Geoeconomics and U.S. Partnerships in East Asia:

Supply Chain Resilience, Trade Strategy, and Opportunities for the American Southeast

September 28, 2026
The Alumni House, Georgia Institute of Technology

Co-Host: Sam Nunn School of International Affairs, Georgia Institute of Technology
Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Atlanta

I. Significance of the Issues

The global economic order that sustained decades of growth is undergoing its most dramatic restructuring since the end of the Cold War. China's near-monopoly over critical minerals processing and its dominance in key industries including shipbuilding, battery production, and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) manufacturing have transformed economic interdependence into a strategic vulnerability for the United States and its allies. These realities have moved supply chain resilience to the center of U.S. national security strategy.

The second Trump Administration has responded with urgency and ambition. Through a sweeping reciprocal tariff program launched in April 2025 and a series of bilateral trade agreements, especially with key Indo-Pacific partners, the United States has aimed at reindustrializing America and reshoring, onshoring, or friendshoring critical industrial sectors to reduce its vulnerability to China's global supply-chain domination. In other words, Washington has placed geoeconomics—the use of economic tools to achieve strategic ends—at the heart of its foreign policy. The results have been monumental: a U.S.–Japan framework agreement concluded in July 2025 committing Japan to $332 billion in U.S. investments; and a landmark U.S.–Taiwan Agreement on Reciprocal Trade signed in February 2026, anchoring Taiwan's $250 billion semiconductor investment commitment and deepening high-technology supply chain integration.

East Asia has emerged as the indispensable theater for American supply chain strategy. Taiwan produces over 90 percent of the world's most advanced semiconductor chips. Japan has spent fifteen years building a non-China rare-earth supply chain—a model the United States is now urgently seeking to emulate. The alignment of U.S. strategic interests with the industrial capabilities of these partners is consequential—it requires a deliberate geoeconomic realignment with profound implications for American manufacturing, defense readiness, and technological leadership.

The American Southeast sits at the intersection of these trends in ways that are underappreciated. The Southeast's ports, workforce, and growing advanced manufacturing base position it uniquely to benefit from deeper U.S.–East Asia supply chain cooperation in semiconductors, battery production, drone manufacturing, and beyond.

Yet the deepening of these partnerships is not without friction, and the American Southeast has already been a stage for the most instructive episode of that complexity. In September 2025, federal immigration agents detained some 475 South Korean nationals—another critical East Asian partner--at the Hyundai–LG Energy Solution battery plant under construction in Ellabell, Georgia. The episode exposed the "intermestic" dimension of geoeconomic cooperation in its fullest complexity. On the American side, the idea that the jobs created by allied investment would flow to imported workers rather than American ones is a politically potent anxiety. On the East Asian side, the question of worker dignity became entangled with national pride and alliance credibility in ways that no trade agreement or investment figure could easily overlook. If the United States and its East Asian allies are to realize the full promise of supply chain resilience, new institutional modalities for managing the interface between geopolitical partnership and domestic political economy will be essential.

II. Symposium Design and Rationale

The symposium is structured in three sequential segments designed to move from strategic context to practical applications.

Opening Keynote: The U.S. Geoeconomic Framework

The symposium opens with a keynote speaker who can speak with authority about the Trump Administration's overarching geoeconomic strategy, especially toward East Asia. This framing is essential: it situates the panel discussions within the current and consequential U.S. policy developments. The audience will benefit from understanding how Washington thinks about supply chain resilience as a national security imperative and the role of allied partnerships in executing that strategy.

Keynote Speaker:

Dr. Patrick Cronin (Asia-Pacific Security Chair, Hudson Institute)

Moderator:
Dennis Lockhart (Distinguished Professor of the Practice, INTA)

Expert Panel: East Asian Perspectives on the New Geoeconomic Landscape

The panel brings together policymakers or practitioners from each of the three key U.S. partner economies to provide ground-level expertise on the most pressing supply chain topics of the moment.

- Taiwan: The conclusion of the U.S.–Taiwan Agreement on Reciprocal Trade in February 2026 was a watershed moment for bilateral economic relations. The speaker from Taiwan will offer first-hand insight into how the deal was constructed, what Taiwan committed to in semiconductor investment and supply chain alignment, and what it signals for the broader U.S.–Taiwan strategic partnership.

  Speaker:
  Dr. Roy Chun Lee (Senior Deputy Executive Director, Chung-Hua Institution for Economic Research)

- Japan: Japan's rare earth supply chain diversification effort, launched after China's 2010 embargo, is widely regarded as the most instructive model for how allied nations can reduce strategic dependence on Chinese critical minerals. With China imposing new rare earth export controls in 2025, Japan's lessons are more timely than ever. A speaker with deep expertise in Japan's geoeconomic strategy and its 2026 cooperative action plan with the United States offers the symposium a concrete case study on the pursuit of supply-chain resilience and beyond.

  Speaker:
  Dr. Kazuto Suzuki (Professor, University of Tokyo; Director, Institute of Geoeconomics)

- South Korea: South Korea brings two complementary industrial capabilities of direct relevance to U.S. strategic needs. Its shipbuilding industry, now partnered with the United States under MASGA, represents the most credible path to restoring American maritime capacity. Its battery manufacturers—LG Energy Solution, Samsung SDI, and SK On—are already powering the U.S. EV supply chain. Meanwhile, South Korea is often viewed as being tussling between its commercial interests in China and its alliance obligations with the United States. A South Korean speaker can illuminate how South Korea is navigating the balance, and where further cooperation is possible.

  Speaker:
  Dr. Seong-Hyon Lee (Senior Fellow, George H.W. Bush Foundation for U.S.-China Relations)

  Moderator:
  Dr. Alasdair Young (Professor and Neal Family Chair, INTA)

Luncheon Address: Taiwan's Strategic Partnership with the United States

Ambassador Alexander Tah-ray Yui, Taiwan's Representative to the United States, will deliver a keynote luncheon address reflecting on the state of the U.S.-Taiwan bilateral partnership and Taiwan's role in the emerging cross-Pacific geoeconomic architecture. Ambassador Yui brings over 35 years of diplomatic experience, including service as Taiwan's Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, Representative to the European Union and Belgium, and Ambassador to Paraguay. The luncheon address provides a bridge between the morning panel's practitioner-level discussion and the afternoon roundtable's focus on actionable opportunities for the American Southeast.

Luncheon Speaker:

Ambassador Alexander Tah-ray Yui (Representative, Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office in the United States)

Moderator:
Richard Utz (Senior Associate Dean for Strategic Initiatives, IAC)

Roundtable: Opportunities for the U.S.-East Asia Partnerships and Southeast United States

The afternoon roundtable brings four local speakers for a structured discussion of concrete partnership opportunities. The specific focus on the Southeast United States is both analytically appropriate and practically important: the region hosts major Korean automotive and battery investments, is home to significant port infrastructure, and has an emerging role in advanced manufacturing. The roundtable format encourages a candid exchange of perspectives on how U.S. policy design, allied industrial investment, and regional capacity can be aligned to advance supply chain resilience in priority sectors.

Roundtable Speakers:
Jared Lin (Director General of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Atlanta)
Kiyo Kojima (Partner, Smith, Gambrell & Russell, LLP; former President & Chairman of the Japanese Chamber of Commerce of Georgia)

Stefan A. Harrigan (Senior Manager, Global Business Development at Metro Atlanta Chamber)
The speaker representing South Korea TBD

Moderator:
Diane Alleva (CEO, Market Access International, Inc.; Lecturer, Georgia Tech)

III. Schedule

9:00 am – 9:20 am: Registration and Reception
(Coffee and light refreshments will be provided)

9:20 am – 9:30 am: Opening remarks

Speakers:
Bernard Kippelen (Vice Provost for International Initiatives, Georgia Institute of Technology)
Jared Lin (Director General, Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Atlanta)

9:30 am – 10:45 am: Keynote Speech – The U.S. Geoeconomic Framework

Speaker: Patrick Cronin (Asia-Pacific Security Chair, Hudson Institute)
Moderator: Dennis Lockhart (Distinguished Professor of the Practice, Nunn School)

10:45 am – 11:00 am: Coffee Break

11:00 am – 12:45 pm: Panel – East Asian Perspectives on the New Geoeconomic Landscape

Speakers:
Roy Chun Lee (Associate Research Fellow, Chung-Hua Institution for Economic Research)
Kazuto Suzuki (Professor, University of Tokyo; Director, Institute of Geoeconomics)
Seong-Hyon Lee (Senior Fellow, George H.W. Bush Foundation for U.S.-China Relations)
Moderator: Alasdair Young (Professor and Neal Family Chair, Nunn School)

12:45 pm – 2:00 pm: Luncheon Address – Taiwan's Strategic Partnership with the United States

Speaker: Ambassador Alexander Tah-ray Yui (Representative, Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office in the United States)

Moderator: Richard Utz (Senior Associate Dean for Strategic Initiatives, IAC)

2:00 pm – 3:45 pm: Roundtable – Opportunities for the U.S. East Asia Partnerships and Southeast United States

Speakers:

Jared Lin (Director General of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Atlanta)

Kiyoaki Kojima (Partner, Smith, Gambrell & Russell, LLP; former President & Chairman of the Japanese Chamber of Commerce of Georgia)

Stefan A. Harrigan (Senior Manager, Global Business Development at Metro Atlanta Chamber)

Moderator: Diane Alleva (CEO, Market Access International, Inc.; Lecturer, Georgia Tech)