COMMENTARY

Shifting Security Narratives in Oceania

Pacific Island Countries and the "New Pacific Diplomacy"

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Abstract

There are two different understandings of *security* in the Pacific region. While Pacific Island countries (PIC) are concerned with nontraditional security threats such as climate change, their traditional security partner, Australia, appears to be more concerned about the influence on the region of powers external to the Pacific. These two distinct narratives underpin various ways of analyzing the security challenges facing the region and understanding the interests at stake. This article demonstrates that under the "new Pacific diplomacy," PICs intend to enhance their autonomy and influence in the Pacific region, as Australia appears to be out of sync with its island neighbors. Using frame analysis, this article seeks to challenge narratives that present PICs as spectators of their future and demonstrate that they instead use their climate-change activism as a strategy not only to appear as a unified "sea of islands" but also to question and change existing power relations between PICs and the rest of the world. To demonstrate how PICs use the new Pacific diplomacy to promote their autonomy, influence, and conceptualization of security in the Pacific region, three interrelated cases will be analyzed: the promotion of a new narrative on the conceptualization of security in the Pacific through the new Pacific diplomacy; the use of the Blue Pacific narrative as a strategic tool to challenge the global narrative on the islands and to manifest their agency; and the influence of the new Pacific diplomacy on the relationship between PICs and Australia.

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When analyzing security challenges in the Pacific region, we notice two different security paradigms. While Pacific Island countries (PIC)[1] are concerned with nontraditional security threats such as climate change, partners such as Australia and the United States appear to be concerned with the influence in the region of powers external to the Pacific. These two distinct narratives underpin various ways of analyzing the security challenges facing the region and understanding the interests at stake. As Canberra and Washington seem to be out of sync with their island neighbors, PICs have been increasingly assertive in promoting their interests in regional and global arenas.[2]

Taking advantage of the changing geopolitical environment, in 2009, the PICs devised the "new Pacific diplomacy"—a way for the island states to find their voice and assert themselves on the regional and international stages. The new

Pacific diplomacy is understood as the third wave of Pacific regionalism.[3] This approach maintains a people-centered lens and Pacific control of the regional agenda, fosters wider political engagement, and builds and strengthens new and existing diplomatic ties. The new Pacific diplomacy is also a response to the failures of existing regional institutions to address issues such as climate change. For example, the Pacific Island Forum (PIF) is seen as one such instance where the interests of Australia and New Zealand prevail, to the detriment of the islands' interests, notably on climate diplomacy regarding carbon emissions targets.[4]

When associated with the issue of climate change, PICs tend to be framed by larger neocolonial Western hegemonic narratives. They are portrayed as helpless victims whose only solution to survive is to migrate.[5] With their fate being redirected from their hands by global narratives, Pacific peoples are presented as spectators of their future rather than actors capable of shaping their fates.[6] However, the implementation of the new Pacific diplomacy reflects a different reality. PICs have agency and can come together—despite their differences—to promote their interests on the global stage and shift the balance of power in the Pacific region.[7] These states are also capable of influencing the foreign policy of their two most important partners in terms of aid and security: Australia and New Zealand. A case in point is the recognition of PICs' climate diplomacy as a key driver of the 2015 Paris Agreement, largely thanks to the Marshall Islands, which fostered and led a global High Ambition Coalition that secured the Paris Agreement.[8] Some other successes include unprecedented financial returns from tuna access agreements and the United Nation's redesignation of French Polynesia as a non-self--governing territory in 2013.[9]

Recognizing these developments, this article aims to explore the following questions: How do the PICs intend to enhance their autonomy and influence in the Pacific region under the new Pacific diplomacy, and how are existing power relations between the PICs and the rest of the world changing?

An Expanded Concept of Security

The new Pacific diplomacy is perceived as a "paradigm shift" in ideas about the organization of Pacific diplomacy and the principles on which it should operate. The concept can be defined as "a heightened Pacific voice in global affairs and a new commitment to establishing Pacific Island control of this diplomatic process, . . . the establishment of new channels and arenas for Pacific diplomacy at the regional and global levels, and new ways of connecting the two levels through active use of intermediate diplomatic associations."[10]

According to Greg Fry and Sandra Tarte, *Pacific diplomacy* should be understood as:

> the diplomacy pursued by Pacific states in global forums, or in multilateral arenas in which the Pacific bloc is negotiating with just one external power . . . This includes negotiations within the Pacific group to determine joint positions to be taken to global talks. It refers to their engagement in the joint negotiation of such matters as trade, sustainable development, climate change, nuclear issues, decolonisation, and fisheries. [It] include[s] the diplomatic activity concerned with establishing the diplomatic institutions in which regional diplomacy is carried out and a Pacific joint position is negotiated. Finally, [are] include[d] . . . the accepted principles, norms and practices which underpin regional diplomacy and might be usefully described as constituting a regional diplomatic culture.[11]

Figure 1. Map of cultural areas of the Pacific. (Source: CartoGIS, College of Asia and the Pacific, The Australian National University.)

There is no consensus on why regional politics have changed in the Pacific. While some contend it is due to the rise of China and the growing interest of new external players, others focus on the role of Fiji's diplomacy following its suspension from the PIF in 2009.[12] Conversely, another view asserts that the new Pacific diplomacy is a response to failures of regional institutions to address development issues that directly affect Pacific countries.[13] Finally, some commentaries emphasize a desire for greater autonomy.[14] Sandra Tarte, an associate professor at the University of the South Pacific, contends it is the interaction of all the aforementioned forces and discourse of change that caused the new regional dynamic.[15] She notably emphasizes the discontent of a growing number

of PICs with the established regional order, as well as a desire to assert greater control over their future. Consequently, PICs use alternative regional frameworks to create relations that more closely align with their interests, especially on the issue of climate change.[16]

The PICs perceive climate change as their main security threat.[17] Because of their geography, most Pacific islands are prone to endure the greatest impacts of climate change, which contributes to the degradation of critical ecosystems and, thus, in turn affects social and economic systems.[18] Vulnerable to environmental change due to the lack of flexibility and/or diversity of their economies, the PICs will witness increased human mobility and outward migration.[19]

The necessity to deal with climate change is well emphasized in the new Pacific diplomacy through a human security narrative that departs from regional powers' focus on traditional security threats.[20] Despite PICs' heterogeneity in terms of histories, identities, cultures, and politics as well as their responses to environmental challenges and pressures, we witness that all Pacific islanders have deep-rooted cultural and spiritual relationships with land and sea—thus, a common interest to protect them. Accordingly, we notice the construction of a strategic narrative about a region "united in a common Pacific stance to keep 'climate change very high up on global political agenda'."[21] The narrative of an expanded concept of security in the Pacific region is promoted through the Boe Declaration on Regional Security. Endorsed in 2018 by *all* PIF members, during the 49th Pacific Island Forum in Nauru, the Boe Declaration emphasizes climate change and human security, rather than geopolitical threats. It reflects PICs' concern with nontraditional security threats, thus enshrining a new conceptualization of regional security that understands human security as its conceptual basis.[22] The preamble highlights what can be expected from the declaration, with forum leaders recognizing the importance placed on an expanded concept of security inclusive of human security, humanitarian assistance, prioritizing environmental security and regional cooperation in building resilience to disasters and climate change, including through regional cooperation and support as well as recognizing the need to strengthen regional security cooperation and collective action through the assertion of *Our Will* and the voices of *Our Pacific Peoples*. [23]

The emphasis on an expanded concept of security primarily reflects the concerns of Pacific island nations, with priority being given to environmental security and regional cooperation to better fight the effects of climate change. Climate change is presented as the single greatest threat to the region. To find such a statement in a regional security declaration is both new and significant and reflects a desire to redefine security issues in the Pacific to promote PICs' interests.[24] Leaders do acknowledge that "an increasingly complex regional security environment

driven by multifaceted security challenges" is leading to "an increasingly crowded and complex region."[25] This is, however, not their main priority. Overall, the declaration is a communicative tool through which PICs leaders intend to give determined meaning to the future to achieve their political objectives. It represents a significant readjustment of the PIF's interests to mirror those of its island member states as well as a reminder to Australia that PICs do not always share the same security preoccupations.[26]

The Blue Pacific Narrative

Through their commitment to take concrete action on climate change and put their agenda on the global stage, Pacific leaders intend to challenge the traditional narratives on the islands and their populations. Their agency, resilience, and capacity are being denied by these narratives, even though their experiences dealing with natural disasters, sudden environmental change, and exchanges between islands have provided them with a wide range of approaches to adapt to and mitigate against environmental change.[27] Pacific leaders seek to foster a new narrative whereby their populations are recognized as capable agents who can contribute to the development and implementation of much-needed solutions. As a result, the new Pacific diplomacy promotes a narrative that frames Pacific islanders as *warriors* connected through a "sea of islands," fighting for their survival in their own way.[28]

Endorsed by the PIF in 2017, the Blue Pacific narrative is a counternarrative to traditional conceptions of Pacific regionalism and a strategy to counter the dominance of global powers in the region.[29] It intends to "call for inspired leadership and a long-term foreign policy commitment to act as one "Blue Continent."[30]

As a narrative, the Blue Pacific places the Pacific Ocean at the center of the Pacific island nations' identities and interconnections. The Pacific Ocean has, indeed, the specificity of connecting the Pacific islands and their peoples and is thus considered to be "the foundation for collective regional identity and cooperation."[31] This frame tells stories of empowerment and "large ocean states" and deliberately seeks to challenge colonial depictions of the Pacific.[32] Former Secretary-General of the PIF, Dame Meg Taylor, explained in 2018 that Pacific island leaders were "embracing a narrative of identity, a narrative of our own strengths, rather than always giving this sentiment that has been articulated for us, that we are just these smatterings of islands in the Pacific and that we are totally incapable of doing anything for ourselves."[33] The Blue Pacific narrative brings PICs together under the same oceanic identity that allows them to work together as an ocean continent to pursue their joint interests in the international arena.[34] As a result, they find their regional solidarity strengthened and can amplify their voice and influence on the global stage as "one middle-size power."[35]

As a strategy, the Blue Pacific facilitates assertive Pacific diplomacy and empowers PICs.[36] This means, among other things, resisting the dominance of key players in the region. A case in point is the 2013 establishment of the Pacific Islands Development Forum (PIDF), a regional organization that excludes both Australia and New Zealand, while it "promotes inclusiveness of state and non--state entities in regional discussions."[37] This exclusion is not surprising, as its implementation is an expression of Pacific island nations' dissatisfaction and disappointment with the prevailing regional order.[38] Accordingly, we notice that through the PIDF and under the auspices of the Blue Pacific, PICs have taken leadership on climate change and other issues important to them.[39] The Blue Pacific empowers PICs by giving them agency to frame their own narratives, allowing them to assert their sovereignty. It includes their security interests and helps them achieve their political objectives.

"Friends to All"

There is a growing perception in the region that Pacific regionalism has not delivered.[40] Consequently, PICs use alternative regional frameworks to create new approaches to the challenges facing them. They are opening the way for closer relations with alternative powers, thus curbing Australia's previously preeminent influence.[41] Having access to fewer conditional sources of aid means that Pacific governments enjoy greater leverage internally as well as internationally.[42] As the power relation between PICs and their foreign partners evolves, PICs are faced with opportunities to influence and affect the regional order, in agreement with their interests and objectives, and to balance against Australia.[43] This means, among other things, deepening diplomatic relationships with China.

To secure the Blue Pacific, PIF leaders "seek genuine partnerships with all actors who are willing to join [them] along the pathway towards that vision."[44] The strategic narrative includes partnerships within the Pacific region and beyond and a "friends to all, enemies to none" approach commonly accepted and promoted by Forum leaders. Consequently, deepening the relationship between China and PICs is perceived as an opportunity and a positive development by most leaders in the Pacific. As stated by Dame Meg Taylor, China's increased actions in the region are seen as an occasion to choose from greater options for financing and development opportunities.[45] Furthermore, China is synonymous with access, whether it is to markets, technology, financing, or infrastructure. Consequently, Papua New Guinea, Fiji, and Samoa are upgrading their bilateral relations with China "to comprehensive strategic partnerships featuring mutual respect and common development" and insist on their right to do so.[46] This can be partly explained by the fact that Beijing describes itself as a friend that does not judge its

partners and does not seek to interfere in the internal affairs of recipient countries.[47] The Chinese government provides PICs with preferential loans, untied aid, and budget support. Presented as a form of "South-South cooperation" supposedly beneficial for both sides, the "no strings" provisions attached to aid packages mean that there is no particular governance or political "conditionalities" to obtain them.[48] Nonetheless, observers have pointed out that Beijing provides loans, aid, and assistance with infrastructure projects to governments that recognize China over Taiwan and prefer to expand economic opportunities for Chinese companies within states that already recognize Beijing.[49] This contradicts the supposed unconditionality of Beijing's aid packages. Still, PICs demonstrate a clear understanding of the challenges arising from China's interests and approaches in the region. They emphasize that the Chinese relationship is solely transactional to them. China's engagement in the Pacific represents an opportunity for PICs, as Australia and other regional powers respond competitively to Chinese support by pledging unprecedented levels of aid and investment.[50]

Pacific Island Countries and Australia

Due to historical factors and its geographic location, Australia has long been engaged in the South Pacific region. Considering the Pacific as its backyard, Australia believes it has a "special responsibility" for the region.[51]

Canberra has been acknowledged as the regional hegemon as well as the PICs' traditional and indispensable security partner. This translates into being the main aid donor of island countries, having strong trade and investment links, and promoting deep security cooperation efforts.[52] Additionally, Canberra is extremely proactive when it is necessary to provide humanitarian assistance and relief to its neighbors.[53] In contrast, it is commonly argued that Australia has completely misunderstood its place in the region.[54] Its engagement is frequently reoriented toward the Pacific but also regularly distracted from the region, which leads to incoherent and inconsistent policies.[55] Unilateral in nature, the relationship between Australia and its neighbors is driven by Canberra's own security concerns. Australian strategic narratives in the region have been founded on the concepts of vulnerability and weakness and the danger of the collapse of the state.[56]

While Australia's influence is assured in the medium term, thanks to Canberra's position as a prominent aid donor—it is also waning because most Australian policy makers are too slow in acknowledging the changing interests and needs of PICs. It is argued that Australia fails to recognize the threat posed by climate change in the Pacific because Canberra is motivated by a more traditional security approach to the challenges the region faces.[57] The Australian approach reflects a commitment to preserve and promote the rules-based international order to con-

tain China's growing influence in the region, to fight terrorism and transnational organized crime, and to protect its borders from external threats.[58] Thus, when Australia provides humanitarian assistance and relief to countries affected by natural disasters, it is because Canberra fears these countries will become destabilized, potentially leading to increased migratory movements to Australia.[59] Australia's tendency to take advantage of Pacific nations to fulfill its own strategic interests works to Canberra's disadvantage as it exacerbates the frustration and anger PICs feel toward their partner.[60]

A Chinese Threat?

The relations between Pacific nations and China seem to challenge Australia's understanding of PICs. Pacific states have proved to be more assertive under the auspices of the new Pacific diplomacy, which made Canberra realize the Pacific is more independent than it thought. Pacific islands are sovereign agents that can pursue the diplomatic relations they want. For Australian policy makers, this also means Australia could potentially "lose" the Pacific to China.

Canberra views the PICs' relations with China unfavorably. Indeed, Australian policy makers believe the rise of China will likely lead to a new form of Cold War.[61] Moreover, Australia is afraid of China's influence in its backyard as Beijing's growing role poses a supposed threat and seeks to influence the Pacific to suit its own interests. The 2017 *Foreign Policy White Paper* emphasizes "China's growing influence on the regional and global issues of greatest consequence to our security and prosperity."[62] As such, Australia intends to contain China and push back its influence in Oceania to remain the regional hegemon.[63] Canberra tends to imply that the Chinese presence in the Pacific is not solely motivated by economic assistance.[64] The Australian discourse regarding these relations also frames Pacific states as "passive collaborators or victims of a new wave of colonialism," "naïve," and unable to resist China.[65] This type of framing pushes Pacific islands to seek out different partners and to balance against regional powers. Caught in its own narrative, Canberra is constraining future options in its relationship with PICs.

"Stepping Up" in the Pacific

In fear of becoming irrelevant in the Pacific, Australia is seeking to boost its engagement in the region.[66] A good example of this apparent renewed interest is the Pacific Step-up. Envisioned in 2016 by then Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull as a "step-change" in relations with Pacific states, it was also a key objective of the 2017 *Foreign Policy White Paper*. Announced by former Prime

Minister Scott Morrison in late 2018, the Pacific Step-up was presented as one of Australia's highest foreign policy priorities. Its goal is to cement relations with Pacific island states and bind them to Australia while containing China's influence.[67] In the words of former Prime Minister Morrison, it aims to launch a "new chapter in relations with our Pacific family" and to "build a region that is secure strategically, stable economically and sovereign politically."[68] Put differently, its goal is to "engage with the Pacific with greater intensity and ambition."[69] The vocabulary used in documents and discourses that mention the Step-up features a striking claim to inclusiveness. There is no "us" versus "them" anymore but "we" and mentions of a "Pacific family" and "enduring partnerships."[70] The strategic narrative used here aims to emphasize the similarities between Australia and PICs, their historical links, past and present, and the future ahead to try to regain the trust of Pacific leaders. Interestingly, climate change is not framed as a common struggle but as an issue "of greatest concern to them [PICs],"[71] highlighting continued dichotomies with regards to perceptions of security concerns.

The Step-up is also said to "respond to and recognise the broad-ranging challenges of our region, identified by Pacific leaders and communities themselves, including: strengthening climate and disaster resilience; sustained economic growth; and support to promote healthy, educated, inclusive population."[72] Climate change and natural disasters are acknowledged as one of the four long-term challenges of the region. However, the Step-up does not detail the measures taken to support PICs in their fight against climate change. Here lies the biggest issue for Australia. Despite being PICs' preferred partner, Canberra fails to exercise leadership on climate change in its diplomatic, aid, or security planning—hence in achieving legitimacy for its Step-up.[73] Australia's passive stance on climate change and its production and exportation of coal and gas play a significant role in its continued estrangement from PICs.[74] Unless Australia changes its climate policies, the Step-up risks being undermined by said policies. One final problem with the current operation of the Step-up is that it completely ignores the new Pacific diplomacy and willfully overlooks PICs' agency and desire to assert their own values and concerns under the vision of the Blue Pacific.[75] It contributes to the perception that the Step-up was conceived as an external and unilateral initiative "done for or to the Pacific, not with it."[76] If Australia really seeks to counter China's influence, it will likely require a more collaborative approach that positions Canberra as part of the regional bloc, not outside of it.

Pacific Island Countries and the United States

The American presence in the Pacific region has been limited to Micronesia where the United States and Freely Associated States (FAS)—the Republic of

the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, and Palau—hold a special relationship since the implementation of the Compacts of Free Association.[77] US presence is mostly nonexistent in Melanesia and Polynesia, as Washington relies heavily on Australia and New Zealand to promote US interests and provide security and aid assistance in these two cultural areas. Yet, as PICs are turning to different partners, the United States is reassessing its engagement in the region. It has been doing so since 2011 and the Obama administration's Pivot to Asia. The Trump and Biden administrations have also reassessed US commitment under the Pacific Pledge and the Indo-Pacific Strategy, respectively.

The Obama administration's Pivot to Asia policy showed a renewed interest in the Asia-Pacific region after decades of policy focus and engagement in Europe and the Middle East. Although the initiative was motivated by China's growing influence, it raised a lot of expectations in the Pacific. Some efforts were made, such as sending then Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to the 2012 PIF Post-Forum Dialogue—a first.[78] Secretary John Kerry met with Pacific Islands leaders on several occasions through the United Nations. He also visited the Solomon Islands in 2014 following devastating floods in the archipelago. Then President Barack Obama also met and exchanged with Pacific Islands leaders at multiple international and regional fora.[79] Most importantly, he acknowledged the cruciality of the Pacific diplomacy when he met with Pacific leaders in Hawai'i in 2016, declaring that "we could not have gotten a Paris Agreement without the incredible efforts and hard work of the island nations."[80] Discussions were held on climate change and its impacts on PICs, security, and conservation of maritime resources during the Obama administration, which provided a sense of understanding of PICs' main challenges. Nevertheless, the United States' commitment to the Pacific was mostly superficial and eventually failed to deliver.

The Trump administration did not depart from Washington's newly found attention to the Pacific. It strengthened its engagement in the region through the implementation of the Pacific Pledge of the *Indo-Pacific Strategy*. In 2019, following the 50th PIF meeting, the United States government announced more than USD 100 million in new US assistance to the region. A year later, Washington announced more than USD 200 million in new funding.[81] The Pacific Pledge was seen as a positive way for the United States to renew its engagement at the regional level and maintain its influence with PICs. Although the funding was allocated to several PICs situated in the South Pacific, FAS remained more privileged. The efforts of the Trump administration were thwarted by the government's climate denial and Trump's decision to withdraw the United States from the Paris Agreement as well as his inflammatory remarks on China.

The Biden administration also recognizes the strategic importance of the Pacific region. Under the *Indo-Pacific Strategy*,[82] Washington acknowledges the security risks climate change poses to PICs and seeks to foster a free and open region, at the same time connected, prosperous, secure, and resilient. To do so, the United States aims to upgrade its presence in PICs, notably through increased investments in its health, climate, security, and development work, the opening of embassies and consulates, and the strengthening of existing ones. Secretary of State Antony Blinken's visit to Fiji in February 2022—a first in 36 years—was organized to show the United States cares about the Pacific and is a Pacific nation.[83] It should be noted, however, that Washington primarily seeks to advance its interests under the *Indo-Pacific Strategy* and that it is mainly a tool to counter China's growing influence in the region while cooperating with Beijing in areas like climate change and nonproliferation, two important issues for PICs. Furthermore, because the *Indo-Pacific Strategy* is designed to encompass both the Indian and Pacific Oceans, the strategy only introduces on the surface how the United States plans to improve its engagement. Even though this is an Indo-*Pacific* strategy (emphasis added), there is little explanation on how the United States intends to engage more with PICs. If the Biden administration really aspires to become a reliable partner, it will have to show a genuine interest in the security issues PICs face rather than in the regional security threats that could affect the United States.

What is striking in the discourse of these three administrations is the lack of consideration for Pacific nations' interests and values. Indeed, on the one hand, Washington's renewed interest in the Pacific is motivated by China's rising influence and the threat Beijing might pose to US interests in the region. As such, the United States appears to be more concerned with deepening military cooperation with PICs to prevent a Chinese military intrusion in the Pacific. Washington's use of the "China threat in the South Pacific" rhetoric denies the PICs' agency and knowledge of their needs by qualifying their partner as a danger, which is not how Pacific Island leaders regard Beijing. On the other hand, tying the PICs to the wider Indo-Pacific region makes them somehow irrelevant while showing a lack of understanding of PICs' specificities. There is a risk that the distinctive norms, ideas, and values of Pacific regionalism will be downplayed by framing the Pacific and Indian Oceans as a unique strategic system.[84] Furthermore, the Indo-Pacific geopolitical construct frames the South Pacific as a theater for great-power rivalry in which PICs are relegated to the role of pawns in a great-power competition. This framing overlooks the work PICs have been doing under the new Pacific diplomacy.

Pacific Island leaders have welcomed American reengagement in the region. It is a "new" player they can partner with on different issues, offering them more options in terms of diplomatic relations. However, they remain cautious and keep seeing Washington as an unreliable partner. If the United States wants to become relevant in the Pacific, it will have to engage more closely with all Pacific Island states, respect PICs' diplomatic relations and sovereignty, understand the challenges they face, and prove to island leaders Washington will remain involved in the region in the long-term.

Conclusion

This article aimed to demonstrate how PICs use the new Pacific diplomacy to promote their autonomy, influence, and conceptualization of security in the Pacific region. It finds that PICs have the capacity to come together as one to push their agenda and interests on the regional and global scenes. They strategically expanded the security narrative in the Pacific to promote climate change as the main security threat. As such, they successfully pushed for the Boe Declaration to be signed by *all* PIF members, without interference in the wording of the final communique and the declaration. The Blue Pacific narrative serves as a tool to counter-narrate Pacific regionalism as well as a strategy to counter the dominance of key powers in the region. It allows PICs to contest the frames traditionally associated with the Pacific and provides them with more agency. The latter is asserted through the intensification of their diplomatic relations with powers such as China. Furthermore, thanks to the new Pacific diplomacy, Australia is adapting its engagement in the Pacific with the implementation of the Pacific Step-up in 2018, while the United States is renewing its engagement in the region through several policies. However, Canberra and Washington, both focused on a traditional security narrative, seem to overlook the new Pacific diplomacy and appear to bypass PICs' agency. Indeed, these would-be hegemons respective policies reflect their security concerns, which do not coincide with PICs' primary security issues. Lastly, if the new Pacific diplomacy is a platform for more agency, assertiveness, and influence for Pacific nations, as demonstrated during the negotiations of the Paris Agreement, it appears to lack the required political power to strongly influence the policies of powers such as Australia and the United States and their understanding of nontraditional security threats in the Pacific. ✪

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Notes

1. The list includes the Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, French Polynesia, Kiribati, Nauru, New Caledonia, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Republic of Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu. Australia and New Zealand are traditionally excluded from this list.

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3. Tim Bryar and Anna Naupa, "The Shifting Tides of Pacific Regionalism," *The Round Table* 106, no. 2 (2017): 155–64.

4. Fry and Tarte, "The 'New Pacific Diplomacy.'"

5. Hannah Fair, "Their Sea of Islands?: Pacific Climate Warriors, Oceanic Identities, and World Enlargement," *The Contemporary Pacific* 32, no. 2 (2020): 341–69.

6. Carol Farbotko, "Wishful Sinking: Disappearing Islands, Climate Refugees and Cosmopolitan Experimentation," *Asia Pacific Viewpoint* 51, no. 1 (2010): 47–60; and Carol Farbotko and Heather Lazrus, "The First Climate Refugees? Contesting Global Narratives of Climate Change in Tuvalu," *Global Environmental Change* 22, no. 2 (2012): 382–90.

7. Sandra Tarte, "Regionalism and Changing Regional Order in the Pacific Islands," *Asia & the Pacific Policy Studies* 1 no., 2 (2014): 312–24; Jenny Bryant-Tokalau, "Pacific Responses to and Knowledge of Climate Change," in *Indigenous Pacific Approaches to Climate Change*, ed. Jenny Bryant-Tokelau (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2018), 13-28; and Fair, "Their Sea of Islands?"

8. Anna Naupa, "Indo-Pacific Diplomacy: A View from the Pacific Islands," *Politics & Policy* 45, no. 5 (2017): 902–17; and Wesley Morgan, "Oceans Apart?: Considering the Indo-Pacific and the Blue Pacific," *Security Challenges* 16, no. 1 (2020): 44-64.

9. Fry and Tarte, "The 'New Pacific Diplomacy'."

10. Fry and Tarte, "The 'New Pacific Diplomacy'," 3.

11. Fry and Tarte, "The 'New Pacific Diplomacy'," 5.

12. Fiji's membership was suspended after reneging on its commitment to hold elections following the 2006 military coup. Fiji's suspension was lifted in 2014 after holding its first election in eight years.

13. Fry and Tarte, "The 'New Pacific Diplomacy,'"; Joanne Wallis, "Diplomacy," in *Pacific Power?: Australia's Strategy in the Pacific Islands*, ed. Joanne Wallis (Melbourne: Melbourne University Publishing, 2017), 166–95; and Greg Fry, "Conclusion: Power and Diplomatic Agency in Pacific Regionalism," in *Framing the Islands: Power and Diplomatic Agency in Pacific Regionalism*, ed. Greg Fry (Canberra: ANU Press, 2019), 305–26.

14. Tarte, "Regionalism and Changing Regional Order"; Bryar and Naupa, "The Shifting Tides of Pacific Regionalism"; and Naupa, "Indo-Pacific Diplomacy," 903.

15. Tarte, "Regionalism and Changing Regional Order."

16. Tarte, "Regionalism and Changing Regional Order"; Fry and Tarte, "The 'New Pacific Diplomacy'"; and Michael O'Keefe, "The Strategic Context of the New Pacific Diplomacy," in *The New Pacific Diplomacy*, ed. Greg Fry and Sandra Tarte (Canberra: ANU Press, 2015), 125–36.

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18. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), *Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis. Contribution of Working Group I to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021).

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22. Fry, "Reframing Regional Security in the Post-Cold War Era."

23. Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS), "Annex 1: Boe Declaration on Regional Security," in *Leaders' Communique: Forty-Ninth Pacific Islands Forum Yaren, Nauru, 3–6 September 2018* (Suva: PIFS, 2018), https://www.forumsec.org/.

24. Powles, *The 2018 Boe Declaration on Regional Security*.

25. PIFS, "Annex 1," paragraph II.

26. Powles. *The 2018 Boe Declaration on Regional Security*.

27. Bryant-Tokalau, "Pacific Responses to and Knowledge of Climate Change."

28. Katerina Teaiwa, "Frames. Reframing Oceania: Lessons from Pacific Studies," in *Framing the Global: Entry Points for Research*, ed. Hilary Kahn (Bloomington: Indiana University, 2014), 67–96; and Fair, "Their Sea of Islands?"

29. Kabutaulaka, "Mapping the Blue Pacific in a Changing Regional Order."

30. Morgan, "Oceans Apart?," 59.

31. Kabutaulaka, "Mapping the Blue Pacific in a Changing Regional Order," 50.

32. Kabutaulaka, "Mapping the Blue Pacific in a Changing Regional Order."

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