

No. 1/2023

Searching for a Common Vision

A Readout From the Munich Security Conference 2023

Munich Security Brief
March 2023

Authors



Dr. Nicole Koenig is Head of Policy at the Munich Security Conference.



Dr. Leonard Schütte is a Senior Researcher at the Munich Security Conference.

Summary

This year's Munich Security Conference (MSC) took place amid intensifying efforts by autocratic states to revise the international order: from Russia's ongoing war against Ukraine to China's tacit support for the war and its own attempts to assert a sphere of influence in East Asia. Meanwhile, many states in the "Global South" have expressed their dissatisfaction with the status quo and have refused to speak up against Russia's fundamental violation of the UN Charter. In Munich, the leaders of liberal democracies sought to push back against this revisionism, reaffirm their commitment to Ukraine, and discuss how to re-envision the international order to create wider ownership.

The MSC 2023 was the first under the chairmanship of Christoph Heusgen and marked the forceful return of post-pandemic diplomacy. The conference hosted a record number of bilateral and multilateral meetings and the largest US Congressional delegation ever. The greatest number of representatives from the "Global South", gender parity on panels, and the launch of a new Women Parliamentarians Program also made this year's conference more diverse than its predecessors. Russian and Iranian officials were absent, however, as the MSC did not see any chance for a constructive dialogue with these regimes and instead invited prominent voices from Russian and Iranian civil society.

Following on from Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's rousing speech, leaders from liberal democracies around the world including German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, French President Emmanuel Macron, and US Vice-President Kamala D. Harris expressed their unwavering commitment to support Ukraine for "as long as it takes" and to hold the perpetrators of war crimes accountable. The conference program also featured the manifold other, and often inter-related, global and regional security challenges, including instability in the Indo-Pacific and the Sahel, climate and food crises, and the risks of nuclear proliferation.

Searching for a Common Vision

It was palpable at this year's MSC that the world is entering a "decisive decade"¹ as fundamental challenges beset the international order. Taking place almost exactly one year after the start of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the MSC convened to foster debates about how to support Ukraine, push back against autocratic revisionism, address pressing global security crises, and defend the rules-based order. The transatlantic leaders displayed remarkable unity in their determination to stand by Ukraine for as long as it takes. Even so, the conference also served as a sobering reminder that the contest between competing visions for the international order is only going to heat up.

The unequivocal message emanating from the halls and echelons of the Hotel Bayerischer Hof was that there is no "Ukraine fatigue" among the transatlantic community. Galvanized by Ukrainian President Zelenskyy's opening speech under the headline of "David on the Dnipro," Western leaders ranging from German Chancellor Olaf Scholz to US Vice-President Kamala D. Harris affirmed their unwavering commitment to Ukraine. Christoph Heusgen summed up the sentiment in his closing remarks: "We do not accept this breach of civilization. We do not accept that in the 21st century, European borders are changed by force." The symbolic surprise visit of US President Joe Biden to Kyiv on the Monday following the conference drove the message of united transatlantic support for Ukraine home.



"We are willing to support Ukraine as long as necessary and we will do our best."

Olaf Scholz, German Chancellor, Munich Security Conference, February 17, 2023

As captured by this year's Munich Security Report – titled "Re:vision" – the Russian war on Ukraine is only the most blatant case of intensifying efforts to promote an autocratic alternative to the liberal, rules-based international order.² The conference agenda attempted to do justice to the full panoply of security issues ranging from the growing rivalry between the US and China, accountability for war crimes, regional conflicts in the Sahel and the Middle East, to pressing global challenges such as climate change. Speaking for many participants, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg expressed his concerns that the Russian aggression in Ukraine could set a precedent for territorial conquests elsewhere – in particular in the Indo-Pacific. Notwithstanding his bilateral meeting with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken on the margins of the conference, Wang Yi, Director of the Chinese Office of the Central Foreign Affairs Commission, did little to quell concerns when he



“David is now all of us, he is the whole free world.”

Volodymyr Zelenskyy,
Ukrainian President,
Munich Security Conference,
February 17, 2023

labelled recent US policy in the espionage balloon affair “hysterical.” Nudged to reassure the audience that military escalation over Taiwan was not imminent, he instead replied that Taiwan “has never been a country and it will not be a country in the future.” His subsequent visit to Moscow underscored that China will not distance itself from Russia any time soon.

States that do not currently align either with liberal democracies or autocratic revisionists will be crucial in shaping the future international order. Several sessions, including the prime Saturday morning slot, were therefore dedicated to the “Global South.” While the discernible effort to provide a platform to voices that had hitherto received less attention resonated positively, this can only be the first step toward developing a common vision for the international order that also attracts ownership in the diverse countries of the “Global South.”

The Transatlantic “as Long as It Takes”

The transatlantic leaders speaking in Munich sent a strong and unified message: we stand ready to support Ukraine as much as necessary and as long as it takes. The largest bipartisan US Congressional Delegation in the 60-year history of the Munich Security Conference echoed this message. So did every single European leader on stage. Germany’s leadership vowed to live up to the ambition that Chancellor Olaf Scholz had set out in his *Zeitenwende* speech on February 27, 2022. Importantly, the Chancellor repeated his promise to permanently spend two percent of GDP on defense and urged his partners to deliver the pledged battle tanks to Ukraine. The G7 Foreign Ministers met in Munich for the first time under the Japanese presidency. They “reaffirmed their unwavering solidarity with Ukraine for as long as it takes” and “committed to actively working with Ukraine to this end.”³ Beyond this general commitment, there was also remarkable agreement on the concrete short-term priorities for military support as set out by Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba: “ammunition, artillery, and tanks.”

Despite this impressive show of strength and unity, greater urgency on arms deliveries is needed. President Zelenskyy opened the conference, stating that “there is no alternative to speed. Because it is the speed that life depends on.” While several transatlantic leaders emphasized the importance of measured decisions and the need for sustainable commitment, Ukraine is paying the price of blood every day and could well run out of time as Russia is gathering troops for a major offensive.



“The transatlantic alliance is stronger than ever. And most importantly, the spirit of the Ukrainian people endures.”

Kamala D. Harris, US Vice President, Munich Security Conference, February 18, 2023

While there was broad agreement among the transatlantic leaders that Ukraine “must win this war,” it was less clear what this entails. They agreed that the “hour of dialogue” with Russia has not yet come and that Ukraine should be empowered to set the terms of peace negotiations. When asked about these terms, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken underlined that “fundamentally these are decisions for our Ukrainian friends to make.” Republican Minority Leader of the US Senate Mitch McConnell agreed that “the definition of victory ought to be left to those that are most affected.” For Ukraine’s Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba, a victory in the short term means the “full restoration of Ukraine’s territorial integrity.” In the long term, it means “reparations for the damage inflicted, accountability for perpetrators of crimes, and most importantly, Russia must change” to no longer pose a threat to the Euro-Atlantic space. An overarching transatlantic vision on how to get there was, however, still missing.

Meanwhile, there was general agreement – going beyond the transatlantic community – that accountability will be crucial for lasting peace. The fight against impunity was seen not only as a way to serve justice to victims but also as a powerful deterrent to others around the globe seeking to undermine the rules-based order by force. Vice President Kamala D. Harris announced in Munich that the US “has formally determined that Russia has committed crimes against humanity.” In their Statement at the MSC, the G7 Foreign Ministers “reemphasized their commitment to holding all those responsible to account, including the Russian President Putin and the Russian leadership, in accordance with international law.” Many speakers called for the establishment of a Special Tribunal for Russia’s crime of aggression with a mandate from the UN General Assembly. Various among them also stressed the need to strengthen the International Criminal Court, pointing to the limitation that dozens of countries, including Russia, China, and the US, have not signed up to it.



“We have to talk about accountability now during the war, if we aim at having sustainable peace tomorrow.”

Kaja Kallas, Estonian Prime Minister, Munich Security Conference, February 17, 2023

The transatlantic leaders tirelessly emphasized that the Russian war against Ukraine concerns not only Europe but the whole world. The implications of a Russian victory against Ukraine – a permanent UN Security Council member and leading nuclear power in open breach with the UN Charter – would go far beyond the continent. It would not only destroy Ukraine but also undermine the rules-based international order and fundamental principles such as territorial integrity and national sovereignty. A Russian victory, built on nuclear threats, would set a very dangerous precedent. Preventing Russia from using nuclear weapons in Ukraine and upholding





“Nuclear wars must not be fought.”

Wang Yi, Director of China's Central Foreign Affairs Commission, Munich Security Conference, February 18, 2023

the nuclear taboo was deemed crucial on all sides. It was therefore important that Wang Yi, Director of the Chinese Office of the Central Foreign Affairs Commission, reiterated the joint statement of the five nuclear weapon states of January 2022 on preventing nuclear war and avoiding an arms race.⁴ Many speakers also underlined the need to relaunch nuclear arms control and non-proliferation efforts. President Putin's subsequent announcement to officially suspend Russia's participation in the New START Treaty, set to expire in 2026, was only the latest symptom of the erosion of the international nuclear arms control regime.⁵

Order Going South

Many states still consider Russia's war on Ukraine largely a European matter. One central ambition of this year's conference was therefore to both understand and begin straddling the differences between liberal democracies and those countries of the “Global South” that have avoided taking sides to forge a larger coalition that supports Ukraine and takes ownership of the international order. Amid global ripple effects of Russia's war and intensifying revisionism of the order, many participants agreed that Western states need to broaden their horizon and engage much more intensely with countries from Africa, Asia, and South America. Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission, called on the transatlantic community, stating that “we [need to] do our utmost to deal with the knock-on effects in a way that the Global South does not suffer too much from Putin's war of aggression.”



“This war [...] is not simply the war of Europeans. It affects the entire planet.”

Emmanuel Macron, French President, Munich Security Conference, February 17, 2023

Notwithstanding the overwhelming condemnation of Russia's attack in the UN General Assembly, it became clear in Munich that many states outside the transatlantic community prioritize a ceasefire, even if it entailed Ukrainian territorial concessions. One recurring charge was that of hypocrisy and double standards. A few participants criticized the West's allegedly reflexive call for peace negotiations in other conflicts while blaming others for doing the same vis-à-vis Russia's war. Many representatives of the “Global South” primarily viewed the war not as microcosm of the contest over the international order but as a diversion of resources and attention from pressing global crises such as climate catastrophes, food and energy shortages, or conflicts in Yemen or Ethiopia. Liberal democracies thus need to strike a fine balance between doubling-down on their support for Ukraine while also addressing the legitimate concerns of the wider international community.



“Crises are the best times to push for reforms.”

Nana Akufo-Addo,
Ghanaian President, Munich
Security Conference,
February 17, 2023

The MSC 2023 also provided a forum for a debate about the broader contours of the international order. As survey data from the Munich Security Index shows, outside of China only small minorities want to live in a world in which the rules are shaped by Beijing or Moscow.⁶ But merely defending the status quo is clearly not tenable given the widespread grievances in the “Global South.” Instead, many participants appealed, the defenders of the rules-based order need to reckon with their unfulfilled promises on, for example, climate financing or vaccine distribution to gain credibility. Another important demand was to widen representation of countries of the “Global South” in key international organizations. The EU’s call, as expressed by the President of the European Council Charles Michel, for the African Union to become a formal member of the G20 was a welcomed sign of concrete support. But as the title of one panel put it, further “recalibration of the compass” for South-North cooperation is needed.

Ukraine Fallout Meets Pre-Existing Global Vulnerabilities

Russia’s war on Ukraine has global repercussions not only because it threatens the UN Charter and the nuclear order, but also because it has exacerbated a broad range of transnational challenges. To promote a comprehensive approach to international security, the MSC has long addressed socio-economic topics that feed insecurity around the globe. These have become even more relevant in light of the ripple effects of the war. At a panel on food security, organized in partnership with the Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development, speakers agreed that Russia’s war had only worsened a pre-existing food security crisis. They suggested that the transatlantic response needs to combine short-term emergency relief with a more comprehensive reform of the global food system to adjust to changing ecosystems.



“This money by Russia and the West that is used to buying weapons [...] could be better utilized to promote development.”

Saara Kuugongelwa-Amadhila,
Namibian Prime Minister,
Munich Security Conference,
February 18, 2023

Surging inflation, persistent inequality, and global health were other important topics of debate in Munich. As Kristalina Georgieva, Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund, succinctly put it: “inequality feeds unrest.” Rising energy insecurity has been another collateral of the war and a stark reminder of the importance of speeding up the path to net zero. Reaching net zero by 2050 will, to a large extent, depend on new technologies, many of which are still in the prototype phase. Breakthrough Energy and Siemens Energy therefore used the MSC weekend to launch the Energy Resilience Leadership Group to “harness the power of startups and scale technologies that will make Europe less dependent on gas.”



“Food security is a global crisis [...] you don’t have food security, you are not going to have peace.”

David Beasley, Executive Director, UN World Food Programme, Munich Security Conference, February 17, 2023

The Russian war on Ukraine has also deviated resources and attention from climate disasters. Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, Pakistan’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, reminded the audience that “in a parallel universe where the Ukraine War had not happened, the story of last year would have been one of climate catastrophe,” pointing to the floods in Pakistan but also extreme droughts in China and forest fires in California. Indeed, according to the Munich Security Index, ecological threats rank among the highest concerns for citizens across the globe.⁷ Various panels on the just transition, carbon border adjustments, and the US Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) underlined the growing geopolitical dimension of the green transition and the crucial importance of financing it. Several speakers highlighted the hitherto unfulfilled promises of wealthy countries to mobilize 100 billion US dollars annually for climate mitigation and adaptation in the developing world. Frans Timmermans, the European Commission’s Vice-President for the European Green Deal, responded with an urgent call for action. Alluding to the EU’s promise to provide loss and damage funding for vulnerable countries affected by climate disasters at COP27 last year, he stated that rich countries “now have an opportunity to redeem” themselves if they implemented their pledges “this year.”

While the IRA was widely hailed as an important step for the green transition in the US, it epitomizes broader protectionist trends, which put the global trade system under pressure. In the words of Valdis Dombrovskis, Vice-President of the European Commission, “globalization is not over, but changing.” Both he and US Trade Representative Katherine Tai signaled that they would be able to settle their differences on the IRA and the EU’s carbon border adjustment mechanism, and thus avert a transatlantic trade conflict. The discussions still highlighted that the growing geopolitical competition threatens to upend the international trade architecture centered on the World Trade Organization. Interdependencies are increasingly seen as a vulnerability and trade has become a matter of national security, not least in China and the US.⁸



“The energy transition needs to be just and affordable.”

Sri Mulyani Indrawati, Indonesian Minister of Finance, Munich Security Conference, February 17, 2023

The systemic competition is also heating up on technology, as semiconductors and the critical raw materials needed for high-tech components have become central foci of government interventions around the world. At the same time, discussions in Munich underscored that private actors increasingly affect the once heavily state-centric realm of military technology. This can create new opportunities, but also potential new dependencies and vulnerabilities. To better understand the implications of





“Japan’s participation in the measures against Russia transformed the response to Russia’s aggression against Ukraine from a trans-atlantic effort to a global one.”

Hayashi Yoshimasa,
Japanese Minister of
Foreign Affairs, Munich
Security Conference,
February 18, 2023

such developments, the MSC convened a meeting of its Security Innovation Board with the NATO Innovation Board.

Regional Tinderboxes and Glimmers of Hope

The MSC 2023 also zoomed in on a series of regional challenges and conflicts. The Indo-Pacific region featured prominently on Munich’s stages. In their remarks, both Japanese Minister of Foreign Affairs Hayashi Yoshimasa and his Korean counterpart Park Jin highlighted the connection between Russia’s war and security in East Asia, fearing that the Russian violation of the UN Charter could set a dangerous precedent. They also emphasized the manifold challenges to the Free and Open Indo-Pacific emanating from China and North Korea. In response to what can be called, “the other *Zeitenwende*,” Japan has undertaken a fundamental overhaul of its security policy and announced that it would double its defense spending in the next five years. The Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Canada and the United Kingdom, Mélanie Joly and James Cleverly, also expressed their commitment to engage further in the region and underlined its “inevitable growth in importance.” With a Munich Leaders Meeting taking place in Tokyo this year, the MSC will provide a platform for an in-depth discussion of security challenges in the Indo-Pacific.

Building on the Munich Leaders Meeting in Bucharest in November 2022, several sessions focused on security in Southeastern Europe. At a roundtable on the Western Balkans, participants agreed that the war in Ukraine had elevated the geopolitical significance of the region. Noting the region’s persistent socio-economic problems, in particular for the youth, and the simmering tensions in Bosnia and Herzegovina and between Kosovo and Serbia, speakers called for intensified European diplomatic engagement and a more credible EU accession perspective. The MSC also managed to bring Ilham Aliyev, President of Azerbaijan, and Nikol Pashinyan, Prime Minister of Armenia, on a stage together again. Joined by Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili and Helga Maria Schmid, Secretary-General of the OSCE, they exchanged views on how to advance the regional peace process.

In light of the devastating earthquake in Turkey and Syria, the MSC, the European Institute of Peace, and the Rockefeller Foundation convened a strategic dialogue among key stakeholders on how to enable better humanitarian assistance, in particular to victims in northwestern Syria. The humanitarian emergency in Yemen was also on the agenda, as was the political situation in Iraq and the wider security architecture in the Middle



“Even though a lot of the news has shifted to Ukraine, someone needs to tell the story that good things are coming out of the Horn of Africa.”

Aden Duale, Kenyan Cabinet Secretary for Defence, Munich Security Conference, February 18, 2023

East. During a discussion on the aggravating security situation in Israel and Palestine, it once again became clear that there is no alternative to a two-state solution for long-term peace and stability in the region. The Arctic, too, was of concern at the conference as participants agreed that “Russia’s war has spilled over.” Strengthening the Arctic Council, increasing the representation of Indigenous people, and a stronger NATO focus on the High North were mentioned as priorities.

In the context of the expanding Russian footprint through the Wagner mercenary group in Mali and beyond, one animated panel addressed how to fight the crisis in the Sahel and prevent the spillover into the wider West African region. Mauritanian Minister of Economic Affairs, Ousmane Kane, spoke for many when he appealed to the international community not to neglect the “root causes of terrorism” in the region: poverty reinforced by climate change-related events like droughts. Others acknowledged that the international community had “collectively failed” to “walk the walk” on improving the interrelated security, development, and human rights situation in the region. In contrast, there appear to be at least some glimmers of hope in the Horn of Africa. At a townhall meeting titled “New Dawn in the Horn,” participants pointed to recent positive developments such as the political deal in Sudan, peace accords in Ethiopia, and vibrant elections in Kenya and Somalia. They agreed that the international community needed to stay engaged to foster regional solutions on both hard security issues – such as the Al-Shabab terrorist group – and socio-economic issues such as climate change and food insecurity.



“When we reduce our military engagement, we have to enhance our development engagement.”

Svenja Schulze, German Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development, Munich Security Conference, February 18, 2023

This year’s conference also put the spotlights on democratic developments both within the transatlantic community and around the world. At a night cap on democratic resilience, parliamentarians from Germany, Italy, and the United Kingdom reflected on the state of the liberal democracies, recognizing the manifold domestic challenges from populists on both sides of the Atlantic. Enhancing democratic resilience will remain a crucial task for policymakers and civil society across the transatlantic community given important looming elections in the US and elsewhere. Ukraine’s democratic resistance against the autocratic aggressor should serve as an inspiration that democracy is worth fighting for.

Indeed, the demonstrations in Iran against the repressive theocratic regime also reflected this sentiment. The MSC hosted a packed Townhall on the future of Iran with prominent voices from the country’s civil society. The



“What set the protests apart is that they are female-led. The engine of the protests have been women.”

Nazanin Boniadi,
Ambassador Amnesty Inter-
national United Kingdom,
Munich Security Conference,
February 18, 2023

panelists emphasized that the female-led protest had turned into a broader pro-democracy movement. They called upon the international community to heap pressure on the regime by imposing a strong set of sanctions, listing Iran’s Revolutionary Guards Corps as a terrorist organization, and expulsing Iran from international organizations. The MSC also provided a platform to leading voices from Russia’s civil society to discuss their visions for a democratic Russia. The panelists saw a Ukrainian victory over Russia as a precondition for democratic change. They reimagined a Russia with clear political checks and balances and stressed that durable change would only be possible with a sustained educational effort on the importance and meaning of democratic institutions.

Toward a Common Vision

While the need for a common vision for the future international order was palpable in the halls of the Hotel Bayerischer Hof, it became equally clear that we are not there yet. The international community is still grappling with the *Zeitenwende* catalyzed by the Russian war against Ukraine. Faced with a common threat, the transatlantic partners have edged closer together. At the same time, dividing lines with others have become more visible. More needs to be done to forge a broader coalition and develop a shared vision for the future. The discussions at the MSC 2023 suggested that the following four points should inform this vision.

First, a Ukraine that is whole, free, and at peace will be central for the future of the international order. This is not only a precondition for peace in Europe, but also for the very existence of a rules-based order guaranteeing peace and freedom globally. In his opening speech, Ukrainian President Zelenskyy expressed hope that next year “we would gather here in Munich for the first security post-war conference.” According to French President Emmanuel Macron, this will require “preparing the terms of peace.” Visions for these terms and the path toward durable peace do, however, still diverge. The Chinese position paper, presented in the week after the conference, did not provide much clarity on how to end the war while re-establishing Ukraine’s “sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity.”

Second, a common vision will require sustained dialogue with the “Global South” and partnerships on equal terms. This year’s conference was a conversation starter. Many speakers acknowledged the need to broaden the coalition upholding the rules-based international order. As German Chancellor Olaf Scholz stressed, this will also require “new forms of interna-



“China said we need a paper for peace [...] But the question will be: What kind of peace will this be?”

Annalena Baerbock, German
Foreign Minister, Munich,
February 18, 2023



tional solidarity and participation.” What this entails concretely will have to be discussed. In any case, a new approach toward the “Global South” will have to be differentiated, taking varying interests and perspectives into account. It will further require active listening, sincere engagement, and a degree of self-criticism on the part of the transatlantic partners. The MSC will play its part by actively promoting North-South dialogue at a Munich Leaders Meeting in Nairobi later this year.⁹

Third, Europeans have to do more to live up to their vision of a geopolitical Europe, not least to shoulder more responsibility within a rebalanced transatlantic partnership. In the short-term, they have to shift into a higher gear on defense. Replenishing stocks and providing Ukraine with the equipment and ammunitions it needs was deemed a priority. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen drew parallels with the joint acquisition of vaccines during the pandemic and announced plans to use the European Peace Facility to jointly buy ammunition and equipment for Ukraine. The medium-term challenge will be to accelerate and scale up standardized production and to overcome the persistent fragmentation of Europe’s defense industries. As German Defense Minister Boris Pistorius pointed out, this should also include a debate on the thorny topic of a common European arms export policy. By reiterating his 2020 invitation to strategically discuss the role of the French nuclear deterrent with European partners, French President Emmanuel Macron opened another sensitive topic up for debate. European representatives also acknowledged the geopolitical importance of EU enlargement. Open and controversial questions include whether the accession process can be accelerated without compromising the EU’s norms and values, how pre-accession support for Ukraine can be enhanced, and which internal reforms are needed to prepare for a larger EU.



“Ukraine belongs to the European family and it will be an EU member – definitely!”

Josep Borrell Fontelles, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission, Munich, February 19, 2023

Last but not least, publics around the globe must be taken along when shaping this common vision. Without public support, any vision will remain contested and the political unity behind it fragile. The MSC will continue to do its part this year by engaging Germans from across the nation in an open dialogue on the country’s changing foreign and security policy via the “*Zeitenwende on tour*” initiative.¹⁰

Key Points

- ① One year after the start of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the transatlantic partners left no doubt about their determination to uphold and strengthen their support for Ukraine – as much as necessary and for as long as it takes.
- ② Accountability was widely seen as a crucial pre-condition for sustainable peace in Europe and beyond. Serving justice to perpetrators would also be a powerful deterrent against other players seeking to undermine the rules-based order.
- ③ Strengthening the rules-based order requires intensified and sustained dialogue with representatives of the “Global South”, partnerships on equal terms, as well as increased resources for their concerns.
- ④ While the Russian war against Ukraine dominated the conference, the debates, on the main stage, in town-halls, roundtables, and side events reflected a diverse set of risks that require urgent collective responses ranging from great power competition to the climate crisis, food and energy insecurity, the erosion of democracy, and a broad range of regional conflicts and crises.



The Munich Security Conference 2023 at a Glance

45

heads of state and government

100+

ministers

25

heads of international organizations
(NATO, EU, UN, AU, OSZE)

225

main program speakers,
including 50% women

50+

main program sessions (Main Stage I & II,
Townhalls, Conversations, Roundtables)

25

official multilaterals
(incl. G7 Foreign Ministers' Meeting)

2750

official bilaterals

150+

partner events

2390

participants in outreach events

The agenda and the recordings of the
Munich Security Conference 2023
can be found here:



<https://securityconference.org/en/msc-2023/agenda/>

Endnotes

Quotations originally in British English have been adapted to American English.

¹ Joseph R. Biden, “Remarks by President Biden at the 2021 Virtual Munich Security Conference,” Munich/Washington, DC: Munich Security Conference, February 19, 2021, <https://perma.cc/84Z9-W7TE>.

² Tobias Bunde et al., “Munich Security Report 2023: Re:vision,” Munich, February 2023, doi:10.47342/ZBJA9198.

³ G7 Foreign Ministers, “G7 Foreign Ministers’ Statement at the 2023 Munich Security Conference,” Press Release, February 18, 2023, <https://perma.cc/T5FB-S284>.

⁴ The White House, “Joint Statement of the Leaders of the Five Nuclear-Weapon States on Preventing Nuclear War and Avoiding Arms Races,” Washington, DC: The White House, January 3, 2022, <https://perma.cc/Y7GU-LJTG>.

⁵ Jintro Pauly, “Nuclear Order: Atomized,” in: Munich Security Conference (ed.), *Munich Security Report 2023: Re:vision*. Munich, February 2023, 115–26.

⁶ Bunde et al., “Munich Security Report 2023: Re:vision,” 24.

⁷ Bunde et al., “Munich Security Report 2023: Re:vision,” 42–3.

⁸ Leonard Schütte, “Global Infrastructures: My Way or No Highway,” in: *Munich Security Conference (ed.), Munich Security Report 2023: Re:vision*. Munich, February 2023, 75–88.

⁹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, “China’s Position on the Political Settlement of the Ukraine Crisis,” Press Release, February 24, 2023.

¹⁰ Munich Security Conference, “Zeitenwende on tour,” <https://perma.cc/QKP2-JYNB>.

Image Sources

[MSC/Baier](#)

P. 9 (Kuugongelwa-Amadhila)

[MSC/Barth-Tuttas](#)

P. 10 (Indrawati), 11 (Harris)

[MSC/Görlich](#)

P. 8 (Akufo-Addo)

[MSC/Guelland](#)

P. 10 (Beasley), 14 (Boniadi)

[MSC/Niedermüller](#)

P. 5, 13 (Duale), 18

[MSC/Preiss](#)

P. 6 (Kallas), 9 (Macron), 11 (Scholz), 13 (Schulze), 16

[All other images:](#)

[MSC/Kuhlmann](#)



About

Editorial Board

Ambassador Dr. Christoph Heusgen, Ambassador Boris Ruge,
Dr. Benedikt Franke

Authors

Dr. Nicole Koenig, Dr. Leonard Schütte

Managing Editor

Natalie Knapp

Design Concept MetaDesign

Design and Layout Felix Kirner, Doris Duschek

Printed by Königsdruck

Stiftung Münchner Sicherheitskonferenz gGmbH

Karolinenplatz 3

80333 Munich

www.securityconference.org

research@securityconference.org

Visit our app and social media channels:

www.linktr.ee/MunSecConf

Please cite as: Nicole Koenig and Leonard Schütte, “Searching for a Common Vision: A Readout From the Munich Security Conference 2023,” Munich:

Munich Security Conference, Munich Security Brief 1, February 2023,

<https://doi.org/10.47342/JPRD3642>.

ISSN (Print): [2702-6558](#)

ISSN (Online): [2702-6574](#)

About the Munich Security Conference (MSC)

The Munich Security Conference is the world's leading forum for debating international security policy. In addition to its annual flagship conference, the MSC regularly convenes high-profile events around the world. The MSC publishes the annual Munich Security Report and other formats on specific security issues.

The Munich Security Briefs (MSB)

With its Munich Security Briefs, the MSC aims at contributing to ongoing debates on a particular issue within the broad field of international security. A much more concise format than the Munich Security Report, the briefs are meant to provide an overview of an issue or a readout of a particular MSC event as well as a succinct analysis of its policy implications and strategic consequences. They generally express the opinion of their author(s) rather than any position of the Munich Security Conference.