



The South Pacific: The New Global Geopolitical Battleground?

Nico Daniel Pasaribu^{1*}, Ansori Zaini², Tasdik Mustika Alam³
Universitas Pertahanan Republik Indonesia

Corresponding Author: Nico Daniel Pasaribu nicodaniel.pasaribu@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

The dynamics of the strategic environment in South Pacific Region involving major powers in the world such as USA, Australia, China, Japan, India, New Zealand, make the world's eyes on the Region. The purpose of this study is to further explain why the South Pacific region is considered a new global geopolitical battleground. This research was developed using the literature study method. The results of the analysis show that this region has a strategic geographic location and has abundant natural resources that make major countries in the world compete to strengthen their influence and dominance in the region in order to achieve their national interests thus making the South Pacific region has become a new battleground in global geopolitics.

INTRODUCTION

The South Pacific region has increasingly attracted global attention in recent decades. The geopolitical dynamics in this region have undergone significant changes, driven by various factors, including economic, security, and strategic interests of major powers. A comprehensive understanding of the geopolitical developments in the South Pacific is crucial for analyzing the region's position and role in the current global context. Historically, the South Pacific has been a contested region by various major powers. In the 19th century, the region was dominated by the influence of the British and French empires, which established colonies and dependencies. Subsequently, at the beginning of the 20th century, Japan emerged as a new power seeking to expand its influence in the region, which later triggered the Pacific War during World War II.

After World War II, geopolitical dynamics in the South Pacific changed again. The Cold War between the Western Bloc led by the United States and the Eastern Bloc led by the Soviet Union also affected the power map in the region. Some countries in the South Pacific, such as Australia and New Zealand, are under the influence of the United States, while the Melanesian Islands tend to be closer to the Soviet Union.

Entering the 21st century, the South Pacific is once again in the spotlight of the world. Some of the factors that drive this are:

- **China's economic and geopolitical growth:** As one of the world's largest economic and military powers, China has increased its activities and investments in the South Pacific, which is considered a strategic region to expand its influence.
- **Great power competition:** In addition to China, other major countries, such as the United States, Japan, and India, are also seeking to strengthen their influence in the region, both through bilateral and multilateral cooperation.
- **Regional security issues:** The South Pacific region is also faced with a variety of security challenges, such as climate change, natural disasters, and the threat of terrorism and transnational crime.
- **Development of Natural Resources:** The existence of natural resources, such as oil, gas, and minerals, in the region is also one of the factors driving geopolitical competition in the South Pacific.

Geopolitical developments in the South Pacific have significant implications, both for countries in the region and at the global level. This region is an arena for competition for influence between major powers, which can cause tension and potential conflict. On the other hand, geopolitical dynamics in the South Pacific also open up opportunities for regional and international cooperation, especially in addressing shared challenges, such as climate change, natural disasters, and transnational crime. Countries in the region need to demonstrate strong leadership and coordination to maintain regional stability and security.

In the context of increasingly dynamic global power competition, the South Pacific region has become increasingly strategically significant. The region not only has a unique geographical location, but also contains abundant natural resources and plays an important role in the balance of power among international actors. Geographically, the South Pacific region is the heart of global shipping and trade flows. The region is a vital link between the Americas, Europe, and Asia, and is an important corridor for international maritime traffic. With this strategic position, this region has become a competitive arena for a number of major powers, especially the United States, China, and other regional countries, in an effort to expand their influence and secure their respective national interests.

In terms of natural resources, the South Pacific region is rich in biodiversity, minerals, and very valuable energy reserves. The potential for fisheries, mining, and energy exploration that has not been fully explored in this region has attracted the interest of many parties, thus triggering territorial disputes and competition for access and management rights over existing natural resources. In addition, this region also has geostrategic significance that cannot be ignored. As a region directly adjacent to the Pacific Ocean, this region is a place of great power competition in building maritime dominance, securing sea lanes, and expanding regional and global influence. Dominance of the South Pacific region can provide significant advantages to a power that is able to position itself as a hegemon in the region.

In the context of today's global power competition, the South Pacific region is increasingly showing its strategic significance. Various foreign policy initiatives and policies taken by major powers, such as the United States' "Indo-Pacific" strategy, China's "Maritime Silk Road," and other regional diplomacy and cooperation efforts, show that the region has become an important arena for competition for influence and interests among global powers.

In the face of these dynamics, countries in the South Pacific region are required to implement prudent foreign policies, be able to maintain balance, and strengthen regional cooperation to maintain sovereignty and optimize their regional potential.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Strategic Environment

The strategic environment is a condition, factor, or force that is outside the organization or country, but can affect the achievement of the strategic goals of the organization or country, (David, 2017). Furthermore, according to the Government of Indonesia in Government Regulation Number 41 of 2010 concerning Regional Apparatus Organizations, the strategic environment is defined as "conditions, situations, and developments that occur inside and outside the local government that affect the implementation of local government". Thus, it can be concluded that the strategic environment can be understood as conditions, factors, or forces outside the organization or country that can affect the achievement of their strategic goals.

Geopolitics

Geopolitics is the study of the relationship between geographical factors (such as location, size, climate, natural resources, and population) and the politics, strategies, and policies of a country or organization (Flint, 2017). Furthermore, according to Subedy (2015), geopolitics can be defined as the study of the influence of geographical, economic, demographic, and natural resource factors on the political policies and strategies of a country or political entity. It can be concluded that geopolitics is the study of the relationship between geographical factors and the politics, strategy, and policies of a country or organization. Geopolitics studies how geographical factors can influence an entity's political policies and actions.

METHODOLOGY

This article is compiled based on the literature study method by collecting data through searching for appropriate keywords in search engines, books, journals, or other scientific sources, which are then analyzed and the results are outlined in writing, Zed in (Ningsih et al., 2022). The data used in this writing is secondary data, where secondary data is generally in the form of evidence, records, or historical reports that have been compiled in archives/documentary data, both published and unpublished, Alawiyah in (Rehardiningtyas et al., 2022).

RESEARCH RESULT

Strategic Importance of Major Countries in the South Pacific Region The Role and Ambition of the United States

In dynamic global developments, the role and ambition of the United States in the South Pacific has become a focus that is increasingly attracting international attention. As one of the world's largest economic and military powers, the United States has demonstrated significant strategic importance in the region, which has far-reaching geopolitical and geostrategic implications. Historically, the United States involvement in the South Pacific can be traced back to the 19th century, when the country began to establish diplomatic and economic relations with several countries in the region.

However, the U.S. role and ambitions in the South Pacific strengthened in the second half of the 20th century, especially as global competition between the U.S.-led Western bloc and the Soviet-led Communist bloc intensified during the Cold War. In this context, the United States views the South Pacific as a strategically important region, both in terms of economy, politics, and security. Economically, the region offers abundant natural resources, promising investment opportunities, and a potential market for U.S. products. Politically, US influence in the region is considered important to strengthen the US position on the global stage, especially in an effort to contain China's growing influence.

Geopolitically, the South Pacific is a region that has a strategic position for the United States. The region serves as a bridge between the United States and Asia, and is part of the outermost defense circle of the United States in the Pacific. In addition, several countries in the South Pacific, such as Australia and New Zealand, are important allies for the United States in maintaining regional

stability and security. The South Pacific also has economic significance for the United States. The region is a potential market for American products, as well as rich natural resources, such as minerals, energy, and fisheries. In addition, several countries in the South Pacific are also important trading partners for the United States, especially in the field of trade and investment.

In terms of security, the South Pacific is a major concern for the United States. The region is considered vulnerable to various security threats, such as terrorism, transnational crime, and regional conflicts. The United States has an interest in maintaining stability and security in the South Pacific, in order to protect its national interests and maintain its influence in the region. The United States strategic interests in the South Pacific have complex implications, both for regional and global dynamics. On the one hand, the presence of the United States in the region can maintain regional stability and security. However, on the other hand, it could also trigger geopolitical rivalry with other powers, such as China, which also has interests in the South Pacific. In addition, the United States' efforts to maintain its dominance in the South Pacific also face several challenges, such as resistance from several countries in the region, as well as changes in increasingly complex global geopolitical dynamics. Therefore, the United States must implement a more comprehensive and adaptive strategy to safeguard its interests in the South Pacific.

The South Pacific is a region of significant strategic importance to the United States, both in terms of geopolitics, economy, and security. The United States' presence in the region is not only aimed at maintaining regional stability and security, but also to maintain its influence in the midst of competition with other powers. However, these efforts also face several challenges that must be faced by the United States with a more comprehensive and adaptive strategy.

Chinese Influence and Expansion

The South Pacific region has become an area of increasing concern and strategic importance for China in recent decades. As one of the major countries that continues to develop, China views this region as an important part of its circle of interests, both in terms of economy, politics, and security. This paper will examine the various aspects that make the South Pacific so important to China, as well as its implications for regional and international dynamics. Economically, the South Pacific has abundant natural resources and growing economic potential. This region is rich in mineral, energy, and fishery resources that are of concern to China. In addition, countries in the region are also potential markets for Chinese products. Therefore, China seeks to expand its influence in the region through investment, trade, and economic cooperation.

One tangible form of China's economic interests in the South Pacific is the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) project launched by the Chinese government. Through the BRI, China strives to develop infrastructure and trade connectivity in the region, thereby strengthening regional economic integration and enhancing China's position as a major economic partner. In addition, China is also actively providing loans and development assistance to countries in the region, which is believed to expand its influence politically and economically. In addition to economic interests, China also has political and security interests in the South Pacific. The region is considered strategic because it is directly adjacent to China and is close to international shipping lanes that are vital for global trade. By controlling or influencing the region, China hopes to improve security and stability in its region, as well as reduce the influence of other countries, especially the United States, which are considered major competitors.

One of the issues that China is focusing on in the South Pacific is territorial disputes in the South China Sea. China has overlapping territorial claims with several other countries in the region, such as the Philippines, Vietnam, and Malaysia. China seeks to strengthen its position in the South China Sea through infrastructure and military development, as well as active diplomacy. This is believed to be China's effort to maintain its security and influence in this strategic region. In addition, China is also striving to improve relations and cooperation with countries in the South Pacific, especially in the fields of defense and security. China hopes to expand its network of allies and strengthen its position in the region, so as to balance the influence of the United States and its allies. China's strategic interests in the South Pacific have raised various implications and challenges for the region. On the one hand, China's presence has provided economic opportunities for countries in the region, but on the other hand, it has also sparked concerns about China's dominance and potential regional conflicts.

Some countries in the South Pacific, such as Australia, New Zealand, and Japan, are worried about China's growing influence in the region, which could threaten their interests and security. This has prompted them to strengthen regional cooperation and increase U.S. involvement in the region as a balancing act. In addition, territorial disputes in the South China Sea also have the potential to trigger an escalation of tensions and conflicts in the region. China's actions, which some countries consider aggressive, have sparked concerns about regional stability and security. This requires effective diplomacy and conflict management efforts to avoid conflicts that can have a wide impact on the region.

The South Pacific is an increasingly important region for China's strategic interests, both in terms of economy, politics, and security. China seeks to expand its influence in the region through various efforts, such as investment, infrastructure development, diplomacy, and military activities. This has posed implications and challenges for countries in the region, which seek to balance China's influence and maintain regional stability. Geopolitical dynamics in the South Pacific will continue to be an important issue in international relations in the future.

Involvement of Other Actors: Japan, India, Australia, New Zealand

The South Pacific region has always been a complex and dynamic geopolitical region, where not only coastal states have interests, but also other actors outside the region are involved and play a significant role. In this context, countries such as Japan, India, Australia, and New Zealand have shown increasing involvement in the region, both in economic, security, and diplomatic aspects. Japan, as one of the world's largest economic powers, has long had a strategic interest in the South Pacific. The Land of the Rising Sun views the region as a vital route for trade and energy, as well as as part of efforts to expand its influence in the Asia-Pacific. Japan has established economic and security partnerships with several countries in the region, such as Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands, in order to enhance maritime security and protect maritime trade routes that are important to the Japanese economy.

On the other hand, India is also increasingly increasing its involvement in the South Pacific as part of a broader "Indo-Pacific" strategy. As a country of geostrategic importance in the Indian Ocean, India sees the South Pacific region as an extension of its sphere of influence. This is reflected in various initiatives carried out by India, such as developing partnerships with Pacific countries, increasing defense cooperation, and efforts to strengthen regional connectivity.

Australia, as a neighboring country directly bordering the South Pacific region, has vital interests in this region. As a developed country with strong military and economic capabilities, Australia has long played an important role in maintaining regional stability and security. Australia is also active in supporting the development and prosperity of Pacific countries, and seeks to strengthen strategic partnerships with countries in the region.

Meanwhile, New Zealand, as an island nation geographically close to the South Pacific, has also shown significant involvement in the region. New Zealand has long established close relations with Pacific countries, both in the fields of economy, culture, and development cooperation. In addition, New Zealand also plays an important role in maintaining regional peace and stability, including through involvement in UN peacekeeping missions in the region.

The involvement of other actors in the South Pacific, such as Japan, India, Australia, and New Zealand, reflects the complexity and geopolitical dynamics of the region. Each country has different interests and strategies, but all seek to expand their influence and strengthen their position in this increasingly strategic region. Competition and cooperation between actors in the South Pacific will continue, with significant implications for regional stability and development in the future.

Key Issues in Geopolitical Competition Territorial Disputes and Sovereignty Claims

The South Pacific region is one of the regions that has been in the spotlight in territorial disputes and sovereignty claims at the global level. The complexity of the problems surrounding this region makes it an arena for the fight of interests between major and regional countries. The disputes that occurred were not only related to border issues and control over small islands, but also involved claims to sovereign rights to the natural resources contained in them. Geopolitically, the South Pacific is a strategic region with abundant natural resource potential, especially in the fields of fisheries and hydrocarbons. This area is also the center of international trade traffic movements. This is what makes countries around the region, as well as major countries such as the United States, China, and Russia, seek to expand their influence and claim sovereignty over the region.

One of the main issues that is the source of the dispute is the claim to ownership of small islands among the bordering countries, such as China, Taiwan, the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei, and Indonesia. In addition, there are also disputes related to maritime boundaries and natural resource management rights in the South China Sea, Sulu Sea, and Sulawesi Sea. Territorial disputes and sovereignty claims in the South Pacific have had significant impacts, both in terms of politics, economy, and regional security. Tensions between related countries can trigger an escalation of conflicts that have the potential to disrupt stability and security in the region. It can also have an impact on economic activities, such as sea trade routes, natural resource exploration, and fishery activities.

In addition, this dispute can also trigger intervention from major powers, which seek to expand their influence and interests in the region. This can lead to increasingly complex geopolitical competition and potentially trigger wider conflicts. In response to the issue of territorial disputes and sovereignty claims in the South Pacific, various efforts have been made to resolve them, both bilaterally, regionally, and multilaterally. These efforts include:

- a. **Bilateral negotiations:** States involved in disputes conduct direct negotiations to find solutions to border issues and sovereignty claims.
- b. **Regional mechanisms:** Regional forums, such as ASEAN and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Council, are set up to facilitate dialogue and negotiations between countries.
- c. **Settlement through international judicial bodies:** Some disputes have been brought to the International Court of Justice or the International Court of Arbitration to obtain a binding legal decision.
- d. **Multilateral mediation and negotiation efforts:** International organizations, such as the United Nations (UN), act as mediators and facilitators in the negotiation process between the parties to the dispute.

However, these efforts to resolve the issue still face challenges, both related to differences in national interests, political tensions, and the complexity of the problem itself. Therefore, it takes a commitment and a comprehensive approach from all parties to achieve a fair and sustainable solution. Territorial disputes and sovereignty claims in the South Pacific are complex issues that continue to be of concern at the regional and global levels. Various efforts have been made to solve this problem, but there are still challenges that must be faced. Strong cooperation and commitment from all parties involved are needed to reach a just and acceptable solution, so as to create stability and security in the South Pacific region.

Economic Competition and Access to Resources

The South Pacific region is one of the regions rich in natural resources, both on land and in waters. The region attracts global attention because of its economic potential, especially in terms of mining, fisheries, and tourism. However, the uncontrolled exploitation of natural resources and the increasingly fierce economic competition among countries in the region have raised various issues that need serious attention. One of the main issues facing the South Pacific is economic competition and access to natural resources. Several countries in the region, such as Australia, New Zealand, and several other small island nations, compete with each other for access and control over the natural resources found in this region. This competition does not only occur in the mining and fisheries sectors, but also in terms of tourism.

For example, there is a dispute between Australia and Fiji related to fisheries management in the Coral Sea. These two countries compete for management rights and access to fish stocks in the region. This raises diplomatic tensions and potential conflicts between the two countries (Stratfor, 2018). In addition, some small countries in the South Pacific also face challenges in maintaining their sovereignty over natural resources. Countries such as Kiribati, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu, which have large maritime areas, often have to deal with pressure from large countries that want to exploit the natural resources in their regions (Taufa, 2019).

Economic competition and access to natural resources in the South Pacific have resulted in various impacts, both economically, socially, and environmentally. Economically, this competition has prompted some countries to take protectionist measures, such as imposing tariffs and import quotas, to protect their domestic industries. This can hinder the flow of trade and investment in this region (Nair, 2020). In addition, the overexploitation of natural resources has also caused environmental damage, such as declining fish stocks, degradation of coral reefs, and marine pollution. This can threaten the sustainability of the livelihoods of local communities that depend on these natural resources (UNEP, 2016).

From the social side, economic competition and access to natural resources can also trigger conflicts and tensions among countries in the region. This could hamper regional cooperation efforts and disrupt political stability in the South Pacific. To address the issue of economic competition and access to natural resources in the South Pacific, closer regional cooperation efforts are needed among countries in the region. Some of the steps that can be taken include:

- a. The development of joint policies and regulations related to the sustainable management of natural resources.
- b. Increased coordination and exchange of information among countries in the region to avoid conflicts and facilitate equitable access to natural resources.
- c. Establishment of an effective dispute resolution mechanism to resolve disputes related to access and management of natural resources.
- d. Economic diversification and development of non-extractive sectors, such as sustainable tourism, to reduce dependence on the exploitation of natural resources.
- e. Increased investment in research and development of green technologies to improve the efficiency of natural resource utilization and minimize environmental impacts.

Economic competition and access to natural resources in the South Pacific is a complex issue that requires serious attention from all stakeholders in the region. Closer regional cooperation efforts, accompanied by the development of appropriate policies and regulations, are urgently needed to manage natural resources sustainably and avoid conflicts that could hinder economic development in the region.

Maritime Security and Strategic Shipping Lane Control

One of the main challenges in maintaining maritime security in the South Pacific is non-traditional security threats, such as piracy, drug smuggling, and illegal fishing. These illegal activities not only disrupt the stability of the region, but also harm the economies of countries in the region. In addition, potential territorial conflicts, such as claims to islands and exclusive economic zones, are also crucial issues that need to be managed properly to prevent escalation of tensions (Thamrin, 2018).

In addition to security challenges, another issue of major concern is control over strategic shipping lanes in the South Pacific. The region is a very important international trade route, with a very high volume of ship traffic. Several straits and seas that are the main routes, such as the Strait of Malacca, the South China Sea, and the Timor Sea, are critical points that need to be controlled in order to maintain security and smooth global trade flows (Kaplan, 2019).

In response to these challenges, countries in the South Pacific, both individually and through regional cooperation, have made various efforts to enhance maritime security. This includes strengthening surveillance and law enforcement capacities at sea, increasing intelligence cooperation and information exchange, and developing early warning systems and rapid response to security threats (Bateman, 2016).

In addition, regional countries have also developed various multilateral mechanisms, such as the Regional Security Forum (ARF) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), to facilitate dialogue and coordination in addressing maritime security issues. This cooperation not only involves countries in the region, but also strategic partners outside the region, such as the United States, Japan, and Australia (Bateman, 2016).

Maritime security issues and control of strategic shipping lanes in the South Pacific are complex challenges that require a comprehensive approach and close cooperation among countries in the region. Non-traditional security threats, potential territorial conflicts, and regional power competition have prompted efforts to increase surveillance and law enforcement capacity at sea, as well as the development of multilateral cooperation mechanisms. Success in managing these issues will greatly determine the stability and development prospects in the South Pacific in the future.

Ideological Influence and Soft Power Competition

One of the main issues that color the dynamics of the South Pacific region is the struggle for ideological influence between major countries, especially the United States and China. These two countries compete with each other to promote their respective ideologies and political systems in the region. The United States, as a country that has long had dominance in the Pacific, seeks to maintain its influence through the promotion of liberal democracy and Western values. Through various aid programs, economic cooperation, and diplomacy, the United States seeks to strengthen ties with countries in the region and keep them within their circle of influence (Firth, 2013).

On the other hand, China is also increasingly actively promoting its ideology and market-building ideology and model. China leverages soft power approaches, such as infrastructure investment, development assistance, and cultural diplomacy, to expand its influence in the South Pacific (Kaplan, 2019). This is motivated by China's desire to build regional power and offset the dominance of the United States in the region.

In addition to ideological competition, the South Pacific region is also an arena for soft power competition between various global and regional powers. Countries such as the United States, China, Japan, Australia, and New Zealand, each seek to increase their influence in the region through various soft power approaches. The United States, for example, relies on the power of popular culture, education, and public diplomacy to attract the sympathy of people in the South Pacific. Meanwhile, China is taking advantage of cultural diplomacy, economic investment, and development assistance to strengthen its positive image in the region (Kaplan, 2019). Japan is also actively involved in soft power competitions in the South Pacific. Through development assistance programs,

cultural diplomacy, and regional cooperation, Japan seeks to promote a positive image and increase its influence in the region (Obe, 2018). Meanwhile, Australia and New Zealand, as neighboring countries in the South Pacific region, are also seeking to maintain and expand their influence in the region through various soft power initiatives, such as development cooperation, cultural exchanges, and regional diplomacy (Firth, 2013).

Ideological and soft power competition in the South Pacific has significant impacts and implications for countries in the region. On the one hand, this competition has encouraged increased investment, development assistance, and regional cooperation that can benefit South Pacific countries. However, on the other hand, this competition also has the potential to cause tension and polarization among countries in the region, as well as trigger suspicion and conflicts of interest.

In addition, soft power competition in the South Pacific can also have an impact on regional stability and regional security. Efforts to expand influence and promote certain ideologies can cause anxiety and discomfort among countries in the region, as well as trigger latent conflicts that already exist (Kaplan, 2019). Therefore, a more comprehensive and collaborative approach is needed among countries in the South Pacific to manage the ideological and soft power competition that occurs. This can be done through strengthening regional cooperation, constructive diplomacy, and the development of common norms that can maintain stability and peace in the region.

The issue of ideological influence and soft power competition in the South Pacific is a complex and dynamic phenomenon. The competition between the United States and China, as well as the involvement of other powers in the region, has created an arena of competition that has implications for regional stability and security. Countries in the South Pacific need to manage this competition wisely, by prioritizing cooperation, dialogue and the development of common norms that can maintain peace and prosperity in the region.

Implications of Geopolitical Dynamics for the South Pacific Region

Located between Asia, Australia, and the Americas, the South Pacific has a very strategic geographical position. The region is a vital international shipping and aviation route, connecting important economic regions of the world. In addition, this region is also rich in natural resources, such as minerals, energy, and fisheries, which are targeted by major countries.

In the context of global geopolitics, the South Pacific has become an arena of competition between several major powers, such as the United States, China, Japan, and Australia. Each country has different interests and strategies in the region. The United States, as the dominant power in the Pacific, seeks to maintain its influence in the region. They consider the South Pacific to be part of their strategic priority "Indo-Pacific." The United States wants to ensure that the region remains stable and open to trade and investment. Meanwhile, China is increasingly active in building economic and political relations with countries in the South Pacific. They see the region as part of their "Belt and Road" initiative, which aims to improve global connectivity and expand China's influence. Japan,

as a developed country in the Asia-Pacific region, also has strategic interests in the South Pacific. They seek to strengthen partnerships with countries in the region, both in the fields of economy, security, and regional cooperation. Australia, as a direct neighbor to the South Pacific, also plays an important role. Canberra seeks to maintain stability and security in the region, as well as increase cooperation with small island states in the region.

The competition of geopolitical interests in the South Pacific has various implications that must be considered. First, rising tensions and rivalries between major powers could trigger an escalation of conflicts and regional instability. This could threaten security and peace in the region. Second, competition for influence in the South Pacific can also have an impact on small countries in the region. They could be caught in a dilemma between defending sovereignty or taking advantage of cooperation with one of the great powers. This can lead to dependency and reduce their ability to self-determination. Third, the scramble for natural resources and maritime wealth in the South Pacific can also trigger disputes and conflicts. Overlapping claims to sea areas, islands, and exclusive economic zones could be a source of potential conflict in the future. Fourth, geopolitical competition in the South Pacific can also have an impact on global issues, such as climate change, environmental conservation, and sustainable development.

Differences in interests and priorities between major powers can hamper collective efforts to address these global challenges. Facing geopolitical challenges in the South Pacific, the role of regional diplomacy and cooperation is becoming increasingly important. Countries in the region need to strengthen coordination and solidarity to maintain sovereignty, maintain stability, and promote inclusive development. In addition, engagement and cooperation with regional organizations, such as the Pacific Islands Forum, can help strengthen the bargaining position and voice of small states in the South Pacific. Together, they can define regional agendas and priorities, as well as build collective strategies to confront geopolitical challenges.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The South Pacific region has become a new battleground in global geopolitics. Its strategic position, wealth of natural resources, and vital shipping lanes make this region a target for various major world powers. Competition of interests among countries such as the United States, China, Japan, and Australia could trigger tensions, instability, and potential conflicts in the region.

To face these geopolitical challenges, countries in the South Pacific need to strengthen regional cooperation, solidarity, and diplomacy. The involvement of regional organizations and inclusive development efforts can help maintain stability, security, and prosperity in the region. Thus, the South Pacific can become a stable, secure, and prosperous region, not just an arena of global geopolitical competition.

ADVANCED RESEARCH

Still conducting further research to find out more about The South Pacific and what makes this place contested by big countries.

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