**India Out**

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In the recently held elections in Maldives, a pro-China candidate Mohamed Muizzu won the elections on the slogan “India Out” of Maldives. The Indian Ocean islands have been a battleground between China and India. The area is 9000 square kilometres out of which 298 square kilometres is dry land. No island is larger than 8 Kilometres and only 200 Islands are inhabited.
Malé is the capital and a third of the population lives here. The President elect Muhammad Muizzu of the People Nation Congress got 54 percent of votes against the sitting president Ibrahim Solih. Muizzu was supported by former president Abdullah Yamin, from 2013 to 2018. The present president won the elections in 2018 and his government’s foreign policy was based on India’s first approach and declared India as a big brother. Solih sent Abdullah Yamin behind bars who was subsequently jailed for money laundering and was disqualified. The most important factor in Muizzu’s victory was his campaign against Indian Influence and the presence of the Indian military in Maldives. The Maldivians also showed their concern about the continued Indian influence, the presence of an Indian military contingent and secret deals with India. Banners and posters were displayed across the island country “India Out” scribbled on it. It was former president and opposition leader Abdullah Yamin wore a T-shirt with the words “India Out”.
He was the one who introduced the slogan “India Out” from Maldives. In June 2022 Maldivians stormed the Indian Yoga Day celebrations organised by the Indian High Commission. When “India Out” campaigns were at its peak before election the Ibrahim Solih Government, under Indian pressure, issued a decree that the “India Out” campaign by the opposition was a threat to national security. The former president Abdullah Yamin curtailed Indian influence in the country and joined the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative. The election victory of Muhammad Muizzu, pro-China has disturbed India. The Chinese presence in the Maldives for India is a threat and a matter of concern. India is bullying and pressurising small neighbouring countries like Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and exerting pressure on countries like Seychelles and Mauritius. In 2018 the Seychelles opposition parties forced India to abandon its plan to develop infrastructure in the country.
To pressurise Nepal against its constitutional amendments, imposed a blockade on Nepal. The blockade resulted in a shortage of fuel, medicine, and essential supplies. Another reason for the blockade was a visit to Nepal by a high-level Chinese delegation and a Nepali delegation visiting China. In 1988 India carried out Operation Cactus in Maldives when there was an attempted coup by landing its troops in Maldives. India undertook the action to demonstrate its power and flex its military muscles. India is propagating that the Chinese will trap Maldives in its debt trap to control small countries as they did in Sri Lanka. The Chinese got a 99-year lease of Sri Lanka’s Hambantota port.
However, the actual reason is that they fear Chinese presence in their backyard and a real threat to India. Pakistan and Maldives enjoy excellent relations based on respect, common faith, and shared interest. Pakistan built the parliament building as a gift to Maldivians. Pakistan also provides training to Maldivian diplomats and offers seats in professional colleges and universities for Maldivian students.