

A World at Breaking Point:

Managing Crises and
Transformations

EXPERT ROUNDTABLES

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Session 1

” The New Actor in the Global Defense Industry: Türkiye

Türkiye has reshaped its security policy to enhance its national defence industry and assert a stronger stance in foreign affairs. This strategic shift was largely influenced by historical events, notably the US arms embargo post-1974 and conflicts such as with the PKK and Daesh terror groups, highlighting the need for robust domestic arms capabilities. Since 2002, significant investments have been made to ensure Türkiye's defence sector is self-reliant and technologically advanced. The country's defence industry, featuring companies like ASELSAN, TUSAŞ, ROKETSAN, MKE, and ASFAT in Defence News' Top 100, underscores its global competitive edge and regional security impact.

This session will delve into the defence industry of Türkiye, analyzing key achievements and the factors that have elevated Turkish defence companies to high international rankings. Discussions will explore the sector's future growth potential, research and development investments, and strategic objectives. The aim is to facilitate a rich dialogue among defence industry professionals and academics, fostering an in-depth understanding of Türkiye's defence capabilities and its strategic direction in the global market.

Discussion Themes

- What are the main reasons behind the high rankings of the five major Turkish defence companies in international listings?
- What are the global competitive advantages of the Turkish defence industry, and what strategies are necessary to maintain these advantages?
- How do R&D investments play a role in Türkiye's defence industry, and what can be done to enhance the effectiveness of these investments?
- What are Türkiye's future strategic goals in the defence industry, and what strategies should be pursued to achieve these goals?

” Africa at the Epicenter of Global Rivalries

Africa has become the focus of global geopolitics, attracting interest from major forces like China, Russia, the United States, France, and Türkiye. These engagements bring both benefits and challenges, offering opportunities for development while posing risks to sovereignty. China's infrastructure investments through the Belt and Road Initiative and Russia's security and resource engagements have stirred concerns over debt and regional stability. The US aims to mitigate Chinese and Russian influence with programs like Prosper Africa but often prioritises strategic interests. France maintains strong ties with former colonies amid increasing calls for more African agency. In contrast, Türkiye positions itself as an anti-colonial ally, promoting a win-win approach, mutual respect, and equitable cooperation, which appeals to African nations looking for alternative global partnerships.

This session will discuss how African nations are increasingly recognising the need to chart their own course amidst a complex web of international interests. It will analyse how these major powers are competing for influence in Africa through various means, including economic investments, security partnerships, and diplomatic initiatives. It will also address the escalating tensions between competing powers in Africa, including resource conflicts, proxy wars, and economic rivalries, and the associated risks these pose

to African sovereignty and regional stability. Additionally, this session will explore how Africa can leverage international relationships to its advantage, analysing anti-colonial approaches and examining the critical role of African agency in reshaping global dynamics to align with the continent's interests and priorities.

Discussion Themes

- **How can African nations strategically engage with global powers while ensuring partnerships align with African development priorities and respect sovereignty?**
- **What measures can African countries take to maximize the benefits of foreign investments while mitigating risks related to debt and resource management?**
- **How can the principles of mutual respect and win-win cooperation, as exemplified in Türkiye's approach, be applied more broadly in Africa's international engagements?**
- **As relationships with former colonial powers evolve, particularly in West Africa, how can nations redefine these ties to better serve African interests while maintaining stability and economic progress?**

Session 3

” Emerging Multipolarity in the Asia Pacific: Different Players, Different Layers

The Asia-Pacific region is evolving into a multipolar landscape, shaping the future regional order. The key geopolitical forces, such as global interconnectedness initiatives, the U.S.'s strategy to counter China, the Quad Alliance's role in the Indo-Pacific Strategy, India's rise, Japan's push for renewed influence, Indonesia's strategic positioning, and Australia's alliance efforts, illustrate a balance between idealism and realism. In this environment, where economic, military, and diplomatic power elements interact in a complex manner, competitive dynamics and opportunities for cooperation coexist. This situation stands out as a critical factor that will determine the region's future security architecture and peace potential. Given that the U.S.-China rivalry has created a bipolar structure in the Asia-Pacific, questions arise regarding how the relationship between these two major powers will impact stability and peace in the region. Especially considering that the US-China rivalry has created a bipolar structure in the Asia Pacific, questions arise about how the relations between these two major powers will affect stability and peace in the region.

In this session, the effects of the U.S.-China rivalry on the stability and peace in the Asia-Pacific, considering the bipolar structure it has created,

will be thoroughly examined. Additionally, the session will discuss how the emerging multipolar structure globally will influence this bipolar dynamic in Asia and shape the future regional order. The importance of understanding this complex geopolitical environment in making strategic decisions related to the region will be emphasised.

Discussion Themes

- How does the increasing multipolarity in the Asia Pacific region influence the emerging regional order, and what are the key factors driving this shift?
- In what ways are the geopolitical agendas, such as America's bid to thwart China and the quad alliance, shaping the strategic environment and power dynamics in the Asia Pacific?
- How do geo-economics, military force, diplomacy, and national narratives interact to create a complex and layered competition in the region?
- What are the potential outcomes of the blend of competition and cooperation among key players in the Asia Pacific, and how might these dynamics shape the region's future?

Session 4

” Central Asia Crossroads: Enhancing Partnerships Amidst Global Currents

Historically a major trading hub, Central Asia's strategic location has positioned it as a key player in global geopolitics, highlighted by the impact of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and Russia's regional strategies. The region is undergoing significant changes, driven by its internal dynamics, cultural-historical linkages and external influences. These internal elements and cultural-historical linkages are becoming increasingly important in shaping the region's future and achieving its goals. The member states of the Organisation of Turkic States (OTS) are using their common cultural heritage to promote new areas of cooperation and strengthen regional integration. Situated at the crossroads of trade routes linking China to Africa and Europe through the BRI, these nations have considerable economic, commercial and diplomatic potential.

This session will examine how Central Asia's internal factors, including its diverse cultural and historical ties, interact with global influences to shape the region's strategic role on the world stage. It will also explore the economic and diplomatic power that Central Asia has and may have in the future due to its position as a key crossroads on global trade routes. The panel will also assess the potential for deeper integration among Central Asian states

through regional initiatives such as the OTS, and consider the implications of these developments within the broader geopolitical landscape.

Discussion Themes

- **How is Türkiye's involvement in Central Asia, particularly through the OTS, influencing the economic and diplomatic landscape of the region, and what are Türkiye's contributions to integration in the region?**
- **What role does the OTS play in promoting regional cooperation and integration, and how does it use its shared cultural heritage to strengthen economic and diplomatic ties between its member states?**
- **How is the Belt and Road Initiative transforming Central Asia's economic and commercial landscape, and what opportunities does it present for the region?**
- **How does the engagement of key players in Central Asia affect regional security and stability, and what measures are being taken to manage potential conflicts or challenges?**

DEVELOPMENT ROAD & INTER-CONNECTIVITY ISSUES

Session 5

” Building New Frontiers: Competing Corridors in Global Connectivity

Global connectivity projects are not just critical to international trade, economic growth, and the geopolitical balance of power—they are also battlegrounds where nations vie for dominance. As indispensable tools for achieving economic growth, strategic influence, and global integration, these projects have sparked an intense global competition. Nations and regions are locked in fierce competition to develop connectivity projects that will bolster their strategic influence, enhance economic growth, and secure their position in the global hierarchy. These projects, encompassing vast networks of transportation, digital infrastructure, and energy corridors, are the new frontiers of power, aiming to connect diverse parts of the world more efficiently and gain leverage in global affairs. Key initiatives like China’s Belt and Road Initiative, the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC), Türkiye’s Development Road, and the Trans-Caspian East-West-Middle Corridor Initiative (The Middle Corridor) underscore the strategic importance of connectivity in reshaping global trade routes, forging powerful economic alliances, and ensuring access to critical resources.

This session will delve into how these connectivity projects not only transform the geopolitical landscape but also serve as instruments of power, fundamentally shaping the future of global trade. It will further explore how

the race to lead these initiatives and control key trade and energy routes could redefine global power dynamics. The session will also examine how these projects, while ostensibly promoting global cooperation, are simultaneously positioned at the heart of competition and geopolitical rivalries.

Discussion Themes

- How do connectivity initiatives boost global energy security and economic stability?
- How does the competition for control over key trade and energy routes impact global power dynamics and international cooperation?
- How do global connectivity projects like the Belt and Road Initiative, the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor, and Türkiye’s Development Road influence the geopolitical landscape?
- What are the risks and challenges associated with the intensifying global competition over connectivity projects? How can nations mitigate these risks while pursuing their strategic objectives?

Session 6

” New European Security Framework and Strategic Autonomy

The ongoing war in Ukraine has significantly transformed Europe's security architecture. This shift underscores the need for a more coordinated approach among European nations to address evolving threats. It has altered the continent's transition from a reactive to a strategic posture, as the conflict has exposed significant vulnerabilities within existing security frameworks, underscoring the need for a comprehensive and adaptable security strategy that anticipates future threats. As Europe faces rapid technological changes and evolving geopolitical dynamics, there is a critical necessity to reassess and enhance military cooperation to bolster strategic autonomy and defence capabilities.

The discussion will explore Europe's strategic deficiencies in light of the Ukraine-Russia war, highlight the need for a robust security architecture, and propose measures for increased military collaboration to address emerging threats. Additionally, the session will address the importance of maintaining a cohesive strategy to enhance overall security resilience. The session aims to catalyse a shift towards proactive strategising, essential for safeguarding Europe's stability and ensuring its resilience against ongoing and future challenges.

Discussion Themes

- How has the ongoing war in Ukraine transformed Europe's security architecture?
- What critical vulnerabilities in current security infrastructures have been exposed by the Ukraine conflict?
- Why is enhanced military cooperation among European nations essential in the current geopolitical climate?
- How should Europe reassess its security strategies in response to rapid technological advancements and emerging threats?

Session 7

” Geopolitical Equations in the Middle East: Gaza Beyond the Headlines

The ongoing Israeli genocide on Gaza have dominated global headlines but often reduce the situation to statistics and soundbites that fail to capture its full complexity and obscure the severe humanitarian crisis. The blockade has trapped over 2 million people, leading to the deterioration of essential services. Supplies are lacking in hospitals, disruptions are occurring in education, and poverty is intensifying. The constant threat of violence and past trauma has scarred a generation, while international focus on political and military aspects overshadows the dire human conditions where millions struggle for basic survival and dignity. The conflict has intensified regional tensions and reshaped the geopolitical landscape of the Middle East, affecting regional alliances, US-Iranian relations, and complicating nuclear negotiations. Shifting public opinion has overshadowed the Abraham Accords.

The session will delve into the daily realities faced by Gazans, examining the profound impact of the blockade, military operations, and political isolation on the region's humanitarian challenges. The discussion will also explore the current geopolitical dynamics, the reshaping of regional and international relations, and the humanitarian efforts in response to the

conflict. It will discuss how the evolving situation necessitates sustained international attention and concerted efforts to navigate the complexities of Middle Eastern geopolitics and promote a path to long-term peace and stability.

Discussion Themes

- How have the ongoing Israeli attacks on Gaza been portrayed in global headlines, and what complexities are often overlooked in this coverage?
- What are the primary humanitarian challenges faced by Gazans due to the blockade and military operations, and how have these issues affected daily life?
- In what ways has the conflict reshaped regional alliances, US-Iranian relations, and the dynamics of nuclear negotiations?
- How does the evolving situation in Gaza highlight the need for sustained international attention and concerted efforts to address Middle Eastern geopolitical complexities and promote long-term peace?

Session 8

” The Russia-Ukraine War: How to Bridge the Divide?

The Russia-Ukraine conflict holds a significant position in international relations, and the ongoing military tensions make achieving a lasting political solution challenging. The conflict occupies an important place on the agenda of many international organisations and states. In this context, organisations such as the United Nations and the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) have made various efforts to ensure peace. Furthermore, diplomatic meetings and negotiations have focused on the applicability of agreements like the Minsk Agreements. Türkiye has assumed a mediating role in the conflict resolution process, facilitating communication and dialogue between the parties involved. As the war enters its third year, the United States, the European Union, and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky have discussed plans for a political solution to the conflict. However, the recurrent escalations from the belligerents present a significant obstacle to achieving these goals.

In this session, the relationship and interactions between military and political solutions will be examined in detail. The focus will be on how Türkiye's mediation role can impact the conflict resolution process and how it can be aligned with international strategies. Additionally, discussions will address how efforts for political solutions can be made more effective in

a context of ongoing armed conflict and the contributions of international actors' strategic approaches to this process.

Discussion Themes

- **How do the interactions between military and political solutions influence the conflict resolution process in the Russia-Ukraine conflict?**
- **What strategic steps should be taken for political solution efforts to be effective in the ongoing armed conflict environment?**
- **What impact do the strategies of the U.S., the EU, and Ukraine have on conflict resolution, and are there inconsistencies among these strategies?**
- **How might Türkiye's diplomatic efforts persuade Russia to de-escalate and seek a resolution to the conflict?**

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