

# Short Summary

## Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat

### State of Pacific Regionalism 2017 Report

This is a short summary that is referring to the data provided by the following report:

**Title:** State of Pacific Regionalism 2017 Report

**Publisher:** Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat

**Year:** 2017

**24 Pages**

**Web:**

<http://www.forumsec.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/State-of-Pacific-Regionalism-2017-Report.pdf>

The “**State of Pacific Regionalism**” Report provides a geopolitical analysis of the trends, threats and opportunities facing the region’s political and development ambitions. The analysis can then help decision and policy makers in the forum find the best suited areas to invest political and financial capital in, which helps them approach the forum’s vision of peace, security, social inclusion and prosperity among all the pacific people. It was published in **2017** by the **Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat**.

The report names **four different perspectives** from which the state of pacific regionalism can be observed, of which each highlights different aspects and thereby a different understanding of the multifaceted nature of regionalism.

According to the report, the **perspective of structure** will lead to the conclusion that the state of the region has remained largely unchanged. History, geography, culture and further structural aspects still provide the same strengths, weaknesses and vulnerabilities for the region, despite of the fact that climate change will certainly have huge impact on the region’s further development.

In contrast, a **perspective of actors** shows strong shifts in both the structure of participating actors within the region and actors from outside of the pacific who are increasingly seeking bilateral interaction with pacific states.

Regarding an **institutional perspective**, the report mainly assesses that regional institutions can be a key factor in a change of the regional architecture. However, recent studies indicate that regional institutional measures are underrepresented in international comparison.

Finally, the report states that, seen from a **perspective of development outcomes**, there has been little progress in the pacific region over the fifteen year period from 2000-2015.

Poverty, youth unemployment, social inequities (particularly in regard to women) and a lack of real GDP growth still depict to great extend unsolved problems in the pacific region.

Climate change and urbanization are expected to have further negative impact on the challenge to create development.

Furthermore, the report highlights several key global and regional geopolitical trends that may have important implications for the State of Pacific Regionalism.

Regarding **shifts in global power and globalization**, the report states a rising tendency towards nationalism and protectionism. This shift is mainly perceived by the current policy of the president of the United States, Donald Trump, and could possibly have immediate negative impacts on pacific economies. Additionally, recent events indicate that President Trump has contributed to a new legitimacy of similar policies in many other western states. In contrast, the report names China as a possible leader for the further establishment of free trade between countries. The uncertainty that derives from the shift in US policies to a more nationalist direction is seen as compromise for the availability of development financing. A lack of acknowledgment for natural vulnerabilities as contributors to fragility that prohibits the pacific region from receiving better financing aid is also seen as a problem.

The report also names **rising inequality** as a serious problem across the pacific. Recent studies have shown that various countries in the pacific are marked by widespread inequalities that may provide an additional source of economic, social and political instability.

Furthermore, the report states several factors that indicate rising **challenges for multilateralism** in the Pacific and beyond. These factors include a growing mistrust in multilateralism, such as can be seen in Britain and other European countries and perceived all over the world, as well as a lack of financial support for regional initiatives in the pacific region.

The Pacific becoming an increasingly **crowded and complex region** requires governments to stay aware of political and economical relations in the region. But the growing interest from various governments also opens up opportunities for pacific island states to reach for new international partnerships.

The next challenge listed in the report is the **depletion of national resources**. Climate change, pollution, extraction and the demands of a growing population all constitute threats to the health of economy, society and people in the pacific. The protection of ocean resources is assigned special importance. The report warns not only about an increase in pollution and contamination, but also about the effects of nuclear tests and extreme weather events such as cyclones and droughts.

Although the Pacific is generally considered a peaceful region, **regional and global conflicts** might be reasons for violent acts in the future. Especially the upcoming referenda on independence in New Caledonia and Bougainville and tensions at the Pacific Rim between great powers like the US, China and North Korea may serve as potential triggers for conflict. Due to their special geographic position, the Pacific States are allocated a role of peacemakers.

Finally, the report analyses risks and chances of **ongoing advances in technology** as the last key trend with possible implications on the Pacific region. Great opportunities for progress are seen in areas such as health, education, energy, economic inclusion and renewable energies. On the other side, advances in artificial intelligence might threaten low paid jobs that do not require high education.

The report concludes that the Pacific continues to face significant challenges for advancing sustainable development in the region. The context of growing political, economic and dependencies the region currently experiences. It confirms his concession to an increased regional cooperation that can be build up on the commonly shared Pacific Ocean Identity. The pacific leaders thereby embrace regionalism as “the expression of a common sense of identity and purpose”. By concentrating on the Pacific Ocean Identity, regional leaders can provide the basis for Pacific Regionalism and help pacific leaders with their decisions on pacific matters. The Pacific Ocean Geography is named as a possible key factor to promote a peaceful and secure region. China’s economic and infrastructural initiatives are to be attached special importance. Several projects in planning are being enumerated. The special importance of Pacific Ocean Resources is also highlighted. Being the source of economic wealth for the Pacific Island Countries, their protection must be ensured, their long term contribution to national economies valued and the connection between shared ocean resources and possibly shared political capital recognized. The report finally concludes that despite of increasing challenges in terms of global and regional trends, they also provide great opportunities for the pacific to reshape their own pacific ocean identity and with the so created regionalism contribute to a sustainable, prosperous and resilient Blue Pacific.

The full “State of Pacific Regionalism” Report, as already been linked in the beginning of this summary, can be found here:

<http://www.forumsec.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/State-of-Pacific-Regionalism-2017-Report.pdf>

Vincent Gewert