

Information Statement

Expecting the Unexpected: 2024 and Beyond at the Munich Security Conference

Shafik Gabr Foundation Annual Munich Opening Dinner

15 February 2024



Ambassador Fu Ying



Mr. Shafik Gabr

This February, Chairman Shafik Gabr and the Shafik Gabr Foundation have held their *Expecting the Unexpected* opening dinner of the Munich Security Conference for the second year, in addition to the *Expected the Unexpected* dinners that the Foundation has for several years held during the World Economic Forum in Davos and other locations.

Under strict Chatham House rules, international experts in fields of politics, business, security, technology, economy, media, and the arts gathered to forecast and provide their insights for the future, in a friendly, insightful, and deeply thought-provoking environment.

This year, the dinner was held on Thursday, 15th February, at the Bayerischer Hof Hotel in Munich as the opening dinner of the Munich Security Conference.

Among more than 70 distinguished dinner guests were a former President, Members of the US Congress, Members of the UK Parliament, Ministers, Ambassadors, government officials, international organization leaders, business leaders and scholars from Europe, the Middle East, the United States and Asia. Judson Moore, a 2015 Gabr Fellow and senior cyber security manager, was also present. The dinner discussion was moderated by Chairman Shafik Gabr and the renowned international broadcaster Nik Gowing.

The main predictions for the year ahead were as follows:

Russia/Ukraine Conflict:

- The conflict between Russia and Ukraine is anticipated to persist throughout 2024, with no resolution in sight. A Korean type of ceasefire was forecasted.

- One prediction was that by February 2025 there should be a peace agreement in place.

US Presidential Election:

- The audience leaned towards a second Trump Presidency although it was anticipated that more developments can interfere between now and November.
- Two minority views were forecasted.
 - A.) Trump would be derailed before the elections.
 - B.) The final candidates would not be Biden-Trump but other contenders.
- The audience was reminded that Nikki Haley had not conceded yet, allowing her the chance to replace Trump if he falters.

Leaders and Diplomacy:

- There were concerns that the world lacked leadership and that diplomacy has been failing and no change expected in 2024.
- Moreover, it was emphasised that global institutions such as the UN have failed in their mission and all institutions such as the World Bank, IMF, WTO, etc. are undermined by their funders and political bias.



Rt. Hon. Tobias Ellwood



Prof. Niall Ferguson

Israel-Gaza:

- The Israel-Gaza conflict is foreseen to persist in 2024, leading to increased instability and casualties. Calls for Western collaboration to address Gaza instability are expected to intensify, with frustration expressed over the handling of the situation.
- Israel will lose its moral platform and while Hamas may be defeated militarily, extremism and fanatical ideology will re-emerge due to the horrific casualties.
- There is a potential possibility for a ceasefire and release of hostages, but it will be temporary.
- A peace proposal submitted focused on 5 pillars: security for Israel, hostage release, de-weaponization of Hamas, resettlement of the West Bank settlers in the Northwest of the West Bank against a land swap to connect Gaza with the West bank, a technocratic team of five Palestinians à la Switzerland to be the transitional leadership for two years not the PA or Hamas. All to be conducted in a grand bargain deal and all parties, Israel plus the security council members proclaim a Palestinian State. At the same time, this proposal will not see the light in 2024 due to the state of political bias of the West towards Israel refusing a cease fire repeatedly and total disorganization of the east.

- A minority view was presented predicting Netanyahu will be out before end of 2024 unless he entangles the US in a war with Iran.

Recognition of a Palestinian State:

- Criticism towards the UK and the US for insufficient action in supporting a Palestinian state is anticipated to continue. The call for new leadership in the US to facilitate a more peaceful future is likely to gain momentum.

Outlook for the Year:

- Pessimism about positive developments in the coming year is expected to dominate. Potential future conflicts, including Iran-USA and China-USA (Taiwan), along with the overlooked threat posed by North Korea, are likely to be significant concerns.

Impact of AI:

- AI is predicted to exert a massive influence in the medical field. Regulatory challenges surrounding AI are expected to escalate, with a significant focus on discerning fact from fiction and fabrication. Differentiating fact from fiction will become more complicated. Education is expected to undergo a major transformation in 2025.
- The dilemma of AGI and advanced tech in terms of ethical and moral standards with a global regulatory framework will remain in 2024 and beyond.

Global Economy:

- It is expected to see rate cuts, debt problems, dollar supremacy and inflation stability in major economies, while other economies shall suffer dramatically and face refinancing pressures and defaults.

Present Rating:

- Minority view based on history emphasised that all is well and will continue to be so regardless of present chaotic state. It was stated that history reflected much worse conditions and based on today's conflicts was worse than reality.

Dialogue:

- It was emphasized that lack of dialogue (no Russians or Palestinians invited to major discussion events) will continue to be a stumbling block in 2024. No serious negotiation is foreseen and without negotiation, the state of conflict and wars will remain in 2024.

World Rules – Based Order:

- The audience agreed that the world rules-based order has failed and will continue to fail. Power will dominate.

Globalization:

- The world is expected to suffer from globalization disruptions (wars, Red Sea, pandemics, widening gap between haves and have nots) and supply chain worries that will bring more decoupling and cause wasted resources on defence and political posturing.