



INDO PACIFIC 2025



Prevention and Dialogue

Indo Pacific 2025

Prevention and Dialogue

High-Level Conference

Organised by
NATO Defense College Foundation

In co-operation with the **Fondazione CSF,**
Fondazione Compagnia di San Paolo,
the **Center for Security Studies (ETH Zurich),**
International Council on Environmental
Economics and Development (ICEED)
and the **NATO Defense College**

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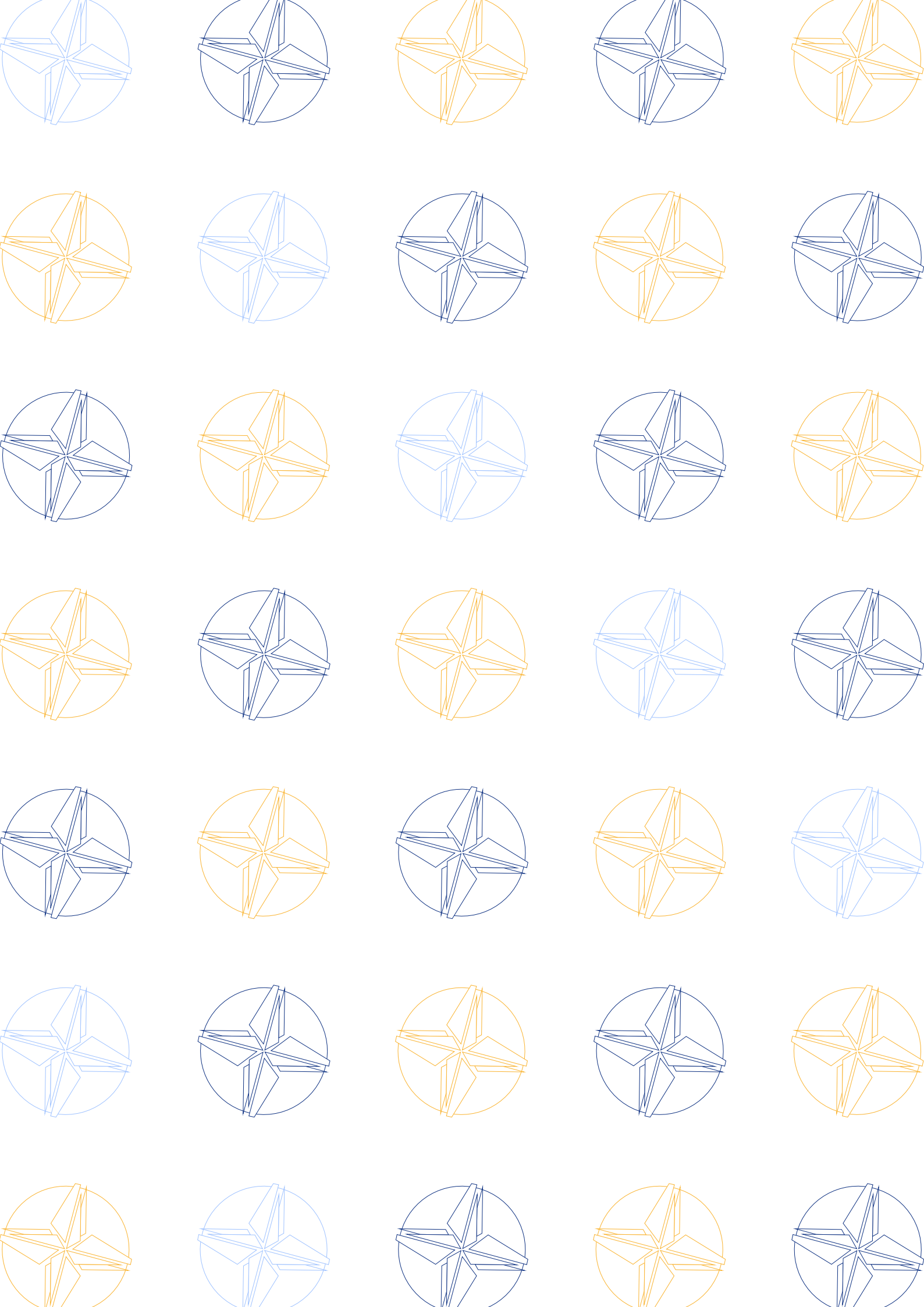
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NATO Defense College Foundation

The NDCF is a unique think-tank: international by design and based in Rome, due to its semi-institutional 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 continuously expanding and refining its highly specific and high-profile customer-tailored activities. Currently, the Foundation is active in three areas: high-level events, research (Strategic Trends, Food for Thought, Papers) and specialised decision makers' training and education.



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WELCOME REMARKS

"Indo Pacific 2025. Prevention and Dialogue". Rome, 17 June 2025.

Source: NATO Defense College Foundation



**Alessandro Minuto-Rizzo**

*President, NATO Defense College Foundation,
Rome*

WELCOME REMARK

Good afternoon to everybody, buon pomeriggio a tutti. Thank you for being here for this event. For the second time this year, we are addressing an area of paramount importance for the international community with a view to the future, an area with many different components, not easy to identify, and where there is still limited knowledge and understanding.

We are going to discuss security in a broad context, not in terms of enemies and confrontation, but by looking instead at possible forms of cooperation, at cooperative security. At the same time, within the limits of a few hours of debate, we will try to examine emerging and evolving challenges as well as potential opportunities.

This event has been approved by the *Science for Peace and Security (SPS) Programme*, a title that speaks for itself about our joint approach. Why is it important? Because we see realities changing at a much faster pace than in the past, and events shaping the environment well before books can describe them.

At each step, we aim to improve our understanding of these issues, looking at them from different angles.

We meet for a serious, informed conversation, in a spirit of balance and respect. We are convinced that dialogue is a decisive factor in preventing crises and in bringing together different perspectives. This is why the Foundation embraces “cooperative security”, the third core task of NATO’s Strategic Concept.

It means promoting partnerships based on common principles with the aim of projecting stability, a two-way street involving dialogue, practical cooperation and consultation. In other words, it means working to strengthen a peaceful and rules-based international order. These are not distant concepts but concrete realities, especially when blended threats continue to erode the security of all actors in the region (state and non-state interference, subversion, organised crime, cyber and hybrid operations, illicit trafficking, terrorism, etc.), and when these challenges require new forms of cooperation.

The Indo-Pacific is relevant in many ways, and developments in this vast region, where the majority of the world’s population lives, can directly affect the Euro-Atlantic area. In our view, it is clear that in today’s world we are all interconnected: events in one continent can easily affect other parts of the globe.

NATO is not a primary actor here, but it is the most important existing security provider. It has a 360-degree security approach and counts 37 partners beyond its member states and like-minded organisations.

We value the partnership with Australia, Japan, New Zealand and South Korea, as dialogue and practical cooperation contribute to regional stability in various ways. They help avoid dangerous escalations, promoting confidence and joint projects. In this respect, the NATO Defense College has a natural role in education and training, and the NATO Defense College Foundation complements its action in a meaningful, deliberate and agile manner.

The promotion of soft-security tools is of primary importance in a diversified environment. Secure trade routes, stable supply chains, resilient infrastructure and freedom of navigation come first on this list, alongside the ability to withstand cyber threats, hybrid measures and other challenges. We have an excellent programme, and I would like to thank the moderators and speakers for accepting our invitation. They bring different perspectives, in terms of knowledge and geography, and offer the best available expertise on the subjects we will discuss.

Special thanks go to the *Science for Peace and Security Programme* in Brussels, to ICEED and Ken Kitatani, to *Fondazione CSF*, *Fondazione Compagnia di San Paolo*, the *Center for Security Studies of Zurich*, and the *NATO Defense College*. My thanks also go to our media partners and to the Foundation’s staff for their enthusiasm and hard work.

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).



Max A.L.T. Nielsen
Commandant, NATO Defense College, Rome

WELCOME REMARK

President Minuto Rizzo, ladies and gentlemen, I am Max Nielsen, the Commandant of the NATO Defense College, and I think it is only befitting that I follow up the President's opening remarks with a very few words from our side of the town.

As was already introduced, the Indo-Pacific is emerging as the epicentre of 21st-century geopolitics: a vast and dynamic region, home to over half the world's population and a significant share of global economic growth. It is also where shifting power balances, territorial disputes, and strategic competition are intensifying.

For NATO, traditionally focused on the Euro-Atlantic area, the question is not whether it has a role in the Indo-Pacific; rather, it is what form that role should take. The Indo-Pacific is marked by several key trends that impact Euro-Atlantic security.

First, the rapid military modernisation of regional actors, particularly China, has introduced new challenges to stability. *Second*, vital sea lanes connecting European and North American economies to global markets run through these regions, making security there an economic interest for NATO members. And *third*, our closest partners (Australia, Japan, South Korea, and New Zealand) are increasingly concerned about their security environment and seek deeper cooperation with NATO.

At the 2022 and 2023 Summits, NATO recognised that developments in the Indo-Pacific have direct consequences for Euro-Atlantic security, and the Alliance's engagement in the region must therefore be proactive, carefully calibrated, and rooted in partnership. NATO's engagement in the Indo-Pacific focuses on *three* core areas: *partnership*, *resilience*, and upholding a *rules-based order*, as you just heard from the President.

NATO's Indo-Pacific partners bring valuable perspectives and capabilities that complement those of the Alliance. These nations are not looking for NATO military deployments, but rather strategic dialogue, intelligence-sharing, and cooperation on cyber defence, space and hybrid threats. Establishing structured mechanisms for joint exercises, interoperability, and technology sharing would reinforce deterrence and crisis-management capabilities across both regions.

At the NATO Defense College, engagement is one of our main tasks. This includes course members and visiting fellows from those partner nations, as well as off-site activities such as the Conference of Commandants, Kiev Week, Gulf Week, and others. The threats NATO faces in the Euro-Atlantic are increasingly mirrored in the Indo-Pacific. Disinformation campaigns, cyberattacks, and economic coercion are used to weaken democracy and disrupt alliances. NATO can play a critical role in sharing best practices on resilience-building, cybersecurity frameworks, and countering hybrid threats.

Additionally, cooperation on critical infrastructure, such as undersea cables and energy supply chains, could enhance collective security across both theatres. NATO is not a Pacific military alliance, but as an alliance of democracies committed to upholding international law, it can contribute by supporting freedom of navigation, condemning economic coercion, and reinforcing existing institutions. If instability in the Indo-Pacific threatens NATO's core interests, the Alliance should be prepared to offer diplomatic, technological, and, if necessary, logistical support to like-minded partners.

In closing, the Indo-Pacific is not NATO's primary theatre, but it cannot be ignored. By deepening partnerships, enhancing resilience, and championing a rules-based order, NATO can play a constructive role in regional stability while

safeguarding its own interests. In an era of global competition, security is no longer confined to one geography.

NATO's engagement in the Indo-Pacific is not a distraction; it is a strategic necessity.

Biography

Lieutenant General **Max A.L.T. Nielsen** joined the armed forces in 1983 and graduated from the Royal Danish Air Force Academy in 1988. In 1996, he completed the US Air Command and Staff College in Montgomery, Alabama, and then served as Chief of the Air Operations Branch at Tactical Air Command Denmark. In 2002, he became Chief of Operations Branch at Defence Command Denmark. In 2005, he was deployed to Baghdad as Military Assistant to the Deputy Commander of NATO Training Mission – Iraq. In 2011, he graduated from the NATO Defense College (NDC) and served as Deputy

Danish Military Representative to NATO in Brussels. He then became Senior Military Assistant to the Chairman of the NATO Military Committee and Head of the CMC's Office. Promoted to Major General in 2014, he held several senior positions before becoming Vice Chief of Defence in 2017 and Danish Military Representative to NATO and the EU in 2019. In July 2023, he became the 32nd Commandant of the NATO Defense College. His leadership emphasises hard work, engagement, listening, and clear communication. General Nielsen has received numerous honours, including Commander First Class of the Order of Dannebrog.

**Ken Kitatani**

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

WELCOME REMARK

Ladies and gentlemen, esteemed colleagues, and distinguished guests, it is a true honour to stand before you today at the opening of this vital conference on the Indo-Pacific. On behalf of the *International Council on Environmental Economics and Development*, I extend our deepest gratitude to the NATO Defense College Foundation, to the NATO Defense College, and to our co-organising institutions for bringing us together at such a pivotal moment.

The Indo-Pacific today is not only a geopolitical theatre; it is a region that encapsulates the full spectrum of challenges and possibilities confronting our interconnected world. From rising sea levels to cyberwarfare, from economic coercion to contested maritime corridors, the stakes could not be higher.

Yet alongside these challenges lie opportunities for partnerships, innovation, and shared security built on trust, transparency, and inclusive dialogue. ICEED is proud to co-sponsor this event as part of our ongoing collaboration with the

NATO Defense College Foundation. We believe deeply that addressing 21st-century threats requires an integrated approach, one that bridges traditional security with environmental resilience, economic stability, and technological governance.

This is especially true in the Indo-Pacific, where overlapping vulnerabilities demand interdisciplinary responses. Let me briefly underscore *three* areas where we see this integration as essential. *First*, economic insecurity and environmental insecurity. Climate change is no longer a distant horizon; it is the present disruptor of livelihoods, migration patterns, and regional stability. Rising sea levels, extreme weather, and resource stress are increasingly shaping national security agendas. Prevention in this context means investing not only in defence but also in sustainability, disaster preparedness, and resilient infrastructure.

Second, hybrid threats and disinformation. The Indo-Pacific has become a theatre of influence operations, cyber incursions, and grey-zone tactics. Combating these requires more than technological tools. It demands coordinated education, media literacy, and a shared normative framework that protects democratic integrity.

And *third*, inclusive economic development. Inequality both within and between nations continues to fuel instability. If we are to build durable peace, we must ensure that the benefits of connectivity, innovation, and growth are shared broadly. Regional partnerships must be structured to include not only major powers but also small island states, indigenous communities, and emerging economies whose voices are too often sidelined.

This conference provides a valuable opportunity to take a step forward, not simply in analysis but in relationship-building. The work of prevention begins here, in dialogue rooted in mutual respect and a shared recognition that no single actor, no single nation, can navigate these complexities alone.

Let us bring bold ideas, open hearts, and a willingness to listen across disciplines and borders. The future of the Indo-Pacific, and indeed our common future, depends on it.

Biography

Director **Ken Kitatani** is a member of ICEED's Board of Directors. In the past, he has held senior leadership positions within the organization, including Director General and Head of the Executive Board and Committee. Since becoming part of ICEED in 2012, he has played a key role in shaping its development at the crossroads of environmental economics, ethics, and sustainability. Drawing on many years of experience with the United Nations, international institutions,

and public agencies, Director Kitatani is widely regarded as an authority on ethical frameworks and value-based issues concerning Indigenous Peoples, biodiversity, and education. Beyond these roles, Director Kitatani advises several organizations, including the Center for Earth Ethics, the Grounded Foundation, the Loka Initiative at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, and Indigenous Affairs initiatives led by General Russel Honoré. He has also previously served on the board of the Society for Conservation Biology.



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

POLITICAL SUMMARY

Defining a geographic area is both a strategic acknowledgement and a political statement. In 2004 the strategic awareness was ripe both in the USA and Italy to create terms like Indo-Pacific and Chindoterranean: the first was born by the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) to stifle sea-borne WMD proliferation, while the second derived by the recognition of significant economic flows from China, India, Gulf, Africa towards major container ports in the Mediterranean. Across the last century, “Asia” was built by nationalists, the “Asia Pacific” by economists, “East Asia” by culturalists and “Indo-Pacific” by strategists.

This is why, for the time being, the area rests essentially on minilaterals, like the QUAD (Australia, India, Japan, USA), AUKUS, the Japan-Philippines-United States trilateral, the Trilateral Strategic Dialogue (TSD – Australia, Japan, USA). It is in this rather fragmented and unstructured scenario, marked by intense political and strategic rivalries, that NATO is developing its PAGs (Partnerships

Across the Globe), trying to chart appropriate policies in a Hobbesian ocean, very different from the European security environment, despite its recent disruptions.

Nevertheless, the Indo-Pacific accounts for 70% of global economic growth, 35% of global wealth, and will represent over 50% of global GDP by 2050.

The four Indo-Pacific NATO partners (IP4 – Australia, Japan, New Zealand, South Korea) have been often described as an assorted group of countries with different, if not divergent interests, but in due time there have been significant evolutions. Suffice to say that the NATO cooperation concerning Innovation and EDT (Emerging and Disruptive Technologies) has the highest overall number of activities from Australia, Japan, and the Republic of Korea, with cyber defence as another leading priority research area, together with the countering of disinformation. Secondly, concrete progress has been made in the field of secure communications: by January 2025, Japan's secure connection to NATO became operational and Seoul will be the next country.

To measure the importance of these steps one should compare them with the largely unknown fifth PAG in the area, Colombia; in 2021 was implemented an agreement on cooperation and the security of information and now there is an enhanced cooperation on interoperability, building integrity, training and education, and climate change and security. By the way, the EU for its part has just started to negotiate a security and defence partnership with Australia in June 2025.

In terms of political investment the Indo-Pacific is not NATO's primary theatre, but it cannot be ignored, because, even if NATO by treaty has precise boundaries and is very cautious on enlargement prospects, security has a global dimension by necessity. This has been clearly shown by: the limited deployment of a North Korean division equivalent on the Kursk oblast front until the end of January 2025; the considerable supplies in DPRK ammunitions and by the discreet Chinese logistic and technological support to the Russian aggressor. The Strategic Concept of 2022 provides some guidance, but it is clear that a more fleshed out strategy is needed both by NATO and its essential partner, the EU. Anyhow, it is rather clear that NATO wants to act usefully with the Indo-Pacific, but not in the Indo-Pacific, far from any "Global NATO" suggestions.

In terms of cooperative security (the third core task), the Alliance has to take into account a complex environment where economic development, economic insecurity, mistrust and lack of dialogue, are very important in shaping regional (in)stability. Four cooperation areas are obviously relevant: environmental security, maritime security (illegal fishing; piracy; exclusive economic zones; ports and critical infrastructure; grey-zone naval tactics), disinformation/hybrid threats and arms control/non-proliferation.

An emerging aspect where cooperative security can be quite helpful are blended threats, characterised by state and non-state actors, combining illegal trafficking with destabilisation, subversion, terrorism and hybrid operations. The land and maritime dimensions of such possible cooperations, also through the experience gained through NATO's Centres of Excellence, can be particularly interesting for present and like-minded partners.

Finally constructive dialogue, continuing the positive experience of the Harmel doctrine adopted in 1967 towards the Soviet Union, is an essential tool to maintain a proactive and constructive approach vis-à-vis China, for instance on military transparency. This diplomatic instrument, encompassing also the dimensions of public and military diplomacy, may well complement a probable US orientation towards several rounds of negotiations with Beijing in order to achieve what was called during the Cold War a "peaceful coexistence".

Biography

Alessandro Politi is, since 14 years, 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. He has co-authored decisively to groundbreaking report "European Security: Evolution of NATO, scenarios, national interest and alternatives" (Sept. 2025), published by the National Security Monitoring Centre (Rome) in

terms of global, NATO and European scenarios. He teaches political leadership/analysis at the IASSP/PwC (Milan). He has worked with four Defence Ministers, while consulting for other three major decision makers and several governmental bodies. His last contribution is in "The Routledge Handbook of Artificial Intelligence and International Relations", 2025 with the article The New Strategic Triad: Geopolitics, Diplomacy and Artificial Intelligence.

**Pietro De Matteis**

*Programme Officer for the Indo-Pacific,
NATO HQ, Brussels*

OPENING REMARKS

Ladies and gentlemen, distinguished guests, it is truly a pleasure for me to be here today with you, and thank you very much for your kindness. I also want to thank the NATO Defense College Foundation, Ambassador Minuto Rizzo for the kind welcome and for hosting us here, and all the partners and organisations who are making this event possible at such a crucial time. Indeed, we are meeting at a truly crucial moment.

Last week, we had a meeting of the Ministers of Defence at NATO Headquarters, and some key decisions were taken as we move towards the NATO Summit at the end of the month. Not only did we discuss security, defence, and deterrence for the coming years, and of course support for Ukraine, but for the first time in history we are moving towards a significant increase in defence spending, 5% of GDP for defence among our Allied countries. A significant increase compared to the current 2%. As you know, 3,5% would be for core defence spending, and 1,5% for collateral defence spending.

This is historic. In fact, our Secretary-General mentioned it last week, and it is truly historic. This will ensure that the Alliance maintains the capacity to defend our territory and keep our 1 billion citizens free.

Of course, this conference today tackles many of these points, and that is why it is so important. We will have a panel addressing the partnership with the Indo-Pacific, which is essential. As you know, at last year's NATO Summit we had key discussions with our Indo-Pacific partners - Japan, Australia, Korea, and New Zealand - and we decided on four flagship initiatives that will ensure we are able to accelerate the upgrade of our defence capabilities.

We have a flagship initiative on *cyber*, which will ensure that we have better capacity to tackle cyberattacks which, as you know, target our citizens on a daily basis - hospitals, banks, citizens like us - with the objective of stealing data and intellectual property. This is an area where we must ensure we are better able to deter.

Countering Disinformation is another important initiative because collaborating on strategies to address hybrid threats and information integrity is a global endeavour against adversaries that do not respect neither laws nor boundaries.

We also have very important cooperation with our Indo-Pacific partners on *disruptive technologies*. This partnership with the IP4 is essential because these countries have the capacity to ensure that we remain at the cutting edge of technology and able to deter any attack.

And of course, support for *Ukraine*, where the IP4 has been essential for NATO in the partnership, and an area which is very important for our democracies - hybrid threats, especially information threats. Because as democracies, we are open, but we can also be vulnerable if we are not able to build resilience in society through better understanding and awareness.

And this is precisely why events like this are important - not only for experts, but also for citizens. I want to salute all those who may be watching this event online thanks to our partnership with Adnkronos, because only by enhancing resilience and understanding of what we do as an Alliance - why we need defence, why we need to invest in security today - can we build a more secure and safer environment for all of us. In fact, today, and we must confront this, we are spending more on defence, around 5%, but many citizens in our countries and cities may wonder: why do we need to spend so much on security and defence? Can't we spend this money on the Green Deal, or on employment or welfare? This event is essential, because what we discuss today and what you bring back to your communities will ensure that citizens understand that security is not optional.

Investing in security and defence is not optional. In today's world, where autocracies are gaining ground, where international law is unfortunately not as

strong as it was just a few years ago, and where multilateralism is not as strong as it used to be and is now on the back foot, we must invest in security and defence if we want to be able to deter attacks across all domains and ensure that our principles are upheld according to what we believe is important as democracies.

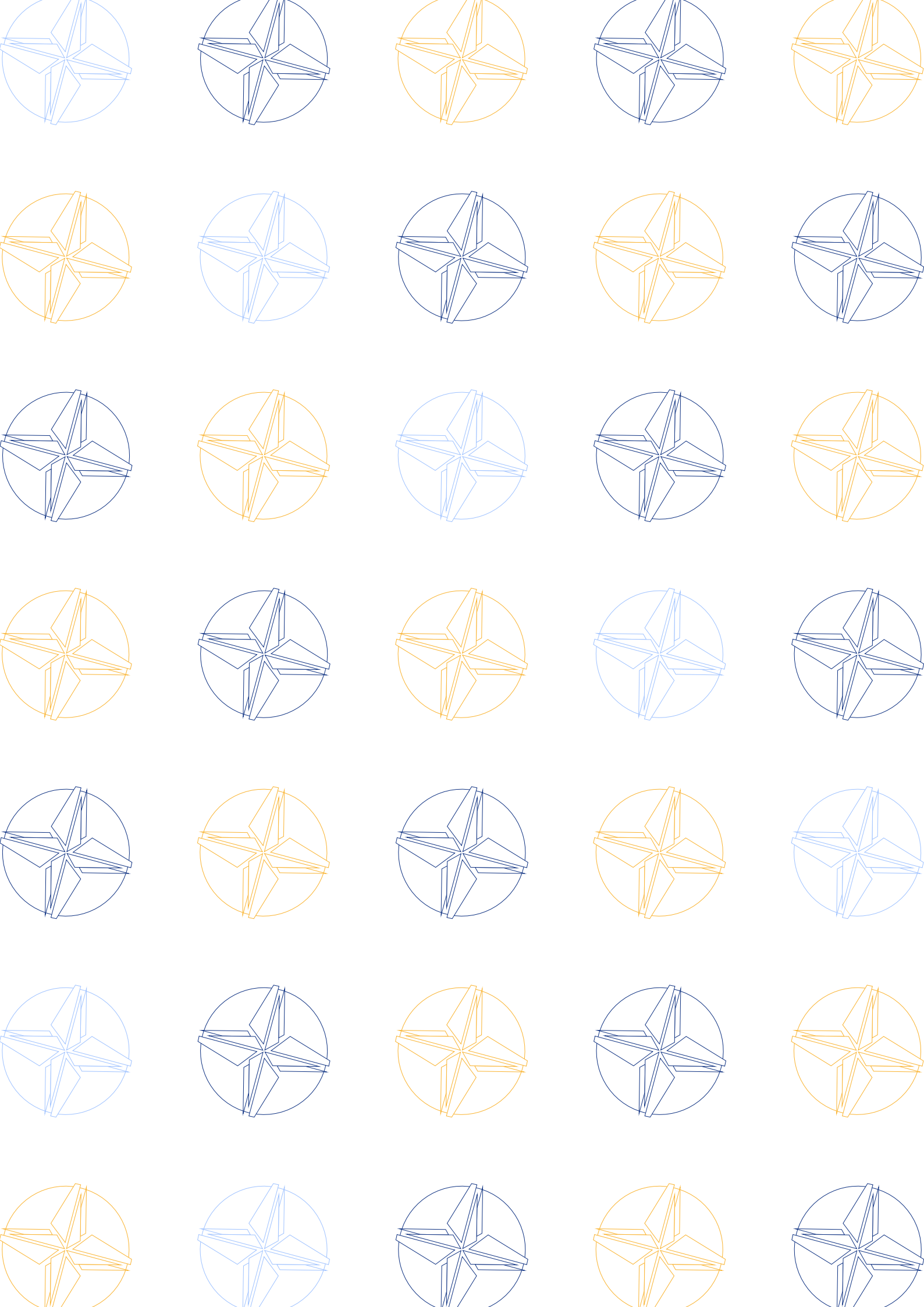
This is why I want to stress a very important point, and I truly thank the NATO Defense College Foundation and the NATO Defense College, because in our democracies, communicating and explaining why we do what we do as a defence alliance is essential for the resilience of our democratic societies.

And especially as attacks become more pervasive - particularly hybrid attacks, information attacks, cyberattacks - we must be able to defend the Alliance and our citizens across all domains.

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

University of Milan-Bicocca after an Erasmus year at the University of Paris I Panthéon-Sorbonne. He also earned a master's degree from the European College of Parma and has been a visiting scholar at both Columbia University in New York and Renmin University in Beijing. Pietro also served as an elected City Councillor in Brussels (SaintGilles), working to bridge the European project with local communities and has actively supported European citizen engagement through various organizations.





How can a **fragmented network** of partnerships in the Indo-Pacific be leveraged to build a more coherent and effective regional **security framework**?



FIRST PANEL

The Indo-Pacific and Its Partnership

Former NATO's Secretary General, Jens Stoltenberg, and US President, Joe Biden, join the heads of the four Indo-Pacific partners for a group meeting at the Washington Summit on 11 July 2024.

Source: NATO

“We see a clear need to engage with a range of actors in the region, but we are also aware that engagement with some of them is more challenging. This underlines the importance of timing, sequencing, and prioritising those partnerships that are more mature.”



CHAIR

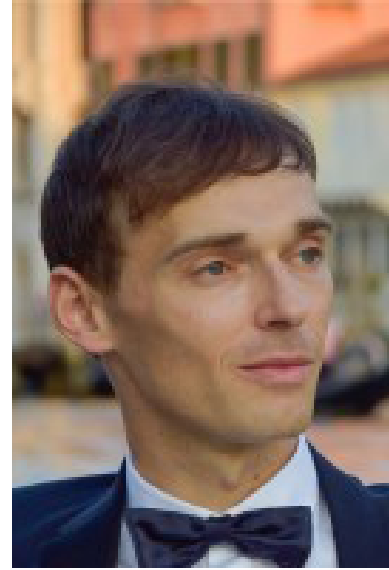
Giulia Tercovich

*Deputy Director, Centre for Security, Diplomacy
and Strategy (CSDS), Brussels*

Biography

Prof. Dr **Giulia Tercovich** is Deputy Director of the Centre for Security, Diplomacy and Strategy (CSDS) and Assistant Professor of European and International Politics at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB). Her

research examines the European Union's foreign and security policy, with particular attention to how geopolitical and geoeconomic shifts reshape EU decision-making, political leadership and strategic engagement in the Indo-Pacific.

**Walter Di Martino**

*Head, North Eastern Asia Office,
Directorate General for Global Affairs,
Ministry of Foreign Affairs and
International Cooperation, Rome*

COOPERATIVE SECURITY IN THE PACIFIC: OPPORTUNITIES AND HURDLES

Let me begin by expressing my gratitude to the NATO Defense College Foundation for inviting me to such a prestigious conference. I look forward to comparing notes and sharing my reflections with you on how we can enhance security in the region that is increasingly central to global stability and security: the Indo-Pacific.

My reflections today will focus mainly on models for seizing opportunities and overcoming the hurdles emerging in that region. In doing so, I will offer my professional perspective but I will also draw on my experience at the Italian Permanent Representation to NATO, where I served as Head of the Political Office.

With that in mind, let me frame the core of my intervention: how to resolve the dilemma of which model we should use to structure partnerships in the Indo-Pacific. A few methodological notes: I will refer to “positive partnerships” as those built on the idea that value can be created for members independently

of any specific external factor. Conversely, I will refer to “negative partnerships” as those formed in opposition to a specific external factor, which is considered the defining disruptive force behind the partnership.

This brings us to the dilemma: *should cooperative security in the Indo-Pacific derive from a positive model of the sort I have just described, or from a negative one? Which model is currently proving more functional to the advancement of our interests and to those of our partners?* Finally, I will offer some reflections on how to promote a culture of partnership that can move beyond this polarisation and ultimately ensure that security in the region is duly reflected in the security of the Euro-Atlantic sphere.

If we look at the Indo-Pacific environment, it is clear that neither the size nor the complexity of the region explains this dilemma. On the contrary, the lack of a shared security vision and of a robust multilateral security architecture is what drives it. The Indo-Pacific currently operates through a patchwork of bilateral alliances, ad hoc coalitions and regional groupings. They often overlap, and unfortunately, they are rarely coherent. In such an environment, the risk of fragmentation is considerable, and the risk of miscalculation even greater.

Turning to *negative partnerships*, the concept is relatively simple and intuitive. They can be understood as a tool of containment or as a form of solidarity bound together by a looming common threat. Fundamentally, they are reactive arrangements, arising from the identification of an external factor perceived as potentially destabilising to the status quo. This is particularly evident in the case of the Taiwan Strait, where we often recall the need to preserve the status quo; a useful point of reference, even if the political essence of this concept is not always straightforward.

A further characteristic of the negative model is its assumption that alternative models are undesirable; the specific situation must be preserved as it is. This may help prevent competition among partners, but the model also has clear disadvantages. Above all, its durability depends on whether the perceived risk actually materialises. If that risk remains dormant for too long, each member will naturally reassess how to allocate its resources.

Let me now turn briefly to *positive partnerships*. Despite the reassuring name, positive partnerships are not built around a simple or abstract idea of positivity. Rather, they are grounded in the shared desire to overcome the limits imposed by an external factor and to move beyond an unsatisfactory status quo. They rely on a vision that seeks to unlock the potential within our societies. A positive model is not driven by fear; it is certainly not just a coalition of the willing. It is a project in which members commit to surpassing their individual positions on the global stage.

Yet this road is not without risks. In my view, the main vulnerability of positive partnerships lies in maintaining cohesion, which depends on whether members can effectively contribute to the collective ability to move forward.

Let me now consider the *effectiveness* of these models. Starting with the Chinese approach, it has largely presented itself as a positive model, promising but ultimately not delivering. This has also shaped the way we interact with partners, or potential partners, within the sphere of influence generated by the Chinese model. By contrast, the Western model has so far been predominantly negative, centred on the idea of defending against a specific threat. Is this sufficient? Probably not.

To conclude, what is missing on our side is the capacity to add a *positive dimension* to the model we have been promoting. We already have a successful example that has been mentioned today: NATO's flagship project with the IP4. This demonstrates that it is indeed possible to include positive, measurable targets in order to promote a new vision of secure partnerships in the Indo-Pacific. What is still lacking is the ability to make this model fully inclusive, to engage those who currently remain outside the present framework.

To achieve this, we may need to return to what Ambassador Alessandro Minuto-Rizzo emphasised at the very beginning: *dialogue*. This is particularly important for Italy, as a founding member of NATO, a member of the G7, and an active player on the global stage. Dialogue is essential to enhance our interactions with that part of the world, unfortunately labelled with the unfortunate expression "Global South", that will either reinforce or, conversely, fragile our partnerships in the Indo-Pacific.

To unlock the potential of those countries, and to strengthen cooperative security in the region, we must remember to look beyond the immediate area on which our attention is currently focused. Not *against* anyone, but *for* the benefit of all.

Biography

Counsellor **Walter Di Martino** joined the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2003 as a diplomat. He has held several diplomatic posts abroad, including First Secretary and Deputy Head of Mission in Yemen (2006), Croatia (2009), and Libya (2013 and 2019), as well as Counsellor and Deputy Head of Mission in Sweden (2016). Counsellor

Di Martino also served as Counsellor at Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation's Directorate General for the Internationalization of the Country System (2014), was appointed First Counsellor at Italy's Permanent Representation to NATO in January 2022, and has been serving as First Counsellor at MAECI since August 2024.

Kaush Arha

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INDIA'S ROLE IN THE INDO-PACIFIC. ARE NEW PRAGMATIC PARTNERSHIPS POSSIBLE AND WITH WHOM?

I will share three observations. *How does NATO partner with the Indo-Pacific?* The biggest hurdle is the understanding and acceptance of the idea of collective security. It is well-intentioned and well-established in Europe, but it almost provokes a knee-jerk, allergic reaction when you discuss it in the Indo-Pacific.

So you have to overcome that particular issue. To that end, the three things I am going to speak about are: *what people say, what politicians pronounce, and what is actually happening in more practical terms.* Of course, most things in the Indo-Pacific, especially the Indo-Pacific Quad, are defined more by what they are not.

If you ever dare to suggest it might be a new security coalition: no, absolutely not. “We are about humanitarian work. We do anti-maritime exercises. We go out and help when there is a typhoon”. But if you look closely, you can see a lot more trilateral coordination and collective coordination, whether it is the US–Japan–South Korea, the US–Japan–Philippines, or the US–Japan–Philippines–

Australia groupings. And under President Biden's tenure, there were numerous defence compacts either renewed, strengthened, or newly established across the Indo-Pacific, from South Korea down through Papua New Guinea to Australia and New Zealand.

This also raises a fascinating question, especially when you consider the Malabar exercises [NoE, Exercise Malabar is a combat naval exercise involving India, the United States and Japan as permanent partners. Australia re-joined the exercise in 2020]. I am not going to give you the Indian perspective. So, much more is going on in terms of coordination, and to some degree interoperability as well, but we must not call it collective security because, in the region, we are still somewhat allergic to the concept.

Then you have America, which never misses an opportunity to tell Europeans "You cannot count on us to back you up on security assistance; you must work collectively". 5% is fantastic, nobody would have imagined that just last year. And yet, at the same time, America in the Indo-Pacific provides unilateral security assistance. On the one hand, it says it cannot carry the burden of Europe; on the other, in the Indo-Pacific, it says it will back Japan, South Korea, and the Philippines. So there is an oddity and an asymmetry in that logic as well.

All this means that the most commonsensical, most obvious, and most beneficial development would be collective security in the Indo-Pacific. It lightens America's burden, and it makes collective resilience ten times stronger compared to relying on unilateral American defence assurances. That is where we are heading. We are evolving in that direction, even as (like Shakespeare's Julius Caesar) we protest too much. But with all the protestations, we are inching that way.

When you go down that road, another issue emerges: *strategic autonomy*. "I will not join collective security because it somehow limits my strategic autonomy", My Indian colleagues can speak to this; it is the first thing any Indian would say, and ASEAN to some degree as well.

But if you look at the facts, alliances actually strengthen strategic autonomy, they do not diminish it. I do not need to tell this audience how every NATO member's strategic autonomy is strengthened by being part of NATO. It is China that constrains India's strategic autonomy, not the Quad or the United States. It is Russia that constrains China. The same is true for Europe: when Macron talks about strategic autonomy, the limitations do not come from America but from China and Russia. So we need to revisit how we think about strategic autonomy and compare what people say with where the discussion actually stands.

A third aspect: from the American side, our closest allies (whether Israel, Japan, or the UK) clearly have greater strategic autonomy through the American alliance than they would without it. So the notion of strategic autonomy needs to be reconsidered.

So: collective security, strategic autonomy, and then we come to the fact that in this area we have focused heavily on the Pacific Islands. We really need to focus much more on India, on the Indian Ocean, rather. It's fascinating that we are all here discussing how NATO needs to look towards the Indo-Pacific. I was in Marseille over the last two days, and the Indian foreign minister, Jaishankar, was there as well. He made a fascinating point. He said "India is a Mediterranean country". India has 480.000 citizens in the Mediterranean region, \$80 billion in trade, a port in the Mediterranean, and it is building an airport there. You see the connection, and certainly the need for this collective approach.

And for those of us, especially in America, who talk about the Indo-Pacific and the Atlantic as separate theatres, clearly something else is going on when North Koreans are fighting in Ukraine, or when Russia can sustain the war only because of Chinese support. So there is deep connectivity.

Where does that leave us? The notion of collective security, at least for those of us with NATO experience, needs to be communicated far more forcefully and clearly in the Indo-Pacific. The benefits of collective security need to be discussed much more openly, not in a surreptitious or indirect way. And we do need to achieve it.

I do not think that will be achieved by expanding NATO into the Indo-Pacific. We will probably end up with an Indo-Pacific Treaty Organisation, an IPTO of sorts, which may very well learn from and partner with NATO. But expanding NATO would only confirm every conspiracy theory in ASEAN and India about NATO "coming all the way to the Indo-Pacific" and would feed that entire narrative. That does not preclude working closely with the four countries I mentioned: indeed, I think that is excellent, and NATO will certainly look at it.

Finally, we are largely talking about NATO in military and air-force terms. The Indo-Pacific is predominantly a naval domain. So we have a different set of issues to address. It would be useful to discuss these further.

Biography

Dr **Kaush Arha** is a senior fellow specializing in global strategy and technology policy, with affiliations at leading research institutions. He has held senior advisory roles within the US government, where he helped design and implement frameworks to address strategic challenges posed by foreign adversaries and to align development assistance with national

security priorities. Earlier in his career, Dr Arha worked at the US Embassy in Kabul, supporting intergovernmental coordination during a key transition period and overseeing US agricultural assistance efforts. In addition to government service, he has worked as an attorney and taught at the university level. He holds a PhD from the University of California, Berkeley, and a law degree from Stanford University.



Amaia Sánchez-Cacicedo

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CONFLICT PREVENTION: WHAT MAY BE THE MOST EFFECTIVE TOOLS IN THE REGION?

Thank you to the NATO Defence College Foundation for having me. It is a pleasure to be back. I wanted to give a sort of bird's-eye view, if you will. My task today was to outline some pathways to conflict prevention in the Indo-Pacific. So I thought that if we want to talk about conflict prevention, we should first highlight the sources of conflict. Then I realised that is pretty much what everyone else is going to be talking about. So instead, I will offer two points as an underlying framework for how I see the region.

My first point is that there is clearly a trust deficit between the global and regional powers in the region, but also among regional actors themselves, and this is really important. We are not just thinking about the US-China relationship, but also India-China, China-Japan, China-South Korea, Australia-China, you name it. I think that is crucial, especially given the absence of any kind of regional collective security arrangement. In fact, the word *alliance* in itself is highly problematic in an Asian context.

My second point concerns the way the region is being approached, within the region itself, but also by external actors, including the US. We have gone from a more dialogue-based approach focused on engagement (thinking, for example, of Obama’s “pivot to Asia”) to Trump I.O, then Joe Biden’s deterrence posture, and now I think we are very much approaching a sort of pre-emption approach. This is rather alarming, especially if accidental escalation were to occur because of a particular regional crisis. So that is the overarching perspective. The hotspots in the region remain largely the same.

I wanted to highlight one in particular: the India-China border, and currently the India-Pakistan-China triangle. That is something we should definitely keep in mind, along with the China-Russia alignment, given its broader relevance. It is easy to pinpoint tensions and their sources.

So I will try to offer three ideas for potential avenues of conflict prevention. In my view, the US and China are both trying, in their own ways, to establish the rules of the game in the Indo-Pacific and determine how competition should be managed there. At the very least, we should attempt to put some rules in place, particularly regarding nuclear deterrence, but not only that. China should be part of any future treaty on arms race limitations, for example. I am not sure that current institutions are still fit for purpose. I am not convinced the ASEAN Regional Forum is effective, nor even the EAS (East Asia Summit) or ADMM+ (ASEAN Defence Ministers’ Meeting and its eight Dialogue Partners - Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, Republic of Korea, Russia and the United States / collectively referred to as the “Plus Countries”).

We could consider more out-of-the-box arrangements, Track 1.5 or Track 2 dialogues on the margins of the Shangri-La Dialogue, for example. That is one idea. And security is not just about hard or traditional security, but also soft security. I should also mention that there should be some kind of agreement on how to approach the military applications of artificial intelligence. That is a key point. We have discussed hybrid technologies and other defence-related technological issues, but soft security matters as well.

I think we often underestimate this, but I see it not just as an entry point, but as an incredibly important risk and priority for many countries in the region. Think of the littoral, especially the island states dealing with climate change, disasters (both man-made and natural) and humanitarian challenges, such as health, livelihoods, and even financial stability. All of these issues should be taken into account, and I think this is an area where we can make use of more than just hard security, which we tend to overemphasise.

My second broader point concerns the regional middle powers. They share many interests. They could establish a variety of crisis-simulation mechanisms,

as well as confidence-building measures. In fact, as was mentioned, this is already happening. There are all kinds of partnerships emerging, trilaterals, and now the very fashionable “minilaterals”. The maritime domain, for example, is extremely broad. We can think in terms of maritime security and maritime safety. It is not just about maritime intelligence sharing or anti-submarine warfare, but also other aspects vital to many countries in the region.

I am thinking of illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing; piracy; the protection of exclusive economic zones; and, an area I would like to hear more about from others, grey-zone tactics. There is a great deal of activity in the dual use of vessels that are ostensibly commercial but also have military functions, as well as ports and even undersea infrastructure. This is extremely worrying for many regional countries, especially those that find themselves hedging between the US and China. There is much that can be done here.

I wanted to mention the Information Fusion Centre for the Indian Ocean Region, which is led by the Indian Navy. I think this could be replicated. They focus on information sharing and exchange, and they have many liaison partners, not only regional ones but also the UK and the US. They have regional offices in Singapore, Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands. This kind of arrangement also works with the Indian Ocean Commission. And I would add that there is so much focus on the East and South China Seas, but Chinese influence is now clearly moving towards the south-west and north-west Indian Ocean. There should be much more attention on the Indian Ocean at the moment.

These minilaterals are emerging across the spectrum, among like-minded and trusted partners, but also among illiberal and less trusted actors. The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, for example, has a number of military exercises underway, as do Iran, Russia and China together. There are all sorts of combinations. I do not necessarily see this solely as a sign of instability, though it clearly points to fragmentation. But I think we have to embrace the current reality; multilateralism is in decline, and I do believe that if we adopt this more interest-based and pragmatic approach, it could be genuinely helpful.

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 as

EU relations with emerging powers. She holds a PhD from SOAS, University of London, and is the author of *Building States, Building Peace: Global and Regional Involvement in Sri Lanka and Myanmar*. Dr Sánchez-Cacicedo has lectured on security and Asian international relations at IE University, SOAS – University of London and the University of Zurich, and has worked with the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) in Costa Rica, Kenya, and Sri Lanka.



Christina Lin

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NATO'S EVOLVING POLICY IN THE REGION: SCENARIOS AND LIMITS

Good afternoon, everyone. First of all, I would like to thank Ambassador Minuto-Rizzo and the NDC Foundation for inviting me to this conference. It is truly an honour to be here.

I have been asked to speak about NATO's evolving approach towards the Indo-Pacific, so my remarks will be divided into three parts. *Firstly*, I will provide a brief synopsis of NATO's engagement in the region and how China and the Taiwan Strait have increasingly gained prominence in NATO's regional strategy; *secondly*, I will then set the broader context of why Taiwan is important in Indo-Pacific regional security and how existing partnerships can be further developed to cooperate with Taiwan; and *finally*, conclude with some of the limitations of these partnerships and the potential role for NATO's involvement.

NATO's engagement in the Indo-Pacific region is based on two main interests: shared values and transnational threats. Outreach began in the 1990s and early

2000s, and formal partnership agreements with all four partners were signed in the early 2010s. NATO has also held military staff talks with China since 2010, which continue today. In fact, back in March, the 8th iteration of NATO-China military staff talks took place in Beijing. In 2016, NATO began engaging the Indo-Pacific partners as a group of four in the IP4 format, with a focus on North Korea.

The IP4 are like-minded partners with shared values of human rights and the rule of law, maintain sophisticated and capable militaries, and have stable and open economies. In the wake of 9/11, NATO began out-of-area operations in Afghanistan with support from the IP4. NATO's regional engagement therefore precedes today's heightened awareness of the security challenge posed by China. Cooperative security areas have included counter-terrorism, anti-piracy, maritime security, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, and cyber defence.

NATO mentioned China for the first time in 2019, and in 2022 NATO's Strategic Concept noted how developments in the Indo-Pacific could affect Euro-Atlantic security. That same year, IP4 heads of state attended a NATO Summit for the first time, followed by subsequent attendance in 2023 and 2024, including at the 2024 NATO Defence Ministerial.

Several developments brought this about: increasing China–Russia alignment on Iran and Ukraine, and the sudden prominence of Taiwan's semiconductor sector during the Covid pandemic in 2020. Against this backdrop, I want to focus on Taiwan as a potential NATO technology partner in the Indo-Pacific and why Taiwan is important for regional security.

There are three main reasons. *Firstly*, Taiwan is part of the first island chain and is important for Japan's sea lines of communication. *Secondly*, it is a semiconductor manufacturing powerhouse. *Finally*, it is a thriving democracy with shared values, an important point for NATO as a values-based alliance, though one that is rarely highlighted in security discussions.

On the first point, the first island chain, extending from Japan to the Philippines and Indonesia, is important to the United States as a line of defence and strategic barrier for deterring China's military activities, although China, for its part, views it as US-led containment limiting its access to the Pacific Ocean. For Japan, Taiwan lies between the Taiwan Strait and the Luzon Strait between Taiwan and the Philippines, two vital sea lines of communication. Japan imports 97% of its energy supply, and 80% of its container cargo travels through the Taiwan Strait.

The Chinese are also cognisant of this vulnerability. A 2013 Chinese military publication noted that if Taiwan were reunified with China, Japan's maritime lines of communication would fall within the range of China's fighters and bombers, threatening its economic and war-making potential. Taiwan's security is therefore of utmost importance for Japan's security.

On the second point, Taiwan's semiconductor manufacturing prowess, global supply chain problems during the Covid-19 pandemic brought renewed attention to Taiwan's vital role, with its near-monopolistic control of 92% of the global supply of advanced chips that power fighter jets, AI, smartphones, and the backbone of the digital economy. As NATO increasingly focuses on science and technology cooperation with like-minded states in the Indo-Pacific, linking back to the third point of Taiwan's importance as a thriving democracy with shared values, this may create opportunities for Taiwan to play a greater role in cooperative security. This brings me to part three: potential scenarios for cooperation between the IP4 and Taiwan.

Several proposals have been raised, including frameworks such as NATO-Plus, Quad-Plus, and AUKUS Pillar 2.

Regarding NATO-Plus, last month the US Congress proposed the Taiwan Plus Act to incorporate Taiwan as a NATO-Plus member. This framework, which includes the IP4 and Israel, provides access to intelligence sharing, military technology, and streamlined arms sales.

Another proposal is Quad-Plus cooperation, involving the USA, India, Japan and Australia working with Taiwan, as well as giving Taiwan access to AUKUS Pillar 2 for defence technology sharing. Taiwan is very interested in this initiative.

Nonetheless, there are limits to these scenarios. India is a wild card in the Quad-Plus or in any "Asian NATO" proposed by Japan's prime minister, given its traditional role in the Non-Aligned Movement and its preference for balancing China rather than adopting an explicitly anti-China posture. China has criticised the US Indo-Pacific strategy as a "5-4-3-2 framework" (Five Eyes, the Quad, AUKUS, and a series of bilateral treaties) designed to contain China. As a result, some regional countries remain cautious about groupings that could be perceived as anti-China.

A recent US Institute of Peace (USIP) report on NATO and the IP4 argues that the partners prefer a model characterised by "NATO with the Indo-Pacific, not in the Indo-Pacific." They do not expect NATO to be a direct actor in the region but instead want the Alliance to coordinate with them on issues of mutual concern.

This brings me to the final part: NATO's potential cooperative security role with Taiwan in the Indo-Pacific.

NATO is concerned about Beijing's growing power in high technology, especially cyber, space, AI, and other asymmetric threats enabled by emerging and disruptive technologies (EDTs). Given that Japan, South Korea, Singapore and Taiwan are leaders in the development of EDTs, as well as semiconductors that enable these technologies, cooperation in this area could enhance NATO's defence technological edge alongside their own.

To that end, NATO is already upgrading ties with Asian partners in EDT sectors. In February 2021, Japan was approved as an Enhanced Opportunities Partner (STO-EOP) of the NATO Science and Technology Organization, and in March this year South Korea was approved as an STO-S&T partner. The STO-EOP framework is key to NATO's S&T collaboration, offering more tailored access to NATO structures and processes.

Singapore, for example, has been involved in STO events at both the strategic and planning levels despite not being a NATO Asian partner. Taiwan could therefore potentially engage in similar cooperative security exchanges, especially as the NATO Science and Technology Board is considering inviting more Asian nations to become STO-EOP partners, particularly in the field of maritime technologies.

Biography

Dr **Christina Lin** serves as a senior research fellow at the International Relations Research Center of the National University of Kaohsiung and is also an adjunct fellow at the Global Taiwan Institute. Dr Lin has significant experience within the US government, where she worked on economic and security issues related to China, including roles in policy planning at the Department of Defense, the Department of State, and the National Security Council. She earned her PhD

from the London School of Economics and Political Science. Her academic interests focus on Taiwan and the global semiconductor supply chain, food security, China-Israel relations, and NATO's global partnerships. Dr Lin's recent work includes "Taiwan's Kaohsiung: a game of diversification in the Indo-Pacific chip supply chain" (NDCF, October 21, 2022) and "The Taiwan question in Israel-China tech cooperation" (The Jerusalem Post, September 5, 2022).

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

SHRI NARENDRA MODI
PRIME MINISTER OF INDIA

SPECIAL INTERVENTION

At the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore, Prime Minister Narendra Modi calls for equal access to shared seas and skies and for disputes to be settled under international law.

Source: *Wikimedia Commons*



**Rajendra Abhyankar**

*Former ambassador, visiting professor,
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SPECIAL INTERVENTION

Distinguished speakers, colleagues and friends, I hope to elucidate the origin and development of India's policy on the Indo-Pacific. In a way, it could not be the Indo-Pacific without the presence of India. What is more, it was President Trump, in his first term, who actually redefined it from the Asia-Pacific to the Indo-Pacific. This recognised the vital role of the Indian Ocean as an ocean of transit and a crucial sea route for global commerce and energy transportation.

It is a key area connecting the economies of the Middle East, Africa, South and Southeast Asia and beyond. India commands a dominant position in the Indian Ocean. It is a matter of conjecture whether President Trump, in his second and current term, will devote the necessary resources and strength to building the Indo-Pacific region in order to offset China's aggressive posture there.

Apart from President Trump's weaponisation of tariffs, the world last week changed beyond recognition. The likelihood of the Indo-Pacific ever receiving

the resources and military strength it needs has become moot. The raging war between Israel and Iran, while Israel continues fighting Hamas with military forays into Syria, appears largely driven by Israel's attempt at regional domination of the Middle East. And while all this is happening, it continues to receive the support of the USA.

In parallel, we have an intensification of the Russia-Ukraine war, now in its third year, with domestic opinion divided along political lines in both Europe and the USA. President Trump continues to push for a settlement of the war on an *as-is-where-is* basis, which is, of course, anathema to President Zelensky.

In this context, it is highly unlikely that the major powers will have the wherewithal to tackle the developing problems in the Indo-Pacific region. The growing tensions at flashpoints in the region (the South China Sea, the Korean Peninsula and the Taiwan Strait) mean that the Indo-Pacific confronts a widening security battle. We can expect Washington's allies and close partners (Japan, the Philippines, South Korea and Taiwan) to face great uncertainty due to President Trump's unpredictable and transactional approach to diplomacy. The reliability of the USA in honouring its security commitments is now in question. Without a robust commitment to collective defence, the Indo-Pacific is on a path towards instability and conflict. I am sorry if this sounds somewhat like being a devil's advocate, but these are the realities we face.

Tactical shifts aside, Beijing's geopolitical aspiration for the greater rejuvenation of the Chinese nation remains unchanged. China seeks to prepare to seize Taiwan by 2026, according to a news report, to control the South China Sea, to weaken US alliances and ultimately to dominate the region. I can tell you that India has tried many ways to talk to China. China has been experienced, in a painful way, by Japan, the Philippines and Australia.

With their unveiling of three-way defence cooperation and the convergence of their interests and actions, the time may be ripe for the USA to propose a collective defence pact with three partners to begin with: Australia, Japan and the Philippines, alongside the USA. This would, of course, involve greater burden-sharing by these allies. The real question is whether President Trump will take ownership of this proposal.

If it does go ahead, later members could include South Korea, New Zealand and possibly, at some stage, India and Singapore. India sees the Indian Ocean Rim Association, comprising the littoral states and other powers with strategic interests in the region, as an opportunity to foster a free, open and inclusive region focussed on economic growth, strategic cooperation and maritime security; concepts that are being challenged almost daily by the PRC.

Inevitably, the four major Asia-Pacific powers (Australia, Japan, New Zealand and South Korea) in forming their policies towards the region in response to the PRC's growing assertiveness, have taken India's position into account. The quadrilateral dialogue, or QUAD, including the US, India, Japan and Australia, was the result. Again, the QUAD has *not* done more than what it has achieved.

For its part, in engaging with the Indo-Pacific concept, India was in a dilemma. While not wanting to be part of a strategy to contain China, even though it recognised that China undermines its position in the neighbourhood, India is equally cognisant of the need to be part of a new security environment that would provide it with a platform to maximise its presence in an area of vital strategic interest. India's approach towards the Indo-Pacific has been shaped by the rise of China in the Indian Ocean region and in South Asia.

Beijing's expanding presence across the region presents a common strategic challenge for Canberra, New Delhi, Tokyo and Washington. It was only in Prime Minister Modi's address to the 2018 Shangri-La Dialogue that the framework of India's Indo-Pacific priorities, concerns and challenges began to emerge. It confirmed India's geographic definition of the Indo-Pacific as extending from the shores of Africa to the Americas, providing a broad physical boundary for its calibrations.

India's vision for the Indo-Pacific contains four elements. *Firstly*, it underscores the importance of partnerships and the benefits of collaboration. *Secondly*, it reflects India's distancing from any groupings or alliances of containment, conveying a message to its smaller neighbours and partners to avoid being caught between Sino-Indian or Sino-US geopolitical rivalry; this positions India to address the need to stabilise the hostile environment in its neighbourhood. *Thirdly*, given that the foundations of the global order are in flux, India emphasises the need to expand partnerships based on an order that is free, open and inclusive. *Fourthly*, India places ASEAN at the heart of its Indo-Pacific vision, reflecting the belief that, in the changing world order, India must be one of the founding pillars.

Through increasing collaboration and real partnerships, India has been able to expand its role across the wider region. The USA, Australia, France and Japan have become New Delhi's pillars for Indo-Pacific partnerships. India has also extended its collaboration with other players: in Africa, Indonesia, Oman and Singapore in Asia, and the European Union. India has developed a critical set of partnerships with island communities across the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean, reaching as far as the Caribbean. In the current context, India's management of its relationships with Iran and Russia will shape its own priorities within the larger security architecture.

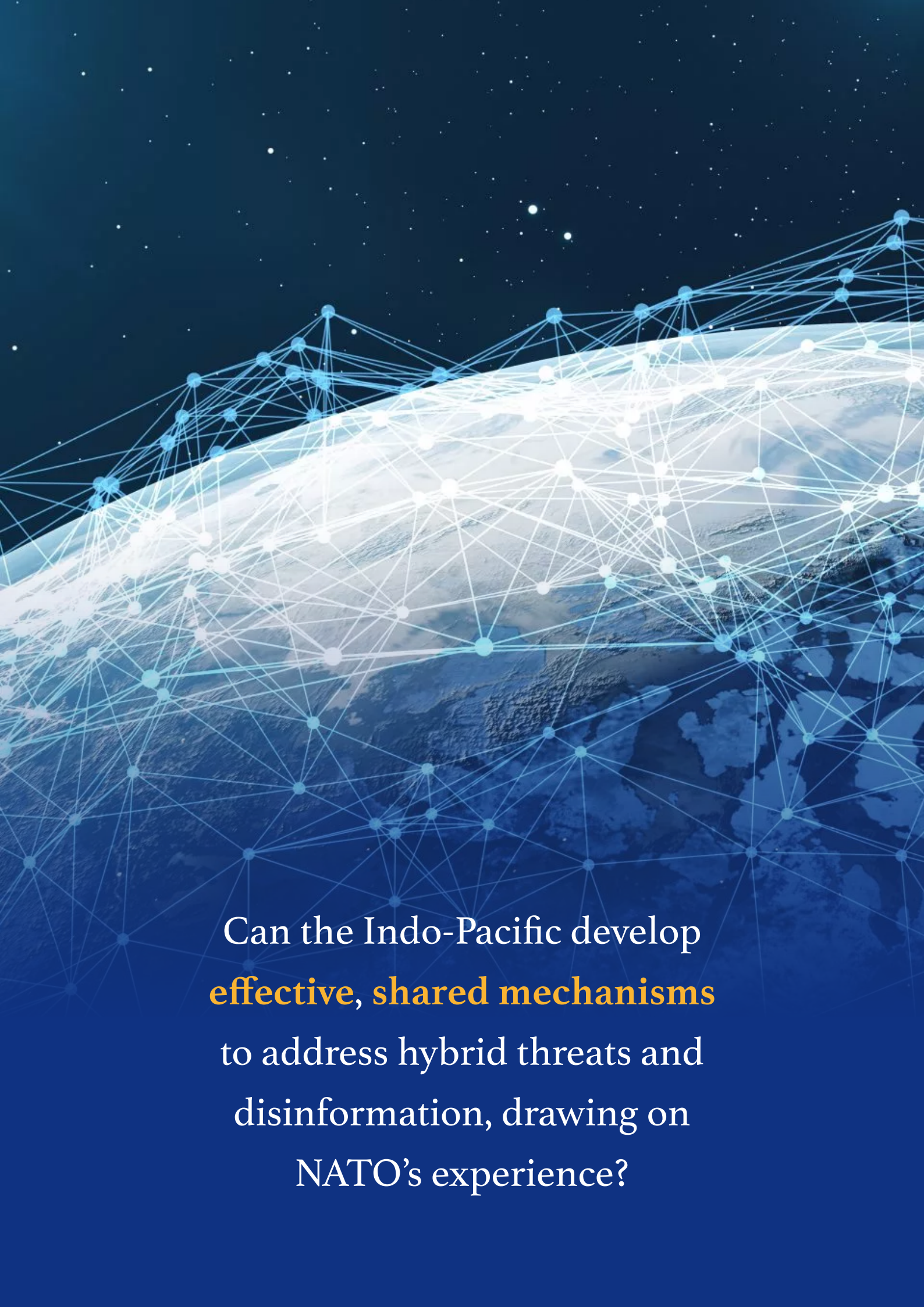
Beijing's ambition will nevertheless continue to undermine India's strategic interests, and will remain at the forefront of India's strategic challenges. As key partners in the Indo-Pacific move forward, they will have to accept that their respective Indo-Pacific visions will never completely align. Increasingly, shared values and shared interests will have to form the basis for partnership. This will also require acknowledging differences in priorities, theatres and regional dynamics, given that each nation has a different appetite and different available resources, while their threat perceptions also differ.

Finally, India will face complex and challenging questions. More often than not, it will find itself having to balance its relationships with strategic partners, as it had to do during the Ukraine–Russia war. Often, India's strategic interests might appear to conflict with its traditional posture of strategic autonomy. This is, again, a question requiring long consideration. Going forward, India's actions and deliverables in the Indo-Pacific will lay the foundation for its role in a new global architecture.

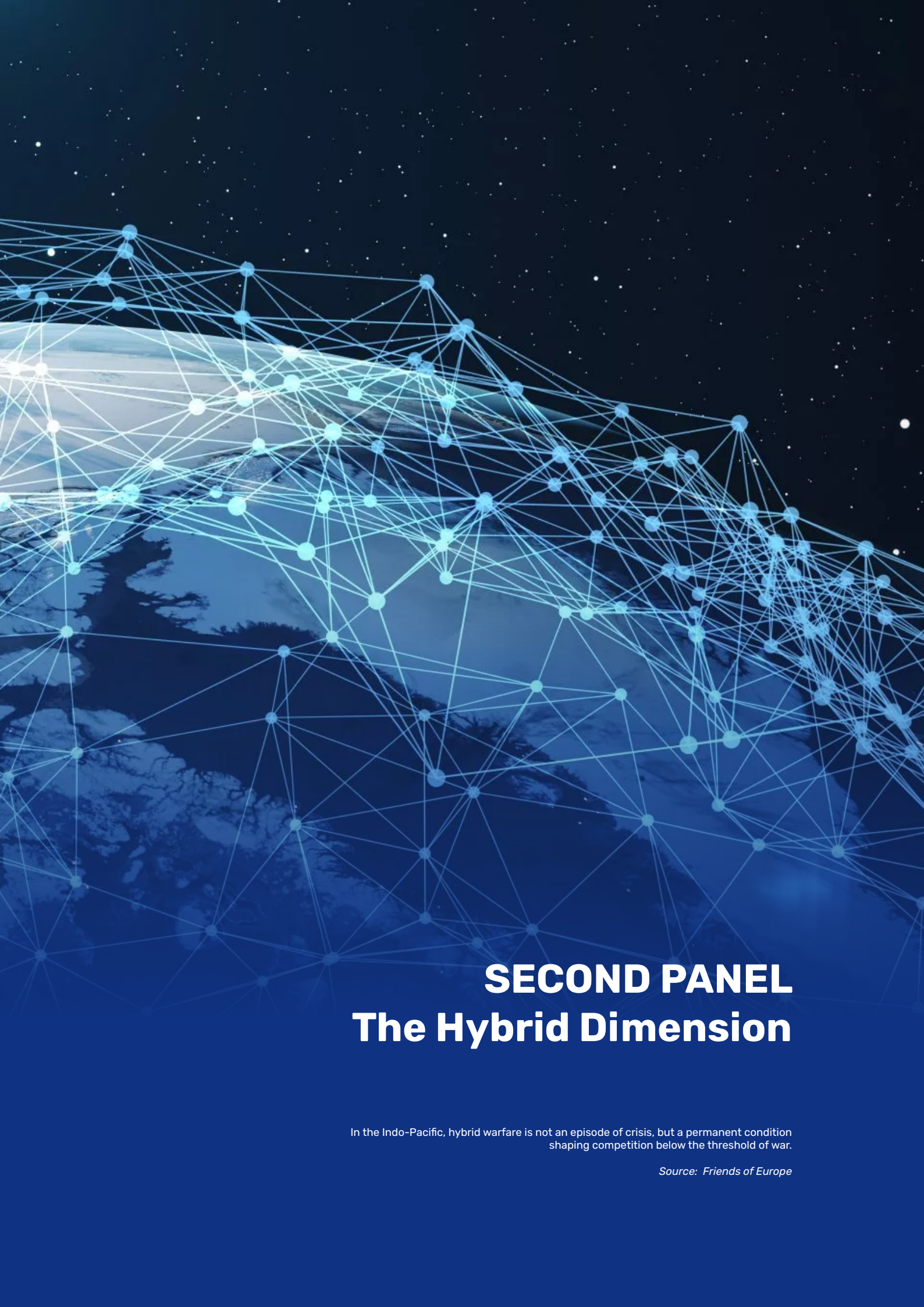
Biography

Ambassador **Rajendra Abhyankar** had a distinguished 36-year career in the Indian diplomatic service, concluding in 2005 as India's Ambassador to the European Union, Belgium, and Luxembourg. Ambassador Abhyankar previously served in senior roles including Consul General in San

Francisco and Ambassador to Turkey, Azerbaijan, and Syria. His expertise focuses on diplomacy, Middle Eastern politics, conflict, and international relations. He is the author of several books, including *Stuff Happens: An Anecdotal Insight into Indian Diplomacy* (2013) and *Indian Diplomacy: Beyond Strategic Autonomy* (2018).



Can the Indo-Pacific develop
effective, shared mechanisms
to address hybrid threats and
disinformation, drawing on
NATO's experience?



SECOND PANEL

The Hybrid Dimension

In the Indo-Pacific, hybrid warfare is not an episode of crisis, but a permanent condition shaping competition below the threshold of war.

Source: Friends of Europe

“One thing that I find really fascinating about the issue of hybrid warfare is that it is extremely difficult to respond for us, Western countries, and that is because the opponent is deliberately using something that is blurring the lines between peace and war.”



CHAIR

Alexandra Sakaki

*Deputy Head of Asia Research Division,
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Biography

Dr **Alexandra Sakaki** is a scholar of international politics with a strong focus on East Asian affairs and Japan's role in the global strategic landscape. She joined the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP) in January 2012, where she has

built extensive expertise in regional security and foreign policy analysis. She served as a Guest Researcher at Japan's National Defense Academy and at Keio University; she was a Senior Fellow with the Robert Bosch Stiftung. She earned her PhD in Political Science from the University of Trier.

**Mihoko Matsubara***Chief Cybersecurity Strategist, NTT, Inc., Tokyo*

THE HYBRID OPERATIONS IN THE REGION: THE VIEW FROM TOKYO

I would like to share my Japanese perspective, because we now have an ongoing war in Ukraine and we are very concerned about a potential contingency in the Taiwan Strait. Thus, I would like to explain how the lessons from the ongoing war in Ukraine may or may not be applicable to this potential contingency, from a Japanese point of view.

First of all, why is the Taiwan crisis relevant to European audiences? Of course, it is obviously very relevant to the Indo-Pacific region. But why should it matter to Europeans? Taiwan has been an important economic player for European people and countries. It manufactures over 60% of global semiconductors and more than 90% of the world's advanced semiconductors. Beyond that, over 20% of global trade passes through the Taiwan Strait. So, imagine what would happen to the global market or the global economy if anything were to occur there.

Also, are you confident that all 30,000 European citizens who currently reside in Taiwan could be evacuated safely and securely from Taiwan to Europe, if anything happened in the Taiwan Strait? Just imagine that. We may have less than two years if a crisis were to unfold in that region. This is known as the Davidson Window.

Admiral Philip Davidson, former Commander of the US Indo-Pacific Command, stated at the US Senate Armed Services Committee in March 2021 that Taiwan is clearly one of China's ambitions, and that the threat would become manifest within this decade, in fact, within the following six years. As he said this in 2021, the so-called Davidson Window points to 2027. There have been repeated references by senior US officials to 2027 as a potential timing for China to integrate Taiwan into the mainland. For instance, then CIA Director William Burns, as well as the current Commander of the US Indo-Pacific Command, Admiral Paparo in 2025. US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth also stated this during the Shangri-La Dialogue in May 2025.

Furthermore, there has been a potential precursor in cyberspace called Volt Typhoon. The US government believes that this advanced Chinese state-sponsored cyber actor has been penetrating into the networks of critical infrastructure in order to paralyze the services, create chaos, to disrupt decision-making processes, and deter and delay the deployment of US forces to the region in the event of a crisis. Volt Typhoon has been reportedly infiltrating critical infrastructure networks in the US, Singapore and India. We have not yet seen confirmed Volt Typhoon cases in mainland Japan or Taiwan.

Nevertheless, Cisco Talos' warned in March 2025 that they had already observed Chinese state-sponsored actors attacking Taiwanese critical infrastructure. The firm also pointed out that their tactics and targets are similar to those of Volt Typhoon.

We have also seen another worrying sign surrounding Taiwan: submarine cable cuts. In fact, submarine cables are cut more frequently near Taiwan than anywhere else in the world, and the frequency has increased in 2025.

This is also a growing concern in Europe that has already seen more cable cuts near the continent. This may be an area where Europe and the Indo-Pacific can share lessons learned.

Some lessons from the ongoing war in Ukraine are applicable to a potential contingency in the Taiwan Strait, but some are not? Long-term cyber defence build-up is absolutely essential. Ukraine used the eight years between 2014 and 2022 to strengthen its cyber defences. The United States and Europe started to provide early warnings to Ukraine in 2021. Ukraine also have obtained international cybersecurity support since Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022.

However, if China is studying the Ukraine war carefully, it may avoid giving any early warning that would allow other countries to have time to prepare for any contingency. Moreover, unlike Ukraine on continent, Japan and Taiwan depend on submarine cables for some 90% of their communications.

Thus, it is the time for the Indo-Pacific and Europe to share their security expertise. Such perspectives would be beneficial to prepare for a potential contingency.

Biography

Ms **Mihoko Matsubara** is Chief Cybersecurity Strategist at NTT, Inc., in Tokyo, leading the company's cybersecurity thought leadership. She previously worked at the Japanese Ministry of Defense and earned her MA at Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies as a Fulbright Scholar. Before joining NTT, Ms Matsubara was Vice President and

Public Sector Chief Security Officer for Asia-Pacific at Palo Alto Networks. She is an Associate Fellow for Cyber at the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London, an Adjunct Fellow at the Pacific Forum in Honolulu, and a Non-resident Scholar at Sasakawa USA in Washington, DC. She has published three books on cybersecurity and lessons of Ukraine, and all of them received an award.

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF NEW INTELLIGENCE AND COUNTER- HYBRID WARFARE COOPERATION

Dear all, it is a pleasure to be with you once again, so let me thank Ambassador Minuto Rizzo and Director Politi for their kind invitation, the whole NATO Defense College Foundation staff, my colleagues, and our chair, as well as all of you for being here. In my speech, I will briefly explore three elements: *the significance of hybrid warfare in the Indo-Pacific; NATO, EU, and cross-institutional policies and programmes to address it; and a potential new initiative to better counter hybrid warfare in the Indo-Pacific.* Today, intelligence and hybrid warfare and threats are common everywhere, though especially in the Indo-Pacific, which encompasses all countries facing the Indian and the Pacific Oceans.

Let me offer just a few examples from the past five years, among many others. *First*, between 2020 and 2022, we witnessed numerous cyberattacks and disinformation campaigns surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic, its origins, and its management, especially (though not solely) from China and Russia.

These revisionist powers also tied access to their vaccines to political alignment on contested regional issues.

Second, amidst several skirmishes between China and India over disputed borders, sustained Chinese media campaigns sought to portray India as the aggressor. This took place while Chinese troops made minor territorial gains and while the Chinese leadership emphasised its military prowess for domestic audiences.

Third, there are countless examples involving Taiwan, a country targeted repeatedly by China through distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attacks, AI-based disinformation, and dozens of military drills simulating a full-scale invasion.

Fourth, the 2023 Fukushima wastewater management issue. In this case, China-sponsored disinformation campaigns, both online and through traditional media, aimed to generate outrage, which eventually resulted in anti-Japanese violence in China.

Fifth, following a Pakistani-affiliated terrorist attack in Pahalgam, India faced a hybrid attack involving Pakistani drones, cyberattacks, and disinformation campaigns. India retaliated by suspending the Indus Waters Treaty, significantly affecting water-sharing between India and Pakistan, and by launching Operation Sindoor, which entailed missile strikes on Pakistan. Both episodes highlight the evolving nature of hybrid warfare in the region.

Sixth, the unrest in New Caledonia in 2024, which was fuelled by Azerbaijan-linked (likely Russia-originated) foreign interference aimed at undermining France's Indo-Pacific presence.

Seventh, cyber-espionage and APT attacks across the entire region, though particularly in Southeast Asia and Oceania, conducted with the objective of achieving political and/or industrial goals. Tens of thousands of such attacks have occurred over the years, as many who have worked in the region (myself included) can attest.

Let me end this list with something that is not occurring yet, though it soon will be: hybrid warfare in the context of space competition. The Chinese government has indirectly admitted that it will equip its Tiangong space station with small robots for self-defence purposes. This is alarming for at least two reasons: it could pose a potential security threat to other satellites, and in 2030 the International Space Station will be decommissioned, leaving the Chinese station as the only one in orbit.

Thankfully, cross-regional cooperation on these matters exists and is growing. To begin with, as we all know, NATO is increasingly engaged in the Indo-Pacific, not only thanks to the provisions of its 2022 Strategic Concept, but also through

its Indo-Pacific Four (Australia, Japan, New Zealand, and South Korea). At the same time, although Europe joined the Indo-Pacific conversation relatively late, both the EU and its most active member states – Italy included – have been pivoting towards this crucial region for some time, in economic, normative, and security terms.

At this point, it is time to address the proverbial “elephant in the room”: the USA and its erratic foreign policy, which risks undermining the trust that its allies and partners place in Washington and, potentially, even the level of future strategic cooperation. Still, the NATO IP4 is an excellent example of how to continue involving the USA as much as possible while promoting stronger Europe–Indo-Pacific cooperation. In this regard, the two key security events taking place this month, the G7 and the NATO Summit, highlight the significance of the Indo-Pacific region for global stability.

All of this brings us to specific cooperation to counter intelligence and hybrid threats. Starting with NATO, the Alliance has recognised hybrid warfare as a strategic challenge since the 2014 Russian invasion of Ukraine. This recognition is supported by the IHC Division (Innovation Hybrid Cyber) [NoE, former Emerging Security Challenges Division, ESCD] and the NATO Intelligence Fusion Centre (NIFC), as well as by the Counter-Hybrid Support Teams (CHSTs). These teams were created in 2018 to craft responses to hybrid threats falling below the Article 5 threshold. Additionally, as acknowledged by the 2014 Wales NATO Declaration, hybrid warfare (even cyberattacks alone) could potentially trigger Article 5, if conducted on a large and protracted scale.

The EU took more time to appreciate the significance and scale of hybrid threats, but eventually developed a “Hybrid Toolbox” as part of its 2022 Strategic Compass. Two years later, it established its Hybrid Rapid Response Teams (HRRTs), which provide short-term and tailored assistance to member and partner countries, much like NATO’s comparable teams. In cases of major and complex crises, the EU can rely on the Integrated Political Crisis Response (IPCR) mechanism.

Given the substantial cross-institutional cooperation on these matters, NATO and the EU display a remarkable and growing level of coordination. The two institutions have dozens of “joint actions” in the security domain, around a fifth of which relate to intelligence and hybrid threats. After all, NATO and the EU have 23 members in common and coordinate their efforts through the EU–NATO Steering Group. The key outcome of this cooperation is the European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats, in Helsinki, that originated as an initiative of the Finnish government and is endorsed by both NATO and the EU. Europe’s “Hybrid COE” assists participating countries in improving their

civil-military capabilities to counter hybrid threats through training courses, exercises, workshops for policymakers and practitioners, and research.

With all this in mind, I believe the time has come to revisit a comparable initiative that could be implemented in the Indo-Pacific, benefitting all parties involved: the establishment of an Indo-Pacific Centre of Excellence for Hybrid Threats, either NATO-affiliated or co-sponsored by NATO and the EU. It is important to note that host states do not need to be NATO members, as demonstrated by Finland, which has hosted Europe's Hybrid COE since 2017 (and only became a NATO member in 2023).

So, where could such a centre be hosted, and why? I argue that the selection process should take into account five key requirements:

- ✦ Membership of NATO's Interoperability Platform
- ✦ Membership of NATO's Indo-Pacific Four
- ✦ Membership of NATO's Enhanced Opportunities Partners
- ✦ A high level of Indo-Pacific involvement and activism
- ✦ A proven ability to contribute to counter-hybrid warfare efforts

Australia is the only country that is a member of the Interoperability Platform, the IP4, and the Enhanced Opportunities Partners, and it also has a substantial track record both in contributing to NATO's activities and in advocating for the Indo-Pacific construct. Moreover, its deep relations with Southeast Asia and the South Pacific may indirectly support NATO's regional objectives. Additionally, Australia has frequently been the target of hybrid warfare attacks (mostly, though not exclusively, from China) and possesses highly relevant experience in countering them.

In conclusion, intelligence and hybrid threats are pervasive and increasing in the Indo-Pacific. The establishment of an Indo-Pacific Hybrid COE would substantially benefit NATO/EU members and partner countries, and Australia would be an ideal host state. As a final note, since we are in Italy after all, I would like to emphasise that Rome's substantial role within NATO, its growing engagement with the Indo-Pacific, and its very warm bilateral relations with Australia would be highly valuable in facilitating this process.

Biography

Prof. Dr. **Gabriele Abbondanza** is an international relations academic at Comillas Pontifical University, the University of Sydney, and the Istituto Affari Internazionali. His expertise spans the Indo-Pacific, Australian and Italian foreign policy, irregular migration, and middle/great powers. Prof. Dr. Abbondanza has published with the most prestigious journals and publishers in his field, and teaches

numerous courses on international relations/security. He frequently contributes to media and institutional debates, including those promoted by the Council of the European Union, the Italian Parliament, the NATO Foundation, the Spanish Ministry of Defence (IUGM), and the Istituto Affari Internazionali. He was the inaugural testimony at the Indo-Pacific Committee, Chamber of Deputies. More information on www.gabrieleabbondanza.com.

Joanna Siekiera

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HOW AND TO WHICH DEGREE EURO-ATLANTIC EXPERIENCES IN COUNTERING HYBRID OPERATIONS CAN BE PROPOSED IN THE INDO-PACIFIC?

As a NATO consultant for the past 4 years, I have trained armed forces within NATO, primarily Polish and American, but also Indian. The law of the sea and maritime security are my background; I am a sailor myself. I sailed across the Pacific Ocean, I did PhD studies in New Zealand, and I am devoted to the Indo-Pacific. After many years of research and witnessing what is actually happening in that region, I cannot comprehend why we, Europeans, are still blind to the actual Chinese threat to our democracies, to the way we, Western world, live, to our rights and freedoms, like freedom of speech, freedom of navigation, or freedom of religion. I remember a few years back when Central Europeans, including Poland - my country, were warning, "Watch out on Russia, since Russia has this imperialistic approach, they have always had this appetite". Instead,

Westerners were calling us Russophobes, laughing at us. Unfortunately, we were right.

And now we are debating over the Chinese Communist Party, whose approach is in total opposition to everything we stand for, from everything we are ready to defend. And again, from an international perspective (and I am very honoured that I can talk about international law, which is very often forgotten in debates about non-kinetic hybrid warfare) everyone is still focussing on kinetic aspects, sometimes including cyber and economy, but what about international law? Russia and China have mastered legal warfare, also called lawfare. They are experts in showing us how to manoeuvre within international law regulations, how to misinterpret the regulations, and lastly laugh at our rules-based order.

May I argue we are miserable, or even naïve? Yet, I aim to do something to change that. I will give you some examples, but I want you to see that law is already used as a weapon. And I know I always get negative comments from my colleagues, the humanitarians, asking how I dare to use the term “weaponisation of law”. But it’s not me using this. I am just describing the fact that Russia, China, and other terrorist organisations do use international law against us, our democracies, and they remain unpunished. China is the only country so far that has codified legal warfare in its doctrine.

It started in the 1990s, when two army colonels wrote about the use of international law, but also domestic law to achieve military advantage. Just to remind you: in 2020 in Hong Kong, there was the Umbrella Revolution. And what happened after? Beijing didn’t send tanks but changed the law. I am sure you have read Sun Tzu, but perhaps read it again, not as a fairy tale from the Far East, but as a true strategy, used one-to-one. It’s a story on how to lie, how to cheat, how to manipulate to achieve the goal without starting a kinetic war.

Are we preparing for the same with Taiwan? But what if I tell you Chinese government is a different kind of war criminal from Russia? We must understand how the enemy is thinking, how they understand the law, and only then use this knowledge in order to counter them. Because we, especially Europeans, still hope that the enemy will follow the rules.

Look at Russia–Ukraine war: how they tackled lawfare when Ukrainians were following every convention (Geneva, Hague). And what did Russians do when Ukrainians were, according to humanitarian law, notifying in advance the humanitarian corridors paths? Russians mined those corridors. When Ukrainians were placing signs “дети” - children, on the shelters, again according to the laws, what did Russians do? They bombed them. I am not saying “don’t follow the law”, but know that the enemy is not stupid. They know the conventions, which they had ratified, they also have good lawyers. Look at the Taliban: they had narcotics,

and now what do they have to support their brutal and illegal government? Gold and diamonds. And they get along in international relations, despite being not recognized.

Coming back to China and its San Zhong Zhan Fa (三種戰法), the Three Warfare's doctrine. First is manipulating public opinion, another is psychological warfare, and the final one is my beloved lawfare. And the CCP follows it. In 2016, in the famous ruling of the Permanent Arbitration Tribunal on China vs. the Philippines, the Tribunal said: "China, back off the South China Sea". What did China do? They did not listen. So what are they doing now? They are shooting water cannons at Filipinos. The world is watching but not reacting. That is exactly called conducting international legal warfare.

Last year, China and India (the two largest armies on the planet) were fighting with what? Sticks and stones. In the 21st century. Why? Because they know the law. They didn't want to start an aggression with warfare. No. They used non-lethal weapons so as not to be accused of being the aggressor. Again, as I always repeat, we must understand the mindset of the enemy.

I can tell you a very short story from the good old days, when the US Navy and the Chinese People's Liberation Army Navy were training together. The boys were doing an integration exercise. They were given a map on how to go through the hills with their full gear. The Americans followed the map. They were sweating. They arrived at the finish line last, seeing the Chinese with no sweat, no stains, and relaxing. They asked: "Hey, how is that possible? We should have seen you on the way, but we did not. What happened?" And the Chinese said: "It was not about following the rules. It was about winning". This is the mindset we must understand how some misuse the law.

Lastly, take the International Criminal Court. I dare to say we were indeed naïve to issue an arrest warrant against Vladimir Putin, while Russia is not a member of the Court. We did that, and the next year we did the same against Benjamin Netanyahu, Prime Minister of Israel, which also is not a member. So we are not using international law as we should. There are tools but I dare to say there is no political will to finally use all the tools we have to protect democracy, human rights, transparency of public administration, and freedom of speech.

Biography

Dr **Joanna Siekiera** is an expert in international law and the Indo-Pacific region, a NATO consultant and educator in legal warfare (lawfare), legal culture in armed conflict, and maritime security. She currently works as an adjunct professor at the Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies in Hawaii, Honolulu, and is also a fellow

at the Atlantic Council in Washington, D.C. Dr Siekiera supports various military institutions as a legal subject matter expert. She has written more than hundred scientific publications in several languages, the book *Regional Policy in the South Pacific* and edited fourteen monographs on international law, international relations, and security.



CLOSING REMARKS

A new world is taking shape. Europe must be part of its design.

Source: *iStock*



Deborah Bergamini
*Member of the Chamber of Deputies,
Foreign Committee Affairs, Rome*



CLOSING REMARKS

Just a few remarks in order to conclude this very relevant session, the first part of this important event, and I want to thank the organisers for thinking that perhaps I am the right person to offer some final remarks for this first part. While listening to the last panel, I was reflecting that this morning the Chamber of Deputies in Rome hosted another important and relevant event regarding the IMEC, the so-called Indo-Mediterranean Corridor. I was impressed by the quality of the debate and by how many stakeholders (institutional, diplomatic, industrial) wanted to be there and took an active part in a discussion aimed at understanding how much the potential of the IMEC could change the future not only for Italy but for the whole of Europe and the entire so-called enlarged Mediterranean. It was an extremely fruitful and very compelling debate.

Why do I say so? I say so because we are now together at a moment of critical relevance to all of us, seeing what is going on across the Middle East, seeing what

is happening in these very hours. And probably the future, to a person of my generation, has never looked so dark. But then, at the same time, I think it is the responsibility of all of us to try to shape this moment in the best way possible, meaning that we have to radically change our ways of behaving, thinking, and being accustomed to certain views or ideas.

And I say this because I am a long-term politician. I have been in Parliament for almost 20 years, and I am an active member of the Committee on Foreign Affairs. I have witnessed the last 20 years of political life in my country, and I have seen many changes. This one is the most incredible change I am living through and this calls upon us.

I truly believe that a new global order is being established, but the problem is that this order cannot be written on paper; it must be constructed, built and shaped together. One word that resonated throughout the debate was *interdependence* or *interconnection*. We thought that globalisation would contribute to a mature sense of interconnection among all the populations of the world. That vision failed; it is no longer real. The result of failed globalisation, in the sense in which we had written it on paper, is that we are all experiencing growing tensions, growing conflicts, growing blended or hybrid threats to the liberty and quality of life of everyone in the world. So we need to find a new path. We need to believe in a different way. But we need to do it together.

What I think is the lesson of failed globalisation is that we truly are interconnected, and we truly need to cooperate in a different way. Yet we are saying this at a moment of the lowest level of cooperation we have experienced since the Second World War. So we are in a moment that is really double-faced. And this requires the best of us, really the best of our efforts.

Now, when it comes to my country, for example, I think that the awareness of how much interconnection is driving all our lives is growing. And this is also thanks to work being done in politics. For example, in the Committee on Foreign Affairs we approved a very well-executed, in-depth analysis about the potential and challenges of the Indo-Pacific region for Italy and Europe. And of course, the conclusion of that very well-done work was that we need a strategy. We do not have one. It has already been difficult simply to become aware of what the Indo-Pacific actually is. The Indo-Pacific accounts for 70% of global economic growth, 35% of global wealth, and will represent over half of global GDP by 2050. This is the Indo-Pacific. And this is why it is a priority even for a seemingly far-away country such as Italy, within the framework, of course, of the EU and NATO. So we need a strategy.

But Europe is dealing with some priorities that are interconnected with the Indo-Pacific yet not resolved. Our new relationship with the USA. Let's be frank: we need to reshape it. We need to become closer than we have been in the last

few decades. We have been losing one another. And we need to rebuild that trust, that habit, and that mutual capability of seeing each other that are required of important allies.

But at the same time, Europe is facing another problem: the problem of how sincere we should be with the public in relation to the increased need to build security, including military security. We are having a hard time as politicians. We do not know how much to calibrate the message that we must share with our public opinions concerning the future of the European Union, which I consider the most amazing, incredible, fascinating political architecture created since the Second World War. A visionary project. But again, stuck. And one of the key questions is a common army. How do we deal with that? With a public that, because of the many complexities they face in their daily lives and in the current situation, are asking only for peace and security and do not want to hear a single word about armies, weapons, war, or conflicts. How sincere should we be? This is a major existential issue for the future of the European Union.

So, when I say that I am a strong believer in the need for a thorough change of attitude, this also concerns the Indo-Pacific, because it is true that within the Indo-Pacific dimension we have more or less the same problems. If we need to learn again, as Europe, to defend ourselves (because NATO cannot do everything for everyone as it has done so far) we will be focused on that. And before we solve that, we will be weaker in our political presence outside our borders. If we are not clear about how we will deal with a common army or not, we will be weaker outside our borders. There will be a real lack of strategy, whereas this is the moment in which strategy is most needed for Europe to be reinforced as a free part of the world that wishes, and is trying, to advocate for freedom, liberty, democracy and the rule of law.

The challenges are very big and very urgent, but because I am a politician, I have to be optimistic, otherwise I might as well change my job. I also think that, by listening to panels such as the one that has just taken place, or this morning's event on the IMEC Corridor, or many other opportunities and multilateral contexts, I believe we are learning, perhaps slowly, perhaps with some uncertainty, but we are beginning to think in a different way. We are beginning to truly understand the real meaning of the word *cooperation*, which should include defence cooperation, industrial cooperation, cultural cooperation, knowledge cooperation. We are becoming more and more aware that we are on the verge of a new world, a totally new world. And I do not necessarily think that the new world will be worse than the one we are living in today. Actually, I am a strong believer in technological innovation. I am also a strong believer in the capabilities of artificial intelligence, provided that it is developed by liberal countries, not authoritarian ones.

I believe that the lesson of failed globalisation has been learned. I believe that we are discovering that we human beings are becoming more aware and more intelligent, and perhaps also more sensitive to what is real, rather than what is presented as real.

So the challenge is huge, but I think that through the ongoing work we are doing together, we will manage. So be ready. Let us all be ready for important choices, but also for a future that will bring us more benefits than we probably expect today.

Biography

Honourable **Deborah Bergamini** is an Italian Member of Parliament since 2008. Before entering Parliament, she built a career in journalism, working for several national and international media outlets, including Bloomberg. She also served as co-editor of the daily newspaper *Il Riformista*. In addition, she held the role of Marketing Director at RAI and sat on the boards of directors of RAI International and RAI Trade. Honourable Bergamini has served as Vice-Chair of the *Transport,*

Post and Telecommunications Committee and as a member of the Foreign Affairs Committee. She was also Vice-President of the Italian Delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. Throughout her parliamentary career, she has focused on the protection of human rights and the rule of law, with particular attention to women's rights. She has also worked to strengthen political relations between Italy and the countries of North Africa.





OPENING REMARKS

"Indo Pacific 2025. Prevention and Dialogue". Rome, 18 June 2025.

Source: NATO Defense College Foundation

**Elena Grech**

*Deputy Head, European Commission
Representation in Italy, Rome*

OPENING REMARKS

The global order, as we all know, is undergoing a profound rebalancing. As we meet in 2025, the Indo-Pacific hosts seven of the world's ten largest armies, and four of these states are nuclear powers. The region also encompasses some of the most vital maritime routes on the planet: the Straits of Malacca, the South China Sea and Bab el-Mandeb. These sea lanes carry over 60% of global maritime trade, connecting Arab production hubs with European markets and beyond. For the European Union, 24 member states of the EU are NATO members, leaving only three out. Therefore, the region is very important, because the Indo-Pacific is not just a distant place but a region of immediate and growing strategic relevance.

Europe's prosperity is inseparably tied to its stability. The world's prosperity is tied to its stability. The EU is the region's top foreign investor and a major trade partner. European exports and imports flow through Indo-Pacific waters, and

the EU's key interests (from open markets to climate resilience and maritime security) are increasingly shaped by dynamics unfolding to the east. Indo-Pacific nations alone accounted for roughly 130 to 137 billion € in trade with the EU in the fiscal year 2023-2024. Yet this opportunity-rich region is also marked by intensifying strategic competition, especially between the US and China, escalating military build-ups and risks to the rules-based international order. Europe must therefore assert a balanced and principled presence, promoting multilateralism and safeguarding maritime freedoms without being drawn into great-power confrontation. At the same time, climate change, supply chain fragility and governance challenges threaten both local and global stability. For Europe, the Indo-Pacific presents a critical test.

To remain a credible geopolitical actor, the EU must be present, principled and proactive. In this regard, in September 2021, the EU unveiled its Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific. Far from being a mere declaration of intent, the Strategy reflects the Union's ambition to deepen engagement across seven key domains, including sustainable prosperity, the green transition, ocean governance, digital partnerships, infrastructure and connectivity, security and defence, and human security.

The EU's approach is guided by three core principles: *inclusivity*, meaning cooperation with all regional partners; *openness*, ensuring that partnerships are not exclusive or coercive; and a *long-term perspective*, recognising that regional integration and stability are generational undertakings. Crucially, the EU's Indo-Pacific engagement is a pivot for Europe's own strategic autonomy, resilience and global credibility. This strategy is being operationalised through bilateral and multilateral partnerships, concrete projects under the Global Gateway Initiative, and a growing presence in diplomatic, commercial and security fora throughout the region.

At the diplomatic level, the EU has significantly elevated its Indo-Pacific presence. Since the 2022 EU-ASEAN Commemorative Summit, Brussels has hosted successive Indo-Pacific ministerial fora, with the most recent in February 2024 bringing together over 60 delegations from Asia and Europe. The turning point, however, came in February 2025 with President Ursula von der Leyen's landmark visit to India, accompanied by the full College of European Commissioners, 27 in total. This was the first time under the new Commission mandate that the entire team travelled together to a non-European power, and India was not chosen by chance. This historic mission underlined the centrality of India in Europe's Indo-Pacific vision. During the visit, the EU and India reaffirmed their commitment to concluding a comprehensive free trade agreement by the end of 2025.

The message was unambiguous: Europe does not simply seek trade flows, but trusted, values-based partnerships with Indo-Pacific democracies. The region is on the front line of climate disruption. Climate change is a daily reality. It accounts for more than 60% of global carbon emissions, making cooperation essential to global mitigation efforts. In order to tackle these challenges, the EU has stepped up accordingly, and since 2022 it has provided over 3,5 billion € in climate finance to Indo-Pacific partners. In 2024, the EU and Pacific island countries launched the EU-Pacific Resilience Facility, focused on disaster preparedness, climate adaptation and environmental monitoring. Equally, the EU's Blue Economy Partnership promotes ocean governance, marine biodiversity protection and efforts to combat illegal fishing, an existential threat for many coastal communities. These actions reflect a European commitment to climate justice and sustainable development, anchored in shared global responsibility.

Trade is the backbone of EU-Indo-Pacific relations, especially in the current geopolitical situation. The EU is already the region's second-largest trading partner. Comprehensive trade agreements are in force with Japan, Singapore, South Korea and Vietnam. Talks have resumed with India, Indonesia and Thailand, and in 2023 the EU concluded a free trade agreement with New Zealand. Yet beyond trade liberalisation, the EU is investing in resilient connectivity. Through the Global Gateway, more than 12 billion € is being deployed in strategic transport, digital and energy infrastructure, from high-speed rail in Indonesia to fibre-optic cables linking the Indian Ocean to East Africa.

Europe is also taking steps to secure its own economic future. Partnerships with Australia on critical raw materials and with Japan and South Korea on semiconductors and digital standards aim to reduce strategic dependencies and bolster Europe's technological sovereignty. European participation in regional security has evolved significantly. The 2022 Strategic Compass expressly tasks the EU with promoting maritime security in the Indo-Pacific, underscoring a shift from distant observer to active enabler. Since then, EU member states including France, Germany and Italy have deployed naval vessels for joint exercises and freedom of navigation operations. The Coordinated Maritime Presence Initiative, operational in the north-western Indian Ocean since 2022, enhances maritime domain awareness.

Bilateral and multilateral naval exercises are increasing. Europe is training alongside Indian, Japanese and Southeast Asian naval forces. Security cooperation also spans training, maritime patrols, cybersecurity and counterterrorism with partners such as the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. A dedicated Cyber-Asian Dialogue, launched in 2024, addresses emerging hybrid threats, underscoring Europe's holistic view of security. This layered approach, from

presence to partnership, reinforces European credibility as a security actor, whilst remaining anchored in multilateralism.

By way of conclusion, in 2025 we stand at a strategic inflection point. Europe's presence in the Indo-Pacific has moved from policy statements to purposeful action, a multidimensional engagement that aligns trade, climate, security and diplomacy under a coherent strategy. Whether through flagship infrastructure, shared climate action, trade deals, defence dialogues or democratic support, the EU is translating its Indo-Pacific strategy into concrete, visible impact. It does not do so to confront, but to cooperate and empower.

As President von der Leyen stated in New Delhi earlier this year, this is a moment for pragmatism and ambition, and for reimagining Europe's role in a region that will determine our collective future. The EU's Indo-Pacific engagement is ultimately about ensuring that Europe remains not just relevant but reliable, as a partner for peace, prosperity and principled leadership in an increasingly contested world.

Biography

Ms **Elena Grech** has served as a European civil servant, holding several senior positions, including Head of Unit at the European Commission and leading the European Representation in Malta. She is currently Deputy Head of the European Commission

Representation in Rome. Ms Grech holds a law degree from the University of Malta and began her career in the Maltese diplomatic service. She was part of the negotiation team that led Malta's accession to the European Union in 2004.



SPECIAL INTERVENTION

When rules prevail over power, stability becomes possible.

Source: Wikimedia Commons





Siddhartha Chakrabarti

*Deputy Head of Mission,
Australian Embassy to Italy, Rome*

SPECIAL INTERVENTION

It is a privilege to speak with you today about the Indo-Pacific, a region whose stability and prosperity are increasingly vital to Europe's own strategic future. It is not a distant theatre; it is a dynamic, interconnected region that drives global growth, innovation and security. It is also a region under pressure, from coercive state behaviour, contested maritime claims, and the erosion of international norms. Australia's message is simple: we cannot take peace for granted, and we cannot preserve it through military strength alone. We must invest in dialogue, diplomacy, and the rules-based order that has underpinned global security for decades. This order, though imperfect, has enabled smaller states to thrive, constrained the arbitrary use of force, and fostered the greatest period of shared prosperity in human history.

It is also not a Western construct. It is a global achievement, shaped by voices from Europe, Asia, and the Global South. Yet today, that order is under strain.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine is a stark reminder of what happens when power is placed above principle, and its implications are not confined to Europe. The strategic alignment we see amongst a number of states is reshaping the global security landscape. Australia is responding with resolve. For example, we are doubling our defence investment to \$100 billion annually by the mid-2030s. But we are equally committed to diplomacy, because deterrence without dialogue risks miscalculation and miscalculation is the greatest threat we face.

Recent efforts across the Indo-Pacific show that dialogue is not only possible; it is essential. ASEAN continues to serve as a vital platform for regional diplomacy, and we were honoured to mark 50 years as ASEAN's first dialogue partner this year. India's Raisina Dialogue and Japan's leadership in regional security forums have brought together diverse voices to reinforce shared norms, and the EU's own Indo-Pacific strategy has been a strong signal of Europe's growing engagement in the region.

We welcome the strategy, because the Indo-Pacific needs Europe not just as a trading partner, but as a voice for peace, sovereignty, and international law. We are already working closely together. There is the presence of European navies in the Pacific, joint exercises, and defence industrial cooperation, and these are all signs of a growing trans-regional commitment to stability. And you may have seen or you may not because it was overnight that at the G7 in Canada, Prime Minister Albanese and Presidents von der Leyen and Costa agreed to start negotiations on a security and defence partnership between Australia and the EU. Like similar partnerships, our partnership will provide a framework for cooperation, including on defence industry, cyber, and counter-terrorism. It will strengthen cooperation on global security challenges at a time of global uncertainty.

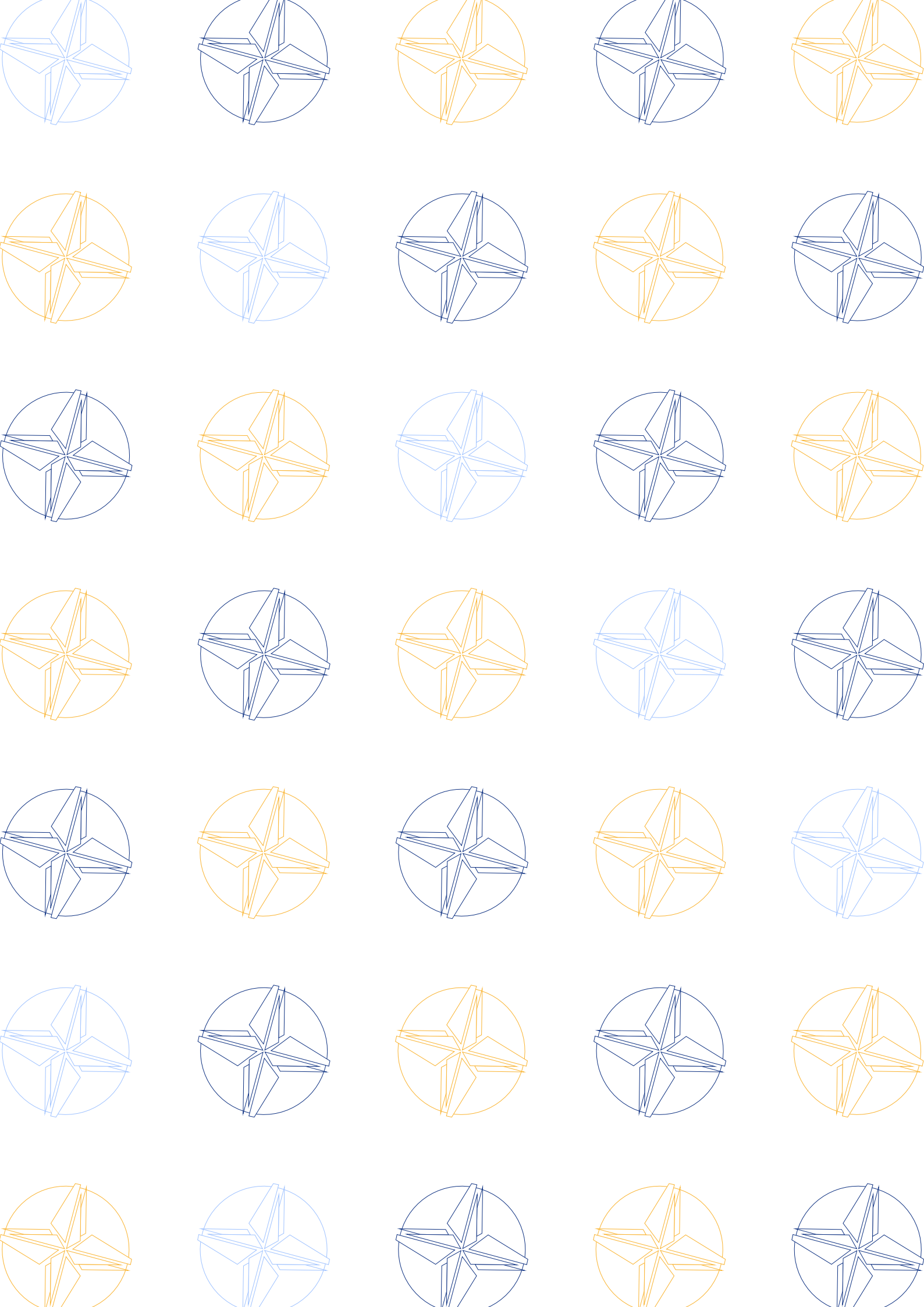
We are also deepening our partnerships across the region, from the US and Japan to India, Indonesia, and the Philippines. As Prime Minister Albanese said yesterday, it is our collective responsibility to work together to uphold peace, security, and economic prosperity. We seek a region where sovereignty is respected and where disputes can be resolved through dialogue.

We believe Europe and the Indo-Pacific are bound by shared values and shared interests. As President von der Leyen said yesterday, we are also bound by shared security interests. We believe that, working together through diplomacy, deterrence, and principled engagement, we can prevent conflict and build a future defined not by division but by cooperation.

Biography

Deputy Head of Mission **Siddhartha Chakrabarti** is an experienced Australian diplomat with a career spanning multiple international postings and senior roles within the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. He has been posted to Indonesia, Ethiopia, Vanuatu, and the Solomon Islands, and has worked on global crises, including responding to

the conflict in Israel and Palestine. He currently serves as Deputy Head of Mission in Rome and Deputy Permanent Representative to the World Food Programme. He holds a Bachelor of Laws and Bachelor of Economics from the University of Western Australia, and a Master of Arts with honours in Political Economy from the Australian National University.





Can transnational security challenges
serve as a foundation for a broader
and more inclusive **regional security
dialogue** in the Indo-Pacific?



THIRD PANEL

Emerging and mutating challenges

June 2025, London. A meeting between US and Chinese delegations marked an important opportunity for dialogue on tariffs, reflecting both the strategic rivalry between the two powers and their shared need to engage on global and regional security challenges.

Source: Il Sole 24 Ore

“Cyberspace is one of
these sorts of instances,
in terms of conflict domains,
where the Alliance gets challenged.”



CHAIR

Gorana Grgić

*Senior Researcher, ETH Zürich's Center for
Security Studies (CSS), Zurich*

Biography

Dr **Gorana Grgić** is the Head of Global Security Team at the ETH Zürich's Center for Security Studies. She is also a non-resident Senior Scholar at the United States Studies Centre at the University of Sydney and a non-resident Senior Fellow at the Atlantic Council's Scowcroft Center for Strategy and Security. Gorana's

research interests include US and EU foreign policy, NATO, and the nexus between Euro-Atlantic and Indo-Pacific security. She has held academic and advisory roles across institutions in Europe, Australia, and the United States, and frequently contributes to international media. She is Monocle media's security correspondent.

**Ivo Schutte**

*Head of Division, Indo Pacific, European
External Action Service, Brussels*

THE EUROPEAN ROLE IN STRENGTHENING COLLABORATION IN THE REGION

First, I would like to thank the NATO Defence College Foundation very much for organising this interesting event, and also for inviting the European institutions today, for inviting the EEAS and the European Commission. Indeed, thanks again for the very interesting exchanges yesterday, and on several occasions I really thought that there was a need to add the European perspective to what was being said. So today we have the chance to do that.

Maybe just to recall some of the points that came up yesterday, where I thought, “Oh, this is where we are already working”. For example, one of the speakers referred to the need to work with partners in the Indo-Pacific on space. Well, in fact, you may have seen that last week High Representative Kallas, during his dialogue with the Foreign Minister of India, Jaishankar, agreed to launch a formal space dialogue with them. So this is something that we are actively working on. Yesterday, one of the speakers also pointed to the fact that we need

to focus much more on working with the Indian Ocean. Well, just last month the EU participated for the first time as a dialogue partner in a ministerial meeting of the Indian Ocean Rim Association, IORA.

It is therefore good that we now have the opportunity to go a little bit deeper into what we are doing as the EU. One of the speakers yesterday mentioned that Europe is making up for lost time in the Indo-Pacific; well, I take that very much as encouragement. Elena Grech set the stage and laid the basis for some of the developments on the EU side in the Indo-Pacific. I will try to go into some of those particular issues. We are not focusing only on hard security as the EU, we have a holistic approach to the region, which underpins our strategy for cooperation in the Indo-Pacific. The aim of our strategy is to promote a free and open Indo-Pacific, to reinforce a rules-based international order, and to address global challenges.

And indeed, it is a very multi-dimensional strategy. The seven priority areas that we have in that strategy have already been mentioned. Going back to 2021, when we prepared it, I think at the time the EU's main image, at least in the region, was really that of a key trading partner, and for some, a key provider of development aid and, in certain cases, humanitarian assistance. But, as was also mentioned this morning, from the outset it was very clear for the EU that there is a strong link between the prosperity of the Indo-Pacific region and that of Europe. And that this link, this trade linkage, brings strong vulnerabilities, and therefore the need to work together to preserve stability and security. To this was added another dimension, with the current interlinkages between security theatres in Europe and in the Indo-Pacific. Russia's engagement with China and with the DPRK is a destabilising factor on both sides. Therefore, I think four years into the implementation of the Indo-Pacific strategy, both the focus and the perception of the EU have changed.

The EU itself has shifted gear, of course. We are faced with developments in our neighbourhood and beyond. And, as HRVP Kallas said at the Shangri-La Dialogue last month, the EU has reimagined its paradigm as a peace project backed up by hard defence. And the EU is becoming a global security partner, notably in the Indo-Pacific. I will say a little more on security and defence, which is a priority of our strategy.

First, back to the overall approach. For us, everything starts with partnerships, both bilateral (between the EU and individual Indo-Pacific partners) but also, very importantly, by supporting regional groupings and initiatives, which is, of course, in our DNA as the EU. And, as was discussed extensively yesterday, there are many such groupings. The EU has signed up to IMEC. We really want to make it happen once the conditions are right in terms of regional stability. I

already mentioned IORA. And obviously, we are a strategic partner of ASEAN. We are also joining the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative.

Then, coming back to this holistic approach and the different priority areas: as underlined yesterday, there can be no stability if we do not focus on the green transition. We support partners in the Indo-Pacific to develop in a sustainable way, helping them to fight climate change. We have Just Energy Transition Partnerships with Indonesia and Vietnam. We have the EU-Japan Green Alliance, the Green-Blue Alliance for the Pacific, etc.

Digital is another area where we are devoting a lot of attention. We have concluded digital partnerships with Japan, Korea and Singapore. And we are negotiating digital trade agreements with both Singapore and Korea. We are also working increasingly with partners on foreign information manipulation and interference.

Holistic for us also means that our approach to the Indo-Pacific covers the entire route linking us with the region. The Western Indian Ocean is, of course, a gateway into the Indo-Pacific, and stability and freedom of navigation are vital. We are supporting our partners in the Western Indian Ocean in dealing with maritime security, maritime pollution, and illegal and unregulated fishing activities.

Now, coming back to what I said before about how the EU is contributing more and more to regional security. In the current complex and volatile environment, the defence and security dimension of our engagement has become more important. Last November, we adopted security and defence partnerships with Japan and with Korea, the first such partnerships outside Europe. And, as was just mentioned, as we speak there is now an intention and commitment to establish a security and defence partnership with Australia. And last week, again at the strategic dialogue between the EU and India, there was agreement that there is a very strong case for having the same with India.

We are also continuing to enhance regional security in the Indo-Pacific through more operational cooperation. Joint naval exercises with Indo-Pacific partners have been mentioned. Operation Atalanta has conducted successful exercises with Djibouti, India, Indonesia, Japan and Korea. We have our EU-funded programme on enhancing security cooperation in and with Asia, which has led to very practical cooperation in key non-traditional areas such as counter-terrorism, cyber security, maritime security and crisis management. A major focus of our work is also on maritime security awareness, where we have launched operational cooperation on building maritime domain awareness with partner countries in the region, involving a total of 50 countries. And we are also working on interoperability of maritime systems with partners.

Just to point out one issue that shows the EU's role as a convening partner with the region: the forum that Elena Grech mentioned. We are now, and I know very well because my team has to prepare this, starting the preparations for the next ministerial forum. We have already held three Indo-Pacific ministerial forums, with 70 participants at ministerial level from both Europe and the region. The next session is coming up in November.

Biography

Mr **Ivo Schutte** is a European Union official with extensive experience in EU foreign policy and external relations. He began his career at the European Parliament in 2002 as a Parliamentary Assistant, before serving as Policy Adviser for Foreign Affairs and Enlargement in 2003. In 2007, he worked as EU Advocacy Manager

and, in 2009, joined the European Commission in the Turkey Unit. In 2014, he became part of the European External Action Service (EEAS), where he has held various positions related to EU external action. Since April 2025, he has been Head of Division for Asia-Pacific Regional / Indo-Pacific at the European External Action Service.



Christina Schori Liang

Head of Counterterrorism and Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE), Geneva Centre for Security Policy (GCSP), Geneva

PERSISTENT AND EMERGING TERRORIST THREATS: NEW IDEAS FOR COOPERATION

Good morning. Today, I would like to reflect on the forces that are driving the growing nexus between terrorism, illicit trade, and piracy - and, finally, on how we might strengthen our responses to these challenges in a more sustainable and forward-looking way.

I often ask my students at Sciences Po a simple but fundamental question: what are the key factors truly responsible for maritime terrorism and for the convergence of piracy and armed robbery at sea? After the rich discussions we shared yesterday, I believe that many of you are already keenly aware of the answers. Still, I would like to highlight several drivers that stand out.

First, there is the resurgence of geopolitical competition. Second, we are witnessing the persistent - and in many cases deepening - weakness of states: weakened by the aftershocks of COVID-19, by internal conflicts and wars, and by the growing pressures of global trade rivalries. Added to this is climate change, a

powerful threat multiplier that increasingly enables both terrorists and criminal networks. Technology, including the rise of crypto-assets, has further expanded their reach and capabilities.

At the heart of all this lies what is arguably the defining contest of our time: the geopolitical struggle. Many of you see it unfold daily in the headlines. It is a struggle over technological dominance, over quantum capabilities - in short, over who holds the keys to the castle.

This is why maritime security deserves our close attention. Nearly 80% of this region is maritime space. Moreover, this region is projected to become, within the next two decades, the most populous, the wealthiest, and the most economically developed area in the world. As the data we examined earlier made clear, an extraordinary share of global activity - commercial, strategic, and criminal alike - is already concentrated here, at the crossroads of the world's oceans.

When we speak of maritime security, we must take a truly holistic view - one that encompasses the marine environment, economic development, national security, and, critically, human security. It is at the intersection of these four dimensions that maritime security acquires its full meaning and relevance. While our discussions understandably tend to focus on national security, we must never lose sight of human security, for it is precisely the erosion of human security that so often fuels terrorism and organized crime across the region.

The question, then, is how should we prepare for the emerging scenarios of maritime terrorism. We already see attacks on vessels, the hijacking of ships, and assaults on critical maritime infrastructure. Looking ahead, however, an even more troubling challenge looms: the growing use of unmanned underwater vehicles. These systems pose significant and largely invisible risks, demanding far greater investment in maritime defense, surveillance, and intelligence capabilities if we want to stay ahead of this new threat.

COVID-19 has emerged as a profound disruptor of maritime security, affecting the region in multiple and interrelated ways. The pandemic severely constrained states' ability to sustain maritime patrols and enforcement operations. At the same time, poverty and unemployment surged, generating deep economic distress in countries such as Indonesia, Bangladesh, and India. Compounding these challenges was the rapid spread of misinformation and conspiracy theories linked to COVID-19 - a phenomenon discussed at length yesterday - which further eroded social trust and state authority.

Climate change has become an equally powerful enabler of insecurity. Rising sea levels, increasingly destructive typhoons, and prolonged droughts are displacing communities, deepening poverty, and placing immense pressure on already fragile governments. As a result, Exclusive Economic Zones are becoming

ever more difficult to monitor and govern. These ungoverned or under-governed maritime spaces are readily exploited by terrorist networks and organized criminal groups. We are therefore witnessing the growing phenomenon sometimes described as “sea jihad”, with groups such as Abu Sayyaf and Jemaah Islamiyah deliberately exploiting the maritime domain to conduct piracy and undermine regional security.

At the same time, it is important to recognize areas of genuine counterterrorism success - particularly in Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines. These achievements are significant precisely because they rest on a comprehensive approach. Authorities have addressed human security concerns by engaging local grievances, tackling systemic issues such as prison overcrowding, and creating pathways for individuals to disengage from criminal and terrorist networks and the ability to reclaim their lives. Malaysia, in particular, stands out for the professionalism of its intelligence and counterterrorism units. Strong legal frameworks have been paired with sophisticated and well-resourced deradicalization programs, producing outcomes that have proven both effective and durable.

The crime–terror nexus is once again intensifying across the Indo-Pacific. Terrorist organizations are increasingly active in the online domain, while criminal syndicates provide logistical and financial support to terrorist networks. At the same time, terrorists themselves are deeply embedded in a range of criminal activities - a convergence I will elaborate on later. Of particular concern is the rerouting of drug trafficking corridors through active conflict zones, a trend that is contributing to rising instability, most notably in Myanmar’s Golden Triangle. Myanmar, in particular, has become a major hub for methamphetamine production and trafficking, underscoring once again the central role of human security vulnerabilities.

Equally troubling is the growing flow of precursor chemicals originating from China and various parts of India, which are fueling the rapid expansion of synthetic drug markets. This is compounded by the increasing maritime trafficking of finished narcotics, a development that poses serious challenges for regional security. Methamphetamine production and distribution have surged dramatically, and there are clear linkages to climate-induced displacement and economic stress, which further expand the pool of vulnerable populations.

These dynamics underscore the urgent need for enhanced maritime domain awareness. Greater investment is required in satellite surveillance, unmanned aerial systems, and other technologies to monitor illicit activities, including illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing. Regional cooperation platforms are essential. At the same time, technology itself has given rise to a new and highly

adaptive black market, fundamentally transforming how drugs are marketed, sold, and distributed. Increasingly, young people purchase narcotics online, often using cryptocurrencies that operate within concealed illicit ecosystems. Digital tools now enable traffickers to evade regulation, move commodities with unprecedented speed, and stay persistently ahead of law enforcement.

Criminal networks are exploiting the full spectrum of emerging technologies: artificial intelligence, drones, and innovative smuggling techniques, including drone-assisted and postal delivery systems. Their agility demands an equally sophisticated response.

This brings me to what may be the most important question of all: how do we improve our collective responses? Sustained and expanded support for information-sharing mechanisms is critical. Platforms such as the Information Fusion Centre in Singapore, highlighted yesterday, play a vital role, as do the Regional Maritime Information Fusion Centre in Madagascar and the Information Fusion Centres across the Indian Ocean region. These institutions are indispensable not only for real-time intelligence sharing, but also for fostering joint projects, coordinated operations, and deeper cooperation—particularly within and alongside the European Union.

Key Indo-Pacific partners for effective collaboration include Australia, Japan, South Korea, New Zealand, and the ASEAN member states, alongside critical multilateral actors ranging from INTERPOL to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. Together, these partners and institutions form a highly relevant and capable ecosystem for addressing the region's complex maritime security challenges.

This leads naturally to a set of policy recommendations. First, we must strengthen and better resource mechanisms such as RECAP and the Maritime Coordination Centre, which play a vital role in regional cooperation. Expanded training initiatives are essential, as is a far more systematic focus on terrorist financing; the financial strength of terrorist networks directly correlates with their operational reach and strategic relevance. Equally urgent is the need to curb environmental crime, particularly illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing. This requires renewed commitment and enhanced support for institutions such as the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency.

At the national and regional levels, deeper security sector reform is indispensable. This includes greater investment in policing, coast guards, maritime law enforcement, and the development of coherent and forward-looking maritime security strategies. Important work in this area is already underway - for example, through our sister organization, the Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance (DCAF) - but much more remains to be done.

Finally, I would like to advance a broader institutional proposal: the creation of a dedicated United Nations body on maritime security. Such a forum would provide a space where states can both agree to disagree and, crucially, converge around shared maritime challenges. What is currently missing is a truly global framework - a fusion mechanism - that brings together the full spectrum of maritime security concerns. The United Nations could build on existing models, particularly its counterterrorism architecture, including the Global Counter-Terrorism Forum, as a template for cooperation.

Ultimately, maritime security is about safeguarding maritime activity, protecting the marine environment, and confronting evolving security threats. It is simultaneously a human security issue, a national security priority, and an international security imperative. While progress has been made, the scale and complexity of the challenge make clear that much more work still lies ahead.

Biography

Dr **Christina Schori Liang** is Head of Counterterrorism and Preventing Violent Extremism at the Geneva Centre for Security Policy (GCSP) in Geneva, Switzerland. In this capacity, she leads the Geneva Security Debates and designs and directs courses on Preventing Violent Extremism, and Transnational Organised Crime and Security. Dr. Liang is the editor of *Europe for the Europeans: The Foreign and Security Policy of the Populist Radical Right* and a long-standing contributor

to the Global Terrorism Index. Dr. Liang has taught university-level courses since 2002. She previously served as Adjunct Faculty at Boston University from 2008 to 2013 and, since 2016, has been an Adjunct Faculty Member at the Paris School of International Affairs (PSIA), Sciences Po, where she teaches in the Global Risks and Intelligence Studies programs. She holds a PhD in International Relations and an MA in History and International Politics from the Geneva Graduate Institute.



Pietro De Matteis

*Programme Officer for the Indo-Pacific,
NATO HQ, Brussels*

NATO'S PRIORITIES IN THE REGION AND THE DISCUSSION AMONG ALLIES/PARTNERS

When I saw the title of this panel, I thought that's exactly the title we need. If you think of NATO, the organisation started in 1949. So many things have changed. Everything has changed. And actually, I was thinking: if there is one thing that can give a sense of the strength of an organisation or a country or a society, it's the ability to change, to adapt to changes. I worked for the EU for many years as well and both organisations, the EU and NATO, were able to adapt to challenges and grow stronger. Stronger and stronger, challenge after challenge.

That shows the resilience of our organisations, but also of organisations that are strong because of the democracies which underpin them. And I think that is an important element, because democracies may be slow sometimes, but they can adapt. Regimes, when they are tested by challenges, often collapse. So just a point about the title of the panel, which I found very pertinent.

Now, I mentioned that when NATO started, it was focussing on three key domains: protection of the land, the sea, and the air. That is very basic. So if you think of all the emerging things that we discuss now, they were not there. In the late 1990s, we realised that we were relying much more on the information environment, information structures, and networks. And so we started including cyber.

Cyber became a full domain in 2014, actually 2016, and a couple of years earlier we had realised that a cyberattack could become a reason for triggering Article 5, because our security is so reliant on communication infrastructure that a cyberattack could actually impact not only our security as individuals, our data, our hospitals, our businesses, but also imagine a denial of service on some critical infrastructure. This could cause accidents involving planes, airports, and of course, if you have to deploy a military operation to defend your country at that moment, that could have a really lethal impact. Cyber became a domain, and we work to ensure this domain is fully integrated with the other three domains.

Space: maybe back in the 1950s, space was just a distant mirage, but now space is essential for communications. And, even more so in the coming years with low-orbit and medium-orbit satellites, it will become essential for communication, even between citizens, with high-speed internet and so on and so forth. And the control of space, especially ensuring that space is managed in a free and transparent manner, will be an essential global good. So essentially, we also operate in this area, and we realise that there is a dependency, an interdependency, between the private sector and the public sector in the management of space. In some countries they are also trying to militarise space, with clear implications for our own security.

So these are some elements which reflect these emerging challenges. And I think what also matters for us as an organisation, a multilateral organisation which operates for peace through deterrence, is that we are not an aggressive alliance. We are an alliance which builds capacity to defend our citizens from possible attacks. But we have had to adapt over all these years, and we do that in a transparent manner, because we are democracies. We do that by adapting our Strategic Concept. And basically, every ten years or so, you can see which areas we are working on most effectively.

Now, the latest Concept, which was adopted in 2022, a few months after the Russian aggression against Ukraine, essentially outlines the threats and challenges that we are working on daily. Clearly, Russia; we started in 1949, and Russia, the Soviet Union, was the main threat for the Alliance. We worked very hard, especially after the collapse of the Soviet Union, with Russia. We integrated Russia into the European security architecture. We had a NATO-Russia Council

meeting in our building, with them around the table discussing topics with us. Unfortunately, Putin had some hidden plans, focussing on imperial claims. And now, we no longer have these meetings with Russia. The last was in 2022. We tried, but we had to evolve, and we had to stop engaging with Russia.

Another element which is a threat to the Alliance is terrorism, as was mentioned. Terrorism, organised crime, state and non-state actors. This is specifically a non-state asymmetric threat. We actually invoked and triggered Article 5 only once in the history of the Alliance, and that was after 9/11, so it was linked to a terrorist attack. This is an area where we operate.

But then there are all the other areas, which are also listed in the Concept, and I refer to hybrid threats, which are pervasive in our societies. These include cyber: cyberspace, unlike the other domains (land, sea, air) where you clearly see if there is a conflict, in cyberspace there is always conflict. In our Concept, we say that cyberspace is always contested. And in fact, right now, I can bet there is a cyberattack coming from state actors or non-state actors, targeting some countries or citizens around Europe, for instance. Cyberspace is always contested. So that is why we have to enhance our capacity to deter these attacks, to call them out. Often they come from China, from Russia, from Iran, and from other proxies. So we have to be able to deter these more effectively.

There is another key area of hybrid threats which we address very effectively, including in partnership with some partners in the Indo-Pacific, for instance, with Japan. We had a very important meeting earlier in January on this. We realised that autocracies try to attack us in all possible ways. And clearly, the easiest way to attack us is through our own citizens. They try to use disinformation operations, or information threats as we call them. They use existing issues in our societies, existing divisions, because we have divisions; we have problems in our societies; we are not perfect. And then, they use these to further divide society, to polarise debate and to attack us, to undermine the legitimacy of our institutions, to undermine democracy. And this is the most difficult challenge to tackle. And that is why I think these events are so important, because you are multipliers in your communities, and you can raise awareness in conversations with your university students, academics, and others, about the challenges we face.

Only by enhancing resilience, and by resilience I mean understanding the challenges we face together, can we actually be stronger. Because today, most of the challenges we face are below the threshold. It is not just a missile attack, even though those still exist and we see them these days; but in our societies in Europe, challenges are below the threshold. And these are some very important challenges we face.

Now, I just want to mention a couple of points about partnerships. These challenges are global, and you realise that cooperation with partners across the globe is essential, because we face similar challenges with democracies worldwide. So we have a pillar of work which is cooperative security, and specifically with partners in the Pacific (Japan, Korea, Australia, New Zealand) we have developed this partnership.

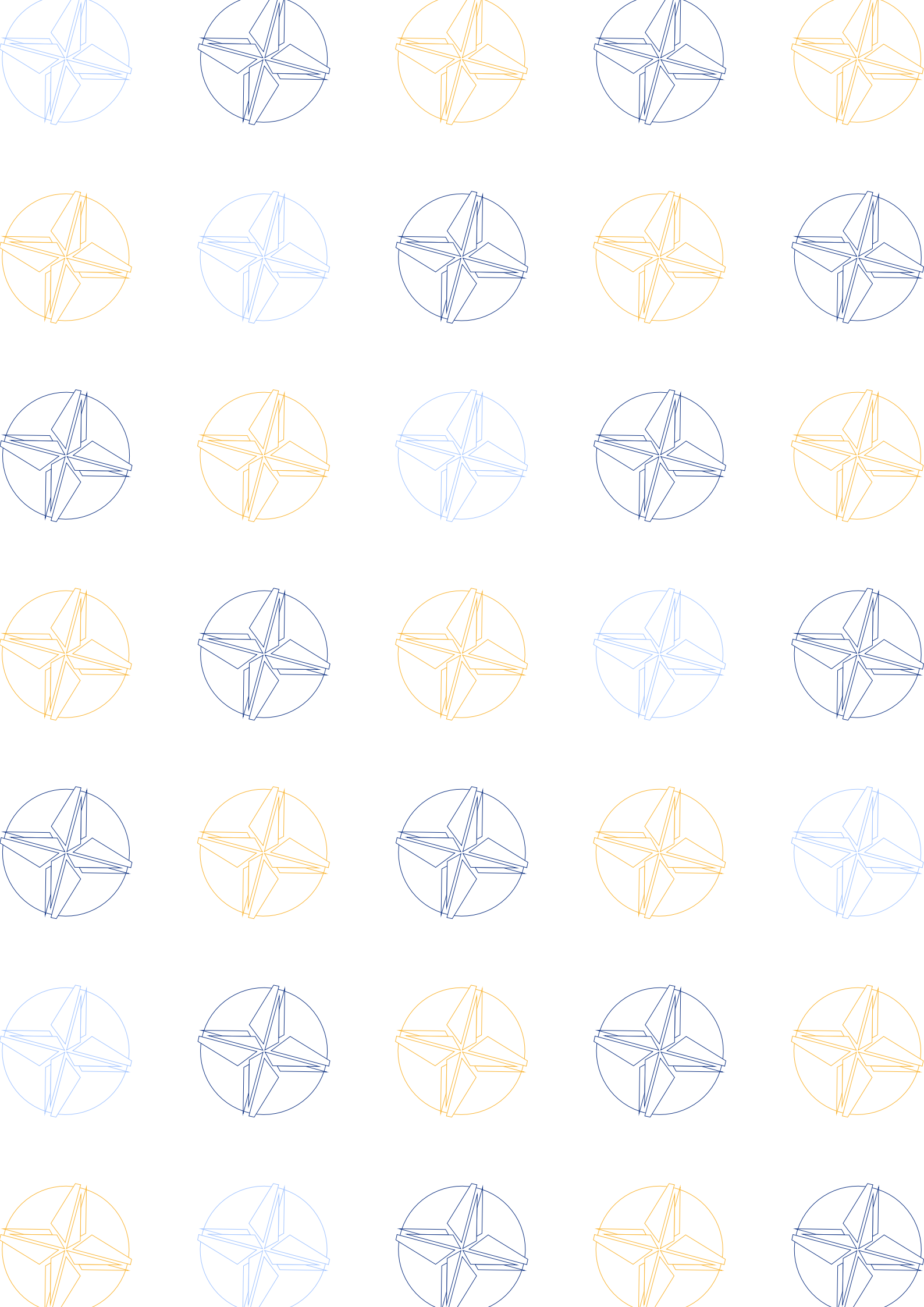
This partnership is structured on very simple programmatic documents. We call them *Individually Tailored Partnership Programmes*, and these cover most of the areas I mentioned earlier today. It is a way to advance cooperation at both political level and in practical terms. So each time we engage with a partner, we have practical cooperation (interoperability exercises on different topics, cyber deployments, and so forth) and then political dialogue on climate change, women, peace and security, cyber, humanitarian aid, counter-terrorism.

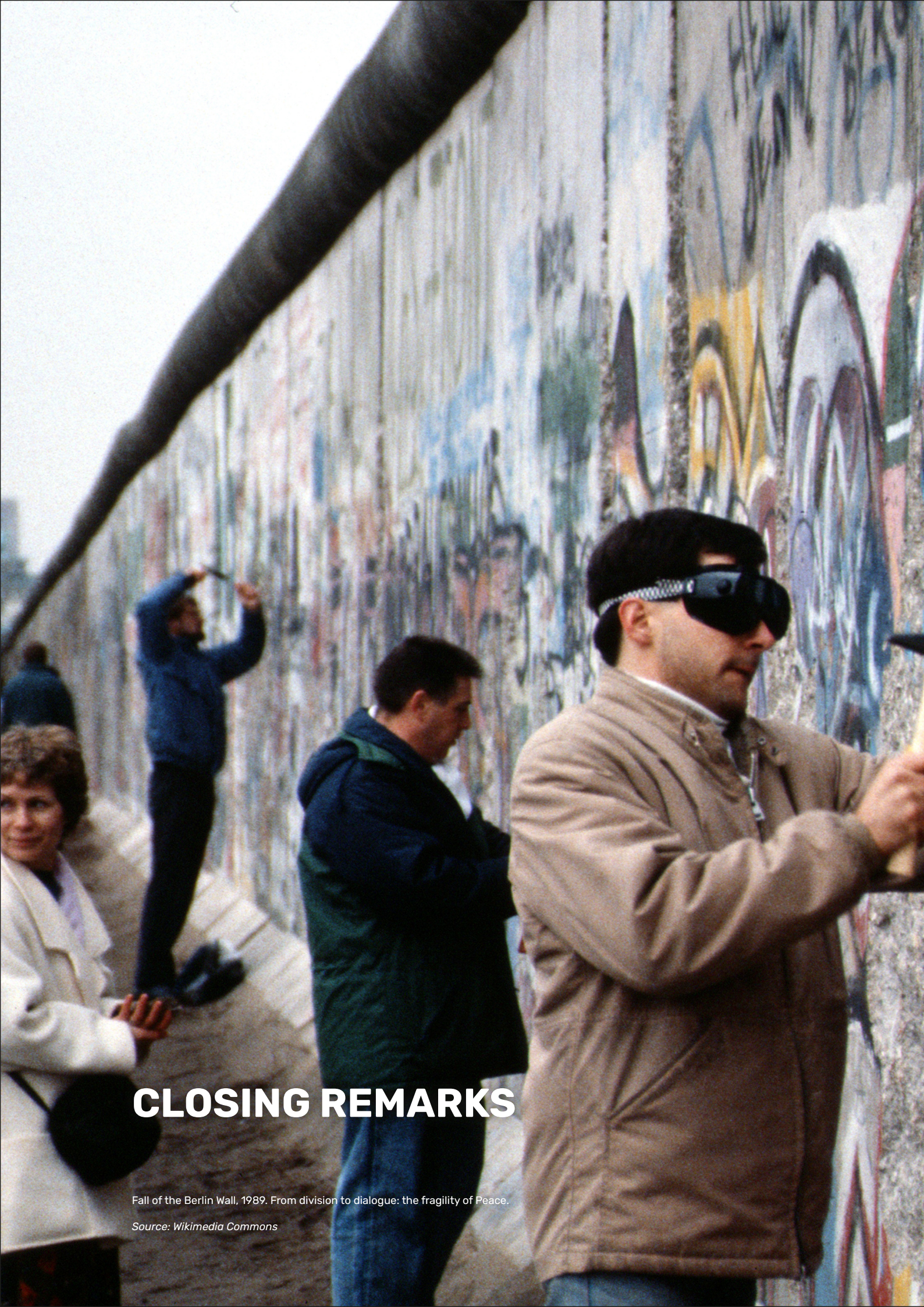
This is a cooperative way of working, because challenges are too big for a single country, and even for an alliance like ours, (even though it is the strongest and longest-standing in history, apparently, as the Secretary-General says) we still need partnerships to address these challenges effectively, and to share good practices. Because if we share good practices, we become more resilient together and better able to tackle these issues, also with our partners across the globe.

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

University of Milan-Bicocca after an Erasmus year at the University of Paris I Panthéon-Sorbonne. He also earned a master's degree from the European College of Parma and has been a visiting scholar at both Columbia University in New York and Renmin University in Beijing. Pietro also served as an elected City Councillor in Brussels (SaintGilles), working to bridge the European project with local communities and has actively supported European citizen engagement through various organizations.





CLOSING REMARKS

Fall of the Berlin Wall, 1989. From division to dialogue: the fragility of Peace.

Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#)





Gun Hwa Kim

*Minister, Embassy of Republic of Korea to Italy,
Rome*

CLOSING REMARKS

I would like to begin my closing remarks with a quick quiz for all of you. Does anyone know what happened exactly 200 years ago today? On 18 June 1815, the Battle of Waterloo took place. This battle, which marked the end of the Napoleonic Wars, subsequently led to the establishment of the Concert of Europe through the Congress of Vienna, based on the principle of the balance of power. This system, in turn, contributed to what is known as the “Long Peace” until the outbreak of the First World War.

In stark contrast, 100 years ago today, the world was engulfed in the First World War, an unprecedented conflict in human history. Meanwhile, 70 years ago, on this very day in 1945, the Second World War was nearing its end, but demanding immense sacrifices. Following the Second World War, humanity began to experience unprecedented peace and prosperity. We, as a society, grew to take peace for granted. We even began to believe that war was an anachronistic relic of the past.

However, reflecting on what happened just 200, 100, and 70 years ago today, we are reminded anew of how precious the peace we enjoy on this very day, 18

June 2025, truly is. Particularly with recent events such as the war in Ukraine and the conflicts in the Middle East, we are keenly aware that peace is by no means a given. Peace is a precious outcome forged by the tireless efforts of humankind.

Furthermore, today we face various crises that cannot be resolved without international cooperation, making peace even more vital. Geopolitical conflicts, the climate crisis, the demographic crisis, political and economic polarisation, and technological changes such as AI that bring about job displacement: these are all issues that humanity must confront and collaborate on together.

Yet, regrettably, human society is currently characterised by fragmentation and confrontation. Even the system of liberal democracy, which has driven post-war peace and prosperity, is facing crises both internally and externally. It is with these profound concerns in mind that we gathered here yesterday and today.

To address the new types of security threats unfolding globally in various forms, cooperation between NATO and its Indo-Pacific partners, including Korea, is a demand of our times. “Glück ist nichts als der Zustand der Schmerzlosigkeit”, “Happiness is nothing more than the absence of pain”. As the German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer said, true value is often only realised when it is lost. The same applies to peace. However, when peace is lost, so much else is easily lost.

Therefore, prevention is paramount. And for prevention, extensive communication (that is, “a dialogue”) is essential. The title of this seminar, “Indo-Pacific 2025: Prevention and Dialogue”, precisely captures this crucial point. Over the past two days, through three panel discussions, I believe we have thoroughly explored practical cooperation measures for the future. I sincerely hope that these discussions will be materialised into effective policies for our era, which faces new security threats.

Biography

Minister **Gun Hwa Kim** joined the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in August 2000. During his diplomatic career, he served in several overseas postings. He was First Secretary at the Embassy in Brazil and later at the Embassy in Spain. He served at the Consulate General in New York and then he was Counselor at the Embassy in Germany. He subsequently returned to Brazil, serving as Minister and Deputy Chief

of Mission. In addition to his overseas assignments, he held positions at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as Director of the South America Division and Deputy Director of the Foreign Policy Bureau. He holds a Bachelor of Arts in International Economics from Kyunghee University in Seoul, Korea, and a Master of Arts in International Relations from the Universidad Complutense of Madrid, Spain.



CLOSING REMARKS

NATO Summit (The Hague), June 2025. NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte meets Indo-Pacific Partners.

Source: NATO



**Andrea Romussi**

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

CLOSING REMARKS

We are one week away from the next NATO summit taking place in The Hague. It is the fourth time in a row that we have invited the heads of state and government of our Indo-Pacific partners: Japan, South Korea, Australia, and New Zealand. So it is very much a partnership already under consolidation, but also under construction.

We all know about the four flagship projects, but indeed there are also other additional topics for cooperation. These have been identified together with the partners as activities of importance for deepening cooperation, including three topics to address the key choke points revealed in the context of support to Ukraine, the Science for Peace and Security Programme, and enhancing the ability to communicate securely. Efforts to address key choke points revealed in the context of support to Ukraine continue to be a key topic of importance, as discussed in the North Atlantic Council with the four partners last May, on

20 May 2025. In the context of NATO's Defence Critical Supply Chain Security Roadmap, the four partners were invited to a workshop organised jointly by the Conference of National Armament Directors and the NATO Science and Technology Board on the recycling and substitution of the 12 NATO defence-critical raw materials, which took place on 19 March 2025.

Looking ahead, the Defence Investment Division is working towards establishing staff-to-staff dialogue with the four partners in a tailor-made approach, in line with the 2024 NATO Industry Capacity Expansion Pledge, the Defence Production Action Plan, and the four partners' individual tailored partnership programmes with NATO, as well as their longstanding cooperation with NATO. Recognising the importance of using the same standards will be key to carrying out these initiatives. As far as the Science for Peace and Security Programme is concerned, representatives of the scientific and academic communities of the four partners have been actively engaged in its deliberations, with a peak in applications in 2024 and similar numbers expected in 2025. The sectors of chemical, biological and nuclear defence, unexploded ordnance, countering improvised explosive devices, and strategic foresight are shared top priorities. Innovation and EDT–Emerging and Disruptive Technologies–related activity has the highest overall number of activities from Australia, Japan, and the Republic of Korea.

Cyber defence is also a leading priority area for research. The last point I mentioned was secure communications. In January 2025, Japan's secure connection to NATO became operational, thus enhancing our ability to communicate securely and share information at the speed of relevance. The Republic of Korea continues to work bilaterally with the NATO Office of Security, including by taking the necessary steps to meet the technical, security, and policy requirements to enable the use of secure information and communication technologies. This is to say that the partnership is dynamic and is not just carried out through the four flagship projects, but also through new activities. In the challenging global security environment, NATO's cooperation with our Indo-Pacific partners is helping Allies address security challenges more effectively and helping our partners in the region to do the same.

We are more secure when we work together. NATO and our four Indo-Pacific partners have a proven track record of tackling a range of security challenges. We are improving our ability to deal with cyber attacks, sharing best practices on artificial intelligence, and deepening our cooperation on defence technology and innovation. As we are all increasing our defence spending and strengthening our military capabilities, we are also increasing our cooperation on defence industrial issues, including through a more focused dialogue on specific multinational

projects on military capabilities. Our Indo-Pacific partners are also providing important support for Ukraine, including by providing non-lethal equipment through NATO's Comprehensive Assistance Package (the CAP) Trust Fund for Ukraine. Australia and New Zealand are also operational partners in the NATO Security Assistance and Training for Ukraine (SATU), while Japan has also indicated its willingness to participate.

Security in Europe impacts the Indo-Pacific and vice versa. Security today is no longer regional; it is global.

In Europe, Russia continues to wage an unprovoked war of aggression against Ukraine. It is ramping up its defence spending. Its economy is on a war footing. And the Kremlin has not given up its ambition to reshape European security. Meanwhile, North Korea and Russia are increasing their cooperation. North Korean troops and weapons are being used against Ukraine. What Pyongyang receives, and will receive, in return from Russia could have serious consequences for the Indo-Pacific region and global security more broadly.

To finish, just a few remarks on the “elephant in the room”: the role of China vis-à-vis NATO. To be clear, the People's Republic of China remains a decisive enabler of Russia's war against Ukraine. The relationship between Moscow and Beijing is getting stronger, and China's large-scale support for Russia's defence industrial base increases the threat Russia poses to its neighbours and to Euro-Atlantic security more broadly. The PRC's challenges to our security, our interests, and our values go beyond its support for Russia. Beijing is pursuing a major military build-up, including the expansion of its nuclear arsenal, without transparency. We have seen hostile hybrid activities, including information manipulation, political interference, and particularly cyber operations against Allies, emanating from China. China also seeks to control key technologies, critical infrastructure, and supply chains.

Countries with deep ties to Russia and North Korea, especially China, must use their influence to uphold international law by opposing Moscow's and Pyongyang's dangerous expansion of Russia's aggression against Ukraine. At the same time, we want to maintain a proactive and constructive approach vis-à-vis China, to engage and to seek constructive dialogue on military transparency. And we call on Beijing to cooperate constructively on arms control, disarmament, and non-proliferation.

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.



Indo Pacific 2025

Prevention and Dialogue

High-Level Conference
Organised by the NATO Defense College Foundation

In co-operation with the
Fondazione CSF, Fondazione Compagnia di San Paolo, the Center for Security Studies (ETH Zurich), International Council on Environmental Economics and Development (ICEED), and the NATO Defense College

Rome, Tuesday, the 17th and Wednesday, the 18th of June 2025
Venue: Hotel Quirinale, via Nazionale 7

TUESDAY, THE 17TH OF JUNE

14,30 – 15,00 CET
PARTICIPANTS ARRIVAL AND REGISTRATION

15,00 – 15,15 CET
WELCOME REMARKS

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

- ✦ **Max A.L.T. Nielsen**, Commandant, NATO Defense College, Rome
- ✦ **Ken Kitatani**, Chief of Executive Board and Committee, International Council on Environmental Economics and Development (ICEED), New York

15,15 – 15,25 CET

OPENING REMARKS

- ✦ **Pietro De Matteis**, Programme Officer for the Indo-Pacific, NATO HQ, Brussels

15,25 – 16,25 CET

FIRST PANEL

The Indo-Pacific and Its Partnership

The Indo-Pacific is lacking a shared security vision and architecture, while different partnerships are characterising the region. How can existing partnerships be developed in order to ensure security? At the Washington Summit in July 2024 the four regional partners (Australia, New Zealand, Japan and South Korea) were invited again. What role for the new Indo-Pacific partners? How could new and old ones work together with other groupings? By which means confidence building measures can be set up and security cooperation fostered?

CHAIR: **Giulia Tercovich**, Deputy Director, Centre for Security, Diplomacy and Strategy (CSDS), Brussels

- ✦ **Walter Di Martino**, Head, North Eastern Asia Office, Directorate General for Global Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Rome
- ✦ **Kaush Arha**, President of the Free & Open Indo-Pacific Forum, Institute for Tech Diplomacy, Atlantic Council, Washington
- ✦ **Amaia Sánchez-Cacicedo**, Non-Resident Senior Fellow, Asia Program, Institut Montaigne, Madrid
- ✦ **Christina Lin**, Senior Non-Resident Associate Fellow, NATO Defense College, Rome

Q&A Session

16,25 – 16,35 CET

SPECIAL INTERVENTION

- ✦ *Rajendra Abhyankar*, former ambassador, visiting professor, School of Public and Environmental Affairs, Indiana University, Bloomington

17,00 – 18,00 CET

SECOND PANEL

The Hybrid Dimension

The Indo-Pacific region has developed an intense hybrid warfare activity since the fall of the Soviet Union (Iraq, Afghanistan, war on terror, Korea and recently in Pacific hotspots), dating back to very long-standing traditions. What are the specifics of the region? Which NATO experiences can be applied and which innovations are required? Is it possible to conceive regional centres to combat disinformation and hybrid threats across the board?

CHAIR: *Alexandra Sakaki*, Deputy Head of Asia Research Division, German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP), Berlin

- ✦ *Mihoko Matsubara*, Chief Cybersecurity Strategist, Nippon Telegraph and Telephone (NTT), Tokyo
- ✦ *Gabriele Abbondanza*, International relations academic, Comillas Pontifical University (Spain), University of Sydney (Australia), Istituto Affari Internazionali (Italy)
- ✦ *Joanna Siekiera*, Adjunct Professor, Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies, Honolulu, USA - Fellow, Indo-Pacific Security Initiative, Atlantic Council, Washington, D.C.

Q&A Session

18,00 – 18,15 CET

CLOSING REMARKS

- ✦ *Deborah Bergamini*, Member of the Chamber of Deputies, Foreign Committee Affairs, Rome

END OF FIRST WORKING DAY

WEDNESDAY, THE 18TH OF JUNE

10,30 – 11,00 CET

PARTICIPANTS ARRIVAL, WELCOME COFFEE AND REGISTRATION

11,00 – 11,10 CET

OPENING REMARKS

- ✦ *Elena Grech*, Deputy Head, European Commission Representation in Italy, Rome

11,10 – 11,15 CET

SPECIAL INTERVENTION

- ✦ *Siddhartha Chakrabarti*, Deputy Head of Mission & PSO, Australian Embassy to Italy, Rome

11,15 – 12,15 CET

THIRD PANEL

Emerging and mutating challenges

The relations between China and the USA are the visible part of an overall regional security dimension that includes persistent challenges: subversion, organised crime, climate change and illegal trafficking. They are all identified either sooner or later by NATO's summit declarations or by different strategic concepts. What are the main impacts of these challenges on the area? How can allies and partners better combine their efforts? Can these challenges be part of a wider security dialogue?

CHAIR: *Gorana Grgić*, Senior Researcher, ETH Zürich's Center for Security Studies (CSS), Zurich

- ✦ *Ivo Schutte*, Head of Division, Indo Pacific, European External Action Service, Brussels
- ✦ *Christina Schori Liang*, Head of Counterterrorism and Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE), Geneva Centre for Security Policy (GCSP), Geneva
- ✦ *Pietro De Matteis*, Programme Officer for the Indo-Pacific, NATO HQ, Brussels

Q&A Session

**12,15 – 12,35 CET
CLOSING REMARKS**

- ✦ **Gun Hwa Kim**, Minister, Embassy of Republic of Korea to Italy, Rome
- ✦ **Andrea Romussi**, Head, Office for NATO, Security and Political-Military Strategic Issues, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Rome

END OF SECOND WORKING DAY

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INDO-PACIFIC
High level conference

Confidence
Cooperation
in Asia-Pacific



International Partnership
for Sustainable Development
and Humanitarianism



The world
is changing

THE 2025 CONFERENCE ON
PREVENTION AND DIALOGUE

The booklet of the event "*Indo-Pacific 2025. Prevention and Dialogue*", a significant opportunity for dialogue and the exchange of ideas on this strategically important region.

Source: NATO Defense College Foundation



