

How Effective is China's Soft Power Diplomacy in FSM? The University of Guam's FSM Student Perspective

Grace Donaldson
Graduate School of International Relations
Ritsumeikan University, Kyoto, Japan

China's increased use of soft power diplomacy and engagement with Pacific Island countries have led to favorable views of China among countries on the receiving end. Favorable views of China may lead to a closer relationship between China and the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), and impact FSM's current relationship with the United States (U.S.). While the literature on China's soft power diplomacy is voluminous, scholarship on the perspectives of FSM leaders of the future is limited. Based on focus group interviews with FSM university students at the University of Guam, this paper argues that - within the soft power conceptual framework - China's soft power in FSM is tangentially effective. From their perspectives, the university students indicated that China subsidies are consequential, but they fear the loss of land and culture under increased China influence. This research is relevant to understanding the attitudes of FSM's future leaders and providing valuable insights into the future US-FSM-China relations.

How effective is China's soft power diplomacy in the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), from the perspective of potential FSM leaders of the future? Despite the ongoing strength of the FSM-US relationship, FSM has also maintained a strong relationship with China. Nye (1990) coined and described soft power as, "...when one country gets other countries to want what it wants might be called co-optive or soft power in contrast with the hard or command power of ordering others to do what it wants."

FSM, through its Compact of Free Association (COFA) agreement, is closely aligned to the United States (U.S.). In 1979, FSM, after over three

decades as a Trust Territory of the U.S., gained its sovereign status. In 1986, FSM implemented the COFA agreement between the FSM and the U.S. The concept of the COFA is that the U.S. will help the FSM advance its self-sufficiency and economic development. The agreement mandates the U.S. to provide defense of the FSM and financial support of over USD110 million annually. Thus, COFA binds the FSM to the U.S. politically, economically, militarily, and socially. Furthermore, it bestows non-resident status on FSM citizens relative to the U.S.; thus, allowing them to live, work, and study in the U.S. In exchange, the U.S. has unfettered access to FSM's land, water, and air. It also gives the U.S. denial authority on foreign access to FSM when this is perceived as a threat to U.S. security.

The US/FSM COFA agreement is in place until both countries mutually agree to end it. However, U.S. financial support is scheduled to expire in 2023 (U.S. Department of State, 2018). ¹ The uncertainty of FSM's future economy creates an environment ripe for China's soft power diplomacy success.

The central question of this research is: How effective is China's soft power diplomacy in FSM – from the perspectives of University of Guam's FSM students?

The answer to this question may lead to an understanding of the attitudes of future leaders, who will have the power to create and change policies that impact their nation's international relations with both the U.S. and China. The research will also provide valuable insight into non-financial factors that could come into play during the COFA re-negotiations with the U.S. For these reasons, the focus group interview method, within the soft power framework, was used to elicit perspectives of the participants.

¹ In August 2019, the then Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo, announced that the U.S. and FSM governments agreed to renegotiate the terms of the COFA (Srinivasan, 2019).

Literature Review

In the past four decades, China's has increased its economic and military strength, and expansion of its global influence. China's paramount leader of the Communist Community Party (CCP), Deng Xiaoping, during the late 1970's and early 1980's, incorporated capitalism into its central planning through a series of far-reaching market-economy reforms, dubbing these reforms "Socialism with Chinese Characteristics" (SWCC). SWCC incorporated the advancement of Chinese culture while opening the country to foreign investment (History, 1984). Under the paramount leader Hu Jintao, the Chinese government policy emphasized "peaceful rise" to reassure the international community that China's political, economic and military growth were not threats to international peace and security; that China was committed to internal affairs and improving the welfare of its people (Zhu, 2007; Hu, 2006). In 2012, Chinese President Xi Jinping proclaimed that the greatest Chinese dream is the rejuvenation of the nation, declaring that by 2021, China would be a moderately prosperous nation and for China to be a *modern, socialist country that is prosperous, strong, democratic, culturally advanced and harmonious by 2049.*" (Xi, 2018) The following year, Xi introduced the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) which greatly enhanced its global influence.

BRI is an ambitious economic and diplomatic strategy to strengthen China's leadership through a vast program of infrastructure development of ports, roads, railways and airports, energy and telecommunications networks, connecting Europe, Asia, Africa, Middle East and the Pacific to China. Analysts argue China's strategy has several objectives (Berndzen, 2017; Meick et al., 2018; Tüysüzoğlu & Özgen, 2020)

- Maintain stable and friendly relations with its neighbors, building multi-polar international relations and expanding its soft power influence.
- Obtain a steady supply of resources to sustain its economic growth.

- Gain political influence to prevent strategic alliances directed against China while reducing Taiwan's international relations.

While China grows its military might, it continues to employ soft power strategy through the BRI (Morris, 2019). The FSM-U.S. COFA agreement makes soft power the logical policy for extending its influence in the Pacific.

China's soft power diplomacy with the FSM hits the mark for all the above points to achieve its goals in the Pacific. In addition to further weakening Taiwan's international standing, China promotes its soft power image through its very visible, infrastructure developments programs such as the construction of government buildings, and a gym, renovation of roads, and bridges. Additionally, China provides economic assistance during times of natural disasters and more recently cash and supplies to assist FSM with its battle with COVID-19 pandemic. (Baldock, 2021, Qudkirk, 2019, Rodriguez, 2017, McClure, 2018, a, b). China also provides scholarships for FSM college students and technical training for government officials to study and train in China, thereby exposing FSM citizens to the Chinese culture.

In 2017, China and the FSM signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) regarding the BRI (Peng, 2017). More recently, in May 2021, China and FSM entered an economic and technical cooperation, with China promising USD16 million to FSM, and FSM President David Panuelo reiterating his country's commitment to supporting the "One China" policy. (FSM Information Services, 2021).

The uncertainty from the Pacific partners about the U.S.' willingness and ability to sustain a robust bilateral presence (Oudkirk, 2019) has allowed private sector with strong ties to the Chinese government to successfully bid for telecommunication projects and enter long-term leases with landowners. While these communication projects and long-term leases have received mixed responses from the community or blocked by the U.S. government, changes to the law are being made at the state and national level. In 2018, the Pohnpei State legislature amended its laws to reduce requirements on foreign

investments. Dual citizenship for foreign citizens and relaxation of land ownership for business investments and loan security, while restricted under the current FSM Constitution, are proposed amendments to the Constitution (2020 FSMConCon, 2020). These constitutional changes have the potential to change FSM's relations with both the U.S. and China.

Methodology

Study Design and Procedure

Focus group interviews were used to study the perspectives of a group of Micronesian college students on a variety of topics related to future political status questions in their home islands. The interaction among participants of the four FSM states (Pohnpei, Chuuk, Yap, and Kosrae) produced new and valuable data that may not have been captured through other qualitative data collection methods, such as individual interviews. The group explored questions in an in-depth interactive manner. Nuanced personal views emerged, helping to explore a range of perspectives toward research questions, and from citizens of four historically, culturally, and linguistically very different FSM States. Considering the high educational status of these participants, their perspectives may provide a window into those of future community leaders of FSM.

Participants

All six participants will receive a degree in Public Administration and are likely to enter government service upon graduation. This arrangement is compatible with Morgan's recommendation (1977) that members of research groups such as this have a degree of homogeneity of background (not opinion), and that strangers should not be selected due to discussion inhibition that may develop. Except for one, participants lived in the UOG dormitory, and that one participant was a frequent visitor to the dormitory. They knew the author through shared campus activity. Therefore, they were likely to express their opinions (Plummer-D'Amato, 2008).

FSM students at UOG are likely to know one another. The population of FSM students at UOG is comparatively small, making up only 5.6% (221 of 3,917) of the student base at UOG. Over 50% of FSM students live in the dormitory. Cultural conversational expectations in Micronesia tend to favor silence, particularly between individuals who are not well known to one another (e.g., Hezel, 2013). For this reason, the selection of focus group participants was based on the following: 1) Students with whom the researcher had already developed rapport; 2) Students who showed a willingness to share opinions; 3) Students who knew and were comfortable with each other; 4) Students who identified as being from FSM or were FSM citizens; 5) Students whose opinions on COFA, China, or the U.S. were unknown to the researcher; and 6) Students who represented different FSM island states.

Stewart & Shamdasani (2015) suggest that 8-12 is a good number for a focus group. More than twelve is challenging to manage, and fewer than 8 may stifle discussion. Haynes (2012) recommends 5-10. One or more of the participants were from each of the four FSM states (Chuuk, Kosrae, Pohnpei, and Yap). Since Chuuk State is the most populous (approximately 50,000, or 50% of FMS's total population), two additional participants from Chuuk were added. One student was of mixed parentage (Chuukese and Pohnpeian) and raised in Chuuk. Each of the four states has at least one distinct language and culture, relative to the other states. Therefore, the focus group interview was conducted in English, the common language spoken by all participants. Two students were undergraduates, and four were graduate students. One student was a recipient of a Chinese scholarship, had studied in China, and transferred to UOG after one year.

Focus Group

The group interview was held in a "quiet room" in the dormitory where five of the participants live. Refreshments were provided. An observer took notes. Anonymity regarding participation in the study was promised. An iPhone was used to record the discussion and the audio file was sent to an online transcription service (REV.com). The returned

transcripts were downloaded as a Word file, and the Atlas Ti.8 software package was then used to code the focus group discussion. The discussion points were classified as positive, negative, or neutral. While the discussion was mainly about China, the U.S. was frequently mentioned. It lasted 2.5 hours.

Discussion Questions

1. How do you feel about the Compact of Free Association agreement between FSM and the U.S.?
2. What do you know about China?
3. Between the U.S. and China, with which country would you want to develop a closer relationship?
4. What is your reaction to China's presence in FSM?
5. Do you believe China's influence in FSM is growing? If yes, how do you believe this influence impacts you and/or your family?
6. Are there specific policies, whether economic, political, educational, environmental, that you would be interested in enacting as a policy as it relates to China?
7. Is there anything about China that excites you?
8. Is there anything about China that worries you?
9. China provides scholarships to FSM students to study in China. What do you think is their purpose for giving scholarships?

Results

Because the focus group research design of this study involves a small number of participants, the results are qualitatively directional rather than appropriate for inferential statistical analysis. Participant responses represent a glimpse of what is important to these young adults, future leaders of Micronesia, and provide a platform for additional future research.

Nine questions were asked for the purpose of gauging the feelings of focus group participants about China. However, discussions about the U.S. were unavoidable because of the symbiotic relationship COFA created between the U.S. and FSM. Concerns and discussions raised within the focus group to each question discussed are presented in the qualitative analysis below.

Question 1: How do you feel about the Compact of Free Association Agreement between FSM and the U.S.?

This question was asked because COFA defines the relationship between the U.S. and FSM. The answer to this first question was intended to gain insight into their feelings about the U.S. in order to compare perspectives on China and the U.S. The consensus among the students was that FSM benefited from COFA but needed *“improvements or adjustment.”* The most common sentiment was that FSM was not an independent country because of COFA, and that it had no control over its land and ocean. Secondly, FSM was viewed as overly reliant on COFA. One participant stated, *“...even though the U.S. is giving us all of these opportunities and benefits to become an independent and then also giving us all this stuff, but at the same time they have control on who comes and goes; I mean initially coming to the FSM.”* Another said, *“It’s good for our country because it helps us start us up, but I think the bad side is that I think we’re too dependent on the Compact.”* The group felt the leaders need to renegotiate the COFA, so it is more beneficial to FSM. As one participant stated, *“...the Compact could be designed as a strategy.”*

Most expressed that even if FSM is economically stable, the COFA is necessary to provide security measures.

Question 2: What do you know about China?

The group’s collective and individual knowledge of China and its culture was minimal. However, the group members believed that China’s economy is robust, and it is a very powerful country. One participant said he would like to do business with China and that China would make a

good trading partner. The student who had lived in China for a year found China to be strict.

Question 3: Between U.S. and China, which country would you want to develop a closer relationship?

The consensus was that they wanted to stay in the middle and not choose a side between the U.S. and China. Because of the long relationship between FSM and the U.S. and the economic support FSM receives from the U.S., the author's expectation was that the students would prefer a closer relationship with the U.S. However, this was not the case. Surprisingly, all stated they want to stay in the middle rather than choose a side. The student who studied in China said, *"Because China, their law system is strict...and we also don't want to be too Westernized."* Another student said they could have a relationship with both but, *"...not jump too much into the U.S. side and not jump too much on the Chinese side."* Another said, *"In the middle when you see whichever side meets the need of our people and making sure that we [are] standing on safe ground."*

On the other hand, the group members are also aware of the benefits of the close relationship with the U.S. One person said the U.S. had been there from the beginning: *"Why do we have to restart again with the Chinese?"* When asked a follow-up question on their thoughts on a COFA with China instead of another COFA with the U.S., their replies were non-committal; the more beneficial agreement would be their choice. As one person summed it up, *"We can sit here and say we'll sit with the U.S. But what if 2023 comes, and then our government really needs some money? We don't know if we'll just say okay, we'll agree to have a COFA with China, so that's why I say it really depends on the situation."*

Another typical comment was that the FSM leaders need to think outside the box on pushing back for FSM's survival and not just lining their pockets. Further, *China is only "investing in its own country."* The FSM leaders *"need to think about how FSM can survive and do a better job at negotiating with the U.S. at the next funding negotiations, if any."*

The participants also expressed reservations about changes its relationship with the U.S. and China could mean. *"...we don't want to be too Westernized. And we also don't want to have that Chinese mindset."*

Question 4: What is your reaction to China's presence in FSM?

Many held the opinion that both China and U.S. interests and investments in FSM are self-serving – that their investments in the FSM were an investment in themselves. Despite the preference to stay in the middle, some of the participants also believed that China had altruistic reasons for their investments in the FSM. One participant who spent about a year in China as a scholarship recipient, stated that China is very strict, and that the people *"are very serious about what they want to accomplish...they are more strict than the U.S."* However, this same individual believed that China is trying to *"help out"* the FSM - and so are other nations - through their offers of scholarships. Another participant stated, *"...heard of China as a country trying to reach out and help other countries."* The general perception is neutral towards China.

The follow-up question was asked, *"Between China and U.S. who is doing more for FSM?"* Again, there were mixed replies to the question. One person felt the U.S. has promised a lot but had done little for FSM, but China did what they said they would do. He believed that China is doing more because he sees more improvements in his state (Yap); that China is trying to improve tourism in his state. However, he also expressed concern about losing land. Another person felt that the U.S. is doing more, that China is helping the State of Yap, but the U.S. is assisting all four states through the amended COFA agreement. The other participants were very aware of the visible gifts such as transport cargo-carrying supplies and the financing of the legislative building. Still, they were not aware of the actual amount of grants and funds provided by the U.S. under COFA.

One participant felt the Chinese presence would open job opportunities. Others expressed fear about China becoming the dominant society in the FSM and the loss of culture.

Question 5: Do you believe China's influence in FSM is growing? If yes, how do you feel this impacts you and/or your family?

There was minimal discussion on this question. One person felt it would not impact him personally but would have more impact on his children and grandchildren. However, the discussion quickly reverted to the effect on their culture rather than their family. There was some discussion about a potential Chuuk cessation from FSM, but most believed that the frustrations of politicians are the driver for Chuuk's cessation movement from FSM, and not any action by China.

Question 6: Are there any specific policies, whether economic, political, educational, environmental, that you would be interested in enacting as a policy as it relates to China?

The researcher asked a follow-up question on their thoughts about FSM's relations to the U.S. One participant answered "environment" and "economies." The discussion returned to the loss of land and culture. They believe the FSM constitution prevents foreigners from having outright ownership of the land. However, changes in policy that allowed for land ownership by foreigners were also discussed. The participants' biggest concern was the economic impact if the COFA funding ends as scheduled.

Question 7: Is there anything about China that excites you?

The most common discussion was about making money off China. One person's immediate response was, "*Get money from them. I need their money.*" The conversation immediately returned to trade with China. The group's perception is that Chinese goods are cheaper than U.S. goods and therefore more affordable to the average FSM citizen. The consensus was that China is a good trading partner. The discussion then led to the low minimum wages in FSM and its citizens' ability to afford only the lesser quality goods from China.

Question 8: Is there anything about China that worries you?

While expressing fears of Chinese influence resulting in loss of land and culture, the participants also saw the importance of maintaining a close relationship with China and the U.S. Another said he fears the relationship between the FSM and China because he is afraid that the foreign country (China) will become, “*more dominant over the local ones.*” Along with the same notion of dominance by a more powerful nation, another stated that the complaint about China is nothing new because other countries such as the U.S., Germany, Japan, and the United Kingdom have all colonized other countries. However, she went on to say that a relationship with a powerful country can open so many doors. Another participant stated that the Chinese are generous with benefits, donations, scholarships, and loans. Still, the reality is if the (FSM) country cannot pay back China, China will ask for land. The topic of dual citizenship, a current debate in FSM, also centered around land and culture. Some felt that giving land to those who were not born in FSM or had lived away from the FSM should not feel entitled to land.

Furthermore, they discussed the cultural aspect of land ownership and passing it to the next generation. For example, in some states, the land is passed on to daughters. To whom does the land transfer if there are no daughters, or if the daughters are U.S. citizens? Another participant stated that the family owns the land regardless of who stays on the land and how long they have stayed.

Question 9: What do you believe is the purpose of China giving scholarships?

The answers varied from China attempting to influence FSM, and it is self-serving; to a more altruistic response, such as China wants to promote education.

General Comments on Group Discussion

China is thought to be powerful, and its economy is healthy and good for FSM's economy. Most believed that China's presence will open job opportunities in FSM and will "...strengthen communication resources that our island may need." Another aspect of the perception of China being good for the economy is that the goods are inexpensive and therefore affordable for the people of the FSM. This reality makes China a good trading partner. Although no question related to land, environment, or ocean was posed to the group, the fear of losing their culture or land or dominance by a foreign country was expressed several times.

Quantitative Comparison of Comments

Table 1 presents absolute numbers (i.e., raw scores) showing that the frequency of positive comments of the discussion group members about China was higher in favorability relative to those of the U.S. However, when converted to percent of respondents giving favorable or unfavorable answers, the U.S. was given 82.35% favorable ratings compared to China's 74.19%. Both the U.S. and China were perceived by the FSM discussion group in a favorable light.

Table 1. Relative Favorability of Comments for China and US by FSM Raters

Country	Comments	Number	Percent
China	Favorable	23	74.19
	Unfavorable	8	25.81
U.S.	Favorable	14	82.35
	Unfavorable	3	17.65

An interesting difference is shown in Table 2 when neutral comments are also considered. China's favorable ratings dropped considerably, from 50% to 30.67%. Conversely, U.S. favorability ratings remained high, at 73.68%.

Table 2. Relative Favorability of Comments for China and US by FSM Raters when Neutral Scores are Included

Country	Comments	Number	Percent
China	Favorable	23	30.67
	Neutral	44	58.67
	Unfavorable	8	10.66
U.S.	Favorable	14	73.68
	Neutral	2	10.53
	Unfavorable	3	15.79

Table 3 displays the frequently mentioned fears expressed by raters. The fears most frequently mentioned were the loss of land and culture, followed by fear of dominance by a foreign country. However, the fear of dominance feeds into the fear of loss of land and culture.

Table 3. Relative Frequency of FSM Fears

Fears	Number	Percent
Dominance by foreign country	3	11.11
Loss of land and culture	18	66.67
Others	6	22.22

Conclusions

The central research question asks how successful China's soft power diplomacy is with the FSM, from the perspective of the University of Guam's FSM students. While they had more positive than negative comments about China, the high rate of neutral comments suggests that the students had no strong feelings about the country's presence in FSM. The results also indicate that China's soft power diplomacy, such as providing educational scholarships and building government structures, may be taking hold. The comments regarding the desire for trade with China because Chinese goods are affordable also suggest that soft power diplomacy is being utilized. The long-term strategy of the Chinese to influence FSM international relations policies through the BRI arrangement may be having an impact on the students' perspectives. It should be noted that China and FSM established diplomatic relations over thirty years ago and have had several warm high-level interactions, more so than the high-level interactions with U.S. leadership.

The central research question of this study was, "How effective is China's soft power diplomacy in FSM?" The University of Guam's FSM students' perspective, by extension, also asks how a favorable perception of China will impact FSM's relationship with the U.S. Although the U.S. was not the focus of the study, the students' responses indicated an overall positive perception of the U.S. The low rates for unfavorable and neutral comments and high favorable rates confirm this perception.

The research data also suggests that China's efforts to apply soft diplomacy have had limited results. Therefore, while the perception of China is more positive than negative, the number of neutral comments indicates that China's soft power efficacy is less than that of the U.S, which received a substantial number of positive comments. However, the volume of neutral comments suggests China's strategy of soft power diplomacy is not immediately clear and must be viewed over the long term.

The focus group, which represents the next generation of leaders, does not seem to see China as a threat but rather a country from which FSM can benefit, in the same way that FSM benefits from its relationship with the U.S. The expressed consensus was that participants desired to stay in the middle, not choosing sides. However, the students expressed fear of China on more than one occasion, suggesting that China's positive soft power influence on FSM may be depressed by fear. Adding to this fear, the comment that "*China is strict*" indicates that the Chinese culture is not aligned with the culture of FSM and is more aligned with punitive attitudes.

The acceptance of China is driven primarily by economics, not by soft power. Statements such as, "I fear China," indicate the participants are cagier about developing a closer relationship with China than the U.S. No one stated they feared the U.S. However, this wariness will not prevent the FSM from negotiating a favorable economic assistance package from China if this would help the FSM get on the right economic footing. The desire for their nation's economic stability and protection of their land and culture hint that they may take a pragmatic approach in their dealings with China and the U.S. China has a much longer road to travel for its soft power initiatives to have a meaningful impact in FSM. Inroads, however, can be seen because the focus group participants also believed that China is attempting to "do good."

Lastly, FSM and the U.S. have recently agreed to renegotiate the terms of the COFA. If an agreement could not be reached, U.S. economic support will end in 2023. The respondents commented that COFA makes the FSM dependent on the U.S., and that FSM is not genuinely independent. They also expressed fear of losing their culture and land. These comments suggest that U.S. negotiators should consider these matters. FSM may demand more authority in the context of its international relations and the country's environmental concerns. The comments of one student who studied in China best encapsulates the responses of the focus group: China is "...very serious about what they want to accomplish...they are more strict than the U.S." Yet, China is perceived to be trying to help the FSM.

Limitations and Future Research

The small sample size of this study means that the data collected are directional, not statistically significant. The results give only a glimpse of what is important to Micronesia's future leaders. Based on limited data, two of the groups greatest concerns are economic stability and protection of its land and culture. A survey of a larger population or an increased number of focus group interviews might identify other important issues and deepen the discussion regarding China-FSM-U.S. relations.

The close familial ties, ease of travel, and access via social media allow FSM students to keep abreast of current events in FSM. However, the general lack of knowledge about China's geo-politics and culture may limit their perspectives on China's soft power influence and its impact on FSM. The high percentage of neutral statements relative to either the positive or negative survey options may be due to lack of knowledge. Therefore, a similar focus group study with participants who have studied in China may provide more insight into how the interaction between Chinese and FSM students could shape FSM perspectives on China's soft power. Would this additional research reveal fewer neutral comments and increase or decrease positive and negative comments about China? Additional study may also provide a glimpse into how increased levels of Chinese education and exposure to Chinese culture might impact the U.S - FSM relations.

Another limitation of this study is that the students are all from an American institution of higher learning. Their experience is related to the U.S. and they benefited from FSM's relationship with the U.S. Their experience with China is much less. Therefore, possible future research would involve comparing the perspectives of students who graduated from Chinese and U.S. universities and entered FSM government service. U.S. presence in FSM is unlikely to dissipate. Therefore, it is important to understand where student perspectives intersect and where they differ will deepen the understanding of the China-FSM-U.S. relations, and FSM's possible strategies for securing its culture and land.

References

- 2020 FSMConCon. (2020). Retrieved from 4th Constitution Convention of the Federated States of Micronesia:
<https://constitution.gov.fm/proposals/>
- Berndzen, A. (2017). The "Asia-Pacific Dream: Is China Using Economic Integration Initiatives as Ideological Weapons? On The Link Between Free Trade Agreements, Soft Power and "Universal Values". *Journal of China and International Relations*, 5(1), 1-34.
- FSM Information Services May 31, 2. (2021, May 31). China provides FSM with \$16M in economic and technical cooperation assistance. *Marianas Variety*. Retrieved from
https://mvariety.com/news/china-provides-fsm-with-16m-in-economic-and-technical-cooperation-assistance/article_fc3f60a0-c19b-11eb-992d-73d6a441eae6.html
- Hadano, T. (2019, December 14). Beijing courts Micronesia in push for rival base to Guam. Retrieved from Nikkei Asia:
<https://asia.nikkei.com/Spotlight/Belt-and-Road/Beijing-courts-Micronesia-in-push-for-rival-base-to-Guam>
- Hezel, F. X. (2013). *Making Sense of Micronesia: The Logic of Pacific Island Culture*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
- History. (1984, April 26). *President Reagan visits China*. (H. Editors, Editor, & A. T. Networks, Producer) Retrieved from History:
<https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/reagan-visits-china>
- Hu, S. (2006). Revisiting Chinese Pacifism. *Asian Affairs, an American Review*, 32(4), 256-278. Retrieved from
<https://www.proquest.com/central/docview/197413691/fulltextPDF/5F348F87084A47F3PQ/1?accountid=41566>
- McClure, J. (2018, January 26). *Yap is having serious second thoughts about Chinese tourism*. Retrieved from The Pacific Island Times:

<https://www.pacificislandtimes.com/post/2018/01/26/yap-is-having-serious-second-thoughts-about-chinese-tourism>

McClure, J. (2018, October 30). *Chinese investment key to hot Yap electoral contest*. Retrieved from The Pacific Island Times: <https://www.pacificislandtimes.com/post/2018/10/30/chinese-investment-key-to-hot-yap-electoral-contest>

Meick, E., Ker, M., & Chan, H. M. (2018). *China's engagement in the Pacific Islands: Implications for the United States*. U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission.

Morgan, D. L. (1997). *Focus Groups as Qualitative Research: Planning and Research Design for Focus Groups*. Sage Research Methods.

Nye, J. S. (1990). *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power*. London: Basic Books.

Oudkirk, S. (2019, July 23). *Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources*. Retrieved from U.S. Department of State: <https://www.energy.senate.gov/services/files/8DC6AFF6-45DD-43FA-A734-7C4CF3165D51>

Pacific Aid Map. (2021). Retrieved from Lowy Institute: <https://pacificaidmap.lowyinstitute.org/>

Peng, J. (2017, March 27). China, Micronesia to cooperate on Belt and Road. *Xinhuanet*. Retrieved from http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-03/27/c_136161549.htm

Plummer-D'Amato, P. (2008, February). Focus group methodology, Part 1: Considerations for design. *International Journal of Therapy and Rehabilitation*, 15(2), 69-73.

Rodriguez, M. (2017, February 6). *China is making inroads in Micronesia*. Retrieved from The Pacific Island Times:
<https://www.pacificislandtimes.com/post/2017/02/06/china-is-making-inroads-in-micronesia>

Srinivasan, P. (2019, August 9). Mixed reviews of US plans to renegotiate Micronesian deals. ABC's Pacific Beat.

Stewart, D. W., & Shamdasani, P. N. (2015). *Focus Groups, Theory and Practice (3rd ed.)*. Thousand Oaks, CA, USA: Sage.

Tüysüzoğlu, G., & Özgen, C. (2020). The Relationship between the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road Initiative and Chinese Naval Strategy. *Alanya Academic Review*, 4(2), 283-303.

U.S. Department of State. (2018, July 5). Retrieved March 26, 2019, from Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs:
<https://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/1839.htm>

Xi, J. (2018). *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China I*. Beijing: Foreign Languages Press.

Zhu, Z. (2007, July). China's "Peaceful Rise" in the 21st Century: Domestic and International Conditions. *The China Journal*, 58, 228-230.