



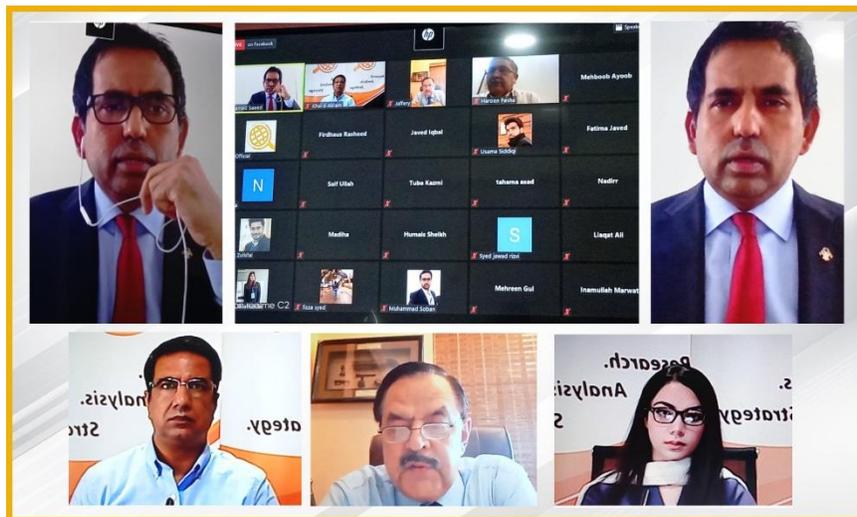
Online International Interactive Series

Report

“The Impossible Depths: How Maldives is challenged by the Indian Ocean Power Struggles”

With

H.E Mohamed Saeed Former Minister of Economic Development & Presently Member of People Majlis (Parliament) & Member of National Security & Foreign Relations Committee, Republic of Maldives



Organized by

**Center for Global & Strategic Studies, Islamabad on
17th September 2020**

Brief Overview:

On 17th September 2020, Center for Global & Strategic Studies (CGSS), Islamabad organized an Online Interactive Session with H.E Mohamed Saeed, the Former Minister of Economic Development & Presently Member of People Majlis (Parliament) & Member of National Security & Foreign Relations Committee, Republic of Maldives on the topic, “The Impossible Depths: How Maldives is challenged by the Indian Ocean Power Struggles”.

The Session commenced with the opening remarks of Major General Syed Khalid Amir Jaffery HI (M) (Retd), President, CGSS. He expressed his gratitude to H.E. Mohamed Saeed, on behalf of CGSS, for joining the international interactive session as a keynote speaker. He stated that CGSS is constantly working on various issues including extensive analysis on the Indian Ocean Region as it is a very significant subject.

H.E Mohamed Saeed thanked Center for Global & Strategic Studies for offering a remarkable platform to interact on a very important subject.

The speech of Mr. Mohamed Saeed was followed by an interactive session in which students of Masters and PhD level asked various questions revolving around different themes including the contemporary Strategic Dynamics of the World, Pakistan-Maldives relations, and role of Maldives in controlling Climate Change etc.

The session was moderated by Ms. Minahil Shawal Afridi, Research Assistant CGSS.

Speech by H.E Mohamed Saeed Former Minister of Economic Development & Presently Member of People Majlis (Parliament) & Member of National Security & Foreign Relations Committee, Republic of Maldives

Mr. Mohamed Saeed mentioned the great significance of the Indian Ocean Region for not only the both countries, Pakistan and Maldives but for the entire region. He stated that Pakistan and Maldives share common ideologies, though these two countries are of vastly different sizes, geography and climate. The brotherly ties are bound to grow stronger and align in multi-facets interests and cooperation.

Referring to the 18th Feb, 2018 CNN report, which wrote that “as China grows, India is looking to build military presence in Seychelles”, Mr. Saeed stated that it indicates the geo-strategic significance of the IOR. The immense growth on the maritime traffic movement of cargo and international trade bound from East to West, and West to East approximately estimates to about 40 million barrels of oil per day (2016 statistics). He said that India demands a dominant role in the region, especially at a time when world economy is shifting from West to East. China comprises 20% of global manufacturing capacity. Mr. Saeed quoted the words of the executive director of India’s maritime foundation talking to CNN that the new Seychelles deal was part of Indian effort to safeguard territorial integrity. He exactly said that, “India has a primary area in the northern Indian Ocean and the secondary is the Indo Pacific region. We, India, have interests that we have to preserve. With the Chinese going into the Indian Ocean in a big way our strategic interests are expanding as well. And this is the only way India will be able to preserve itself.”

The India Seychelles revised agreements granting India permission to construct a military base on Seychelles in 2016 reflects the long due, Indian attitude and foreign policy towards Maldives until the new Indian backed government led by Maldivian Democratic Party in the Maldives. In fact, a similar attitude was repeated from the Indian side in 2008 when the Maldivian Democratic Party won the election led by Muhammad Nasheed and the incumbent President at the Majlis, during that time played an active role shaping several commercial and defense contracts with India.

One example is the infamous handover of the country’s only international airport to the GMR that eventually became a major hurdle for the nation’s economy. However, it was a threat to the national sovereignty and with continued mass protests by the people, the government was forced

to terminate the contract in 2011. The government paid a hefty price of over US \$400 million as compensation for this forced termination.

He briefly shed some light on what happened in the Maldives against a great leap forward during 2013 and 2018, under President Yameen's administration. Mr. Saeed also mentioned the socio-economic progress that Maldives made under the leadership of H.E. Abdulla Yameen, the former President of Republic of Maldives during the period from 2013 to 2018. Maldives experienced the most astonishing growth under President Yameen in 2013 to 2018. From basic utilities nationwide to large infrastructure projects, tourism, transport and construction industry never witnessed such remarkable growth anytime in the past. Country's GDP per capita increased from US \$4500 to \$12000 in a span of 5 years. The financial sector was rated internationally for the first time, a record job creation an improvement in social index. This growth and much improvement in political and commercial ties with China were strengthened, misrepresented to the extent that Maldives Democratic Party led up.

He stated that the former President Nasheed including the top officials of the current administration accused China of land grabbing, and developing military bases in the Maldives. Stroking fear and false accusations on China were made excuses to further strengthen Indian military muscles in Maldives in various forms under current India backed administration. The helicopter operations in the name of medical evacuation, the military presence in three strategic atolls, instillation of the radar systems in North and South etc are a few examples. Furthermore, Mr, Saeed said that China is a major power and the shifting geopolitical significance more so with the notion of neo-capitalism shaken not just Trump's United States but the more extreme view by the BJP in India led by PM Modi. The continued debate on traditional capitalism controlling the land (colonial capitalism) versus the control of movement (goods, missionaries and finance) largely represents the fundamental core of the argument. Years of colonial power dominance versus a non-interference policy in countries internal affairs and affordable development credit by China at the same time.

Geostrategic Significance of Indian Ocean Region

While emphasizing the Geostrategic Significance of Indian Ocean Region, Mr. Saeed said that the Indian Ocean region has nearly 33 percent of the world's population, accounting for 50 percent of world maritime trade, 50 percent of the container traffic, 70 percent of the global sea borne trade

in oil and gas ply through the IO region. 40 percent passing through the Strait of Hormuz, 35 percent through the Strait of Malacca, and 8 percent through the Bab el-Mandab Strait. Major sea routes connecting the Middle East, Africa, East Asia with Europe & the America. Large reserves of hydrocarbons in the offshore areas of Saudi Arabia, Iran, India, and Western Australia. An estimated 40% of the world's offshore oil production comes from the Indian Ocean. It is rich in heavy minerals, and offshore placer deposits.

He noted that the changing realities of global power and more populist view largely dictate the security in the Indian Ocean. China's growth generates inferiority among nations competing economic dominance. The shift from control of land to the control of movement of goods, services and finance demands maritime significance. The dominance of entry and exit points to the Indian Ocean will play a major role towards winning the new fundamentals of capitalism in the 21st century. In this context, China's corporate ideology, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), and the need for maritime commercial movement will be far outreaching than India's, for several decades to come. From the experiences of former Colonial Powers of Europe, at turn of the 19th Century, United States learned that for global hegemony, control of land (colonialism) is seen as a bad idea. For global hegemony, control of goods, capital and its movement (capitalism) is the best idea.

However, at the Turn of the 21st Century the Reality is as follows:

Roughly 30% of Global Manufacturing Output is Only China. This figure is equivalent to total combined output of USA, Japan, South Korea, and Germany. Chinese companies have made investments in several Indian Ocean ports, including Gwadar, Hambantota, Colombo and Sonadia (Cox's Bazar coast in Chittagong Division, Bangladesh). This has sparked a debate about the strategic implications of these investments. World's largest top 5 banks are in China. SO, if capitalism is about controlling goods, capital and its movement; then china is doing that. So, to maintain us and Western hegemony they need to stop China and the west have decided to supply hardware, use Indian manpower and invoice to Japan, South Korea, and Saudi Arabia.

He also mentioned that in the recent times, many argue about the fake and oppressive nature of the Indian democracy. Historic figures gathered, reveals the following;

India's Designs to Destabilize the Region by Exercising Hegemony on Indian Ocean

It is ruled by the 60 Million Brahamans -the Priest Caste or 'God Class' in Indian Caste System. These Brahamans, run the government, political parties, foreign embassies, and military top ranks. These 60 Million Brahamans, are those who oppress the 1.3 Billion Indians, among them 400 Million Dalits and 900 Million other lower castes including Muslims.

In summary, a democracy build up on biasness and racial differences is not legitimate, as seen mostly within their own system. Therefore to project themselves as a legitimate democracy, the Brahmanic position of India is always to serve the West (USA/UK/EU). Thus, they always try to prove they are a worthy servant of the west in South Asia by bullying smaller neighbors in the region. Indian government has terrorized Sri Lanka for 25 years and more. They sent terrorists to attack Maldives in 1988 to bring Maldives under its influence. They have bullied Mauritius and established their Military presence in Agelaga Island, Mauritius. They have bullied Seychelles and established their military presence in Assumption Island, Seychelles. They want control access to Arabian Sea and Strait of Hormuz by controlling the Maldives with the Support of USA and West. They have signed the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) with USA, and USA signed a Defense Pact with Maldives. They have taken this route because India knows that Maldivian public will never give in to Indians. Because throughout history all enemies who attacked Maldives sailed from Indian shores or Indian controlled shores.

Thank you very much.