

The Complex Security Paradigm of Small Island Developing States (SIDS): Is there a Need to Devise a Hybrid National Security Strategy?

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a. Introduction

As terrorist attacks have become more frequent in cities like Mumbai in India and several cities in Pakistan in the recent past, the South Asia has turned into one of the most volatile hubs of global terrorism today. Terrorism being widely transnational with consolidated regional support structures and other criminal activities strongly entwining into it, the smaller members of the South Asia are now spontaneously dragged into the larger networks of transnational nature. As a consequence, it poses a high threat to the national security of smaller states, particularly to “micro states” of South Asia. As part of a ripple effect of terrorism and other transnational perils in the region, intricate cross-border and cross-crime nexuses and illicit phantom networks are now being developed. New breeds of non-state criminal actors such as terrorists, pirates, organized criminals and valueless international entrepreneurs in the arms and drug trade have started assaulting and paralyzing security structures of countries in the region.¹

This paper attempts to explore the most immediate and pressing concerns to national security by making a case study with special reference to the Maldives. As such, it emphasizes the nexuses that are being so cleverly created in the realm of transnational terrorism and organized crime in South Asia while examining the abrupt threats that are emerging on the country’s vast maritime domain. Hence, this paper argues that the transforming and complex security environment of South Asia, entangled in an immense cascading effect in the region, poses great risks to the national security of Maldives and other small states in the region, and highlights the need to formulate a hybrid national security strategy focusing on more instant and real threats. Such a strategy must not merely define the ends, but also carefully calculate the ways in which the available resources can be utilized to achieve the ends or rational interests of national security such as sustainable development and societal harmony.

Furthermore, this paper hypothesizes that the fundamental question of national security relates to the survival of the island state in the face of the emerging threats and challenges in the region. It argues that at the helm of such an endeavor lays the most elementary tactic of creating national resilience, reconciliation and effective utilization of limited resources focusing on sustainable development. The document also maintains that the national security strategy of Maldives must sternly aim at securing its economic base, ideally the tourist and fishing industry, and the resources of its vast maritime areas, which have a direct bearing on its survivability and sustainable development. It must therefore, tailor a security strategy to meet these ends, which proposes the integrated application of available elements of national power; the law enforcement agencies, the military and other civil sectors. A concentrated and consorted effort is imperative to combat the most immediate threats of transnational nature, such as the nexus between organized

1 Kimberly. L Thachuk, *Transnational Threats, Smuggling and Trafficking in Arms, Drugs, and Human Life* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Security International, 2007) 3.

crime and terrorism or drug trafficking and piracy.

b. The Changing Dynamics of a Complex Security Environment

South Asia's security environment is rapidly evolving, manifested with an intensified aspect of terrorism and transnational crime. For example, "Terror Strikes Mumbai Again" is neither a new expression nor shocking headline news in India or South Asia - for the most part - any longer, but just another report of a common, though tragic incident. Like several news sources, *Indian Express* posted these headlines reporting that Mumbai was rocked by three strong blasts in *Zaveri Bazaar*, *Daadar*, and *Charni* road areas killing twenty one and injuring almost one hundred and forty people.² Not many people have forgotten what happened in 1993, 2006 and especially, the terrorist attacks of November 26, 2008, which lasted for four days and took as many as one hundred and sixty six lives with several injuries and losses in this city.³

While this is the case in Mumbai and largely in India as a whole, the situation is seemingly worse in Pakistan; where bomb blasts and terrorist attacks are almost an everyday occurrence. One of the most recent being the suicide attacks on *Mandokhel Mosque* in the *Jamrud* area of *Kyber Agency* near Peshawar in Pakistan on August 19, 2011, which killed fifty six and injured one hundred and twenty three, and hence, the terror goes on.⁴ Biggest worry is the large spill-over impact in the region. A video footage - allegedly circulated by *Al-Qaeda's* media wing in November 2009 - showed and verified the active participation of Maldivians in regional terrorism - the global *jihad* - and revealed the increased impact of radical Islamist ideology on the psyche of Maldivian youth and particularly on individuals.⁵ It showed a Maldivian national named Ali Jaleel, with the forged identity of Musa'b Sayyid was covertly fighting alongside pro-Taliban *mujahideen* forces in Waziristan. He had traveled to Pakistan to call for and participate in *jihad* and eventually died during the terrorist attacks on ISI Headquarters in Lahore on 27 May 2009.⁶

While terror and violence continues, of striking prominence in the recent years is the overall dynamics of South Asia's complex security environment are taking a more volatile turn. As Ryan Clarke opines, the Mumbai attacks of 2008 clearly shows the advances in planning, sophistication and expansion of the Islamist terrorist groups and more importantly, how they are evolving.⁷ With the

2 "Terror Strikes Mumbai Again, at least 21 Killed, Over 141 Injured," *Indian Express*, July 13, 2011, accessed September 20, 2011, <http://www.indianexpress.com/news/amin/817085/>.

3 "Don't Give Me Death, I was Brainwashed Like a Robot: Kasab," October 10, 2011, *The Times of India*, accessed December 12, 2011, <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Dont-give-me-death-I-was-brainwashed-like-a-robot-Kasab/articleshow/10303907.cms>.

4 "Suicide Bomb in Jamrud Mosque :56 Killed, 123 Injured," *The Express Tribune*, August 19, 2011, accessed September 22, 2011, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/235082/khyber-agency-blast-in-jamrud-mosque/>

5 "Maldivian Mujahideen Fighting in Pakistan," *Live Leak*, November 6, 2009, accessed October 10, 2011, http://www.liveleak.com/view?i=e1a_1257529338.

6 Aminesh Roul, "Jihad and Islamism in the Maldives Islands," *The Jamestown Foundation*, February 12, 2010 accessed November 5, 2011, http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=36036&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=7&cHash=f218d5b027

7 Ryan Clarke, "Lashkar-i- Taiba : The Fallacy of Subservient Proxies and the Future of Islamism in India," *The Letort Papers*, (March 2010): 47-55.

growth of transnational terrorism and its dispersion in the regional security environment, now it is witnessed that criminal gangs and drug cartels are getting deeply associated with terrorist networks. Paradoxically, at the same pace, off the shores of South Asian littorals, intensified activities of maritime piracy are becoming another serious concern; posing acute problems to island states of the Indian Ocean region.

As a result of the changing security circumstances, the smaller members of South Asia are left in an unfathomable national security predicament. Most of the countries are already victims to the extensive “spill over” effect in the region. In particular, the Maldives, which is a small island developing state (SID) with a population of 298,698⁸ falling under the category of “micro states” in South Asia, and located in the center of the Indian Ocean with no shared borders with any of its neighbors. In recent years, the South Asia’s most prominent terrorist group the *Lashkar- e- Taiba* (LeT) has made despicable attempts to expand its operations throughout South Asia and establish its sleeper cells.⁹ LeT’s infiltration of the Maldives goes back to the post-tsunami period. The Pakistan-based *Idara Khidmat-e-Khalq* (IKK), a charitable front for the LeT’s parent organization, *Jamaat –ud-Dawa* (JuD), reached the Maldives in the wake of the December, 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami under the guise of providing humanitarian services.¹⁰

Like many other small island nations, the country has its inherent vulnerabilities due to the character of smallness and thus, the weaknesses. Risks such as the issue of sea level rise coupled with environmental degradation, economic fragility, illegal immigration and scarcity of resources are also matters of national concern. However, the evolving regional security dynamics have surfaced more immediate threats and concerns which need to be addressed.

c. Conceptualizing National Security Strategy in Relation to Micro States

As a common guideline, a successful national security strategy must clearly identify the national security interests which are interpreted in terms of ends and illustrate the means and ways to secure them. Nevertheless, before understanding the mechanics of a tailored strategy that fits the security paradigm of micro states, in this case the SIDS– Maldives – it is important to make references to the popular literature on “strategy formulation.” For instance, Liddell Hart defines strategy as “the art of applying and distributing military means to fulfill the ends of policy.”¹¹ Robert Kennedy holds the view that Liddell Hart’s definition, to an extent, shows a wider application of military means and importantly emphasizes that political objectives are the ends that are to be pursued by military means.¹²

8 Department of National Planning , Republic of Maldives, Census Population by Sex and Sex Ratio and Inter- Censal Variation of Population, 1911-2006, accessed September 25, 2011. <http://www.planning.gov.mv/en/>

9 Roul, (2010).

10 Ibid.

11 Robert Kennedy, “Elements of Strategic Thinking: A Practical Guide,” in *Teaching Strategy: Challenge and Response*, ed. Gabriella Marcella (Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute, U. S. Army War College, 2010) 14.

12 Kennedy(2010).

The definition and conception of the strategy have evolved over the years. Particularly in the 20th century, strategy's definition and application had moved beyond the realm of military activity.¹³ Merriam-Webster dictionary defines strategy in a broader context; as "the science and art of employing the political, economic, psychological, and military forces of a nation or a group of nations to afford the maximum support to adopted policies in peace and war."¹⁴ This understanding moves beyond the military field and clearly shows the use of other elements of national power or other means which are employed to achieve political ends. Martha Crenshaw argues that "strategy" which is typically referred to military operations, is generally a scheme for making the means produce the desired ends. As such "the grand strategy," which is multi-faceted, complex and focuses on a distant time horizon, explains how a state's full range of resources can be applied to achieve national security in an inclusive manner.¹⁵ All these views have the clear and common understanding that a "strategy" must have clear ends, and significantly address how the ends can be achieved with the use of means or resources. These definitions somewhat help to draw a view on the fundamentals of a strategy, however, as Kennedy posits, they still miss the mark.¹⁶

At the national level, a pragmatic definition of the strategy will be the integrated application of the national power, such as economic, political, diplomatic, psychological, informational and military power, in pursuit of national interests.¹⁷ Hence, reconciliation and sustainable development could be made effective elements of a national security strategy. Moreover, to glean the fundamental components of strategy formulation, with special reference to micro states, this definition of strategy has greater relevance. Moreover, the elements of national power must be tactfully synergized to maximize the results in terms of achieving national security objectives. Conceptually, the national security strategy of Maldives must aim at protecting its economic base; the tourist and fishing industry and the resources of its vast maritime areas as they have a tangible impact on the country's survivability.

d. The Blurred Distinction between Internal and External Threats: The Transnational Era

The complexity of the evolving security environment focuses micro states into an intricate and unpredicted state of affairs. As inter- state conflicts are a less common in today's international order, non- state actors or non- state enemies take a center stage in the contemporary security environment. Kimberly L. Thachuk posits that a new breed of non- state criminal actors such as terrorists, pirates, organized criminals and unethical international entrepreneurs in the arms and slave trade have intensely started assaulting states the world over.¹⁸ Many of these armed groups are

13 Ibid.

14 Merriam Webster Online Dictionary, accessed November 2, 2011, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/>.

15 Martha Crenshaw, "Terrorism, Strategies and Grand Strategies," in *Attacking Terrorism: Elements of a Grand Strategy*, ed. Audrey Kurth Cronin and James M. Ludes (Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 2004) 76.

16 Kennedy, (2010), 14.

17 Kennedy, (2010),15.

18 Thachuk, (2007) 3.

equipped with modern weapons or technological advances and opportunities that are peculiar to the current age and therefore, a conundrum has emerged in terms of dealing with non- state transnational actors.¹⁹

Whether for a big or small, powerful or weak state, combating transnational terrorism and other cross-border perils remain at the forefront of security agendas today. Such threats are extremely complex and effectively eliminating them has become a far greater challenge. Thachuk points out that, at the core of the problem, such threats deteriorate existing affable relations between states and create mistrust, while at the same time they consolidate their stranglehold on the host nations. In those situations, states squabble over legal, political and economic measures which are insufficient to counter terrorists or organized criminals²⁰ This quandary is evident in many parts of the globe, such as in such countries as Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, Columbia, Philippines, Yemen, and Somalia. In these countries, terrorists and criminal gangs have been highly adaptive, blending seamlessly into the masses and manipulating the weak state structures. Perhaps, the biggest problem could be, as Thachuk explains, the complexity of the globalized era and the transnational nature of the threat and it is almost impossible to distinguish between various roles and relations of the non-state actors. While many states seemingly may harbor terrorists and international criminals, it is not entirely unrealistic to think that mafia bosses may govern states and terrorists may be voted into office.²¹ For example, in the article entitled, “Mafia –nation: State Capture by Criminal Syndicates,” in *Gateway House*, the interview with Sarah Chayes explains the extent of corruption by government officials and how state resources are extracted through structured vertical and integrated criminal networks in weak states in Asia.²²

Globalization has presented ample opportunities to promote global trade and commerce leveraging on economic networks that transcend state borders and more importantly, enabling global well being. However, to facilitate transnational crime, terrorists and criminal gangs have skillfully exploited the chances they create. Paul Battersby and Joseph M. Siracusa are of the opinion that globalization increases the influence of transnational linkages and makes national societies vulnerable to a greater array of international shocks and security risks.²³ Disparity of wealth and opportunities around the globe, regional instability, conflicts and rivalries and state failures are all contributing factors in the increasing number of transnational threats.²⁴ For example, the intensity of piracy activities off the coast of Somalia which have now expanded into the greater Indian Ocean is largely attributed to the crisis in Somalia. It has become a major security concern for the island states of the Indian Ocean region such as the Maldives, Mauritius and the Seychelles.

19 Ibid.

20 Thachuk, (2007),3.

21 Ibid., 4.

22 “Mafia-Nation: State Capture by Criminal Syndicates,” *Gateway House*, September 13, 2011, accessed December 13, 2011, <http://www.gatewayhouse.in/publication/gateway-house/911-special/mafia-nation-state-capture-criminal-syndicates>.

23 Paul Battersby and Joseph M. Siracusa, *Globalization and Human Security* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2009) 37.

24 Thachuk,(2007), 5.

The emerging transnational threat environment has blurred the traditional conception of “external threat versus the internal threat matrix” making it extremely complicated for the states to deal with the threat. Given this complexity, and taking into account the lack of proper security infrastructure and limited resources to cater for multilayered security operations, national security is a dilemma for micro states. Querine H. Hanlon points out that armed groups have cleverly adapted to and exploited the opportunities of a globalized world in ways that states, especially the weak states cannot.²⁵ The anonymity of globalization has created “marriages of convenience” among groups with vastly diverse ideological and political objectives. While the heightened connectivity and advances in technology have enabled armed groups to transmit information and recruit internationally, they also exploit the sheer volume of trade and compressed time and space, to carry out illicit activities without being detected.²⁶ Such activities would involve movement of illegal cargo and weapons, funds transfer, drug and human trafficking and many more.

Transnational threats transcend borders; they do not have states as they move from state to state in search of better deals. For the non- state actor, the size or the strength of the state do not matter. However, the smaller or the weaker the better, as such conditions present conducive environments to infiltrate state structures and carry out their activities. Transnational threats are not only complicated but take different forms and are diverse. They range from terrorism, piracy, international organized crime, quick transfer of privately held armament technologies, to international narcotics trafficking, to money laundering and corruption, to cyber war and cyber crimes, to illegal immigration and human trafficking, to the movement of infectious diseases, to environmental degradation, to the dissemination of ethnic and religious hatred.²⁷

Most of these threats are largely interrelated and it is this combined nature which makes them far more challenging for states to find an antidote. As these threats cut across the borders such menaces are beyond the control of national governments.²⁸ Perhaps, it is the biggest worry for states with weak structures; the micro states. While the domestic environment facilitates a conducive breeding environment for the threat, the threat drivers are external. To put into context, the so- called domestic or internal threats are strongly entangled with the external threat environment, as the threat - in most cases - originates from external sources. As a result, within the transnational threat scenario, there is hardly a distinction between internal and external threats and both aspects are obscurely inter- connected. These threats are arrayed in a broad spectrum of related phenomenon rather than boxed in formal discreet categories which makes not only dealing with, but also understating its dynamics an intricate challenge. Hence, with weak security structures, limited resources and inherent vulnerabilities, micro states are plunged into a security dilemma.

25 Querine H. Hanlon, “Globalization and the Transformation of the Armed Groups,” in *Armed Groups: Studies in National Security, Counterterrorism, and Counterinsurgency*, Jeffrey H. Norwitz, ed. (Newport, 2008), 137-140.

26 Ibid.

27 Thachuk,(2007),18.

28 Ibid, 8.

e. **Menaces of the Vast Maritime Domain**

Protecting and securing their vast maritime zones have always remained a challenge for the small island states. While the security of the seas that surround these micro states are fundamental to their very survival, preventing the illegal activities of the infinite sea surfaces and safeguarding the marine resources of enormous Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ) are almost unattainable tasks. The intensification of maritime crime such as piracy, gunrunning, smuggling and drug trafficking has pushed the oceans deeper into a violent morass.

The escalation of piracy activities off the coast of Somalia in the recent years and its expansion into the greater Indian Ocean region (IOR) both in terms of its capability and reach have posed an acute maritime security problem for the SIDS in this region. Despite a reasonable distance, Maldives lies directly towards the east of Somalia in the Indian Ocean without any land barrier between the two countries and hence the increase in their capabilities implies expansion of their reach further eastwards. The Seychelles, Mauritius and Maldives have fallen prey to the menace of maritime piracy. Although Maldives is over 1800 nautical miles away from the volatile coastline of Somalia, the country has the potential to become a primary target for the pirate vessels which are lately being forced away from the Somali waters as a result of maritime security crackdowns.²⁹ Several incidents of Somali nationals arriving in skiffs have been reported in Maldives in 2009 and 2010. Although most of these incidents have been drifting cases from the vicinity of their mother vessels so far, fears have taken root in the maritime community that the piracy attacks in Maldivian waters are highly likely at present.³⁰

Several incidents have occurred inside and right next to its EEZ and, apparently many tourist vessels such as safari yachts that transit in Maldives have been hijacked by the pirates. One such incident was the capture of the Danish family and their yacht after visiting the Maldives in February 2011. Jan Quist Johansen, along with his wife, their three teen age children, and the crew were held hostage by the pirates. The Somali pirates made it clear that the hostages would be killed if any rescue attempt was made.³¹ The pirates released the hostages after keeping them in captivity for more than six months and it was claimed that the family paid a ransom of US three million dollars.³² Two weeks prior to the capture of the Danish family, an American yacht with two US couples on board were captured and killed by the pirates. Another British couple that was captured while touring in their yacht after leaving from Seychelles was held in captivity in Somalia for more than a

29 Neil Merret and J J. Robinson, "Piracy and the Maldives : Special Report," Minivan News, December 8, 2010, accessed October 20, 2011, <http://minivannews.com/society/piracy-and-the-maldives-special-report-14157>

30 Merret and Robinson, (2010).

31 Aliyah Shahid , " Somali Pirates threaten to Kill Johansen Family , Danish hostages on Yacht with Three Teens Onboard," Daily News, NY Daily News.Com, March 01, 2001, accessed October 24, 2001, http://articles.nydailynews.com/2011-03-01/news/28660578_1_somali-pirates-somali-coast-somali-captors

32 "Seven Danes Released by Pirates after Ransom Drop," Yachting Monthly, September 8, 2011, accessed October 24, 2011, <http://www.yachtingmonthly.com/news/529655/seven-danes-released-by-pirates-after-ransom-drop>.

year and was released in November 2010 after paying a ransom.³³

f. Conclusion

As a concluding thought, it is essential to highlight the pressing need for small states or micro states to cautiously examine the changing dynamics of the regional security scenario. There is a need to critically understand the necessity to address the immediate and more real threats rather than indistinctly look at the broader threat spectrum, to which most of the SIDS are generally vulnerable to. As examined in the preceding discussions, the emerging transnational threat environment has created blurred the traditional conception of external threat versus the internal threat, making it exceptionally complicated and difficult to make a clear perception. More specifically, terrorists and criminals have overwhelmingly taken advantage of an increasingly interconnected world. Terrorist groups transform into hybrid entities and partner up with criminal gangs, posing a complex threat to nations; it demands unique, clever and tailored responses to counter it.

The rising connections between terrorist groups, criminal syndicates and drug cartels are a matter of serious concern as a whole in South Asia. This region remains a global hub for transnational terrorism networked and supported by illicit cross-border activities. These expanding networks are the biggest worry for the SIDS in the region. Particularly, the primary concern is the large spill-over effect of these transnational perils. For the non-state actor, the size or the strength of the state does not matter. However, the smaller or weaker the better, as such circumstances present favorable conditions to infiltrate into weak state structures of smaller countries to carry out their illicit activities. These threats and menaces are not only complex, but are smartly adaptable and diverse. They range from terrorism, piracy, international organized crime, quick transfer of privately held armament technologies, to international narcotics trafficking, to money laundering. The changing situation of the threat environment poses serious security implications to micro states, creating instability and uncertainty in overall national security. Given their inherent vulnerabilities, limited capabilities and resources, Maldives, therefore, must cleverly devise pragmatic and crossbreed strategies to deal with the surfacing security situation.

Addressing the issues of the country's maritime zone, such as piracy and combating nexuses of terror, crime and drug trafficking need urgent attention. To tackle these problems, a hybrid national strategy is much needed. Contextually, the national security strategy of the Maldives must firmly target these threats with the view to secure its economic base; the tourism and fishing industry which has a direct bearing on its very survivability, especially on sustainable development. To realize these goals, through the integrated application of available elements of national power, it must tailor a strategy to combat these most immediate challenges to the country's national security. It must put into place an integrated campaign among the law enforcement agencies, the military and other civil sectors to exploit every element of national power. The objective, clearly enough, is to diffuse the most eminent and real threat to the micro state of the Maldives and largely to small states: the emerging "perilous nexuses of convenience."

³³ Xan Rice, "British Couple Kidnapped by Somali Pirates Freed after Ransom Payment," *The Guardian*, November 14, 2010, accessed October 19, 2011, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/nov/14/paul-rachel-chandler-released-somali-pirates>.