

INTERNAL CAMPAIGN MEMORANDUM

Extremely Confidential

To: President Mohammed Waheed Hassan
Jeffery Epstein

From: James P. McGee and Jason Cincotti, Newgrange Consulting

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Re: Preliminary Issues Research and Baseline Polling Development

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This memorandum covers some of the preliminary issues research conducted by Newgrange Consulting on the Maldives. This issues information has been pulled together for the purpose of developing some of our initial baseline polling questions that we want to test for both President Waheed and his campaign.

The issues research that has been developed for this memorandum also provides a very frank and honest look at the Maldives and the prevailing issues affecting the country today. Through a very honest review and assessment of these issues we are able to develop those baseline polling questions that will give us real insight into what voters currently think of President Waheed and his Administration as well as their opinions and preferences in the upcoming Presidential Election.

Economy

The 2011 protests were largely touched off by a stagnating economy. The country faces a large budget deficit (\$300 million in 2010, or 15% of GDP—the fourth-worst percentage in the world), an even larger debt (\$943 million), and an unemployment rate estimated at 14.5%. Tourism and fishing are Maldives's two biggest industries; however, fishing has experienced a sharp decline in recent years, and tourism took a dip during the international recession (though it has since rebounded). Maldives's reliance on these industries has led some to worry that its economy is dangerously susceptible to external shocks. Both tourism and fishing have also proven somewhat damaging to the island ecosystem.

President Nasheed also imposed a tax the first time ever to help the economy, which was unpopular with the resort owners who had to pay up. Tax revenue has gone toward infrastructure and education primarily. There is also a great disparity between people who live in Malé and people who live on farther-flung islands—the farther, the poorer, due to worse infrastructure connecting them to society.

For example, Noonu Atoll has recently experienced unrests from protesters complaining about a lack of basic services. (The administration has proposed an airport on the atoll to alleviate the problem.) In general, there is great income inequality in Maldives, and a nascent higher-education system seems poorly positioned to help would-be bootstrap-raisers.

One proposal to revive the economy, by a PPM presidential candidate, is oil exploration in Maldives. However, this is controversial, as it flies in the face of its status as a natural beauty that must be preserved as well as its obvious need to stem global warming. However, PPM argues that a domestic oil industry would attract foreign investors and create 26,000 jobs.

- *Do you consider the economy in Maldives currently to be very good, somewhat good, somewhat bad, or very bad?*
- *As you consider the factors that will affect your vote for president, would you say that the national debt is very important, somewhat important, not very important, or not at all important?*
- *As you consider the factors that will affect your vote for president, would you say that unemployment is very important, somewhat important, not very important, or not at all important?*
- *Do you believe that President Waheed is doing all he can to stimulate the economy, doing some of the things he needs to do to stimulate the economy, or is not doing enough to stimulate the economy?*
- *Do you believe that President Waheed is doing all he can to help the tourism industry, doing some of the things he needs to do to help the tourism industry, or is not doing enough to help the tourism industry?*
- *Do you believe that President Waheed is doing all he can to help the fishing industry, doing some of the things he needs to do to help the fishing industry, or is not doing enough to help the fishing industry?*
- *Do you support or oppose the government's policy of collecting taxes?*



- *Do you feel that economic disparity between atolls is a major problem, a minor problem, or not much of a problem?*
- *Do you support domestic oil drilling as a way to stimulate the economy?*

Abuse of Power/Corruption

Maldives has a checkered record of providing civil and human rights. While these are not major political issues as we think of them in the West, the violent events of 2011 and the murky circumstances of President Waheed's accession to power have made political issues out of the abuse of power and the government's fair and open treatment of citizens more broadly.

Throughout his term, President Waheed has been dogged by accusations that he was a conspirator in, or at least the beneficiary of, a coup d'état of the previous government. The Maldivian government is currently holding hearings to ascertain exactly what happened, and while there is no evidence of a coup, many (politically motivated) testifiers have said damning things about Waheed's involvement, including orchestrating his own rise to the presidency. However, Waheed and other opponents of the Nasheed administration would also argue—not entirely without merit—that President Nasheed went to extreme and unconstitutional means to hold onto power before he finally resigned (e.g., unilaterally removing a judge from office; firing on peaceful protesters).

Ironically, this means, in part, that the two presidents have proven to be very similar leaders policy- and style-wise. As a result, this issue area is more meta than an actual substantive policy difference. That is to say, the main issue the 2013 election will be decided on is simply Nasheed vs. Waheed. While both sides were likely guilty of these things, each will consider rampant government corruption, unconstitutional power grabs, and use of force on peaceful protesters as a main disqualifier for the other's fitness to hold office.

Corruption is alleged to exist on other levels of government as well. For example, two judges have been accused of accepting an \$800,000 bribe. The judicial system in general is not seen as fair, clean, and protected from political influence. A recent international report also criticized Maldives's political emphasis for recrimination over reconciliation, limited



transparency, and rampant patronage. Specifically, politicians are thought to switch political parties willy-nilly in exchange for personal rewards. The lack of rules governing political defections is thought to be a hindrance to a truly free democracy.

- *Do you believe that President Nasheed acted unconstitutionally during his tenure as president?*
- *Do you believe that the events that caused President Nasheed to resign and brought President Waheed into power were a coup?*
- *Do you believe that President Waheed has acted unconstitutionally either before or during his tenure as president?*
- *Do you believe that President Waheed has brought stability to the Maldives during his tenure as president?*
- *Do you feel that President Waheed has begun to re-establish trust and confidence to the political process in the Maldives?*
- *As you consider the factors that will affect your vote for president, would you say that corruption is very important, somewhat important, not very important, or not at all important?*
- *Do you believe the judicial system in Maldives is completely free and fair, mostly free and fair, mostly not free and fair, or not at all free and fair?*
- *Do you believe there is enough transparency in government?*
- *Do you believe the government suffers from political patronage?*

Vice/Rule of Law

Maldives has long suffered from a high rate of violent crime and drug abuse, especially among the younger population, and the worsening of these problems hurt President Nasheed's standing in advance of his ouster. In addition, relating to the "Abuse of Power" issue area, Maldives has also experienced many street protests over the past few years, including several that have turned violent. As with that issue, voters are likely to see their own protests as a peaceful and necessary democratic measure, while the other side's protests are a public-safety-threatening menace.

In response, President Waheed and the parliament have passed a "Freedom of Assembly Bill" that outlines specific allowances and restrictions on protests. For example, demonstrations were outlawed outside government



offices, private residences, tourist resorts, airports, etc., and limits were placed on the media's ability to cover protests. The bill was criticized by Nasheed supporters (who are the main protesters these days) and NGOs.

- *Do you believe that President Waheed is doing all he can to decrease violent crime, doing some of the things he needs to do to decrease violent crime, or is not doing enough to decrease violent crime?*
- *Do you believe that President Waheed is doing all he can to curb drug abuse, doing some of the things he needs to do to curb drug abuse, or is not doing enough to curb drug abuse?*
- *Do you believe that the use of force on peaceful protesters is always justified, sometimes justified, or never justified?*
- *Do you believe that President Nasheed ordered or sanctioned the use of force on peaceful protesters?*
- *Which statement comes closest to what you believe: the many protests in Maldives are a good thing because they represent citizens exercising their democratic rights, or the many protests in Maldives are a bad thing because they threaten public law and order?*
- *Do you support or oppose President Waheed's Freedom of Assembly Bill placing limits on demonstrations?*

Climate Change

Maldives is the world's lowest country, with an average elevation of 5 feet. Its highest peak is only 8 feet tall. Obviously, this puts Maldives at extreme risk from sea-level rise caused by global warming. In a possible preview of what is to come, the 2004 tsunami devastated the islands (costing \$400 million, or 62% of the GDP), damaging infrastructure and completely wiping out six islands. The 1998 El Niño, which warmed the waters of the Indian Ocean, also killed two-thirds of Maldives's coral reefs. President Nasheed was famous internationally for his role in trying to stop climate change as the subject of the Hollywood documentary *The Island President*. For his part, President Waheed has declared that Maldives will be "the first country to be a marine reserve," and the government is moving to make the entire country a protected biosphere by 2017. However, rather than imposing nationwide restrictions, the government is proposing "zones," some of which would be kept pristine and others where more "wasteful" activities (e.g., tourist activity) would be allowed.



- *As you consider the factors that will affect your vote for president, would you say that protecting the environment is very important, somewhat important, not very important, or not at all important?*
- *On the issue of the environment and global warming, do you believe President Waheed is doing too much, not doing enough, or doing about the right amount?*
- *In your opinion, what is more important: fostering economic growth even at environmental cost, or protecting the environment and stopping global warming even at economic cost?*
- *Do you believe that the proposal to drill for oil in Maldives is mutually exclusive with Maldives's commitment to conservation and the environment?*

Islam

Religious freedom is nonexistent in Maldives, but this is not an issue with the overwhelmingly Muslim electorate. Rather, a lack of piety in government has actually arisen as an issue. The government of President Nasheed was accused of being too secular and not enforcing Islamic values; for example, they allowed resort owners to sell pork and alcohol products, and the Nasheed government was unusually liberal on the issue of Israel. December 2011 saw a mass march to "protect Islam" that called for various extremist positions, such as the cessation of all flights between Israel and Maldives. However, Waheed has not changed any of these policies since taking office, leading some to accuse Nasheed opponents of using Islam as a political tool only.

- *As you consider the factors that will affect your vote for president, would you say that adherence to Islam is very important, somewhat important, not very important, or not at all important?*
- *Do you believe that the government of President Waheed has been too faithful to Islamic values, not faithful enough, or about right?*
- *As you consider the factors that will affect your vote for president, would you say that allowing tourist resorts to serve pork and alcohol is very important, somewhat important, not very important, or not at all important?*
- *Do you believe that President Nasheed uses Islam primarily as a political tool?*



- *Do you believe that the PPM uses Islam primarily as a political tool?*
- *Do you believe that the DRP uses Islam primarily as a political tool?*

Foreign Policy

As mentioned above, weak support for Palestine (and perceived support for Israel) was one of the reasons for ex-President Nasheed's unpopularity in this deeply Islamic nation. Lately, Maldives has also been cozying up to China at the expense of India, their longtime ally and a defender of President Gayoom's dictatorial regime. Chinese tourism is a large share of the Maldivian economy, and the two nations have recently been negotiating about stronger military ties. Meanwhile, an Indian developer was recently fired from running the Malé airport, which has reverted to public from private. President Waheed has had to deny that pressure from China led to this undiplomatic snub of India. On the other side, India has also publicly acknowledged concern about how closely Maldives's IT and telecom sectors are tying themselves to China—another place where China may be pushing India out of the equation.

In response to Maldives's actions, India rejected a visit from the Maldivian foreign minister, saying they did not want to be a puppet in Waheed's attempt to save face and repair relations in advance of the elections. India is also calling in its \$100 million debts from Maldives, which must be paid by February and represent a fiscal cliff of sorts for the Maldivian economy. In addition, India has tightened restrictions on Maldivians getting visas to go to India. The Indian High Commission actually released to the press a list of 11 grievances it had with the Waheed government. As a result, Nasheed has criticized the current administration for allowing relations to sour with India.

Maldives and the US have a good relationship that is often characterized by Maldives taking actions that it thinks will endear it in the eyes of the American, and thus Western, community. Even domestic-policy decisions such as those on human rights and pro-tourist regulations are often done for these types of PR reasons.

- *As you consider the factors that will affect your vote for president, would you say that foreign policy is very important, somewhat important, not very important, or not at all important?*



- *Do you believe that President Waheed is too heavily influenced by his perception of Maldives's international reputation?*
- *Do you believe that President Waheed's relationship with India is too friendly, too hostile, or about right?*
- *Do you believe that President Waheed's relationship with (Can use China, United States, Israel, or Palestine) is too friendly, too hostile, or about right?*

Immigration

Maldives has a large population of migrant workers—an estimated 111,000 legal residents of Maldives are not Maldivian. President Waheed is one of many Maldivians concerned by the issue, and he has called for tighter restrictions on immigration. His reasoning is twofold: he does not want to fall to Tier 3 on the US State Department's human-trafficking scale (due to the criticism and cessation of foreign aid it would mean from the West), but he is also concerned about preserving the Maldivian national character that is threatened by a diluting foreign population.

- *As you consider the factors that will affect your vote for president, would you say that immigration is very important, somewhat important, not very important, or not at all important?*
- *Do you think that immigration to Maldives should be encouraged more than it is now, restricted more than it is now, or stay at about the level it is now?*
- *Do you believe that immigrants pose a threat to "Maldivianness" and the national character?*
- *Do you believe it is important that Maldives not fall to Tier 3 on the US State Department's human-trafficking scale?*
- *Do you believe that immigration strengthens Maldives, by broadening the economic base, or weakens Maldives, by taking away from natives?*

Human/Women's Rights

By Western standards, Maldives has had a poor human-rights record. Women are treated unequally (e.g., being publicly flogged for adultery), LGBT relationships are illegal, and religious freedom is nonexistent.



However, it is unclear to what extent actual Maldivian voters care about these issues. Still, it has been a political football from time to time. For example, one recent proposal by the Waheed administration was to reform laws that treat rape and sexual-abuse victims as equally culpable as the perpetrators. Currently, a 15-year-old girl has been charged for having “consensual sexual relations” that may actually have been her father raping her.

- *As you consider the factors that will affect your vote for president, would you say that laws punishing women for sexual relations are very important, somewhat important, not very important, or not at all important?*
- *Do you believe that the law should punish minors for “fornication” even if the sex was not consensual?*
- *Do you believe that the law should punish minors for “fornication” if the sex was consensual?*
- *Do you believe that the law should punish women for committing adultery?*
- *Do you support President Waheed’s proposal to change the law so that minors who engage in sexual activity will no longer be prosecuted in some cases?*

