

The Asia-Pacific Stage: The Big Role and Geopolitical Challenges

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ABSTRACT

The geopolitical shift from Europe to the Asia Pacific region has made this region a hot area recently. Even though there is a race to increase maritime power, it is not yet considered an arms race. This research examines the major role and challenges of geopolitics on the Asia-Pacific Stage, a region that has a significant impact on global dynamics. This research uses a qualitative approach with descriptive methods. The research results show that the Asia-Pacific Stage is a complex stage with various geopolitical challenges. Territorial disputes, competition between major powers such as China, the United States and Russia, and the threat of terrorism create tensions that affect stability. The existence of nuclear weapons and the potential for proliferation increases the risk of serious conflict. Humanitarian crises, both due to conflict and the impact of climate change, add complexity to the increasing number of refugees. In this context, regional organizations such as ASEAN are emerging as key players in managing tensions. Overcoming these challenges requires joint efforts, careful diplomacy and international cooperation to maintain peace, security and sustainable development in the region.

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INTRODUCTION

The current geopolitical shift, especially from the European region to the Asia Pacific (Aspas), marks a significant transformation in global power dynamics (Yadav, 2022). The main focus of this shift lies in the South China Sea (SCS) and East China Sea (LCT), two areas that are the center of geopolitical tension and rivalry. Countries in this region are actively taking deep geopolitical and geostrategic initiatives, fully understanding the importance of control over natural resources, shipping routes and regional influence (Indrawan, 2022).

Each of the superpowers, especially China, the United States and Japan, pursues their political, economic and security interests in the Asia Pacific (Al Syahrin, 2018). China's rapid economic growth has been a key driver in this shift. China, with its technological advances and ambitious foreign policy, has become the dominant power in the region. The impact is not only limited to economic aspects, but also extends to the political and security realms, creating dynamics that change the face of the global geopolitical stage (Satris, 2015).

However, in the midst of economic success, security tensions are increasingly heating up. Strategic competition between major powers, especially between China and the United States, adds complexity to regional dynamics (Iriawan, 2018). Tensions in the SCS and LCT are the main focus, creating potential risks of conflict that need to be managed wisely. This phenomenon has become the main concern of researchers, who have predicted and described in detail how strategic this Asia Pacific region will be in the future. Along with

rapid economic growth, this shift creates challenges and opportunities that require deep understanding, multilateral cooperation and careful diplomacy to maintain regional stability and security (Amalia, 2018).

Asia Pacific, as a sociogeographic region, covers an area that extends from East Asia to Southeast Asia, and includes the Oceania, North America and South America regions known as the Pacific Basin or Pacific Basin. This region is famous for its rapid economic growth, which encouraged the formation of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) as a forum for economic cooperation in this region (Rumley, 2003). Hsiung & Hsiung (2001) provide more detail on the composition of the Asia Pacific region which consists of East Asia, Russia which borders the Pacific Ocean, Southeast Asia, Australia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea including the South Pacific countries, the United States and Canada.

Significant economic growth in the Asia Pacific region is driven by its strategic location and rich maritime potential. This factor is strengthened by the existence of dense strategic trade routes, taking advantage of regional maritime route connectivity, as stated by Toccheto, Tancredi, Araújo, & Noronha (2014). Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs) or sea communication routes have a key role in facilitating global trade, meeting the economic needs of several countries both inside and outside the Asia Pacific region. Foreign investment, manufacturing trade, and other business activities have flowed into the region, creating a significant market share (Khalid, 2012).

Although the benefits of the region's geostrategic position are very real, there are threats of negative impacts that need to be acknowledged. The increasingly widespread interactions in this region have serious implications, especially related to the possibility of conflict emerging as a result of friction of interests in these interactions, as highlighted by Lai (2013). Thus, it is important to understand that while providing a strong economic boost, the complex dynamics in the Asia Pacific also bring potential risks that need to be managed wisely to ensure long-term sustainability and stability in the region (Krishnamohan, 2017).

The Asia-Pacific stage has emerged as a central arena in the global geopolitical theater, drawing global attention to its complexity and impact on international dynamics. Rapid economic growth, security tensions, and environmental issues are some of the key elements that shape this stage, creating dynamics that require in-depth understanding. In this context, this research aims to explore the major role and challenges of geopolitics on the Asia-Pacific Stage, with the hope of providing new insights into how these factors interact and influence regional and global security and stability. Through careful analysis, this research seeks to respond to demands for a better understanding of the emerging geopolitical dynamics in the region.

METHOD

This research is a literature review which discusses the role and challenges of geopolitics and security dynamics in the Asia Pacific region. This research was carried out through steps, data inventory in the form of collecting library data in the form of books related to the focus of the study. Then data classification and research preparation were carried out (Yulianah, 2022). The data sources for this study use reference sources in the form of journals, articles and report documents that are directly related to this research.

The analytical method is used through sorting or decomposing the various meanings that exist in the object being studied. Next, discuss conceptual and critical matters regarding the meaning used. Departing from these various understandings, a synthesis is then carried out to obtain a form of systematic framework of thinking or understanding, so as to obtain a completely new understanding of the object under study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Role of the Asia Pacific Stage in Regional Geopolitics

Increasing security challenges are taking center stage in the current global panorama, with the Asia-Pacific region standing out as a key element in the world's geopolitical theater. The complexity of global security dynamics is increasingly manifesting, and the strategic role of the Asia-Pacific is becoming increasingly significant in responding to these changes (Yanuarti et al, 2020). This region is not only the center of rapid economic growth, but also the stage for various security issues involving superpowers and regional governments (Armawi & Wijatmoko, 2022). With rapid economic growth in several countries in the region, especially China and India, the potential for conflict and competition is increasing. The Asia-Pacific region is witnessing a battle of strategic and geopolitical interests between various powers, whether related to natural resources, trade routes or political influence. In addition, non-traditional security challenges, such as maritime tensions, terrorism and environmental issues, increasingly complicate the security landscape in this region (Rachmat, 2017).

It is important to recognize that security dynamics in the Asia-Pacific not only affect the region itself, but also have a profound impact on global stability. Therefore, responses to security challenges in the region must be collaborative and involve active participation from all stakeholders. As the center of the geopolitical theater, success in managing security challenges in the Asia-Pacific is crucial for shaping the direction and dynamics of global security as a whole. The following is the role of the Asia-Pacific stage as a stage for Geopolitical theater

a) Center for Economic Growth

The Asia-Pacific stage has become the central axis of spectacular economic growth, placing it as a major force in the global economy. Countries in the region, especially China, India and Southeast Asian countries, have played a key role in driving global economic activity. The extraordinary economic growth in China, as the largest economy in the region, has been the main driver behind this phenomenon. Likewise, India, with its large population and rapid growth rate, as well as Southeast Asian countries showing significant progress, have all contributed substantially to the economic dynamics of the Asia-Pacific Stage.

The region's significant economic growth not only creates abundant economic opportunities, but also strengthens its geopolitical influence at the global level. As the center of economic growth, the Asia-Pacific Stage is a magnet for investment, trade and economic cooperation between countries. Countries outside the region are actively involved in this economic dynamic, making it an important element in the construction of the world economic order. Thus, rapid economic growth on the Asia-Pacific Stage not only provides local benefits, but also shapes shifts in global power and dynamics. This stage is not only a

stage for economic growth, but also a stage for policy, diplomacy and geopolitical competition that continues to develop in the 21st century.

b) Vital Trade Routes

The Asia-Pacific region stretches widely, covering sea trade routes which are the main arteries in the global economy, especially through the South China Sea and the East China Sea. The existence of this trade route positions this region as a vital center for global economic activity. These sea routes are the main corridors for much of the world's trade, facilitating the transfer of goods and resources from one country to another.

Control over these trade routes has a significant impact on global economic stability and security. As the center of world trade, any disruption to these routes could result in economic instability that spreads throughout the world. Therefore, political and security dynamics along these trade routes are of critical concern. Competition to control and secure access to these routes creates complex geopolitical dynamics in the region. Apart from playing an important role in the smooth running of international trade, Asia-Pacific trade routes also become a stage for tensions and disputes between countries regarding territorial claims and resource rights. Therefore, the sustainability and stability of these pathways is not only important for economic growth in the region, but also has profound implications for overall global economic resilience and security.

c) Battle of Strategic Interests.

The Asia-Pacific region is witnessing a fierce struggle between superpowers, including China, the United States, and Russia, which compete to gain influence and realize strategic interests in this region. This competition involves various aspects, including economics, security and geopolitics, and is capable of having a direct impact on the global balance of power. China, as the largest economic power in the region, has expanded its influence through economic investments, infrastructure projects and trade cooperation. The United States, which has long held a dominant role in regional security and geopolitics, remains committed to defending its strategic interests. On the other hand, Russia, with its increasingly active presence, is trying to consolidate its position and benefit from the dynamics of this region.

This struggle not only reflects competition between countries, but also gives rise to uncertainty in the international system as a whole. Trade disputes, military rivalries, and efforts to form regional alliances are elements that shape complex dynamics on the Asia-Pacific Stage. Therefore, a deep understanding of the interactions and struggles of interests between these superpowers is key to predicting and responding to changes in the direction of global geopolitics and security.

d) Complex Security Issues

The Asia-Pacific stage is a complex and often tense arena in the context of global security, especially with the emergence of a number of security issues that require serious attention. One of the main issues that creates tension is territorial disputes, both related to territorial claims and rights to natural resources in the South China Sea and East China Sea. These competing claims involve several countries in the region, creating dynamics that could potentially trigger regional conflict. Regional tensions in the Asia-Pacific are also influenced by political and military dynamics between superpowers, such as China and the United States, who compete to strengthen their strategic positions and interests in this

region. Additionally, the terrorist threat remains a significant issue, with several extremist groups active in the region. Regional and global security are closely linked to efforts to overcome the threat of terrorism and manage political tensions that could trigger further conflict.

e) The Role of Regional Organizations

Regional organizations, especially ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations), have become a key element in managing tensions and stimulating cooperation on the Asia-Pacific Stage. ASEAN, which consists of ten member countries in Southeast Asia, has played an important role as a catalyst in shaping geopolitical dynamics in the region. The initiatives and collaborative efforts of ASEAN reflect a strong commitment to peace, stability and sustainable development in Southeast Asia and beyond. ASEAN promotes the principles of dialogue, diplomacy and conflict resolution through negotiation. ASEAN's success in establishing a Nuclear Free Zone in Southeast Asia (SEANWFZ) and establishing a joint Diplomacy Table to handle the South China Sea dispute shows this organization's ability to be an effective mediator in managing regional tensions. Apart from that, ASEAN is also active in developing a framework for sustainable economic and security cooperation in the region.

Asia Pacific Stage Challenges to Regional Geopolitics

The Asia-Pacific stage as a geopolitical theater cannot be separated from a number of complex and varied challenges. Some of the main challenges include:

a) Regional Tensions

Prolonged territorial disputes in the South China Sea and East China Sea have become a significant source of tension on the Asia-Pacific Stage. Countries such as China, Vietnam, the Philippines and Japan compete over overlapping territorial claims, creating the potential for serious conflict and affecting overall regional stability. This rivalry is not only limited to maritime boundary disputes, but also includes access to the region's rich natural resources. An increasing military presence, the construction of artificial islands, and unilateral actions in claiming maritime areas have complicated geopolitical dynamics. This dispute shows the complexity of security challenges in the region, requiring a diplomatic approach and effective conflict resolution mechanisms to maintain regional stability.

b) Great Power Rivalry

Geopolitical competition on the Asia-Pacific Stage between major powers, especially China, the United States and Russia, forms the basis of complex dynamics in this region. The battle for influence and strategic interests between these three countries creates tensions that can reach varying degrees, both regionally and globally. China, with its booming economy and expansionist policies, is seeking to strengthen its dominance in the region. The United States, as a historical player with a strong military presence, aims to maintain its influence and support its allies. Russia, with its increasingly active military presence, is seeking opportunities to expand its influence on the Asia-Pacific Stage. These competitive dynamics create challenges to regional stability, requiring careful dialogue and cooperation to prevent conflict escalation and reach agreements that promote overall regional security and development.

c) Threat of Terrorism

The threat of terrorism remains a significant focus of attention on the Asia-Pacific Stage, with the activities of terrorist groups in several countries creating real risks to regional and global security. Continuing terrorist attacks in several regions in the Asia-Pacific show that terrorist groups continue to strive to face this security challenge. This threat not only endangers national stability, but can also have a widespread and profound impact at the global level. Prevention efforts, intelligence cooperation and coordination between countries are very important in responding to this terrorist threat. Joint awareness and coordinated action at the regional level can form the basis for countering and mitigating the impact of the threat of terrorism, securing security and stability on the Asia-Pacific Stage.

d) Nuclear Issues and Weapons Proliferation

The existence of nuclear weapons in several countries in the region and the potential proliferation of nuclear weapons is a source of instability. These threats can have serious impacts on regional security and peace.

e) Humanitarian Crisis

Humanitarian crises, involving armed conflicts and natural disasters, mark the Asia-Pacific Stage with substantial challenges. The increasing number of refugees as a result of internal conflicts and territorial disputes adds to the humanitarian burden in the region. Conflict crises, such as those occurring in several countries, create complex situations with impacts that are felt much more widely, including regional security and geopolitical stability. In addition, natural disasters are becoming more frequent and intense, increasing the risk of a humanitarian crisis on the Asia-Pacific Stage. Climate change, such as floods, storms and earthquakes, is placing additional pressure on the capacity of countries in the region to respond and restore societal resilience. Given the complexity of this situation, handling humanitarian crises on the Asia-Pacific Stage requires joint efforts, regional coordination and global commitment to mitigate their adverse impacts and rebuild the resilience of affected communities.

CONCLUSION

The Asia-Pacific stage is a dynamic stage filled with a number of complex geopolitical challenges. Territorial disputes in the South China Sea and East China Sea, competition between major powers such as China, the United States and Russia, and the threat of terrorism create tensions that affect regional stability. The existence of nuclear weapons and the potential for proliferation adds complexity to the situation and increases the risk of serious conflict. Humanitarian crises, whether due to armed conflict or the impact of climate change, present serious challenges by increasing the number of refugees and complicating efforts to handle the crisis. Amidst this complexity, the role of regional organizations such as ASEAN is emerging as a key factor in managing tensions and stimulating cooperation. In conclusion, facing these challenges requires joint efforts, astute diplomacy, and strong international cooperation to maintain peace, security, and sustainable development on the Asia-Pacific Stage.

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