

Australia Is Attempting to “Contain” China

By [Andrew Korybko](#)

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Australia is attempting to tighten its vise-grip of control over the South Pacific island nation of Vanuatu.

The tiny nation has sought to strategically liberate itself in recent years by realigning closer to China as a means of “balancing” out Australia’s excessive influence, but the rapid success of this policy fed into [fake news fears](#) from two months ago that the People’s Republic was planning to build a secret military base there just a few hours’ flight from the Australian coast. In hindsight, this was a carefully crafted signal designed to send the message that Vanuatu must immediately cease its “balancing” strategy with China and return to the Australian hegemonic fold, which has since seen the two lopsided “partners” [negotiate a prospective military deal](#) during Prime Minister Charlot Salwai’s trip earlier this week to Canberra.

It’s too early to tell whether Vanuatu has folded or not, but this development allows one to obtain a deeper understanding of Australia’s intended role in the [New Cold War](#). As part of the so-called “Quad” together with the US, Japan, and India, it’s widely assumed that the continent-sized nation will inevitably carry out anti-Chinese “containment” functions in one capacity or another, with it now becoming apparent that these efforts will center on [the South Pacific islands](#) within [Australia’s historic “sphere of influence”](#) that China has recently made enormous headway in. Naturally, the Australian public needs a galvanizing rallying cry for recommitting to this region, which is why the country is emulating the West’s anti-Russian witch hunt in attempting to do the same with China.

Canberra passed a “[foreign agents law](#)” late last year that’s very similar to the one that the US has in effect, thereby “securitizing” legitimate economic concerns among its citizenry in order to manufacture geopolitical tensions that could then be exploited for the regional strategic ends that Washington wants. It should be reminded that the US’ “[Lead From Behind](#)” paradigm of adapting its unipolar Washington Consensus to the irreversible multipolar trends of recent years envisions delegating ambitious leadership responsibilities to its regional partners who have a self-interested stake in preserving the US-led system of International Relations. Just as the US behaves as the “big brother” in Latin America, so too does it want India to do the same in South Asia, Japan in East & Southeast Asia, [France](#) in Africa, and Australia in the South Pacific.

On the topic of France, Macron recently travelled to the South Pacific in an attempt to [reassert his country as a regional power there](#) via its colonial-era territorial holdings, thus encouraging Australia to be equally assertive given that it was led to believe that it could rely on France for support. This probably contributed to Australia reassessing all Chinese Silk

Road infrastructure projects in its “backyard” as having dual military uses in possibly threatening to sever the Sea Lines Of Communication (SLOC) between it and the US one day, a misleading narrative that relies too much on prevailing stereotypes from the old paradigm of International Relations to scare the public into going along with the [US’ anti-Chinese “containment” policy](#).

China doesn’t need to build bases in the South Pacific and risk militarily provoking the US and Australia when it can just continue employing economic and financial means to expand its regional influence. Without offering a developmental model that respects the South Pacific nations as equal partners, neither Western Great Power will be able to sustainably compete with China here, though that explains why they’re resorting to aggressive strategies that emphasize the military dimension over the economic one in order to intimidate these countries into submission. This approach might yield the short-term results that Australia and its allies are looking for, but it risks alienating its neighbors in the medium- to long-terms and predisposing their people even more to Chinese influence.

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Andrew Korybko is an American Moscow-based political analyst specializing in the relationship between the US strategy in Afro-Eurasia, China’s One Belt One Road global vision of New Silk Road connectivity, and Hybrid Warfare. He is a frequent contributor to Global Research.

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Articles by: [Andrew Korybko](#)

About the author:

Andrew Korybko est le commentateur politique étasunien qui travaille actuellement pour l’agence Sputnik. Il est en troisième cycle de l’Université MGIMO et auteur de la monographie Guerres hybrides: l’approche adaptative indirecte pour un changement de régime(2015).

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