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SOLOMON ISLANDS' CHANGING RECOGNITION OF TAIWAN IN 2019

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Abstract

This paper discusses why a country shifts its diplomatic policy to another country despite having long-established diplomatic relations. Since 1983, the Solomon Islands, a country in the South Pacific, has maintained diplomatic relations with Taiwan. However, in 2019, the Solomon Islands decided to sever its diplomatic ties with Taiwan and pivot to China, even after maintaining relations for 36 years. The analysis in this study uses Gideon Rose's neo-classical realism theory to explain the change in the Solomon Islands Diplomatic Relations policy from Taiwan to China in 2019. The method used in this article is a qualitative method with case studies supported by theory and data. The results of this study show that the Solomon Islands' decision to shift its diplomatic ties from Taiwan to China in 2019 was driven by two main factors. Firstly, systemic incentives (external factors) in the form of China's influence and power in the Solomon Islands. These systemic incentives combined with the intervening variable (internal factor), namely the perception of the Solomon Islands' decision-makers regarding diplomatic relations with Taiwan and China. These two factors resulted in the Solomon Islands deciding to sever diplomatic relations with Taiwan and pivot to China.

Keywords: Solomon Islands, neoclassical realism, China, Taiwan, diplomatic relations

Abstrak

Tulisan ini menjelaskan alasan suatu negara mengalihkan kebijakannya ke negara lain meskipun sudah menjalin hubungan diplomatik sejak lama. Sejak tahun 1983 Kepulauan Solomon yang merupakan negara di Pasifik Selatan telah menjalin hubungan diplomatik dengan Taiwan, namun pada tahun 2019 Kepulauan Solomon memutuskan hubungan diplomatiknya dengan Taiwan dan beralih ke Tiongkok meskipun telah menjalin hubungan diplomatik selama 36 tahun. Analisis dalam penelitian ini menggunakan teori realisme neoklasik (*neo – classical realism*) Gideon Rose untuk menjelaskan perubahan kebijakan Hubungan Diplomatik Kepulauan Solomon dari Taiwan ke Tiongkok pada tahun 2019. Metode yang digunakan yakni menggunakan metode kualitatif berbasis studi kasus yang didukung dengan teori dan data. Hasil dari penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa Kepulauan Solomon memutuskan mengalihkan hubungan diplomatiknya dari Taiwan ke Tiongkok pada tahun 2019 dilatarbelakangi oleh dua faktor utama, yaitu *systemic incentives* (faktor eksternal) berupa pengaruh dan *power* Tiongkok di Kepulauan Solomon. *Systemic incentive* tersebut dikombinasikan dengan adanya faktor *intervening variable* (faktor internal) yaitu persepsi *decision maker* Kepulauan Solomon tentang hubungan diplomatik dengan Taiwan dan Tiongkok. Kedua faktor ini yang mengakibatkan Kepulauan Solomon memutuskan hubungan diplomatik dengan Taiwan dan beralih ke Tiongkok.

Kata Kunci: Kepulauan Solomon, Realisme Neoklasik, Tiongkok, Taiwan, Hubungan Diplomatik

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The achievement A state will engage in cooperation with other states to achieve their national interests. One of the instruments of cooperation is establishing diplomatic relations. Diplomatic relations can also be seen as a sign of good relationship between two states. However, in practice, some states do not establish diplomatic relations with other states for specific reasons, such as the two engage in war situation. Under such circumstances, some states may decide to sever diplomatic ties with other states even if they previously have established diplomatic relations for a long time. The Solomon Islands is an example of a state which sever diplomatic ties with their ally, even though they do not engage in war or war-like situation with their previous partner.

The Solomon Islands established diplomatic relations with Taiwan in March 1983. Taiwan was soon opening a consulate-general in Honiara before eventually upgrading it into an embassy in September 1985 (Biddick 1989, 807). Meanwhile, the Solomon Islands set up their embassy in Taipei in May 2005 (Zhang 2019a). Diplomatic relations with Taiwan have brought various benefits for the Solomon Islands. Taiwan assisted the Solomon Islands in developing their agriculture, education, sports, and health sectors. From 1983 to 2019, Taiwan provided aid to the Solomon Islands worth of 460 million USD (Zhang 2019b, 3). In 2009 and 2010 alone, for example, Taiwan donated 10 million USD to support primary and secondary education in the Solomon Islands. In 2017, Taiwan allocated 29.3 million USD for the Rural Constituency Development Fund, a government-based funding initiative with specific function to develop rural areas throughout the country. In 2018, Taiwan provided 30,000 USD to the Solomon Islands Football Federation to help the latter's national team to participate in international competitions (Aqorau 2021, 330). The Solomon Islands was the largest recipient of Taiwan aid in Southern Pacific area. From 2011-2016, the Solomon Islands received a total of 76.3 million USD, higher than the combination of Kiribati (45 million USD), the Marshall Islands (44 million USD), Nauru (4 million USD), Palau (3.5 million USD), and Tuvalu (73 thousand USD) (Aqorau 2021, 330).

In addition to the financial assistance mentioned above, the President of Taiwan visited the Solomon Islands several times symbolizing their good relationship. President Chen Shui-bian visited the Solomon Islands in 2005 while President Tsai Ing-wen paid visit in November 2017. In educational sector, Taiwanese government offered scholarships for students from the Solomon Islands to pursue their studies in Taiwan. Taiwan also sent teaching staffs to the Solomon Islands to teach Mandarin language for both government officials and elementary and secondary students (Solomon Star News 2019).

Relations between the Solomon Islands and Taiwan was not always smooth. They had their ups and downs, especially due to the increasing presence of China in the Southern Pacific. Chinese companies have intensified their operation in the Southern Pacific area, including in the Solomon Islands, in the past few years. In May 2013, Prime Minister Gordon Lilo, stated that Chinese presence in the Southern Pacific area could no longer be ignored. Regional countries must adapt to Chinese presence and activities in the Southern Pacific, especially in trade and other economic activities. In December 2014, Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare

hinted at the possibility of the Solomon Islands shifting their diplomatic ties to China. In January 2019, at the coalition congress of the ruling Democratic Alliance Party (DAP), Prime Minister Ricky Houenipwela expressed that his party would reconsider the Solomon Islands' diplomatic ties with Taiwan if they won the general elections in April 2019 (Aqorau 2021, 321). Tension in diplomatic relations between the Solomon Islands and Taiwan finally arrived in September 2019 when the former decided to sever its diplomatic ties with the latter which at that time had been taken place for 36 years. The Solomon Islands then established diplomatic ties with China. Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare during the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Chinese Communist Party stated that the Solomon Islands respect and adhere the One China Policy and recognize the People's Republic of China as the official government of China, which include the territories of Tibet, Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan (Milhiet 2017, 4).

The decision of the Solomon Islands is puzzling. Taiwan has given so much, especially financially, to the Solomon Islands, but the latter decided to drop Taiwan and shift their preference to China. The 36 years of friendship and constant support was thrown away in minutes. The question is why did the Solomon Islands decide to sever diplomatic ties with Taiwan and switch it to China in 2019? This article examines the rationale behind the Solomon Islands' decision to sever diplomatic relations with Taiwan in 2019. This article investigates the external and internal factors that explain the Solomon Islands' decision. This article argues that the changing in power relations in the Southern Pacific with the presence of an active China has forced regional countries, including the Solomon Islands, to reconsider their diplomatic options. This changing regional political landscape is then interpreted by the leaders of the Solomon Islands that leave them with limited policy option but to engage China intensively. The combination of those two factors have led the Solomon Islands' decision to abandon Taiwan and take side with China.

1.2 Research Question

This shift in the stance of the Solomon Islands is intriguing to delve into, considering the decision to sever diplomatic ties with Taiwan occurred despite both countries having fostered a positive diplomatic relationship that had benefited the Solomon Islands for 36 years. Therefore, this paper poses the research question: Why did the Solomon Islands decide to sever its diplomatic ties with Taiwan and switch to China in 2019?

1.3 Purpose and Objective

The primary objective of this research is to analyze the rationale behind the Solomon Islands' decision to sever its diplomatic relations with Taiwan. Furthermore, the study examines why the Solomon Islands pursued diplomatic ties with China in 2019. The conclusion of the 36-year-long diplomatic relationship between the Solomon Islands and Taiwan presents an intriguing subject for investigation. Notably, in addition to the duration of their diplomatic rapport, the Solomon Islands emerged as Taiwan's most significant aid recipient. This research intends to elucidate the factors underpinning the foreign policy behaviors and decisions of the Solomon Islands, drawing from both external and internal determinants.

2. Literature Review

Literatures on the shifting of diplomatic recognition, especially in the case of Taiwan and China, has been abundantly available. Udayani (2016) discusses Gambia's shift in 2016 from recognizing Taiwan to China and finds that Gambia's shift is due to their reluctance to adopt Taiwan's foreign aid model which in a way forces the implementation of democratic practices which is not compatible with Gambia's wish. In addition, Gambia is surrounded by states with diplomatic relations with China and they witness their neighbors' development that is fully backed by Chinese foreign aid. Gambia considers China as a better option to support their development without having to adopt democratic precondition which they disagree with. Zhang (2019) also argues that Chinese influence, especially through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), has outpace Taiwan in the various areas, including the Pacific. While Taiwan remains commit to assist the Pacific nations, those support could not resist Chinese charm and prevent a domino effect of the transition of diplomatic ties to China. Chinese efforts to spread their influence is part of what Atkinson (2010) consider as China-Taiwan diplomatic rivalry in the Pacific. External factor is also evident in the work of Ramadhani (2022) who argues that the Solomon Islands' ties to nations like Australia and New Zealand makes the latter perceive China's presence in the Solomon Islands as a security and defense threat and it contributes to the debate within the Solomon Islands' elites on whether they should align with China.

External pressures are not the only force that make a country change their preference from Taiwan to China. Aqorau (2021) argues that the shifting of the Solomon Islands' diplomatic ties from Taiwan to China is a result of political competition between elites in the country. It has been known that both Taiwan and China use cheque diplomacy in approaching leaders of the Pacific countries to pledge their support to each of the two sides of the Taiwan Strait. Fraenkel and Smith (2022) also contends that in the case of the Solomon Islands' shifting preference, domestic pressures, particularly the potential occurrence of riots such as the one that took place in November 2021, is also an important factor in their decision to proceed with recognizing China. The riot itself was due to public accusation of bribery from China to the then Prime Minister to maintain his political power within a contested political arena.

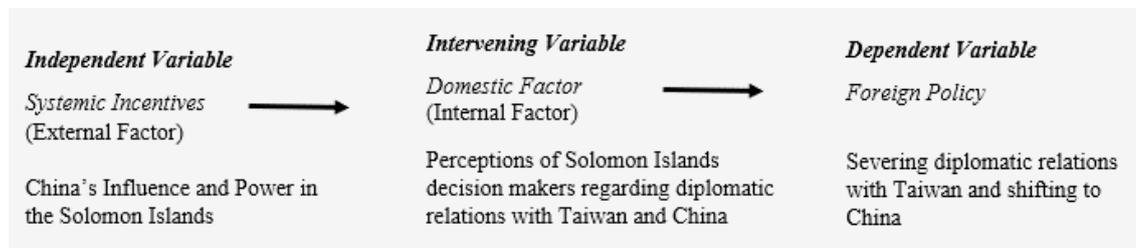
Previous literatures tend to focus on either external or internal factors in explaining the decision made by the Solomon Islands. In addition, they tend to also focus on economic and trade aspects but limit the discussion on political and security aspects. This article intends to fill these gaps by employing a Neoclassical Realism framework in explaining the formulation of a country's foreign policy by examining both external and internal dimensions. As widely known, Neoclassical Realism bridges the gap between different stands of Realism by combining both internal and external factors in explaining a country's foreign policy. A quote from Rose (1998, 149) perfectly captures it:

“Neoclassical realism explicitly incorporates external and internal variables, updating and systematizing certain insights drawn from classical realist thought. Its adherents argue that the scope and ambition of a country” 's foreign policy is first driven by its place in the international system and specifically by its relative material power capabilities. This is why they are realists. They argue further, however, that the impact of such power capabilities on foreign policy is indirect and complex because systemic

incentives must be translated through intervening variables at the unit level. This is why they are neoclassical (Rose, G., 1998, p. 146)."

This article treats external factors as independent variable and internal factors as intervening variable that explain a dependent variable, in this case a state behavior. These external factors include the influence and pressures from outside of the state, such as other nations behaviors as well as international organizations or international community that adhere to specific values. Meanwhile, the internal factors include the perceptions of decision-makers and the domestic state structure. In analyzing the case, the systemic incentives are the influence and power of China in the Solomon Islands while the domestic factors are the perception of the decision-makers regarding the values of establishing diplomatic relations with Taiwan and with China.

Figure 1. Model of Analysis



Source: has been reinterpreted from the Neoclassical Realism Concept (Rose, G., 1998).

3. Research Method

This article relies on non-numeric data collection. It does not employ quantitative parameters, such as statistical data, to measure the intensity or accuracy of research variables, but it selects information or documents which are adequately answer the research questions.

The study uses primary and secondary data types to supplement the research information. Primary data sources are obtained from official sources such as government documents, official information released by the government or relevant ministries/agencies, government regulations, etc. An example of using primary data in this writing is through the Bi-Partisan Task Force formed by the Solomon Prime Minister to review the Solomon Islands' relations with Taiwan and China. Meanwhile, secondary data is obtained through books, journals, valid research results, and articles related to the research topic.

4. Results and Discussion

In this section, a detailed analysis of the factors that drives the Solomon Islands' decision to sever diplomatic ties with Taiwan and shift to China in 2019 will be provided. based on the systemic incentives (external factors) and domestic factors (internal factors) from Gideon Rose's Neoclassical Realism theory, as previously discussed.

4.1 Systemic Incentives

In Neoclassical Realism by Gideon Rose, the thought in foreign policy formation begins with incentives or pressures from the external environment (systemic encouragement), such as actions of other countries, which are then weighed by the domestic unit level (intervening variable). In the context of the factors driving the Solomon Islands to sever diplomatic ties with Taiwan and pivot to China, several key elements played a role, including the assistance provided by China, China being the Solomon Islands' largest trading partner, and China's influence and power in the South Pacific region.

Firstly, the assistance provided by China emerged as a significant factor behind the Solomon Islands' decision to break diplomatic ties with Taiwan and align with China. The competition in the South Pacific between China and Taiwan to secure support and diplomatic recognition prompted both to offer aid to the countries in the region, including the Solomon Islands. China extended its assistance as a manifestation of South-South cooperation that mutually benefits and enhances its political and economic influence. Meanwhile, through its New Southbound Policy, Taiwan aimed to provide assistance and share developmental experiences with South Pacific countries to prevent its allies from switching allegiance to China (Zhang, D., 2019a).

Most of China's aid to the Solomon Islands is channeled through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). During Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare's visit to Beijing in October 2019, the Solomon Islands signed a BRI agreement. The BRI program aligns with the Solomon Islands National Development Strategy 2016-2030, which envisions “Enhancing the Social and Economic Livelihoods of All Solomon Islanders” (Zhang, 2019). Through BRI cooperation, China offers assistance across nine provinces and rural areas in agriculture, fisheries, education, infrastructure, and health. The implementation of the BRI program includes infrastructure projects worth \$825 million, encompassing port construction, highways, railways, bridges, and hydroelectric power plants that commenced in 2019 (GCR Staff, 2019). China assisted in stadium construction through the China Civil Engineering Construction Corporation (CCECC) to develop seven sports facilities in the Solomon Islands, which will host the Pacific Games in 2023. In the education sector, China constructed the Chung Wa school in the Solomon Islands with a donation of 310 thousand Solomon Island dollars (GCR Staff, 2021). China has granted tariff exemptions to 97% of the Solomon Islands' exports, enhancing its export potential to the Chinese market (Solomon Islands Government, 2021).

Secondly, China stands as the Solomon Islands' largest trading partner. Despite having diplomatic relations with Taiwan for 36 years, trading ties with China have benefited the Solomon Islands. According to data from Global Edge in 2019 concerning the top ten export destinations for the Solomon Islands, China ranks as the Solomon Islands' largest export market, as evidenced by the following table.

Table. 1 Top 10 Export Destinations for Solomon Islands

Country	Export (US\$)
China	\$325,830,017

Italy	\$38,695,793
Switzerland	\$19,335,916
India	\$18,192,934
Philippines	\$17,583,591
Netherlands	\$15,005,260
Malaysia	\$7,553,025
Hongkong	\$6,436,486
Thailand	\$6,331,429
Vietnam	\$4,920,341

Source: Global Edge (2019)

The table above indicates that China is the largest export destination for the Solomon Islands, with export values being eight times larger than Italy, which sits in the second position. Meanwhile, Taiwan still needs to rank in the top ten, even though, when this data was released, Taiwan still maintained diplomatic ties with the Solomon Islands. Further analyzing the average percentages of the Solomon Islands' exports and imports from and to other countries from 2013 to 2017, China emerges as one of the largest trading partners, with the following data.

**Table. 2 Solomon Islands Major Trading Partners, Exports, and Imports
2013 – 2017**

	% of exports*	Commodity		% of imports*	Items
China	58	Logs	Australia	30	Food, mixed
Australia	7	Timber, mixed	Singapore	14	Fuel
Italy	7	Fish	China	11	Household, mixed
UK	5	Palm oil	Japan	8	Machines, cars
Philippines	3	Copra	New Zealand	7	Food, mixed
Total SB\$m	3,506		Total SB\$m	3,864	

Source: Central Bank of Solomon Islands (2019).

The percentage data for exports and imports in the table above demonstrates that China is a primary trading partner for the Solomon Islands, encompassing both exports and imports. China is the Solomon Islands' largest partner in the export sector, accounting for 58% of the total exports, with timber as the primary commodity. Regarding imports, China ranks third among the Solomon Islands' import partners, making up 11% of total imports, with household furniture being the main commodity.

Thirdly, China's Influence and Power in the South Pacific. Since the late 19th century, immigrants from China, mainly traders and laborers, set foot in the South Pacific and subsequently spread across various places in the region. After the Cold War, China shifted its focus and attention to the South Pacific due to the increasing presence of Western nations like Australia, New Zealand, France, the European Union, and Japan (Wesley-Smith, 2007). Since the mid-2000s, China has intensified its involvement with the Pacific Island countries and bolstered its diplomatic, trade, and investment ties with the region. China emerged as the third-

largest donor, following Australia and the United States during this period.

According to the White Paper published by the Chinese government, China's foreign aid is categorized into three types: Grants, Interest-free loans, and Concessional Loans. Grants provided by China are channeled in the form of goods and services utilized in small to medium-scale projects for social welfare and humanitarian aid. China offers interest-free loans for public facilities and projects enhancing community livelihoods. Concessional Loans assist South Pacific nations in executing manufacturing projects large and medium-scale infrastructure ventures, such as factory constructions, machinery provision, and electronic products (Bozzato, F., 2017, p. 19).

In 2006, China and the South Pacific nations organized a meeting named the China-Pacific Island Countries Economic Development and Cooperation Forum. This meeting resulted in China's commitment to train over 2,500 officials and technicians, collaborate in agriculture and fisheries, offer assistance in malaria prevention and control, and train healthcare professionals, hospital administrators, and pharmaceutical researchers. Furthermore, China backed human resource development in the South Pacific by granting scholarships to students from Pacific Island countries to study in China (White Paper, 2014). To further assist the South Pacific nations, between 2006- 2011, China extended aid amounting to 850 million US dollars to eight South Pacific nations. Between 2011-2016, China's total foreign aid to the Pacific Island countries amounted to 1.5 billion US dollars, almost quadrupling the complete assistance given by Taiwan within the same period (Dornan, M & Brant, P., 2014, p.2).

The competition between China and Taiwan in the South Pacific to gain diplomatic recognition from the countries in the region using economic aid and investment is known as "checkbook diplomacy." China's goal in expanding its influence in the South Pacific is to diplomatically isolate Taiwan by using loans or grants to divert its diplomatic recognition from Taipei to Beijing. Chinese state-owned enterprises and private companies are at the forefront of executing this influence (Strategic Comments, 2021). By 2021, the number of South Pacific nations maintaining diplomatic relations with Taiwan has dwindled to four: the Marshall Islands, Nauru, Palau, and Tuvalu. This follows the decisions of the Solomon Islands and Kiribati in 2019 to shift their diplomatic relations to China (Zhang, 2019).

4.2 Domestic Factor (Internal Factor)

This section elucidates domestic factors as the intervening variables that play a critical role in foreign policy formation (dependent variable). The intervening variable is a factor that explains why the Solomon Islands decided to sever its diplomatic ties with Taiwan and pivot to China. The domestic factors in this context include a report and recommendations issued by the Solomon Islands Bi-Partisan Task Force, the influence of the ruling party during the transition of diplomatic relations from Taiwan to China, which is The Ownership, Unity, and Responsibility Party, and the personality and background of Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare.

First, the Solomon Islands Bi-Partisan Task Force issued the report and recommendations. Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare established the Solomon Islands Bi-Partisan Task Force in June 2019 to review the Solomon Islands' relations with Taiwan and China. The Task Force consisted of nine members, of

which seven were members of parliament (three from the pro-government side, three from the opposition, and one neutral member), and two were secretarial staff from the Prime Minister and Cabinet's Office. In executing its mission, the Bi-Partisan Task Force visited Taiwan, China, and several Pacific Island countries, including Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Tonga, and Vanuatu, to gather data and information (Bi-partisan Task Force Report, 2019., p. 7-8).

The objectives and mandates given to the Bi-partisan Task Force were: first, to consider all aspects and implications, both positive and negative, of the Solomon Islands either maintaining ties with Taiwan or switching allegiance to China. Second, to undertake broader cross-sectoral research through literature reviews, consultations, and open dialogues with relevant stakeholders concerning the One China Policy and provide recommendations to the government to make an informed decision. Third, should the Solomon Islands wish to continue its relationship with Taiwan, the Task Force was expected to delve into an in-depth review and analysis of the aid the Solomon Islands had received from Taiwan over the years. Fourth, if the Solomon Islands were considering transitioning its allegiance from Taiwan to China, the Task Force would explore and analyze the potential aid and benefits the Solomon Islands would receive from China. Lastly, if the government decided to pivot from Taiwan to China, the Task Force would draft an emergency plan and preventive measures in anticipation of reactions from traditional partners. They would also provide insights to the government to prevent any disturbances in the social, economic, and political stability of the Solomon Islands (Bi-partisan Task Force Report, 2019, p. 9).

In its report, the Bi-Partisan Task Force stated that with its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), China could assist the Solomon Islands in achieving national development, especially in infrastructure, as outlined in the Solomon Islands National Development Strategy 2016-2030.

"The BRI can help the Solomon Islands implement its National Development Strategy for 2016-2030. Currently, only China has such an initiative for its bilateral friends. None of our traditional partners has its equivalent... This Chinese initiative is the only means to address this national development challenge, as it has for other countries, including nations in the Pacific region." (Bi-Partisan Task Force Report, 2019, p. 38-39).

After completing its mandate, the Bi-Partisan Task Force made the following recommendations to the Solomon Islands government: First, Establish diplomatic ties with China and sign a joint communique announcing the opening of diplomatic relations by mid-September 2019. These ties should be established before October 1, 2019, which marks the 70th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China. Second, Terminate diplomatic relations with Taiwan and ensure the Solomon Islands adhere to the One China Policy. Third, Invite China to open a diplomatic representation in Honiara and, in return, open a Solomon Islands diplomatic representation in Beijing to enhance bilateral relations between the two nations. Fourth, The Office of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (OPMC) should coordinate with the ministries in the Solomon Islands to devise strategies and a framework to implement relations with China (Bi-Partisan Task Force Report, 2019, p. 66 - 67).

Secondly, the party in power in the Solomon Islands in 2019 during the transition of diplomatic ties from Taiwan to China was the Ownership, Unity, and Responsibility Party, known as Our Party. Founded in 2010 by Manasseh

Sogavare, Our Party champions the constitution as a symbol of unity and promotes a sovereign nation based on a democratic mandate. It is founded on Christian principles and committed to returning the nation's ownership to the Solomon Islands' people. Our Party believes in fostering responsible leadership and is committed to the prosperity of its citizens through a people-centered development strategy. Concrete evidence of their commitment includes investing 780 million Solomon dollars over four years for rural economic development and 6.2 million dollars to aid the relocation of those affected by climate change if they win the 2019 elections. Due to their vision and actions, Manasseh Sogavare was elected as the Prime Minister of the Solomon Islands, defeating his rival, Matthew Wale. Additionally, in 2019, Our Party became the largest political party in Parliament with 50 seats. The party has 34 members in the National Parliament, making it the largest single party there (Radio New Zealand, 2019).

Thirdly, regarding the personality and background of the Prime Minister of the Solomon Islands, Manasseh Sogavare. Sogavare was born on January 17, 1955, in the Oro Province, Papua New Guinea. Sogavare earned a Bachelor's degree in Accounting and Economics from the University of the South Pacific (USP) and a Master's in Management Studies from the University of Waikato in New Zealand (Pacific Islands Forum, 2019). After graduating, he became the Commissioner of Inland Revenue in 1991 then Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Finance in 1993. He later became the Director of the Central Bank of Solomon Islands and the Chairman of the Solomon Islands National Provident Fund.

Sogavare began his political career in 1997 when he was elected as a national parliament member representing East Choiseul. Under the government of Prime Minister Bartholomew Ulufa'alu, Sogavare served as Minister of Finance and Treasury from 1997 to July 1998. From July 1998 to September 1999, he served as Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Solomon Islands. He was appointed Leader of the Opposition in January 2000 after the previous leader died. He was first elected as Prime Minister by parliament on June 30, 2000, after the preceding prime minister was captured by rebels and forced to resign. He served as Prime Minister until December 17, 2001.

In 2002, Sogavare became a member of the Legislative Committee before being appointed Minister of Commerce, Industry, and Employment (Solomon Islands Historical Encyclopedia, 2020). In May 2006, he was elected the prime minister for the second time, defeating Fred Fono, serving until December 2007. From 2007 to 2014, Sogavare was once again the Leader of the Opposition, and during this period, specifically in 2010, he founded the Ownership, Unity, and Responsibility Party. In the 2014 general election, he was elected prime minister for the third time, serving until November 2017. He was then re-elected for the fourth time in 2019 and continues to serve in this role (Pacific Islands Forum, 2019).

4.3 Foreign Policy of Solomon Islands

Due to the mentioned external and internal factors, the Solomon Islands decided to terminate its diplomatic relations with Taiwan and shift to China in 2019 with the following statement.

“It is with deep gratitude that I express, on behalf of my family and all members of the DCGA, my heartfelt thanks and appreciation for the support rendered by Taiwan over the past 36 years. Taiwan has been an enduring friend and development partner, standing with us during our darkest hours, a sentiment that the change in diplomatic recognition will never erase. Thus, I call upon all the law-abiding citizens of this great nation to move past the blame game and begin a dialogue on the path forward with our newly found friendship.” Mannaseh Sogavare (Toito'ona, R., 2019).

In a subsequent development, on 21 September 2019, the People's Republic of China and the Solomon Islands formalized their diplomatic relations by signing a joint communique in Beijing. The Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister, Wang Yi, and the Solomon Islands' Minister of Foreign Affairs and External Trade, Jeremiah Manele, represented this significant event. Both governments have committed to fostering amicable ties grounded in principles such as mutual respect for sovereignty, non-aggression, and non-interference in internal matters, alongside equality, mutual advantage, and peaceful coexistence. The Solomon Islands acknowledges that only one China exists globally, with the People's Republic of China being its only legitimate governing body. It reaffirms that Taiwan is an integral part of China. The Government of the People's Republic of China and the Government of Solomon Islands have agreed to exchange Ambassadors to provide each other with all the necessary assistance for the establishment of diplomatic missions and their performance of functions in each other's capitals on a reciprocal basis (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2019).

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

The diplomatic relationship between the Solomon Islands and Taiwan in 1983 was positive and mutually beneficial. However, over time, their relationship experienced highs and lows, especially with the increasing presence of China in the South Pacific. This shift began in 2013 when the Prime Minister of the Solomon Islands, Gordon Lilo, stated that China's rise could not be ignored but should be considered in the Solomon Islands' trade and foreign relations. The peak occurred in September 2019 when the Solomon Islands decided to sever its diplomatic ties with Taiwan, a relationship that had existed since 1983, and switched allegiance to China.

This research aims to answer the question of why the Solomon Islands decided to sever its diplomatic ties with Taiwan and shift to China in 2019, even though the two countries had maintained diplomatic relations for 36 years, and the Solomon Islands was the largest recipient of Taiwanese aid in the South Pacific region. Using the Neoclassical Realism theory (Gideon Rose), there are two primary determinants of how a country's foreign policy is formed. First, there is a systemic incentive (external factor), which includes aid provided by China, China being the Solomon Islands' largest trading partner, and China's influence and power in the South Pacific region. This systemic incentive is combined with the intervening variable (internal factor), namely the report and recommendations of the Bi-Partisan Task Force, the ruling party in the Solomon Islands in 2019 during the diplomatic shift from Taiwan to China, which is The Ownership, Unity, and Responsibility Party, and the personality and background of the Solomon Islands Prime Minister, Manasseh Sogavare. These external and internal

factors are the reasons for the change in the Solomon Islands' foreign policy. This led to severing diplomatic ties with Taiwan and the switch to China in 2019.

The author's recommendation for using Gideon Rose's Neoclassical Realism theory is that this theory is adept at explaining the reasons behind a country's foreign policy formation. According to Gideon Rose, foreign policy is shaped not only by external factors (systemic incentives) but also influenced by the domestic factors of that country. When analyzed using this theory, nations act due to external factors and receive responses from domestic policymakers (intervening variables), which then serve as a reference in determining the nation's strategy in the international arena. However, the author believes it's essential to elucidate which variables, external (systemic incentives) or internal (domestic factors), dominate a country's foreign policy.

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