

Globalisation in Retreat: Risks and Opportunities

21st - 22nd of October | 2019

Istanbul Congress Center



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”” Day 1

Exclusive Talk

Demystifying Turkey's Operation Peace Spring

On the 9th of October 2019, Turkey declared the start of its third military operation in northern Syria since 2016. Named 'Operation Peace Spring', the operation is being carried out together with a coalition of Syrian opposition groups under the banner of the newly-established Syrian National Army. Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan explained the objective of the operation as being the prevention of the formation of a "terror corridor" along the country's southern border, and to establish a 'safe zone' in the area in order to facilitate the return of refugees. According to Turkish officials, Turkey is justified in its actions according to the principle of self-defence as set out by international law. On the other hand, the operation has attracted significant criticism from around the world and has been largely portrayed as an operation against Syrian Kurds. Turkey considers the YPG group as the extension of the PKK in Syria, a designated terrorist group by Turkey, the US, the EU and others. Turkey also hosts the largest refugee population in the world including hundreds of thousands of Syrian Kurds who fled both from the Syrian regime and the YPG. One of the main objectives of the operation is to facilitate the return of these refugees to their homes. This session aims to discuss the objectives, scale and the duration of 'Operation Peace Spring' as well as shed light on the Turkey's broad approach to the Syria question.

Discussion Themes

This session intends to discuss the following:

- Will 'Operation Peace Spring' address Turkey's national security concerns in the long-run?
- What effect could 'Operation Peace Spring' have with regards to stability in the wider region?
- Could 'Operation Peace Spring' pave the way for a positive resolution of the war in Syria?

Session 1

The Allure of Identity Politics in a Globalised World

The renewed appeal of identity politics is shaking the foundations of the global order. Recent history has problematised many of our assumptions about the trajectory of the world following the end of the Cold War, what Francis Fukuyama famously referred to as 'the end of history'. From the inadequate predictive capacity of the 'Clash of Civilizations' thesis to the shortcomings of the 'global village' perspective, the revival of identity politics has called our assumptions into question. Rising economic and cultural nationalism is leading to protectionism and trade wars on the one hand, and deep socio-cultural divides between different communities on the other. While some argue that the current surge of nationalism, tribalism and ethnocentric policies stem from an intolerance of difference and a resentment towards political systems that have left many disempowered, others trace this shift to growing economic grievances perceived to be rooted in the very nature of the international system. Within this context, nationalist discourses and economic protectionism have regained a mainstream position in the politics of many states across the world, altering social perceptions of issues ranging from globalisation to diversity and difference.

Discussion Themes

This session intends to discuss the following:

- In the face of rising identity politics, what does the future hold for globalisation? Why is the reaction to globalisation and the rise of nationalism more ferocious in the West?
- Does history offer an alternative between current understandings of globalisation and narrowly defined nationalism? How could societies be constructed differently and how can diversity within, and between states be addressed? Can multiculturalism in the West be salvaged?
- What are the roots of the renewed appeal of nationalism? What are the commonalities and differences between the rise of nationalism today and that of the early 20th century?
- How and why are governments and politicians exploiting social insecurities to increase nationalist sentiments?

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**Speech by
the Guest of
Honour**

**Globalisation
in Retreat:
Reflections
on the World
Order**

In the past decades, globalisation has been presented to the world as an indisputable fact, to which all international and national institutions were called to adapt themselves. The discourse on globalisation has, for several decades, built the image of a mighty political, economic and technological behemoth that sways states and societies. With the transition to the new millennium, this debate has shifted. Political, economic, and social detractors of globalisation around the world have become more vocal. A vital aspect of the emerging debate is the lack of representation in the institutions that govern the world order. To illustrate this point, the United Nations was established almost 75 years ago on the basis it would end wars and solve conflicts. However, five countries, which claimed victory in the Second World War, gave themselves veto powers over the rest of the world. This step weakened the role of this leading world organisation, as a privileged few tended to impede equitable solutions to conflicts. Similar patterns can also be observed in other supranational institutions, especially the ones governing trade and international commerce. While the concept of free trade is accepted practically unanimously around the world, new regulations and trade barriers are introduced all the time, which impede the growth of emerging economies. However, since every cloud has a silver lining, the present situation could represent a tremendous opportunity to address the inequalities affecting the world order.

Session 2

NATO under the Gun: The Emergence of New Security Challenges

The shifts in today's world arguably signify the dawn of a new world order, one where old assumptions and certainties are being supplanted by new dynamics. Traditional alliance structures and multinational organisations are being put to the test as their efficacy and relevance are increasingly being called into question. Since the end of the Cold War, NATO has struggled to find its purpose and although the so-called War on Terror has opened new avenues for meaningful cooperation, the long-term viability of the alliance continues to be called into question. At a time when a resurgent Russia has given the Cold War era alliance new life, President Donald Trump has repeatedly questioned its relevance as main NATO partners are increasingly turning inward. In light of proposals for a new European army, the potential for polarisation and fragmentation poses serious challenges to the alliance. Ongoing conflagrations, such as the Russia-Ukraine crisis, further threaten to polarise the positions of key NATO members. This session will discuss the future of the NATO alliance in a world that reflects significantly different dynamics than those from which it emerged and in which its relevance is being called into question by even its most powerful members.

Discussion Themes

This session intends to discuss the following:

- Can NATO members find new common ground?
- Will the inclusion of new members strengthen or further dilute the alliance?
- What is Turkey's future role in the alliance, particularly as its political and security concerns are often underpinned by different realities than those of their European and North American allies?
- Does the resurgence of Russia provide new life for NATO, or do new global political dynamics marked by shifting alliances and multi-polarity merely re-emphasise the argument that NATO is no longer reflective of today's geopolitical realities?
- Will polarising issues such as the Russia-Ukraine crisis and increasing populism across Europe and the United States further fragment the alliance?

Session 3

The Future of Turkey-US Relations: Political and Security Dimensions

In the past decade, US-Turkey relations have been through several ups and downs. Today however, three problem areas are at the core of the divergence between the two sides. President Obama's decision to work with notorious terror organisations in Syria, such as the PYD/YPG, in order to combat ISIS was considered in Turkey as a disaster of epic proportions. The consequences of this decision left the PYD/YPG in control of nearly one-third of Syria, constituting a clear and present danger to Turkey's national security. Secondly, Washington's reluctance to extradite Fetullah Gulen, the mastermind behind the July 15, 2016, failed coup attempt in Turkey, has tested Ankara's patience. Additionally, there is the erroneous perception in Washington D.C. that Turkey's NATO membership is in question. This view tends to gain currency whenever the Turkish leadership opts, in the absence of viable alternative, to purchase weapons systems from other parties. President Trump's recent decision to approve Turkey's corridor east of the Euphrates is coherent with the president's earlier commitment to withdraw from Syria. However, President Trump has been facing mounting pressure in Washington, making it a challenge for the White House to balance its attention between domestic and foreign issues.

Discussion Themes

This session intends to discuss the following:

- **Could President Trump's approach in Syria overcome resistance from certain circles in the U.S. military and security apparatus?**
- **Is it possible for the White House to provide adequate attention to foreign relations amidst fast paced domestic political developments?**
- **Can the recent developments pave the way for a more positive trajectory in the bilateral relations?**

Session 4

New Horizons for Emerging Powers: Co-operation or Competition?

2018 was a challenging year for emerging powers. Amid increasing political and economic instability and a deep sense of shifting global paradigms, emerging economies are trying to find their place in the international order and enhance their potential for economic growth. Whilst the steady rise of the emerging powers has generated a major transformation in relations with the 'great powers', it has also impacted how they relate to each other. While relations with the world's developed countries will continue, can emerging powers put aside the differences between them for the sake of mutually beneficial development or are they ultimately competitors in a zero-sum game? Will the balance of relations between emerging powers centre predominantly on competition or will co-operation characterise the future of global governance?

Discussion Themes

This session intends to discuss the following:

- What mechanisms and institutions are available to emerging powers to provide them with sustainable growth in face of declining globalisation?
- Can co-operation between emerging powers provide them with better leverage against powerful nations and a bulwark against the imposition of policies favourable to established order?
- What will the role of BRICS be in coming years? Are we likely to see further integration or fragmentation among the member-states?
- How will rich and developed countries perceive and, in turn, influence the nature of relations between emerging powers?

”” Day 2

Opening Keynote

Revisiting Humanitarian Diplomacy towards Inclusive Development

Rapidly changing socio-political dynamics and shifting alliances mean that nations no longer rely solely on traditional diplomacy to communicate or achieve foreign policy objectives. Humanitarian diplomacy is a diplomatic approach based on protecting the interests of the most vulnerable within the framework of respect for humanitarian principles. The use of humanitarian diplomacy has been on the increase and has become one of the primary means of socioeconomic development in many regions of the world, creating a 'win-win' situation for both the countries receiving aid and those providing it. However, not all international initiatives and socio-economic development models have contributed to poverty reduction and shared prosperity. There has been recurrent criticism regarding this, and there remain numerous challenges when it comes to achieving inclusive development.

Session 1

The Threat of Far-right Extremism: War on Terror 2.0?

In the aftermath of the 9/11 terror attacks, governments around the world hastily introduced counter-terrorism and counter-extremism measures. Focused almost exclusively on Muslims and Islam, hostile acts, extremist ideology and politics of others, such as the far-right, were mostly ignored by the counter-terrorism frameworks adopted in Western states, despite the clear rise in white supremacy and far-right extremism online. The so-called 'dark web' - a largely ungoverned space where armed groups and extremists share propaganda - has provided a space for these ideas to proliferate. The rise of these various extremisms has underlined the presence of ideological currents that support anti-Muslim, anti-immigrant, anti-Semitic, and anti-globalist feelings. Terror-attacks ranging from the mass-shooting at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania to the March 2019 attacks against mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand have clear links to a far-right ideology connected with the rise of populism and based on notions of ethno-European supremacy. At the same time, it has become clear that the elements of the discourse espoused by the far-right have been increasingly embedded within political structures and media in the West and elsewhere - thereby influencing public discourse on Islam as well as the shape of both foreign and security policies.

Discussion Themes

This session intends to discuss the following:

- What steps can be taken nationally and internationally to address the threat of far-right extremism and terrorism?
- How has the media narrative regarding Islam and terrorism influenced public and political discourse?
- What lessons can be learned from approaches to counter-terrorism in the post-9/11 period with regards to combating far-right extremism?
- Is it necessary for the world to form another international coalition to fight against this form of extremism?
- What lies behind the normalisation of far-right extremist ideas and opinions and how can they be effectively countered?

Session 2

The Middle East at a Crossroad: Regional Responses to Shifting Challenges

Various political events and conflicts over the last several years have underscored the dynamic nature of regional geopolitics in the Middle East. Framed in the context of an increasingly volatile rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia, from the ongoing wars in Syria and Yemen, the situation in Palestine and the political deadlock in Lebanon, to the blockade on Qatar and the re-entrenchment of authoritarianism in Egypt, conventional understandings of the political dynamics and traditional alliances in the region have consistently been undermined. In the midst of all of these regional conflicts, the states in the Middle East also face the potential of regional aftershocks resulting from shifts at the international level. All too often however, the view of the region is dominated by voices from the outside, neglecting the perspectives of the various regional actors themselves. This session will engage with notable voices from the region in order to analyse their perspectives and suggested solutions for the various predicaments facing the Middle East.

Discussion Themes

This session intends to discuss the following:

- What are the main drivers behind these shifts? Do they emerge primarily from political expediency or do they reflect deeper issues of long-term political vision and political survival?
- Are we witnessing the emergence of a fundamentally new paradigm in the region, or are the shifts of recent years reflections of geopolitical anomalies?
- Can regional forces in the Middle East produce a blueprint for peace and stability in their own region?
- How does the Middle East see and understand shifts in the international order and emerging great power rivalries?
- What is the nature of the relationship between these shifts and the international geopolitical dynamic?

Session 3

The Assassination of Jamal Khashoggi: A Reflection of Regional Politics?

The murder of Saudi journalist and Washington Post contributor Jamal Khashoggi is not only a dark day in the history of journalism, but is also one of the most politically charged affairs to have taken place in recent years. The assassination of the prominent journalist inside the Saudi consulate in Istanbul provoked an international outcry and continues to have strategic, political and legal ramifications. As a result, Riyadh was plunged into an international image crisis. Seeking to dampen the negative fallout from the killing, the Saudis have spent millions of dollars on lobbying firms and public relations companies in order to advance a more positive image of the Kingdom. Furthermore, the subsequent fallout has also presented a picture of the newly unfolding geopolitical reality in the Middle East that continues to reshape political dynamics in the region. This session will explore the geopolitics of the Middle East in light of the killing of Jamal Khashoggi and seek to understand how the tragic event fits into the emerging political dynamic in the region.

Discussion Themes

This session intends to discuss the following:

- Why did Khashoggi become a target, and what are the repercussions and impact of his murder on regional and international politics?
- Can the killing of Khashoggi be connected to Saudi Arabia's newly developed counter-revolutionary state identity and its position vis-à-vis the Arab Spring?
- What does the targeting of a Saudi journalist in Istanbul reveal about the trajectory of Saudi-Turkish relations? Will it have a long-lasting effect on bilateral ties?
- What do international and regional reactions to Khashoggi's killing indicate about possible future trajectories of the regional order in the Middle East?

Exclusive Talk

Trade Wars and the Risks to Global Growth

In recent years, various international players have resorted to trade wars as a means of settling political and diplomatic scores. However, measures such as this carry a heavy price tag as they initiate a cycle of retaliation that can throw financial markets and economies into turmoil. Even though the world economy is still thriving, there are signs that a global slowdown may be on the horizon. Growth has slowed slightly since 2017, a problem that is exacerbated in emerging economies by trade wars and the imposition of tariffs and sanctions. Moreover, a decade after the most significant global financial crisis since the great depression, many analysts point out that the annual growth rates in the most advanced economies are unsustainable and the next great recession may be looming. Turkey is one of the emerging economies that has been thriving in the past two decades. However, facing tariffs, sanctions and other economic impediments related to international trade, its growth rates have been affected. For its part, the government in Turkey has turned the looming threats into opportunities, navigating these new uncharted territories and re-evaluating its economic policies and financial architecture to adapt to newly emerging realities.

Discussion Themes

This session intends to discuss the following:

- To what extent are trade wars causing uncertainty in the global financial system and affecting global stability?
- Does the imposition of tariffs and trade sanctions signal the decline of multilateralism?
- What are the implications of continual trade wars on the future of the Turkish economy?

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Exclusive Talk

Managing Migration: Europe and the Refugee Crisis

Beginning in 2015, large numbers of people arriving to the European Union from across the Mediterranean or overland through Southeast Europe engendered political challenges in several EU nations. Through its own hosting of millions of refugees, Turkey has played a crucial role in mitigating the extent of the crisis. However, as conflicts in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Yemen and parts of Africa continue to fester, hundreds of thousands – if not millions – of people are likely to continue to seek refuge in Europe, threatening to trigger a new crisis. As a possible sign of things to come, in July and August 2019, more than 13,000 people landed on the shores of Greece, equalling more than half of all sea arrivals to the country recorded throughout the year thus far. The rise in recent arrivals has put extra strain on already overcrowded facilities on the islands where conditions remain dire. In the face of rising nationalist and Eurosceptic parties, it is unclear how, and if, Europe will be able to manage the ongoing crisis. What is clear, is that EU member states must seek an agreement on a comprehensive plan to effectively share responsibility for appropriately dealing with refugee and migrant populations. In addition to domestic political challenges, the EU is also faced with its own political divides which represent a significant hindrance to a humane and effective management of migration issues.

Discussion Themes

This session intends to discuss the following:

- What role can the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies play in creating and sustaining the conditions for lasting peace and building a culture of non-violence around the world?
- How can the refugee crisis be mitigated proactively and what role can European nations and institutions play in managing the crisis?
- To what extent are civil society organisations effective in responding to population movements?
- How does the rise of populist and far-right politics impact the humanitarian sector in Europe working on the refugee/migration issue? How can these issues best be resolved?

Session 4

The EU: A Vote of No Confidence?

The EU continues to face multiple challenges that constitute threats to its very existence. Values and principles such as the rule of law, democracy and respect for human rights that make up the DNA of the EU are increasingly coming under direct threat by rising populism and 'Euroscepticism'. Many experts claim that the Brexit phenomenon may be an indication of further ruptures to come. Countries such as Poland, Hungary and Italy could open up new fissures within the EU as populist and nationalist sentiments continue to rise. Similarly, economic woes and stagnating living standards in many European countries - such as Greece, Italy and Spain - are an indication that the coming generations will have a lower quality of life than that of their parents. Such a state of affairs has been a trigger for the rise of social movements, such as the "Yellow Vests" in France, which are a manifestation of the high levels of frustration with the political status-quo. In the long run, the continued growth of this anger holds the potential to destabilise the EU as a whole. Furthermore, the failure to form a coherent and common European identity and to adopt common foreign and security policies among member states has called the geopolitical relevance of the bloc into question.

Discussion Themes

This session intends to discuss the following:

- Does Brexit represent the beginning of the end for the EU? Will it have a domino effect on other EU member states?
- Could Hungary, Poland and Italy open up new fissures within the EU?
- Does the growing dissatisfaction with wealth distribution in some European countries, as represented by social protest movements such as the "Yellow Vests" in France, constitute a threat to the EU's future?
- Can the EU's core values survive the rise of far-right nationalism in Europe?
- What steps can the EU take - if any - to make it more geopolitically and strategically central to international affairs?



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