



# INDO-PACIFIC – CANADA'S STRATEGY AND BANGLADESH'S OUTLOOK: A DEEPER LOOK INTO THE KEY AREAS

December 2023



 **CPS Policy Brief 13**

## **Reshaping Geo-economics and Geopolitics in the Indo-Pacific**

The phrase “Indo-Pacific” has become a contemporary construct that encompasses a dynamic region and goes beyond the traditional boundaries of the Asia-Pacific. The Indo-Pacific region is positioned at a pivotal juncture as it navigates the shift from a unipolar to a multipolar world order. This new perspective requires a more detailed understanding of the complex political, economic, and security challenges and opportunities that characterize the region. The Indo-Pacific region is being increasingly accepted by Japan, India, and the United States and explores the region's growing influence and reshaping geo-economics and geopolitics (Asaturov & Martynov, 2022).

The region's strategic and economic importance is significantly increasing by definitional ambiguity, institutional fragmentation, and ideological diversity, which contribute to an environment where over 15 countries strive to delineate their regional strategies (Beeson & Lee-Brown, 2021). However, the perspectives of smaller countries, such as Bangladesh, on the developing Indo-Pacific landscape may differ from the mainstream ideas. The focus of Dhaka's Indo-Pacific integration strategy has shifted to inclusivity, but lacks clarity. This may raise queries from partners about Bangladesh's role and contributions in the broader Indo-Pacific region. Given the ongoing dynamics and interdependencies in the Indo-Pacific region, it is beneficial for Bangladesh to reconsider its stance on participating in security dialogues. Bangladesh can play a more constructive role in this context by proactively adapting to changing power dynamics. However, its integration into the Indo-Pacific is challenging due to some countries' dependence on China, which prioritizes geopolitics over geo-economics.

## **A Comprehensive Framework of Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy**

Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy (IPS) is a comprehensive framework that takes a robust approach to the region. Comprising five pivotal pillars, it aims to shape Ottawa's active involvement in the Indo-Pacific in the areas of tangible resources, including investments, infrastructure funds, technical assistance, and people-to-people connections.

Canada is open to collaborating with Indo-Pacific nations that uphold democracy, human rights, inclusion, and free trade. Its primary goal in the Indo-Pacific region is to establish a fair, open, and secure environment (Canada, 2023). The Indo-Pacific strategies of Canada and Bangladesh share a commitment to peace and security, with a joint priority on peacekeeping. Furthermore, Canada's emphasis on economic growth, trade, and investment highlights the potential for diversification and untapped opportunities between the two countries. The deltaic geographic conditions of Bangladesh and the melting ice caps in the Arctic region have contributed to shared climate vulnerability between the two countries which enables a common ground for cooperative efforts on climate change mitigation and adaptation. Canada's involvement in Bangladesh's development projects and provision of technical and vocational education opportunities further strengthen the growing relationship between the two countries.

## **Canada-Bangladesh Partnership for Sustainable Economic Ties**

In order to attain middle-income status, Bangladesh is exploring ways to diversify its trade portfolio, incorporating higher-value products and services into its exports. Concerning the fourth industrial revolution, Dhaka and Ottawa forged a beneficial partnership based on passive and non-confrontational approaches. A strategic partnership with Canada offers Bangladesh valuable support and expertise to capitalize on emerging opportunities and navigate the global economy. In this context, Bangladesh could benefit from adopting advanced agricultural practices, improving food storage infrastructure and technology, enhancing capabilities in light engineering, and receiving assistance in the renewable energy sectors.

Both governments should concentrate on cultivating a more favorable environment for businesses by enhancing information accessibility, simplifying regulatory processes, and promoting transparency. The Canada-Bangladesh economic partnership, facilitated through the Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement (IPS), presents various opportunities to promote economic growth and development. As a critical stakeholder in this equation, the banking sector can provide valuable insights into how this partnership can drive Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), strengthen trade ties, and address challenges faced by both countries. Collaboration among stakeholders in Bangladesh can unlock new opportunities for increased Foreign Direct Investment, contributing to the country's economic growth and development.

## **Constructive Diplomacy in Indo-Pacific Landscape**

As the world becomes more multipolar with shifting economic, political, and cultural dynamics, it is necessary for Bangladesh and Canada to re-evaluate their strategic relationship and make education a top priority in their foreign policy. By placing education at the core of their foreign policy, they can better prepare their citizens for the challenges and opportunities of the changing world order. The approach aims to establish a comprehensive framework that would enable individuals, regardless of their location, to actively participate in the progress and development of Bangladesh. This framework would not only encourage those who have migrated to other countries to contribute but also provide them with resources and support to do so. With this approach, Bangladesh can harness the diverse skills and expertise of its citizens and leverage them to achieve its objectives for growth. This cross-border educational interaction is essential for promoting mutual understanding and collaboration between the two countries. This involves creating collaborative structures supporting joint degree programs and courses for Canadian and Bangladeshi students.

Bangladesh actively engages in the Indo-Pacific region to strengthen its maritime capabilities and expand its influence beyond its land borders. Strategically positioned in the Bay of Bengal, Bangladesh has strengthened its diplomatic ties with countries in the Indo-Pacific and increased its influence in regional affairs. Dhaka's active participation in regional organizations and constructive relationships with neighboring countries such as India and Myanmar fortify its significant role in promoting peace and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific.

The discussion sheds light on the promising trade and diplomatic relations between the two countries.

Dhaka's diplomatic strategy emphasizes inclusivity, nonalignment, and cooperation, avoiding containment policy to develop positive relationships, mutual respect, and collaboration which will nurture a peaceful global order, and uphold the rule of law. Canada and Bangladesh are prioritizing high-quality human resources development as a central strategy to achieve economic growth and meet the business community's needs. While Canada has acknowledged the Rohingya issue in the Indo-Pacific Outlook, Bangladesh needs to seize the opportunity and work towards finding a sustainable solution that can contribute positively to the broader regional context.

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### This Policy Brief is prepared by

**Farzana Shams Riya**

Research Assistant

South Asian Institute of Policy and Governance (SIPG)

North South University, Dhaka, Bangladesh

### Special Thanks to

**Dr. Raymond Kwun-Sun Lau**

Assistant Professor

Department of Political Science & Sociology (PSS)

North South University, Dhaka, Bangladesh

### Designed by

**Mahmud Bin Morshed**

Research Assistant

South Asian Institute of Policy and Governance (SIPG)

North South University, Dhaka, Bangladesh



**SIPG**



**Center for Peace Studies (CPS)**

**South Asian Institute of Policy and Governance (SIPG)**

North South University, Dhaka, Bangladesh

Phone : +880-2-55668200 Ext. 2164/6855

Email : [sipg@northsouth.edu](mailto:sipg@northsouth.edu)

Website : [www.sipg.northsouth.edu](http://www.sipg.northsouth.edu)



[sipg.northsouth.edu](http://sipg.northsouth.edu)