

Scott Morrison brushes off Turnbull's embassy warning (Sunday Herald Sun 3 Nov)



Prime Minister Scott Morrison insists any decision to move Australia's embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem must be done on our own terms. Speaking after a meeting with Indonesian President Joko Widodo, former leader Malcolm Turnbull warned his successor the embassy move could prompt a 'negative reaction' from Australia's Muslim majority neighbour. Mr Morrison says he is listening to concerns but maintains Australia needs to set its own foreign policy agenda. Image: Kym Smith / News Corp Australia

Andrew Bolt, Herald Sun
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MALCOLM Turnbull's rage was almost funny when it was just the Morrison Government he was smashing. But now the former prime minister's spite is damaging Australia internationally, not least by encouraging Indonesia to meddle in our business.

It was always a lousy idea for new Prime Minister Scott Morrison to ask Turnbull to represent him in talks with Indonesian President Joko Widodo. Sure, Morrison hoped that a flattered Turnbull would not trash the Liberals for having sacked him two months ago, but that fundamentally misread Turnbull's character.

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Turnbull was abandoned by his mother as a child and takes rejection very hard. When he fell out with billionaire Kerry Packer over a joint business deal, he secretly shopped him to authorities. When voters in 1999 said no to the republic pushed by Turnbull's Australian Republican Movement, he raged that monarchist John Howard was the "prime minister who broke this nation's heart".

When the Liberals sacked him as leader in 2009, Turnbull voted against them on global warming and revealed private conversations with successor Tony Abbott in which Abbott allegedly confessed he was a "bit of a weather vane on this".

Turnbull was never going to go quietly. He quit his seat early to cause a by-election the Liberals would struggle to win and pointedly refused to lift a finger to help them. But that bastardry is nothing to what Turnbull did this week in Indonesia.

Remember, he was there to represent Morrison — but rather than represent Australia's views to Indonesia, he represented Indonesia's views to Australia.

Two weeks ago, Morrison said he was open to moving our Israel embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, defying Palestinian demands that we not recognise Israel's capital. But Turnbull, while representing Morrison, declared this a terrible idea.

He said he, himself, had concluded our embassy "should remain exactly the same as it is" and Indonesia's Muslim President "expressed to me ... very serious concern" about moving it to Jerusalem. That is astonishing. Morrison's representative has sided with Indonesia against our own PM. Worse, he's implicitly endorsed Indonesia's right to influence, even determine, where Australia places its embassy in a friendly nation.

Indonesia now knows it has an ally in Turnbull who takes their side and has the Morrison Government cowering before him. That's bad for Australia.