



Hello and welcome to the latest edition of Asia on the Horizon. In this week's issue, we bring you critical insights into the unfolding events that are shaping the future of the Asia-Pacific and Indo-Pacific regions. As global dynamics shift, we focus on the growing alliances, strategic recalibrations, and economic developments that impact both regional stability and global influence. Join us as we explore these complex stories and provide analysis on the issues that matter for Asia and beyond.

This edition covers an array of pivotal developments, from North Korea's deepening involvement in Russia's conflict to the potential ramifications of a second Trump administration on Asia's economic and security landscape. We also delve into NATO's expanding role in the Indo-Pacific. These insights offer a comprehensive view of the shifting forces at play in one of the world's most dynamic regions, equipping you with the context needed to understand Asia's evolving role in global affairs.



# 1. KEY DEVELOPMENTS

## **North Korean Troop Deployment in Russia Sparks Global Concerns NATO**

Secretary General Mark Rutte has confirmed North Korean troops are now stationed in Russia's Kursk region, an unprecedented move in Pyongyang's support for Moscow's war in Ukraine. NATO has condemned this deployment as a violation of UN Security Council resolutions and has called on Russia and North Korea to cease these escalatory actions immediately. The deepening military cooperation between Russia and DPRK is viewed as a direct threat to both Euro-Atlantic and Indo-Pacific security, drawing NATO's attention to both regions.

## **Trump's Second Term**

Possible Repercussions for Asia Donald Trump's return to the White House could usher in a wave of policy changes that will impact U.S.-Asia relations. Analysts anticipate renewed trade tensions with China, potential adjustments in U.S. security commitments in the Indo-Pacific, and a more transactional approach to alliances with Japan and South Korea. Trump's re-election raises questions about the future of key multilateral initiatives in Asia, including the Quad and AUKUS, as regional allies brace for a recalibrated U.S. strategy.

## **IMF Projects Slowing Economic Growth Across Asia in 2025**

The latest IMF projections indicate a slowdown in economic growth across major Asian economies in 2025. India, China, and South Korea are among those expected to see declines, reflecting broader global economic challenges and shifting growth patterns. In contrast, countries like the Philippines and Japan are predicted to experience modest growth increases, suggesting uneven resilience across the region's economies as they adapt to global pressures.

## **NATO's Indo-Pacific Strategy Gains Traction Amid Regional Tensions**

NATO is strengthening its security partnerships in the Indo-Pacific, engaging closely with allies like Japan, South Korea, and Australia. The recent North Atlantic Council meeting emphasized NATO's commitment to a Free and Open Indo-Pacific, with rising security concerns over China's assertiveness and North Korea's increasing alignment with Russia. This strategic shift underscores NATO's growing engagement in the region, aiming to address shared security threats and promote regional stability.

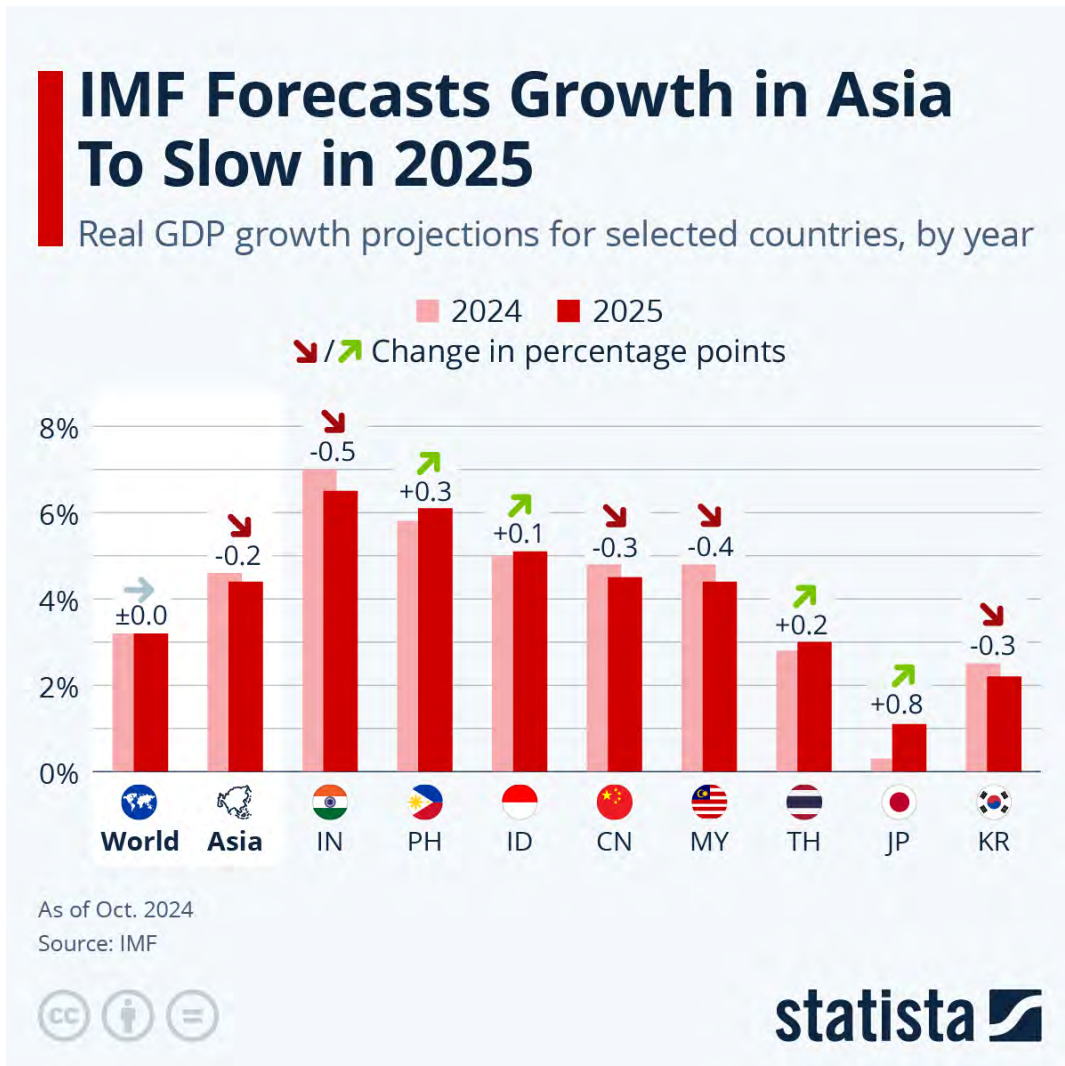
## **Italy-China Relations Strengthen Amid Broader EU-China Tensions**

Italian President Sergio Mattarella recently visited China to discuss strengthening trade and investment ties between Rome and Beijing. During his meeting with President Xi Jinping, Mattarella emphasized Italy's commitment to deepening economic cooperation while Xi highlighted China's interest in importing more high-quality Italian products. This diplomatic engagement follows Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni's visit in July, which aimed to renew relations outside of the Belt and Road Initiative. The visit underscores Italy's balancing act in strengthening bilateral ties with China amid ongoing EU-China trade tensions, including disputes over tariffs

on Chinese electric vehicles. This renewed cooperation between Italy and China signals a cautious yet strategic effort to enhance Europe-China relations, even as broader geopolitical strains persist.

## 2. STATISTICS OF THE WEEK

According to IMF data, Asia's economic growth is expected to slow down in 2025 across several major economies. While countries like the Philippines and Japan are projected to experience modest growth increases, significant slowdowns are anticipated for India, China, and South Korea. This trend underscores the broader global economic challenges affecting the region and hints at shifting dynamics in Asia's economic landscape heading into 2025.



<https://www.statista.com/>

### 3. MAP OF THE WEEK

#### Deployment of North Korean Troops to Russia

The map illustrates **reported deployments of North Korean troops to Russia** as of October 25, 2024, highlighting multiple locations where North Korean personnel are believed to be stationed and actively involved in training. Intelligence from South Korea and Ukraine points to **troop concentrations in Russia’s Far East**, including locations like the **Yekaterinoslavka Training Ground in Amur Oblast** and **Sergeevka Training Ground in Primorsky Krai**. Additionally, **satellite imagery** has detected North Korean troops at facilities in **Khabarovsk, Ussuriysk, and Ulan-Ude in Buryatia**.

This deployment marks a substantial escalation in DPRK’s military involvement, supporting Russia’s war effort in Ukraine. The movement of North Korean soldiers to these training grounds also suggests ongoing military cooperation between Russia and North Korea, likely involving training and logistical support. The strategic positioning of North Korean forces across key military sites underscores their active role in bolstering Russia’s capabilities amid its protracted conflict in Ukraine.



<https://www.understandingwar.org/>

## 4. PHOTO OF THE WEEK

Italian President Sergio Mattarella visits China for a two-day state visit from November 8 to 9. This year marks the 20th anniversary of China-Italy comprehensive strategic partnership and the 700th anniversary of the death of Marco Polo.

During Italian President Sergio Mattarella's state visit to Beijing, Chinese President Xi Jinping expressed China's willingness to strengthen economic ties with Italy by increasing imports of high-quality Italian products and expanding mutual investment. Xi emphasized that both nations have opportunities to cooperate in science, environmental protection, clean energy and aerospace, marking a significant step in China-Italy relations.

Xi also stressed the importance of Europe as a strategic partner for China and encouraged prudence in managing differences to maintain stability in China-EU relations. The meeting follows Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni's visit in July, which aimed to rebuild China-Italy relations outside of the Belt and Road Initiative, on which Italy has taken a more cautious stance. Amid ongoing EU-China trade tensions, particularly over tariffs on Chinese electric vehicles, this dialogue underscores both countries' intention to promote cooperation despite broader challenges.



<https://english.news.cn/>  
(Xinhua/Ding Haitao)

## 5. INFOGRAPHIC OF THE WEEK

This week’s infographic highlights NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte’s response to North Korea’s recent deployment of troops to Russia. As North Korea deepens its involvement in Russia’s conflict with Ukraine, NATO warns that this alliance poses a direct threat to both Euro-Atlantic and Indo-Pacific security. Rutte’s call for an immediate cessation of these actions underscores the growing complexity of global security dynamics, as alliances stretch across continents, intertwining regional conflicts with broader strategic implications.

### DPRK'S DEPLOYMENT TO RUSSIA

DPRK's involvement in Europe legitimizes NATO's increased activity in the Indo-Pacific



## 6. Regional Alliances

### **Implications of Trump's Second Term on Multilateral Initiatives in Asia**

Donald Trump's re-election as U.S. President is expected to impact the landscape of multilateral security and economic initiatives in Asia, including critical frameworks like the Quad (Quadrilateral Security Dialogue), AUKUS (Australia-UK-U.S. security pact), and regional economic partnerships. While Trump has shown support for countering China's influence, his administration's "America First" approach often emphasizes transactional relationships and a preference for bilateral over multilateral commitments. This stance could reshape the U.S. approach to key alliances in the Indo-Pacific, with implications for regional stability and cooperation.

#### **Quad (Quadrilateral Security Dialogue)**

The Quad, comprising the U.S., Japan, India, and Australia, has emerged as a significant forum for addressing security challenges in the Indo-Pacific, particularly with a focus on countering China's assertiveness in the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean. During Trump's previous term, the Quad gained momentum as a platform for promoting a "Free and Open Indo-Pacific" and enhancing maritime security coordination. However, Trump's approach to alliances may impact the cohesion of the Quad, as he has previously pushed allies to take on more of the financial and logistical burdens of joint security efforts.

Trump's transactional style might lead to demands for greater military and financial contributions from Quad partners, which could strain cooperation if allies perceive these demands as undermining the spirit of equal partnership. On the other hand, Trump's strategic focus on China might also result in a stronger U.S. commitment to Quad initiatives, especially in maritime security and intelligence sharing. This could bring about more robust military exercises and defense technology sharing within the Quad, although the stability of these collaborations could be influenced by fluctuating U.S. expectations of allies' contributions.

#### **AUKUS (Australia-UK-U.S. Security Pact)**

AUKUS, announced in 2021 after Trump's first term, is a trilateral security pact aimed at enhancing defense and technological collaboration between the U.S., UK, and Australia, with a primary focus on countering China's rise. Trump's return may bring mixed outcomes for AUKUS, as his administration's emphasis on domestic military investments could lead to a reduction in resources allocated to shared defense projects.

While Trump may support AUKUS as a means to check China's regional ambitions, his approach could prioritize American defense manufacturing and technology for U.S. forces, potentially complicating Australia's access to high-tech weaponry and nuclear-powered submarine technology under AUKUS. Additionally, Trump's tendency to question traditional alliances could test the depth of this relatively new pact,

especially if he expects Australia to shoulder a greater financial burden in joint defense initiatives.

### **ASEAN and Broader Multilateral Economic Initiatives**

Trump's previous term saw the U.S. withdrawing from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), signaling his administration's preference for bilateral trade deals over multilateral economic agreements. His re-election could limit U.S. engagement in regional economic frameworks like the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), which many Asian economies have adopted to promote intra-regional trade and reduce dependency on the U.S. and China.

By distancing the U.S. from these multilateral trade pacts, Trump's second term could create a vacuum in Asia's economic architecture that China might be eager to fill. This shift may encourage Asian countries to deepen their economic ties with one another and strengthen regional institutions without U.S. involvement, further consolidating Asia's economic autonomy and diminishing Washington's influence in shaping regional trade norms.

### **Potential Impact on Regional Security Architecture**

In addition to the Quad and AUKUS, Trump's second term could also influence other multilateral security frameworks, such as ASEAN-centered mechanisms (e.g., the ASEAN Regional Forum and ADMM-Plus) that are crucial for maintaining a balance of power in the Indo-Pacific. Trump's transactional approach may place pressure on ASEAN states to take a firmer stance against China, potentially disrupting ASEAN's neutral, consensus-based approach to security matters.

However, Trump's limited engagement in multilateral institutions could also mean that the U.S. will rely more heavily on informal coalitions like the Quad and AUKUS, while adopting a more selective approach to ASEAN initiatives. This could lead to fragmented regional security cooperation, where U.S.-led coalitions focus on hard security, while ASEAN and other regional forums address softer security issues, such as humanitarian assistance, disaster relief, and diplomatic dialogue with China.

Trump's second term presents a complex set of implications for multilateral initiatives in Asia. His administration's emphasis on bilateralism and transactional diplomacy may strain cooperative frameworks like the Quad and AUKUS, potentially impacting the cohesion and financial dynamics within these groups. On the economic front, Trump's likely disengagement from multilateral trade pacts could accelerate intra-Asian economic integration, offering China greater influence over the region's trade rules and norms. As Trump reshapes U.S. engagement in Asia, the region may see a more fragmented yet adaptive security and economic landscape, with countries balancing U.S. interests against a backdrop of growing regional autonomy.

## 7. ANALYSIS

### **NATO Secretary General's Remarks on DPRK's Troop Deployment in Russia**

NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte's recent statement confirmed the deployment of North Korean troops to Russia, specifically in the Kursk region, marking a significant and concerning escalation in North Korea's involvement in the Ukraine conflict. This development underscores the growing military partnership between Russia and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), which poses serious implications for both Euro-Atlantic and Indo-Pacific security.

#### **Key Points of the Deployment and Its Implications**

1. **Escalation of DPRK's Involvement:** North Korea's dispatch of military units to Russia is a marked increase in its support for Russia's war in Ukraine. Previously, DPRK assistance to Russia had largely focused on supplying ammunition and ballistic missiles. The presence of North Korean troops on Russian soil represents a direct and unprecedented expansion of this support.
2. **Violation of UN Security Council Resolutions:** This deployment is a blatant breach of UN Security Council resolutions that prohibit North Korea from exporting military assistance. By aligning openly with Russia in this way, North Korea is not only challenging international norms but also undermining efforts to isolate it economically and diplomatically.
3. **Mutual Military and Technological Support:** Rutte highlighted the reciprocal nature of the Russia-DPRK relationship, with North Korea supplying munitions to Russia while receiving military technology in return. This exchange allows North Korea to circumvent sanctions, advancing its military capabilities through Russian support.
4. **Strategic Impact on Global Security:** The DPRK's direct involvement in Russia's war against Ukraine represents a new axis of cooperation that extends beyond the Euro-Atlantic sphere. Rutte warned that this growing military partnership threatens stability in both the Indo-Pacific and Euro-Atlantic regions. It signals an alignment of authoritarian states willing to cooperate despite global opposition, creating potential flashpoints that may destabilize other regions, including the Korean Peninsula.
5. **Reflection of Russia's Military Desperation:** According to Rutte, this partnership highlights Putin's growing desperation as Russian forces face heavy casualties and logistical strains in Ukraine. Russia's reliance on external allies like DPRK underscores the strain of sustaining its war effort against a resilient Ukrainian defense backed by NATO.

#### **Response and Strategic Considerations for NATO and Allies**

The deployment of DPRK troops to Russia prompted NATO allies to reevaluate their support for Ukraine and consider additional measures to counterbalance this

escalation. The meeting underscored the importance of coordinated intelligence-sharing and a united stance among NATO members and Indo-Pacific allies, such as South Korea, Japan, Australia, and New Zealand.

In his remarks, Rutte emphasized the need for democracies to stand together against these authoritarian alliances and to enhance military support for Ukraine as part of a broader effort to protect democratic values and global stability. NATO's commitment to Ukraine's defense remains unwavering, as Alliance members recognize that Ukraine's security directly impacts European and international security frameworks.

As North Korea continues to deepen its ties with Russia, NATO and its partners are likely to strengthen sanctions and monitoring to prevent further breaches of international law. Rutte's outreach to South Korean President Yoon and Ukrainian Defense Minister Umerov reflects NATO's strategy of building a multinational coalition to address shared security threats, reinforcing the unity of democratic nations in the face of authoritarian expansion.

This latest development points to a complex and increasingly polarized global landscape, where alliances are reshaping in response to shifting power dynamics. NATO's vigilance and proactive measures will be crucial as it navigates the challenges posed by the Russia-DPRK partnership and its implications for global peace.

### **Implications of Trump's Re-election on Asia**

Donald Trump's re-election as U.S. President introduces a range of uncertainties and potential shifts in U.S.-Asia relations, with far-reaching impacts on both economic and security dynamics in the region. Trump's previous term set a precedent of protectionist trade policies and an "America First" approach that often strained U.S. alliances and partnerships across Asia. His return to office brings questions about the trajectory of U.S. policy toward China, trade relations with Asian economies, and security commitments in the Indo-Pacific.

### **Economic and Trade Implications**

One of the most immediate concerns for Asian economies is the possibility of renewed trade tensions with China. Trump's stance on trade with China has historically involved high tariffs, and his re-election could reignite a trade war that impacts not only China but also other Asian economies deeply integrated into global supply chains. Countries like South Korea, Japan, and ASEAN members, which rely heavily on exports to both the U.S. and China, may experience economic turbulence if new tariffs or trade barriers disrupt cross-border trade flows.

Additionally, Trump's focus on reshoring American manufacturing could affect sectors where Asia currently leads, such as technology and electronics production. U.S. efforts to reduce dependence on Asian manufacturing could lead to a partial decoupling of supply chains, forcing Asian producers to diversify their markets and adapt to shifts in global demand.

### **Security Concerns in the Indo-Pacific**

Trump's approach to security alliances in Asia during his previous term was marked by demands for greater financial contributions from allies such as South Korea and Japan for hosting U.S. troops. If this approach continues, it may strain these relationships, especially if the U.S. administration pushes for renegotiated defense cost-sharing agreements that place additional financial burdens on allies.

Moreover, U.S.-China tensions over Taiwan are likely to escalate, with Trump's administration historically adopting a more confrontational stance toward Beijing. A stronger U.S. stance in the Taiwan Strait could provoke heightened military responses from China, increasing regional security risks. For countries in the region, particularly those close to flashpoints like Taiwan and the South China Sea, the return of Trump's assertive policies raises concerns about the stability of the Indo-Pacific and the potential for conflict escalation.

### **Potential Shifts in Regional Alliances**

Asian nations may also reconsider their strategic alignments in light of Trump's re-election. His "transactional" approach to alliances could push some countries to strengthen ties with other regional powers, such as Japan and Australia, or to seek closer economic and security partnerships within ASEAN to hedge against volatility in U.S. commitments. Nations like South Korea, which maintains a complex relationship with North Korea and relies on the U.S. security umbrella, may face new diplomatic challenges as they balance their relationship with Washington while managing regional security concerns.

### **Impact on U.S. Engagement in Multilateral Initiatives**

Trump's preference for bilateral over multilateral agreements may once again limit U.S. engagement in regional frameworks like the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) or the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP). This could result in an Asia that increasingly relies on intra-regional trade and partnerships, reducing U.S. influence and leaving a vacuum that China or other regional powers might fill.

Trump's re-election presents both challenges and strategic recalibrations for Asia. From potential trade tensions with China and a heightened U.S. stance on Taiwan to possible shifts in regional security alliances, Asian nations will need to navigate a complex landscape. For many, the response will likely involve diversifying alliances, enhancing regional cooperation, and preparing for fluctuations in U.S. policies that could impact both economic and security dimensions in the region. The coming years will reveal how Asian economies and governments adapt to this renewed phase in U.S.-Asia relations, striving to balance their economic interests, security needs, and strategic autonomy.

