



## Security Deal between China and Solomon Island

**For Prelims:** Location of Solomon Island, AUKUS, Boe Declaration.

**For Mains:** Security agreement between China and Solomon Island and its Geopolitical Configuration in the region.

### Why in News?

A recent leaked document has revealed that the [Solomon Islands in the South Pacific](#) has reached a deal with China which outlines an unprecedented level of security cooperation.

- This is the **first deal of its kind for China in the region**, which is not yet signed and it is not fully known whether the provisions mentioned in the leaked document are present in the final draft.

### What are the Key Highlights about Solomon Island?

- The Solomon Islands is **part of the ethnically Melanesian group of islands** in the Pacific and lies between Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu.
- The islands were initially controlled by the **British Empire during the colonial era**.
- It went through the **hands of Germany and Japan** and then back to the U.K., after the Americans took over the islands from the Japanese during [World War II](#).
- The islands became **independent in 1978 to become a constitutional monarchy** under the British Crown, with a parliamentary system of government.
- Still, the country, [a member of the Commonwealth](#), is independent, and the governor-general is appointed on the advice of the unicameral National Parliament.

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### What are the Provisions under the Proposed Deal?

- The document **explicitly enables China to send its “police, armed police, military personnel and other law enforcement and armed forces”** to the islands on the latter government’s request, or if the former sees that the safety of its projects and personnel in the islands are at risk.
- It also provides for China’s naval vessels to **utilise the islands for logistics support.**

### What are the Reasons for China’s Interest in the Solomon Islands?

- **Role of Taiwan:**
  - The Pacific islands are among the few regions in the world **where China has competition from Taiwan for diplomatic recognition.**
    - **China considers Taiwan to be a renegade territory** awaiting reunification, and opposes its recognition as an independent state on the international stage.
    - Hence, any country which has to officially establish relations with China will have to break diplomatic ties with Taiwan.
  - The Solomon Islands **was one among the six Pacific island states** which had official bilateral relations with Taiwan.
  - However, in **2019, the Solomon Islands, along with Kiribati, switched allegiance to China.** Now, **only four regional countries backing Taiwan,** mostly belonging to the **Micronesian group of islands** which are under the control of the US.
- **Potential Vote Banks for Mobilising Support:**

- The small Pacific island states act as **potential vote banks for mobilising support** for the great powers in international fora like the [United Nations](#).
- **Presence of Large Maritime Exclusive Economic Zones:**
  - These Pacific island states have **disproportionately large maritime Exclusive Economic Zones** when compared to their small sizes.
- **Presence of Reserves of Timber and Mineral Resources:**
  - Solomon Island in particular has **significant reserves of timber and mineral resources**, along with fisheries.
- **Strategic Significance:**
  - The islands in the Pacific are **strategically located for China** to insert itself between America's military bases in the Pacific islands and Australia.
    - This is especially significant in the current scenario, given the emergence of the [AUKUS \(Australia, the UK and the US\)](#) which seeks to elevate Australia's strategic capabilities vis-à-vis China through Anglo-American cooperation.

## What are the Implications for Geopolitical Configuration in the Region?

- All Pacific countries have a stake in protecting the stability and security of the region.
  - Pacific Islands Forum members, including Australia, agreed in the 2018 [Boe Declaration](#) to **address regional security challenges collectively**.
- A bilateral agreement such as the one proposed between China and Solomon Islands **undermines that sentiment and shows a limited appreciation for the security of the region** as a whole.
- Earlier, the [US announced plans to open an embassy in the Solomon Islands](#), laying out in unusually blunt terms a plan to increase its influence in the South Pacific nation before China becomes "strongly embedded".
- The smaller island nations of the region are heavily dependent on them, **especially Australia as it is a resident power**.
  - This established power structure in the region is being increasingly challenged by China through the steady displacement of Taiwan and the cultivation of economic and political clout.
- The **geopolitics of the region is undergoing an unprecedented flux** in tandem with the larger shifts in the [Indo-Pacific](#), suggesting an intensification of regional great power rivalry and domestic volatility for the Pacific island states in the coming years.

[Source: TH](#)

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