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CANADA AND THE INDO-PACIFIC:

'DIVERSE' AND 'INCLUSIVE',
NOT 'FREE' AND 'OPEN'

SEPTEMBER 2020

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	3
KEY FINDINGS	8
THE INDO-PACIFIC: WHAT'S IN A NAME?	10
Continuity in Japan's FOIP Strategy	14
COVID-19 and the Quad 'Plus' Formulation	34
WHAT'S IN A FOIP	46
China in the US FOIP Vision	70
CANADA AND THE INDO-PACIFIC: WHERE IS THE RATIONALE?	75
Energy and India: a Latent Canadian Indo-Pacific Economic Rationale	77
THE ADAPTERS AND A 'DIVERSE,' 'INCLUSIVE,' AND 'STABLE' INDO-PACIFIC?	103
CONCLUSION	118
ABOUT THE AUTHOR	124
ABOUT THE ASIA PACIFIC FOUNDATION OF CANADA	126

INTRODUCTION

One of the most significant geopolitical developments of the past decade in Asia has been the purposeful and political attempt by the region's predominant democratic powers to redefine the 'Asia-Pacific' as the 'Indo-Pacific.' Far from a simple matter of semantics, this rectification of geographic 'names' represents a geospatial redesign – one led by Australia, India, Japan, and the United States to recognize and to deepen trans-regional ties between the Indian and Pacific Ocean areas and to deal more effectively with China's 'rise' in Asia, the Middle East, and Africa. Indeed, these Indo-Pacific 'proponent states' have internalized the Indo-Pacific super-region to such an extent that its geographic logic now informs their respective political, economic, and security engagements in Asia and beyond. The concept has become so integrated into Canberra's, New Delhi's, Tokyo's, and Washington's leadership statements on Asia that it has become the predominant lexicon for Western policy and strategy analysts when writing on Asian affairs.

The Indo-Pacific region's significance is not limited to its geographic widening of Asia's political, economic, and social demarcations. Indeed, it is the proponent states' strategic responses to the Indo-Pacific that have the most measurable impact on the region's developments. While Australia, India, Japan, and the U.S. have approached the Indo-Pacific through different strategic lenses, they have all introduced new whole-of-government strategies, or visions, to achieve their strategic aims within the region. As demonstrated below, there are marked divergences in how each proponent state has approached its Indo-Pacific strategy, with the notable

commonality that all are committed to a ‘free’ and ‘open’ Indo-Pacific, however defined.

As with all major strategic developments, neither the Indo-Pacific geographic region nor the proponent states’ ‘free’ and ‘open’ Indo-Pacific (FOIP) strategies are without controversy. Asian states, particularly Asian middle and small powers, are concerned about marginalization as a result of an Indo-Pacific geographic widening. Developing Asian states are also worried about the proponent states’ seeming desire to re-invest in Africa, believing, quite rightly, that their own development opportunities may suffer as a result. Most salient, however, is the widely shared regional view that the proponent states’ FOIP concepts collectively represent an emerging ‘anti-China’ collation of states. This concern is particularly pronounced with respect to the U.S. FOIP vision, which is predicated on a regional view of China as a ‘revisionist power’ that the U.S., its allies, and partners must contain.

Despite these controversies – outlined in greater detail below – the Indo-Pacific geographic ideal has gained ground in a number of strategically significant institutions and states in ways that bode well for the concept’s longevity and for regional inclusivity and stability. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), for instance, has issued a joint declaration on the Indo-Pacific that highlights its positive aspects – such as trans-regional integration – while rejecting its strategic ‘baggage,’ such as its China containment logic. Within ASEAN, Indonesia has also articulated an Indo-Pacific approach predicated on inclusivity and equidistance from the U.S. and China. Similarly, France and Germany have outlined Indo-Pacific strategies that stress middle power co-operation on non-traditional security, such as climate change, regional governance, and foreign policy diversification. Whereas the proponent states

first articulated the Indo-Pacific in more confrontational tones, these Indo-Pacific ‘adapters’ have outlined a more benign vision, one just as accepting of Beijing as Washington.

There are good reasons to believe the adapter view will become more prominent across the Indo-Pacific. Germany, for instance, has suggested its Indo-Pacific strategy reflects European values and, as such, could provide the basis for a European Union (EU) Indo-Pacific vision in the future. ASEAN’s and Indonesia’s Indo-Pacific views, similarly, align with ASEAN’s values of non-interference, non-intervention, and consensus, all but assuring the Indo-Pacific ideal in Southeast Asia will remain a source of stability rather than conflict.

Perhaps most importantly, Japan – while arguably the original Indo-Pacific proponent state – has conceptually adjusted its FOIP vision to reflect these regional adaptations, jettisoning language around ‘managing’ China for language around regional inclusivity. While Japan remains operationally committed to the U.S. around the two states’ FOIP strategies and activities, Tokyo has also made concessions with respect to China, going so far as to suggest its FOIP vision and Beijing’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) may be compatible.

For Canada – a country that has yet to articulate its position on the Indo-Pacific and/or FOIP – the distinction between the Indo-Pacific proponents’ and adapters’ views of the super-region is critical. As Canberra and Washington move further down the road of a FOIP containment strategy, and as India remains strategically ambiguous about its FOIP intentions, Ottawa must look rather to the FOIP adapters, which could include Japan, to formulate its own regional approach. Rather than align its interests with what are fast

becoming anti-China strategies, justified in terms of a ‘free’ and ‘open’ region, Ottawa would do better to adopt the adapter states’ ‘diverse,’ ‘inclusive,’ and ‘stable’ Indo-Pacific framework, one that it could then work into a strategy of broader diversification in Asia.

This brief outlines what have essentially become two competing Indo-Pacific and FOIP visions, a proponent state vision based on a ‘free’ and ‘open’ Indo-Pacific and an alternative adapter state vision based on ‘diversification,’ ‘inclusion,’ and ‘stability’. After considering each Indo-Pacific vision in line with Canada’s national interests in Asia, the brief argues for closer Canadian alignment with the adapter states. The brief concludes with specific policy recommendations for Canada to achieve broad diversification in Asia through normative alignment with ASEAN, Indonesia, France, and Germany and through multilateral co-operation through Asia’s existing institutions, such as ASEAN.

OUTLINE

In Chapter 1, this policy brief employs textual analysis of the proponent states’ leadership and policy statements, media reporting, and academic works to detail the Indo-Pacific’s conceptual rise. Through this approach, the brief identifies the specific economic, security, and normative imperatives inherent in Australia’s, India’s, Japan’s, and the United States’ respective Indo-Pacific visions.

In Chapter 2, building on this Indo-Pacific ‘foundation,’ the brief undertakes a comparative study of the proponent states’ Indo-Pacific strategies and operations. Together with the states’ Indo-

Pacific rationales, this survey of their respective FOIP ends, ways, and means provides a comprehensive account of the proponent states' differing FOIP interpretations and approaches.

In Chapter 3, the brief considers the various proponent states' FOIP visions in line with Canada's national interests in the Indo-Pacific region. The brief demonstrates the costs and benefits of Canadian Indo-Pacific/FOIP engagement with each proponent state.

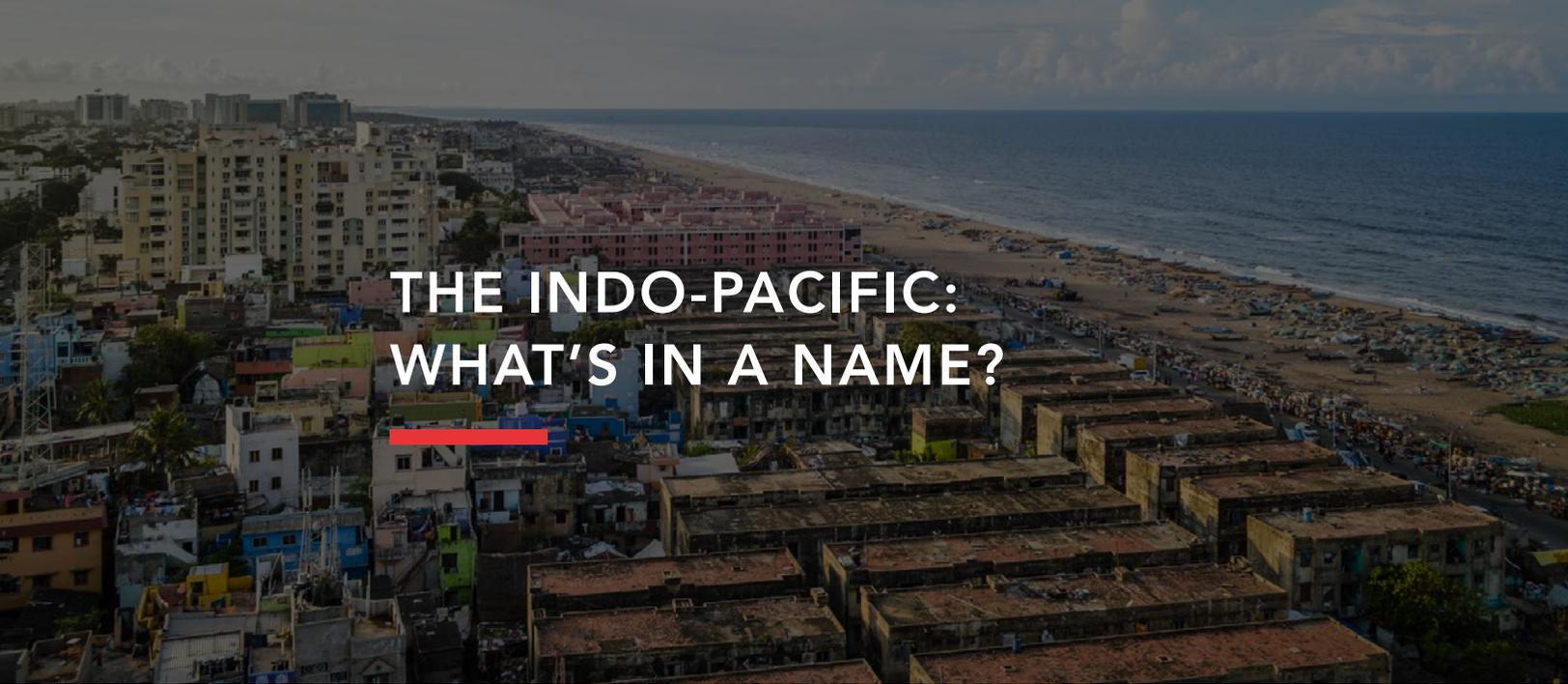
In Chapter 4, the brief shifts its focus to examine the adapter states' Indo-Pacific visions. The brief demonstrates how these 'adapters' are shifting the Indo-Pacific's geopolitical and normative framework away from the proponent states' original Indo-Pacific/FOIP strategies toward an Indo-Pacific ideal based on inclusivity and stability.

In Chapter 5, the brief concludes by arguing for Canada's normative alignment with the adapter's Indo-Pacific visions and rejection of the proponent states' FOIP concepts. The brief outlines a strategy for Canada in Asia based on diversity, inclusivity, and stability in the Indo-Pacific.

KEY FINDINGS

- The Indo-Pacific has become the predominant geopolitical paradigm for Asia's advanced democracies. Australia, India, Japan, and the United States, in particular, advanced the concept to better reflect their trans-regional economic, political, and security interests and as a conceptual bulwark against China's growing influence within the Indian and Pacific Ocean areas.
- These 'proponent states' have developed whole-of-government, comprehensive strategic approaches to the Indo-Pacific region predicated on its 'freedom' and 'openness.' Far from ensuring regional stability, however, the proponent states have developed their FOIP strategies to ensure their national interests across the Indian and Pacific Oceans, to promote democratic values, and to limit China's regional influence.
- ASEAN, Indonesia, France, and Germany have all developed alternative models of regional engagement predicated on the Indo-Pacific geographic model. As such, these 'adapters' offer an alternative model of Indo-Pacific engagement predicated on 'inclusion' and 'stability.' While one of the original proponent states, there are indications Japan is moving conceptually toward this adapter approach.
- While Canada lacks a commercial, economic, and strategic imperative necessitating adoption of an Indo-Pacific geographic redesign, it can benefit from closer normative alignment with the adapter institution/states and, possibly, Japan. Such alignment will necessarily be only one component of Canada's approach to the region, however, which must prioritize broad diversification over containment.

- Canada must tread carefully with respect to the U.S. ‘Free and Open Indo Pacific’ concept. As the U.S. remains Asia’s predominant power, there is a risk that its Indo-Pacific ideal will subsume other, subtler Indo-Pacific accounts, thereby creating the impression among regional states that Indo-Pacific engagement is tantamount to an anti-China coalition.



THE INDO-PACIFIC: WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Over the past decade, the Indo-Pacific has emerged as an alternative geographic referent area to the Asia Pacific. Senior leadership, policy analysts, and academics from Australia, India, Japan, and the United States, in particular, have propagated the Indo-Pacific ideal, arguing, among other points, that it is a more inclusive and representational concept than the Asia-Pacific.¹

Central to this belief is the idea that the Asia-Pacific is a flawed geographic concept, one that leads to the unnatural exclusion of states and peoples that would otherwise be a part of an endogenous geographic region.² In defining the Asia Pacific as a singular realm based only on its location, scale, and human/environment interaction (the common geographic standards), Indo-Pacific proponents argue that geographers and policy analysts marginalize those with clear historic and contemporary ties to the region. Whether knowingly or not, the proponent states and their representatives are appealing to a spatial realignment of an Asia

1 Timothy Doyle and Dennis Rumley, *The Rise & Return of the Indo-Pacific* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).

2 Rob Wilson, "Imagining 'Asia-Pacific': Forgetting Politics and Colonialism in the Magical Waters of the Pacific," *Cultural Studies* 14, no. 3-4 (November 2000): 562-592.

Pacific to an Indo-Pacific region along systemic lines; a geographic redesign that considers such non-material aspects as trade, security, and ideational ties in determining the region's boundaries.³

There is nothing inherently radical about redefining regional boundaries to reflect states' political and economic interests. Western imperialists defined 'Asia,' for instance, rather than Asian states themselves, and Asia's sub-regions (East, Southeast, Central, and South Asia) only became distinct geographic reference points during the Cold War.⁴ Indeed, some Asian scholars and analysts argue that in replacing the Asia Pacific with the Indo-Pacific, states are not only more accurately representing 'Asia,' but that, in doing so, they are undertaking a post-colonial rectification project that gives marginalized groups greater representation within the world's most dynamic region.

It is important to note, however, that the drive to institutionalize the Indo-Pacific over the Asia Pacific is not coming from the Asia Pacific's small and middle powers – those with colonial histories – but from the region's advanced economies, many of which were colonial powers in Asia. Indeed, one sees hesitation, skepticism, and cynicism around discussions of the Indo-Pacific in Southeast Asian states, for instance, far more than one sees support for an Indo-Pacific ideal.⁵ For some South Pacific states, in particular, there is active opposition to the Indo-Pacific idea as they fear a geographic expansion could lead (ironically) to their marginalization.

3 Joseph P. Stoltman, *21st Century Geography: A Reference Handbook* (New York: Sage, 2012), 586.

4 Robert D. Kaplan, *The Revenge of Geography: What the Map Tells Us About Coming Conflicts and the Battle Against Fate* (New York: Random House, 2013), 116.

5 Huong Le Thu, "The long and winding way to the Indo-Pacific," *The Strategist*, July 29, 2019, <https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/the-long-and-winding-way-to-the-indo-pacific/>.

What then is the Indo-Pacific? Stripped of its normative character (on which more is written below), the concept is a proactive attempt by the region's wealthiest states to provide a strategic overlay for their extra-regional economic and security activities.⁶ By recasting their relations with Africa and the Middle East as part of their 'Indo-Pacific affairs,' in particular, the proponent states are reshaping public and policy discourse and perceptions to consider their extra-regional operations as intra-regional activities.

The Indo-Pacific is, as such, a strategic frame of reference that allows defence and trade analysts from Berlin, Canberra, Jakarta, New Delhi, Paris, Tokyo, and Washington, D.C., to develop operational plans that start in Saudi Arabia's oil fields and end in Asia's ports. The concept is, fundamentally, a political construct that provides a geographic rationale to extra-regional states' activities in the Indian Ocean and/ or that allows states such as Japan and India to point to Chinese activity in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) to justify more assertive foreign and security policies in the Asia Pacific and beyond.⁷

Identifying the Indo-Pacific as a strategic concept rather than one designed to affect geographic reconciliation is not, however, to critique it. Australia, India, Japan, and the United States were all initially forthright about the strategic factors motivating their respective Indo-Pacific strategies (or 'visions'), although some – Japan in particular – have worked to recast their Indo-Pacific visions in more altruistic, more inclusive terms in recent months.⁸

6 Timothy Doyle and Dennis Rumley, *The Rise and Return of the Indo-Pacific* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 2.

7 Purnendra Jain and Takenori Horimoto, "Japan and the Indo-Pacific," in *New Regional Geopolitics in the Indo-Pacific: Drivers, Dynamics and Consequences*, ed. Priya Chacko (London: Routledge, 2019), 28.

8 Yuchi Hosoya, "FOIP 2.0: The Evolution of Japan's Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy," *Asia-Pacific Review* 26, no. 1 (September 2019): 18-28.

Indeed, all the proponent states' earliest references to an Indo-Pacific region clearly identified economics, security, and normative institutions as the primary factors necessitating the geographic redesign. Through examination of leadership statements and policy documents detailing their Indo-Pacific rationale, one can see that, from even the concept's earliest days, the proponent states saw the Indo-Pacific as a strategic necessary – one through which they could counter unwanted trends and advance their national interests across the Indian and Pacific Oceans.

CONTINUITY IN JAPAN'S FOIP STRATEGY

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe stepped down from his position as Prime Minister on 28 August 2020, just as APF Canada was preparing this policy brief for publication. On 14 September, the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) – Japan's predominant political party – elected Yoshihide Suga, Abe's chief cabinet secretary, to serve as Japan's next prime minister.

Continuity in Japan's foreign policy approach is nearly certain in the near term as Suga was involved in helping shape and operationalize Abe's approach to foreign affairs. Japan's FOIP concept, in this respect, will remain the country's overall grand strategy framework through September 2021, when the LDP will elect a new prime minister.

Beyond 2021, it is highly likely that Japan will continue to use the FOIP concept to promote its foreign engagement in Asia. As a new Japanese leadership emerges, however, one can expect variations to the country's FOIP strategy that will impact its conceptual unity with the other FOIP proponent states, either positively or negatively.

The most important variation is whether Japan will continue to develop what Japanese scholar Yuichi Hosoya calls Japan's 'FOIP 2.0' – a concept predicated on inclusion, non-aggression, ASEAN centrality, and multilateralism – or whether its leadership will opt for greater alignment with the U.S. FOIP vision.

While it is impossible to say for certain how Japan's next-generation leadership will approach FOIP, it is possible to get a sense of how its potential leadership views the country's current FOIP vision.

One possible contender for Japanese prime minister in 2021, for instance, is former defence minister Shigeru Ishiba. Mr. Ishida enjoys widespread public support and is an open critic of the Abe administration's FOIP policy, which he has argued is overly dependent on the United States. If Mr. Ishiba becomes Japan's prime minister in 2021, he will likely advocate for a more inclusive FOIP vision, one that downplays great power competition for the sake of regional multilateralism and integration.

Should Japan continue to refine its FOIP strategy to highlight its regional focus, its inclusive nature, and its commitment to multilateralism – including engagement with China – it will become a much needed source of Asian stability. Japan will also emerge as FOIP's unofficial 'leader' to the extent that its FOIP vision provides the conceptual basis for co-operation between Indo-Pacific actors such as ASEAN, France, Germany, India, and Indonesia, all of which eschew FOIP alignment with the U.S. for a more equidistant approach to the U.S. and China.

ECONOMIC UNDERPINNINGS

The proponent states' policy and leadership statements are replete with economic rationales for their Indo-Pacific worldviews, from the general to the specific. From a general perspective, one sees reference to 'economic opportunity' as an Indo-Pacific justification in official statements going back more than 10 years. In 2007, for instance, Prime Minister Shinzō Abe identified Japan's economic interests across the India and Pacific Oceans as a primary driver behind his 'confluence of the two seas' approach and Indo-Pacific conceptualization.⁹ In 2012, Australian analysts first used the term 'Indo-Pacific' to account for the "increased economic interaction between South, Northeast, and Southeast Asia and the importance of the lines of energy supply to Asia from the Middle East."¹⁰

Similarly, in the first official reference to the region by a senior U.S. government official, US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson used the Indo-Pacific in 2017 to describe an economic area covering "the entire Indian Ocean, the Western Pacific, and the nations that surround them."¹¹ Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi also relied on an economic rationale to contextualize his Indo-Pacific vision in a 2018 speech to the Shangri-La Dialogue security forum, arguing, among other salient points, that the Indo-Pacific's "sea lanes will be pathways to prosperity."¹²

9 Shinzo Abe, "Confluence of the Two Seas," (speech at the Parliament of the Republic of India), August 22, 2007, <https://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/pmv0708/speech-2.html>.

10 The Australian Government, *White Paper: Australia in the Asian Century*, October 2012, https://www.defence.gov.au/whitepaper/2013/docs/australia_in_the_asian_century_white_paper.pdf, 74.

11 CSIS, "Defining Our Relationship with India for the Next Century: An Address by U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson," October 18, 2017, https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/event/171018_An_Address_by_U.S._Secretary_of_State_Rex_Tillerson.pdf.

12 Ministry of External Affairs of India, "Prime Minister's Keynote Address at Shangri La Dialogue," June 1, 2018, <https://www.mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/29943/Prime+Ministers+Keynote+Address+at+Shangri+La+Dialogue+June+01+2018>.

Aside from these generalities, Indo-Pacific advocates routinely identify China's and India's economic 'rise' in the Indian Ocean region, sub-Saharan Africa's emerging markets, and MENA-originating energy trade as the three predominant economic trends necessitating an Indo-Pacific 'response.'¹³ While closely related to the Indo-Pacific's strategic logic (on which more is written below), these three thematic issues also serve as the basis for the proponent states' economic rationale.

CHINA'S AND INDIA'S RISE IN THE INDIAN OCEAN

CHINA

Beijing has been developing trade, investment, and finance relations across the Indian Ocean region for decades, to good effect. As of 2019, China was Africa's largest trade partner and the Middle East's second largest trade partner, just narrowly behind the United States.¹⁴ China similarly leads in foreign direct investment to both regions, when measured in terms of total capital, and is Africa's largest donor country.¹⁵ As of 2020, China received almost half of its oil imports from MENA-area states and has further

13 Brookings, "Foreign Policy & Security Tiffin Talk I: The Strategic and Economic Dimensions of the Indo-Pacific," April 5, 2019, <https://www.brookings.edu/events/the-strategic-and-economic-dimensions-of-the-indo-pacific/>.

14 World Bank, "Trade Summary for Middle East & North Africa 2018," accessed February 15, 2020, <https://wits.worldbank.org/countrysnapshot/en/MEA>; World Bank, "Trade Summary for Sub-Saharan Africa 2018," accessed February 15, 2020, <https://wits.worldbank.org/countrysnapshot/en/SSF>.

15 Payce Madden, "Figure of the Week: Foreign Direct Investment in Africa," Brookings' *Africa in Focus*, October 9, 2019, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/africa-in-focus/2019/10/09/figure-of-the-week-foreign-direct-investment-in-africa/>; "China is Largest Foreign Investor in Middle East," *Middle East Monitor*, July 24, 2017, <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20170724-china-is-largest-foreign-investor-in-middle-east/>.

prioritized its energy relations with the Middle East in ways that are fundamentally reshaping global energy markets.¹⁶ Far from a natural occurrence, China's economic predominance in both regions is by design. From 2013, in particular, the Xi Jinping administration has prioritized China's economic relations with Africa and the Middle East through its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) with the stated intent of establishing a 'zone of prosperity' across the Indian Ocean.¹⁷

For the proponent states, China's 'scramble' for Africa and the Middle East and its 'revisionist' effect on the Indian Ocean's economic order were (and remain) primary developments necessitating an Indo-Pacific geographic redesign.¹⁸ The Abe administration's 2006 *Arc of Freedom and Prosperity* concept, for instance, while ostensibly a policy to advance Japan's extra-regional economic ties, was, in fact, a strategy to establish an Indo-Pacific 'type' region to balance China's economic influence in Africa and the Middle East.¹⁹ Further predicated on 'value-oriented diplomacy,' the *Arc of Freedom and Prosperity* concept sought to limit China's economic gains through a loose coalition of 'likeminded' democracies centred around the Indian and Pacific Oceans, a strategy Abe would revisit in his second term as a FOIP concept.²⁰

Australia's 2012 *Australia in the Asian Century* White Paper similarly identified China's prioritization of infrastructure development

16 "Is China about to Change the Global Oil Trade?" *Financial Times*, June 2, 2019, <https://www.ft.com/content/fd01b21a-81f9-11e9-b592-5fe435b57a3b>.

17 Congressional Research Service, "China's Economic Rise: History, Trends, Challenges, and Implications for the United States," last updated June 25, 2019, <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL33534.pdf>.

18 Mingjiang Li, "The Belt and Road Initiative: Geo-Economics and Indo-Pacific Security Competition," *International Affairs* 96, no. 1 (January 2020): 169-187.

19 Tsuneo "Nabe" Watanabe, "Japan's Rationale for the Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy," The Sasakawa Peace Foundation (website), accessed January 25, 2020, https://www.spf.org/jia/en/articles/watanabe_01.html.

20 Mingjiang Li and Kalyan M. Kemburi, eds., *China's Power and Asian Security* (London: Routledge, 2015), 256.

toward Central Asia and the Middle East, its increased economic activity across the Indian Ocean, and its growing trade with India as variables in its adoption of an Indo-Pacific geographic referent point.²¹ Australia's 2013 *Defence White Paper* also identified China's 'economic and strategic weight' in the Indian Ocean as a 'key trend' in "shaping the emergence of the Indo-Pacific as a single strategic arc" and in necessitating an Australian strategic response.²² Australian analysts have further identified Canberra's concern over China's economic activities in Africa, particularly its BRI-related developments, as a primary factor influencing the country's Indo-Pacific vision and its corresponding FOIP strategy.²³

U.S. officials similarly pointed to China's economic rise as a determining factor in their strategic decision to replace the Asia Pacific with an Indo-Pacific geographic reference area. In 2017, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson identified China's BRI, its 'financing mechanisms,' and its approach to debt financing (what U.S. officials later termed 'debt trap diplomacy') as primary conditions necessitating an Indo-Pacific redesign.²⁴ In 2017, President Donald Trump's administration's *National Security Strategy (NSS)* also charged China with trying to economically 'displace' the U.S. from the Indo-Pacific and argued, as a result, for a more robust U.S. approach to the Indo-Pacific 'region'.²⁵ The Trump administration's *2018 National Defense Strategy*, its *2019 Indo-Pacific Strategy Report*, and its *2019 Free and Open Indo-Pacific* report all similarly identify China's economic influence as a strategic challenge, one best addressed through an Indo-Pacific strategic approach.

21 Australian Government, *White Paper*, 74.

22 Australian Government, *White Paper*, 2.

23 David Brewster, "A 'Free and Open Indo-Pacific' and What It Means for Australia," *The Interpreter*, March 7, 2018, <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/free-and-open-indo-pacific-and-what-it-means-australia>.

24 CSIS, "Defining."

25 White House, *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, December 2017, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905-2.pdf>, 25.

New Delhi, too, has linked China's economic rise in 'West Asia' with its own Indo-Pacific outlook. It has, however, thus far avoided official alarmism over China's economic activities, instead focusing on an inclusive account of the Indo-Pacific economic area that includes China and Russia. Indian official statements, in particular, treat China's economic rise as evidence that the 'economic fulcrum' has swung toward the Indian and Pacific Oceans in such a way as to justify a unified Indo-Pacific viewpoint – one that gives shape to New Delhi's own economic priorities and goals.²⁶ While this is an area where India differs from the other proponent states' views of China, New Delhi realigns with Tokyo and Washington, in particular, in its view of Beijing as a strategic challenger, as detailed in the subsequent section on *Security Underpinnings*.

INDIA

While still a much smaller economy than China, India has been one of the world's fastest growing major economies over the past 20 years, with average annual growth rates around 6.9 per cent between 2000 and 2018.²⁷ Similar to China, however, India's continued growth has led to its greater integration in Asian, African, and Middle Eastern markets, and New Delhi has made clear its intention to build on these economic foundations to support the country's future growth.²⁸ Since 2014, in particular, India has significantly expanded its trade, investment, and energy relations

26 Indian Ministry of External Affairs, "Address by Foreign Secretary at the Regional Connectivity Conference: South Asia in the Indo-Pacific Context," November 01, 2018, <https://www.mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/30556/Address+by+Foreign+Secretary+at+the+Regional+Connectivity+Conference++South+Asia+in+the+IndoPacific+Context>.

27 The World Bank, GDP Growth (annual %)- India, accessed May 20, 2020, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG?end=2018&locations=IN&start=2000>.

28 Miria Pigato, *Strengthening China's and India's Trade and Investment Ties to the Middle East and North Africa* (Washington, D.C.: The World Bank, 2009).

with sub-Saharan Africa, North Africa, and the Middle East under the Modi administration's 'Act West' program.²⁹ As with China, India's integration into these markets is fundamentally restructuring the Indian Ocean region's economic architecture.³⁰

In contrast to their views of China, the other Indo-Pacific proponent states perceive India's economic 'rise' in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East as a welcome development (in part as it 'balances' China) and believe the country's economic growth and potential further justify the development of an Indo-Pacific 'economic corridor.'³¹ Japan, for instance, has made economic engagement with India a central rationale for its Indo-Pacific vision, up to establishing a 2017 India-Japan Asia-Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC) agreement predicated on the two states' co-operation in establishing an economic foundation to the Indo-Pacific ideal.³² Australia, too, identified India's economic development as a critical input to its emerging view of the Indo-Pacific as a 'single strategic arch' in 2013, specifically referencing its growing energy, trade, and investment ties across the Indian Ocean region and Southeast Asia as determining factors in Australia's own evolving strategic view.³³

India's economic rise, its democratic status and identity, and its perceived ability to balance China in the Indian Ocean region were all critical inputs into the U.S.'s early Indo-Pacific visions.³⁴ Indeed,

29 Guy Burton, "India's 'Look West' Policy in the Middle East under Modi," the Middle East Institute, August 6, 2019, <https://www.mei.edu/publications/indias-look-west-policy-middle-east-under-modi>.

30 Vivek Mishra, "Consolidating India's Indian Ocean Strategy," *The Diplomat*, June 7, 2019, <https://thediplomat.com/2019/06/consolidating-indias-indian-ocean-strategy/>

31 Pankaj K. Jha and Vo Xuan Vinh, *India, Vietnam and the Indo-Pacific: Expanding Horizons* (London: Routledge, 2020).

32 African Development Bank, *Asia Africa Growth Corridor: Partnership for Sustainable and Innovative Development (A Vision Document)*, May 2017, <https://www.eria.org/Asia-Africa-Growth-Corridor-Documents.pdf>, 1.

33 Australian Government, *White Paper*, 7.

34 Walter C. Ladwig III and Anit Mukherjee, "The United States, India and the Future of the Indo-Pacific Strategy," *NBR Commentary*, June 20, 2019, <https://www.nbr.org/publication/the-united-states-india-and-the-future-of-the-indo-pacific-strategy/>.

Tillerson first referenced the Indo-Pacific as a unified region in a 2017 speech on U.S.-India relations, where he identified the two countries' bilateral economic relations as a stabilizing force in the Indo-Pacific and as a source of balance against China's predatory economic activities in Africa.³⁵ For the U.S., economic ties with India provided both a commercial and strategic logic for an Indo-Pacific consolidation; one the Trump administration further expanded on in its 2017 NSS, its 2018 *National Defense Strategy*, and its 2019 *Indo-Pacific Strategy*.³⁶

SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA'S EMERGING MARKETS

Sub-Saharan Africa's (SSA) emerging markets were also an important driving factor behind the Indo-Pacific's conceptual formation. For Canberra, Tokyo, Washington, and New Delhi, the SSA's allure as an overseas investment destination and as a source of consumer demand further justified an inter-regional economic consolidation, particularly when considered together with concerns over China's economic influence in Africa.

Based on demographic trends and economic growth projections, SSA's consumer market will reach US\$2.5 trillion in 2030 with a potential market of 1.7 billion people. Since 2010, consumer expenditure across SSA has grown an average of 3.5 per cent per annum with states including South Africa, Egypt, and Nigeria leading such growth. Algeria, Angola, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya,

³⁵ CSIS, "Defining."

³⁶ Ladwig III and Mukherjee, "The United States."

Morocco, Sudan, Tunisia, and Tanzania are also positioned to contribute to consumer growth, with Ethiopia, in particular, emerging as one of the world's fastest growing economies at more than 10.5 per cent annual GDP growth since 2005.³⁷ Moreover, 55 African nations signed the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) in 2019 that, in addition to being the most inclusive FTA in the world, is projected to increase intra-Africa trade by more than 50 per cent by 2022.³⁸ Coupled with already high growth among some African states, the FTA will ultimately result in around 43 per cent of Africans entering the middle or upper classes in the near to medium terms.³⁹

Since 2006, African nations have significantly redirected their economic relations away from their more traditional Western partners toward Asia. Trade with the U.S., for instance, has declined 66 per cent since 2006 while trade with Asian states has increased exponentially.⁴⁰ Among Asian states, China has been the most proactive investor in Africa, pledging more than US\$120 billion in investment in Africa's infrastructure, manufacturing, telecommunications, and agricultural sectors between 2015 and 2018 alone.⁴¹ Through its BRI strategy, in particular, China has solidified its position as Africa's largest trade partner.⁴²

37 Landry Signé, *Africa's Consumer Market Potential: Trends, Drivers, Opportunities, and Strategies* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 2018), <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Africas-consumer-market-potential.pdf>.

38 Kanzañira Thornton, "African Continental Free Trade Area: A New Horizon For Trade in Africa," *The Council on Foreign Relations* (blog), June 10, 2019, <https://www.cfr.org/blog/african-continental-free-trade-area-new-horizon-trade-africa>.

39 Landry Signé, "Africa's Emerging Economies to Take the Lead in Consumer Market Growth," *Brookings' Africa in Focus*, April 3, 2019, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/africa-in-focus/2019/04/03/africas-emerging-economies-to-take-the-lead-in-consumer-market-growth/>.

40 Isaac Kwaku Fokuo and Akinyi Ochieng, "Up and Coming: Here's Why Africa Has the Potential to Boost Global Growth," *World Economic Forum* (blog), February 18, 2020, <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/02/how-emerging-markets-will-shape-africa-in-2020/>.

41 Kevin Tan, "Africa-Asia Economic Relations: Let the Private Sector Shine," *The Africa Report*, September 21, 2018, <https://www.theafricareport.com/521/africa-asia-economic-relations-let-the-private-sector-shine/>.

42 Eleanor Albert, "China in Africa," *Council on Foreign Relations* (blog), July 12, 2017, <https://www.cfr.org/background/china-africa>.

The Abe administration identified Japan's economic ties with Africa as a key input into its Indo-Pacific geographic construct. In 2016, for instance, then Prime Minister Abe issued a joint statement with Prime Minister Modi where he argued that Japan-African economic ties justified Japan's Indo-Pacific vision and, conversely, that the Indo-Pacific vision was necessary to develop Japan-African economic ties further.⁴³ Central to Japan's Africa 'logic' is market access, infrastructure development, and overseas development aid (ODA), all of which the Abe administration committed to increasing through its Indo-Pacific-dependent Asia Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC) Programme.⁴⁴ Equally, the Abe administration viewed Japan's competition with China for economic access and political influence in Africa as a key driver of its Indo-Pacific vision.⁴⁵

Australia's view of the Indo-Pacific, conversely, does not always include Africa. Its 2017 *Foreign Policy White Paper*, for instance, excludes Africa in its official Indo-Pacific demarcation. In 2016, however, Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs Julie Bishop established the Advisory Group on Australian African Relations (AGAAR) in an effort to increase Australia's role in Africa, both economically and strategically.⁴⁶ Australian analysts have since pointed to the AGAAR to advocate for a further geographic and strategic widening of the country's Indo-Pacific geographic area to include Africa, arguing that the continent's exclusion puts Australia

43 "India-Japan Joint Statement During the Visit of Prime Minister to Japan," Asia Africa Growth Corridor (website), November 11, 2016, <http://aagc.ris.org.in/joint-statement>.

44 African Development Bank, "Asia," 14.

45 Jonathan Berkshire Miller, "Japan Is Taking on China in Africa," *Foreign Policy*, August 22, 2019, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/08/22/japan-is-taking-on-china-in-africa/>.

46 Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, "A Strategy for Australia's Engagement with Africa," December 2016, <https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/a-strategy-for-australia-engagement-with-africa.pdf>.

out of step with other Indo-Pacific proponent states, particularly Japan and India.⁴⁷

Similarly, the official U.S. view of the Indo-Pacific does not include Africa, although Secretary of State Tillerson did identify Africa's emerging economies as a driver behind his Indo-Pacific formulation in 2017.⁴⁸ As with Australian analysts, U.S. policy experts have identified this exclusion as a fundamental flaw in U.S. strategic thinking and have advocated for an expansion of the U.S. Indo-Pacific geographic viewpoint to accord with Japan's and include Africa.⁴⁹ Mostly argued from a strategic perspective with respect to China's activities in Africa, U.S. analysts have also identified Africa's 'market logic' in promoting its inclusion in the U.S. concept of the Indo-Pacific.⁵⁰

One notable aspect of both the Australian and U.S. Indo-Pacific geographic concepts is their shared understanding that closer partnership with India – an expected outcome of Indo-Pacific consolidation – will enable both Canberra and Washington to develop closer economic and security ties with Africa.⁵¹ Indeed, it is arguably Australia's and the United States' understanding of India as a 'gateway' to the Indo-Pacific that has led them to undertheorize Africa's place in the region. Rather than develop an Indo-Pacific vision that includes Africa and the Middle East within its area

47 David Brewster, "Australia Can't Continue to Divide the Indian Ocean in Two," *The Interpreter*, February 19, 2020, <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/australia-can-t-continue-divide-indian-ocean-two>.

48 CSIS, "Defining."

49 Jean-Loup Samaan, "Confronting the Flaws in America's Indo-Pacific Strategy," *War on the Rocks Commentary*, February 11, 2019, <https://warontherocks.com/2019/02/confronting-the-flaws-in-americas-indo-pacific-strategy/>.

50 Alyssa Ayres, "The U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy Needs More Indian Ocean," *Council on Foreign Relations' Expert Brief*, January 22, 2019, <https://www.cfr.org/expert-brief/us-indo-pacific-strategy-needs-more-indian-ocean>.

51 Ramesh Thakur and Ashok Sharma, "India in Australia's Strategic Framing in the Indo-Pacific," *Strategic Analysis* 42, no. 2 (April 2018): 69-83; Ladwig III and Mukherjee, "The United States."

of responsibility (AOR), Canberra and Washington have instead prioritized deeper relations with New Delhi with the belief India can serve as an entrepôt for Australia and US trade and investment into the Indian Ocean area.

India, conversely, sees Africa as a critical component of its Indo-Pacific vision, a point the country's minister of external affairs made clear in an official statement on the Indo-Pacific.⁵² While India is clearly interested in Africa's emerging markets and opportunities for investment, it is also aware of the continent's importance as an export market for oil (from Nigeria), uranium (from South Africa), and mineral resources.⁵³ Together with Japan, India is a part of the AAGC, through which it has pledged deeper co-operation around trade, investment, and development aid and through which it has provided an additional, commercial logic to its Indo-Pacific geographic construct. As with Japan, India also views its relations in Africa as a counterbalance to China's influence and pursues closer economic relations to deepen political and defence ties.⁵⁴

52 Huma Siddiqui, "India's Concept of Indo-Pacific is Inclusive and Across Oceans," Indian Ministry of External Affairs (website), November 08, 2019, https://mea.gov.in/articles-in-indian-media.htm?dtl/32015/Indias_concept_of_IndoPacific_is_inclusive_and_across_oceans.

53 M. Ganapathi, "The Significance of the Indo-Pacific Region in India's Foreign Policy," Indian Ministry of External Affairs' Distinguished Lectures, September 18, 2019, <https://mea.gov.in/distinguished-lectures-detail.htm?854>.

54 Elizabeth Sidiropoulos, "India-Africa Relations Under Modi: More Geo-Economics?" *Brookings' Commentary*, January 30, 2016, <https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/india-africa-relations-under-modi-more-geo-economic/>.

THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA (MENA): ENERGY TRADE AND SEA LANES OF COMMUNICATION

Lastly, and perhaps most significant with respect to an Indo-Pacific conception, is energy trade between MENA and Asia and its resulting networks and state-to-state ties. A move away from coal, fast economic growth among its emerging economies, and energy dependency among its developed economies all contribute to high demand in Asia for energy imports, many of which originate in the Middle East and North Africa.

In 2018, for instance, at least 78 per cent of all energy exports from the MENA region that passed through the Strait of Hormuz and entered the Indian Ocean ended up in Asia.⁵⁵ China, India, and Japan are all heavily dependent on crude oil exports from the region, with Japan relying on supplies from MENA for 88.5 per cent of its total oil exports.⁵⁶ With an estimated 85 per cent increase in demand from China and a staggering 300 per cent increase for India projected for 2040, analysts forecast even greater inter-regional energy ties in the coming decades.⁵⁷

These energy supply/demand trends have led to the development of a complex interdependency between Asian and MENA energy producing states. Not only has energy trade led to robust state-to-state ties, but Asian and MENA-based businesses, bureaucracies, and even non-governmental agencies (NGOs) have also become

55 EIA, "The Strait of Hormuz is the World's Most Important Oil Transit Chokepoint," June 20, 2019, <https://www.eia.gov/todayinenergy/detail.php?id=39932>.

56 U.S. Energy Information Administration, Japan is the second largest net importer of fossil fuels in the world (Washington, DC: 2013), <https://www.eia.gov/todayinenergy/detail.php?id=13711>.

57 Kishan Khoday, "Emerging Asia and the Middle East: The New Energy Silk Road," Middle East Institute Blog, October 3, 2017, <https://www.mei.edu/publications/emerging-asia-and-middle-east-new-energy-silk-road>.

intricately integrated.⁵⁸ Further, to facilitate trade, dense sea lanes of communication (SLOCs) have developed between the Indian and Pacific Oceans, over which hundreds of commercial container ships travel daily between MENA and Asian ports. These SLOCs, while inherently commercial, have become a strategic basis for the U.S. Indo-Pacific vision with particular reference to China's growing naval power in the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea. From Australia's, India's, Japan's, and the United States' perspectives, the complex interdependency between MENA and Asia resulting from such trade requires a unified geographic lens to understand and manage it fully.

The Abe administration first proposed a unified geographic area including Japan and MENA through its *Arc of Freedom and Prosperity* concept and subsequently included the region as a key geographic area in its Indo-Pacific construction. In a 2020 speech to the Japanese Diet, Foreign Minister Tarō Kōno justified this inclusion in economic and strategic terms, stating that Japan depended on the region for more than 90 per cent of its gas imports and that secure SLOCs between MENA and Japan were critical to its economic development and the Indo-Pacific's property.⁵⁹ Japan has further rationalized MENA's inclusion in an Indo-Pacific region with respect to SLOC security, arguing that the Indo-Pacific framework enables Japan to undertake unilateral security activities across the Pacific and Indian Ocean theaters and to establish security alliances and partnerships with Australia, India, and the United States.⁶⁰

58 Anoushiravan Ehteshami and Yukiko Miyagi, *The Emerging Middle East-East Asia Nexus* (London: Routledge, 2015), 2.

59 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, "Foreign Policy Speech by Foreign Minister Motegi to the 201st Session of the Diet," January 20, 2020, https://www.mofa.go.jp/fp/pp/page3e_001153.html.

60 Office of Prime Minister of Japan, "National Security Strategy," December 17, 2013, http://japan.kantei.go.jp/96_abe/documents/2013/_icsFiles/afieldfile/2013/12/18/NSS.pdf.

As with Africa, Australia does not formally include MENA in its Indo-Pacific geographic treatment, although it does, somewhat ironically, identify MENA-originating SLOCs and the need to secure these SLOCs as key strategic considerations underpinning its Indo-Pacific geographic area. Unilaterally, Australia has identified SLOC security in the Indo-Pacific – including across the Indian Ocean – as necessary for its trade relations (ostensibly with the Middle East), the Indo-Pacific’s stability, and its strategic outlook.⁶¹ Through its involvement in the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue among the United States, Japan, India, and Australia (the ‘Quad’) – an inherently Indo-Pacific security construct – it has also prioritized multilateral SLOC security operations, up to and including those designed to ensure energy trade from MENA to Asia.⁶²

The US State Department has also identified transnational energy supply and shipment in the Indian Ocean as a driver behind its Indo-Pacific vision, although stopping short of including MENA in its Indo-Pacific geographic design.⁶³ The US Department of Defense’s 2019 *Indo-Pacific Strategy Report* does, however, indirectly include the MENA region in its Indo-Pacific paradigm by identifying Russian and Chinese operations in the area as distinct Indo-Pacific strategic challenges.⁶⁴ While both departments have political reasons to exclude MENA from their formal Indo-Pacific frameworks (much as the U.S. ‘rebalance’ to Asia sought to downplay U.S. involvement in the Middle East), the U.S. Director of

61 Australian Government, *Defence White Paper*, (Canberra: Department of Defence, 2016), <https://www.defence.gov.au/WhitePaper/Docs/2016-Defence-White-Paper.pdf>, 70.

62 David Brewster, “It’s Time for a “Quad” of Coast Guards,” *The Interpreter*, August 12, 2019, <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/time-quad-coast-guards>.

63 U.S. Department of State, *A Free and Open Indo-Pacific: Advancing a Shared Vision*, November 4, 2019, <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Free-and-Open-Indo-Pacific-4Nov2019.pdf>, 17.

64 U.S. Department of Defence, *Indo-Pacific Strategy Report: Preparedness, Partnerships, and Promoting a Networked Region*, (Washington, D.C.: Department of Defence, 2019), <https://media.defense.gov/2019/Jul/01/2002152311/-1/-1/1/DEPARTMENT-OF-DEFENSE-INDO-PACIFIC-STRATEGY-REPORT-2019.PDF>.

National Intelligence (DNI) is more candid in its inclusion of MENA in its view of the Indo-Pacific, with particular reference to inter-regional energy relations, supply and demand, and dependency. Indeed, the DNI clearly identifies MENA as a core sub-region in its view of the Indo-Pacific – a view based on existing trade relations and energy trade projections.⁶⁵

For India, conversely, there is no ambiguity around its conceptual inclusion of MENA in its Indo-Pacific vision. The Modi government's 'Act West' foreign and economic policy – a keystone component of its broader Indo-Pacific vision – is predicated on the expansion of India's economic and energy relations with states including Iran, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Libya, among others.⁶⁶ In 2019, Indian Minister of External Affairs Subrahmanyam Jaishankar made this point clearly in his remarks to the Delhi Dialogue, where he specifically noted that MENA states were a part of India's Indo-Pacific region.⁶⁷ The minister identified India's shared economic, political, social, and historical ties to the MENA region as justification for their inclusion in an Indo-Pacific formulation. To operationalize MENA's inclusion in its Indo-Pacific region, the Indian Ministry of External Affairs established an Indo-Pacific division in 2019 that included its Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) to better help co-ordinate India's relations with African and Middle Eastern states.⁶⁸

65 Christopher Barber et al., "Indo-Pacific Energy Markets: Opportunities and Risks for the United States," U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2018, https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/2018_AEP_Developments_in_Global_Energy_Markets.pdf.

66 Rohan Mukherjee, "Looking West, Acting East: India's Indo-Pacific Strategy," *Southeast Asian Affairs*, (2019): 43-51.

67 Indrani Bagchi, "India Expands Indo-Pacific Policy," *The Times of India*, December 15, 2019, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/India/india-expands-indo-pacific-policy/article-show/72644806.cms>.

68 Indian Ministry of External Affairs, *Indo-Pacific Division Briefs*, (New Delhi: Ministry of External Affairs, 2019), https://mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/Indo_Feb_07_2020.pdf

SECURITY UNDERPINNINGS

As with economics, early accounts of the Indo-Pacific identified security as a justification for inter-regional consolidation. Two shared security concerns, in particular, provided the basis for the proponent states' development of an Indo-Pacific security region.

First, the states all identified China's 'rise' in the Indian Ocean as a pressing security challenge that required a widening of the Asia Pacific aperture to an Indo-Pacific lens to address. States disagreed on the precise nature of the China 'challenge' in Asia – whether it was an indirect challenge to Asia's 'order' or whether it was a direct 'hard' security or military challenge – but one sees clear agreement around China's role as a regional security 'disrupter' within all the states' earliest Indo-Pacific strategic statements (examined below).

Second, the states referenced the need to provide security for their inter-regional economic and commercial activity, identifying such tactical challenges as piracy and such strategic challenges as economic prosperity and access as justification for a 'two oceans' approach. Inherent in this view was the operational reality that the states would need to project force across both the Indian and Pacific Oceans to ensure economic security, a reality the states used to justify the further strategic consolidation of the Indo-Pacific.

CHINA AS A REGIONAL STRATEGIC CHALLENGER

From the earliest days of his second tenure as Japanese Prime Minister, Shinzō Abe identified China's activities across the Indian and Pacific Oceans as his primary strategic concern for establishing

an Indo-Pacific geographic construct. In a 2012 opinion piece in *Project Syndicate*, for example, Abe outlined his vision of a ‘democratic security diamond’ between Australia, India, Japan, and the United States to counterbalance China’s naval expansion in the Indian and Pacific Oceans and Chinese ‘aggression’ in the South China Sea, which he pejoratively labelled ‘Lake Beijing.’⁶⁹ Abe formalized this view of China as a strategic threat in his administration’s 2013 *National Security Strategy*, in which Japanese policy analysts identified China as the primary driver behind the Asian region’s changing ‘balance of power.’⁷⁰ Later in 2013, Abe first referenced the Indo-Pacific at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), a prominent U.S. think-tank, in a speech titled, “Japan is Back,” his main analytical point being the need for concerted security co-operation between Japan and its democratic partners across the ‘Indo-Pacific.’⁷¹ China remains the central strategic issue informing Japan’s view of the Indo-Pacific, despite Tokyo’s recent claims that its Indo-Pacific ‘vision’ is an inclusive rather than exclusive concept.⁷²

Australia similarly identified China’s military modernization (particularly its naval advancements), its growing regional influence, and its economic growth as important components of its strategic environment in its seminal 2016 *Defence White Paper*. In contrast to Japan, Australia’s earliest references to China were relatively benign, with the focus of its analysis on areas of potential co-operation rather than competition.⁷³ Canberra’s views

69 Shinzo Abe, “Asia’s Democratic Security Diamond,” *Project Syndicate*, December 27, 2012, <https://www.project-syndicate.org/onpoint/a-strategic-alliance-for-japan-and-india-by-shinzo-abe?barrier=accesspaylog>.

70 Government of Japan, “National Security Strategy,” December 17, 2013, <https://www.cas.go.jp/jp/siryou/131217anzenhoshou/nss-e.pdf>.

71 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, “Japan is Back” (address of Shinzo Abe), February 22, 2013, https://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/pm/abe/us_20130222en.html.

72 Kei Koga, “Japan’s ‘Indo-Pacific’ Question: Countering China or Shaping a New Regional Order?” *International Affairs* 96, no. 1 (January 2020): 49-73.

73 Australian Government, “*Defence*,” 44.

of China changed somewhat under Prime Minister Scott Morrison's administration, however, moving closer to Japan's and the United States' perceptions of China as a strategic challenger to the existing Asian regional order, one best met through democratic engagement across an 'Indo-Pacific' region.⁷⁴

Whereas New Delhi is somewhat reticent on China's economic activities across the Indian Ocean, India's long-standing concern over China as a strategic rival in the country's near-abroad is, arguably, the primary driver behind its Indo-Pacific worldview.⁷⁵ Indeed, India has long conflated the necessity to counter China's influence with its need to adapt to a 'changing geopolitical environment,' up to and including a strategic redesign of the Indian Ocean area into an Indo-Pacific geographic region including Southeast Asia.⁷⁶ Operationally, India has restructured its armed forces to address its China 'challenge' in 'West Asia' and the 'East Sea,' deprioritizing its land forces (army) in favour of its air and sea forces.⁷⁷ The country's 2015 Maritime Naval Strategy, *Ensuring Secure Seas: Indian Maritime Security Strategy*, for instance, commits New Delhi to the development of a significant blue water naval capacity to better secure its maritime geography from Chinese activity in the Indo-Pacific region.⁷⁸

The same is true for the United States' adoption of an Indo-Pacific geographic framework, which is predicated on a belief that China's

74 Scott Morrison, "The 2019 Lowy Lecture: Prime Minister Scott Morrison," *Lowy Institute's Speeches*, October 3, 2019, <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/publications/2019-lowy-lecture-prime-minister-scott-morrison>.

75 Rajesh Rajagopalan, "Evasive Balancing: India's Unviable Indo-Pacific Strategy," *International Affairs* 96, no. 1 (January 2020): 75-93.

76 Vinay Kaura, "Incorporating Indo-Pacific and the Quadrilateral into India's Strategic Outlook," *Maritime Affairs - Journal of the National Maritime Foundation of India* 15, no. 2 (January 2020): 78-102.

77 Rahul Roy-Chaudhury & Kate Sullivan de Estrada, "India, the Indo-Pacific and the Quad," *Survival* 60, no. 3 (June 2018): 181-194.

78 Gurpreet S. Khurana, "Maritime Strategy: Context and Subtext," *Maritime Affairs: Journal of the National Maritime Foundation* 13, no. 1 (2017): 14-26.

economic and military ‘rise’ in the Indian Ocean is an inherent threat to U.S. global interests. The Trump administration’s earliest strategic defence and foreign policy documents, specifically the 2017 *National Security Strategy* and the 2018 *National Defense Strategy*, clearly state this logic in their respective references to the U.S. need to address Chinese ‘revisionism’ in the Indo-Pacific. To further clarify its focus on balancing China in the Indian and Pacific theaters, the Trump administration’s 2019 *Indo-Pacific Strategy* identifies China as the U.S.’s principal security threat in the Indo-Pacific ‘region.’⁷⁹ As if to remove any further doubt, former US Secretary of Defense James Mattis justified the renaming of US Pacific Command to US *Indo-Pacific* Command in his need to counter China’s activities beyond the Asia Pacific.⁸⁰

Further pursuant to Indo-Pacific consolidation as a security region is alignment between Australia, India, Japan, and the United States through the Quad. Put forward by all participating states as a mechanism for security dialogue and co-ordination between democratic powers, the Quad is, at its most fundamental, a vehicle to co-ordinate strategic visions and operations in the Indo-Pacific, particularly with respect to China as a strategic competitor.⁸¹ Viewed from Beijing as an inherently anti-Chinese institution, the Quad’s relevance depends on shared visions of security challenges in the Indo-Pacific and, as such, provides the concept with a further, China-centric security rationale.

79 U.S. Department Defence, *Indo-Pacific*, 7.

80 “INDOPACOM, it is: US Pacific Command Gets Renamed,” *Defence News*, May 30, 2018, <https://www.defensenews.com/news/your-military/2018/05/30/indo-pacom-it-is-pacific-command-gets-renamed/>.

81 Kai He and Mingjiang Li, “Understanding the Dynamics of the Indo-Pacific: US-China Strategic Competition, Regional Actors, and Beyond,” *International Affairs* 96, no. 1 (January 2020): 1-7.

COVID-19 AND THE QUAD 'PLUS' FORMULATION

In March 2020, the four Indo-Pacific proponent states held the first meeting of the Quad 'Plus,' an expanded form of the existing Quad mechanism including representatives from New Zealand, South Korea, and Vietnam. Instigated by the United States Deputy Secretary of State, the Quad 'Plus' mechanism brought together key 'Indo-Pacific' states to discuss their respective approaches to pandemic response and mitigation.⁸² For India, in particular, the Quad 'Plus' was evidence of an Indo-Pacific alignment between regional likeminded states.

For FOIP advocates, the Quad 'Plus' is evidence that the concept has become operational and more appealing to states previously opposed to an Indo-Pacific geographic realignment, like New Zealand. Vietnam's inclusion, in particular, is seen as a sign that non-democratic states are willing to align under the FOIP concept on issues of non-traditional security. For those hoping the FOIP concept can become an inclusive, comprehensive mechanism for co-operation between states, the Quad 'Plus' is arguably the first tangible proof that such engagement is possible beyond the original FOIP states.

There are many reasons, however, to question whether the Quad 'Plus' mechanism is, in fact, evidence of a broader regional buy-in to the FOIP concept.

First, there is no indication, even among the FOIP states, that the Quad 'Plus' mechanism is actually a FOIP-related institution. Indeed, while India was one of the loudest proponents of Quad 'Plus' dialogue, its own Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) studiously avoided linking the new institution with the existing Quad and/or any reference to a FOIP concept. Rather, the MEA has classified the meeting as a 'telephonic conference call' to enable better co-ordination between Asian states' pandemic responses.⁸³

Second, the Quad 'Plus' remains a distinctly Asia Pacific construct in that it only includes states from East and Southeast Asia and Oceania. As with many of FOIP's underlying structural ideas, the MENA and SSA regions are not represented. Moreover, none of the additional state participants have publicly embraced an Indo-Pacific geographic realignment and/or aligned with an existing FOIP model. Indeed, New Zealand, South Korea, and Vietnam remain steadfastly 'Asian Pacific' nations, with the notable exception of Vietnam's participation in the 2019 *ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific*, which prioritized Southeast Asian centrality.

Third, and perhaps most importantly, rather than becoming a mechanism where states can share their success stories around pandemic mitigation, two of the FOIP proponent states – India and the United States – are now two of the most affected countries in the world, having failed to control COVID-19's spread among their domestic populations. Far from demonstrating leadership through the Quad 'Plus,' these original FOIP proponents have instead become models of inefficiency. This lack of suitable leadership around pandemic response and mitigation will likely render the new Quad 'Plus' grouping irrelevant.

⁸² Rajeswari Pillai Rajagopalan, 'Towards a Quad-Plus Arrangement,' *Observer Research Foundation*, 7 May 2020, <https://www.orfonline.org/research/towards-a-quad-plus-arrangement-65674/>

⁸³ Government of India, 'Foreign Secretary's Conference Call with counterparts from Indo-Pacific Countries,' Ministry of External Affairs, 20 March 2020, <https://mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/32592/Foreign+Secretarys+Conference+Call+with+counterparts+from+IndoPacific+Countries>

ECONOMIC SECURITY AS AN INTER-REGIONAL CHALLENGE

If the framing of China as a trans-regional challenger provided a strategic rationale for an Indo-Pacific ideal, states' concerns over direct threats to their economic interests in the Indian and Pacific Oceans provided a tactical-level push for inter-regional consolidation.

As early as 2007, the Abe administration identified Japan's need to secure its trade routes in the Indian and Pacific Oceans as a primary rationale for its 'confluence of two seas' into an Indo-Pacific geographic area.⁸⁴ Indeed, Japan's concern over its energy dependency on the Middle East and its subsequent need to secure Indian and Pacific SLOCs was, and remains, a principal driver of its Indo-Pacific conceptualization.⁸⁵ So, too, has Tokyo identified its desire to establish economic linkages between Japan, Africa, and the Middle East for trade and investment and its need to secure such linkages as a critical component of its Indo-Pacific formulation. In linking its foreign economic security priorities with a unified Indo-Pacific vision, Tokyo has been able to pursue maritime security relations with states as far afield as Djibouti (where it has established a base for anti-piracy) without having to address its constitutional restraints against overseas military deployments.⁸⁶

Economic security was also front and centre in Australia's earliest conceptions of the Indo-Pacific. The Australian Department of Defence's 2016 *White Paper*, for instance, identified economic

84 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, "Confluence of the Two Seas," speech by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, August 22, 2007, <https://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/pm0708/speech-2.html>.

85 Kei Koga, "Japan's 'Indo-Pacific' Question: Countering China or Shaping a New Regional Order?" *International Affairs* 96, no. 1 (January 2020): 49-73.

86 Ra Mason, "Djibouti and Beyond: Japan's First Post-War Overseas Base and Recalibration of Risk in Security Enhanced Military Capabilities," *Asian Security*, (September 2017): 339-357.

stability and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific as its primary strategic consideration in the country's strategic outlook, particularly with respect to the Indo-Pacific's 'changing nature' and the need for Australia to realize its full economic potential through engagement.⁸⁷ Indeed, central to Australia's Indo-Pacific 'vision' is its full economic integration in the super-region and the concurrent development of a military means, with a particular focus on naval power, to ensure its northern sea lanes of communication through the Indian and Pacific Oceans. Australia has operationalized its Indo-Pacific construct through close co-ordination with the Indian, Japanese, and U.S. defence forces in and around the Indian Ocean, South China Sea, and Pacific Oceans, focusing on anti-piracy, humanitarian assistance and disaster response (HADR), and combined training and exercises.⁸⁸

Prime Minister Modi also identified India's economic security as central to his vision of an Indo-Pacific, albeit one with a clear centre of gravity in Southeast Asia.⁸⁹ To ensure the security of its economic interests in the Indo-Pacific, whether in the form of energy access or international shipping, India has reached out primarily to France to conduct joint naval patrols and to secure access to bases in Djibouti, the UAE, and French Réunion.⁹⁰ More than any other Asian state, India has also prioritized the development of economic and energy security relations with states in the Middle East and Africa, including the UAE and Saudi Arabia, under the umbrella of its Indo-Pacific strategy.

87 Australian Government, "Defence," 14.

88 Tom Abke, "Australia Increases Military Activity in Indo-Pacific," *Indo-Pacific Defence Forum*, June 17, 2019, <https://ipdefenseforum.com/australia-increases-military-activity-in-indo-pacific/>.

89 Vinay Kaura, "Securing India's Economic and Security Interests in the Indo-Pacific," *Indian Journal of Asian Affairs* 31, no.1/2 (June-December 2018): 37-52.

90 Rajeswari Pillai Rajagopalan, "A New India-France Alliance?" *The Diplomat*, September 3, 2019, <https://thediplomat.com/2019/09/a-new-india-france-alliance/>.

Economic security, shared prosperity, and economic freedom also feature prominently in U.S. statements on the Indo-Pacific, albeit often as an afterthought or retroactive justification to its strategic intentions in the region. As with Japan, Australia, and India, the United States sees a clear economic necessity in keeping the SLOCs between the Middle East and Asia secure and has dedicated military assets, platforms, and bases in the Middle East, Africa, South Asia, Southeast Asia, and East Asia to the purpose. Indeed, as noted above, the US Pacific Command specifically changed its name, and its geographic combatant command, to counter China and to ensure U.S. and U.S. allies' and partners' economic interests throughout the region.

NORMATIVE UNDERPINNINGS

The need to protect democratic values and a rules based order (RBO) featured prominently in the proponent states' earliest arguments for an Indo-Pacific geographic region. At first inextricably woven into the states' broader economic and security rationales, particularly with respect to China's inherent threat to regional and international order and institutions, these normative concepts increased in prominence as proponent states' leadership sought to expand the Indo-Pacific appeal to Asian sub-regions like Southeast Asia and to integrate the Indo-Pacific ideal into existing regional governance and financial institutions like ASEAN and the World Bank. The democratic rationale, in particular, has become both a mantra for preserving the Indo-Pacific's 'order,' for co-operation between proponent states, and for democratic promotion across Asia, Africa, and the Middle East.

DEMOCRATIC ORDER, CO-OPERATION, AND EXPANSION

Among the ideological rationales the proponent states have used to justify an Indo-Pacific geographic construct, democracy has pride of place. With the notable exception of India, the states' earliest Indo-Pacific frameworks included the contention that democracy in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East was in 'retreat' and that concerted efforts from the region's largest (wealthiest) democracies were essential to bolster democracy across the super-region. For the proponent states, democracy in the Indo-Pacific was both a rallying cry and a means to advance multilateralism, whether in the form of Prime Minister Abe's 'democratic security diamond,' a 'concert of democracies,' or a democratically-oriented 'Quad.'

There are, however, important distinctions within the proponent states' treatment of democracy as a unifying value for the Indo-Pacific. Japan, for example, primarily references democracy in relation to Indo-Pacific governance, or the RBO (on which more is written below), Indo-Pacific security co-operation, and China's illiberalism. Abe's earliest references to democracy and Indo-Pacific unity, for instance, were made with respect to international institutions, particularly liberal economic institutions, and the need to preserve democracy for the sake of inter-regional stability.⁹¹ The Abe administration also referenced democracy to champion security multilateralism, specifically appealing to democratic values as the basis for enhanced defence co-operation between Japan, Australia, India, and the United States in the Indo-Pacific. The Abe administration also formulated and championed the democratic security diamond and advanced the democratic Quad as early as 2007 as components in a values-based foreign policy to balance

⁹¹ Jeff M. Smith eds., *Asia's Quest For Balance: China's Rise and Balancing in the Indo-Pacific* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2018), 237.

China in the Indo-Pacific.⁹² Democracy, therefore, was an important strategic tool for the Abe administration to establish Japan as a regional leader across the Indo-Pacific.⁹³

Australia also identified democracy as a unifying force for its view of the Indo-Pacific, matching Japan in its stated preference for formal and informal democratic alliances to ensure the Indo-Pacific order. Australia's 2017 *Foreign Policy White Paper*, for instance, outlines a values-based approach to the country's view of the Indo-Pacific, highlighting the importance of shared democratic norms in its bilateral and 'plurilateral' relations with India, Japan, and the United States.⁹⁴ In contrast to Tokyo, however, Canberra does not limit itself with democratic alignment at the systems level, but also advocates democratic promotion across the Indo-Pacific as a means to consolidate the region around its shared values and to undo China's 'autocracy' gains in Southeast and South Asia, in particular.⁹⁵

The United States, too, has used democratic preservation, democratic promotion, and democratic values as cornerstones of its Indo-Pacific ideal. More than Japan and Australia, however, the U.S. has linked democracy in the region with 'Western' values and, at least in some instances, with Christianity.⁹⁶ In 2019, the US Department of State's influential Director of Planning defined the U.S. commitment to democracy in terms of a regional 'clash

92 Christopher W. Hughes, *Japan's Foreign and Security Policy Under the 'Abe Doctrine': New Dynamism or New Dead End?* (London: Springer, 2015).

93 Giulio Pugliese, "Kantei Diplomacy? Japan's Hybrid Leadership in Foreign and Security Policy," *The Pacific Review* (July 2016): 152-168.

94 Australian Government, *Foreign Policy White Paper* (Canberra: DFAT, 2017), <https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/2017-foreign-policy-white-paper.pdf>.

95 Lavina Lee, "Democracy Promotion: ANZUS and the Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy," The United States Studies Centre (website), July 2019, <https://apo.org.au/node/246826>.

96 U.S. Department of State, "A Foreign Policy from the Founding," A speech of Secretary of State Michael R. Pompeo, May 11, 2019, <https://www.state.gov/remarks-at-the-claremont-institute-40th-anniversary-gala-a-foreign-policy-from-the-founding/>.

of civilizations’ with China, which he identified as outside the ‘Western (democratic) family.’⁹⁷ More than the other proponent states, therefore, the U.S. employs democratic values as a strategic tool in the Indo-Pacific, creating a clear dichotomy between those in the U.S.-led ‘democratic’ camp, such as Australia, Japan, South Korea, and India, and those outside it, primarily China. This strategic use of democracy to facilitate regional alliance networks in Asia, while pronounced under the Trump administration, is in line with past U.S. approaches to the region, which sought to use ‘American’ values to challenge China’s regional influence and to pressure Asian states to undertake domestic governance reforms.⁹⁸

India, conversely, has assiduously avoided referencing democracy in any way other than in passing with respect to the Indo-Pacific, despite the other proponent states’ nearly limitless analytical pieces identifying India as a democratic champion. Prime Minister Modi mentioned democracy just twice in his 2018 inaugural Indo-Pacific address and has avoided raising democracy in subsequent discussions of the Indo-Pacific.⁹⁹ Neither has India expressed interest in being a part of a Japanese-led democratic security diamond, or a concert of democracies, with a purposeful aim of countering China.¹⁰⁰ Rather, India has eschewed democratic promotion and a values-based foreign policy for a more inclusive Indo-Pacific account that seeks to accommodate China where necessary and where so doing advances India’s own strategic

97 Steven Ward, “Because China isn’t ‘Caucasian,’ the U.S. is Planning for a ‘Clash of Civilizations.’ That could be Dangerous,” *The Washington Post’s Monkey Cage*, May 4, 2019, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2019/05/04/because-china-isnt-caucasian-us-is-planning-clash-civilizations-that-could-be-dangerous/>.

98 Michael Green and Daniel Twining, “Democracy and American Grand Strategy in Asia: The Realist Principles Behind an Enduring Idealism,” *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 30, no. 1 (April 2008): 1-28.

99 Alyssa Ayres, *Our Time Has Come: How India is Making Its Place in the World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 152, 228.

100 Rohan Mukherjee, “Looking West, Acting East: India’s Indo-Pacific Strategy,” *Southeast Asian Affairs* (April 2019): 43-51.

objectives.¹⁰¹ Where India has employed ideation in its Indo-Pacific view, it has prioritized its non-aligned and developing country identity, on which more is written below.

RULES BASED ORDER

The proponent states' shared belief that China's activities and growing influence in the Indian and Pacific Oceans challenge the RBO – used here as shorthand for normative institutions including the rule of law, transparency, openness, high-quality rules for trade, investment, and infrastructure development, and non-coercion between states – is one of the most fundamental, yet one of the most nebulous, conditions for an Indo-Pacific ideal. The RBO's essentialness comes from its centrality in all the proponent states' earliest Indo-Pacific constructs, both as a corollary to democratic promotion and as a stand-alone ideal. The RBO's ubiquity within the states' respective Indo-Pacific rationales, however, has the secondary effect of rendering it a somewhat vague ideal, as leadership statements almost always reference the RBO as a singular entity without clarifying what they see as its constituent parts.

The Abe administration's commitment to the RBO, for instance, was both with respect to the postwar U.S.-led institutional architecture in Asia – through which, it argued, all Asian states have benefited – and with respect to a new Japan-led order based on inter-regional economic, political, and security coalitions.¹⁰² While seemingly

101 Sujan R. Chinoy, "India Must Negotiate Growing Chinese Presence in Indo-Pacific Region," *The Indian Express*, December 17, 2019, <https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/navigating-the-indo-pacific-6170525/>.

102 Kei Koga, "Japan's 'Indo-Pacific' Question: Countering China or Shaping a New Regional Order?" *International Affairs* 96, no. 1 (January 2020): 49-73.

two different systems, Japan's Indo-Pacific vision is predicated on their ultimate unification, both conceptually and operationally. Central to this belief is that the RBO is a pliable enough concept that Japan can both support it and change it without undermining its usefulness as a unifying ideal and its effectiveness in providing a shared foundation for state relations. The Abe administration sought to achieve this balance through close co-ordination with the U.S. and through 'mini-lateralism' agreements with states including India and Australia and regional institutions including ASEAN.¹⁰³

The RBO is also central to Australia's Indo-Pacific construct, particularly with respect to the country's strategic regional view. Australia's 2016 *Defence White Paper*, for instance, references the RBO 56 times in relation to the Indo-Pacific region, going so far as to identify the defence of the RBO as one of three core strategic interests within Australian defense strategy.¹⁰⁴ As with Japan, Australian defence and foreign policy analysts isolate China's increasing economic and political clout as the principal threat to an Indo-Pacific RBO, but, in contrast to Tokyo, see the challenge in primarily security terms. For Canberra, China's greatest threat to the Indo-Pacific's RBO is around maritime security, freedom of navigation and overflight, and to the existing regional security order.¹⁰⁵ In its 2017 *Foreign Policy White Paper*, Australian policy analysts further identified defence of the RBO in national security terms, arguing the need for closer co-operation with the U.S. and other 'likeminded partners' to achieve its security ends.¹⁰⁶

103 Bhubhindar Singh and Sarah Teo, "Minilateralism in the Indo-Pacific: The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, Lancang-Mekong Cooperation Mechanism, and ASEAN" (London: Routledge, 2020).

104 Australian Government, "Defence," 70.

105 Nick Bisley and Benjamin Schreer, "Australia and the Rules-Based Order in Asia: Of Principles and Pragmatism," *Asian Survey* 58, no. 2 (April 2018): 307.

106 Australian Government, "Defence," 83.

For the Trump administration, the need to ‘protect’ the RBO from Chinese ‘revisionism’ is at the heart of its Indo-Pacific vision.¹⁰⁷ Yet Washington’s treatment of the RBO is significantly different from the other proponent states in that it is closely related to the U.S.’s national identity as the predominant power in the Asia Pacific, Africa, and the Middle East and as the sole provider of regional public goods. One sees this most clearly in the Trump administration’s equation of the international ‘liberal’ RBO with U.S. leadership in the Indo-Pacific, two seemingly distinct concepts that its senior diplomatic and military leaders use interchangeably. Inextricably linked to the RBO in the Indo-Pacific is the Trump administration’s belief that the U.S. military must maintain a forward presence in the Indian and Pacific Oceans through basing, must develop multilateral security alliances throughout the region, such as the Quad, and must expand its bilateral security relations with states throughout the Asia Pacific, in particular.¹⁰⁸ The U.S. vision of an RBO in the Indo-Pacific is, therefore, heavily dependent on U.S. military force, with the clear understanding that U.S. military ‘leadership’ is a stabilizing force whereas China’s ‘influence’ is inherently detrimental to regional institutions and values.¹⁰⁹

Prime Minister Modi has also referenced India’s commitment to an RBO as a key rationale for his adoption of an Indo-Pacific geographic region, albeit with a decidedly different view of what constitutes the RBO. Rather than accept an existing RBO and a consequential need to ‘defend’ the RBO status quo, Modi has argued for the need to develop, through dialogue, an inclusive RBO in the Indo-Pacific, one based on values including non-interference,

107 Michael Auslin, “Security in the Indo-Pacific Commons: Toward a Regional Strategy,” *American Enterprise Institute’s Research Report*, December 1, 2020, https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep03103?turn_away=true.

108 U.S. Department of Defence, *Indo-Pacific*, 15.

109 William Tow, “Minilateral Security’s Relevance to US Strategy in the Indo-Pacific: Challenges and Prospects,” *The Pacific Review* 32, no. 2 (May 2018): 232-244.

respect for sovereignty, consensus, and state equality.¹¹⁰ More in line with regional norms including the ASEAN Way, the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, or *Panchsheel*, Modi's reference to the RBO in the Indo-Pacific differs from the Australian, Japanese, and American interpretations as it includes China (and Russia) as part of the RBO and focuses on its evolutionary quality, rather than its established institutions, as its inherent value.¹¹¹

FROM THE INDO-PACIFIC TO THE FREE AND OPEN INDO-PACIFIC

Whereas Australia, India, Japan, and the United States constructed the Indo-Pacific region to reflect their individual economic, strategic, and normative interests across the Indian and Pacific Ocean regions, they developed their respective Free and Open Indo-Pacific concepts to provide their 'regional' activities with a singular strategic rationale and a unifying strategic narrative. Drafted in line with their distinct Indo-Pacific geographic ideals and national interests, these FOIP strategies are essentially domestic policy statements, outlining, among other issues, national-level ends, ways, and means.

Over the past several years, however, the proponent states have sought to leverage their respective strategies to effect foreign economic and security policy alignment, mostly with reference to Indo-Pacific's normative foundations. Proponent state leaders

110 Ministry of External Affairs of India, "Prime Minister's Keynote Address at Shangri La Dialogue," June 1, 2018, <https://mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/29943/Prime+Ministers+Keynote+Address+at+Shangri+La+Dialogue+June+01+2018>.

111 Lynn Kuok, "Order from Chaos: Negotiating the Indo-Pacific Security Landscape," *Brookings Commentary*, June 8, 2018, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2018/06/08/negotiating-the-indo-pacific-security-landscape-what-the-shangri-la-dialogue-tells-us/>.

now regularly reference the ‘free’ and ‘open’ Indo-Pacific in joint statements urging co-operation, co-ordination, and communication under the FOIP framework with proponent and non-proponent states alike. In addition to its strategic vision, therefore, FOIP has become a state-sponsored mantra of sorts, gaining in value as it ostensibly represents a more ‘liberal’ approach to international relations that China’s ‘illiberal’ BRI.¹¹²

112 James D. J. Brown, “Promoting Japan’s Answer to China’s Belt and Road,” *Nikkei Asian Review*, April 25, 2019, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Opinion/Promoting-Japan-s-answer-to-China-s-Belt-and-Road>.



WHAT'S IN A FOIP?

In its simplest form, the various FOIP concepts within the Asia Pacific serve common purposes: to formulate a strategic vision of Asia order; to articulate the importance of a ‘rules based order’ (or a strategic status quo); to advocate democratic values across the Indo-Pacific region; and, to facilitate co-operation between FOIP advocate states and other ‘likeminded’ states. The various FOIP interpretations also share the qualities of being operational statements about how states will achieve their strategic goals within the Indo-Pacific, being vision statements about states’ respective hierarchies of priorities, and a call to arms for regional states’ conceptual buy-in and support. In this sense, FOIP concepts are Asian states’ manifestos as to how they view the region, how they view their place in the region, how they want the region to develop, and which states they seek to partner with to achieve their goals.

As strategic statements, each states’ FOIP concept articulates its purposed ends, ways, and means.¹¹³ Analysis of each FOIP concept’s ends, ways, and means – at least those publicly available

¹¹³ Used in line with standard definitions, ends, ways, and means describe a strategy’s objectives, courses of actions, and supporting resources, respectively.

– is possible through textual analysis of leadership statements, policy documents, and, in some cases, informed commentary. The following section employs this methodological approach to ‘map’ each states’ FOIP strategy, thereby providing an analysis of the state’s objectives, courses of action, and supporting resources. Through this approach, it then becomes possible to determine whether the state’s FOIP strategy is strategically balanced (between ends, ways, and means) and to compare the states’ respective FOIP interpretations.

In addition to examining the proponent states’ FOIP strategies, the following section also considers the Indo-Pacific ‘concepts’ from ASEAN and Indonesia, two regional actors that have articulated their own understanding of and approach to the Indo-Pacific. While less committed to the Indo-Pacific geographic area than the proponent states, and less formal in their FOIP strategic approach, understanding alternative views around the Indo-Pacific and FOIP is critical for Canada as its leadership determines the applicability of the Indo-Pacific geographic area and the FOIP strategy for its own Asia Pacific approach.

JAPAN

Of the proponent states, Japan is the most active, both with respect to its FOIP strategy (which Tokyo now calls a ‘vision’) and its FOIP propagation. Indeed, since Prime Minister Abe first announced Japan’s FOIP vision in Kenya in 2016, the strategy has been central to Japan’s foreign policy approach to the Asia Pacific and Indian

Ocean area, providing a central narrative for the country's unilateral and multilateral economic and security activities.¹¹⁴

Furthermore, the Government of Japan (GoJ) has been actively promoting Japan's FOIP as an alternative to China's BRI; one based on rule of law, openness, transparency, and (a recent addition) inclusiveness. For Tokyo, FOIP therefore serves the dual purpose of a strategic plan and a marketing-type ideal to demonstrate Japan's liberalism, altruism, and progressivism to the rest of Asia.¹¹⁵

Further relevant to discussion of its objectives (ends) was the Abe administration's use of FOIP to demonstrate Japan's commitment to Asia's liberal order. In his 2013 "Japan is Back" speech, for instance, Abe noted that Japan's foreign policy priorities were establishing Japan as a 'rule promoter' in the Indo-Pacific and a 'guardian of the global commons.'¹¹⁶ Foreign Minister Tarō Kōno reiterated these objectives in a 2018 speech to Japan's Diet, adding that Japan sought to use FOIP to 'increase Japan's influence' and to enhance Japan's 'comprehensive diplomatic capabilities.'¹¹⁷

More specifically, the Abe administration identified the promotion and establishment of rule of law, freedom of navigation, and free trade, the pursuit of economic prosperity, and the commitment of peace and stability as FOIP's primary objectives.¹¹⁸ The GoJ has also identified FOIP as a mechanism to consolidate the Indo-

114 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, *Diplomatic Bluebook 2019*, Tokyo: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2019), <https://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/other/bluebook/2019/html/chapter1/c0102.html#sf01>.

115 Brown, "Promoting,"

116 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, "Japan is Back," a speech by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, February 22, 2013, https://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/pm/abe/us_20130222en.html.

117 Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Foreign Policy Speech by Foreign Minister Kono to the 196th Session of the Diet," January 22, 2018, https://www.mofa.go.jp/fp/unp_a/page3e_000816.html.

118 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, "Towards Free and Open Indo-Pacific," November 2016, <https://www.mofa.go.jp/files/000407643.pdf>.

Pacific geographic area's 'two oceans' and 'two continents' so as to formalize the region as an 'international public good.'¹¹⁹

Lastly, the Abe administration identified the strengthening of its alliance relations with the U.S., the expansion of its partnerships with 'likeminded' states like Australia and India, and the deepening of its economic ties with states in Africa and the Middle East as specific FOIP objectives.¹²⁰ To accomplish its objectives, the Abe administration established relations with states throughout the Indo-Pacific region and as far afield as the United Kingdom and the European Union. All managed in accordance with the FOIP's three thematic areas – governance, economics, and security – these relationships are both informal (such as the Canada-Japan relationship) and formal (such as the Japan-U.S. alliance).¹²¹

With respect to governance, the GoJ has argued that FOIP can serve as a unifying body to support the international rule of law, to ensure freedom of navigation within the Indo-Pacific region, and to advance free trade: what Prime Minister Abe called 'fundamental principles' of Asian order.¹²² To support these goals, the GoJ has called for greater Japanese involvement in high-level diplomacy, maritime safety and security, and legal system development. The GoJ has identified activities including its support for maritime security training and awareness development in Palau, the Philippines, and Vietnam, maritime resource protection in the Marshall Islands, Micronesia, and Palau, forest conservation in the

119 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, "Towards," <https://www.mofa.go.jp/files/000407643.pdf>.

120 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, *Diplomatic Bluebook 2017* (Tokyo, 2017), <https://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/other/bluebook/2017/html/chapter1/c0102.html#sf03>.

121 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, "Foreign Policy Speech by Foreign Minister Motegi to the 201st Session of the Diet," January 20, 2020, https://www.mofa.go.jp/fp/pp/page3e_001153.html.

122 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, "Free and Open Indo-Pacific," May 20, 2019, https://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/page25e_000278.html.

Mekong region, and human resource development in Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Vietnam, and Timor-Leste as specific FOIP-related operations.

With regard to economics, the GoJ has classified the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) as a FOIP institution that provides ‘high-level’ trade rules for the Indo-Pacific, although there is no indication that CPTPP member states share this classification. As with China’s BRI, Japan has also prioritized the development of infrastructure and trade corridors in the Mekong region and Africa as central to its FOIP vision, particularly with respect to roads, ports, and rail. The Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs has also identified the development of Kenya’s Mombasa port, the establishment of a Delhi-Mumbai Corridor and a Mumbai-Ahmedabad high-speed railway, and the formation of a Bay of Bengal Industrial Growth Belt (BIG-B) as key FOIP projects.¹²³

With respect to security, the GoJ has identified FOIP as its primary vehicle – both conceptually and operationally – for ensuring ‘peace and prosperity’ throughout the Indo-Pacific region. Central to this vision is Japan’s ‘two-ocean’ approach to maritime security through which it seeks to secure the SLOCs between Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. Within the Asia Pacific region, Japan has sought to operationalize this approach to FOIP maritime security by providing patrol vessels, high-speed boats, and radar monitoring equipment to states like the Philippines. The GoJ has also worked with Asian states such as Bangladesh, the Maldives, and Pakistan on law enforcement and counterterrorism training and with states including Nepal and institutions such as ASEAN on disaster risk reduction.

¹²³ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, “Free,” <https://www.mofa.go.jp/files/000430632.pdf>.

Japan has also used FOIP to deepen its defence relations with other FOIP proponent states. Japan has used FOIP to expand joint training and joint operations with Australia, for instance, in the South Pacific and South China Sea, mostly with respect to maritime awareness, maritime security, and humanitarian assistance and disaster response (HADR).¹²⁴ With India, Japan has used the FOIP concept to established ministerial-level ‘2+2’ security dialogues, where Tokyo and New Delhi discuss regional security issues including China’s rise, North Korea’s nuclear program, and cybersecurity, among other issues.¹²⁵ Japan has also used its FOIP concept to press for security co-operation under the Quad, which includes all the FOIP proponent states in a ‘concert of democracies.’

Most importantly, however, is Japan’s use of FOIP to deepen its security and alliance relations with the United States, even at a time when the GoJ is concerned that the Trump administration’s ‘America First’ doctrine is undermining the two states’ traditional defence relations.¹²⁶ Under the FOIP banner, Tokyo and Washington have committed, for instance, to enhance their defence relations on maritime security, cybersecurity, energy security and access (SLOC security), HADR, and disaster risk reduction.¹²⁷

124 Thomas Wilkins, “Defending a Rules-Based Regional Order: Australia and Japan’s “Free and Open Indo-Pacific,” *ISPI Commentary*, April 15, 2019, <https://www.ispionline.it/en/pubbliazione/defending-rules-based-regional-order-australia-and-japans-free-and-open-indo-pacific-22861>.

125 Kazuto Suzuki, “Japan-India Security Cooperation: Asian Giants to Expand Their Relations to Space,” *Financial Express*, July 8, 2019, <https://www.financialexpress.com/defence/japan-india-security-cooperation-asian-giants-expand-relations-space/1636322/>.

126 Tomohiko Taniguchi, “Japan: A Stabilizer for the U.S.-Led System in a New Era,” *Asia Policy* 14, no. 1 (January 2019): 172-176.

127 White House, “President Donald J. Trump and Prime Minister Shinzo Abe Are Working Together to Maintain a Free and Open Indo-Pacific,” September 28, 2018, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/president-donald-j-trump-and-prime-minister-shinzo-abe-are-working-together-to-maintain-a-free-and-open-indo-pacific/>.

AUSTRALIA

While Australian analysts have integrated the Indo-Pacific geographic concept into the country's foreign and security policy planning, Canberra has stopped short of publishing a FOIP strategy, unlike Tokyo and Washington. The closest its strategic planners have come to a formal statement on FOIP is, arguably, its 2017 *Foreign Policy White Paper*, which identified Australia's objectives in the Indo-Pacific as the pursuance of 'opportunity, security, and strength' through an 'outward looking' foreign policy, and its 2020 *Defense Strategic Update*, which articulated an Australian view of the Indo-Pacific predicated on great power competition and countering Chinese 'assertiveness'.¹²⁸ Australia is unique among the proponent states in this respect. The country's leadership has clearly adopted an Indo-Pacific geographic referent point.¹²⁹ Prime Minister Morrison also regularly endorses the other proponent states' FOIP concepts and pledges Australian co-operation and co-ordination under the FOIP framework.¹³⁰ At the time of writing, however, the Government of Australia (GoA) has not articulated a strategic FOIP concept to support its official strategic vision.

Australian policy analysts have identified Canberra's lack of an official FOIP strategy as short sighted and have argued the need for an updated defence white paper to address this strategic 'deficiency'.¹³¹ Some Australian academics have further questioned

128 Australian Government, "2017 Foreign," 1; Australian Department of Defense, *2020 Defense Strategic Update* (Canberra: Department of Defense, 2020), https://www.defence.gov.au/StrategicUpdate-2020/docs/2020_Defence_Strategic_Update.pdf

129 Australian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Launch of Rory Medcalf Book: Contest for the Indo-Pacific-Why China Won't Map the Future," March 3, 2020, <https://www.foreignminister.gov.au/minister/marise-payne/speech/launch-rory-medcalf-book-contest-indo-pacific-why-china-wont-map-future>.

130 "Japan and Australia Vow to Cooperate on Indo-Pacific Vision," *The Japan Times*, August 26, 2019, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2019/08/26/national/politics-diplomacy/japan-australia-vow-cooperate-indo-pacific-vision/#.Xt-0xUVKjD4>.

131 Peter Jennings, "Do We Need Another Defence White Paper, And What Should It Say?" *The Strategist*, February 26, 2019, <https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/do-we-need-another-defence-white-paper-and-what-should-it-say/>.

the relevance of the country's Indo-Pacific vision if the vision does not lead to a corresponding strategic realignment.¹³² While Canberra could certainly provide more clarity around its view of FOIP, to say the GoA has not developed a FOIP-related strategy is to ignore its most recent strategic statements. Australia's 2016 *Defence White Paper*, its 2017 *Foreign Policy White Paper*, and its 2020 *Defense Strategic Update* outline strategic views that are 'FOIP' concepts in all but name, particularly when viewed together with GoA leadership statements on Australia's adherence to FOIP as a unifying concept.

In its 2016 *Defence White Paper*, for instance, Australian defence analysts identify the country's strategic objectives in the Indo-Pacific in similar terms to those Tokyo and Washington use in their FOIP concepts, mainly the maintenance of a regional RBO, the deepening of alliance relationships (particularly with the United States), and the response to traditional and non-traditional security threats throughout the region.¹³³ Similarly, its 2017 *Foreign Policy White Paper* describes Australia's Indo-Pacific objectives as being the promotion of an open, inclusive, and prosperous Indo-Pacific region, the pursuance of a regional RBO, and the expansion of its regional partnerships, especially with the U.S.¹³⁴ More specifically, the *Foreign Policy White Paper* called for Australia to develop a 'strength through openness' approach to prioritized free trade in Asia, a 'building influence' approach to managing its diplomatic engagement throughout the region, and a 'flexible and competitive economy' approach to economic development and engagement.¹³⁵

132 Brendan Taylor, "Is Australia's Indo-Pacific Strategy an Illusion?" *International Affairs* 96, no. 1 (January 2020): 95-109.

133 Australian Government, *Defence*, 16.

134 Australian Government, "Foreign," 3.

135 Australian Government, *Foreign Policy White Paper* (Canberra: Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2017), <https://www.fpwhitepaper.gov.au/foreign-policy-white-paper/chapter-one-foundations-success>.

Importantly, Australia took pains to stress its approach to the Indo-Pacific included deepening and maintaining ties with China, understanding that Australia directly benefited from its bilateral relations with Beijing and from regional stability that was predicated on China's regional inclusion and, ultimately, its successful regional integration.

Adding further clarification to its strategic objectives, Prime Minister Morrison directly linked Australia's strategic Indo-Pacific vision to the idea of a 'free' and 'open' Indo-Pacific in a 2019 speech titled "Where We Live."¹³⁶ In the speech, Morrison defined Australia's objectives in the Indo-Pacific as being the pursuance of open markets, the support of the regional rules based order and rule of law, the commitment to burden-sharing, and the propagation of Indo-Pacific's existing architecture. In the same year, Morrison further linked Australia's Indo-Pacific vision with the U.S. FOIP approach. In doing so, Morrison broke with the 2017 *Foreign Policy White Paper's* inclusive approach to China in the Indo-Pacific in favour of a far more confrontational, inherently anti-Chinese version of the FOIP concept.¹³⁷

Australia's strategic alignment with the U.S. FOIP vision was even more pronounced in Canberra's 2020 *Defense Strategic Update*, which identified China's determination to develop Indo-Pacific influence, its 'gray zone' activities, and great power competition as the driving factors behind the super-region's strategic

136 Scott Morrison, "Address to Asialink "Where We Live," *Asialink*, June 26, 2019, <https://asialink.unimelb.edu.au/stories/australia-and-the-indo-pacific-an-address-by-prime-minister-scott-morrison>.

137 Graeme Dobell, "Australia- US/East Asia Relations: Scott Morrison, Donald Trump, and the Indo-Pacific," *Comparative Connections* 21, no. 2 (2019): 123-134.

environment.¹³⁸ In the accompanying *2020 Force Structure Plan*, Canberra identified an approach to ensuring Australia's national defence in line with this strategic environment predicated on greater interoperability, engagement, and training with the United States.¹³⁹ As if to erase any question around Australia's alignment with the U.S. FOIP vision, PM Morrison gave an interview to Australia's *Financial Review*, where he outlined the 'Morrison Doctrine' of regional military co-operation to 'manage' China.¹⁴⁰

Whereas Canberra's official FOIP strategic position remains somewhat ambiguous, its FOIP-supporting activities, or courses of action, are less so. Since publication of its 2017 *White Paper*, for instance, Australian officials have been proactively working with other proponent states to establish economic, defence, and democratic institutions to advance its national security and national interests in the Indo-Pacific. Indeed, Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) has identified the promotion of a stable and prosperous Indo-Pacific as its first foreign policy priority and has outlined an approach to achieve this end predicated on expanded Australian-U.S. ties, managed Australian-Chinese relations, developed Australia-Southeast and South Asia relations, effective maritime security, and deepened regional interconnectedness.¹⁴¹ Taken together, DFAT's approach to Australian-Indo-Pacific foreign relations is conceptually in line with

138 Australian Department of Defense, *2020 Defense Strategic Update* (Canberra: Department of Defense 2020), https://www.defence.gov.au/StrategicUpdate-2020/docs/2020_Defence_Strategic_Update.pdf

139 Australian Department of Defense, *2020 Force Structure Plan* (Canberra: Department of Defense 2020), https://www.defence.gov.au/StrategicUpdate-2020/docs/2020_Force_Structure_Plan.pdf

140 Financial Review, 'Managing China now requires regional alignment,' *Financial Review*, 31 August 2020, <https://www.afr.com/policy/foreign-affairs/managing-china-now-requires-regional-alignment-20200827-p55q15>

141 Australian Government, *DFAT Annual Report 2018-19* (Canberra: Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2019), <https://www.dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/corporate/annual-reports/Pages/department-of-foreign-affairs-and-trade-annual-report-2018-19.aspx/annual-report-2018-19/home/section-2/promote-a-stable-and-prosperous-indo-pacific/index.html>.

other proponent states' FOIP strategies. Viewed separately, one sees Australia's Indo-Pacific operations as dependent on and in accordance with existing FOIP strategies.

For Canberra, Australian-U.S. relations are at the heart of its Indo-Pacific approach and often justified in terms of FOIP alignment. In 2019, for example, Prime Minister Morrison called on the United States to remain engaged in the Indo-Pacific to ensure the region's openness and freedom whilst also pledging Australia's support for U.S. activities in the region for '100 years.'¹⁴² Operationally, Morrison's call for engagement has resulted in closer defence relations and finance co-operation between Australia and the United States as well as more robust multilateral engagement between Australia, the United States, and the other proponent states, outlined in more detail below.

On defence relations, Australia worked with the US Marines in the Indian Ocean region through its Indo-Pacific Endeavour program – Canberra's 'defence diplomacy' approach to the Indo-Pacific – and through the Talisman Sabre military exercise, which since 2019 has been focused on operations and challenges in the Indo-Pacific theater.¹⁴³ The Australian Navy has also been proactive in co-ordinating with the United States Navy in the South China Sea, most notably dispatching an Australian frigate to conduct joint patrols with three U.S. warships in 2020.¹⁴⁴ In 2018, Canberra and Washington agreed to establish a joint naval base in Papua New

142 White House, "Remarks by President Trump and Prime Minister Morrison of Australia in Joint Press Conference," September 20, 2019, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-prime-minister-morrison-australia-joint-press-conference/>.

143 U.S. Department of State, "U.S. Security Cooperation with Australia," December 2, 2019, <https://www.state.gov/u-s-security-cooperation-with-australia/#:~:text=Australia%20is%20also%20one%20of,projects%20for%20government%20end%2Duse>.

144 "Australia Joins U.S. Ships in South China Sea Amid Rising Tension," *Reuters*, April 21, 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-security-malaysia/australia-joins-u-s-ships-in-south-china-sea-amid-rising-tension-idUSKCN2240FS>.

Guinea, with the stated purpose of ensuring security in the Indo-Pacific, in line with the Trump administration's FOIP priorities.¹⁴⁵ The two states have further agreed to work on regional information sharing and maritime security, counterterrorism and transnational crime, and HADR in the Indo-Pacific, with the Morrison administration pledging more Australian burden-sharing in support of the U.S.-led FOIP strategy.¹⁴⁶

On economics, Australia is also part of the tri-lateral Partnership for Infrastructure Investment in the Indo-Pacific, a financial and development institution Tokyo and Washington both clearly identify as a FOIP institution intended to counterbalance China's BRI investment across the Indo-Pacific region.¹⁴⁷ In 2018, the Morrison and Trump administrations also agreed to establish the Australia-U.S. Strategic Partnership on Energy in the Indo-Pacific, through which the two countries could co-ordinate on energy policies, energy security, and research and development.¹⁴⁸

In addition to its alliance relations with the U.S., Australia has also been actively deepening its relations with Japan under that country's FOIP strategy. In 2018, for instance, the two states signed a general sharing of military information agreement that allowed them to work more closely together in the Indo-Pacific on intelligence collection and analysis. Through a ministerial-level '2+2' dialogue mechanism, Canberra and Tokyo are also negotiating a Reciprocal Access Agreement (RAA), which analysts argue will be

145 "Joint US-Australian Naval Base on Manus Island a 'Significant Pushback' Against China's Pacific Ambitions," *ABC News*, November 17, 2018, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-11-18/us-pushes-further-into-pacific-with-png-manus-naval-base-deal/10508354>.

146 Office of Prime Minister of Australia, "A Speech by Prime Minister Robert McCormick," September 23, 2019, <https://www.pm.gov.au/media/chicago-council-global-affairs>.

147 Roland Rajah, "Mobilizing the Indo-Pacific Infrastructure Response to China's Belt and Road Initiative in Southeast Asia," *Brookings' Foreign Policy*, April 2020, https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/FP_20200429_mobilize_compete_rajah.pdf.

148 Clara Gillispie, "U.S.- Australia Energy Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific," NBR's Commentary, January 10, 2020, <https://www.nbr.org/publication/u-s-australia-energy-cooperation-in-the-indo-pacific/>.

similar to a status of forces agreement. The RAA's intent is to allow greater security co-ordination between Australia and Japan across the Indo-Pacific theater.¹⁴⁹ With respect to economic ties, Canberra and Tokyo have deepened their economic co-operation in the Pacific region, allocating nearly US\$3 billion in extra official development assistance (ODA) funding to the 2016 Australia-Japan Strategy for Cooperation in the Pacific initiative in what analysts have labelled an Australian-Japanese 'Pacific Pivot' within the Indo-Pacific.¹⁵⁰

Canberra has pursued similar defence and economics relations with India, a country Australian analysts identified as of 'first order' importance to its strategic interests in the Indo-Pacific in its 2017 *Foreign Policy White Paper*. On defence, the two states have established the annual naval joint exercise, AUSINDEX, in response to their shared strategic assessment that the Indian Ocean has become a 'contested region,' due primarily to China's capacities and activities in the region.¹⁵¹ As with Japan, Canberra has also established a ministerial-level '2+2' mechanism to discuss and co-ordinate security and foreign policy issues in the Indo-Pacific. On economics, the GoA published an *India Economic Strategy Through 2035* document in 2018 predicated on the belief that the two countries share a common view of the Indo-Pacific's strategic environment, including the understanding that the United States' predominance in the Indo-Pacific is waning while China's influences is growing.¹⁵²

149 Michael Macarthur Bosak, "Blazing the Way Forward in Japan-Australia Security Ties," *The Japan Times*, April 15, 2019, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/opinion/2019/04/15/commentary/japan-commentary/blazing-way-forward-japan-australia-security-ties/#.XuFMFOVKjD4>.

150 Thomas Wilkins, "Defending a Rules-Based Regional Order: Australia and Japan's Free and Open Indo-Pacific," *ISPI Commentary*, April 15, 2019, <https://www.ispionline.it/it/pubbliazione/defending-rules-based-regional-order-australia-and-japans-free-and-open-indo-pacific-22861>.

151 Grant Wyeth, "With AUSINDEX, Australia and India Team Up," *The Diplomat*, March 30, 2019, <https://thediplomat.com/2019/03/with-ausindex-australia-and-india-team-up/>.

152 Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *An India Economic Strategy to 2035: Navigating From Potential to Delivery* (Barton ACT, 2018), <https://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/india/ies/introduction.html>.

In addition to its bilateral relations with the other proponent states, Australia has embraced the Quad not only as an Indo-Pacific security dialogue mechanism but as an ‘important part of [Australia’s] regional diplomacy,’ according to DFAT Secretary Frances Adamson.¹⁵³ In 2019, the Morrison administration upgraded Australia’s involvement in the Quad to the ministerial level in a move Morrison hopes will further ‘cement’ the dialogue mechanism.¹⁵⁴ While the GoA insists its involvement in the Quad is not aimed at any single country, other FOIP proponent states’ openly identify the Quad as a FOIP-supporting institution with the primary purpose of balancing China’s influence in the Indo-Pacific. Australian scholars and analysts have pointed to this inherent contradiction between intent and purpose as evidence of Canberra’s FOIP alignment, even in the absence of a formal FOIP strategy.¹⁵⁵

INDIA

Indian strategic thinkers have long viewed the Indian and Pacific Oceans as intrinsically linked through trade, migration, and security issues. Indian strategic scholarship, for instance, regularly references the Middle East and East Africa as ‘west’ Asia, implying a natural geographic affinity between states such as Oman and Madagascar and ‘east’ Asian states such as Malaysia and Indonesia.¹⁵⁶ From this perspective, the idea of an Indo-Pacific

153 Australian Government, “Shaping Australia’s Role in Indo-Pacific Security in the Next Decade,” October 2, 2018, <https://www.dfat.gov.au/news/speeches/Pages/shaping-australias-role-in-indo-pacific-security-in-the-next-decade>.

154 Lowy Institute, “The 2019 Lowy Lecture: Prime Minister Scott Morrison,” October 4, 2019, <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/publications/2019-lowy-lecture-prime-minister-scott-morrison>.

155 Iain Henry, “Finally, Some Plain Talk on the Quad,” *The Interpreter*, October 25, 2019, <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/finally-some-plain-talk-quad>.

156 Anwar Alam, *India, Global Powers, and West Asia: Political and Economic Dynamics* (New Delhi: New Century Publications, 2011).

geographic region aligns closely with the way New Delhi has long viewed the world and its place within it.

In 2018, Prime Minister Modi outlined India's strategic approach to the Indo-Pacific in a keynote address to the Shangri-La Dialogue.¹⁵⁷ While Western analysts, in particular, praised Modi's speech as evidence that India had moved closer to the U.S. and Japanese positions on FOIP, Modi's actual comments pointed to an independent approach to the Indo-Pacific based not on alignment, but on India's unique national interests and strategic perspective.

Rather than a FOIP concept, Modi outlined a 'FOIIP' concept, highlighting the importance of a 'free,' 'open,' and 'inclusive' Indo-Pacific as opposed to one that excluded regional or extra-regional states and actors. Modi specifically referenced Russia, for instance, as part of the Indo-Pacific – in direct contrast to U.S. accounts of Russia as a 'revisionist power' – and argued the need for accommodation of interests instead of competition.¹⁵⁸ Modi also argued for increased connectivity in the Indo-Pacific, both between the proponent states and other non-democratic states, including China. Indeed, Modi specifically included China in its Indo-Pacific construct, ostensibly (though not practically) rejecting the idea of China as a disruptive actor.¹⁵⁹

Building on Modi's speech, the Government of India (GoI) has developed a further geographic view of the Indo-Pacific that

157 Ministry of India, "Prime Minister's Keynote Address at Shangri La Dialogue," June 01, 2018, <https://www.mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/29943/Prime+Ministers+Key-note+Address+at+Shangri+La+Dialogue+June+01+2018>.

158 Rahul Roy-Chaudhury, "Modi spells out free, open, inclusive Indo-Pacific policy," International Institute for Strategic Studies (blog), August 7, 2018, <https://www.iiss.org/blogs/analysis/2018/08/modi-free-open-inclusive>.

159 "India and the Indo-Pacific Balance at Shangri-La," *Hindustan Times*, June 5, 2018, <https://www.hindustantimes.com/opinion/india-and-the-indo-pacific-balance-at-shangri-la/story-VrHEb6pndYMNk2YpKDcfvM.html>.

includes Africa and the Middle East and that prioritizes the development and deepening of India's ties across both regions, including with states the U.S. sees as strategic rivalries, such as Iran.¹⁶⁰ While the GoI has publicly stated that Southeast Asia is the centre of gravity in its Indo-Pacific vision, its prioritization of relationship building and connectivity development with Indian Ocean region states is further evidence that India's FOIIP concept is based on its national priorities and is not simply an imitation of the other proponent states' strategies.¹⁶¹

This is not to suggest, however, that India's view of the Indo-Pacific differs entirely from those of the other FOIP proponent states, particularly with reference to China's activities in the Indo-Pacific. Inherent in India's approach to FOIIP participation is its view that the concept provides an invaluable framework for ideational and operational balance against China's BRI, which it has long viewed as inimical to its interests in the Indo-Pacific.¹⁶² Indeed, following Modi's initial attempt to differentiate India's Indo-Pacific vision from Japan's and the United States' more assertive strategies, the GoI's FOIIP approach has gradually become more aligned with the other proponent states, particularly due to New Delhi's strategic concerns over China. The reality that India is more in line with FOIP than with its own self-proclaimed FOIIP has led some Indian analysts to argue its approach to the Indo-Pacific is inherently contradictory and, as such, that it lacks strategic coherence.¹⁶³

160 "Iran Could Derail Trump's Indo-Pacific," *Hindustan Times*, January 3, 2020, <https://www.hindustantimes.com/columns/opinion-iran-could-derail-trump-s-indo-pacific-strategy/story-t4fkNOPOQ82H8UehWkWRYYN.html>.

161 Ministry of External Affairs of India, "India's Concept of Indo-Pacific is Inclusive and Across Oceans," November 8, 2019, <https://mea.gov.in/articles-in-indian-media.htm?dtl/32015/India-concept-of-IndoPacific-is-inclusive-and-across-oceans>.

162 Ministry of External Affairs of India, "The Significance of the Indo-Pacific Region in India's Foreign Policy," September 18, 2019, <https://mea.gov.in/distinguished-lectures-detail.htm?854>.

163 Rajesh Rajagopalan, "Evasive Balancing: India's Unviable Indo-Pacific Strategy," *International Affairs* 96, no. 1 (2020): 75-93.

Its coherence aside, India has worked to operationalize its Indo-Pacific vision in ways that align with the other proponent states. Central to its approach is the Modi government's 'Act East' and 'Act West' concepts, both of which seek to advance Indian influence across the Indo-Pacific.¹⁶⁴ Through its Act East policy, the Modi government has expanded security consultation ties with Australia and Japan through 2+2 dialogue mechanisms, as noted above.¹⁶⁵ In addition, the GoI has further developed its bilateral security ties with the United States. In 2019, India and the U.S. established their first ever joint tri-service exercise, *Tiger Triumph*, and signed a mutual support logistics agreement that allows the Indian Navy access to U.S. bases throughout the Indo-Pacific region.¹⁶⁶

India has also prioritized engagement with ASEAN and ASEAN member states in its Act East outreach, establishing numerous security agreements with states including Indonesia (with which it has a Shared Vision Statement on the Indo-Pacific), Malaysia (to which it has sold a submarine), and Singapore (with which it has signed a logistics support agreement).¹⁶⁷ India has also held defence-related exercises with ASEAN Plus states around de-mining and peacekeeping.

India has also been active in expanding its defence relations through its Act West approach. The Indian Navy, for instance, has conducted joint patrols with the French Navy around France's Reunion Island. It has also participated in large-scale joint naval exercises with

164 Vinay Kaura, "Incorporating Indo-Pacific and the Quadrilateral into India's Strategic Outlook," *Maritime Affairs: Journal of the National Maritime Foundation of India* 15, no. 2 (2019): 78-102.

165 Ministry of External Affairs of India, "Shared Vision of India-Indonesia Maritime Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific," May 30, 2018, <https://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/29933>.

166 Saurabh Todi, "India Gets Serious About the Indo-Pacific," *The Diplomat*, December 18, 2019, <https://thediplomat.com/2019/12/india-gets-serious-about-the-indo-pacific/>.

167 Saurabh, "India." <https://thediplomat.com/2019/12/india-gets-serious-about-the-indo-pacific/>.

Australia in the Bay of Bengal, anti-submarine training with the U.S. around Diego Garcia, and a ‘group’ sail with Japan, the United States, and the Philippines in the Indian Ocean.¹⁶⁸

India has also expanded its diplomatic and economic ties with Gulf States through its Act West program, often breaking with other FOIP states in its approach to the region. Prime Minister Modi has travelled to Palestine to demonstrate India’s support for the Palestinians, for example, has rejected the Trump administration’s assertion that Jerusalem is Israel’s capital city, and has refused to participate in the U.S.-led attempt to isolate Iran.¹⁶⁹ Under Modi, India has further developed its strategic and economic ties with Oman and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), both critical states for India’s operational outreach in the Indian Ocean.

While such strategic autonomy arguably serves Indian interests well, it has exposed the Modi government to criticism from outside analysts who view India as the FOIP concept’s ‘weakest link,’ particularly with respect to the Quad, toward which it maintains ambiguous participation.¹⁷⁰ Such criticisms, arguably, say more about the FOIP’s regional appeal and the concept’s ability to take all states’ interests into account than they do about Indian foreign policy. That the Modi government has internalized the Indo-Pacific into India’s contemporary strategic thinking clearly does not mean it has wholeheartedly embraced strategic partnership

168 Abhijit Singh, “All out at sea: on India’s engagements in the Indian Ocean,” *Observer Research Foundation Commentaries*, May 16, 2019, <https://www.orfonline.org/research/all-out-at-sea-on-indias-engagements-in-the-indian-ocean-50901/>.

169 Manoj Joshi, “Success of Modi’s ‘Act West’ policy opens doors to Gulf potential,” *Observer Research Foundation Commentaries*, February 16, 2018, <https://www.orfonline.org/research/success-modi-act-west-policy-opens-doors-gulf-potential/>.

170 Derek Grossman, “India is the Weakest Link in the Quad,” *Foreign Policy*, July 23, 2018, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/07/23/india-is-the-weakest-link-in-the-quad/>.

with Australia, Japan, and the United States over its other foreign relations. Rather, there are clear components of the FOIP vision that India is willing to adhere to when and where doing so advances its strategic interests.

THE UNITED STATES

The United States government (USG) has internalized its FOIP concept to the extent that nearly all of what Washington does, or wants to do, in the Indo-Pacific is filtered through its strategic lens.¹⁷¹ Whether with respect to balancing China, expanding defence relations, furthering U.S. economic interests, or promoting democracy – all U.S. strategic ends in the Indo-Pacific – the Trump administration has cast these efforts as part of a FOIP grand strategy.¹⁷² To catalogue the FOIP's strategic ends is, therefore, to inventory the United States' objectives in the Indo-Pacific. The end result of such alignment is that the FOIP concept is both ubiquitous within U.S. policy statements on the Indo-Pacific and diluted to the point that its merit as a strategic concept is questionable.¹⁷³

The concept's value aside, one does gain important insight into U.S. Indo-Pacific objectives through a review of the Trump administration's official FOIP statements. Indeed, the Trump administration has used documents such as the 2017 *National Security Strategy*, the 2018 *National Defense Strategy*, the 2019 *Indo-*

171 Congressional Research Service, "The Trump Administration's "Free and Open Indo-Pacific": Issues for Congress," October 3, 2018, <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R45396>.

172 U.S. Department of State, "A Free and Open Indo-Pacific: Advancing A Shared Vision," November 3, 2019, <https://www.state.gov/a-free-and-open-indo-pacific-advancing-a-shared-vision/>.

173 Gregory B. Polling, "For Lack of a Strategy: The Free and Open Indo-Pacific," *War on the Rocks*, November 13, 2019, <https://warontherocks.com/2019/11/for-lack-of-a-strategy-the-free-and-open-indo-pacific/>.

Pacific Strategy, and the 2019 *Free and Open Indo-Pacific Shared Vision* document, as well as numerous leadership statements, to outline a broad set of FOIP objectives toward the Indo-Pacific. Roughly speaking, one can divide these objectives into defence, economic, and governance types.

On defence, the USG has prioritized military preparedness, partnerships, and promotion of a networked region within its FOIP strategic outlook.¹⁷⁴ Predicated on its existing alliance network and ongoing military partnerships, the Trump administration seeks to use its appeal to a ‘free’ and ‘open’ Indo-Pacific to further solidify U.S. military predominance in Asia through formal partnerships, technology transfers, and joint exercises that allow for greater interoperability. The Trump administration is also using the FOIP framework to push its allies and partners to ‘burden-share’ in the form of cost-sharing, active defence, and U.S. weapons systems purchases.¹⁷⁵ As with other proponent states, the Trump administration has further prioritized maritime security – or security of the common domains – in its FOIP strategy.

On economics, the Trump administration has identified FOIP’s objectives as being the propagation of private sector-led economic growth in the Indo-Pacific and the provision of a regional alternative to China’s economic coercion.¹⁷⁶ Further, in 2018, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo identified the U.S.’s FOIP economic objectives as the “fair and reciprocal trade, open investment

174 U.S. Department of Defence, “Indo-Pacific.” <https://media.defense.gov/2019/Jul/01/2002152311/-1/-1/1/DEPARTMENT-OF-DEFENSE-INDO-PACIFIC-STRATEGY-REPORT-2019.PDF>

175 Lindsey Ford and James Goldgeier, “Who are America’s Allies and are They Paying Their Fair Share of Defence?” *Brookings’ Policy 2020* (blog), December 17, 2019, <https://www.brookings.edu/policy2020/votervital/who-are-americas-allies-and-are-they-paying-their-fair-share-of-defense/>.

176 USAID, “USAID’s Strategic Approach to Advancing America’s Vision for a Free and Open Indo-Pacific,” February 2020, https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1861/Strategic-Approach-Indo-Pacific-Vision_Feb2020.pdf.

environments, transparent agreements between nations, and improved connectivity to drive regional ties.”¹⁷⁷ Somewhat ironically, the Trump administration has borrowed heavily from the CPTPP framework (from which it withdrew early in Trump’s tenure) to articulate the precise nature of its FOIP-related economic engagement, which includes the strengthening of international trade agreements, the protection of intellectual property rights, the establishment of international labour standards, and the reduction of trade barriers, among other priorities.¹⁷⁸

On governance, the Trump administration has outlined a set of objectives in the Indo-Pacific including support for democratic development, civil society, transparency and accountability, and freedom of expression – all conditions for governance ostensibly reflecting U.S. values.¹⁷⁹ Central to this set of objectives is the Trump administration’s stated intent to ‘push back’ against the China ‘model’ of illiberalism and revisionism in the Indo-Pacific.¹⁸⁰

Operationally, the USG has recast its alliance relations in Asia, particularly with Australia and Japan, as components of its FOIP approach, thereby using the strategy as a justification for security alignment.¹⁸¹ Washington also uses the FOIP concept as operational shorthand for its broader security relations with its security ‘partners,’ such as Malaysia and Indonesia, and with reference to the

177 U.S. Mission to ASEAN, “Secretary Pompeo Remarks on America’s Indo-Pacific Economic Vision,” July 30, 2020, <https://asean.usmission.gov/sec-pompeo-remarks-on-americas-indo-pacific-economic-vision/>.

178 Lindsey Ford, “The Trump Administration and the ‘Free and Open Indo-Pacific,’” *Brookings’ Foreign Policy*, May 2020, https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/fp_20200505_free_open_indo_pacific.pdf.

179 U.S. Department of State, “Indo-Pacific Transparency Initiative,” Fact Sheet, November 3, 2019, <https://www.state.gov/indo-pacific-transparency-initiative/>.

180 U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee, “Blunting China’s Illiberal Order: The Vital Role of Congress in U.S. Strategic Competition with China,” a statement by Ely Rather, January 29, 2019, https://www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Ratner_01-29-19.pdf.

181 Congressional Research Service, “The U.S. - Japan Alliance,” June 13, 2019, <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/RL/RL33740/23>.

Indo-Pacific’s ‘security architecture,’ in which the USG sees the U.S. as the regional lynchpin. Indeed, in 2018, the Trump administration established the Asia Reassurance Initiative Act (ARIA) as a way to ensure continued U.S. ‘leadership’ in the Indo-Pacific, which it argued was necessary for regional security and prosperity.¹⁸² The USG also now identifies long-standing multilateral military exercises such as the Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) and newly-established exercises such as the ASEAN-U.S. Maritime Exercise as part of its FOIP architecture.¹⁸³ Similarly, U.S. leadership classifies nearly all of its defence exchanges with Australia, India, and Japan – whether through the Quad, multilaterally, or bilaterally – as outcomes of its FOIP vision and approach.¹⁸⁴

On maritime security, in particular, the U.S. has used its FOIP strategy to recast its operations and relations as stabilizing activities undertaken to ensure regional order. The US Navy now classifies its freedom of navigation operations (FONOPs) in the South China Sea – particularly those undertaken with other proponent states – as critical components of the U.S. FOIP strategy.¹⁸⁵ Through the ARIA, the USG has also allotted US\$1.5 billion annually in security assistance training to its allies and security partner states to address issues including maritime shared awareness, maritime resource protection, maritime law enforcement, and anti-piracy.¹⁸⁶

182 U.S. Congress, “S.2736- Asia Reassurance Initiative Act of 2018,” December 31, 2018, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/senate-bill/2736/text>.

183 Jerry Harmer, “US Promotes Free and Open Indo-Pacific at Naval Exercise,” *Navy Times*, September 2, 2019, <https://www.navytimes.com/news/your-navy/2019/09/02/us-promotes-free-and-open-indo-pacific-at-naval-exercise/>.

184 Rahul Roy-Chaudhury and Kate Sullivan de Estrada, “India, the Indo-Pacific and the Quad,” *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy* 60, no.3 (2018): 181-194.

185 U.S. Pacific Fleet, “U.S. Navy, Royal Australian Navy Team up in the South China Sea,” April 21, 2020, <https://www.cpf.navy.mil/news.aspx/130600>.

186 Leigh Hartman, “Promoting Security Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific,” *Share America (blog)*, November 4, 2019, <https://share.america.gov/promoting-security-cooperation-in-indo-pacific/>.

With respect to its FOIP-supporting economic operations, the USG has established a number of new institutions, all of which its policy-makers have formulated and propagated as alternatives to China's BRI institutions.¹⁸⁷ In 2018, for example, Washington established the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation (DFC) through its BUILD Act to provide up to US\$60 billion in development finance to the Asia region. To support the DFC, the Trump administration established the Blue Dot initiative, which, with Australia's and Japan's support, it presents as an alternative to Chinese development aid and infrastructure development; an alternative meant to highlight a project's long-term quality and sustainability over its immediate utility.¹⁸⁸ The U.S. also established a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Australia and Japan in 2018 around private sector investment with the distinct intention of proving a regional alternative to funding from 'state-directed initiatives that can leave developing countries worse off' or, more directly, Chinese-originating funding.¹⁸⁹

With respect to FOIP governance institutions, the Trump administration established the Indo-Pacific Transparency Initiative in 2018 to provide direct capacity building support to states throughout the Indo-Pacific.¹⁹⁰ An initiative run from the Vice President's office, the Transparency Initiative funds over 200 projects through the Indo-Pacific with a specific focus on institutional strengthening and rule of law. The Trump administration has also allocated nominal funding through the

187 Congressional Research Service, "The Trump Administration's "Free and Open Indo-Pacific": Issues for Congress," October 3, 2018, <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R45396>.

188 U.S. Department of State, "A Free."

189 U.S. International Development Finance Corporation, "US, Japan, Australia Sign First Trilateral Agreement on Development Finance Collaboration." November 12, 2018, <https://www.dfc.gov/media/opic-press-releases/us-japan-australia-sign-first-trilateral-agreement-development-finance>.

190 U.S. Department of State, "Indo-Pacific Transparency Initiative," November 3, 2019, <https://www.state.gov/indo-pacific-transparency-initiative/>.

ARIA to promote ‘American values’ among Indo-Pacific states through youth exchanges, human rights support, and religious freedom, although the initiative remains primarily focused on security co-operation.¹⁹¹

191 Congressional Research Service, “The Asia Reassurance Initiative Act (ARIA) of 2018,” <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/IF11148.pdf>

CHINA IN THE US FOIP VISION

As demonstrated above, the proponent states share concerns over China's activities in the Indo-Pacific. The United States is unique, however, to the extent that it has infused its FOIP strategy with logic and activities aimed at countering China across the region.¹⁹² Whether one looks to policy or leadership statements as a starting point to understand the Trump administration's FOIP approach, one sees clear and continual reference to China as a threat throughout.¹⁹³

While Trump administration officials regularly deny that the U.S. FOIP vision is inherently anti-Chinese in nature, these same individuals consistently undermine their positions through bellicose, confrontational speeches on the China 'threat' in the Indo-Pacific and the U.S.'s need to prevent China's further rise.¹⁹⁴

Moreover, one can also see an inherent Chinese containment strategic logic in the U.S. operational approach to its FOIP vision.¹⁹⁵ On the military/security front, the United States uses the FOIP concept to rationalize its continued forward presence in the Pacific region, to justify its force projection in the South China Sea and Indian Ocean regions, and to persuade other regional states to align themselves with it to ensure regional stability across the Indo-Pacific, all under the pretext of 'shared values.'

Security co-operation with Japan, Australia, and India (among other 'like-minded' democracies) across the maritime realm to counter Chinese 'aggression,' in particular, has become a rallying cry among U.S. military and political leadership for bilateral and multilateral engagement under the FOIP strategic umbrella.¹⁹⁶

On the economic front, the United States has sought to establish itself through the FOIP concept as the 'anti-China' state, stressing the transparency and sustainability of its lending practices and the quality of its infrastructure projects in contrast to what it argues is Chinese 'debt trade diplomacy.'¹⁹⁷

192 White House, "United States Strategic Approach to the People's Republic of China," May 2020, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/U.S.-Strategic-Approach-to-The-Peoples-Republic-of-China-Report-5.20.20.pdf>.

193 Nathan Packard and Benjamin Jensen, "Washington Needs a Bold Rethink of Its China Strategy," *War on the Rocks Commentary*, June 9, 2020, <https://warontherocks.com/2020/06/Washington-needs-a-bold-rethink-of-its-China-strategy/>.

194 Mark Santora, "Pompeo Calls China's Ruling Party 'Central Threat of Our Times,'" *The New York Times*, January 30, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/30/world/europe/pompeo-uk-china-huawei.html>; "China Threatens Pacific Stability, US Commander Warns, Citing 'Military Intimidation and Outright Corruption,'" *South China Morning Post*, February 13, 2020, <https://www.scmp.com/news/asia/australasia/article/3050435/china-threatens-pacific-stability-us-commander-warns-citing>.

195 Michael D. Swaine, "Creating an Unstable Asia: the U.S. 'Free and Open Indo-Pacific' Strategy," *Foreign Affairs*, March 2, 2018, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2018/03/02/creating-unstable-asia-u.s.-free-and-open-indo-pacific-strategy-pub-75720>.

196 USINDOPACOM, "China Power: Up for Debate," Testimony of U.S. Indo-Pacific Commander ADM Phil Davidson, November 29, 2018, <https://www.pacom.mil/Media/Speeches-Testimony/Article/1702301/china-power-up-for-debate/>.

197 Deborah Brautigam, "A Critical Look at Chinese 'Debt-Trap Diplomacy': the Rise of the Meme," *Area Development and Policy* 5, no.1 (2019): 1-14.

INDO-PACIFIC AND FOIP CONCERNS AND CONTROVERSIES

While regional polling shows an increased acceptance among Asian states, particularly in Southeast Asia, to the idea of an Indo-Pacific, the concept remains problematic within certain parts of Asia and among certain Asian states. More than 54 per cent of respondents to the *State of Southeast Asia 2020* poll, for instance, believe the Indo-Pacific concept is unclear and requires further clarification. More than 23 per cent of respondents also see the Indo-Pacific construct as being largely anti-Chinese in form and function, while 23 per cent believe it will result in the marginalization of ASEAN and Southeast Asian states within Asia.¹⁹⁸ This concern is particularly acute among states with close economic and political ties to China, such as Myanmar and Cambodia, but also extends to U.S. allies, including Thailand and the Philippines.

Neither has the concept taken root in Oceania, where Pacific Island states are seeing their already marginalized position increasingly the result of Australian strategic realignment toward the Indian Ocean. Indeed, South Pacific nations are arguably the most salient example that the Indo-Pacific is not an entirely inclusive project and that, for some states, geographic realignment undermines their existing position within the more established Asia Pacific construct.¹⁹⁹

China, too, is concerned about the proponent states' shared intention to 'balance' its activities in the Indo-Pacific through their respective FOIP constructs. Less critical of the Indo-Pacific concept than it was of the U.S. 'rebalance' to Asia – perhaps because Beijing

198 ASEAN Studies Centre, *The State of Southeast Asia: 2020 Survey Report* (Singapore: 2020), https://www.iseas.edu.sg/images/pdf/TheStateofSEASurveyReport_2020.pdf.

199 Brendan Sargeant, "The place of the Pacific islands in the Indo-Pacific," *The Strategist*, July 9, 2019, <https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/the-place-of-the-pacific-islands-in-the-indo-pacific/>.

remains unconvinced of its strategic staying power – Chinese leadership has nevertheless identified FOIP as an exclusionary, antagonistic, and destabilizing anti-China strategy.²⁰⁰ Beijing is especially uncomfortable with the U.S. FOIP vision, which it considers a containment strategy in all but name. Chinese analysts, in particular, recognize the Trump administration’s FOIP strategy as a means to undermine China’s political, economic, and defence institutions at the domestic and national levels and, consequently, as a major source of potential conflict between China and the U.S.²⁰¹ Far from a uniquely Chinese interpretation of FOIP, some U.S. analysts have echoed this concern, noting the U.S. FOIP vision overly vilifies China and unnecessarily places the two countries on a path toward confrontation and/or conflict.²⁰² Many Asian states share this concern, as noted above, and see the U.S., not China, as the aggressor and its FOIP strategy as a destabilizing force.²⁰³

Neither is it clear that the proponent states’ respective Indo-Pacific visions and FOIP strategies adequately take Middle East and/or African countries perceptions, priorities, or relationships into account in their formulations and objectives. Indeed, the near total lack of commentary from East Africa and/or the Middle East about the Indo-Pacific concept raises some concern over whether those from the region share an Indo-Pacific ‘vision.’ Neither does it seem that all African states, in particular, share the same enthusiasm as Asian states for economic interconnectivity with respect to their

²⁰⁰ Feng Zhang, “China’s Curious Nonchalance Towards the Indo-Pacific,” *Survival* 61, no. 3 (May 2019): 187-212.

²⁰¹ (Liang Li), “Goal, Essence and Root of America’s New Containment Strategy against China,” *Journal of Nantong University*, no. 2 (2020), <http://new.oversea.cnki.net/KCMS/detail/detail.aspx?dbcode=CJFQ&dbname=CJFDLAST2020&filename=NTSX202002006&v=MDg2NzVUcldN-MUZyQ1VSN3FmWWVkb0ZpM21WcnJKS3puWWRyRzRITkhNclK5RllvUjhlWDFMdXhZUZdEaDF-UM3E=>

²⁰² Chas W. Freeman, Jr., “The United States and a Resurgent Asia,” (personal blog), March 26, 2020, <https://chasfreeman.net/the-united-states-and-a-resurgent-asia/>.

²⁰³ Tang Siew Mun eds. *The State of Southeast Asia: 2020* (Singapore: ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, 2020), https://www.iseas.edu.sg/images/pdf/TheStateofSEASurveyReport_2020.pdf.

national priorities around developing internal consumption, intra-trade, and a skilled workforce.²⁰⁴ Indeed, some African policy-makers have raised concern over Asian states' economic involvement in their economics; a concern that is likely to grow in response to the proponent states' prioritization of African market penetration in their economic development plans.²⁰⁵ Japan, to its credit, seems to have taken notice of this imbalance within its Indo-Pacific vision and pledged greater inclusivity in its future engagements.²⁰⁶ So, too, has China demonstrated itself a responsible actor in Africa, despite the myriad of Western media suggesting it is engaged in 'neo-colonial' practices.²⁰⁷

In almost mirror opposition, some in South and Southeast Asia and Oceania oppose the Indo-Pacific construct out of concern that developed Asian states (mainly Japan) will overlook Asia for Africa as a destination for overseas investment and manufacturing. Asia and Africa are both home to developing nations that rely on large, youthful populations to compete in labour-intensive, low-cost manufacturing, so there is little appetite within the region's developing states for increased extra-regional competition.²⁰⁸ Central Indo-Pacific initiatives like the Japan-Indian Asia Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC), which highlights the role developed Asian states can play in Africa's development, therefore, do not appeal

204 Ndubuisi Ekekwe, "Why Africa's Industrialization Won't Look Like China's," *Harvard Business Review*, September 4, 2019, <https://hbr.org/2019/09/why-africas-industrialization-wont-look-like-chinas>.

205 African Development Bank Group, *African Economic Outlook 2020*, January 30, 2020, <https://www.afdb.org/en/knowledge/publications/african-economic-outlook>.

206 Walter Sim, "Japan's Free and Open Indo-Pacific must be inclusive," *The Straits Times*, March 8, 2019, <https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/japans-free-and-open-indo-pacific-must-be-inclusive>.

207 Mehari Taddele Maru, "Why Africa loves China," *Aljazeera*, January 5, 2019, <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/africa-loves-china-190103121552367.html>.

208 Irene Yuan Sun, "The World's Next Great Manufacturing Centre," *Harvard Business Review* May-June (2017): 122-129, <https://hbr.org/2017/05/the-worlds-next-great-manufacturing-center>.

to governments and analysts alike in countries like Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Myanmar, the Philippines, and Vietnam.²⁰⁹

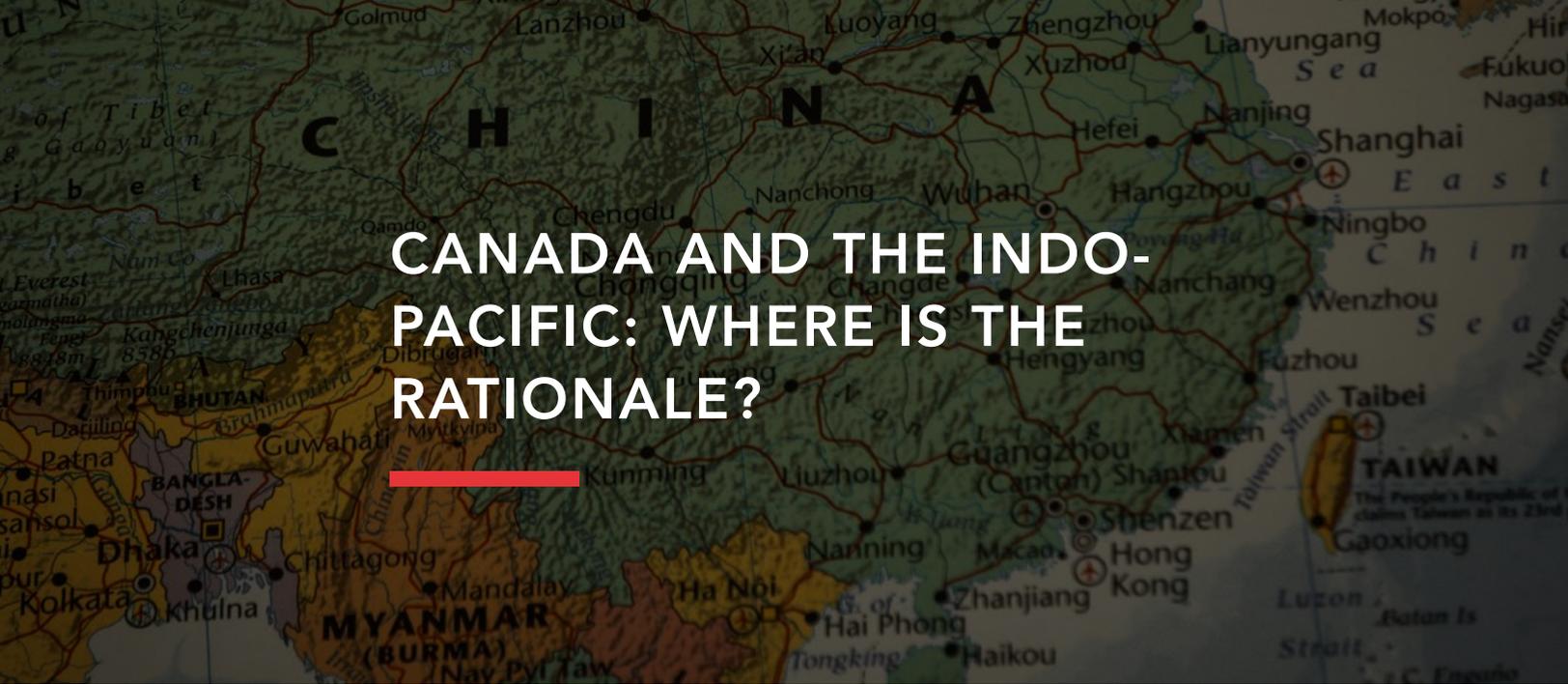
Neither has the Indo-Pacific concept translated into regional popular sentiment, but rather remains a narrative propagated by regional elites. As noted above, support for the Indo-Pacific concept among poll respondents remains remarkably low, with the primary concern being the concept's lack of clarity and the potential negative effects it might have on regional development and regional unity. As with all top-down initiatives, public opinion on the topic remains agnostic at best and resistant at worse.

Lastly, and perhaps most consequentially, a small number of analysts are calling into question the Indo-Pacific's relevancy as an organizational concept, arguing, rather, that the concept serves no obvious purpose other than promoting Asian exploitation of Africa's developing states and justifying interventionist activities abroad.²¹⁰ Analysts have also raised questions over the desirability of greater linkages between democracies like Australia, India, and Japan and authoritarian states like Ethiopia, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Sudan. Outside of Canberra, New Delhi, Tokyo, and Washington, there is also concern among regional states, particularly China and Russia, as to why the advanced Asian economies feel it necessary to engage in a 'concert of democracies' to 'secure' a region where multiple states have conflicting interests.²¹¹

209 Yuan Irene Sun, "The World's Next Factory Won't Be in South Asia," Bloomberg, October 5, 2019, <https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2019-10-06/why-factories-leaving-china-aren-t-going-to-india>.

210 Michael D. Swaine, "Creating an Unstable Asia: the U.S. 'Free and Open Indo-Pacific' Strategy," *Foreign Affairs*, March 2, 2018, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2018/03/02/creating-unstable-asia-u.s.-free-and-open-indo-pacific-strategy-pub-75720>.

211 "Russia Doubles Down on Indo-Pacific Criticism, Raises Fear of 'Divisiveness'," *The Wire*, January 17, 2020, <https://thewire.in/diplomacy/russia-indo-pacific-criticism-double-down>.



CANADA AND THE INDO-PACIFIC: WHERE IS THE RATIONALE?

For Canada, any discussion of proponent states’ Indo-Pacific and FOIP visions’ relevancy must consider the country’s national interests in the Indian and Pacific Oceans as well as the competing versions of FOIP within the Asia Pacific as a starting point. From this perspective, it then becomes possible to determine where and when it may make sense for Canada to reference the Indo-Pacific as a geographic construct and/or to align with a FOIP vision, using the country’s national interests as a baseline for analysis. Central to this approach is a cost/benefit analysis of the FOIP concept for Canada; an exercise that lends itself well to a policy discussion around how Ottawa might engage within the FOIP construct so as to maximize its national interest gains across the region.

ECONOMIC RATIONALE

As outlined above, the earliest accounts of the Indo-Pacific were rooted in economic terms. Japan and India, for instance, employed a clear economic logic to argue for Africa’s and the Middle East’s

inclusion in an Indo-Pacific super-region, noting the MENA's and SSA's potential consumer and energy markets in particular to justify the geographic redesign. Australia and the United States, conversely, predicated their Indo-Pacific visions on India's economic growth, SLOC maintenance in the Indian Ocean area, and energy security. While divergent in terms of priority, the proponent states' shared vision of economic interconnectivity between Asia, Africa, and the Middle East (both actual and potential) provided a basis for their respective Indo-Pacific visions.

Viewed from the perspective of its own economic relations and priorities, it is not clear that Canada shares the proponent states' economic priorities toward the Indo-Pacific. Canada does not, for instance, share Japan's and/or India's economic rationale for adoption of an Indo-Pacific geographic construct. Far from being dependent on energy imports from the MENA through the Asia Pacific as China, India, and Japan largely are, Canada enjoys a high degree of energy autarky, being the 6th largest global producer of energy, including oil, gas, and uranium, and otherwise receiving the majority of its energy imports from the United States. According to Natural Resources Canada, more than 89 per cent of the country's energy exports, primarily crude oil, liquefied natural gas (LNG), and uranium, go to the U.S.; an export pattern that indicates huge demand from the U.S. for Canadian natural resources.²¹² While it may be in Canada's national interest to diversify its energy trade to lessen its dependence on the U.S. market, the most immediate opportunities for such diversification are states like Japan and China, both of which are East Asian, not Indo-Pacific, states.

212 Government of Canada, "Energy Resources Canada," Natural Resource of Canada (website) last modified May 26, 2020, <https://www.nrcan.gc.ca/science-data/data-analysis/energy-data-analysis/energy-facts/energy-and-economy/20062>.

ENERGY AND INDIA: A LATENT CANADIAN INDO-PACIFIC ECONOMIC RATIONALE

While Canada, at present, does not have a clear economic rationale necessitating an Indo-Pacific realignment, further development of its energy sector and a corresponding ability to export oil and LNG to Asia would provide such a rationale. Should Canada's federal government and provincial leaders agree on construction of an 'Energy East'-type pipeline from Alberta's oil and gas fields to refineries on the country's East Coast, Canadian firms could substantially increase their energy exports to Asia through the Indian Ocean.

Among Canada's potential energy customers, India, in particular, stands as a great source of potential. The Modi government has prioritized energy diversification in its foreign and security policies, particularly away from dependency on the MENA region, and has already demonstrated its desire for Canadian oil and LNG. In 2013, Indian Oil signed an MoU with the Alberta Petroleum Marketing Commission for off take on the proposed Energy East Pipeline and, in 2014, Indian Oil Corporation invested US\$1 billion for a 10 per cent stake in the Progress Energy LNG project in British Columbia. Both opportunities have fallen through due to environmental and regulatory concerns.²¹³

While pipeline construction remains a challenge for a number of domestic reasons, not least the National Energy Board's greenhouse gas criteria, India remains a ready-made and eager energy consumer. In 2018, India imported 228.6 million tons of oil worth US\$120 billion with the U.S. exporting 6.9 million tons, an increase of 226 per cent year-on-year. Also, India is currently the world's 4th largest LNG importer, importing 21.7 million tons of LNG in fiscal year 2018/19, with the U.S. supplying five per cent of the LNG import market.

In the event Canada does start exporting energy to India through its Eastern Provinces, it would become more dependent on SLOCs in the Indian Ocean. In this instance, Ottawa would gain a material Indo-Pacific rationale, one it could best operationalize through co-operation with the adapter states (outlined in greater detail below).

Even viewed from the perspective of overseas Canadian energy assets, there is little rationale for Ottawa to adopt an Indo-Pacific viewpoint. Canadian firms have two times the amount of energy assets in South America (US\$9.2 billion) than in all of 'Asia'

²¹³ CBC, 'Indian Oil Corp. buys 10% of B.C. LNG project from Petronas,' *CBC*, 7 March 2014, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/business/indian-oil-corp-buys-10-of-b-c-lng-project-from-petronas-1.2564025>; Reid Southwick, 'India port project expects LNG supply from Canada,' *Calgary Herald*, 19 July 2017, <https://calgaryherald.com/business/energy/india-port-project-expects-lng-supply-from-canada>

(including the Middle East) and more than three times more than in Africa. Indeed, Canadian energy investment in the Middle East and Africa has actually been in decline since 2017 while investment in countries like the U.S., Germany, Mexico, and Colombia have increased.²¹⁴

Canada is not, therefore, dependent on maritime-based trade through the Indian Ocean for its economic development and growth. Canadian exports to the Middle East and North Africa, for instance, which consist almost entirely of agricultural goods and seafood, pass through the Atlantic Ocean and Mediterranean rather than the Pacific and Indian Oceans.²¹⁵ These export routes are far more direct and more secure than those in the Indian Ocean area, meaning there is no trade imperative for Canada to abandon its current geographic focus for an Indo-Pacific redesign. Indeed, Canada's current geographic orientation toward the MENA and SSA, seen in comparison to the proponent states' reliance on transit through the Indian Ocean area, is a strategic advantage.

Canada does, conversely, share the proponent states' view of India as a desirable economic partner. Ottawa has long prioritized the development of Canada-India economics relations; a prioritization that has taken on even greater urgency since the 2019 souring of Canada-China relations.²¹⁶ At first glance, there is ample room for growth in the Canada-Indian economic relationship, particularly if Ottawa allocates resources to support greater economic integration

214 Government of Canada, "Canadian Energy Assets," Natural Resources of Canada (website), last modified November 22, 2019, <https://www.nrcan.gc.ca/science-data/data-analysis/energy-data-analysis/energy-statistics-analysis/canadian-energy-assets/22397>.

215 Vanessa Hravtin, "Mapping Cargo Ship Routes Around the World," *Canadian Geographic*, May 2, 2016, <https://www.canadiangeographic.ca/article/mapping-cargo-ship-routes-around-world>.

216 Office of Prime Minister of Canada, "Backgrounder: Strengthening Canada India Commercial Relationship," February 20, 2018, <https://pm.gc.ca/en/news/backgrounders/2018/02/20/strengthening-canada-india-commercial-relationship>.

between the two states. As of 2018, for instance, Canada-India trade relations remained nominal, with Canada exporting just C\$3.7 billion in goods to India and receiving just C\$3.5 billion.²¹⁷ Further, Canada's investment in India between 2003 and 2020 totalled just C\$23 billion while Indian investment in Canada totalled C\$3.2 billion over the same period.²¹⁸ To put this amount into perspective, Canadian investment in China from 2003 to 2020 was C\$45 billion while Chinese investment in Canada totalled C\$73 billion. Canada is also home to a sizable Indian diaspora and Indian nationals now account for the largest foreign cohort of overseas students in Canada.

There is little to suggest, however, that Canada's future ties with India are dependent on Ottawa's adoption of an Indo-Pacific vision or a FOIP strategy. New Delhi has not indicated preferential treatment for states that align their foreign policy perspective to its own. Neither has Ottawa's 'Asia Pacific' approach to Asia hampered its ability to engage directly with India. Far from simplifying its relations with New Delhi, voluntarily overlaying its bilateral ties with the Indo-Pacific and/or FOIP concepts will add unnecessary complexity. Canada will do far better to advance its ties with India through a wholly informed bilateral approach; one that avoids the pitfalls associated with the Indo-Pacific ideal and FOIP concept.

217 The Observatory of Economic Complexity, "Canada and India Trade (Profile), 2018, accessed February 14, 2020, <https://oec.world/en/profile/bilateral-country/can/partner/ind>.

218 Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada, Investment Monitor 2019, accessed February 24, 2020, <https://investmentmonitor.ca/data-visualizer#visualizer-filters>.

SECURITY RATIONALE

In many ways, Canada shares the proponent states' security concerns around the Indo-Pacific geographic area and FOIP concept. Canada's Armed Forces (CAF) have been active throughout the 'Indo-Pacific' area for decades and Canada remains a contributor country to ongoing operations in Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. Indeed, as of 2020, the CAF is involved in seven multinational operations in Africa, six in the Middle East, and three in the Asia Pacific where it works with a diverse network of states and institutions ranging from the Tunisian Navy to the United Nations and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).²¹⁹ Within these operations, the CAF has prioritized non-traditional security, maritime security, and peacekeeping operations as well as joint training, joint exercises, and women, peace, and security (WPS).²²⁰ As such, Canada and the CAF remain deeply committed to contributing to security of the global commons, including across the Indian and Pacific Ocean theaters.²²¹

None of its security concerns or operations, however, are dependent on Ottawa's adoption of the Indo-Pacific geographic region or its adherence to a FOIP formulation. Non-traditional security is a global concern, not one confined to the Indo-Pacific, as Canadian security practitioners and analysts clearly understand.²²² Even

²¹⁹ Government of Canada, "Current Operations List," Department of National Defence (website), last modified May 7, 2020, <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/services/operations/military-operations/current-operations/list.html>.

²²⁰ Government of Canada, "Canada Concludes Maritime Security and Counter-Terrorism Mission Having Seized Over 9,000 kg of Narcotics," Department of National Defence (website), May 30, 2019, <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/news/2019/05/canada-concludes-maritime-security-and-counter-terrorism-mission-having-seized-over-9000-kg-of-narcotics.html>.

²²¹ Government of Canada, "Canada's Efforts to Promote International Peace and Security," Department of National Defence (website), last modified January 30, 2020, https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/issues_development-enjeux_developpement/peace_scurity-paix_securite/index.aspx?lang=eng.

²²² Government of Canada, "World Issues, Development Priorities," last modified July 8, 2019, https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/issues_development-enjeux_developpement/priorities-priorites/fiap_peace_security-paix_paix_securite.aspx?lang=eng.

specific anti-piracy and anti-terrorism operations in the Gulf of Aden or SLOC security in the Indian Ocean do not require Ottawa to adopt an Indo-Pacific construct, particularly one predicated on exclusivity. Indeed, the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) already undertakes such operations as part of several international coalitions, some of which co-ordinate with the Chinese Navy on tactical matters.²²³

Neither is it clear that Canada would benefit from security engagement through FOIP adoption. As noted above, the CAF already has multiple global partnerships, whether at the state level or within international institutions. None of these partnerships depend on Canada's Indo-Pacific and/or FOIP alignment and some, conversely, could be undermined if aligned with what many Asian states view as an anti-China coalition. Indeed, one need only examine the CAF's current approach to naval engagement in the Indian and Pacific Ocean regions to see the potential pitfalls around Canadian adoption of an Indo-Pacific and/or FOIP framework.

At present, the RCN is currently involved in a number of multinational naval coalitions in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East, most notably through Operations PROJECTION and ARTEMIS.²²⁴ Through these operations, the RCN has worked with states in the Asia Pacific, including Australia, Japan, the United States, Vietnam, and Fiji, and with Middle Eastern states, including Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE, to conduct combined maritime

223 Government of Canada, "Canada Increases Contribution to Multinational Counter-Terrorism Naval Task Force," News Release of the Department of National Defence, April 1, 2019, <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/news/2019/04/canada-increases-contribution-to-multinational-counter-terrorism-naval-task-force.html>; Nadège Rolland ed., *Securing the Belt and Road Initiative: China's Evolving Military Engagement Along the Silk Roads*, NBR Special Report 80, September 2019, "https://www.nbr.org/wp-content/uploads/pdfs/publications/sr80_securing_the_belt_and_road_sep2019.pdf"

224 Government of Canada, "Operation Projection," last modified August 22, 2018, <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/services/operations/military-operations/current-operations/operation-projection.html>.

operations and trainings.²²⁵ Many of the RCN's missions in support of PROJECTION and ARTEMIS were (and are) a part of U.S.-led coalitions, including the Indian Ocean-based United States Naval Forces Central Command and the Pacific Ocean-based US Pacific Fleet.

Canada's military leadership, however, has made the pragmatic choice not to define its operations in line with U.S. FOIP objectives and/or rhetoric. Whereas the U.S. Indo-Pacific strategy calls for U.S. FONOPs in the South and East China Seas to counterbalance Chinese 'revisionism,' the RCN has specifically rejected the idea of participating in freedom of navigation operations (FONOPs) against China's maritime claims.²²⁶ Through this strategic approach, the CAF have been able to affect its own balancing act between Washington and China.

Rather than find its ties with the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) problematized over its adherence to U.S. FOIP priorities – as is the case with Australia's navy – the RCN still maintains direct and amiable ties with the PLAN.²²⁷ Neither has Beijing curtailed the RCN's ability to conduct port calls in Hong Kong, despite the RCN's transit of warships through the Taiwan Strait in 2019, which Canadian military leadership refused to identify as a FONOP. Conversely, Beijing no longer allows the US Navy to port in Hong

225 Government of Canada, "HMCS Calgary Concludes Operation Projection and Returns to CBF Esquimalt," Department of National Defence, December 18, 2018, <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/news/2018/12/hmcs-calgary-concludes-operation-projection-and-returns-to-cfb-esquimalt.html>; Government of Canada, "Operation ARTEMIS (Middle Eastern Waters)," last modified April 3, 2020, <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/reports-publications/transition-materials/caf-operations-activities/2020/03/caf-ops-activities/op-artemis-mid-east-waters.html>.

226 "Canada Sails Warship Through Taiwan Strait for Second Time in Three Months," *South China Morning Post*, September 11, 2019, <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3026707/canada-sails-warship-through-taiwan-strait-second-time-three>.

227 Government of Canada, "HMCS Vancouver Completes Its Contribution to Operation Projection in Asia-Pacific," *The Maple Leaf*, June 28, 2018, <https://ml-fd.caf-fac.ca/en/2018/06/15144>.

Kong, citing ‘unreasonable U.S. practices’ as their justification.²²⁸ In choosing to forgo strategic alignment with the U.S. through the FOIP concept, Canada has clearly maintained strategic flexibility and regional relations that allow it greater room to manoeuvre. The RCN remains a steadfast U.S. ally, but has not closed the strategic door to engagement with China in and around security areas in the Asia Pacific and Indian Ocean areas.

Similarly, Canada has little to benefit from Indo-Pacific/FOIP alignment with respect to security dialogue. Ottawa is already a part of the Asian region’s primary security dialogue mechanisms, including the East Asian Summit and the ASEAN Regional Forum, where it has observer status, and the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific (CSCAP), among others.²²⁹ These dialogue mechanism – most of which are ASEAN-centric – are inclusive and provide regional perspectives to Asian security and the Asian strategic environment. Conversely, Canada would have little to gain in working with FOIP proponent states through the Quad, which China views – quite correctly – as being directed against its interests in the Indian and Pacific Ocean regions.²³⁰ Rather than increase its actual security ties with India, Japan, and the United States, Canadian involvement in the Quad would send a clear message to Beijing that it too sees China’s activities in the Indian and Pacific Ocean areas as inherently threatening. As Canada currently maintains a direct security dialogue mechanism with China – the annual Canada-China Annual Leaders’ Dialogue – Canadian leadership will gain more from direct discussion with

228 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC, “Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Hua Chunying’s Regular Press Conference on December 2, 2019,” https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/xwfw_665399/s2510_665401/2511_665403/t1720852.shtml.

229 Office of Prime Minister of Canada, “Prime Minister Concludes Successful visit to Singapore and Participation at ASEAN,” November 15, 2018, <https://pm.gc.ca/en/news/news-releases/2018/11/15/prime-minister-concludes-successful-visit-singapore-and-participation>.

230 Derek Grossman, “The Quad Needs Broadening to Balance China--And Now’s the Time to Do It,” *The Rand Corporation* (blog), October 22, 2018, <https://www.rand.org/blog/2018/10/the-quad-needs-broadening-to-balance-china-and-nows.html>.

Beijing on its concerns and intentions than by further isolating China through its alignment with the Quad.

Detractors from this approach will cry ‘appeasement’ and argue that China is an existential threat against which Canada must balance through engagement with ‘likeminded’ countries. These individuals will argue for Canadian acceptance of the Indo-Pacific concept, its involvement in the Quad, and its participation in FOIP-identified operations precisely because they are directed against China, which they believe is a threat to global (not to mention regional) security. Any situation where China’s activities challenge the existing status quo, or the sacrosanct rules based order, is, from this perspective, evidence of Chinese revisionism.

Such charges are misplaced as they assume Chinese motivations and intentions in line with their own worldview of a Western-led security order – one where China is a security recipient and not a security provider. Regional states do not uniformly hold this view, however, and are more interested in accommodating China’s growing influence and interests through co-operation and collaboration, including on areas such as the contentious South China Sea. While ubiquitously dismissed as an exercise in futility by Western analysts, ASEAN member states are currently negotiating with China over a Code of Conduct (CoC) for the South China Sea where all claimant states’ interests are considered.²³¹ Regional states’ preference for dialogue over direct conflict is due to their understanding that they must address China’s growing interests in line with its expanding influence. This is not a net-negative outcome for Asia, rather a condition born of changing regional dynamics that prioritize regionalism over offshore balancing.²³²

231 Laura Zhou, “ASEAN Members Up the Ante on South China Sea Amid Code of Contact Talks,” *South China Morning Post*, December 29, 2019, <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3043772/asean-members-ante-south-china-sea-amid-code-conduct-talks>.

232 Dong Jun Kim, “Unfaithful Allies? US Security Clients in China-led International Institutions,” *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 20, Issue 1, January (2020): 61–90.

As Canada further develops its security approach to the Asia Pacific, it would do well to consider China's national and foreign policy interests. While the two states' current relations are fraught with difficulty, Canada does not stand to benefit strategically from ignoring Beijing's perspective on regional events, even when they do not align with Ottawa's own regional assessment. Neither does Canada stand to benefit from alignment against China, particularly with respect to the proponent states. Canadians may deeply object to China's political and economic institutions, or its approach to human rights, but there is nothing about China's current position in Asia that requires Canada to enter into a U.S.-led security coalition to contain China, to balance China, or to hedge against China.

Nor is isolating China the strategically 'smart' move for Canada, as dialogue and engagement are critical components to crisis management and prevention.²³³ While current U.S. strategic analysts discount the importance of dialogue with the country's adversary states, their views differ significantly from previous generations that advocated for dialogue between the U.S. and Soviet Union, even at the height of the Cold War.²³⁴ Further, while Canada-China political relations are strained at the time of writing, security relations between the two states remain stable. Should Ottawa align itself with proponent states' FOIP perceptions of China as an 'enemy,' it is almost certain that its security relations with China will correspondingly suffer.²³⁵

233 J. Martin Ramirez and Gracia Abad-Quintanal ed., *Cross-Cultural Dialogue as a Conflict Management Strategy* (Gewerbestrasse: Springer, 2018).

234 James Voorhees, *Dialogue Sustained: The Multilevel Peace Process and the Dartmouth Conference* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2002).

235 Christian Olsson, "Can't Live With Them, Can't Live Without Them: 'the Enemy' as Object of Controversy in Contemporary Western Wars," *Critical Military Studies* 5, no. 4 (May 2019): 359-377, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/23337486.2019.1622261>.

NORMATIVE RATIONALE

There is, as first glance, a compelling normative case to be made for Canadian adoption of an Indo-Pacific geographic concept and/or the FOIP framework. Canada is a steadfast proponent of inclusivity, a rules based order, and global justice and the proponent states have suffused their Indo-Pacific and FOIP visions with a normative logic drawn from these values. Yet, as with proponent states' FOIP economic and security rationale, the benefits for Canada in FOIP alignment are less clear when critically considered in line with the strategy's actual normative assumptions. Indeed, far from an institution founded on ideals, FOIP's normative components are just as exclusive as inclusive and, in many ways, far less about values and rules than about fostering strategic alignment.²³⁶

With respect to democracy, FOIP proponent states themselves are divided, with India preferring to downplay democracy promotion within its Indo-Pacific vision and the United States raising the issue of democracy protection to an almost religious level.²³⁷ Neither have the proponent states clearly articulated their objectives and means for democratic promotion in the Indo-Pacific region, but have rather limited their discussions of democratic values to their own systems, thereby proving a normative rationale for their FOIP engagement. The Abe administration's 'democratic security diamond' and 'concert of democracies' concepts are the most salient examples of this attempt at ideological alignment, although one sees similar references throughout the proponent states' FOIP statements to alignment between 'likeminded' (read 'democratic')

²³⁶ Axel Berkofsky and Sergio Miracola ed., *Geopolitics by Other Means: The Indo-Pacific Reality* (Milan: Ledizioni LediPublishing, 2019).

²³⁷ Julie Zauzmer, "Pence: America Will Prioritize Protecting Christians Abroad," *The Washington Post*, May 11, 2017, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2017/05/11/pence-america-will-prioritize-protecting-christians-abroad/>.

states.²³⁸ Far from being a principled institution established to support governance, the proponent states' FOIP concepts are, rather, manifestos for Asia's advanced democracies to work together to shape regional governance institutions in ways that advance their respective interests.²³⁹

Similarly, there is little in the proponent states' FOIP concepts' approach to preserving and strengthening a rules based order that is compelling upon critical examination. In addition to the proponent states' lack of clarity around what constitutes an RBO, there is a clear sense, from the United States in particular, that the RBO is essentially shorthand for a continuation of the regional status quo around governance, law, and institutions.²⁴⁰ While the prevailing 'San Francisco System' does have much to commend it, its contemporary and future relevance is less certain, particularly if its principal architects (e.g. the proponent states) are committed to its preservation at the expense of its evolution.²⁴¹ Far from a source of regional stability at a time of increased uncertainty, a 'Western'-led program to preserve an RBO could have the desultory effect of propagating Asian spheres of influence, where 'adherents' and 'detractors' to the RBO find themselves in opposition.²⁴²

While Canada can benefit from greater collaboration with the region's advanced democracies and greater involvement in

238 Kharis Templeman, "Democracy under Siege: Advancing Cooperation and Common Values in the Indo-Pacific," *Atlantic Council*, January 2020, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/resrep20700.pdf>.

239 Congressional Research Service, "Democracy Promotion: An Objective of U.S. Foreign Assistance," January 4, 2019, <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R44858.pdf>.

240 Carl Ungerer, "Whose Rules? In Which Order?" *Australian Institute of International Affairs - Australian Outlook*, May 25, 2018, <http://www.internationalaffairs.org.au/australia-noutlook/whose-rules-in-which-order/>.

241 Richard Menhinick, "The Rules-Based Global Order': Be Alert and Alarmed," *The Strategist*, April 12, 2018, <https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/rules-based-global-order-alert-alarmed/>.

242 Van Jackson, "Whose Rules, What Rules? A Contest for Order in the Asia-Pacific," Chicago Council on Global Affairs Commentary, December 6, 2017, <https://www.thechicagocouncil.org/publication/whose-rules-what-rules-contest-order-asia-pacific>.

discussions around Asia's RBO, the proponent states' FOIP strategies are not the appropriate vehicles for such activities. As a self-described 'alternative' model to China's BRI, the proponent states have defined FOIP in largely adversarial terms to non-democratic states and/or states that advocate for new regional institutions to match the region's new power dynamics. Moreover, FOIP's commitment to democratic promotion is taking place at the same time that Asian states are adopting more mixed-model governments, learning from China's, Malaysia's, and Singapore's governance successes, and rejecting the West's democratic models as unable to meet modern day global challenges, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the 2008 Global Financial Crisis.²⁴³

Canada rightfully prioritizes democratic values in its foreign policy at the global level. For Canada, however, it is unnecessary to align with FOIP proponent states on democracy promotion and/or preservation of the Asian RBO as, in so doing, it would be aligning itself with the region's established powers at the expense of its engagement with emerging powers. To simply view the region's move away from democracy as the result of a lack of 'responsible' leadership is to take a paternalistic view of Asian states' agency, with the very real possibility that in doing so Canada will further establish itself as an 'outside' actor in Asia Pacific affairs. One only need look to regional polling to see that democracy's appeal is in large decline among Asian states and populations.²⁴⁴ Far better for Ottawa to work bilaterally and through inclusive regional institutions (in line with the adapter states' Indo-Pacific values, on which more is written below) to share its national experiences

243 Freedom House, "New Report: Freedom in the World 2020 Finds Established Democracies are in Decline," March 4, 2020, <https://freedomhouse.org/article/new-report-freedom-world-2020-finds-established-democracies-are-decline>.

244 Pew Research Centre, "Many Across the Globe Are Dissatisfied With How Democracy Is Working," April 19, 2019, <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2019/04/29/many-across-the-globe-are-dissatisfied-with-how-democracy-is-working/>.

around democracy and to articulate its democratic ideals than to align with FOIP and push against endogenous change in the Asian region.

In contrast to democracy and the RBO, there is a compelling normative case to be made for Canadian acceptance of an Indo-Pacific frame of reference if, indeed, regional sentiments are in agreement that the Asia Pacific concept is a colonial legacy and the Indo-Pacific construct is a more inclusive, endogenous vision of the region's geographic and cultural parameters.²⁴⁵ Canada should jettison the Asia Pacific concept if doing so is truly an act of social justice, if only to show solidarity for small and middle powers in the region that may have lacked previous agency to shape the lexicon within which they must operate.

From the limited amount of information available on non-elite public opinion in the Asia Pacific, however, there are no clear social demand signals for a geographic re-framing toward the Indo-Pacific. In polling on regional issues from 2015 until the present, for instance, there is little indication from Asian respondents that replacing the Asia Pacific with an Indo-Pacific geographic construct is a post-colonial priority. Pew polling from 2015 on *How Asia-Pacific Publics See Each Other and Their National Leaders*, for instance, showed no endogenous drive among respondents to adopt an Indo-Pacific vision.²⁴⁶

245 Indrani Bagchi, "Raisina Dialogue: 'Indo-Pacific' a Global Common, Says Foreign Secy Vijay Gokhale," *The Times of India*, January 17, 2020, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/raisina-dialogue-indo-pacific-a-global-common-says-foreign-secy-vijay-gokhale/article-show/73337528.cms>.

246 Pew Research Center, "How Asia-Pacific Publics See Each Other and Their National Leaders," September 2, 2015, <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2015/09/02/how-asia-pacific-publics-see-each-other-and-their-national-leaders/>.

Neither did a 2017 Chicago Council and Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada poll on *Asia in the Age of Uncertainty* record public dissatisfaction with the Asia Pacific as a geographic reference point.²⁴⁷ While the absence of registered dissatisfaction does not, of course, preclude the existence of unspoken discontent, neither does one find evidence of support for the Indo-Pacific concept in more directed regional polling. The ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute's *State of Southeast Asia: 2020* poll, for instance, notes that 54 per cent of respondents in 2020 opposed the Indo-Pacific concept on the grounds that it was 'unclear,' and 23 per cent of respondents believed the concept could undermine ASEAN's centrality within the Asia Pacific.²⁴⁸

Neither is there is a significant body of scholarly work that identifies the Asia Pacific as a colonial construct and advocates a redefinition to rectify it as a post-colonial institution. Indeed, a preliminary search of existing scholarly databases, including Google Scholar, shows the most relevant academic piece on the Asia Pacific as a colonial concept is a 1992 work by Arif Dirlik titled, *The Asia-Pacific Idea: Reality and Representation in the Invention of a Regional Structure*. Importantly, however, Dirlik did not advocate for a widening of the Asia Pacific to the Indo-Pacific. Rather, his key argument was for a move toward sub-regionalism as the Asia Pacific ideal, itself, was too 'wide' a geographic construct.²⁴⁹

In line with this view, there has been a significant amount of scholarship in recent years within and outside the Asia Pacific on Asian 'regionalization' or 'localization.' The central thesis within

247 The Chicago Council of Global Affairs, "Asia in an Age of Uncertainty: Public Opinion in the Asia Pacific Results of the 2016 Multinational Survey," Chicago, 2017, https://www.thechicago-council.org/sites/default/files/asia-age-of-uncertainty-report_20170201.pdf.

248 Tang Siew Mun et al. "The State of Southeast Asia: 2020 Survey Report".

249 Arif Dirlik, "The Asia-Pacific Idea: Reality and Representation in the Invention of a Regional Structure," *Journal of World History* 3, No. 1 (Spring, 1992): 55-79.

such scholarship is that the Asia Pacific has become a more robust region through Asian states' shared norms, strategic views, and economic interconnectivity. These shared characteristics, in turn, have led to the formation of regional institutions and have contributed to a 'thickening' of regional ties. Indeed, authors such as Amitav Acharya have become pioneers in arguing for Asian regionalism, or the expansion of Asian states' linkages to the Asia Pacific region, as an act of post-colonial social justice, noting that Asian states gain power and agency through consolidation and cooperation.²⁵⁰ This scholarship, based on years of close observation at the Asia Pacific regional level, directly contradicts calls from FOIP propogating states – primarily India – that the Indo-Pacific is a more 'natural' geographic construct as it includes states and actors from the Middle East and Africa.

There is little evidence, therefore, that the region would see Canada's alignment with the proponent states' Indo-Pacific values as anything more than Canadian 'bandwagoning' with FOIP proponent states. Indeed, there is a good chance that Canada's internalization of the proponent states' FOIP strategies would place it on the outside of regional sentiment, particularly as the states most ardently pushing the Indo-Pacific construct are the region's most developed, most affluent states. This is particularly the case as three of the FOIP proponent states have been colonial powers in Asia in the past.

²⁵⁰ Amitav Acharya, *Whose Ideas Matter? Agency and Power in Asian Regionalism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009).

CANADA AND FOIP: HOW TO PROCEED?

While there is not a clear rationale for Canada to abandon the Asia Pacific for an Indo-Pacific geographic ideal, as demonstrated above, there is still value in examining whether Canada could best achieve its national interests through FOIP engagement and, if so, which proponent states’ FOIP construct would best support its national aims. Setting aside the question of Indo-Pacific relevancy, the fundamental question then becomes whether Canada stands to benefit from co-operation with Australia, India, Japan, and the U.S. under a FOIP strategic umbrella.

The table below summarizes the above discussion on differing FOIP visions in Australia, ASEAN, India, Japan, and the United States, in terms of priority thematic areas and FOIP priorities. While such a representation oversimplifies the inherent interconnectivity between issue areas, it does provide an important starting point for discussions of the FOIP concept’s applicability for Canada in line with its national interests and its current engagement approach to Asia.

Table 1: Free and Open Indo-Pacific Visions Among FOIP Proponent States/Institutions

	Country	Governance	Economic Development	Security	Interconnectivity & Inclusion	Balance China
First-tier priority	Australia	Second-tier priority	Second-tier priority	First-tier priority	Not applicable	First-tier priority
Second-tier priority	ASEAN/Indonesia	First-tier priority	First-tier priority	Third-tier priority	First-tier priority	Not applicable
Third-tier priority	India	Second-tier priority	First-tier priority	Second-tier priority	First-tier priority	Second-tier priority
	Japan	First-tier priority	First-tier priority	First-tier priority	Second-tier priority	First-tier priority
Not applicable	United States	Third-tier priority	Third-tier priority	First-tier priority	Not applicable	First-tier priority

Among these competing FOIP visions, Canada should be the wariest of the United States', which is predicated on expanded U.S. military hegemony in Asia and aimed at containing China.²⁵¹ No other FOIP vision so fully embraces the idea that China is a revisionist actor seeking to upset the regional rules based order (read U.S.-led regional order) and that China's actions require a 'peace through strength' approach based on a U.S.-led military/security coalition.²⁵² While both Japan and Australia have similarly articulated concern over China's activities in the Indian and Pacific Ocean areas, neither state has placed as much emphasis on 'great power competition' within the FOIP concept as has the Trump administration, despite the fact that both states are central to Washington's FOIP view and operations. Neither has the United States offered a fully detailed or compelling economic or governance counterpart to its militaristic approach, despite claims from Secretary of State Pompeo that the US State Department has developed a FOIP economic blueprint. The Trump administration's blind withdrawal from the CPTPP immediately after assuming office and its decision to voluntarily enter into a trade war with China is more than evidence enough that the U.S. has no economic strategy for inclusive engagement in Asia, aside from the sanctions-based economic coercion strategy it employs across the Indo-Pacific theater with allies and adversaries alike.²⁵³

Neither does Australia's formal FOIP model offer much for Canada's approach to Asia as it, too, has become a largely anti-

251 Michael D. Swaine, "A Counterproductive Cold War with China," *Foreign Affairs*, March 2, 2018.

252 White House, "President Donald J. Trump's America First Agenda is Helping to Achieve Peace Through Strength," September 25, 2018, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/president-donald-j-trumps-america-first-agenda-helping-achieve-peace-strength/>.

253 Charlene Barshefsky, et al., "Reinvigorating U.S. Economic Strategy in the Asia Pacific: Recommendations for the Incoming Administration," (report), January 2017, https://csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/publication/161228_Barshefsky_US_Economic_Strategy_Asia_Pacific_Web.pdf.

China directed strategy under the Morrison administration. While earlier Australian accounts of FOIP articulated the country's need to reconceptualise its geographic position in light of its growing commercial and security interests in the Indian Ocean, Prime Minister Morrison has now publicly linked Australia's FOIP with the U.S. vision, going so far as to equate the Quad with the FOIP concept.²⁵⁴ Notably, the Morrison administration's position is contrary to public discussion and scholarship in Australia, which is arguably the most sophisticated among the English-speaking world with regard to developing and articulating an Indo-Pacific 'logic.' For states like China, however, Morrison's alignment with the U.S. FOIP vision is an indication that Australia has deprioritized the concept's focus on inclusivity while prioritizing its focus on containment.²⁵⁵

India's FOIP vision, conversely, is far less concerned with security matters and China than it is an expression of that country's two-ocean's approach to its economic development and multilateral engagement. This is not to say that India is not concerned about China's activities in the Indian and Pacific Ocean regions, but rather that it remains committed to strategic autonomy, foreign policy flexibility, and inclusivity over competition with China. Indeed, India's FOIP vision is far more focused on deepening its ties with states in the Middle East, or 'West Asia,' and in Southeast Asia, where it sees particular economic and political opportunities. In contrast to Australia, the Modi government has specifically worked to separate its participation with the Quad (of which it is the most hesitant member) to its FOIP vision in a frank attempt to decouple

254 See Seng Tan. "Consigned to Hedge: South-East Asia and America's 'Free and Open Indo-Pacific' Strategy." *International Affairs* 96, Issue 1 (2020): 131-148.

255 Wu Minwen, "How Has the China Containment Indo-Pacific' Strategy Has Steadily Progressed?" *Xinhua*, August 9, 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/mil/2018-08/09/c_129929588.htm.

its economic and political interests from its strategic and security concerns.²⁵⁶

While India's FOIP is less confrontational than the U.S. and Australian visions, its value as a strategic concept for Canada is nevertheless questionable. India's view on the Indo-Pacific comes from its unique geographic position, its need to develop a clear two-ocean, two-continent strategy, and its desire to capitalize on its deep historical and civilizational linkages with the Middle East to realize what it sees as its greater potential on the global stage.²⁵⁷ The concept is a realization of the Modi administration's Act East and Act West strategies, which are India-specific in terms of priorities and potential outcomes. While Canada can certainly benefit from greater bilateral and multilateral co-operation with India on a number of fronts, none are dependent on the two countries' alignment under FOIP. Indeed, aside from the benefit Canada might receive from symbolic alignment with India, there is nothing tangible that Ottawa would receive from adopting India's FOIP vision.

Of the FOIP visions, Japan's is, at first glance, the most relevant for Canada's position as it covers governance, economic development, and security in equal parts. While initially more in line with the U.S. and Australian visions in its focus on China and its intent to balance China's BRI activities, Japan's FOIP vision has evolved to be more inclusive and less confrontational – what Yuichi Hosoya calls Japan's FOIP 2.0 – up to and including closer collaboration with

256 Rahul Roy-Chaudhury, "Modi's Vision for Indo-Pacific Region," International Institute for Strategic Studies (blog), June 2, 2018, <https://www.iiss.org/blogs/analysis/2018/06/modi-vision-indo-pacific>.

257 Manjeet S. Pardesi, "The Indo-Pacific: a New 'Region' or the Return of History," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 74, no. 2 (2020): 124-146.

China and China's BRI.²⁵⁸ The Abe administration's FOIP evolution, in this respect, positioned Japan much closer to the *2019 ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific*, which emphasizes inclusivity, dialogue, non-interference, and ASEAN centrality in any Indo-Pacific strategy. While this brings Japan more in line with Southeast Asian sentiment, which has accepted the Indo-Pacific concept but rejected any FOIP-related institution building, it has also diluted Tokyo's FOIP vision into something less than a comprehensive strategy and something more like an aspirational, normative statement.²⁵⁹

This raises the critical question of what shape Canadian alignment with Japan's FOIP vision would take aside from a general accord around the two states' shared principles, values, and norms. For Japan's FOIP vision to remain appealing to Southeast Asian nations, which the Abe administration identified as a 'core interest' for Japan, Tokyo must avoid any FOIP operations that lead to institution development or cause regional instability.²⁶⁰ Rather, it must be content working within the Asia Pacific's existing regional architecture and applying the FOIP nomenclature where doing so makes strategic sense for Japan. This suggests that going forward, the FOIP concept will be little more than a strategy in name – one that serves the (important) purpose of demonstrating Japanese strategic resolve and strategic vision to the Asian region while not antagonising ASEAN member states.²⁶¹

258 Yuichi Hosoya, "FOIP 2.0: The Evolution of Japan's Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy," *Asia Pacific Review* 26, Issue 1 (2019): 18-28.

259 Celine Pajon, "Japan's Indo-Pacific Strategy: Shaping a Hybrid Regional Order" *The War on the Rocks Commentary* (blog), December 18, 2019, <https://warontherocks.com/2019/12/japans-indo-pacific-strategy-shaping-a-hybrid-regional-order/>.

260 Kei Koga, "The Emerging Indo-Pacific Era (Japan-Southeast Asia Relations)," *Comparative Connections* 21, No. 1 (2019): 125-134.

261 Yukio Tajima, "Abe Softens Tone on Indo-Pacific to Coax China's ASEAN Friends," *Nikkei Asian Review*, November 13, 2018, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/International-relations/Abe-softens-tone-on-Indo-Pacific-to-coax-China-s-ASEAN-friends>.

From this perspective, it is not at all certain where Canada could operationally engage with Japan on issues of governance outside the institutions that already exist in the Asia Pacific region independent of the FOIP concept. There is currently no FOIP-specific governance institution, for example, and neither is Canada underrepresented in regional multilateral governance forums. Canada is already a member of the G20 and G7, for instance, both of which are invaluable forums for discussion of governance issues with reference to the Asia Pacific and neither of which depend on the FOIP concept for their relevance. At the G20 summit in Osaka in 2019, for instance, state member committees addressed rules and regulations around regional trade and finance, environmental protection, economic development, women's empowerment, and public health, among other relevant governance issues.²⁶² At the 2019 G7 meeting in France, member states addressed the U.S.-China trade war and events in Hong Kong, among other non-Asia specific issues including climate change and international finance.²⁶³ Canada is also a founding member of Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), a regional forum focused on economic governance issues including trade, economic integration, and structural reform, a member of the CPTPP, a regional multilateral FTA focused on trade liberalization, tariff elimination, and intellectual property protection, and a director on the boards of both the Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and Asian Development Bank, two of the Asia Pacific's premier developed institutions focused on poverty reduction.

262 Government of Canada, "G20 Osaka Leaders' Declaration," Global Affairs Canada (website), June 29, 2019, https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/international_relations-re-lations_internationales/g20/2019-06-29-g20_leaders-dirigeants_g20.aspx?lang=eng.

263 Présidence de la République Française, "G7 Leaders' Declaration," August 26, 2019, <https://www.elysee.fr/en/g7/2019/08/26/g7-leaders-declaration>.

While there are clearly areas where Canada could increase its participation in local discussions around governance, both related to economic and non-economic issues, these opportunities are primarily within existing institutions and almost exclusively within the ASEAN Plus frameworks, which Canada has yet to wholly embrace. Indeed, as ASEAN member states have made the strengthening of ASEAN institutions a priority within their *Indo-Pacific Outlook*, Canada should be circumspect in supporting any new regional institutions that could undermine those already existing.

One can say the same for Canada's potential to engage with Japan on economic development issues under the FOIP concept. At present, there are no FOIP-specific institutions that fill a gap in the Asia Pacific's economic institutional architecture, which is developing through initiatives like the CPTPP and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) in parallel to the FOIP vision. Neither is Canada lacking membership in or access to existing institutions. As noted above, Canada is an active member in APEC, CPTPP, the ADB, and the AIIB. Canada also has FTAs with South Korea, Chile, and Peru and is in the process of exploratory discussions on FTAs with China, ASEAN, and Thailand, and FTA negotiations with the Pacific Alliance.²⁶⁴ Canada also works with the World Bank, the International Finance Corporation, and the International Labour Organization on economic development issues across the Asia Pacific.

As there is ample evidence that Canada is actually underperforming on economic issues in the Asia Pacific despite its participation

²⁶⁴ Government of Canada, "Canada and the Asia Pacific," Global Affairs Canada (website), last modified January 10, 2020, https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/international-relations-relations-internationales/asia_pacific-asie_pacifique/index.aspx?lang=eng.

in these existing institutions, there is little reason to think engagement on economic development issues under FOIP would advance Canada's national economic interests in any meaningful way.²⁶⁵ This is even the case with regard to Canada-Japan economic relations, as both states have entered into the equivalent of a bilateral FTA through mutual accession to the CPTPP.

Lastly, alignment with Japan on the FOIP concept is unnecessary for Canada's security relations to the Asia Pacific region as neither country's security activities or security interests are dependent on FOIP concept-related operations. With regard to Canada-Japan bilateral security relations, the two states already co-ordinate on security issues through the G7 and G7 working groups like the DPRK Sanctions Contact Group and the Non-Proliferation Directors Group and work together to support United Nation's Security Council sanctions against North Korea through Operation NEON. Canada and Japan also signed an Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA) in 2018, allowing the two countries to better co-ordinate co-operation between their respective armed forces where and when appropriate.²⁶⁶

With regard to multilateral security relations, the only benefit Canada might receive from alignment with Japan around the FOIP concept is participation in the Quad, which, ironically, Japan is increasingly uncomfortable associating with the FOIP and, increasingly, is becoming a U.S. and Australian FOIP institution. Canada already has close defence relations with Australia, Japan, and the United States, is already a part of the 'Five Eyes' intelligence

265 Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada, *The CPTPP Tracker 2019: The First Year*, (Vancouver: 2019), https://www.asiapacific.ca/sites/default/files/publication-pdf/the_cptpp_tracker_report.pdf.

266 Office of Prime Minister of Canada, "Canada Announces Closer Collaboration with Japan," April 28, 2019, <https://pm.gc.ca/en/news/backgrounders/2019/04/28/canada-announces-closer-collaboration-japan>.

sharing mechanism that includes two FOIP proponent states, the U.K., and New Zealand, and already undertakes joint-training and joint-operations with three of the FOIP states (not India) in the Asia Pacific. None of these security partnerships are dependent on Canadian adherence to the FOIP concept, nor would Canada's acceptance of FOIP guarantee Canadian involvement in the Quad.

It is clear that Canada would not benefit materially from FOIP engagement with Japan. This is not because Japan's FOIP concept is inherently flawed, but rather because Ottawa and Tokyo already enjoy close bilateral relations, because Canada is already enmeshed in the Asia Pacific's existing governance, economic, and security institutions, and because Japan's FOIP concept lacks a clear operational platform. From the perspective of material gain, therefore, there is nothing persuasive that should push Canada to adopt the FOIP concept, particularly as it has no clear rationale derived from its national interests to do so.

There is, however, a strong case to be made for normative alignment with Japan's FOIP vision if the Suga administration continues the country's ideological shift away from its original Indo-Pacific strategy, which sought to counter China's rise through democratic security alignment toward a more 'inclusive' Indo-Pacific concept in line with the adapter states (on which more is written below). As noted above, Tokyo has reconceptualized its FOIP 'strategy' to be more of a FOIP 'vision' through which it seeks greater ideological alignment with regional actors, such as ASEAN, that reject the more bellicose, U.S.-led Indo-Pacific view. Japan has shifted its Indo-Pacific rhetoric, in this respect, from 'managing' China's rise toward regional consultation, integration, and non-aggression, bringing it more in line with the ASEAN *Outlook*, in particular.

Whether Japan wholly embraces this more regionally-driven Indo-Pacific view remains, however, questionable. While the Abe administration made rhetorical alterations to its FOIP concept, most notably with respect toward China and China's role in Asia, Japan remains firmly committed to operational engagement with the other FOIP proponent states, as detailed above. Japan's continued reliance on proponent states security ties, in particular, is problematic if the country is truly intent on distancing itself from a more aggressive FOIP interpretation, one it had a majority hand in first articulating. If Japan continues to engage with the U.S. on FOIP security and defence relations, for instance, while espousing a more 'inclusive' Indo-Pacific, Canadian policy-makers should view this for what it is – a rhetorical attempt by Tokyo to placate regional concerns over the FOIP while maintaining the very same FOIP operations that the adapter states have summarily rejected.

Much, therefore, depends on Japan's near-term FOIP development, whether, for example, Tokyo aligns its FOIP operations with its FOIP ideals of whether, alternatively, it continues to reference the FOIP with respect to its defence relations with the U.S. This is not to say that Japan must reject its defence relations with the U.S. before Canada considers alignment. U.S.-Japan defence relations are fundamental to Tokyo's security strategy and are unlikely to change significantly in the near- to medium-terms. Rather, Japan must decouple its FOIP vision from its relations with the U.S. to demonstrate its commitment to Indo-Pacific diversity, inclusivity, and stability.

Should the Suga administration continue with activities, relations, and operations that partner with the U.S. to target Chinese activity, Canada should avoid normative alignment with the Japanese FOIP concept. If, alternatively, Japan alters its FOIP operations in line with its new Indo-Pacific rhetoric, demonstrably aligning its FOIP

operations with its commitment to regional inclusivity, Canada should work with Tokyo to ensure normative alignment.

Importantly, however, Canadian-Japanese normative alignment should not take place within the proponent states' FOIP concepts. As demonstrated above, Canada stands to gain little from proponent states FOIP alignment and, indeed, could find its strategic options in the Indo-Pacific lessened as a result of perceived bangwagoning with the U.S. FOIP vision, in particular. Rather, Ottawa should look to the Indo-Pacific adapter states for a strategic direction forward, most notably with respect to Indo-Pacific priorities and values. Canada should also look to funnel its bilateral engagement with Japan through the adapter states' Indo-Pacific visions, thereby benefiting from close engagement with Tokyo in the Indo-Pacific while avoiding the strategic 'baggage' associated with the proponent states' FOIP strategies.



THE ADAPTERS AND A 'DIVERSE,' 'INCLUSIVE,' AND 'STABLE' INDO-PACIFIC

The Indo-Pacific represents an ideal, one that gains in value the more states are willing to adopt it and to internalize it into their foreign and security policies. Japanese and U.S. leadership, in particular, understand this and have prioritized the Indo-Pacific's and the FOIP's propagation within their regional foreign and security policy activities. The Abe administration, for example, identified FOIP expansion throughout Asia as a policy priority, particularly among ASEAN member states, noting that the benefits for FOIP participation are open to 'every country that supports this idea.'²⁶⁷ The Trump administration, similarly, has pushed for Asian states to accept its Indo-Pacific vision, arguing that each country is free to determine its own course within the broader Indo-Pacific framework.²⁶⁸ While more reticent than Tokyo and Washington, Canberra and New Delhi have similarly used the Indo-Pacific and FOIP constructs to appeal for regional unity and regional order, particularly with respect to the

267 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, *Diplomatic Bluebook 2018* (Tokyo: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2018), <https://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/other/bluebook/2018/html/chapter1/c0102.html#sf01>; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, "ASEAN Policy Speech by Foreign Minister MOTEGI Toshimitsu," January 10, 2020, https://www.mofa.go.jp/sa/sea2/page3e_001148.html.

268 U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee, "Testimony of Randall Schriver on ARIA Implementation and the Indo-Pacific Strategy," October 16, 2019, https://www.foreign.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/101619_Schriver_Testimony.pdf.

maintenance of the regional rules based order and international law.²⁶⁹

It is, therefore, not surprising that regional and extra-regional actors have articulated their own Indo-Pacific visions, albeit somewhat apprehensively.²⁷⁰ These actors' views of the Indo-Pacific are not, however, clean reproductions of the proponent states' visions. Rather, they represent the clear and persistent foreign and security policy norms of non-alignment, conflict management, and inclusion that small and middle powers have used for at least a decade to balance great power rivalry in the Asian region to maximum effect.

Ironically, in adopting and adapting the proponent states' Indo-Pacific visions, these 'adapter' institutions and states have, perhaps unwittingly, contributed to an alternative Indo-Pacific 'reality' that rejects many of the proponent states' early FOIP rationales and justifications. Rather than adhere to Indo-Pacific ideals that securitize China's rise, for instance, the adapter states articulate a vision on Indo-Pacific order that includes China and that accommodates China's strategic interests, even at the cost of continued U.S. hegemony.

Further, these adapter states have systematically rejected the 'great power conflict' paradigm that now informs the Australian and U.S. Indo-Pacific visions, focusing instead on non-traditional security issues such as terrorism and piracy (France), economic

269 Office of Prime Minister of Australia, "In Our Interest," Speech- Lowy Lecture, October 3, 2019, <https://www.pm.gov.au/media/speech-lowy-lecture-our-interest>; Indian Ministry of External Affairs, "Prime Minister's Speech at the East Asia Summit," November 4, 2019, https://www.mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/32171/Prime_Ministers_Speech_at_the_East_Asia_Summit_04_November_2019.

270 Huong Le Thu, "The Long and Winding Way to the Indo-Pacific," *The Strategist*, June 29, 2019, <https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/the-long-and-winding-way-to-the-indo-pacific/>.

security (ASEAN and Indonesia), and climate change (Germany). Built into this view of security is the equidistant treatment of Beijing and Washington, a commitment to strategic neutrality, and a prioritization of Indo-Pacific inclusivity that breaks from the proponent states' more parochial Indo-Pacific visions.

Lastly, these adapter states have uniformly called for middle and small power collaboration across the Indo-Pacific on matters of trans-regional governance. Rejecting the 'rule of the strong' for a more multilateral approach to matters of international law, international institutions, and international security, the adapter states' Indo-Pacific visions exclude such groupings as the 'democratic security diamond' and, in some cases, the Quad. All adapter states further prioritize ASEAN as an institution and Southeast Asia as a sub-region for engagement, again, ironically, returning Asia's centre of gravity to the Asia Pacific.

The adapter states' summary rejection of aspects of the proponent states' Indo-Pacific visions and FOIP strategies suggest that, in advocating for widespread Indo-Pacific adoption, the proponent states sowed the seeds for a truly inclusive, regionally-developed Indo-Pacific ideal. This alternative vision is one of interconnectivity, inclusivity, consultation, and stability rather than democracy, exclusivity, and confrontation. For a middle power such as Canada, the adapters' Indo-Pacific visions offer far more with respect to comprehensive Asian engagement.

The following section details the 'ASEAN Outlook' on the Indo-Pacific, Indonesia's Indo-Pacific vision, and France and Germany's Indo-Pacific visions as they are, collectively, the most significant examples of Indo-Pacific adapters to date. Not only do they reject the proponent states' more bellicose Indo-Pacific/FOIP concepts,

but they offer a clear strategic option: an ‘inclusive’ and ‘stable’ Indo-Pacific.

ASEAN

ASEAN member state were slow to embrace the Indo-Pacific vision, with states like Singapore clearly concerned that doing so could lead to Southeast Asia’s marginalization and to great-power centric spheres of influence in the Asia Pacific. Singaporean Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong clearly articulated these concerns in a major speech at the Shangri-la Dialogue in 2019, where he rejected any idea of the ‘Indo-Pacific’ that was not inclusive, that ignored ASEAN centrality, or that led to increased tensions in the region. Prime Minister Lee further critiqued the Indo-Pacific concept in relation to the BRI, which he argued was more developed and more operational.²⁷¹ Regional polling suggests that the Southeast Asian public shares Lee’s concerns over the Indo-Pacific as a concept, with more than 54 per cent of respondents in the *State of Southeast Asia: 2020 Survey Report* noting that the Indo-Pacific concept was unclear and required further development.²⁷²

In June 2019, nevertheless, ASEAN member states outlined their view of the Indo-Pacific in a document called the *ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific*. For those looking to Southeast Asia and ASEAN as a bellwether of a FOIP vision’s regional appeal, this joint-statement was a vindication of sorts, demonstrating to skeptical analysts and hesitant publics that the FOIP construct has a universalist quality

271 “PM Lee Hsien Loong’s Speech at the Shangri-La Dialogue,” *Channel News Asia*, May 31, 2019, <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/singapore/lee-hsien-loong-speech-2019-shangri-la-dialogue-11585954>.

272 Tang Siew Mun, ed., “The State of Southeast Asia: 2020 Survey Report,” ASEAN Secretariat, January 16, 2020, https://www.iseas.edu.sg/images/pdf/TheStateofSEASurveyReport_2020.pdf.

that appeals to Asia's middle powers, even those initially hesitant to embrace its universalism.²⁷³

Examination of the *ASEAN Outlook* statement, however, does not reveal Southeast Asian acceptance of the FOIP concept (in any form), but rather a view from ASEAN about the applicability of the Indo-Pacific as a geographic area; one that only makes sense in the ASEAN context if Southeast Asia remains the Indo-Pacific's centre of gravity. Indeed, rather than a statement endorsing the proponent states' Indo-Pacific and/or FOIP constructs, as some Western analysts wrongly claimed, the *ASEAN Outlook* outlined ASEAN's intent to internalize and use the Indo-Pacific construct in ways that benefit ASEAN centrality and obscure the concept's more adversarial components. The *ASEAN Outlook* accomplishes this primarily by insisting any Indo-Pacific concept must be inclusive, it must maintain Southeast Asian centrality, and it must prioritize co-operation instead of competition.²⁷⁴

One can see these principles clearly in the *Outlook's* issue-area focus. With regard to maritime issues, for example, the *ASEAN Outlook* breaks with the proponent states' FOIP visions to deprioritize maritime security engagement and emphasize maritime consultations, arbitration, and conservation.²⁷⁵ The *Outlook* also calls for greater connectivity between Indo-Pacific states in line with the existing *Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity (MPAC) 2025*, which identifies China's centrality in Asia and its positive contribution to regional infrastructure development – a core requirement for

273 Stephen R. Nagy, "Shifting into the Era of the Indo-Pacific," *Japan Times*, December 12, 2019, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/opinion/2019/12/12/commentary/japan-commentary/shifting-era-indo-pacific/#.Xkw-WChkJD4>.

274 ASEAN Secretariat, *ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific* (Jakarta: 2019), https://asean.org/storage/2019/06/ASEAN-Outlook-on-the-Indo-Pacific_FINAL_22062019.pdf.

275 Ibid.

greater, inclusive regional interconnectivity.²⁷⁶ The *Outlook* also emphasizes the importance of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the importance of micro, small, and medium enterprises to ASEAN states' overall economic development.

In contrast to the proponent states' FOIP visions, all of which have their foundations in strategic and security issues, the *ASEAN Outlook* is far more focused on economic development issues and conservation. Far from accepting existing FOIP visions in its drafting, ASEAN's *Outlook on the Indo-Pacific* presents a more economic-centric, inclusive alternative for the Indo-Pacific region – one that clearly rejects any Chinese containment logic for one predicated on dialogue and engagement.

INDONESIA

More than other ASEAN member state, Indonesia has been at the forefront of developing an alternative Indo-Pacific vision, one that prioritizes neutrality over the proponent states' FOIP alignment.²⁷⁷ Indeed, the Widodo administration's 'Look West' strategy, its 'Global Maritime Fulcrum' vision, and its 'Indo-Pacific Co-operation Concept' all articulate a clear Indonesian view of the Indo-Pacific predicated on economic co-operation and security participation.²⁷⁸ Central to the Indonesian vision – which greatly informed the *ASEAN Outlook* – is the need for Indonesia and other Southeast

276 ASEAN Secretariat, *Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity* (Jakarta: 2016), <https://asean.org/storage/2016/09/Master-Plan-on-ASEAN-Connectivity-20251.pdf>.

277 "Indonesia Promotes ASEAN Outlook on Indo-Pacific at Middle Power Meet," *The Jakarta Post*, February 14, 2020, <https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2020/02/14/indonesia-promotes-asean-outlook-on-indo-pacific-at-middle-power-meet.html>.

278 David Scott, "Indonesia Grapples with the Indo-Pacific: Outreach, Strategic Discourse, and Diplomacy," *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs* 38. no.2, (2019): 194-217.

Asian states to maintain strategic autonomy from all great powers in the region, with specific reference to China and the United States.

Rather than create new institutions to affect an inclusive Indo-Pacific approach, the Indonesian government prioritizes the further development and integration of existing ASEAN and other regional institutions, a view the Widodo administration succeeded in getting ASEAN to include in its *Indo-Pacific Outlook*.²⁷⁹ Indeed, like the *ASEAN Outlook*, Indonesia's approach to the Indo-Pacific is predicated on engagement with all states, subversion to none. This interpretation of the Indo-Pacific is particularly at odds with the Australian and U.S. FOIP visions, both of which emphasize security and the need to 'manage' China. Indeed, far from using its view of the Indo-Pacific to contain Chinese activity, the Widodo administration has embraced Indonesian co-operation with China's BRI where and when doing so makes sense for Indonesian national security and national interests.²⁸⁰ Through this pragmatic approach, Indonesia and ASEAN have offered and are offering a competing rather than a complementary vision of FOIP.

FRANCE AND GERMANY: EXTRA-REGIONAL INDO-PACIFIC ACTORS

France's and Germany's Indo-Pacific strategies are the most comprehensive adaptive visions to date and, as such, are important models for Canada as it develops its own national-level approach to the Indo-Pacific. Their strategic relevance comes not only from

279 Dewi Fortuna Anwar, "Indonesia and the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific," *International Affairs* 96, no.1, (2020): 111–129.

280 Xinli Qiu, "Why BRI-GMF Cooperation Benefits China and Indonesia," *The Jakarta Post*, August 23, 2019, <https://www.thejakartapost.com/academia/2019/08/23/why-bri-gmf-cooperation-benefits-china-and-indonesia.html>.

their inclusive Indo-Pacific visions, but also their prioritization of diversification, multilateralism, and non-alignment in their Indo-Pacific approaches. Paris and Berlin have also provided much needed frameworks for the Indo-Pacific's conceptual integration with existing international institutions, such as the United Nations, G7, and European Union that can contribute to inter-regional stability across the Indian and Pacific Ocean areas.

FRANCE

For France, the Indo-Pacific has a geographic and territorial determination, with the country's seven overseas territories – Mayotte and La Réunion islands, Scattered Islands and French Southern and Antarctic Territories, New Caledonia, Wallis and Futuna, French Polynesia, and Clipperton – straddling the Indian and Pacific Ocean areas and constituting 97 per cent of its total exclusive economic zone (EEZ).²⁸¹ From this conceptual starting point, the Macron administration has prioritized the safety of French overseas nationals, the security of French territory, and maritime security across the Indian and Pacific Ocean areas within its Indo-Pacific strategy. This has led some analysts to suggest, wrongly, that France is bandwagoning with the U.S. in the Indo-Pacific.

Rather, France has outlined a security approach to the Indo-Pacific predicated on 'inclusivity,' with its ultimate concern being non-traditional security issues including piracy, terrorism, and organized

281 Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs, 'The Indo Pacific Region: A Priority for France', February 2020, <https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/country-files/asia-and-oceania/the-indo-pacific-region-a-priority-for-france/>

crime, not great power competition or China's rise.²⁸² While Paris identifies Australia, India, and Japan as important Indo-Pacific security partners, for instance, it does so within a broader commitment for engagement in regional multilateral security forums such as ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting-Plus, the Heads of Asian Coast Guard Agencies Meeting, and the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery Against Ships in Asia, all of which include China as a security actor.

France has similarly embraced multilateralism and diversity of relations in its economic approach to the region. This approach includes deepening economic ties with China in Asia, both bilaterally and through co-operation on the Belt and Road Initiative, to 'strengthen and rebalance its comprehensive strategic partnership' with Beijing in the Indo-Pacific.²⁸³ Concurrently, Paris will reach out to Australia, India, Japan, Singapore, and Malaysia to develop further economic opportunities for French firms, all a part of its inclusive Indo-Pacific approach.

Lastly, Paris has identified support for sustainable development, environmental protection, and biodiversity preservation as core pillars of its Indo-Pacific approach. Led by the Agence Française de Développement (AFD), France seeks primarily to engage with ASEAN member states and Pacific Island nations through development financing and programming, which it undertakes with both the Asian Development Bank and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank.

²⁸² Ministry for Armed Forces, 'France and Security in the Indo Pacific', access 4 Sept 2020, <https://www.defense.gouv.fr/layout/set/print/content/download/532754/9176250/version/3/file/France+and+Security+in+the+Indo-Pacific+-+2019.pdf>

²⁸³ Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs, *French Strategy in the Indo-Pacific: For an Inclusive Indo-Pacific*, accessed 11 September 2020, https://jp.ambafrance.org/IMG/pdf/french_strategy_in_the_indo-pacific.pdf?27051/2765a0ffd0fab0010aa4d96b5ad7419e73f67dea

GERMANY

Germany, conversely, has framed its Indo-Pacific strategy largely in governance terms. In its 2020 Federal Foreign Office document, *Guidelines on the Indo-Pacific (Leitlinien zum Indo-Pazifik)*, German policy writers describe the state as a ‘global trading nation’ both dependent on and an advocate for an Indo-Pacific rules based order.²⁸⁴ To ensure Germany’s global ‘prosperity,’ argues Germany’s foreign minister, Berlin must proactively engage within the Indo-Pacific to ensure the region remains receptive to German interests and supportive of German economic development.²⁸⁵ In particular, Germany seeks to promote an Asian RBO based on consultation and co-operation, not on the ‘law of the strong.’

Germany sees itself, in this respect, as playing an important role toward institutional development in the Indo-Pacific, a region its policy analysts describe as institutionally underdeveloped. The Federal Foreign Office has identified Germany’s participation with the United Nations, the European Union, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the Council of Europe, and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) as important experiences it can use to support institutional development in Asia, primarily in partnership with ASEAN and within the ASEAN regional framework.²⁸⁶ Berlin’s focus on ASEAN centrality and institutional building through ASEAN’s existing structure directly align its Indo-Pacific vision with the *ASEAN Outlook* and Indonesia’s Indo-Pacific strategy.

²⁸⁴ Federal Foreign Office, ‘Leitlinien zum Indo-Pazifik’, 2 September 2020, <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/blob/2380514/35e5c739e1c9a5c52b6469cfd1ffc72d/200901-indo-pazifik-leitlinien--1--data.pdf>

²⁸⁵ Federal Foreign Office, ‘Foreign Minister Maas on the adoption of the German Government policy guidelines on the Indo-Pacific region’, 2 September 2020, <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/en/newsroom/news/maas-indo-pacific/2380474>

²⁸⁶ Federal Foreign Office, ‘Leitlinien zum Indo-Pazifik’, 2 September 2020, <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/blob/2380514/35e5c739e1c9a5c52b6469cfd1ffc72d/200901-indo-pazifik-leitlinien--1--data.pdf>, 2

Importantly, Germany uses its *Guidelines on the Indo-Pacific* to differentiate its own Indo-Pacific approach from the proponent states' FOIP strategies, particularly with respect to China. Rather than engage in strategic competition in the region, Germany outlines an Indo-Pacific approach based on multilateralism, institutionalism, and inclusivity, even with China as a strategic partner. Germany calls this approach 'geographic and thematic' diversity, through which its purposefully seeks to avoid one-sided dependency on a single state and/or actor.²⁸⁷

Indeed, Germany outrightly rejects the idea of a unipolar Asia, arguing that hegemony has no place in the contemporary Indo-Pacific, and argues against bipolarity, stating that no Asian state should have to choose between any two powers. This Indo-Pacific view places Germany squarely outside the U.S. FOIP vision, which is predicated, as outlined above, on the perseverance of U.S. predominance and the U.S.-led alliance system in the Indo-Pacific.

Aside from its focus on regional governance and institutionalism, Germany's Indo-Pacific vision identifies key areas where the country will seek to deepen its economic engagement. Economic relations with China, which accounts for around 50 per cent of Germany's total Indo-Pacific trade, are key to this approach, although Berlin makes clear that economic diversification away from China is one of its key Indo-Pacific strategic priorities. German policy writers identify ASEAN member states, in particular, as nodes of great economic potential for German industry, and as a means for German firms to ensure greater supply chain security in the Indo-Pacific.²⁸⁸

²⁸⁷ Federal Foreign Office, 'Leitlinien zum Indo-Pazifik', 2 September 2020, <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/blob/2380514/35e5c739e1c9a5c52b6469cfd1ffc72d/200901-indo-pazifik-leitlinien--1--data.pdf>, 9

²⁸⁸ Ibid, 47

Aside from its own national priorities and engagement strategies, Germany uses its Indo-Pacific strategy to call for a European Union-wide Indo-Pacific approach, one based on the French and German views of inclusivity, multilateralism, and diversification. Germany specifically notes an EU Indo-Pacific approach would strengthen its member states' ability to force China to reciprocate on matters of trade and investment. One finds similar calls for EU co-ordination in France's *For an Inclusive Indo-Pacific (Pour un espace indopacifique inclusive)* strategic document, an indication that the two states' national views could inform a comprehensive EU approach in the near to medium terms.

INDO-PACIFIC ADOPTER STATES: A MODEL FOR A DIVERSE, INCLUSIVE, AND STABLE INDO-PACIFIC

In contrast to the proponent states' Indo-Pacific and FOIP visions, one can make a strong case for Canadian alignment with the adapter states' Indo-Pacific visions. Like the adapters, Canada is committed to multilateralism and institutionalism in Indian and Pacific Oceans areas and, like the adapter states, Canada has prioritized inclusivity and sustainable development in its Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP) toward Asia. Also like the adapter states, Canada is deeply committed to international rule of law and regional order in Asia, particularly if such order is flexible to the development of new, endogenous institutions that meet a clear regional demand. Canada's decision to participate in the AIIB despite President Barack Obama's administration's objections, for instance, is evidence that Canada does not see Asia's order as a zero-sum game where Chinese interests are ignored for the sake of

continued U.S. primacy. Canada is also committed to supporting social and economic development and security in the Middle East and Africa, where it already works with the Gulf Cooperation Council, Global Coalition Against Daesh, La Francophonie, and the International Syria Support Group on such issues.²⁸⁹

Canada is also keenly aware of the importance of middle power co-operation to achieve its national interests in Asia, and it could use Indo-Pacific normative alignment with the adapter states, in particular, to further its middle power engagement in the region. Canada can also benefit from an inclusive Indo-Pacific – one that accommodates for China as an influential Asian actor with rights as well as responsibilities – and a commitment to non-aggression. So long as the adapter states remain committed to such values, normative alignment with their shared Indo-Pacific principles appears to provide Canada with a strategic logic – if not imperative – for strategic engagement.

Canada can only undertake normative alignment of this type, however, if it purposefully and clearly articulates the Indo-Pacific vision it accepts and identifies the Indo-Pacific visions, or components thereof, that it rejects. Adherence to the U.S. FOIP vision, for instance, would not allow Canada to advance its middle power position in the Asia Pacific (or Indo-Pacific), but rather would place it firmly on the U.S. ‘side’ in Asia. Far from advancing its position as a middle power, Canada would find its actions limited and its room to manoeuvre constrained as a result of such a conceptual alliance.

²⁸⁹ Government of Canada, “Canada and the Middle East and North Africa,” last modified July 25, 2019, https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/international_relations-relations_internationales/mena-moan/index.aspx?lang=eng.

These realities raised two important questions for Canada as it moves forward with its deliberations over whether or not to conceptually and practically reengineer its approach to the Asia Pacific to bring itself in line with Indo-Pacific adapter states.

First, can Canada choose which version of the Indo-Pacific it aligns itself with if and/or when it decides to adopt the Indo-Pacific as a geographic reference point? While the answer to this question is ostensibly ‘yes,’ as Canada is free to articulate its approach to any policy as it sees fit, practically the answer is a resounding ‘maybe.’ The Indo-Pacific and the FOIP vision, while complex ideas and concepts to those willing to spend the time to critically disassemble them, are primarily valuable as foreign policy tools as they represent perceptions, intentions, and partnerships.

For many Indo-Pacific states, there is little difference between the U.S. and German Indo-Pacific visions, particularly as both states use the Indo-Pacific concept as shorthand for their bilateral and multilateral engagement in Asia. For Canada, then, communication to other Asian states – particularly those that are inherently wary of the Indo-Pacific and FOIP as grand strategic visions – that its Indo-Pacific vision adheres to the adapters’ views and eschews the U.S. approach is a strategic communication imperative. This distinction will become easier to articulate and maintain as more states like Germany publicize their Indo-Pacific views in opposition to the Trump administration’s ‘America First’ approach.

Second, does Canada gain through normative alignment with the FOIP concept? Here, the answer should be a resounding ‘yes,’ albeit with an important caveat. While there is clearly much laudable in ASEAN’s *Indo-Pacific Outlook* and the French, German, and Indonesian Indo-Pacific concepts in terms of adherence to non-

aggression, inclusivity, non-interference, international law, and multilateralism, Ottawa needs to understand that the dominant Indo-Pacific and/or FOIP narrative in the region remains one propagated by Washington, which, as described above, is inherently *illiberal* in its treatment of China, its dependence on military force as its primary means, and its insistence on continued U.S. hegemony in Asia. Any acceptance of the Indo-Pacific on normative grounds must, therefore, include a clear strategy for communicating which aspects of the Indo-Pacific concept Canada accepts and, perhaps even more importantly, which it rejects. Germany has demonstrated this is possible by clearly rejecting ‘rule of the strong’ in Asia, by which Berlin clearly means the U.S. FOIP approach. Canada can do this as well, but not without openly rejecting Washington’s more brutish vision of regional order.



CONCLUSION

The Indo-Pacific concept is now a geographic and strategic reality, despite its lack of clarity and its ongoing controversies, as described above. For Canada, this means there is now a substantial need to address the concept within its own strategic approach to the region, even as it lacks a geographic and material foundation necessitating geostrategic realignment. This is not to suggest that Canada accept existing Indo-Pacific models as its own – indeed, far from it. Rather, Canadian policy-makers must figure out how best to engage with the concept so as to advance the country’s national interests in Asia and avoid the strategic backlash that has, and will, coalesce around more confrontational visions, such as the U.S. FOIP. Clear understanding of predominant Indo-Pacific and FOIP accounts is the starting point for such a strategic undertaking.

First and foremost, Canadian policy-makers must differentiate between the Indo-Pacific as a strategic concept and FOIP as a strategic plan. While there is significant overlap between the two concepts, most notably with respect to the proponent states’ Indo-Pacific ‘visions,’ which constitute ‘strategies’ in all but name, they are not mutually dependent. The Indo-Pacific, as outlined

above, is most fundamentally an expansion of the Asia Pacific geographic area to include the Indian Ocean area and its littoral states. The FOIP concepts, conversely, are strategic plans, including operations and resources, to ensure the proponent states' national interests across the Indo-Pacific area. While FOIP depends on the Indo-Pacific for its strategic and geographic reference area, the Indo-Pacific concept can, and does, exist exclusive of FOIP.

For Canada, it is therefore possible to adopt an Indo-Pacific 'vision' while rejecting a FOIP strategy. This may at first seem self-evident, but the differentiation between the two concepts is subtle and often ignored. When ASEAN published its *Indo-Pacific Outlook*, for instance, proponent state advocates were quick to claim the institution and its member states shared the U.S. vision of Asia, which includes the need to balance China. Indeed, the US State Department specifically referenced ASEAN as a key U.S. FOIP partner in its *Indo-Pacific Strategy* publication, essentially co-opting ASEAN member states into the U.S. vision of regional order, despite ASEAN's clear break with the U.S.'s exclusionary approach.²⁹⁰ Similarly, Western analysts were quick to ascribe Germany's Indo-Pacific strategy as 'anti-Chinese' in nature, despite Berlin's rejection of a U.S.-led FOIP vision and acceptance of China's Indo-Pacific centrality in its strategic document.

Nevertheless, it is possible for Canada to adopt an Indo-Pacific viewpoint while rejecting the FOIP strategy; an approach that would allow Ottawa to make common reference to a geographic area of growing relevance and significance among non-proponent states and to align its foreign policy principles with existing models of diversification, inclusion, and stability. This approach is only possible, however, if Canada specifically rejects FOIP as

290 U.S. Department of State, "A Free."

a strategic ideal and aligns itself with the adapter states, all of which have taken measures to ensure their own Indo-Pacific visions include clear rejection of U.S.-led FOIP principles, such as Chinese containment and U.S. pre-eminence. The approach would not, therefore, be cost free as its success depends on defining it in opposition to the proponent states' predominant views.

The benefits for normative alignment with the adapter states do, however, outweigh the costs. ASEAN, Indonesia, France, and Germany have all articulated Indo-Pacific visions that stress non-traditional security (climate change, in particular), governance, and middle power diplomacy – all issue areas that transcend the Indo-Pacific and have implications for the global order going forward. Canada's foreign policy principles of multilateralism, international governance, and international law are, therefore, strengthened as the result of adapter state engagement, particularly as such alignment rejects the FOIP dominant paradigm that U.S. pre-eminence in Asia is the necessary condition for regional stability.

Similarly, Canada shares the adapter states' Indo-Pacific principles of diversity, inclusivity, and stability and could support these principles as alternatives to the proponent states' 'free' and 'open' ideals. Through normative alignment, Ottawa could demonstrate its commitment to non-competitive regional order in Asia, its support for middle power coalitions, and its independence of action from the U.S. in Asia. Canada's strategic reputation in Asia would benefit from the rejection of a U.S.-led order and instead the adoption of a shared, internationalist view of an inclusive Asian order, particularly one with ASEAN as its conceptual centre of gravity.

Further, engagement with the adapter states also provides Canada a framework for thinking about its own, non-FOIP-aligned strategic

approach to the Indo-Pacific. Rather than seek to replicate the proponent states' FOIP rationales, visions, and approaches, Canada could instead internalize the adapter states' principles of diversity, inclusivity, and stability to shape its own strategy of 'broad diversification' in the Indo-Pacific. While such an approach will necessarily evolve over time, a Canadian 'diverse,' 'inclusive,' and 'stable' Indo-Pacific strategy should address the following points.

First, Canada must operate selectively in the Indo-Pacific rather than adopting a region-wide approach such as the FOIP concept. Canadian policy-makers should use Canada's national interests, its Indo-Pacific values, and its partnerships to determine where and when to undertake operations to support its regional vision. Part of this approach must include a willingness to forego the Indo-Pacific geographic lens when doing so increases Canada's strategic flexibility and options, such as ensuring continued Canadian involvement with Mexico, Chile, and Peru – important Latin American partners for Canada is Asia – that continue to operate within a conceptual Asia Pacific.

Second, Canada must remain materially and operationally unaligned in the Indo-Pacific region. Canada can achieve this through a policy of equidistance toward the U.S. and China, of selective engagement with Indo-Pacific states, and of multilateralism where and when possible. In particular, Canada must carefully avoid any operations with the proponent states directed against China, such as freedom of navigations operations (FONOPs) in the South China Sea, as Ottawa could find itself an unwitting 'partner' in an anti-China coalition. Concurrently, Canada must develop a China 'strategy' predicated on economic, political, and security reciprocity – a strategy designed in line with Canada's national interests and its commitment to regional diversity, inclusivity, and stability.

Third, Canada must continue close co-operation with the Indo-Pacific proponent states *outside* the FOIP strategic construct. Australia, India, and Japan, in particular, are all critical middle power strategic partners for Canada and Ottawa must ensure continuity and development of its bilateral relations with each state. In particular, Canada must prioritize co-operation with Japan where Tokyo works toward Indo-Pacific inclusion, ASEAN centrality, and regional institutional building. Ottawa must studiously avoid any bilateral and/or multilateral engagement with the proponent states under the FOIP strategic umbrella, however, particularly with respect to FOIP security activity.

Similarly, Canada must continue to work with the U.S. on matters where the two states' national interests align while studiously avoiding entrapment in Washington's FOIP strategy. Engagement of this type will be difficult as the Trump administration uses the Indo-Pacific and FOIP concepts as shorthand for nearly all U.S. activity in the region, particularly when Washington directs such activity at China. Indeed, Canada must assiduously avoid the unintended consequences of partnership with the U.S., at least until Washington refines its own approach to the region to be less antagonistic.

Fourth, Canada must work with the ASEAN Secretariat to strengthen the organization's existing institutions, dialogue mechanisms, and normative values. Canada can best accomplish this through recognition of ASEAN's centrality within the Indo-Pacific, expansion of Canada representation across forums such as the ADMM+, the EAS, and the ARF, and negotiation of a Canada/ASEAN free trade agreement. Canada must also work with each ASEAN member state to identify areas of potential economic opportunity and common strategic vision, to encourage education

exchange, to increase local awareness of Canada, and to encourage high-skilled immigration where appropriate.

Fifth, Canada must work with ASEAN, Indonesia, France, Germany, and potentially Japan, to operationalize its Indo-Pacific values through activities designed to strengthen regional governance and rule of law, to address climate change, water security, and illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing, and to reject great power competition. Canadian policy-makers must prepare both to support existing institutions, such as Mekong River Commission, and to engage with new regional institutions, such as the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia. Canada must studiously avoid rejection of any regional institution, such as the AIIB, on the grounds that it is China-led.

Sixth, and lastly, Canada must invest in domestic education and training programs to enable Canadian students, government officials, and entrepreneurs to engage more effectively in Asia. Canadian national and provincial governments must introduce Asian modules into primary and secondary social studies programs, both to highlight contributions from Asian-Canadians to Canada's national development and to educate Canada's next generation of students about one of the world's most dynamic regions. Canada must also invest more resources in Asian language studies, offering immersion opportunities for Canadian students in line with existing French language schools, and increase opportunities for young Canadians to undertake co-op opportunities in Asia. Through these modest efforts, Canadian policy-makers can increase the Canadian public's 'Asia Competence' and better position the country to compete successfully in Asia.

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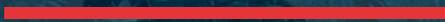


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