

Von der Ressource zum Ressourcenkonflikt? Rohstoffreichtum, Umweltverschmutzung und schwache Staatlichkeit in Melanesien

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Summary

The Melanesian area is characterized by both a high level of cultural and political heterogeneity and an abundance of resources. In many cases, state structures are weak and the state is scarcely functional. Even more importantly, the traditional big man-system supports corruption and prevents effective nation-building. With these facts in mind, this article overhauls the resource-curse thesis and examines the role of resources in Melanesian conflicts. Using West Papua, Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands and New Caledonia as comparative examples, it highlights the similar conditions but different outcomes in these countries. While West Papua, Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands can be considered weak political units, New Caledonia is performing quite well. The author suggests that the reason for this discrepancy might be New Caledonia's functioning state; thus, the meaning of resource abundance is secondary. Regarding the Melanesian conflicts, the author concludes that resources are not the original cause of conflicts but that they strongly support already existing conflicts. Alternatively, if a strong political framework is provided by state or non-state actors, resource abundance supports cooperation.

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„The problem with these Pacific states is not so much that they are prone to falling apart, but rather that they have never really been put together“ (Finin/Wesley-Smith 2000:6).

1 Einleitung

Die Inselstaaten des Pazifiks tauchen in den hiesigen Medien bestenfalls als touristisch attraktive Randnotiz auf. Dass das vermeintliche „Paradies“ schon lange keine Konfliktextklave mehr ist, wird hingegen kaum thematisiert. Putsche in Fiji, Unruhen in Tonga sowie schwache bis kollabierende Staaten in Papua-Neuguinea (PNG), den Salomonen und Nauru beschreiben jedoch eine andere, konfliktrichtige Realität. Dabei ist es offensichtlich, dass es vor allem die vergleichsweise rohstoffreichen Staaten Melanesiens sind, die zumindest von einer ausgeprägten Instabilität und zum Teil von gewalttätigen Konflikten geprägt sind. In diesem Beitrag soll untersucht werden, ob Instabilitäten und Konflikte auf der Insel Neuguinea und in den anderen