

Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy: Crossing the North Pacific

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The Attraction of the Indo-Pacific

The magnetism of the Indo-Pacific and lure of its many beneficial opportunities is attracting nations, many of which have expressed their intentions and expectations in the form of Indo-Pacific strategies. Canada's Indo-Pacific strategy released on 27 November 2022¹ joins the increasing list of such strategies, and perhaps lays to rest the question asked after AUKUS was announced as to "Why is Canada missing from the Indo-Pacific?"² It was therefore a natural process for Canada, which is a member of the Five Eyes intelligence-sharing arrangement, to join the Anglosphere Indo-Pacific nations grouping consisting of Australia, New Zealand, United Kingdom (UK), and the United States (US).³ Furthermore, Canada is "overwhelmingly dependent on Pacific-based maritime trade, freedom of navigation, and maintenance of the rules-based order of ocean governance, security, and safety of shipping",⁴ which adds to its major interest in the Indo-Pacific. Therefore, the pressure grew on Canada "to take a bigger part in the Indo-Pacific's development and support for a rules-based order or risk getting locked out of the region's economic, diplomatic and security benefits."⁵ These aspects will add to the bouquet of threats, challenges, risks, and opportunities that Canada as a North American continental nation with shorelines on three oceans faces, and Ottawa will need to address these issues to become an acknowledged Indo-Pacific Nation.

A 2020 National Opinion Poll (NOP) conducted by the Asia Pacific Foundation (APF) seeking views from Canadian citizens about engagement with Asia indicated a favourable tilt, especially with respect to trade.⁶ This support, along with the increasing strategic pressure, perhaps set the stage for Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy. It is not surprising that the strategy opens with calling the Indo-Pacific a *New Horizon of Opportunity* with figures and graphics supporting *Economic*

¹ *Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy*, Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2022, available at <https://www.international.gc.ca/transparency-transparence/assets/pdfs/indo-pacific-indo-pacifique/indo-pacific-indo-pacifique-en.pdf>, accessed on 05 January 2022

² Steve Raaymakers, *Why is Canada missing from the Indo-Pacific?*, *The Diplomat*, 25 October 2021, available at <https://thediplomat.com/2021/10/why-is-canada-missing-from-the-indo-pacific/>, accessed on 05 January 2023

³ *Ibid*

⁴ *Ibid*

⁵ Stephen Nagy, *Canada in the Indo-Pacific?*, SPP Communique, Vol 14:15, 24 May 2021, The School of Public Policy, University of Calgary, available at Nagy, Stephen Robert, *Canada in the Indo-Pacific?* (May 19, 2021). The School of Public Policy Publications 2021, available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3848952>, accessed on 05 January 2023

⁶ Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada, *Canadian Views on Asia: 2020 National Opinion Poll*, 25 November 2020, <https://www.asiapacific.ca/sites/default/files/publication-pdf/2020%20NOP%20Canadian%20Views%20on%20Asia.pdf>, accessed on 05 January 2023

Opportunity throughout the document.⁷ This paper examines the factors that drive Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy and aspects that merit attention.

The Indo-Pacific Viewed from Ottawa

The 2020 NOP conducted by the AFP led to 17 takeaways⁸, from which the following relevant figures emerged:

- 38 per cent considered Canada a part of the Asia-Pacific region, a drop from 43 per cent from 2018.
- 35 per cent considered China as an opportunity and not a threat, a reduction from 60 per cent from 2018.
- 83 per cent felt that Canada should stand up to China as Canadian national values such as the rule of law, human rights, and democracy were on the line.
- Measured on a scale of 1 to 7, China's economic importance rating dropped to 5.0 from 5.6 in 2018, while the rating of the US increased to 6.1 from 6.0 in 2018.
- 49 per cent considered trade with the US more important than trade with Asia, as against 59 per cent who thought otherwise in 2018.
- 58 per cent considered export of goods and services to Asia more of an opportunity than interprovincial trade.
- 47 per cent considered investments from Asia beneficial as against 59 per cent in 2018. However, most Canadians remain open to more investments in the high-tech and biomedical sectors from India, Japan, and South Korea vis-à-vis China.
- 63 per cent supported an FTA with India, 76 per cent with the Pacific Alliance, and 68 per cent with ASEAN member states (a five per cent increase since 2018).
- 56 per cent considered alignment with like-minded democracies such as Australia, Japan, South Korea, UK, and the European Union (EU) as top priority, while 53 per cent considered alignment with the US as the fourth and last priority.

The acceptance and usage of the term Indo-Pacific in lieu of Asia-Pacific is the first step in focussing a nation's vision of the region. There is a smattering use of the terms Asia-Pacific and Asia in the Canadian lexicon as is evident from perusing the following national security strategy/policy documents spread over almost two decades: *Securing an Open Society: Canada's National Security Policy* released on 27 April 2004⁹, *Securing an Open Society: One Year later* (progress report on the 2004 document) released in April 2005¹⁰, and *Strong Secure Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy* of 2017¹¹. There is a webpage of the Canadian Government entitled *Canada and the Asia-Pacific* that provides details regarding Canada's engagements in the region.¹² This gradual shift is a natural

⁷ *Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy*, pp 1,2,10,12, and 13

⁸ *Canadian Views on Asia: 2020 National Opinion Poll*, pp 5-9

⁹ *Securing an Open Society: Canada's National Security Policy*, Privy Council Office, Canada, 2004

¹⁰ *Securing an Open Society: One Year later, Progress Report on the Implementation of Canada's National Security Policy*, Privy Council Office, Canada, 2005

¹¹ *Strong Secure Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy*, Ministry of National Defence, Canada, 2017

¹² See https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/international_relations-relations_internationales/asia_pacific-asie_pacifique/index.aspx?lang=eng, accessed on 11 January 2023

process as Canada's attention has, till date, been focussed on the Arctic and the North Atlantic. Therefore, though the introduction and use of the term Indo-Pacific in the strategy document, though a welcome step, it is limited by Ottawa's geopolitical horizon. As per the strategy, the Indo-Pacific "comprises 40 countries and economies", stretching from Japan and the Pacific Islands in the east to Pakistan and the west coast of India.¹³ Further, primarily for Canada "The Indo-Pacific region represents significant opportunities for growing the economy here at home, as well as opportunities for Canadian workers and businesses for decades to come."¹⁴ The strategy caters for engagements for a decade, of which the first five years will cost 2.3 billion CAD.¹⁵ Hence, it is evident that the geopolitical stretch is clearly based on Canadian national economic interests.

Engaging the Indo-Pacific

The strategy identifies Canada as a Pacific nation and the Indo-Pacific as its neighbourhood¹⁶, and acknowledges that "The rising influence of the Indo-Pacific region is a once-in-a-generation global shift that requires a generational Canadian response".¹⁷ This approach is a good start point for a nation whose major attention has been focussed on the North Atlantic and the Arctic regions since the mid-twentieth century. However, the absence of framing the idea of a *Free and Open Indo-Pacific*, which is a common element of most national Indo-Pacific strategies, is quite conspicuous. This term is used only in connection with Japan (See Table 2, para (c)). Hence, to be considered and counted as an Indo-Pacific nation, Canada will require to view the Indo-Pacific through an *Indo-Pacific lens* and not a North American or European or North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) lens. The success of Canada's Indo-Pacific engagements would depend heavily on Ottawa's ability to balance these areas, and the strategy identifies the need for it to "... invest resources and build knowledge and capacity to engage".¹⁸

The strategy also identifies the North Pacific as Canada's neighbourhood.¹⁹ To avoid subsequent confusion, this North Pacific region could be termed as Canada's *Immediate Pacific Neighbourhood* for three reasons. Firstly, it is one of the areas that provides access to the Canadian Arctic. Secondly, it is the maritime area which connects Canada to the broader Indo-Pacific. Thirdly, due to its proximity as an adjunct area within which Canada "can count on long-standing and deepening relationships with Japan and the Republic of Korea"²⁰. The mention of Japan and South Korea in Canada's *Immediate Pacific Neighbourhood* could be to counter and balance the presence of Russia as well as the stated challenges posed by North Korea.

¹³ *Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy*, p 1

¹⁴ *Ibid*

¹⁵ For a detailed breakdown see, *Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy: New Initiatives and Resources*, <https://www.canada.ca/en/global-affairs/news/2022/11/canadas-indo-pacific-strategy-new-initiatives-and-resources.html>, accessed 11 January 2023

¹⁶ *Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy*, p 23

¹⁷ *Ibid*, p 4

¹⁸ *Ibid*, p 5

¹⁹ *Ibid*, p 10

²⁰ *Ibid*, p 10

The approach to the Indo-Pacific is outlined in five interconnected Strategic Objectives (SOs)²¹; and the strategy also lays out a broad roadmap for engaging select nations: China, India, Japan, South Korea, and ASEAN²². Canada's approach to realize the five SOs and roadmap to engage identified Indo-Pacific nations are tabulated in Tables 1 and 2, respectively. Table 2 also indicates the SOs that would be most connected with the roadmap.

Table 1: Canada's Approach to Realize its Strategic Objectives

Ser	Strategic Objective	Canada's Approach
(a)	SO1: Promote peace, resilience, and security	(i) Invest in an enhanced military presence, along with intelligence and cyber security, to promote security in the region and ensure the safety of Canadians. (ii) Build the Women, Peace, and Security agenda (iii) Build established security partnerships to reinforce regional capabilities and promote stability.
(b)	SO2: Expand trade, investment, and supply chain resilience	(i) Seize economic opportunities by focussing on trade, investment, and supply chain resilience. (ii) Appoint an Indo-Pacific Trade Representative to advance Canada's regional trade policy, promotion, and economic cooperation objectives in the region (iii) Strengthen and diversify our regional partnerships to: (aa) Strengthen economic ties across the Indo-Pacific. (bb) Build a stronger and more secure economy at home.
(c)	SO3: Invest in and connect people	(i) Expand education exchanges. (ii) Bolster visa-processing capacity. (iii) Empower Canadian organisations and experts to engage in the region. (iv) Address local development challenges by increasing feminist international assistance. (v) Advance collective efforts towards achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

²¹ Ibid, p 5

²² Ibid, pp 7-13

Ser	Strategic Objective	Canada's Approach
		(vi) Actively defend human rights, including women's rights.
(d)	SO4: Build a sustainable and green future	(i) Share expertise in clean technology, oceans management, energy transition and climate finance (ii) Work collaboratively to reduce emissions and prevent further biodiversity loss (iii) Work with G7 partners to meet the growing USD 2.1 trillion infrastructure funding gap.
(e)	SO5: Canada as an active and engaged partner to the Indo-Pacific	(i) Appoint a special envoy for the Indo-Pacific region to coordinate a whole-of-government approach and manage strategic implementation of the strategy (ii) Reinforce Canada's influence among partners and allies in the region. (iii) Offer more diplomatic, economic, military, and technical support and cooperation. (iv) Respond to calls from regional partners for deeper engagement.
Source: Author		

Table 2: Canada's Roadmap to Engage Identified Indo-Pacific Nations

Ser	Nation(s) and Canada's Base View	Canada's Roadmap and Associated SO(s)
(a)	China (i) Canada's approach to China is critical for the strategy. (ii) China is an increasingly disruptive global power which disregards existing international rules and norms. (iii) China's size and influence makes cooperation necessary, and its economy offers opportunities for Canadian exporters.	Approach China centric issues, at the domestic, bilateral, regional, and multilateral levels, like: (i) Challenging China's coercive behaviour that impact Canada's security and national interests. (ii) Working with partners to address China's actions that are contrary to international rules and norms. (iii) Cooperating with China to address global issues such as climate change, biodiversity loss, global health, and nuclear proliferation. (iv) While following a One-China policy continue to engage Taiwan in mutually beneficial areas and oppose any action that threatens the Taiwan Strait status quo. Most Connected SOs: 1, 2, and 5
(b)	India Growing strategic, economic, and demographic importance and mutual	(i) Enhance economic ties by: (aa) Engaging in deeper trade and Investment.

Ser	Nation(s) and Canada's Base View	Canada's Roadmap and Associated SO(s)
	interests position India as a critical nation to engage.	<p>(bb) Build resilient supply chains.</p> <p>(cc) Expand market access by concluding an Early Progress Trade Agreement (EPTA) as a step toward a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA).</p> <p>(dd) Promote implementation of the EPTA for businesses and investors by creating a Canada-India desk within the Trade Commissioner Service.</p> <p>(ii) Enhance people to people contact by:</p> <p>(aa) Easing travel to Canada by enhancing visa-processing capacity in New Delhi and Chandigarh.</p> <p>(bb) Supporting academic, educational, cultural, youth and research exchanges.</p> <p>(iii) Enhance cooperation in areas of convergence like, climate change, environment protection, renewable energy, and clean technology.</p> <p>(iv) Seek cooperation in new areas of common interest and values, including security, promotion of democracy, pluralism, and human rights.</p> <p>Most Connected SOs: All five</p>
(c)	<p>Japan</p> <p>(i) Apart from the US, Japan is Canada's only G7 partner in the North Pacific region.</p> <p>(ii) Japan is Canada's most important commercial partner, and largest source of bilateral Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in Asia.</p> <p>(ii) Canada and Japan are the two largest economies in the</p>	<p>(i) Implement the six shared priorities agreed to in 2021 towards a free and open Indo-Pacific.²⁴</p> <p>(ii) Work together to address free trade, sustainable energy, climate change and environmental protection.</p> <p>(iii) Conclude an agreement on General Security of Information.</p> <p>(iv) Support defence procurement and broader national security objectives.</p>

²⁴ In 2021, Canada and Japan agreed on six areas of cooperation to advance their shared vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific. These areas were the rule of law; peacekeeping operations, peacebuilding, and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief; health security and responding to COVID-19; energy security; free trade promotion and trade agreement implementation; and environment and climate change. For more details see <https://www.canada.ca/en/global-affairs/news/2021/05/shared-canada-japan-priorities-contributing-to-a-free-and-open-indopacific-region.html>, accessed on 09 January 2023

Ser	Nation(s) and Canada's Base View	Canada's Roadmap and Associated SO(s)
	<p>Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP)²³.</p> <p>(iii) Japan and Canada share values and interests to address global challenges and strengthening of the rules-based international order.</p>	<p>(v) Support Japan's G7 presidency in 2023.</p> <p>(vi) Participate in the 2025 World Expo to be held in Osaka, and showcase Canadian innovation, resources, investment, and education to the broader Indo-Pacific region.</p> <p>Most Connected SOs: All five</p>
(d)	<p>Republic of Korea (RoK)</p> <p>(i) RoK is a strong democratic partner in the North Pacific region with which Canada shares bilateral and global strategic interests, long standing trade and cultural ties and a history of mutual support.</p> <p>(ii) RoK is Canada's seventh largest merchandise export market, and an increasing source of FDI into Canada.</p> <p>(iii) The Republic of Korea's Indo-Pacific Strategy released on 28 December 2022 mentions increased economic security cooperation with Canada through stabilised supply chains.²⁵</p> <p>(iv) Continuous Canadian military presence under the UN Command to preserve peace in the peninsula.</p>	<p>(i) Advance the September 2022 Comprehensive Strategic Partnership and launch a high-level Dialogue as part of the partnership.</p> <p>(ii) Work together in support of resilient supply chains, the supply of critical minerals and high labour conditions and environmental protections, including the transition to clean energy.</p> <p>(iii) Establish a new annual bilateral climate change dialogue.</p> <p>(iv) Support the efforts to achieve a denuclearized, peaceful, and prosperous Korean Peninsula.</p> <p>Most Connected SOs: All five</p>
(e)	<p>ASEAN</p> <p>Respect for ASEAN Centrality and the importance of ASEAN for regional prosperity and stability.</p>	<p>(i) Deepen the partnership by placing ASEAN at the level of a Strategic Partner and seeking membership in the ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting Plus (ADMM+) and the East Asia Summit (EAS).</p> <p>(ii) Strengthen Canadian diplomatic presence in the region and increase security cooperation with ASEAN and its members.</p> <p>(iii) Continue to support ASEAN centrality by reinforcing alignment between Canada's Indo-</p>

²³ CPTPP is a free trade agreement (FTA) between 11 nations of the Asia-Pacific region: Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, and Vietnam. For more details see https://www.international.gc.ca/trade-commerce/trade-agreements-accords-commerciaux/agr-acc/cptpp-ptppg/background-document_information.aspx?lang=eng, accessed 09 January 2023

²⁵ *Strategy for a Free, Peaceful, and Prosperous Indo-Pacific Region (2022)*, Republic of Korea, p 14, <https://www.mofa.go.kr/viewer/skin/doc.html?fn=20221228060752073.pdf&rs=/viewer/result/202212>, accessed on 10 January 2022

Ser	Nation(s) and Canada's Base View	Canada's Roadmap and Associated SO(s)
		Pacific Strategy and the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP). (iv) Augment contribution to the ASEAN-Canada Plan of Action Trust Fund. ²⁶ (v) Negotiate and implement a Canada-ASEAN FTA and a CEPA with Indonesia. (vi) Launch a Canadian Trade Gateway in Southeast Asia as a market entry point and catalyst for: (aa) Canadian businesses to grow in the region. (bb) Enhancing Canada's profile as a commercial and investment partner. Most Connected SOs: All five
Source: Author		

Apart from the nations mentioned in Table 2, which have specific sections in the strategy, the document also looks at engaging other identified Indo-Pacific nations across the full spectrum of the five SOs. SO4 addresses *all-pervasive* aspects like climate change, blue economy, sustainable development, and environmental issues like fishing, infrastructure, and biodiversity protection and conservation, etc. Hence, all 40 nations would be engaged under this SO as it would provide adequate convergence and space for cooperation. In comparison, some issues covered under the balance four SOs would require recognition and acceptance of regional and national sensitivities and outlooks, hence the reiterated need for Canada to view this region from an *Indo-Pacific Lens* (see Table 3 for a detailed breakdown of the engagement matrix of SOs 1, 2, 3, and 5 with identified Indo-Pacific nations). Some of these sensitivities arise from sovereignty related aspects, which were born from the long periods of colonisation and exploitation endured by many Indo-Pacific nations. Therefore, while pursuing its Indo-Pacific strategy, Canada, as it seeks to position itself as an Indo-Pacific nation, may like to balance its approach to the region with respect to its own national interests and domestically polled views.

Table 3: Engagement Matrix with Identified Indo-Pacific Nations

Ser	Nation(s)	Aim(s)
SO1: Promote peace, resilience, and security		

²⁶ The ASEAN-Canada Plan of Action Trust Fund will support activities that promote cooperation between ASEAN and Canada in mutually agreed priority areas aligned with Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy. The Fund will also support Canada's strategic objectives in ASEAN, the ASEAN-Canada Action Plan 2021-2025, ASEAN's Community Vision 2025 and its Post-2025 Community Vision, including inclusive and sustainable development activities. The 1 million CAD fund will be located at the ASEAN Secretariat. For more details see <https://www.canada.ca/en/global-affairs/news/2022/08/asean-canada-plan-of-action-trust-fund.html>, accessed on 09 January 2023

Ser	Nation(s)	Aim(s)
(a)	Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Vietnam.	Aim: Expand existing military capacity building initiatives by advancing joint priorities and interoperability by and launching new training programmes.
SO2: Expand trade, investment, and supply chain resilience		
(b)	Australia, New Zealand, and Taiwan	Aim: Support the economic empowerment of the Indigenous Peoples by implementation of the Indigenous Peoples Economic and Trade Cooperation Arrangement (IPETCA).
(c)	Singapore and Taiwan (Other nations are India, Japan, and the Republic of Korea)	Aim: Support international co-innovation projects and commercialization-oriented research and development partnerships for Canadian small and medium-sized businesses by strengthening Science, Technology, and Innovation partnerships.
(d)	Singapore, New Zealand, and Chile	Aim: Secure a cultural-industries exception for the Canadian cultural sector by joining the Digital Economic Partnership Agreement with these three nations.
(e)	Indonesia	Aim: Improve market access through a new comprehensive free trade agreement, such as currently being negotiated with ASEAN and India.
SO3: Invest in and connect people		
(f)	Pakistan and the Philippines	Aim: Enhance visa-processing capacities to ease access for students and family members.
(g)	Australia, New Zealand, and Taiwan	Aims: (i) Pursue the path of reconciliation with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples through enhanced Indigenous exchanges. (ii) Support education and skills development for Indigenous youth. (iii) Continue the implementation of the IPETCA. (iv) Support the implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.
(h)	Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam	Aim: Support francophone immigration objectives
(j)	Pacific Islands	Aim: Establish Canada's first international assistance program for the Pacific Islands region a part of Canada's membership of the Partners in the Blue Pacific initiative.
(k)	Cambodia and Laos	Aim: Help build demining capacity by establishing standards for landmine clearance and accelerate mine-clearing by sharing of expertise

Ser	Nation(s)	Aim(s)
(l)	Sri Lanka and Myanmar	Aim: Support peacebuilding and encourage truth seeking and accountability for alleged violations of human rights and humanitarian law.
SO5: Canada as an active and engaged partner to the Indo-Pacific		
(m)	Pacific Islands and Fiji	Aim: Strengthen engagement with the Pacific Island Countries by opening Canada's first mission to Fiji.
(n)	Taiwan	Aim: Continue to grow economic and people-to-people ties while supporting Taiwan's Resilience.
(p)	USA	Aims: (i) Deploy the first diplomatic position in Hawaii to lead engagement with local US and international partners. (ii) Hold the inaugural Canada–United States Strategic Dialogue on the Indo-Pacific in 2023.
Source: Compiled by the author from Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy ²⁷		

Crossing the North Pacific - Economics, Diplomacy, and Military Engagements

The three tables indicate a large overlap with the several QUAD initiatives that have emerged from the four leader summits held so far, as well as the seven spokes of the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI). However, both sets of initiatives do not find mention in the strategy. While the strategy covers a wide ambit of cooperative overtures, the strategy is largely economic centric and can be considered highly ambitious for a North Pacific nation like Canada, which is seeking to look deeper in the south-westerly direction. Hence, Canada, which is engaging the broader and complex Indo-Pacific for the first time, will face considerable threats, challenges, risks, and opportunities. These have been grouped under three major areas: economics, diplomacy, and military engagements. These aspects can also be viewed as the three pillars of the bridge Canada is seeking to cross and engage the Indo-Pacific.

Economics

This first major challenge would require to be supported by continuity in terms of national leadership and a sustained budget. For a region like the Indo-Pacific and for engaging 40 nations across Ottawa's geopolitical stretch the outlay of 2.3 billion CAD for the first five years may need to be revisited. However, this revisit would depend on the success rate of the engagements, state of the global economy, and, most importantly, continued domestic support. Putting a cost to an Indo-Pacific strategy right at the outset is debatable if not questionable. This is perhaps why most nations have not put an overall cost to their strategies.

²⁷ *Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy*, pp 14-23

Diplomacy

This challenge will firstly require Canada to balance China and the US, especially where Canadian-China economic interests may conflict with the obligations emanating from US-Canada relations. Secondly, there will be a growing need for a better understanding of regional, sub-regional, and national dynamics and sensitivities to improve the focus from an *Indo-Pacific Lens*. This should be an easy task as barring a few nations and the Pacific Island nations, Canada has diplomatic missions and consulates in more than half of the 40 nations, it has listed in its idea of the Indo-Pacific.²⁸ The setting up of more missions, like in Fiji which will go a long way in engaging the identified 14 island nations, would greatly aid the strategy and enable greater focus on the SOs. Consistency of diplomatic efforts keeping regional and national sensitivities in mind would be an important aspect of this pillar.

Military Engagements

With a strength of 66,500 active members and 34,400 reservists, the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) “are focused principally on territorial defence, as well as contributing important capabilities to international missions, principally through NATO.”²⁹ Further, “Canada’s deployments, although relatively small scale, underscore a determination to maintain both international engagement and power-projection capability”.³⁰ In the Indo-Pacific, the CAF are engaged in five operations from the hard military task of supporting implementation of United Nations Security Council (UNSC) sanctions imposed against North Korea to four soft military tasks addressing humanitarian/non-traditional threats.³¹ As per the strategy document, in support of SO1, “Canada will invest in an enhanced military presence, along with intelligence and cyber security, to promote security in the region and ensure the safety of Canadians”.³² These investments include committing additional resources like naval presence, increased engagement in international exercises and operations, and expanding existing military capacity initiatives, and launching new training programmes (see Table 3, para (a) for list of identified nations).³³

Most of these interactions are, however, limited to Canada’s traditional anglosphere allies, North Pacific and Southeast Asian partners. Continuation on this path alone could limit its ability to engage with the broader Indo-Pacific. There will thus be a need to engage more nations either directly through a bilateral approach or minilateral/multilateral interactions depending on mutual comfort levels of engagement. Engagements towards addressing common non-traditional threats could enable these comfort levels. In so far as traditional threats are concerned,

²⁸ For details of Canadian Missions globally see, *Information by Country and Territory*, https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/country-pays/index.aspx?lang=eng&_ga=2.115266183.1296176043.1673415042-1788348514.1673258432, accessed 11 January 2023

²⁹ *The Military Balance 2022*, International Institute for Strategic Studies, London, February 2022, p 45

³⁰ *Ibid*

³¹ For details see, *Current Operations and Joint Military Exercises List*, <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/services/operations/military-operations/current-operations/list.html>, accessed 13 January 2023

³² *Canada’s Indo-Pacific Strategy*, p 5

³³ *Ibid*, p 15

enhancing its presence while continuing to work with its traditional allies would be the best avenue for Canada.

Broadening the Bridge

Canada's bridge across the North Pacific to the broader Indo-Pacific can be broadened. The strategy, though ambitious, places Canada's national interests first, which is a ubiquitous expected and accepted approach. The focus on economics, which flows from the national interests, is also an accepted pillar of any national strategy. However, the idea of a *Free and Open Pacific*, which is the major convergence aspect of almost all like-minded Indo-Pacific nations, and hence provides the platform for engagements needs to be incorporated. This would be an easy task for Canada as it "... can bolt in to pre-existing Indo-Pacific-focused institutions to lend its capabilities"³⁴, and this "Bolting in co-operation in the Indo-Pacific would make Canadian engagement in the region more sustainable and meaningful...".³⁵ As the SOs and aims of the strategy find resonance in the QUAD initiatives as well as the seven spokes of the IPOI, Canada could consider working with the QUAD and also joining suitable pillars of the IPOI and work its Indo-Pacific Strategy within its defined geopolitical stretch.

About the Author

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³⁴ *Canada in the Indo-Pacific?*, p 3

³⁵ *Ibid*