

Fry, G. and Tarte, S. (Eds.). (2015). *The New Pacific Diplomacy*. Canberra, Australia: ANU Press. ISBN: 978-1-9250-2281-0. 305pp. AUD\$50.

The new Pacific diplomacy provides a fascinating look at the changing nature of the foreign affairs of Pacific small island states over the last decade. It is the most important work to be published on this topic so far, and has been influential in its own right in establishing the narrative of Pacific island states as assertive, independent, innovative and influential voices on the international stage.

The edited volume brings together chapters from 23 authors, edited by two well-known international relations scholars based at the University of the South Pacific. It is both an outstanding and inclusive line-up, with several Pacific island leaders (including prime ministers and presidents), academics, students and civil servants providing contributions. Importantly, a majority of the contributors are themselves Pacific islanders: a fact that distinguishes the book from much of the literature on the region.

The various chapters cover a range of topics, including climate change, regionalism, trade, and tuna. The first chapter, by the book's editors, spells out the central premise of the volume: that 'there has been a fundamental shift in the way that Pacific Island states engage with regional and world politics': a 'paradigm shift', in the words of Anote Tong, the former president of Kiribati. The chapters that follow set out in various ways to establish where and how this has happened.

The first part of the book considers regionalism. Dame Meg Taylor, the Secretary-General of the Pacific Islands Forum, details how the new Framework for Pacific Regionalism agreed to by Forum Leaders forms part of an effort to 'bring back the politics' in regionalism, thus moving away from the much-criticised technocratic approach of the *Pacific Plan* that preceded it. New regional actors are also discussed. Fulori Manoa details the rise of the Pacific Small Island Developing States (PSIDS) group at the United Nations, a grouping which she argues has superseded the Pacific Group owing to its membership base (only Pacific Small Island Developing States are members, whereas the Pacific Group comprises all Pacific Islands Forum countries that are UN members, including Australia and New Zealand). Sandra Tarte explores the establishment, by the Government of Fiji, of the Pacific Islands Development Forum, an organisation considered by many to represent a challenge to the Pacific Islands Forum (as well as to the Australia and New Zealand governments, which support the Pacific Islands Forum as non-island members).

Three chapters explore sub-regionalism: the heightened prominence of the Melanesian Spearhead Group (by Tess Newton Cain); the implementation of the Melanesia free trade area (by Sovaia Marawa); and various sub-regional initiatives in Micronesia (by Suzanne Lowe Gallen). All three chapters take a historical view, noting the resilience of sub-regionalism over time. They are positive about sub-regionalism's prospects; though events since publication, including a 2017 trade dispute where Papua New Guinea's Trade Minister called for a ban on imports from Fiji, mean that much of that promise is left unfulfilled. (The same could be said of the Pacific Islands Development Forum, but for different reasons.)

A number of chapters deal with geopolitics. Nicola Baker provides an excellent historical analysis of New Zealand's relationship with its small island state neighbours. Michael O'Keefe discusses the implications of competition between global superpowers for the region. Wesley Morgan and Nic Maclellan write about trade liberalisation and decolonisation in the final two chapters of the book.

Two of the most interesting parts of the book consider diplomacy on climate change issues (chapters by Nicollette Goulding and George Carter) and tuna fisheries (Transform Aqorau and Jope Tarai). Both are issues on which Pacific small island states have become more assertive, with positive results. However, the chapters make clear that in neither case has Pacific solidarity been constant. Tensions exist among Pacific small island nations just as they do between the Pacific and external powers. In the case of climate change, countries such as Papua New Guinea have supported the programme to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries (REDD+), despite the objections of atoll states. Similarly, in the case of tuna fisheries, the interests of members of the Parties to the Nauru Agreement have often differed starkly from those of countries without a purse seine fishery targeting skipjack tuna, the most important tuna fishery in the region.

It is this divergence of interests that in my view is underplayed in the book's overall thesis. There is a tendency in some of the chapters to emphasise and contrast the interests of Pacific island states vis-à-vis those of external powers, and in particular, Australia and New Zealand. Unsurprisingly, this is especially evident in the chapters on Fiji's foreign policy, which has been shaped by the Australia/New Zealand-led sanctions imposed on the military regime that took power in 2006. The overall argument of the book, as presented by its editors in the introductory chapter, also emphasises this small island state vis-à-vis Australia and New Zealand dichotomy; though, to be fair, differences among island states are also noted.

Least satisfying in the volume are the chapters on the Fiji government's diplomacy. Both chapters (by Litia Mawi and Makareta Komai) portray a very Fiji-centric view of the Pacific, emphasising Fiji as a regional leader and 'hub of the Pacific'. Criticisms of the Bainimarama government by various Pacific island states on issues such as democracy, air space, trade and tuna, are ignored. The chapter by Litia Mawi, a diplomat from Fiji, is especially one-sided, though the fact that the chapter is a government perspective is made clear in the title ("Fiji's emerging brand of Pacific diplomacy: A Fiji government perspective"). The volume would have been better served by including a more balanced assessment of the Fiji government's assertive foreign policy.

The new Pacific diplomacy represents a volume that is more than just an academic work by external researchers removed from involvement in foreign affairs. It forms part of a broader shift by Pacific islanders to establish a narrative in which *they* control their destiny, emphasising the achievements of Pacific small island states on both the regional and world stage. It is an important work, as demonstrated by the fact that the title of the book has become a commonly used phrase among policy makers in the Pacific. It also presents a range of voices that is uncommon in the academic literature, though the analysis of Fiji and its role in the region could be improved. The book provides a timely introduction to the diplomacy practised by Pacific small island states for those who want to learn more about them, with a strong historical emphasis permeating many of the chapters. It is a fascinating read for researchers already familiar with the region.

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