



GAME CHANGERS 2020: *A New Future Dawns on International Security*

The conference was organised by the **NATO Defense College Foundation**, in co-operation with the **NATO Science for Peace and Security Programme**, the **Fondazione Compagnia di San Paolo**, the **Policy Center for the New South** and the **NATO Defense College**, the 10th and 11th of December 2020.

The two-day discussion, held in a **trailblazing television format**, BBC style, was broadcasted on the engaging, interactive **NDCF Talks digital platform**, in line with the highest professional and technological standards. Out of the **20 high-level experts** involved, it hosted the majority of them in-person in Rome, and gathered **more than 300 participants** that actively contributed to a lively and timely debate on three topics that will revolutionise the future of global security: climate change and resource scarcity, the security-health nexus and Artificial Intelligence. Quotes follow.

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

“Why choosing this name for the conference? The answer is that we live in special times, presenting special challenges. They need awareness in terms of understanding the issues at stake, to prepare ourselves to manage them. We are all walking in an unprecedented international environment, where we see surprises at every step; reality is multifaceted and is changing at a fast speed. Somebody says that “We live in a liquid world”, where no one is leading but everybody is present”.

Stefano Silvestri - *Vice President, NATO Defense College Foundation, Rome*

“NATO is perfectly aware of all the evolving trends in the international scenario and the problems linked to climate change, it is working on them. But how far should it go? Can we have an increasingly global and political Atlantic Alliance without destroying it? How will that be perceived from the outside? [...] NATO is essentially and primarily a military defensive Alliance. And yet, the pressure to change is so great that NATO will be obliged to become more global and more political. To this end, a lot of political finesse, moderation and balance will be required, as well as a greater power of initiative from the Secretary General”.

Kidane Kiros - *Senior Fellow, Policy Center for the New South, Rabat*

“Warmer temperatures in Africa will lead to a chain of reactions across the continent, exacerbated by the pressure of increasing population and widespread poverty. Climate-related environmental changes and disasters are likely to increase the number of conflicts at both national and international level, especially when it comes to transboundary scarce resources. If one takes the Nile basin case, 11 countries rely on the river to access and use its fresh water. But in that region population pressure, poor development and the widespread impact of climate change are tightening up the competition over an already scarce resource, potentially fuelling tensions but also violent conflicts.”

Daniele Riggio - *Press Officer; and former NATO Political Advisor in Afghanistan, NATO HQ, Brussels*

“During the COVID-19 pandemic, allied countries came to the rescue of each other, providing mutual support. In this respect, a critical facilitating role has been played by the Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre, the principal civil response mechanism within NATO, that has been coordinating 22 requests for international assistance, translated into more than 125 support activities”.

Jamie Shea - *Former Spokesperson of NATO, Overijse (BE)*

“COVID-19 has shown that the multilateral system in which we put so much faith and trust is not actually as effective as it should be. [...] What we have seen, and what I think is going to be interesting for the future, is a kind of new

multilateralism based on smaller coalitions, involving NGOs, private sector, countries that are willing to work together”.

Francesco M. Talò - *Permanent Representative of Italy to the North Atlantic Council, NATO HQ, Brussels*

“COVID-19 was not what many call a black swan, actually it was what experts define as *grey rhino*. Grey rhinos are highly probable, high-impact, yet neglected events. They are not random surprises, yet occur after a series of warning signs and visible evidence. This is definitely the case of disruptive technologies, climate change, and the case of pandemics. [...] We have to be prepared, we have to deal with these aspects, which will become more and more permanent”.

Laura Carpini - *Head of Cyber Department, Directorate General of Political and Security Affairs, Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation*

“What we are witnessing with Artificial Intelligence is a bit like when the nuclear age was at its dawn and there was the need for increased cooperation, shared definitions, and information sharing - a very challenging task at the political level. [...] At that time, scientists managed to establish forms of cooperation that conducted to a good environment where to discuss such difficult and delicate topics.”

Stéphan Brunessaux - *Senior Expert in Artificial Intelligence and Data Analytics, Airbus Defence and Space, Elancourt (FR)*

“AI is a technology that is neither good or bad, it is the use we do that it is good or bad. [...] An AI system may provide the correct decision, but this has still to be communicated effectively to the operator. If for some reasons the latter is in a stressful situation, for instance, one may not see correctly the decision. The important question is: who will be taken responsible when the system fails? It is important to have the man in the loop, but at the same time we do not want to put the man in the loop just to blame him in the end”.

Pietro Fassino - *President, Foreign Affairs Committee, Chamber of Deputies, Rome*

“These days we are called upon to verify whether the concept of ‘West’ still has meaning in the changing context of 21st century international relations. Of course, we are here because we want to answer this question affirmatively. Because we think that, while the Atlantic Alliance might be vulnerable, it remains very much alive, far from being on life support. And because we think it is still necessary to defend liberty and the rule of law around the world: this – and not a limitless desire for power – is what our armed forces are for.”

The full recording of the event is available on the [NDCF Talks platform](#).

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