



## From Cold War to Hot Peace

Day 2

The title of this panel of the Raisina Dialogue – “From Cold War to Hot Peace” – was, whether by accident or design, an indicator that contemporary global politics is far removed from how it was between the end of the Second World War and the fall of the Berlin Wall. That era was marked by distinct differences between capitalism and communism, between East and West, between democracy and authoritarianism. The current milieu is different, characterised by hybrid models and modes of conduct; the once well-defined line between democracy and authoritarianism, at least in developed states, for example, is now blurred in many countries. Some continue to promote globalisation abroad while cultivating nationalist constituencies at home. This hybridity, one can argue, is one of the principal sources of global disruptions and no four countries illustrate this better than the United States, Russia, Turkey, and China.

The election of Donald Trump as the 45th president of the US was one such disruptive event. While Trump was democratically elected (quibbles about the Elec-

toral College system aside), he is authoritarian, with little regard for the norms and courtesies of party politics in a liberal democracy. Trump is an example of the ‘hybrid’ leader, elected to office through a democratic process but exhibiting authoritarian traits. His election also exposed the deep schisms in American politics, with the Democratic Party being perceived as a club of the Washington-Wall Street elites, and the Republican Party one of the hard-working but unrecognised blue collar workers – an almost total (but perhaps inevitable) about-turn for American politics from 70 years ago. This change, in turn, was fuelled by the rising influence of social media on voter perceptions and choices which the Trump campaign deftly leveraged (perhaps with a little help from the Kremlin, according to ongoing investigations).

If Trump is one example of the new hybrid leader, Russian President Vladimir Putin is another, perhaps more striking one. While one can hardly compare Putin’s election to Trump’s – both Moscow and Washington would be insulted, in their own ways, with the comparison – his popularity among Russians suggests that

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Nationalism in Asia has tended to be more in the form of what you would consider re-emerging powers who are more confident.

—Tanvi Madan

unseating him democratically remains, by far, a distant prospect. So why have the Russians willingly elected strongman Putin? The answer lies in the fact that Russians may prefer, as panellist Matthew Rojansky pointed out, a system and a president that delivers promptly (whether on geopolitics or social issues) rather than what they perceive as an “unaccountable, ineffective, non-transparent” government. But just like Trump, there is also an additional factor at play when it comes to Russia’s fondness for Vladimir Putin: demographics. A large section of Russian society is elderly, with vivid memories of both communist rule and the chaos that ensued following the collapse of the Soviet empire. Delivery and demographics are key to understanding why Russia would prefer a hybrid leader.

Turkey’s hybridity is many quintessential, that country stand-

ing, as it does, between Europe and the Middle East; between authoritarianism and democracy; between being a nominally western power and an ally of illiberal powers such as Russia. Like Russia, Turkey’s hybridity is linked to the ascendance to power of one strongman, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, first as prime minister and then as president. Erdogan has eroded much of Turkey’s traditionally secular Kemalist character while continuing to seek leverage over the European Union. Under his leadership, Turkey has pivoted to Russia even though – as a NATO member – it hosts American nuclear weapons on its soil. This author had once written: “The canary in the coal mine is Turkey. Its trajectory will serve as the best indicator of the future of the liberal world order in the years to come.” This trajectory, in turn, will be determined by whether Turkey can resolve the growing contradictions in its own

polity and around how it engages with the world.

A definitive example of this hybridity co-existing and guiding a government is that of China. Since Xi Jinping's election as president in 2013, the People's Republic has taken a significantly sharp turn towards authoritarianism and away from the "collective leadership" principles of the Chinese Communist Party of the past. With the removal of term limits for Xi in March 2018, China has become, as a recent article in *The Economist* put it, a dictatorship. Never before in the history of modern China has the country been more integrated with the rest of the world. Not only that, Xi's China actively seeks to promote its own version of globalisation abroad, principally through the Belt and Road Initiative. The long gamble of the West, when it came to China, was that as China goes global, it will become democratic. That

this gamble failed as miserably as it did illustrates how the hybridity phenomenon continues to disrupt global systems, popular psyche, and political ethos.

China also illustrates how nationalism and globalisation can co-exist in a single polity.

—Abhijnan Rej



"So whether it is youth versus an older generation or whether it is even something like nationalism, populism, protectionism versus some sort of idealized liberalist globalism whatever, that it seems to me is a false dichotomy".

—Matthew Rojansky



## Nuclear Unpredictability: Managing the Global Nuclear Framework



Concerns over how the global nuclear framework can sustain and function efficiently are as old as nuclear weapons technology itself. In 1963, Robert McNamara, then US Secretary of Defence, had written a memo to President John F. Kennedy, noting that in addition to the four countries already declared as nuclear powers then—the US, the Soviet Union, the UK and France—four more were to acquire declared nuclear weapons capabilities. These countries were China, Israel, India and Sweden. McNamara calculated that by 1973, a total of 12 countries would be in possession of nuclear weapons.

Similar bleak projections have been made on several occasions throughout history. Fortunately, none of them have come true, and credit is due the international community for their concerted efforts in upholding the agenda of nuclear non-proliferation and arms control.

However, the global nuclear framework still faces many challenges. Often, bleak predictions motivate the international community to collectively ensure that such predictions do not come true. This essay attempts to

gauge the future of the global nuclear framework based on current trends.

With repeated tests of nuclear devices and missile systems, it is North Korea that today no doubt presents the gravest challenge to the framework. The international community appears to be divided on the solution to the North Korean problem, and whether complete denuclearisation should be the end goal of a prospective deal with Pyongyang. Considering the efforts that Kim Jong-un's regime has made to acquire an operational, costly nuclear weapons programme, it is unlikely that Pyongyang will agree to complete denuclearisation without significant concessions, including a possible reunification of the Korean peninsula under Kim Jong-un's leadership. This, of course, will have significant geopolitical ramifications. A deal without denuclearisation as its last stage, on the other hand, will leave the global nuclear framework dented forever. While speculations of consequential horizontal proliferation of nuclear weapons have been labelled "far-fetched," there are hints that Japan could consider nuclearising.

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