

Indonesia's Role On The Regional Security Of The South Pacific

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ABSTRACT

This study examines Indonesia's position and role in maintaining regional security in the Indo-Pacific region, with a particular focus on the South Pacific region. Using the theoretical approach of Neoclassical Realism, this study analyzes Indonesia's foreign policy from 2014 to 2021, drawing on a review of official documents, journals, reports, books, and in-depth interviews with relevant informants. The results show that Indonesia plays a strategic role as a liaison in a region filled with geopolitical tensions due to the rise of major powers such as China and US policies. Indonesia seeks to expand its influence through bilateral and multilateral cooperation, including regional forums such as PIF and ASEAN, to strengthen national positions and ensure the stability of maritime security, natural resource management, and sustainable development. In addition, cooperation with Pacific countries and friendly countries such as Australia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, and Palau is part of Indonesia's strategy in affirming national interests amid the region's challenging geopolitical dynamics. This study provides an important understanding of how Indonesia navigates its strategic position in the complex and rapidly evolving Indo-Pacific region.

Keywords: Cooperation, Regional Security, South Pacific, Regional Geopolitics

1. INTRODUCTION

The Indo-Pacific region in contemporary times, has been considered a region full of new politics that includes global powers (Chacko & Willis, 2018; Tertia & Perwita, 2018). Based on recent developments, China's rise in the region, as well as the United States' foreign policy to rebalance China in the Indo-Pacific, have resulted in a volatile region. In the Pacific Ocean, China's claim to the South China Sea has resulted in a turbulent region, which has led to tensions between China and Southeast Asian countries (Putra, 2019). Furthermore, U.S. involvement in the sea they claim to be International Waters, has resulted in minor tensions between the coast guard of the Philippines, the U.S., Vietnam and China. The tensions that have emerged since a decade ago are fundamentally different from the past, where tensions at sea are categorized as rare phenomena (Regilme, 2018; Robertua & Sinaga, 2018; Storey, 2014). Another element of geopolitics in the Indo-Pacific region focuses on the dynamics that occur in the Indian Ocean. Although not as clear as the South China Sea claims, it is clear that regional power tensions have emerged since the last decade (Tertia & Perwita, 2018). China's ambitious Belt Road Initiative (BRI) has resulted in a unique set of foreign policies from coastal countries in the Indian Ocean.

Therefore, many countries and organizations include issues related to the Indo-Pacific region as part of their long-term vision. ASEAN recently finalized the ASEAN Indo-Pacific Outlook in 2021, and countries such as Indonesia, have also based their grand strategy to include the Indo-Pacific region. The main consideration is directly related to the security dynamics of the Indo-Pacific region. By making this issue a long-term vision, Indonesia can navigate its strategic position in the complex and rapidly developing Indo-Pacific region.

The first term of office of Joko Widodo (Jokowi) formed the grand strategy of the 'World Maritime Axis' (Syailendra, 2017). A policy that positions Indonesia as a strategic hub that connects two large oceans known as the Indian and Pacific Oceans (Kuncoro et al., 2020). Indonesia has shown in recent years that the regional focus area for Indonesia has expanded its scope, not only focusing on Southeast Asia, but also including the Indo-Pacific region. Especially in the South Pacific, Indonesia's position is quite unique. Indonesia's national interests are similar to its position in ASEAN since two decades ago. Indonesia is the de facto leader of ASEAN, based on previous research and relevant articles (Putra, 2015; Sambhi, 2015). Indonesia is leading efforts in establishing the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights, and the ASEAN Political Security Community. Furthermore, Indonesia is active in shaping regional norms

that are important to Indonesia, including the Friendship and Cooperation Agreement, and *the recently finalized* ASEAN Indo-Pacific Outlook.

This research will focus on a specific angle of Indo-Pacific regional politics. The focus will be on the South Pacific region, which has been relatively stable lately. Indonesia's position in the region will be assessed to determine why Indonesia is implementing a particular position with the South Pacific. Geopolitics in the South Pacific is considered stable compared to other regions. The *littoral states* of the South Pacific consist of 16 countries; Australia, Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu. The majority of countries in the South Pacific are island countries, and have a tendency to be less vocal in global politics. Two sizable countries in the region include Australia and New Zealand. In addition to issues related to terrorism and immigration, the two countries are also arguably stable.

In recent years, Indonesia has deliberately shown efforts to be closer to the South Pacific. Indonesia is advancing efforts to increase their influence, which has given rise to pro and con opinions (Chacko & Willis, 2018; Saragih, Siregar, & Putera, 2018). Indonesia's long conflict in West Papua has not shown resolution, which is certainly a major setback for Indonesia, which has been working hard to improve its human rights record. Indonesia's increased connectivity makes it a complicated issue, and raises questions about Indonesia's national interests in the South Pacific. The relationship thus goes beyond the simple assumption of 'Melanesian relations', as it seems that Indonesia's foreign policy is geared towards achieving a special status in the regional affairs of Indonesia and the South Pacific.

In general, Indonesia's activity in the South Pacific region has recently been quite intensive. In 2019, Indonesia facilitated the *Indonesia-South Pacific Forum* (ISPF) which included countries such as Australia, New Zealand, Micronesia, Fiji, New Caledonia, Marshall Islands, Kiribati, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Tonga, and Tuvalu. Indonesia's involvement is known to be active in the region, as it is geographically close to the South Pacific, in addition to the fact that Indonesia consists of about 10-11 million people of the Melanesian race spread across the provinces of Papua, West Papua, Maluku, North Maluku, and East Nusa Tenggara. Indonesia is expected to advance bilateral relations with the South Pacific, including economic and business relations.

Indonesia, carry out policies that are in accordance with its national interests. Therefore, there has not been any research that builds on the research focus related to the position and importance of Indonesia's foreign policy in the new architecture of South Pacific regional politics and security. Therefore, the author will focus the research on how Indonesia's interests are in regional security in the South Pacific region.

In getting *the novelty* and *research gap* on the big theme of Indonesia's interests in the South Pacific, this study will provide a conclusion to several existing studies and articles first, related to Indonesia's interests in regional security in the South Pacific region mentioned earlier. In the explanation of Indonesia's interests in the South Pacific, there are several articles that can be referenced and related to Indonesia's contemporary role in the South Pacific.

Therefore, based on the background that has been described, this study will formulate the problem, namely what is Indonesia's interest in the South Pacific region?

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The Indo-Pacific region in contemporary times, has been considered a region full of new politics that includes global powers (Chacko & Willis, 2018; Tertia & Perwita, 2018). Based on this development, the researcher uses the theory of Neoclassical Realism as a theory of international relations that is able to analyze the process of foreign policy formulation with consideration of internal and external factors. In the discussion, we will focus on the relevance of the theory of neoholastic realism, as an explanation of Indonesia's position in establishing cooperation with countries in the South Pacific. Furthermore, the second part will discuss the concept of regional security as a concept in international relations that can be used to analyze how a country's strategic cooperation within the scope of the region to improve regional security stability.

2.1. Realism Neoclassic

Neoclassical realism provides an opportunity to understand the foreign policy of state actors based on multilevel factors. The first level is the system level, and the second level is the domestic level. Both levels are considered to have a balanced contribution to the foreign policy formulation of state actors, and can provide an understanding of why state actors tend to choose a foreign policy over other alternative policies (Ripsman, Taliaferro, & Lobell, 2016).

As an independent variable proposed in this study, what will be seen is the relative position of the country in the international system. In this case, the research will look at Indonesia's position in the international political arena in the South Pacific. Of course, in measuring this position, it will consider several factors, namely GDP, military strength, the size of the country's territorial area, to the perceptions of countries in the South Pacific towards Indonesia. This independent variable will look at the system factors in the theory of neoclassical realism, and look at the external dynamics that contribute to the implementation of Indonesia's foreign policy in the South Pacific.

This neoclassical realism also considers the existence of intervention variables, namely the internal political dynamics of the state. In this intervention variable, academics who have written a lot about neoclassical realism still have different opinions on what the ideal intervention variable is like. As described by Walt (2002), the use of these intervention variables is still in *an ad hoc* order, where it all depends on the needs of the questions asked in the research. This is the reason why, for example, Schweller in his article *A Neoclassical Realist Theory of Underbalancing* (2004) uses 4 different intervention variables from previous researchers, namely; 1) Elite Consensus: individuals who have influence on the foreign policy formulation of state actors, namely presidents, ministries, executive advisors, etc., 2) Government Vulnerability: Focus on the relationship between the leader and the leader, which will have an impact on the on foreign policy, 3) Social Cohesion: Questioning whether public actors view decision-makers in a country as legitimate or not, and 4) Elite Cohesion: Identification of fragmentation in government, which will affect the policies taken.

For this study, neoclassical realism will specifically use the intervention variables described in the paper by Ripsman, Taliaferro, and Lobell (2016) entitled *Neoclassical Realist Theory of International Politics*. The intervention variables they apply are more general, and can be applied in understanding the external and internal factors in the foreign policy formulation of state actors. The intervention variables include; 1) *Leader Images*: The beliefs of each foreign policy maker of a country, 2) *Strategic Culture*: Expectations of the community, organizations, 3) *Domestic Institutions*: The structure of the state and domestic political institutions, and 4) *State-Society Relations*: The interaction between central institutions and society.

2.2. Regional Security Complex

Barry Buzan, who explained that the security of a country and a region cannot be understood without understanding the pattern of interdependence of security among countries in the region (Barry Buzan, 2003). In understanding this regional security, Buzan offers a concept that he calls the phenomenon of *security complex* (Barry Buzan, 2003). The definition of *security complex* is a group of countries that are closely related to each other so that the security of a country cannot be separated from each other.

The concept of the Regional Security Complex is interpreted as a form of interpretation of the national security policy of one country against another. This will later show who actually dominates security interactions, even interpreted as an interpretation of who is actually interconnected in terms of establishing safe interactions (Setiawan, 2017). This concept sees that the condition of regional security becomes increasingly complex because threats or pressures can spread easily, especially at certain distances so that state security will depend on each other in order to realize regional security (Buzan, 1983).

Internal variables that affect the concept of regional security are having several indicators such as the geographical location of a country by considering how much the geographical location affects the mutual security arrangements between countries. Then, the interaction between countries in a region, and the similarities of the systems seen are from the various similarities of cultural, economic, social and political systems in countries in one region. The more these countries have more complex similarities as well, of course, this will be able to foster a stronger sense of solidarity (Barry Buzan, 2003).

The external variable that affects the concept of regional security is the international situation where this indicator is intended to see the conditions of the international environment to support the formation or not of security arrangements in regional security. The next variable is international issues that are developing (Barry Buzan, 2003). For example, whether issues in the developing world today require cooperation between countries in a region related to security arrangements or not.

Therefore, in the research, the author will use the concept of regional security that has been explained by Barry Buzan that regional security represents a problem regarding the security of the state in a region that has a close relationship so that problems related to national security cannot exist without considering the security of a region. Where in the research the author will also explain how Indonesia's position in regional security in the South Pacific region is geographically adjacent to Indonesia.

Independent Variables Systemic/External Factors: Relative position Indonesia in international politics in the Pacific South	Intervention Variables Internal/Domestic Factors of the Country: Leaders' Views Strategic Culture Domestic Institutions State & Community Relations	Variable Dependencies Foreign Policy/Country Position: Position and Foreign Policy Indonesia in the South Pacific
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3. METHOD

The research method in this dissertation adopts a qualitative approach that aims to understand in depth the social context and phenomena of Indonesia's foreign policy in the South Pacific region. This approach was chosen because it is able to explain the internal and external factors that affect Indonesia's position as well as the pattern of the balance of power in the region. The object of the research is Indonesia's foreign policy in the period 2014 to 2021, with a focus on internal actors such as the President and related ministries, as well as external factors involving countries in the South Pacific, the United States, and China.

The main data source of this research consists of official documents and archives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia covering the period 2014-2021, as well as other supporting documents in the form of journals, reports, and books relevant to the theory of neoclassical realism and Indonesia's position in the South Pacific. In addition, data was obtained through in-depth interviews with informants who have roles related to Indonesia's position and relations with countries in the South Pacific region.

The data collection technique was carried out through document review and in-depth interviews. Document review was conducted to collect literature and information relevant to the discourse that was the focus of the research. In-depth interviews are designed with specific guidelines containing questions regarding the main tasks and roles of the informant, so that it is expected to produce rich qualitative data to support the research analysis.

After the data is collected, the data processing and analysis stage is carried out systematically by filtering the relevant information. Data processing begins with literature review first, followed by processing interview data, and then compiling reports as the initial framework for writing. Data analysis was carried out descriptively using neoclassical realism theory to understand the influence of internal and external factors and the pattern of power balance in the South Pacific on Indonesia's foreign policy.

This research is planned to last for two years, from February 2022 to February 2024, to ensure comprehensive and in-depth data collection and analysis. Thus, the method used is able to provide a comprehensive picture of the factors behind Indonesia's position and foreign policy in the South Pacific region.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Indonesia's Cooperation in the South Pacific Region

Indonesia, as the largest developing country in Southeast Asia, plays an important role as a strategic partner that leverages its experience in sustainable natural resource management, including marine management, fisheries, and agriculture. In addition, this cooperation also covers the fields of education, training, engineering, technology, culture, as well as aspects of diplomacy and regional security. More specifically, Indonesia is actively building cooperative relations through various initiatives, both bilateral and multilateral, that aim to strengthen the capacity of South Pacific countries in managing natural resources, facing climate change challenges, and improving people's welfare. Indonesia also shares experience in disaster mitigation and offers technical assistance, such as educational scholarships and human resource capacity training. Here are some forms of Indonesian cooperation in the South Pacific region.

4.1.1 South-South Cooperation

South-South Cooperation (SSC) refers to a form of collaboration between developing countries that aims to support each other in overcoming development challenges and increasing socio-economic capacity, without relying on developed countries or international institutions. The concept emphasizes the principles of solidarity, equality, and mutualism among countries with similar levels of development, and seeks to build a more equitable and sustainable partnership within the international framework. The SSC not only involves technical exchanges and economic assistance, but also includes diplomatic, technological, educational, and cultural aspects.

One of the main areas of Indonesia's cooperation with South Pacific countries within the framework of the SSC is the management of natural resources. As an archipelagic country rich in natural resources, Indonesia has experience in managing marine, agricultural, and fishery resources in a sustainable manner. South Pacific countries, which have similar natural resources, view Indonesia as a valuable partner in terms of more efficient and environmentally friendly management. Through training and knowledge exchange programs, Indonesia can share its experience in managing the fisheries, forestry, and agriculture sectors to improve economic and environmental resilience in South Pacific countries.

In addition, economic cooperation within the framework of the SSC focuses on increasing trade and investment between developing countries. Indonesia has a strategic interest in expanding its export markets in the South Pacific, while countries in the region need investment and technology to increase their production capacity.

Climate change management is another area that is the main focus of SSC Indonesia's cooperation with the South Pacific. Countries in the region are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, such as sea level rise and other natural disasters. In this regard, Indonesia shares its experience in mitigation and adaptation to climate change, especially related to coastal area management and the sustainability of marine ecosystems.

In the field of education and human development, Indonesia is also active in providing scholarships for students from South Pacific countries. The scholarship aims to increase the capacity of human resources in partner countries, particularly in areas that support economic and social development. In addition, Indonesia also offers technical training programs relevant to the needs of South Pacific countries, such as training in natural resource management, health, and disasters. These programs focus on community empowerment, which is in line with the basic principles of South-South cooperation itself.

Diplomacy and multilateral cooperation are also important aspects of Indonesia's relations with South Pacific countries. Indonesia actively encourages inclusivity and solidarity among developing countries in international forums, such as the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF).

4.1.2 South Pacific Indonesia Forum (ISPF)

The Indonesian South Pacific Forum (ISPF) is one of Indonesia's important initiatives in strengthening relations with countries in the South Pacific region. The forum focuses on various areas of strategic cooperation, including economy, security, environment, and social development. In this context, the ISPF not only serves as a diplomatic platform, but also as a bridge to build stronger partnerships between Indonesia and South Pacific countries such as Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, and other smaller

countries. This cooperation reflects the spirit of South-South cooperation that prioritizes solidarity, equality, and collaboration between developing countries.

Indonesia's cooperation with South Pacific countries in the ISPF forum is focused on efforts to expand economic and trade ties. Indonesia, as the largest economy in Southeast Asia, has the potential to become a key partner for South Pacific countries in developing key economic sectors. Through ISPF, Indonesia can increase exports of goods and services, such as fishery products, textiles, and technology, which are urgently needed by South Pacific countries.

As part of Indonesia's cooperation with South Pacific countries within the framework of the ISPF, human resource empowerment (HR) is also an important agenda. The ISPF provides a platform for educational and training exchanges that are beneficial to both parties. Indonesia offers educational scholarships for students from South Pacific countries to study at Indonesian universities, particularly in areas relevant to regional development, such as marine science, disaster management, sustainable agriculture, and green technology.

Through the ISPF, Indonesia can collaborate with South Pacific countries in sharing experiences and technologies for climate change mitigation and natural disaster management. Indonesia, which also faces challenges related to climate change, can provide technical and financial support in the management of coastal areas and forests that are resilient to natural disasters.

Through this forum, Indonesia can play a key role in improving economic, security, and social relations with countries in the region. By prioritizing the principles of solidarity and mutual benefit, ISPF not only benefits Indonesia, but also helps South Pacific countries to face their development challenges.

4.1.3 Pacific Islands Forum (PIF)

Although Indonesia is not a full member of the PIF, its participation in PIF meetings strengthens this relationship by offering significant contributions on key issues such as climate change, natural resource management, and maritime security. Indonesia considers Pacific countries as important partners in creating regional peace and prosperity. One of the main areas that is the focus of Indonesia's cooperation with South Pacific countries is climate change. Pacific nations, which are mostly made up of small islands, face serious threats from rising sea levels and natural disasters.

Other collaborations include the fields of education, health, and capacity building. Indonesia provides scholarships for students from Pacific countries and offers training in various fields, such as agriculture, food security, and infrastructure. These programs aim to strengthen the economic competitiveness of South Pacific countries and improve the quality of life of their people. Through this cooperation, Indonesia not only enhances its diplomatic relations with Pacific countries, but also plays an active role in creating solutions to common challenges in the region.

4.1.4 Bilateral Pacific Treaty

The Bilateral Pacific Agreement is an agreement between countries in the South Pacific region and partner countries outside the region to enhance economic cooperation, trade, and sustainable development. In this context, Indonesia has built increasingly strong ties with South Pacific countries, although it is not a direct part of the deal. One of the important aspects of the Bilateral Pacific Agreement is the strengthening of trade relations between Pacific countries and partners outside the region, including Indonesia. As the country with the largest economy in Southeast Asia, Indonesia sees a great opportunity to develop trade relations with South Pacific countries through bilateral agreements. Indonesia has signed various trade agreements with several Pacific countries, especially in the fisheries, renewable energy, and agriculture sectors. Through this cooperation, Indonesia can not only expand the market for Indonesian products, but also assist Pacific countries in strengthening their economies through access to wider markets and the use of Indonesian technology and knowledge in various sectors. Overall, the Bilateral Pacific Agreement has been a platform that strengthens Indonesia's cooperation with South Pacific countries. Through various initiatives, Indonesia has not only established itself as a trusted partner in improving the region's economic well-being, but also assists Pacific countries in addressing major challenges such as climate change and food security. With this increasingly intensive cooperation, Indonesia can play a greater role in supporting sustainable development in the South Pacific region and creating a mutually beneficial relationship for both sides.

4.1.5 Maritime Cooperation Initiative

The Maritime Cooperation Initiative is a joint effort by countries in the South Pacific region to improve the management of their vast and important maritime areas. The South Pacific region, which consists of many island nations, is heavily dependent on marine natural resources for economic sustainability and security. Therefore, maritime cooperation is a key element in creating regional stability and ensuring the sustainable management of marine resources. Maritime cooperation with South Pacific countries provides an opportunity for Indonesia to share knowledge and technology related to fisheries management, protection of marine ecosystems, and prevention and countermeasures of maritime crimes, such as fish theft and illegal trade.

Indonesia's maritime cooperation with Pacific countries also includes strengthening the maritime security system. South Pacific nations face serious challenges when it comes to monitoring and protecting their vast and hard-to-reach marine areas. Indonesia, with its expertise in maritime surveillance and early detection systems, has offered technology and resources to assist Pacific nations in improving their ability to monitor and secure their waters. Through various joint exercises, strengthening of maritime patrols, and the exchange of information and intelligence, Indonesia helps Pacific countries to address maritime threats that can undermine regional stability, such as piracy, illegal trade, and the unauthorized exploitation of marine resources.

In terms of fisheries, Indonesia also has a lot of experience that can be exchanged with Pacific countries. Pacific nations, which rely heavily on the fishing industry for their economies, face a major challenge in maintaining the sustainability of fish stocks and preventing illegal fishing practices. Indonesia has been working with Pacific nations to introduce more effective fisheries management systems, including stronger monitoring and enforcement technologies. Through this collaboration, Indonesia assists Pacific countries in implementing best practices in marine resource management and ensuring that their fisheries industries remain sustainable in the future.

The Maritime Cooperation Initiative also includes strengthening resilience to natural disasters, which is especially important given that the Pacific region is often hit by natural disasters such as tsunamis, tropical storms and earthquakes. Indonesia, with experience in dealing with natural disasters, assists Pacific countries in strengthening their capacity in disaster mitigation and enhancing the resilience of coastal communities. Through this cooperation, Indonesia not only strengthens its position as a strategic partner in the Pacific region, but also plays an important role in creating a safer, more stable, and more sustainable region.

4.2 Indonesia's Foreign Policy in the Pacific Region

Foreign policy is one of the crucial elements in the development of a country because it is directly related to relations between countries and the country's position in the international arena. For Indonesia, foreign policy is not only important in facing global challenges, but also in maintaining sovereignty and strengthening national interests. One of the main principles that underlies Indonesia's foreign policy is a free and active foreign policy. During Joko Widodo's administration, Indonesia's foreign policy underwent a transformation with an emphasis on strengthening economic and trade cooperation, as well as deepening relations with regions that have great potential for Indonesia. One of the regions that is of main concern to Indonesia is the South Pacific region, which, although it has different characteristics, plays an important role in Indonesia's geopolitics and geostrategy.

Indonesia continues to strengthen cooperation with Pacific countries through various existing regional forums. Some of the important forums that serve as a forum for Indonesia's cooperation with Pacific countries are the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG), the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), and the Pacific Islands Development Forum (PIDF). Through these forums, Indonesia pursues various initiatives to strengthen diplomatic relations and expand cooperation in various sectors, such as trade, fisheries, education, and maritime security.

In addition, Indonesia also views Pacific countries as partners in human resource development. Education and training programs are the main focus in strengthening the capacity of Pacific countries. Indonesia provides various scholarship assistance for students from Pacific countries to study in Indonesia, as well as offers skills training to improve the capabilities of human resources in these

countries. This is expected to make a positive contribution to human and economic development in Pacific countries. Although Indonesia has many opportunities to strengthen cooperation with Pacific countries, challenges remain, especially related to political instability in some Pacific countries. Leadership changes that often occur in these countries can affect the continuity of the cooperation that has been established with Indonesia. Domestic political instability in Pacific countries, which is often caused by internal problems such as corruption, social discontent, and ethnic differences, is a factor that must be considered in formulating Indonesia's foreign policy.

Indonesia's regional cooperation with Australia and Pacific countries is one of the important pillars in building stability, peace, and sustainable development in the South Pacific region and beyond. While each country has unique characteristics and challenges, the collaboration affirms a shared commitment to addressing crucial issues such as climate change, natural resource management, maritime security, and human development.

In the Pacific region, countries such as Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall, Micronesia, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu face major challenges due to rising sea levels, frequent natural disasters, and limited resources and development capacity. Indonesia views the region as an important strategic partner in creating regional stability and strengthening collaborative mechanisms in the areas of resource management, climate change mitigation and adaptation, and sustainable development.

In the context of bilateral and multilayer cooperation, Indonesia and Australia are actively strengthening ties through various initiatives, including maritime cooperation, technology exchanges, human resource training, and assistance in disaster management. Australia, as one of the dominant powers in the region, plays a role in supporting the capacity building of Pacific small nations through technical assistance and sustainable development programs. On the other hand, Indonesia, which shares geographical and climate challenges with the region, offers experience in disaster mitigation, marine resource management, and the development of environmentally friendly industries.

In addition to the aspects of economic and security cooperation, other important issues are environmental diplomacy and climate change. Pacific countries such as Tuvalu, Kiribati, and Tuvalu are particularly vulnerable to sea level rise, so Indonesia pays special attention through technical support, training, and capacity building programs in mitigating the impacts of climate change. Indonesia is also taking part in regional efforts to strengthen the resilience of island ecosystems and communities in the region.

It is also important to note that Indonesia's relations with countries such as the Cook Islands, Niue, and Tokelau show a partnership approach based on mutual respect and mutual benefit, especially in the areas of education, capacity building, and cultural exchange. Indonesia offers scholarship and training programs that can improve the quality of human resources and strengthen diplomatic and economic cooperation.

No less important is the role of relations with countries such as Papua New Guinea and Palau that take center stage in the framework of maritime security and shared water management. Indonesia and Papua New Guinea, for example, actively collaborate in maritime patrols, marine resource surveillance, and countering transnational crime that threatens the sustainability of regional resources.

Meanwhile, cooperation with New Zealand and Nauru, which have significant influence in the Pacific region, has helped strengthen regional solidarity in the face of global challenges and strengthen the region's position as a stable and competitive entity. This collaboration is carried out through regional forums such as the PIF (Pacific Islands Forum), ASEAN, and various other multilateral frameworks involving various sectors.

Overall, cooperation between Indonesia, Australia, and Pacific countries shows a dynamic and strategic evolution in facing regional challenges. This synergy not only aims to address regional problems, but also affirms the shared commitment to sustainable development, maritime security, and responsible management of natural resources. These collective efforts are believed to support the creation of a safer, more prosperous, and more resilient Pacific region and its surroundings in the future.

5. CONCLUSION

Indonesia positions itself strategically within the geopolitical context of the Indo-Pacific region, particularly in the South Pacific. In recent years, Indonesia has increased its active participation in various regional and multilateral cooperation to strengthen its position and national interests in this dynamic and challenging region. The approach used in the analysis is the theory of Neoclassical Realism, which helps to understand the internal and external factors that influence Indonesia's foreign policy as well as the dynamics of the balance of power in the South Pacific region.

Indonesia views this region as a crucial hub in natural resource management, maritime security, and mitigation and adaptation to climate change. As a country with a large population and experience in marine resource management and natural disasters, Indonesia offers a significant contribution through technical assistance, training, and regional diplomacy. Relations with countries in the region such as Papua New Guinea, Palau, Fiji, the Marshall Islands, and others in the South Pacific are further strengthened through regional forums such as the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) and the ASEAN Indo-Pacific Outlook. Indonesia's activity in the region has increased through bilateral and multilateral initiatives, including facilitation of maritime meetings and cooperation, technology exchanges, and capacity-building programs.

In addition, regional geopolitical dynamics, including tensions in the South China Sea and Indian Ocean involving regional powers such as China and the United States, also influence Indonesia's policies in the Indo-Pacific region. Indonesia, with its unique position, seeks to balance its national interests with regional and global frameworks, maintain regional stability and strengthen its bargaining position through active diplomacy and strategic cooperation. In this context, Indonesia is also active in shaping regional norms and frameworks that support regional peace, security, and sustainable development.

Furthermore, Indonesia views the South Pacific region not only as a stable region but also as an important partner in resource management and climate change mitigation efforts. The President and relevant officials in Indonesia demonstrated a commitment to strengthening ties with Pacific countries through various diplomacy initiatives and security and economic cooperation. This approach reflects Indonesia's attention to regional stability as well as part of the larger 'World Maritime Axis' strategy that positions Indonesia as a strategic hub connecting the Indian and Pacific Oceans.

Overall, Indonesia's policies in the South Pacific region are based on national interests that include security, resource management, and sustainable development. Through strong cooperation with key countries in the region and active engagement in international forums, Indonesia seeks to assert its position as an important actor capable of maintaining stability, managing regional challenges and strengthening the peace and prosperity of the Indo-Pacific region at large. This approach will not only strengthen Indonesia's position geopolitically, but also make an important contribution to the lives of the region's people and the strategic and sustainable management of natural resources.

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