

December 18, 2025



# ***Exploring the Feasibility & Viability of a Canadian-Led Global Middle Power Trade/Security/Digital Alliance, with Yash Kalash, Stephen Nagy & Kernaghan Webb***

Organized by Toronto Metropolitan University's Institute for the Study of Corporate Social Responsibility, co-sponsored by the TMU CSR Student Society, and the TMU Law and Business Student Association

***Session starts at 12:02 pm***

Thursday, December 18, 2025

Toronto Metropolitan University,

Toronto, Canada

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# **Toronto Metropolitan University\***

## **Land Acknowledgement**

**"Toronto is in the 'Dish With One Spoon Territory'. The Dish With One Spoon is a treaty between the Anishinaabe, Mississaugas and Haudenosaunee that bound them to share the territory and protect the land. Subsequent Indigenous Nations and peoples, Europeans and all newcomers have been invited into this treaty in the spirit of peace, friendship and respect."**

*\* Toronto Metropolitan University was formerly known as Ryerson University.*

# ISO 26000 Social Responsibility definition

Social Responsibility: *the responsibility of an organization for the impacts of its decisions and activities on society and the environment, through transparent and ethical behaviour that:*

- *Contributes to sustainable development, health and the welfare of society;*
- *Takes into account the expectations of stakeholders;*
- *Is in compliance with applicable law and consistent with international norms of behaviour; and*
- *Is integrated throughout the organization and practiced in its relationships*

# The need for “sustainable governance”

Sustainable governance starts from the proposition that the best likelihood of addressing the complex, fast evolving, multi-jurisdictional environmental, social and economic challenges we face in the 21<sup>st</sup> century will involve ***harnessing the unique energies and capabilities of all three of government, the private sector and civil society***, using a combination of rule instruments, processes, institutions and actors, sometimes operating collaboratively, and sometimes operating in more of a “check and balance”/rivalrous manner.

Webb (2005), “*Sustainable Governance in the Twenty-First Century - Moving beyond Instrument Choice*”

# Sustainable governance taxonomy

- **Institutions** – specialized entities performing public-interest oriented functions or processes (public, private, civil society): for example, legislatures are a public sector institution, ISO is an example of a non-state rule-making institution)
- **Rule instruments** – articulations of normatively acceptable and unacceptable conduct, typically consisting of criteria for objectively assessing conformity or non-conformity: for example, laws are public sector rule instruments, and ISO standards are an example of non-state rule instruments
- **Processes** – inter-active activities associated with rule making, rule application, rule implementation and penalty/reward decisions. For example, environmental agencies carry out government rule implementation processes and certification agencies carry out non-state conformity assessment processes
- **Actors** – interacting individuals and entities that play some role in the broader governance ecosystem: e.g., inspectors, judges, auditors, are all individual actors

# Did you know?

- **New talks coming up!**
  - search: TMU “CSR Institute” and “events”→
  - January 16 (Integrity@Atkins-Realis with Hentie Dirker),
  - January 23 (Nigerian Impact Benefit Agreements-Lotana Nwodo)
  - suggestions for upcoming TMU CSR Institute “in conversation” guests and topics welcome (email [kernaghan.webb@torontomu.ca](mailto:kernaghan.webb@torontomu.ca))
  - Ongoing project exploring the need and feasibility of a global coalition in support of the rule of law
- **All TMU University CSR Institute talks are available at no cost, and accessible after the fact as videos with related material on the TMU CSR Institute webpage**
  - search: TMU “CSR Institute” and “events”
- **Toronto Metropolitan University’s Bachelor of Commerce and MBA programs have been ranked among the best in the world by Corporate Knights**
  - search: TMU CSR Institute webpage and “news”
- **Toronto Metropolitan University CSR Institute News**
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# About Yash Kalash

Yash Kalash is a senior fellow at CIGI and an expert in strategy, public policy, digital technology and financial services. He has experience in emerging markets across India, MENA (Middle East and North Africa) and the Asia-Pacific and a distinguished track record advising governments and the private sector on emerging technologies. His expertise spans various industries, including fintech, AI and digital assets, and their impact on geopolitics. His career includes key roles at Roland Berger, the Government of India, Adani Group and KPMG, where he spearheaded strategic digital projects, advised clients on their digital assets and AI strategy, and informed policy and regulatory developments. With an M.Sc. in management from Imperial College London and a B.Sc. in international relations and politics from the University of Bath, Yash combines deep strategic insight with strong training, making him a versatile and impactful leader in the field of digital economy. Recent publications include: Should Canada Lead a Global Middle Power Trade, Security and Digital Alliance? (co-author, CIGI, Dec. 9, 2025); The Cognitive Network Age: Networks as the Nervous System of Civilization (CIGI, Nov. 27, 2025).

# About Stephen Nash

- Stephen Nash is Professor of Politics and International Studies at the International Christian University, specializing in Indo-Pacific geopolitics and great power competition. Concurrently, he holds strategic appointments as a Senior Fellow and China Project lead at the MacDonald Laurier Institute and the Asia-Pacific Foundation, and a Visiting Fellow at the Japan Institute for International Affairs. His expertise is further recognized through affiliations with the Institute for Security and Development Policy, the East Asia Security Centre, and the Research Institute for Peace and Security. He serves as the director of policy studies for the Yokosuka Council of Asia Pacific Studies (YCAPS), spearheading their Indo-Pacific Policy Dialogue series. He is currently working on monograph concerning middle-power approaches to great-power competition in the Indo-Pacific. Recent publications include: Nagy, S.R. and Indu Saxena. 2024. "Southeast Asia and the Indo-Pacific Construct," and Nagy, Stephen and Thomas Murphy, 2024. "Middle Power Cyber Security Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific: An Analysis Through the Lens of Neo-Middle Power Diplomacy,"



# About Kernaghan Webb

Kernaghan Webb holds Bachelor's, Masters and Doctorate degrees in law, and is an Associate Professor in the Toronto Metropolitan University Department of Law and Business. He is also the Founding Director of the TMU Institute for the Study of Corporate Social Responsibility. Prof. Webb's extensive law and regulation research and publications have among other things been cited and quoted by the Supreme Court of Canada. Dr. Webb has also been employed by or advised governments and inter-governmental bodies, and he has been on the board of directors or otherwise assisted private sector, civil society organizations on regulatory matters. Professor Webb was appointed Special Advisor to the UN Global Compact regarding the development of the ISO 26000 social responsibility standard, he has played leadership roles in the development of international and national social and economic standards, and received international and national recognition for his leadership. Recent publications include: Should Canada Lead a Global Middle Power Trade, Security and Digital Alliance? (co-author, CIGI, Dec. 9, 2025); Attacks on the rule of law and the threat to business and human rights (co-author, International Bar Association Business and Human Rights Committee, Nov. 21, 2025).

# About this session

- The foundations of global trade, security, and economic governance are shifting faster and in more profound ways than many middle powers can comfortably absorb. Long-standing assumptions about reliable markets, stable security guarantees, and predictable rules are weakening, while pressure to align with competing great powers is intensifying. For middle powers that have depended on a more-or-less stable, somewhat principles-based international rules-based order, this raises an urgent question: can each thrive as autonomous actors on their own in the increasingly polarized, transactional world—or would acting together give them a better chance at prospering while preserving basic human values?
- Drawing on their publications, the discussion will probe the case for developing a collective approach to preserving and furthering middle power sovereignty, the practical aspects of coordinated action, and how a “united front” among diverse middle powers could enhance resilience, influence global rule-making, and reduce vulnerability to great-power pressure. Particular attention will be given to considering the feasibility of linking together current Euro-Americas-Afro-Indo-Pacific regional arrangements, and the viability of Canada playing a leadership role in the alliance.

# Notice

***If you have a question or comment, please email:  
kernaghan.webb@torontomu.ca***

*I will do my best to fold in your questions/comments into  
the conversation.*