Rubio’s Munich message: US wants a powerful, self-reliant Israel

written by Prof. Zaki Shalom | 17.02.2026

In his address at the Munich Security Conference, Secretary of State Marco Rubio conveyed important messages regarding the direction of President Trump’s foreign policy. Although his remarks were aimed primarily at Europe, they clearly reflected a broader strategic worldview that is highly relevant to all American allies—including the State of Israel.

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union,—according to Rubio — the West succumbed to a dangerous illusion. Many believed that history had reached its endpoint; that liberal democracy would become universal; that national interests would be replaced by a “rules-based global order”; and that borders and sovereignty would lose their central importance. This euphoria, he argued, ignored the lessons of history and human nature.

In parallel, Western societies increasingly shed elements of their sovereignty, transferring authority to international institutions and multilateral frameworks. There was an assumption that global norms and legal mechanisms would ensure stability and peace. Yet during the same period, hostile actors strengthened their military capabilities and prepared for confrontation. The belief that abstract principles alone could secure order proved misguided.

Rubio also addressed the consequences of mass migration. In pursuit of a “world without borders,” Western states opened their doors widely, without fully considering the long-term implications for social cohesion, cultural continuity, and national identity. The failure to control borders, he stressed, is not a marginal issue but a fundamental question of sovereignty and civilizational survival.

A central theme of the speech was the deep civilizational bond between the United States and Europe. America, though geographically distant, remains spiritually and historically rooted in Europe. The ideas of liberty, the rule of law,

and the great intellectual and cultural achievements of the West emerged from this shared heritage. Security, Rubio emphasized, is not merely about budgets or military deployments; it is about defending a people, a nation, and a way of life.

His criticism of international institutions was sharp. While not calling for their abandonment, Rubio made clear that they have failed to resolve the most pressing crises of our time. The United Nations has not brought an end to the war in Gaza, has not resolved the conflict in Ukraine, and has not removed the threat posed by Iran's nuclear ambitions. In an imperfect world, states cannot allow their adversaries to shield themselves behind principles of international law which they themselves routinely violate.

For Israel, Rubio's message carries significant implications. The doctrine he articulated suggests that the United States does not seek weak or dependent allies. On the contrary, it prefers partners that are strong, sovereign, and capable of defending themselves. After years in which certain American approaches seemed to favor a restrained and cautious Israel, the current message is different: a powerful, self-reliant Israel that deters its enemies serves not only its own interests but also those of the United States.

Rubio's skepticism toward the automatic primacy accorded to international institutions resonates strongly with Israel's longstanding experience. For decades, Israel has operated under severe diplomatic constraints imposed by multilateral bodies that have often limited its freedom of action while failing to restrain its adversaries.

Finally, the worldview articulated in Munich also sheds light on the Trump administration's unprecedented involvement in issues perceived as internal Israeli matters. From this perspective, the stability, authority, and resilience of a crucial ally are not purely domestic concerns. A strong and cohesive Israel is viewed as an integral component of the broader Western alliance and therefore as part of the United States' own national interest.

Rubio's speech in Munich thus conveyed a clear and consequential message: America expects its allies—including Israel—to strengthen their sovereignty, enhance their military and technological capabilities, and act with confidence in the defense of their civilization and national interests.

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