

10 PACIFIC ISLAND NATIONS REJECT CHINA SECURITY PACT

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: Effect of policies and politics of developed & developing countries on India's interests

Wang Yi

Ten Pacific island nations rebuffed China's push for a wide-ranging regional security pact on Monday, amid worries the proposal was designed to pull them into Beijing's orbit.

Talks in Fiji between Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and leaders from the small island nations failed to reach an agreement, in a high-profile diplomatic setback for Beijing.

China is offering to radically ramp up its activities in the South Pacific, directly challenging the influence of the United States and its allies in the strategically vital region. The proposed pact would see Beijing train Pacific island police, become involved in cybersecurity, expand political ties, conduct sensitive marine mapping and gain greater access to natural resources on land and in the water.

As an enticement, Beijing is offering millions of dollars in financial aid, the prospect of a potentially lucrative China-Pacific islands free trade agreement and access to China's vast market.

Behind the scenes, Pacific leaders have voiced deep misgivings about the offer.

In a recent letter to fellow leaders, David Panuelo, the President of the Federated States of Micronesia, warned the offer was "disingenuous" and would "ensure Chinese influence in government" and "economic control" of key industries. A more soft-spoken rebuke came after the talks, when leaders said they could not agree to Beijing's proposed "Common Development Vision" due to a lack of regional consensus.

"As always, we put consensus first," co-host and Fijian Prime Minister Frank Bainimarama said, indicating that broad accord would be needed before inking any "new regional agreements".

Papua New Guinea, Samoa and the Federated States of Micronesia were said to be among those concerned about the proposals, along with Taiwan-recognising Palau, which was not invited.

Speaking from Suva, Mr. Wang made the face-saving announcement that the 10 countries had agreed to memorandums of understanding on China's "Belt and Road" initiative. The two sides will "continue to have ongoing and in-depth discussions and consultations to shape more consensus on cooperation", he said, urging those worried by Beijing's intentions not to be "too anxious and don't be too nervous".

[Our code of editorial values](#)

END

CrackIAS.com