

GAME CHANGERS 2022: *New strategic issues*

The High-Level conference was organised by the **NATO Defense College Foundation** and took place last Thursday, the **10th of March 2022**, in **Rome** at the Rome Cavalieri, A Waldorf Astoria Hotel.

Held in co-operation with the **NATO Public Diplomacy Division**, the **Fondazione Compagnia di San Paolo**, **MBDA**, and the **NATO Defense College**, it has been a further opportunity to discuss the future of international security, in full compliance with pandemic regulations.

3 sessions, 3 special interventions, 18 distinguished speakers of different know-hows and professional backgrounds discussed the most relevant topics related to the Euro-Atlantic security. Among them: the conflict in Ukraine; criminal markets and illicit trades thriving on the crisis; tensions in the Indo-Pacific region and its overall security architecture; China's posture and role. Finally, outer space, its tools, strategic dimension and its pivotal in terms of any future security considerations. **More than 120 people attended the conference and about 130 viewers were connected on Zoom**, actively contributing to a lively debate. Here are some **statements** from our speakers.

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

“We have chosen this title *Game Changers 2022. New strategic issues*, because we think we are living in special times, presenting special challenges as well as opportunities. Our hope is that these changes can be of help towards new formulas of stability and wellbeing. We are not happy with the present situation where we are witnessing fragmentation, a number of vocal actors and a state of disorder. Progress and modernity are great game changers, yet nothing is written in advance. This is a good reason for understanding as much as possible the issues at stake to prepare ourselves to manage them to our advantage. The Foundation has been working since long time on those issues, trying to focus on emerging realities.”

Nicola de Santis, *Head, Engagement Section, NATO Public Diplomacy Division, NATO HQ, Brussels*

“I want to thank the NATO Foundation for all the work that it has done in Italy and internationally to promote a better understanding of NATO's policies and goals. The expression “Game Changer” is something that has accompanied us during the last three decades of NATO. [...] Today, 2022, the strategic concept has been revised for the fourth time since the end of the Cold War. Why are we doing that? Because many things have changed. I think the first game changer for NATO with the Rome Strategic Concept (1991) was to accompany the return of the countries that in the Eastern part of Europe had been for too long unnaturally separated from totalitarian regimes into the family of democratic nations. That was the greatest achievement, because democracy cannot be taken for granted and what is happening in Ukraine today, shows that we have a competition that is a value system competition. It is between those who believe in democracy, individual liberties and the rule of law, values written in the 1949 NATO preamble, and those who does not.”

Benedetto Della Vedova, *Undersecretary of State, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Rome*

“I find particularly appropriate to hold such debate at this critical juncture. The events of last two weeks will have a profound and lasting impact on our security environment. It is worthwhile to see and assess unfolding event and their implications for the European security architecture. It is also appropriate to reflect on NATO's role and actions, especially now that negotiations on the new strategic concept are due to begin in Brussels and among Allies. Undoubtedly, a major shift has occurred across the Alliance since the night of February 24. Russia's aggression has not just given to NATO a renewed focus after decades of seeking a purpose in post-Cold War, but it has also revitalised the Alliance centrality to Western democracies, political and economic freedom, prompting member states to rally around the often-criticised institution.”

Louise Shelley, *Director, Terrorism, Transnational Crime and Corruption Center, Arlington, USA*

“I think we need to think about why people engage in smuggling and sometimes it is their absolute survival that's at stake when the state provides no protection. With the rise of ISIS in Syria and Iraq we saw the control of territory, the licensing of looting, movements across borders where there is corruption, oil smuggling to neighbouring states and cigarette smuggling. Many of these phenomena are present in Ukraine and were visible during the last few years. TraCCC did a study on the illicit trade in Ukraine regarding cigarettes and its convergence with other commodities; of course, we found Odessa in a key role (now unfortunately under siege) and a key change that occurred after the attacks against the Donbass and the takeover of the Crimea. This conflict helped to exacerbate the already existing illicit trade. One of the things that we need to talk more about are the enormous challenges that President Zelensky and his team faced in trying to combat the endemic corruption that was going on in Ukraine.”

Richard D. Hooker, *Senior Fellow, Atlantic Council, Washington D.C.*

“India abstained from condemning Russia for invading Ukraine in the Security Council. The West should not have been surprised as IISS recently reported; India rhetorically perceives Russia as a special and privileged strategic partner that provides critical defense technology denied to it by the West and accounts for about 55% of its total procurement of arms and spares. [...] NATO and India do have common interests, above all shared concerns about China; so, the Russian invasion of Ukraine presents something of a paradox. China and Russia are engaged as we all know in a strategic partnership. At the same time India and Russia are engaged too. In times of crisis and tension India cannot be sure which way Russia will tilt, but the odds are that Moscow sees Beijing as more important right now. One scholar has described this by saying India wants to eat the Chinese cake and keep the Russian one. As Russia becomes more and more an international pariah, this conundrum I think can only become more and more complicated for the Indian government. It is possible that the fallout from Ukraine will cause New Delhi to re-evaluate its close ties with Moscow and tilt more closely to the west but that remains far from certain at the present time.”

Peter Neumann, *Director, International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation, King's College, London*

“In Afghanistan actually, ironically perhaps, and paradoxically as a result of the takeover of the Taliban we saw a reduction in violent conflict. That doesn't necessarily mean that the situation is good. Just because there's no violent conflict doesn't necessarily mean that people are happy. The UN is saying that Afghanistan is now the country in the world that is most at risk of a severe humanitarian crisis. There are multiple reasons for that, there have been droughts last year ongoing, Covid-19 pandemic. Also, the Taliban have not proven to be particularly skilled at managing the country and its economy. [...] Importantly, the withdrawal of the international community struck a severe blow to Afghanistan. It represented up to 75% of the public spending and basically disappeared almost overnight [...] Also the situation in Myanmar, another of the conflict in the region, doesn't look very good at the moment. There was a military coup in February 2022. The party associated with military had lost the elections very badly. After that, they decided to take over the government again leading the country into a renewed conflict. Despite not being new, [...] Myanmar have a long history of civil conflicts and repression of minorities, now the conflict is expanding all over the country, also in the big cities.”

Pascal Legai, *Senior Adviser to the Director General, European Space Agency, Paris*

“The second accelerator is called rapid and resilient crisis response (R3). The problem to be solved is the following one. Europe is facing an expanding evolving security challenge and interconnection between the different crises. There is clearly a need to enhance the means to act for the security of European citizens. You probably have in mind these floods and fires during the last summer, but the security scope involves also geopolitical instabilities and humanitarian crises; on the one hand we have a terrible example at the moment in Ukraine, on the other emerging security issues such as cybercrime and the vulnerabilities in critical infrastructures. What is needed and important, is to act urgently to have a faster crisis response, moving from reacting towards the real-time management and automatic proactive mitigation of risks.”

Piero Fassino, *President, Foreign Affairs Committee, Chamber of Deputies, Rome*

“World and European public opinion must clearly see that NATO has not worked, and is not working, to destabilise Europe, but the exact opposite. The enlargement of NATO, which is always a matter of free choice and never an imposition, is a guarantee for everyone, and never a threat to anyone. As I have said on another occasion, quoting President Joe Biden, “We are not what we are by the example of our power, but by the power of our example”. The prudence that NATO has shown on these days, demonstrated by the choices made by the Biden Administration, revealed that NATO is not at the service of an imperialist plan but a project of multilateral and collective security. This aspect is something we must be mindful and proud about.”

The recordings of the event are available on our You Tube channel [NATO Foundation](#).

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