

Transcript: Marco Rubio Remarks at MSC 2026

- February 14, 2026

A Historic Alliance That Saved the World

MARCO RUBIO: Thank you very much. We gather here today as members of a historic alliance, an alliance that saved and changed the world. You know, when this conference began in 1963, it was in a nation, actually it was on a continent, it was divided against itself. The line between communism and freedom ran through the heart of Germany. The first barbed fences of the Berlin Wall had gone up just two years prior. And just months before that first conference, before our predecessors first met here, here in Munich, the Cuban Missile Crisis had brought the world to the brink of nuclear destruction.

Even as World War II still burned fresh in the memory of Americans and Europeans alike, we found ourselves staring down the barrel of a new global catastrophe, one with the potential for a new kind of destruction, more apocalyptic and final than anything before in the history of mankind. The time of that first gathering, Soviet communism was on the march. Thousands of years of Western civilization hung in the balance. At that time, victory was far from certain.

But we were driven by a common purpose. We were unified, not just by what we were fighting against. We were unified by what we were fighting for. And together, Europe and America prevailed. And a continent was rebuilt. Our people prospered. In time, the East and West blocs were reunited. A civilization was once again made whole. That infamous wall that had cleaved this nation into two came down, and with it an evil empire. And the East and West became one again.

The Dangerous Delusion of the “End of History”

But the euphoria of this triumph led us to a dangerous delusion. That we had entered, quote, “the end of history.” That every nation would now be a liberal democracy. That the ties formed by trade and by commerce alone would now replace nationhood. That the rules-based global order, an overused term, would now replace the national interest. And that we would now live in a world without borders where everyone became a citizen of the world.

This was a foolish idea that ignored both human nature and it ignored the lessons of over 5,000 years of recorded human history. And it has cost us dearly.

The Cost of Our Mistakes

In this delusion, we embraced a dogmatic vision of free and unfettered trade, even as some nations protected their economies and subsidized their companies, to systematically undercut ours, shuttering our plants, resulting in large parts of our societies being de-industrialized, shipping millions of working and middle-class jobs overseas, and handing control of our critical supply chains to both adversaries and rivals.

We increasingly outsourced our sovereignty to international institutions while many nations invested in massive welfare states at the cost of maintaining the ability to defend themselves. This, even as other countries have invested in the most rapid military build-up in all of human history and have not hesitated to use hard power to pursue their own interests.

To appease a climate cult, we have imposed energy policies on ourselves that are impoverishing our people, even as our competitors exploit oil and coal and natural gas and anything else not just to power their economies, but to use as leverage against our own. And in a pursuit of a world without borders, we opened our doors to an

unprecedented wave of mass migration that threatens the cohesion of our societies, the continuity of our culture, and the future of our people.

A Vision of Renewal and Restoration

We made these mistakes together, and now together we owe it to our people to face those facts and to move forward to rebuild. Under President Trump, the United States of America will once again take on the task of renewal and restoration, driven by a vision of a future as proud, as sovereign, and as vital as our civilization's past. And while we are prepared, if necessary, to do this alone, it is our preference and it is our hope to do this together with you, our friends here in Europe. For the United States and Europe, we belong together.

America was founded 250 years ago, but the roots began here on this continent long before. The men who settled and built the nation of my birth arrived on our shores carrying the memories and the traditions and the Christian faith of their ancestors as a sacred inheritance, an unbreakable link between the old world and the new.

We are part of one civilization, Western civilization. We are bound to one another by the deepest bonds that nations could share, forged by centuries of shared history, Christian faith, culture, heritage, language, ancestry, and the sacrifices our forefathers made together for the common civilization to which we have fallen heir.

A Call for Seriousness and Reciprocity

And so this is why we Americans may sometimes come off as a little direct and urgent in our counsel. This is why President Trump demands seriousness and reciprocity from our friends here in Europe. The reason why, my friends, is because we care deeply. We care deeply about your future and ours.

And if at times we disagree, our disagreements come from our profound sense of concern about a Europe with which we are connected, not just economically, not just militarily.

We are connected spiritually and we are connected culturally. We want Europe to be strong. We believe that Europe must survive.

Because the two great wars of the last century serve for us as history's constant reminder that ultimately our destiny is, and will always be, intertwined with yours. Because we know that the fate of Europe will never be irrelevant to our own.

What Are We Defending?

National security, which this conference is largely about, is not merely a series of technical questions. How much we spend on defense or where, how we deploy it, these are important questions. They are. But they are not the fundamental one.

The fundamental question we must answer at the outset is what exactly are we defending? Because armies do not fight for abstractions. Armies fight for a people. Armies fight for a nation. Armies fight for a way of life.

And that is what we are defending. A great civilization that has every reason to be proud of its history, confident of its future, and aims to always be the master of its own economic and political destiny.

Europe's Legacy and Promise

It was here, in Europe, where the ideas that planted the seeds of liberty that changed the world were born. It was here, in Europe, where the world, which gave the world the rule of law, the universities, and the scientific revolution.

It was this continent that produced the genius of Mozart and Beethoven, of Dante and Shakespeare, of Michelangelo and da Vinci, of the Beatles and the Rolling Stones. And this is the place where the

vaulted ceilings of the Sistine Chapel and the towering spires of the great cathedral in Cologne, they testify not just to the greatness of our past or to a faith in God that inspired these marvels. They foreshadow the wonders that await us in our future.

But only if we are unapologetic in our heritage and proud of this common inheritance can we together begin the work of envisioning and shaping our economic and our political future.

Reversing Destructive Policy Choices

Deindustrialization was not inevitable. It was a conscious policy choice, a decades-long economic undertaking that stripped our nations of their wealth, of their productive capacity, and of their independence.

And the loss of our supply chain sovereignty was not a function of a prosperous and healthy system of global trade. It was foolish. It was a foolish but voluntary transformation of our economy that left us dependent on others for our needs and dangerously vulnerable to crisis.

Mass migration is not, was not, is some fringe concern of little consequence. It was and continues to be a crisis which is transforming and destabilizing societies all across the West.

Together we can re-industrialize our economies and rebuild our capacity to defend our people. But the work of this new alliance should not be focused just on military cooperation and reclaiming the industries of the past. It should also be focused on together advancing our mutual interests and new frontiers, unshackling our ingenuity, our creativity, and the dynamic spirit to build a new Western century.

Commercial space travel and cutting-edge artificial intelligence, industrial automation and flex manufacturing, creating a Western supply chain for critical minerals not vulnerable to extortion from other powers, and a unified effort to compete for market share in the economies of the global South. Together we can not only take back

control of our own industries and supply chains, we can prosper in the areas that will define the 21st century.

Border Control and National Sovereignty

But we must also gain control of our national borders. Controlling who and how many people enter our countries, this is not an expression of xenophobia, it is not hate, it is a fundamental act of national sovereignty. And the failure to do so is not just an abdication of one of our most basic duties owed to our people. It is an urgent threat to the fabric of our societies and the survival of our civilization itself.

Reforming the Global Order

And finally, we can no longer place the so-called global order above the vital interests of our people and our nations. We do not need to abandon the system of international cooperation we authored, and we don't need to dismantle the global institutions of the old order that together we built. But these must be reformed. These must be rebuilt.

For example, the United Nations still has tremendous potential to be a tool for good in the world, but we cannot ignore that today on the most pressing matters before us, it has no answers and has played virtually no role. It could not solve the war in Gaza, instead it was American leadership that freed captives from barbarians and brought about a fragile truce. It has not solved the war in Ukraine. It took American leadership in partnership with many of the countries here today just to bring the two sides to the table in search of a still elusive peace. It was powerless to constrain the nuclear program of radical Shia clerics in Tehran. That required 14 bombs dropped with precision from American B-2 bombers. And it was unable to address the threat to our security from a narco-terrorist dictator in Venezuela. Instead, it took American special forces to bring this fugitive to justice.

In a perfect world, all of these problems and more would be solved by diplomats and strongly worded resolutions, but we do not live in a perfect world, and we cannot continue to allow those who blatantly and openly threaten our citizens and endanger our global stability to

shield themselves behind abstractions of international law which they themselves routinely violate.

Walking Together on a Shared Path

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. It is a path we have walked together before and hope to walk together again.

For five centuries before the end of the Second World War, the West had been expanding. Its missionaries, its pilgrims, its soldiers, its explorers, pouring out from its shores to cross oceans, settle new continents, build vast empires extending out across the globe. But in 1945, for the first time since the age of Columbus, it was contracting. Europe was in ruins. Half of it lived behind an iron curtain and the rest looked like it would soon follow. The great Western empires had entered into terminal decline, accelerated by godless communist revolutions and by anti-colonial uprisings that would transform the world and drape the red hammer and sickle across vast swaths of the map in the years to come.

Against that backdrop, then as now, many came to believe that the West's age of dominance had come to an end and that our future was destined to be a faint and feeble echo of our past. But together, our predecessors recognized that decline was a choice and it was a choice they refused to make. This is what we did together once before and this is what President Trump and the United States want to do again now, together with you. And this is why we do not want our allies to be weak. Because that makes us weaker.

We want allies who can defend themselves so that no adversary will ever be tempted to test our collective strength. This is why we do not want our allies to be shackled by guilt and shame. We want allies who are proud of their culture and of their heritage, who understand that we are heirs to the same great and noble civilization, and who, together with us, are willing and able to defend it.

And this is why we do not want allies to rationalize the broken status quo, rather than reckon with what is necessary to fix it. For we in America have no interest in being polite and orderly caretakers of the West's managed decline. We do not seek to separate, but to revitalize an old friendship and renew the greatest civilization in human history.

What we want is a reinvigorated alliance that recognizes that what has ailed our societies is not just a set of bad policies, but a malaise of hopelessness and complacency. An alliance that we want is one that is not paralyzed into inaction by fear. Fear of climate change, fear of war, fear of technology. Instead, we want an alliance that boldly races into the future. And the only fear we have is the fear of the shame of not leaving our nations prouder, stronger, and wealthier for our children.

An alliance ready to defend our people, to safeguard our interests, and to preserve the freedom of action that allows us to shape our own destiny, not one that exists to operate a global welfare state and atone for the purported sins of past generations. An alliance that does not allow its power to be outsourced, constrained, or subordinated to systems beyond its control. One that does not depend on others for the critical necessities of its national life. And one that does not maintain the polite pretense that our way of life is just one among many, and that asks for permission before it acts.

And above all, an alliance based on the recognition that we, the West, have inherited together, what we have inherited together is something that is unique, and distinctive, and irreplaceable. Because this, after all, is the very foundation of the transatlantic bond.

Acting together in this way, we will not just help recover a sane foreign policy. It will restore to us a clear sense of ourselves. It will restore a place in the world. And in so doing, it will rebuke and deter the forces of civilizational erasure that today menace both America and Europe alike.

America's European Heritage

So in a time of headlines, heralding the end of the transatlantic era, let it be known and clear to all that this is neither our goal nor our wish.

Because for us Americans, our home may be in the Western Hemisphere, but we will always be a child of Europe.

Our story began with an Italian explorer whose adventure into the great unknown to discover a new world brought Christianity to the Americas and became the legend that defined the imagination of our pioneer nation. Our first colonies were built by English settlers, to whom we owe not just the language we speak, but the whole of our political and legal system.

Our frontiers were shaped by Scots-Irish, that proud, hardy clan from the hills of Ulster that gave us Davy Crockett, and Mark Twain, and Teddy Roosevelt, and Neil Armstrong. Our great Midwestern heartland was built by German farmers and craftsmen who transformed empty plains into a global agricultural powerhouse. And by the way, dramatically upgraded the quality of American beer.

Our expansion into the interior followed the footsteps of French fur traders and explorers whose names, by the way, still adorn the street signs and town names all across the Mississippi Valley. Our horses, our ranches, our rodeos, the entire romance of the cowboy archetype that became synonymous with the American West. These were born in Spain, and our largest and most iconic city was named New Amsterdam before it was named New York.

And you know that in the year that my country was founded, Lorenzo and Catalina Girolodi lived in Casal Monferrato in the kingdom of Piedmont, Sardinia, and Jose and Manuela Reyna lived in Sevilla, Spain. I don't know what, if anything, they knew about the 13 colonies which had gained their independence from the British Empire, but here's what I'm certain of. They could have never imagined that 250 years later, one of their direct descendants would be back here today on this continent as the chief diplomat of that infant nation.

And yet here I am, reminded by my own story that both our histories and our fates will always be linked. Together we rebuilt a shattered continent in the wake of two devastating world wars. When we found ourselves divided once again by the Iron Curtain, the Free West linked arms with the courageous dissidents struggling against tyranny in the

East to defeat Soviet Communism. We have fought against each other, then reconciled, then fought, then reconciled again. And we have bled and died side by side on battlefields from Qheppyong to Kandahar.

And I'm here today to leave it clear that America is charting the path for a new century of prosperity and that once again we want to do it together with you, our cherished allies, and our oldest friends. We want to do it together with you, with a Europe that is proud of its heritage and of its history, with a Europe that has the spirit of creation and liberty that sent ships out into uncharted seas and birthed our civilization, with a Europe that has the means to defend itself and the will to survive.

We should be proud of what we achieved together in the last century, but now we must confront and embrace the opportunities of a new one. Because yesterday is over, the future is inevitable, and our destiny together awaits. Thank you.

Q&A Session Begins

INTERVIEWER: Mr. Secretary, I'm not sure you heard the sigh of relief through this hall when we were just listening to what I would interpret as a message of reassurance, of partnership. You spoke of intertwined relations between the United States and Europe. It reminds me of statements made decades ago by your predecessors when the discussion was, is actually America a European power? Is America a power in Europe?

Thank you for offering this message of reassurance about our partnership. This is actually not the first time that Marco Rubio is here at the Munich Security Conference. He's been here before a couple of times, but it's the first time he has been and he is the speaker as Secretary of State. So thank you again.

We have only a couple of minutes now for just a few questions, and if I may, we collected questions from the audience. One of the key issues here yesterday, today, is of course, continues to be the question of how to deal with the war in Ukraine. Many of us in the discussions of the last day, the last 24 hours, have voiced their impression that the

Russians, let me put it colloquially, the Russians are playing for time. They're not really interested in a meaningful settlement. There's no indication that they're willing to compromise on any of their maximalist objectives. Offer to us, if you could, your assessment of where we are and where you think we can go.

Assessment on Ukraine-Russia Negotiations

MARCO RUBIO: Well, I think where we are at this point is that the issues at play that have to be, here's the good news. The good news is that the issues that need to be confronted to end this war have been narrowed. That's the good news. The bad news is they've been narrowed to the hardest questions to answer, and work remains to be done in that front.

I hear your point about the answer is we don't know. We don't know if the Russians are serious about ending the war. They say they are, and under what terms they are willing to do it, and whether we can find terms that are acceptable to Ukraine that Russia will always agree to, but we're going to continue to test it.

In the meantime, everything else continues to happen. The United States has imposed additional sanctions on Russia's oil. In our conversations with India, we've gotten their commitment to stop buying additional Russian oil. Europe has taken its set of steps moving forward. The Pearl Program continues in which American weaponry is being sold for the Ukrainian war effort. So all these things continue. Nothing has stopped in the interim, so there's no buying of time here in that regard.

What we can't answer, but we're going to continue to test, is whether there is an outcome that Ukraine can live with and that Russia will accept. And I would say it's been elusive up to this point. We've made progress in the sense that for the first time, I think, in years, at least at the technical level, there were military officials from both sides that met together last week, and there will be meetings again on Tuesday, although it may not be the same group of people.

Look, we're going to continue to do everything we can to play this role of bringing this war to an end. I don't think anybody in this room would be against a negotiated settlement to this war, so long as the conditions are just and sustainable. And that's what we aim to achieve, and we're going to continue to try to achieve it, even as all these other things continue to happen on the sanctions front and so forth.

INTERVIEWER: Thank you very much. I'm sure if we had more time, there would be many questions on Ukraine. But let me conclude by asking a question about something entirely different. The next speaker here in just a couple of minutes will be the foreign minister of China. When you served in the Senate, sir, people considered you kind of a China hawk.

MARCO RUBIO: So did they.

INTERVIEWER: So did they. We know that there will be, in about two months' time, a summit meeting between President Trump and President Xi Jinping. Give us your expectation. Are you optimistic? Can there be a quote-unquote deal with China? What do you expect?

Managing U.S.-China Relations

MARCO RUBIO: Well, I would say this. The two largest economies in the world, two of the big powers on the planet, we have an obligation to communicate with them and talk. And so do many of you on a bilateral basis as well. I mean, it would be geopolitical malpractice to not be in conversations with China.

I would say this. Because we're two large countries with huge global interests, our national interests will often not align. Their national interests and ours will not align. And we owe it to the world to try to manage those as best we can, obviously avoiding conflict, both economic and worse. And so it's important for us to have communications with them in that regard.

On areas in which our interests are aligned, I think we can work together to make positive impact on the world. And we seek opportunities to do that with them. But we have to have a relationship

with China. And many of the countries represented here today are going to have to have a relationship with China, always understanding that nothing that we agree to could come at the expense of our national interests.

And, frankly, we expect China to act in their national interests as we expect every nation state to act in their national interests. And the goal of diplomacy is to try to navigate those times in which our national interests come into conflict with one another, always hoping to do it peacefully.

I think we also have a special obligation because whatever happens between the U.S. and China on trade has a global implication. So there are long-term challenges that we face that we're going to have to confront that are going to be irritants in our relationship with China. That's not just true for the United States. That's true for the broader West. But I do think we need to try to manage those the best we can to avoid, you know, unnecessary friction if it's possible. But no one is under any illusions.

There are some fundamental challenges between our countries and between the West and China that will continue for the foreseeable future for a variety of reasons. And it's some of the things we hope to work together with you on.

INTERVIEWER: Thank you very much, Mr. Secretary. We've run out of time. I'm sorry that I can't take questions from all those who wanted to ask questions. Mr. Secretary of State, thank you for this message of reassurance. I think this is much appreciated here in the hall. Let's offer a round of applause. Thank you.