

The 2019 Elections: Electoral Quality, Political Inequality and the Flames of Frustration in Honiara

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Abstract

The 2019 general elections in Solomon Islands were the country's tenth since it became an independent country. The elections were relatively well-run, and free of violence. However, shortly after the elections, when the prime minister was announced, rioting erupted in Honiara, the country's capital. In this paper, I describe the elections themselves before looking at election results. I then explain how comparatively peaceful elections led to riots. My central arguments are that the assistance provided by foreign aid, combined with fluid political dynamics and checks and balances within the electoral system itself, contributed to reasonably well-run elections. At the same time, political inequality is rising in Solomon Islands. And the nature of electoral politics in Solomon Islands leads to poor political governance. Poor governance, in turn, contributed to the frustrations that spilled over into riots after the prime minister was announced in 2019.

Keywords: Elections; Solomon Islands; Political violence; 2017 elections; The Pacific

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