



# CONTENTS

<b>A Message from Dr David Rubens</b>	<b>4</b>
Overview	5
Introduction	7
Executive Summary	8
<b>Global Risk Landscape: Converging Crises and Systemic Fragility</b>	<b>9</b>
From Political Violence to Strategic Provocation: Global Tensions and Local Flashpoints	10
Rising Polarisation and the Return of Dangerous Divides	11
Normalised Violence in America	12
Icons and Influence: Serbia's Entry into the Global Culture Clash	12
Navigating Global Uncertainty	13
Democracy in Decline: Hungary's Illiberal Shift and U.S. Parallels	13
<b>Middle East Tensions</b>	<b>14</b>
Regional Tensions Rise: Strikes, Arab Divisions and Israel's Isolation	15
Darkening Horizons: Fragmented Solidarity and the Erosion of Global Compassion	16
<b>Fragile Stability in Southeast Asia</b>	<b>17</b>
Indonesia at a Crossroads: Economic Concessions, Democratic Strains and Rising Militarism	18
Indonesia Calms, Nepal Erupts	18
Nepal's Youth Uprising: Digital Mobilisation and Political Upheaval	19
Nepal at a Crossroads: Foreign Influence, Digital Power and New Leadership	20
Nepal in Transition: Targeted Unrest and Fragile Stability Amid Political Upheaval	20
Nepal's New Austerity: Rebuilding Trust Through Accountability	21

<b>Global Governance Under Pressure</b>	<b>22</b>
Nuclear Tensions, Climate Chaos and a Fractured World Order	23
Global Governance Under Strain: Accountability and Geopolitical Shifts	23
Fractured Alliances and Rising Instability Across the Pacific and Beyond	24
Power Shifts and Social Strains: Rethinking Governance in a Changing World	25
Global Retreat: Aid Decline, Populism and the Fracturing of Cooperation	26
Governance at a Crossroads: The Erosion of Competence and the Crisis of Public Trust	27
The Erosion of Political Continuity and the Crisis of Governance	27
Geopolitical Tensions: Trade Disruptions, Proxy Wars and Strategic Alliances	28
Global Instability: Rising Cyber Threats and Health Doubts and Strategic Drift	29
Australia's Strategic Value: Geography Over Governance in U.S. Regional Calculus	29
<b>Europe's Economic and Social Strain</b>	<b>30</b>
Europe in Flux: Market Instability and Political Fractures	31
Rising Populism, Governance Gaps and Digital Identity in Europe	31
Brexit and the Crisis of Fairness: Disillusionment and the Erosion of Trust	32
<b>Digital Risks and Youth Radicalisation</b>	<b>33</b>
Rights, Responsibilities and Social Cohesion in the Digital Age	34
Youth Unrest and Digital Risks in a Polarised World	34
<b>Resilience Through Trust and Reform</b>	<b>35</b>
Building Resilience in an Age of Distrust	36
<b>Concluding Remarks</b>	<b>37</b>

## A MESSAGE FROM DR DAVID RUBENS

As I am writing this, the ceasefire between Israel and Hamas has been announced, hostages and prisoners have been released on both sides, President Trump has visited both Israel and Egypt where he announced, 'The war is over', and the expectation seems to be that with that announcement relative peace and stability can be returned to the region and the process of recovery and reconstruction can begin.

As the physicist Niels Bohr said, 'It is difficult to make predictions, especially about the future', but one does not need to be considered a complete cynic to believe that it will probably not be that simple.

Hamas is expected to decommission its weaponry, but at the same time Israel has admitted that it has financed and armed other groups within the Gaza Strip, each of which have their own agenda and all of whom will be looking to maximise their own advantage, whether that is from a political, security, criminal or social perspective. Without the presence of a functioning authority, Gaza will experience a vacuum that will undoubtedly be seized upon as we have seen in Libya, Iraq, Afghanistan and other places where western forces have tried to impose order and structure on what has been a fundamentally deconstructed social and administrative environment.

These events happened too late to be covered in this month's report, but there is no shortage of other issues that captured our attention.

The overarching themes seem to be of increasing tension, polarisation, alienation, confrontation and the general erosion of many of the political and social norms that have underpinned our societies for the last eighty years. In America, parallel to his attempts to win the Noble Peace prize, President Trump is introducing increasingly authoritative and repressive policies that identify Democrat-led cities as war zones, which justifies the use of increasingly militarised tactics, including by the ICE (Immigration & Customs Enforcement) agents

and the National Guard, in ways that are reminiscent of the worst scenes of fascist regimes.

There has been a major push-back from social, political and judicial networks, but it is yet to be seen whether we have seen peak repression, whether it will be rolled back in the face of such pressure or whether in fact, and this is a real possibility, Trump will double down, increase the tactics and use that as an opportunity to further encourage and strengthen his core support.

In other part of the world, social and political unrest have brought major changes in Nepal, Indonesia and France; Russia tested Europe's and Nato's resolve with increased frequency of incursions into national air space, and China and US continue to try and balance political and economic posturing whilst maintaining the façade that they are able to deal with each other in a mutually respectful way. All of these issues are discussed in depth in this month's report, in ways that will bring insight and clarity to what are often hidden and obtuse trends.

I hope that this report is of value and interest to you, wherever you are and whatever you are involved with and I hope to see you on our weekly Global Crisis Watch calls, so that you can be part of this on-going discussion and longitudinal record of the world we are living in.



**David Rubens**  
*Executive Director*  
ISRM

15<sup>th</sup> October  
2025

# OVERVIEW

The September Global Risk Review Report provides concise, critical analysis of pressing geopolitical, economic and humanitarian developments, offering decision-makers insight into emerging risks and systemic shifts. This edition highlights a world facing heightened instability, where political violence, institutional fragility and regional tensions intersect - from the assassination of U.S. political figures to mass protests across South and Southeast Asia - underscoring the interconnected nature of contemporary crises.

## KEY THEMES INCLUDED:

### DEMOCRATIC STRAIN AND POLITICAL VIOLENCE

**The assassination of US political figure Charlie Kirk** emerged as a symbolic inflection point, reflecting the normalisation of political violence and deepening ideological polarisation in Western democracies.

**Across the US, UK and Europe, political discourse** is increasingly fragmented with rising populism, erosion of civic norms and declining trust in institutions.

### YOUTH MOBILISATION AND DIGITAL ACTIVISM

**In Nepal, Gen Z-led protests** catalysed a political transition, demonstrating the power of digital mobilisation against corruption, censorship and elite dominance.

**Youth movements** globally are increasingly impatient with traditional governance, leveraging social media to demand accountability, but also risking destabilisation through misinformation and flash mobilisation.

### GEOPOLITICAL TENSIONS AND STRATEGIC DRIFT

**Russia's hybrid aggression** - including drone incursions, cyberattacks and airspace violations - continues to test NATO's defensive posture and expose systemic vulnerabilities.

**Israel's expanding military operations and diplomatic isolation**, particularly following airstrikes in multiple Arab states and growing international criticism, reflect a shift in global sentiment and strategic realignment.

### GOVERNANCE GAPS AND INSTITUTIONAL EROSION

Across multiple regions, governance is increasingly reactive, fragmented and ideologically polarised. The **absence of strategic continuity and expert consultation** has weakened institutional resilience.

The concept of **'Maslow's governance'** was introduced, urging states to prioritise foundational public needs - security, stability and essential services - before pursuing higher-order reforms.

**In Nepal**, the interim government's merit-based appointments and austerity measures signal a potential shift toward service-oriented leadership, though fragility remains.

### ECONOMIC INEQUALITY AND SOCIAL UNREST

**France, Indonesia and Nepal** have witnessed **mass protests** driven by austerity, inequality and governance failures. These movements reflect broader global discontent with elite privilege and economic exclusion.

In Europe, stagnant growth, regulatory complexity and **youth disenfranchisement** are fuelling **populist movements** and challenging traditional political structures.

## CYBERSECURITY, HEALTH TRUST AND TECHNOLOGICAL VULNERABILITY

**Cyberattacks on critical infrastructure** in Europe and the Middle East highlight growing exposure to hybrid threats.

**Public trust in health systems** is eroding amid concerns over pharmaceutical safety and misinformation, compounding societal anxiety and institutional fragility.

## GLOBAL GOVERNANCE AND STRATEGIC REALIGNMENT

Multilateral institutions such as **the UN and NATO** face credibility challenges amid rising geopolitical competition and internal divisions.

**The retreat of Western nations** from sustained foreign aid and cooperative frameworks has weakened global influence and opened space for rival powers to expand their reach.

**Strategic alliances** are increasingly shaped by geography and economic interdependence rather than shared values, as seen in **U.S.-Australia relations and China-Russia dynamics**.

## CULTURAL SYMBOLISM AND SOFT POWER

The use of foreign political figures as cultural icons - such as **Serbia's mural of Charlie Kirk** - illustrates how soft power and symbolic politics are being leveraged to reinforce domestic narratives and ideological alignment.

## RESILIENCE AND THE IMPERATIVE OF TRUST

Across all the Global Crisis Watch sessions, a recurring theme is the **erosion of trust - between citizens and institutions, among international partners and within governance systems**.

**Building resilience** requires not only **technical preparedness** but also **relational integrity, transparency, and inclusive leadership** that reflects societal realities.



Photo by Getty Images  
Unsplash

# INTRODUCTION

The early sessions of the month offered a comprehensive examination of global political and social dynamics, highlighting the accelerating convergence of crises across multiple regions. A central focus was the assassination of U.S. political influencer Charlie Kirk, viewed as a potential inflection point in America's deepening political polarisation. This incident, alongside ongoing attacks on political figures and escalating immigration enforcement, illustrates the mainstreaming of rhetoric previously confined to political fringes, normalising violence within an increasingly weaponised public sphere.

Corruption scandals in the United States and the United Kingdom - including revelations regarding Jeffrey Epstein's network and the resignation of UK Ambassador to the US Peter Mandelson - have further reinforced perceptions of elite impunity, widening the gap between public accountability and political privilege. These developments underscore a broader erosion of trust in governance, challenging the legitimacy of established institutions.

Across Asia, domestic instability has intensified. Nepal's government collapse, driven by mass mobilisation against corruption and social media restrictions, demonstrates the fragility of democratic institutions in South Asia. Similar patterns of civil unrest emerged in Indonesia, reflecting economic grievances, social inequality and generational frustration. France's protests against austerity measures and public-sector reforms further illustrate the tension between fiscal consolidation and public confidence.

The Middle East and Europe are experiencing parallel pressures. Israel's military operations across six Arab states - including an unprecedented strike on Qatar - have strained regional relations and exposed the limits of ongoing mediation efforts.

Concurrently, Russia's drone incursions into Polish airspace prompted NATO consultations under Article 4, highlighting the fragility of European security and the persistent threat of hybrid warfare. Ukraine continues to face operational challenges with the seasonal freeze altering battlefield dynamics, while persistent corruption and infrastructure vulnerabilities complicate recovery and governance.

Globally, these crises converge in ways that challenge traditional assumptions of stability. Political extremism, social discontent, economic fragility and militarisation are increasingly interlinked with ripple effects spanning continents. Domestic governance issues - ranging from leadership discontinuity to eroding democratic norms and public mistrust - compound these pressures, amplifying the risk of systemic breakdown.

The discussion highlighted resilience not as a purely technical or institutional capacity, but as a social contract dependent on legitimacy, continuity, and fairness. Experiences from Nepal, the United Kingdom, the United States and Ukraine demonstrate that effective governance requires responsiveness to local realities, strategic foresight, as well a commitment to restoring public trust.

The sessions underscored the urgent need for proactive and coordinated approaches to global governance, emphasising that without renewed international cooperation and adaptive leadership, the current phase of interconnected crises might be becoming entrenched.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Global Risk Review Report aims to provide timely, structured and critical analyses of key geopolitical, economic and humanitarian developments worldwide. This report is designed to support decision-makers, analysts and stakeholders in anticipating risk, understanding systemic shifts and preparing for strategic response. Each edition synthesises complex global events, identifies trends and highlights potential flashpoints that may reshape the international landscape.

Across these sessions, a consistent and sobering narrative emerged: the world is entering a phase of intensified systemic instability, marked by the convergence of political violence, institutional fragility and geopolitical confrontation. From the assassination of U.S. political figure Charlie Kirk to mass protests in Nepal and Indonesia, this report traces how domestic unrest and ideological polarisation are increasingly intertwined with regional and global tensions.

GLOBAL RISK  
LANDSCAPE:  
CONVERGING CRISES  
AND SYSTEMIC  
FRAGILITY

## **FROM POLITICAL VIOLENCE TO STRATEGIC PROVOCATION: GLOBAL TENSIONS AND LOCAL FLASHPOINTS**

The discussion examined the convergence of political extremism, public emotion and geopolitical brinkmanship, highlighting how individual events can rapidly evolve into broader social and security challenges. The assassination of U.S. political figure Charlie Kirk has become a powerful catalyst for polarisation, particularly among younger demographics drawn to the appeal of order, rationality and traditional stability.

This emotional and ideological resonance has translated into domestic mobilisation with large-scale protests such as the upcoming 'Festival of Free Speech' in London expected to attract significant - and potentially volatile - crowds. The overlap of political activism and football fan culture raises further concerns about public safety and the potential for violent escalation.

Beyond the domestic sphere, rising instability in Europe underscores how global tensions are being tested through tactical provocations. Russian drone incursions into Polish airspace have exposed the vulnerability of NATO's defensive posture, revealing a costly imbalance between low-tech threats and high-cost Western responses. Poland's subsequent decision to close land and rail borders with Belarus and Russia reflects a growing sense of insecurity but also risks further escalation. These incidents illustrate how limited military provocations can yield strategic gains when met with weak or delayed hindrance.

Together, these developments reflect a broader pattern, where political violence and technological asymmetry are eroding the boundaries between domestic unrest and international confrontation. It is significant to understand that the fusion of ideological mobilisation, social anxiety and geopolitical testing points will lead to a more volatile global environment in which isolated crises rapidly acquire transnational significance.



Photo by President Of Ukraine  
Flickr

## RISING POLARISATION AND THE RETURN OF DANGEROUS DIVIDES

The discussion highlighted deepening social and political polarisation across Western democracies with growing concern that the erosion of balanced discourse is creating conditions reminiscent of historical periods of instability. The killing of a prominent U.S. influencer, noted for engaging both sides of the political spectrum, was seen as symptomatic of a broader climate of hostility, where ideological divisions increasingly manifest in acts of violence. What once constituted open debate has given way to entrenched positions, mutual 'cancellation' and the gradual disappearance of moderation in public life.

In the United Kingdom, participants drew parallels between contemporary political dynamics and those that preceded the rise of extremist movements in early 20<sup>th</sup> century Europe. A combination of concentrated political power along with growing disenfranchisement has raised concerns of renewed sectarianism and identity-based conflict. Symbols such as national flags, once unifying emblems have become markers of division. The discussion also underscored that political imbalance - where one faction dominates without broad consent - risks fuelling resentment and empowering reactionary forces.

Beyond domestic politics, the conversation turned to the broader geopolitical landscape. Russia's war in Ukraine remains locked in a destructive stalemate with little incentive for withdrawal and growing fears that continued escalation could yield even more dangerous leadership in Moscow. In the Middle East, the enduring conflict between Israel and Hamas was described as mutually reinforcing with both sides benefitting politically from sustained confrontation. The result is a cycle of violence that perpetuates instability, obstructs diplomacy and deepens regional mistrust.

The discussion concluded with a warning: the combination of domestic fragmentation and global confrontation is reshaping political culture in ways that challenge the foundations of liberal democracy. The collapse of dialogue and the triumph of polarisation represent not just a communications crisis but a governance crisis - one that, if left unchecked, could invite the return of extremist politics on a scale unseen in decades.

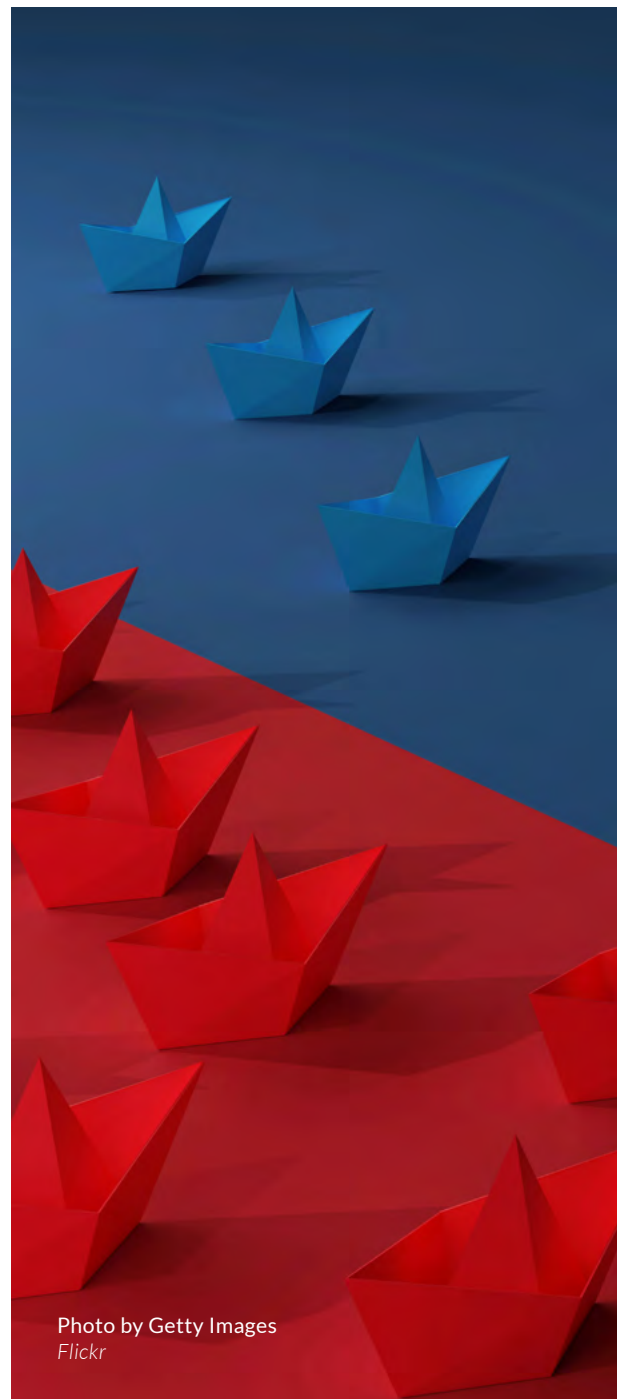


Photo by Getty Images  
Flickr

## NORMALISED VIOLENCE IN AMERICA

The discussion underscored growing concerns over the normalisation of violence in the United States and its intersection with political polarisation, racial inequality and public distrust. Recent high-profile shootings, including the killing of a prominent political influencer were framed as symptomatic of broader societal dysfunction rather than isolated incidents. The discussion highlighted how reactions to such events often reflect political posturing rather than genuine accountability or policy reform with symbolic gestures - such as lowering flags - raising questions about selective empathy and political signalling.

The session also highlighted the routine nature of gun violence, the disproportionate targeting of marginalised communities, as well as the erosion of civic norms where debates increasingly escalate into deadly confrontations. This environment coupled with systemic inequities and fragmented governance, undermines faith in institutions and intensifies social fractures. Observers noted that the persistence of these patterns signals a long-term challenge for American democracy with potential implications not only for social cohesion, but also the country's capacity to respond to internal and external crises effectively.

All in all, this analysis situates contemporary U.S. societal tensions within a global context of political instability, highlighting parallels in polarisation and challenges to the social contract.

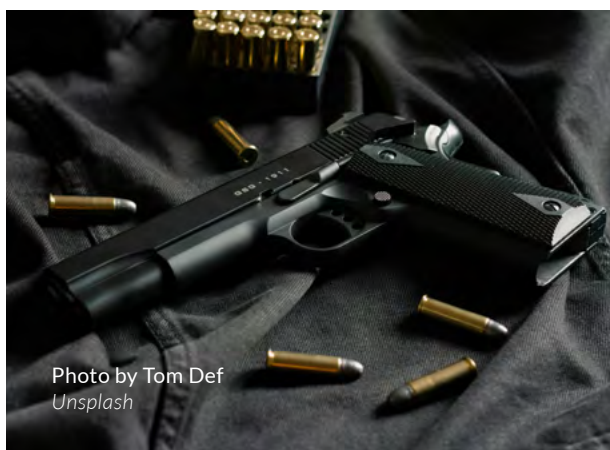


Photo by Tom Def  
Unsplash

## ICONS AND INFLUENCE: SERBIA'S ENTRY INTO THE GLOBAL CULTURE CLASH

In Belgrade, an NGO closely linked to the presidential administration unveiled a mural of Charlie Kirk, depicting him in his youth playing basketball with Serbian teammates in Chicago. The organisation frames Kirk as a symbol of values that seeks to promote - Christianity, family, patriotism and free speech - which it argues are under threat in contemporary society. The mural and accompanying video portray Kirk as a local and global cultural figure, linking Serbia's own political and cultural struggles to broader international conservative movements.

This development highlights a growing trend among nationalist and pro-Russian actors to adopt foreign political figures as symbolic touchstones, signalling solidarity with like-minded groups abroad while reinforcing domestic political narratives. While Kirk's ideology remains divisive and controversial, the mural is intended to emphasise his personal connection to the Serbian community and to underline the perceived risks faced by those who speak out for these values.

The episode reflects the increasing interplay between local politics and global culture wars, demonstrating how foreign figures can be leveraged to validate domestic agendas. It also raises questions about the ways in which political symbolism is deployed to unify communities around shared cultural and ideological identities, even when the broader ideological implications remain polarising.

This case underscores how soft power, culture and symbolic politics are becoming central instruments in shaping public perception and political alignment, both domestically and internationally.

## NAVIGATING GLOBAL UNCERTAINTY

Rising concerns over the unpredictability of U.S. policy under the current administration was emphasised, as well as the broader implications for international partners attempting to engage with a volatile and often inconsistent actor. The participants highlighted that sudden policy shifts, inconsistent messaging and unilateral actions create uncertainty for both allies and neutral states, complicating diplomacy, trade and security arrangements.

On the other front, civic movements such as the 'No Kings' protests in the U.S. demonstrate the gap between public expressions of dissent and the achievement of sustained political change. While demonstrations provide a temporary outlet for frustration and collective identity, they often lack the organisational depth and strategic follow-through necessary to influence policy or institutional reform. This underscores the challenges of translating grassroots mobilisation into tangible outcomes in a highly polarised political environment.

It was also noted that the global ramifications of these dynamics extend beyond U.S. borders, affecting the stability of international alliances, the credibility of multilateral institutions, as well as the planning horizon for businesses and governments alike. The interconnected nature of modern geopolitical, economic and social systems means that domestic volatility can propagate rapidly, affecting global markets and diplomatic relations.

Finally, the discussion stressed the importance of monitoring interdependencies and potential cascading effects with attention to both immediate crises and longer-term structural vulnerabilities. It is also essential to highlight that civic activism, political unpredictability and shifting international alignments contribute to a landscape in which traditional assumptions about governance and strategic reliability are increasingly challenged.

## DEMOCRACY IN DECLINE: HUNGARY'S ILLIBERAL SHIFT AND U.S. PARALLELS

A new documentary, 'Democracy Noir' by filmmaker Connie Field, has reignited debate about the global decline of liberal democracy by drawing stark parallels between Hungary's political trajectory under Viktor Orbán and current developments in the United States. The film, which began screening in the U.S. in September after a European release last year, traces the stories of three Hungarian women - a politician, a journalist and a nurse - who have resisted the entrenchment of Orbán's 'illiberal state.'

The documentary underscores how populist leaders can erode democratic institutions not through coups, but through the gradual manipulation of media, courts and public discourse. By comparing Orbán's alliances with figures like Putin and Trump, it highlights the transnational nature of democratic backsliding. Notably, some U.S. cinemas have declined to show the film, fearing backlash from Trump supporters - a reflection of how politically charged the conversation around democracy has become.

While the film warns that authoritarian trends in the U.S. are accelerating more rapidly than they did in Hungary, it also identifies areas of resilience - such as federalism and organised opposition - that may still safeguard democratic norms. In Hungary, meanwhile, recent polling suggests Orbán's long-standing grip on power could weaken ahead of next year's elections, offering a rare moment of potential democratic renewal amid broader global regression.



## **REGIONAL TENSIONS RISE: STRIKES, ARAB DIVISIONS AND ISRAEL'S ISOLATION**

Recent airstrikes on Qatar have heightened instability across the Middle East, exposing both the fragility of regional alliances and the deepening divisions within the Arab world. Analysts note that such an operation could not have taken place without at least tacit coordination or approval from key stakeholders, including the United States, Israel and Qatar itself - signalling a broader geopolitical game unfolding beneath the surface. The muted responses from Arab capitals such as Riyadh, Kuwait City and Doha have provoked widespread anger, reflecting growing frustration at what many perceive as political paralysis and moral inconsistency among regional powers.

Israel's actions are further isolating it internationally. In Europe, countries like Ireland have taken a strong public stance with Dublin threatening to boycott cultural events such as the Eurovision Song Contest should Israel participate. Similarly, symbolic protests during sporting events, including the Italy-Israel football match, demonstrate how public opinion and digital activism are shaping the narrative. The power of social media has intensified scrutiny and mobilised voices across the Arab world, eroding the ability of governments to control the discourse.

In the Middle East, military actions continue to escalate with Israel's operations extending beyond Gaza to Syria, Lebanon and Yemen. While some Western nations, including the UK, France, Italy and Spain, have taken steps to safeguard strategic interests, regional responses remain limited. Arab and Muslim states appear largely inactive with political and economic self-interest prevailing over collective security or humanitarian intervention. This inertia highlights the complex interplay between governance, corruption and regional power dynamics, leaving the broader Middle East in a state of strategic stagnation.

The incident underscores a dangerous convergence of geopolitical manoeuvring, eroding legitimacy of Arab leadership, as well as the accelerating isolation of Israel. Together, these dynamics suggest a region at a breaking point - where it can be seen that public sentiment, strategic miscalculations and external interference may soon collide in ways that reshape Middle Eastern politics.

## **DARKENING HORIZONS: FRAGMENTED SOLIDARITY AND THE EROSION OF GLOBAL COMPASSION**

This session explored the deepening moral and political fragmentation shaping today's global landscape with a particular focus on the erosion of solidarity within the Muslim world.

Despite widespread awareness of the persecution faced by Muslim communities in regions such as China and Myanmar, it was observed throughout the session, a striking absence of collective action or unified voice from the broader Ummah (in Arabic Ummah means 'community'). This silence, reflects not only geopolitical constraints but also a deeper weakening of moral cohesion and shared responsibility across nations.

The discussion broadened to consider how this lack of coordinated response mirrors a wider global discomfort - marked by cynicism, fatigue and the gradual fading of compassion in international affairs. Participants expressed concern that as conflicts multiply and crises intensify, the world's moral compass appears to be losing direction with fewer examples of principled leadership or humanitarian resolve.

Yet, amid this growing darkness, the conversation also underscored the enduring importance of transnational dialogue and connection. The ability to engage directly with individuals and communities across diverse regions - from South Asia and the Middle East to Europe and Africa - was seen as a rare source of resilience and understanding. By sustaining these global networks of exchange, it was suggested that there remains a chance to nurture the faint but vital light of empathy and cooperation in an increasingly divided world.



Photo by Nina Zeynep Güler  
Unsplash



## **INDONESIA AT A CROSSROADS: ECONOMIC CONCESSIONS, DEMOCRATIC STRAINS AND RISING MILITARISM**

The recent unrest in Indonesia has eased following significant concessions from the government, including targeted subsidies and lower price controls aimed at stabilising essential commodities for low-income families. These measures have temporarily quelled widespread labour-led protests that erupted in August over economic inequality and governance frustrations.

At the international level, Indonesia's President addressed the UN General Assembly for the first time in over a decade, reaffirming the nation's long-standing constitutional support for Palestinian statehood. The statement underscored Indonesia's readiness to formally recognise Israel contingent upon the establishment of a two-state solution - signalling a pragmatic yet principled stance on one of the region's most divisive issues.

Domestically, however, the consolidation of power by the president, a former military general has raised growing concerns over democratic backsliding. The infusion of military personnel into civilian government roles marks a notable shift toward political militarisation, unseen since the Suharto era. With nearly total parliamentary support, opposition now emerges primarily from civil society, student movements and labour unions - setting the stage for potential friction between the state and grassroots democratic forces in the months ahead.

## **INDONESIA CALMS, NEPAL ERUPTS**

The session focused on the rapidly shifting security and political landscape in Southeast Asia with Indonesia and Nepal at the centre of concern. Following weeks of unrest in Indonesia marked by violent protests, arson attacks and the ransacking of government buildings, the situation has begun to stabilise.

The Indonesian government has initiated a cabinet reshuffle and reinstated provincial funding while expanding subsidies for essential goods to address the underlying grievances that fuelled the protests. These measures, coupled with a firm but controlled security response, appear to have calmed tensions in major cities such as Jakarta and Surabaya.

However, the discussion underscored that this calm remains fragile. Indonesia's political order, despite decades of reform, has shown how thin the veneer of stability can be when economic inequality and institutional mistrust converge. Intelligence reports of potential threats against senior officials - including the presidential residence - highlight how quickly unrest could reignite if economic or political pressures return.

Comparisons were drawn with Nepal, where protests have escalated even further, resulting in fatalities and severe political disruption. The wider pattern across South and Southeast Asia - spanning Indonesia, Nepal, Bangladesh, the Philippines and Thailand - suggests that democratic institutions remain brittle with recurring instability often driven by the same entrenched political elites.

The session concluded that while Indonesia's immediate crisis may have eased, the region as a whole faces a period of persistent volatility, demanding renewed attention to governance, resilience and public trust.

## **NEPAL'S YOUTH UPRISING: DIGITAL MOBILISATION AND POLITICAL UPHEAVAL**

The Gen Z protests in Nepal mark a historic and potentially transformative moment in the country's political landscape, highlighting deep-seated grievances around corruption, nepotism, inequality and youth exclusion from economic and political power. The protests were triggered on 4<sup>th</sup> September 2025 by the government's order requiring twenty-six social media platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp and YouTube to register with the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology - a move widely perceived as censorship and a suppression of dissent. Mobilised largely through social media, students and young people across Kathmandu, Pokhara, Biratnagar and other cities staged mass demonstrations demanding anti-corruption reforms, restoration of digital freedoms and accountability from political elites.

The government's security response escalated tensions, where tear gas, water cannons, rubber bullets and live ammunition were deployed, resulting in at least fifty-one deaths - including protesters, police and prison inmates - and over 1,300 injuries, overwhelming hospitals and emergency services. The unrest spread rapidly with the destruction of elite properties, parliamentary buildings and ministerial offices, signalling a profound crisis of governance.

In response, the government lifted the social media ban, Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli resigned and Sushila Karki was appointed as Nepal's first female interim Prime Minister, representing both a symbolic and practical shift in leadership. The events demonstrate the pivotal role of digital mobilisation, the assertiveness of youth in demanding agency and the fragility of the social contract when institutional channels fail to respond to public grievances.

Looking ahead, long-term stability in Nepal will depend on sustained institutional reforms, strengthened human rights oversight along with mechanisms that integrate youth voices into governance. These protests serve as a stark reminder that when digital expression is curtailed and systemic inequities persist, young populations can catalyse rapid political change by challenging entrenched power structures and redefining the contours of democracy in fragile states.

## **NEPAL AT A CROSSROADS:** FOREIGN INFLUENCE, DIGITAL POWER AND NEW LEADERSHIP

It was noted that the recent youth-led protests - sparked by corruption, inequality and digital censorship - have drawn attention to the broader role of foreign actors and financial flows in shaping domestic movements. Reports suggest that international NGOs and Western partners, including the U.S., U.K. and Canada, have indirectly supported civil society initiatives promoting accountability and transparency, while India and China continue to fight for political influence within Nepal's fragile coalition system.

The discussion emphasised the growing power of digital platforms in Nepal's political sphere, where social media has served both as a tool for civic mobilisation and as a vector for disinformation. Rumours of a return to monarchy, external intervention and leadership changes have spread rapidly across platforms such as Facebook, X and Instagram, further fuelling uncertainty. In response to the unrest, curfews and military restrictions have been imposed, underscoring the government's struggle to maintain order amid a volatile information environment.

Sushila Karki's appointment represents both a symbolic and structural shift: a move toward inclusivity and gender representation amid decades of male-dominated politics. As a nonpartisan figure and former chief justice, her leadership is seen as a potential stabilising force capable of restoring institutional trust and navigating the balance between domestic reform and international influence. The developments in Nepal highlight the intersection of governance, technology and geopolitics in shaping the future of small democracies under global scrutiny.

## **NEPAL IN TRANSITION:** TARGETED UNREST AND FRAGILE STABILITY AMID POLITICAL UPHEAVAL

The recent wave of mass protests in Nepal has reshaped the country's political landscape, leading to the collapse of the previous government and the establishment of an interim administration. While the streets have quieted, the unrest has left deep structural and social scars.

Field assessments of protest-related arson attacks revealed a pattern of deliberate targeting - fires concentrated on government archives, security facilities and administrative buildings, suggesting organised coordination rather than spontaneous mob violence. These incidents underscore the sophistication of the movement's tactics and the deep-seated frustration driving public dissent.

The aftermath has extended beyond domestic politics into the economic and social realm. Several Gulf nations as well as Malaysia, have suspended visa approvals for Nepali migrant workers, citing instability and rising security concerns. The theft of firearms from police stations during the protests has further eroded public confidence and heightened fears of armed crime across Kathmandu Valley. Although overt demonstrations have subsided, this 'silence mode' is widely viewed as precarious—a potential prelude to renewed unrest should the interim government fail to deliver reforms or credible elections within six months.

Despite the volatility, some optimism remains. The interim cabinet has been praised for appointing technically competent ministers, particularly in infrastructure, suggesting a shift toward merit-based governance. However, unresolved issues - such as questions over the legitimacy of leadership and calls for a 'people's prime minister'—continue to threaten the fragile balance. Nepal stands at a critical juncture, where a brief window of calm that could either usher in reform and institutional renewal or give way to another cycle of disillusionment and unrest.

## NEPAL'S NEW AUSTERITY: REBUILDING TRUST THROUGH ACCOUNTABILITY

Nepal's interim government has begun taking visible steps to restore credibility and rebuild public trust following years of political volatility and perceived excess among its leadership.

One of its most striking early measures involves revoking special privileges, security details and financial benefits previously extended to former ministers and high-ranking officials. The move is presented as both a symbolic and practical effort to reduce public expenditure and reassert the principle of service over status.

This policy shift also reflects a broader recognition of the growing frustration among citizens over entrenched political elites who rotate between parties without clear ideological consistency, often prioritising personal gain over public welfare. Despite repeated promises of reform, project implementation has remained weak at the local level, deepening public cynicism.

By urging officials to return to the simplicity of their roots and demonstrating fiscal restraint, the interim government aims to project a message of humility and accountability. Yet the challenge remains significant: **genuine reform will require not just symbolic austerity, but sustained institutional integrity and visible improvements in governance.**

Nepal now stands at a crossroads - seeking to redefine political leadership not by privilege or protection, but by service, responsibility and trust in the people who placed them in power.



Photo by Sushanta Rokka  
Unsplash

GLOBAL  
GOVERNANCE  
UNDER  
PRESSURE

## **NUCLEAR TENSIONS, CLIMATE CHAOS AND A FRACTURED WORLD ORDER**

The discussion focused on the growing convergence of geopolitical and environmental crises, highlighting the increasing fragility of global stability. Concerns were raised over escalating rhetoric from the United States, particularly statements suggesting the potential for direct military confrontation with Russia, which heightened fears of accidental conflict or even a slide toward a wider war. It was also reflected on how rising tensions, coupled with inexperienced military actors and narrowing margins for error, have amplified the risk of miscalculation.

Beyond geopolitics, the session underscored the intensifying environmental threats facing the planet, illustrated by Super Typhoon Ragasa's devastating path through the Philippines, Taiwan and China - and the renewed threat of severe wildfires in Australia. These extreme weather events were seen as clear evidence of worsening climate disruption, in stark contrast to dismissive political rhetoric that undermines global environmental cooperation.

Despite the prevailing sense of alarm, there are moments of optimism, where many people achieve the impossible in their lives, such as climbing the seven highest peaks of the world, serving as reminders of resilience and perseverance amid uncertainty. The overarching conclusion emphasised that the intersection of political recklessness and environmental volatility is accelerating systemic global risk, demanding renewed international focus on prevention, cooperation and responsible leadership.

## **GLOBAL GOVERNANCE UNDER STRAIN: ACCOUNTABILITY AND GEOPOLITICAL SHIFTS**

The session examined the mounting pressures on international governance, corporate accountability and geopolitical stability. In Israel, increasing corporate disengagement from defence-related operations reflects concerns over legal liability under international law, particularly amid allegations of human rights violations and potential genocide.

The broader discussion highlighted how progressive political establishments in Western nations may have alienated portions of their populations, fuelling the appeal of populist leaders and extreme political movements.

It was also noted that the contemporary surge in conflicts may represent a returning to historical norms of inter- and intra-state aggression after decades of relative peace, raising questions about the effectiveness and relevance of multilateral institutions such as the UN. Participants debated whether the UN has overextended beyond its foundational remit of preventing war, suggesting a potential need to streamline its focus and restore operational credibility.

Europe's strategic and financial decisions, particularly regarding sanctions, asset freezes and support for Ukraine were highlighted as potential inflection points affecting global confidence in the continent as a safe haven for investment.

Concerns were raised about the rise of alternative financial systems supported by India, China and Middle Eastern states, which could challenge European influence. Overall, the discussion underscored heightened uncertainty in global governance, the fragility of international cooperation and the need for careful recalibration of policy and institutional legitimacy.

## FRACTURED ALLIANCES AND RISING INSTABILITY ACROSS THE PACIFIC AND BEYOND

The session examined mounting geopolitical and domestic instability across multiple regions, with particular focus on the Pacific Islands, the Middle East and the United States. The Pacific Islands Forum, hosted by the Solomon Islands, unfolded amid heightened tensions between China and Taiwan, prompting the unprecedented exclusion of external observers.

The move underscored growing discomfort among regional partners such as Australia and New Zealand and signalled fractures within the so-called 'Pacific family.' Despite these tensions, a new security treaty between Australia and Vanuatu was signed, reflecting continued competition for influence in the region.

Defence procurement in Australia remained a subject of scrutiny with concerns raised about the cost and practicality of new maritime drone systems under the AUKUS framework. The investment in high-end drones was seen as emblematic of broader inefficiencies in strategic spending. Meanwhile, Australia's decision to join France and Canada in formally recognising a two-state solution for Israel and Palestine marked a diplomatic realignment away from U.S. policy positions, further illustrating the region's evolving geopolitical posture.

Globally, the escalation of violence and political extremism continues to unsettle governance frameworks. Renewed unrest in the United States, following the assassination of a high-profile political influencer Charlie Kirk and continuing incidents of gun violence, highlights persistent societal divisions and the absence of effective regulatory reform. The ongoing volatility in the Middle East, including the threat of broader conflict stemming from renewed Arab-Israeli tensions, adds to a deteriorating global security outlook.

Taken together, these developments depict an international environment characterised by fragmented alliances, eroding trust in institutions and the blurring of boundaries between domestic unrest and strategic confrontation. The Pacific, once viewed as a zone of stability and cooperation, now reflects the same fault lines - strategic rivalry, political fragility and contested legitimacy - that define the broader global order.



Photo by Marcus Woodbridge  
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## **POWER SHIFTS AND SOCIAL STRAINS:** RETHINKING GOVERNANCE IN A CHANGING WORLD

The session reflected on the shifting global and domestic landscape marked by geopolitical uncertainty, societal transformation and the disruptive impact of technology.

Discussion began with the geopolitical implications of Israel's defensive posture and broader Middle Eastern restraint, highlighting how regional actors continue to navigate global power asymmetries under the influence of dominant allies. This raised deeper questions about the sustainability of current power structures as global influence becomes increasingly contested.

At the societal level, the conversation turned to how economic and demographic pressures are reshaping communities, particularly in advanced economies such as Australia. The erosion of the middle class - traditionally the foundation of civic engagement and charitable contribution - has weakened local social structures once supported by volunteerism.

Simultaneously, the rise of automation and artificial intelligence is challenging existing tax systems and labour markets, demanding a fundamental rethinking of economic models and governance.

The broader theme underscored a world in transition - where global and domestic systems alike must adapt to new forms of instability, technological disruption along with shifting notions of responsibility, both within and between nations.



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## **GLOBAL RETREAT: AID DECLINE, POPULISM AND THE FRACTURING OF COOPERATION**

The discussion explored how the retreat of Western nations from sustained international engagement - particularly through foreign aid and cooperative frameworks - has accelerated global instability and weakened trust among allies.

It was also observed that as domestic pressures mount, especially following the pandemic and ongoing economic uncertainty, governments are turning inward, prioritising internal spending on issues such as migration, welfare and energy security over global development commitments.

This inward shift has diluted the political leverage that foreign aid once provided, eroding Western influence in developing regions and creating opportunities for rival powers to expand their foothold through financial or strategic means.

The conversation significantly highlighted the moral and strategic implications of this trend, noting that investment in global stability is not merely altruistic but a safeguard against the spread of conflict, extremism and humanitarian crises that inevitably resonates back into donor countries.

The erosion of multilateral cooperation - illustrated by the weakening role of institutions like NATO and the UN - was seen as particularly concerning, as global actors exploit the perception of Western inconsistency to pursue more aggressive agendas.

At the domestic level, the discussion connected these global developments to rising populism and political polarisation within Western societies. Economic hardship, disillusionment with leadership along with social inequality have created fertile ground for nationalist movements that promise protectionism and quick fixes.

This populist resurgence, amplified by social media and elite-driven 'luxury beliefs,' fuels resentment and further isolates citizens from global realities. The participants concluded that without renewed commitment to international cooperation, equitable economic growth and responsible leadership, both domestic and international trust will continue to erode - leaving space sadly for instability, disinformation and authoritarian opportunism to flourish.

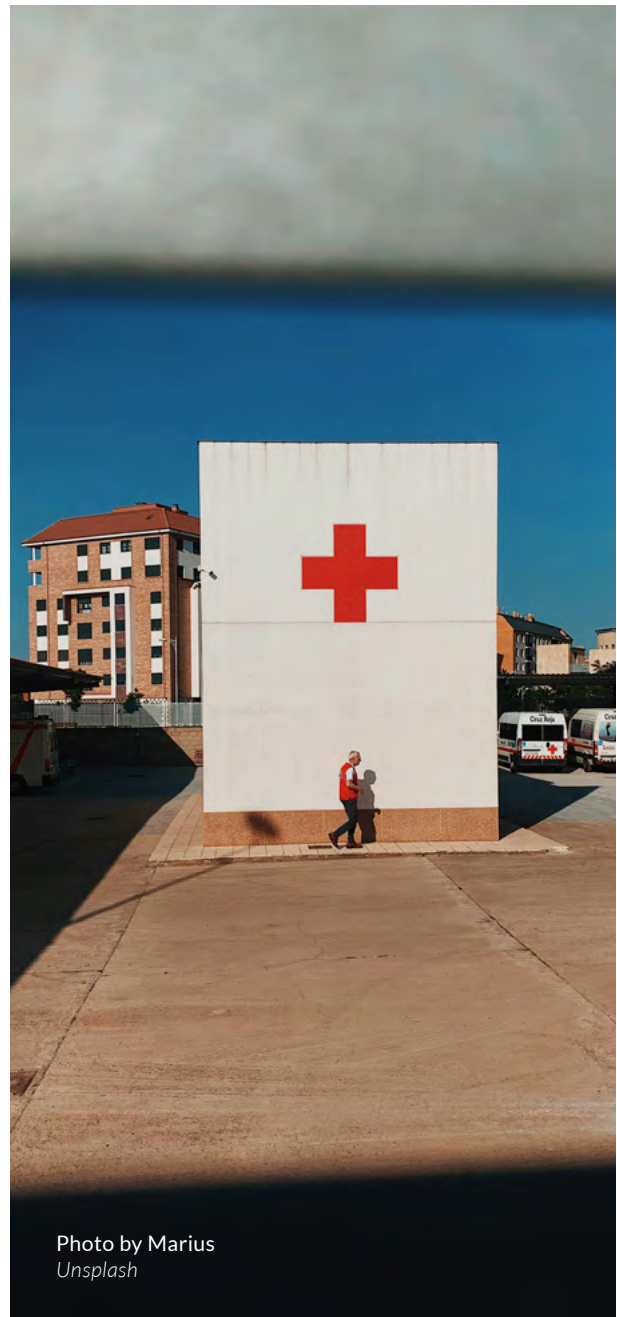


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## GOVERNANCE AT A CROSSROADS: THE EROSION OF COMPETENCE AND THE CRISIS OF PUBLIC TRUST

The discussion reflected on the long-term decline in governmental competence, arguing that successive administrations have become increasingly unable to meet even the most fundamental social and institutional needs.

The conversation introduced the idea of 'Maslow's governance,' suggesting that the state should first focus on the basic layers of public welfare - security, stability and essential services - before aspiring to higher ideals such as innovation or self-actualisation.

It was observed that governments often overextend themselves in addressing every aspect of citizens' lives rather than consolidating core functions. It was also examined the growing polarisation of politics in the UK and elsewhere, where governance is driven by increasingly narrow ideological factions rather than the broader national interest.

This has deepened public cynicism and fractured collective resilience. The sentiment concluded that effective governance must be grounded in realistic priorities, trust-building and an awareness of social relativity - recognising that resilience and wellbeing depend on local context as much as national leadership.



## THE EROSION OF POLITICAL CONTINUITY AND THE CRISIS OF GOVERNANCE

The discussion centred on the deepening crisis of political competency and the systemic absence of continuity across successive administrations in both the UK and the United States. It was argued that governments have increasingly prioritised loyalty and ideological alignment over expertise and management capability, leading to instability, poor decision-making and policy reversals that undermine long-term resilience.

The conversation underscored that modern governance often lacks the confidence to consult subject-matter experts in areas such as resilience, emergency preparedness and security - further eroding institutional strength.

It was further observed that post-Brexit Britain and post-Trump America exemplify the same dysfunction: **political appointments driven by allegiance rather than merit, resulting in high turnover and policy inconsistency.**

From a managerial perspective, the absence of continuity of vision, strategy and personnel was identified as the core weakness in government structures. Each new administration or minister tends to discard previous efforts rather than build incrementally on existing foundations, perpetuating cycles of inefficiency and lost institutional memory.

The exchange concluded that political systems must reorient toward professional governance - where competency, consultation and continuity are treated as the foundations of effective leadership rather than optional ideals.

## GEOPOLITICAL TENSIONS: TRADE DISRUPTIONS, PROXY WARS AND STRATEGIC ALLIANCES

The discussion provided a sobering account of how geopolitical competition is increasingly manifesting through economic disruption, proxy warfare and technological precision strikes rather than formal declarations of war.

Recent developments along the Belarus–Poland border - specifically, the closure of key land crossings during the Zapad 2025 Russian-Belarusian joint strategic military exercises - underscored this shift. While framed as a security measure, the closure disrupted a major Chinese trade artery to Europe, costing an estimated US \$2.5 billion in lost commerce.

This episode revealed the fragile interdependence between Moscow and Beijing: Russia’s geopolitical manoeuvring directly threatens China’s commercial interests, while Beijing’s leverage over Moscow grows proportionally as Russia’s isolation deepens.

The conversation further highlighted the convergence of military and civilian targeting within Ukraine, where sustained drone attacks - including precision incendiary strikes on non-military residential areas - have become routine. The personal account of destruction in Kherson oblast illustrated how civilians remain on the frontline of technologically sophisticated, hybrid warfare that blurs the distinction between combatant and non-combatant zones.

At a strategic level, the analysis suggested that the current conflict landscape constitutes a ‘de facto world war’ - diffuse, economic, digital and psychological. Western and allied powers remain engaged through sanctions, arms transfers and intelligence coordination, while adversaries leverage asymmetric tools such as cyber operations and supply chain disruptions.

Meanwhile, major powers’ economic dependencies continue to shape strategic decisions: Beijing’s calculus toward Moscow, Washington’s prioritisation of arms exports and alliance management and Europe’s continued economic vulnerability amid supply shocks and defence realignment.

The overarching conclusion was clear: global conflict has already transcended the traditional battlefield. The next phase of confrontation will be determined as much by trade chokepoints, cyber resilience and economic coercion as by troop movements. In this sense, the ‘third world war’ has arguably begun - one defined less by declaration than by disruption.



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## **GLOBAL INSTABILITY:** RISING CYBER THREATS AND HEALTH DOUBTS AND STRATEGIC DRIFT

The current geopolitical and security landscape underscores an increasing fragility across multiple domains. Cybersecurity remains a critical vulnerability with major infrastructure - including airports and financial systems - exposed to sophisticated attacks. As technological systems become more advanced, so too does the ability of malicious actors to exploit weaknesses, demonstrating a paradox where increased capability coincides with heightened susceptibility.

Simultaneously, public trust in health systems and pharmaceuticals is being eroded. Emerging concerns about the safety of widely used medications, including vaccines and common treatments have sparked uncertainty over what can be reliably trusted, further amplifying societal anxiety. These developments highlight the convergence of technological, medical and informational risks, creating a landscape where confidence in institutions is increasingly challenged.

In summary, the session underscored the urgent need for comprehensive risk management across cybersecurity, public health and geopolitical engagement. Without coordinated action and accountable leadership, vulnerabilities will continue to grow and systemic instability may become increasingly normalised.

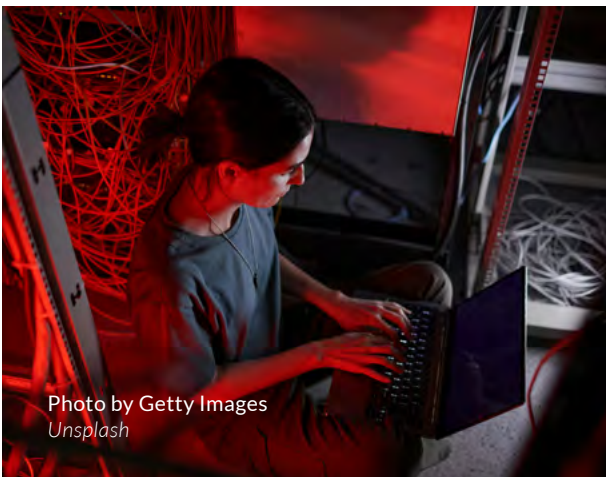


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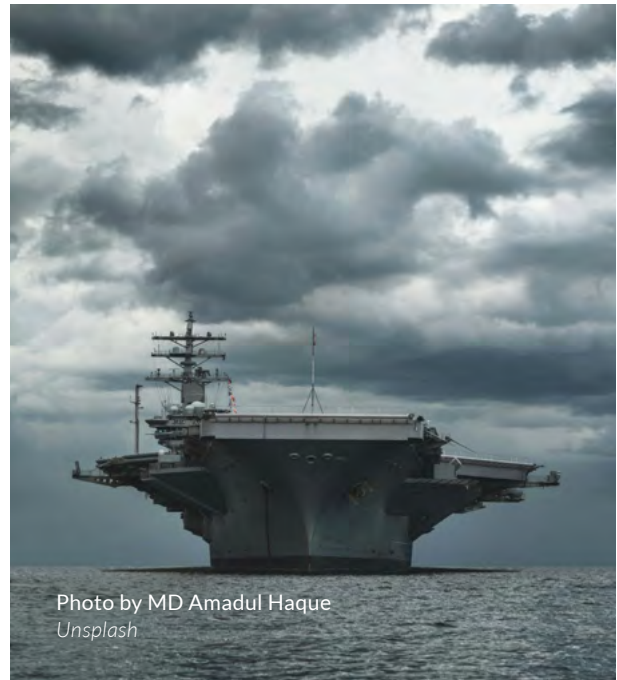


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## **AUSTRALIA'S STRATEGIC VALUE:** GEOGRAPHY OVER GOVERNANCE IN U.S. REGIONAL CALCULUS

Recent analysis underscored a critical distinction in how the United States perceives Australia - not primarily as a political partner or societal ally, but as a strategically vital landmass. The Australian continent's geography offers assets unmatched elsewhere: deep-water ports near its western coastline, proximity to major sea lanes and strategic reach across the Gulf, the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea. These features make Australia an indispensable platform for U.S. maritime and submarine operations, serving effectively as a 'floating aircraft carrier' and logistical hub in the Indo-Pacific.

However, this geographic utility contrasts sharply with concerns about the reliability of the U.S.-Australia alliance. Historical experience, dating back to Vietnam, has fuelled scepticism about American dependability in conflict situations. The assessment highlights a recurring tension between Australia's strategic importance as territory and its perceived dispensability as a sovereign actor. In essence, while the landmass is prized for its military and operational value, its societal and political agency remains secondary in Washington's broader regional calculus.

# EUROPE'S ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL STRAIN

## EUROPE IN FLUX: MARKET INSTABILITY AND POLITICAL FRACTURES

Europe is facing a convergence of economic, political and social pressures that highlight vulnerabilities across the region. Stagnating growth combined with central banks' reluctance to cut interest rates has contributed to rising long-term yields, signalling waning investor confidence in governments' fiscal discipline.

France illustrates the structural fragility of this system: elite networks, particularly graduates from top business schools, dominate positions of power, generating public resentment. Youth movements are increasingly mobilising in protest, challenging entrenched hierarchies and exposing broader societal inequities. Recent scandals, including high-profile ethical lapses in government, underscore that the electorate remains attentive to integrity and accountability, countering assumptions of political disengagement.

Simultaneously, the European Union has introduced a new internal market for data, aiming to harmonise cross-border data flows while reinforcing security. While strategically significant, this legislation adds operational complexity and cost burdens for social media and technology companies, creating friction between innovation and regulation. The broader policy environment reveals a tension between short-term political manoeuvres and the long-term strategic horizon needed for sustainable growth. Countries adopting flexible, adaptive economic models, such as Italy, demonstrate greater resilience, suggesting that survival and prosperity increasingly depend on adaptability rather than rigid top-down planning. The intersection of economic stagnation, regulatory complexity together with social unrest underscores a critical need for governments to balance market confidence, citizen engagement and structural reforms to maintain stability in an uncertain Europe.

## RISING POPULISM, GOVERNANCE GAPS AND DIGITAL IDENTITY IN EUROPE

The session highlighted the growing disconnection between political establishments in Europe and public sentiment, particularly regarding immigration and socio-economic fairness. The frustration of citizens, who perceive systemic neglect of their concerns, is increasingly channelling support toward populist figures and movements, echoing historical patterns where institutional failures amplify radical alternatives.

Discussion also focused on recent policy developments in the UK, including the proposed introduction of a national ID system. While initially framed as an immigration measure, the system is seen as a practical tool to enhance administrative efficiency, streamline public services and improve governance, drawing parallels with digital identification frameworks in countries like India.

Underlying these debates is a broader reflection on governance effectiveness, the importance of balancing civil liberties with administrative order and the ongoing challenge of maintaining public trust in institutions amid rising political polarisation. The session underscored that systemic reforms, rather than reactive measures are essential to address long-term societal grievances and prevent further polarisation.

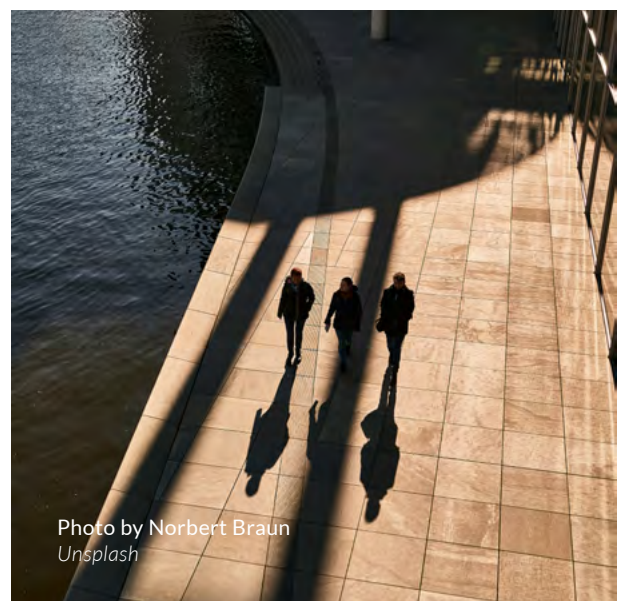


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## BREXIT AND THE CRISIS OF FAIRNESS: DISILLUSIONMENT AND THE EROSION OF TRUST

The Brexit referendum reflected a profound sense of public dissatisfaction with political leadership rather than a singular rejection of European integration. For many, the vote was not driven by ideology, nationalism or anti-immigration sentiment, but by the cumulative frustration with what was perceived as systemic unfairness, waste and detachment within both national and European institutions.

The decisive factor was a growing belief that government no longer served ordinary citizens equitably. While inequality was accepted as a fact of life, the perception that public money was squandered and that political elites operated without accountability became intolerable. This discontent transcended party lines, uniting communities across socio-economic divides in a shared call for greater responsiveness and responsibility from their leaders.

Brexit was therefore less about division between 'Leave' and 'Remain' than about a rupture in trust between citizens and governance itself. Once the sense of fairness - long a stabilising force in British political culture - was eroded, the legitimacy of the system began to fray.

The episode underscores a broader democratic challenge: **when fairness is perceived to be absent, even moderate electorates will turn to radical solutions.** Rebuilding confidence in governance will depend not on ideological realignment but on restoring transparency, continuity and a tangible sense of equity in public life.



## UKRAINE'S FRAGILE RESILIENCE: HARDSHIP, CORRUPTION AND PUBLIC DISTRUST

Discussion focused on the complex realities facing Ukraine's post-invasion recovery, highlighting the tension between public frustration, systemic corruption and the persistence of misinformation. While international narratives often portray a united and reforming Ukraine, local experiences - such as prolonged infrastructure failures in cities like Mykolaiv - underscore ongoing governance and logistical struggles.

Corruption remains multifaceted: some viewed as a pragmatic part of doing business, others as the diversion of critical foreign aid. Despite these challenges, recent local improvements, such as the restoration of water supply, have temporarily boosted public sentiment. Yet, underlying scepticism toward leadership and the sway of misinformation continue to hinder societal trust and resilience. The conversation further reflected on how populist impulses and limited public understanding - mirrored in Western political decisions like Brexit - illustrate the broader risks of governance in an age of fragmented information and emotional politics.



## RIGHTS, RESPONSIBILITIES AND SOCIAL COHESION IN THE DIGITAL AGE

The growing tension between individual rights and societal responsibilities in contemporary democracies was extensively discussed during the session. While public discourse often emphasises entitlements - human rights, freedoms and personal liberties - there is far less attention to the obligations citizens owe to the social order.

This imbalance is exacerbated by movements that challenge established laws without democratic mandate, raising questions not only about civic responsibility and social cohesion, but also about the rule of law.

The phenomenon of rapid mobilisation, particularly through social media, was identified as a key accelerator, enabling small groups to enact significant disruptions - 'flash mobs' in effect - without broader societal consent. This dynamic intensifies conflicts between the majority, who comply with existing norms and vocal minorities seeking immediate change.

The debate underscored the need to reconcile rights with responsibilities, encouraging citizens to engage constructively in shaping society while respecting legal frameworks and democratic processes. It also highlighted the broader implications of digital connectivity in magnifying social tensions and accelerating challenges to governance.

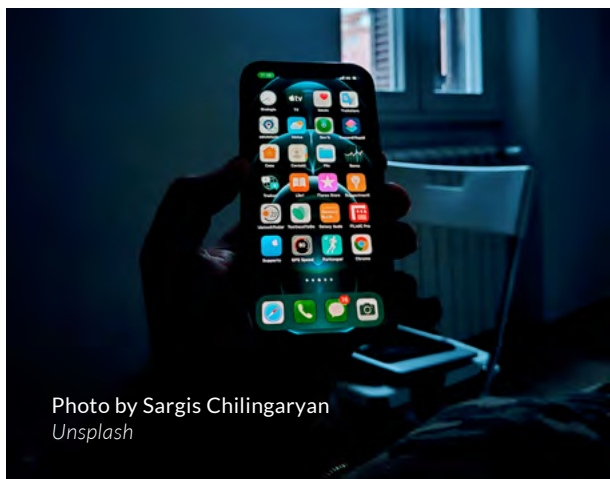


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## YOUTH UNREST AND DIGITAL RISKS IN A POLARISED WORLD

The session focused on the growing influence of youth movements on contemporary socio-political landscapes with young people exhibiting heightened frustration, mobilisation and susceptibility to both constructive and radicalised activism.

Societal and governmental responses are widely perceived as too slow, fostering impatience and catalysing rapid escalation from dissatisfaction to moral outrage. This accelerated polarisation bypasses traditional, gradual avenues of dialogue, leaving little room for consensus-building.

Digital platforms are central to this phenomenon, enabling instant mobilisation, widespread misinformation and targeted harassment, including doxing and privacy invasions. These dynamics pose severe risks to individuals, organisational leadership and businesses, emphasising the urgent need for pre-emptive protection measures rather than reactive responses.

The session also noted the dual nature of youth activism: it can be a powerful force for positive change but also carries the potential for destabilisation if unchecked. Generational impatience coupled with instantaneous communication, creates a volatile mix that challenges traditional governance structures, social cohesion and institutional trust.

Participants pointed out the importance of anticipating digital risks, protecting vulnerable actors and fostering mechanisms to channel youth energy constructively while safeguarding societal stability in an increasingly polarised world.

This reflects a broader global trend, where technological amplification, generational dynamics and political polarisation converge, reshaping how societies respond to crises and contestations of authority.

RESILIENCE  
THROUGH TRUST  
AND REFORM

## BUILDING RESILIENCE IN AN AGE OF DISTRUST

Recent discussions in London focused on strengthening societal and institutional resilience highlighted an emerging recognition that trust - not technology - forms the foundation of effective crisis preparedness. The conference, bringing together civil servants, private sector representatives and members of the voluntary sector, underscored the need to rebuild confidence between state, corporate and civic actors.

The session also touched on broader geopolitical implications, including the growing convergence of financial integrity, cyber vulnerability and hybrid threats. References were made to the recent escalation between Russia and Europe with Poland's assertive stance seen as coordinated with allied support rather than unilateral provocation. This reflects a shifting security environment where historical patterns - such as control of key transit corridors between Berlin and Moscow - retain strategic relevance.

In parallel, commentary on Edward Lucas's work on illicit finance reinforced the connection between governance, resilience and accountability. The overarching message was clear: **resilience is not merely technical or procedural - it is political, relational and built on the restoration of trust between institutions and the citizens they serve.**

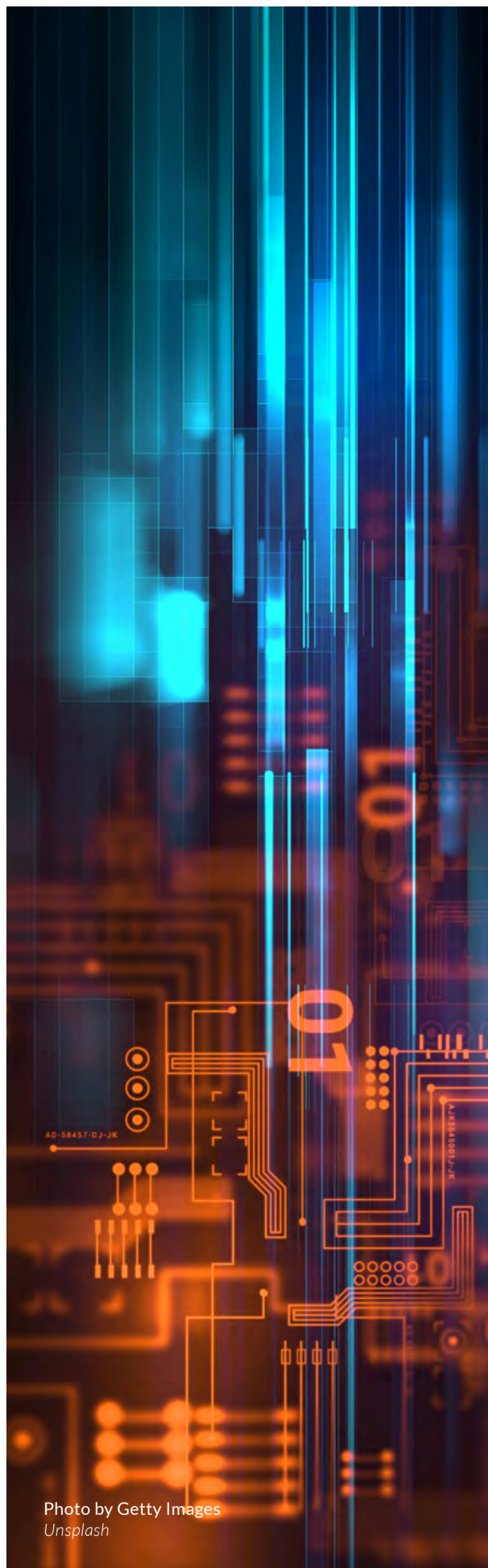


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# CONCLUDING REMARKS

The session concluded with a broad reflection on both the immediate and long-term dimensions of global instability, underscoring how local discontent has become part of a wider, interconnected pattern of disruption. In the short term, it was noted the emergence of 'waves of civil unrest,' where protests in one country rapidly inspire or intensify similar movements elsewhere, accelerated by digital networks and shared grievances.

Europe - particularly the United Kingdom and France - was highlighted as a focal point for this transnational contagion of discontent, each episode of unrest feeding into a broader cycle of political fatigue and institutional mistrust. This volatility reflects not only economic hardship and social inequality but also a deeper crisis of faith in political leadership and systemic fairness.

In the longer term, attention turned to the structural risks of generational alienation and youth radicalisation. Participants expressed concern that rising economic precarity, digital echo chambers and disinformation could entrench a sense of disempowerment among younger populations.

Governments, educators and civil society actors were urged to adopt forward-looking strategies that emphasise inclusion, education and civic engagement. Investment in digital literacy, economic opportunity and participatory governance was identified as critical to preventing disillusionment from crystallising into extremism over the next quarter century.

The discussion also revisited historical precedents to contextualise current challenges. The example of former Australian Prime Minister Gough Whitlam's 1972 election and its enduring implications for U.S.-Australia relations served as a reminder of the persistent asymmetries that underpin major alliances. Concerns at the time over strategic access and intelligence cooperation illustrated how great-power priorities can overshadow national sovereignty - an issue that remains relevant as global power balances continue to shift.

Additionally, it was emphasised that effective governance in this environment requires more than technical competence; it demands trust, humility and adaptability. The conversation reinforced the importance of situational awareness, cross-sector collaboration and continuity in institutional knowledge to navigate compounding risks - from geopolitical tension and economic fragility to social unrest and environmental stress.

While acknowledging the gravity of the current moment, the session closed on a note of cautious optimism. Dialogue, reflection and cooperation were affirmed as essential counterweights to polarisation and fatigue. Participants stressed the need to create 'islands of sanity' - spaces for informed discourse, evidence-based decision-making and shared purpose amid uncertainty. The path forward lies in cultivating integrated resilience strategies that balance national sovereignty with global interdependence, aligning security, governance and societal well-being as complementary rather than competing priorities.

**Ultimately, the discussion concluded that the defining challenge of the coming decade will be not only to manage instability but to renew the foundations of legitimacy, fairness and trust upon which lasting stability depends.**



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