



ISSRA

INSTITUTE FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES, RESEARCH & ANALYSIS

International Web Seminar

ASIA PACIFIC

WITHIN THE TRANSFORMING GLOBAL ORDER AND TRENDS

Tuesday, 3rd February 2026



Conversations



@Foothills



Asia Pacific Within the Transforming Global Order & Trends

ISSRA International Web Seminar

3rd February 2026

Supervised by

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Asia Pacific Within the Transforming Global Order & Trends



Hon Bruce Atkinson
Australia



Professor Zhou Rong
China



Maj Gen Dr. Oktaheroe Ramsi
Indonesia



Professor Masayuki Masuda
Japan



Dr. Seongjong Song
South Korea



Dr. Antonio P. Contreras
Philippines



Dr. Jonathan Pincus
Vietnam



Ambassador Farukh Amil
Pakistan



Dr. Marium Fatima
Pakistan

Introduction

- The Institute for Strategic Studies, Research and Analysis (ISSRA) at the National Defence University (NDU), Islamabad, hosted an international web seminar on “Asia Pacific Within the Transforming Global Order and Trends” on 3rd February 2026.
- This international webinar was designed to strengthen collaboration and outreach with ISSRA's global and regional partners, including think tanks and academia.
- The session featured expert presentations alongside an interactive segment that encouraged diverse perspectives and active engagement. The audience comprised policy practitioners, researchers, academics, students, and members of the strategic affairs community.

Key Takeaways

- The Asia-Pacific has emerged as a primary arena shaping global change, marked by contested rules, shifting power balances, and overlapping security, economic, and environmental challenges.
- Great-power competition, particularly between the United States (US) and China, has intensified, increasingly characterized by nationalism, enforcement-based politics, and selective adherence to multilateral norms.
- Middle powers across the region are seeking to preserve autonomy through strategic diversification rather than exclusive alignment, emphasizing flexibility, resilience, and multi-vector engagement.
- The erosion of the post-1945 rules-based order has heightened uncertainty, compelling states to rely more heavily on regional mechanisms and bilateral frameworks to manage risk and reduce vulnerability.



- The 2026 US National Defense Strategy prioritizes a "peace through strength" approach while demanding significantly higher burden-sharing from regional allies, forcing them to balance their security dependence with increased strategic self-reliance.
- Maritime security, shipping lanes, and resource access have gained renewed importance as strategic and economic lifelines, particularly for coastal and trading states.
- Economic security and national security are increasingly intertwined, with trade, technology, supply chains, and energy resources becoming instruments of strategic leverage.
- Technological competition, including in areas such as space, artificial intelligence, and critical minerals, is emerging as a new domain of rivalry with significant implications for regional stability.
- Climate change and environmental vulnerability were identified as critical threat multipliers, particularly for disaster-prone and coastal states, affecting food security, governance capacity, and long-term resilience.
- Regional organizations such as ASEAN continue to play a stabilizing role, though their centrality is under strain from geopolitical rivalry and uneven exposure to climate and economic risks.
- Across the Asia-Pacific, prosperity was repeatedly emphasized as the foundation of autonomy, resilience, and sustained strategic relevance in a transforming global order.
- Pakistan views the Asia-Pacific as an interconnected and strategically vital region where sustainable stability and prosperity depend on regional connectivity, cooperative security, and trade-driven collaboration rather than geopolitical rivalry and military competition.



Summary of Proceedings

- The seminar examined the Asia-Pacific as a vast, diverse, and increasingly central region within the transforming global order. Participants repeatedly cautioned against treating the Asia-Pacific as a single, uniform strategic space, emphasizing instead its character as a mosaic of sub-regions shaped by distinct historical experiences, economic structures, political systems, and security challenges. This diversity, it was argued, necessitates differentiated policy responses rather than one-size-fits-all frameworks.
- A central theme throughout the discussion was the intensification of great-power competition, particularly between the US and China, and its implications for regional stability. Speakers noted that while leadership changes in Washington may alter rhetoric, the underlying structural rivalry has persisted and, in some respects, deepened. Competition was described as increasingly comprehensive, spanning military posture, trade, technology, supply chains, space, and emerging domains such as artificial intelligence. This shift was characterized as moving away from rule-based restraint toward enforcement-oriented politics, where power increasingly determines outcomes.
- Several participants highlighted that recent US approaches, especially during the Trump era and as codified in the 2026 US National Defense Strategy, have accelerated uncertainty by weakening multilateral institutions, politicizing alliances, and introducing transactional logic into long-standing security and economic relationships. This erosion of predictability, combined with domestic political constraints within the US, was viewed as undermining confidence among allies and partners. At the same time, China's growing global and regional influence was discussed as part of a broader structural transition rather than a temporary fluctuation, further complicating strategic calculations across the Asia-Pacific.
- Middle powers featured prominently in the discussions, with speakers emphasizing their growing importance in shaping regional outcomes. Countries such as Japan, South Korea, Indonesia, Vietnam, the Philippines, Australia, and Pakistan were described as neither passive recipients of great-power policies nor aspiring hegemons, but as strategic actors seeking room for maneuver. Rather than choosing sides, many are pursuing diversification strategies, expanding economic, diplomatic, and security partnerships to reduce dependence on any single power.

- From Southeast Asian perspectives, ASEAN was repeatedly referenced as a stabilizing framework that has historically helped manage tensions and preserve regional autonomy. However, participants also acknowledged that ASEAN centrality is under increasing strain due to internal divisions, external pressure from great-power rivalry, and uneven exposure to security and climate risks. The coexistence of rule-based and power-based orders was described as creating ambiguity, complicating consensus-building and crisis management within the region.
- Maritime security emerged as a critical and recurring concern. Speakers highlighted the strategic and economic importance of sea lines of communication, exclusive economic zones, fishing rights, and energy exploration. For many Asia-Pacific states, maritime issues were framed not only as security challenges but also as matters of livelihood, sovereignty, and national resilience. Contested maritime spaces, particularly the South China Sea and surrounding waters, were described as flashpoints where strategic rivalry, economic coercion, and legal norms intersect.
- The Japanese perspective highlighted that great power competition in the Indo-Pacific remains structurally centered on US–China rivalry, increasingly shaped by nationalist narratives and a revival of realist security thinking. Particular concern was expressed over China's military presence and more assertive posture around Taiwan, the East China Sea, and the South China Sea, as well as growing China–Russia military cooperation, which could contribute to a more confrontational security framework in Northeast Asia. While Beijing frames its actions as deterrence-driven and security-focused, the growing intensity of military signaling raises risks of miscalculation, underscoring the urgent need for strategic communication and crisis management mechanisms.
- South Korean interventions highlighted the deepening convergence between economic and security domains. Participants noted that South Korea's earlier model, relying on the US for security and China for economic growth, has become increasingly untenable. Export dependence, technological competition, and vulnerability to economic coercion were identified as pressing challenges, prompting greater attention to diversification and engagement with emerging markets, particularly in the Global South.
- Vietnam's experience was presented as an illustrative case of how prosperity underpins autonomy. Its “bamboo diplomacy,” characterized by deep roots and flexible branches, was discussed as a strategy for maintaining independence amid geopolitical pressure. Extensive

participation in trade agreements, attraction of foreign direct investment, and integration into regional production networks were identified as central to Vietnam's success. Supporting this trajectory, Vietnam's exports to the US and China (including Hong Kong) grew by approximately 13% annually between 2019 and 2024, while exports to the European Union increased by 9%, and to Korea, Japan, and Taiwan by 4%, with other markets growing at 6%. Speakers nevertheless acknowledged emerging challenges related to protectionism, demographic change, energy transition, and technological capacity.

- The Philippines' perspective brought climate and environmental security to the forefront of the discussion. Participants emphasized that climate change is no longer a secondary issue but a core security concern that affects food systems, energy access, disaster response capacity, and institutional resilience. The Philippines was described as a frontline state facing overlapping pressures from maritime disputes, economic restructuring, and extreme environmental vulnerability. Climate change was characterized as a threat multiplier that intensifies existing political, social, and economic stresses.
- Pakistan's interventions stressed the importance of viewing the Asia-Pacific through interconnected sub-regions rather than rigid geographic boundaries. Pakistan's central location linking West, Central, South, and East Asia was highlighted as a strategic asset, particularly in terms of connectivity, maritime trade, and regional cooperation. Participants noted Pakistan's emphasis on peaceful sea lanes, avoidance of unnecessary militarization, and preference for cooperative economic frameworks over zero-sum competition.
- Across the discussions, technological competition was identified as an emerging arena of rivalry with long-term implications for stability. Space, artificial intelligence, rare earths, and advanced manufacturing were discussed as areas where economic advantage and security considerations increasingly overlap. Participants cautioned that technological competition, if unmanaged, could exacerbate fragmentation and heighten strategic mistrust.

Overall, the seminar reflected a shared recognition that the Asia-Pacific is entering a period marked by heightened uncertainty, overlapping crises, and intensified competition. While great-power rivalry remains a defining feature, participants agreed that the agency of middle and developing powers, expressed through adaptability, diversification, regional cooperation, and economic resilience, will play a decisive role in shaping the region's future trajectory. The discussions concluded with an emphasis on resilience, flexibility, and cooperation as essential strategies for navigating the evolving global order.



ANNEXES

Programme

1000-1030 hrs	Registration / Online Assembling
1030-1035 hrs	Recitation from Holy Quran
1035-1040 hrs	Welcome Remarks by Brig Riaz Ahmed (Retd), Director G&RS, ISSRA-NDU
1040-1200 hrs	<p>Experts' talk on:</p> <p>“Asia Pacific within the Transforming Global Order and Trends”</p> <p>Distinguished Speakers:</p> <p>Perspective from Australia</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Hon Bruce Atkinson, Former President of the Legislative Council Victoria State Parliament, Australia <p>Perspective from Indonesia</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Major General Dr. Oktaheroe Ramsi, Dean for the Faculty of Defence Strategy, Republic Indonesia Defence University <p>Perspective from Japan</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Professor Masayuki MASUDA, Head of China Division, National Institute for Defence Studies (NIDS), Japan <p>Perspective from South Korea</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Dr. Seongjong Song, Daejeon University, South Korea <p>Perspective from China</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Professor Zhou Rong, Grandview Institute China <p>Perspective from Philippines</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Dr. Antonio P. Contreras, Professor of Political Science, Philippines <p>Perspective from Vietnam</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Dr. Jonathan Pincus, Dean of Fulbright School of Public Policy and Management, Fulbright University, Vietnam <p>Perspective from Pakistan</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Ambassador ® Farukh Amil - Former Ambassador to Japan <p>Moderator:</p> <p>Dr. Marium Fatima, Assistant Professor, National Institute of Intelligence and Security Studies, QAU</p>
1200-1255 hrs	Interactive Session
1255-1300 hrs	Vote of Thanks by Major General Muhammad Raza Aizad, HI (M), DG ISSRA
1300 hrs onwards	Refreshments Dispersal

List of Participants

Chair	
Major General Raza Aizad, HI (M),	Director General ISSRA
Moderator	
Dr. Marium Fatima	Assistant Professor
Experts Participants	
Hon Bruce Atkinson	Former President of the Legislative Council Victoria State Parliament, Australia
Major General Dr. Oktaheroe Ramsi	Dean for the Faculty of Defence Strategy, Republic Indonesia Defence University
Professor Masayuki MASUDA	Head of China Division, National Institute for Defence Studies (NIDS), Japan
Dr. Seongjong Song	Daejeon University, South Korea
Professor Zhou Rong	Grandview Institute China
Dr. Antonio P. Contreras	Professor of Political Science, Philippines
Dr. Jonathan Pincus	Dean of Fulbright School of Public Policy and Management, Fulbright University, Vietnam
Ambassador ® Farukh Amil	Former Ambassador to Japan

Picture Gallery







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