

Why size doesn't matter: The importance of the Pacific Island states to Taiwan's diplomatic strategy

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Abstract

Of the 13 sovereign states that continue to recognise Taiwan over the People's Republic of China (PRC), four are located in the Pacific, giving the region outsized importance to Taiwan's international diplomatic strategy. This article examines the ways in which Pacific Island states are able to exercise their power through their influence on Taiwan's international standing, due to their role in reaffirming Taiwan's external sovereignty and sustaining its presence on the international stage. This approach emphasises the agency of Pacific Island states in international affairs and challenges the common misconception that Pacific Island states are too small to have a strong influence on global politics. In fact, the article argues that Pacific Island states have been able to leverage their smallness to their advantage, using the issue of diplomatic recognition to create mutually beneficial partnerships with larger states like Taiwan, the PRC, and the United States, and secure a significant role in international affairs.

Introduction

Through its 'One China' policy, the People's Republic of China (PRC) has claimed to be the sole legitimate government of China, preventing other states from establishing concurrent diplomatic relations with both the PRC and its rival claimant Taiwan (officially known as the Republic of China). As a result, Taiwan has faced increasing difficulty maintaining relations with other states, exacerbated by the PRC's growing global influence. This article argues that the Pacific Island states, which comprise a third of Taiwan's diplomatic partners, are therefore of outsized importance to Taiwan's international diplomatic strategy. The first section of this article explains the historical background to the contemporary role of Pacific-Taiwan diplomacy in the politics of the Pacific region. The article then elaborates that, although Pacific Island states provide little material benefit to Taiwan, they represent a critical component of Taiwan's foreign policy because they reaffirm Taiwan's external sovereignty and sustain Taiwan's presence on the international stage. The next section suggests that Pacific Island states in particular are well-suited for Taiwan's diplomatic strategy due to their smallness. While smallness is often perceived as an impediment for states to exert influence on the international stage, this article argues that in the case of the Pacific Island states, it actually facilitates their mutually beneficial relationships with Taiwan, boosting their agency and influence in global affairs. The article concludes by discussing the wider implications of these findings on the study of the role of small states, particularly Pacific Island states, in the international system.

Background

Since the PRC established control of the Chinese mainland in 1949, Taiwan has faced a steady decline in diplomatic recognition as states have changed their official diplomatic policy to recognise the PRC as the legitimate government of China. The PRC, having mostly abandoned its hopes of conquering Taiwan by the early 1960s, has instead pursued a strategy of diplomatically isolating Taiwan to erode

its legitimacy as a nation-state.¹ The gradual shift in diplomatic recognition towards the PRC accelerated following the United Nations' decision in 1971 to expel Taiwan in favour of the PRC as the sole representative of China.² By 1973, 45 per cent of the states that had held diplomatic relations with Taiwan in 1971 had switched their recognition to the PRC.³ Since then, the number of states recognising Taiwan has dwindled further to just 13, with Honduras in March 2023 providing the latest example of a state cutting diplomatic ties with Taiwan in favour of establishing relations with the PRC.

Four of the states that have retained relations with Taiwan—the Marshall Islands, Nauru, Palau, and Tuvalu—are located in the Pacific. Meanwhile, the other eight Pacific Island states—the Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, and Vanuatu—recognise the PRC. This balance in diplomatic recognition in the Pacific has shifted significantly since 2019, when Taiwan and the PRC each held relations with six Pacific Island states. The switch by Solomon Islands and Kiribati to recognise the PRC over Taiwan in 2019 served as a significant blow to Taiwan. In the first place, Solomon Islands and Taiwan had been longstanding diplomatic partners, with their relations beginning in 1983. Kiribati, on the other hand, had previously been diplomatically aligned with the PRC until it switched to recognition of Taiwan in 2003, but its surprise decision to switch back to the PRC provoked fears of a domino effect among the Pacific Island states.

Pacific Island states have had a long history of switching their diplomatic recognition between the PRC and Taiwan. For example, Taiwan's first diplomatic partners in the Pacific, Samoa and Tonga, switched their recognition to the PRC in 1975 and 1998, respectively,⁴ and they have maintained cordial relations with the PRC ever since. Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu have also been longstanding diplomatic partners of the PRC, although both have experienced failed attempts by their leaders to switch diplomatic recognition to Taiwan. Both of these attempts resulted in their leaders being removed from office days later by other members of the government,⁵ demonstrating the prominence of the PRC–Taiwan dispute in the domestic politics of the Pacific Island states. Nauru, meanwhile, has long shown its support for Taiwan, although it recognised the PRC for a short period between 2002 and 2005.

Other Pacific Island states have remained relatively stable in their diplomatic support, and they have developed strong relations with their respective partners. The Marshall Islands, after switching its recognition to Taiwan in 1998, has consistently reaffirmed its continual support for Taiwan despite strong pressure from the PRC to change its position,⁶ as have Palau and Tuvalu, which have maintained close relations with Taiwan since their independence. Fiji, on the other hand, was the first Pacific Island state to establish relations with the PRC in 1975, and it has remained one of the PRC's strongest supporters among the Pacific Island states. The Federated States of Micronesia has also maintained a continuous relationship with the PRC since its independence, although outgoing President David Panuelo urged the government in March 2023 to cut ties with the PRC in favour of Taiwan.⁷ This example emphasises that the diplomatic conflict between the PRC and Taiwan continues to incite controversy and debate in the Pacific Island states, while the Pacific Island states in turn continue to receive significant attention from both sides of the Taiwan Strait.

1 John F Copper, 'Taiwan's Diplomatic Isolation: How Serious a Problem?' *Journal of East Asian Affairs* 6, no. 1 (1992): 204–7, www.jstor.org/stable/23253989.

2 Copper, 'Taiwan's Diplomatic Isolation', 206–8.

3 Copper, 'Taiwan's Diplomatic Isolation', 206.

4 Anthony van Fossen, 'The Struggle for Recognition: Diplomatic Competition between China and Taiwan in Oceania', *Journal of Chinese Political Science* 12, no. 2 (2007): 132, doi.org/10.1007/s11366-007-9008-0.

5 Van Fossen, 'Struggle for Recognition', 134, 138.

6 Ben Blanchard and Robert Birsell, 'Marshall Islands Says "Strongly Committed" to Taiwan Ties', *Reuters*, 22 March 2022, www.reuters.com/world/china/marshall-islands-says-strongly-committed-taiwan-ties-2022-03-22.

7 Kelvin Anthony and Lydia Lewis, "'We Are Witnessing Political Warfare': Micronesia Leader Drops China Bombshell", *Radio New Zealand*, 14 March 2023, www.nz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/485893/we-are-witnessing-political-warfare-micronesia-leader-drops-china-bombshell.

Significance of Taiwan's recognition in the Pacific

While Taiwan's relations with Pacific Island states provide no economic or military advantages, the region's importance to Taiwan's diplomatic strategy is demonstrated through Taiwan's costly aid contributions to the Pacific Islands. In a material sense, Taiwan's diplomatic allies in the Pacific provide very little benefit, accounting for less than 0.002 per cent of Taiwan's exports and imports in 2022.⁸ Taiwan's Pacific partners also possess no military forces, meaning that they do not provide any security benefit to Taiwan, unlike its unofficial relations with the United States.⁹ Yet Taiwan is estimated to have spent more than US\$363 million in development aid to Pacific Island states between 2009 and 2019,¹⁰ and it is the tenth-largest donor to the region.¹¹ These significant financial contributions have often been labelled by international observers as 'chequebook diplomacy', the provision of aid packages in exchange for diplomatic recognition.¹² Regardless of the political motives behind such foreign aid contributions, the volume of economic resources that Taiwan has devoted to the Pacific Islands signals the region's importance to Taiwan's foreign policy.

In addition, diplomacy in the Pacific represents an important element of domestic political discourse in Taiwan. In general, much of the Taiwanese public view Taiwan's aid to the Pacific Islands as expenses wasted on 'poor, small, and black' nations seeking to extort Taiwan's finances.¹³ However, when the issue is framed in relation to geopolitical competition with the PRC, diplomatic recognition becomes a politically salient issue invoking national pride.¹⁴ An example of this is the domestic political impact of Kiribati's switch in recognition from the PRC to Taiwan in 2003. As a notable diplomatic victory for Taiwan, some scholars suggest that it may have contributed to Taiwanese President Chen Shui-bian's re-election the next year, highlighting the importance of diplomatic recognition in Taiwan's domestic politics.¹⁵ Thus, the significant political attention given to Pacific relations in Taiwan indicates the outsized role that Pacific Island states play in Taiwan's international diplomatic strategy.

Diplomatic recognition of Taiwan by Pacific Island states forms a significant aspect of Taiwan's foreign policy because it provides international legitimacy to Taiwan's statehood and symbolically reaffirms Taiwan's sovereignty in an international system that has been increasingly influenced by the PRC. Under most definitions, Taiwan clearly meets the criteria required for internal sovereignty, conventionally defined as state control over a defined territory and a permanent population.¹⁶ However, its lack of formal recognition from most other states undermines its claims of external sovereignty, as determined by its ability to engage in 'normal' relations with other states.¹⁷ As such, Taiwan's current diplomatic allies, including its four Pacific partners, are essential for maintaining its sense of legitimacy as a sovereign state and are therefore central to its international diplomatic strategy.

This issue has become acute with the PRC's increasing global influence and active efforts to erode Taiwan's diplomatic support. By seeking to delegitimise Taiwan's statehood, the PRC has transformed the act of diplomatic recognition into a 'battle for Taiwan'.¹⁸ Since 2016, nine states have switched their recognition from Taiwan to the PRC, while the number of potential diplomatic partners for Taiwan has

8 'Trade Statistics', International Trade Administration, accessed 5 November 2023, cuswebo.trade.gov.tw/FSCE3000C?table=FSCE3010F.

9 Jonathan Pryke, 'Solomons and Kiribati Snub Taiwan for China – Does It Matter?' *Interpreter*, 23 September 2019, www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/solomons-and-kiribati-s-nub-taiwan-china-does-it-matter.

10 'Lowy Institute Pacific Aid Map', Lowy Institute, accessed 19 October 2022, pacificaidmap.lowyinstitute.org.

11 Alexandre Dayant and Jonathan Pryke, 'How Taiwan Competes with China in the Pacific', *Diplomat*, 9 August 2018, thediplomat.com/2018/08/how-taiwan-competes-with-china-in-the-pacific.

12 Timothy S Rich, 'The Importance of Taiwan's Diplomatic Partners in Oceania', *Interpreter*, 31 May 2019, www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/importance-taiwan-s-diplomatic-partners-oceania.

13 Kwei-Bo Huang, 'Taiwan and Its South Pacific Allies', *Interpreter*, 11 December 2017, www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/taiwan-and-its-south-pacific-allies.

14 Timothy S Rich and Andi Dahmer, 'Taiwanese Public Perceptions of Diplomatic Recognition: An Experimental Analysis', *International Journal of Taiwan Studies* 3, no. 2 (2020): 262, doi.org/10.1163/24688800-00302004.

15 Van Fossen, 'Struggle for Recognition', 137.

16 Timothy S Rich and Andi Dahmer, 'Should I Stay or Should I Go? Diplomatic Recognition of Taiwan, 1950–2016', *International Journal of Taiwan Studies* 5, no. 2 (2022): 355–56, doi.org/10.1163/24688800-20221195.

17 Rich and Dahmer, 'Should I Stay', 355–56.

18 Van Fossen, 'Struggle for Recognition', 127.

dwindled,¹⁹ emphasising the increasing importance for Taiwan to retain its remaining allies. As a regional stronghold for Taiwan's diplomatic relations, the Pacific Islands have increasingly become a site of intense competition between the PRC and Taiwan, culminating in the diplomatic switches by Solomon Islands and Kiribati in 2019. Seeking to counter the appeal of Taiwan's aid to its partners in the Pacific, the PRC has provided financial enticements to its own Pacific partners, including more than US\$2.7 billion in aid between 2009 and 2019.²⁰ The attempts by both the PRC and Taiwan to entice Pacific Island states to switch their diplomatic recognition highlights the importance that they place on the Pacific Islands in maintaining Taiwan's international legitimacy as a sovereign state.

Pacific Island states also contribute significantly to Taiwan's diplomatic strategy by speaking on its behalf in international organisations to maintain awareness of Taiwan's political status and sustain Taiwan's relevance on the international stage. Since Taiwan's expulsion from the United Nations in 1971, pressure from the PRC has led to Taiwan being increasingly excluded from international organisations like the World Health Assembly, which revoked Taiwan's observer status in 2017.²¹ Taiwan's exclusion from influential intergovernmental organisations has limited its opportunities to present its own perspectives to a global audience and contribute to international discussion and cooperation on global issues.²² This is particularly consequential given the increasingly interconnected international system where participation in international institutions has become an important element of modern statehood. Public support from diplomatic allies within these institutions therefore allows Taiwan to maintain an international presence and prevents the 'further erosion of its diplomatic space'.²³

One such benefit to Taiwan having diplomatic allies within international organisations is its allies' continual expressions of support for Taiwan's readmittance into the United Nations. Despite the fact that these speeches are largely symbolic and have little effect on other states' existing attitudes towards Taiwan,²⁴ it signals to the international community that the PRC–Taiwan dispute remains unresolved and deters complacency on the issue. Furthermore, while the record of allies advocating for Taiwan is sometimes inconsistent,²⁵ this only underscores the individual importance of each of Taiwan's remaining diplomatic partners in maximising the opportunities for international discussion around the topic. Pacific Island states, which comprise a significant proportion of Taiwan's diplomatic partners, have shown themselves to be strong, consistent supporters of Taiwan at the UN General Assembly,²⁶ and thus remain critical to Taiwan's international diplomatic efforts.

Pacific Island states as Taiwan's ideal diplomatic partners

Taiwan's use of economic assistance as a primary tool for attracting support places Pacific Island states at the forefront of Taiwan's international diplomatic strategy, due to their willingness to accept a mutually beneficial relationship tied to foreign aid. Since the end of the Cold War, Taiwan has no longer been able to leverage its status as a capitalist state struggling against the communist regime of the PRC as an ideological basis for diplomatic recognition.²⁷ As a result, it has had to employ other, primarily economic, means of attracting support, referred to (often derogatorily) as 'chequebook diplomacy'. As

19 Rich, 'Taiwan's Diplomatic Partners'.

20 'Pacific Aid Map'.

21 Erin Hale, 'Taiwan Taps on United Nations' Door, 50 Years after Departure', *Al Jazeera*, 25 October 2021, www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/10/25/chinas-un-seat-50-years-on.

22 Van Fossen, 'Struggle for Recognition', 125.

23 Timothy S Rich, 'Status for Sale: Taiwan and the Competition for Diplomatic Recognition', *Issues & Studies* 45, no. 4 (2009): 181–82, www.researchgate.net/publication/228374078_Status_for_Sale_Taiwan_and_the_Competition_for_Diplomatic_Recognition.

24 Pryke, 'Solomons and Kiribati Snub Taiwan'.

25 Rich, 'Taiwan's Diplomatic Partners'.

26 Transform Aqorau, 'Solomon Islands' Foreign Policy Dilemma and the Switch from Taiwan to China', in *The China Alternative: Changing Regional Order in the Pacific Islands*, ed. Graeme Smith and Terence Wesley-Smith (Canberra: ANU Press, 2021), 334;

'Micronesia Countries Urge Taiwan Involvement at UN', *Radio New Zealand*, 24 September 2021, www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/452234/micronesia-countries-urge-taiwan-involvement-at-un.

27 Rich, 'Status for Sale', 169–70.

the largest recipients of foreign aid per capita in the world,²⁸ the Pacific Island states are therefore a focal point for this strategy. However, it is important to emphasise that Pacific Island states are not simply pawns in the PRC–Taiwan geopolitical competition but active players who take advantage of this contest for their own benefit. This so-called ‘chequebook diplomacy’ involves a reciprocal relationship in which Pacific Island states have equal, if not greater, agency and power in relation to their aid donors.

Because Pacific Island states have few material advantages to offer when bargaining for international assistance, they instead engage in a ‘sovereignty business’ by employing diplomatic recognition as a bargaining tool,²⁹ in effect ‘renting’ their recognition and voice in international institutions as a source of government revenue.³⁰ A prime example of this is Nauru, which switched its recognition from Taiwan to the PRC in 2002 when Taiwan refused to quintuple its aid contribution, before switching back to Taiwan in 2005 after it agreed to finance Nauru’s national airline.³¹ These cases of Pacific–Taiwan diplomacy support much of the literature focused on the role of small states in the international system, which suggest that small states are able to profit by ‘renting out their sovereign prerogatives’.³² The varying levels at which they do so signify small states’ freedom and agency in consciously choosing how to delegate their sovereignty.³³ This theoretical perspective very much challenges the predominant view of mainstream international relations literature, in which small states are perceived as inescapably dependent on larger states for survival.³⁴ Instead, it argues that the modern international system has allowed small states to reclaim and exercise their sovereignty.³⁵ Accordingly, Taiwan’s diplomatic strategy has illustrated a reversal in how the dynamics of the international system are typically understood, presenting a situation in which ‘poor countries with typically little political influence are the major players’.³⁶

The perception of Pacific Island states as positioned at the periphery of the global economy has also influenced their suitability for Taiwanese diplomacy, which has oriented its strategy towards regions where the PRC may have the least economic influence. As ‘peripheral states’,³⁷ Pacific Island states are more willing to establish relations with Taiwan owing to their small economies and limited exports. This stands in contrast to export-dominated economies, which scholars have shown to be five times less likely to recognise Taiwan due to the strong appeal of access to the PRC’s lucrative markets.³⁸ A notable exception to this finding was Solomon Islands, which was Taiwan’s largest and arguably most important Pacific partner, but whose largest trading partner was the PRC. Reflecting this incongruity, the importance of Chinese trade to Solomon Islands eventually outweighed its longstanding ties with Taiwan, justifying Solomon Islands’ switch in recognition to the PRC in 2019.³⁹ This example reinforces the argument that the viability of Taiwan’s diplomatic relations primarily depends on smaller states that are less reliant on Chinese trade.

The smallness of Pacific Island states is a central factor in Taiwan’s diplomatic strategy, as it allows Taiwan to efficiently distribute its financial incentives to increase the breadth of its support. Due to Pacific Island states’ small population size, the costs for Taiwan of providing economic benefits to its Pacific allies in exchange for their support is relatively low and easier to manage than with larger

28 Hu Shaohua, ‘Small State Foreign Policy: The Diplomatic Recognition of Taiwan’, *China: An International Journal* 13, no. 2 (2015): 6–7, doi.org/10.1353/chn.2015.0013.

29 Rich, ‘Status for Sale’, 175; Van Fossen, ‘Struggle for Recognition’, 125.

30 Van Fossen, ‘Struggle for Recognition’, 138–39.

31 Hu, ‘Small State Foreign Policy’, 17.

32 JC Sharman, ‘Sovereignty at the Extremes: Micro-states in World Politics’, *Political Studies* 65, no. 3 (2017): 571, doi.org/10.1177/0032321716665392.

33 Sharman, ‘Sovereignty at the Extremes’, 561.

34 Christos Kassimeris, ‘The Foreign Policy of Small Powers’, *International Politics* 46, no. 1 (2009): 86, doi.org/10.1057/ip.2008.34; Sharman, ‘Sovereignty at the Extremes’, 571.

35 Sharman, ‘Sovereignty at the Extremes’, 559, 571.

36 Rich, ‘Status for Sale’, 161.

37 Van Fossen, ‘Struggle for Recognition’, 127.

38 Rich and Dahmer, ‘Should I Stay’, 364–65.

39 Aqorau, ‘Foreign Policy Dilemma’, 320–24, 335–37.

states.⁴⁰ For example, reports of Taiwan paying each of Nauru's 18 members of parliament a monthly stipend of US\$4,000 emphasise how the small scale of Nauruan politics economically benefits Taiwan's diplomatic strategy.⁴¹ Furthermore, the principle of sovereign equality, enshrined in the UN Charter, emphasises that every state is equal under international law no matter its size, giving small states 'unprecedented visibility and prestige as well as physical security and legal equality'.⁴² With the same voting power as other states in the UN General Assembly, Pacific Island states contain only 0.2 per cent of the world's population but hold around 6 per cent of UN votes,⁴³ making them highly valuable for Taiwan's quest for recognition. This finding is consistent with arguments within the literature that suggest that international organisations, which have become a cornerstone of the modern international order, have amplified the influence of small states in the international system.⁴⁴

Although the principle of sovereign equality is limited by existing power and resource imbalances in the international system, restricting the influence that small states can realistically wield, Taiwan's ties to small Pacific Island states can also allow more powerful states to unofficially support Taiwan through the policies that they direct towards the Pacific. The United States, for example, officially recognises the PRC but is informally Taiwan's key security partner. As a result, the US views Taiwan's Pacific diplomacy as an additional support against growing Chinese influence in the region and has frequently encouraged its Pacific partners to retain relations with Taiwan,⁴⁵ with senior US diplomat W Patrick Murphy urging Pacific Island states to 'maintain the status quo' in 2019.⁴⁶ Thus, Pacific Island states provide Taiwan with both formal and informal means of support, strengthening its overall international diplomatic position.

Wider implications

The arguments presented in this article highlight the important role that small states play in the international community, addressing an area of research that is underrepresented and often neglected in the discipline of international relations. As such, it contributes to a growing literature that seeks to challenge traditional materialist conceptions of power in the international system, presenting alternative perspectives on how states are able to exert influence in the modern international order outside conventional power politics. This case study of Pacific–Taiwan diplomacy emphasises the need for scholars and policymakers to re-evaluate how they perceive the role of small states. Specifically, Pacific Island states should not be viewed as poor, vulnerable, unstable, or insignificant, but rather as containing their own unique sources of power which they are able to employ in unconventional and innovative ways.⁴⁷

It is also important to acknowledge the agency of small states within the contexts of 'great-power' geopolitical competition. Regions populated by small states, such as the Pacific, do not simply serve as spheres of influence for powerful states to project their global agendas and narratives. Rather, small states are able to use tools like diplomacy and international institutions to assert their sovereignty and convey their interests.⁴⁸ This is particularly evident in the leadership roles assumed by small states on issues such as climate change, such as Nauru's role in drafting the first UN proposal for a multilateral

40 Hu, 'Small State Foreign Policy', 14–15.

41 Aqorau, 'Foreign Policy Dilemma', 322.

42 Hu, 'Small State Foreign Policy', 6.

43 United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *World Population Prospects 2022: Summary of Results* (New York: United Nations, 2022), 5, www.un.org/development/desa/pd/sites/www.un.org./development.desa.pd/files/wpp2022_summary_of_results.pdf.

44 Kassimeris, 'Small Powers', 84–85.

45 Rich, 'Taiwan's Diplomatic Partners'.

46 Swati Pandey, Colin Packham, and Robert Birsell, 'U.S. Official Urges Pacific Island Nations to Keep Ties with Taiwan', *Reuters*, 24 May 2019, www.reuters.com/article/us-pacific-china-idUSKCN1SU0XE.

47 Tarcisius Kabutaulaka, 'Mapping the Blue Pacific in a Changing Regional Order', in *The China Alternative: Changing Regional Order in the Pacific Islands*, eds. Graeme Smith and Terence Wesley-Smith (Canberra: ANU Press, 2021), 43–44, 51.

48 Kabutaulaka, 'Blue Pacific', 41–42.

approach to global warming in 1994, which eventually evolved into the Kyoto Protocol.⁴⁹ Similarly, the Marshall Islands founded the High Ambition Coalition in 2014, which successfully secured the most ambitious provisions and targets in the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement. These examples, among others provided in this article, highlight the need to embrace a new understanding of the modern international system focused less on structured hierarchies of power and more on individual, contextualised relationships.

Conclusion

Overall, Pacific Island states' considerable importance to Taiwan's diplomatic strategy demonstrates the region's substantial influence on international affairs, challenging the misconception of Pacific Island states as too small to be relevant in global politics. Rather, this article demonstrates that Pacific Island states contribute to Taiwan's international presence by providing it with continued international legitimacy and a voice within international organisations, despite the PRC's increasing influence and efforts to erase Taiwan's relevance on the international stage. The article suggests that it is the smallness of Pacific Island states that has empowered them to contribute to Taiwan's foreign policy by facilitating mutually beneficial partnerships involving financial assistance in exchange for diplomatic support. These relationships, while criticised by some observers, secure Pacific Island states' important role in international affairs, granting them leverage over larger states like Taiwan, the PRC, and the United States. Ultimately, this article forms part of a growing literature aiming to uncover the various ways in which small states are able to exercise their sovereignty and exert their influence in the modern international system.

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49 Katerina Teiwei, 'No Distant Future: Climate Change as an Existential Threat', *Australian Foreign Affairs*, no. 6 (2019): 58, www.australianforeignaffairs.com/articles/extract/2019/08/no-distant-future.

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