

## **Geopolitical Shift in the Maldives: Muizzu's Victory and Its Implications**

The recent electoral success of the People's National Congress (PNC) in the Maldives, under President Mohamed Muizzu, represents a significant shift in the nation's geopolitical landscape. On 21 Apr 2024, the PNC secured an overwhelming majority, capturing 66 of the declared 86 seats in the 93-member House. This victory not only solidifies Muizzu's leadership but also signifies a major endorsement of his policies that pivot towards China, distancing from the prior "India First" stance.

President Muizzu, elected in Sep 2023 as a successor to former president Abdulla Yameen, has been clear about redefining the Maldives' foreign policy by strengthening ties with China. The electorate's support for Muizzu's party underscores a broad national approval of this realignment in international relations.

This shift gains further momentum with the recent release of Abdulla Yameen, another pro-China figure, whose 11-year corruption sentence was overturned, bolstering pro-China sentiment within the country's political framework. Such developments are likely to enhance Sino-Maldivian relations, expanding both economic and military collaborations.

Strategically positioned along critical east-west shipping lanes in the Indian Ocean, the Maldives is a focal point in the tussle for regional dominance between China and India. The outcome of these elections could significantly influence the country's diplomatic ties, tilting more towards China. This may lead to increased Chinese investments in infrastructure, crucial for the Maldives' developmental needs and environmental challenges like rising sea levels. Moreover, a stronger Chinese military presence could challenge ongoing efforts by Maldivian leaders to maintain balanced relations with India. The electoral triumph of Muizzu's PNC marks a pivotal moment in Maldivian geopolitics, with potential ripple effects across regional political dynamics and power balances.