakers should accept that “the greater the conflict between the great powers; the greater the strategic importance of the small neighbor to its great power neighbor; the greater the strategic importance of the small neighbor to the neighbor’s great power enemy”.<sup>14</sup> It is, therefore, still not too late to adopt a grand strategy of playing an asymmetric game to safeguard its interests and autonomy, albeit the Maldives has been pursuing outcomes, not strategies.

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<sup>14</sup> Olav F. Knudsen, ‘Of Lambs and Lions: Relations between Great Powers and their Small Neighbors’, *Cooperation and Conflict*, vol. 23, no. 2, 1988, p. 115.





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