US Torches Solomon Islands for Choosing China

Recent unrest in the Solomon Islands, a small Oceania nation northeast of Australia’s coasts, is a reminder of just how far the US is willing to go to penalize nations for choosing to do business with China versus obeying threats from Washington not to.

Reuters in an article titled, “Explainer: -What is behind unrest in the Solomon Islands?,” would report that a group calling itself “Malaita for Democracy” ravaged the capital Honiara’s Chinatown after the nation’s prime minister failed to address them.

This follows the current Solomon Islands government’s growing ties with Beijing after its decision in 2019 to recognize the People’s Republic of China as the sole government of “one China” - a policy adopted by virtually all nations on Earth (including AUKUS members; the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia) with the exception of only a small and shrinking number of outliers.

The article would note Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare’s explanation:

Sogavare said unnamed foreign powers had intervened because they did not want the Solomon Islands to have diplomatic relations with China. Taiwan has denied any involvement in the unrest.

Reuters would go on to explain:

China and Taiwan have been rivals in the South Pacific for decades. Some island nations have switched allegiances and allegations have surfaced about rival offers of aid and infrastructure being made to sway influence.
Fifteen countries maintain formal diplomatic ties with Taiwan. The last two to ditch Taipei in favour of Beijing were the Solomon Islands and Kiribati in September 2019.

Malaita’s premier, Daniel Suidani, has banned Chinese companies from the province and accepted development aid from the United States.

The Solomon Islands’ province of Malaita is clearly a foothold of US influence - its local government bought off by Washington in a demonstration of blatant foreign interference in violation of the UN Charter protecting the political independence of all sovereign nations.

While Taiwan is also cited as playing a significant role in interfering in the Solomon Islands - its “Taiwan Foundation for Democracy” is little more than an extension of Washington’s National Endowment for Democracy with little to no actual independence meaning that Taiwan is simply one of several vectors US interference is laundered through.

**Washington’s Long History of Meddling in the Solomon Islands**

Far from comments made by the Solomon Islands’ prime minister or admissions from Reuters alone, US interference in Malaita’s internal political affairs through tranches of supposed “aid” money has been noted across the Western media and for many decades.

A US diplomatic cable published by Wikileaks titled, “IV PROGRAM FOR SOLOMON ISLANDS,” and dated 1976, discusses grant money to be provided for the now late Solomon Islands politician Fred Osifelo.

The cable would note Osifelo’s future potential as a prominent Solomon Islands’ politician from Malaita, and the desire to “broaden” his knowledge of the United States in order for him to be “of value to the US government.” The cable demonstrates US attempts to buy off the nation’s leadership as they rose through the ranks of government.

More recently and in direct connection with recent violence in the Solomon Islands - in an October 2020 article in the Diplomat titled, “US Aid Pledge to Pro-Taiwan Solomon Islands Province Raises Eyebrows,” it would be reported that:

> The United States has pledged $25 million in aid to the Solomon Islands province of Malaita, which has in recent weeks made calls for secession from the national government over its relationship with China.

Malaita, the largest province in the Solomon Islands, announced its plan to hold a referendum on independence last month, citing the central government’s switch in diplomatic relations with Taiwan to China last year. The decision has put Malaita at odds with the rest of the country, as Malaita preferred to continue relations with Taiwan.

The Diplomat would continue, noting:

> The US aid package, more than 50 times what the province received in aid from all countries in 2018, has sparked concerns that Washington is using the aid for geopolitical gain, to counter China – despite the risks it poses in flaring old tensions.

Clearly - at the risk of large numbers of human lives, the political and economic stability of the entire nation itself as well as the nation’s future - the United States has deliberately created division within the Solomon Islands, specifically to prevent positive developments resulting from closer ties between the island nation and Beijing.

China - soon to be the world’s largest economy and a nation renowned for its expertise in alleviating poverty, driving development, and building infrastructure around the globe - will be key to overcoming the Solomon Islands’ chronic poverty and lack of opportunities.

The United States, on the other hand, has demonstrated throughout the 21st century both a lack of ability to drive global development as well as a lack of interest in partnering with nations for mutual benefit. Instead, the United States imposes itself on a targeted nation, capturing administrative control over it, strip-mining its economy, and using what’s left as a battering ram or brush fire to destabilize neighboring nations. What aid it or allies like the current administration of Taiwan pass out is deliberately designed to maintain dependency on and obedience to Washington.

It is clear that the Solomon Islands is the latest demonstration of this process, with lives already being lost, property
being damaged, and the threat of a larger conflict looming overhead solely because the United States refuses to let the Oceania nation make the obvious choice of working with China toward a better economic future and toward opportunities the United States admittedly cannot and will not provide any alternatives to.

The deployment of mostly Western troops to the Solomon Islands to quell unrest of Washington’s own deliberate design bodes ill for the islands’ future and serves as an example of what awaits other smaller nations around the globe if they fail to prepare against similar attempts to undermine their sovereignty and co-opt their foreign policy.

Although Prime Minister Sogavare survived a no-confidence vote after the US-sponsored violence, and as plans to pivot the islands closer to China move forward - it remains to be seen whether the recent violence was a punishment meted out in vain by Washington or the first round of much wider destabilization efforts being engineered to deny the islands as a functioning, viable partner for Beijing.

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