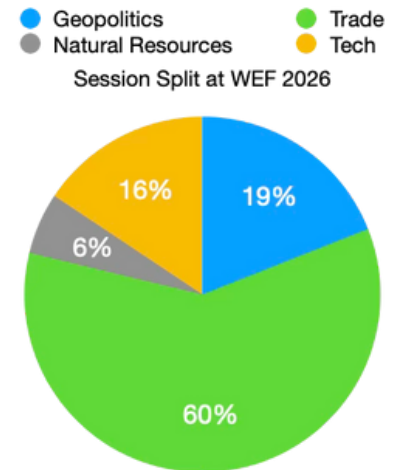




Davos 2026: A “Spirit of Dialogue” in a World on the Brink

By Lauren Mason
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‘A Spirit of Dialogue’ is the theme of this year’s World Economic Forum, urging world leaders to work together towards a stable world order; something that feels almost impossible in the wake of Donald Trump’s recent actions fracturing the world order to the edge of collapse. Indeed, Børge Brende, WEF president has admitted this year’s forum will take place against ‘the most complicated geopolitical backdrop since the WEF was founded’. Trump will attend alongside the largest ever US delegation, undoubtedly a show of force. As well as European leaders, Nato chief Mark Rutte, Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelenskyy, and UN secretary general António Guterres. The forum will mark a stark contrast between leaders promoting peace, transatlantic cooperation, and international law, and Trump with his growing hostility towards his European allies and aggressive international policy. Davos is shaping up to be a stage for these international politics to play out, and maybe a last ditch attempt to heal the growing division between allies. Aside from politics, AI will also take centre stage at the conference, with business leaders across the sector in attendance, and AI products showcased on ‘the Promenade’ – Davos’ main street.



Source: WEF 2026 Annual Meeting Program

Key Context and Highlights

- Potential Greenland escalation: coming into the forum this year Donald Trump has been stirring up conflict with his closest allies over a potential annexation of Greenland, a sovereign territory of Denmark, right after his interventions in Venezuela. His threats have received push back from European nations almost baffled by the provocation. In response Trump has threatened tariffs on allied countries who do not side with him over Greenland, including the UK, France, and Germany. This could be the basis for a US-EU trade war, with the European Commission promising a €93 billion package of counter tariffs, if Trump imposes a 10% tariff on 2nd February. These leaders will soon be face-to-face at Davos, opening the potential for a deal to be struck and the situation to be de-escalated, however Trump has stayed firm on his interest in Greenland, and threatening a Nato country in the manner Trump is has driven a large wedge between the US and Europe.
 - Continued provocations and inventions might make Trump feel strong but could have a strong negative impact on the US, as he isolates allies and potential partners, the US is strong economically but is not the only player, with China continuing to grow and stand up to Trump, countries could re-centre economically and politically around the US’s adversities who are more stable than the erratic Trump

- Zelenskyy is vying for support: the Ukrainian president is attending the conference in an attempt to garner more support for his country. This comes on the back of successive attempts from the US to force Ukraine into a pro-Russian peace, and Trump himself claiming Putin wants peace more than Zelenskyy, placing the blame for the ongoing war on the defenders. Zelenskyy will want to secure support from his European allies here, especially in the light of escalation around Greenland which has the potential to shake the foundations of Nato and increase Russian aggression. A war on multiple fronts in Eastern Europe would be detrimental to Europe and could pull funding and attention from Ukraine's conflict.
- The AI boom and international order: with AI leaders such as Nvidia's president Jensen Huang, Microsoft's chief executive Satya Nadella, and Anthropic founder Dario Amodei in attendance as part of the US delegation, the boom and its potential failings and limitations will be on show at the conference. Whilst billions have already been generated off the new technology there are criticisms surrounding an AI bubble, in which AI cannot deliver on its promises and ultimately is not worth the money already pumped in. The UN has already announced prior to Davos that it would be setting up a scientific panel on AI, with 40 experts in an attempt to limit and understand the US's commercially driven AI models.

This Davos is set to see US ruthless individualism and power politics come up against ideals of international cooperation and law. Europe has never been so distant from its closest ally across the Atlantic and events such as the WEF seem to highlight the collapse of global order and cooperation, shining a light on the division allies are facing. Conferences like this are becoming symbols of a world that may be disappearing, however as leaders descend to make deals and try to find consensus, it is clear it is not over yet.

