

## U.S.-AUSTRALIA COOPERATION IN THE INDO-PACIFIC REGION THROUGH THE IPEF FRAMEWORK IN REALIZING THE CLEAN ECONOMY PILLAR

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**Abstract:** *This research focuses on analyzing the cooperation between the United States and Australia within the framework of the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF), particularly in realizing the clean economy pillar. Grounded in the Theory of Neoliberalism and the Concept of International Cooperation, this study aims to further examine the dynamics of IPEF collaboration, especially in the context of bilateral relations between the United States and Australia, to enhance economic growth through commodity exports and the development of low-carbon clean technologies to ensure environmental security and sustainability in the face of industrialization. In implementing the clean economy pillar of IPEF, the involvement of Non-State Actors in the energy sector, particularly Chevron Corporation, plays a crucial role in supporting and maximizing Australia's agenda to become an energy superpower while maintaining environmental safety as a priority. Chevron's presence is significant in the IPEF cooperation between the United States and Australia due to its substantial impact on the domestic economy and its tangible commitment to carbon emission reduction. This research reveals the importance of bilateral cooperation, investment, and the development of clean technologies in achieving the clean economy pillar of the IPEF.*

**Keywords:** IPEF, Clean Economy, International Cooperation

### INTRODUCTION

In the current dynamics of the global situation, the Indo-Pacific plays a significant role in the growth of the world economy. Indo-Pacific—a term combining “India” and “Pacific,” indicating a geopolitical fusion of regions—refers to a geopolitical area comprising several Asian nations, such as India, South Korea, Japan, Australia, and the member countries of ASEAN. Geographically, the Indo-Pacific lies along a strategically important international trade route, covering parts of the Indian Ocean (from Latin: “Oceanus Indicus”) and the Pacific Ocean (from Latin: “Oceanus Pacificus” meaning “peaceful sea”). This region contributes around 40% of the global GDP and is home to approximately 60% of the world's population [1], making it a vital hub for expanding economic and trade cooperation among countries worldwide.

Fundamentally, the term Indo-Pacific carries a different connotation from traditional regional integration areas such as Europe or Asia [2]. The Indo-Pacific has become a central area in global issues such as trade, maritime geopolitics (from Greek: “geo” meaning “earth” and “politikē” meaning “affairs of the cities”), security, and the environment. Its strategic location as a crossroad of international trade routes—through which approximately 32.2 million barrels of crude oil pass each year—and the fact that 40% of global exports originate from this region [3], enhance its economic appeal and attract foreign investors eager to engage in regional economic activities.

Given this potential, the Indo-Pacific has become a focal interest for major powers, including the United States. The United States, as a nation with a dominant economic capacity, realizes its economic interests in the Indo-Pacific through cooperation with countries in the region. One such instrument is the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF), initiated by U.S. President Joe Biden on May 23, 2022.

The design of the IPEF comprises four pillars of the United States' commitment in the Indo-Pacific: Trade, Supply Chains, Clean Economy, and Fair Economy. The first pillar is led by the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, while the remaining three are led by the U.S. Department of Commerce. The IPEF initiative includes 13 member countries: Australia, Fiji, Brunei, Indonesia, India, South Korea, Japan, the Philippines, Malaysia, New Zealand, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam [4]. Under Biden's leadership, the primary agenda of the IPEF is to reduce inflation and integrate regional economies to boost economic activities and investments within these countries.

Australia, in particular, has long-term strategic interests in the Indo-Pacific across sectors such as economy, climate, security, and energy. The establishment of the IPEF serves as a concrete policy framework for Australia to advance positive policy directions. According to the four IPEF pillars, the first—Connected Economy—relates to digital economic cooperation, where Australia has fostered bilateral relationships with Indo-Pacific countries in digital technology. The second pillar—Resilient Economy—centers on supply chain resilience, a goal Australia actively pursues. The third pillar—Clean Economy—responds to climate change, a significant concern for Australia, which has been one of the high carbon-emitting nations, thus facing challenges in transitioning to a low-carbon economy. The final pillar—Fair Economy—demonstrates Australia's commitment to economic fairness, emphasizing absolute enforcement of tax regulations and strict action against corruption [5].

In pursuing its interests, U.S.-Australia cooperation under the IPEF is not limited to state actors alone. Non-state actors—especially multinational corporations—also play a role. As previously mentioned, a key non-state actor is Chevron Corporation, a multinational company in the oil and gas supply chain. Chevron, founded in 1879 in Pico Canyon, California (from Latin *calor* “heat” and *fornia* “furnace, oven”), focuses on energy and operates in over 180 countries, including Australia. Chevron has operated in Western Australia since 1952 under the name Caltex, in collaboration with Ampol Petroleum, forming West Australian Petroleum (WAPET) [6].

One of Chevron's primary goals in Australia is to process and supply environmentally friendly oil and natural gas globally. To reduce future carbon emissions, Chevron aims to lower the carbon intensity of its traditional operations and develop low-carbon business ventures to foster a healthier environment [7]. This mission aligns with the IPEF's Clean Economy pillar.

Thus, the U.S.-Australia partnership within the IPEF framework, especially with the involvement of multinational corporations like Chevron, provides a compelling subject for further study. Using the Neoliberalism Theory (from Greek “*neos*” meaning new + Latin “*liberalis*” meaning free) and the Concept of International Cooperation, the author may analyze Australia's economic interests focusing on business, oil and gas supply chains, and clean energy transitions. The cooperation between the United States and Australia through the IPEF is highly relevant, reflecting the Indo-Pacific's critical role as a platform for regional economic collaboration and a strategic avenue for clean economic optimization.

## RESEARCH METHOD

In conducting this research, the author employs a qualitative descriptive method (from Latin “*qualitas*” meaning quality, and “*describere*” meaning to describe). The purpose of using this qualitative descriptive approach is to gather information regarding the United States' cooperative efforts through the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) in the Indo-Pacific region, which began in 2022. Data collection encompasses literature review and secondary data observation concerning the relevance of U.S.-Australia cooperation in advancing economic interests in the Indo-Pacific through IPEF.

The data and information utilized by the author are drawn from multiple sources and media, including theoretical frameworks within the field of international relations (from Latin “*inter*” meaning between, and “*relatio*” meaning connection) and international cooperation (from Latin “*cooperari*” meaning to work together), specifically related to the partnership between the United States and Australia through IPEF in the Indo-Pacific region.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### History of United States–Australia Cooperation

The cooperation between the United States and Australia has, in essence, existed for a considerable period. In the post–World War II era, specifically on September 1, 1951, Australia entered into a trilateral security alliance with the United States through the ANZUS Treaty (Australia, New Zealand, and the

United States). U.S. President Harry Truman announced the ANZUS agreement, which was later ratified in 1952. The primary objective of this cooperation was to promote peace and ensure security in the Pacific region. Australia and New Zealand viewed the political climate in the Pacific as being under threat following World War II, especially with the rise of communism in Korea and China. Consequently, both countries felt the need to pursue sustainable security through collaboration with the United States [8].

In parallel with the ANZUS alliance, the 1950s saw the United States emerge as one of Australia's principal economic partners, alongside Japan, which by the 1960s became the main importer of Australian iron. Previously, Australia had maintained a protectionist policy characterized by high tariffs to shield its domestic industries. In the 1930s, Australia imposed steep duties on industrial nations trading with it. However, over time, Australian economists realized that such high tariffs hindered the country's ability to compete in the global market. This led to a significant reduction in tariff barriers in 1973 [9].

In 2001, Australian Prime Minister **John Howard** initiated negotiations with then-U.S. President **George W. Bush** to establish a free trade agreement between the two countries, known as the **Australia–United States Free Trade Agreement (AUSFTA)**. President Bush responded favorably to this proposal. Negotiations between the two nations began in March 2003 and concluded after five rounds in February 2004 [10]. With the implementation of AUSFTA, over 97% of Australia's non-agricultural exports to the United States—excluding textiles and apparel—became tariff-free. The agreement also granted Australian businesses easier access to the U.S. federal market and markets in 31 U.S. states. As a result, AUSFTA significantly strengthened the economic ties between Australia and the United States [11].

This economic cooperation continued to evolve. Under President **Joe Biden**, a new economic cooperation framework—the **Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF)**—was introduced in May 2022, involving 14 member countries including Australia, India, South Korea, Japan, and ASEAN nations. IPEF encompasses four pillars of cooperation: **Trade, Supply Chains, Clean Economy, and Fair Economy** [1]. Australia has taken advantage of IPEF's presence to enhance its economic activities, improve competitiveness, and strengthen its national trade and energy sectors.

U.S.–Australia Cooperation Framework under the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF)

The Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) is an economic initiative launched by U.S. President Joe Biden in May 2022. The initiative represents a strategic step to reinforce and optimize economic growth among countries in the Indo-Pacific region. The cooperation framework involves 14 member states, including Australia as one of its strategic partners. IPEF is not structured as a traditional Free Trade Agreement (FTA) focused on tariff reduction or market access. Instead, it emphasizes a policy-oriented approach that strengthens strategic sectors such as supply chains, which are critical in facing global economic challenges.

In general, IPEF consists of four main pillars: Trade, Supply Chain Resilience, Clean Economy, and Fair Economy [1].

1. The Trade pillar addresses issues such as digital economy development, labor standards, and trade facilitation.
2. The Supply Chain pillar aims to enhance resilience through transparency, diversification, and crisis response mechanisms.
3. The Clean Economy pillar focuses on clean energy transition, sustainable development, and collaboration in clean technology.
4. The Fair Economy pillar emphasizes anti-corruption efforts and fair tax governance.

In the context of this study, U.S.–Australia cooperation primarily targets the Clean Economy pillar. This aligns with Australia's strategic vision of becoming a clean energy superpower. The clean economy pillar emphasizes cross-border collaboration in achieving low-carbon economic transitions, particularly through the development of clean technologies and reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

The U.S.–Australia bilateral cooperation on clean economy transition materialized in the form of the U.S.–Australia Climate, Critical Minerals, and Clean Energy Transformation Compact, signed in 2023. This agreement provides a strategic foundation for collaborative efforts in the development of clean technologies, green hydrogen, and enhanced energy storage and carbon capture systems that are both efficient and environmentally friendly [12]. Ultimately, Australia's objective of boosting economic

performance through export growth and clean technology development is being advanced through this bilateral partnership with the United States.

#### Strategic Sectors in U.S.–Australia Cooperation Through IPEF

Australia plays a vital role in the dynamics of international trade. With its abundant natural resources and extensive supply chains, the country leverages high-quality export commodities to remain competitive in global markets. Key Australian exports include iron and steel, coal, liquified natural gas (LNG), agricultural products, livestock, minerals, dairy products, and their derivatives [13]. According to Winsight, Australia ranks as the 13th-largest economy in the world, with a strong reliance on commodity trade. Despite its strengths, Australia frequently experiences supply chain instability. Hence, participation in Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) allows Australia to increase its economic gains.

From 2012 to 2021, Australia's economy recorded relatively high growth, averaging 3.6% annually [14]. In 2020, data from the World Bank Group showed Australia's total GDP reached USD 1.33 trillion [15]. That same year, the trade balance—also known as net exports—showed a surplus of USD 53.26 billion, with exports totaling USD 309.18 billion, surpassing imports of USD 256.44 billion. The significantly higher export value compared to imports highlights Australia's strong orientation toward trade, generating substantial economic benefits [16].

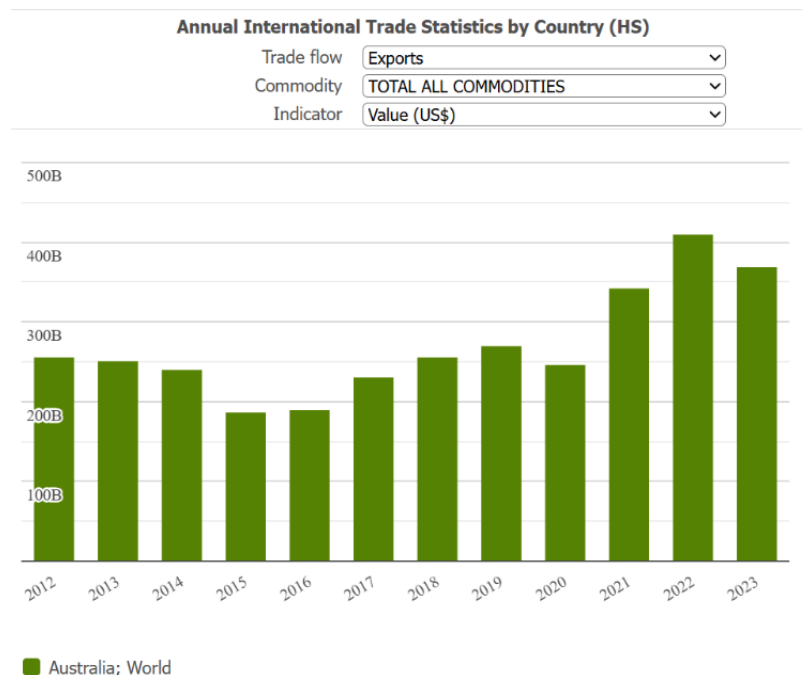



Figure 1. Commodity Export Value

Based on Graph 1 depicting Australia's commodity export values, it can be observed that from 2012 to 2024, there has been a significant increase. Over the span of 12 years, the highest export value occurred in 2022, reaching approximately USD 400 billion. This figure illustrates the substantial role of commodity exports in maintaining domestic economic stability and growth. When compared to previous years—such as 2019 and 2020, which coincided with the COVID-19 pandemic—a slowdown in export growth was evident. However, in the post-COVID period, the economic stability of the commodity sector has steadily improved.

The significance of Australia's economic growth is closely tied to its export performance and commodity trade. Several globally strategic sectors with high demand for Australia's key commodities include iron ore, coal, liquefied natural gas (LNG), gold, and agricultural products such as beef and wheat, as well as

services sectors like international education and tourism [17]. These highly strategic sectors have made a major contribution to Australia's ability to advance its interests in the realm of commodity exports.

Tabel 1. Australia's Featured Exports



Australian Government

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

AUSTRALIA'S TOP 25 EXPORTS, GOODS & SERVICES (a)

Rank	Commodity	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	% share 2023-24	% growth	
						2022-23 to 2023-24	5 year trend
	Total (b)	594,970	688,074	659,442	100.0	-4.2	9.1
1	Iron ore & concentrates	132,489	124,131	137,939	20.9	11.1	9.9
2	Coal	113,846	127,422	91,358	13.9	-28.3	15.3
3	Natural gas	70,571	92,237	68,707	10.4	-25.5	13.5
4	Education-related travel services (c)	20,776	36,342	51,032	7.7	40.4	3.4
5	Gold	23,202	24,416	32,937	5.0	34.9	7.9
6	Personal travel (excl. education-related)	1,818	14,350	21,670	3.3	51.0	3.0
7	Beef, f.c.f.	9,920	10,669	12,378	1.9	16.0	3.9
8	Crude petroleum	13,598	12,496	11,648	1.8	-6.8	10.1
9	Aluminium ores & conc (incl alumina)	9,982	9,414	10,373	1.6	10.2	-0.2
10	Wheat	11,336	16,738	9,869	1.5	-41.0	32.6

Based on Table 1, Australia's leading export sectors demonstrate that commodities play a crucial role in the country's economy. Iron ore, coal, and natural gas consistently occupy the top three positions among Australia's commodity exports. Specifically, iron ore exports reached AUD 123.389 billion in 2021–2022, slightly declined to AUD 124.131 billion in 2022–2023, and significantly increased to AUD 137.939 billion in 2023–2024. The average growth rate over the past five years stood at 9.9%.

Meanwhile, coal exports amounted to AUD 113.846 billion in 2021–2022, rose to AUD 127.422 billion in 2022–2023, but then experienced a notable decline to AUD 91.358 billion in 2023–2024. The average five-year export growth rate for coal was 15.3%. The third leading commodity, natural gas, recorded AUD 70.285 billion in 2021–2022, increased to AUD 92.237 billion in 2022–2023, and then dropped sharply to AUD 68.707 billion in 2023–2024. The average export growth rate in the natural gas sector over the past five years was 13.5%.

On the other hand, in the context of bilateral cooperation between the United States and Australia, a strong economic partnership has long been established, particularly under the framework of the Australia–United States Free Trade Agreement (AUSFTA). This long-standing agreement has positioned both nations as influential trade and commodity partners.

This dynamic can be observed through various levels of trade between the two countries. According to data from the Observatory of Economic Complexity (OEC), in 2022, U.S. exports to Australia totaled USD 30.8 billion, while Australia's exports to the United States reached USD 13.9 billion. In 2023, U.S. exports to Australia increased to USD 31.9 billion, whereas Australia's exports saw a slight decrease to USD 13.4 billion [18].

U.S.–Australia Cooperation in the Clean Economy Pillar of IPEF and the Role of Non-State Actors  
In the context of the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF), the cooperation between Australia and the United States—particularly in the clean economy sector—is highly relevant. Given Australia's dominant position as a resource-based export economy, the Australian government also engages non-state actors to implement its cooperative efforts. The Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) has partnered with non-state actors to develop policies and collaborate in achieving Australia's development goals.

One prominent non-state actor involved in the U.S.–Australia collaboration is Chevron, a multinational energy company engaged in oil and gas commodities. Among Chevron Australia’s major energy projects are the Gorgon Project and the Wheatstone Project, both located in Western Australia, and considered among the world’s largest LNG operations. The Gorgon Project alone produces 15.6 million tons of LNG per year and 300 terajoules of domestic gas per day [19].

Under the Clean Economy pillar of IPEF, Chevron plays a crucial role by investing in low-carbon technologies, particularly Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) in Australia. Chevron Australia has committed USD 26 million to support CCS research in Victoria and Western Australia [20]. Of this amount, USD 15 million is allocated to the Barrow Dampier CCS Regional Study, led by the global technology corporation Schlumberger Limited (SLB). This study aims to observe and evaluate carbon capture and storage potential in Carnarvon, Western Australia. The remaining USD 11 million will be used to develop infrastructure at the Otway International Test Centre in Victoria, managed by the CO2CRC (Carbon Capture and Storage Research Centre), which has been active in CCS research since 2003 [21].

Aligned with the Clean Economy pillar, CCS aims to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050. Chevron is committed to this goal. According to the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26), carbon neutrality standards have been a key agenda, especially under Article 6 of the Paris Agreement, which outlines carbon offsetting and credit mechanisms. Private actors, including Chevron, have also committed to net-zero targets [22].

In 2024, Chevron announced a USD 10 billion investment in low-carbon economic initiatives. The breakdown includes:

- USD 3 billion for carbon capture and offsetting,
- USD 2 billion to reduce greenhouse gas emissions,
- USD 3 billion for renewable fuels, and
- USD 2 billion for hydrogen energy development.

The goal of this investment is to reduce Chevron’s greenhouse gas emissions from oil and gas production by 35% by 2028. Other U.S.-based companies such as ExxonMobil and Occidental Petroleum have also pledged to support CCS efforts [23].

#### Impact of Australia’s Participation in IPEF and Chevron’s Domestic Investment

Australia’s involvement in IPEF, initiated by the United States, marks a new chapter in its economic sustainability. As a commodity-producing and exporting country, the four IPEF pillars—Trade, Supply Chains, Clean Economy, and Fair Economy—encourage Australia to focus on supply chain industrialization while preserving environmental security. Like other industrial economies, Australia faces environmental challenges such as climate change, a consequence of industrial growth. This drives Australia to adopt strategies for preventing the negative effects of industrial waste, and to realize its ambition of becoming a renewable energy superpower [24].

One concrete measure is the implementation of the Net Zero Plan. In 2016, Australia ratified the Paris Agreement, committing to limit global temperature rise to well below 2°C and ideally 1.5°C [25]. IPEF and the Paris Agreement are interconnected, as both aim to reduce emissions through clean economic pathways. The Clean Economy and Fair Economy pillars of IPEF were ratified by Australia and 13 other members on September 6, 2024. This marked the first regional agreement explicitly supporting Net Zero Emissions (NZE) and accelerating clean energy adoption to help countries like Australia meet their 2030 emission reduction targets [26].

IPEF has also impacted Australia’s supply chain sector. The IPEF Supply Chain Agreement is the first international framework helping Australia address supply chain disruptions. It established three key institutions:

- IPEF Supply Chain Council,
- IPEF Supply Chain Crisis Response Network, and
- IPEF Labor Rights Advisory Board.

Chevron's participation in U.S.–Australia cooperation brings economic, environmental, and social impacts at the domestic level. Economically, Chevron contributed AUD 4.2 billion in taxes in 2022 and AUD 3.5 billion in 2023 [27].

Environmental management is also central to Chevron's global operations. Chevron follows four core environmental commitments:

- Including Environmental Considerations in Decision Making,
- Minimising Our Environmental Footprint,
- Operating Responsibly, and
- Stewarding Our Sites [28].

In addition to its environmental focus, Chevron also engages with local communities. Through its Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), Chevron partners with health organizations such as the Hear Foundation, supporting the Pilbara Aboriginal Heart Health Program to address cardiovascular disease in Indigenous communities [29].

Analysis of U.S.–Australia Clean Economy Cooperation under IPEF through Neoliberalism Theory and International Cooperation Concepts

To analyze the collaboration between the United States and Australia under IPEF, one can employ Neoliberalism Theory—a key school of thought in international relations. A core derivative of neoliberalism is the concept of international cooperation.

According to David Little, neoliberalism posits that cooperation among states can be mutually beneficial, even in an anarchic international system, especially through the involvement of non-state actors. IPEF, launched in May 2022, embodies neoliberal principles by acting as an economic cooperation framework that facilitates collective action in the Indo-Pacific. Neoliberalism assumes that international realities present opportunities for collaborative policymaking, especially in technology governance, supply chain stability, and clean energy transitions.

Neoliberalism also acknowledges that while states are the primary actors, they are not the only ones with influence in international affairs. This is evident in the involvement of Chevron Corporation, a multinational non-state actor, in the U.S.–Australia cooperation. While Australia represents the state actor pursuing national interests, Chevron supports those interests—particularly in economic growth and sustainable energy.

From the perspective of international cooperation, the IPEF framework also fits the definition of cooperation involving multiple nations to reach agreements that yield mutual benefits. This includes participation from non-state actors, not solely sovereign states.

The U.S.–Australia partnership under IPEF is thus a practical example of international cooperation. The agreement is driven by two primary motivations:

1. Improving economic welfare and enhancing access to essential needs for the population,
2. Achieving resource efficiency in the face of shared challenges.

In this case, U.S.–Australia collaboration with Chevron represents an efficient allocation of energy-related resources to achieve national goals.

Beyond bilateral relations, IPEF has broader implications for the Indo-Pacific region, involving 14 member states. It emphasizes cooperation to solve economic constraints and to raise standards in sectors like digitalization, supply chain resilience, and clean energy. However, IPEF's cooperative platform may also inadvertently generate new forms of economic competition, especially in areas of innovation, technology, and infrastructure.

Thus, while IPEF strengthens collaboration and regional integration, it also reshapes the economic rivalry landscape in the Indo-Pacific.

## CONCLUSION

In the modern era, international issues have undergone significant shifts in focus and priorities. This transformation has led to changes in the nature of interactions between states—from historically conflict-driven relations toward more collective cooperation. The partnership between the United States and Australia within the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) exemplifies a contemporary cooperation model, addressing current global issues. As outlined in the four pillars of IPEF—Trade, Supply Chains, Clean Economy, and Fair Economy—this collaboration not only strengthens bilateral relations but also responds to global challenges such as climate change, digital transformation, and supply chain resilience.

Australia views IPEF as an opportunity to secure its economic position and to realize its ambition of becoming an energy superpower. Through its active participation, particularly in the Supply Chain and Clean Economy pillars, Australia demonstrates a strong commitment to investing in clean technologies, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and mitigating pollution from fossil fuels. Within the supply chain sector, Australia's economy is heavily reliant on the export of resource-based commodities such as oil and gas, indicating a central focus on natural resource management for economic development, while maintaining concern for environmental impacts.

To optimize its resource efficiency and fully harness its potential, Australia has involved Chevron, a multinational company specializing in natural gas energy. Chevron's participation represents a key example of public-private synergy in international cooperation. Its investment in low-carbon energy technologies such as Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) aligns directly with the Clean Economy pillar of IPEF. These efforts not only support the net-zero emissions transition, but also contribute to the strengthening of bilateral ties between the United States and Australia within the IPEF framework.

Therefore, Chevron's role in the U.S.–Australia cooperation context under IPEF has a tangible impact on Australia's medium-term goals for 2030 and long-term objectives for 2050, particularly in realizing the Clean Economy pillar aimed at reducing carbon emissions.

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