

Geopolitical Conflicts between United States and China in The South Pacific Region

الصراعات الجيوسياسية بين الولايات المتحدة والصين في منطقة جنوب المحيط الهادئ

Mohamed Abdelaziem Elchime

Associate Professor of Political Science - Helwan University

Abstract:

The South Pacific region is the scene of competition between the United States and China, which has been the main power in the region for the past century. Over the past two decades, China has been steadily building its influence in the South Pacific. Many see this expansion as growing at a much faster rate than can be seen as a natural reflection of China's growing economic and geopolitical influence. This left many analysts in the West wondering, what is China's ambition in the South Pacific, and what risks does this create? In the past three years, China's presence in the South Pacific has become so large, and its behavior in other parts of the world more assertive, as several indicators have begun to escalate the conflict of major powers in the regional areas of the world.

The strategic competition between the United States and China extends to include most regions of geostrategic importance in the world, as well as various military, political, economic and technical fields as well, China rejects American's unilateral leadership of the international regime and seeks to establish a new multipolar international order.

The security agreement concluded between China and Solomon Islands have sparked widespread controversy, China will be able to send military forces to the Solomon Islands to impose order, maintain stability and social order, protect the lives and property of individuals, as well as provide aid. Humanity, especially after the unrest and protests in the Solomon Islands.

Keywords: US-Sino Relations, the South Pacific region, Solomon Islands, and new world order.

المستخلص:

تعد منطقة جنوب المحيط الهادئ مسرحًا للمنافسة بين الولايات المتحدة والصين ، التي كانت القوة الرئيسية في المنطقة خلال القرن الماضي. على مدى العقدين الماضيين ، كانت الصين تبني بثبات نفوذها في جنوب المحيط الهادئ. يرى الكثير أن هذا التوسع ينمو بمعدل أسرع بكثير مما يمكن اعتباره انعكاسًا طبيعيًا لنفوذ الصين الاقتصادي والجيوسياسي المتنامي. ترك هذا العديد من المحللين في الغرب يتساءلون ، ما هو طموح الصين في جنوب المحيط الهادئ ، وما هي المخاطر التي يخلقها ذلك؟ في السنوات الثلاث الماضية ، أصبح وجود الصين في جنوب المحيط الهادئ كبيرًا جدًا ، وسلوكها في أجزاء أخرى من العالم أكثر حزمًا ، حيث بدأت العديد من المؤشرات في تصعيد صراع القوى الكبرى في المناطق الإقليمية من العالم.

تمتد المنافسة الاستراتيجية بين الولايات المتحدة والصين لتشمل معظم المناطق ذات الأهمية الجيوستراتيجية في العالم ، فضلاً عن مختلف المجالات العسكرية والسياسية والاقتصادية والتقنية أيضًا ، وترفض الصين القيادة الأمريكية الأحادية للنظام الدولي وتسعى إلى إقامة نظام دولي جديد متعدد الأقطاب.

أثارت الاتفاقية الأمنية المبرمة بين الصين وجزر سليمان جدلاً واسع النطاق ، وستكون الصين قادرة على إرسال قوات عسكرية إلى جزر سليمان لفرض النظام والحفاظ على الاستقرار والنظام الاجتماعي وحماية أرواح وممتلكات الأفراد ، فضلاً عن تقديم المساعدة الإنسانية ، خاصة بعد الاضطرابات والاحتجاجات في جزر سليمان.

الكلمات المفتاحية: العلاقات الأمريكية الصينية ، منطقة جنوب المحيط الهادئ ، جزر سلمان ، النظام العالمي الجديد.

Introduction:

The administration of US President Joe Biden has unveiled plans to expand its diplomatic presence and foreign aid investments in the Pacific in an effort to counter growing Chinese influence and military designs as well as reverse

decades of waning US influence and high-level interest in the Pacific Region. It comes as the United States' biggest global rival, China, is seeking to make headway in the Pacific islands and vying for more geopolitical influence in the region as start of a diplomatic campaign that has concerned United States. In April 2022, the Solomon Islands signed a bilateral security cooperation agreement with China that appeared to give it a potential military foothold on the island chain, sparking concern in the United States and Australia as well as sending senior American officials scrambling to try to outdo the Chinese. Government and Court of Solomon Islands to thwart the agreement¹.

"The security agreement that was signed between China and the Solomon Islands was really another step on the road to strategic competition," Richard Marles, Australia's deputy prime minister and defense minister, told reporters in Washington on Thursday. "This significantly changes Australia's national security framework." Marlis said the US and Australia are striving to be the "natural partner of choice" for the Pacific islands, but they need to pay enough attention to the region to earn their trust.

Over the past two decades, China has been steadily building its influence in the South Pacific. Many see this expansion as growing at a much faster rate than can be seen as a natural reflection of China's growing economic and geopolitical influence. This left many analysts in the West wondering, what is China's ambition in the South Pacific, and what risks does this create? In the past three years, China's presence in the South Pacific has become so large, and its behavior in other parts of the world more assertive, that alarm bells have begun to ring in the capitals of traditional South Pacific partners.

Although the current Ukrainian crisis may prompt the administration of US President Joe Biden to avoid further tensions with Beijing to avoid opening two fronts at the same time, confrontation between the two sides appears inevitable at some point in the future. On February 11 - just before the Russian invasion of Ukraine - the United States released a new strategy for the Indo-Pacific region, which Washington has come to consider "the most vibrant region in the world, and its future affects people everywhere", as home to more than half of the population. the planet and about two-thirds of the global economy².

In this strategy, Washington affirmed its commitments to its partners in the region, especially Australia, Japan, the Republic of Korea (South), the Philippines and Thailand, and to strengthening relations with India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mongolia, New Zealand, Singapore, Taiwan, Vietnam and the Pacific Islands, and contributing to the unification of the ASEAN countries (the Association of Southeast Asian Nations). Ten years, and to fulfill the commitments of the "Quad" alliance, which includes the United States, Japan, India and Australia, and Beijing considers it an American attempt to create a new version of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in the Indo-Pacific.

These arrangements aim to counter Beijing's influence, challenge its control of the South China Sea, and provide protection for Taiwan, especially since the way Washington dealt with the Russia-Ukraine crisis reminded Beijing that the West still dominates the main arteries of the global order, and that the enormous influence of the United States should not be ignored³.

First: The strategic importance of the Pacific Islands

The South Pacific region is known for its pristine beaches, geographic and cultural diversity, and unique development challenges. With a cumulative population of less than 13 million, these fourteen sovereign states and seven territories extend over 15% of the world's surface. The Pacific nations are located in the sub-Melanesia region along the east coast of Australia. Only 6 km separates Australia and Papua New Guinea, while only 2,000 separates Australia and Vanuatu. To the north, the atolls of eastern Kiribati lie 3,000 kilometers from Hawaii while Palau is 1,300 kilometers from Guam.

The dual authoritarian regimes of small size and remoteness make traditional economic paths in most of these countries very difficult, if not impossible. Some of the world's highest population growth rates and overcrowding, particularly in atoll nations, (1) exacerbate current development challenges. The South Pacific countries are also among the most vulnerable to natural disasters in the world, (2) a threat exacerbated by climate change. All of these factors combine to make the Pacific region one of the most fragile regions in the world, and one of the most aid dependent. (3) While each Pacific nation faces its own unique set of development challenges, they all value support from development partners on the basis of respect and parity. While traditional development partners are often eager to see improvements in

governance in these countries, Pacific nations are often more eager to support economic development, and to see concrete action on the existential threat of climate change.

It doesn't take much creativity to see the geostrategic importance of these islands scattered across the vast Pacific Ocean. In World War II, controlling them was critical to both maintaining logistical supply lines and projecting military power. Since the war, the Pacific has largely enjoyed a good position on the geopolitical stage. All this has changed with the increasing Chinese presence in the region⁴.

The term Indo-Pacific has emerged with its heavy use by the US administration during the Trump era, highlighting the growing US interest in the region and its new policy towards the growing Chinese rise. The Indo-Pacific region is a major arena for the current rivalry and conflict between the United States and China, and it extends geographically from the eastern African coast overlooking the Indian Ocean to the South Pacific Ocean through Southeast Asia. The strategic value of the region has increased significantly with the beginnings of the last decade and with the changes that have occurred in it, as its political, economic and demographic weight has increased rapidly, making it one of the most important hot spots in the world, which many expectations indicate that it will contribute to shaping the map of international interactions and determining the future of the international system in the coming decades.

One of the vital points that the Indo-Pacific region gained its weight is the location of the South China Sea in its geographical scope, as the sea is located between the eastern Indian Ocean and the western Pacific Ocean and is surrounded by nine countries: China, Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Brunei and the Philippines, and the sea contains a large number of islands Small and important. The South China Sea has great strategic importance because it is within the densest maritime shipping lanes in the world, through which more than half of international trade passes. Geopolitics⁵.

In addition, China always has had an existence in the region. Ethnic Chinese have resided in the area for centuries, and run some of the oldest trading houses in the area. The rivalry between China and Taiwan over diplomatic

allies in the region has led to some degree of maneuvering through briefcase diplomacy between the two countries in the region for decades.

Since 2006, however, China's trade, aid, diplomatic and commercial activity in the Pacific region has been steadily and significantly increasing. Excluding Papua New Guinea, bilateral trade with China has exceeded that of Australia since 2013. For the Solomon Islands, bilateral trade with China now accounts for 46% of the total trade⁶.

China has also greatly enhanced its assistance activities. According to Lowy Institute research, between 2006 and 2017, China provided nearly 1.5 billion US dollars in foreign aid to the Pacific Islands region through a combination of grants and loans⁷. As of 2017, China was the third largest donor to the Pacific region, contributing 8% of total foreign aid to the region between 2011 and 2017.⁸ While China is by no means the dominant donor in the Pacific The way in which it delivers its aid - large infrastructure projects financed with soft loans - makes these projects stand out. Chinese lending has also been used as a means of introducing Chinese state-owned enterprises into the region. These companies are now competing in business in all areas. According to Chinese investment statistics, China's construction activity in the region reached \$958 million in 2017, nearly six times that of foreign aid.⁹

Much has been written about the Pacific region's, and indeed the world's, growing dependence on China from debt to trade statistics. While the narrative of "debt trap diplomacy" has been underestimated by a recent comprehensive analysis of Pacific debt statistics, significant risks remain¹⁰.

Second: China's reaction between economic tools and the intensification of military activities

The relative success of China in confronting the Corona pandemic compared to the United States and the rest of the international powers contributed to its realization of its international position after the pandemic, and that there is a new international order in which China stands on an equal footing with the United States, and after the pandemic, Beijing's ambitions were strengthened, which prompted it to demand global leadership and in At the same time, the threat of a firm response to any attempts to contain it. As it is clear, Chinese foreign policy during the pandemic period differs from its policy in previous decades, which makes the Chinese reaction to a military alliance the size of

the “AUKUS” alliance appears different and in more than one direction, forming the main features of China's strategy to confront the United States.

Some estimates do not rule out the possibility of the two forces being involved in an indirect or limited confrontation, while the option of a comprehensive military confrontation remains excluded in the foreseeable future. China currently lacks, and in the coming years, the capabilities and experience that would enable it to engage in a direct confrontation, which makes Beijing more cautious in the face of the increasing American containment efforts¹¹.

In the Indo-Pacific region, China will continue to intensify its military activities in the South China Sea to test the effectiveness of the new security alliance. On the other hand, China can use its strong economic ties to strengthen its relations with the countries of the region, in addition to building relations with the Pacific island countries, which may form the arena of competition in the coming years between the United States and China. In the same context, China will seek to reduce the areas of cooperation The United States is strategic with the countries of the region, and here it can use its economic tools as pressure cards to prevent the countries of the region from forming new alliances with the United States, or as a punitive policy for countries that have already entered into alliances.

Sino-Australian relations can represent a model of the strength and impact of Chinese economic tools, and it is sufficient to note that China received 81% of Australia's total foreign exports of iron ore in 2020, and the Australian economy received an estimated return of 136 billion dollars in return for this huge volume of exports. This makes Australian iron ore exports to China the largest and most valuable among Australian exports. At the beginning of this year, the Chinese government announced its intention to use modern technology to recycle iron waste and to search for alternative supplies from other countries, leading to a halving of Australian iron ore exports in the next five years, and it seems that China, after the announcement of the “AUKUS” alliance, will move forward. In its plan to reduce its imports of iron ore and inflict on Australia not insignificant economic losses.

At the international level, China will not stop building strong relations based on economic, trade and technological cooperation, especially with developing countries whose interests converge with the Chinese strategy, with China keen

to frame its economic relations in multiple forums that it leads with a large number of countries and in different regions. It is the case in the Arab and African cooperation forums¹².

The American strategy to confront the Chinese rise relies on establishing security and military alliances in a small scale, which is the model that it presented in its tripartite alliance and the tightest of them, the “AUKUS” alliance with both Britain and Australia, in addition to establishing partnerships with countries from the Indo-Pacific region that do not place the allies of the United States. In direct confrontation with China, it enables Washington to fulfill its security obligations towards its allies. China's relative superiority over the United States in the face of the Corona pandemic made it more aware that a new international order is taking shape in which China stands on an equal footing with the United States, and the Chinese conviction generated after the pandemic has strengthened its ambitions and pushed it to demand global leadership and made it more resolute in the face of all attempt's containment.

Recently, Europe realized "the danger of Chinese industrial policy and Beijing's pursuit of technology acquisition", and recognized the existence of a Chinese threat to the Indo-Pacific region that must be confronted jointly with the United States¹³. Despite Biden's foreign policy that seems less involved in the Middle East and gives strategic priority to the Indo-Pacific region, China's financial and economic expansion in the Middle East and the strong ties that Beijing has begun to weave with most regional powers will force the United States to deepen its relations with its main allies, and maintain its roles in the region without allowing more voids in which the Chinese influence infiltrates.

It seems that the “AUKUS” alliance will not only bring to mind the image of the United States as a strong military ally, but it will establish a new stage, titled a sharp geopolitical conflict between the United States and its allies on the one hand and China on the other, enhancing the chances of the Cold War that are forming, but in a new dress The world will not turn into solid geopolitical blocs like the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union¹⁴.

Third: American interests and the rise of China

Two main factors that contributed to the exacerbation of the conflict and the increase in tension between the American and Chinese sides, can provide an answer to the reason behind the growing American fears of the rise of China in recent years.

- China's military, economic and technological power is rising

Recent years have revealed the growth of China's power in several key areas. At the military level, China's military expenditures have witnessed a tremendous increase in the last decade, and in 2021 expenditures amounted to \$186 billion, and although this figure represents only a third of American military spending, it is at the same time. It is larger than the budgets of other major powers for the same year, an important indication of how far China has come in the international military arms race. On the other hand, the growth of Chinese economic power in recent years seems more evident than ever, especially with the development of Chinese industrial policy and the massive expansion of China through global supply chains, which was reflected on the global economy, while the United States in the middle of the last century represented half of the global economy (Half of global production of goods and services) now accounts for only 24% of it, while China accounts for 16% of the global economy.

In addition to the growth of Chinese military and economic power, it seemed that China's technological superiority was also one of the factors that annoyed the United States and the West, and it is clear that Chinese acquisitions of Western technology companies have reached the point where some believe that Western laws and policies to counter the Chinese acquisition have come. In hindsight, the numbers indicate important facts about the Chinese technology acquisition, as Chinese companies, including the Chinese technology giant "Huawei", acquired 38% of 5G technology patents, compared to about 17% for American companies¹⁵.

- A more bold and confrontational Chinese foreign policy

In recent years, China has changed its foreign policy and field action in areas of strategic influence and developed its naval fleet to become more capable of

confronting its neighbors and more aspiring to regional hegemony. The most prominent manifestations of that change are the following:

Great interest from the US and Chinese sides in the South China Sea. Washington's interests at sea depend on securing the navigation of American military and commercial ships that roam the Indo-Pacific region through the South China Sea, while Beijing's interests depend on turning the sea into a vital area for its political and economic interests, as well as the expected oil reserves in the sea through which it hopes China has to reduce its heavy dependence on oil imports from abroad.

In recent years, China has increased the size of its naval fleet with the deployment of military bases on islands within the South China Sea, in addition to establishing artificial islands within the sea for military and economic purposes. China argues that it possesses sovereignty over 90% of the South China Sea, which gives it the right to Control of all maritime, military, economic and commercial activities. Chinese behavior has caused severe tensions between it and the majority of countries surrounding the South China Sea and, of course, increased its geopolitical rivalry with the United States¹⁶.

Tensions between China and the US-backed island of Taiwan have risen to their highest level in decades, after China's repeated attempts in recent years to penetrate the island's defense space with fighter jets. The conflict between China and the island of Taiwan extends to another area that intersects with American and Western interests related to the Taiwan Strait, which separates the island and China and connects the South China Sea to the Pacific Ocean. The United States of Taiwan, which recently made it reveal its military presence on the island to train the Taiwanese army against any possible Chinese attack.

The relations between China and Australia, which witnessed great trade cooperation, turned into an endless series of tensions, which began with China imposing a trade embargo on Australia in response to Australia's demand for an independent international investigation into the origin of the Corona virus, and tensions reached their climax in the middle of this year with Australia's withdrawal from the initiative China's "Belt and Road", in return, China suspended all activities of the Strategic Economic Dialogue with Australia¹⁷.

At September 2021, China announced a new maritime law against foreign ships passing through Chinese territorial waters, including the South China Sea and other disputed water areas. Its sovereignty and the strengthening of its military influence in a way that threatens all maritime activities in the region. So, United States realizes that China has turned into a strategic adversary whose danger may outweigh the danger of the Soviet Union at its best. It also realizes that its policy toward China will differ from its containment policy toward the Soviet Union during the Cold War era. The differences in circumstances and contexts seem clear.

It seems that a number of US allies, as a result of their deep economic and trade ties with China, fear being drawn into a direct confrontation with China in the context of the US-China conflict. At the same time, these countries are keen on their alliances with the United States. This complex equation prevents the United States from expanding its Cold War approach, containing and isolating China diplomatically, and turning into two camps, one American and the other Chinese.

This different reality from the reality of the old Cold War prompted the United States to adopt a different strategy that focuses on limited military alliances, and other broader alliances, including in the security field, economic and technological fields and issues of climate change, as is the case in the “QUAD” alliance with Japan India and Australia¹⁸.

In the case, it seems clear now that the new American alliance “AUKUS” is different from other American alliances, as it appears to be limited to a limited number of allies, because the United States realizes that the expansion of this type of alliance may disrupt its strategic goal, given the complexities of the broad alliances and their different interests and priorities that limit of its effectiveness and weight.

In this tripartite alliance, the United States seeks to achieve a balance of power in the Indo-Pacific region by involving Australia in the US-Chinese conflict arena by maximizing its naval power to counter the growing capabilities of the Chinese naval power, and to achieve a balance of power that prevents Chinese hegemony in the region. It appears that the nuclear submarines that Australia will receive as part of the alliance agreement are sufficiently capable of achieving this role, as they can travel long distances in the deep sea and at

a relatively higher speed than ordinary submarines, which makes their range wider and less vulnerable to exposure, and gives them the ability to perform missions in the two oceans. India and the Pacific, in addition to the possibility of providing them with nuclear weapons¹⁹.

In general, it seems that the title of the American strategy to confront the Chinese rise is to focus on security and military alliances in a narrow scope, which is the model that it presented in its tripartite alliance and the tightest "AUKUS" alliance, while allowing broader participation from the countries of the Indo-Pacific region through other partnerships that do not place The allies of the United States are in direct and frank confrontation with China, while at the same time enabling the United States to fulfill its security obligations towards its allies in the region.

Through this type of alliance, the United States deals with the reality of China's relations and its strong commercial ties through a set of partnerships with multiple allies under different banners to achieve its main goal in confronting the rise of China's economic and military powers and preventing its dominance in the Indo-Pacific region²⁰.

Fourth: The US-Chinese conflict over the Solomon Islands

Solomon Islands is one of the hotbeds of conflict in the southern Indian Ocean between China, which sees in securing its strategy in the Pacific Ocean from the dangers surrounding it, as well as securing its trade lines to different regions of the world, and between the United States, which is also trying to impose its hegemony to control the Indian and Pacific Oceans Undermining China's trade and attempting to encircle it and impose a naval blockade through the formation of new military alliances and the deployment of nuclear fleets and submarines to threaten China, the powerful economic and technical competitor of the United States, which China perceives as a threat to its national security and existence in general.

The Solomon Islands chain in the South Pacific consists of several large volcanic islands located to the southeast of Papua New Guinea, as well as other islands and remote atolls. The islands are characterized by mountainous terrain and dense forests. The islands, formerly a British protectorate, struggled to recover from the inter-ethnic civil unrest of 2003-98 that brought them to the brink of collapse, and an Australian-brokered peace deal was

signed in October 2000. But the chaos continued until A multinational peacekeeping force led by Australia arrived in July 2003. It didn't leave until 2017. During World War II, Guadalcanal saw some of the fiercest fighting in the Pacific theater, as the United States struggled to wrest control of the area from Japanese occupiers, while seeking to Washington to expand its influence in the southern coasts of the Pacific Ocean, at a time when American hegemony is increasing to control the world, and monopolize it for the continuation of the unipolar policy, and the revival of the Cold War climates. The United States has no right to impose and land on any side of the Iron Curtain, and the notion that America will now put the second largest naval power in the world into a firewall is a ridiculous idea to attack China²¹.

(Foreign Policy) magazine published a report prepared by "Colum Quinn", the writer of the news in the American magazine about the race of China and the United States on the "Solomon Islands", and the writer concluded that the state of Solomon Island attracted the attention of "Beijing", which prompted "Washington" to take measures Fast on this, and that could mean we may be heading toward a brinkmanship among the great powers in the Solomon Islands. According to the report, the United States will send high-ranking officials to the Solomon Islands at a time when the White House is trying to avoid a rapid turn to "China." Kurt Campbell, the chief Asian national security official in the administration of US President Joe Biden, and Daniel Krettenbrink, the US Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, will make the visit as part of a trip that includes visits to the Fiji Islands and Papua Guinea²².

Firstly, The United States of America announced that it will open an embassy in the Solomon Islands, in a gesture that sheds light on the increasing focus on the Indo-Pacific region in the face of Chinese influence efforts to extend more hegemony in that region. Although the Solomon Islands are far from the mainland of the United States, they are located in a major strategic choke point in the Pacific Ocean, a little more than a thousand miles from Australia, and from the US state of "Hawaii": 3,600 miles. China is a wake-up call among allies in the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, which includes Australia, India, Japan and the United States. Australia, New Zealand and the United States have all expressed concerns about security in the Pacific after China signed a security agreement with the Solomon Islands. The signing of the agreement,

which took place a few days ago, raised fears that China might seek to build a naval base in the Pacific country, and the islands government had rejected last-hour attempts by Australia - the largest aid donor - to block the deal²³.

Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavari said the agreement would not undermine peace and harmony in the region, and the islands leader added that the agreement was not aimed at traditional allies but rather aimed at improving our internal security situation. In a speech to parliament, Sogavary said that under the agreement, China would not build a military base on the South Pacific island, which has a population of less than 800,000 people. He did not disclose the terms of the agreement, but insisted that the government signed it with eyes wide open, guided by our national interests.

The details of the agreement are still unclear, but a leaked draft on the Internet was said to be of the text of the agreement, which raised the fears of the United States of America about China's expansion in that strategic region, as it indicated that the Chinese Navy would be allowed to dock its warships there, and Solomon Islands did not confirm the authenticity of the details. contained in the draft agreement that was leaked on the Internet, but announced at the time that it was in the process of "expanding" its security arrangements with more countries, and diversifying the country's security partnership (with other countries), including China. China says that the purpose of the security cooperation agreement is to support the ability of the Solomon Islands state, which was a British protectorate in the past, to maintain security and order within the community²⁴.

On the other hand , Beijing's relationship with Solomon Island began in 2019, when the country's prime minister, Manasseh Sogavari, switched his country's loyalty from Taiwan to China, and this move prompted the Taiwanese capital, Taipei, to cut aid to the most populous provinces in the Solomon Islands. It also helped stoke resentment against Sugavari that culminated in deadly riots in the country last year 2021.

These relations are about to go further, according to a draft security agreement between China and the Solomon Islands; It was leaked and appeared in March 2022. Observers believe that this Chinese move will open areas for cooperation between the two countries at various levels. In the context of this cooperation, China seeks to secure its flank in the South Pacific from any

upcoming threats, especially after the formation of the “Ocos” alliance, which includes Australia, the United States, Japan and India, and this agreement will enable Chinese naval ships to use the ports of the Solomon Islands for the purposes of resupplying Logistically, it may even enable “Beijing” to send security forces on the islands, if requested to do so to help preserve the political and social order in the Solomon Islands State from external threats, especially the US, especially after directing its warnings to the country’s leadership of the consequences of the relationship with China²⁵.

The Solomon Islands have witnessed several disturbances in the recent period, and a large segment of its population suffers from poverty. Last November, the Australian government sent elements of its defense forces to help quell the bloody riots that broke out in the capital, Honiara, after protesters stormed Parliament in an attempt to oust Sugavari. Deeply disappointing," saying they were "concerned about the lack of transparency with which this agreement has been developed."

"It is our consistently stated view, including from the perspective of Australia's national interests, that the Pacific family remains best suited to address the security needs of the region," the two Australian officials said in a joint statement. The Australian opposition described the signing of the agreement as the worst failure of Australian foreign policy in the Pacific in 80 years, and Prime Minister Scott Morrison, who is currently leading a re-election campaign based in part on a national security platform, denied that the agreement was evidence that his government erred in its diplomacy with the Solomon Islands.

He added that he could not have told leaders in the Pacific islands what they should and should not do, but Morrison said his country would not be in a submissive relationship with China, adding that it had made all kinds of promises to the Pacific countries. "We have always stood up to China because this is in our interest," Morrison told reporters, while New Zealand's Foreign Minister Nanaya Mahuta said her country was sad because the Solomon Islands made an agreement with China²⁶.

- Project Protection

The details of the leaked plans raised the concern of Australia in particular, as it is located no more than 2,000 kilometers to the south of the Solomon

Islands, and the papers establish a framework that allows Beijing to deploy forces to protect the security of the Chinese and major Chinese projects in the Solomon Islands. Under the same document, Solomon Islands can ask China to send police, military police, army, and other law enforcement and armed forces personnel. Scholars believe that these plans easily reveal China's intentions towards the region for the first time. These plans clearly show what China wants, says Jonathan Brake, a specialist in the affairs of the islands in the Pacific Ocean, and that these plans in a way did Australia a favor. We are still at the beginning of a long process, and we have not yet seen soldiers on the ground or any military presence in the Solomon Islands, but just knowing China's intent is troubling. The Solomon Islands government has signed a number of agreements with China for development and infrastructure projects, including agreements for the expansion of trade exchange and civil aviation services²⁷.

The question that arises is whether China is developing a global navy to secure its geostrategic security, or just to protect its trade points? There is no doubt that the two countries have signed many agreements in ways that do not hamper the autonomy of the Solomon Islands, and that the restrictive terms are not so severe as to harm the host country and its relationship with the regional neighborhood, but the United States is trying to obstruct China's commercial interests from the Belt and Road project to come to an end the end.

Conclusion:

China has economic relations with the Pacific islands based on the priority of the economic tool for China in its foreign policy with various countries, and the trade activity and aid to China in the Pacific region has been steadily increasing since 2006, and China has accounted for 46% of the total trade balance of the Solomon Islands with the outside world According to the research of the Lowy Institute, between 2006 and 2017, China provided nearly 1.5 billion US dollars in foreign aid to the Pacific Islands region between grants and loans, so that China became the third largest donor to the Pacific region, and the activity of Chinese construction companies reached about \$958 million in 2017.

At the first China-Pacific Foreign Ministers' Meeting (PICs) in October 2021, the Chinese government announced the establishment of a China-Pacific Climate Change Cooperation Center, a Center for Poverty Reduction and Development Cooperation, an emergency supply reserve, and also highlighted the concept of a "community of destiny" Joint” and asked for support from the Pacific island countries on the issues of Taiwan, Hong Kong, Xinjiang and Tibet, and China used grant and loan diplomacy as a pretext to link its relationship with the Pacific countries, and in the process of protecting its economic interests in the region and facing the US-Japanese expansions, it gradually began laying the foundation stone for its military forces, holding Bilateral security agreements²⁸.

Despite the expanded US activity with its allies in the ocean, the Solomon Islands agreement with China exposes the security gaps in the American strategy, and the inability of Quad to extend its influence over the entire region, which China exploited to its advantage, as it managed to persuade the islands to transfer its recognition to the sovereignty of China over Taiwan in 2019, in addition to the dominance of Chinese companies in most sectors of the Solomon Islands’ economy, ranging from natural resource extraction to retail trade, and on the other hand, Australian Pacific Minister Zed Sesilja tried to persuade the islands not to sign the agreement with China on his visit During the past week, and this comes late in the agreement, according to the draft leaked on April 3, the United States had also closed its embassy in the Solomon Islands 29 years ago, and the agreement came to confirm the loss of the United States influence in the Solomon Islands alongside Fears that it will lead to a "domino effect" in the region²⁹.

Moreover, The Russian war on Ukraine gave a fatal blow to the idea of a unipolar world, as Russia led the invasion in the face of the United States and the West in an attempt to rearrange the security map in the world, and emphasize the likely indicators to enter the stage of a multipolar world, and on February 4 on the sidelines of the Winter Olympics China and Russia agreed on a “without borders” agreement to support each other, and China is also the first supporter of Russia in the decision to invade, based on China’s emphasis on the need for the country to move to protect its interests and confront all surrounding threats, even if at the expense of the sovereignty and independence of other countries. This move constitutes a new variable in

international politics. As it is an additional acquisition point in China's credit, on the contrary, it constitutes a mistake and misperception in American policy and the Quad Group, and the most prominent possible repercussions are³⁰:

-The intensification of the rivalry between China and America: The United States has bilateral relations with Palau, Micronesia, and the Marshall Islands, known as Pacts of Free Association, which provide the U.S. military with exclusive access to land, sea, and air routes in this region. The list of challenges for what it considers a Chinese strategy to establish a regional sphere of influence, and pledged to allocate more diplomatic and security resources. At the same time, the region is witnessing the largest part of China's military potential, especially the military agreement with the Solomon Islands, which ignites the pace of competition between the two poles.

-Transfer the conflict to Australia: Australia fears that the islands will turn into Cuba - during the period of the Cuban missile crisis - as the agreement allows China to establish a military base less than 2,000 kilometers from Australia's eastern border, which includes Chinese bases in the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Fiji effectively controlling access to Northeast Australia, which calls for the Australian military forces to be prepared to face any potential threats, in light of the possibility that the region will become an arena of competition between China and the Quad Group.

-Reproduction of the Ukraine scenario in the Pacific: The islands have a long colonial history, as they were a major stop during World War II. The operations of the coalition forces against Japan witnessed the naval bombardment on August 14, 1942, and in parallel with the Russian invasion, the island could turn into an operations center for a Chinese attack on American bases and targets under the pretext of protecting Chinese influence³¹.

-New security arrangements between members of Quad: The agreement would spur greater Western engagement with Pacific island nations, with US and Australian officials failing to prevent the agreement's completion. The parties are expected to move into multi-level security agreements in anticipation of any preemptive strikes from China. As well as to curb Chinese influence in the Indo-Pacific.

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