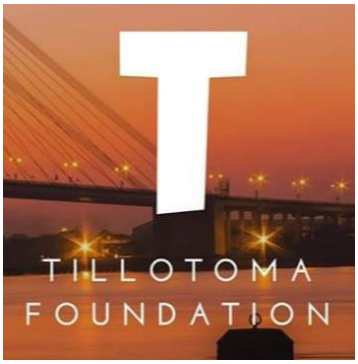

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Examining Negotiation Strategies Used by Small Island States in Multilateral Climate Negotiations

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Introduction

A state is often defined by having the following elements: a government, permanent population, defined territory, and capacity to enter into relations with other states (Henriksen, 2021, p. 61). Without even one of these elements, a prospective state may not be recognised by the international community as a state. For small island states, especially small island developing states (SIDS), climate change has been a creeping issue that threatens the very existence of these states. Oftentimes, these states face climate-related consequences disproportionate to that of larger states or states that are landlocked. While countries worldwide are experiencing more extreme weather, small island states are also experiencing rising sea levels and the degradation of coastlines, both of which threaten the physical territory, the prospect of having a permanent population of these small island states, and the livelihoods of the people living on these islands.

In the *Climate Change 2021* report summary published by the IPCC, research has found that the global mean sea level has increased by about 0.2 metres and has likely been caused by human influences since 1971, if not earlier (ICCP, 2021, p. 5). Though this may at first glance seem relatively harmless, for low-lying countries such as the Maldives, which over 80 percent of its islands stand less than a metre above sea level (Voiland, 2021), even a 0.6 metre sea level rise can inundate 10% of a one kilometre wide urban coastal zone (Fletcher & Rotzoll, 2013, p. 477). While the flooding of homes and streets is problematic, flooding from the ocean can also disturb natural freshwater supplies, reducing the amount of drinkable water available for the people in the affected area.

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The threat that climate change poses to these small island states has prompted them to become increasingly outspoken during climate-related negotiations. Movements such as "1.5 to stay alive" (de Águeda, 2014, p. 286) have been pushed by these small island states in hopes of avoiding a significantly warmer planet that would cause these small islands to be inhabitable. Climate change is an issue that is recognised as serious by the majority, but the solutions to the issue often create problems with how the economy functions, causing states especially reliant on greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions for economic activity and livelihood to be hesitant to enter binding agreements that would significantly cut down on their GHG emissions (Corbett, et al., 2020, p. 833). Taking into consideration the political sway that these states have and may pursue to maintain, climate negotiations can often become a game of maintaining a positive public image, while avoiding any commitments that would be considered “too ambitious”. This tends to be a recurring pattern within climate negotiations, that especially negatively affects SIDS, who are often on the receiving end of the more serious consequences that come with anthropogenic climate change.

This paper will examine how SIDS negotiate during multilateral climate-related negotiations, furthermore and will attempt to analyse the effectiveness of negotiation strategies that are used. The paper will achieve this by examining various instances in which SIDS have participated in multilateral climate-related negotiations. This will include their participation at Conference of Parties (COPs), the International Maritime Organisation (IMO), and in other meetings. Though this paper will not account for every instance in which SIDS have participated in climate-related negotiations, it will give the reader a general idea of how SIDS have been negotiating during these multilateral meetings and how effective these negotiations have been in reaching their goals during these meetings.

Influence by the Numbers: The Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) and the Paris Agreement

One recurring strategy that SIDS and other smaller states use in multilateral negotiations is that of creating alliances, forums, or cooperating with other states towards a common goal or set of goals. Though it may be difficult for a singular state to bring attention to an issue, a group of states has a better chance of bringing attention to an issue by having a 'louder' voice, one that is relatively more difficult to simply ignore or overlook. Some examples of such alliances and forums are the SAMOA Pathway, Pacific Islands Forum, Caribbean Community, Indian Ocean Commission, and Alliance of Small Island States.

The Alliance of Small Island Nations, also known as AOSIS, is an intergovernmental organisation that consists of 39 member states and was created in 1990 (Ourbak and Magnan, 2018, p. 2201). These 39 states are low-lying coastal regions or small island states that are most affected by climate change and suffer from rising sea levels and eroding coastlines (particularly SIDS). The original purpose of this alliance was for these smaller states to create a united front that would allow them to more effectively address issues of global warming during negotiations. According to Ourbak and Magnan, AOSIS has, time and time again, played a major and successful role in helping move climate negotiations forward on a global scale (2018, p. 2202). One stark example of this is AOSIS' role in influencing the nature of the Paris Agreement and helping ensure that the Paris Agreement was able to enter into force in 2016 (2018, p. 2204).

For COP21, AOSIS members gathered and agreed on a set of three goals that they would aim for during the climate negotiations – ensuring that the long-term temperature goal of well

below 1.5 degrees was established within the Paris Agreement; ensuing a stand-alone article for Loss and Damage that would address the issue and put in place a system or process that would help when such issues arose; creating a larger pool of money (at least 100 billion USD per year) that SIDS, specifically, would be able to access to help adapt to various challenges created by climate change (AOSIS, 2015).

While AOSIS was vastly successful in their endeavours, there were some aspects that they were unable to negotiate into the final treaty. Within the final version of the Paris Agreement, Article 2 Paragraph 1(a) recognises "Holding the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, recognizing that this would significantly reduce the risks and impacts of climate change" as an objective that would aid ongoing efforts to curb the threat of climate change. Likewise, AOSIS managed to negotiate the existence of Article 8, which is a stand-alone article that covers the topic of Loss and Damage. Unfortunately, the article fails to establish any systems or processes that would properly address the issue of Loss and Damage, especially a system or process that would hold states liable or require them to provide compensation for any instances of loss or damage (Ourbak and Magnan, 2019, p. 2204). Finally, while the Paris Agreement mentions providing financing to help with aspects such as mitigation, capacity building, and adaptation, there is nothing that mentions such support for SIDS specifically, but rather for developing countries as a whole (Ourbak and Magnan, 2019, p. 2203).

Though AOSIS was unable to get exactly what they wanted in negotiations during COP21, their efforts, backed by cooperation with Least Developed Countries (LDCs), and various fora such as the IPCC and the Climate Vulnerable Forum (Ourbak and Magnan, 2019, p.

2203), were able to leave a great impact on the Paris Agreement and subsequent climate-related discourse, so much that even today, the temperature goal of 1.5ºC continues to be a large topic within climate-related discourse and negotiations.

In addition to their impacts on the drafting of the Paris Agreement, AOSIS members helped the Paris Agreement enter into force. Article 21, Paragraph 1 of the Paris Agreement explains the requirements that would lead to the treaty entering into force:

> This Agreement shall enter into force on the thirtieth day after the date on which at least 55 Parties to the Convention accounting in total for at least an estimated 55 per cent of the total global greenhouse gas emissions have deposited their instruments of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession.
>
> (UNFCCC, 2015)

While AOSIS members don't make up anywhere near the 55 per cent of total global GHG emissions as required by this clause within article 21, Ourbak and Magnan explain that AOSIS members were responsible for taking the initiative of ratifying the treaty, with Fiji being the first country to ratify the treaty, with fellow AOSIS members following suit shortly after. Not only did this help initiate other states into action, but they cite that by ratifying the treaty, AOSIS members helped increase the number of countries that ratified the treaty, which would consequently put pressure on major polluting countries to also ratify the treaty (2018, p. 2204).

Policy Entrepreneurship

The International Maritime Organisation (IMO) is one of the 15 specialised UN agencies that are responsible "for the safety and security of shipping and the prevention of marine and atmospheric pollution by ships" (IMO, 2019). The organisation ensures measures are taken so that shipping companies can't take shortcuts that would compromise security, safety, and the environment while assisting the shipping industry moves towards the UN's 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This often is done in the form of meetings in which member states and various actors negotiate and agree on standards and regulations that are adopted and implemented as binding agreements.

In the article *Climate governance, policy entrepreneurs and small states: explaining policy change at the International Maritime Organisation* (2020), Corbett, et al. describe the successful negotiations of the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) within the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) during 2018. It is explained that the IMO is particularly notorious for being a "highly technical" organisation that deals with creating "regulatory frameworks on practices relating to technical matters of all kinds affecting shipping engaged international trade" (Corbett, et al., 2020, p. 829). Unlike other organisations and meetings in which agreements can be general statements that states can say without enacting them, the IMO creates binding agreements that members must follow (Corbett, et al., 2020, p. 838). As such, states with weaker structures and smaller capacities are not expected to heavily influence discourse during negotiations in organisations as technical as the IMO. Despite this, many small states rely on the shipping industry, thus have large shipping registries and a certain level of expertise and

knowledge when it comes to the IMO, specifically, allowing them to have considerable structural influence that they would otherwise not have (Corbett, et al., 2020, p. 829).

The article identifies four factors that helped with the RMI's success in their negotiations at the IMO: (1) having a tangible and strong vision from the policy entrepreneur, (2) developing the capacity of the RMI and other regions in cooperation, (3) seeking broader international support, and (4) having key actors fully committed to the vision (Corbett, et al., 2020, p. 826).

During COP18, in 2012, the late Tony de Brum, the Foreign Minister of the RMI at the time, set the tone for the RMI and various Pacific small island states (PSIDS) to begin taking action in climate discussions (Corbett, et al., 2020, p. 825). de Brum was a vocal advocate for climate justice and was calling for the capping of shipping GHG emissions in 2012. Though this vision of his was unrealistic, it set a goal for the RMI and other PSIDS, which they would persistently work towards (Corbett, et al., 2020, pp. 831-832). As such, de Brum, along with his colleagues, identified the IMO as a place in which they could push de Brum's vision of capping shipping GHG emissions due to the IMO's own goals as well as the fact that the RMI was a large stakeholder in the IMO considering their shipping registry is one of the largest in the world.

Though the RMI had a vision, it didn't have the necessary capacity needed to successfully push its agenda within the international sphere and especially within international organisations (Corbett, et al., 2020, p. 832). As such, de Brum and the RMI sought to expand their reach within the international sphere through international organisations and various outreach events. During one such event, academics and policymakers came up with the strategy of creating coalitions for small island states and gaining support from other states, especially from larger and richer European countries which could be used within the IMO (Corbett, et al., 2020, p. 833). With this strategy in mind, de Brum attended the 68th Marine and Environment

Protection Committee (MEPC) session, giving an impassioned speech about how climate change is threatening low-lying islands and submitting a position paper on the behalf of the RMI that talks about setting a reduction target and creating complementary measures for the shipping industry (Corbett, et al., 2020, p. 834). Though the position was rejected by MEPC, it did succeed in bringing the subject of GHG emission reduction back onto the negotiation table within the IMO.

Additionally, the RMI and de Brum worked to consolidate climate discourse within the Pacific region and worked to expand the reaches of their agenda into political spaces outside of the region. While PSIDS became more unified in their climate-related diplomacy, meetings with some European countries ensued after lunch during the 2015 intersessional meeting (Corbett, et al., 2020, p. 836). Talks that took place over lunch led to Germany, Belgium, France, and, eventually, various other countries from Europe and Africa cooperating in IMO activities.

With the creation of the Paris Agreement, MEPC 69 saw a shift in the issue of GHG emission, while MEPC 70 saw an even larger coalition that put forth an improved proposal for GHG emission reductions that would complement the data collection process that was put into place (Corbett, et al., 2020, p. 836). Later during MEPC 72, PSIDS along with EU members pushed for a 70-100% reduction agenda, which was settled as a 50% reduction agenda – a reduction larger than was expected (Corbett, et al., 2020, p. 837).

Leadership Strategies

Within international negotiations, leadership has been recognised as a factor that can influence the outcomes of a negotiation (de Águeda, 2014, p. 284). There are four types of leadership strategies that are often recognised: structural, entrepreneurial, environmental, and intellectual (de Águeda, et al., 2014, pp. 284-285).

Structural leadership is often regarded as the most powerful strategy in international negotiations and comes from natural resources, economic wealth, and political power (de Águeda, et al., 2014, pp. 284-285). While it would be useful for states such as the US or China, especially during environmental negotiations, many SIDS do not possess such resources to call upon. Entrepreneurial leadership refers to using various skills, tactics, and knowledge to acquire an influential position in negotiations in which one can sway how issues are presented and perceived (de Águeda, 2014, p. 285). Environmental leadership refers to the domestic policies that can be shown as proof of an actor's dedication toward a particular issue or matter. Finally, intellectual leadership refers to using academic or scientific research to back one's negotiations, using the information for justification or backing of the actor's stance.

de Águeda, et al. propose that while SIDS and AOSIS use entrepreneurial, environmental, and intellectual leadership in their negotiations, there is a fifth type of leadership strategy that is also used during their climate negotiations, which they refer to as "moral leadership" (2014, p. 292). This type of leadership capitalises on the vulnerability and 'innocence' that encapsulates SIDS and plays on the morality that comes with choosing to help

or not help a state that is vulnerable and has become victim to the choices of states in higher positions of power and hold more resources than SIDS may have.

During the recent Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) and Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBA) held in June, AOSIS made a closing plenary statement addressing that current progress is inadequate in addressing climate change. Within this statement, Hunte (2022) often highlights that SIDS are "vulnerable" and "have a right to a climate safe future" while talking about the lack of progress during the meetings held. While it is questionable just how effective this speech may have been, as it addresses the lack of progress in light of the upcoming COP27, which has not taken place yet, it is a clear example of how SIDS and AOSIS continue to use moral leadership within their negotiations with other countries.

Analysis

This paper has discussed cooperation and the creation of alliances/groups, policy entrepreneurship, and leadership strategies, especially moral leadership. In this section, the paper will discuss each of these strategies and how it has been implemented in negotiations.

Moral leadership has been a driving point for SIDS as well as AOSIS in negotiations. In speeches, it is rare to not hear something about the wrongs that have been done against these island states and how they are the most vulnerable to the consequences of climate change, despite not making up even 1% of global GHG emissions (de Águeda et al., 2014, pp. 282). While it can't be said that this tactic isn't overly effective, it still does have a purpose in SIDS' negotiation strategies. It has almost become a signature argument of SIDS and AOSIS, to the

point that actors will know exactly what their goals are and what stances they will take on various issues. On the other hand, overusing moral leadership as a strategy may render it useless. Similarly, to one that is experiencing compassion fatigue, if other leaders continue to hear about the existential threat that climate change poses to SIDS, these leaders may find themselves less inclined to listen to such struggles and concerns. Additionally, depending on other states' priorities and how interested they are in helping other states, they may be less inclined to help other states on the notion that it is an act of justice.

Policy entrepreneurship, as described by Corbett, et al. (2020), was highly effective in progressing climate policy during negotiations, despite the process spanning over the course of several years. While such entrepreneurship can be effective, it will only be as effective as the entrepreneur is. Though de Brum was exemplary in negotiating and creating a space in which SIDS could more effectively negotiate with larger states, there isn't a guarantee that future leaders will be able to reach the level of competency needed to push climate negotiations forward in a timely manner. Regardless, the efforts put forth by de Brum and the RMI got the ball going for PSIDS in climate-related negotiations, not only within the IMO but during COP negotiations as well, which will last for years to come.

Creating alliances, coalitions, groups, or partnerships between the three seems to be the most effective strategy of the three. Whether it be during COP, MEPC, or SBA negotiations, having one or more actors that assist with the negotiation significantly raises the chances of the negotiation having a favourable outcome. With that said, if the group of actors aren't able to consolidate their goals, acting as a group becomes significantly more difficult and may weaken their influence during negotiations, so it is crucial that the group has a set of goals that all members agree with.

While each of these strategies helps SIDS in negotiating during climate-related negotiations, they rarely can be used on their own and are often combined with one another to make a full strategy, as seen with the RMI's negotiations within the IMO. Not only do they create groups and cooperate with numerous states to push policies and agendas, but de Brum also acts as a successful policy entrepreneur that uses intellectual, entrepreneurial, environmental, and moral leadership strategies to ensure that there are many stakeholders that are genuinely interested in ensuring the agendas set to succeed and are adopted.

Conclusion

Despite SIDS lacking structural power within the international system, there are many ways in which they are able to influence the outcomes of negotiations, especially those related to climate change and environmental protection. Along with their ability to create groups and coalitions that strive for the same goals and morally appeal to other countries during negotiations, SIDS also use policy entrepreneurship to create environments in which ambitious environmental policies are within reach of being adopted, ratified, and entered into force. Considering SIDS' large stake in climate-related negotiations, it can be speculated that they will likely have a profound influence on how the international community will confront the issue of climate change and what global environmental policy will look like in the next 10 years.

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