



INDO PACIFIC 2025

Developing regional soft
security: a role for NATO?

Indo Pacific 2025

Developing regional soft security: a role for NATO?

High-Level Round Table

Organised by
NATO Defense College Foundation

In co-operation with
**Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International
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Fondazione Compagnia di San Paolo,
NATO Defense College,
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Indo Pacific 2025. Developing regional soft security: a role for NATO?

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NATO Defense College Foundation

The NDCF is a unique think-tank: international by design and based in Rome, due to its association with the NATO Defense College. Its added value lies in the objectives stated by its charter and in its international network, which make the Foundation a body with considerable freedom of action, transnational reach and cultural openness. The charter specifies that the NDCF works with the Member States of the Atlantic Alliance, its partners and the countries that have some form of co-operation with NATO. Through the Foundation the involvement of USA and Canada is more fluid than in other settings. The Foundation was born in March 2011 and is rapidly expanding its highly specific and customer-tailored activities, achieving an increasingly higher profile, also through activities dedicated to decision makers and their staffs. Currently, the Foundation is active in three areas: high-level events, strategic trends research and specialised decision makers' training and education.

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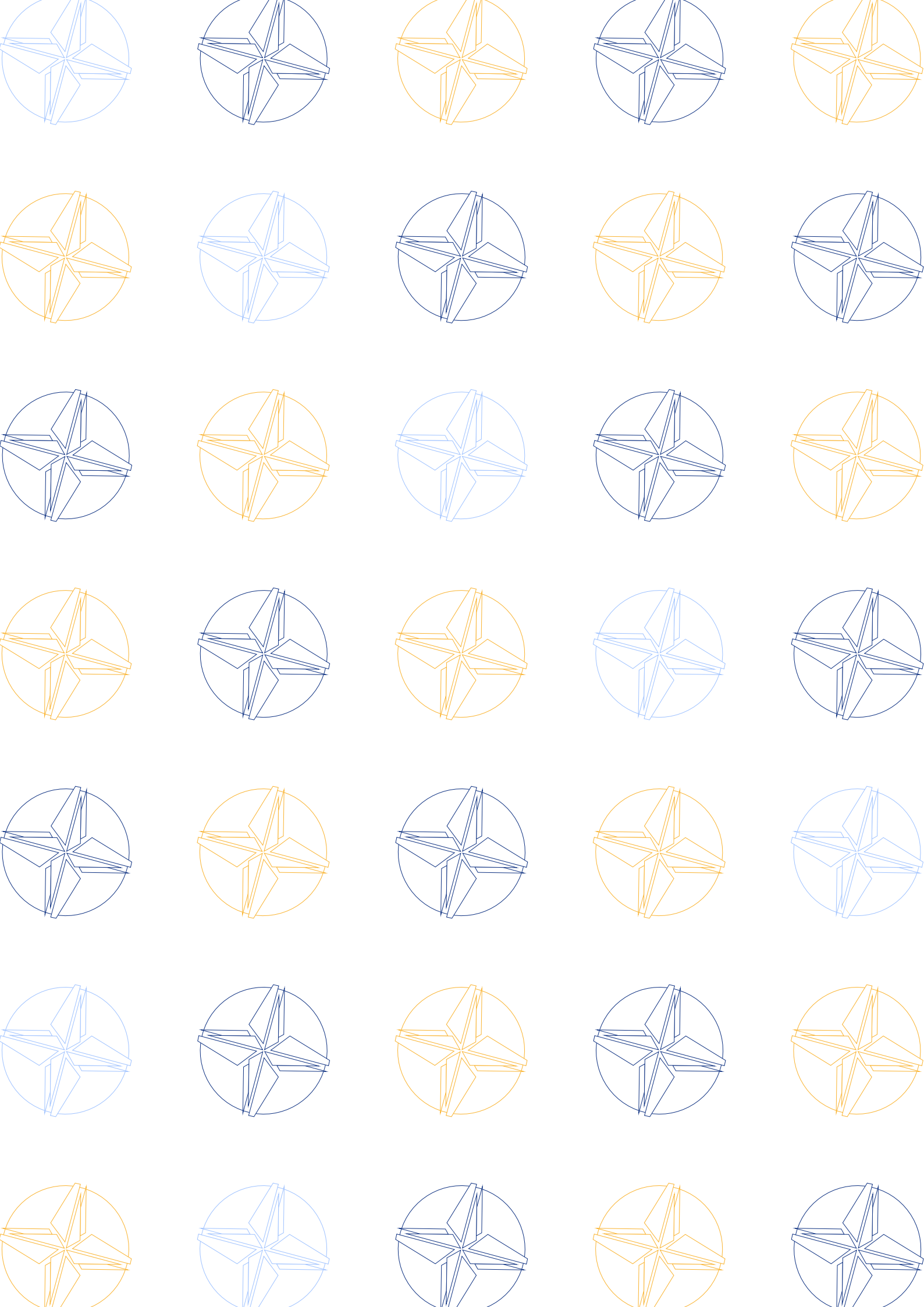




WELCOME REMARKS

Indo-Pacific 2025. Developing regional soft security: a role for NATO? Rome, 3 March 2025.

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**Alessandro Minuto-Rizzo**

*President, NATO Defense College Foundation,
Rome*

FOREWORD

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. Today, we are going to address a topic of great importance: understanding the current strategic and economic environment to enhance our comprehension of a complex yet highly interesting scenario. I am aware that the significance of the matter at hand is understood.

Moreover, we aim to identify possible guidelines for the future. We are witnessing rapid and unprecedented changes, with events unfolding faster than books can document or commentators can analyse. We must embrace change for the right reasons. Challenges do not come alone; we firmly believe that they are accompanied by opportunities. This is why it is crucial to analyse and interpret, in the best possible way, situations that appear particularly intricate.

The NATO Defense College Foundation is addressing the Indo-Pacific issue for the third time, and with each discussion, we strive to take a step forward in deepening our understanding. We approach this dialogue from various

perspectives, ensuring a serious, scientific, and well-informed conversation. We convene in a spirit of balance and respect, firmly believing that dialogue and prevention are fundamental.

For this reason, the NDCF embraces *cooperative security*, one of NATO's core tasks. This involves building partnerships based on mutual respect, a two-way approach with the primary objective of projecting stability. Through dialogue, consultation, and practical cooperation, we aim to uphold the rules-based international order.

The Indo-Pacific region is of great significance in many aspects, and developments in this vast area have direct implications for the Euro-Atlantic region, as Secretary General Rutte has frequently pointed out. In today's interconnected world, fostering a better understanding benefits us all.

With this Roundtable, we look forward to an engaging discussion, structured into two panels. While NATO is not a primary actor in the Indo-Pacific, it adopts a *360-degree security approach* and remains a *key security provider*. We acknowledge the partnerships established with Australia, Japan, New Zealand, and South Korea: nations that play highly relevant roles in many aspects. A strategic approach and coordination with these partners will be instrumental in ensuring regional stability. A cooperative security framework helps prevent dangerous escalations, fostering trust and collaborative initiatives. Training and education are integral components of this framework, and the College in Rome naturally plays an important role in this regard. We are, in effect, opening a new book and turning its first chapter.

The second panel will focus on geoeconomics, cooperation, and the promotion of soft security tools in a dynamic environment where diplomacy and economics intersect. Supporting trade and technological advancements, fostering exchanges, and simultaneously resisting cyber threats and hybrid challenges are all in our collective interest. Secure trade routes, stable supply chains, and resilient infrastructures are also key factors contributing to regional and global stability.

I wish to extend my gratitude to our esteemed speakers and moderators who have accepted our invitation to be here today in Rome. They are among the most distinguished experts in their respective fields, offering invaluable insights on the topics at hand. I would also like to thank Ambassador Tsai of Taiwan for his contribution, Ambassador Cowley for her forthcoming concluding remarks, and Il Circolo degli Esteri for their kind hospitality. On a personal note, I extend my best wishes to the newly elected President, Maria Assunta Accili: our warmest congratulations to you. Special thanks go to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Italy, ICEED, Ken Kitatani, and the Compagnia di

San Paolo for their support in this project. Lastly, my heartfelt appreciation to our media partners and the entire staff of this Foundation for their dedication and enthusiasm.

Biography

After having served at the Italian Embassy in Washington DC and as Commercial Counsellor at the Embassy of Italy in Prague, Ambassador **Alessandro Minuto-Rizzo** worked as Head of the External Relations Office of the EEC from 1981 to 1986. In the following years, his career focused on Europe and Space Policy. In 1997 he was appointed Diplomatic Counsellor of the Minister of Defence Beniamino Andreatta, then of his successors Carlo Scognamiglio and Sergio Mattarella. In 2000, Minuto-Rizzo held the position of Italian Ambassador to the Western European Union and to the Political and

Security Committee of the EU, of which he was among the founding members. He was Deputy Secretary General of the Atlantic Alliance between 2001 and 2007. His mandate was mostly carried out in the strategic-political industrial area and in the relations with sensitive countries such as those in the Gulf and the Southern Mediterranean. He is the author of the books: *The road to Kabul* (Il Mulino-Arel, 2009); *A political journey without maps. Diversity and future in the Greater Middle East* (Rubbettino, 2013); and *NATO and the Middle East: The Making of a Partnership* (New Academia Publishing, 2018).



How can strategic coordination between NATO and the IP4 partners be operationalised to **enhance regional stability** in the Indo-Pacific?

What mechanisms can ensure that NATO's engagement with IP4 partners supports **long-term peace and security** in the Indo-Pacific?



SESSION I

Soft Security: forestalling geopolitical confrontation

The NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg alongside former US President Joe Biden and the key political figures of the IP4 group.
NATO Summit, Washington July 2024.

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“What is interesting right now is,
on the one hand,
the extremely convoluted
geopolitical scenario we are facing,
but also the unprecedented threats
that are not exclusive to the
Indo-Pacific like critical and disruptive
technologies or energy security risks.”



CHAIR

Amaia Sánchez-Cacicedo*Non-Resident Senior Fellow, Asia Program,
Institut Montaigne***Biography**

Dr **Amaia Sánchez-Cacicedo** is a Non-Resident Senior Fellow in the Asia Programme at Institut Montaigne and Affiliated Faculty at IE University in Madrid. Previously, Dr Sánchez-Cacicedo served as a Non-Resident Associate Analyst for South Asia at the European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS), focusing on security and foreign policy developments in South Asia and the Indian Ocean, as well

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**Andrea Romussi**

Head, Office for NATO, Security and Political-Military Strategic Issues, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Rome

INCREASING THE ALLIANCE'S CONSENSUS ON A COMMON STRATEGIC VISION

Addressing the issues we have discussed today is becoming increasingly important. In recent years, we have observed the growing interconnection between the security of the Euro-Atlantic and Indo-Pacific regions, with the war in Ukraine acting as a catalyst. As stated in Washington at the last NATO Summit, China has played a decisive role in [enabling Russia's war](#), while North Korea's participation in the hostilities has demonstrated how this growing interrelationship between theatres can take on a military dimension. Simultaneously, the Indo-Pacific itself remains a potential flashpoint for global instability, given its strategic importance for maritime routes and the numerous challenges emerging from the region.

We are concerned about the global repercussions that tensions in this area may have, especially regarding the disruption of sea trade, global supply chains, and broader implications for international stability. What must be avoided is creating the perception of a so-called "collective West" distraction, which our

competitors may seek to exploit to pursue incremental gains in the Indo-Pacific region.

For this reason, we consider it essential to maintain effective coordination among the Allies and partners, ensuring the delivery of clear messages of condemnation and readiness to respond to any unilateral attempt to alter the status quo through force or coercion. In this context, only a comprehensive and coordinated approach will provide an opportunity to effectively address the multiple challenges affecting the region's stability and prevent further spillover effects on Euro-Atlantic and global security.

The outcomes of the last Summit were crucial in consolidating our dialogue with regional partners and in establishing a positive agenda on shared security interests, thereby enhancing our collective ability to tackle common threats and challenges. We have agreed on several flagship projects to reinforce our practical cooperation, particularly in support of Ukraine, as well as in cyber defence, countering disinformation, and technological advancements. In this regard, considerable progress in our engagement have been made, conducting joint activities across all the aforementioned sectors.

Such initiatives are of great significance given the challenges that the Alliance and its partners face, including the need to maintain a technological edge over competitors. Furthermore, our political dialogue with partners in the Indo-Pacific has continued to evolve. Our exchanges have covered issues such as arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation, counterterrorism, maritime security, and the nexus between climate change and security.

All of this contributes to the development of a shared understanding of the security landscape in which we must operate. Sharing information and best practices is key to creating a framework that enables coordinated responses and helps shape a common strategic vision. Additional opportunities to strengthen our partnerships also arise through bilateral initiatives. Italy has maintained a regular presence in the Indo-Pacific over the past years through naval and air force deployments. Consequently, there is a coordinated air and naval presence from European organisations, alongside increased engagement with our regional partners and institutions.

A few additional points must be highlighted. Amid NATO's global partnerships, the IP4 nations are among the most advanced, and our collaboration is mutually beneficial. These countries – Japan, South Korea, Australia, and New Zealand – are not merely recipients of technological assistance; rather, we engage with them on an equal footing. Some of them also participate in other formats, such as [AUKUS](#), where Italy is developing an interest especially in the technological exchanges it may facilitate.

This cooperation is crucial not only for the high level of engagement we can develop but also because we share common values and principles. This is particularly important at a time when the Alliance is under strain and facing significant challenges. It is imperative to reaffirm NATO's mission and purpose. Further developing our relationships with the IP4 nations is a step in the right direction. We recognise that this effort requires commitment, but Italy has already been actively participating in various naval and diplomatic initiatives in the region.

Our interests are multifaceted, encompassing not only security but also naval diplomacy. In the coming months and years, it will be crucial to sustain and strengthen this engagement and partnership. While this is vital, the extent to which we succeed will depend on developments within the European continent.

Biography

Counsellor **Andrea Romussi** is an Italian diplomat currently serving as the Head of Office IV (NATO and Strategic Security and Political-Military Issues) at the Directorate General for Political and Security Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation. In his role, Counsellor Romussi has addressed challenges

faced by the Alliance, emphasising NATO's comprehensive 360-degree approach to security. Prior to his current position, Romussi held various diplomatic assignments, including roles at the Permanent Mission of Italy to the United Nations in New York and the Italian Embassy in Beirut. His career reflects a strong focus on international security and multilateral cooperation.



Luis Simòn

Director of the Centre for Security, Diplomacy and Strategy (CSDS), VUB; Director of the Brussels Office, Elcano Royal Institute, Brussels

THE EMERGING NEW PARADIGMS ON CHINA: PRIORITIES AND PRAGMATIC CHOICES

If we consider the war in Ukraine, which remains very much at the forefront of our concerns, through a broader systemic lens, one of its key implications has been the consolidation of adversarial geopolitical alignments. These alignments, albeit loose, fragile, or imperfect, have become more pronounced.

On one side, we see a continental pan-Eurasian alignment of authoritarian powers, centred around the Sino-Russian partnership and including North Korea and Iran. The various ways in which China, North Korea, and Iran have supported Russia's war efforts and defence industry are well documented. On the other side, we observe a growing alignment among the US' allies in the Indo-Pacific and Euro-Atlantic regions. Countries such as Japan, Australia, and South Korea have not only expressed support for Ukraine but have also strengthened their ties with NATO.

However, it appears that the current US administration is re-evaluating, or even challenging, this concept of adversarial geopolitical alignments. This is particularly notable given that it was the previous administration that promoted this narrative. Since Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, a significant debate has emerged in the United States regarding the opportunity costs of supporting Ukraine. More specifically, this debate has centred on how US engagement, or lack thereof, in Ukraine affects the balance of power between the United States and China.

This perspective involves viewing Ukraine through the lens of competition with China. Many experts have framed the Ukraine and China issues as a zero-sum game, arguing that every dollar the United States spends on supporting Ukraine is a dollar that cannot be allocated to reinforcing its military position vis-à-vis China in the Pacific, which they regard as the primary strategic priority. This viewpoint appears to align with the current administration's perspective.

For instance, the US Secretary of Defence, Pete Hegseth, recently indicated at NATO headquarters in Brussels that strengthening the US military posture in the Pacific inevitably requires a reduction in engagement in [Europe](#). This position stands in contrast to the logic previously advanced by the Biden administration, which maintained that supporting Ukraine would yield strategic benefits or synergies in relation to China.

According to the Biden administration and many US allies in the Indo-Pacific, upholding global norms whenever and wherever they are challenged sends a powerful deterrent message against territorial revisionism. Therefore, we can discern a clear divergence in how the Biden and Trump administrations perceive the relationship between the Indo-Pacific and Euro-Atlantic regions. The Biden administration underscored the importance of upholding global norms, treated China and Russia as a relatively cohesive bloc, and prioritised cross-regional cooperation among US allies in both regions. In contrast, the current administration appears to be questioning each of these assumptions.

It has placed a strong emphasis on establishing a clear hierarchy of priorities, with China – and more specifically, the China challenge in the Indo-Pacific – at the top. Everything else is considered secondary or even superfluous. This administration also appears to reject the notion of China and Russia as a unified bloc and may even be exploring ways to create divisions between them. While this remains unconfirmed, there seems to be less interest in fostering cooperation among US allies across both regions, with a preference instead for bilateral engagements, even within the same region.

That said, if the current administration's approach to Ukraine and Europe is largely shaped by considerations related to China and US strategic interests,

then one fundamental principle remains consistent across both the Biden and Trump administrations: the recognition of a high degree of interdependence between the Euro-Atlantic and Indo-Pacific regions. This is significant because it suggests that developments in Europe often have far-reaching consequences beyond the continent, reinforcing the need for continuous awareness of events in the Indo-Pacific.

At the heart of this debate lie several critical questions regarding the nature and extent of the Chinese challenge to US power; questions that, in many ways, echo Cold War discussions about the Soviet threat and how best to counter it. Key considerations include: should China be viewed as a regional (Indo-Pacific) threat or as a global one from a US strategic perspective? How much effort should the United States devote to countering China in the Indo-Pacific versus other regions? How important is it to contain Chinese influence in Europe compared to other areas? How much effort should the United States allocate to countering low-cost Chinese efforts to create instability in Europe or the Middle East? Finally, what is the true level of coordination between China and Russia, and to what extent – if at all – can this relationship be influenced? This is a crucial question.

Biography

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and the Royal United Services Institute. His work has been published in leading academic journals, including *International Affairs*, *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, *Geopolitics*, *Orbis*, *Survival*, *The RUSI Journal*, *Comparative Strategy*, *Parameters*, and *The International Spectator*. Furthermore, Dr Simòn is a co-founder and senior editor of the online magazine *European Geostrategy* and serves on the editorial board of *Parameters: The US Army War College Quarterly*.

**Gabriele Abbondanza**

International relations academic, University of Madrid (UCM); University of Sydney (USYD); Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI)

CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN US-EUROPE-NATO COOPERATION IN THE INDO-PACIFIC

As both a European and an Australian, I will endeavour to provide some insights into these broad and complex topics: *the IP4, Europe, and the United States*. We could discuss these matters for hours, but I will aim to be concise. We live today in a multipolar world, which, while arguably more democratic than fifty years ago, is also significantly more volatile. As a result, achieving cooperative security has become an increasingly challenging objective.

The IP4 represents a unique grouping, as it is a minilateral framework within a broader military alliance. This underscores the extent of alignment between the IP4 and NATO's fully-fledged members. This alignment is particularly significant, as geopolitical and geoeconomic developments in the Indo-Pacific now have a direct impact on Euro-Atlantic security. Consequently, the relevance of the IP4 has never been greater.

Starting with *Australia*, it is a deeply committed actor in the region and has arguably been the most steadfast US ally since the Second World War. It engages in extensive cooperation with NATO, not only in the Middle East but also within the region itself. Given Australia's strategic posture, we can anticipate increased collaboration with NATO, including in the realm of maritime security. However, it is also well understood that US approval plays a crucial role in shaping such developments in Australia.

Turning to *Japan*, it is another steadfast player in the Indo-Pacific. The modern iteration of the Indo-Pacific concept originated in Japan, specifically in Tokyo in 2007. Despite the country's traditional foreign policy constraints, such as Article 9 and historically low defence spending, Japan is increasingly aware of security threats, and rightly so. The tailored partnership between Japan and NATO continues to expand, offering a growing array of opportunities for bilateral cooperation.

South Korea presents a somewhat distinct case. Until relatively recently, the term "strategic ambiguity" was frequently used to describe Seoul's foreign policy, and understandably so. The security-trade dilemma faced by countries in the region is immense, and South Korea's is particularly prominent. Nevertheless, Seoul is a major defence actor and, given its capabilities and heightened awareness of regional security threats, greater collaboration with NATO is a potential development in the near future.

New Zealand, meanwhile, stands apart within the IP4 grouping. It has a comparatively lower threat perception, partly due to its geographical location. Its primary focus on non-traditional security issues distinguishes it within the IP4 framework. Nonetheless, New Zealand has successfully participated in multiple passing exercises in the Indo-Pacific region in recent years, and has cooperated with NATO on various non-traditional security matters, particularly in the South Pacific. Against this backdrop, increased collaboration with the Alliance on these specific issues can also be expected.

On the other side of the Atlantic, *Europe* has joined these discussions with some delay, for a variety of reasons. The positive news is that Europe is now actively pivoting towards the Indo-Pacific, fostering deeper cooperation with NATO beyond its previous security focus on the Indian Ocean or economic interests revolving chiefly around China.

France was at the forefront of the European Indo-Pacific strategy, successfully combining hard and soft power through not only its military capabilities but also its policies. The *United Kingdom*, by contrast, places a stronger emphasis on hard power and more traditional containment strategies, aligning closely with the US. Meanwhile, *Germany* and the *Netherlands*, both major trading nations,

have approached the region with a more measured and pragmatic strategy, as reflected in their respective Indo-Pacific guidelines. Germany faces challenges due to its excessive economic dependence on the Chinese market, but is making efforts to address this vulnerability. This brings us to *Italy*, our host country, which presents a unique case. Italy has deep economic, normative, and strategic ties with the Indo-Pacific, yet it lacks a dedicated Indo-Pacific strategy (though it will likely adopt one soon). Moreover, other European nations – mostly NATO members – are increasingly engaging in this debate, which bodes well for enhanced cooperation between Europe, NATO, and the Indo-Pacific.

That said, we must remain realistic. The international security environment is deteriorating more rapidly than anticipated. Europe must decide whether it seeks to become “the master of its own destiny” or merely remain reactive to external developments. Achieving strategic autonomy is not a simple task. Increased defence spending is only part of the solution: more rational and coordinated defence spending is crucial. Europe’s fragmented defence industry may have functioned, albeit imperfectly, in the 20th century, but it is ill-suited to the challenges of the 21st. The establishment of a security-focused mini-lateral framework among European nations is now a necessary step forward. These are undeniably ambitious proposals, but given the severity of the current security landscape, ambitious measures are required.

Lastly, we must consider the *United States*, the architect of the global liberal order that most of us continue to benefit from today. In the Euro-Atlantic region, the US leads NATO, while in the Indo-Pacific it spearheads the hub-and-spoke system, a framework that has underpinned US primacy for over seventy years. However, this order now faces challenges, both internally, due to the destabilising effects of the second Trump administration, and externally, as a result of Chinese and Russian revisionism. It is important to recognise that such turbulence in US foreign policy is unlikely to be permanent. Nonetheless, US allies and partners must take greater responsibility for their own security, enhancing both their capabilities and strategic cohesion. This is not an easy task, particularly in an era when even the mere mention of NATO in the Indo-Pacific can provoke unease among regional actors. Yet, this is a challenge that must be addressed.

Encouragingly, we are witnessing positive developments, including the Draghi and Letta reports for the EU, the European Commission’s responses under Ursula von der Leyen’s leadership, and recent remarks by Mark Rutte concerning recent geopolitical shifts. However, only time will tell whether these promising signals will translate into substantive and much-needed foreign policy shifts.

Biography

Dr **Gabriele Abbondanza**, PhD, is an international relations academic. He is lecturer and Marie Curie Fellow at the Complutense University of Madrid (UCM, Spain), Associate Researcher at the University of Sydney (USYD, Australia), and Associate Fellow at the Italian Institute of International Affairs (IAI, Italy). His expertise includes Australian and Italian foreign and security policy, middle and great powers, irregular migration, and the

Indo-Pacific. He has published widely and prominently on these subjects, including with some of the world's most prestigious journals and publishers. He currently teaches numerous university courses on international relations, security studies, migration governance, and the Indo-Pacific. He is regularly interviewed by leading international media, and frequently contributes to institutional and political debates on his fields of expertise.



Pietro De Matteis

*Programme Officer for the Indo-Pacific, Public
Diplomacy Division, NATO HQ, Bruxelles*

RESHAPING NATO'S NARRATIVE IN THE REGION

If we consider NATO, established in 1949, the United Nations, founded in 1945, the World Bank in 1944, and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, which later led to the creation of the World Trade Organisation, these institutions were established in the aftermath of the Second World War. We know the consequences of failing to uphold an international rules-based order, which is precisely why these institutions were developed. NATO, as a political-military organisation, was specifically designed to ensure peace and stability in the transatlantic space. This was achieved by strengthening our allies to deter potential attacks and by establishing the fundamental principle that an attack on one ally constitutes an attack on all, enshrined in Article 5.

The NATO Treaty is only a few pages long, yet it encapsulates the progressive approach we adopted after the Second World War, firmly anchored in the UN Charter and committed to the principles of the rule of law, democracy, and

freedom. It is therefore crucial to reframe this discussion in terms of what we stand for today and what NATO represents. Naturally, NATO has evolved, and the challenges we face today are vastly different from those of the past 75 years.

Last year, we celebrated NATO's 75th anniversary. The world has changed significantly. Previously, security challenges were largely geographically defined and specific. Our primary domains were air, land, and sea, where deterrence was maintained. Today, we must contend with space, which is not confined to a specific geography, as well as cyberspace, where millions of cyberattacks are launched against our countries daily. We must also consider the information and cognitive domains, which, although not officially designated as NATO domains, are areas where our democracies are actively targeted, particularly by Russia and others.

NATO has adapted to these changes. In 2022, following the Madrid Summit, we introduced a new Strategic Concept to address these evolving challenges. A key element is recognising that our challenges are global. This is why cooperative security, as previously mentioned by colleagues, is so essential. Global challenges cannot be addressed in isolation. While strong transatlantic cooperation is essential, it is insufficient on its own.

If we wish to tackle threats in cyberspace, space, and hybrid warfare, such as vulnerabilities in undersea cables that connect global communications infrastructure, we must work together. This is why cooperative security is paramount and why NATO has established partnerships with 35 countries worldwide. These include Colombia, the Indo-Pacific Four (IP4), and various partners in Europe, the Mediterranean, and beyond.

The IP4 (South Korea, Japan, Australia, and New Zealand) are particularly significant partners. Although not a formal grouping, they are special because we share the same values: democracy, respect for international law, and a rules-based order. These countries stood with us when Russia invaded Ukraine, implementing sanctions and increasing cooperation. Their partnership is not new; they have worked with us for decades in regions such as the Western Balkans and Afghanistan. In fact, this cooperation predates NATO itself. More than 70,000 Australian and New Zealand soldiers lost their lives defending freedom and democracy on our continent. This partnership is deeply rooted in history, despite claims from Russia and China that NATO is expanding into the region. These claims are simply not true. Our cooperation is based on shared democratic principles.

Additionally, maintaining the highest level of technological capability is critical to deterring our adversaries. Only by working with technologically advanced countries such as Japan and South Korea can we ensure our own

technological edge. This is particularly relevant in cyberspace and hybrid warfare, where we must do more. Over the past several years, and especially after Russia's aggression against Ukraine, we have significantly strengthened our cooperation. This aggression marked a turning point in our relationships.

Economically, we are already deeply interconnected. One-fifth of the global economy depends on trade routes in the Indo-Pacific, and two-thirds of the world's semiconductors come from the region, particularly Taiwan. However, the geopolitical landscape has shifted. The so-called "no-limits" partnership between Russia and China, as well as the growing military cooperation between North Korea and Russia, present serious security concerns. North Korean troops have been deployed to the front lines, and North Korean missiles have been used against European targets in Ukraine. This raises further concerns about what North Korea may be receiving in return, potentially technological or ballistic support that could destabilise the Indo-Pacific.

It is important to note that NATO's new [Strategic Concept](#) does not define China as a threat. However, China is a strategic challenge, and even before Russia's aggression, there were concerns. China's significant military build-up lacks transparency, raising questions about its ultimate purpose. China has also been a key amplifier of Russian propaganda, especially in the realm of disinformation, targeting NATO allies and beyond. Moreover, it has leveraged economic coercion to influence political decisions in our countries.


Since the onset of Russia's war in Ukraine, China has provided political and economic support to Russia in various ways. While the international community sought to isolate Russia, China offered diplomatic space through forums such as the BRICS Summit and other international platforms. Economically, China has facilitated the circumvention of sanctions, provided industrial support through dual-use goods, and played an enabling role in sustaining Russia's war effort. These actions have significantly impacted the course of the conflict and remain a major concern for NATO.

In conclusion, NATO remains a North Atlantic Alliance. We are not expanding into the Pacific, nor could we under the NATO Charter. However, by strengthening cooperation with like-minded partners to address common challenges, we are enhancing our collective resilience. Many of these challenges are not geographically bound, making international cooperation essential. This collaboration will undoubtedly continue in the years ahead.

Biography

Dr **Pietro De Matteis** is Programme Officer at the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), responsible for engaging with the Indo-Pacific and Latin America. He previously spent over 13 years with the European Commission and the European External Action Service (the EU's diplomatic arm), serving in various roles in Europe, the Middle East, Asia and the Americas. An economist by training, Pietro holds a PhD in International Studies from the University of Cambridge and he graduated summa cum laude from the

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How can NATO and
its partners develop
coordinated strategies to
safeguard supply chains
against coercive, cyber,
and hybrid threats?

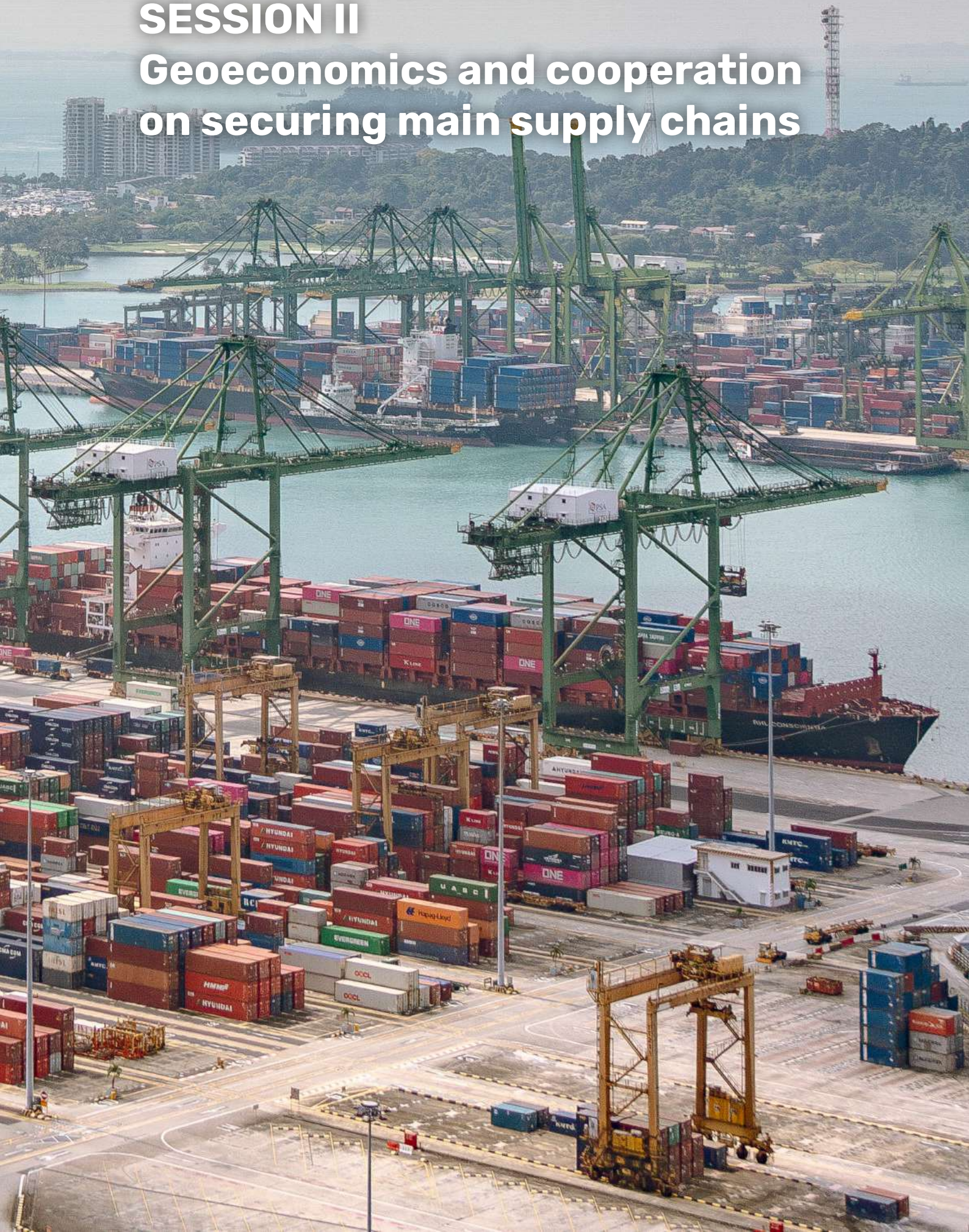
What role can **resilient
infrastructure and
secure trade routes**
play in advancing
cooperative security and
preventing geoeconomic
confrontation?

Port of Singapore photographed from above.

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SESSION II

Geoeconomics and cooperation on securing main supply chains



“Globalisation is fragmenting.
We are at the crossroads
between a fractured Middle Age
or a Renaissance tapestry.
The latter may happen
if protectionism and diffidence
will not prevail.”



CHAIR

Alessandro Politi*Director, NATO Defense College Foundation,
Rome***Biography**

Alessandro Politi, since 13 years, is Director of the NATO Defense College Foundation (NDCF), the only NATO recognised think tank. He has regularly published, edited and contributed to the series of the NDCF books. As a global geopolitical and strategic analyst, he has a 30-year track record with his thesis published as scientific work by the Army's General Staff (ITA).

He has been advisor in Italy and abroad to four Defence ministers, one National Armaments Director, one Intelligence Co-ordinator, one Chairman of the Oversight Intelligence Committee, one KFOR Commander.

He taught geopolitics, intelligence

and Arctic security at the SIOI (Rome) for more than two decades and political leadership/analysis at the IASSP (Milan). He has taught conflict management, crisis, peace-making and analysis at different governmental establishments and has tutored courses at the NATO Defense College. Last contribution: "The New Strategic Triad: Geopolitics, Diplomacy and AI" in The Routledge Handbook of Artificial Intelligence and International Relations, 2025. Last report "IHEDN, Pole Luxembourg, Quelles postures de l'Union Européenne, jeu d'échecs ou jeu de rôles, vis-à-vis de l'Alliance du Traité de l'Atlantique Nord?". Latest book: "Goodbye Merkel".



Vincent Y.C. Tsai

*Ambassador,
Taipei Representative Office in Italy, Rome*

HOW CAN SOFT SECURITY CONTRIBUTE TO ECONOMIC SECURITY?

In recent years, Taiwan has sustained steady economic growth despite global uncertainties. Taiwan's GDP grew by 4.3% last year, and it is projected to grow by 3.4% this year. A key factor driving this expansion is Taiwan's deep integration into the global supply chain, particularly within the high-tech sector. We fully recognise that remaining aligned with global industrial trends is essential to ensuring Taiwan's economic competitiveness and global relevance. The theme of today's roundtable is particularly significant, especially as we stand at a turning point in global technological development, where emerging technologies will spur a new wave of economic growth, notably in AI advancement and application.

In line with today's discussion on geoeconomics and cooperation to secure key supply chains, the semiconductor and AI industries will be used as examples to outline my government's policies and strategies for maintaining Taiwan's leadership in these two sectors. Allow me first to provide a brief overview of the

current state of these industries in Taiwan. According to our calculations, Taiwan accounts for 50% of the global semiconductor market and more than 90% of the mid- to high-end segment of that market.

Taiwan's semiconductor technology has become an essential pillar in supporting global technological development and the stability of the global supply chain. To illustrate this, in January 2024, an earthquake in southern Taiwan temporarily halted production at one of Taiwan's semiconductor companies, resulting in business losses exceeding \$100 million and disrupting global supply and customers. This event highlights the extreme sensitivity of the semiconductor supply chain and Taiwan's critical role within it.

Turning to AI, artificial intelligence has become one of the most prevalent topics in daily conversations in Taiwan. Without doubt, AI applications will drive industrial transformation and create a new global AI supply chain. Over the next five to ten years, I am confident the AI industry will expand on an unprecedented scale. The Taiwanese government is capitalising on AI's immense potential, working closely with private industries to position Taiwan as an AI technology hub. Taiwan holds significant advantages in AI chip manufacturing and is a leading global supplier of AI servers and data centre equipment. The frequent visits of executives from major technology companies, including NVIDIA, AMD, and Microsoft, underscore Taiwan's strong position in the global AI ecosystem. Despite the remarkable success of Taiwan's high-tech industry, we remain vigilant and cautious in addressing future challenges, particularly in ensuring supply chain security and resilience.

Taiwan continues to face escalating global trade uncertainty, along with persistent political and economic pressure from China. Navigating a sustainable path forward is a complex and demanding task. To reinforce Taiwan's role in the global supply chain, my government has adopted *three core strategies* to ensure security and resilience.

The first strategy focuses on *strengthening Taiwan's industrial competitiveness*. Taiwan has developed a comprehensive industrial cluster with an integrated upstream and downstream supply chain, thereby enhancing efficiency and competitiveness. Furthermore, talent development and infrastructure investment are vital for sustaining industrial growth. In both the semiconductor and AI industries, government policy, funding, talent cultivation, and infrastructure form the four key pillars of development. Taiwan must rely on its own strengths to build and refine this capability. My government is fully committed to this mission, providing robust support and stability to enable industrial growth.

Secondly, we are making concerted efforts to *diversify and de-risk supply chains*. Historically, Taiwan's economy has been overly dependent on a single market:

China. In 2016, nearly 40% of Taiwan's exports were destined for China. Such excessive reliance meant that any economic downturn in China had a direct impact on Taiwan. Recognising the risks of over-concentration, we have since actively pursued export market diversification. In recent years, Taiwan has made bold progress in expanding partnerships with North America, Europe, ASEAN, and India. By 2024, Taiwan's exports to China had decreased significantly to 30%. In the near future, we aim to further reduce reliance on China while strengthening trade relationships with other partners.

Thirdly, we fully appreciate the importance of *establishing comprehensive global partnerships*. Taiwan cannot afford complacency in the face of the geopolitical challenges and obstacles before us. We are not a member of the United Nations, and we are under constant threat from authoritarian China. Taiwan's most pressing challenge today is defending against China's relentless aggression and coercion. If asked whether Taiwan has ever made a strategic miscalculation in its dealings with China, I would candidly respond in the affirmative. We once believed that China's economic development would foster internal political change. However, history has demonstrated that bolstering China's economy has only fuelled its authoritarian ambitions. China has escalated diplomatic suppression, military intimidation, and economic coercion against Taiwan. It employs import restrictions, financial controls, and industrial pressure to undermine Taiwan's economic independence.

In countering China's coercion, selecting the right economic partners is crucial. President Lai Ching-te has proposed the establishment of a "non-red" supply chain, aimed at fostering industrial cooperation among global democracies to ensure supply chain security and resilience. For instance, in semiconductors, Taiwan is investing in the United States, Japan, Germany, Italy, and India. In AI infrastructure, Taiwan is actively forging partnerships with Mexico, the United States, India, Japan, and other Asian nations. This strategy not only benefits Taiwanese businesses but also strengthens economic ties with our global partners.

In conclusion, Taiwan's path to development has been fraught with challenges, and the road ahead remains formidable. Nevertheless, we firmly believe that maintaining an indispensable role in the global supply chain is essential to securing Taiwan's economic future and international standing. We will continue to promote economic diplomacy and technological diplomacy to deepen partnerships with all of you.

Lastly, I would like to take this opportunity to emphasise Taiwan's commitment to enhancing cooperation with European countries. Our representative offices across Europe serve as an ideal gateway for European businesses seeking

partnerships with Taiwan. We warmly welcome your enquiries and collaboration opportunities and will do our utmost to support and facilitate them.

Biography

Ambassador **Vincent Y.C. Tsai** has served as the Representative at the Taipei Representative Office in Italy since January 2023. With a robust background in international commerce and diplomacy, he holds an MBA from the University of Alabama at Birmingham (1990) and a bachelor's degree in international Trade from Tunghai University in Taiwan (1985). Throughout his career, Ambassador Tsai has held key positions in Taiwan's

foreign and economic sectors. Most recently, he served as Director-General (2020-2022) and Deputy Director-General (2018-2020) of the Department of International Economic Affairs and Cooperation at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Ambassador Tsai's extensive experience in trade, diplomacy and international cooperation underscores his expertise in fostering economic relations and international partnerships.



Ken Kitatani

*Chief of Executive Board and Committee,
International Council on Environmental
Economics and Development, New York*

THE CONTRIBUTION OF EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES TO COOPERATIVE SECURITY IN THE PACIFIC

Distinguished panellists, esteemed guests, it is always a pleasure to be here and to engage in discussions on how emerging technologies are shaping cooperative security in the Indo-Pacific. In a rapidly evolving geopolitical landscape, advancements in artificial intelligence, quantum computing, and cyber security are no longer merely futuristic concepts. They are the realities shaping our security frameworks, economic resilience, and regional stability. The Indo-Pacific region now stands at the crossroads of technological innovation and strategic power dynamics, and it is imperative that we harness these tools to reinforce sovereignty and foster collaboration.

Allow me to introduce *five key points*, drawn from our most recent studies, which I hope will serve as key takeaways for all of you.

First, *artificial intelligence and cyber security*: strengthening digital infrastructure for sovereign security. Cyber security has already been at the forefront in 2025. Last

month, a significant cyber-attack targeted the Philippine government's defence networks, reportedly linked to state-sponsored actors. Similarly, Australia's critical infrastructure suffered a sophisticated ransomware assault, disrupting essential services. Meanwhile, Japan's [National Centre of Incident Readiness and Strategy for Cybersecurity](#) (NISC) reported a marked increase in cyber-attacks attributed to foreign entities. These incidents illustrate how cyber threats are escalating in scale and complexity, underscoring the urgent necessity for AI-driven cyber security solutions. AI-powered threat detection systems, employing machine learning and predictive analytics, can assist nations in staying ahead of these attacks by identifying vulnerabilities before they are exploited.

Second, *AI, supply chain security, and economic resilience amid strategic competition*. In 2024, vulnerabilities within global supply chains were once again exposed. Taiwanese semiconductor manufacturing company TSMC announced in November 2024 [further restrictions on chip exports to China](#), under pressure from the United States. This move escalated tensions and disrupted supply chains across the Indo-Pacific. In addition, China intensified its restrictions on rare-earth mineral exports, impacting semiconductor production and AI hardware development worldwide. These disruptions highlight the growing importance of AI-driven logistics optimisation and blockchain-based trade documentation. AI-assisted risk assessment tools can aid governments and industries in predicting and managing trade uncertainties, while automation can maintain the flow of goods even amidst geopolitical tensions.

Furthermore, the renewed Trump administration has adopted a more aggressive "America First" economic policy, further restricting trade with China and applying pressure on allies to follow suit.

This could prompt Indo-Pacific nations to explore alternative trade frameworks, fostering stronger intra-regional cooperation. Countries may increasingly rely on AI-driven trade facilitation technologies to minimise dependence on the US-China dynamic, leveraging technology to establish more resilient supply networks.

Third, *enhancing maritime security with emerging technologies*. Maritime security remains a critical concern. In 2024, tensions escalated in the South China Sea. In February, [a Philippine Coast Guard vessel was harassed by Chinese maritime militia](#), raising significant concerns. Since 2022 and 2023, both Japan and Australia have expanded their use of AI-powered satellite surveillance and autonomous drones to monitor illegal fishing activities and unauthorised incursions within their waters. AI-driven maritime domain awareness platforms have proved invaluable in these situations, allowing real-time tracking of potential threats and enhancing coordination among nations.

Underwater autonomous vehicles, equipped with AI-driven anomaly detection capabilities, are contributing to the safeguarding of critical naval routes and resources. Given the shifts anticipated in US defence commitments under the Trump administration, particularly regarding support for the Philippines and Taiwan, Indo-Pacific nations may need to place greater reliance on AI-enhanced defence technologies rather than traditional military backing.

Fourth, *geopolitical competition and emerging technology alliances*. Technological competition in the Indo-Pacific continues to intensify. In 2024, China significantly increased investments in AI-driven surveillance infrastructure across Belt and Road Initiative partner countries, heightening concerns surrounding digital sovereignty. Meanwhile, the Quad Alliance (a diplomatic partnership between Australia, India, Japan, and the United States) expanded its AI and cybersecurity initiatives in response, aiming to counteract Chinese influence in the region.

The [AUKUS agreement](#), established in 2021, continues to evolve, with the United Kingdom and Australia focusing on AI-powered submarine technology. Under the current US administration, we may witness a more transactional approach to alliances, with nations expected to shoulder greater responsibility for their own security. This shift could accelerate collaborative AI research and the development of autonomous defence projects throughout the Indo-Pacific, as countries pursue greater technological self-sufficiency.

Fifth, *climate security and AI-driven disaster preparedness*. Climate change remains an existential threat, and the events of 2024 have demonstrated why AI-driven solutions are indispensable. In January, record-breaking typhoons struck the Philippines and Taiwan, resulting in widespread flooding and power outages. AI-powered climate models accurately predicted the severity of these storms weeks in advance, enabling governments to issue early warnings and deploy response teams with unprecedented speed. Real-time, AI-enhanced disaster monitoring, supported by IoT-driven sensor networks, is improving both preparedness and resilience. Furthermore, AI-powered simulations can forecast migration patterns driven by climate-induced displacement, equipping policymakers with the tools to develop long-term strategies for affected communities. With the Trump administration reversing or terminating various climate policies, Indo-Pacific nations must adopt a more autonomous approach, leveraging AI and data-driven solutions to confront climate-related security threats without over-reliance on global initiatives.

In conclusion, emerging technologies are not merely tools: they are central components of Indo-Pacific sovereignty and security. From AI-driven cyber security to supply chain resilience, maritime monitoring, and climate adaptation, the region must take ownership of these advancements to maintain its strategic

advantage. Given the evolving geopolitical landscape and the return of President Trump to the White House, Indo-Pacific nations will need to accelerate self-reliance in technology, security, and trade.

We firmly believe that the partnership between ICEED and the NATO Defense College Foundation will become increasingly significant. We encourage you to look forward to our forthcoming joint research initiatives, educational programmes, and events.

Biography

Director **Ken Kitatani** is the Chief of Executive Board and Committee at ICEED. He joined ICEED in 2012, was appointed Director General in 2018, and has chaired the ICEED United Nations Council since 2022. Director Kitatani serves as a Council Member at the European Council, he is member of the OECD AI Expert Committee, and a representative on the UNECE WP29 committee. Director Kitatani is also a former Co-Chair and current Advisory Board member of the Center for Earth

Ethics, sits on the boards of the UN Committee of NGOs and the Society for Conservation Biology, and is a Permanent Observer to the UNFCCC Standing Committee on Finance and the Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform of the UNFCCC. Furthermore, Director Kitatani advises the Vatican's Scholas Occurrentes Foundation, the Loka Initiative at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and serves as Senior Advisor to General Russel Honoré on Indigenous Affairs.

**Paolo Guerrieri**

*Paris School of International Affairs,
Sciences-Po (Paris) and Business School,
University of San Diego (USA)*

BALANCING GLOBAL TRADE NEEDS AND EMERGING MULTIPOLARISM

Global trade is of paramount importance, as it constitutes the framework within which global value chains and foreign investments operate. In other words, trade today is no longer characterised by one country exporting a finished product to another, as was the case decades ago. Rather, approximately 60 to 70 percent of global trade now involves intermediate goods moving across multiple borders before final assembly and export. It is, essentially, the lifeblood of globalisation.

At present, global trade faces two significant risks. The first is the *fragmentation of the world economy*, a trend that has been underway for several years. The second is the *escalation of protectionist measures*. While such tendencies were already evident prior to the Trump administration, recent months have witnessed a pronounced acceleration of protectionist policies. These are particularly concerning when trade tariffs and other restrictive measures are employed to

advance strategic objectives that are largely unrelated to trade itself as in the case of the Trump's Administration.

The reality of a fragmented, multipolar world is undeniable. Numerous intermediary powers, such as India, Brazil, Saudi Arabia, and Indonesia, are increasingly influential in shaping the global economic landscape. In theory, multipolarity could represent an important step forward. However, the combination of fragmentation and protectionism poses risks of instability and a potential decline in global trade flows. This is not a hypothetical future threat: it is already occurring.

Recent data from institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank indicate that, although global trade flows remain resilient, they are increasingly concentrated within political blocs rather than crossing between them. This suggests that trade is progressively shaped by security and geopolitical considerations, rather than purely by economic efficiency. Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) follows a similar trajectory. Highlighting these risks is essential, as the costs of unmanaged fragmentation are potentially severe. Studies confirm that such costs are disproportionately borne by developing and poorer nations, threatening global value chains, FDI, and economic integration.

Fortunately, we have not yet entered a full phase of de-globalisation. We are still within a globalisation framework, albeit a new and evolving one. Approximately 75% of global trade continues to operate under established international rules, ensuring a degree of order and predictability. While the protectionist measures introduced by the Trump administration have been disruptive, it is worth noting that the US accounts for around 15% of global trade. The remaining 85% is conducted by other regions, including Europe, the Asia-Pacific, and Latin America and they want to maintain open markets and economies.

The question, therefore, is whether it is still possible to preserve stability within the current global trade regime. Some argue that this is unachievable, claiming that a zero-sum game will inevitably prevail. I do not share this pessimistic view. The current resilience of trade flows demonstrates that the global network remains robust. However, returning to the past Bretton Woods model of global governance is not viable. That era was defined by a world economy dominated by the US and Europe, which together controlled 80% of global output. Today's reality is a multipolar world.

In order to address governance at global level, we must adopt a more flexible and pragmatic approach, emphasising regional and plurilateral agreements among groups of countries. This strategy may be described as a "variable geometry" model of trade global governance. A variable geometry implies that, while managing risky and incompatible behaviours by certain nations, we introduce adaptable

and tolerant rules in other respects. This approach is particularly relevant for both European and Indo-Pacific countries, which are deeply integrated into the global economy. Their growth and prosperity have historically relied on trade, FDI, and participation in global value chains. Consequently, it is reasonable to envisage agreements or, at minimum, meaningful interactions between these regions; not necessarily by convening a new global negotiating table, but rather through targeted, pragmatic accords.

In this respect, Europe could play a vital role and holds a unique position as a unified actor. The European Commission is solely responsible for negotiating trade agreements on behalf of EU member states. While maintaining a transactional approach with the US is clearly in Europe's interest, expanding the network of agreements to many other economies including Indo-Pacific countries through a variable geometry framework represents a second critical pillar of the EU's trade policy strategy.

To conclude, economic and security considerations have become increasingly intertwined. It is essential to think not only in terms of economic collaboration, but also in parallel steps regarding security. It is evident that the two fields are no longer distinct; rather, they reinforce – or obstruct – each other. This makes the present moment an opportune time to explore new possibilities for cooperation, particularly between the two groups of countries under discussion.

Biography

Professor **Paolo Guerrieri** is currently Visiting Professor at the Paris School of International Affairs, Sciences-Po, Paris and at the Luiss University, Leap Centre, Rome. Professor Guerrieri has been consultant to several international institutions and organisations, such

as World Bank, European Commission, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). Author of several books and articles, his areas of research are economics and international economic politics.



P-8A Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft, Royal Australian Air Force.

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CONCLUDING REMARKS



Julianne Cowley

*Ambassador of Australia to Italy,
Rome*

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The partnership between Australia and NATO is longstanding, built upon our shared commitment to upholding the international rules, norms, and standards that underpin stability, peace, and prosperity. We are particularly proud to have been the first partner nation to participate in a NATO exercise, dating back to 1953. As the panel rightly noted this evening, NATO is not expanding into the region; rather, there has always been a deep history of cooperation, which has only grown more significant over the decades. To borrow the words of my Foreign Minister, the Honourable Penelope Wong, we are now living in a more dangerous and turbulent world. More people are displaced and hungry. The climate is changing at a pace that outstrips our collective efforts to counter it. The risk of nuclear warfare is heightened, and conflicts continue to rage from Sudan to Myanmar, from Yemen to Gaza, and, of course, Russia's illegal and immoral invasion of Ukraine, which persists after more than three years.

As emphasised throughout the panel discussions, it is increasingly clear that the notion of distinct theatres no longer applies. It is within this context that Australia has committed 1,5 billion Australian dollars in assistance to Ukraine. Australia stands steadfastly with Ukraine. While we may be separated by oceans, the IP4 partnership between Australia, New Zealand, Japan, South Korea, and NATO enables us to share perspectives at a time when we do ourselves a disservice by viewing the world in silos. This partnership allows us to engage both individually and collectively to address the pressing issues of our time. Each partner brings a unique perspective and approach to safeguarding the security and prosperity of the Indo-Pacific region.

In an era of heightened geostrategic competition, there is a tendency to oversimplify conversations by focusing solely on the pursuits of major global actors. To do so is to overlook the vast expanse of the Indo-Pacific, a region of paramount importance to us. For Australia, the subjects discussed this evening – soft power, economic security, supply chains – resonate deeply with our approach and our vision for a peaceful, stable, and prosperous Indo-Pacific. These elements are invaluable in sustaining a peaceful global order. If I may, I would like to share some reflections, particularly on how Australia engages within the Pacific. Over the past two years, I have worked extensively on Pacific matters, focusing notably on soft security and why it holds such importance. I hope these reflections contribute meaningfully to our discussions.

First, *the significance of regional architecture*. Our region exists in a permanent state of contest. In these challenging times we must rely on one another. It is only by harnessing collective strength and preserving sovereignty that we ensure no single nation dominates. Therefore, it is no surprise that Australia supports a strong and effective regional architecture, one in which all nations may contribute to a balanced regional order. As a democratic, independent nation, Australia believes it is best served by Pacific-led institutions and processes rather than external impositions. This is why the [Pacific Islands Forum](#) lies at the heart of our collective strength; it is a critical force multiplier.

I recently met with Under-Secretary the Honourable Giorgio Silli, who attended the Pacific Islands Forum in 2023, and he too observed firsthand the importance of this grouping. As Italy pursues renewed engagement and seeks to strengthen its presence in the Indo-Pacific, we encourage Italy – and Europe more broadly – to adopt Australia's approach: to listen and learn from Pacific leadership. We listen to Pacific priorities and to Pacific voices. And we learn the Pacific way: for over 50 years, the Forum has guided us in this Pacific way.

The Pacific Islands Forum is home to foundational documents such as the [2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent](#), the [Boe Declaration on Regional](#)

[Security](#), and the [Biketawa Declaration](#). These documents frame the Pacific family's approach to addressing global challenges on the world stage.

The greatest security challenge is *climate change*. It is the single gravest threat to livelihoods, safety, security, and well-being across the Pacific. We cannot afford to underestimate its significance. Pacific nations are on the frontline of climate change's effects, despite contributing the least to its causes. In this reality, we recognise our responsibility to reduce emissions and to advocate that others, including the world's largest emitters, do the same.

Economic integration is another key issue. A resilient, interconnected region enables all our economies to thrive, providing a vital incentive for peace as the benefits of prosperity are shared. Accordingly, Australia has been investing in critical infrastructure – highways, seaports, airports, aviation links. For example, our partnership with Palau has enabled the establishment of direct flights between Brisbane and Koror. These initiatives connect families, communities, and businesses alike. We also operate the Australia-North Pacific flight, fostering tourism and providing regular links to Australia. I have been particularly impressed by the rapid development of undersea telecommunication cables, crucial for connectivity and access to global services such as information, banking, commerce, and education. The most recent telecommunications cable, announced as a joint project in December last year. Such partnerships underscore the importance of collective action in the Pacific.

Australian and Pacific defence and police forces collaborate to maintain peace in the region. Under the Boe Declaration, we maintain a maritime security programme: a 30-year commitment supporting Pacific-led cooperation and information-sharing. We are building regional capacity to safeguard exclusive economic zones and economic sovereignty. We also champion the inclusion of women's voices in security leadership, supporting defence operations aligned with our National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security.

In policing, we support local, Pacific-led initiatives developed by and for the Pacific, tackling challenges such as corruption, maritime security, and cybercrime. We also recognise the unique needs of smaller island nations. The Pacific is far from homogenous. From Niue, with fewer than 2,000 people, to Papua New Guinea, with over 10 million, each island state's needs differ. Australia has responded with tailored treaties – such as the [Falepili Union](#) with Tuvalu and a new treaty with Nauru. In Nauru, for instance, Australia supports the provision of essential banking services. We are delighted that the Commonwealth Bank of Australia continues to provide such services, contributing to a safer, more secure region.

Security and stability rest not only on the strength of traditional security sectors, and I hope my comments have conveyed the breadth of areas in which

we collaborate. Each of these aspects is vital to the stability and prosperity of our region. We also celebrate cultural and personal connections in the Pacific – whether through sport, faith, shared histories, or personal ties. We are supporting Papua New Guinea’s bid to join Australia’s National Rugby League competition. We are working with the Pacific as we approach the Brisbane Olympic Games. Through such initiatives, we strengthen bonds across our region. While my remarks have focused primarily on the Pacific, our commitment extends equally to the regional architecture of ASEAN and bespoke partnerships throughout the Indo-Pacific. Each of these efforts contributes to promoting a region that benefits us all.

Returning to our engagement with NATO on maritime security, climate change, and resilience, these issues are critical to our partners. As we have discussed, the strength of IP4 lies in the values we share with NATO Allies – our mutual support for peace, security, human rights, and the rule of law. A stronger, united, and prosperous Indo-Pacific is the greatest deterrent to potential aggressors. We want any aggressor to understand that conflict is not worth the risk. For those seeking further information on our approach, I commend to you our recent publication, [Australia in the World: 2025 Snapshot](#), which provides a more detailed account.

Biography

Ambassador **Julianne Cowley** currently serves as the Australian Ambassador to Italy and San Marino, as well as Ambassador-designate to Albania and Libya. Additionally, she is Australia’s Permanent Representative to the United Nations’ Rome-based agencies, including the FAO and WFP. Before taking up her current role, Ambassador Cowley held the position of Assistant Secretary for Pacific Development within the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade’s Office of the Pacific. Between 2018 and 2021, she was Australia’s Consul-General in Ho

Chi Minh City. Her previous assignments include Assistant Secretary for Health Policy. Ambassador Cowley has also served as Assistant Secretary of the Staff Welfare Branch and, during her time at the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID), she was Assistant Director-General responsible for People, Policy, and Planning. She is a founding board member of both Pacific Women Lead and the Asia Pacific Leaders Malaria Alliance, and has engaged in development initiatives in Northern Thailand.



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of the UN Environment Programme



Indo Pacific 2025

Developing regional soft security: a role for NATO?

High-Level Round Table

Organised by the NATO Defense College Foundation

In co-operation with the

**Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Fondazione
Compagnia di San Paolo, the NATO Defense College and the International
Council on Environmental Economics and Development**

Rome, 3rd of March 2025

Venue: Circolo degli Esteri, Lungotevere dell'Acqua Acetosa 42, Rome

Monday, 3rd of March 2025

17,15 – 17,20 CET

WELCOME REMARKS

- ✦ **Alessandro Minuto-Rizzo**, President, NATO Defense College Foundation, Rome

17,20 – 18,30 CET

SESSION I

Soft Security: forestalling geopolitical confrontation

The Indo-Pacific's shifting geopolitical landscape has prompted NATO to deepen its engagement in the region. Following the Washington Summit, NATO has strengthened its ties with Japan, South Korea, Australia, and New Zealand (the IP4 partners). The US new administration will further clarify its engagements in the area. In this context, strategic coordination between NATO and the IP4 is crucial to regional stability. Cooperative security allows to avoid dangerous escalations, while building up confidence and shared interests. The structured NATO Women, Peace and Security policy is an important tool in this complex situation.

CHAIR: *Amaia Sánchez-Cacicedo*, Non-Resident Senior Fellow, Asia Program, Institut Montaigne

- ✦ *Andrea Romussi*, Head, Office for NATO, Security and Political-Military Strategic Issues, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Rome
- ✦ *Luis Simón*, Director of the Centre for Security, Diplomacy and Strategy (CSDS), VUB; Director of the Brussels Office, Elcano Royal Institute, Brussels
- ✦ *Gabriele Abbondanza*, International relations and international security academic, University of Madrid (UCM); University of Sydney (USYD); Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI)
- ✦ *Pietro De Matteis*, Programme Officer for the Indo-Pacific, Public Diplomacy Division, NATO HQ, Brussels

Q&A Session

18,30 – 19,40 CET

SESSION II

Geoeconomics and cooperation on securing main supply chains

Facing foreseeably higher geoeconomic tensions, NATO's emphasis on "soft security" focussing on resilient infrastructure, secure trade routes and stable supply chains, is gaining renewed significance. In the interplay between the

economic and diplomatic prevention of commercial confrontations and NATO's cooperative security, the Alliance can assist partners and like-minded countries in better resisting against coercive, cyber and hybrid measures, while contributing to security in the common interest of all parties involved in transnational trade.

CHAIR: **Alessandro Politi**, Director, NATO Defense College Foundation, Rome

- ✦ **Vincent Y.C. Tsai**, Ambassador, Taipei Representative Office in Italy, Rome
- ✦ **Ken Kitatani**, Chief of Executive Board and Committee, International Council on Environmental Economics and Development, New York
- ✦ **Paolo Guerrieri**, Paris School of International Affairs, Sciences-Po (Paris) and Business School, University of San Diego (USA)

Q&A Session

19,40 – 19,50 CET **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

- ✦ **Julianne Cowley**, Ambassador of Australia to Italy, Rome

END OF THE ROUND TABLE

In Media Partnership with



Ambassador Minuto-Rizzo, President of the NATO Defense College Foundation, and Director Kitatani, engaged in a cordial discussion ahead of the "Indo-Pacific 2025" Roundtable.

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Developing regional soft security: a role for NATO?



INDO - PACIFIC 2025
High level roundtable



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Environmental Economics
and Development
Accredited to the United Nations and the Governing Body
of the UN Environment Programme

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 **agenzia
NOVA**



About us

NATO DEFENSE COLLEGE FOUNDATION

The NATO Defense College Foundation, the only existing think-tank bearing the name of the Alliance, was established in Rome in 2011. It grew out from a common intuition of the President Alessandro Minuto-Rizzo and the NATO Defense College top decision makers, who understood the value of a non-profit NGO that could work beyond usual and institutional outreach, training, communication and scientific research activities.

The principles stated in the preamble to the Washington Treaty of 1949 are our heritage.

Our mission is to promote the culture of stability and well-being in the North Atlantic area and in NATO Partner nations.

Our aim is to meet the highest standards in contributing to public debate and future deliberations on strategic, security and geopolitical issues.

Therefore, the NDCF strives at considering relevant issues not just in a descriptive or prescriptive way, but by catching the sense of events and the essential vectors of future developments.

In a claim: Charting ahead.

Scan the QR Code to
visit the NDCF website



CONTACTS



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Indo-Pacific 2025

Developing regional soft security: a role for NATO?

CONCEPT

With over half of the world's population and contributing nearly two-thirds of global economic output, the **Indo-Pacific** is significant in both geopolitical and economic terms. As the North Korean military presence in Ukraine shows (linking de facto Indo-Pacific and Euro-Atlantic security), the **stability in this region** is of growing concern to NATO. Moreover, geoeconomics will be becoming more important with the new US administration.

The historic **Washington NATO Summit** (9-11th of July 2024) characterised the Indo-Pacific as a region where **global security** is at stake, taking into account both China's strategic weight and Russia's flanking role. In this context, Italy shows already a visible and active commitment, which has to be further defined, according to the existing security arrangements in the Indo-Pacific, and to the common lines in the Euro-Atlantic framework.

Taipei, due to its strategic position and essential electronics, has to develop, complementing its traditional deterrence, also capabilities and activities in the field of cooperative security (NATO's third core task). Thus, **Taiwan** can change its status **from a security consumer into a security producer**, developing a network of partnerships beyond existing formalised relations.



Indo-Pacific 2025 Developing regional soft security: a role for NATO?

CONCEPT

Facing foreseeably higher geopolitical tensions, NATO's emphasis on "**soft security**" is gaining renewed significance. On the one hand, trained partners can discourage the use aggressive instruments (intimidation, provocations, cyber and hybrid operations, etc.), threatening the freedom of trade. On the other, gradually setting a practical framework of shared interests and solutions, helps creating a less confrontational environment. To this end, NATO has integrated into all core tasks (cooperative security included), its updated **Women Peace and Security policy**, in line with UN Security Council Resolution 1325. This enables the Alliance and its partners to respond better to broader **security challenges** (para 35 of the Washington Summit Declaration), strengthening human security and international humanitarian law.

The second phase of the round table will discuss the interplay between the economic and diplomatic prevention of tariffs and commercial confrontations and **NATO's cooperative security**. On this wider political-economic background, the Alliance can assist partners and like-minded countries in focussing on resilient infrastructure, secure trade routes and stable supply chains. The High-Level Round Table will feature **eight international discussants** from relevant institutions and countries both in presence and virtually to explore practical initiatives, fostering cooperative multidimensional security, especially in the Asia-Pacific area with its links to Indian Ocean.



Programme

INDO PACIFIC 2025

*Developing regional soft security:
a role for NATO?*

High-Level Round Table

Organised by the **NATO Defense College Foundation**

In co-operation with the
**Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Fondazione
Compagnia di San Paolo, *the* NATO Defense College *and the*
International Council on Environmental Economics and Development
(ICEED)**

Rome, 3rd of March 2025

Venue: Salone della Musica | Circolo degli Esteri
(Lungotevere dell'Acqua Acetosa, 42)

17,15 – 17,30 CET WELCOME REMARKS

Alessandro Minuto-Rizzo, President, NATO Defense College Foundation,
Rome

SESSION I

SOFT SECURITY: FORESTALLING GEOPOLITICAL CONFRONTATION


The Indo-Pacific's shifting geopolitical landscape has prompted NATO to deepen its engagement in the region. Following the Washington Summit, NATO has strengthened its ties with Japan, South Korea, Australia, and New Zealand (the IP4 partners). The US new administration will further clarify its engagements in the area. In this context, strategic coordination between NATO and the IP4 is crucial to regional stability. Cooperative security allows to avoid dangerous escalations, while building up confidence and shared interests. The structured NATO Women, Peace and Security policy is an important tool in this complex situation.

Chair: **Amaia Sánchez-Cacicedo**, Non-Resident Senior Fellow, Asia Program, Institut Montaigne

- **Andrea Romussi**, Head, Office for NATO, Security and Political-Military Strategic Issues, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Rome
- **Luis Simòn**, Director of the Centre for Security Diplomacy and Strategy (CSDS), VUB; Director of the Brussels Office, Elcano Royal Institute, Brussels
- **Gabriele Abbondanza**, International relations and international security academic, University of Madrid (UCM); University of Sydney (USYD); Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI)
- **Pietro De Matteis**, Programme Officer for the Indo-Pacific, NATO HQ, Brussels

Q&A Session





18,40 – 19,40 CET

SESSION II
**GEOECONOMICS AND COOPERATION ON SECURING MAIN
SUPPLY CHAINS**

Facing foreseeably higher geoeconomic tensions, NATO's emphasis on "soft security" focussing on resilient infrastructure, secure trade routes and stable supply chains, is gaining renewed significance. In the interplay between the economic and diplomatic prevention of commercial confrontations and NATO's cooperative security, the Alliance can assist partners and like-minded countries in better resisting against coercive, cyber and hybrid measures, while contributing to security in the common interest of all parties involved in transnational trade.

Chair: **Alessandro Politi**, Director, NATO Defense College Foundation, Rome

- **Vincent Y.C. Tsai**, Representative, Representative Office of Taipei, Rome
- **Ken Kitatani**, Chief of Executive Board and Committee, International Council on Environmental Economics and Development, New York
- **Paolo Guerrieri**, Paris School of International Affairs, Sciences-Po (Paris) and Business School, University of San Diego (USA)
- **Valentina Muiesan**, Head, Division South East Asia, Pacific, Antarctica and Regional Organisations, Directorate General for Global Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Rome

Q&A Session

19,40 – 19,50 CONCLUDING REMARKS

Julianne Cowley, Ambassador of Australia to Italy, Rome

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03 / 03 / 2025

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03 / 03 / 2025

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