

## Canada's Approach to Climate Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific: Analysis and Suggestions for Canada's Engagement with ASEAN Countries under the Indo-Pacific Strategy

### L'approche du Canada en matière de coopération climatique dans l'Indo-Pacifique : une analyse et suggestions de l'engagement du Canada avec les pays de l'ASEAN dans le cadre de la Stratégie pour l'Indo-Pacifique)

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Article abstract

Drawing evidence from governmental datasets, policy reports, and other sources, this paper, focusing on the clean energy transition as the key aspect, examines Canada's current approach to climate cooperation with ASEAN countries to "build a sustainable and green future," echoing one of the strategic goals in Canada's newly released Indo-Pacific Strategy (IPS). In particular, this paper argues that the current policy and financial assistance from Canada to ASEAN countries is unequal and insufficient. Moreover, there is a lack of continuity and measurable objectives within this cooperative framework, which primarily operates within a multilateral context. Given these characteristics, we propose that Canada's cooperation with ASEAN nations in addressing climate change should integrate the imperative for a clean energy transition. This approach has the potential to create numerous opportunities for engaging with ASEAN countries, while also aligning with the objectives of the IPS. Specifically, to enhance the effectiveness of IPS in this context, the Canadian government should emphasize experience sharing, fortify its business collaboration with ASEAN countries, and participate more actively in ASEAN-led initiatives.

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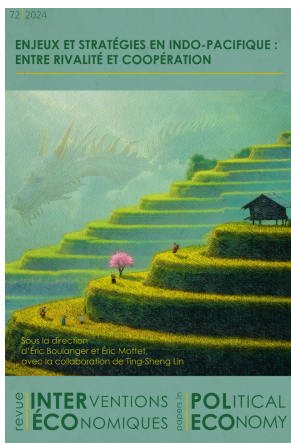
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revue **INTERVENTIONS** papers in **POLITICAL**  
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## Enjeux et stratégies en Indo-Pacifique : entre rivalité et coopération

Sous la direction de **Éric Boulanger** et **Éric Mottet**

# Canada's Approach to Climate Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific: Analysis and Suggestions for Canada's Engagement with ASEAN Countries under the Indo-Pacific Strategy

*L'approche du Canada en matière de coopération climatique dans l'Indo-Pacifique : Une analyse et suggestions de l'engagement du Canada avec les pays de l'ASEAN dans le cadre de la Stratégie pour l'Indo-Pacifique)*

Chang (Christina) Pan and Yongzheng (Parker) Li

## 01. Introduction

- 1 Announced in November 2022, Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy (IPS) “positions Canada as a reliable partner to the region, now and into the future” and is “acting in Canada’s national interests” (Global Affairs Canada, 2022a). It entails an expanded Canadian diplomatic footprint in the region, emphasizes stronger people-to-people and economic ties, and calls for more robust strategic collaboration, among many other items: it represents a generational shift in Canadian foreign policy (Ostwald, Legault, & Caouette, 2023).
- 2 The IPS specifies four “partners” Canada should collaborate with: China, India, the North Pacific, and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) (Global Affairs Canada, 2022b). This paper focuses on the Canada-ASEAN collaboration, given that the combined population of almost 700 million and a combined GDP of over \$3.3 trillion render ASEAN an indispensable partner for Canada. Unlike mature developed markets in the North Pacific, such as South Korea and Japan, which are confronting economic

slowdowns, most ASEAN countries are developing economies and are expected to have robust economic growth (IMF, 2023; OECD, 2023). In addition to its economic and demographic prowess, ASEAN's geopolitical significance and its hedging behaviours within the current Sino-US rivalry environment (Kuik, 2016; Tan, 2020; Wen, 2022) highlights its criticality as a strategic partner for Canada, considering Canada, to some extent, faces similar geopolitical dynamics in today's world (Denis, 2022; Fortier & Massie, 2023; Kawasaki, 2021). Furthermore, the Canada-China relationship has worsened since the Meng Wanzhou incident, and the relationship between India and Canada has been put to the test following Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's statement regarding the alleged involvement of the Indian government in the killing of Hardeep Singh Nijjar, a prominent Canadian Sikh leader. ASEAN countries, on the other hand, generally have a positive impression of Canada, and Southeast Asians are receptive to fostering closer ties with Canada (Chew, 2023).

- 3 Nonetheless, the existing study has shown that, to some degree, Southeast Asians lack a comprehensive understanding of Canada or its current and potential future engagement in Southeast Asia (Chew, 2023). This observation is not difficult to understand as the historical engagement between ASEAN members and Canada remains limited and sporadic and presents a mixed record compared with Canada's engagement with other Indo-Pacific countries (Calvert, 2023; Ostwald *et al.*, 2023; Martel, 2023). However, tremendous potential exists for Canada to strengthen its ties with ASEAN states and even assume a leadership role in the ASEAN region, given Canada's expertise in climate mitigation, which is urgently needed by ASEAN countries as they are beginning to feel the pain of climate change in general.
- 4 To better clarify Canada's position on climate mitigation in the Indo-Pacific region, the IPS incorporates "building a sustainable and green future" as one of its five distinct yet interconnected strategic objectives, with the other four being: 1) promoting peace, resilience, and security; 2) expanding trade, investment, and supply chain resilience; 3) investing in and connecting people; and 4) Canada as an active and engaged partner in the Indo-Pacific (Global Affairs Canada, 2022b). Among these five objectives, "building a sustainable and green future" demands special attention, not only because 40% of the total \$2.3 billion IPS investment falls under this objective (Global Affairs Canada, 2022a) but also because of Canada's expertise in climate adaptation and its commitment to be a world leader on combating climate change. This objective is also intricately linked to the other four objectives. For instance, a pivotal aspect of building a resilient supply chain is the management of rare earth elements (REE), and research on this topic has shown that intense REE mining and production activities have led to significant environmental and health impacts in countries like Malaysia and China. There are substantial gaps in our understanding of the adverse effects of REE on human health and the environment (Balaram, 2019). Additionally, to build a sustainable and green future, it is critical to cultivate a skilled workforce within related industries, and it is essential to enhance educational opportunities for students and practitioners, echoing IPS's objective of "investing in and connecting people."
- 5 In November 2015, shortly after Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's victory in the federal election and in anticipation of the Paris Climate Conference that year, he announced Canada's historic contribution of \$2.65 billion over the subsequent five years to assist developing countries in tackling climate change. He proudly stated that "Canada is back and ready to play its part in combating climate change, and this includes helping

the poorest and most vulnerable countries in the world adopt” (Office of the Prime Minister, 2015), with many of these countries being ASEAN countries. Many ASEAN countries, including but not limited to Vietnam, Myanmar, the Philippines, and Thailand, are among the countries most susceptible to climate change, and those are also the countries exhibiting a significant reliance on fossil fuels (Eckstein *et al.*, 2017). The effects of climate change in the ASEAN region are evident and detrimental: Indonesia and Thailand’s decision to relocate their capital cities is partly driven by the threat of severe flooding (Englander, 2019); Vietnam has previously experienced multiple severe droughts (Daiss, 2016). Moreover, research has shown that Myanmar’s environment, people, and society are at significant risk due to higher temperatures, altered precipitation rates, and higher sea levels, which will lead to reduced agriculture output, the spread of disease, and loss of habitable land (Slagle, 2014). Many other ASEAN nations face comparable risks and hazards, including the perils of rising sea levels, higher temperatures, and other extreme weather conditions.

- 6 Meanwhile, the increasing energy demand within the region complicates efforts to decarbonize, given the relatively low cost of coal, with Indonesia being the world’s fifth-largest coal producer and second-largest exporter (IMF, 2018). Sukri and Wah (2022) have shown that “Brunei Darussalam’s greatest vulnerability to climate change probably lies in the energy sector, which sees the problem of having to move away from the use of, and reliance on, fossil fuels and petroleum products, the country’s main source of income.” This dramatic reliance on fossil fuels is also evident in Singapore and Malaysia, where, like in Brunei, more than 90% of electricity comes from fossil fuels (Oh *et al.*, 2023). Despite their reliance on fossil fuels, ASEAN members have initiated plans to decarbonize and facilitate the transition to cleaner energy, a commitment reinforced by the 2015 Paris Climate Conference. Nevertheless, ASEAN countries face substantial financial gaps and technological challenges, and most ASEAN countries’ carbon neutrality commitments are contingent upon international support and assistance. For instance, under its most updated Nationally Determined Contribution (Socialist Republic of Vietnam, 2022), Vietnam commits to reducing its greenhouse gas emissions in the energy, agriculture, land use, land use change and forestry (LULUCF), waste, and industrial processes by 15.8% under a business-as-usual scenario by 2030, and up to 43.5% reduction by the same year with international support. International assistance is, therefore, pivotal in building a sustainable and green future, presenting an opportunity for Canada, following its IPS, to offer help. Additionally, there is a pressing need to examine Canada’s current approaches in climate cooperation with ASEAN countries to enhance the effectiveness of IPS further. Canada’s stance toward ASEAN members is positive, and Canada aims to engage more with ASEAN countries. As Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (2022) stated after concluding his participation in the ASEAN summit in 2022, “Canada and ASEAN have a long history of partnership. Canada stands with ASEAN as a steadfast partner, working together to secure an inclusive, strong, and people-centred future.”
- 7 Given the significance of “building a sustainable and green future” and the necessity for Canada to engage ASEAN countries, this paper seeks to examine the current Canada-ASEAN climate cooperation and draws evidence from Canada’s international climate finance dataset, policy documents, and newspaper articles. We argue that Canada’s collaboration with ASEAN countries on climate change should incorporate the demands for clean energy transition in the region, which will bring more economic opportunities to engage with ASEAN countries aligned with the objectives of IPS. To the

best of the authors' knowledge, this paper is the first academic paper that systematically examines the Canada-ASEAN engagement in clean energy transition under the framework of IPS.

- 8 The rest of the paper is structured as follows: the first section elucidates the contextual differences among ASEAN countries in their pursuit of clean energy transition, followed by a detailed analysis of the existing landscape in Canada's approach to climate cooperation with ASEAN, and then this paper explores some potential avenues for further collaborative engagement between ASEAN and Canada in clean energy transition.

## 02. Contextual Differences among ASEAN Countries in Their Clean Energy Transition

- 9 While it is true that many ASEAN countries share similar climate challenges and clean energy transition obstacles owing to their geographical proximity, the severity and degree of such challenges vary significantly. More importantly, geographical proximity and closer economic and cultural interactions within ASEAN countries should not imply that IPS should treat ASEAN countries as a single unity. An important reason is that there are vast differences among ASEAN countries regarding their economic profiles, population sizes, geomorphologic configurations, and other factors. The table below summarizes some of the differences.

**Table 1 Diversity among ASEAN members**

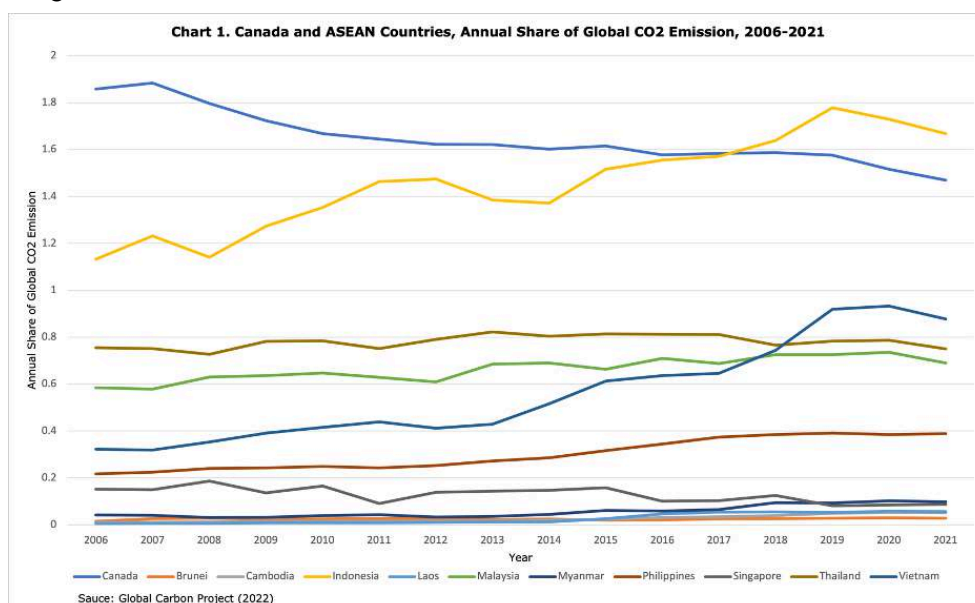
Country	GDP per capita (2017, US dollars)	Population (2019, million)	Arable land as percent of total land area (2016)	Global Freedom Scores (2023)
Brunei	28,291	0.43	0.95	28
Cambodia	1,382	16.49	21.53	24
Indonesia	3,847	270.63	12.97	58
Laos	2,457	7.17	6.61	13
Malaysia	9,951	31.95	2.68	53
Myanmar	1,257	54.05	16.7	9
Philippines	2,989	108.12	18.75	58
Singapore	56,737	5.8	0.79	47
Thailand	6,595	69.63	32.9	30
Vietnam	2,342	96.46	22.57	19

Source: Data for GDP per capita, population, and arable land as a percent of total land area are from the United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Statistics – SDG Indicators Database 2024. Country-specific data may be last updated in a different year, but all data were retrieved in February 2024 from the SDG Indicators Database website. Data for Global Freedom Scores are from Freedom House. The score is from 1 (not free) to 100 (free).

- 10 Those differences further highlight the fact that Canada should not treat all ASEAN countries as one unity. Such an approach could impede Canada's ability to achieve measurable and meaningful outcomes in its climate cooperation efforts with this region. As Ostwald, Legault, and Caouette (2023, p.118) argue, "Engaging Southeast Asia presents clear challenges. Many of these stem from the region's remarkable diversity on nearly every conceivable front, from cultural to economic and political. This diversity precludes a one-size-fits-all approach, and demands instead a nuanced

understanding of the unique contexts prevalent in the ten countries that comprise the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.”

- 11 In terms of clean energy transition, one contextual difference among ASEAN countries is that their degree of dependence on fossil fuels varies significantly. This difference is rooted in their resource endowment, which is not inherently tied to their respective levels of economic development. As mentioned earlier, Brunei, Malaysia, and Singapore derive more than 90% of their electricity from fossil fuels, whereas Myanmar derives less than 50% of electricity from fossil fuels (Oh *et al.*, 2023). Myanmar is particularly notable, where hydropower alone accounts for more than half of the country’s power generalization and enjoys “high utilization among the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries” (Oh *et al.*, 2023). The chart below further shows ASEAN countries’ annual share of Global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, with Canada added as a comparison. Over the period from 2006-2021, Indonesia stands out as the largest emitter with an average annual share of 1.46% (by comparison, Canada’s share in the same period is 1.65%, while Brunei, Cambodia, Myanmar, and Laos combined account for only 0.13% of the global emissions).



- 12 The difference can also be seen in their implementation of different power policies about the transition to a sustainable future. The table below, compiled from Climatescope (2022), shows the varying degrees of enactment of those policies.<sup>1</sup> As demonstrated in the table, countries like Malaysia and the Philippines have successfully implemented five out of the six power policies. In contrast, Laos has only managed to enact one such policy.

**Table 2 Implementation of Different Power Policies**

Country	Renewable Energy Auction	Feed-in Tariff	Import Tax Incentives	Net Metering	Renewable Energy Target	VAT Incentives
<b>Brunei</b>	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
<b>Cambodia</b>	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
<b>Indonesia</b>	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Laos</b>	No	No	No	No	Yes	No
<b>Malaysia</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
<b>Myanmar</b>	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
<b>Philippines</b>	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Singapore</b>	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Thailand</b>	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
<b>Vietnam</b>	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes

Source: Climatescope 2022

- 13 Another contextual difference is the absence of uniform net-zero goals and strategies among ASEAN countries. On one end of the spectrum, we have countries that lack a firm target (e.g., the Philippines). On the other side of the spectrum, countries such as Cambodia, Singapore, Laos, and Malaysia have set a target year of 2050, and Indonesia a target year of 2060. Myanmar aims to achieve its net-zero carbon goal by 2040, with a focus on land use, land use change, and forestry. Many of these targets are conditional on international assistance, and substantial investment is needed to achieve these goals. However, unfortunately, ASEAN countries generally confront considerable financial challenges to fund clean energy projects, given the lack of market confidence for both domestic and international investors. According to the *Southeast Asia Green Economy Report* (Hardcastle *et al.*, 2022), ASEAN countries need \$1 trillion to \$3 trillion in investment to achieve their 2030 carbon emission targets. Furthermore, certain ASEAN countries grapple with even more pronounced financial challenges for their clean energy transition (Bain & Company, 2022). The table below ranks different ASEAN countries in terms of their attractiveness as a market for energy transition project investment. The full ranking encompasses 107 emerging markets and a total of 136 countries. Compared with countries like the Philippines, Vietnam and Singapore, nations like Indonesia, Laos, and Myanmar face greater obstacles in attracting investment, making it more challenging to achieve their net-zero goal.

**Table 3 Ranking: Most Attractive Markets for Energy Transition Projects Investment, Target Year of Achieving Net-Zero**

Country	Emerging Markets Ranking	Global Ranking
Indonesia	70	99
Laos	60	89
Myanmar	48	77
Malaysia	39	68
Thailand	27	55
Cambodia	22	49
Singapore	15	41
Vietnam	14	40
Philippines	12	37
Brunei	NA	NA

Source: Climatescope 2022

### 03. Characteristics of Canada's Approach to Climate Cooperation with ASEAN Countries

- 14 These contextual differences determine ASEAN countries' needs in the decarbonization process, which vary considerably but also provide great opportunities for Canada in its cooperation with ASEAN member countries. As IPS is a broad guideline for Canada's engagement with ASEAN member states, in this section, we have used data from different government websites and newspaper articles to evaluate Canada's approach to climate cooperation. We argue that Canada's current approach to climate cooperation is unbalanced in its assistance distribution among ASEAN members, lacks continuity and measurable objectives, heavily relies on the multilateral framework but lacks bilateral experience sharing, and has a focus limited towards climate adaptation.

#### 3.1 Unequal and Insufficient Assistance

- 15 Canada's climate finance assistance does not account for each ASEAN nation's unique requirements and challenges. According to Canada's International Climate Finance Website, the current priority in Canada's approach to climate assistance for the ASEAN nations is adaptation-focused, as most of Canada's climate finance has been allocated to adaptation initiatives. This is consistent with one of Canada's declared climate change priorities: "Canada will continue to support a prominent international focus on adaptation actions, particularly for developing countries" (Environment and Climate Change Canada, 2015). Under the program Sustainable Landscape for Climate Resilient Livelihoods, Canada has partnered with the World Agroforestry Center to aid Indonesia. Since 2012, Canada has partnered with the Asian Development Bank's Integrated Disaster Risk Management to "reduce the impact of disasters on vulnerable populations in Southeast Asia by providing support for governments and civil society to manage and reduce disaster risk" (Canada Public Safety, 2022).
- 16 Despite the Indo-Pacific Strategy's presumption that Southeast Asian nations are a single entity, Canada has not distributed climate assistance resources evenly across the



region. Most of Canada's climate finance went toward assisting Indonesia and Vietnam for climate adaptation. In contrast, Myanmar, ranked second most vulnerable out of 183 countries to adverse weather events, has received little assistance from Canada (Horton *et al.*, 2016).

- 17 ASEAN countries have released ambitious climate commitments under the Paris Climate Agreement (see Table 4), but achieving these targets requires massive financial assistance for clean energy transitions in addition to climate adaptation. Though Canada has been funding mostly climate adaptation projects in Indonesia, the financial needs of Indonesia for clean energy transition have not been considered in Canada's climate finance program. Indonesia needs approximately US\$28.5 billion each year to achieve its NDC target by 2030, which is higher than the amount of "central government allocated spending for education, social security, and health spending combined" (Barsi & Riefky, 2023). Without sufficient financial support, it will be nearly impossible for Indonesia to phase out coal power by 2050, as proposed by the government. Although Indonesia has cooperated with the Asian Development Bank's Energy Transition Mechanism (ETM) and the Just Energy Transition Partnership (JETP) to expedite its coal phase-out, the Indonesian financial market is insufficiently developed to assist the country in obtaining sufficient funding for green energy projects with relatively higher risks than brown energy projects (Barsi & Riefky, 2023). The long-standing subsidies for fossil fuels further complicate the development of renewable energy in Indonesia, as the cost of renewable energy sources is less competitive than that of fossil fuels (Basri & Riefky, 2023).

**Table 4 ASEAN Countries' Emissions Reduction and Net Zero Targets**

Country	Unconditional Emissions Target	Conditional Emissions Target	Net Zero Target
<b>Brunei</b>	20 per cent below BAU by 2030		Net Zero by 2050
<b>Cambodia</b>		41.7 per cent below BAU by 2030	Carbon neutral by 2050
<b>Indonesia</b>	31.9 per cent below BAU by 2030	43.2 per cent below BAU by 2030	Net zero by 2060 or sooner
<b>Laos</b>	60 per cent below BAU by 2030		Net zero by 2050 (conditional)
<b>Malaysia</b>	45 per cent fall in emissions intensity of GDP below 2005 levels by 2030		Net zero by 2050
<b>Myanmar</b>			Net zero by 2040 (from land use, land use change and forestry)
<b>Philippines</b>	2.71 per cent below BAU by 2030	72.3 per cent below BAU by 2030	
<b>Singapore</b>	Reduce emissions to around 60 Mt CO <sub>2</sub> -e in 2030		Net zero by 2050
<b>Thailand</b>	30 per cent below BAU by 2030	40 per cent below BAU by 2030 and peak emissions	Carbon neutral by 2050; Net zero by 2050
<b>Vietnam</b>	15.8 per cent below BAU by 2030	43.5 per cent below BAU by 2030	Net zero by 2050

BAU = Business as usual ; Mt = megatonne ; CO<sub>2</sub>-e = carbon dioxide equivalent

Source: Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Analysis of National Policies 2023; Climatescope 2022

- 18 Another example of unequal assistance is the Canada Fund for Local Initiatives (CFLI), which allows Canada to work with small local civil society organizations that may understand local needs better. CFLI has different thematic priorities, which show how the Canadian government evaluates local needs. One of the themes is climate and environment-related: "Environment and climate action focusing on adaptation and

mitigation, as well as on water management.” This theme can be seen in many ASEAN countries' CFLI pages, but only Vietnam's page (The Canada Fund for Local Initiatives, 2023a) states it is one of the priorities for the 2023 to 2024 programming. Furthermore, the Philippines' page has a more targeted environment-and-climate-action section, which includes “climate change adaptation and mitigation, coastal biodiversity protection, environmental conservation, and supporting sustainable practices of indigenous peoples” (The Canada Fund for Local Initiatives, 2023b), while other countries' CFLI pages follow the more generic framing. Furthermore, CFLI is only for countries eligible for official development assistance, so countries like Singapore are not included.

### 3.2 Lack of Continuity and Measurable Objectives

- 19 There needs to be more continuity in Canada's climate finance assistance initiative. According to data from Canada's Climate Finance Initiatives and Programs (2023), most climate finance initiatives sponsored by Canada in ASEAN countries have been discontinued since 2013. For instance, all climate finance initiatives funded by Canada in Cambodia lasted only one year, and Cambodia has had no significant climate finance assistance program from Canada since 2013. Similarly, Canada led several assistance projects for Thailand, including the Adaptation Research Initiative in Asia in partnership with the International Development Research Center (IDRC), which supports climate change adaptation projects in the water sector, and the advisory services under the project Alternative Energy Development in Thailand, which aims to assist Thailand in developing sustainable clean energy projects. However, none of these projects survived more than two years and have been discontinued after 2013. Although Canada funded the Integrated Disaster Risk Management initiative for all ASEAN members (except Singapore) in collaboration with the Asian Development Bank (ADB), it lasted only five years and ended in 2018. Some of the initiatives are context-specific and may not require additional assistance. However, the transition to renewable energy and climate cooperation should be long-term, and the government must propose long-term strategies and initiatives.

### 3.3 Multilateral Framework

- 20 Existing cooperation between Canada and ASEAN countries has occurred primarily within a multilateral framework, whereas other middle powers have established bilateral climate cooperation with Southeast Asian nations. For instance, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) signed loan agreements with Indonesia to provide Japanese ODA loans of up to a total of 173,667,000,000 yen (\$CAN1.6 billion) for four projects to support Indonesia's transition to renewable energy (JICA, 2023). Similarly, Denmark established bilateral climate cooperation with Indonesia to provide technical and institutional support for its transition to renewable energy. The Danish Energy Agency launched a Strategic Sector Cooperation (SSC) program with the Indonesian government to share knowledge regarding "low carbon transition, scenarios and long-term planning, and a gradual reduction of energy intensity" (Danish Ministry of Climate, Energy, and Utilities, 2018). Also, the British government established a UK-Indonesia Pact to assist with the electrification of buses and carbon pricing in Indonesia and signed an agreement with Indonesia on a partnership for

devising and coordinating carbon pricing policies in July 2023. The United Kingdom will also provide £2.75 million (\$CAN4.6 million) in technical assistance for clean energy transition. Australia has also developed bilateral partnerships, such as the A\$200 million (\$CAN176,4 million) Australia–Indonesia Climate and Infrastructure Partnership and the Singapore–Australia Green Economy Agreement (Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2023). In contrast, Canada's climate cooperation is primarily limited to partnerships with international organizations such as ADB and UNDP, as well as cooperation with other countries to provide climate finance for developing economies (Government of Canada, 2023). Compared with other countries, there has been a lack of bilateral dialogue between Canada and ASEAN countries. For instance, Indonesia received its climate finance from Canada via international organizations like ADB, the World Agroforestry Center, and Oxfam Canada instead of from the Canadian government directly. There is also no bilateral agreement between Canada and any ASEAN countries focused solely on climate cooperation. While the multilateral framework is valuable, this should not be the only framework for Canada to work with ASEAN countries. Canada should tap into the opportunities for bilateral cooperation and be more proactive in promoting dialogue with each ASEAN member state directly by sharing its experiences in the clean energy transition.

## 04. Policy Recommendations

- 21 Despite some limitations in Canada's approach to climate cooperation with ASEAN countries, these limitations highlight the opportunity for Canada to exercise leadership. This section will focus on the clean energy transition in ASEAN countries through which Canada can and should increase its influence among ASEAN member states to attain its IPS objectives. The renewable energy transition to meet the demand for low-emission power sources and reduce reliance on fossil fuels in Southeast Asia will present Canada with numerous opportunities to engage with them. For instance, ASEAN countries with copious renewable energy resources can serve as exporters to countries with insufficient renewable energy resources in this region. One example is the energy export agreement between Singapore and Cambodia, which will export 1 gigawatt (GW) of renewable energy from Cambodia to Singapore annually after 2030. This process requires battery energy storage systems and pumped storage hydropower to store excess wind and solar power. Canada has multiple competitive firms in renewable energy storage, such as Northland Power and NRStor Inc., which have been actively engaged in domestic projects for clean energy restoration (Karim, 2023). This type of collaboration presents an excellent opportunity for Canada to expand its export of clean energy storage technologies.
- 22 Specifically, Canada should 1) use its experience in transitioning to clean energy to expand its engagement with ASEAN countries; 2) increase business collaborations between Canadian and ASEAN companies through technology sharing and financial investment; and 3) actively participate in climate initiatives led by ASEAN.

## 4.1 Experience Sharing

- 23 Canada should utilize the window of opportunity of ASEAN’s energy transition to expand its engagement with ASEAN countries in clean energy-related areas, and this engagement should go beyond trade and incorporate other aspects of collaboration, such as technical assistance and information sharing. We have already seen some progress: Canada has established the Canadian Technology Accelerator (CTA) for some ASEAN countries like Singapore, Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines; the Canadian Trade Commissioner Service has offices in Canadian diplomatic missions in all of the 10 ASEAN member states, and sustainable technologies and the clean technology are among the key sectors that they actively engage with. However, more could be done, especially in “project engineering, design, construction, advisory services, and technology,” as other medium powers such as Australia have already begun doing (Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2023).
- 24 Canada has extensive experience in various clean energy sectors, including implementing a carbon tax, phasing out coal, transborder energy transmission, and many others; these experiences could significantly assist ASEAN countries in reshaping their energy production and consumption patterns. For instance, ASEAN members have been investigating transnational energy transmission to accelerate their transition to renewable energy. For instance, launched in June of 2022, the Lao PDR-Thailand-Malaysia-Singapore Power Integration Project exports renewable energy from Laos to Singapore. As more ASEAN nations transition to renewable energy, clean technology will become a battleground for nations that have already mastered energy storage and grid-connected technologies. Canada could and should expand its engagement with ASEAN by leveraging its expertise and technologies in this field. After all, Canada and the US share the most integrated electric infrastructure along their border, and Hydro-Québec, the largest electricity producer in Canada, plans to export electricity from Quebec to New York by May 2026 via the \$6 billion subterranean and underwater Champlain Hudson Power Express (Bloomberg, 2023).
- 25 Canada should establish government-to-government collaboration for experience sharing in the institutional arrangement of clean energy transition. Most ASEAN members, including Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, and Vietnam, have begun to prepare for a potential carbon tax implementation. Most of them are still heavily reliant on fossil fuels, so how to help their carbon-intensive business adapt to the carbon market is challenging for their governments. In contrast, the Canadian government has valuable experience to share regarding the carbon market, coal phase-out, and GHG emission reporting. Regarding carbon trading, Canada has a comprehensive rebate scheme for households alongside its national carbon pricing policy, which could be valuable for countries that have just started the carbon market. On GHG reporting, since 2004, Canada has established the GHGRP to require the largest emitting Canadian facilities to release their GHG emissions information. At the UNFCCC/RCC Bangkok in 2020 (UNFCCC, 2020), a country representative from the ASEAN member state stated, “Carbon pricing is very important but can also be very complicated. Countries have different circumstances which need to be taken into account when considering carbon pricing instruments. Therefore, it is very helpful to share experiences in the region.” Some middle powers like the UK have already put effort into facilitating the cross-government experience sharing on carbon pricing. For

instance, in September 2020, during the UK COP26 Presidency, the UK hosted an ASEAN-COP26 Climate Dialogue to exchange experiences in institutional arrangements for carbon pricing (UK Mission to ASEAN, 2020), and Canada should not be left behind.

- 26 Canada is better positioned than other middle powers in cooperating with ASEAN because Canada can draw diverse experiences from each of its provinces. In Ontario, for example, coal used to be a significant source of electricity, but it was phased out entirely in 2014. Four other provinces—Alberta, Saskatchewan, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia—still operate coal-fired power plants, but each province has released plans to phase out coal, and their plans are different to fit each province’s needs better (Government of Canada, 2022). With Indonesia and Vietnam being the main coal producers and exporters, supplying nearly 90% of ASEAN’s coal production, the transition to clean energy is difficult (Table 4 shows the energy mix of some ASEAN countries). However, the diverse stages across Canada’s provinces in their energy transition show that Canada understands the needs and challenges different ASEAN states face in coal phasing-out, and thus Canada could provide meaningful assistance.

**Table 5 the Year of 2021, Power Generation by Technology (299 TWh)**

Country	Coal	Oil & Gas	Renewable Energy <sup>2</sup>
<b>Indonesia</b>	60%	21%	19%
<b>Malaysia</b>	32%	47%	21%
<b>Philippines</b>	55%	22%	23%
<b>Singapore</b>	1%	96%	3%
<b>Thailand</b>	11%	67%	22%
<b>Vietnam</b>	30%	13%	57%
<b>Cambodia</b>	41%	8%	51%

TWh = Terawatt hour

Source: International Energy Agency (IEA) 2023, Ministry of Mines and Electricity Authority of Cambodia, 2021

## 4.2 Business Collaboration

- 27 The allocation of existing funding and investment is skewed toward certain countries, for whom funding remains insufficient. Indonesia and Vietnam received most of the international finance for clean energy transition. According to OECD estimates, the US contributed just over \$1 billion in climate-related development finance to Southeast Asian countries from 2012 to 2020, more than half of which went to Indonesia (Fallin *et al.*, 2023). However, even though it has received a significant amount of funding, Indonesia still faces massive financial gaps for its clean energy transition, as shutting down coal plants will require “an estimated \$25 billion per year through 2030, but Indonesia invested just \$3 billion in renewables for 2017 to 2021” (Fallin *et al.*, 2023).
- 28 This financial gap allows Canada to fund and invest in the region. Canada has announced several new government-led initiatives via IPS to help ASEAN countries build a green and sustainable future (Government of Canada, 2023c). However, Canada should further facilitate closer private-sector collaboration between Canada and ASEAN in the clean energy sector to attract more private funding. Successful private-sector collaboration exists. For instance, Malaysian clean energy solutions provider Gentari has included developing clean hydrogen projects in Canada in their strategic roadmap

(*Energy Connects*, 2023). Northland Power in Canada signed an agreement with Gentari to work together on the Hai Long offshore wind project in Taiwan (Northland Power, 2023). Canada has also announced the *Advancing International Clean Technology Demonstration in the Indo-Pacific* project to channel \$16 million over five years into the region to “facilitate the scale-up of Canadian SMEs and the adoption of Canadian cleantech in the Indo-Pacific by supporting commercial demonstrations in priority Indo-Pacific markets” (Government of Canada, 2023b). However, more direct private-sector collaboration should be encouraged because of the vast financial gap and the enormous business opportunities.

- 29 Furthermore, collaboration between ASEAN and Canadian businesses will benefit Canadian companies significantly. For example, Canada may want to cooperate with ASEAN countries to diversify its manufacturing for clean technologies. Alberta, for example, has an increasing solar panel industry and has contributed to the majority growth of the solar power installed capacity in Canada. In 2022, Alberta added 1391 MW of installed capacity. According to the Solar Energy Society of Alberta (Solas Energy Consulting, 2018), 278 Alberta-based solar companies mainly focus on manufacturing. By cooperating with major solar panel producers in ASEAN countries such as Malaysia and Vietnam (Sun, 2022), solar panel companies in Alberta have more opportunities to diversify their manufacturing base, and to focus more on value-added services like providing goods and services in development, design, installation, and maintenance for solar photovoltaics and thus move up in the value chain.
- 30 Another field of collaboration we want to highlight, not only at the national level but also at the firm level, is the collaboration in the production and management of critical minerals like nickel, tin, and REE in general. ASEAN countries are well endowed with those natural resources: Vietnam has the world’s second-largest reserves of rare earth (Fallin, Lee and Poling, 2023), Indonesia and the Philippines are the world’s largest producers of nickel (a key component in lithium-ion batteries), Indonesia and Myanmar are the second- and third-largest producers of tin, and Myanmar accounts for 13 percent of global rare-earth elements production (Fallin, Lee and Poling, 2023). Although those countries lack the processing capacities and technologies, they have begun to aim to develop technologies to process these raw materials. In the meantime, Canada is a global leader in environmental, social, and governance standards for mining. Cheetah Resources Corp., a subsidiary of Vital Metals Ltd., is Canada’s first miner and processor of rare earths, which has technologies that can minimize the environmental impact of the mining of critical minerals (Government of Canada, 2023). The Canadian government should facilitate the industry exchange between those Canadian businesses and companies in ASEAN, and this industry exchange can also help with Canada’s supply chain security and management.

### 4.3 Support ASEAN-Led Initiatives

- 31 IPS defines Canada's strategic objectives in the Indo-Pacific, and to achieve these objectives, Canada and ASEAN countries (and other members of the Indo-Pacific) should be active partners rather than passive givers and receivers. Canada should support ASEAN-led climate initiatives and actively partake in them. In recent years, an increasing number of ASEAN nations have launched their climate initiatives with international partners. For instance, the ASEAN Climate Change and Energy Project is a

collaboration between the ASEAN Centre for Energy (ACE) and the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI) (ASEAN Climate Change and Energy Project, n.d.); the ASEAN Climate Change Strategic Action Plan (ACCSA) 2023-2030 is led by the ASEAN and supported by the Ministry of the Environment, Government of Japan, and the Japanese Government, as well as the Institute for Global Environmental Studies. These initiatives may provide a clearer picture of ASEAN's needs, and based on them, we can see that ASEAN countries require not only financial support, but also assistance with technical assistance, technology transfer, capacity building, and institutional development, such as sustainable finance classifications and climate-related disclosure rules for clean energy development. These are all promising areas in which Canada can share its expertise and become an active partner. It also helps Canada build more effective bilateral relationships with ASEAN.

- 32 In addition to supporting ASEAN-led initiatives, Canada can help by increasing educational and training opportunities for ASEAN employees, echoing IPS's objective of "investing in and connecting people." According to the 7th ASEAN Energy Outlook, "Southeast Asia will require an additional 5.5 million trained workers in the renewables sector alone by 2050, as well as workers across grid infrastructure, clean energy supply chains, energy efficiency, and low-emissions technologies" (ASEAN Center for Energy, 2022). In 2017, the Canadian government established the Canada-ASEAN Scholarships and Educational Exchanges for Development (SEED) program to enable students from ASEAN member countries to conduct research in Canadian post-secondary institutions in areas that contribute to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. As part of IPS, the Canadian government will provide CAD\$14.2 million over five years to expand this program. However, it may be preferable for the SEED program to have dedicated programs tailored to the needs of ASEAN countries and Canada's expertise in critical technologies for the energy transition. Canada's research institutions have a wealth of experience in storing and transmitting renewable energy, which will be invaluable to ASEAN nations in dire need of training. In addition, Canada should identify research programs in Canadian universities with a concentration on renewable energy, such as the University of Toronto, the University of British Columbia, the University of Waterloo, and McGill University, which will help ASEAN students enormously when applying for the SEED program.

## 05. Conclusion

- 33 This paper examines the contextual differences ASEAN members face to achieve a clean energy transition, analyzes the characteristics of Canada's approach to climate cooperation with ASEAN countries, and provides policy suggestions for Canada to achieve a measurable result for its IPS. Specifically, this paper argues that Canada's current policy and climate assistance to ASEAN countries is unequal and insufficient. Moreover, there is a lack of continuity within this cooperative framework, which primarily operates within a multilateral context. To enhance the effectiveness of IPS, the Canadian government should integrate the demands for clean energy transition in ASEAN countries by placing greater emphasis on experience sharing, fortifying its business collaboration with ASEAN countries, and participating more actively in ASEAN-led initiatives.

- 34 More and more countries have increased their engagement with ASEAN member states in clean energy transition and climate cooperation in general. For instance, China has increasingly invested in clean energy projects in the ASEAN member countries. “China’s total public investment allocated to RE projects in ASEAN between 2000 and 2020 reached \$31 trillion, accounting for 60 percent of total foreign public investment in the region over that period” (ASEAN Energy Center, 2023b). Australia has also emphasized clean energy cooperation in its Indo-Pacific strategy (Australian Government, 2022). Filling in the climate cooperation gap in clean energy cooperation is crucial for Canada to compete for leadership in this region.
- 35 It is also important to note that climate cooperation between Canada and ASEAN is in alignment with all the other four IPS objectives. For instance, the export of grid-connected technology and energy storage from Canada holds significant promise for strengthening Canada's trade ties with this region. Canada's strategic partnerships with nations with advanced solar panel manufacturing capabilities will also enhance Canada’s supply chain resilience. By promoting the allocation of resources from businesses towards the clean energy project and fostering collaboration between the public and private sectors in Canada and this region, Canada will not only assume an active and involved role as a partner in this region but will also contribute to the global endeavour of building a sustainable and green future.

## 06. Authors notes

1. Climatescope (2023), developed by BloombergNEFT, is an online market assessment tool, report, and index that evaluates the relative readiness of individual nations to put energy transition investment to work. <https://www.global-climatescope.org/about/>
2. Renewable energy includes hydropower, solar power, bioenergy, and geothermal power.
3. We are grateful to Harry Dienes, Fen Hampson, and the participants at the 2024 Bell Chair Graduate Student Conference in Canadian Politics for their valuable feedback. We thank Constant Courtin and Aliya Bachir for translating our abstract into French. We would also like to thank the journal’s two anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments on earlier drafts of the article.

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## ABSTRACT

Drawing evidence from governmental datasets, policy reports, and other sources, this paper, focusing on the clean energy transition as the key aspect, examines Canada's current approach to climate cooperation with ASEAN countries to "build a sustainable and green future," echoing one of the strategic goals in Canada's newly released Indo-Pacific Strategy (IPS). In particular, this paper argues that the current policy and financial assistance from Canada to ASEAN countries is unequal and insufficient. Moreover, there is a lack of continuity and measurable objectives within this cooperative framework, which primarily operates within a multilateral context. Given these characteristics, we propose that Canada's cooperation with ASEAN nations in addressing climate change should integrate the imperative for a clean energy transition. This approach has the potential to create numerous opportunities for engaging with ASEAN countries, while also aligning with the objectives of the IPS. Specifically, to enhance the effectiveness of IPS in this context, the Canadian government should emphasize experience sharing, fortify its business collaboration with ASEAN countries, and participate more actively in ASEAN-led initiatives.

## RÉSUMÉ

S'appuyant sur des données gouvernementales, des rapports de politiques publiques ainsi que d'autres sources, cet article prend l'exemple de la transition vers une énergie propre pour examiner l'approche actuelle du Canada en matière de coopération sur les sujets climatiques avec les pays de l'ASEAN en vue de « construire un avenir durable et vert », faisant ainsi écho à l'un des objectifs stratégiques de la nouvelle Stratégie pour l'Indo-Pacifique (SIP) récemment publiée par le Canada. Cet article soutient l'idée que la politique actuelle et l'aide financière du Canada aux pays de l'ASEAN sont inégaux et insuffisants. Par ailleurs, il existe un manque de continuité et d'objectifs mesurables au sein de ce cadre de coopération, qui fonctionne principalement dans un contexte multilatéral. Compte tenu de ces caractéristiques, nous proposons que la coopération du Canada avec les pays de l'ASEAN dans la lutte contre le changement climatique intègre l'impératif d'une transition énergétique propre dans la région. Cette approche a le potentiel de créer de nombreuses opportunités de dialogue avec les pays de l'ASEAN, tout en s'alignant également sur les objectifs de la SIP. Ainsi, pour renforcer l'efficacité de la SIP dans ce contexte, le gouvernement canadien devrait mettre davantage l'accent sur le partage d'expériences, le renforcement de la collaboration commerciale avec les pays de l'ASEAN et une participation plus active aux initiatives dirigées par l'ASEAN.

## INDEX

**Mots-clés:** Canada, ASEAN, Strategie pour l'Indo-Pacifique, coopération climatique, transition vers les énergies propres

**Keywords:** Canada, ASEAN, Indo-Pacific Strategy, climate cooperation, clean energy transition

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