

# Munich Security Conference 2026: An International Order Under Demolition and the Labor Pains of New Strategic Balances

(Translated)

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The sixty-second session of the Munich Security Conference was held from 13 to 15 February 2026 at the Bayerischer Hof and Rosewood Munich hotels, in the German city of Munich. This year's conference comes at what is described as a pivotal moment in the trajectory of the international order, amid escalating conflicts, eroding trust amongst traditional allies, and intensifying competition among major powers.

As the world's foremost forum for discussing issues of security and foreign policy, the conference provides a central platform, bringing together heads of state, decision-makers, and experts to debate the future of the international order and its challenges. Over more than six decades, it has evolved into an essential annual milestone for monitoring transformations in the global order, and assessing the direction of strategic balances. It gathers presidents, prime ministers, defense and foreign ministers, leaders of international institutions, as well as experts and representatives from research centers, and major corporations in the fields of technology and defense industries.

A close observer of this conference would find that it convened under highly complex circumstances, as the erosion of trust — indeed, at times its complete absence — among allies overshadowed the atmosphere of the meetings. The American divide, and the proliferation of official rhetoric, were also clearly visible. Although the United States attempted to present a tone-less confrontation toward its traditional allies, the differences in perspectives on numerous issues proved deeper than efforts at de-escalation, making this conference markedly different from its predecessors.

To accurately grasp this scene and assess its correspondence with reality, one finds that the issue of the fragmentation of the rules-based international order took center stage. The agenda focused on the declining effectiveness of international institutions, the growing dominance of power politics and spheres of influence, the shaken confidence in the rules of international law, as well as the rise of populism and far-right nationalism and their impact on international commitments.

The conference chairman, Wolfgang Ischinger, expressed this bitter reality in his opening remarks, stating that the world is going through an unprecedented period of turmoil and that the international order is undergoing a genuine process of “destruction.” He affirmed that this year's report, titled “Under Destruction: Munich Security Report 2026,” reflects the magnitude of the grave challenges threatening international security and relations among states — a title that encapsulates every meaning of crisis and danger.

This view was echoed by the German Chancellor, Friedrich Merz, who declared that the rules of the international order are being dismantled and that the world is entering a phase in which states increasingly rely on power politics.

By contrast, the speeches of European leaders — foremost among them the President of France, Emmanuel Macron, and the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen — highlighted a serious orientation toward strengthening Europe's capacity to protect itself, and to act independently in its defense decisions. Macron explicitly called for a redesign of European security to include nuclear defense cooperation, emphasizing that Europe can no longer fully rely on external partners, and at times not even on the United States.

As for the shift in American rhetoric, it was clearly evident in the change of tone in the speech delivered by Secretary of State Marco Rubio compared to the address given at the 2025 conference, when J.D. Vance warned the European political elite of the decline of

Western civilization, and accused them of suppressing freedom of expression and ignoring the dangers of mass migration.

In contrast, Rubio's speech emphasized that Washington is spiritually, culturally, and politically bound to Europe, calling for the defense of this civilization together. It appears that Rubio sought to highlight a deliberate contrast with Vance's previous rhetoric in order to ease tensions at the verbal level. Yet this rhetorical de-escalation does not alter the substance of what may be described as "Trumpian" conduct toward Europe. It is the same policy expressed in less harsh language, still carrying an implicit warning — such as his remark that "This is the path that President Trump and the United States has embarked upon. It is the path we ask you here in Europe to join us on."

This was further underscored by Deutsche Welle (DW) under the headline "Partnership at Stake," noting that Rubio's speech revealed the deep rift — described by Merz — between the two sides of the Atlantic.

The matter did not stop at disagreements with Europe; internal American divisions also surfaced through Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, who accused Donald Trump of undermining the transatlantic alliance and seeking to usher in an era of authoritarianism. Writing for "The Guardian," she presented an alternative left-wing vision for foreign policy, warning that the efforts of Trump and Rubio to withdraw America from global engagement would pave the way for Vladimir Putin to flex his muscles in Europe.

Gavin Newsom, Governor of California, joined in this criticism, stating that "Donald Trump is temporary. He'll be gone in three years."

The disagreements also extended to pressing international issues, including the handling of Gaza. Kaja Kallas, Vice-President of the European Commission, criticized the "Board of Peace" established by Trump, describing it as a personal instrument lacking accountability. Meanwhile, Spain's Foreign Minister José Manuel Albares accused President Trump of attempting to bypass the United Nations mandate, and sideline Europe, which is considered a major donor to the Palestinian Authority.

A careful observer sees that the divergences between the United States and Europe are no longer merely tactical; they now extend to burden-sharing within NATO, stances over the war in Ukraine, priorities of deterrence toward Russia, as well as trade policies and tariffs. It has become evident that the Trump administration is working to restructure the framework and rules of the international order to serve its unilateral interests. As a result, the Munich Conference 2026 has become a mirror reflecting a strong European desire for strategic autonomy in decision-making.

With America moving toward what may be described as "utilitarian unilateralism" and marginalizing international institutions, we appear to be witnessing an international order that is losing its historical centrality — one that dominated the destinies of nations for many decades.

For the Islamic Ummah, this anticipated and profound fragmentation between the two sides — alongside American domestic divisions — may open a window of historic opportunity. The preoccupation of major powers with their internal rivalries weakens their capacity to impose unified policies on our region. Moreover, the erosion of the old international rules paves the way for the emergence of new balances, that may allow greater margins of political independence and revival. Perhaps within this turbulence and clash of Western interests lies a distraction that occupies the dominant powers with one another — something we pray will ultimately bring goodness, empowerment, and independent authority to the Islamic Ummah, in a world searching for alternatives that are more just and balanced.