

Williams College

Onsager, Madison

2021 Political Science Thesis

Constructivism and Climate Vulnerability

Small Island Developing States at International Climate Negotiations

Advisor	Galen Jackson
Additional Advisor	
Access	None of the above
Contains Copyrighted Material?	No
Release Restrictions	release now
Authenticated Access	

CONSTRUCTIVISM AND CLIMATE VULNERABILITY: SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING
STATES AT INTERNATIONAL CLIMATE NEGOTIATIONS

by

MADISON ONSAGER

Professor Galen Jackson, Advisor

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the
Degree of Bachelor of Arts with Honors
in Political Science

WILLIAMS COLLEGE

Williamstown, Massachusetts

17 May 2021

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	iii
Introduction	1
SIDS in International Arenas	2
Literature Review	4
Scope and Structure	14
Chapter 1: The Evolution of SIDS Tactics, 1987-2015	17
Part 1: Pre-Kyoto	17
Part 2: Kyoto	29
Part 3: The Twenty-First Century	36
Chapter 2: SIDS at the Paris Conference	42
Part 1: The Road to Paris	42
Part 2: AOSIS' Goals	45
Part 3: Conference Negotiations	50
Chapter 3: Analysis of Effectiveness	66
Part 1: Successes	66
Part 2: Failures	69
Part 3: Theoretical Explanations	70
Conclusion	77
Appendices	83
Appendix A:	83
Appendix B:	84
Bibliography	85

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my deepest appreciation to my committee chair, Professor Galen Jackson, for his guidance, patience, and unwavering support throughout the past two years. Thank you so much for your enthusiasm and excellence in teaching, for opening my mind to opportunities to venture off the beaten path, and for your patience through revision after revision of the scope of this thesis. Your encouragement has been invaluable.

I would like to thank Professor James McAllister and Professor James Mahon for serving on my committee and for your thoughtful feedback throughout the editing process.

I would also like to thank Professor Katy Hall for providing indispensable advice, support, and enthusiasm on the subject of international climate policy. I have greatly looked forward to every class I had with you throughout this year, and I know that your lessons about finding ways to create meaningful change will be vital in years to come.

In addition, I thank the Center for Environmental Studies for providing me with a grant from the Miranda Heller 1978 and Jerry Tone 1977 Environmental Studies Fund to pursue research for this thesis over the past summer.

A special thank you is owed to my mom, Kristen, and my dad, David, for providing encouragement, joy, and a well-needed break from cooking throughout the hardest parts of this thesis. Thank you both so much for always being there when I needed you.

Lastly, I owe a special debt of gratitude to Grey. Your experience and editorial wisdom have been indispensable, and I am extremely thankful for your generosity and relentless support.

Introduction

In the fall of 2014, a 26-year-old poet stood before the members of a U.N. climate summit in New York and spoke of the ocean gnawing at shorelines, chewing at the roots of breadfruit trees, and crunching through her island's shattered bones. Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner, hailing from the Republic of the Marshall Islands, then called on the world leaders around her to act radically to save her country and her history. The Marshall Islands are home to more than 1,100 low-lying islands on 29 atolls, encompassing millions of square kilometers of ocean and sitting on average only 6 feet above sea level. Flooding has already come close to destroying its capital city and rising sea levels pose a truly existential threat. "We look at our children and wonder how they will know themselves or their culture should they lose our islands," she said.¹

Another nation, half a world away, has faced similar pressures in recent decades: the Republic of Maldives, a nation of 1,192 islands that stretches across the equator in the Indian Ocean. Over two-thirds of its critical infrastructure exists within 100 meters of the shoreline, and its highest natural point is only 5.1 meters above sea level. The Indian Ocean tsunami that hit the islands in 2004 offered a stark image of what the Maldives will be facing in only a few decades if global emissions continue unchecked, as only a few meters in sea level rise threatens tremendous loss of land, groundwater, and infrastructure. Both the Maldives and the Marshall Islands experience a high level of vulnerability to climate change effects, situating the two states on the frontline of environmental hazards and destruction which will only worsen in coming years.

¹ Katie Valentine, "Marshall Islands Speaker Tells U.N. 'We Are Drawing the Line Here' on Climate Change," ThinkProgress: ClimateProgress, last modified September 23, 2014.

The experiences of small island states across the Pacific, Caribbean, and Indian Oceans have harmonized as the early impacts of climate change arrive. In a tragic inequity, these nations have been among the first to experience dangerous climate effects despite having little to no responsibility for global temperature and sea level rise. The 38 countries designated by the UN in 1992 as Small Island Developing States (SIDS) are some of the most vulnerable countries in the world, and in the face of this similar vulnerability to a single threat, many of them have united as a bloc to pressure the international system to deal with climate change in an effective and expedient manner. While they have met with mixed results, their rate of success has surprised realist and liberal theorists of international relations who might otherwise predict these small states to have little control over global collective action. Instead, in a situation where the odds are stacked heavily against any outcome affirming constructivism, the ability of these small states to utilize sophisticated discourse management and norm creation has afforded them outsize power.

SIDS in International Arenas

Small island states have an important stake in climate negotiations, being highly impacted by global temperature rise effects and having minimal ability to mitigate these effects on their own. However, they are typically marginalized in realist political theory due to their lack of structural power: their territories, populations, and militaries are typically small, and their economies are restricted by their size and remoteness.² The ability of small states to influence large states is frequently restricted under realism to borrowing power from third-party states, coalitions, or international organizations.³ This would suggest that the efforts of small island

² Inés Águeda Corneloup and Arthur Mol, "Small Island Developing States and International Climate Change Negotiations: The Power of Moral "Leadership,"" *International Environmental Agreements: Politics, Law and Economics* 14, no. 3 (2014): 282.

³ I. William Zartman, "The Structuralist Dilemma in Negotiation," in *Research on Negotiation in Organizations*, edited by R.J. Lewicki, R.J. Bies and B.H. Sheppard, vol. 6 (1997): 227-293.

states to influence international forums in their favor are only likely to work when their goals benefit larger states. Despite this, they have repeatedly succeeded in influencing climate change agendas and negotiations even when it does not directly benefit others: small island states not only led the diplomatic push to bring the issue of global warming to the table at the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, but also secured for themselves a leadership seat on the Bureau of all subsidiary bodies of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) at the same conference.⁴ In this tough test for constructivism, the theory successfully explains how small island states have been able to exert a compelling influence in UN climate negotiations, and further suggests how these frontline nations may most effectively pursue diplomatic strategies in years to come.

Since the late 1990s, a small but growing body of work has brought small island states' diplomatic and bargaining tactics at climate negotiations into conversation with constructivist theory. However, this research is often limited to studying a small set of parties rather than the broader UN community or to prioritizing the study's breadth of issue coverage over depth of analysis regarding the bargaining process. Detailed case studies are useful because they thoroughly describe certain aspects of the UNFCCC, but they often reach their conclusions at the cost of the ability to move towards general implications. One significant exception is the recent work of Federica Genovese, who published a groundbreaking empirical dataset in 2014 of countries' bargaining positions during two distinct periods of UNFCCC negotiations. The first dataset encompassed the 2001-2004 Kyoto Protocol meetings, while the second measured the 2008-2011 post-Kyoto Protocol meetings. In 2020, Genovese leveraged her datasets to clarify

⁴ Eric Shibuya, "'Roaring Mice Against the Tide': The South Pacific Islands and Agenda-Building on Global Warming," *Pacific Affairs* 69, no. 4 (1996): 542.

the sources of weak states' power in international negotiations, linking their influence to the foreign salience and legitimation of their vulnerability and thus the domestic debates around social justice and fairness within stronger countries.⁵

This thesis explores the evolution of SIDS' negotiating tactics at UN forums over time, with a particular focus on the activities of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), and how constructivism explains their successes despite constraints on their material capabilities. Since climate change became a subject of high-level international discussion in the 1980s, SIDS have been learning from their successes and failures to refine their arguments. These negotiating strategies primarily revolve around a combination of vulnerability discourse, scientific expertise, shaming tactics, and moral leverage that ebbs and flows with UN ideational structures. In recent years, new environmental and economic pressures faced by countries across the globe have lent urgency to climate issues, but these increased pressures have also led to AOSIS facing competition in its quest for adaptation funding. In my first chapter, I trace the transformations and revisions in SIDS negotiating tactics from the 1980s onward, culminating in a case study of COP21, the 2015 Paris Conference. Next, I examine the implications of SIDS successes over time for the weight of norms against realist and liberal interests, incorporating Genovese's findings on SIDS' bargaining power. Lastly, I discuss what these findings mean for SIDS' attempts to bargain for survival in a rapidly warming world.

Literature Review

While extensive research has been done on how realism and liberalism deal with small states, only constructivism has begun to build a targeted body of research on small island states

⁵ Federica Genovese, *Weak States at Global Climate Negotiations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 8. DOI: 10.1017/9781108800051

and international climate negotiations. The problem revolves partly around the recent emergence of such phenomena and consequently the relative paucity of data to draw upon until recent years. It is compounded by realism's frequent focus on states which possess great material and military power and liberalism's focus on typically Western forms of government, both of which tend towards a Eurocentric lens.

Due to the lack of realist literature on SIDS, this literature review will first examine realist and liberalist perspectives on the broader category of "small states:" how each theory conceptualizes smallness and the behavior of states in that category. Next, it will move into the growing literature on small island states in the context of climate change created by scholars of constructivism and of international negotiations. This section will describe the behavior and intent of small states in the UN from the constructivist perspective and introduce theories specific to global climate negotiations. Lastly, findings from existing literature examining the linkage between discourse of moral authority, perceptions of vulnerability to climate effects, and bargaining success will be evaluated.

Realism on Small States

Because of its foundational concern with national interest, power to ensure security, and universal desires for hegemonic status, classical realism tends to focus on the more powerful states on the world stage. When it does address small states, realism begins from the position that they do not have much power on their own and are frequently limited by restrictions on their resources and soft power, so can have little impact on world politics. Neorealist scholarship, however, broadly allows that smaller states can find a source of influence by leveraging large states' interests against each other and using their cooperation as a bargaining chip. This is more frequently true in cases where that cooperation can create a military benefit or threat, such as

offering land for the construction of naval or air bases or emphasizing the strategic dangers from that same land should it be occupied by a different power.

Realism offers a multitude of “universal definitions” of small powers, such as that of Robert Rothstein: “A Small Power is a state which recognizes that it can not obtain security primarily by use of its own capabilities, and that it must rely fundamentally on the aid of other states, institutions, processes, or developments to do so; the Small Power’s belief in its inability to rely on its own means must also be recognized by the other states involved in international politics.”⁶ In simpler terms, they are states which are externally vulnerable relative to self-dependent countries. However, this definition is not falsifiable: if a small state relies on its own means or creates international change it can no longer be called a small state. Rothstein’s proposition around vulnerability does offer a conceptually useful division that is particularly applicable to SIDS on the matter of climate change, as it is a global dilemma with a root cause maintained by a host of other, larger states. For this thesis, small states in the climate context are those which are materially unable to prevent or overcome the challenges climate change poses on their own. However, they may be able to influence other states to come to their aid: in the words of theorist Annette Baker Fox, “for the small state, diplomacy is the tool of statecraft in whose use it can on occasion hope to excel.”⁷

Rothstein delves further into small states’ international prospects by considering what types of alliances are most beneficial to small powers. His conclusion is that small states “ought to prefer mixed, multilateral alliances [...] if unavailable, they probably should choose a Small Power alliance [...] particularly if the Small Powers do not fear an immediate threat to their

⁶ Robert L. Rothstein, *Alliances and Small Powers*, (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1968), 29.

⁷ Annette Baker Fox, *The Power of Small States: Diplomacy in World War II*, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1959), 2.

security, and if their goals in allying are primarily political.”⁸ In contrast, David Vital claims that “the coalition or alliance is not an effective unit of foreign policy and strategy at all,” but his stance is undermined by his initial premise, which stacks the deck against small states by disdaining their abilities to maneuver and exploit their positions.⁹ Rothstein is joined by George Liska and, with some reservations, Robert Osgood in disagreeing with Vital’s conclusion and arguing that for small states “alliances have increasingly become instruments designed to achieve nonmilitary goals.”¹⁰

In one of the few cases of realist scholarship narrowing to focus on small island states, Jack Corbett and John Connell have examined the interactions between small island states and international organizations, finding that, in general, power asymmetries prevail, but that small states can play a creative role on the margins.¹¹ This creativity can arise from leveraging aid and support from larger states, and by voting in blocs. Regarding diplomacy, Mancur Olson and Richard Zeckhauser posited in 1966 that small states can benefit from their lack of power in international discussions of shared burdens. When the large states believe that they have an interest in providing a “public good,” such as defense against a security threat, small states may not be called upon to make contributions because their capabilities are not as decisive.¹² But realist theory is criticized by liberalists and constructivists for arguing that national interest around the global threat of climate change is ordained primarily by capacity and the desire for survival. Instead, liberal theory argues that international institutions, economic interdependence,

⁸ Rothstein, *Alliances and Small Powers*, 177.

⁹ George Liska, *Alliances and the Third World* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1968), 49.

Robert E. Osgood, *Alliances and American Foreign Policy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1968), 131.

¹⁰ David Vital, *The Inequality of States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), 186.

¹¹ Jack Corbett and John Connell, “All the world is a stage: global governance, human resources, and the ‘problem’ of smallness,” *The Pacific Review* 28, no. 3 (2015): 435, DOI: 10.1080/09512748.2015.1011214

¹² Mancur Olson, Jr., and Richard Zeckhauser, “An Economic Theory of Alliances,” *Review of Economics and Statistics* 48, no. 3 (August 1966): 266–279.

and domestic politics influence state behavior, while constructivist theory claims that states' interests are a site of contestation and discursive reification.

Liberalism on Small States

Liberal international relations theory can be traced back to German philosopher Immanuel Kant's 1795 essay "To Perpetual Peace," wherein he lays out three "definitive conditions" which would ensure the promotion of peace and commerce.¹³ Each condition later became the foundation for a primary strain of liberal theory: Kant's "federation of free states," which focused on the importance of multilateral institutions, proved the basis for liberal institutionalism; his "universal hospitality" principle aimed at driving intercommunication between nations grew into commercial liberalism; and Kant's desire for states to have "republican constitutions" inspired the Democratic Peace Theory (DPT), which at its core argues that governmental accountability is crucial for peace.¹⁴ Each of these three theories hold the same basic tenets which bring them under the overarching banner of liberalism: that domestic politics influence state actions in the international system, that factors other than material capabilities can limit state behavior, and that states' interests are neither singular nor static.

Of these three theoretical approaches, liberal institutionalism offers the most optimistic outlook for small states. SIDS struggle to take part in a globalized free market because of their limited resources and geographical remoteness, removing some of the factors which commercial liberalism might otherwise draw on, and while DPT's ideas of public accountability are highly relevant to SIDS, those costs are better discussed in the framework of two-level games than in

¹³ Immanuel Kant, *Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Essay*, originally published by F. Nicolovius (1795), translated by Mary C. Smith (2016), 4-8.

¹⁴ Jonathan Cristol, "Liberalism," Oxford Bibliographies, last modified November 26, 2019, <https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199743292/obo-9780199743292-0060.xml#obo-9780199743292-0060-bibItem-0007>

the context of military conflict. Liberal institutionalism focuses on the impact of international regimes on the incentives facing states, arguing that institutions can overcome the challenges presented by informational and coordinating limitations on state interactions in order to create sufficient trust for cooperation.¹⁵ Notably, in contrast to constructivists, liberalists typically subordinate ideological, discursive, and psychological factors to material interests and power relationships.¹⁶ Liberal institutionalists also begin to break down the realist focus on state-to-state interactions, highlighting a system of “complex interdependence” that includes multiple channels through which actors can interact and stipulates that state interests may be constrained because conflicting and interconnecting policy issues arise simultaneously rather than sequentially.¹⁷

When it comes to categorizing small states, Robert O. Keohane takes a different approach from realists, categorizing states based on their ability to affect international systems and suggesting that small states are those which can do little but adapt.¹⁸ In his article *Lilliputians’ Dilemmas*, Keohane proposes that leaders of small states consider that they cannot make any significant impact on the international system on their own, but that “through an international organization, they can attempt to promote attitudes favorable to their survival.”¹⁹ These international organizations are often created by powerful states which can continue to shape the agendas on the table, which at first glance seems to only further limit small states.²⁰ But the structure of international institutions can offer small states a forum where their voice is

¹⁵ Edward A. Kolodziej, *Security and International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 153.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Robert O. Keohane and J.S. Nye, *Power and Interdependence*, New York: Longman (2001), 25.

¹⁸ Robert O. Keohane, “Lilliputians’ Dilemmas: Small States in International Politics,” *International Organization* 23, no. 2 (1969): 295.

¹⁹ Ibid., 296.

²⁰ Tom Long, “Small States, Great Power? Gaining Influence through Intrinsic, Derivative, and Collective Power,” *International Studies Review* 19, no. 2 (2017): 190.

disproportionate to their population, the ability to create processes sympathetic to their needs (such as the International Criminal Court), and restraints on larger states who are incentivized to play by the rules of international institutions to maintain their standing within them.²¹

Another aspect of liberal theory which is important for small states is the influence of domestic politics on states' foreign policy. In particular, Robert D. Putnam's work on two-level games is highly relevant to SIDS' actions on the international stage. Putnam moves beyond "partial equilibrium" analyses which focus on causes either at the domestic or international level, creating a "general equilibrium" theory which attempts to account for the effects of domestic and international factors simultaneously.²² In brief, he argues that a state's representative or negotiator at an international level must always balance bargaining with other negotiators (Level I) against the set of outcomes which will be acceptable to the state's constituents, or the state's domestic "win-set" (Level II). Expectations around acceptance or rejection at Level II can shape or even abort negotiations at Level I, with a large domestic win-set increasing the credibility of claims made based on the negotiator's perceived ability to deliver and a small domestic win-set conversely offering negotiators more leverage with which to drive a bargain.²³ This analysis of domestic influence on international negotiation ties into SIDS' ability to manipulate states' analysis of their own national interest under constructivism. SIDS often confronted large states whose domestic audiences were averse to climate action, especially those with large extractive industries. However, SIDS negotiators were not restrained to attempts to convince national representatives. Instead, they were able to attempt to shift the opinions of domestic audiences in

²¹ Keohane and J. S. Nye, *Power and Independence*, 23

David L. Bosco, *Rough Justice: The International Criminal Court in a World of Power Politics*, New York: Oxford University Press (2014), 8.

²² Robert D. Putnam, "Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games," *International Organization* 42, no. 3 (1988): 430

²³ *Ibid.*, 440.

order to alter the win-sets of other countries, opening them to resolutions which offered more benefit to SIDS.

Constructivism on SIDS

Constructivists have created a small but significant body of work dedicated to interactions between SIDS and the UN on climate change. The fact that UN climate negotiations have been influenced by small island states is no longer in question given the existing literature: more recent papers focus instead on arguing different theories for how this influence has come about and how effective it has been.²⁴ The foundational notion of constructivism is that ideas and norms play a fundamental role in shaping foreign policy behavior of states and their policy structures. The reality of international politics is treated as constructed, not given, and state identities both change and can be changed rather than being static.²⁵ From this point constructivism largely splits into different strands, each with their own competing definitions of constructivist theory, but all maintaining an underlying focus on challenging the realist assumptions of states as rational actors and facts as separate from values.

In his 1996 article “Roaring Mice Against the Tide,” Eric Shibuya brought an agenda-building analysis framework to bear on the involvement of Pacific Island states with the 1992 Rio Earth Summit. He focused primarily on the importance of “windows of opportunity” in influencing international policy agendas, but also began to extrapolate his analysis towards how small islands could best influence UN arenas.²⁶ Another scholar, Florian Weiler, has analyzed

²⁴ Athualla Rasheed, “Role of Small Islands in UN Climate Negotiations: A Constructivist Viewpoint,” *International Studies* 56 no. 4 (2019): 216, DOI: 10.1177/0020881719861503

²⁵ Maja Zehfuss, *Constructivism in International Relations: The Politics of Reality*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 4. DOI: [10.1017/CBO9780511491795](https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511491795)

²⁶ Shibuya, “Roaring Mice Against the Tide,” 542.

determinants of the comparative influence of states in UNFCCC negotiations. Among his findings was that both how much external power a state wielded and how vulnerable a state was to climate change were positively correlated with bargaining success.²⁷ However, Weiler's national positions were drawn from interviews with national delegations while the measures of salience used to substantiate them were sourced from reports written by a third party. This raised concerns that the two types of information may not precisely validate one another.²⁸ Perhaps the most comprehensive data sets to date are those created by Genovese in 2014, which lay out the bargaining positions of states at UNFCCC conferences. This research filled notable gaps in the existing literature on cross-national surveys of positions on climate change negotiations and returned high external validation during analysis.²⁹

Moving back from quantitative to qualitative analysis, Ines de Águeda Corneloup and Arthur P. J. Mol investigated the leadership strategies and the focus on moral authority wielded by SIDS during the Copenhagen summit of 2009, comparing their strategies to their successes.³⁰ Águeda Corneloup and Mol focus on a global temperature rise limit of 1.5 C, adaptation funding for SIDS, and a legally binding framework as the primary goals of SIDS. Athualla A. Rasheed, in contrast, focuses on an island vulnerability identity as the main strategy of SIDS in UN negotiations.³¹ Rasheed traces the foreign policy engagement of SIDS from the late 1980s to 2015, analyzing the ideational structures they have promoted and their coalitional impact on the UN.³² While moral authority is mentioned as one of the results of this ideational thrust, Rasheed

²⁷ Florian Weiler, "Determinants of Bargaining Success in the Climate Change Negotiations," *Climate Policy* 12 no. 5 (2012), 552.

²⁸ Federica Genovese, "States' interests at international climate negotiations: new measures of bargaining positions," *Environmental Politics* 23 no. 4 (2014), 612, DOI: 10.1080/09644016.2014.904068

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 611.

³⁰ Águeda Corneloup and Mol, "Small Island Developing States," 284.

³¹ Rasheed, "Role of Small Islands in UN Negotiations," 221.

³² *Ibid.* 225.

contends that it is drawn from the coalitional and ideational force wielded by AOSIS through a constitutive notion of vulnerability.

Then, in a paper published in early 2020, Genovese leveraged her previous research into states' bargaining positions at UNFCCC conferences to empirically evaluate UNFCCC bargaining success. She argues that the international moral case for countries highly at-risk to climate change, or "weak states," hinges on external perceptions of climate vulnerability. This legitimates weak states' bargaining positions and improves their salience in debates.³³ Notably, while this still focuses on strong states as the primary decision-making powers in international forums, it gives credibility to weak states' ability to influence strong states' understanding of their own actions and interests. Genovese's work thus offers a critical tie between realism and constructivism, starting to bring them into conversation on this issue. If legitimated vulnerability yields negotiating power to small states, and this legitimation can occur in many forms, realism must grapple with the empirical impact of values on interests. Domestic audiences are not immune to external influence and ideational intersubjectivity, which can allow SIDS to promote their own aims by creating domestic audience costs in larger states.³⁴ After this novel discussion of the interaction between SIDS' ideational influence and the power of domestic audience costs in UNFCCC conferences, Genovese admits that she expects legitimation by the public in stronger countries "can only work so far at making strong countries' leaders give concessions."³⁵

While compelling in many ways, Genovese's data relies on the bargaining positions at the start and end of these conferences with little regard to the specific proceedings. This effectively treats the negotiating arena as a black box, obfuscating the ways in which certain

³³ Genovese, *Weak States at Global Climate Negotiations*, 8.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 18.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 21.

aims may be sacrificed as bargaining chips to ensure the success of others. In this thesis, I draw on both Genovese and Rasheed for inspiration, tracing the successes, failures, and development over time of SIDS negotiating tactics from 1987 to 2015, culminating in a case study of the Paris Conference. I focus on the discourses of moral authority and vulnerability that these states have nurtured, as well as their coalition-building strategies and focus on maintaining the legitimacy of international negotiating structures.

Scope and Structure

The first chapter of my thesis reviews the history of SIDS' involvement with international climate negotiations from 1987 to 2014. I describe the foundation of AOSIS and the emergence of SIDS as influential players in global climate politics, tracing their international engagements with the UNFCCC regime. I explore how the narrative of their unique vulnerability emerged, its roots in great-power aggression, and how it has grown more sophisticated over time. I also trace the slow build of AOSIS' discursive construction as the "moral conscience" of the UN on climate issues, and the ways in which both this and their vulnerability are legitimated by stronger states both formally and informally as a function of domestic debates around social justice. I then examine how domestic audience costs, while incorporated in liberalist calculations, are by nature vulnerable to the influence of ideational subjectivity. Additionally, I describe how the ontological security of larger states can be threatened by this discourse. Ontological security is the need of a person or organization to experience its own identity as continuous and stable, and for its actions to reinforce rather than undermine that identity.³⁶ A state's actions can be constrained not just by its desired negotiating standpoint but by the way

³⁶ Jennifer Mitzen, "Ontological Security in World Politics: State Identity and the Security Dilemma," *European Journal of International Relations* 12 no. 3 (2006): 344.

those desires confirm or conflict with its own self-image, and I explain how this operates upon both politicians and the public. Lastly, I include instances of failure: when regional divides within AOSIS prevented them from taking an agenda-setting role, how opposition built against their goals over time, and how the global climate regime broke down at Copenhagen in 2009.

The second chapter of my thesis presents the first stage of my original contribution to the literature. I engage in a detailed case study of the 21st Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC, or the Paris Conference, and the negotiating tactics of SIDS throughout. I identify the objectives that they sought to achieve, the alliances they built to that end, and the progress that they made inciting ideational shifts on topics of disagreement prior to the conference. I then present the details of negotiations during COP21 itself, examining the means by which SIDS created, leveraged, and borrowed power throughout the conference, and the areas in which they remained unable to drive change.

The third chapter of my thesis shifts from the quantitative to the theoretical once again, tackling the quandary at the core of this thesis about how and when constructivism successfully predicts state behavior even in such a tough test of its validity. Within the broader debate between rationalist, liberal, and constructivist philosophy, this hinges broadly on whether the evolution of state interests should be attributed to rational motives, domestic politics, or the influence of norms. To this end, I describe the greatest successes and failures of AOSIS and the ripples that they have caused for subsequent negotiations. From these, I draw out a set of normative themes that run through each set of outcomes and inform my constructivist explanation of how and when SIDS have successfully achieved their interests. I then reincorporate Genovese's recent findings and their implications for SIDS success in the past and the future, analyzing the specific circumstances in which normative influence can outweigh

security and economic interests. Looking towards the future, I also speculate as to what effect the changing political climates in Europe and the United States will have on global cooperation for the good of the climate. I contrast nationalist and populist impulses against what is needed to solve the present international collective action problem, and further explore whether the discourse of vulnerability will maintain its influence as climate impacts begin to be felt more broadly across the globe.

Chapter 1: The Evolution of SIDS Tactics, 1987-2015

Part 1: Pre-Kyoto

The Rising Tide

On April 11, 1987, the archipelago of the Maldives experienced the highest tidal waves the country had seen in years, affecting 13 out of the 19 atolls. Malé, the capital city, saw inundation of more than one third of its land as seawater damaged retaining walls, coastal roads, private homes, and Hulule International Airport.³⁷ Most of the land in the Maldives lies at less than one meter above mean sea level, making the archipelago the lowest-lying nation in the world.³⁸ No loss of life was reported, but more than 300 people lost their homes in Malé alone, and the cost of repairs was estimated at 6 million US dollars before accounting for losses of boats or reclaimed land.³⁹

While the situation in the Maldives had largely stabilized by the end of the month due to an emergency grant from the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Coordinator and further relief from other countries and NGOs, the threat of further damage remained a strong concern.⁴⁰ In October of the same year, President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom of Maldives called at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Vancouver for a conference to study the implications of sea level rise. While not as encompassing as the UN, the Commonwealth does represent a majority of SIDS, having 25 SIDS as members to the UN's

37.⁴¹

³⁷ UN Department of Humanitarian Affairs. "Maldives – Tidal Waves Apr 1987 UNDRO Situation Reports 1-3." April 13, 1987. <https://reliefweb.int/report/maldives/maldives-tidal-waves-apr-1987-undro-situation-reports-1-3>

³⁸ Matthew Wadey, Sally Brown, Robert J. Nicholls, and Ivan Haigh, "Coastal flooding in the Maldives: an assessment of historic events and their implications," *Natural Hazards* 89 (2017): 132.

³⁹ UN DHA. "Maldives – Tidal Waves."

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Athualla Rasheed, "Role of Small Islands in UN Climate Negotiations: A Constructivist Viewpoint," *International Studies* 56 no. 4 (2019): 221, DOI: 10.1177/0020881719861503

At the meeting, President Gayoom compared the threat of environmental change to that of nuclear weapons and called for a similar international dismantling effort. He also observed that external suggestions that small island states should build sea defenses, raise land levels, retreat inland or simply migrate were insensitive to the real situation.⁴² The Maldives' recent experience with a dramatic tidal swell, which had erased many of their own efforts to raise land levels and required international aid to recover from, was not a unique occurrence. Many small islands in the Indian and Pacific Oceans have a maximum elevation of four meters or less above sea level, with Tuvalu and Kiribati entirely below said elevation.⁴³ The recent incidence of two hurricanes in the Caribbean, which had both impacted island states, lent not just credence but empathy to the reception of President Gayoom's speech.

President Gayoom's speech highlighted three ideas: that climate change requires international collective action; that SIDS were among the least contributors to climate change but experienced the most damage; and that SIDS could not combat change on their own.⁴⁴ Those same three tenets were at the center of the ideational impact this climate discourse had on participating states. Under constructivist theories of norms, ideas shared among states can shape both system- and state-level foreign policy by impacting states' interests in particular policy goals. This takes place through a form of social relations which guides intersubjective understanding.⁴⁵ In this case, the climate ideas proposed by the Maldives both constructed a narrative of vulnerability and would go on to act as a coalition magnet, inspiring homogenous SIDS actors to join in pursuing a common goal. A majority of the member-states which participated in the CHOGM meeting later shared views inspired by President Gayoom's

⁴² James Lewis, "Small States Conference on Sea Level Rise," *The Environmentalist* 10, no. 2 (1990): 141.

⁴³ Wadey et al., "Coastal flooding in the Maldives," 132.

⁴⁴ Rasheed, "Role of Small Islands in UN Climate Negotiations," 221.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 218.

statement, especially the Pacific island states, some of whom went on to raise similar concerns about island vulnerabilities to climate change at the 1988 Pacific Island Forum leaders meeting.⁴⁶

The Maldives remained a key player in these early years of climate discourse formation at spreading both awareness of climate change as a pressing issue and the idea of SIDS as particularly vulnerable nations. One month after the CHOGM meeting, a representative from the Maldives raised the same concerns at the 1987 summit meeting of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation. It was also the Maldives which first warned the UN about the specific dangers of sea level rise for low-lying island nations, stating that “[a] rise of 2 meters would suffice to virtually submerge the entire country of 1,190 small islands, most of which barely rise over 2 meters above mean sea level.”⁴⁷ While the UN had already created forums to address environmental preservation, the specific issue of climate change was just beginning to carve out its own place in the international arena. However, these efforts were “conveniently sidelined” at UN discussions, as Rasheed notes. UN climate negotiators doubted whether reaching an international consensus to attempt strong mitigation measures was possible, so declined to give the issue much focus.⁴⁸ This unfortunate result would have come as no surprise to small island states: the international representation of island interests has historically been disjointed and marginalized, owing partly to the dispersion of SIDS across different UN regional groups and largely to the typical focus of international politics on larger, more powerful states. But other small states were listening.

⁴⁶ Rasheed, “Role of Small Islands in UN Climate Negotiations,” 221

⁴⁷ Maldives Permanent Mission to UN, “Address by his excellency Mr. Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, President of the Republic of Maldives, before the forty second session of the United Nations General Assembly on the special debate on environment and development, 19 October,” (1987).

Scholarly consensus varies on precise land height in the Maldives: see Lewis, Appendix 1 for a selection of sources.

⁴⁸ Rasheed, “Role of Small Islands in UN Climate Negotiations,” 222.

In November 1989, the conference President Gayoom had called for took place. It was titled the Small States Conference on Sea Level Rise and was held in the recently repaired capital of the Maldives. It was attended by delegates and ministers representing 14 island states, as well as observers from both metropolitan countries and NGOs.⁴⁹ Nine of the island participants, composed of Antigua and Barbuda, Cyprus, Fiji, Kiribati, Maldives, Malta, Mauritius, Trinidad and Tobago, and Vanuatu, formally declared as a matter of foreign policy that SIDS were disproportionately impacted by climate change and that international cooperation in the face of such change was imperative.⁵⁰ One minister from the Maldives described the risk that small island states could become “innocent victims” of and the “first nations to suffer” from the actions of developed states, and characterized climate change as an existential threat.⁵¹ The document which resulted from this conference, the Malé Declaration on Global Warming and Sea Level Rise, would set the tone of SIDS international negotiation for the following 20 years. It explicitly recognized the vulnerability of SIDS as greater than that of other countries experiencing the same climate impacts, owing to their low-lying, small, coastal and island qualities. It also called upon developed nations to fulfill their moral obligation to initiate international action to combat climate change.⁵²

With both the Malé Declaration and the recently published first assessment report from the IPCC in mind, SIDS across the Caribbean Sea and the Pacific, Indian, and Atlantic Oceans were all uncomfortably aware of their susceptibility to climate change effects. In 1990 at the Second World Conference in Geneva, small island countries met as a group for the first time to

⁴⁹ Lewis, “Small States Conference on Sea Level Rise,” 141.

⁵⁰ Rasheed, “Role of Small Islands in UN Climate Negotiations,” 223.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Lewis, “Small States Conference on Sea Level Rise,” 141.

find a solution to their individual lack of the necessary political capital to address the problem.⁵³ They formed an ad hoc coalition known as the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), designed to represent countries which are members of island regional groupings, which are at comparable levels of economic development, and which experience particularly high levels of vulnerability to adverse climate change impacts.⁵⁴ AOSIS is a member of the Group of 77 (G77), the negotiating group of developing countries, but is not recognized as an independent group in and of itself. The group functions through consultation and consensus and does not have a formal charter, a regular budget, or a secretariat.⁵⁵ It has 44 member states, 39 of which are UN member states and 5 of which are observer states, distributed across the Caribbean, the Pacific, and the African, Indian, and South China Seas. Some members also fall into the category of least developed countries (LDCs), while others are wealthier nations.⁵⁶

AOSIS at the UN

The first challenge for AOSIS would be the negotiating rounds leading up to the adoption of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). At the Small States Conference on Sea Level Rise, the representative from Malta had stated that “a very broad consensus is emerging [among nations] in favor of a framework convention on climate change,” a global framework of general principles to coordinate national, regional, and international conservation measures.⁵⁷ While participating states had agreed that international collaboration

⁵³ Carola Betzold, “‘Borrowing’ Power to Influence International Negotiations: AOSIS in the Climate Change Regime, 1990-1997,” *Political Studies Association* 30, no. 3 (2010): 135.

⁵⁴ John W. Ashe, Robert Van Lierop, and Anilla Cherian, “The role of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) in the negotiation of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC),” *Natural Resources Forum* 23, no. 3 (1999): 210.

⁵⁵ Betzold, “‘Borrowing’ Power to Influence International Negotiations,” 135.

⁵⁶ Timothee Ourbak and Alexandre K. Magnan, “The Paris Agreement and Climate Change Negotiations: Small Islands, Big Players,” *Regional Environmental Change* 18 (2018): 2202. DOI: 10.1007/s10113-017-1247-9

⁵⁷ Malta, “Country statement at the small states conference on sea level rise, Malé, Maldives” (1989), <http://www.islandvulnerability.org/slr1989.html - country>.

would be necessary to address the issue and prevent SIDS from facing drastic consequences, they were all too familiar with the obstacles to making their voices heard. Micro-states are enshrined as legitimate members of the international system according to the ‘sovereign equality’ principle in the UN charter, but they have historically been marginalized both politically and economically by the international community.⁵⁸ Even within the G77, SIDS’ interests were often overshadowed by those of larger developing countries. By forming a coalition, SIDS intended to enhance their joint negotiating capacity and visibility, ensuring that they could meaningfully participate in the INC negotiations.

On December 11, 1990, the UN General Assembly established the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) for a Framework Convention on Climate Change.⁵⁹ AOSIS set for itself three goals which it hoped to meet over the following five negotiating rounds:

1. to establish a common negotiating position for the bloc despite heterogeneity among small island states;
2. to maximize attention on the situation faced by small island states in the face of climate change and sea level rise; and
3. to develop strategies to both cope with the effects of climate change and ensure AOSIS’ interests were fully and effectively addressed by the resulting Convention.⁶⁰

To that end, AOSIS adopted a number of specific objectives for INC negotiations. They would seek to fulfill these objectives through a myriad of negotiating strategies. Zartman and Rubin

⁵⁸ Ali Naseer Mohamed, “The Diplomacy of Micro-States,” *Discussion Papers in Diplomacy* (2002): 4, https://www.clingendael.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/20020100_cli_paper_dip_issue78.pdf
Ashe et al., “The role of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS),” 210.

⁵⁹ “UNFCCC – 25 Years of Effort and Achievement,” United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, accessed February 2, 2021, <https://unfccc.int/timeline/>

⁶⁰ Ashe et al., “The role of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS),” 210.

have identified four categories of strategies that weak states can use to “borrow power” from external source: using context to create norm-based strength and moral legitimacy, targeting the self-interest of stronger parties to bring them in line, drawing in third parties to call on their legitimacy and power, and manipulating the process of negotiations to center particular issues or outcomes.⁶¹ AOSIS would use all four types of strategy in the INC negotiations.

Prior to the formal negotiations, AOSIS members realized that negotiating as one cohesive team would lend their voices weight. By creating a joint mechanism for negotiation, they could claim a legitimacy greater than their population share and draw on collective rather than intrinsic power, making it easier for their arguments to influence definitions of interests.⁶² To that end, SIDS worked tightly together at the negotiations, led by Robert Van Lierop of Vanuatu, Tuiloma Neroni Slade of Samoa, and John Ashe of Antigua and Barbuda. As Ambassador Slade later stated, “For the small, there is always safety and strength in numbers.”⁶³ As a collective, these delegates proved highly active participants, helping to start discussions and keep them lively. Malta had been the country to propose the Convention negotiations begin, and the negotiators drew on that agenda-setting power throughout the process to influence the issues which were brought to the table.⁶⁴

The objectives began with gaining official recognition for the “special circumstances” of small island countries in both the preamble and the body of the Convention, both of which were realized.⁶⁵ For small island states, and for micro-states more broadly, a discourse of vulnerability

⁶¹ Rishikesh Ram Bhandary, “Coalition strategies in the climate negotiations: an analysis of mountain-related coalitions,” *International Environmental Agreements: Politics, Law and Economics* 17 (2017): 176.

⁶² Long, “Small States, Great Power?” 202.

⁶³ Tuiloma Neroni Slade, “The Making of International Law: The Role of Small Island States,” *Temple International & Comparative Law Journal* 17, no. 2 (2003): 532.

⁶⁴ Betzold, “‘Borrowing’ Power to Influence International Negotiations,” 141.

⁶⁵ Ashe et al., “The role of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS),” 210.

plays a key role in most foreign policy. Because these states lack hard power, their ability to influence others depends heavily on their ability to convince other states to act in their favor. Therefore, vulnerability presents a double-edged tool for micro-states: while the economic and military vulnerabilities of small states remain very real, present anxieties, these states may use the same vulnerability as the bases of normative arguments which appeal to larger states' self-image as moral, good-faith international actors.⁶⁶ The ideational premiere of small states being particularly vulnerable came about when the United States invaded Grenada in 1983, and gained even more attention when mercenaries of a Tamil secessionist organization from Sri Lanka backed a coup attempt in the Maldives in 1988.⁶⁷ The construct of vulnerability is consequently rooted in both colonial history and more recent military incursion by larger states. Transposed to a climate context, it maps easily to a similar imaginary of developed countries as historically responsible for present challenges faced by SIDS. In rhetoric which harkened directly back to the 1989 Small States Conference, AOSIS delegates argued that 'the countries who had done the least to create the problem are the ones who will be suffering the most.'⁶⁸

This discourse of vulnerability also rests on existing principles and norms of the international system, and on two in particular which AOSIS sought to enshrine in the text of the Convention: the polluter pays and the precautionary principle. The polluter pays norm is used to reference the public bad of climate change specifically regarding SIDS, for whom the impacts of sea level rise, ocean acidification, and increased incidence of storms represent an existential threat. The scale of this environmental harm and the historical responsibility that developed countries bear was used to lobby for prioritizing action from major emitters. Also tied to their

⁶⁶ Naseer Mohamed, "The Diplomacy of Micro-States," 12.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Betzold, "'Borrowing' Power to Influence International Negotiations," 138.

survival was the precautionary principle, used to urge immediate action rather than waiting for specific scientific guidelines about exactly what degree of emissions should be reduced.

Ambassador van Lierop perfectly encapsulated this argument in his compelling statement that “We do not have the luxury of waiting for conclusive proof ... The proof, we fear, will kill us.”⁶⁹

AOSIS played a key role in negotiating the inclusion of the precautionary principle in Article 3 of the Convention, but was unable to ensure inclusion of the polluter pays principle. Despite this omission, the idea of “common but differentiated responsibility,” as well as acknowledgement in the preamble that developed countries were the source of the largest share of greenhouse gas emissions, still suggest a heightened degree of responsibility for developed countries.⁷⁰

In contrast to the moral authority leveraged above, AOSIS also relied heavily on scientific evidence, technical information, and credible legal analysis. Clear, robust scientific facts allowed AOSIS to make their case more convincing, while the legal expertise provided by organizations such as the Foundation for International Environmental Law and Development translated AOSIS proposals into technical and legal language.⁷¹ Technical terminology around climate change and peer-reviewed quantitative evidence are highly relevant to environmental negotiations given the levels of uncertainty about the future involved.⁷² On one level, this served to inform the bloc as to the most effective mitigation strategies to pursue and the most crucial postures to take in order to pursue their continued survival. On another, the scientific expertise AOSIS wielded with the support of third-party NGOs translated to soft power, allowing SIDS to go toe-to-toe in negotiations with larger delegations. Leonard Nurse and Rawlestone Moore have

⁶⁹ Phillippe Sands, *Principles of International Environmental Law*, 2nd edition, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (2003): 267.

⁷⁰ Ashe et al., “The role of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS),” 210.

⁷¹ Betzold, “‘Borrowing’ Power to Influence International Negotiations,” 141.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 136.

observed that AOSIS' argumentation must "be informed by the best available science, and must be both robust and credible," to negotiate seriously and convincingly with other countries.⁷³ For this very reason, facts from IPCC reports and close consultation with environmental NGOs featured consistently in the arguments of SIDS delegates.

AOSIS delegations used scientific, technical, and legal expertise to pursue many of their objectives. Their recognition of the importance of knowledge as an asset was actually reflected in some of those objectives themselves: supporting the creation of an international climate change information gathering network, advocating for guaranteed access for states and individuals to information on climate change, and pursuing language in the Convention which would obligate the Parties to transfer environmentally acceptable technologies to promote effective responses to climate change.⁷⁴ All of these aims were met with reasonable success. A fourth objective, initially for ensuring that the combination of new bodies and existing institutions would be sufficient to implement the Convention's mandate, achieved extreme success: both a subsidiary body for scientific and technological advice and a subsidiary body for implementation were established through the Convention.⁷⁵

However, not all the goals of AOSIS were realized in full. The bloc was unable to obtain commitments from industrialized nations to making immediate, significant cuts to greenhouse gas emissions.⁷⁶ The argument which they employed was that the costs of inaction were higher than those of mitigation, emphasizing a call to self-interest in the form of creating a safe climate for all countries. AOSIS also sought to use both scientific consensus and their alliances with

⁷³ Leonard Nurse and Rawlestone Moore, "Critical Considerations for Future Action during the Second Commitment Period: A Small Island's Perspective," *Natural Resources Forum* 2, no. 31 (2002): 105.

⁷⁴ Ashe et al., "The role of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS)," 214.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 210.

other delegations, especially the Europeans, to isolate specific opponents who they characterized as “obstinate and obstructionist.”⁷⁷ Despite these efforts, concerns about costs proved too strong among recalcitrant states to overcome through moral pressure or appeals to common goals. As a result, the Convention lacks any binding commitment to even stabilize greenhouse gas emissions. Even the explicit recognition of the particular vulnerability of small island countries was watered down by the width of the category, which included countries whose economies would be negatively impacted by climate mitigation efforts – namely, oil-producing countries.⁷⁸

Nevertheless, AOSIS succeeded in “punching above its weight class,” and further achieved two particular aims of strong import. The first is a financial mechanism established by the Convention which will provide fully for the costs of adaptation and mitigation efforts by developing country Parties to the Convention, an achievement which the then-chair of AOSIS would later describe as “significantly beyond what AOSIS could reasonably have expected to achieve.”⁷⁹ The second is a special seat on the Bureau of the negotiations, in the INC, the subsequent Conferences of the Parties (COPs), and all subsidiary bodies which would be established. This was groundbreaking, the first time that a seat had been reserved for a non-regional group, and particularly remarkable given the failure of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) to gain the same despite similar efforts.⁸⁰ The seat serves as legitimization of SIDS’ need for a prominent voice in the UN’s climate policy, akin to an institutional codification of the link Florian Weiler found between vulnerability and bargaining power. Through effective leveraging of vulnerability discourse and their commitment to agenda setting, SIDS used constructivist modes of influence to claim an institutional position which

⁷⁷ Betzold, “‘Borrowing’ Power to Influence International Negotiations,” 140.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ashe et al., “The role of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS),” 214.

⁸⁰ Betzold, “‘Borrowing’ Power to Influence International Negotiations,” 139.

would offer them liberal power down the road. The engagement of SIDS at the top level of all UNFCCC committees would help them keep their voices and needs centered going forward.

In the wake of the adoption of the UNFCCC in June 1992, the UN General Assembly established the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. This was intended to act on the special recognition AOSIS had argued for in the UNFCCC and, among other aims, to define specific environmental and development policies to be undertaken by SIDS with international assistance.⁸¹ Known as the 1994 Barbados Conference, it would ultimately demonstrate that while AOSIS achieved many successes at the UN, it struggled to truly unify its component nations outside of its single-issue focus. SIDS across the globe had agreed that pro-environmental actions, mitigation strategies, and international cooperation were necessary, but they did not share the same environmental problems. As such, they found it difficult to come up with a common position on how the sustainable development of SIDS should be pursued.

Three regional groups exist within AOSIS: the Caribbean, the Pacific, and the African, Indian Ocean, Mediterranean and South China Seas (AIMS) SIDS.⁸² While each region had a broadly similar list of issues they wished to see addressed, the ordering of priorities varied greatly. Caribbean SIDS favored preservation of coastal and marine resources and protection from natural and environmental disasters. AIMS SIDS gave primary importance to preserving tourism and biodiversity resources. The Pacific SIDS chose not to offer a ranking of their priorities at all.⁸³ In the face of these differences, AOSIS members found themselves unable to

⁸¹ Pamela S. Chasek, "Margins of Power: Coalition Building and Coalition Maintenance of the South Pacific Island States and the Alliance of Small Island States," *Review of European Community & International Environmental Law* 14, no. 2 (2005): 132.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 125.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 136.

elevate the concerns of one region above another without weakening their position of unity. Choosing to preserve the strength of their bargaining leverage at the UN, AOSIS instead included all of the issues brought up in the final policy outcome and claimed that they were all of equal importance.⁸⁴ This meant that SIDS missed an opportunity to create specific guidelines enabling donors to redirect the distribution of existing resources, creating more work for them in negotiations about funding for years to come.

Part 2: Kyoto

The Road to Kyoto

In 1995, at the very first Conference of the Parties (COP1) in Berlin, the provisions of the UNFCCC were found to be ‘not adequate.’ This verdict came only a year after the Convention had entered into force. Strong resistance by the United States and members of OPEC had kept any specific commitments from being included in the Convention, but AOSIS and its allies sought to remedy this in future agreements.⁸⁵ The Berlin Mandate, the outcome of COP1, included a planned attempt to set binding targets and timelines for reducing greenhouse gas emissions.⁸⁶ However, there were a number of hurdles which AOSIS would be forced to confront along the road.

Publicity was an issue from the start. As the UNFCCC entered into force, emission trends were increasing while public interest was falling.⁸⁷ The morality of states does not exist in a vacuum: officials are most concerned about adhering to the spirit of a state’s stated aims or moral

⁸⁴ Chasek, “Margins of Power,” 135.

⁸⁵ Betzold, “‘Borrowing’ Power to Influence International Negotiations,” 137.

⁸⁶ J.W. Anderson, “Climate Change, Clinton and Kyoto: The Negotiations Over Global Warming,” *Resources for the Future* (1997): 9.

⁸⁷ Betzold, “‘Borrowing’ Power to Influence International Negotiations,” 142.

agenda when their public approval rating would be affected by their actions. James Fearon developed the idea of audience costs in 1994 to analyze signaling and credibility between states in a military context,⁸⁸ but it has since been expanded by authors focused more on the degree to which citizens care about the international reputation of the country or leader. The central idea is that leaders who fail to fulfill their commitments, in Fearon's case carrying out a military threat against an opponent, would suffer costs for backing down from domestic political opponents who resent the international loss of face. However, audience costs could also be conceptualized as threatened against leaders who fail to pursue a policy which their domestic audience prefers.⁸⁹ These costs diminish as the audience's attention moves to other matters.

Unions in energy industries throughout the Americas presented a domestic audience hostile to climate action behind American and Canadian politicians, but many European countries had either a strong conservation tradition or vocal Green parties.⁹⁰ This made the European audience more receptive to SIDS' work to create external legitimation of their vulnerability and consequent needs and created increased domestic audience costs for European politicians should they ignore SIDS' concerns. Given AOSIS' recent encounter with how foreign economic interests could prove a sharp counterbalance to their arguments, the member states wished to keep as much leverage behind their moral legitimacy as possible.

AOSIS was both the primary force calling for the negotiation of the Kyoto Protocol immediately after the Convention entered into force and the first Party to propose a complete draft protocol for review – even before COP1 convened.⁹¹ This allowed the bloc to maintain the

⁸⁸ James D. Fearon, "Domestic Political Audiences and the Escalation of International Disputes," *American Political Science Review* 88, no. 3 (1994): 577.

⁸⁹ Branislav L. Slantchev, "Audience Costs Theory and Its Audiences," *Security Studies* 21 (2012): 377.

⁹⁰ Anderson, "Climate Change, Clinton and Kyoto," 10.

⁹¹ Betzold, "'Borrowing' Power to Influence International Negotiations," 142.

same agenda-setting power they had been quick to claim in the INC negotiations, and their proposal consequently exerted a strong influence on the negotiating process. Small island delegates also took leadership roles throughout the conferences leading up to 1997. At the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, two vice presidents to the conference were delegates from the Maldives and Vanuatu, both members of AOSIS.⁹² Not only were these positions capable of shaping the ensuing discussion, but in themselves they represented a significant increase in the clout SIDS were thought capable of wielding. Before the foundation of AOSIS and its remarkable success at INC negotiations, SIDS representatives had not been nominated for positions chairing negotiation groups.⁹³

The Kyoto Protocol was the first instance of calls for immediate and significant cuts to greenhouse gas emissions being considered seriously, but only resulted in modest emission targets. They were legally binding, but nowhere near the levels which AOSIS had initially called for. This was partly due to the fact that as discussion shifted to particular measures of emissions reductions, implementation, and timelines, so too did focus shift naturally to the economic costs such measures would require.⁹⁴ Another threat to reaching an agreement incorporating effective mitigation measures was a recent theory circulating among developing countries, many well on their way to industrialization, that global warming was a hoax being peddled by rich, developed countries to prevent others from rising to their level.⁹⁵ Whether in genuine belief or not, the rationale was quickly picked up by China, India, and other large developing powers, who strongly opposed any restrictions on their emissions until rich, developed countries had made

⁹² Mary Jo Larson, "Low-Power Contributions in Multilateral Negotiations: A Framework Analysis," *Negotiation Journal* 19, no. 2 (2003): 135.

⁹³ Betzold, "'Borrowing' Power to Influence International Negotiations," 142.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 143.

⁹⁵ Anderson, "Climate Change, Clinton and Kyoto," 10.

significant strides themselves. At the same time, in the United States, while President Clinton favored limits without defining their severity, the Senate had passed a resolution preventing him from signing any treaty including limits solely for developed countries' emissions. The US' consequent aim was the inclusion of equitable, binding contributions from all countries, a requirement which President Clinton introduced in the final weeks of a two-and-a-half-year long negotiation process.⁹⁶ This late proposal dramatically derailed the proposed treaty text for Kyoto, in a demonstration of how easy it was for large, rich developed countries to wield their political clout. If the point had not yet been driven home, it would be when President Bush later rejected the US' previous commitment to ratify the Kyoto Protocol.

The Kyoto Protocol was an ultimately disappointing result for AOSIS, which had been attempting to build a consensus around a binding 20 percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions of Annex 1 Parties from 1990 levels by 2005. This was already a significant drop from the immediate 60 percent reduction necessary to stabilize atmospheric concentrations, as calculated by the IPCC.⁹⁷ AOSIS' most important objective had not been achieved, yet, as one member of the UNFCCC secretariat staff observed, "the fact that the Protocol was agreed could not be anything but a success for AOSIS."⁹⁸ In fact, Sebastian Oberthur and Hermann Ott argue that AOSIS members were likely aware that the 20 percent target was unachievable from the start, but continued to advocate in its favor so as to raise international expectations as to the adequacy of commitments and to keep the bar as high as possible during the negotiation process.⁹⁹ This was a situation where AOSIS members gauged that realist calculations around

⁹⁶ Anderson, "Climate Change, Clinton and Kyoto," 10, 11.

⁹⁷ Betzold, "'Borrowing' Power to Influence International Negotiations," 140.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Sebastian Oberthür and Hermann E. Ott, *The Kyoto Protocol: International Climate Policy for the 21st Century* (Berlin: Springer-Verlag, 1999), 45.

economic interests would outweigh the normative leverage they could bring to bear, but continued their work so as to maintain the idea of themselves as ambitious drivers of change. This would continue to shape their international image to their advantage even in the absence of policy success.

Climate change is a complicated, delicate, and politically charged issue, involving high economic, ethical, and technical stakes. The deliberations AOSIS has undertaken at the UN have not met with universal or consistent success, but it is important to note that this is not a zero-sum game or a short process. Rather, the objective of SIDS in UN climate negotiations is to continue the play in hopes of changing the rules, boundaries, and imaginaries involved. If the alternative to a disappointing agreement is no agreement at all, the former allows AOSIS to maintain and develop networks and alliances in order to create a stronger position with which to tackle the next proposed Protocol.

Lessons in Diplomacy

From the beginning, SIDS had known that they were on the margins of international politics, that they would need to be both clever and active in order to make their voices heard. But many of the members of AOSIS were both new to the UN and inexperienced with multilateral negotiations, particularly the international complexities present at UN headquarters.¹⁰⁰ SIDS tend to have a narrower range of concerns in international politics, often focused on a previous colonial power, and were not known for being influential players in global forums prior to the foundation of AOSIS.¹⁰¹ This is in large part due to the colonial legacies many of these states share, which incorporated an administrative dependence on colonial

¹⁰⁰ Chasek, "Margins of Power," 133.

¹⁰¹ Naseer Mohamed, "The Diplomacy of Micro-States," 13.

powers' foreign affairs apparatuses. Foreign ministries in most SIDS consequently date only to their gaining independence, and most of these nations lack established facilities to train diplomatic staff.¹⁰² Partly due to this difficulty in acquiring trained representation and partly due to a scarcity of resources, their foreign missions do not have many staff.

SIDS primarily rely on permanent missions in New York for UN climate negotiations rather than also employing direct bilateral contact with other states.¹⁰³ The average number of staff at Latin American and Caribbean state missions was only 10.9 in 2004, while Pacific state missions staff counted at an even more dramatic 2.5.¹⁰⁴ These staff are effectively overwhelmed by the amount of paperwork and meetings they face, finding it difficult to pull the relevant messages from the onslaught, and some may be patronage hires who are less than qualified for or committed to the amount of work at hand. According to one Pacific ambassador in 2004, "You always have that feeling that you're not being involved because you just cannot cover all that is happening at the United Nations." Another stated that, "At the United Nations, it's a numbers game; those with more can change and affect some of the end results."¹⁰⁵

The comparatively under-resourced foreign bureaucracy of SIDS is further strained by the demands on membership in international organizations. The sheer number of international organizations and demands of membership can overwhelm small states' capacity to access the aid and resources which theoretically are available to them, while compliance costs present an additional financial stress. The majority of the cost of maintaining the staff of SIDS missions in New York City to effectively negotiate at the UN comes out of these small states' budgets rather

¹⁰² Naseer Mohamed, "The Diplomacy of Micro-States," 10.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 24.

¹⁰⁴ Karen E. McNamara, "Voices from the margins: Pacific ambassadors and the geopolitics of marginality at the United Nations," *Asia Pacific Viewpoint* 50, no. 1 (2009): 4.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

than being covered by the UN, though Australia has provided shared office space to the smallest Commonwealth states.¹⁰⁶ Membership fees within specific organizations also take a toll: being part of the G77 costs each member country USD \$5000 annually.¹⁰⁷ The G77 is not a consistently productive voice for representing SIDS interests, owing to the variety of concerns spread across different developing countries and regions. But AOSIS is recognized as an association by the UN rather than an institutionalized lobbying block like the G77, the latter of which is viewed as a more serious form of representation.¹⁰⁸ Consequently, “development partners tend to listen a bit more if it’s the Group 77 who’s trying to articulate a viewpoint rather than a small island developing states specific issue.”¹⁰⁹ Some of the SIDS have utilized simultaneous multiple representation or joint representation strategies to try to minimize overall costs of creating missions and paying for ambassadors, but these strategies are of limited utility, convenient only to a few states.¹¹⁰

Despite the associated costs, permanent representation at the UN is key to dramatically symbolizing the islands’ continued presence, keeping them relevant instead of forgotten. While the imaginary of small island states as ‘most vulnerable’ frequently proves powerful in climate change negotiations, ambassadors are fighting against a simultaneous geopolitical imaginary casting the states as outliers, subservient to previous colonial powers, or even doomed.¹¹¹ As one Pacific ambassador has put it, “The lack of fundamental endowments is because of our vulnerability to climate change and sea level rise. Who would want to invest in a country such as

¹⁰⁶ Jack Corbett and John Connell, “All the world is a stage: global governance, human resources, and the ‘problem’ of smallness,” *The Pacific Review* 28, no. 3 (2015): 449.

¹⁰⁷ McNamara, “Voices from the margins,” 6.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹¹⁰ Naseer Mohamed, “The Diplomacy of Micro-States,” 23.

¹¹¹ Corbett and Connell, “All the world is a stage,” 449.

mine for example with these threats hanging at the back?”¹¹² Such a characterization makes it far harder for SIDS to get either attention or resources. Constructivist approaches to foreign policy describe social relations, shaped by ideas continuously revised and shared between concerned states, impacting the policy and political goals of these states.¹¹³ Small island representatives are continually trying to manage expectations about the UN system and UNFCCC Protocols in order to keep SIDS near the top of the list of priorities without letting their threatened status tip into being seen as a lost cause.

Part 3: The Twenty-First Century

The Kyoto Protocol entered into force in 2005, after ratification by Russia in place of the US. Focus quickly shifted at that point to the development of its successor, leading the era to be termed the “post-Kyoto” phase.¹¹⁴ The commitments set out in the Kyoto Protocol were set to expire in 2012, so a new Protocol would need to be drafted to take its place. In November 2007, anticipating the upcoming United Nations conference in Bali, representatives of SIDS met once again in the Maldives and signed the second Malé Declaration. This document emphasized again the particular vulnerability of SIDS, recognized AOSIS’ leadership in organizing international responses to climate change, and called upon the Bali conference to commit to a formal process which would ensure urgent action to stabilize the climate.¹¹⁵

Over the preceding years, AOSIS had been most active in COPs, but second-most in UN meetings regarding finance, owing to their focus on obtaining resources, funding, and technology

¹¹² McNamara, “Voices from the margins,” 8.

¹¹³ Rasheed, “Role of Small Islands in UN Climate Negotiations,” 218.

¹¹⁴ Larry Crump and Christian Downie, “Understanding Climate Change Negotiations: Contributions from International Negotiation and Conflict Management,” *International Negotiation* 20 (2015): 156.

¹¹⁵ “Malé Declaration on the Human Dimension of Global Climate Change,” *Center for International Environmental Law: Publications*, 14 November 2007, http://www.ciel.org/Publications/Male_Declaration_Nov07.pdf

with which to pursue sustainable development and adaptation measures.¹¹⁶ Ambassadors had become frustrated with UN funding mechanisms because many of them failed to translate into development projects on the ground – while money had been earmarked for SIDS as part of Kyoto, much of that later failed to appear.¹¹⁷ One month later, the Bali Action Plan was agreed upon, creating the legal mandate for the UN to negotiate a new treaty. The Bali Action plan introduced the two-track approach, one for industrialized countries and one for long-term commitments from all countries, including developing countries.¹¹⁸ This approach prescribed two sets of negotiations. The first was conducted by the Ad Hoc Working Group on Further Commitments for Annex I parties under the Kyoto Protocol (AWG-KP), intended to renegotiate emissions reductions by industrialized countries. The second took place in the Ad Hoc Working Group on Long-Term Cooperative Action (AWG-LCA), aimed at considering long-term commitments by all countries.¹¹⁹

The 2009 United Nations Climate Change Conference, known as the Copenhagen Summit, was intended to be the setting for political breakthroughs and the creation of a new legal instrument to be put forward, succeeding the Kyoto Protocol when it expired in 2012.¹²⁰ As the Copenhagen Summit approached, AOSIS members had doubled down on a rhetoric of vulnerability. In July 2009, Ambassador Dessima Williams, Permanent Representative of Grenada to the UN and then-chairperson of AOSIS, stressed that “without adequate global commitments to make deep cuts to temperature increases caused by greenhouse gas emissions,

¹¹⁶ Akima Cornell, “Small actor, big opinion: Least developed countries’ participation in climate change networks,” *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences* 4 (2010): 69.

¹¹⁷ McNamara, “Voices from the margins,” 7-8.

¹¹⁸ Radoslav S. Dimitrov, “Inside UN Climate Change Negotiations: The Copenhagen Conference,” *The Review of Policy Research* 27, no. 6 (2010): 799.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ Crump and Downie, “Understanding Climate Change Negotiations,” 156-157.

small islands would be the first to be washed away into the sea.”¹²¹ Just one month before the summit, President Mohamed Nasheed of the Republic of Maldives reminded the UN that “with a sea-level rise of over 1.5 metres, hundreds of millions of people would be dead. They would simply be wiped out.”¹²² And on November 21, 2009, the Caribbean Community released a song titled “1.5 to Stay Alive,” referring to the degree limit for global surface temperature rise before SIDS cannot effectively adapt to climate change.¹²³

Expectations were high for the Copenhagen Summit and, consequently, the COP portion was held at a much higher administrative level than usual, with the entire last two days of the conference attended by heads of state.¹²⁴ However, negotiations quickly collapsed as the preceding AWGs produced absolutely no compromises. In the five meetings held by each AWG in preparation for Copenhagen, states flatly reiterated their positions rather than genuinely engaging in negotiations.¹²⁵ The two-track solution had entrenched divisions between developed and developing countries, setting the stage for a battle over the shape of any new agreement. Non-Annex I countries favored “common but differentiated responsibilities,” pointing to their low per capita emissions and limited capabilities contrasted with industrialized countries being responsible for 75% of historical greenhouse gas emissions. Industrialized countries constructed the problem as one of “pragmatic politics,” rejecting the idea that they were culpable or guilty in a sense that connotes reparations and instead calling for the path they found most likely to

¹²¹ Nemat Sadat, “Small Islands, Rising Seas,” *UN Chronicle*, accessed February 6, 2021, <https://www.un.org/en/chronicle/article/small-islands-rising-seas>

¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ “CARICOM states unite in song on climate change position,” *McClatchy – Tribune Business News*, last modified November 21, 2009, <https://search.proquest.com/wire-feeds/caricom-states-unite-song-on-climate-change/docview/457062354/se-2?accountid=15054>.

¹²⁴ Daniel Bodansky, “The Copenhagen Climate Change Conference: A Post-Mortem,” Athens, GA: University of Georgia Law School (2010): 4.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

change future emissions trends.¹²⁶ At the Barcelona round of negotiations in November 2009, negotiators concluded that they were not ready to agree on a global climate treaty in December. SIDS representatives would continue to doggedly pursue a legally binding agreement, but they were the only ones to do so.¹²⁷

What precisely happened at the Copenhagen Summit fell in part behind closed doors, with backroom meetings between the United States, Brazil, China and India creating the final agreement. We do know that on the third day of negotiations, developing countries split apart in a culmination of longstanding differences. While the conflicting interests of industrial emitters, OPEC members, forested countries, and AOSIS had previously been suppressed for the sake of coalition maintenance, the G77 fractured along those component lines at Copenhagen.¹²⁸

AOSIS and several Latin American countries joined together to call for formal negotiations on a detailed text which had been submitted to the UN by Tuvalu in May, which would create a global legally binding “Copenhagen Protocol.” The proposed agreement would limit global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees and create obligations for both Western nations and major emitters among developing countries. Despite repeated calls for negotiation, their proposal was never seriously acknowledged by other delegations or chairpersons.¹²⁹ In this instance, neither the advantage of setting the agenda nor public support could overcome the combined force of immediate economic interest and the now-entrenched representation of power relations which pits developing against developed countries. In one small success for SIDS, Grenada, then-chair of AOSIS, was invited to the 29-party heads of state negotiating group which

¹²⁶ Navroz K. Dubash, “Copenhagen: Climate of Mistrust,” *Economic and Political Weekly* 44, no. 52 (2010): 9.

¹²⁷ Dimitrov, “Inside UN Climate Change Negotiations,” 808.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 804.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 807.

happened on the last day of the conference, representing the degree to which AOSIS was regarded as a major player at this conference.¹³⁰

Some analysts have called the Copenhagen negotiations a “remarkable failure,”¹³¹ while others argue that it “represents a potentially significant breakthrough.”¹³² What is clear is that Copenhagen was an illuminating disappointment: in many ways, its greatest failures pushed the need to do better into the spotlight. Copenhagen failed to actually solve any international disagreements over climate change, to resolve questions about whether to keep or dismiss the two-track method, or to bridge ideological differences between industrialized and developing countries.¹³³ But while no substantive progress was made on many subjects, industrialized nations did pledge billions of dollars in support of climate policy in developing countries, and fragilities in the UN multilateral process were underscored. The threat of public loss of faith in heads of state would continue to haunt high-level leaders as they returned home in disarray, as would the need for creative ways to overcome the structural tension laid bare at Copenhagen.¹³⁴ This created domestic audience costs that SIDS leveraged in the lead-up to the next set of negotiations. In direct response to the failures of Copenhagen, at the 2011 negotiations in Durban, nations committed to establishing a binding international agreement and a process focused on long-term participation of all countries, hoping to eliminate the distinction between developed and developing countries which had so hopelessly snarled negotiations at

¹³⁰ Bodansky, “The Copenhagen Climate Change Conference,” 4-5.

¹³¹ Crump and Downie, “Understanding Climate Change Negotiations,” 156.

¹³² Bodansky, “The Copenhagen Climate Change Conference,” 9.

¹³³ Dubash, “Copenhagen: Climate of Mistrust,” 9.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 11.

Copenhagen.¹³⁵ This agreement was scheduled to be completed in 2015, culminating in a summit to be held in Paris.

¹³⁵ Crump and Downie, “Understanding Climate Change Negotiations,” 157.

Chapter 2: SIDS at the Paris Conference

Part 1: The Road to Paris

Lessons Learned

The four years between Durban and Paris offered ample time for contemplation of what exactly had gone wrong at Copenhagen. Disagreements over responsibility for emissions reductions, the continued lack of internationally binding mechanisms, and the recently-proved ability of the United States to derail a global community-building process due to domestic shifts in power weighed heavy on the minds of many negotiators. Nevertheless, ministers, ambassadors and representatives prepared once again for preparatory negotiations, the next skirmish in an ongoing battle. The Durban Platform had begun to weaken the distinction between ‘developed’ and ‘developing’ countries which had so hindered negotiations at Copenhagen. This decreased the legitimacy of the G77’s self-portrayal as the representative of all developing countries, but also made room for Brazil, South Africa, India and China (collectively referred to as BASIC) to develop their own, increasingly divergent position.¹³⁶

Over the 15 negotiation sessions leading up to COP21, it became evident to most negotiators that the political inability of a US President to sign a legally binding treaty without permission from Congress would limit the form any agreement would take.¹³⁷ Meanwhile, a new coalition was forming to handicap any agreement which would include strong commitments from developing countries – called the group of “Like Minded Developing Countries” (LMDCs), it included Bolivia, China, Ecuador, Egypt, India, Malaysia, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Philippines,

¹³⁶ Louise van Schaik, “The EU and the progressive alliance negotiating in Durban: saving the climate?” *Climate and Development Knowledge Network* (2012): 17, <https://www.odi.org/publications/6864-eu-and-progressivealliance-negotiating-durban-saving-climate>.

¹³⁷ Ian Fry, “The Paris Agreement: An Insider’s Perspective,” *Environmental Policy and Law* 46, no. 2 (2016): 106.

Saudi Arabia, Thailand and Venezuela.¹³⁸ Their position hinged on ensuring that any outcomes of the climate change regime would not affect their abilities regarding development.¹³⁹

Whether in response to lessons learned about the political muscle of the US or in response to the formation of LMDC, AOSIS began to work on a new coalition of its own. In July 2015, Tony de Brum, Foreign Minister for the Marshall Islands, began organizing meetings of ministers who had been relegated to the margins of preparatory negotiations, handpicked for their like-mindedness and desire to see ambitious action at Paris. The meetings were aimed at discussing how to raise expectations surrounding the conference and how to keep climate change in the public eye, but quickly became more. The group initially included countries from Latin America, the Pacific, and Africa, then expanded to incorporate European countries as well.¹⁴⁰ By November more than 100 countries claimed membership, among them 79 African, Caribbean, and Pacific countries and all EU member states. The original goal of the coalition was to build momentum towards an ambitious, strong agreement at Paris which would include legally binding terms, a long-term goal aligned with science, a mechanism for review, and a system for tracking states' progress in meeting said goal.¹⁴¹ The coalition, however, was not made public prior to COP21.

¹³⁸ Angel Hsu, "New bloc of 'Like Minded Developing Countries' meet in advance of Doha Climate Talks," *Data-Driven Enviro Lab*, last modified October 25, 2012, <https://datadrivenlab.org/climate/new-bloc-of-like-minded-developing-countries-meet-in-advance-of-doha-climate-talks/>

¹³⁹ Fry, "The Paris Agreement," 106.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ Karl Mathiesen and Fiona Harvey, "Climate coalition breaks cover in Paris to push for binding and ambitious deal," *The Guardian*, last modified December 8, 2015. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/dec/08/coalition-paris-push-for-binding-ambitious-climate-change-deal>

Issues on the Table

Three main points of contention had emerged during the negotiations thus far: differentiation between ‘developed’ and ‘developing’ states in terms of emissions responsibilities, the form of a framework with which to capture and assess nationally determined contributions (NDCs), and whether the Paris Agreement would be adopted as a protocol to the UNFCCC. Each of these issues created strife, setting a disheartening stage for the ensuing conference. Some feared that a repeat of Copenhagen might be in the works, but at least a negotiating text had been adopted, however rife with square brackets it might remain.¹⁴²

On the day before the first session of the Paris conference, November 29, Thoriq Ibrahim, Minister of Environment and Energy for the Maldives and then-chair of AOSIS, released a statement on behalf of its members. The document summarized the increase in extreme weather events and warming which SIDS had seen over the past years, then laid out AOSIS’ objectives for the Paris agreement: a long-term temperature goal of 1.5 degrees or less, demanding increasing mitigation over time, with developed countries “taking the lead;” explicit recognition of SIDS’ special circumstances; an international mechanism to address loss and damage from climate change; and increased financial resources for development and mitigation, starting from a minimum of \$100 billion USD by 2020.¹⁴³

One other maneuver took place just before the start of the Paris conference. The United States was privately invited to a meeting of the coalition which Minister de Brum had worked to found. While little record of the meeting exists due to the secrecy around the coalition’s

¹⁴² Annalisa Savaresi, “The Paris Agreement: a new beginning?” *Journal of Energy & Natural Resources Law* 34, no. 1 (2016): 18. DOI: 10.1080/02646811.2016.1133983

¹⁴³ “Paris Must Show Global Solidarity to Tackle Climate Change,” Alliance of Small Island States, last modified November 29, 2015, <http://web.archive.org/web/20170718133747/https://www.aosis.org/paris-must-show-global-solidarity-to-tackle-climate-change/>.

existence, the chief climate change negotiator for the Pacific Island state of Tuvalu, Ian Fry, would later reveal that the US accepted the invitation and “joined forces” with the coalition.¹⁴⁴ Within Zartman and Rubin’s framework of “borrowing power,” AOSIS successfully appealed to a common interest with the US in order to pair their positions, offering both a position of leadership that would favorably impact the US’ public image and shared interest in getting commitments from developing countries.¹⁴⁵ While the US was less materially ambitious in their goals than AOSIS, the sheer political clout which they brought to the table would be critical to overcoming opposition from BASIC countries and the LMDC group. As mentioned above, the Maldives held the Presidency for AOSIS, and Mr. Enele Sopoaga, Prime Minister of Tuvalu, was the primary spokesman for AOSIS throughout the negotiations. Mr. Tony de Brum, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Marshall Islands, and Mr. Anote Tong, President of the Republic of Kiribati, were also key players in setting up meetings prior to the beginning of COP21.¹⁴⁶

Part 2: AOSIS’ Goals

In both formal and informal preparatory meetings, as well as official statements during the final negotiation sessions of COP21, AOSIS had three primary objectives. These were their “red lines,” or negotiation outcomes which, if they were not agreed upon, could make or break AOSIS’ willingness to ratify the Paris Agreement. The three positions were a continued recognition of SIDS’ special circumstances, a legally binding and “ambitious” treaty, and recognition of loss and damages from climate change.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁴ Fry, “The Paris Agreement,” 106.

¹⁴⁵ Betzold, “‘Borrowing’ Power to Influence International Negotiations,” 136.

¹⁴⁶ Ourbak and Magnan, “The Paris Agreement and Climate Change Negotiations,” 2203.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

The recognition of SIDS as particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change was grounded in the same rhetoric which island state negotiators had been employing for years. However, there was a potential new issue at stake: “vulnerable countries” would receive priority during the allocation of funds for adaptation, but a specific definition of vulnerable had not been established – and now other countries wanted a piece of the pie. The original text of the UNFCCC commits developed countries “to assist developing countries that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change,” but offers little guidance as to which countries those are or by what measures vulnerability should be assessed.¹⁴⁸ Because adaptation funding is limited, the issue of prioritization is highly important to developing countries, and SIDS wanted to maintain a position at the top of the list.

AOSIS’ second redline, a legally binding and ambitious target for global emissions reductions, was even more contentious. The secret coalition that they had built was largely willing to advocate for a cap of 1.5 degrees C on global warming by the end of the century, with members of the LDC group, Asian countries, and African countries all advocating for this as a target. However, the aforementioned issue of the US’s limitations created difficulties. Despite this preexisting disagreement and the considerable power that the US held in negotiations, AOSIS continued to push for a legally binding outcome. This was in part a reflection of previously stated aims to keep international expectations as high as possible regarding the potential outcomes of these conferences, and in part a refusal to preemptively cut their support for a plan which they truly considered best simply because they found its success unlikely.¹⁴⁹ For AOSIS, sacrificing their aims simply because the opposition appeared overwhelming would be

¹⁴⁸ Richard J.T. Klein and Annett Möhner, “The Political Dimension of Vulnerability: Implications for the Green Climate Fund,” *IDS Bulletin* 42, no. 3 (2011): 16.

¹⁴⁹ Oberthür and Ott, *The Kyoto Protocol*, 45.

tantamount to preemptively accepting defeat and would take pressure off of their other goals as well. By holding fast to their political convictions, AOSIS forced nations which opposed this temperature rise limit to make their case against the visible existential threat to SIDS rather than letting their desire for insufficient action go unquestioned.

The third objective AOSIS brought to Paris was to enshrine recognition of loss and damages in the text of the agreement. This was something which AOSIS had been seeking since the 1990s, when Vanuatu put forward a proposal for an International Insurance Pool which would compensate the countries most vulnerable to sea level rise for loss and damage from climate change.¹⁵⁰ Adaptation measures can only take SIDS so far, and rising sea levels threaten to overwhelm entire nations. If that should happen, there exists very little remedy at present, as international protections for refugees do not extend to those who are displaced from their homes by climate change. Neither the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees nor the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Stateless Persons offers remedy for climate migrants.¹⁵¹ As Sam Edelman puts it, “the right not to be arbitrarily deprived of one’s nationality is provided in Article 15 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights but there is no human right to the ground below one’s feet.”¹⁵²

SIDS states resist the prospect of being forced into the status of atterritorial states. Most mainstream international relations theory adopts a model of state sovereignty as unlimited rule over a territory, and the UN system reinforces that norm through its choice to legitimate states

¹⁵⁰ Sam Adelman, “Climate justice, loss and damage and compensation for small island developing states,” *Journal of Human Rights and the Environment* 7, no. 1 (2016): 45. DOI: 10.4337/jhre.2016.01.02

¹⁵¹ Fry, “The Paris Agreement,” 108.

¹⁵² Adelman, “Climate justice, loss and damage,” 43.

based largely on principles of territorial integrity.¹⁵³ The Tibetan Government-In-Exile has struggled to legitimate its *de facto* sovereignty over the Tibetan diaspora without legal jurisdiction over territory, achieving tacit international recognition but far less voice in international politics than SIDS currently enjoy.¹⁵⁴ Understandably, island governments do not relish the prospect of being forced to wage a new battle for recognition of their authority in the midst of relocating entire populations and fighting for financial aid. SIDS see language on loss and damages as a potential avenue to achieving provisions which would maintain their statehood should their traditional territories become uninhabitable and would create legal and financial provisions for acquiring different territory.¹⁵⁵ While little hope exists for a Protocol to the UNFCCC to be dedicated to this subject, arguments on an international convention to protect those displaced by climate change would help build a norm that there is some shared responsibility between developed and developing countries for this forced migration. This norm could then be called upon in arguing for localized or regional responses to provide assistance and protection with resettlement.¹⁵⁶

The idea of text on loss and damage was instantly controversial, however, with Annex I Parties looking to avoid any codified legal responsibility for the adverse effects of climate change. AOSIS continued to lobby until the Bali Action Plan included mild language on loss and damage, compelling parties to “consider ways of addressing loss and damage” but lacking any mention of either compensation from or liability of developed countries.¹⁵⁷ Subsequent COPs

¹⁵³ Stuart Elden, “Contingent Sovereignty, Territorial Integrity and the Sanctity of Borders,” *SAIS Review of International Affairs* 26, no. 1 (2012): 12.

¹⁵⁴ Fiona McConnell, “De Facto, Displaced, Tacit: The Sovereign Articulations of the Tibetan Government-In-Exile,” *Political Geography* 28 (2009): 347.

¹⁵⁵ Jane McAdam, *Climate Change, Forced Migration, and International Law*, Oxford: Oxford University Press (2009): 269.

¹⁵⁶ Adelman, “Climate justice, loss and damage,” 44.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 45.

inched the issue forward, establishing the Warsaw Mechanism in 2013 to study climate risk management strategy and ways of addressing related loss and damage. In the lead-up to COP21, it was obvious that the concept had gained more traction, with co-chairs of a preparatory meeting in Bonn recording “general acceptance that it [loss and damage] needs to be included in the Paris outcome.”¹⁵⁸ However, disagreement remained between developed and developing states on exactly what “loss and damage” meant. The G77 and their allies tended to argue that compensation was part of loss and damage remediation, with the understanding that climate change would cause inevitable damages which could not be alleviated through adaptation. Industrialized states preferred to view the agenda as part of the adaptation process, without entertaining questions of responsibility.¹⁵⁹ AOSIS was unwilling to accept any agreement which did not include a mechanism to acknowledge and compensate for climate-related loss and damage, but neither were developed countries prepared to subject themselves to unlimited liability. This would prove to be a very tricky issue for the entirety of COP21.

All the above objectives were dealt with in AOSIS’ opening statement to COP21, with the addition of a request for increased financial resources for adaptation and development. Minister Ibrahim, representative for Maldives and then-chair of AOSIS, noted that the funding should provide special access to SIDS, noting that, “in light of our capacity constraints, simplified access is essential.”¹⁶⁰ As mentioned in the previous chapter, the comparative resource scarcity in SIDS bureaucracies frequently inhibits their ability to access scientific, technical, and financial resources theoretically made available to them through international organizations.

¹⁵⁸ Adelman, “Climate justice, loss and damage,” 47.

¹⁵⁹ Lisa Vanhala and Cecilie Hestbaek, “Framing Climate Change Loss and Damage in UNFCCC Negotiations,” *Global Environmental Politics* 16, no. 4 (2016): 112.

¹⁶⁰ “AOSIS Opening Statement for 21st Conference of Parties to the UNFCCC,” *UNFCCC* (2015): 2, https://unfccc.int/files/meetings/paris_nov_2015/application/pdf/cop21cmp11_hls_speech_aosis_maldives.pdf

SIDS were also among the states cautious to trust in the funds which had already been pledged by developed countries because previous commitments for financial or technical assistance had gone overdue or unfulfilled.¹⁶¹ As further adaptation needs arose each year with increased extreme weather events and progressive sea level rise, so had the need for adaptation finance, and so it would continue to grow if global emissions were left unchecked. AOSIS' request at COP21, in which they were joined by other LDCs, was for a minimum of \$100 billion USD per year to be provided for climate adaptation by 2020.¹⁶²

Part 3: Conference Negotiations

Last-Minute Changes and First-Day Meetings

The set of coordinated terrorist attacks in Paris during November 2015 necessitated increased security measures for the Paris Conference, significantly lowering the amount of direct participation by members of civil society and decreasing the conference's overall accessibility.¹⁶³ Plans for environmental demonstrations were scaled back, a massive climate march was canceled over security concerns, and live television coverage of the sessions was restricted. Whether elements of this had been incorporated in prior designs or enabled solely by new security concerns, the Paris negotiations would prove highly opaque, creating opportunities for backroom dealings upon which the French presidency would capitalize. The conference was run tightly and quietly, with many consultations taking place but their results not being shared beyond the participants directly involved. On each issue, President Laurent Fabius and his team made quiet deals with the most engaged or powerful actors, keeping all others out of the loop so as to reduce

¹⁶¹ "Press Conference on Vulnerabilities of Small Island Developing States," *US Federal News Service*, May 11, 2010, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/275667964?accountid=15054>

¹⁶² "AOSIS Opening Statement," 2.

¹⁶³ Radoslav S. Dimitrov, "The Paris Agreement on Climate Change: Behind Closed Doors," *Global Environmental Politics* 16, no. 3 (2016): 2. DOI: 10.1162/GLEP_a_00361

the number of actors involved – this served to expedite the negotiations, but at the expense of principles of global governance which had long been enshrined in the UN and which had caused so much uproar at Copenhagen.¹⁶⁴ It also reduced the pressure which civil society could bring to bear on the negotiations. The restrictions on public access to the conference, while amply reasonable for the protection of the many representatives and heads of state attending, presented difficulties in analyzing the conference’s proceedings. Insider accounts of the negotiating sessions, news updates released throughout the two weeks in question, and documents reflecting countries’ official stances have been invaluable for tracing what happened behind closed doors.

On the first day of the conference, President Barack Obama of the United States spoke with heads of state of AOSIS in a meeting intended to enhance the role of SIDS countries in the Paris negotiations. He said afterwards, “These nations are not the most populous nations, they don’t have big armies. But they have a right to dignity and sense of place.”¹⁶⁵ This high-level meeting, one of the first to take place during the Paris Conference, illustrates the level of soft power which AOSIS had cultivated over the past decades. In the 1980s, SIDS concerns were marginalized and ignored at UN forums, but in 2015, the leader of one of the most globally influential states not only made time to meet directly with AOSIS leaders but referenced the plight of island nations in his own opening statement at the conference.¹⁶⁶ Personal, high-level consideration from a global superpower at this conference is a measure of how much soft power AOSIS was considered to wield, as well as their reputation as a driver of consensus. President Obama’s statement was also a boon in that it affirmed the rhetorical right of all UN nations to an

¹⁶⁴ Dimitrov, “The Paris Agreement on Climate Change,” 6.

¹⁶⁵ Reguly, “Small island states make waves at Paris climate conference.”

¹⁶⁶ “Remarks by President Obama at the First Session of COP21,” *The White House: Office of the Press Secretary*, November 30, 2015, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2015/11/30/remarks-president-obama-first-session-cop21>.

equal voice, no matter how fragile that promise might be; his support for SIDS' concerns made it just that much harder to dismiss them.

After this meeting, President Obama stated that “the consensus between the United States and these smaller nations is that we have to have an ambitious agreement. That, although the targets themselves may not have the force of treaties, the process, the procedures, that ensure transparency and periodic reviews – that needs to be legally binding, and that is going to be critical, in us having high ambitions and holding each other accountable for these measures.” Meanwhile, Prime Minister Peter O’Neill of Papua New Guinea and Chair of the PIF talked about the need for ambitious targets that have a real impact on climate change but made no immediate mention of legally binding measures. This suggests that the meeting was one where the two groups hammered out a deal – that the US would support higher targets for temperature caps, but the pressure to have a legally binding international treaty would be dropped.¹⁶⁷

Legal Form of the Agreement

While the precise timeline of the conference negotiations is difficult to know given the restrictions on access and closed-door meetings that peppered the summit, the most divisive topics were clear. The first was the issue of legally binding obligations, a matter which had been hotly debated for years. AOSIS desired a legally binding and ambitious treaty, joining a coalition of Latin American countries in backing a push by the EU for mandatory, quantified and binding national policies. The United States adopted an interesting dual posture on this matter: publicly, it attempted to appear open to compromise, avoiding explicit opposition to such measures, but in

¹⁶⁷ “PNG, USA and Vulnerable Island Nations Look to Ambitious Global Climate Change Goals in Paris,” *PACNEWS*; *Suva*, December 3, 2015, <https://search.proquest.com/wire-feeds/png-usa-vulnerable-island-nations-look-ambitious/docview/1828039839/se-2?accountid=15054>

private it was clear that legally binding mitigation was a red line for the country. The US delegation repeatedly intimated that the Paris Agreement being considered a protocol to the UNFCCC would go over poorly with Congress and would likely see the same rejection that the Kyoto Protocol had.¹⁶⁸ This was an instance where two-level games came into play: President Obama's ability to negotiate at Paris was constrained by Level II considerations regarding domestic ratification, and credibly so given Congress' past actions on climate. One top EU official affirmed that, "if we insist on legally binding, the deal will not be global because we will lose the US."¹⁶⁹ China, meanwhile, was open to the idea of a legally binding set of obligations, but only when coupled with the absence of any external review mechanisms. A high-level official, speaking anonymously, reportedly quipped that, "China is maximalist on legally binding and minimalist on transparency."¹⁷⁰

The resulting draft text created a framework for countries to choose their own, non-binding climate targets and included a five-year external review mechanism. While no record has been made of the negotiations which took place on this subject, the facts which are known help paint a picture of how compromise was achieved. AOSIS had previously met with the US so as to invite them to join the secret coalition, a meeting which included discussion of how to create a strong international agreement. In the second week of the Paris Conference, as these negotiations on legal character were taking place, Tuvalu withdrew from this broader coalition because it felt that it had become more about staged ambition than real change.¹⁷¹ This decision coincided with a small negotiating group being formed by members of the coalition to try to find a compromise,

¹⁶⁸ Fry, "The Paris Agreement," 107.

¹⁶⁹ Dimitrov, "The Paris Agreement on Climate Change," 3.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Fry, "The Paris Agreement," 106.

which resulted in the draft text reflecting a non-binding agreement.¹⁷² Though unverifiable, a compelling explanation for this sequence of events is that AOSIS, in conjunction with the secret coalition they had founded, traded their aim of a legally binding treaty for compromises elsewhere in the draft. It is worth noting here that AOSIS was reportedly focused primarily on emissions targets in Paris, a choice which according to Athualla Rasheed represented, “adapting its expectations to ensure continuity of a stronger UN-based climate system addressing the concerns of SIDS.”¹⁷³ Because of this focus, AOSIS saw more success on the matter of emissions reductions.

Ambition: The Temperature Increase Target

The next matter under debate was the maximum level which global temperature increase would be held to. There were a wide variety of opinions on this subject: the majority of EU countries favored 80- to 95-percent emission reductions by 2050, while the LMDC group desired minor qualitative goals with no measurements involved. The US wanted a global transition to clean energy before the end of the century but with no clear timeline and initially resisted the idea of a 2 degree target appearing in substantive sections of the Agreement.¹⁷⁴ Meanwhile, AOSIS experienced internal fractures. The majority of the coalition made a case for zero net global emissions by 2060-2080 and a temperature increase target below 1.5 degrees Celsius, with the Maldives stating on December 4th that the “guardrail of 2 degrees Celsius is wholly inadequate.”¹⁷⁵ However, Singapore did not support this, keeping AOSIS from reaching a consensus position. Singapore was apparently reticent on other issues, as well, likely due to

¹⁷² Fry, “The Paris Agreement,” 107.

¹⁷³ Rasheed, “Role of Small Islands in UN Climate Negotiations,” 227.

¹⁷⁴ Dimitrov, “The Paris Agreement on Climate Change,” 4.

¹⁷⁵ “Paris Highlights: Friday, 4 December 2015,” *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* 12, no. 657 (2015): 2.

differences in immediate vulnerability, economic status, and level of development between Singapore and other SIDS countries.¹⁷⁶ Because of this lack of consensus, SIDS split on this issue into smaller regional sub-groups including the Pacific Small Island States (PSIDS), the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), and the Coalition of Coral Atoll Nations.¹⁷⁷

Each of these sub-groups were able to use AOSIS' connections, alliances, and technical knowledge in their negotiation. SIDS had come to Paris well-prepared for arguments around whether a cap of 2 degrees would be sufficient, backing their position with a UNFCCC Structured Expert report released earlier in 2015 which affirmed that a 1.5 degree warming goal offered hope for islands' and coral reefs' survival but that a 2 degree goal would scuttle that hope.¹⁷⁸ Alden Meyer, director of strategy and policy at the Union of Concerned Scientists in Washington, said that AOSIS "became a big force [in Paris]," rather than simply being lucky given the desires of other states. "They were unified and came prepared. They worked with the environmental and scientific community to project their voice."¹⁷⁹

Scientific consensus was not the only force which SIDS brought to bear. On the eighth day of negotiations, as gridlock threatened, AOSIS revealed the new coalition which it had built, which had taken on the name of the High Ambition Coalition. The highly publicized reveal made it clear that the majority of the 195 countries at the conference favored a long-term goal of holding global temperature increase below 1.5 degrees. Tony de Brum, the foreign minister of the Marshall Islands, later said that they waited until the coalition could have the most impact:

¹⁷⁶ Fry, "The Paris Agreement," 106.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 107.

¹⁷⁸ Eric Reguly, "Small island states make waves at Paris climate conference," *The Globe and Mail*, December 13, 2015, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/world/small-island-states-make-waves-at-paris-climate-conference/article27742043/>.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

“This being the last three days of this meeting, there needs to be bridging. To reach out to those who still have doubts and maybe help convince them that the message that we are putting out is for real and it does make sense and it has the support of a lot more people than may first meet the eye.”¹⁸⁰ Their size and consensus exerted normative pressure which made it impolitic for major emitters, freshly exposed as holding a minority opinion, to overtly oppose this temperature limit.¹⁸¹ In the end, the Paris Agreement holds 2 degrees C to be the maximum temperature rise which states should permit, but subsequently states that the 1.5 C mark is a more ideal goal. SIDS got their preferred temperature increase limit included in the Paris Agreement text, implied as a long-term goal, and added to the agenda for consideration in IPCC forums due to strategic alliances and a “sophisticated communication strategy.”¹⁸² They effectively shifted international ideas around what level of ambition was reasonable or possible, securing the inclusion of their goal despite internal dissidence and international reticence.

Loss and Damage

Another matter which caused significant disagreement was the question of loss and damage. Climate change effects were both already occurring and in part inevitable by 2015, with severe weather events, sea level rise, wildfires, and other disasters projected to increase in frequency over the approaching years. Many SIDS anticipated land restoration, seawall construction, and other adaptation projects to require more funding as a result, and some had even begun looking into options should resettlement become necessary. The idea of loss and damage arose from this recognition that adaptation could not address all of the impacts of climate change. The UNFCCC does not identify a universal definition for the term, but loss and

¹⁸⁰ Mathiesen and Harvey, “Climate coalition breaks cover in Paris to push for binding and ambitious deal.”

¹⁸¹ Dimitrov, “The Paris Agreement on Climate Change,” 4.

¹⁸² Ourbak and Magnan, “The Paris Agreement and Climate Change Negotiations,” 2203.

damage can be understood as the sum of the impacts of slow-onset climate events, non-economic losses, institutional incapacity or lack of funding to avoid climate impacts, and setbacks to development, among other things.¹⁸³

The idea behind including a loss and damage regime in the Paris Agreement was not new in 2015: AOSIS had been advocating for such since releasing an insurance-related proposal in the 1980s intended to address loss and damage under the umbrella of adaptation assistance.¹⁸⁴ Appeals for recognition of loss and damage center on its function in reparations, comparing the disproportionately low contributions of vulnerable countries to climate change with the risks they now face. The developed world, SIDS argue, has an ethical and legal obligation to help ensure their survival given its majority role in current and historical emissions.¹⁸⁵ Other vulnerable nations and LDCs joined SIDS in arguing that a stand-alone loss and damage mechanism needed to be included in the Paris Agreement and was critical to providing “coping capacity,” meaning forms of planning that will reduce suffering.¹⁸⁶ Leading up to the conference, SIDS collaborated with LDCs to formulate a common position with the G77 and China so as to maximize their group lobbying power and come into the conference with a strong negotiating position. In September, the G77 and China agreed, engaging all developing countries with the issue.¹⁸⁷ AOSIS proved the most vocal proponent of loss and damage at Paris, listing its inclusion as one of their ‘red lines’. Their proposal was for a stand-alone loss and damage mechanism, separate

¹⁸³ Maxine Burkett, “Reading Between the Red Lines: Loss and Damage and the Paris Outcome,” *Climate Law* 6, no. 1 (2016): 119-120.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 121.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 120.

¹⁸⁶ Ben Adler, “Here’s why the words ‘loss and damage’ are causing such a fuss at the Paris climate talks,” *Grist*, last modified December 8, 2015, <https://grist.org/climate-energy/heres-why-the-words-loss-and-damage-are-causing-such-a-fuss-at-the-paris-climate-talks/>

¹⁸⁷ Fry, “The Paris Agreement,” 108.

from adaptation, that would be included as an independent article in the text.¹⁸⁸ However, developed countries were also highly invested in this issue – from the opposite direction.

The idea of accepting unlimited legal liability for climate change effects was anathema to many developed countries, as was the idea of opening avenues to being sued for compensation. The US proved the primary detractor of loss and damage, working hard to limit and weaken any inclusion of this language. Earlier in 2015, the US appeared to resist any language alluding to “loss and damage” on the basis of it evoking responsibility and liability, but nearer the start of the conference, American negotiators softened on the concept as long as liability was specifically precluded. On December 1st, the same day in which President Obama had met with leaders of SIDS, US Secretary of State John Kerry stated: “I think loss and damage will be complicated. We’re not against it. We’re in favor of framing it in a way that doesn’t create a legal remedy.”¹⁸⁹ External public interest, NGOs, and civil society, meanwhile, favored the side of LDCs and SIDS. On December 4th, for example, ACT Alliance staged a “loss and damage ‘Die-In’ campaign stunt” to publicize the rising death toll of extreme weather in developing countries.¹⁹⁰ Pressure from civil society to find a compromise was rising.

With some issues receiving more attention than others in the negotiations, and some important matters being left unresolved until procedural debates and bridging proposals had been dealt with, loss and damage was pushed into the ministerial debates. In the end, only one formal negotiation took place on this topic. Some outside observers had predicted that bilateral negotiations between the US and India would create the final compromise, owing to recent heavy

¹⁸⁸ Burkett, “Reading Between the Red Lines,” 122.

¹⁸⁹ Tony Dokoupil, “Climate Change Reparations: What Does the US Owe?” *MSNBC*, last modified December 2, 2015, <https://www.msnbc.com/msnbc/climate-change-reparations-what-does-the-us-owe-1-msna736636>

¹⁹⁰ Adler, “Here’s why the words ‘loss and damage’ are causing such a fuss at the Paris climate talks.”

flooding which had killed hundreds in India.¹⁹¹ In the end, AOSIS edged out India in the eyes of the ADP Co-Chairs despite India's comparatively greater structural power: on December 10th, when COP21 President Laurent Fabius proposed a private closed-door meeting to reach a compromise, the participants were the US Secretary of State and the Prime Minister of Tuvalu. After these meetings, a small group of representatives from the US, SIDS, and LDCs joined together to negotiate the final text.¹⁹² The result was a loss-and-damage clause included as its own article of the Paris Agreement, with an accompanying piece of text clarifying that the article "does not involve or provide a basis for any liability or compensation."¹⁹³ AOSIS and its allies successfully brought pressure from civil society and domestic audiences to bear on the conference regarding the necessity of including provisions on the material and ongoing harms done to vulnerable states, and in the process legitimated AOSIS' status as an authoritative voice in UNFCCC negotiations once again.

Finance

The last of SIDS' top priorities at Paris was the scale and distribution of financial assistance, which created much tension and debate behind closed doors. Regarding the scale of development finance, the G77 demanded a goal of \$100 billion per year in financial commitments by 2025, a demand which was barely agreed to.¹⁹⁴ This may appear surprising given the willingness of developed countries to offer significant pledges at Copenhagen in search of a compromise, but that apparent generosity may be viewed in another light as economic blackmail. In the words of Weisser and Muller-Mahn, "Making noisy financial pledges is by no

¹⁹¹ Adler, "Here's why the words 'loss and damage' are causing such a fuss at the Paris climate talks."

¹⁹² Fry, "The Paris Agreement," 108.

¹⁹³ UNFCCC, *Draft Paris Agreement: Revision 1*, (Paris: United Nations, 2015), available from <https://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2015/cop21/eng/109r01.pdf>

¹⁹⁴ Dimitrov, "The Paris Agreement on Climate Change," 4-5.

means philanthropic, but is ‘hiding both economic and epistemological violences behind the apparently benevolent act of giving.’¹⁹⁵ Finance is often treated as a hammer rather than an open hand at UNFCCC conferences, used by wealthy countries to shift compromises on other parts of the final text in their favor.

Some outside observers suspected that the High Ambition Coalition was weakened by exactly such activity, though the lack of transparency in negotiations made any allegations difficult to verify: “...critics cautioned that the [High Ambition Coalition] was only held together by the fact that the EU and the US had corrupted the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP) with trade-offs of financial pledges for adaptation, to the detriment of a binding agreement in terms of liability with regard to loss and damage, which was pursued by the US and other silent partners behind the scenes.”¹⁹⁶ Efforts to determine whether increases in financial commitments from the US and EU countries coincided with concessions on other portions of the text were unfortunately obstructed by the French Presidency’s decision to hold back the results of backroom dealings until the final draft of the text was released.

Radoslav Dimitrov, an EU delegate, has provided one of the few insider accounts of the negotiations that took place at Paris. He reported that in the final week of the conference, a last-minute closed-door debate between ministers of rich countries took place in which several countries from the global North suggested that they might reverse their previous pledges of climate finance. This threatened to derail the fragile web of compromises which had been strung together throughout the previous year’s negotiations, as finance was a redline issue for the G77

¹⁹⁵ Florian Weisser and Detlef Müller-Mahn, “No Place for the Political: Micro-Geographies of the Paris Climate Conference 2015,” *Antipode* 49, no. 3 (2017): 811.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

and China.¹⁹⁷ Diplomats who argued against such a move cited the lasting impact and public visibility of the conference, perhaps remembering the ramifications of their failure at Copenhagen: “What happens in Paris will be in the history books for a long time. Let’s not give any historian a reason to write that we ruined the global response to climate change.”¹⁹⁸ In the end, developed countries accepted the G77 demand of \$100 billion dollars per year, swayed by arguments which appealed to their interest in the conference’s success. But the distribution of those funds remained a point of contention.

Regarding access to adaptation funding, SIDS wanted continued recognition of their special circumstances and particular vulnerability but wanted to exclude other states from the same so they could maintain their privileged access to climate finance.¹⁹⁹ At the same time, a number of other nations tried to lay claim to the same label, most of them LDCs. The other states were primarily Latin American countries, joined by some African and mountainous countries as well, with vulnerabilities ranging from arid and semi-arid areas to fragile mountain ecosystems.²⁰⁰ As mentioned previously, the UNFCCC does not articulate a clear definition of vulnerability or particularly vulnerable countries, leaving the identification up to political debate.²⁰¹ Initially SIDS relied on being listed as “particularly vulnerable countries” in the Bali Action Plan, along with LDCs and drought- and flood-prone countries in Africa. However, at COP19 in Cancun, Colombia argued that Latin American countries should be considered particularly vulnerable as well. This instigated much argument within the G77 over following

¹⁹⁷ Dimitrov, “The Paris Agreement on Climate Change,” 4-5.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁹⁹ Ourbak and Magnan, “The Paris Agreement and Climate Change Negotiations,” 2203.

²⁰⁰ Fry, “The Paris Agreement,” 107.

²⁰¹ Neil Oculi and Scott R. Stephenson, “Conceptualizing climate vulnerability: Understanding the negotiating strategies of Small Island Developing States,” *Environmental Science and Policy* 85 (2018): 74.

years, and the Latin American constituency continued to mobilize for recognition in the lead-up to COP21.

At Paris, the Central American coalition was joined in advocacy by Afghanistan, Bhutan, Nepal, and the Republic of Azerbaijan. However, the Central American countries were simultaneously fractured by strident internal dissent from Belize, which is also a member of SIDS. This scattered regional attempts to build consensus.²⁰² Despite this complication, so many insertions were proposed to the draft text for identifying vulnerable states that the definition proved impossible to solve. Such was a common failing of the ADP, with many sections of the draft containing enough bracketed text to make any conclusions meaningless. On December 10, Antigua and Barbuda “lamented the process of discussions on COP items on finance matters. She said that because focus was given to streamlining rather than to negotiations due to limited time, many issues important to SIDS were left out.”²⁰³ The G77 and China seconded the sentiment, but little was to be done in the rush of the final days of the conference.

Rather than agree on recognizing any particular groups of states, the Paris Agreement instead offers murky generalities: Article 7.2 makes mention of “particularly vulnerable countries” without recognizing who they are. However, this loss was ameliorated by the fact that Articles 9.4 and 9.9 specifically recognize SIDS and LDCs as particularly vulnerable, having significant capacity constraints and needing readiness support.²⁰⁴ On the whole, this episode should be considered a success for SIDS in that it maintains the status quo in the face of rising competition for the special treatment they already receive. This can be attributed in large part to the increasingly sophisticated PR tactics of SIDS, exemplified most strikingly by the Maldives

²⁰² Oculi and Stephenson, “Conceptualizing climate vulnerability,” 76.

²⁰³ “Paris Highlights: Thursday, 10 December 2015.” *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* 12, no. 662 (2015): 2.

²⁰⁴ Fry, “The Paris Agreement,” 107.

holding a cabinet meeting entirely underwater in 2009.²⁰⁵ Their entrenched vulnerability identity gave weight to SIDS negotiations on funding priority.

Day 12: Resolution

Men argue. Nature acts. - Voltaire

On December 12th, the last day of the conference, the release of the final text of the Paris Agreement was imminent. In one of the closing meetings where the delegates had assembled, a voice rose – then another, and another – not in anger, but in song. The delegates from AOSIS members, more than eighty people all told, broke into a spontaneous, harmonized chorus of Bob Marley’s “Three Little Birds,” and were met with tears, cheers, and applause.²⁰⁶ It was not clear, however, that every little thing would indeed “be alright.” As writer and activist George Monbiot described the Paris Agreement, “by comparison to what it could have been, it’s a miracle. By comparison to what it should have been, it’s a disaster.”²⁰⁷ While much of this can be attributed to the institutional legacy of two decades of procrastination and short-term priorities, some failings of ambition undoubtably arose from the secretive process. The last two days of the conference were made up entirely of spatially exclusive backroom diplomacy, with no official negotiating sessions taking place.²⁰⁸

The so-called “*Indaba* of Solutions” was in practice less about deliberation than about tough bargaining: issues were solved by weighing compromise options against vested interests,

²⁰⁵ Maryam Omid, “Maldives sends climate SOS with undersea cabinet,” *Reuters: Environment*, last modified October 17, 2009, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-maldives-environment-idUSTRE59G0P120091017>.

²⁰⁶ Rasheed, “Role of Small Islands in UN Climate Negotiations,” 228.

²⁰⁷ George Monbiot, “Grand promises of Paris climate deal undermined by squalid retrenchments,” *The Guardian*, last modified December 12, 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/georgemonbiot/2015/dec/12/paris-climate-deal-governments-fossil-fuels>.

²⁰⁸ Dimitrov, “The Paris Agreement on Climate Change,” 6.

rather than convincing the other party with a better ethical, political, or scientific argument.²⁰⁹ Accredited observers were allowed into the conference halls but were excluded from the small group conferences behind closed doors where decisions were actually made. This prevented them from holding governments accountable and civil society from exercising meaningful support for developing countries.²¹⁰ This lack of transparency also incentivized negotiations to center on spatial and technological fixes for the climate crisis rather than touching on the underlying extractive political economy. Language proposing an eventual goal of “climate neutrality” proved too ambitious for the oil lobby to allow, almost no attention was paid to the production of fossil fuels, and the financial and monetary logic of the international system remained unchallenged as the status quo. Climate change was encoded as an external threat to all humankind rather than a challenge to the legitimacy of the hierarchical international structure.²¹¹ Even with all of the actual negotiations taking place backstage, the negotiating process of the Paris Agreement was still accepted as legitimate by the Parties, in considerable contrast to the outcome four years ago at Copenhagen. This was primarily because the result was palatable and the countries involved feared a similar loss of face on the world stage.²¹²

Despite the soft promises, insufficient projections for INDCs, and lack of attention to the extraction of fossil fuels as compared to their consumption, the Paris talks were much more ambitious than many had expected given the weak stances many governments had brought with them to the conference.²¹³ The inclusion of an 1.5 degree temperature rise limit as aspirational was a major success for SIDS, and one UNFCCC spokesman later enthused that “the dynamics

²⁰⁹ Weisser and Müller-Mahn, “No Place for the Political,” 811.

²¹⁰ “Paris Highlights: Monday, 7 December 2015,” *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* 12, no. 659 (2015): 1.

²¹¹ Weisser and Müller-Mahn, “No Place for the Political,” 811.

²¹² Dimitrov, “The Paris Agreement on Climate Change,” 7.

²¹³ Monbiot, “Grand promises of Paris climate deal.”

of the small countries [were] amazing in Paris.”²¹⁴ Ian Fry, the Ambassador for Tuvalu to the Paris Conference, later stated that SIDS generally considered the final text to be “a good outcome albeit not a great one.”²¹⁵ Thoriq Ibrahim, Minister of Environment and Energy for the Maldives, was quoted saying “We’re happy with this” in an interview at the AOSIS pavilion at the end of the conference.²¹⁶ And throughout the following year, AOSIS members would lead the charge on ratification of the Paris Agreement.²¹⁷ Needless to say, SIDS’ fight against rapidly encroaching dangers of climate change and the pitfalls of the international system was far from over, but COP21 proved a site of significant progress towards advancing and protecting their interests.

²¹⁴ Reguly, “Small island states make waves at Paris climate conference.”

²¹⁵ Fry, “The Paris Agreement,” 105.

²¹⁶ Reguly, “Small island states make waves at Paris climate conference.”

²¹⁷ Ourbak and Magnan, “The Paris Agreement and Climate Change Negotiations,” 2204.

Chapter 3: Analysis of Effectiveness

From the beginning of global considerations over how to deal with the threat of climate change, SIDS have been fighting to ensure their survival in the face of an often-lethargic international system. A rhetoric of vulnerability has underpinned many of their arguments but, as discussed, they have grown to employ a variety of negotiating tactics to meet their aims. Across the years, SIDS have experienced a wide range of results from their negotiating tactics. Among these, certain incidents stand out as particularly surprising or impactful. SIDS have been able to shift international norms around whose voices matter in climate negotiations, what level of ambition should inform limits on global temperature rise, and how funding should be assessed and delivered to developing nations. They have also made alliances with other nations and NGOs along the way, creating micropolitical and civil society advocacy networks to further their goals. However, they have consistently failed to achieve legally binding agreements on climate, a “polluter pays” principle with a method of resolution, and externally imposed emissions targets. SIDS also struggle with bloc maintenance.

Successes

In 1992, AOSIS successfully negotiated for a financial mechanism which would provide fully for adaptation and mitigation efforts by developing country Parties. This has played a role in allowing them to successfully manage their international political image over the following decades as endangered but not doomed. At the same conference, they gained a special seat for AOSIS on the Bureau for the INC, subsequent COPs, and all subsidiary bodies moving forward, granting the coalition unprecedented involvement and oversight on UNFCCC matters. This seat almost certainly prompted the nomination of AOSIS members to chair negotiation groups from 1995-1997. Each of these were staggering successes for a group of nations which had previously

been considered marginal players at best. The adoption of the UNFCCC also enshrined the precautionary principle in international climate change politics, exerting normative pressure against actors who might otherwise (or might still) press for a business-as-usual approach to environmental preservation. From the 1980s to the present, SIDS have consistently been successful in drawing on external support for scientific and technological advice, which informs their arguments for specific policy action. The Foundation for International Environmental Law and Development, mentioned in Chapter 1, was a key partner of AOSIS from the very beginning. By offering legal expertise and helping AOSIS delegates become fluent in the jargon and rhetoric of climate debates, they multiplied AOSIS' capacity for analysis and negotiation.²¹⁸ This has also helped AOSIS members manage difficulties arising from their own low staff numbers and limited administrative apparatus.

At the Paris Conference, one striking success was AOSIS' ability to convince the US and UK to throw their weight behind the High Ambition Coalition. This was an impressive partnership, though it was not reflected in their different aims: the US and the UK both continued to lobby against certain provisions which the coalition had called for when behind closed doors, including the 1.5 degree temperature target. But their inclusion with the group did add both political muscle and visibility, sparking a rush of interest in membership: at one point, the Australian Foreign Affairs Minister expressed interest in joining the coalition.²¹⁹ And the High Ambition Coalition has continued to develop past the end of the Paris Conference, even now pushing for the objective of conserving and protecting 30% of the world's land and oceans by

²¹⁸ Betzold, "Borrowing Power," 141.

²¹⁹ Fry, "The Paris Agreement," 106.

2030.²²⁰ The inclusion of the US and the UK should therefore be viewed as an important success towards a goal of “continuing play” via creating another high-level platform through which AOSIS can influence international norms around what degree of action and ambition is required to combat climate change.

The inclusion of language on loss and damage in the Paris Agreement was also an interesting partial success. While the placement of the text outside of the adaptation structure acknowledges the limitations of adaptation and the historical failures of mitigation efforts, no funding mechanism has yet been developed.²²¹ This will undoubtedly be a topic of contention in years to come, as will the question of liability. Developed countries, particularly the US, had sought at Paris to close the door on legal claims against them for their dominant past and present contributions to global emissions. And indeed, as a concession to win their agreement on mentioning loss and damage at all, the Decision Text states that “Article 8 of the Agreement [on Loss and Damage] does not involve or provide a basis for any liability or compensation.”²²² However, as Maxine Burkett, professor and expert in the law and policy of climate change, notes in analyzing the conference outcome, “There is no identifiable provision in the UNFCCC that would lend legal force to the prohibition of claims for compensation based on Article 8 of the Agreement.”²²³ SIDS thus have maintained their right to seek redress through existing international channels, with little opposition from the Agreement at stake – though filing any actual claims would likely sacrifice some of the political trust and consensus-building which was achieved through negotiation on this article. Nevertheless, said existing channels and the

²²⁰ Andy Corbley, “50 Countries Just Joined New Coalition to Protect 30% of Our Planet’s Land and Oceans by Decade’s End,” *Good News Network*, last modified January 14, 2021. <https://www.goodnewsnetwork.org/50-countries-just-joined-new-coalition-to-protect-30-of-the-planets-land-and-oceans-by-decades-end/>

²²¹ Burkett, “Reading Between the Red Lines,” 123.

²²² *Ibid.*

²²³ *Ibid.*, 125.

“polluter pays” principle may become tools for SIDS to use in future negotiations over funding for climate-related migration and displacement.

Failures

Not all outcomes have been so rosy, however. While the “polluter pays” principle is a hallmark of international law, it has not yet been included in any UNFCCC agreements or treaties, despite SIDS’ repeated attempts. That principle has been on AOSIS’ agenda since 1992, but has fallen through each time, which necessitated shifting to arguments over loss and damage as a separate entity. International environmental law still lacks the maturity or enforceability to sanction states which have transgressed against their duties as members of an interdependent global community, representing a failure to implement the principles enshrined in the 1992 Rio Declaration on Environment and Development.²²⁴

Initial successes also dwindled regarding international treaties and emissions targets. In 2009 AOSIS’s call for a vote on the Copenhagen Protocol, which would have been legally binding and created obligations for both Western nations and major emitters among developed countries, went unheeded. Despite advantages in the form of agenda-setting ability and public support, they were unable to overcome the entrenched normative divisions between developed and developing countries. This marked a tipping point on the nature of climate agreements: the Montreal Protocol of 1987 on ozone-depleting substances and the UNFCCC were both globally ratified as treaties, and the Kyoto Protocol entered into force as a legally binding climate treaty despite the US’ failure to ratify. But even in the years leading up to Copenhagen it was clear that

²²⁴ Stakeholder Forum for a Sustainable Future, “Detailed Review of Implementation of the Rio Principles,” Sustainable Development in the 21st Century Project, *UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs*, December 2011, [1127rioprinciples.pdf \(un.org\)](http://www.un.org/1127rioprinciples.pdf)

the international tone had changed. This phase of global climate targets also saw the introduction of recommendations for an appropriate goal for atmospheric CO₂ concentrations. Said recommendations occurred in tandem with a shift away from externally determined specific emissions cuts. Ever since this change occurred, AOSIS has been lobbying for ambition and finding itself seldom heard, whether it uses scientific language or song. Even the inclusion of a potential 1.5 degree temperature increase limit at Paris was treated as an optimistic possibility rather than an intentionally set goal.

Lastly, AOSIS has struggled since its inception with bloc cohesion. The heterogeneity of the coalition along regional, size, and economic measures is high, and specific policy priorities within the group frequently vary along one or more of those divisions. This has made internal divisions very hard to overcome, and cost SIDS opportunities to set international development priorities in Barbados in 1994. It also fractured AOSIS at Paris, where Singapore thought the coalition was too ambitious and Tuvalu thought that it was not ambitious enough.

Theoretical Explanations

Between successes and failures throughout history, one trend seems to remain constant: AOSIS has been less able to shift norms which are more closely tied to ideas around sovereignty. In other words, industrialized or developed nations have most strongly resisted overtures from SIDS that would require them to cede some portion of control over their actions, whether it be through treaties, externally imposed emissions targets, or legal responsibility for the consequences of climate change. While it could be argued that China broke this mold at the Paris Conference by supporting a legally binding treaty, they did so on the condition that there be minimal oversight or transparency, which would have made any resulting agreement politically toothless.

From a realist political perspective, any explanation of the above feels half-baked. Under neo-realist theory, the failures of SIDS should be easily written off as challenges to states' fundamental interests, the preservation of state power over its territory and populace. For a state in a position of power to diminish its sovereignty for less than a hard-power concession from another state seems naturally unreasonable. China's apparent willingness to do as much is counterbalanced by the negotiation against oversight, which might allow other states detailed information about the energy production sectors in the state and consequently reveal exploitable weaknesses – or simply allow monitoring of their own compliance with the legally binding standards they had supported. And in the end, small states have little ability to force large, powerful states to do anything they materially do not wish to. There should be little to no realist interests involved with protecting these states, save for avoiding the issue of climate-induced migration. However, the international climate regime has resulted in large financial packages and disproportionate authority being handed to SIDS, countries which offer minimal underlying strategic advantage to larger states.

Liberalism also fails to adequately describe the reasons why SIDS would achieve the results they have in practice. While international institutions have been the forum through which SIDS realized many of their political and financial goals, their power has not come from appealing to the ways in which climate change can harm the economies of larger powers. Nor have they been reliant on existing rules and standards to combat the effects of power asymmetries, as SIDS have instead been involved with the *creation* of a new regime and have sought the inclusion of rules that are to their favor. And while domestic audiences in larger states have frequently been the focus of AOSIS' attention, they have not remained static restraints but have instead engaged with debates about values and been influenced by SIDS.

Constructivist theory offers a better explanation of exactly how SIDS have been able to punch above their weight, including why there are certain areas in which they fail. Under constructivism, theory is formative rather than formalization: the behavior of actors socially constructs what we observe as reality. SIDS have successfully been able to drive change in foreign conceptions of national interest and played on international norms of morality to center themselves as deserving of special treatment in the climate regime. As their discourse of unique vulnerability was repeatedly legitimated and entrenched by international activity, ideas and principles around how they should be treated and protected diffused into domestic movements and grew to shape domestic audience costs for states like the US and UK. But still, their efforts at discourse management foundered when they attempted to impinge on norms around state sovereignty. The Westphalian construction of sovereignty underpins the current state system and is continually reinforced by some of the foundational principles of the UN, especially the right to national self-determination and the conflation of sovereignty with territory. Proposing to alter or subvert tenets of this mode of sovereignty threatened the ontological security of states in their own construction and capabilities, creating resistance to SIDS' aims.

Interestingly, the norms which tie closely to modern ideas of sovereignty overlap with certain realist security interests: maintaining state control over internal economic production, avoiding external constraints on behaviors and industries linked to the military, and distrusting guarantees of international cooperation which might require them to accept more vulnerability first. In most discussion of international relations theory, the different schools of thought are held apart in a mode of analysis called perspectivism. Under perspectivism, realist, liberalist and constructivist paradigms can be held up next to one another and examined in turn but cannot be

integrated.²²⁵ However, a careful analysis of SIDS' activity on climate seems to require a more holistic approach to understand why some arguments have created change while others have not. Sharp distinctions between realist, liberalist, and constructivist theories obscure the complex interplay of hard and soft power at work in international negotiations. This would support moving away from perspectivism to a compatibilist analysis, based in the epistemological theory that seemingly incompatible political theories can both restrain and reinforce each other. Compatibilism argues that mutually competitive perspectives can and should supplement one another as explanatory factors.²²⁶ Federica Genovese's recent quantitative study of countries' bargaining positions at UNFCCC conferences and the ways weak states have been able to exert influence also reinforces this idea.

As discussed in the introduction, Genovese published a work in 2020 arguing that weak states' power in international climate negotiations is due to their moral authority, and that said authority is provided through norms located in and legitimized by strong states. Her work seeks to systematically test and validate that the weak states most successful in their bargaining are those considered particularly vulnerable to climate risks by the broader international community, because they are able to draw on norms of social justice and global fairness within strong countries. She contrasts this standpoint against theories which argue that the emphasis weak states give to their most domestically salient policy positions are an indicator of success and concludes that salience is in fact an ambivalent force for weak states. The results of her analysis indicate that external legitimation of vulnerability to climate change is conducive, if not

²²⁵ Hans Mouritzen, "Combining 'incompatible' foreign policy explanations: how a realist can borrow from constructivism," *Journal of International Relations and Development* 20, no. 3 (2017): 631.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, 633.

predictive, of weak states' bargaining success on domestically salient issues at UNFCCC conferences.

Genovese's explanation goes far in explaining why SIDS have had particular success in international climate conferences, and why they have fought so hard to maintain semi-exclusive access to the "particularly vulnerable" title within climate risk assessments. It also reinforces the notion that SIDS' capability to influence these conferences is by no means assured: as international debates on climate change shift from arguments over principle and ethics to focus more strongly on concrete economic and industrial measures, the linkage of moral authority to political authority grows more tenuous. An example in practice is how developed countries are willing to voluntarily (if at times grudgingly) provide funding for adaptation measures because they accept that SIDS are in need but resist the creation of legal avenues to address loss and damage that might compel them to provide similar funding. This drives back towards a realist calculus, making central the voices of strong states. Genovese's work is consequently another rationale for examining these findings through a compatibilist lens, as her work suggests that constructivist theories of normative influence can overcome realist calculations of great power politics but only in specific circumstances.

Ultimately, it seems there is truth in the statement that small states can play a creative role on the margins of international politics – it is the margins they have been consigned to, and they have not truly been able to shift to the center of environmental politics despite decades of persistent effort.²²⁷ But their creativity has absolutely borne fruit and their successes are anything but insignificant. While these outcomes do not approach the hopes of SIDS leaders or, indeed,

²²⁷ Corbett & Connell, "All the world is a stage," 435.

even guarantee these islands' survival, few states have ever been completely satisfied at the end of a UNFCCC conference given the sheer breadth of desires and compromises involved. Progress has been slow in coming, but the fact that it has been made is testament to the tireless efforts of so very many people. SIDS' negotiation tactics have resulted in multimodal legitimation of their moral authority across UNFCCC conferences, entrenching them as a key player in climate politics. They have become one of the primary managers of climate discourse, reshaping the political blocs in play and reframing the obligations of countries in the global North to those most vulnerable to climate change effects. Lastly, their publicity stunts and leveraging of alliances throughout the years have made SIDS a prominent face in the public imaginary of climate dangers. With their opposition taking the form of entrenched economic systems, multinational infrastructure barriers, wealthy corporations with packs of lobbyists, and the very foundation of the present international state system, it is a marvel that they have been able to carve out this space and hold it for themselves over the years.

In years to come, SIDS will have to adapt to new forces in the international system. Populist and nationalist sentiments have begun to rise once again in many countries, including the US and the EU, undermining the sense of a global community which has thus far proved useful in dealing with a worldwide collective action problem. Domestic discourse in the US has begun to securitize climate issues, drawing on racially charged imaginaries of migration and potentially exacerbating existing political divisions.²²⁸ This has coincided with a resurgence of neo-Malthusian narratives of environmental conflict, which are based on the idea that poverty and land degradation are due to population pressure in peasant communities rather than

²²⁸ Betsy Hartmann, "Rethinking Climate Refugees and Climate Conflict: Rhetoric, Reality and the Politics of Policy Discourse," *Journal of International Development* 22, no. 2 (2010): 237.

commercial agriculture and extractive industries.²²⁹ Both of these influences create a push to militarize both climate policy and development aid and to treat climate-induced migration as a threat.

At the same time, climate impacts have well and truly arrived in some of the most powerful states. In the US, massive wildfires on the West Coast, droughts in the Midwest, and increased incidence of extreme weather events on the East Coast all pose threats to national self-interest, which may trigger increased interest by both politicians and civil society on taking immediate action to preserve the climate. This could create increased audience costs for not moving to decarbonize energy production, but on the other hand could meld with nationalist sentiment to refocus attention on adaptation at home rather than abroad. As such, SIDS must intensify their rhetoric around vulnerability to maintain global attention on their plight.

²²⁹ Hartmann, "Rethinking Climate Refugees," 234.

Conclusion

Climate change is perhaps the most challenging collective action problem facing the modern international arena. Some have even described it as a “wicked” policy problem, meaning an issue intimidating in its complexity for which it is “impossible to simply diagnose and apply a straightforward solution.”²³⁰ SIDS have a record of impressive successes despite their comparative lack of power, especially within a political atmosphere too often driven by economic rationales and wealthy parties with little interest in change.

This thesis has charted the evolution of SIDS’ negotiating tactics over time, revealing the tenacious underlying discourses at play. SIDS have maintained their rhetoric around vulnerability and claims to moral authority since the formation of AOSIS, but their specific diplomatic choices have been refined over the decades. They have improved significantly at coalition-building, both internally and externally. While AOSIS suffered from deadlock in Barbados in 1994, causing them to miss agenda-setting opportunities, they had learned their lesson by 2015. Rather than stall again at Paris when Singapore broke ranks, SIDS instead split into regional coalitions and each used AOSIS’ existing resources to continue to lobby for their needs. Similarly, while in the 1990s AOSIS found itself fairly reliant on ties with sympathetic European nations during negotiations on the UNFCCC, in the 2010s SIDS helped to break larger countries’ hold on the G77 and further developed their own voice outside of that bloc. At Paris, AOSIS used the High Ambition Coalition to reveal the number of states that supported stronger action in the Paris Agreement and present a show of rhetorical force. While some states joined

²³⁰ Hayley Stevenson, *Global Environmental Politics: Problems, Policy and Practice*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (2018): 148. See also R. Falkner (2016).

the HAC for show rather than substance, the expectation of action which that set within civil society helped build SIDS' influence.

SIDS' public relations tactics and diplomatic skills have also improved as the states grew more experienced in the role they claimed within the climate regime. Powerful images like the underwater cabinet meeting held by the Maldives stoked public interest and sympathy for the pressures which climate change brought to bear on SIDS. Emotional appeals like this and meetings with more powerful officials were effectively leveraged to raise the profile of SIDS' concerns. Perhaps an even more skillful choice was keeping the High Ambition Coalition secret until near the end of the Paris Conference, which allowed AOSIS to present a *coup de grace* similar to that which the French Presidency was simultaneously attempting.

The bargaining tactics and discourse management of SIDS have combined to deliver successes which are greater than either realism or liberalism would otherwise predict. Vulnerability rhetoric, moral authority, and agenda-setting power have combined to shape international ideas of whose voices matter when it comes to the climate crisis. The resulting idea of SIDS as leaders and the conscience of the international system has yielded them privileged positions within UNFCCC structures which would otherwise be far outside their reach. An island vulnerability identity has also informed successes regarding adaptation funding, while both agenda-setting and moral authority have worked to drive ambition on climate action. In some cases, however, SIDS are still constrained by the logic of Thucydides. Shaming tactics and appeals to the morality of larger states have not resulted in legally binding international agreements or the inclusion of the polluter pays principle, though the logic of the latter can still be found in the very existence of sustainable development initiatives. And neither effective

coalition-building nor emphasis on the existential threat SIDS face have brought about externally imposed emissions targets.

Despite failing to achieve some of their more ambitious aims, SIDS have successfully shaped their position and image in the international community to great effect. They have, in many ways, become a primary face for states on the frontlines of the fight against climate change, with both the structures of the climate regime and the political activity from larger states legitimating their position. This has normalized their position as a primary stakeholder on climate change in the UN. Domestic audiences in stronger countries have also been sympathetic to SIDS, creating a circulation of ideas and rhetoric which motivate these stronger countries to gain the support of SIDS for their decisions or at least avoid their public opposition where possible. But while SIDS' power to make headway against this wicked problem has grown, the majority of it remains on stages rather than in backrooms. Their ability to drive change is primarily drawn from manipulating domestic audience costs and ontological security for stronger countries, shaping their interests through that work. As such, SIDS continue to find the greatest influence when lobbying loudly for change, convincing other states to partner with them, maintaining the visibility of the dangers of climate change, and – where possible – making obvious the gaps between problems, policy, and practice in the UNFCCC regime.

Because their discourse management has been responsible for much of their success, SIDS should continue to promote a rhetoric of vulnerability to legitimate their needs, moral authority to act as the conscience of the UN, and coalition-based negotiation strategies to maintain ambition. But another crucial negotiating goal for SIDS going forward should be preventing a repeat of the failures of transparency at both Copenhagen and Paris. The backroom nature of many of the decisions that were made at Paris decreased the ability of these island

nations to hold countries like the US and the UK accountable to their domestic audiences, in turn diminishing the pressure which they could place on these stronger countries. It also enabled the US to present one negotiating aim in public and another in private, as was the case regarding the legal form of the Paris Agreement. While any form of legally binding obligation was always going to be unlikely for the US, the lack of visibility around what actually happened in the negotiations allowed the US to save face and weakened SIDS' negotiating position. Had the Paris Conference been less opaque, the US and UK would have had to reckon with pressure from a highly engaged civil society both domestically and in the streets of Paris, which would at the least have offered SIDS more ability to negotiate over concessions in return for a non-binding agreement.

Another lesson which SIDS should draw from the Paris Conference and the High Ambition Coalition in particular is the desire of many countries to appear to be a leadership figure on this subject. Even countries which were not lobbying for ambitious climate goals wished to become part of the HAC when it was announced, optimistic about the message that it would send to their domestic audiences and the impact it could have on their international image. SIDS should examine the possibility of creating more public-facing coalitions or IGOs like the HAC, but ones which require member countries to commit to specific climate actions or targets which would decrease their impact on the environment. Small but useful steps would likely be the most conceivable draw, such as implementing monitoring programs for ocean acidification or reporting out specific ways in which countries have brought down their greenhouse gas emissions.

Lastly, SIDS should continue to leverage their status as an important voice in climate negotiations to gain access to international summits and conferences to maintain their seat at the

table. This should not be restricted to UNFCCC meetings or even UN structures more broadly, but rather should include as many opportunities as are useful and economically feasible. In April 2021, US President Joe Biden held the virtual US Leaders Summit on Climate Change. This event was primarily targeted towards the world's major emitters, but also included other voices, such as "leaders charting innovative pathways to a net-zero economy." To that end, President Biden invited the Marshall Islands as the chair of the High Ambition Coalition and Barbuda and Antigua as the current chair of AOSIS.²³¹ With only 40 countries represented at the Summit, the inclusion of two AOSIS members in their respective leadership roles signifies the extent to which SIDS have successfully discursively constructed themselves as catalysts for ambitious climate action. At the same time, SIDS should be wary of the purposes to which their visibility is working, because their involvement in such initiatives cuts both ways. The power of seeming to have AOSIS' approval for an initiative might allow politicians to deflect from its negative externalities or create perceptions in their domestic audience that the government is acting more than it actually is. Careful management of both public and international relations will be necessary so SIDS can ensure that their figurehead status allows them to chart a path without making them a tool for others.

While SIDS have successfully made waves in the UN and secured both funding and privilege, their prospects are still often localized on the margins due to their size, location, and lack of hard power in a global political structure which adopts realist norms all too frequently. But marginality is not just an imposed existence. It can be and is a site of resistance, self-definition, opportunity, and hope. The marginalized are both constrained and mobilized because

²³¹ Island Times, "Marshall Islands Gets Front-Row Seat at U.S. Leaders Climate Summit," *Island Times: Pacific News*, last modified April 23, 2021, <https://islandtimes.org/marshall-islands-gets-front-row-seat-at-u-s-leaders-climate-summit/>.

of the entrepreneurialism required to survive. bell hooks writes of marginality that it is “the site of radical possibility, a space of resistance.”²³² Marginal populations, especially those living in remote islands or borderlands, are not just passive victims of the power of larger states, but actors, actively pursuing their own political goals and strategies. SIDS have, over the past decades, forcefully challenged the imaginary of global superpowers as universal power centers, writing both themselves and international power relations anew with skillful discourse management. In the coming years, no matter what changes they may bring, SIDS will meet those challenges with fortitude and community, just as they have been doing since AOSIS’ inception.

²³² bell hooks, “Choosing the Margin as a Space of Radical Openness,” *Framework: The Journal of Cinema and Media*, no. 36 (1989): 20.

Appendices

Appendix A: Bargaining Tactics of SIDS

- Agenda-setting: a process-based strategy focused on controlling the hierarchy and scope of issues being discussed by being the first to speak or propose resolutions, thereby influencing idea-formation around those issues
- Coalition-building: enhancing visibility and negotiating capacity of SIDS as a bloc
- Continuing play: advocating for compromise to keep international climate negotiations from derailing in order to keep avenues open for SIDS to seek better outcomes in the future
- Domestic appeals: publicizing the existential threat SIDS face to appeal to moral norms in domestic audiences of strong states, so as to shift the domestic “win-set” for their opponents or create audience costs for not protecting SIDS
- Moral authority: using context-based strategies and legitimated vulnerability to cast SIDS as appealing to the collective good and serving as the “conscience” of the UN
- Ontological security tactics: appealing to stronger states’ self-images as moral actors and emphasizing that letting SIDS go unprotected would violate that self-image
- Rhetoric of vulnerability: creating an island vulnerability discourse tied to SIDS’ unique position regarding sea level rise and seeking legitimation through policy and practice
- Shaming: invoking images or histories of harm done to small states by more powerful states or pointing out the role of industrialized nations in creating the climate crisis
- Third-party strategies: utilizing scientific and legal expertise of NGOs and other external groups to increase the salience of their own arguments

Appendix B: Successes and Failures of SIDS

Successes:

- 1992: financial provision for adaptation and mitigation efforts by developing countries
- 1992: reserved seat for AOSIS on the Bureau for the INC, subsequent COPs, and all UNFCCC subsidiary bodies
- 1995-1997: AOSIS members chair UNFCCC negotiation groups
- 2009: Grenada is invited to a 29-party closed-door negotiating group on the final day of the Copenhagen Summit
- 2015: US and UK convinced to join High Ambition Coalition
- 2015: Paris Agreement final text includes a provision on loss and damage and the 1.5 degree temperature rise limit as aspirational
- 2015: SIDS retain special privileged status due to legitimated vulnerability

Failures:

- 1992-2015: polluter pays principle is not included in any UNFCCC agreements
- 1994: internal fractures cause AOSIS to lose agenda-setting power on international development priorities
- 2009: AOSIS' call for a vote on their proposed Copenhagen Protocol is ignored; no international agreement is reached
- 2015: Paris Agreement is not legally binding
- 2015: Singapore prevents AOSIS from negotiating as a cohesive bloc

Bibliography

- Adelman, Sam. "Climate justice, loss and damage and compensation for small island developing states." *Journal of Human Rights and the Environment* 7, no. 1 (2016): 32-53. DOI: 10.4337/jhre.2016.01.02
- Adler, Ben. "Here's why the words 'loss and damage' are causing such a fuss at the Paris climate talks." *Grist*. Last modified December 8, 2015. <https://grist.org/climate-energy/heres-why-the-words-loss-and-damage-are-causing-such-a-fuss-at-the-paris-climate-talks/>
- Adler, Emanuel. "Constructivism in international relations: Sources, contributions, and debates." In *Handbook of International Relations*, edited by W. Carlsnaes, T. Risse and B. A. Simmons. London, UK: SAGE Publications (2012): 112–144.
- Águeda Corneloup, Inés, and Arthur Mol. "Small Island Developing States and International Climate Change Negotiations: The Power of Moral 'Leadership'." *International Environmental Agreements: Politics, Law and Economics* 14, no. 3 (2014): 281-97.
- Akanle, Tomilola. et al. "Cancun Highlights." *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* 12, no. 488 (2010). <https://enb.iisd.org/vol12/enb12488e.html>
- Anderson, J.W. "Climate Change, Clinton and Kyoto: The Negotiations Over Global Warming." *Resources for the Future* (1997): 1-18.
- "AOSIS Opening Statement for 21st Conference of Parties to the UNFCCC," *UNFCCC* (2015): 2. https://unfccc.int/files/meetings/paris_nov_2015/application/pdf/cop21cmp11_hls_speech_aosis_maldives.pdf
- Ashe, John W., Robert Van Lierop, and Anilla Cherian. "The role of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) in the negotiation of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)." *Natural Resources Forum* 23, no. 3 (1999): 209–220.
- Bailer, Stefanie. "Strategy in the climate change negotiations." *Climate Policy* 12, no. 5 (2012): 534–551.
- bell hooks. "Choosing the Margin as a Space of Radical Openness." *Framework: The Journal of Cinema and Media*, no. 36 (1989): 15-23.
- Benwell, Richard. "The canaries in the coalmine: Small states as climate change champions." *The Round Table: The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs* 100, no. 413 (2011): 199–211.
- Betzold, Carola. "'Borrowing' Power to Influence International Negotiations: AOSIS in the Climate Change Regime, 1990-1997." *Political Studies Association* 30, no. 3 (2010): 131-148. DOI: [10.1111/j.1467-9256.2010.01377.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9256.2010.01377.x)

- Bhandary, Rishikesh Ram. "Coalition strategies in the climate negotiations: an analysis of mountain-related coalitions." *International Environmental Agreements: Politics, Law and Economics* 17 (2017): 173-190.
- Bodansky, Daniel. "The Copenhagen Climate Change Conference: A Post-Mortem." Athens, GA: University of Georgia Law School (2010).
- Bosco, David L. *Rough Justice: The International Criminal Court in a World of Power Politics*. New York: Oxford University Press (2014).
- Burkett, Maxine. "Reading Between the Red Lines: Loss and Damage and the Paris Outcome." *Climate Law* 6, no. 1 (2016): 118-129.
- "CARICOM states unite in song on climate change position," *McClatchy – Tribune Business News*. Last modified November 21, 2009. <https://search.proquest.com/wire-feeds/caricom-states-unite-song-on-climate-change/docview/457062354/se-2?accountid=15054>.
- Chasek, Pamela S. "Margins of Power: Coalition Building and Coalition Maintenance of the South Pacific Island States and the Alliance of Small Island States." *Review of European Community & International Environmental Law* 14, no. 2 (2005): 125-137.
- Corbett, Jack, and John Connell. "All the world is a stage: global governance, human resources, and the 'problem' of smallness." *The Pacific Review* 28, no. 3 (2015): 435-459. DOI: 10.1080/09512748.2015.1011214
- Corbley, Andy. "50 Countries Just Joined New Coalition to Protect 30% of Our Planet's Land and Oceans by Decade's End." *Good News Network*. Last modified January 14, 2021. <https://www.goodnewsnetwork.org/50-countries-just-joined-new-coalition-to-protect-30-of-the-planets-land-and-oceans-by-decades-end/>
- Cornell, Akima. "Small actor, big opinion: Least developed countries' participation in climate change networks." *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences* 4 (2010): 59-70. DOI: 10.1016/j.sbspro.2010.07.483
- Coscieme, Luca et al. "Multiple Conceptualizations of Nature Are Key to Inclusivity and Legitimacy in Global Environmental Governance." *Environmental Science & Policy* 104 (2020): 36-42.
- Cristol, Jonathan. "Liberalism." *Oxford Bibliographies*. Last modified November 26, 2019. <https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199743292/obo-9780199743292-0060.xml#obo-9780199743292-0060-bibItem-0007>
- Crump, Larry, and Christian Downie. "Understanding Climate Change Negotiations: Contributions from International Negotiation and Conflict Management." *International Negotiation* 20 (2015): 146-174. DOI 10.1163/15718069-12341302

- Deitelhoff, Nicole, & Linda Wallbott. "Beyond soft balancing: Small states and coalition-building in the ICC and climate negotiations." *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 25, no. 3 (2012): 345–366.
- Dimitrov, Radoslav S. "Inside UN Climate Change Negotiations: The Copenhagen Conference." *The Review of Policy Research* 27, no. 6 (2010): 795-821.
- Dimitrov, Radoslav S. "The Paris Agreement on Climate Change: Behind Closed Doors." *Global Environmental Politics* 16, no. 3 (2016): 1-11. DOI: 10.1162/GLEP_a_00361
- Dokoupil, Tony. "Climate Change Reparations: What Does the US Owe?" *MSNBC*. Last modified December 2, 2015. <https://www.msnbc.com/msnbc/climate-change-reparations-what-does-the-us-owe-1-msna736636>
- Dubash, Navroz K. "Copenhagen: Climate of Mistrust." *Economic and Political Weekly* 44, no. 52 (2010): 8-11. <http://www.jstor.com/stable/25663931>
- Elden, Stuart. "Contingent Sovereignty, Territorial Integrity and the Sanctity of Borders." *SAIS Review of International Affairs* 26, no. 1 (2012): 11-24.
- Fearon, James D. "Domestic Political Audiences and the Escalation of International Disputes." *American Political Science Review* 88, no. 3 (1994): 577-592.
- Fisher, Liz. "Environmental Governance." *Environmental Law*, Lecture presented at University of Oxford, Oxford, UK, October 25, 2019.
- Flockhart, Trine. "Constructivism and foreign policy." In *Foreign policy: Theories, actors, cases*, edited by S. Smith, A. Hadfield & T. Dunne. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press (2016): 79–94.
- Fox, Annette B. *The Power of Small States: Diplomacy in World War II*. (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1959).
- Fry, Ian. "The Paris Agreement: An Insider's Perspective." *Environmental Policy and Law* 46, no. 2 (2016): 105-108.
- Genovese, Federica. "States' interests at international climate negotiations: new measures of bargaining positions," *Environmental Politics* 23, no. 4 (2014): 610-631. DOI: 10.1080/09644016.2014.904068
- Genovese, Federica. *Weak States at Global Climate Negotiations*. Cambridge University Press (2020). DOI: 10.1017/9781108800051
- Hajer, Maarten A. *The politics of environmental discourse: Ecological modernization and the policy process*. Oxford: Clarendon (1995).
- Hojnacki, Marie. "Interest Groups' Decisions to Join Alliances or Work Alone," *American Journal of Political Science* 41, no. 1 (1997): 61-87, DOI: 10.2307/2111709

- Hartmann, Betsy. "Rethinking Climate Refugees and Climate Conflict: Rhetoric, Reality and the Politics of Policy Discourse." *Journal of International Development* 22, no. 2 (2010): 233-246.
- Hoffman, Matthew J. *Climate Governance at the Crossroads: Experimenting with a Global Response after Kyoto*. Oxford: Oxford University Press (2011).
- Hsu, Angel. "New bloc of 'Like Minded Developing Countries' meet in advance of Doha Climate Talks." *Data-Driven Enviro Lab*. Last modified October 25, 2012. <https://datadrivenlab.org/climate/new-bloc-of-like-minded-developing-countries-meet-in-advance-of-doha-climate-talks/>
- Ingebritsen, Christine, Iver B. Neumann, Sieglinde Gstöhl, & Jessica Beyer. *Small States in International Relations*, University of Washington Press (2006).
- Island Times. "Marshall Islands Gets Front-Row Seat at U.S. Leaders Climate Summit." *Island Times: Pacific News*. Last modified April 23, 2021. <https://islandtimes.org/marshall-islands-gets-front-row-seat-at-u-s-leaders-climate-summit/>
- Jackson, Thomas. "Paradiplomacy and political geography: The geopolitics of substate regional diplomacy." *Geography Compass* 12, no. 2 (2018): 1-11.
- Jaschik, Kevin. "Small States and International Politics: Climate Change, the Maldives and Tuvalu." *International Politics* 51, no. 2 (2014): 272-93.
- Kant, Immanuel. *Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Essay*. Originally published by F. Nicolovius (1795), translated by Mary C. Smith (2016).
- Keohane, Robert O. "Lilliputians' Dilemmas: Small States in International Politics." *International Organization* 23, no. 2 (1969): 291-310.
- Keohane, Robert O. and Joseph S. Nye. *Power and Independence*. New York: Longman (2001).
- Klein, Richard J.T. and Annett Möhner. "The Political Dimension of Vulnerability: Implications for the Green Climate Fund." *IDS Bulletin* 42, no. 3 (2011): 15-22.
- Kolodziej, Edward A. *Security and International Relations*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press (2005).
- Larson, Mary Jo. "Low-Power Contributions in Multilateral Negotiations: A Framework Analysis." *Negotiation Journal* 19, no. 2 (2003): 133-149.
- Lewis, James. "Small States Conference on Sea Level Rise." *The Environmentalist* 10, no. 2 (1990): 141-143.
- Liska, George. *Alliances and the Third World*. Baltimore, Johns Hopkins Press (1968).
- Long, Tom. "Small States, Great Power? Gaining Influence through Intrinsic, Derivative, and Collective Power." *International Studies Review* 19, no. 2 (2017): 185-205.

- Maldives Permanent Mission to UN. "Address by his excellency Mr. Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, President of the Republic of Maldives, before the forty second session of the United Nations General Assembly on the special debate on environment and development, 19 October." 1987.
http://maldivesmission.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=931:death-of-a-nationspeech&catid=93:statements-from-unga-42-1987&Itemid=56
- "Malé Declaration on the Human Dimension of Global Climate Change." *Center for International Environmental Law: Publications*. 14 November 2007.
http://www.ciel.org/Publications/Male_Declaration_Nov07.pdf
- Malta. "Country statement at the small states conference on sea level rise, Malé, Maldives." 1989. <http://www.islandvulnerability.org/slr1989.html> - country.
- Mathiesen, Karl and Fiona Harvey. "Climate coalition breaks cover in Paris to push for binding and ambitious deal." *The Guardian*. Last modified December 8, 2015.
<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/dec/08/coalition-paris-push-for-binding-ambitious-climate-change-deal>
- McAdam, Jane. *Climate Change, Forced Migration, and International Law*, Oxford: Oxford University Press (2009).
- McConnell, Fiona. "De Facto, Displaced, Tacit: The Sovereign Articulations of the Tibetan Government-In-Exile." *Political Geography* 28 (2009): 343-352.
- McNamara, Karen E. "Voices from the margins: Pacific ambassadors and the geopolitics of marginality at the United Nations." *Asia Pacific Viewpoint* 50, no. 1 (2009): 1-12.
- Monbiot, George. "Grand promises of Paris climate deal undermined by squalid retrenchments." *The Guardian*. Last modified December 12, 2015.
<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/georgemonbiot/2015/dec/12/paris-climate-deal-governments-fossil-fuels>.
- Mouritzen, Hans. "Combining 'incompatible' foreign policy explanations: how a realist can borrow from constructivism." *Journal of International Relations and Development* 20, no. 3 (2017): 631-658.
- Naseer Mohamed, Ali. "The Diplomacy of Micro-States." *Discussion Papers in Diplomacy* (2002).
https://www.clingendael.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/20020100_cli_paper_dip_issue78.pdf
- .
- Neumann, Roderick P. "Biodiversity Conservation." *Making Political Ecology*, New York: Oxford University Press (2005): 118-152.
- Nurse, Leonard and Rawlestone Moore. "Critical Considerations for Future Action during the Second Commitment Period: A Small Island's Perspective." *Natural Resources Forum* 2, no. 31 (2002): 102-110.

- Oberthür, Sebastian and Hermann E Ott. *The Kyoto Protocol: International Climate Policy for the 21st Century*. Berlin: Springer-Verlag, 1999.
- O'Connor, James R. *Natural Causes: Essays in Ecological Marxism*. New York: Guilford Press (1998).
- Oculi, Neil and Scott R Stephenson. "Conceptualizing climate vulnerability: Understanding the negotiating strategies of Small Island Developing States." *Environmental Science and Policy* 85 (2018): 72-80.
- Olson, Jr., Mancur and Richard Zeckhauser. "An Economic Theory of Alliances." *Review of Economics and Statistics* 48, no. 3 (August 1966): 266–279.
- Omidi, Maryam. "Maldives sends climate SOS with undersea cabinet." *Reuters: Environment*. Last modified October 17, 2009. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-maldives-environment-idUSTRE59G0P120091017>
- O'Neill, Kate. "Actors in Global Environmental Politics." In *The Environment and International Relations*, Second Edition, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (2017): 51-78.
- Ourbak, Timothee and Alexandre K. Magnan. "The Paris Agreement and Climate Change Negotiations: Small Islands, Big Players." *Regional Environmental Change* 18 (2018): 2201-2207. DOI: 10.1007/s10113-017-1247-9
- "'Our very Survival Threatened' Small Island States' Envoy Tells Climate Summit." *BBC Monitoring Americas*, December 10 2009, *ProQuest*. Web.
- "Paris Highlights: Tuesday, 1 December 2015." *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* 12, no. 654 (2015): 1-4.
- "Paris Highlights: Wednesday, 2 December 2015." *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* 12, no. 655 (2015): 1-4.
- "Paris Highlights: Thursday, 3 December 2015." *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* 12, no. 656 (2015): 1-4.
- "Paris Highlights: Friday, 4 December 2015." *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* 12, no. 657 (2015): 1-4.
- "Paris Highlights: Saturday, 5 December 2015." *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* 12, no. 658 (2015): 1-2.
- "Paris Highlights: Monday, 7 December 2015." *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* 12, no. 659 (2015): 1-2.
- "Paris Highlights: Tuesday, 8 December 2015." *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* 12, no. 660 (2015): 1-2.
- "Paris Highlights: Wednesday, 9 December 2015." *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* 12, no. 661 (2015): 1-4.

- “Paris Highlights: Thursday, 10 December 2015.” *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* 12, no. 662 (2015): 1-4.
- “Paris Must Show Global Solidarity to Tackle Climate Change.” Alliance of Small Island States. Last modified November 29, 2015. <http://web.archive.org/web/20170718133747/https://www.aosis.org/paris-must-show-global-solidarity-to-tackle-climate-change/>.
- “PNG, USA and Vulnerable Island Nations Look to Ambitious Global Climate Change Goals in Paris.” *PACNEWS*; *Suva*. December 3, 2015. <https://search.proquest.com/wire-feeds/png-usa-vulnerable-island-nations-look-ambitious/docview/1828039839/se-2?accountid=15054>.
- Pratt, Simon F. “A Relational View of Ontological Security in International Relations.” *International Studies Quarterly* 61, no. 1 (2017): 78–85. <https://doi-org.ezproxy2.williams.edu/10.1093/isq/sqw038>
- “Press Conference by Alliance of Small Island States on Climate Change,” *UN Department of Public Information*. July 10, 2009. https://www.un.org/press/en/2009/090710_AOSIS.doc.htm
- "Press Conference on Small Island Developing States." *US Federal News Service*. September 27, 2010, *ProQuest*.
- “Press Conference on Vulnerabilities of Small Island Developing States.” *US Federal News Service*. May 11, 2010. <https://search.proquest.com/docview/275667964?accountid=15054>.
- Putnam, Robert D. “Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games.” *International Organization* 42, no. 3 (1988): 427-460.
- Rasheed, Athualla. “Role of Small Islands in UN Climate Negotiations: A Constructivist Viewpoint,” *International Studies* 56, no. 4 (2019): 215-235. DOI: 10.1177/0020881719861503
- Reguly, Eric. “Small island states make waves at Paris climate conference.” *The Globe and Mail*. December 13, 2015. <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/world/small-island-states-make-waves-at-paris-climate-conference/article27742043/>.
- “Remarks by President Obama at the First Session of COP21.” *The White House: Office of the Press Secretary*. November 30, 2015. <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2015/11/30/remarks-president-obama-first-session-cop21>.
- Rong, Fang. Understanding developing country stances on post-2012 climate change negotiations: Comparative analysis of Brazil, China, India, Mexico, and South Africa. *Energy Policy* 38, no. 8 (2010): 4582-4591.
- Sadat, Nemat. “Small Islands, Rising Seas.” *UN Chronicle*, accessed February 6, 2021. <https://www.un.org/en/chronicle/article/small-islands-rising-seas>

- Sands, Phillipe. *Principles of International Environmental Law*. 2nd edition, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (2003).
- Savaresi, Annalisa. "The Paris Agreement: a new beginning?" *Journal of Energy & Natural Resources Law* 34, no. 1 (2016): 16-26. DOI: 10.1080/02646811.2016.1133983
- Shibuya, Eric. "Roaring Mice Against the Tide": The South Pacific Islands and Agenda-Building on Global Warming. *Pacific Affairs* 69, no. 4 (1996): 541–555.
- Shibuya, Eric. "The problems and potential of the Pacific islands forum." In *The Asia-Pacific: A region in transition*, edited by J. Rolf. Honolulu: Asia-Pacific Centre for Security Studies (2009): 102–115.
- Slade, Tuiloma Neroni. "The Making of International Law: The Role of Small Island States." *Temple International & Comparative Law Journal* 17, no. 2 (2003): 531-544.
- Slantchev, Branislav L. "Audience Costs Theory and Its Audiences." *Security Studies* 21 (2012): 376-382.
- Speth, James Gustave. *Red Sky at Morning: America and the Crisis of the Global Environment*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press (2004).
- Stakeholder Forum for a Sustainable Future, "Detailed Review of Implementation of the Rio Principles," *Sustainable Development in the 21st Century Project*, UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, December 2011. [1127rioprinciples.pdf \(un.org\)](https://www.un.org/development/desa/secretariat/sustainable-development/2011/12/1127rioprinciples.pdf)
- Stevenson, Hayley. *Global Environmental Politics: Problems, Policy and Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (2018).
- Taplin, Roslyn E. International policy on the greenhouse effect and the island South Pacific. *Pacific Review* 7, no. 3 (1994): 277.
- UN Department of Humanitarian Affairs. "Maldives – Tidal Waves Apr 1987 UNDR0 Situation Reports 1-3." April 13, 1987. <https://reliefweb.int/report/maldives/maldives-tidal-waves-apr-1987-undro-situation-reports-1-3>
- "UNFCCC – 25 Years of Effort and Achievement." United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Accessed February 2, 2021. <https://unfccc.int/timeline/>
- UNFCCC, *Draft Paris Agreement: Revision 1*, (Paris: United Nations, 2015), available from <https://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2015/cop21/eng/109r01.pdf>
- "United States: Fine Words; Climate Change at the UN." *The Economist*, Sep 26 2009: 36. ProQuest. Web.
- Valentine, Katie, "Marshall Islands Speaker Tells U.N. 'We Are Drawing the Line Here' on Climate Change," *ThinkProgress: ClimateProgress*. September 23, 2014.
- Van Schaik, Louise. "The EU and the progressive alliance negotiating in Durban: saving the climate?" *Climate and Development Knowledge Network* (2012).

<https://www.odi.org/publications/6864-eu-and-progressivealliance-negotiating-durban-saving-climate>.

Vanhala, Lisa and Cecilie Hestbaek. "Framing Climate Change Loss and Damage in UNFCCC Negotiations." *Global Environmental Politics* 16, no. 4 (2016): 111-129.

Vital, David. *The Inequality of States*. New York: Oxford University Press (1967).

Wadey, Matthew, Sally Brown, Robert J. Nicholls, and Ivan Haigh. "Coastal flooding in the Maldives: an assessment of historic events and their implications." *Natural Hazards* 89 (2017): 131-159.

Weiler, Florian. Determinants of Bargaining Success in the Climate Change Negotiations. *Climate Policy* 12, no. 5 (2012): 552–574.

Weisser, Florian and Detlef Müller-Mahn. "No Place for the Political: Micro-Geographies of the Paris Climate Conference 2015." *Antipode* 49, no. 3 (2017): 802-820.

Zartman, I.W. "The Structuralist Dilemma in Negotiation." In *Research on Negotiation in Organizations*, edited by R.J. Lewicki, R.J. Bies and B.H. Sheppard, vol. 6 (1997): 227-293.

Zehfuss, Maja. *Constructivism in International Relations: The Politics of Reality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (2002). DOI: [10.1017/CBO9780511491795](https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511491795)