

A decorative mosaic pattern in shades of blue and white, located at the top of the page.

CHAPTER TEN

**NAVIGATING SPATIAL POLITICS: THE COMPACTS OF FREE  
ASSOCIATION AND OCEANIA'S GEOPOLITICAL LANDSCAPE**

Rachelle Rodriguez

*Space is not static. It is not a flat surface across which we walk.  
It is, rather, a pincushion of a million stories.*

— Doreen Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender*, 1994

**Abstract**

The Compacts of Free Association (COFA) are not merely legal agreements; they are instruments of spatial politics—the ways in which space is used to exert power and influence—that shape the geopolitical landscape of the Pacific. This chapter examines COFA between the United States and the Freely Associated States (FAS)—the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau—through the lens of spatialization, the intricate relationship between space and identity. By analyzing the historical and contemporary spatial narratives surrounding the Pacific region, the chapter reveals how COFA reflects and reinforces the spatialization of Oceania as a strategic arena, exposing power imbalances and divergent priorities. This analysis argues that a deeper understanding of spatial dynamics is crucial for reimagining a more equitable and sustainable partnership that prioritizes the environmental security, self-determination, and cultural preservation of Pacific Island communities. Ultimately, the chapter proposes recommendations for the 2043 COFA negotiations, advocating for revisions to foster a more just and equitable future for the region, grounded in the principles of spatial justice.

## **Introduction**

Maps, much like any form of representation, are inherently subjective. They reflect the perspectives and biases of both the cartographer and the intended audience, shaping how we understand the world and its complexities. This is particularly true in Oceania, where the vast expanse of the Pacific, dotted with countless islands, is often reduced to mere dots or swallowed by broad strokes of national borders. Yet, as scholar Epeli Hau'ofa eloquently highlighted in his landmark work on spatial language, the way we perceive this region—whether as a “sea of islands” or “islands in a far sea”—profoundly impacts our understanding of its unique identity and the dynamics between its inhabitants and external powers.<sup>1</sup>

This chapter employs the theoretical framework of spatialization to delve deeper into this complex relationship,<sup>2</sup> with a focus on preparing for the strategic renewal of the Compacts of Free Association (COFA) scheduled for 2043. Spatialization examines the intricate relationship between space and identity, particularly how power dynamics and narratives shape and are shaped by the spatial constructs we create. In the geopolitical context of Oceania, spatialization reveals how dominant powers leverage geographical perceptions to exert influence and control. However, it also highlights the agency of Pacific Island communities in resisting and reinterpreting these imposed spatial narratives.

Spatialization will be used to critically analyze the recently renegotiated Compacts of Free Association (COFA) between the United States and the Freely Associated States of Micronesia, including Micronesia, the Marshall Islands, and Palau. Established in the 1980s and 1990s, these agreements grant the United States significant military rights and responsibilities in exchange for economic assistance and certain immigration privileges for citizens of the Freely Associated States. By examining how COFA reflects and reinforces the spatialization of the Pacific as a strategic arena,

we can uncover the underlying power dynamics, evolving narratives, and implications for oceanic sovereignty. This analysis will shed light on the complex relationship between the United States and the Freely Associated States and illuminate how Pacific Islanders are actively negotiating and redefining their place in the world.

### **The Compacts of Free Association: A Brief Overview**

The Compacts of Free Association (COFA) are a series of agreements between the United States and three Pacific Island nations: the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI), the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), and the Republic of Palau. These agreements, established in 1986 for the RMI and FSM and in 1994 for Palau, are unique in their structure and implications.

At its core, the COFA grants the United States significant military rights and responsibilities in the Freely Associated States. This includes exclusive access to the islands' land, airspace, and territorial waters for military purposes. In exchange, the United States provides financial assistance, access to certain federal programs, and the right for FAS citizens to live and work in the United States without visas.

The Compacts are intended to be mutually beneficial, promoting economic development and self-governance in the Freely Associated States while ensuring U.S. security interests in the region. However, the agreements are not without controversy, with critics highlighting the power imbalance inherent in their structure, particularly U.S. unilateral control over military provisions and the limited say Freely Associated States have in shaping the terms of the agreements.

This chapter will delve deeper into the complexities of COFA, examining how the agreements have evolved over time and how they are perceived and experienced by both the United States and

the Freely Associated States. Through the lens of spatialization, this chapter analyzes how these agreements have shaped, and continue to shape, the geopolitical landscape of the Pacific, impacting everything from environmental security to regional identity.

### **Conceptualizing an Oceanic Security Space**

Applying spatialization as a framework requires critically examining the historical narratives surrounding “space” in Oceania. Traditional geopolitical views, often rooted in realism and small-state theory, tend to portray Pacific Island countries as having limited agency, their existence reduced to the mere occupation of physical space. This perception relegates island nations to secondary roles, seemingly with limited options for navigating the complexities of the international system.<sup>3</sup>

In stark contrast, an islander perspective centers on indigeneity and identity as fundamental components in defining “space.” This understanding transcends physical distances between islands, encompassing the deep-rooted connections and shared history that foster a profound sense of regional unity. Historian Matt Matsuda’s exploration of the “empty space” concept challenges the notion of the Pacific as a blank canvas for external powers. He argues that recognizing a “place” necessitates acknowledging its rich history and the people who have shaped it.<sup>4</sup> The forced occupation of these spaces by external forces, as exemplified by the 1998 Nouméa Accord between France and New Caledonia, starkly reveals the historical erasure of indigenous presence and agency.<sup>5</sup>

Through the lens of spatialization, the militarization of Oceania emerges as a tool for projecting external identities onto the region. It becomes a process of perpetuating imposed values, often at the expense of local realities and indigenous perspectives. A poignant example is Lauren Hirshberg’s stark depiction of the contrast between the Americanized military base on Kwajalein Atoll and the impoverished conditions on nearby Ebeye Island.<sup>6</sup> This

juxtaposition reveals how spatialization manifests in the physical landscape, reinforcing power dynamics and profoundly shaping local communities.

Understanding COFA necessitates contextualizing it within this history of spatialization and external influence. The islands' designation as the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, under U.S. administration until they transition to independence, exposes the paternalistic undertones of early U.S. engagement.<sup>7</sup> The Solomon Plan, as highlighted by Sara Cannon, exemplifies this strategic approach,<sup>8</sup> viewing the islands primarily through a lens of military utility and reinforcing the notion of the Pacific as a vast expanse ripe for exploitation.<sup>9</sup>

This legacy of spatialization is further entrenched in the COFA agreements themselves.<sup>10</sup> While framed as mutually beneficial, the inherent power imbalance is evident in provisions like the termination clause, which grants the United States unilateral veto power over ending military aspects of the agreement.<sup>11</sup> Even the choice of the Department of the Interior (DOI), with its domestic focus on internal development, as the primary U.S. representative in COFA negotiations is telling. This contrasts sharply with the sovereign status of the FAS nations,<sup>12</sup> suggesting an extension of U.S. domestic interests onto the international stage.<sup>13</sup>

The spatialization of Oceania as a security sphere, shaped by colonial histories and ongoing militarization, has profound and far-reaching implications for the region. By understanding this complex interplay of space, power, and identity, we can begin to uncover the divergent priorities and perspectives that emerge from a spatialized islander viewpoint. This divergence, born from a complex interplay of historical and geopolitical forces, has profound implications for COFA and the broader relationship between the United States and the Freely Associated States.

### **Outcomes of 2023 Negotiations: Progress and Future Considerations**

The 2023 COFA renegotiations yielded significant amendments, including \$6.5 billion in economic assistance to be distributed among Micronesia, the Marshall Islands, and Palau over the next 20 years.<sup>14</sup> This funding aims to bolster key areas such as environmental resilience, health, education, and infrastructure, reflecting both U.S. strategic interests and the developmental needs of the Freely Associated States within the COFA framework.

However, these amendments should be viewed as a starting point for addressing the complex spatial politics that shape the relationship between the United States and the Freely Associated States. A deeper evaluation of sustainable economic growth, environmental sustainability, and the FAS's socio-economic independence remains crucial as they approach the 2043 renewal.

As stakeholders engage in long-term planning for the 2043 renewal, it is crucial to build on the momentum of the recent negotiations by proactively addressing these and other emerging challenges.<sup>15</sup> This approach will strengthen current cooperation and ensure that future amendments align more closely with both the strategic and humanitarian goals of the COFA agreements.

### **Environmental Security and Islander Spatialization**

Spatialization reveals a stark contrast between the United States' strategic prioritization of the Pacific and the environmental security concerns to Pacific Islander identity. While the United States has historically prioritized strategic positioning in the Pacific, indigenous communities conceptualize the region through a fundamentally different lens. Drawing inspiration from the work of Epele Hau'ofa and others, Pacific scholars emphasize two critical components of oceanic identity: the recognition of each island's individuality and the importance of maintaining regional unity across the vast expanse of the ocean. This identity is inextricably

linked to the ocean, which serves as both a physical connector and a cultural touchstone. Debates about the ocean's representation—whether as a “blue continent” or a network of transit routes—highlight the dynamic relationship between language, identity, and space within the Pacific context.

The emergence of Pacific regionalism in the mid-twentieth century, spurred by anti-colonial movements and the desire for self-determination, further solidified this unique spatial perspective. Organizations like the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) have played a crucial role in fostering regional collaboration and addressing shared challenges, including the growing threat of climate change. In November 2023, the PIF's endorsement of the Regional Framework on Climate Mobility underscored the centrality of environmental security in the islanders' spatial understanding of Oceania.<sup>16</sup> This framework calls for “people-centered movement” strategies that prioritize the needs and agency of Pacific communities facing climate-related displacement and migration.<sup>17</sup>

However, COFA presents a complex challenge to addressing climate change and environmental security. While COFA aims to foster economic development and eventual independence for the Freely Associated States, its effectiveness in achieving these goals has been questioned.<sup>18</sup> The persistent focus on military priorities, coupled with inadequate action on climate-related issues, raises concerns about the long-term sustainability of these agreements.

The legacy of U.S. nuclear testing in the Marshall Islands further complicates the issue.<sup>19</sup> A prime example is the Runit Dome, a concrete structure built on Runit Island in the Marshall Islands to contain radioactive debris from dozens of nuclear tests conducted by the United States between 1946 and 1958. Concerns about the Runit Dome's structural integrity and the potential leakage of radioactive waste pose a significant environmental threat to the Marshall Islands and the wider Pacific region.<sup>20</sup> Additionally, the recent COFA renegotiations revealed tensions surrounding the

Marshall Nuclear Claims Trust Fund, highlighting the historical sensitivities and unresolved grievances that continue to shape relations between the United States and the Marshall Islands.<sup>21</sup> It is important to note that while the United States has made some efforts to address the environmental legacy of nuclear testing and to provide assistance for climate change adaptation, these actions have been criticized as insufficient and overshadowed by the continued emphasis on militarization.

While the renegotiated COFA agreements include provisions for climate adaptation and disaster resilience,<sup>22</sup> their effectiveness remains questionable in the face of the United States' contradictory approach to environmental security.<sup>23</sup> As scholars Tiara Na'puti and Sylvia Frain argue, the United States engages in a form of "blue-washing," where performative environmental initiatives mask ongoing militarization and environmental degradation.<sup>24</sup> This tension between rhetoric and action underscores the misalignment between U.S. policy and the existential threats facing Pacific Island communities.

In contrast, islander spatialization places environmental conservation at the forefront of regional priorities. The ocean is not merely a strategic asset but a life-giving force intertwined with cultural heritage and survival. This perspective calls for a localized, community-based approach to environmental security that prioritizes sustainable practices and indigenous knowledge.

### **Economic Disparities and the Spatialization of Dependency**

The spatialization of the Pacific extends beyond military and environmental concerns; it also manifests in the economic relationship between the United States and the Freely Associated States. COFA's provisions for financial assistance have created a complex web of economic dependency, where the Freely Associated States heavily rely on U.S. aid for basic services and infrastructure. This dependency, exacerbated by the region's geographic isolation



and limited economic opportunities, has perpetuated a power imbalance that hinders the Freely Associated States' ability to achieve true self-sufficiency and sustainable development.

The spatialization of the Pacific as a region needing external aid further reinforces this dependency. The narrative of “developing” nations, often portrayed as lagging behind Western standards, perpetuates a paternalistic attitude that undermines the agency and capabilities of Pacific Islanders. This can be seen in the disproportionate influence of the U.S. dollar in FAS economies, the limited diversification of industries, and the challenges local businesses face in competing with imported goods.

Moreover, the economic provisions of COFA have been criticized for their lack of transparency and accountability. The distribution of funds is often opaque, with limited oversight from FAS governments or communities. This has led to concerns about corruption, mismanagement, and the unequal distribution of resources, further exacerbating social inequalities within the Freely Associated States.<sup>25</sup>

Reimagining the economic relationship between the United States and the Freely Associated States requires addressing these spatial dimensions of dependency. This involves increasing the amount of aid and ensuring that it is used effectively and transparently to support sustainable development initiatives that align with the priorities and needs of local communities.

It also requires fostering economic diversification and empowering local businesses to compete in the global market. This can be achieved through investments in education, infrastructure, and technology, as well as creating opportunities for trade and investment that benefit both the Freely Associated States and the United States.

Ultimately, a more equitable and sustainable economic partnership must recognize the agency and potential of Pacific

Island communities. By moving beyond the narrative of dependency and embracing a model of mutual respect and shared responsibility, the United States and the Freely Associated States can build a stronger economic future for the Pacific region.

This spatialized approach to economic analysis reveals how COFA can be viewed as a perpetuation of a colonial economic model. Reliance on external aid, often tied to specific conditions and priorities, can hinder the development of diverse and self-sufficient economies within the Freely Associated States. The continued use of the U.S. dollar as the primary currency further reinforces this dependency, limiting the Freely Associated State's ability to control its own monetary policy and manage economic fluctuations.

Moreover, the historical legacy of nuclear testing and environmental degradation has created unique economic challenges for the Freely Associated States. The destruction of land and resources, coupled with ongoing health concerns and displacement, has hampered economic development and created a reliance on external aid for basic necessities.

Reimagining the economic relationship under COFA requires shifting from dependency toward an empowerment and sustainable development model. This involves prioritizing investments in education, infrastructure, and local industries, promoting fair trade practices, and supporting initiatives that empower local communities to manage their own resources.

A revised COFA framework can create a more equitable and sustainable partnership by addressing the economic dimensions of spatialization, one that recognizes the economic potential and self-determination of Pacific Island nations. This will require a commitment from both the United States and the Freely Associated States to move beyond traditional aid models and embrace a more collaborative approach to economic development that prioritizes the long-term well-being of Pacific Island communities.

## **Reimagining Partnership: A Call for Spatial Justice**

The spatial analysis presented in this chapter underscores the urgent need to reimagine the relationship between the United States and the Freely Associated States. The current model, shaped by historical legacies of militarization and geopolitical anxieties, perpetuates a power imbalance that hinders genuine cooperation and undermines the existential needs of Pacific Islanders.

Moving forward, a more equitable and sustainable partnership must be grounded in the principles of spatial justice. This means acknowledging and respecting the unique spatial perspectives of Pacific Island communities, recognizing their inherent right to self-determination, and prioritizing their environmental security and economic prosperity.

### **To achieve this, the following recommendations are crucial:**

1. *DECENTRALIZE POWER*: In the 2043 COFA renegotiations, revise the agreements to grant the Freely Associated States greater autonomy over their affairs, particularly concerning environmental policy, resource management, and economic decision-making.
2. *PRIORITIZE ENVIRONMENTAL SECURITY*: Elevate climate change and environmental concerns to the forefront of the COFA agenda, ensuring adequate funding and resources for mitigation, adaptation, and resilience efforts. This includes addressing the legacy of environmental damage caused by nuclear testing and promoting sustainable resource management practices.
3. *EMBRACE INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE*: Integrate traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) into environmental and economic decision-making processes, recognizing its value in understanding local ecosystems, sustainable practices, and cultural preservation.<sup>26</sup>

4. *PROMOTE MULTILATERALISM*: Explore opportunities for diversifying regional security and economic development partnerships, including greater collaboration with other Pacific Island nations and international organizations, to complement the existing U.S. security role.
5. *REIMAGINE SPATIAL NARRATIVES*: Challenge the dominant narrative of the Pacific as a mere security sphere or a collection of economically dependent islands. Instead, promote a more holistic view encompassing the region's rich cultural heritage, ecological diversity, and potential for self-sufficient and sustainable development.

By embracing spatial justice and incorporating these recommendations, the United States and the Freely Associated States can forge a sustainable partnership that genuinely benefits both parties and ensures the long-term well-being of the Pacific region.

### **Conclusion:**

#### **Reframing the Future of COFA through Spatial Justice**

In their February 2024 letter to U.S. Senate leaders, the Presidents of the Freely Associated States succinctly captured the anxieties and limitations arising from the current COFA framework.<sup>27</sup> While acknowledging the economic benefits of the Compacts, they highlighted the growing “uncertainty among our peoples” and the potential for “economic exploitation by competitive political actors active in the Pacific.”<sup>28</sup> This underscores the inherent tensions within COFA, where strategic interests often overshadow the existential concerns of Pacific Islanders.

This chapter has demonstrated the power of spatialization as a theoretical lens for unraveling these complexities. By examining the historical legacies of colonialism, militarization, and differing spatial perspectives, this chapter has exposed the power imbalances that underpin the Compacts and their impact on the region. The

future of the Pacific cannot, and should not, be dictated solely by the geopolitical interests of external powers. The existential threat of climate change, which disproportionately threatens the very existence of Pacific Island nations, necessitates a radical rethinking of regional security and cooperation. A sustainable future for the Pacific must prioritize environmental conservation, cultural preservation, and the self-determination of its people.

While the complete dissolution of the Compacts may not be feasible given the region's strategic importance and history of militarization, a fundamental shift in approach is imperative. The United States must move beyond the narrow lens of security and embrace a more holistic understanding of spatial relations in the Pacific. This involves recognizing the unique vulnerabilities and aspirations of the Freely Associated States, as well as their deep-rooted connection to the ocean and its resources.

Looking toward the 2043 renewal, the recent 2023 negotiations, while providing a foundational framework, also underscore the urgent need for ongoing dialogue and reform. Crafting a truly balanced approach requires genuinely respecting and integrating the diverse interests of all parties, particularly given the looming challenges of climate change. Rising sea levels directly threaten critical infrastructure and livelihoods, demanding a just and equitable partnership acutely attuned to their environmental and socio-economic realities.

Moreover, the United States should explore opportunities for diversifying partnerships in regional security, including greater collaboration with other Pacific Island nations and international organizations, to complement the existing U.S. military presence. This could involve focusing on areas such as disaster preparedness, sustainable resource management, and cultural exchange. In doing so, the United States can demonstrate a genuine commitment to the Pacific region that goes beyond military interests and acknowledges

the complex interplay of environmental, social, and economic factors that shape the lives and futures of Pacific Islanders.

Ultimately, the future of COFA hinges on the willingness of both parties to embrace a new spatial imaginary—one that transcends geopolitical calculations and prioritizes the well-being and agency of Pacific Islanders. By recognizing the interconnectedness of environmental, social, and economic factors and fostering a genuine partnership based on mutual respect and shared responsibility, the United States and the Freely Associated States can chart a new course toward a more equitable and sustainable future for the Pacific region. A future where the Pacific is not merely a strategic chessboard but a vibrant and interconnected community of nations working together to address shared challenges and achieve common goals.

### **Endnotes**

- <sup>1</sup> Epeli Hau'ofa, “Our Sea of Islands,” *The Contemporary Pacific* 6, no. 1 (1994): 152, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23701593>.
- <sup>2</sup> Joanne Wallis, Emily Conroy, and Cayleigh Stock, “The United States as a ‘Pacific Nation’: Imaginary, Performance, and Spatialisation,” *Geopolitics* (2024): 1–34, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14650045.2024.2302421>.
- <sup>3</sup> Robert Keohane, “Lilliputians’ Dilemmas: Small States in International Politics,” *International Organization* 23, no. 2 (1969): 296, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S002081830003160X>.
- <sup>4</sup> Matt K. Matsuda, “‘This Territory Was Not Empty’: Pacific Possibilities,” *The Geographical Review* 97, no. 2 (2007): 230, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/30034163>.
- <sup>5</sup> Matsuda, “‘This Territory Was Not Empty,’” 231.
- <sup>6</sup> Lauren Hirshberg, “Mapping American Innocence in the Pacific: Cold War Empire, Militarization and Suburbanization at Kwajalein Atoll,” *Critical Military Studies* (2024): 6, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23337486.2023.2244842>.

- 7 Salā George Carter and Jack Corbett, "Security and Securitisation in the Pacific Islands: From Great-Power Competition to Climate Change and Back Again," in *Agency, Security, and Governance of Small States*, ed. Thomas Kolnberger and Harlan Koff (London: Routledge, 2024), 162.
- 8 Sara E. Cannon, "Climate Change Denial and the Jeopardised Interest of the United States in the Freely Associated States of Micronesia," *Asia Pacific Viewpoint* 62, no. 2 (2021): 245, <https://doi.org/10.1111/apv.12295>.
- 9 University of Hawai'i eVols, *The Solomon Report; America's Ruthless Blueprint for the Assimilation of Micronesia* (Friends of Micronesia, Micronesian Independent, Tia Belau, 1971), 14, <https://evols.library.manoa.hawaii.edu/items/bb1fc621-12a2-469b-836a-a27284e879d1>.
- 10 Cannon, "Climate Change Denial," 245.
- 11 Cannon, "Climate Change Denial," 246.
- 12 Wallis, Conroy, and Stock, "The United States as a 'Pacific Nation'," 9-10.
- 13 Wallis, Conroy, and Stock, "The United States as a 'Pacific Nation'," 6.
- 14 U.S. Department of the Interior, "Interior Department Applauds Renewed Economic Assistance for Compacts of Free Association," last edited March 12, 2024, <https://www.doi.gov/oia/press/Interior-Department-Appauds-Renewed-Economic-Assistance-for-Compacts-of-Free-Association>.
- 15 "Amata Chairs Subcommittee Oversight Hearing Examining COFA Implementation," *Mariana Variety*, September 16, 2024, [https://www.mvariety.com/news/regional\\_world/amata-chairs-subcommittee-oversight-hearing-examining-cofa-implementation/article\\_03433270-7326-11ef-aa42-d33140271c0d.html](https://www.mvariety.com/news/regional_world/amata-chairs-subcommittee-oversight-hearing-examining-cofa-implementation/article_03433270-7326-11ef-aa42-d33140271c0d.html).
- 16 "Pacific Islands Countries Lauded for Endorsing Regional Framework on Climate Mobility," *Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific*, November 15, 2023, <https://www.unescap.org/news/pacific-islands-countries-lauded-endorsing-regional-framework-climate-mobility>.

- 17 “Pacific Regional Framework on Climate Mobility,” *Pacific Islands Forum*, November 10, 2023, <https://forumsec.org/publications/pacific-regional-framework-climate-mobility>.
- 18 Cannon, “Climate Change Denial,” 251.
- 19 Tara Wu, “Climate Change May Unearth Cold War-Era Nuclear Waste Stored by the U.S. in Other Countries,” *Smithsonian Magazine*, March 6, 2024, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/climate-change-may-unearth-cold-war-era-nuclear-waste-stored-by-the-us-in-other-countries-180983901/>.
- 20 Coleen Jose, Kim Wall, and Jan Hendrik Hinzl, “This Dome in the Pacific Houses Tons of Radioactive Waste—and it’s Leaking,” *The Guardian*, July 3, 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jul/03/runit-dome-pacific-radioactive-waste>.
- 21 Giff Johnson, “Marshall Islands Launches COFA Public Review – Nuclear Legacy Question Remains Open,” *Radio New Zealand*, March 25, 2024. <https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/512603/marshall-islands-launches-cofa-public-review-nuclear-legacy-question-remains-open>.
- 22 Francisco Camacho, “US Gives Billions to Island Nations, Tackling Climate and China,” *POLITICO Pro*, March 20, 2024, <https://subscriber.politicopro.com/article/eenews/2024/03/20/u-s-gives-billions-to-island-nations-tackling-climate-and-china-00147775>.
- 23 Tiara R. Na'puti and Sylvia C. Frain, “Indigenous Environmental Perspectives: Challenging the Oceanic Security State,” *Security Dialogue* 54, no. 2 (2023): 118, <https://doi.org/10.1177/09670106221139765>.
- 24 Na'puti and Frain, “Indigenous Environmental Perspectives,” 117-118.
- 25 Meg Keen and Alan Tidwell, “Geopolitics in the Pacific Islands: Playing for Advantage,” *Lowy Institute*, January 31, 2024, <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/publications/geopolitics-pacific-islands-playing-advantage>.



- <sup>26</sup> Michael Spencer et al., “Environmental Justice, Indigenous Knowledge Systems, and Native Hawaiians and Other Pacific Islanders,” *Human Biology* 92, no. 1 (2020): 50, <https://doi.org/10.13110/humanbiology.92.1.06>.
- <sup>27</sup> Surangel S. Whipps, Jr., Wesley W. Simina, and Hilda C. Heine to Charles Schumer, Mitch McConnell, Patty Murray, and Susan Collins, February 6, 2024, letter, <https://x.com/CleoPaskal/status/1755270543308193861>.
- <sup>28</sup> Whipps, Simina, and Heine, letter.