

JUNE 2023

Imperatives of Foreign Policy and Security Dynamics of Small Island Nations in the Indo-Pacific

CSS DIALOGUE REPORT

THE CENTRE FOR SECURITY STUDIES

Emerging Geopolitical and Security Concerns of the Indo-Pacific

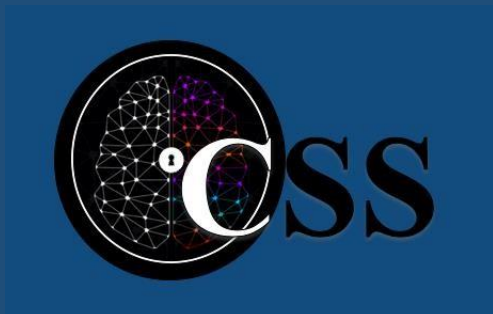
The geopolitical, economic, and security significance of the Indo-Pacific region has captivated the attention of policymakers, leaders, and academicians worldwide. From the eastern shores of Africa to the western coasts of the Americas, the Indo-Pacific comprises some of the world's most dynamic societies, influential economies, vibrant cultures, and strategic maritime routes. Small Island Developing States (SIDS) are countries characterised by their small land area, their location within oceans and seas, scarce resources, and growing economies. Given their geographical location and natural endowments, SIDS are highly susceptible to the impacts of climate change, including rising sea levels, frequent and severe storms, and ocean acidification, among other threats. These environmental challenges threaten their ecosystem, economies and often their very existence. It is against this backdrop that this report aims to delve deeper into their contemporary challenges, their international relations, and in general, their role in the Indo-Pacific region.

This report, divided into 3 parts, is the work of 11 Research Interns at CSS, who examined critical security and foreign policy issues pertinent to 11 Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in the Indo-Pacific region. It aims to offer valuable insights and perspectives that contribute to a more profound comprehension of these countries within the region's evolving geopolitical and security landscape.

This report is a product of the Centre for Security Studies, Jindal School of International Affairs.

Centre for Security Studies

Jindal School of International Affairs
O.P. Jindal Global University



All rights reserved to CSS, JSIA

For queries kindly contact css@jgu.edu.in

Table of Contents

Maldives Shehaan Sahni	04
Madagascar Tanish Srivastava	13
Fiji Vanisha Krishani	17
Micronesia Vibha Hareesh	21

Prologue

Maldives

The archipelago of Maldives has had an active voice in international relations and the report aims to dissect its foreign policy based on a rules-based world order and non-interference in internal affairs. The author evaluates the importance of geographical location, the role of religion in the country, the consequences of climate change, and the various security challenges faced by the country ranging from radicalisation, transnational crime, natural calamities, and political instability. Finally, the report also gives a glimpse into the various regional organizations.

Madagascar

Madagascar's strategic location in the Indo-Pacific region has made an analysis of the country's foreign relations and security policies an important focal point for academicians and strategic analysts all over the world. The report discusses its geography, its naval capabilities, its role in the security of the Indo-Pacific region, lack of its own natural resources, and the importance of agriculture in the country. The author then evaluates the country's economy, its defence expenditure, its mobilization of military personnel, and foreign policy. The report concludes with an analysis of the various issues faced by small island states and what can be done to help them overcome these challenges.

Fiji

Fiji commands attention as a pivotal player in the geopolitical, economic, and strategic dynamics of this vast and interconnected expanse. Situated at the crossroads between the Pacific and Indian Oceans, Fiji's role extends far beyond its physical borders. With a unique blend of cultural diversity, economic potential, and strategic importance, Fiji emerges as a key actor shaping the broader narratives of security, trade, diplomacy, and cooperation within the Indo-Pacific. The report refers to the various dimensions of Fiji's foreign policy and its security dynamics.

Micronesia

The Federal States of Micronesia is an important sovereign nation in the Indo-Pacific region. The report gives a brief introduction of the geographical landscape of the country, its vulnerability to climate change, and its active participation in international climate negotiations. The author sheds light on the various regional cooperation initiatives and partnerships that Micronesia is a part of. The report evaluates the security threats posed by territorial disputes due to Micronesia's overlapping claims over its EEZs and maritime boundaries and concludes with an analysis of the possibility of Micronesia becoming a battleground for US' and China's power politics.

Maldives

Shehaan Sahni

Even though it is the smallest Asian country in both land area and population, the Maldives thrives in the Indian Ocean as a paradisaical archipelago, spanning over 26 atolls or coral reefs enclosing a lagoon, and almost 1,200 coral islands, extending to over 820 kilometres. The pristine white sandy beaches as well as the impeccably clear waters, paired with a diverse marine life attract large numbers of tourists from across the world. Besides its inherent natural charm, the Maldives emanates a loud voice in international relations, voicing their concerns on key issues such as climate change and sustainable development while advocating human rights, promoting democracy, and ensuring peace and security. It prides itself in its diplomatic capabilities, pursuing friendship, understanding and cooperation, and portraying the interests and aspirations of the Maldivian community to the international community. While working towards this goal, the Maldives boasts a robust foreign policy that functions on a set of principles and goals that best serve its national interest, helping it provide valuable contributions to the global community.

The Foreign Policy of the Maldives

Just like any other nation in the world, the Maldives has an intricate foreign policy that dictates its efforts in reaching its national interest, ensuring the security and well-being of its residents, and upholding a peaceful rules-based world order. This foreign policy is guided by some principles or norms that first and foremost, work towards ensuring the sovereign equality of states in accordance with international law. The Maldives preaches a rules-based global system that is inclusive in nature to every nation within the world. It also indoctrinates the importance of non-interference within the internal affairs of another country. Moreover, it recognizes the need to maintain friendships with all countries based on a level of mutual respect and reiterates the supremacy of diplomacy in identifying, managing, and resolving global problems (The Maldivian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021). Being guided by these principles, the Maldives also strives to reach many goals through its foreign policy. These include:

- Enhancing the security and national sovereignty of the Maldives through increased bilateral and multilateral engagement.

- Protecting the Islamic identity of the Maldives and helping to promote the values of Islam internationally.
- Increasing the economic resilience of the Maldives.
- Promoting greater regional cooperation in South Asia.
- Providing quality consular services for Maldivians.
- Promoting efficiency and professionalism in the service (The Maldivian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021).

Hence, to reach these foreign policy goals in adherence to the principles, the Maldivian government has a set of strategies. These strategies have been reiterated by the Maldivian government as follows:

- Consolidating the Maldives' bilateral relationships with key regional and global powers.
- Strengthening the Maldives' engagement with South Asian and Indian Ocean rim countries to combat terrorism, piracy, and other non-traditional security threats.
- Bolstering the active participation of the Maldives at UN General Assembly, the UN Human Rights Council, and other UN bodies, and actively contribute to collective problem solving.
- Enhancing the active participation of the Maldives at key international organisations that enhances the country's diplomatic outreach and promote greater global recognition for the Maldives.
- Increasing the Maldives' participation in international efforts at promoting and maintaining stability, peace, and security.
- Deepening the bonds of friendship and cooperation with key international civil society organisations and international foreign policy think-tanks.
- Fortifying regional cooperation in South Asia.
- Heightening the Maldives' capacity and reporting to the international conventions it has ratified (The Maldivian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021).

Factors Affecting the Foreign Policy of the Maldives

Geopolitical Location

The Maldives holds a position of strategic importance within the Indian Ocean, southwest of India and Sri Lanka, acting as a gateway to maritime trade routes paving the way to connect

East Asia, the Middle East, and Africa. This location provides the Maldives access to incredibly important sea routes such as the Strait of Malacca, the Bay of Bengal, and the Arabian Sea, which facilitate the movement of energy resources, varieties of goods, and commercial shipping, establishing the Maldives as a focal point for global trade networks. At the northern and southern parts of the Maldives lies two greatly significant sea lines of communication (SLOCs) that are critical for maritime trade flow between the Gulf of Aden and the Gulf of Hormuz in West Asia and the Strait of Malacca in Southeast Asia. In the Indian context, the Maldives acts as a toll gate within the Indian Ocean as nearly 50% of India's external trade and 80% of its energy imports transit these SLOCs. The Maldives is also an integral partner in India's role as the net security provider in the Indian Ocean Region.

Religion (Islam)

According to the constitution of the Maldives, which defines Islam as being based on Sunni doctrines, the nation is a republic founded on Islamic values. It claims that it is the "duty" of citizens to uphold and defend Islam. This shapes its diplomatic engagements with other countries, prioritizing the maintenance and bolstering of ties with other Muslim-majority nations, particularly those that share its religious and cultural values. Moreover, the Maldives also seeks to portray itself as a voice for the causes and issues of the Muslim community on a global scale. As a result, this often influences the Maldives' alignment and cooperation on global platforms such as regional cooperations and international organizations.

Climate Change

As has been stated by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), Small Island Developing States (SIDS) such as the Maldives are likely to be the first ones to be hit by the terrors of climate change and the impact is supposedly felt the largest as well. Moreover, SIDS remain to be a part of the least equipped countries to tackle, improvise, and adapt to the changes brought by climate change. The rising sea levels constantly put them at risk of being submerged, while food and water security remain to be hampered due to land loss and beach erosion increase. Furthermore, as one of the most land-scarce and low-lying fragile island nations, the Maldives is vulnerable to the danger of worsening severe weather events such as droughts, flooding, and storm surges. As a result, the Maldives is a massive advocate of climate change and the inherent need for protection on a global scale (The Government of the Maldives, 2014, pp. 3-4).

Security

The Maldives is concerned with defending its territorial seas, its Exclusive Economic Zones, and the safety and security of its maritime boundaries. To address marine risks such as piracy, illicit fishing, and smuggling, the Maldives participates in bilateral and multilateral cooperation with neighbouring nations and international organisations. The Maldives works swiftly with regional and international partners to combat terrorism, share intelligence, and tighten border controls. Its government aspires to form partnerships with nations and organisations that can help strengthen its capacity for counterterrorism activities and promote regional security.

Challenges to the Security of the Maldives

Radicalisation

Although the Maldives has always been a peaceful state, the rise of radical ideology and instances of individuals joining extremist groups have generated worries about internal radicalization and its consequences for national security. The radical elements working within the social fabric of the country are going strong. Organizations such as the United Islamic Society have been suspected to have run rampant as a platform to spread radical ideologies through social media. Moreover, criminal gangs have also been reported to be involved in the recruitment and brainwashing of youth with radical ideologies; a comprehensive report on which, “Prison Radicalisation in the Maldives”, has been published by Transparency Maldives, collaborating with the Maldives Ministry of Home Affairs. Moreover, these radical ideologies have also found their way into the politics of the nation, particularly through Islamist parties, such as the Progressive Party of Maldives, which is headed by the country’s former President, Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayoom. His Presidency had reported a giant increase in radical mobilisation in the Maldives, paired with the migration of over 250 Maldivians to Iraq and Syria, to join the Islamic State (South Asia Terrorism Portal, 2023).

Maritime Security and Transnational Crime

Piracy is prevalent in the waterways surrounding the Maldives, particularly in the greater Indian Ocean region. Piracy occurrences, albeit infrequent in recent years, have traditionally disrupted maritime commerce routes and endangered the safety of sailors, fishermen, and tourists. The Maldives faces transnational criminal concerns such as human trafficking, drug smuggling, and gunrunning. Moreover, illegal, unreported, and uncontrolled fishing is a severe

threat to the Maldives' marine security and fishing sector, which provides a vital source of income for many Maldivians. Foreign vessels illegally fishing in the Maldivian Exclusive Economic Zones decrease fish populations, harm marine ecosystems, and jeopardise the country's economic interests. (defenceWeb, 2012).

Natural Calamities

Being an archipelago, the Maldives geographically composes of significantly more water than land mass, and as a result, any minuscule change within the ocean and the waters nearing it, is felt all across the island. As a result, the country is incredibly vulnerable to natural disasters such as tsunamis, floods, high winds, and increasing sea levels. Recognising that the Maldives is one of the world's lowest-lying countries, and hence one of the most vulnerable to climate change, the environment has been at the forefront of Maldivian political debate for the past three decades. Since the inaugural gathering of leaders from other island nations in 1989, environmental degradation and climate change have been top priorities for every government (Orłowska, 2018). Moreover, phenomena such as coral bleaching and ocean acidification, both caused by the most potent natural disaster, climate change, pose substantial dangers to the Maldives' marine ecosystems. Since the coral reefs operate as natural barriers, shielding coastal communities of the Maldives from the effects of storms and erosion, their degradation not only has an adverse impact on the marine biodiversity, but it also tremendously weakens the natural defence mechanisms against natural catastrophes, leaving the Maldives more exposed to their consequences.

Political Instability

Paired with rapid spreading radicalization and heightening terrorism, the Maldives also experiences torrents of political instability, weakening government structures and institutions and leading to ineffective decision-making processes which ultimately undermines the security of the nation. The Maldives, having recently undergone a transition from autocracy to democracy in the year 2008, there still exist many challenges to democracy due to a lack of proper democratic institutions paired with an inherent lack of experience among the political candidates. Furthermore, a political crisis that had occurred recently in the nation in the year 2018, wherein, after disobeying the order of the Supreme Court, the then President of the nation, Abdulla Yameen, had ordered the arrest of two judges of the Supreme Court as well as had declared a state of emergency within the nation for fifteen days. These domestic tensions

had severely undermined the security of the nation at the time and this instability can still be felt in waves in today's time.

Counter-Terrorism Efforts

The Maldives has taken a robust stance to combat the rising terrorism and violent radicalism within the nation, which had first been facilitated by a high-level conference on peace and security held at cabinet level, in 2019. This specific conference helped provide integral guidance and amendments for the proper functioning of the country's Anti-Terrorism Act by embracing and defining the presence of violent extremism in the local context, while also designating Conflict Zones and Foreign Terrorist Organizations. This also pioneered the promotion of intelligence agencies and mandating the sharing of intelligence at a national level, while further empowering the abilities to investigate, prosecute, and adjudicate (Naeem, 2021, pp. 1-2).

To further alleviate the effectiveness of combating terrorism, the Maldives utilises a two-pronged approach wherein there are two distinct types of responses towards terror threats. Firstly, the kinetic response, which entails the usage of traditional military and security responses, is being spearheaded by the Joint Inter-Agency Operation Centre, established in 2021. This kinetic response is guided by the National Terrorism Response Plan and coordinated by the Counter Terrorism Steering Committee of the Maldives. Secondly, the soft approach is utilised which focuses on the prevention and combating or countering aggressive extremism. These efforts of prevention include spearheading efforts to decrease the vulnerability of the Maldivian society by advocating durability and resilience to radical ideologies and brutal extremism. This is achieved through putting special emphasis on addressing the push and pull factors that might or might not lead to the radicalization of ideologies as well as the identification and prevention of any individuals that might be advancing towards the possibility of committing communal or political atrocities within the nation. This soft approach is guided by a supreme document known as the National Action Plan on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism, wherein the prevention efforts are led by the Counter Radicalization Committee of the Maldives (Naeem, 2021, p. 3).

Regional Cooperation

India and the Maldives Security Cooperation

Defence and security cooperations between India and the Maldives have been prominent ever

since 1988 wherein India has flexibly accommodated Maldivian requirements of defence training and equipment. Furthermore, a comprehensive Action Plan for Defence had been formulated and signed between the two countries in April 2016 to consolidate the defence partnership. Within these cooperations, India also meets around 70% of the defence training requirements of the Maldivian National Defence Force, providing it with the largest number of training opportunities (Indian Ministry of External Affairs, 2022, pp. 4-5). The Indian Navy has deployed 10-member marine commando Mobile Training teams to the Maldives in 2017, 2018, 2019, and 2021 while also providing the Maldivian National Defence Force with air assets for the purpose of air surveillance, MEDEVAC, and Helicopter-borne vertical insertion capability. Furthermore, the Maldivian National Defence Force has also been participating in various military-to-military activities such as joint Exclusive Economic Zone patrols, anti-narcotic ops, the sea-rider programme, and the sailing regatta (Indian Ministry of External Affairs, 2022, pp. 4-5). India and the Maldives have also been conducting Exercise Ekuverin, meaning ‘friends’ in the Maldivian language, ever since 2009, being held alternatively in the Maldives and India for a period of two weeks, focusing on bolstering interoperability between the two nations for carrying out counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency operations in a semi-urban environment under the mandate of the United Nations (Press Information Bureau of Delhi, 2021). India, the Maldives, and Sri Lanka also conduct the biennial trilateral coast guard exercise “Dosti”, which had been first initiated in 1991, between the Indian and Maldives Coast Guard with Sri Lanka joining for the first time in 2012. Exercise Dosti aims to further enhance their friendship, alleviate mutual operational capabilities, exercise interoperability, and to build cooperation between the coast guards of the three countries. The Exercise has primarily focused on exercises and drills on engaging assistance in sea accidents, eradicating sea pollution, as well as the coast guard’s procedure and conduct during situations such as oil spills. Through this cooperation, the three countries have also agreed to work on the four pillars of security cooperation including the areas of marine security, human trafficking, counterterrorism, and cyber security (Banka, 2021).

South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)

The Maldives recognises the value of regional cooperation in solving shared issues and attaining common objectives. The Maldives' participation in the SAARC aims to improve trade and economic integration in the South Asian area, encourage cultural understanding, increase people-to-people interactions, and address regional issues such as poverty, climate change, and

terrorism. The Maldives has made a significant contribution to the SAARC's activities and objectives. It has held multiple SAARC summits and ministerial meetings, giving a forum for regional leaders to deliberate and establish regional development policies. In addition, the nation has participated in several SAARC working groups and specialised committees focused on specific sectors of cooperation including as agriculture, health, education, and tourism (The Government of the Maldives, Maldives at SAARC, 2020).

Indian Ocean Rim Association

The Maldives had joined the IORA in 2019, as its 22nd member state. It takes an active role in IORA's many working groups, committees, and ministerial meetings, participating to talks and initiatives on marine security, commerce and investment, tourism, fisheries, and sustainable development, working on six major priority areas which include Maritime Safety and Security; Trade and Investment Facilitation; Fisheries Management; Disaster Risk Management; Academic and Scientific Cooperation; and Tourism Promotion and Cultural Exchanges, along with two cross-cutting areas, which entail Women's Economic Empowerment and Blue Economy. Furthermore, the Maldives has also hosted major IORA events, such as Council of Ministers meetings and the IORA Indian Ocean Conference, providing a venue for member states to discuss and promote the organization's agenda. These conferences promote regional understanding and collaboration by encouraging member-nation discourse, cooperation, and the exchange of ideas (The Maldivian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Maldives participates in the Eleventh Bi-Annual Meeting of the Committee of Senior Officials of IORA, 2021).

Conclusion

Inherently, the Maldives recognises the need to manage the complex international scene effectively, balance ties with regional and global powers, and combat new challenges to its security and stability. As the Maldives advances in its foreign policy and security goals, it recognises the importance of strong governance structures, democratic institutions, and inclusive decision-making procedures. For the Maldives, building domestic institutions, supporting good governance, and guaranteeing the rule of law is critical for tackling political instability, protecting human rights, and creating an atmosphere favourable to foreign policy and security objectives. Moreover, the imperatives of foreign policy and security dynamics are linked to the Maldives' goal of regional and global participation, security and stability, and economic progress. The Maldives aspires to build a foreign policy agenda that supports its

national interests while contributing to regional peace, stability, and prosperity by successfully tackling security concerns, prioritising sustainable development, and engaging in regional and international collaborations. The Maldives meticulously utilises regional platforms to spread awareness about an integral issue such as climate change, advocating for immediate action. Furthermore, the Maldives' engagement in international climate change discussions demonstrates its commitment to global climate action as well as its willingness to preserve its fragile environment and population. The Maldives' active participation amplifies the voices of tiny island states and pushes for aggressive climate objectives, adaptation measures, and assistance to vulnerable countries. The country's actions indicate its leadership and willingness to address the serious issue of climate change and ensure a sustainable future for the Maldives and the rest of the world.

Madagascar

Tanish Srivastava

Introduction

Small states face a variety of different problems when it comes to modelling foreign policy and security policy. Some of these issues are related to the limitations that small states have in scaling in comparison to larger states. These issues include the small geographical area that these countries have to themselves, lesser amounts of resources, lesser amounts of influence that they exert, etc. Madagascar also faces some of these issues and thus shapes its foreign and security policy keeping these limitations in mind. This report will focus on the different limitations faced by Madagascar and the effects of these limitations on the foreign relations and security policy of Madagascar.

Madagascar's Geography

Madagascar is an Island nation on the coast of southern Africa. The country is roughly 587,000 square kilometres in size, which makes it the world's 4th largest Island and the world's second-largest Island country. The country has almost 3000 miles of coastline, due to which the water acts as a natural protective border for the country. The country lies in the Indo-Pacific which makes it a strategically important country for all of the stakeholders involved in the security of the Indo-Pacific.

Being an island nation, Madagascar's Navy is perhaps the most important arm of the military in the country. Being close to the strait of Hormuz and right below the Gulf, one security issue that Madagascar faces is the high amounts of piracy that take place in the region. The nation's navy actively participates in anti-piracy operations that take place in the region and has been an active part of multilateral agreements aimed at countering piracy in the region.

Another issue in which Madagascar is an active part is the security of the Indo-Pacific, which in recent times has been an issue of increasing importance. Madagascar's foreign policy does include defence pacts with other nations as well.

Another issue small states face is the lack of natural resources in their national territory. Madagascar does not face this issue to a large degree. The country possesses a high value of minerals. Titanium Ore and Gold, for example, are both one of Madagascar's biggest exports. The country also has very fertile soil, which leads to a high amount of agriculture that takes

place in the country. Agricultural products also play an important role in the country's exports alongside minerals (The Observatory of Economic Complexity, 2021). For most small states, being secure in the context of geography and resources is important, and this is an advantage that Madagascar holds already.

Madagascar's Economy and Defense Expenditure

Madagascar faces another issue that most smaller states do as well, which is the issue of defence expenditure. Smaller states have smaller populations which leads to them having smaller markets and smaller economies. Small states cannot afford to spend extensively on defence and usually have very minute defence budgets.

Madagascar faces the same challenge of defence spending. Madagascar's Defence budget is about \$100 Million annually, which is among the lowest in the world. Madagascar's Gross Domestic Product is about \$14 Billion and its Per Capita income in 2019 was \$1500 compared to \$1800 in 1970, which shows that the Economy of Madagascar is not only small but is also on a gradual decline (African Development Bank Group, 2020). This means that the procurement of military equipment for a state such as Madagascar is particularly difficult.

Because of the limited local markets that these small states have, they emphasise agreements with lesser barriers such as Free trade agreements with larger states so that they can trade and grow their economy. When it comes to the military equipment that these countries require, they need to source cheaper equipment since their defence budgets are not as high. This issue should also be seen in the context of population.

Mobilisation of Military Personnel

Madagascar's population is around 29 million, but most small states have even more limited population sizes. Along with the problem of procurement of military equipment due to economic reasons there is also the issue of mobilising military personnel for the purposes of war.

Most small states have policies relating to conscription in their law and governance so that the state in the event of war can call upon able-bodied and trained personnel for the military as the military during peacetime does have not a lot of personnel.

While a lot of different states face the issue of older, growing populations, Madagascar does not have a very old population. A high amount of potential personnel reach military age annually and can be called upon by the state whenever the state needs it. The state has a fairly

strict conscription policy which cannot be disobeyed by any citizen (War Resisters' International, 1998).

The state, however, does not recruit a high proportion of able-bodied individuals who qualify for conscription. The military in Madagascar is still fairly small and even with full recruitment, the military's size would be smaller than most larger states. This issue of a small population and decreasing potential for mobilisation is a common problem for small states throughout the world.

Foreign Policy

Madagascar's foreign policy has seen dynamic changes with the different regime changes that have taken place in the country. Over time Madagascar's foreign policy has changed. At first post-independence Madagascar was under heavy French influence. French was the language spoken among the elite in Madagascar. Most of the elite studied in French schools and universities and obtained their degrees from colleges in France. France's economic interests in Madagascar were also catered to by the government of Madagascar. There were also a number of defence agreements that Madagascar had with France, one of which gave France access to all military bases in Madagascar as well. In return, there was a high amount of security that was guaranteed by the French to Madagascar.

After a regime shift in the 70s, there was a shift in Madagascar's foreign policy. Madagascar's relations with communist countries were on the rise. Madagascar had established positive relations with countries such as the People's Republic of China and The Soviet Union and had taken a strong anti-imperial, anti-colonial, and anti-racist stance on the global stage. It had also started establishing relations with rising powers in Asia such as India and Japan. At one point most of the military equipment of Madagascar had been from the Soviet Union (wildmadagascar.org, 1994).

Madagascar would see changes in its foreign policy with differences in the successive regimes that continued to take over the country. Today Madagascar tends to stay neutral in most conflicts. When it comes to emerging powers such as India and China, Madagascar does have close relations with the states in question.

With India, Madagascar has established a listening post for India. As previously mentioned, Madagascar's position in the Indo-Pacific puts it in an important position strategically. India can now observe the movements of ships in the Indo-Pacific through its post in Madagascar (Pubby, 2007).

With China, Madagascar has very intricate economic relations. Madagascar signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) which was on the BRI (the Belt and Road Initiative) which helped expand China's footprint in Africa. Chinese investment had a high amount of negative effects inside Madagascar. For example, a lot of the local job opportunities have been taken away by Chinese workers and the Chinese population in Madagascar (which is the third largest Chinese population in Africa) has increased the sale of cheap Chinese goods in the local markets of Madagascar. There is also an adverse effect on the local natural resources. Madagascar's rosewood trees, for example, are a popular precious resource in Madagascar, which is now used by Chinese companies to manufacture luxury musical instruments. A fishing deal signed in 2018 allowed the Chinese company Taihe Century Investment Developments along with Madagascar's Agency for Economic Development and Business Promotion (AMDP) sign an alliance where the Chinese company had a 99% stake. This deal allowed the Chinese fishing firm to capture the entire Madagascar coastline with its fleet of 300 ships which affected the local fishing communities (ANI, 2021)

Conclusion

In conclusion, Madagascar faces a lot of the issues that small states face. The economy needs investment and development to help Madagascar in the procurement of military equipment and the country needs to balance the influence of foreign powers. Madagascar is victim to very high levels of Chinese influence and it needs to diversify its source of investment and equipment. Small states throughout the world face issues such as population growth and lack of natural resources, both of which are issues Madagascar does not face to a high degree, at least. This means that Madagascar has a lot of potential as a country that could be a strong representative of the global south. It is difficult to predict, however, how the future of Madagascar is going to be, as that depends on the decisions that the government takes from this point forward.

Fiji

Vanisha Krishnani

Fiji is a country and an archipelago in the South Pacific Ocean that encompasses the Koro Sea, which happens to be approximately 2,100 km north of Auckland, New Zealand. The archipelago accommodates around 540 islets and 300 islands dispersed over 3,000,000 square km. The capital of the republic is Suva, which is present on the southeast coast of the largest island, Viti Levu, also known as “Greater Fiji”.

Foreign Policy Imperatives

Fiji’s foreign policies have acquired their framework from its multiple suspensions in 2009 and multiple nations’ negligence towards its internal affairs. In January 2009, Fiji was suspended from the Pacific Islands Forum due to the military takeover that took place in 2006 and the aftermath that occurred due to it. The chairman of the Pacific Islands Forum, Toke Talagi, stated that its suspension was a result of its inability to initiate democracy and enable basic human rights. In September of the same year, Fiji was suspended from the Commonwealth due to the nation’s military coup d’état. These events happened to be defining for Fiji, as they changed its foreign policy drastically. Fiji began to focus more on enlarging its foreign relations and developing its stance in the international community. However, they desired to keep in mind Pillar 11 from the 2006 Charter for Change document when it came to the enhancement of international relations. It was a requisite for Fiji to not acquire traditional allies but ones that respect its sovereignty and understand the challenges that the country faced and its current needs. They required a certain amount of respect and empathy from their allies with regard to their circumstances and scenarios.

The second dimension of their foreign policy was “finding better partners beyond Australia and New Zealand”, as claimed by Esala Nayasi, who is currently the Acting Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Their expansion of relations led to China becoming a crucial part of its “Look North” policy. China happened to be quite respectful of Fiji’s sovereignty and territorial integrity and maintained a policy and attitude of non-interference and peaceful coexistence. Commodore Bainimarama said, “The Chinese authorities are very sympathetic and understand what’s happening here- the fact that we need to do things our own way.” After the Coronavirus pandemic, when Fiji’s tourism industry went

down like a sinking ship and its GDP shrank by over 15%, China wrote checks to Fiji to help it bounce back. China has proven to be quite a benevolent partner to Fiji over time.

The Fiji Islands further proceeded to deepen relations with Indonesia and South Korea. Diplomatic missions had been sent to both the nations in April 2011 and July 2012, respectively. When Fiji's relations with China started to bud, a few eyebrows were raised in Australia and New Zealand, which are known to assume the Pacific islands as their own backyard. Their open discontent with Fiji's developing partnerships is a portrayal of their blatant disregard for its sovereignty and decisions.

The third new aspect of their foreign policy imperative was building diplomatic ties with as many nations as possible as long as Pillar 11 from the 2006 Charter for Change applied to them. Prior to their "friends to all" foreign policy imperative, they happened to have amicable relations with approximately 70 nations, and post-this imperative, from 2009 to 2013, they developed genial affiliations with 63 more countries. Most of these 63 nations belong to the United Nations; these include South Africa, some Latin American nations, Caribbean nations, the UAE, and southeast nations primarily. They also gained some controversial friends like North Korea, Egypt, and Iran.

Since 1978, Fiji has made immense contributions to UN peacekeeping in terms of manpower. It earns \$200 million in revenue per annum from its contribution to UN peacekeeping itself, which is more than the garment and sugar sectors. It has contributed to peacekeeping missions in Sinai, Iraq, the Golan Heights, and more. Its meaningful contribution to global peace has been regarded and recognised by superpowers such as the US. However, in 2010, Australia desired to block Fiji's contribution to the mission in Balawa 2013 because of the possibility of two P5 members disapproving.

The Fiji Islands have also been incorporated into multitudinous powerful international member groups that happen to be of great significance. As a matter of fact, in 2012, it assumed leadership of the powerful G77 plus China group, wherein it had been voted over Bangladesh. It also happens to be a part of the Pacific Small Island Developing States, the Asia Group, and the Pacific Islands Development Forum. In 2012, the Fiji Islands received support from India and Brazil for leading the International Sugar Council. The nation had also commenced and led a regional process in 2012, known as "Engaging with the Pacific". Herein, leaders from the Pacific Islands met in order to engage in mutually assured, sustainable regional development. They also sought to cultivate economic and security relations within the community.

The Pacific Small Island Developing States happened to be a key pathway to combat poverty, build resilience, and reduce vulnerabilities and inequalities, including through institutional

strengthening and capacity building, enhanced governance and peacebuilding, addressing gender equality and economic empowerment, education, access to information and communication technology (ICT), economic growth and diversification, and sustainable energy development. Their initiatives towards climate change and oceans as stand-alone sustainable development goals have been quite important and have truly distinguished the developing states from the Pacific.

The Fiji Islands happen to be a member of the United Nations Commission on International Trade (UNCITRAL), the Government Council of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), and the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS). The presence of Fiji at multifarious United Nations councils happens to be an apt representation of its enhanced multilateral affiliations with nations and tenacious position in the international community in comparison to its stance and relations in the past.

Security Dynamics

In 1978, the Fiji Islands experienced its first military coup, which also brought about some revelations for the nation regarding their security, threat perceptions, and the nature of their allies. Australia and New Zealand were known to be the two most reliable allies Fiji happens to have; however, in 1978, the nations were on standby, ready to intervene upon the occurrence of any more internal disturbances. This revealed the nature of Australia and New Zealand, who might be traditional allies but were not respectful of Fiji's internal politics and affairs and disregarded its sovereignty and territorial integrity as per circumstance rather than perpetually respecting them.

In 2006, after the military coup d'état in Fiji, Australia had sent a diplomatic mission accompanied by evacuation plans if violence erupted. They also entered the country in a clandestine manner and happened to possess plans for naval deployment, including a guided missile frigate and a Blackhawk helicopter. The government of the Fiji Islands expressed disdain towards Australia at the time for its suspicious and clandestine manner of entering the nation and establishing deployment and evacuation plans, which once again happened to be utterly disrespectful of Fiji's territorial integrity. One of the reasons Pillar 11 had been established was the fact that the Fiji Islands happened to receive threat perceptions from a solidly established ally such as Australia. It experienced external security threats from an ally, which happened to be highly disruptive to the security and internal affairs of the nation.

Therefore, Fiji considered allies who were respectful and understanding about their nation's circumstances to be incredibly crucial.

The Fiji Islands happen to be a weak state with inadequate strength when it comes to their national security agencies. This opens up the possibility of the nation being an easy target for terrorist infiltration. Political instability also happens to be a cause that could lead to the aforementioned situation. The Fiji Islands have witnessed two military coups, one in 1978 and another in 2006; this is an accurate portrayal of how simply power can be grasped in the nation. Since power can be so easily acquired in the nation, it is more susceptible to threats such as terrorism. Political instability also happens to be a possible pathway to civil wars and anarchy; a consequence of such circumstances would be anarchic chaos and the government's perception in an illegitimate light.

Other threats to the Fiji Islands include transnational crimes. According to the 2004 Defence Review, the nation's territory had been used by international criminal organisations as a transit point for perilous drugs en route to Australia and New Zealand. Crimes other than drug laundering that have been encountered by the nation include identity fraud, cybercrimes, and corruption of public officials. Due to the country's incapacitated surveillance and intelligence employed by the government and their inability to afford adequately qualified patrol vessels requisite for maritime surveillance, the crimes that they have endured have been persistent.

Natural and man-made disasters also happen to be a peril to the security dynamics and economy of the nation; for example, the 2009 floods and cyclone happened to have a devastating social and economic impact on the Fiji Islands.

Conclusion

One can conclude by remarking that the Fiji Islands have indeed developed their foreign relations over time and currently happens to be one of the leading developing states among the Pacific nations. Its role in the international community has certainly ameliorated. The security measures of the nation, however, are not quite up to par and certainly have room for improvement. The nation is susceptible to a multitude of threats due to its instability in politics, which, if maintained or escalated, could lead to highly perilous circumstances.

Micronesia

Vibha Hareesh

This report aims to highlight the foreign policy aspects and security dynamics of Micronesia as a small Island Nation in the region of Indo-Pacific.

Geographic Background

The Federated States of Micronesia [FSM] is an independent and sovereign nation in the Indo-Pacific comprising of mainly four states – Chuuk, Kosrae, Pohnpei and Yap. The state of Chuuk was formerly known as Truk, it has a land area of 49.2 square miles, and includes seven major island groups. The island of Kosrae, formerly known as Kusaie, is an island of about 42.3 square miles. Pohnpei, originally known as Ponapae has about 133.4 square miles of land. The largest island in the Federated States of Micronesia, Pohnpei, accounts for the majority of Micronesia's overall land area. The island of Yap is relatively made up of 4 large islands, 7 small islands, and 134 atolls with a total land area of about 45 square miles.

Foreign Policy

Preserving and safeguarding national sovereignty and security is a fundamental imperative for the Federated States of Micronesia. This fundamentally and imperatively includes ensuring territorial integrity being an island nation spread across the Indo-Pacific, safeguarding, and protecting its maritime boundaries, and most importantly addressing regional security challenges through alliances, partnerships, visibility, and participation in the international security frameworks. Micronesia's foreign policy should priorities economic development and sustainability. This primarily entails recruiting and retaining more foreign investment, promoting tourism and trade agreements, diversifying the existing economy, and simultaneously leveraging international assistance to support infrastructure development, capacity building and technology transfer at the same time.

Micronesia being an island nation is extremely vulnerable to the effects of climate change, and solving this pressing global crisis should be a central objective in its foreign policy. Micronesia should take an active role in international climate negotiations, seek global financial assistance

for climate resilience, advocate for emission reductions and collaborate with other nations to promote sustainable development practices. Micronesia needs to focus and promote climate change mitigation and adaptation.

Strengthening regional cooperation is a necessary measure in a country's foreign policy. Micronesia too, needs to prioritize regional cooperation initiatives, such as the Pacific Islands Forum [PIF] and the Micronesian Chief Executives Summit [MCES], to enhance its influence, promote regional stability and address common challenges. Engagements with neighboring countries and forging partnerships with regional powers can contribute to the region's collective security and economic development. Apart from enhancing regional cooperation and strengthening relations with neighbouring countries, Micronesia must forge alliances with global superpowers. Micronesia signed the COFA or the Compact of Free Association with the United States of America. According to this international agreement, which describes the financial assistance commitment by the United States of America to the Federated states of Micronesia, citizens of Micronesia are allowed to live and legally work in the United States without a visa, as well as have access to health and social services. In return the United States has sole access to a great amount of military and veto power over these islands placed in a very strategic geographical location.

Good governance and the Rule of Law are critical components of a country's foreign policy. Micronesia's foreign policy should prioritize good governance, transparency, and the rule of law. Cooperation with international partners may be required to strengthen institutions, combat corruption, promote human rights, and foster democratic principles. During the 2019 visit of Micronesian president, David W. Pauelo to Beijing, he immensely commended the one-China Policy which recognizes the Chinese government's ownership of Taiwan calling it the "Bedrock" of Micronesian relations with China.

Health Security and Pandemic Response: The COVID-19 pandemic has brought to light the global relevance of health security in the world. Collaboration with international health organisations, exchanging best practises, and requesting aid to develop healthcare infrastructure, strengthen public health systems, and improving pandemic preparedness should be among Micronesia's top foreign policy imperatives.

Security Dynamics

Territorial Disputes is a major concern and security threat to Micronesia. Due to its location in the Pacific Ocean, Micronesia is subject to territorial disputes, particularly concerning

overlapping claims over exclusive economic zones (EEZs) and maritime boundaries. These conflicts involve neighbouring countries such as Palau, the Marshall Islands, Guam (a U.S. territory), and potentially other regional powers. With Beijing trying to increase its global influence, China's presence in the territories of Guam and Hawaii significantly influences the United States. Signing of the COFA, with the Freely Associated States [FAS] in the northern Pacific, which includes the Federated States of Micronesia [FSM], the Republic of Palau, and the Republic of the Marshall Islands [RMI] enables the United States full responsibility for the security and defence of FAS. It also grants the United States the right to use the FAS territories for military purposes and the right to establish US bases and defence installations in the FAS. United States Maritime security is thus an important aspect in the Security Dynamics of Micronesia. Given its vast oceanic territory, Micronesia faces challenges related to maritime security, including illegal fishing, smuggling, human trafficking, and piracy. Cooperation with regional allies and international maritime security efforts are crucial to addressing these challenges effectively.

Climate Change and Environmental Security is a crucial aspect of security given that Micronesia is highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, including rising sea levels, extreme weather events, and ocean acidification. These environmental challenges pose security risks to the region, including population displacement, loss of land, and damage to critical infrastructure. Micronesia's economic dependence also causes major security concerns. Micronesia relies heavily on foreign aid and assistance, which can create economic vulnerabilities and dependencies. Micronesia relies heavily on Chinese investments for developments in its infrastructure. China has made significant investments in infrastructure like roads, bridges, schools, and government buildings in Micronesia. China's firm desire to cultivate strong ties with Micronesia has strategic value, since U.S territories of Guam and the Northern Mariana islands lie just to the north. This hence provides China a political and military power over Micronesia. With both China and the United States having power over Micronesia, thus rendering it dependent on both China and the United States, many experts believe that Micronesia is going to be a potential battlefield for both China and the United States of America soon. Regional power dynamics further influence security concerns for a small country. Micronesia is influenced by the broader regional power dynamics in the Pacific, including the role of major powers such as the United States, China, Australia, and Japan. The competition for influence and strategic interests of these powers can have implications for Micronesia's security and political stability. Natural resource management and conservation, such as fisheries and mineral deposits, constitute key security factors for a small island nation such as

Micronesia. Competing interests in resource extraction and sustainable management can potentially lead to tensions and conflicts.

To address all the above-mentioned security dynamics, The Federated State of Micronesia often relies on regional organizations such as the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), the Micronesian Chief Executives Summit (MCES), and bilateral cooperation with larger powers. Additionally, building resilience to climate change, promoting sustainable development, strengthening maritime security capabilities, and enhancing regional cooperation are essential for addressing the security challenges in Micronesia.

Centre for Security Studies

Jindal School of International Affairs

O.P. Jindal Global University



All rights reserved @CSS, JSIA