



ROYAL DANISH DEFENCE COLLEGE

Post Conference Report
NDU-RDDC Roundtable

SECURITY IN THE Evolving Global Order

Geo-economics, Connectivity & Defence

16 -17 December 2025

Jointly Organised by
National Defence University & Royal Danish Defence College



INSTITUTE FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES, RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS

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Geo-economics, Connectivity & Defence

**16 - 17 December 2025
NDU, Islamabad**



Introduction

The contemporary global order is increasingly shaped by the strategic interplay between geo-economic priorities and evolving defence postures. Economic interests, expressed through trade corridors, digital networks, energy supply chains, and financial instruments have become central to both competition and cooperation among states, while rising levels of armament reflect efforts to respond to an increasingly complex and uncertain security environment. Together, these dynamics underscore that security and prosperity are no longer distinct pursuits but are deeply interconnected, with state resilience and stability depending on how effectively economic connectivity is aligned with defence frameworks.

In this purview, researchers and practitioners from the National Defence University (NDU), Pakistan and the Royal Danish Defence College (RDDC), Denmark convened to deliberate on how the global order is being reshaped by the growing interdependence of economic influence and security strategy. By comparing South Asian and European experiences, participants examined great power rivalries, regional and societal security challenges, and the trade-offs between conventional forces, emerging technologies, and strategic economic capabilities that will shape future defence and policy choices.

The NDU-RDDC conference was convened in a roundtable format titled, “*Security in the New Global Order: Integrating Geo-economics, Connectivity, and Defence*”. The agenda included a Keynote address by H.E. Maja Derrous Mortensen, Ambassador of Denmark to Pakistan, followed by three working sessions, where perspectives from South Asia and Europe were presented by NDU and RDDC delegations respectively. Details are as under;

1. Working Session 1: Major Contours of Transformation in the Global Order: Geo-Economics and Global Rivalries — A Look into the Future
2. Working Session 2: Contemporary Socio-political Trends Impacting National Security: Perspectives from South Asia and Europe
3. Working Session 3: New Frontiers of International Security: Conventional Forces VS New Technologies

The event reaffirmed the strength of the partnership between the two institutions, providing a structured and productive platform for scholarly exchange. Through rigorous discussions and an academic approach, NDU and RDDC enhanced their understanding of complex strategic issues while incorporating a diversity of perspectives. In light of the strategic relevance of the topics to both countries and institutions, this report endeavours to present a balanced account, capturing nuances and areas of divergence, in accordance with Chatham House Rule. It provides a comprehensive summary of the principal findings from the two-day roundtable deliberations.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

**H.E. Maja Derrous
Mortensen**

Ambassador of Denmark to Pakistan

The roundtable began with a keynote address by H.E. Maja Derrous Mortensen, Ambassador of Denmark to Pakistan. She opened the discussion by acknowledging the longstanding bilateral relations between Pakistan and the Kingdom of Denmark, describing the partnership as grounded in practical cooperation and tangible outcomes rather than rhetoric. Emphasising the depth of this relationship, she highlighted the shared commitment to collaboration, mutual trust, and a results-oriented approach in addressing both bilateral and global challenges.


Ambassador Mortensen argued that the current global environment is increasingly defined by the assertive pursuit of power. Great-power rivalries, hybrid threats to critical infrastructure, terrorism, migration, and persistent regional instability have created a landscape in which hard power and strategic competition strongly influences the state behaviour. Taken together, these developments underscore that security concerns are essential, but they must not over shadow urgent transnational challenges that no country can tackle alone, from climate change and public health crises to economic inequality. In this context, she underscored that proactive engagement, partnerships, and sustained dialogue are not optional but necessary strategies for navigating global volatility. States must safeguard their security while also projecting their values and narratives, ensuring that cooperation and multilateral solutions remain central. By threading their principles into this competitive international environment, nations can pursue collective gains and contribute to a more stable and collaborative global order.

Overall, the keynote highlighted that navigating today's global landscape requires balancing the imperatives of security with the pursuit of long-term collective challenges. Ambassador Mortensen argued that while power competition and instability define the current era, opportunities exist to shape a more cooperative and resilient international order.



WORKING SESSION 1

**Major Contours of Transformation
in the Global Order:
Geo-Economics and Global
Rivalries – A Look into the Future**




The first working session explored the contours of transformation in the global order. In this regard, the speakers deliberated on geo-economics and the intensifying global rivalries as the major transforming features of the global order.

The Pakistani perspective underscored that economic statecraft now defines the strategic environment, with economic choices increasingly shaping long-term national and regional outcomes. The speaker highlighted that South Asia possesses substantial geo-economic potential, driven by its demographic scale, growing consumer markets, connectivity corridors, and renewable energy resources. Yet, the region remains among the least integrated globally, with intra-regional trade at minimal levels, hindered by political tensions, protectionist policies, weak transport networks, and disputes over energy. In response, Pakistan is pursuing a strategic transition from geopolitics to geo-economics, with initiatives like the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) serving as a backbone for connectivity, energy infrastructure, and logistics development, even as the country continues to contend with high energy costs, limited exports, governance challenges, and regional political stand-offs.

The session further underscored that regional stability, particularly between Pakistan and India, is essential for unlocking economic growth, investment confidence, climate resilience, and long-term strategic autonomy. U.S.–China geo-economic competition is a key external factor, influencing trade flows, supply-chain realignments, and investment patterns across the region. Against this backdrop, Pakistan's focus on strategic connectivity, value-driven partnerships, and regional economic diplomacy emerges as critical for realising South Asia's latent potential and ensuring a resilient, integrated, and forward-looking regional order.

The European perspective underscored that international structures have historically been designed by great powers, leaving smaller states conditioned to operate within a system that favours the strong. However, the emergence of multipolarity is changing the dynamic, offering these smaller states greater flexibility to hedge strategically, form coalitions, and pursue national interests in ways that were previously limited. This represents a shift from an era of exclusive alignments toward an era of more adaptive approaches.




The current environment is marked by growing competition among great powers and increasing disregard for the liberal rules-based order. European states, once central to setting global norms, face dependencies on external conditions, while powers like the US and Russia selectively follow or openly challenge the international rules. In this context, smaller states are positioned as strategic hedgers, devising mechanisms such as BRICS or regional alliances to safeguard their interests. In response to these strategic shifts, the EU has strengthened its internal integration to enhance its overall capacity to navigate in an evolving international system. Grey zone activities, economic coercion, and shifting conflict thresholds further underline the need for flexible, adaptive strategies that reflect reciprocity and shared procedures.

Overall, the speaker argued that in the emerging multipolar order, lasting influence depends on strategic adaptability, credibility, and long-term commitment rather than moral authority alone, as demonstrated by conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza. Multipolarity provides the Global South with greater space to manoeuvre and advance its interests through diverse economic, technological, and military partnerships. At the same time, this multilateral environment has led to increased institutional fragmentation. To ensure these arrangements serve broad rather than selective interests, there is a need to move from rigid institutions towards a more flexible alliance system that balances adaptability with predictability.

The interactive discussion highlighted how South Asia and Europe interpret the evolving global order through different lenses. Several participants noted that South Asia, particularly Pakistan, emphasises geo-economics, focusing on connectivity, economic statecraft, and strategic partnerships to navigate US – China competition and regional dynamics, with initiatives like CPEC providing structured and predictable frameworks. The European perspective was observed to approach the global order through a geopolitical lens, emphasising alliance cohesion, institutional resilience, and differentiation between powers such as Russia and China. While South Asia leverages economic tools and flexible engagement to manage uncertainty, Europe focuses on rules-based order and collective strategic purpose, reflecting its distinct historical experiences and regional contexts.

WORKING SESSION 2

Contemporary Socio – Political Trends Impacting National Security




The second working session examined how contemporary socio-political trends are reshaping national security priorities in Europe and South Asia. The speakers discussed in detail how these trends are influencing long-term security strategies amid evolving global dynamics.

The European perspective highlighted an increasingly interconnected international system, where conflicts are interlinked, and the risk of escalation is particularly acute. The speaker noted that the war in Ukraine has fundamentally reshaped European security perceptions, creating a state of affairs that is neither clear peacetime nor a formal war. NATO and Europe's alliances are undergoing significant transformation, with evolving transatlantic dynamics marking a clear departure from post-Cold War assumptions and signalling a reorientation of the continent's security framework. As NATO's architecture also has evolved following a reduction in the US' direct role, these developments may, over time, potentially weaken the alliance's overall legitimacy. At the same time, this shift has prompted the European Union to assume a more active role in the fields of defence and security.

The speaker stressed that the war's outcome will shape Europe's future security, affecting not only the European Union but also Ukraine, the United Kingdom, and the wider European security system. She explained that although Europe sees Russia as a declining military power, the final outcome of the war may depend largely on Russia's ability to influence events through non-traditional means, such as hybrid tactics that create division, reduce trust in institutions, and make decision-making more difficult without crossing into open conflict.

The Pakistani perspective emphasised a human-centric approach to security, highlighting that social cohesion, governance, economic stability, and societal resilience are integral to national security alongside conventional military concerns. The speaker noted that analytical advancements in security have not fully translated into state policies, underscoring the need to rethink traditional paradigms. Climate change, technological risks, and non-traditional threats were identified as immediate challenges, directly impacting human security, political stability, and economic resilience, requiring flexible and integrated policy responses.



Regionally, South Asia faces persistent rivalries, particularly between India and Pakistan, alongside terrorism, youth unrest, and political polarisation, all exacerbated by institutional fragility and external geopolitical pressures. India's expanding strategic role, combined with weakened multilateral institutions and intensifying great power competition, adds further complexity. The speaker stressed that intra-state and inter-state conflicts are increasingly interconnected and that Pakistan's economic trajectory remains closely linked to geopolitical developments. The session concluded with a call for adaptive, integrated, and forward-looking security frameworks capable of addressing both traditional and emerging threats.

The interactive session highlighted the complex socio-political and security considerations shaping both South Asia and Europe. Participants unanimously agreed that the Russia–Ukraine war will continue to influence Europe's security and political architecture in the foreseeable future. The discussion also encompassed the prospects of Europe and Russia working together to resolve the conflicts, the speaker noted that although some smaller voices within Europe advocate engagement with Russia, but there are presently no realistic prospects for meaningful cooperation, as none of the parties have demonstrated openness toward such engagement. However, it was also observed that prolonged disengagement from Russia could further destabilise the European economic and security environment.

Drawing on a South Asian vantage point, it was observed that both traditional and non-traditional threats continue to shape the region's security architecture. With regard to traditional threats, it was argued that India's hegemonic posture remains a key driver of persistent instability in intra-regional relations. The discussion also highlighted how extra-regional powers often enable such behaviour; notably, the absence of condemnation or meaningful pushback from European states following India's aggression in May 2025 was cited as indicative of how geopolitical interests can embolden regional hegemonic actors. In this context, it was emphasised that the primary responsibility rests with the region's largest power, India, to act with restraint and pursue development in harmony with neighbouring states. Concerning non-traditional threats, participants underscored the need for collective responsibility and enhanced regional cooperation, as these challenges transcend national boundaries and affect the stability and well-being of the region as a whole.

WORKING SESSION 3

New Frontiers of International Security

Conventional Forces vs. New Technologies

The third working session adopted a contrasting approach, where conventional forces were discussed in comparison with new technologies, in the emerging security environment in South Asia and Europe.

From a South Asian perspective, the speaker argued that despite the growing emphasis on hybrid warfare and emerging technologies, war remains fundamentally kinetic. Conflicts in the 21st century, particularly in South Asia, continue to be fought through conventional force, even as they are shaped by political, economic, and technological factors. The region is defined by crises between unequal powers, where force differentials in size, capability, and external support heighten instability. India's actions in February 2019, followed by further escalatory behaviour in May 2025, illustrate a deliberate effort to pursue military action below the nuclear threshold, thereby placing sustained pressure on conventional deterrence stability.

The speaker stressed that new technologies function primarily as force multipliers rather than substitutes for conventional power in South Asia. The presence of unresolved dispute of Jammu & Kashmir and Indian hegemonic posturing has made South Asia the only region where two nuclear-armed rivals are maintaining large conventional forces. Emerging technologies are integrated as force enhancers, improving precision, responsiveness, and battlefield effectiveness, but they operate within the constraints imposed by escalation risks. Conventional forces, therefore, remain central to South Asian security structure.

The speaker concluded that South Asia's security dynamics continue to rest on a fusion of conventional military power and emerging technologies. Given persistent ideological, territorial, and water-related disputes, the possibility of conventional conflict remains present; however, its likelihood varies with evolving regional dynamics.

The European perspective argued that rapid geopolitical shifts, weakening security guarantees, and the emergence of non-binary conflict environments have accelerated the rise of emerging and disruptive technologies in international security. Contemporary conflict is no longer defined by clear thresholds or linear escalation, creating a strong sense of urgency around technological adoption. However, the speaker stressed that this technology does not operate in isolation. Instead, humans and technologies function as co-actors within complex systems, jointly shaping influence, decision-making, and strategic outcomes. The effectiveness of emerging technologies is therefore inseparable from the political, institutional, and operational contexts in which they are deployed.

Central to this argument was intentionality. Technologies, the speaker stressed, are not decisive by themselves; their impact emerges from the intentions guiding their use and the systems framing decisions. AI, cyber, and quantum capabilities offer strategic promise but also carry uncertainty. While AI and data-driven systems promise to reduce the fog of war, states lacking sufficient AI, cyber, and information literacy can be at risk of increased operational opacity.

The speaker concluded that while Europe is increasingly focused on emerging and disruptive technologies, the associated risks are complex. These risks do not argue for ignoring technology, but rather for its cautious and deliberate use, avoiding the misuse of urgency and intent in the use of new military technologies.

The interactive session examined South Asian security primarily through the lens of conventional forces. Participants agreed that conventional forces and strategic weapons are not true guarantors of peace in the region; however, in an environment where a hegemonic neighbour, like India, insists on escalation, Pakistan sees them as a guarantor of security. The discussion on emerging and disruptive technologies focused on their lethality and the ethical considerations surrounding their use. In the human-technology equation, humans must always remain in control of decision-making.



PICTURE GALLERY





PROGRAMME

16 th December 2025 (Tuesday) Seminar Day 1		
Opening Session		
Time (hours)	Activity	
09:30-09:45	Arrival, Coffee/Tea	
09:45-10:00	Welcome and introductory Remarks by Heads of Delegations	
10:00-10:30	Address by Danish Ambassador to Pakistan	
10:30-10:45	Short Break & Group Photo	
Working Session 1: Major Contours of Transformation in the Global Order: Geo-Economics and Global Rivalries – A look into the Future		
Time (hours)	Activity	Guest Speaker
10:45-10:55	Introductory Remarks by Moderator	Mr. Jens Vesterlund Mathiesen , Programme Manager, RDDC
10:55-11:10	Perspective from South Asia	Mr Nadeem Bashir , DS Economy, FSS NDU
11:10-11:25	Perspective from Europe	Dr. Thomas Mandrup , Professor at Institute for Strategy and War Studies. RDDC
11:25-12:25	Interactive Session	
12:25-12:30	Wrap-up by Moderator	
12:30-13:30	Lunch at NDU	
Working Session 2: Contemporary Socio – Political Trends Impacting National Security: Perspectives from South Asia and Europe		
Time (hours)	Activity	Guest Speaker
13:30-13:35	Introductory Remarks by Moderator	Ms Ayesha Sohail , Research Associate, ISSRA, NDU
13:35-13:50	Perspective from Europe	Ms. Jeanette Serritzslew , Military Analyst at Institute for Military Operations, RDDC
13:50-14:05	Perspective from South Asia	Dr Arshi Saleem Hashmi , Dean FCS, NDU
14:05-15:05	Interactive session	
15:05-15:10	Wrap-up by Moderator	
15:10-15:45	Dispersal and transport from NDU back to Hotel	
19:00-21:00	Conference Dinner Hosted by NDU at Mövenpick Hotel	

17th December 2025 (Wednesday)

Seminar Day 2

Working Session 3: New Frontiers of International Security: Conventional Forces VS New Technologies

Time (hours)	Activity	Guest Speaker
07:00-09:00	Golf at Margalla Greens Golf Club	
09:00-09:30	Transport Back to the Hotel	
09:30-10:30	Freshen Up Time	
10:30-11:00	Transport From Hotel to NDU	
11:00-11:15	Arrival, Coffee/ Tea and Registration	
11:15-11:20	Introductory Remarks by Moderator	Ms Faiza Qureshi , Research Associate, ISSRA, NDU
11:20-11:35	Perspective from South Asia	Dr Zia Ul Haque Shamsi , HoD Strategic Studies, FCS, NDU
11:35-11:50	Perspective from Europe	Major Lasse Kronborg , Military Analyst at Institute for Military Technology, RDDC
11:50-12:50	Interactive Session	
12:50-12:55	Wrap-up by the Moderator	
12:55- 14:00	Lunch at NDU & Dispersal	
19:00- 21:00	Dinner Hosted by Danish Embassy	

NOTES

NOTES

Conversations



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