

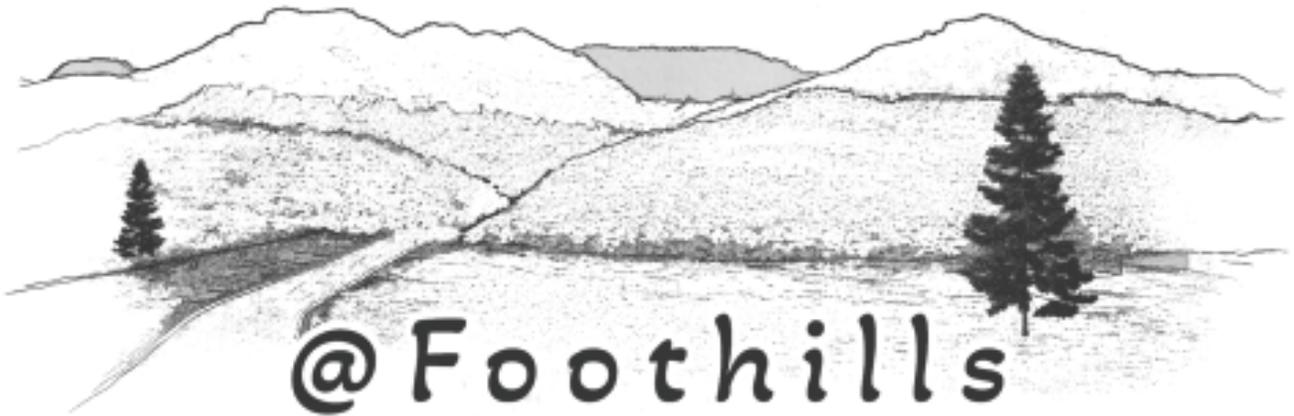
EUROPE WITHIN THE EVOLVING GLOBAL ORDER AND TRENDS

ISSRA INTERNATIONAL WEBINAR

21 January 2025



Conversations



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Disclaimer: The discussion and report have followed Chatham House rule. The statements, facts and opinions by speakers do not constitute the official policy of ISSRA/NDU.





Introduction

- The Institute for Strategic Studies, Research and Analysis (ISSRA) at the National Defence University (NDU) Islamabad hosted an online discussion titled “Europe in the Evolving Global Order and Trends” on Tuesday, 21 January 2025.
- This was the first of a newly launched international webinar series by ISSRA. The series aims to achieve two key objectives. First, to strengthen collaboration and outreach with global partners through formal cooperative mechanisms like MOUs and agreements. Second, to connect with think tanks and academic institutions worldwide.
- The session included presentations by experts alongside interactive discussions that fostered diverse perspectives and strong engagement.
- The distinguished panel featured experts from prestigious institutions in Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Russia, the United Kingdom, and Pakistan. They offered a range of insights into contemporary security challenges, geopolitical shifts, economic developments, and the strategic partnerships shaping Europe's global role.
- The discussion critically assessed Europe's role in a rapidly changing global landscape, focusing on its strategic alignments, policy responses, and the various methods it uses to tackle contemporary challenges. Participants also identified collaborative opportunities to enhance stability and prosperity, emphasising the significance of multilateral cooperation in addressing complex global issues.

Key Findings

- The global order is undergoing a profound transformation, marked by multipolarity, intensified great power competition, rapid technological innovation, and escalating crises—including climate change, pandemics, economic instability, terrorism, and xenophobia.
- Amidst these shifts, Europe is actively redefining its role within an increasingly intricate geopolitical and geo-economic landscape.
- Europe's enduring transatlantic partnerships and strategic engagement with emerging powers underscore the continent's central position in shaping and adapting to global trends.
- The focus of European security has transitioned from expeditionary interventions in regions such as Afghanistan and Iraq to prioritising territorial defence—a shift primarily driven by the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict.
- Uncertainties regarding the commitment of the United States (US) under President Trump's administration have raised concerns about the future effectiveness of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

- Some member states of the European Union (EU) have raised concerns about the economic sanctions imposed on Russia, questioning their potential negative impact on European economies.
- While transatlantic ties remain essential, Europe is actively exploring independent defence and economic strategies to assert its autonomy.
- Additionally, recent disruptions in the Red Sea region—triggered mainly by Houthi attacks—have significantly affected traffic through the Suez Canal, leading to higher costs and delays for European trade.
- Energy security is also a critical issue as Europe adapts to a reduced reliance on Russian oil and gas.
- The rise of protectionism—exemplified by tariffs imposed by the US and the EU on Chinese goods—could significantly reshape global trade patterns.
- Climate change is expected to intensify resource conflicts, exacerbate migration pressures, and place additional strain on Europe's military readiness.
- Across the continent, far-right populist movements are gaining traction, challenging both EU's unity and established democratic norms.
- Immigration policies remain deeply divisive, with some nations advocating for stricter controls while widening economic disparities between Northern and Southern Europe further risk fragmentation.
- Moreover, the US Indo-Pacific strategy, which enhances security cooperation with the United Kingdom, Australia, Japan, and India, is increasingly influencing European foreign policy. Europe now finds itself balancing its trade relations with China against aligning with US containment strategies.
- To maintain its global relevance, Europe must also redefine its relationship with the Muslim world, engage constructively with regions such as West Asia, and recognise the strategic importance of countries like Pakistan.
- Ultimately, the future of European industry and technology may depend on how deftly the continent navigates the competitive dynamics between the US, China, and Russia.

Summary of Proceedings

- The experts, having diverse professional backgrounds and nationalities, mainly shared their perspectives about the overall impact of the global and regional environment on Europe's security and development.
- Some noticed that Europe's defence strategy has significantly shifted over the last two decades. Initially focused on expeditionary operations in places like Libya, Afghanistan and Iraq as part of NATO missions, the conflict in Ukraine since 2022 has led European countries to refocus on territorial defence. NATO has been reinforced, military spending increased, and domestic security bolstered.
- NATO's role was seen as a critical topic of debate. While European nations continue demonstrating steadfast commitment to the alliance, growing concerns persist regarding future US engagement. The NATO Secretary General's call for a “wartime mindset” underscores escalating tensions, particularly concerning Russia and the potential for future conflicts in Eastern Europe.
- Some experts viewed that lessons from past interventions, particularly in the Middle East and Afghanistan, underscore that military force alone cannot ensure long-term stability. Therefore, Europe is focusing more on regional cooperation, diplomacy, and crisis management.
- However, they posited that Europe's economic stability faces mounting pressure from various factors, including the Ukraine conflict, energy security challenges, rising inflation, and disruptions to global trade routes.
- Moreover, the crisis in the Red Sea region, triggered by Houthi attacks on commercial shipping, has significantly decreased traffic through the Suez Canal, one of Europe's most important trade routes. This disruption has increased shipping costs and fuel expenses while extending transit times, putting additional strain on supply chains across the continent.
- These economic shifts reveal Europe's vulnerability to global trade disruptions, highlighting the urgent need for diversified supply chains and strong energy security strategies.
- Climate change was also recognised as a critical strategic security issue. Rising temperatures, dwindling resources, and widespread environmental degradation are not only creating new conflict zones and triggering forced migration but also intensifying geopolitical instability – especially in regions such as Africa and the Middle East. In response, European military forces are integrating sustainability measures into their strategies, striving to reduce reliance on fossil fuels while bolstering operational resilience.
- One of Europe's significant economic challenges, as highlighted, is its dependence on fossil fuels and energy imports. The sanctions imposed on Russia have significantly reduced European

purchases of Russian gas and oil, prompting a shift toward renewable energy sources and alternative suppliers, especially from the US and the Middle East. However, as per the experts, this transition is costly and raises long-term concerns about achieving true energy independence.

- Also, the economic, political, and military relations between Russia and Europe have significantly deteriorated in the wake of the Ukraine conflict. Stringent European sanctions on Russian exports have severely limited trade, leading Russia to shift its economic focus toward establishing closer partnerships with China, India, and other Asian markets.
- At the same time, climate change policies are influencing economic decisions. Europe's military and industrial sectors are progressively moving toward low-carbon energy solutions. Yet, reaching carbon neutrality by 2045 presents a significant challenge. This shift toward sustainable energy will significantly affect economic competitiveness, defence strategies, and trade relations.
- An expert also noted that not all European nations agree on isolating Russia. Countries like Hungary, Slovakia, and Austria have expressed scepticism about the long-term effectiveness of economic sanctions, arguing that these measures may harm European economies more than they affect Russia. These differing views raise essential questions about the future of Europe's unified stance on Russia and whether divisions will develop within the EU and NATO.
- The growing concern about military escalation was also underscored. NATO's expansion, which includes Finland and Sweden joining the alliance, has led some to refer to the Baltic Sea as a "NATO lake," further isolating Russia. While NATO leaders argue that this expansion is necessary for deterrence, it has only heightened tensions between Russia and Western Europe.
- The experts mostly acknowledged that future negotiations with Russia are unavoidable, although the specifics of these discussions are still unclear. Some participants suggested exploring diplomatic channels to prevent further escalation, while others argued that security measures should be strengthened before negotiations occur.
- The long-term stability of the EU was a central topic of discussion. In recent years, the Union has faced significant internal challenges, including Brexit, the rise of nationalist movements, deepening economic inequalities, and growing political fragmentation. Some speakers questioned whether these crises would ultimately strengthen the EU or lead to further fragmentation, resulting in increased disunity.
- It was observed that recent crises have prompted European countries to collaborate more closely despite ongoing political divisions. The Ukraine conflict has strengthened EU defence policies, while economic challenges highlight the need for a unified energy and trade strategy. However, several concerns persist. For instance:

- The rise of populism and far-right movements in various European nations threatens democratic stability.
- Economic disparities between Northern and Southern Europe risk deepening regional divisions.
- Uncertainty in US-Europe relations – particularly with potential policy shifts under the new US administration – continues to be a significant challenge.
- Likewise, some experts expressed concerns about the likely inconsistent commitments of the US – particularly during the second Trump presidency, arguing that an unpredictable foreign policy could unsettle both adversaries and allies alike.
- The panel also explored the future of NATO and defence cooperation within the EU. Some experts suggested a decreased US role in NATO could require Europe to develop greater military independence. However, others warned that European security is closely connected to transatlantic relations, making complete independence an unlikely outcome.
- It was also highlighted that Europe's efforts to pursue greater autonomy risk diminished US support for NATO if Washington insisted on stricter alignment. Meanwhile, persistent trade frictions continue to pose a substantial challenge.
- Another central theme of the discussion was Europe's evolving foreign policy strategy. Some experts observed the growing scepticism about the effectiveness of military interventions and regime change strategies.
- It was observed that Europe is changing its approach toward Africa, South Asia, and the Middle East by placing greater emphasis on economic and diplomatic engagement more than direct military involvement.
- The intensifying rivalry between the US and China was seen as reshaping Europe's global strategy. While Europe continues to maintain essential economic ties with China, it is increasingly aligning itself with the US and its Indo-Pacific partners.
- It was stated that ongoing conflicts, such as in Gaza, along with broader regional tensions, are likely to redefine Europe's engagement with the Muslim world. European nations will need to navigate a complex diplomatic landscape that balances human rights concerns with security challenges.
- An expert emphasised that the ongoing genocide in Gaza, as declared by the United Nations, has significant implications for Europe's moral standing and its relationships with the Muslim world. Europe's long-standing political and historical ties with Israel, along with its perceived silence or complicity during these atrocities, have damaged its reputation as a defender of human rights and international law. To restore trust, it is essential to adopt a more balanced approach.

- Pakistan's strategic location was highlighted, which provides a vital link between West, Central, and South Asia. Recognising Pakistan's significance for regional stability, European nations must pursue deeper, more meaningful engagement with the country.
- An expert posited that for decades, Pakistan has borne the burden of refugee crises, particularly following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the subsequent US-led war on terror. In the wake of the Ukraine conflict, Europe may finally gain a clearer understanding of the significant socio-economic challenges that Pakistan faces in accommodating millions of refugees.
- Europe and Pakistan maintain strong relations, especially in trade and development. However, Europe can enhance this partnership by promoting fair trade practices and actively supporting Pakistan's economic progress, contributing to greater regional stability.
- Pakistan is highly vulnerable to climate change, facing catastrophic floods and resource scarcity exacerbating its economic challenges. Europe and Pakistan have the opportunity to collaborate on initiatives aimed at enhancing climate resilience and promoting sustainable development.
- It was highlighted that European states must remain focused on:
 - Enhancing security measures while avoiding direct military interventions.
 - Diversifying trade and energy partnerships to reduce economic vulnerabilities.
 - Balancing relations with the US, China, and Russia while maintaining strategic autonomy.
 - Preparing for the multifaceted impacts of climate change on defence and economic policies.
- The discussion concluded with a broad consensus that Europe plays a crucial role in global affairs but must adapt to a more complex geopolitical landscape. It is at a pivotal crossroads in global politics, contending with pressing security imperatives, economic uncertainties, and realigning alliances. While NATO expansion and strong transatlantic ties remain crucial for the region, Europe will have to pursue greater strategic autonomy. This requires carefully balancing its relations with the US, China, and Russia while addressing internal challenges such as rising populism, economic disparities, and climate change. Ultimately, Europe's future will depend on its ability to maintain unity, reinforce its security posture, and redefine its role in an increasingly multipolar world.

Picture Gallery



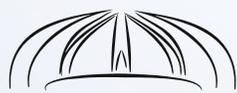


Programme

1345 hrs	International Speakers to Join Online
1400-1405 hrs	Welcome Remarks by Major General Muhammad Raza Aizad, HI(M), DG ISSRA
1405-1505 hrs	Experts' Talks on <p style="text-align: center;">Europe within the Evolving Global Order and Trends</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mr. David Vestenkov, Director Centre for Stabilisation, Royal Danish Defence College (RDDC), Denmark 2. Ambassador Sylvain Berger, Researcher, Institute of Advanced Studies in National Defence (IHEDN), France 3. Ambassador Emanuele FARRUGGIA, Advisor for International Affairs to the President, Center for High Defence Studies (CASD), Italy 4. Prof. Dr. Stefan Bayer, Helmut-Schmidt University, University of the Armed Forces Hamburg, & GIDS, Germany 5. Mr. Timothy Wright, Research Associate for Defence and Military Analysis, International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), United Kingdom 6. Mr. Albert Vidal, Research Analyst, IISS 7. Ambassador (Retd) Farukh Amil, Chairman Intellectual Property Organisation (IPO), former Ambassador of Pakistan to United Nations <p>Moderator: Dr. Atia Ali Kazmi, Director Global & Regional Studies, ISSRA</p>
1505-1605 hrs	Interactive Session
1605-1610 hrs	Concluding Remarks by DG ISSRA

List of Participants

Chair	
Major General Muhammad Raza Aizad, HI(M)	DG ISSRA
Moderator	
Dr. Atia Ali Kazmi	Director Global & Regional Studies, ISSRA
Expert Participants	
Mr. David Vestenkov	Director Centre for Stabilisation, Royal Danish Defence College (RDDC), Denmark
Ambassador Sylvain Berger	Researcher, Institute of Advanced Studies in National Defence (IHEDN), France
Prof. Dr. Stefan Bayer	Helmut-Schmidt University, University of the Armed Forces Hamburg, & GIDS, Germany
Ambassador Emanuele FARRUGGIA	Advisor for International Affairs to the President, Center for High Defence Studies (CASD), Italy
Mr. Timothy Wright	Research Associate for Defence and Military Analysis, International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), United Kingdom
Mr. Albert Vidal	Research Analyst, IISS
Ambassador (Retd) Farukh Amil	Chairman Intellectual Property Organisation (IPO), former Ambassador of Pakistan to United Nations
Ms. Gulandam	Lecturer Faculty of Contemporary Studies (FCS), NDU
Ms. Zuzanna Gwadera	Research Analyst and Programme Administrator, IISS
Dr. Muhammad Shabbir	Research Fellow, G&RS, ISSRA
Ms. Ayesha Afgun	Research Associate, G&RS, ISSRA



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