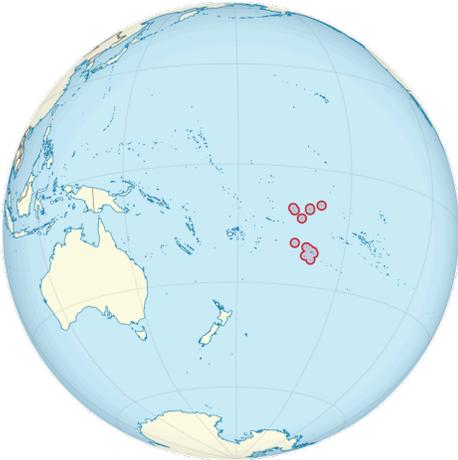


The Cook Islands emerge from New Zealand's shadow

Carilyn Pointer

12/14/2022



Map of the Cook Islands

Carilyn Pointer - The Cook Islands are a self-governing island in the Pacific Ocean in association with New Zealand. At the recent summit of Pacific nations, President Biden moved for formal recognition of the Cook Islands. What does this mean for these islands, and how will it impact the global stage?

The terms state and nation are often used interchangeably but are quite distinct concepts. States are defined by having sovereignty over a territory and group of people. Often referred to as countries. On the other hand, nations are named groups of people share common histories, myths, culture, economy, and rights. The Cook Islands are considered a self-governing nation but are still technically under New Zealand's power and influence. Without international recognition, the Cook Islands are simply a group of islands with a shared history and culture operating under a larger colonial power. Biden's new push for international recognition, would effectively change that status and move them from a nation to an officially recognized state. Receiving formal recognition of statehood would give the inhabitants of the Cook Islands political control and therefore more influence on the global political stage. Participation in the United Nations as well

as the IMF would become possible and continue the trend of international engagement. Understanding the distinction between these terms is important for the Cook Islands, and the rest of the global stage, because it defines the scope of influence for both the Cook Islands and New Zealand.

This status change isn't only important for the island nation but would likely turn more support in favor of Taiwan if conflict were to emerge. With greater autonomy, the Cook Islands can choose who they support. As a small state, it is probable that these decisions could shift in favor of Taiwan, another underdog. Shifting as much support toward Taiwan now, could in the long run have large effects. As mentioned by The Cook Islands' prime minister, Mark Brown, "the Pacific is a very contestable region right now." Biden has effectively recognized this as well and may be using the United States power to shift the status quo of the Pacific islands without inserting our troops into the situation.

Picture Credit: Photo distributed under the [Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported](#) license. [Source](#)