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Executive Summary

Research Objectives and Methodology

The Indo-Pacific region will play a critical role in shaping Canada's future over the next half-century. To that end, Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy (IPS) presents a comprehensive and integrated set of strategic priorities for the coming decade. Qualitative research was conducted by Ipsos to gather insights on how Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy was perceived among regional experts in five Indo-Pacific countries: Australia, South Korea, India, Indonesia, and the Philippines.

Forty-five in-depth interviews were conducted from March to May of 2025 with regional experts across the five Indo-Pacific countries included in the research: ten each from Australia, South Korea, India, and the Philippines, and five from Indonesia. The interviews were conducted in the language of choice of each regional expert and moderated by experienced local Ipsos moderators. The discussions were designed to broaden the understanding of regional experts' perspectives regarding the five strategic objectives in the IPS:

1. Promoting peace, resilience and security
2. Expanding trade, investment and supply chain resilience
3. Investing in and connecting people
4. Building a sustainable and green future
5. Canada as an active and engaged partner to the Indo-Pacific.

The insights from the research will provide Global Affairs Canada (GAC) policymakers with informed opinions based on which to conduct analysis and make recommendations on foreign, security, trade, and development policies that will inform the IPS five-year evaluation (FY 2027-28) and further refine the IPS. The total value of the contract was \$199,976.10 (including HST).

The research findings are qualitative in nature. When interpreting the results, it is important to bear in mind that the intention is in no way to produce results that are statistically representative of the study population. The findings are intended to be exploratory and directional.

Key Findings

Canada as an Active and Engaged Partner in the Indo-Pacific

Canada maintains a predominantly positive image across the five Indo-Pacific countries, with regional experts describing it as a developed democracy championing human rights, multiculturalism, and inclusivity. Canada is viewed as an attractive destination for study, migration, and tourism, though nuanced perspectives on how that has changed over time were provided. Canada's economic strengths were also highlighted, except less frequently, and regional experts mainly referenced Canada's exporting of key commodities. While negative impressions were minimal, some experts in India mentioned diplomatic tensions over the Khalistan movement, and those in South Korea and Australia referenced Canada's continued fossil fuel extraction.

The research revealed mixed perceptions regarding Canada's role as an active and engaged partner in the region. Canada is often seen as a middle "soft power" with a history of peacekeeping and support for a rules-based international order. However, its influence is frequently overshadowed by other Western powers, with some experts concluding Canada is a strategic but secondary player aligned with U.S. geopolitical priorities. Canada's geographical distance from the Indo-Pacific and perceived limited on-the-ground visibility have contributed to skepticism about its impact and

attractiveness as a partner of choice. Several experts pointed to Canada's lack of strategic communication, limited embassy presence, and minimal economic and military footprint in the region as factors hindering its engagement with the region.

Awareness of Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy (IPS) was generally low among regional experts, with only a few policy experts and academics expressing prior knowledge. While the strategy was welcomed as a starting point for enhanced regional involvement and praised for its coverage of thematic areas, experts' assessment was limited due to a lack of familiarity and experience with Canada's efforts in implementing the IPS. Some experts noted that the strategy relied heavily on widely accepted diplomatic principles without clearly articulating Canada's unique impact, other considered it could benefit from a clear operational framework, and a few that it resembled other countries' Indo-Pacific strategies. To improve its engagement, experts recommended boosting diplomatic visibility, actively promoting the IPS, and adopting a meaningful long-term approach with different sectors, like civil organizations, that other sectors can reference as a demonstration of Canada's understanding of country-specific nuances.

Promoting Peace, Resiliency and Security

Regional experts across the five countries studied identified the strategic competition between China and the U.S. as the dominant geopolitical dynamic in the Indo-Pacific, creating pressure for regional countries to navigate between the two powers. China's assertive behavior, particularly its territorial claims in the South China Sea and over Taiwan, was highlighted as a major security challenge. While the U.S. maintains military superiority and treaties in the region, concerns were expressed about potential U.S. isolationism. Japan, India, and Australia were identified as key regional powers acting to balance against China, while ASEAN's role in regional geopolitics was emphasized by experts in Indonesia and the Philippines.

Canada was perceived as having a limited security presence and influence in the region but was viewed positively as a potential security partner due to its reputation for promoting democracy, human rights, and multilateralism. Regional experts saw an opportunity for Canada to play a more prominent role in upholding values and acting as a bridge-builder among competing powers. Maritime security and defense cooperation were prioritized as areas where Canada could play a greater role, particularly in Indonesia and the Philippines. The Status of Visiting Forces Agreement with the Philippines and Canada's support for combating illegal fishing and maritime surveillance in Indonesia were noted as positive developments.

Regional experts offered several recommendations to enhance Canada's collaboration on security issues in the Indo-Pacific. These include active participation in ASEAN-led security frameworks, promoting dialogues on non-traditional threats, considering QUAD membership, and sharing cybersecurity expertise through bilateral cooperation. While Canada is viewed positively as a potential security partner, regional experts emphasized significant room for growth in its regional engagement and influence. They stressed the importance of Canada demonstrating sensitivity to the complex geopolitical dynamics many Indo-Pacific countries navigate, e.g., the U.S.-China relations. The regional experts suggested that Canada should focus on capacity-building initiatives rather than hard power projection, positioning itself as a stabilizing, neutral actor that offers strategic partnerships without political entanglement.

Expanding Trade, Investment, and Supply Chain Resilience

Regional experts identified several sectors as primary drivers of economic growth in the Indo-Pacific, including critical minerals and rare earths in Australia, nickel extraction in Indonesia, agri-food sectors in India and the Philippines, and defense-related industries in South Korea. Canada was generally recognized as a developed, stable economy with abundant natural resources and advanced technological sectors. However, regional experts suggested that Canadian

businesses' brand visibility and recognition in the region could be significantly enhanced, as they do not enjoy the same profile as American brands.

The clean or green technology energy sector was highlighted across all countries as an area for further collaboration with Canada. Other priority sectors for cooperation included natural resources, AI and innovation, food and agriculture, pharmaceuticals, and manufacturing. Regional experts also saw opportunities for Canadian foreign direct investment, particularly through pension funds. They welcomed Canada's pursuit of free trade and economic agreements, viewing Canada as a more stable and reliable partner compared to the U.S. in the current context.

Despite abundant opportunities, regional experts highlighted potential challenges to trade and investment. These included regulatory and bureaucratic hurdles in Indonesia, limited awareness of Canadian brands in the Philippines, and a perception of lacking full alignment with regional economic goals in Australia. In South Korea, fragmented domestic consensus on trade liberalization and perceptions of Canada's reliance on fossil fuels were noted as potential barriers.

To expand trade, investment, and supply chain resilience, regional experts recommended that Canada articulate a clear and compelling value proposition differentiating itself from other economic partners. They suggested prioritizing joint ventures in key sectors, adopting a flexible approach to trade negotiations that considers each country's specific needs and constraints, and leveraging existing trade agreements while exploring areas of economic development cooperation beyond these agreements. Experts emphasized the importance of Canada demonstrating long-term commitment to engagement in the region and adapting to local regulations and priorities.

Build a Sustainable and Green Future

Regional experts across the Indo-Pacific identified significant challenges from climate change, including rising sea levels, intensifying weather patterns, and biodiversity loss. While all five countries have initiated climate change measures, the approach, effectiveness and scope of these efforts vary due to technological limitations, resource constraints, fragmented governance, and the need to balance economic growth with environmental sustainability. Common challenges include limited access to advanced clean technologies, financial constraints, complex jurisdictional issues, and the need for capacity building. Regional experts emphasized the stark contrast between nations contributing to climate change and those bearing its consequences, highlighting the need for collaborative action and support from more developed countries, like Canada.

Ocean management emerged as a critical issue, with regional experts welcoming Canada's potential to offer technological support, policy expertise, and collaborative research opportunities in areas such as marine biodiversity conservation, sustainable fisheries management, and climate change adaptation strategies. There was particular enthusiasm by a few regional experts for leveraging Canada's cutting-edge maritime technologies, such as the Dark Vessel Detection program, to enhance regional maritime surveillance and enforcement capabilities. Regional experts also identified opportunities for deeper collaboration with Canada in disaster response, knowledge exchange in forest conservation and waste management, and joint initiatives in renewable energy projects and capacity building.

While Canada's commitment to multilateralism, environmental governance, and sustainable development was generally viewed positively, regional experts stressed the need for Canada to take a more active role in Indo-Pacific climate initiatives. They suggested that Canada could amplify its presence in regional climate forums, support technology transfer initiatives, collaborate on joint research and development projects, contribute to ocean management frameworks, align trade and investment policies with sustainability objectives, and engage with diverse communities to ensure inclusive and equitable climate action. Regional experts also highlighted the potential for partnerships with agile

players such as startups and small and medium enterprises focused on clean tech solutions, seeing these as drivers of significant change in the region with the right support and collaboration.

Invest In and Connect People

Regional experts across the Indo-Pacific viewed Canada positively as an attractive destination for living, studying, and visiting, citing factors such as high quality of life, political stability, robust social welfare, progressive policies, and world-class educational institutions. However, some noted evolving perceptions due to rising living costs, complex immigration processes, and competition from other countries. While Canadian institutions were recognized as world-class, experts suggested improvements in recognizing foreign qualifications and providing targeted support for international students. Despite recent political tensions with India, experts believed these issues could be resolved diplomatically, maintaining strong people-to-people links.

Canada's role in development cooperation and international assistance was generally viewed positively by those that have been exposed to them. With regional experts recognizing Canada as a committed actor supporting initiatives promoting gender equality, climate action, inclusive governance, and sustainable development. However, some felt Canada's presence and impact were not as visible as they could be, often overshadowed by major donors like the U.S., Japan, or Australia, or understating Canada's contributions. There was expressed interest in Canada's international assistance to women and other Canadian values, with suggestions for public promotion through partnerships with influential civil society organizations. They went on to suggest this could demonstrate goodwill and signal understanding of country and regional nuances positively impacting business, and other sectors.

To strengthen people-to-people ties, experts recommended that Canada leverage its international reputation as a progressive and inclusive society and develop comprehensive context-specific engagement strategies with each country, informed by local priorities and challenges. Other suggestions included exploring collaboration on Indigenous issues with Australia and Indonesia, building on diaspora connections particularly with India and the Philippines, educational exchanges that could maximize innovation, capitalizing on the positive reception of Canada's feminist international assistance policy in the Philippines, and leveraging Canada's progressive image while developing concrete partnerships in South Korea. Experts also emphasized the need to enhance the visibility and impact of Canada's international assistance efforts through targeted communications, local partnerships, and adaptive programming.

Political Neutrality Statement

I hereby certify, as a Representative of Ipsos, that the deliverables fully comply with the Government of Canada political neutrality requirements outlined in the Government of Canada's Policy on Communications and Federal Identity and Directive on the Management of Communications. Specifically, the deliverables do not include information on electoral voting intentions, political party preferences, party standings with the electorate, or ratings of the performance of a political party or its leaders.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brad Griffin".

Brad Griffin
President
Ipsos Public Affairs

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1. Research Objectives and Methodology

1.1 Research Objectives

The Indo-Pacific region will play a critical role in shaping Canada’s future over the next half-century. Encompassing 40 economies, over four billion people and \$47.19 trillion in economic activity, it is the world’s fastest growing region and home to six of Canada’s top 13 trading partners. The Indo-Pacific region represents significant opportunities for growing the Canadian economy, as well as opportunities for Canadian workers and businesses for decades to come.

To that end, Canada’s Indo-Pacific Strategy (IPS) presents a comprehensive and integrated set of strategic priorities for the coming decade, spanning defence and security, trade and economic cooperation, people-to-people ties, international assistance, as well as environment and climate change. Underpinning this Strategy is the recognition that Canada must expand its presence and strengthen its partnerships in the region in order to effectively protect and promote Canadian interests.

Qualitative research was conducted by Ipsos to gather insights on how Canada’s Indo-Pacific Strategy was perceived among regional experts in five Indo-Pacific countries: Australia, South Korea, India, Indonesia, and the Philippines. More specifically, the research was designed to broaden the understanding of regional experts’ perspectives regarding the IPS’s five strategic objectives and programs:

6. Promoting peace, resilience and security
7. Expanding trade, investment and supply chain resilience
8. Investing in and connecting people
9. Building a sustainable and green future
10. Canada as an active and engaged partner to the Indo-Pacific

The insights from the research will provide GAC policy makers with informed opinions on the basis of which to conduct analysis and make recommendations on foreign, security, trade, and development policies that will inform the IPS five-year evaluation (FY 2027-28) and further refine the IPS. The total value of the contract was \$199,976.10 (including HST).

1.2 Methodology

Forty-five in-depth interviews were conducted from March to May of 2025 with regional experts across the five Indo-Pacific countries included in the research. The table below provides a breakdown of the profile of regional experts included in the study.

Table 1 Breakdown of Interviews

Variable	Number of interviews
Country	
Australia	10
South Korea	10
India	10
Indonesia	5
Philippines	10

Type of expert	
Academic or researcher	14
Political adviser	5
Public servant	11
Civil society leader	8
Senior business executive	7

The research was delivered through a collaborative effort between the Ipsos Canada team and experienced professionals and moderators based in the local Ipsos office of each of the five countries of interest, all accustomed to conducting research with thought leaders from their country. The Ipsos Canada team took the lead in designing the research materials with input from Global Affairs Canada (GAC). Moderators and other professionals from the local offices met various times with Ipsos researchers based in Canada to discuss research objectives and the discussion guide, and there was continued communication and guidance during the execution of the research in each country.

Local Ipsos teams took the lead in developing lists of target regional experts through desk research and drawing on their established networks. Teams reached out to over 150 individuals in order to achieve the 45 completed interviews. GAC provided a signed letter in advance to the local Ipsos teams, which was translated as needed. Those contacted directly had a current or recent position, experience and tenure in one of the strategic objectives of the IPS. The recruitment process ensured a diverse mix of participants from various professional backgrounds and organizations.

The in-depth interviews were conducted in the preferred language of the regional experts, lasted about an hour, and the majority were done over video call with a few taking place in person. The local expert moderators used the discussion guide provided, which was translated where appropriate.

Conversations lasted about an hour each and most regional experts showed strong interest in the topics. Most were particularly animated when discussing Canada's strengths and strategic opportunities, but some were more cautious when commenting on sensitive political dynamics involving major powers due to their positions.

1.3 Interpretation of the Findings

The detailed findings from the interviews are presented in the remainder of this report. The findings have been structured around each of the five strategic objectives of the IPS and are qualitative in nature. The value of qualitative research is that it allows for in-depth exploration of the factors that shape attitudes and behaviours toward certain issues. When interpreting the results, it is important to bear in mind that the intention is in no way to produce results that are statistically representative of the study population. The findings are intended to be exploratory and directional.

2. Canada as an Active and Engaged Partner in the Indo-Pacific

Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy is a comprehensive roadmap designed to deepen Canada's engagement with the region. A central strategic objective of the IPS is positioning Canada as an active and engaged regional partner. This opening chapter presents the qualitative findings on the extent to which Canada is viewed in this regard from the perspectives of regional experts who took part in the study. It considers Canada's image and reputation in the region, followed by regional experts' perceptions of Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy.

2.1 Canada's Image and Reputation in the Region

The research found that Canada maintains an overall positive image across the five Indo-Pacific countries included in the study. Many regional experts described Canada's reputation using values-based terms from the outset of the discussions; Canada is recognized as a developed democracy with a multicultural and inclusive society that champions human rights. Regional experts in Australia went even further, describing Canada as a "sibling" nation to Australia and pointing to the shared Commonwealth history between the two countries which in turn shaped their current values and respective institutions. According to regional experts in Australia, these commonalities enhance trust and enthusiasm for cooperation between the two nations.

"Canada was consistently cited as a model country — culturally, politically, and in terms of inclusiveness. The values that Canada represents — democracy, human rights — are a kind of soft power." – Regional expert in South Korea

"Canada is Australia with the temperature turned down ... it's a snowy Australia". – Regional expert in Australia

Most regional experts agreed that Canada enjoys a strong reputation as a desirable destination. Those in South Korea and India highlighted that Canada has historically been viewed as an attractive destination for study and migration and this continues to remain somewhat true. Regional experts in the Philippines tended to focus on Canada's favourable reputation as a migration destination among Filipinos in the health and caregiving sectors, in part bolstered by well-documented stories of success and integration among Filipino diaspora working in these sectors that migrated to Canada. Those in Australia tended to focus more on Canada's reputation as a tourism destination due to its natural beauty. Notably, regional experts in Indonesia were less likely to spontaneously discuss Canada's appeal as a destination for travel, study or tourism.

"India regards Canada as an attractive destination for students, second only to the United States, with strong academic collaborations fostering exchange programs and joint research initiatives." – Regional expert in India

Regional experts were generally less likely to spontaneously point to Canada's strengths from an economic standpoint. The exceptions to this were regional experts in Indonesia and India. Some noted the critical role Canada plays as an exporter of nickel and agricultural goods to Indonesia, while those in India recognized Canada as a key trading partner for pharmaceuticals and machinery.

Outright negative impressions of Canada were minimal and confined to India and Australia. Regional experts in India referred to the diplomatic tension between the Indian and Canadian governments over the Khalistan movement,

although they were of the view that the situation has not significantly marred Canada's overall reputation in the country. In the case of Australia, there was reference to Canada's continued fossil fuel extraction.

Several regional experts made a distinction between the views of members of the public versus the business community and experts. They noted that Canada has a fairly low profile within their country, which means that it is often not viewed as having a brand or identity that is distinct from the U.S.

“Canada's brand seems to be too strongly affiliated with America so that its own [identity] is not visible [...] I'm sure that if we go down the street today, we ask people whether Canada and America are the same country, they probably won't be able to tell the difference.” – Regional expert in Indonesia

The qualitative evidence was more mixed with respect to Canada being viewed as an active, engaged and consequential partner in the region. Regional experts were more likely to perceive Canada as a middle "soft power," characterized by its historical role in international peacekeeping missions and its consistent alignment with a rules-based international order. At the same time, Canada's influence in the region and in international engagement more broadly were overshadowed by other Western powers. From this perspective, Canada was seen as a strategic but secondary player, respected for its diplomatic contributions yet ultimately operating within the framework of Western-led global governance. Some regional experts viewed Canada as the "good side" of America, a country that emphasizes multilateralism but remains fundamentally aligned with the geopolitical priorities of the U.S. and its allies. A more critical perspective from regional experts suggested that Canada lacks a unique voice and is often perceived as an extension of U.S. foreign policy rather than an independent global actor. Those expressing this view argued that Canada's geopolitical positioning is largely shaped by its economic and security dependence on the U.S., limiting its ability to project an autonomous foreign policy agenda. From this standpoint, Canada was categorized as "just another American ally," contributing to global governance but without the strategic weight or assertiveness.

“The U.S. enjoys a distinct "Made in America" brand identity, Canada's image is less about specific origin and more about being perceived as part of the developed Western world, often leading to it being overshadowed by the U.S.” – Regional expert in the Philippines

Canada's geographical distance from the Indo-Pacific region and perceived limited on-the-ground visibility exacerbated skepticism towards Canada's impact and attractiveness as a partner of choice. On the latter point, several regional experts pointed to a combination of Canada's lack of strategic communication and limited media coverage; lack of embassy presence and limited activities emanating from extant embassies; and limited economic and military footprint in the region. A few contrasted Canada's standing against countries and cities that are more central to the region, such as Japan, Australia, Singapore and Hong Kong.

“Canada sort of seems a bit distant and bit sort of like almost people have forgotten about it. Their perceptions are positive but just not on our radar screen at all”. – Regional expert in Australia

“Compared to others—like Australia or New Zealand—the Canadian embassy has seemed comparatively passive. [...] I've gotten the impression that they're relatively inactive.”– Regional expert in South Korea

2.2 Perceptions of Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy

Across all the countries, awareness of Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy tended to be low with only a few policy experts and academics expressing some high-level prior knowledge thereof. Regional experts were presented with details on the IPS, and several took the initiative to familiarize themselves with it prior to participating in the research. The strategy was

generally welcomed by regional experts as a starting point for Canada to enhance its regional involvement, though admittedly some participants were unsurprised to see one in place. The strategy was praised for being comprehensive in its coverage of thematic areas, as well as for reaffirming values and principles that are strongly associated with Canada.

While there was some cautious optimism towards the strategy, regional experts' general assessment of the strategy was limited. This was in part due the majority had not heard of the IPS prior to participating in the research, nor were there aware of the efforts made by Canada as a result of implementing IPS.

“The strategy sounds good—but where is the footprint?” – Regional expert in Indonesia

A few regional experts noted that the IPS leaned heavily on widely accepted diplomatic principles, such as transparency, inclusivity, human rights, and sustainable development, without clearly articulating what makes Canada's approach uniquely impactful. As a result, the IPS is seen as well-intentioned but somewhat generic, echoing similar frameworks already introduced by others. At worst, the IPS risks being seen as "preachy" or as being of limited relevance; for example, regional experts in South Korea noted that Canada's identity as a multicultural and inclusive society contributes to its positive image, but this image has limited strategic or political salience.

Detailed findings on the other pillars covered in the strategy are offered in subsequent sections.

2.3 Recommendations on Future IPS Engagement

Amid shifting global dynamics, some regional experts saw an opportunity for Canada to evolve its positioning and demonstrate greater strategic independence from the U.S. There was an expectation for Canada to build on its legacy as a principled and constructive partner while balancing humility with ambition that matches the resources and capabilities at its disposal.

To achieve the goal of being an active and engaged partner, regional experts offered a number of suggestions:

- Boost diplomatic visibility along with more active promotion of IPS in general and its constituent key initiatives.
- Engage local stakeholders to develop context-specific initiatives that reflect a deeper bilateral understanding.
- Increase communications on key areas in which Canada has a comparative advantage, such as climate change, food security, global health and trade.
- Adopt a less episodic and a more institutionalized long-term approach to engagement with partners in the region.
- Play a supporting role in existing initiatives led by Australia and New Zealand to engage South Pacific partners who have limited capacity to meaningfully engaged with all potential partners.

“The IPS does not adequately reflect the diverse and intricate perspectives of various states in the region. This is due to the fact that most states in the region are status-quo powers navigating a landscape that is, inevitably, experiencing significant strategic and economic transformations, which the Canadian IPS does not sufficiently recognize.” – Regional expert in the Philippines

3. Promoting Peace, Resiliency and Security

Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy outlines a commitment to advancing peace, resilience, and security across the region. This strategic objective focuses on strengthening Canada's defence, intelligence, and diplomatic capabilities to address emerging threats and uphold the rules-based international order. This chapter presents the qualitative findings on how Canada's security-related engagement is perceived by regional experts.

3.1 Regional Dynamics and Key Geopolitical Challenges

Across all five countries, there was a strong consensus that geopolitical dynamics in the region are dominated by the strategic competition between China and the U.S., creating pressures for Indo-Pacific countries to navigate between the two powers.

"It's skewing debates at the regional and bilateral level ... officials and leaders are overwhelmed with the demands that this geopolitical competition brings". – Regional expert in Australia

China's assertive behaviour was highlighted as a major security challenge by regional experts in all countries. They focused primarily on China's territorial claims around the South China Sea using the "nine-dash line," which is disputed by several ASEAN member states. There were significant concerns that China's maritime behaviour may risk sparking a regional conflict given the South China Sea's strategic and economic value. China's longstanding claim over Taiwan was seen as a further source of conflict. At the same time, China was viewed as an important economic partner that has deepened its economic influence over Southeast Asia via the Belt and Road Initiative.

The U.S. continues to maintain military superiority in the region and engages in defence treaties ensuring deterrence against Chinese expansionism, yet the direction of the current administration was a source of concern for many regional experts. A U.S. move towards more isolationism or transaction-based diplomacy was perceived as a risk to regional stability that could lead to fraying alliances and drive Indo-Pacific countries to reassess their security and diplomatic strategies.

Japan, India and Australia were the main regional powers identified as acting to balance against China. Regional experts highlighted how Japan has abandoned its pacifist stance, doubling its defence budget and strengthening ties with the U.S.; India has expanded its naval capabilities to counterbalance China's influence in the Indian Ocean; while Australia has deepened defence ties with the U.S. and U.K. through AUKUS, securing nuclear-powered submarines. There was a sense that these were trusted regional powers.

Regional experts in Indonesia and Philippines highlighted the role of ASEAN in regional geopolitics. On the one hand, they reinstated their countries' commitment to ASEAN centrality in navigating regional security issues. ASEAN-led mechanisms such as the East Asia Summit (EAS) and ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting-Plus (ADMM+) were seen as platforms where ASEAN countries can engage with multiple powers, including China and the U.S., while reinforcing collective norms of peace and non-intervention. On the other hand, regional experts pointed to internal divisions and pressures from new frameworks such as AUKUS and the Quad, which may undermine ASEAN's effectiveness as a forum for multilateral cooperation.

The role of Russia was mentioned minimally; its influence was discussed in reference to growing military cooperation with China that in turn could shift regional power dynamics, especially in maritime security and arms sales. Regional

experts in South Korea added North Korea as a destabilizing force for the region and noted that there are growing domestic calls for nuclear armament given the uncertainty over U.S. security guarantees in future.

3.2 Perceptions of Canada's Role in Regional Stability and Security Issues

Canada was seen as having relatively limited security presence and influence in the region. Nonetheless, Canada was generally viewed positively as a potential security partner with its reputation for promoting democracy, human rights and multilateralism noted as an asset. Regional experts reiterated the opportunity for Canada to play a more prominent role in upholding values in light of the evolving direction of U.S. foreign policy. More importantly, Canada's increasing engagement in the Indo-Pacific was interpreted not as a bid for dominance, but rather as an effort to act as a bridge-builder among competing powers. That said, it was noted by some that relying too heavily on a Western-centric values-based approach may present challenges to greater collaboration. Such an approach may limit Canada's ability to effectively engage countries in the region due to a lack of understanding of local governance styles and societal sensitivities. From a capacity point of view, Canada was seen as on par with other middle powers such as Australia.

"I genuinely respect Canada's commitment to freedom, human rights, democracy, inclusion, and multiculturalism. These values are the kinds that we need more of in the world." – Regional expert in South Korea

In light of the concerns over regional conflict in the South China Sea and Taiwan Strait outlined above, regional experts prioritized maritime security and defence cooperation as areas where Canada is and could play a greater role in future. This was strongest among regional experts in Indonesia and the Philippines.

Regional experts in Indonesia felt that some of the most tangible aspects of the IPS were the efforts to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing; support maritime surveillance; and build capacity in coastal states. This initiative was seen as aligning closely with Indonesia's own maritime security agenda under its Global Maritime Fulcrum doctrine. They went on to convey that greater cooperation in joint maritime patrols, technology transfer and technical training could not only strengthen Indonesia's domestic maritime governance but also contribute to broader regional stability.

Regional experts in the Philippines discussed the country's chronic underfunding, which severely limits the country's ability to modernize its military assets. They pointed to the recently negotiated Status of Visiting Forces Agreement with Canada as a positive development, with hope that the agreement will improve bilateral military cooperation by focusing on military training and capacity, as well as joint military exercises. That said, they noted challenges with securing public support for foreign military presence due to historical apprehensions and the need to maintain diplomatic relationships within ASEAN, where centrality and unity remain critical. There was also mention of the Royal Canadian Navy conducting joint patrols with the Philippine Navy within the country's Exclusive Economic Zone under the Maritime Cooperative Activity.

Involvement in existing regional multilateral forums and security frameworks in response to the current geopolitical dynamics was the other main area of agreement among some regional experts. Those in Indonesia and the Philippines had taken notice of the IPS's support for ASEAN's role in maintaining regional security. Their expectation was to see Canada move from rhetoric to consistent action. Regional experts in Australia focused more on the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD) and noted Canada's absence from the alliance.

Much of the discussions centred on security issues stemming from geopolitics. When presented with the wider range of security issues on which the IPS focuses, regional experts were either generally receptive to them or neutral due to their limited knowledge on the specific subject.

Cybersecurity was viewed by some regional experts as an increasingly critical dimension of national and regional security, especially given rising cyber threats targeting government systems, financial sectors and critical infrastructure. There was some limited awareness of Canada's strengths in cybersecurity expertise and resilient digital regulatory frameworks. Regional experts in the Philippines commended Canada for offering specialized training to the Cybercrime Investigation and Coordinating Center as part of a wider defence agreement.

Transnational crime and human trafficking were brought up primarily by regional experts in Indonesia and the Philippines; these participants referred to their countries' heightened vulnerability due to their geographical positions. Both countries were seen as susceptible to drugs and arms smuggling, while porous borders, widespread networks and weak monitoring also made both countries vulnerable to illicit movement of people. There was some awareness among participants in the Philippines of Canada's support in combatting these activities through information-sharing networks and law enforcement collaborations.

Interestingly, climate change was discussed by several regional experts as an increasingly important concern from a security perspective. Climate change-induced risks such as rising sea levels, extreme weather events, and resource scarcity were seen as potential drivers of regional instability, displacement, and conflict. There was a perception that Canada is committed to environmental protection, which is thus an area where Canada could contribute to broader regional resilience (see section 5 for more details).

3.3 Recommendations for Greater Collaboration on Security Issues

Key stakeholders offered a number of suggestions for greater collaboration between Canada and Indo-Pacific countries:

- Active participation in ASEAN-led security frameworks such as ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus, ASEAN Regional Forum, East Asia Summit.
- Promote security dialogues on non-traditional threats like piracy, cyber threats, and pandemics.
- Strengthen Track 1.5 diplomacy on security issues by investing in regional think tanks, research networks, and capacity-building initiatives.
- Consider joining the QUAD to anchor Canada in crucial security dialogues and enhance its regional presence.
- Transfer cybersecurity knowledge through bilateral cooperation on joint training programs for local cybersecurity agencies, technical assistance in securing election infrastructure and conducting joint cyber incident simulations.

In sum, while Canada was viewed positively as a potential security partner in the Indo-Pacific, regional experts suggested that there is significant room for growth in Canada's engagement and influence on the security pillar of the IPS. Regional experts reiterated the need for Canada to display sensitivity to the delicate balancing act many Indo-Pacific countries perform in response to U.S.-China dynamics. Canada should continue to focus on capacity-building over hard power projection and position itself as a stabilizing, neutral actor offering strategic partnerships without entanglement.

4. Expanding Trade, Investment, and Supply Chain Resilience

A key pillar of Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy is the expansion of trade, investment, and supply chain resilience. This objective reflects Canada's intent to diversify economic partnerships and enhance competitiveness in the region. This chapter examines perspectives on how Canada can enhance and diversify its economic relationships with key Indo-Pacific economies, as well as how Canada can respond to increased U.S. trade protectionism.

4.1 Economic Outlook of the Region

Regional experts identified several sectors as primary drivers of economic growth in the near future. Those in Australia shared that the resources sector, particularly critical minerals and rare earths, is poised for substantial expansion, reflecting the growing global demand for these strategic commodities. Indonesia's resources sector was also expected to grow, and regional experts there focused on nickel extraction and its importance in supporting the global shift to cleaner and more sustainable energy sources. Those in India and the Philippines tended to focus on growth in their countries' agri-food sectors stemming from increasing consumption rates and the need for food security in both countries. Regional experts in South Korea projected robust short-term growth in defence-related sectors, such as shipbuilding, propelled by the heightened focus on regional security dynamics.

In terms of sectors that will likely face decline, regional experts in Australia expected international student attraction to experience a downturn, with significant implications for university revenue streams and the broader economy. Rapid technological advancement and increasing automation were perceived as potential disruptors in Australia and the Philippines, likely to impact low-skilled white-collar jobs and necessitate a proactive approach to reskilling and workforce adaptation. Filipino regional experts also commented on the increased competition in the region regarding fruit exports, leading to a decrease in their exports. In Indonesia, concerns were raised about the long-term sustainability of mining reserves and the manufacturing sector's stagnation due to technology gaps and productivity challenges.

“We are not providing enough support for the agricultural industry, making it difficult for the sector to expand and reach its full potential. Investments in infrastructure, technology, and sustainable practices could help drive growth in this area.” – Regional expert from the Philippines

4.2 Perceptions of Canada's Economy and Businesses

Regional experts generally recognized Canada as a developed, stable economy renowned for its abundant natural resources and advanced technological sectors. There was a prevailing perception that Canada's economy is heavily dependent on resource exploitation, which could overshadow its strengths in innovation, services, and advanced manufacturing.

Feedback on Canadian businesses, goods, and services was more limited. Regional experts suggested that there was significant room for enhancing Canadian businesses' brand visibility and recognition in the region. This was an area where regional experts felt Canadian businesses did not enjoy the same level of profile as that of American brands. At the same time, several regional experts recognised that certain sectors of the Indo-Pacific business community have exposure to Canadian businesses. Among the Filipino business community, Canadian enterprises are highly regarded for their reliability, professionalism, and adherence to international standards.

“Canada is a developed country. But it’s not a manufacturing powerhouse. So most of what comes into Korea from Canada is things like lumber and minerals. Among the general public, the best-known Canadian product is probably ice wine. There aren’t many internationally prominent Canadian manufacturers.” – Regional expert from South Korea

“I think in areas where they are strong, are in mining, agriculture and technology”. – Regional expert from Australia

4.3 Opportunities for Trade, Investment and Economic Cooperation

Regional experts generally welcomed the IPS’s strategic objective on expanding trade, investment, and supply chain resilience. They expressed enthusiasm for joint research initiatives, technology transfers, and co-investment opportunities that can drive innovation and create new economic opportunities for both Canada and the region. Many went on to identify areas of alignment between their countries’ economic priorities and Canada’s perceived strengths.

Priority Sectors

The clean- or green-technology energy sector was highlighted by regional experts in all countries as an area for further collaboration between their countries and Canada. Those in South Korea focused specifically on hydrogen fuel cells, energy storage solutions, smart grid technologies, and collaborative R&D for the battery industry. They also described the strongly complementary economic structures of the two countries, considering that Canada is resource-rich and South Korea is a leader in high-tech manufacturing. This alignment has created a solid foundation for strategic, non-competitive cooperation as long as the costs of Canadian resources remain competitive compared to alternatives. Regional experts in the Philippines noted increasing demand for clean technology and energy driven by sustainability goals and public discourse, which presents a significant opportunity for investors, including those from Canada. They saw an opportunity for Canada to partner with local conglomerate giants and large corporations at the forefront of this trend who bring essential networks and knowledge of the Philippine business environment. They warned, however, that the renewable energy space is expected to become crowded. Similarly, regional experts in India recommended that Canada focus on expanding its foothold in India's growing clean technology and renewable energy sectors. Regional experts in Australia added the dimension of infrastructure growth as a result of green energy transition as a potential area for collaboration. Indonesian regional experts suggested that Canada could invest in and transfer its knowledge in hydropower, as this sector has significant underdeveloped potential.

“Canada also has strengths in environmentally sustainable industries, and these aren’t very well known in Korea. If Canada does more to promote those sectors, I think there’s substantial room for deeper cooperation.” – Regional expert from South Korea

Given Canada's reputation as a resource-rich country, regional experts saw opportunities for synergies between Canada's natural resources sectors and those of their own countries. Those in Indonesia and in the Philippines identified Canada as an attractive development and knowledge transfer partner to help their countries' nickel and critical mineral industries scale their operations sustainably. This view was underpinned by a perception that Canada is a leader in mining technology, sustainable extraction practices, and environmental management.

Canada was also recognized as a leader in AI and innovation, which aligned with several countries' economic priorities. Regional experts in Australia highlighted their country's ambitions around electric vehicles and saw an opportunity to partner with Canada to facilitate trade and investment. Those in Indonesia brought up Indonesia's push toward modernization and innovation, which requires the strengthening of its human capital and technology ecosystems. In this

context, Canada's world-class education system and thriving innovation sectors were viewed as significant partnership opportunities. Potential areas for collaboration included increasing academic exchanges, developing joint research programs, fostering innovation-driven entrepreneurship, and facilitating tailored technology transfers to support Indonesia's modernization initiatives. Regional experts in the Philippines noted that the country's status as a global Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) hub will have to adapt to the rise of AI technologies; Canada's thought leadership in the area would be valuable as the Philippines navigates that evolving landscape.

Other sectors for collaboration highlighted by regional experts in some countries included:

- Food and agriculture – Regional experts in the Philippines reiterated that food security is high on the domestic agenda in terms of ensuring affordability, accessibility, and availability of food to the country's growing middle class. They saw opportunity for greater cooperation given that Canada has a wealth of high-quality food and agricultural products, such as dairy, wheat, and meat, along with the expertise and technology to support these industries.
- Pharmaceuticals – This is an area of strength for India, which led regional experts to suggest the industry as a significant opportunity for Canada to capitalize on. Collaborative efforts in research and development could lead to mutual benefits, strengthening supply chain resilience.
- Manufacturing – Those in Indonesia mentioned that enhancing value chains, improving productivity, and upgrading industrial technology are national priorities. They noted that Canada can play a pivotal role by contributing to technology transfers and investment in advanced manufacturing capabilities.
- Business conduct and compliance – Regional experts in Australia discussed the opportunity for Canada to play a role in programs emphasizing responsible business conduct and compliance with human rights standards. This would align with the perceptions of Canadian values and potentially enhance trade relations and economic opportunities. The EU has already engaged in this area.

Foreign Direct Investment

Foreign direct investment (FDI) opportunities were discussed by some regional experts. Those in Australia felt that “Canadian superfunds” or pension funds had already proven to be impactful and could be leveraged further to drive meaningful economic growth across the region. Those in Indonesia felt that Canada's FDI footprint in the region was modest, which presents an opportunity for targeted investment that would position Canada as an influential and trusted economic partner.

“I think that investment story is a good one for them [Canada], and the Canadian super funds, it's something that Australia is conscious of... So, there are definitely some bright spots [in the Canadian economy], but I would definitely characterise them as bright spots rather than, comprehensive and consequential economy across the board.” – Regional expert in Australia

Economic Partnerships and Free Trade Agreements

Perspectives on Canada's strategy of pursuing free trade and economic agreements were very much influenced by the U.S. imposing tariffs on multiple countries in the lead-up to and during the fieldwork for this report. Regional experts generally agreed that, compared to the U.S. in the current context, Canada is a more stable, cooperative, principled, and reliable partner, as well as more reserved and less assertive in its economic and political interactions. Many agreed that Canada could step in and remind the region that it is a reliable economic partner as the actions of the U.S. administration has created gaps. While China is viewed as an important economic player in the region, skepticism and concern about forming ties and increasing debt levels remain. That said, regional experts felt that

stepping in to fill any gaps left by the U.S. can only go so far, as they viewed Canada as a secondary trade partner rather than a strategic hub, reinforced by its reliance on natural resources, trade dependence on the U.S., and limited market for goods and services.

“Given what’s happening in Washington... both Canada and Australia have to find other trading partners and it’s more urgent for Canada than for us... Washington at the moment is unreliable and China is not only unreliable, but quite hostile.” – Regional expert from Australia

There was some awareness of Canada's work on securing economic agreements with some countries in the region. Regional experts in Indonesia were familiar with the Canada-Indonesia Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) under the IPS. They viewed it as a positive development and showcase of Canada's willingness to be flexible in negotiations, which was seen as a departure from past practices.

“Their [Canada’s] economy follows the United States, which influences their international economic engagements and negotiating, which is more difficult than negotiating with the European Union, due to their ‘take it or leave it’ stance. However, recent developments [Canada-Indonesia CEPA] have changed perceptions of Canada’s willingness to engage more flexibly and openly now and its not their past ‘take it or leave it stance’ anymore” – Regional expert from Indonesia

Regional experts in the Philippines agreed that a Canada-ASEAN Free Trade Agreement (FTA) would enhance Canada's trade presence and allow it to compete more effectively with major players like China, Japan, and South Korea, who already have FTAs with ASEAN. A Canada-ASEAN FTA could be mutually beneficial, but regional experts called on Canada to address issues such as quota limitations and investment gaps in key sectors like education, agriculture, and infrastructure. A Canada-Philippines FTA, currently under discussion, was also seen in a positive light, and it was suggested that it should prioritize strengthening people-to-people ties through focused collaborations in migration, research, and innovation. Modernizing existing investment and double-tax agreements would further solidify the partnership between Canada and the Philippines.

Those in South Korea had also heard of the Korea–Canada Free Trade Agreement (CKFTA), though the belief was that the agreement is currently underutilized by both governments and industries. They suggested that there is scope to revisit CKFTA sector-specific provisions to modernize and reflect evolving trade dynamics – for example, digital trade, intellectual property, and Investor-State Dispute Settlement mechanisms.

Where trade agreements are not currently in place, receptivity was mixed. Some regional experts from India wondered about the required effort and potential challenges in setting up an agreement. In contrast, regional experts from Australia placed a strong emphasis on the value of the 'CANZUK' umbrella for enhancing cooperation and collaboration for mutual economic benefit.

4.4 Barriers to Trade, Investment and Economic Cooperation

Despite the abundant opportunities for trade and investment, regional experts highlighted some potential challenges.

In Indonesia, regulatory and bureaucratic hurdles remain a significant impediment to foreign investment. Regional experts explained that this is due to complex licensing procedures, compliance requirements, and administrative approvals, often leading to delays and increased costs for businesses. Additionally, infrastructure and logistics challenges, particularly in terms of inadequate transportation networks and port inefficiencies, hamper the movement of goods.

In the Philippines, regional experts considered that there is limited awareness of Canadian brands and products among the general population, which poses a challenge for Canadian companies seeking to establish a strong market presence. They emphasized the need for targeted branding and marketing efforts to raise the profile of Canadian goods and services and differentiate them from competitors. Moreover, they warned that inconsistent availability of Canadian products can hinder their widespread adoption in the Philippine market.

Australian regional experts noted that while there is significant potential for economic cooperation with Canada, the current level of engagement is perceived as lacking full alignment with regional economic goals. Canada's economic ties with Australia are sometimes overshadowed by the stronger presence of other regional players, such as China and India, and are impacted by Canada's strained relationships with both countries. To overcome these challenges, they suggested Canada articulate a clear and compelling value proposition that sets it apart from other economic partners and demonstrates a genuine commitment to long-term engagement in the region.

Regional experts from South Korea pointed to the country's fragmented domestic consensus on trade liberalization as a barrier to greater economic cooperation. They also noted the perception of Canada's continued reliance on fossil fuels as possibly clashing with South Korea's clean energy goals.

4.5 Recommendations on Expanding Trade, Investment, and Supply-Chain Resilience

Regional experts across the five countries considered that there is substantial potential for expanding their economic ties with Canada. They recommended focusing on the following:

- Articulate a clear and compelling value proposition that differentiates Canada from other economic partners and demonstrates a long-term commitment to engagement in the region. The perception of Canada as a stable and trustworthy ally presents a valuable opportunity for Canada to differentiate itself from the U.S., particularly in an era of heightened geopolitical tensions and economic uncertainty.
- Prioritize creating joint ventures to provide opportunities for innovation and demonstrate that Canada can be a flexible, reliable partner. Centre these ventures on priority areas like critical minerals, clean energy, agri-food, and digital technologies, which are likely to have an impact in local development.
- Adopt an approach to trade negotiations that considers the specific needs, sensitivities, local progress, and domestic constraints of each country. Regional experts from India emphasized the need for Canada to demonstrate this flexibility in its approach to trade negotiations. Regional experts from Indonesia considered that Canada should be aware of challenges that hinder trade, such as regulatory hurdles, infrastructure gaps, and domestic policy constraints. On adapting to local regulations, South Korean regional experts considered it important for Canadian goods to align with its RE100, that requires products to be manufactured with renewable energy, and green supply chain goals.
- Leverage existing trade agreements but continue to explore areas of economic development cooperation beyond those agreements. For example, Canada could engage in capacity-building initiatives and technical assistance programs that facilitate smoother economic interactions, as highlighted by regional experts from Indonesia and the Philippines.

5. Build a Sustainable and Green Future

Environmental sustainability is a core priority of Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy. This strategic objective emphasizes collaboration on climate action, clean energy, and biodiversity conservation. This chapter examines regional experts' views on how Canada can support and contribute to climate resilience, ocean management, and building a sustainable region.

5.1 Regional Impacts of Climate Change

The Indo-Pacific region faces significant challenges from climate change. Countries like the Philippines and Indonesia experience immediate threats from rising sea levels, intensifying weather patterns, and biodiversity loss. Regional experts across the region expressed heightened awareness and concern about these issues. They identified Japan, Germany, and other EU countries as recognized leaders in deploying technology and transition know-how to combat climate change.

Australian and Filipino regional experts highlighted the stark contrast between nations contributing to climate change and those bearing its consequences. Indian regional experts emphasized their country's rapid industrialization and vulnerability to climate impacts, underscoring the need for collaborative action. South Korean informants noted their country's evolving view of climate change as a strategic issue encompassing security, industrial competitiveness, and technological advancement.

While all five countries have initiated climate change measures, the effectiveness and scope of these efforts have varied. Filipino regional experts mentioned the Philippines' National Climate Change Action Plan, which prioritizes adaptation strategies and community resilience-building. They noted that their country's engagement is often catalyzed by natural disasters. Australian regional experts made similar points, highlighting the need for a more consistent, long-term approach. Indonesian informants noted technological limitations and resource constraints hindering progress. South Korean informants highlighted fragmented governance and short-term thinking as barriers to effective climate policy implementation. Indian regional experts emphasized the need for international cooperation to balance economic growth and energy demands with environmental sustainability.

“We want to do our part, but for us [the Philippines] to effectively meet targets, we are expecting the more developed world to help fund these efforts... those more industrialized countries, who have historically contributed more to environmental pollution, should take on greater accountability in reversing the effects of climate change.” – Regional expert from the Philippines

Challenges in Achieving Environmental Resilience

Regional experts identified common challenges across the Indo-Pacific region, including limited access to advanced clean technologies, financial constraints, complex jurisdictional issues, and the need for capacity building. Indonesian and Filipino informants noted their countries' focus on adaptation measures over mitigation efforts due to their vulnerability to climate impacts. Many concluded that balancing economic development aspirations with environmental conservation remains a persistent challenge. This balance requires innovative solutions and collaborative approaches.

“Our biggest problem is that we don’t have technology, the technology is not easy to access, and it can’t be acquired just like that and it’s not cheap” – Regional expert from Indonesia

5.2 Ocean Management and Collaboration Opportunities

The Indo-Pacific region faces various maritime challenges, including illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing; marine biodiversity loss; and the need for sustainable ocean governance. Indonesian regional experts highlighted their country's prioritization of combatting IUU fishing and developing a blue economy by safeguarding marine ecosystems. Filipino informants emphasized the need to strengthen maritime domain awareness and enforcement capabilities. Australian informants stressed the importance of free navigation and fish stock conservation.

“Maritime security ... is a big, big issue and free navigation in the Pacific ... huge amounts of fish stocks that feed huge swathes of the global population”. – Regional expert from Australia

Regional experts welcomed the inclusion of ocean management in Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy. They recognized Canada's potential to offer technological support, policy expertise, and collaborative research opportunities. These offerings could focus on marine biodiversity conservation, sustainable fisheries management, and climate change adaptation strategies. This focus signals a clear recognition of the pivotal role maritime issues play in the region's stability and prosperity. Several regional experts expressed enthusiasm for leveraging Canada's cutting-edge maritime technologies, such as the Dark Vessel Detection program. They saw potential in these technologies to enhance regional maritime surveillance and enforcement capabilities.

5.3 Perceptions of Canada's Role in Addressing Climate Change

Regional experts across the region identified opportunities for deeper collaboration with Canada in climate change mitigation, clean energy adaptation, disaster response, and knowledge exchange, for example in forest conservation and waste management. They highlighted potential joint initiatives in renewable energy projects and capacity building. These initiatives could focus on disaster preparedness and sustainable agriculture and engage local communities.

“One significant aspect endangered by climate change is food security, particularly for a country vulnerable to natural disasters. Agriculture is a critical sector that needs support. Consequently, initiatives that encourage sustainable agricultural practices to assist farmers in adapting to shifting climatic conditions should be prioritized to enhance food security. Such initiatives should encompass the promotion of agroforestry, organic farming, and advanced irrigation methods.” – Regional expert from the Philippines

“We [the Philippines] are always lagging in disaster response; complaints about our ineffective disaster response are common. So, I would imagine that if Canada has programs to support disaster response, they would be very much welcome.” – Regional expert from the Philippines

Canada's commitment to multilateralism, environmental governance, and sustainable development was generally viewed positively by regional experts, who noted that Canada has expertise in clean technologies, ocean management, and climate finance. However, they stressed the need for Canada to take a more active role in Indo-Pacific climate initiatives. Australian regional experts suggested that Canada could support initiatives already underway in the region. Various regional experts acknowledged Canada's efforts to address climate change but also pointed out some of Canada's continued oil and gas practices that they would like to see phased out.

“Continuing to extract fossil fuels in Canada has certainly tarnished [Canada's] reputation in the eyes of climate activists. Canada needs to be a lot more ambitious in terms of its climate policy and transition away from fossil fuels.” – Regional expert from Australia

“Korea’s Wolsong Nuclear Power Plant, located in Gyeongju, uses a CANDU-type reactor imported from Canada. In fact, only Canada and Korea still operate CANDU reactors. These are heavy water reactors known for producing relatively high levels of radioactive waste. From an environmental standpoint, I believe both countries should shut them down. But Canada views the CANDU as a core national technology and continues to develop it. So, while Canada has many strengths, its nuclear policy is troubling.” – Regional expert from South Korea

Regional experts discussed both current sustainable practices and ways to expand their adoption. Filipino informants noted that conglomerate giants aim to lead the sustainability transition, meeting growing civil society demands for sustainable practices. An Indonesian informant saw Canada as an appropriate investment partner in renewable energy, particularly hydropower. Indian and South Korean regional experts emphasized opportunities for joint ventures and innovation consortia with Canada in green technologies. They highlighted the rise of startups and small and medium enterprises focused on clean tech solutions as signs of growing momentum towards a sustainable future. These agile players, they suggested, could drive significant change in the region with the right partners.

“The synergy between Canadian technology and Indian implementation capabilities can create a massive impact on sustainable development,” – Regional expert from India

“In addition to funding local climate change initiatives, Canada has the chance to enhance its influence in the country by backing investments in renewable energy projects, including solar and wind power, which can contribute to lowering greenhouse gas emissions while delivering sustainable energy solutions. Moreover, Canada should focus on investing in training programs for individuals, particularly women, in disaster management, as well as supporting women-led start-up companies that are interested in green technology.” – Regional expert from the Philippines

5.4 Recommendations on Building a Sustainable and Green Future

Regional experts expressed a desire for more concerted cooperative action between their governments and Canada in building a sustainable and green future. They viewed Canada as a natural partner in this matter since Canada has expertise, resources, technological prowess, and commitment to environmental stewardship. They suggested Canada could:

- Amplify its presence and leadership in regional climate forums, multilateral initiatives, and knowledge-sharing platforms. Australian regional experts were particularly interested in leveraging Canada's support to enhance their own country's climate leadership in the region.
- Support and invest in technology transfer initiatives and capacity building that promote clean energy. Regional experts from India, Indonesia, and the Philippines highlighted this need to fill technological gaps and strengthen environmental resilience.
- Collaborate on joint research and development projects in green technologies, renewable energy, and sustainable infrastructure. India seeks collaborations that address its energy security needs, while South Korea aims to foster innovation-driven collaborations.
- Contribute to the development, promotion, and enforcement of ocean management frameworks, marine conservation efforts, and sustainable fisheries practices.
- Align trade, investment, and development assistance policies with sustainability objectives, promoting green growth, and supporting the transition to low-carbon economies.

- Engage with youth, women, and marginalized communities to ensure that climate action and sustainable development initiatives are inclusive, equitable, and responsive to local needs.

“Canada really needs to do the hard work and listen... support something like the Pacific Resilience Facility. That gives that kind of community level engagement” – Regional expert from Australia

“Rather than engaging in broad, multilateral collaborations, it’s often more efficient to learn from existing partners or from their own foreign subsidiaries. These channels offer quicker, more direct knowledge transfer, with minimal coordination costs.” – Regional expert from South Korea

6. Invest In and Connect People

Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy recognizes that strong people-to-people ties are essential for long-term regional engagement. This strategic objective focuses on enhancing educational, cultural, and professional exchanges, and supporting inclusive development. This chapter examines perspectives from regional experts on how Canada can deepen its engagement with people in the region.

6.1 People-to-People Ties

Regional experts in India and the Philippines emphasized the successful integration of their diasporas in Canada as crucial for maintaining strong people-to-people connections. In Indonesia and South Korea, they recognized the active presence of Canadian organizations and individuals in sectors such as education, trade, and environmental conservation, citing examples like the 2022 Korea-Canada summit. Australian regional experts highlighted the shared Commonwealth history as the foundation of ties between the two nations.

Across all five countries, Canadians were perceived positively. Regional experts praised their friendliness, open-mindedness, and respect for local cultures. In Indonesia, they noted Canadians' ability to navigate complex social landscapes. In the Philippines, they acknowledged Canadians' active participation in education, business, and cultural exchanges. South Korean regional experts expressed favourable views of Canadians, particularly in cultural exchanges and English language teaching. Regional experts highlighted the approachability and adaptability of Canadians as strengths. This ability to bridge cultural gaps and foster understanding is seen as an invaluable asset to strengthen ties across the Indo-Pacific region.

“I’d say Koreans tend to have a positive perception of Canada. There’s rarely any reason to think negatively about it. People may not know much, but Canada gives off a clean, wholesome image.” – Regional expert from South Korea

While some regional experts acknowledged Canada's efforts in fostering ties, others expressed reservations about the scale and depth of engagement, characterizing it as limited and sometimes superficial. Australian regional experts suggested leveraging expatriate networks to build stronger connections. Those in India and the Philippines emphasized the need for a more strategic approach to education and development assistance, aligning with local priorities. A regional expert from Indonesia suggested partnering with civil society organizations and mass organizations, like Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah, since they often inform public opinion in their country.

Canadian values such as democracy, human rights, and inclusive governance resonated strongly in Indonesia and the Philippines. Regional experts from these countries commented on civil liberties being increasingly prioritized. However, regional experts acknowledged that applying these values might sometimes clash with entrenched cultural norms and priorities, particularly in regions where economic pragmatism or traditional gender roles hold sway.

6.2 Canada as a Destination

Regional experts consistently viewed Canada as an attractive destination for living, studying, and visiting. They cited factors such as high quality of life, political stability, a peaceful reputation, robust social welfare system, progressive policies, a vibrant multicultural society, world-class educational institutions, and welcoming immigration policies.

Regional experts also highlighted the attractiveness of Canada's natural beauty and abundant recreational opportunities, which serve as powerful magnets for tourists and adventurers alike.

“Canada’s eco-friendly and beautiful environment is something Koreans really value but those that have been also described the country as slow-moving and resistant to change ...” – Key respondent from South Korea

However, some regional experts noted evolving perceptions of Canada due to factors like rising living costs, complex immigration processes, and competition from other countries vying for talent and tourism. Filipino regional experts shared that some individuals have shifted preferences towards destinations with more lenient visa requirements and lower living costs.

“From the perspective of those living in poverty in the Philippines, Canada embodies an ideal place to reside, visit, or to study. However, this perspective has evolved over time, as many people have shifted their preferences from Canada to other destinations.” – Regional expert from the Philippines

Regional experts demonstrated general awareness of Canada's immigration policies, with some praising Canada's policies on refugees, though their understanding varied. Some regional experts from the Philippines shared that the recent changes in Canada's immigration approach, such as the tightening of admission criteria and the decreased quotas for students and workers, have sparked concerns. They considered this to be signal of potential strain on resources and shifting attitudes towards multiculturalism in Canada. They emphasized the need for Canada to strike a delicate balance between maintaining the integrity of its immigration system and ensuring that it remains responsive to the needs and aspirations of those migrating. South Korean regional experts noted that while Canada remains popular for its inclusive atmosphere and English-language education, rising living costs and housing shortages have decreased its attractiveness for young professionals and international students. Indonesian regional experts echoed what Filipino and South Korean informants said, suggesting Canada could be more transparent in its communications about immigration policy changes and domestic issues so that expectations can be managed. Regional experts also suggested demonstrating that local governments are receiving support in managing the impacts of immigration.

“Canada's acceptance of refugees under Trudeau's administration has greatly boosted its global image, making it seem more open and humane” – Regional expert of Indonesia

Regional experts recognized Canadian institutions as world-class, with cutting-edge research opportunities. The quality and reputation of Canadian universities, coupled with the country's multicultural ethos and inclusive campus cultures, were seen as major draws for students seeking a transformative educational experience. They highlighted the potential for enhancing educational collaborations through the promotion of two-way student mobility initiatives, the expansion of inclusive scholarship programs, and fostering joint research projects that tackle shared challenges and generate innovative solutions. For example, Filipino regional experts suggested that Canada could collaborate with the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and educational institutions to initiate programs that nurture innovation, ultimately hosting annual innovation summits that they considered would draw national attention. For South Korean informants, Canada is an excellent choice as a destination for working holiday and language study opportunities. They are also aware that there is limited capacity in major cities and top-tier universities, and those who want to pursue these experiences might have to go to smaller cities.

However, some regional experts from Australia suggested improvements in recognizing foreign qualifications. Those from Indonesia and the Philippines suggested improvements in the provision of targeted support services that cater to the unique needs and aspirations of international students. Various regional experts suggested that Canada could

provide targeted funding, technical assistance, and capacity-building support to institutions and researchers in the region to explore and promote academic mobility to Canada.

“Canada is seen as offering high-quality education and diverse career opportunities ... educational exchanges could build foundational business relations in the long term”. – Regional expert from Australia

Despite recent political tensions between India and Canada, Indian regional experts believed these issues could be resolved diplomatically, maintaining strong people-to-people links and positive perceptions of Canadian educational institutions. ***“Compared to the U.S. or China, Canada has public goodwill”***, as one regional expert from India put it.

6.3 Perceived Impact of Canadian International Assistance

Regional experts held largely positive perceptions of Canada's role in development cooperation, sustainable development goals (SDGs), and international assistance. They recognized Canada as a committed and principled actor on the global stage supporting initiatives that promote gender equality, climate action, and inclusive governance. They also commended Canada's engagement in multilateral fora and its leadership in mobilizing resources and expertise to address global challenges.

While acknowledging Canada's contributions in the region, some regional experts felt its presence and impact were not as visible as they could be. An Australian regional expert noted that Canada's impact tends to be thematically focused rather than geographically concentrated, which makes Canada's efforts appear more impactful from a Canadian perspective than in each of the Indo-Pacific countries. Others suggested Canada's assistance efforts were often overshadowed by major donors in the region like the U.S., Japan, or Australia.

“Maybe Canada is just too modest. If they’re doing international aid but no one knows about it, isn’t that more of a publicity issue? They should let people know what kind of support they’re providing ... I personally haven’t felt the impact of Canada’s international support. Especially in areas like gender equality, which is facing significant backlash in Korea right now. There’s been a lot of regression, and feminism is under heavy attack here.” – Regional expert from South Korea

Regional experts who had direct experience with Canadian assistance programs spoke highly of their impact and effectiveness. In Indonesia, Canada's support was seen as instrumental in helping address climate change, with regional experts highlighting the value of Canadian expertise in renewable energy and climate-smart agriculture. In the Philippines, Canada's assistance was recognized for focusing on climate resilience, healthcare access, and sustainable development. Indian regional experts appreciated Canada's collaborative approach and emphasis on local ownership. Regional experts also appreciated that Canada does not have an imposing top-down model or an interest in quick fixes.

Although Canada's international assistance to women was not widely referenced, there was expressed interest in this area and other Canadian values. Regional experts mentioned that besides robust policy frameworks, there could be public promotion and support of Canadian values through partnerships with influential civil society organizations.

6.4 Interest in Strengthening Indigenous People’s Ties with the Region

Indonesian and Australian regional experts highlighted potential for Canada to engage more deeply with its own Indigenous communities. They suggested collaboration in areas such as Indigenous-led conservation; climate action initiatives like forest protection and traditional land management practices; promoting Indigenous rights and self-

determination; and facilitating cultural exchange programs, such as youth exchanges and language revitalization programs for cultural preservation. Australian regional experts highlighted that they have a similar and shared history of First Nation communities and also raised the possibility of developing collaborative programs focused on Indigenous knowledge, education, and rights.

6.5 Recommendations for Investing In and Connecting People

On the whole, regional experts across the five countries recognized the value of people-to-people ties, Canada's reputation as a welcoming and inclusive country, and the need to shift from thematic initiatives to a more proactive and geographically focused strategic engagement. They also noted the generally positive perception of Canada's international assistance efforts.

To effectively invest in and connect people between Canada and the Indo-Pacific region, regional experts recommended that Canada:

- Leverage its international reputation as a progressive, inclusive, and socially just society while ensuring that its policies and practices align with its stated values and commitments.
- Develop a comprehensive and context-specific people-to-people engagement strategy for the region and each country, informed by local priorities, opportunities, and challenges. For example:
 - In Australia and Indonesia, explore collaboration on Indigenous issues and reconciliation.
 - In India and the Philippines, build on strong diaspora connections and educational exchanges.
 - In the Philippines, capitalize on the positive reception of Canada's feminist international assistance policy.
 - In South Korea, leverage Canada's progressive and inclusive image while developing more concrete partnerships.
- Enhance the visibility, coordination, and impact of Canada's international assistance efforts in the region through targeted communications, local partnerships, and adaptive programming.
- Strengthen and expand educational exchanges, research collaborations, and skills development partnerships, focusing on mutual learning and reciprocity.

Appendix

Discussion Guide

INTRODUCTION

- Thank participant, introduce self & Ipsos.
- Explain purpose: Today's interview is for a global study Ipsos is conducting on behalf of the Government of Canada. We are speaking with experts in the Indo-Pacific region to gather insights to inform policy and collection of baseline data on Canada's presence and engagement in the region using the Indo-Pacific Strategy (IPS) as a vehicle.
- Explain format: We would appreciate an open and honest discussion. Our discussion will end at or before 60 minutes and you will receive an honorarium. We would like to record the discussion for our internal analysis and reporting purposes. Results are reported anonymously and in aggregate form. Can I confirm that you are comfortable with this?
- Introduction: Name and brief overview of expertise.

SECTION 1: 'BRAND' CANADA & AWARENESS OF IPS

ASK ALL EXPERTS

- 1.1 To begin with, how is Canada perceived in [Respondent's country]? In other words, what is Canada's "brand" or reputation in [Respondent's country]?
- What shapes these impressions?
 - Have views of Canada have changed over time? In what ways?
 - Is there a need for Canada to improve its image and reputation? If so, which specific areas and how should it do this? FOR INDIA PROBE INSTEAD: How Canada can build back a positive reputation in India in the face of media negativity?
- 1.2 Is Canada viewed as a differentiated and consequential partner of choice in the region?
- In your opinion, who views Canada this way, or not?
 - And in what areas do they view Canada this way, or not?
 - In which ways is Canada perceived as having an edge over other partners in these areas?
- Provide overview of Canada's IPS: Launched in June 2022, the IPS presents a comprehensive and integrated set of strategic priorities to deepen ties with the Indo-Pacific region for the coming decade, spanning defence and security, trade and economic cooperation, people-to-people ties, international assistance, as well as the environment and climate change.
 - The IPS includes five interconnected strategic objectives:
 - Promoting peace, resilience and security
 - Expanding trade, investment and supply chain resilience
 - Investing in and connecting people
 - Building a sustainable and green future
 - Canada as an active, engaged and reliable partner in the Indo-Pacific
- 1.3 How familiar, if at all, would you say you are with Canada's presence in the Indo-Pacific region¹?
- 1.4 Are you familiar with Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy?

¹ The Indo-Pacific region as defined by the Indo-Pacific Strategy include Australia, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Brunei, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Japan, Laos, Malaysia, Maldives, Mongolia, Nepal, New Zealand, the Pacific Island Countries (14), Pakistan, the Philippines, Republic of Korea, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Thailand, Timor Leste, and Vietnam.

- Based on what you know, what's your assessment of the strategy?
- Are the efforts Canada is making to become a partner of choice to Indo-Pacific economies visible?

CONFIRM WITH PARTICIPANT WHICH PILLARS ARE MOST RELEVANT FOR THEM BASED ON THEIR EXPERTISE. THE FINAL PILLAR ON ENGAGEMENT SHOULD BE ASKED OF ALL.

SECTION 2: SECURITY AND DEFENCE & GEOPOLITICAL AND STRATEGIC INTEREST

ASK ALL EXPERTS

OBJECTIVE OF THIS SECTION:

SECURITY AND DEFENCE

- Perspectives on regional security cooperation with Canada.
- Views on maritime security, cyber threats, and non-traditional security challenges (e.g., terrorism, transnational crime).
- Opinions on Canada's role in capacity-building and multilateral security frameworks.

GEOPOLITICAL AND STRATEGIC INTEREST

- How does the general population perceive Canada's role in the Indo-Pacific region?
- What are the key geopolitical challenges in the region (e.g., security concerns, territorial disputes), and how can Canada support the region as a partner?
- Views on regional power dynamics (e.g., the influence of China, the U.S., India, Japan, and ASEAN), and Canada in this context.

- 2.1 Thinking at the Indo-Pacific regional level, what are some of the key geopolitical challenges in the next 5-10 years?
- How would you describe the current balance of power in the region and how might it evolve in future?
 - What is the role of each of the major player in the region? How influential are they in the region? PROBE IN RELATION TO:
 - China
 - Russia
 - USA
 - India
 - Japan
 - Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)
- 2.2 What are the most pressing security challenges facing [Respondent's country] in the next 5 -10 years? To what extent are the following important security challenges? Can you elaborate on the nature of the threat that is facing [Respondent's country]? PROBE IN RELATION TO:
- Defence cooperation
 - Military capacity building
 - Foreign interference
 - Maritime security/Naval defense
 - Cyber threats/cyber security
 - Counterterrorism
 - Transnational crime
 - People smuggling and trafficking
 - Spread of disinformation
- 2.3 How is [Respondent's country] managing the security threats we just discussed?
- Are there gaps that exist in [Respondent's country]'s capacity or capability in dealing with these threats?
 - What are some of the main regional partners or multilateral security frameworks that [Respondent's country] is leveraging?

Let's turn to Canada.

2.4 Given geopolitical challenges and power dynamics in the region, where would you place Canada in terms of being a differentiated and consequential partner for [Respondent's country] and the region?

- What expectations does [Respondent's country] have for Canada's role and contributions to regional security?
- How would you describe Canada's contribution to date?
- What is Canada's relative influence in the region, compared to other countries? Where is Canada situated in the regional balance of power?
- How can it make a meaningful contribution to the region's security and defence?

2.5 To what extent is Canada seen as a reliable and trusted partner on security issues? Why/why not?

- Are you aware of Canada's collaboration with partners in the Indo-Pacific region on security issues?
- Canada collaborates with [Respondent's country] on...
 - Military capacity building
 - Foreign interference
 - Maritime security/Naval defense
 - Cyber threats/cyber security
 - Counterterrorism
 - Transnational crime
 - People smuggling and trafficking
 - Spread of disinformation
 - FOR EACH OF THE AREAS LISTED ABOVE FOLLOW UP WITH: Were you aware of this? How can Canada play a greater role in future?
 - ONCE ALL AREAS: Which of the areas we discussed should Canada prioritize? Which ones are relatively less important?
- Under IPS, Canada's security and defense engagement includes:
 - Defence cooperation
 - Military capacity building
 - Foreign interference
 - Maritime security/Naval defense
 - Cyber threats/cyber security
 - Counterterrorism
 - Transnational crime
 - Others as above
- What's your assessment of the likely impact of such activities?

2.6 Are there opportunities for greater security cooperation between Canada and [Respondent's country]?

- What might present challenges to cooperation?
- Which areas are seen as those where Canada can exercise the greatest influence? PROBE: maritime security, cybersecurity, law enforcement cooperation, military cooperation, Women, Peace and Security, or other areas?
- Does Canada have a role to play from a capacity-building perspective? What would that look like?
- Does Canada have a role to play in regional or multilateral security frameworks? Which ones?
- What can Canada learn from [Respondent's country] and the region's experiences of dealing with these security issues?

SECTION 3: EXPANDING TRADE, INVESTMENT, AND SUPPLY CHAIN RESILIENCE

ASK ALL ECONOMY AND TRADE PILLAR EXPERTS ONLY

OBJECTIVE OF THIS SECTION:

- Identify opportunities for trade and investment with Canada.

- Explore perceptions of Canada’s trade and economic engagement in the region and potential areas for economic cooperation and collaboration (e.g., in sectors like technology, energy, or infrastructure, food security).
- Identify challenges or barriers to trade and investment.

- 3.1 Thinking about [Respondent’s country]’s economy for the next 5-10 years, which are the main sectors that will likely...
- drive economic growth?
 - experience decline?
 - rely on imported goods and services?
 - benefit from FDI growth?

- 3.2 Which sectors would you say are [Respondent’s country] sectors of need?

- Energy?
- Agriculture/Food security?
- Infrastructure?
- Natural resources and critical minerals?
- Advanced Manufacturing?
- Services (health, financial, education, etc.)?
- Others?

Let’s turn to Canada now.

- 3.2 Thinking about Canada, what do you know about key sectors that makes up the Canadian economy? Does Canada have a perceived advantage in any sectors? If so, which ones?

- 3.3 How are Canada, Canadian businesses and Canadian goods and services viewed by the general population, and the business community in [Respondent’s country]? What shapes these impressions?

- FOR INDIA IF PARTICIPANT IS FOCUSED ON CANADIAN PENSION FUNDS ONLY PROBE: What about other types of businesses beyond pension/portfolio investment funds? How are other types of Canadian businesses viewed?
- What is Canada’s “brand” as a business partner in the region, when it comes to trade? Is Canada viewed as...
 - Reputable?
 - Reliable?
 - Proactive?
 - Aggressive?
 - Help me understand why or why not is Canada viewed in this way?
 - What other words would you use?
- Does the business community in [Respondent’s country] differentiate between Canada and Canadian businesses, goods and services vs. the USA and American businesses, goods and services or do they view them as the same? In what ways is Canada and Canadian business viewed differently?
- What should the Government of Canada and Canadian businesses do to enhance their reputation with [Respondent’s country]’s business community?

- 3.4 Canada’s IPS strategic objective on expanding trade, investment and supply chain resilience intends to promote rules-based trade, expand trade and digital partnerships, enhance innovation and research, trade and investment agreements, among others. To what extent, if at all, would you say these key areas align with the economic priorities of [Respondent’s country]?

- Is there potential for greater economic cooperation and collaboration between Canada and [Respondent’s country] that will most likely...
 - drive economic growth that you discussed earlier [NOTE TO MODERATOR: SECTORS IDENTIFIED IN Q3.1]? Which area(s) could Canada be most influential in and why?
 - rely on imports that you discussed earlier [NOTE TO MODERATOR: SECTORS IDENTIFIED IN Q3.1]? Which area(s) could Canada be most influential in and why?
- What sectors of the economy could potentially benefit from greater Canada-[Respondent’s country] economic cooperation and collaboration? PROBE FOR THE FOLLOWING SECTORS:

- Technology
- Infrastructure
- Energy
- Agriculture and Fisheries
- Critical Minerals
- Services (health, finance, research, education, etc.)

3.5 Canada is engaging with [Respondent's country] on trade and economic matters through free investment and trade agreements. Are you aware of these and what's your assessment of them?

- PROVIDE DETAILS AND COVER ALL THE FOLLOWING AGREEMENTS:
 - FOR PHILIPPINES AND INDONESIA ASK: Negotiating a Canada-ASEAN Free Trade Agreement.
 - FOR INDONESIA ASK: Canada-Indonesia Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement, Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement on Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) which, among other things, eliminates and reduces tariff and non-tariff barriers.
 - FOR SOUTH KOREA AS: Canada-Korea Free Trade Agreement, which among other things, 99% of Canada's exports are eligible for duty-free access.
- More broadly, in light of the current context of the US imposing tariffs across multiple countries, what's your perspective on Canada's pursuit of free trade agreement in the region?
 - Is there appetite in [Respondent's country] to explore these types of agreements? FOR COUNTRIES WHERE NO FREE TRADE AGREEMENTS PROVIDE DETAILS OF AGREEMENTS NEGOTIATED WITH OTHER COUNTRIES.
 - Do these developments affect how Canada is viewed by the business and trade community in [Respondent's country] vis-à-vis the US? In what ways?

SECTION 4: INVESTING AND CONNECTING WITH PEOPLE

CHECK WITH ALL PARTICIPANTS IF THEY FEEL KNOWLEDGABLE IN ADDRESSING THIS SECTION

OBJECTIVE OF THIS SECTION:

- Assess current people-to-people and educational ties between Canada and the Indo-Pacific and identify opportunities to expand academic partnerships and student mobility.
- Examine how citizens of [Respondent's country] perceive how Canada fosters economic, people-to-people ties, and educational linkages that strengthen bilateral relationships and advance shared interests.
- Analyze how Canadian values such as democracy, human rights, and inclusive governance are perceived in the Indo-Pacific and where they align or diverge from regional priorities.
- Perception of Canada's international assistance in the region and its perceived impact.

4.1 How is Canada viewed in [Respondent's country] as a place to live, study or visit nowadays and have views changed over time?

- What attracts [people of Respondent's country] and what deters them from going to live, study or visit Canada?
- Which other countries is Canada competing with in terms of immigration [Respondent's country]? PROBE SPECIFICALLY IN RELATION TO THE US IF NOT MENTIONED
- Have recent changes to Canada's immigration policy affected perspectives on going to live, study or visit Canada?
- What would strengthen educational, people to people ties between Canada and [Respondent's country]?

4.2 Conversely, do many Canadians come to [Respondent's country] to study, do business, conduct research, etc.? Are there opportunities to promote [Respondent's country] to Canadians?

4.3 Canada also contributes to the region through international assistance. What, if anything, have you heard about Canada's efforts in this regard? Do you have a sense of the impact of Canada's international assistance in the region?

- How effective, if at all is Canada at helping [Respondent's country] achieve its Sustainable Development Goals? In what ways *could* Canada support [Respondent's country]'s SDGs?

- Canada has an international assistance policy which aims to focus on funding initiatives that promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. Have you heard of this policy? What are the strengths and what are the weaknesses of such a policy?
- In which of the following areas of development can Canada make the most difference?
 - Inclusivity
 - Governance
 - Inequality
 - Democracy
 - Any others?

4.4 Under the IPS strategic objective on investing and connecting with people, in addition to the above areas, Canada envisions an increased engagement and partnerships with organisations, institutions, and civil society groups in [Respondent's country].

- To achieve this objective, which area, in your opinion should Canada focus its attention and why? (research, academia, student exchanges, working with NGOs, think tanks, etc.)?
- Indigenous Peoples from across Canada have established ties with Indigenous communities and organizations across the Indo-Pacific on issues as diverse as trade, oceans protections and Indigenous rights. What in your view are the best ways for Canada to engage with the Indigenous peoples of [Respondent country]?

SECTION 5: CLIMATE CHANGE & SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

ASK ALL CLIMATE CHANGE EXPERTS ONLY

OBJECTIVE OF THIS SECTION:

- Regional impacts of climate change and opportunities for collaboration with Canada on mitigation and adaptation.
- Role of Canada in promoting green technologies and sustainable development.
- Challenges in achieving environmental resilience and the role of international partnerships.

5.1 How much emphasis is being placed on the impacts of climate change, biodiversity loss, and natural disasters on [Respondent's country]? Has the level of emphasis increased, decreased or hasn't changed in recent years?

- What are the main risks from climate change, natural disasters, and biodiversity loss for [Respondent's country]?
- How are different sectors – government, businesses, not-for-profits – responding to the risks of climate change?
- What are the main actions being taken to mitigate or adapt to risks by each sector?

5.2 To what extent is the transition to clean energy and clean technologies a priority for [Respondent's country]?

- Are certain sectors or industries leaders or early adopters in clean energy and clean technologies within [Respondent's country]?
- Which countries or international companies are perceived to be leaders in clean energy and clean technology? Are Canada and Canadian companies seen as leaders in this space? Why/why not?
- Are there opportunities for Canada and Canadian companies to partner with [Respondent's country] on clean energy and clean technologies? Which areas present the greatest opportunities? What might prevent these types of partnerships from taking place?

5.3 Ocean management is an area of focus in Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy. Canada wants to work with partners in the region on sustainable fishing practices including expand measures against illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, protection of marine biodiversity and reducing ocean pollution.

- What's your reactions to these elements of Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy?
- To the best of your knowledge, are you aware of any initiatives that are already in place?
- Are you aware of Canada's Dark Vessel Detection Program?
- Can you think of any potential future partnerships that Canada can play a role in?
- Which areas are more likely to resonate with [Respondent's country]?

- What are some challenges to international partnerships in these areas?

5.4 Canada has expertise to share on managing the before, during and after impacts of natural disasters caused by climate change. Is this an area that Canada could collaborate more on with [Respondent's country] on? What makes you say that? How can Canada effectively share its expertise with [Respondent's country]?

5.5 Canada has a number of climate initiatives:

- Providing technical assistance to mitigate or adapt to the impacts of environmental change

FOR EACH INITIATIVE LISTED ABOVE PROBE:

- Were you aware of this?
- How effective, if at all, is such an initiative in supporting [Respondent's country]'s climate priorities?

ONCE ALL INITIATIVES ARE DISCUSSED PROBE:

- Of all the initiatives we discussed, which one would you say are the most effective in supporting [Respondent's country]'s climate priorities?
- What opportunities exist for Canada to collaborate or assist [Respondent's country]'s efforts to mitigate or adapt to the impacts of environmental change?

6. ENGAGEMENT & CLOSEOUT // 10 MINS

ASK ALL

6.1 Finally, Canada wants to be an active and engaged partner in the Indo-Pacific. To what extent would you say it is achieving this goal?

- Have you noticed a shift in Canada's presence and engagement in [Respondent's country] of late?
- Relative to other countries that engages with [Respondent's country], how would you describe Canada's influence in [Respondent's country]?
- What about in terms of Canada's influence in the Indo-Pacific relative to other countries?
- In the next few years, to achieve its goal of being an active and engaged partner, what does Canada need to...
 - CONTINUE doing
 - STOP doing
 - START doing

That's all my questions for you today. Thank you so much for all the feedback you provided today. Lots of great points and suggestions.

FREE SPACE DISCUSSION: We only have X minutes until the end of the scheduled time. I will open up the floor for any final comments or reflections you may have. Is there anything else you wish to mention that we haven't addressed yet, or revisit anything that I might've missed about these topics?

END SESSION

Advanced Letter

Dear Sir or Madam,

The Government of Canada is committed to being an active, engaged and reliable partner in the Indo-Pacific. In 2022, we launched our comprehensive Indo-Pacific Strategy (IPS) to guide our policies and engagement in the region over the next decades.

I am writing to invite you to participate in an important research study that will contribute to our assessment of the IPS's impact and effectiveness. As an expert and thought leader in [INSERT COUNTRY], your insights and perspectives are invaluable to our understanding of the region.

The study aims to gather in-depth knowledge from thought leaders across the Indo-Pacific region on a range of critical issues, including:

1. Promote peace, resilience and security
2. Expand trade, investment and supply chain resilience
3. Invest in and connect people
4. Build a sustainable and green future
5. Canada as an active and engaged partner to the Indo-Pacific

Ipsos, the global market and social research firm, is our research study partners. Your participation would involve a virtual interview with an Ipsos researcher lasting no longer than 60 minutes. The interview will be scheduled at a time that is most convenient for you. As a thank you for your time, we are offering [DESCRIBE INCENTIVE].

We assure you that your responses will be treated with the utmost confidentiality and will be used solely for the purpose of informing our policy evaluation and development process. Ipsos will take the lead in analysing and reporting responses at an aggregate level. Your participation is entirely voluntary, and you may choose to withdraw at any time.

A member from the Ipsos team will follow-up with you directly. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact [ENTER IPSOS CONTACT] or Julius.Egbeyemi@international.gc.ca who is managing the project.

Thank you for considering this request. We look forward to the possibility of learning from your expertise and insights.

Sincerely,

[signature]

Julius Egbeyemi
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