

# SOLOMON ISLANDS

## Gwales

Activity: 1978-2020

### General notes

NA

### Movement start and end dates

- The Gwales consider themselves indigenous to Guadalcanal, an island belonging to the Solomon Islands. With independence in sight, the Guadalcanal Council began to push for a federal system, demanding a federalized Solomon Islands (Kabutaulaka 2008: 101). Kabutaulaka does not provide an exact date as to when the first claims were made, and we could not find one in other sources either. However, Kabutaulaka discusses the Guadalcanalese claim jointly with the Westerner claim, suggesting that it originated at roughly the same time. Thus, we use the Westerners' start date (1975) also as the start date for the Gwales. The Solomon Islands attained independence in 1978. Accordingly, in the cross-national version of the data set, we only code the movement from 1978. We found no violence in 1975-1977, and thus note prior non-violent activity.
- According to Kabutaulaka (2008: 101) the desire for autonomy "continued and was expressed publicly on various occasions in the post-independence period. Tensions began to mount in 1997. Again, Guadalcanal's provincial government threatened secession. A violent conflict followed (see below). In 2003, a peace-keeping mission was established (Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands, RAMSI). Hewitt et al. (2008) report that Gwale separatists again threatened secession in October 2006 if a bill promising increased autonomy was not passed. The movement is ongoing as of 2020. For example, in a 2015 report on the reconciliatory dialogue between the Solomon Island Government and the Guadalcanal Provincial Government, the UNDP Pacific Centre suggests that federalism is still one of the core issues on the Gwales' agenda. [start date: 1975; end date: ongoing]

### Dominant claim

- With independence in sight, the Guadalcanal Council began to push for a federal system, demanding substantial devolution of powers. According to Kabutaulaka (2008: 101), the movement was quite aggressive in its push for federalism and the desire for autonomy "continued and was expressed publicly on various occasions in the post-independence period" (Kabutaulaka 2008: 101; also see UNDP Pacific Centre 2015). Guadalcanal's provincial government threatened secession on two occasions (1997 and 2006) but the threat is very likely to be a tactical manoeuvre in support of/opposition to new bills that would have increased/decreased the Gwale level of self-determination. There is no proper claim for independence. Thus, we code autonomy as the dominant claim throughout. [1978-2020: autonomy claim]

### Independence claims

NA

## **Irredentist claims**

NA

## **Claimed territory**

- The Gwales demand self-determination for the island of Guadalcanal, and forms at the same time the administrative province of Guadalcanal. We code this claim based on the Global Administrative Areas database (GADM 2019).

## **Sovereignty declarations**

NA

## **Separatist armed conflict**

- Significant tensions escalated in late 1998, when the Isatabu Freedom Movement (IFM), a militant Gwales organization, began to attack and forcibly displace Malaitans (BBC; Global Security; Hewitt et al. 2008; Minahan 2002: 1154). The Malaitans are immigrants from another Solomon Islands province, Malaita, and constitute a minority in Guadalcanal. Claims to self-determination and land rights were central during the conflict episode. The Malatai settlers established their own organization, the Malaita Eagle Force (MEF), in 1999 to defend their interests and undertake armed action against the IFM.
- Over the course of the conflict, 23,000 persons (mainly Malaitans) fled from Guadalcanal.
- Estimates of casualties vary. According to Global Security 12 people were killed and 17 went missing. Minahan (2002: 1154) states that over 60 Malaitans died in the violence and another 50 in the fighting around Solomon's capital. The BBC states that up to 100 died in 1998-2000. Foukona (2002) suggests casualty numbers are in the hundreds.
- Hewitt et al. (2008) code armed conflict in 1998-2000 as a result of this episode. However, several sources suggest that almost all of the violence was inter-ethnic, i.e., between Gwale and Malaitan rebels/militants/civilians (Amnesty International 2000; Foukona 2002; Jun n.d.). Our definition of separatist violence requires that the state is involved as a direct combatant. Hewitt et al. suggest that Gwale militants engaged in battles not only with Malaitan militants, but also government forces; however, such violence was limited and almost certainly did not cross the 25-deaths threshold (see Foukona 2000: 6, 8f).
- A cease-fire agreement was signed in August 2000 and comprehensive peace agreements in October 2000 and February 2001 (Hewitt et al. 2008). The peace agreements promised greater autonomy for Guadalcanal, among other things (Hewitt et al. 2008) (for centre-province relations since independence see Scales 2007: 235-236, 2008: 224-229). Some violence continued, but it was mostly crime-related (Global Security; BBC). [NVIOLSD]

## **Historical context**

- The island of Guadalcanal (indigenous: Isatabu) was discovered in 1568 by the Spanish explorer Alvaro de Mendana. Previously a part of German New Guinea, Guadalcanal was annexed to the British Protectorate in 1899 in exchange for parts of Samoa that were given to Germany.
- The island of Guadalcanal experienced some fierce fighting as the United States started its first major offensive against the Japanese Empire in the Second World War (Guadalcanal Campaign). The United States had secured the island in February 1943, British administration was restored (Global Security).
- By establishing Local Councils, the British administration wanted to include Solomon Islanders in the governing process. The Local Councils were granted competencies in local administration,

development, justice, health, education and agriculture. The Native Administration Ordinance of 1953 established the councils, among which also the Guadalcanal Council. The local government system and the council powers and functions were expanded in 1963 with the Local Government Ordinance (Solomon Islands Historical Encyclopaedia 2013).

- The Independence Constitution of 1978 installed a unitary system of government and did not grant the devolution of powers to the provinces that had been demanded by autonomist movements (Premdas et al. 1984). Since regional/provincial autonomy had not existed prior to independence, we do not code this as a restriction.

## Concessions and restrictions

- The Provincial Government Act 1981 (PGA) established seven provinces (Malaita, Central, Makira, Western, Isabel, Temotu, Guadalcanal; two new provinces were added in 1991). It aimed at bringing decision-making closer to the people. According to Nanau (1997: 74, cited in Suluia 2012: 31), the new two-tier structure of government “provided devolution and de-concentration of authority to the lower levels of government [...], giving voice to local communities”. In each province a Provincial Assembly was created. We code an autonomy concession since the PGA of 1981 “formally instituted the decentralised system of provincial government in the Solomon Islands” (Suluia 2012: 2). Note though that the extent of decentralization remained limited. [1981: autonomy concession]
- The Provincial Government Bill 1996 repealed the Provincial Government Act 1981. The new act sought to replace the system of Provincial Assemblies, made up of elected members, with a system of Provincial Councils in which it was possible that the assembly could exclusively or predominantly consist of non-elected members (Corrin Care 1997). The act was considered undemocratic and unconstitutional by many provincial governments and was challenged successfully by the government of Guadalcanal in 1997 (The Minister for Provincial Government v. Guadalcanal Provincial Assembly). Overall, the 1996 bill did not however deviate much from the 1981 PGA in terms of centralization/decentralization (Nanau 1998: 195). Hence we do not code a restriction.
- As a consequence of the failure of the 1996 act, the parliament subsequently passed the Provincial Government Act 1997. The new PGA provided for provincial governments to generate their own revenue, installed an Executive as the head of the Provincial Assembly and a Premier elected by a majority of Provincial Assembly members. Furthermore, new functions and powers of the provincial government were laid out based on scheduled 3 (final legislative powers of provincial governments, administrative functions), 4 (legislation subject to review by the national government) and 5 (transfer of other functions) (Suluia 2012). [1997: autonomy concession]
- Having agreed on a cease-fire in August 2000, the conflict parties (Gwales/Isatabu and Malaitans) signed the Townsville Peace Agreement (TPA) on 15 October 2000. The TPA, among other things, promised greater autonomy to all provinces and the Malaita and Guadalcanal provinces in particular (Kabutaulaka 2008: 101). The agreement furthermore provided for a general amnesty, disarmament and demilitarization and a restructuring of the Royal Solomon Islands Police. The indigenous Peace Monitoring Council (PMC) was established to assist in the implementation of the agreement. A first plan to implement these provisions was put together at a premiers’ conference in November where it was decided that the government should adopt a “Homegrown State System of Government for Solomon Islands whereby each respective province should become a State with its own State Constitution” (Premiers’ Millennium Conference Buala 2000b, cited in Scales 2008: 235). A draft Constitution Amendment (Creation of the Federation) Bill was passed in July 2001. Overall, implementation of the Townsville agreement remained patchy, and this continues to be a significant issue (Hewitt et al. 2008). Nonetheless, there was some movement towards more decentralization as a result of the Townsville agreement; thus we code an autonomy concession. [2000: autonomy concession]
- The Townsville agreement led to a constitutional reform process. In 2007, the Constitutional Reform Unit was established, which consisted of representatives from all the 9 provinces and the capital territory. Several constitutional drafts have been published, but no definitive version was passed (Constitutional Reform Program 2022; Mae 2010). We do not code a concession.

## Regional autonomy

- The decentralization process as initiated by the PGA of 1981 and 1997 and the 2000 Townsville agreement did not lead to devolution of functions and resources to the provinces that would be significant enough to warrant a regional autonomy code. According to Suluia (2012: 2), devolution has been minimal “leaving provinces to play a marginal role in the delivery of services” with provincial grants remaining at best static and with the central government maintaining most of the competencies and responsibilities. Schedule 3 of the 1997 PGA, thus powers that are fully devolved, concerns mainly administrative competencies, such as the licensing of local businesses, the protection of wild creatures, the codification and amendment of customary law, management of agriculture land, fresh water and reef fisheries, local shipping and the maintenance of roads, bridges, and harbours, waste disposal and fire protection, and the provision of water supply to rural communities. Functions such as education or health are not devolved. As a consequence, decentralization “has minimal impact in empowering the local government” (Suluia 2012: 75). Based on this, we do not code regional autonomy.

## De facto independence

NA

## Major territorial changes

- Solomon Islands attained independence in 1978, implying a host change. [1978: host change (new)]

## EPR2SDM

<i>Movement</i>	Gwales
<i>Scenario</i>	No match
<i>EPR group(s)</i>	-
<i>Gwgroupid(s)</i>	-

## Power access

- EPR does not include the Solomon Islands. Global Security states that the Malaitans “generally dominate the elected government and the business sector around Honiara”. However, with Ezekiel Alebua (1986-1989), the former Premier of Guadalcanal, and Derek Sikua (2007-2010) there have been two Gwale Prime Ministers. Since there is no information of systematic exclusion from central government (less alone any form of discrimination), we assume that in all other years, there also has been some sort of access to central government for the Gwales, who make up almost 20% of the total population. Ezekiel Alebua, for example, was the foreign minister in 1981-1982, Derek Sikua had ministerial posts between 1993 and 1998 and then again from 2003-2006. Anthony Veke, who was the premier of Guadalcanal between 2010 and 2013 and the again in 2014, was Minister for Policy, National Security, and Correctional Services as of 2022. On this basis, we code the Gwales as junior partner throughout. [1978-2020: junior partner]

## Group size

- The official census distinguishes only between Melanesian, Polynesian, Micronesian Chinese, European and Others, thus disregarding distinctions between Gwale or Temotu identities. Since

no information on the ethnic Gwale population could be found we need to rely on a relatively crude estimation. According to Overley (1999), “most of the population of Guadalcanal [...] is Gwale”, whereas the capital city of Honiara, which is also situated on Guadalcanal “is populated mainly with Malaitans”. According to the 2009 census, the population of Guadalcanal (which excludes the separately administered Capital Territory of Hooniara) stood at 93,613. Given the Solomon Island’s total population (515,870) in that year, we code a population share of 0.1815. [0.1815]

### Regional concentration

- According to Overley (1999), “most of the population of Guadalcanal [...] is Gwale”. We found no evidence suggesting that a majority of the Gwales would live outside of Guadalcanal, thus we code them as regionally concentrated. [concentrated]

### Kin

- We could not find evidence of kin groups of the indigenous Gwales outside the Solomon Islands. Although Gwales are Melanesians we do not code Melanesians in other countries as kin since this movement is directed against a Melanesian-dominated government. [no kin]

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## **Makiras**

Activity: 2000-2017

### **General notes**

NA

### **Movement start and end dates**

- Makira-Ulawa is a province in the Solomon Islands. In 2000, the province announced its intention to secede, thus the start date. This followed a similar move by the Western Province (see Westerners) and Temotu (see Temotus). The Townsville Peace Agreement signed by the warring Gwales and Malaitans in mid-October 2000 foresaw a federal form of government (for centre-province relations since independence see Scales 2007: 235-236, 2008: 224-229). However, Makira-Ulawa continued to make claims for independence (Böge 2001: 37). Scott (2011) reports that the movement has remained active as of 2007. We find no evidence of separatist activity beyond 2007. Following the ten-year rule, we code the end date in 2017. [start date: 2000; end date: 2017]

### **Dominant claim**

- Several sources mention a recurrent claim for independence. According to Böge (2001: 37), Makira-Ulawa province announced its intention to secede in 2000 and continued to make claims for independence. This is confirmed by Scott 2011 (citing a Solomon Times article from 2007), who states that the “Makira-Ulawa Province has been, over the past few years, calling for independence from the rest of Solomon Islands.” [2000-2017: independence claim]

### **Independence claims**

- See above. [start date: 2000; end date: 2017]

### **Irredentist claims**

NA

### **Claimed territory**

- The territory claimed by the Makiras consists of the Makira-Ulawa province. We code this claim based on the Global Administrative Areas database.

### **Sovereignty declarations**

- In 2000, the Makira-Ulawa province announced its intention to secede (Böge 2001: 37). No evidence of an independence declaration could be found though.

## **Separatist armed conflict**

- We found no evidence of separatist violence, thus the entire movement is coded as NVIOLSD. [NVIOLSD]

## **Historical context**

- By establishing Local Councils, the British administration wanted to include Solomon Islanders in the governing process. The Local Councils were granted competencies in local administration, development, justice, health, education and agriculture. The Native Administration Ordinance of 1953 established the councils, among which also councils for Makira. The local government system and the council powers and functions were expanded in 1963 with the Local Government Ordinance (Solomon Islands Historical Encyclopaedia 2013).
- The Independence Constitution of 1978 installed a unitary system of government and did not grant the devolution of powers to the provinces as demanded by autonomist movements (Premdas et al. 1984).
- The Provincial Government Act 1981 (PGA) established seven provinces (Malaita, Central, Makira, Western, Isabel, Temotu, Guadalcanal; two new provinces were added in 1991). It aimed at bringing decision-making closer to the people. According to Nanau (1997: 74, cited in Suluia 2012: 31), the new two-tier structure of government “provided devolution and de-concentration of authority to the lower levels of government [...], giving voice to local communities”. In each province a Provincial Assembly was created. The PGA of 1981 “formally instituted the decentralised system of provincial government in the Solomon Islands” (Suluia 2012: 2). Note though that the extent of decentralization remained limited.
- The Provincial Government Bill 1996 repealed the Provincial Government Act 1981. The new act sought to replace the system of Provincial Assemblies, made up of elected members, with a system of Provincial Councils in which it was possible that the assembly could exclusively or predominantly consist of non-elected members (Corrin Care 1997). The act was considered undemocratic and unconstitutional by many provincial governments and was challenged successfully by the government of Guadalcanal in 1997 (The Minister for Provincial Government v. Guadalcanal Provincial Assembly). Overall, the 1996 bill did not however deviate much from the 1981 PGA in terms of centralization/decentralization (Nanau 1998: 195). Hence we do not code a restriction.
- As a consequence of the failure of the 1996 act, the parliament subsequently passed the Provincial Government Act 1997. The new PGA provided for provincial governments to generate their own revenue, installed an Executive as the head of the Provincial Assembly and a Premier elected by a majority of Provincial Assembly members. Furthermore, new functions and powers of the provincial government were laid out based on scheduled 3 (final legislative powers of provincial governments, administrative functions), 4 (legislation subject to review by the national government) and 5 (transfer of other functions) (Suluia 2012). [1997: autonomy concession]

## **Concessions and restrictions**

- Having agreed on a cease-fire in August 2000, the conflict parties (Gwales/Isatabu and Malaitans) signed the Townsville Peace Agreement (TPA) on 15 October 2000. The TPA, among other things, promised greater autonomy to all provinces and the Malaita and Guadalcanal provinces in particular (Kabutaulaka 2008: 101). The indigenous Peace Monitoring Council (PMC) was established to assist in the implementation of the agreement. A first plan to implement these provisions was put together at a premiers’ conference in November where it was decided that the government should adopt a “Homegrown State System of Government for Solomon Islands whereby each respective province should become a State with its own State Constitution” (Premiers’ Millennium Conference Buala 2000b, cited in Scales 2008: 235). A draft Constitution Amendment (Creation of the Federation) Bill was passed in July 2001. Overall, implementation of the Townsville agreement remained patchy, and this continues to be a significant issue (Hewitt



et al. 2008). Nonetheless, there was some movement towards more decentralization as a result of the Townsville agreement; thus we code an autonomy concession. [2000: autonomy concession]

- Note: the above narrative makes it likely that the agreement was made after the movement's start date, though this is not entirely clear.
- The Townsville agreement led to a constitutional reform process. In 2007, the Constitutional Reform Unit was established, which consisted of representatives from all the 9 provinces and the capital territory. Several constitutional drafts have been published, but no definitive version was passed (Constitutional Reform Program 2022; Mae 2010). We do not code a concession.

## Regional autonomy

- The decentralization process as initiated by the PGA of 1981 and 1997 and the 2000 Townsville agreement did not lead to devolution of functions and resources to the provinces that would be significant enough to warrant a regional autonomy code. According to Suluia (2012: 2), devolution has been minimal “leaving provinces to play a marginal role in the delivery of services” with provincial grants remaining at best static and with the central government maintaining most of the competencies and responsibilities. Schedule 3 of the 1997 PGA, thus powers that are fully devolved, concerns mainly administrative competencies, such as the licensing of local businesses, the protection of wild creatures, the codification and amendment of customary law, management of agriculture land, fresh water and reef fisheries, local shipping and the maintenance of roads, bridges, and harbours, waste disposal and fire protection, and the provision of water supply to rural communities. Functions such as education or health are not devolved. As a consequence, decentralization “has minimal impact in empowering the local government” (Suluia 2012: 75). Based on this, we do not code regional autonomy.

## De facto independence

NA

## Major territorial changes

NA

## EPR2SDM

<i>Movement</i>	Makiras
<i>Scenario</i>	No match
<i>EPR group(s)</i>	-
<i>Gwgroupid(s)</i>	-

## Power access

- EPR does not include the Solomon Islands due to its small size. Global Security states that the Malaitans “generally dominate the elected government and the business sector around Honiara”. None of the eleven Prime Ministers has Makira origins but we have found evidence of several ministers from the Makira-Ulawa Province: Hypolite Taremae was Minister of Peace, Reconciliation and National Unity and Dickson Ha'amori Minister of Education and Human Resources in the Philip cabinet (2010-2011), Alfred Ghiro Minister of Public Service in the Lilo Cabinet (2011-2014). Since there is no information of systematic exclusion from central government (less alone any form of discrimination), we assume that in all other years, there also

has been some sort of access to central government for the Makiras. We thus code the Makiras as junior partner throughout. [2000-2017: junior partner]

### Group size

- The official census distinguishes only between Melanesian, Polynesian, Micronesian Chinese, European and Others, thus disregarding distinctions between different Melanesian regional identities. Since no information on the ethnic Makira population could be found we need to rely on the relatively crude assumption that the population of the Makira-Ulawa province is entirely of ethnic Makira origin. According to the 2009 census, the population of Makira-Ulawa stood at 40,419. Given the Solomon Island's total population (515,870) in that year, we code a population share of 0.0784. [0.0784]

### Regional concentration

- We make the relatively crude assumption that the population of Makira is homogenous and consists entirely of ethnic Makira (the population of the island of Makira makes up 83% of the entire population of the Makira-Ulawa province). Since there is no evidence of majority Makira population living outside the Makira-Ulawa province, we code them as regionally concentrated. Note that the Makira-Ulawa territory consists of several islands, but this can be seen as spatially contiguous in the sense used here. [concentrated]

### Kin

- We could not find evidence of kin groups of the indigenous Makiras outside the Solomon Islands. Although Makiras are Melanesians (see 2009 census) we do not code Melanesians in other countries as kin since this movement is directed against a Melanesian-dominated government. [no kin]

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## **Malaitans**

Activity: 1999-2020

### **General notes**

- Malaita is one of Solomon Islands' provinces. Malaita lies 30 miles northeast of Guadalcanal, another Solomon province with a substantial share of Malaitan immigrants.

### **Movement start and end dates**

- In 1998, Gwales in Guadalcanal began to target Malaitan immigrants in inter-ethnic strife (see Gwales). The Malaitans constitute a minority in Guadalcanal, but make up around 40 per cent of the Solomon Islands' population (Minahan 2002: 1151). In 1999, Guadalcanal's Malaitai settlers established their own organization, the Malaita Eagle Force (MEF), to defend their interests. Hewitt et al. (2008) indicate that the Eagles made separatist claims. Other sources we consulted suggest that the Eagles' main aim has been the defense of Malaitan-owned property and land against the raiding Gwales. However, other sources appear to agree with Hewitt et al. that the Eagles also made separatist claims. Minahan (2002: 1156), for instance, reports that Malaitan leaders openly threatened secession in 2000 (also see Kilford 2000). Thus we code 1999 as the start date.
- The movement is ongoing. Hewitt et al. (2008) report that "several Malaitan provincial leaders begin pursuing secessionism via conventional politics in 2004." Furthermore, in 2005, another Malaitan-nationalist militant organization appeared, the Malaita Separatist Movement (MSM). The MSM consisted mainly out of former members of the Malaita Eagles, which had to be disbanded (UNIFEM 2005). A report in the Solomon Star suggests an independence claim as of 2019. There was a plan for an independence referendum to be held in 2020 in protest against the central government's decision of cutting off the diplomatic relations with Taiwan and establishing ties with China instead. The central government opposed the plan and declared that any such referendum would be illegal (The Guardian 2020). [start date: 1999; end date: ongoing]

### **Dominant claim**

- The onset of the Malai movement is coded in 1999, when Guadalcanal's Malaitai settlers established the Malaita Eagle Force (MEF). The MEF's main aim has been the defense of Malaitan-owned property and land against the raiding Gwales. However, according to Hewitt et al. (2008), the Eagles also made separatist claims. Minahan (2002: 1156), for instance, reports that Malaitan leaders openly threatened secession in 2000 (also see Kilford 2000). Hewitt et al. (2008) report that "several Malaitan provincial leaders begin pursuing secessionism via conventional politics in 2004." In 2005, militant nationalist Malaita Separatist Movement (MSM) appeared. The MSM consisted mainly out of former members of the Malaita Eagles, which had to be disbanded (UNIFEM 2005). The MSM seems to continue the goal of an independent Malaita (Radio Australia 2012). A 2019 report in the Solomon Star confirms that the claim continued to be for independence. There was a plan for an independence referendum to be held in 2020 in protest against the central government's decision of cutting off the diplomatic relations with Taiwan and establishing ties with China instead (The Guardian 2020). [1999-2020: independence claim]

## **Independence claims**

- See above. [start date: 1999; end date: ongoing]

## **Irredentist claims**

NA

## **Claimed territory**

- The territory claimed by the Malaitans is the Malaita province northeast of the Guadalcanal province on the Solomon Islands. We code this claim based on the Global Administrative Areas database.

## **Sovereignty declarations**

NA

## **Separatist armed conflict**

- Significant tensions escalated in late 1998, when the Isatabu Freedom Movement (IFM), a militant Gwales organization, began to attack and forcibly displace Malaitans (BBC; Global Security; Hewitt et al. 2008; Minahan 2002: 1154). The Malaitans are immigrants from another Solomon Islands province, Malaita, and constitute a minority in Guadalcanal. Claims to self-determination and land rights were central during the conflict episode. The Malaitai settlers established their own organization, the Malaita Eagle Force (MEF), in 1999 to defend their interests and undertake armed action against the IFM.
- Over the course of the conflict, 23,000 persons (mainly Malaitans) fled from Guadalcanal.
- Estimates of casualties vary. According to Global Security 12 people were killed and 17 went missing. Minahan (2002: 1154) states that over 60 Malaitans died in the violence and another 50 in the fighting around Solomon's capital. The BBC states that up to 100 died in 1998-2000. Foukona (2002) suggests casualty numbers are in the hundreds.
- Hewitt et al. (2008) code armed conflict in 1998-2000 as a result of this episode. However, several sources suggest that almost all of the violence was inter-ethnic, i.e., between Gwale and Malaitan rebels/militants/civilians (Amnesty International 2000; Foukona 2002; Jun n.d.). Our definition of separatist violence requires that the state is involved as a direct combatant. Hewitt et al. suggest that Gwale militants engaged in battles not only with Malaitan militants, but also government forces; however, such violence was limited and almost certainly did not cross the 25-deaths threshold (see Foukona 2000: 6, 8f).
- A cease-fire agreement was signed in August 2000 and comprehensive peace agreements in October 2000 and February 2001 (Hewitt et al. 2008). The peace agreements promised greater autonomy for Guadalcanal, among other things (Hewitt et al. 2008) (for centre-province relations since independence see Scales 2007: 235-236, 2008: 224-229). Some violence continued, but it was mostly crime-related (Global Security; BBC). [NVIOLSD]

## **Historical context**

- The island of Malaita was discovered in 1568 by the Spanish explorer Alvaro de Mendana. However, with later expeditions unable to confirm the discovery, the island was not visited again for another 200 years. Mission stations were established by Christian missionaries from the United Kingdom, Australia, and the United States (Minahan 2002: 1152).

- When Germany and the United Kingdom divided the Solomon Islands in 1886, Malaita was included in the British zone. The British established a protectorate in the eastern Solomon Islands and left power mostly in the hands of local chiefs. British rule was reestablished after the Second World War, in which the Japanese invaded and took control of Malaita (Minahan 2002: 1153).
- In response to anti-colonialist sentiments, the British administration established Local Councils in order to include Solomon Islanders in the governing process. The Local Councils were granted competencies in local administration, development, justice, health, education and agriculture. The Native Administration Ordinance of 1953 established the councils, among which also the Malaitan Council. The local government system and the council powers and functions were expanded in 1963 with the Local Government Ordinance (Solomon Islands Historical Encyclopaedia 2013).
- The Solomon Island protectorate was granted internal self-government in 1975 and independence in 1978. The Independence Constitution of 1978 installed a unitary system of government and did not grant the devolution of powers to the provinces that had been demanded by autonomist movements (Premdas et al. 1984).
- The Provincial Government Act 1981 (PGA) established seven provinces (Malaita, Central, Makira, Western, Isabel, Temotu, Guadalcanal; two new provinces were added in 1991). It aimed at bringing decision-making closer to the people. According to Nanau (1997: 74, cited in Suluia 2012: 31), the new two-tier structure of government “provided devolution and de-concentration of authority to the lower levels of government [...], giving voice to local communities”. In each province a Provincial Assembly was created. The PGA of 1981 “formally instituted the decentralised system of provincial government in the Solomon Islands” (Suluia 2012: 2). Note though that the extent of decentralization remained limited.
- The Provincial Government Bill 1996 repealed the Provincial Government Act 1981. The new act sought to replace the system of Provincial Assemblies, made up of elected members, with a system of Provincial Councils in which it was possible that the assembly could exclusively or predominantly consist of non-elected members (Corrin Care 1997). The act was considered undemocratic and unconstitutional by many provincial governments and was challenged successfully by the government of Guadalcanal in 1997 (The Minister for Provincial Government v. Guadalcanal Provincial Assembly). Overall, the 1996 bill did not however deviate much from the 1981 PGA in terms of centralization/decentralization (Nanau 1998: 195). Hence we do not code a restriction.
- As a consequence of the failure of the 1996 act, the parliament subsequently passed the Provincial Government Act 1997. The new PGA provided for provincial governments to generate their own revenue, installed an Executive as the head of the Provincial Assembly and a Premier elected by a majority of Provincial Assembly members. Furthermore, new functions and powers of the provincial government were laid out based on scheduled 3 (final legislative powers of provincial governments, administrative functions), 4 (legislation subject to review by the national government) and 5 (transfer of other functions) (Suluia 2012). [1997: autonomy concession]

### **Concessions and restrictions**

- Having agreed on a cease-fire in August 2000, the conflict parties (Gwales/Isatabu and Malaitans) signed the Townsville Peace Agreement (TPA) on 15 October 2000. The TPA, among other things, promised greater autonomy to all provinces and the Malaita and Guadalcanal provinces in particular (Kabutaulaka 2008: 101). The indigenous Peace Monitoring Council (PMC) was established to assist in the implementation of the agreement. A first plan to implement these provisions was put together at a premiers’ conference in November where it was decided that the government should adopt a “Homegrown State System of Government for Solomon Islands whereby each respective province should become a State with its own State Constitution” (Premiers’ Millennium Conference Buala 2000b, cited in Scales 2008: 235). A draft Constitution Amendment (Creation of the Federation) Bill was passed in July 2001. Overall, implementation of the Townsville agreement remained patchy, and this continues to be a significant issue (Hewitt et al. 2008). Nonetheless, there was some movement towards more decentralization as a result of the Townsville agreement; thus we code an autonomy concession. [2000: autonomy concession]

- The Townsville agreement led to a constitutional reform process. In 2007, the Constitutional Reform Unit was established, which consisted of representatives from all the 9 provinces and the capital territory. Several constitutional drafts have been published, but no definitive version was passed (Constitutional Reform Program 2022; Mae 2010). We do not code a concession.

### Regional autonomy

- The decentralization process as initiated by the PGA of 1981 and 1997 and the 2000 Townsville agreement did not lead to devolution of functions and resources to the provinces that would be significant enough to warrant a regional autonomy code. According to Suluia (2012: 2), devolution has been minimal “leaving provinces to play a marginal role in the delivery of services” with provincial grants remaining at best static and with the central government maintaining most of the competencies and responsibilities. Schedule 3 of the 1997 PGA, thus powers that are fully devolved, concerns mainly administrative competencies, such as the licensing of local businesses, the protection of wild creatures, the codification and amendment of customary law, management of agriculture land, fresh water and reef fisheries, local shipping and the maintenance of roads, bridges, and harbours, waste disposal and fire protection, and the provision of water supply to rural communities. Functions such as education or health are not devolved. As a consequence, decentralization “has minimal impact in empowering the local government” (Suluia 2012: 75). Based on this, we do not code regional autonomy.

### De facto independence

NA

### Major territorial changes

NA

### EPR2SDM

<i>Movement</i>	Malaitans
<i>Scenario</i>	No match
<i>EPR group(s)</i>	-
<i>Gwgroupid(s)</i>	-

### Power access

- EPR does not include the Solomon Islands due to its small size. Global Security states that the Malaitans “generally dominate the elected government and the business sector around Honiara”. This is confirmed by Jun (2000), who labels the Malaitans as the “business and political elite”. Bartholomew Ulufa'alu, prime minister from 1997 until 2000 was Malaitan, as are most of the members of the police and military forces (Jun 2000) and several important ministers. Given the major influence of Malaitans in central executive power, we code the Malaitans as senior partner throughout. [1999-2020: senior partner]

### Group size

- According to Minahan (2002: 1151), approximately 180,000 Malaitans lived in the Solomon Islands in 2002. Given the country's entire population in that year (435,262), we code a population share of 0.4135. [0.4135]

### Regional concentration

- According to Minahan (2002: 1151), the Malaitans make up 92% of the entire population of the Province of Malaita. This corresponds to approximately 108,500 people, which is more than 50% of the entire Malaitan population of the Solomon Islands. Hence, both criteria are fulfilled. [concentrated]

### Kin

- We could not find evidence of kin groups of the indigenous Malaitans outside the Solomon Islands. Although Malaitans are Melanesians we do not code Melanesians in other countries as kin since this movement is directed against a Melanesian (and also Malaitan)-dominated government. The MEF at some point even put Malaitan Prime Minister Ulufa'alu under house arrest and threatened to shoot down a plane with his supporters on board (Böge 2001: 27, 33). [no kin]

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## **Rennell-Bellonas**

Activity: 2000-2013

### **General notes**

NA

### **Movement start and end dates**

- Rennell-Bellona is a province in the Solomon Islands. In 2000, the province announced its intention to secede, thus the start date. This followed a similar move by the Western Province (see Westerners) and Temotu (see Temotus). The Townsville Peace Agreement signed by the warring Gwales and Malaitans in mid-October 2000 foresaw a federal form of government (for centre-province relations since independence see Scales 2007: 235-236, 2008: 224-229). However, Rennell-Bellona continued to make claims for independence (Böge 2001: 37). Freedom House (2004) reports that Rennell-Bellona renewed its claim in 2003 (also see Radio New Zealand 2005). We found no evidence of further separatist activity and code 2013 as the movement end date based on the ten years-rule. [start date: 2000; end date: 2013]

### **Dominant claim**

- In 2000, the province announced its intention to secede (Böge 2001: 37). Freedom House (2004) reports that Rennell-Bellona renewed this claim in 2003 (see also Radio New Zealand 2005). No evidence of separatist activity could be found beyond 2003. However, the movement is coded as ongoing based on the ten years-rule and the coding of the independence claim is also continued. [2000-2013: independence claim]

### **Independence claims**

- See above. [start date: 2000; end date: 2013]

### **Irredentist claims**

NA

### **Claimed territory**

- The territory claimed by the Rennell-Bellonas is the Rennell-Bellona province. The territory is in the south of the Solomon Islands. We code this claim based on the Global Administrative Areas database.

### **Sovereignty declarations**

- In 2000, the Makira-Ulawa province announced its intention to secede (Böge 2001: 37). No evidence of an independence declaration could be found though.

## **Separatist armed conflict**

- We found no evidence of separatist violence, thus the entire movement is coded as NVIOLSD. [NVIOLSD]

## **Historical context**

- By establishing Local Councils, the British administration wanted to include Solomon Islanders in the governing process. The Local Councils were granted competencies in local administration, development, justice, health, education and agriculture. The Native Administration Ordinance of 1953 established the councils, among which also a council for Rennell-Bellona. The local government system and the council powers and functions were expanded in 1963 with the Local Government Ordinance (Solomon Islands Historical Encyclopaedia 2013).
- The Solomon Island protectorate was granted internal self-government in 1975 and independence in 1978. The Independence Constitution of 1978 installed a unitary system of government and did not grant the devolution of powers to the provinces that had been demanded by autonomist movements (Premdas et al. 1984).
- The Provincial Government Act 1981 (PGA) established seven provinces (Malaita, Central, Makira, Western, Isabel, Temotu, Guadalcanal; Rennell-Bellona was granted provincial status in 1993). The act aimed at bringing decision-making closer to the people. According to Nanau (1997: 74, cited in Suluia 2012: 31), the new two-tier structure of government “provided devolution and de-concentration of authority to the lower levels of government [...], giving voice to local communities”. In each province a Provincial Assembly was created. The PGA of 1981 “formally instituted the decentralised system of provincial government in the Solomon Islands” (Suluia 2012: 2). Note though that the extent of decentralization remained limited. Since Rennell-Bellona was granted provincial status in 1993, we code a prior concession. [1993: autonomy concession]
- The Provincial Government Bill 1996 repealed the Provincial Government Act 1981. The new act sought to replace the system of Provincial Assemblies, made up of elected members, with a system of Provincial Councils in which it was possible that the assembly could exclusively or predominantly consist of non-elected members (Corrin Care 1997). The act was considered undemocratic and unconstitutional by many provincial governments and was challenged successfully by the government of Guadalcanal in 1997 (The Minister for Provincial Government v. Guadalcanal Provincial Assembly). Overall, the 1996 bill did not however deviate much from the 1981 PGA in terms of centralization/decentralization (Nanau 1998: 195). Hence we do not code a restriction.
- As a consequence of the failure of the 1996 act, the parliament subsequently passed the Provincial Government Act 1997. The new PGA provided for provincial governments to generate their own revenue, installed an Executive as the head of the Provincial Assembly and a Premier elected by a majority of Provincial Assembly members. Furthermore, new functions and powers of the provincial government were laid out based on scheduled 3 (final legislative powers of provincial governments, administrative functions), 4 (legislation subject to review by the national government) and 5 (transfer of other functions) (Suluia 2012). [1997: autonomy concession]

## **Concessions and restrictions**

- Having agreed on a cease-fire in August 2000, the conflict parties (Gwales/Isatabu and Malaitans) signed the Townsville Peace Agreement (TPA) on 15 October 2000. The TPA, among other things, promised greater autonomy to all provinces and the Malaita and Guadalcanal provinces in particular (Kabutaulaka 2008: 101). The indigenous Peace Monitoring Council (PMC) was established to assist in the implementation of the agreement. A first plan to implement these provisions was put together at a premiers’ conference in November where it was decided that the government should adopt a “Homegrown State System of Government for Solomon Islands whereby each respective province should become a State with its own State Constitution”

(Premiers' Millennium Conference Buala 2000b, cited in Scales 2008: 235). A draft Constitution Amendment (Creation of the Federation) Bill was passed in July 2001. Overall, implementation of the Townsville agreement remained patchy, and this continues to be a significant issue (Hewitt et al. 2008). Nonetheless, there was some movement towards more decentralization as a result of the Townsville agreement; thus we code an autonomy concession. [2000: autonomy concession]

- Note: the above narrative makes it likely that the agreement was made after the movement's start date, though this is not entirely clear.
- The Townsville agreement led to a constitutional reform process. In 2007, the Constitutional Reform Unit was established, which consisted of representatives from all the 9 provinces and the capital territory. Several constitutional drafts have been published, but no definitive version was passed (Constitutional Reform Program 2022; Mae 2010). We do not code a concession.

## Regional autonomy

- The decentralization process as initiated by the PGA of 1981 and 1997 and the 2000 Townsville agreement did not lead to devolution of functions and resources to the provinces that would be significant enough to warrant a regional autonomy code. According to Suluia (2012: 2), devolution has been minimal "leaving provinces to play a marginal role in the delivery of services" with provincial grants remaining at best static and with the central government maintaining most of the competencies and responsibilities. Schedule 3 of the 1997 PGA, thus powers that are fully devolved, concerns mainly administrative competencies, such as the licensing of local businesses, the protection of wild creatures, the codification and amendment of customary law, management of agriculture land, fresh water and reef fisheries, local shipping and the maintenance of roads, bridges, and harbours, waste disposal and fire protection, and the provision of water supply to rural communities. Functions such as education or health are not devolved. As a consequence, decentralization "has minimal impact in empowering the local government" (Suluia 2012: 75). Based on this, we do not code regional autonomy.

## De facto independence

NA

## Major territorial changes

NA

## EPR2SDM

<i>Movement</i>	Rennell-Bellonas
<i>Scenario</i>	No match
<i>EPR group(s)</i>	-
<i>Gwgroupid(s)</i>	-

## Power access

- EPR does not include the Solomon Islands due to its small size. Global Security states that the Malaitans "generally dominate the elected government and the business sector around Honiara". We could not find evidence of members of the central executive with origins in Rennell-Bellona (the only minister from the Rennell-Bellona constituency was appointed in 2014). Since there is no evidence of discrimination, we code them as powerless. [2000-2013: powerless]

## Group size

- The official census distinguishes only between Melanesian, Polynesian, Micronesian Chinese, European and Others, thus disregarding distinctions between different regional identities. Since no information on the population with Rennell-Bellona origin could be found we need to rely on the relatively crude assumption that the population of the Rennell-Bellona Province is entirely of Rennell-Bellona origin. According to the 2009 census, the population of Rennell-Bellona stood at 3,041. Given the Solomon Island's total population (515,870) in that year, we code a population share of 0.0059. [0.0059]

## Regional concentration

- We make the relatively crude assumption that the population of the Rennell-Bellona Province is homogenous and consists entirely of people with origins in Rennell-Bellona. Since there is no evidence of majority Rennell-Bellona population living outside the Rennell-Bellona Province, we code them as regionally concentrated. Note that the Rennell-Bellona territory consists of several islands, but this can be seen as spatially contiguous in the sense used here. [concentrated]

## Kin

- The Rennell-Bellona Province is the only Polynesian inhabited province of the Solomon Islands (95% Polynesian according to the 2009 census). Polynesian kin larger than 100,000 can be found in Australia, New Zealand, Tonga, Samoa, and the United States. None of these countries is within 150 statute miles of the Solomon Islands. [kin in non-adjointing country]

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## **Temotus**

Activity: 2000-2020

### **General notes**

- Temotu is a province in the Solomon Islands.

### **Movement start and end dates**

- In 2000, the Temotu province's executive announced its intention to secede (Meesa 2004), thus the start date. The declaration followed a similar move by the Western Province (see Westerners). In 2001, the central government rejected the claim to independence. The province's Premier, Gabriel Teao, said that his government would continue to pursue independence (Radio Australia 2012).
- The Townsville Peace Agreement signed by the warring Gwales and Malaitans in mid-October 2000 foresaw a federal form of government (for centre-province relations since independence see Scales 2007: 235-236, 2008: 224-229). BBC Monitoring Asia Pacific (2006) reports that the Temotu provincial government repeated its threat to secede in 2006. Self-determination claims continued, but in more recent years the Temotu provincial government has de-escalated its claim to increased autonomy (Solomon Star 2021). On this basis, we code the movement as ongoing as of 2020. [start date: 2000; end date: ongoing]

### **Dominant claim**

- The Temotu movement was initiated in August 2000 when the Province Executive announced its intention to secede at the provincial capital of Lata (Meesa 2004). Independence continued to be the dominant claim in the following years. In 2001 the province's Premier, Gabriel Teao, said that his government would continue to pursue independence (Radio Australia 2012). BBC Monitoring Asia Pacific (2006) reports that the Temoutu provincial government repeated its threat to secede in 2006. [2000-2007: independence claim]
- In 2007, a special unit for constitutional reform was established, with much of the focus being around decentralization and the possibility of federalism. The Temotus continued to periodically make claims for independence, but these are regarded as a strategy to secure more funding from the government rather than genuine sentiments (Prestidege-King 2010) and several sources suggest that the dominant claim has shifted to increased internal autonomy (e.g., Solomon Star 2015, Solomon Islands Government 2021). [2008-2020: autonomy claim]

### **Independence claims**

- As noted above, following the constitutional reform in 2007, the Temotus periodically made claims for independence, but these were widely considered a rhetorical tactic to gain more autonomy rather than genuine demands for independence. [start date: 2000; end date: 2007]

### **Irredentist claims**

NA

## **Claimed territory**

- The territory claimed by the Temotus is the Temotu province in the eastern part of the Solomon Islands. We code this claim based on the Global Administrative Areas database.

## **Sovereignty declarations**

NA

## **Separatist armed conflict**

- We found no evidence of separatist violence, thus the entire movement is coded as NVIOLSD. [NVIOLSD]

## **Historical context**

- By establishing Local Councils, the British administration wanted to include Solomon Islanders in the governing process. The Local Councils were granted competencies in local administration, development, justice, health, education and agriculture. The Native Administration Ordinance of 1953 established the councils, among which also councils for the islands of Temotu. The local government system and the council powers and functions were expanded in 1963 with the Local Government Ordinance (Solomon Islands Historical Encyclopaedia 2013).
- The Independence Constitution of 1978 installed a unitary system of government and did not grant the devolution of powers to the provinces as demanded by autonomist movements (Premdas et al. 1984).
- The Provincial Government Act 1981 (PGA) established seven provinces (Malaita, Central, Makira, Western, Isabel, Temotu, Guadalcanal; two new provinces were added in 1991). It aimed at bringing decision-making closer to the people. According to Nanau (1997: 74, cited in Suluia 2012: 31), the new two-tier structure of government “provided devolution and de-concentration of authority to the lower levels of government [...], giving voice to local communities”. In each province a Provincial Assembly was created. We note a (prior) autonomy concession since the PGA of 1981 “formally instituted the decentralised system of provincial government in the Solomon Islands” (Suluia 2012: 2). Note though that the extent of decentralization remained limited.
- The Provincial Government Bill 1996 repealed the Provincial Government Act 1981. The new act sought to replace the system of Provincial Assemblies, made up of elected members, with a system of Provincial Councils in which it was possible that the assembly could exclusively or predominantly consist of non-elected members (Corrin Care 1997). The act was considered undemocratic and unconstitutional by many provincial governments and was challenged successfully by the government of Guadalcanal in 1997 (The Minister for Provincial Government v. Guadalcanal Provincial Assembly). Overall, the 1996 bill did not however deviate much from the 1981 PGA in terms of centralization/decentralization (Nanau 1998: 195). Hence we do not code a restriction.
- As a consequence of the failure of the 1996 act, the parliament subsequently passed the Provincial Government Act 1997. The new PGA provided for provincial governments to generate their own revenue, installed an Executive as the head of the Provincial Assembly and a Premier elected by a majority of Provincial Assembly members. Furthermore, new functions and powers of the provincial government were laid out based on scheduled 3 (final legislative powers of provincial governments, administrative functions), 4 (legislation subject to review by the national government) and 5 (transfer of other functions) (Suluia 2012). [1997: autonomy concession]



## **Concessions and restrictions**

- Having agreed on a cease-fire in August 2000, the conflict parties (Gwales/Isatabu and Malaitans) signed the Townsville Peace Agreement (TPA) on 15 October 2000. The TPA, among other things, promised greater autonomy to all provinces and the Malaita and Guadalcanal provinces in particular (Kabutaulaka 2008: 101). The indigenous Peace Monitoring Council (PMC) was established to assist in the implementation of the agreement. A first plan to implement these provisions was put together at a premiers' conference in November where it was decided that the government should adopt a "Homegrown State System of Government for Solomon Islands whereby each respective province should become a State with its own State Constitution" (Premiers' Millennium Conference Buala 2000b, cited in Scales 2008: 235). A draft Constitution Amendment (Creation of the Federation) Bill was passed in July 2001. Overall, implementation of the Townsville agreement remained patchy, and this continues to be a significant issue (Hewitt et al. 2008). Nonetheless, there was some movement towards more decentralization as a result of the Townsville agreement; thus we code an autonomy concession. [2000: autonomy concession]
  - o Note: the above narrative makes it likely that the agreement was made after the movement's start date, though this is not entirely clear.
- The Townsville agreement led to a constitutional reform process. In 2007, the Constitutional Reform Unit was established, which consisted of representatives from all the 9 provinces and the capital territory. Several constitutional drafts have been published, but no definitive version was passed (Constitutional Reform Program 2022; Mae 2010). We do not code a concession.

## **Regional autonomy**

- The decentralization process as initiated by the PGA of 1981 and 1997 and the 2000 Townsville agreement did not lead to devolution of functions and resources to the provinces that would be significant enough to warrant a regional autonomy code. According to Suluia (2012: 2), devolution has been minimal "leaving provinces to play a marginal role in the delivery of services" with provincial grants remaining at best static and with the central government maintaining most of the competencies and responsibilities. Schedule 3 of the 1997 PGA, thus powers that are fully devolved, concerns mainly administrative competencies, such as the licensing of local businesses, the protection of wild creatures, the codification and amendment of customary law, management of agriculture land, fresh water and reef fisheries, local shipping and the maintenance of roads, bridges, and harbours, waste disposal and fire protection, and the provision of water supply to rural communities. Functions such as education or health are not devolved. As a consequence, decentralization "has minimal impact in empowering the local government" (Suluia 2012: 75). Based on this, we do not code regional autonomy.

## **De facto independence**

NA

## **Major territorial changes**

NA

## EPR2SDM

<i>Movement</i>	Temotus
<i>Scenario</i>	No match
<i>EPR group(s)</i>	-
<i>Gwgroupid(s)</i>	-

### Power access

- EPR does not include the Solomon Islands. Global Security states that the Malaitans “generally dominate the elected government and the business sector around Honiara”. None of the eleven Prime Ministers has Temotu origins but we have found evidence of several ministers from Temotu Province: Commins Mewa was Minister for Justice and Legal Affairs from 2010 to 2011, Patteson Oti was Minister of Foreign Affairs from 2006 until 2007 and Michael Maena also has a ministerial post. Since there is no information of systematic exclusion from central government (less alone any form of discrimination), we assume that in all other years, there also has been some sort of access to central government for the Temotus. We thus code the Temotus as junior partner throughout. [2000-2020: junior partner]

### Group size

- The official census distinguishes only between Melanesian, Polynesian, Micronesian Chinese, European and Others, thus disregarding distinctions between Gwale or Temotu identities. Since no information on the ethnic Temotu population could be found we need to rely on the relatively crude assumption that the population of the Temotu province is entirely of ethnic Temotu origin. According to the 2009 census, the population of Temotu stood at 21,362. Given the Solomon Island’s total population (515,870) in that year, we code a population share of 0.0414. [0.0414]

### Regional concentration

- As argued out above, we make the relatively crude assumption that the population of the Temotu province is entirely of ethnic Temotu origin. Since there is no evidence of majority Temotu population living outside the Temotu province, we code them as regionally concentrated. Note that the Temotu territory consists of several islands, but this can be seen as spatially contiguous in the sense used here. [concentrated]

### Kin

- We could not find evidence of kin groups of the indigenous Temotus outside the Solomon Islands. Although Temotus are Melanesians we do not code Melanesians in other countries as kin since this movement is directed against a Melanesian-dominated government. [no kin]

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## **Westerners**

Activity: 1978-1979; 2000-2020

### **General notes**

NA

### **Movement start and end dates**

- With independence in sight, Solomon Islands' Western Province began to lobby for a federal set-up. The Western Province makes up about 20 per cent of the local population and about 30 per cent of the land area (Premdas et al. 1984: 34). The earliest evidence for activity that can be seen as organized we found is in 1975, when the Western Council began to circulate a proposal for a federal Solomon Islands (Premdas et al. 1984: 52). Thus, 1975 is coded as start date.
- The Westerners' demand was not met. "Western Council leaders were unhappy with the failure of the Independence Constitution to guarantee the devolution of powers to the provinces. The Western Council wanted a more federal political structure; it feared "internal colonialism" since its population constituted a minority in the country's multiethnic setting" (Premdas et al. 1984: 34). In the run-up to independence, the Westerner government threatened to declare unilateral independence if no federal set-up is granted, similarly to Bougainville (Premdas et al. 1984: 52). However, "[t]he so-called breakaway movement of the West did not display the same overt passions, articulate arguments, and mass mobilization of the Bougainville secessionist movement" and in particular, "the activities of the Western movement were almost always undertaken by legal means" (Premdas et al. 1984: 35); its methods were generally "non-violent" (Premdas et al. 1984: 54). The movement continued to press its demands up until independence and shortly thereafter. Meesa (2004) reports that there were separatist demonstrations in 1978-1979. Thus, in the data set, we code the movement from 1978 but note prior non-violent contention.
- The Westerners movement died down very quickly after independence, even if no federal system was installed (Premdas et al. 1984: 55). Though separatist sentiment does not appear to have died down, the movement remained more or less dormant until the 1998-2000 unrests. Since we found no activity after the above-mentioned 1979 protests and have quite clear evidence that the movement ended thereafter, 1979 is coded as end date.
- The 1998-2000 unrests mainly involved inter-ethnic strife in Guadalcanal, another Solomon Islands province (see Gwales and Malaitans). However, there was also some inter-ethnic strife in the Western Province involving local groups and Malaitans (Scales 2008: 214-215, 222). In mid-2000 Westerner leaders began to make calls for a federal system that would grant the west increased autonomy (Scales 2007: 204, 2008: 215), thus the second start date. Westerner leaders declared their "intention" to unilaterally declare a federal form of government, but refrained from formally issuing a unilateral declaration (Scales 2007: 204-205). A new state flag was also raised (Scales 2007: 205).
- The Townsville Peace Agreement signed by the warring Gwales and Malaitans in mid-October 2000 foresaw a federal form of government (for centre-province relations since independence see Scales 2007: 235-236, 2008: 224-229). A 2001 draft constitutional amendment foresaw a much more decentralized form of government, which met many of the Westerners' demands (Scales 2007: 207-208). Yet Mills (2004) reports that the Western Province leaders have continued to lobby for greater autonomy. The movement was ongoing as of 2020 (Solomon Islands Government 2021). [start date 1: 1975; end date 1: 1979; start date2: 2000; end date 2: ongoing]

## **Dominant claim**

- With independence in sight, the Western Province began lobbying for a federal set-up. In 1975, three years prior to independence, the Western Council began to circulate a proposal for a federal Solomon Islands (Premdas et al. 1984: 52). According to Premdas et al. (1984: 34), “Western Council leaders were unhappy with the failure of the Independence Constitution to guarantee the devolution of powers to the provinces. The Western Council wanted a more federal political structure; it feared “internal colonialism” since its population constituted a minority in the country’s multiethnic setting”. The movement continued to press its demands up until independence and shortly thereafter. There were also threats that the province would declare independence unilaterally, similarly to Bougainville. However, the secessionist movement “did not display the same overt passions, articulate arguments, and mass mobilization of the Bougainville secessionist movement” (Premdas et al. 1984: 35). Overall, the claim for a federal set-up of the new country seems to be dominant in this first period of activity. [1978-1979: autonomy claim]
- In the 2000s, Westerner leaders began to make calls for a federal system that would grant the west increased autonomy (Scales 2007: 204, 2008: 215). Westerner leaders also declared their “intention” to unilaterally declare a federal form of government, but refrained from formally issuing a unilateral declaration (Scales 2007: 204-205). According to Mills (2004) and an official news release of the Solomon Islands Government (2021), the Western Province leaders have continued to lobby for greater autonomy. [2000-2020: autonomy claim]

## **Independence claims**

- As noted above, there were threats to declare independence should demands for a federal system not be met prior to the independence of the Solomon Islands. Scales (2007: 190) indicates that independence was a serious proposition in discussions of post independent Solomon Islands. As noted above, this claim continued post independence.
- Around 2000 there is some indication that the regional government were seriously considering independence due to the lack of autonomy concessions by the central government (Nexis 2023). However, no movement formally made a claim for independence. We therefore code independence claims only during the 1970s. [start date: 1975; end date: 1979]

## **Irredentist claims**

NA

## **Claimed territory**

- The territory claimed by the Westerners is the Western Province of Solomon Islands. We code this claim based on the the Global Administrative Areas database.

## **Sovereignty declarations**

- Westerner leaders declared their “intention” to unilaterally declare a federal form of government in 2000, but refrained from formally issuing a unilateral declaration (Scales 2007: 204-205).

## **Separatist armed conflict**

- We found no evidence of separatist violence (see e.g. Scales 2007, 2008: 213), thus both phases are coded as non-violent. [NVIOLSD]

## Historical context

- By establishing Local Councils, the British administration wanted to include Solomon Islanders in the governing process. The Local Councils were granted competencies in local administration, development, justice, health, education and agriculture. The Native Administration Ordinance of 1953 established the councils, among which also a council for the Westerners. The local government system and the council powers and functions were expanded in 1963 with the Local Government Ordinance (Solomon Islands Historical Encyclopaedia 2013).
- The Independence Constitution of 1978 installed a unitary system of government and did not grant the devolution of powers to the provinces that had been demanded by autonomist movements (Premdas et al. 1984). Since regional/provincial autonomy had not existed prior to independence, we do not code this as a restriction.
- The Provincial Government Act 1981 (PGA) established seven provinces (Malaita, Central, Makira, Western, Isabel, Temotu, Guadalcanal; two new provinces were added in 1991). It aimed at bringing decision-making closer to the people. According to Nanau (1997: 74, cited in Suluia 2012: 31), the new two-tier structure of government “provided devolution and de-concentration of authority to the lower levels of government [...], giving voice to local communities”. In each province a Provincial Assembly was created. The PGA of 1981 “formally instituted the decentralised system of provincial government in the Solomon Islands” (Suluia 2012: 2). Note though that the extent of decentralization remained limited.
- The Provincial Government Bill 1996 repealed the Provincial Government Act 1981. The new act sought to replace the system of Provincial Assemblies, made up of elected members, with a system of Provincial Councils in which it was possible that the assembly could exclusively or predominantly consist of non-elected members (Corrin Care 1997). The act was considered undemocratic and unconstitutional by many provincial governments and was challenged successfully by the government of Guadalcanal in 1997 (The Minister for Provincial Government v. Guadalcanal Provincial Assembly). Overall, the 1996 bill did not however deviate much from the 1981 PGA in terms of centralization/decentralization (Nanau 1998: 195). Hence we do not code a restriction.
- As a consequence of the failure of the 1996 act, the parliament subsequently passed the Provincial Government Act 1997. The new PGA provided for provincial governments to generate their own revenue, installed an Executive as the head of the Provincial Assembly and a Premier elected by a majority of Provincial Assembly members. Furthermore, new functions and powers of the provincial government were laid out based on scheduled 3 (final legislative powers of provincial governments, administrative functions), 4 (legislation subject to review by the national government) and 5 (transfer of other functions) (Suluia 2012). [1997: autonomy concession]

## Concessions and restrictions

- Having agreed on a cease-fire in August 2000, the conflict parties (Gwales/Isatabu and Malaitans) signed the Townsville Peace Agreement (TPA) on 15 October 2000. The TPA, among other things, promised greater autonomy to all provinces and the Malaita and Guadalcanal provinces in particular (Kabutaulaka 2008: 101). The indigenous Peace Monitoring Council (PMC) was established to assist in the implementation of the agreement. A first plan to implement these provisions was put together at a premiers’ conference in November where it was decided that the government should adopt a “Homegrown State System of Government for Solomon Islands whereby each respective province should become a State with its own State Constitution” (Premiers’ Millennium Conference Buala 2000b, cited in Scales 2008: 235). A draft Constitution Amendment (Creation of the Federation) Bill was passed in July 2001. Overall, implementation of the Townsville agreement remained patchy, and this continues to be a significant issue (Hewitt et al. 2008). Nonetheless, there was some movement towards more decentralization as a result of the Townsville agreement; thus we code an autonomy concession. [2000: autonomy concession]
  - o Note: the above narrative suggests that the agreement was made after the movement’s start date.

- The Townsville agreement led to a constitutional reform process. In 2007, the Constitutional Reform Unit was established, which consisted of representatives from all the 9 provinces and the capital territory. Several constitutional drafts have been published, but no definitive version was passed (Constitutional Reform Program 2022; Mae 2010). We do not code a concession.

### Regional autonomy

- The decentralization process as initiated by the PGA of 1981 and 1997 and the 2000 Townsville agreement did not lead to devolution of functions and resources to the provinces that would be significant enough to warrant a regional autonomy code. According to Suluia (2012: 2), devolution has been minimal “leaving provinces to play a marginal role in the delivery of services” with provincial grants remaining at best static and with the central government maintaining most of the competencies and responsibilities. Schedule 3 of the 1997 PGA, thus powers that are fully devolved, concerns mainly administrative competencies, such as the licensing of local businesses, the protection of wild creatures, the codification and amendment of customary law, management of agriculture land, fresh water and reef fisheries, local shipping and the maintenance of roads, bridges, and harbours, waste disposal and fire protection, and the provision of water supply to rural communities. Functions such as education or health are not devolved. As a consequence, decentralization “has minimal impact in empowering the local government” (Suluia 2012: 75). Based on this, we do not code regional autonomy.

### De facto independence

NA

### Major territorial changes

- Solomon Islands attained independence in 1978, implying a host change. [1978: host change (new)]

### EPR2SDM

<i>Movement</i>	Westerners
<i>Scenario</i>	No match
<i>EPR group(s)</i>	-
<i>Gwgroupid(s)</i>	-

### Power access

- EPR does not include the Solomon Islands due to its small size. Global Security states that the Malaitans “generally dominate the elected government and the business sector around Honiara”. However, the Westerners have always had major influence in the central executive: Several prime ministers with origins in the Western Province were elected during the period of Western separatist activity: Snyder Rini was prime minsiter in 2006, Danny Philip in 2010 and 2011, and Gordon Darcy Lilo from 2011 to 2014. There are also numerous ministers from the Western Province. We thus code the Makiras as senior partner throughout. [1978-1979; 2000-2012: senior partner]



## Group size

- The official census distinguishes only between Melanesian, Polynesian, Micronesian Chinese, European and Others, thus disregarding distinctions between different regional identities. Since no information on the Westerner population could be found we need to rely on the relatively crude assumption that the population of the Western province is entirely of Western origin. According to the 2009 census, the population of the Western Province stood at 76,649. Given the Solomon Island's total population (515,870) in that year, we code a population share of 0.1486. [0.1486]

## Regional concentration

- We make the relatively crude assumption that the population of the Western Province is homogenous and consists entirely of people with origins on the islands of the Western Province. Since there is no evidence of majority Western population living outside the Western Province, we code them as regionally concentrated. Note that the Western territory consists of several islands, but this can be seen as spatially contiguous in the sense used here. [concentrated]

## Kin

- We could not find evidence of kin groups of the indigenous Westerners outside the Solomon Islands. Although Westerners are 95% Melanesians (2009 census), we do not code Melanesians in other countries as kin since this movement is directed against a Melanesian-dominated government. [no kin]

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