

DASICON 2026

Beyond Order: Diplomacy in an Age of Systemic Transformation



Background

The Diplomatic Academy Students' Initiative Conference (DASICON) is an annual international conference fully organised by current students of the Vienna School of International Studies. Addressed to the general public, it offers a platform for international experts, students, and key stakeholders to engage in timely and critical discussions on the future of diplomacy and global governance.

The 2026 edition, titled "**Beyond Order: Diplomacy in an Age of Systemic Transformation**," departs from the premise that the current world order is undergoing a profound transformation. Drawing inspiration from structural theories of historical change, such as Peter Turchin's cliodynamic model in *End Times*, the conference does not ask *whether* the international system will change, but rather *how*.

Are we headed toward collapse, a chaotic reordering of power, or a new era of cooperation and institutional renewal? What role can diplomacy play when the path forward is unclear, and the assumptions underpinning international relations begin to erode?

Through high-level panels and interactive formats, DASICON 2026 will examine the disruptive forces shaping our time — from elite fragmentation and inequality to climate shocks and technological upheaval — and explore how diplomacy can adapt to navigate this age of uncertainty.

TOPICS



The conference will be structured around thematic panels, each addressing a potential outcome or driving force behind the transformation of the world order.

Topic 1: Collapse – What Happens If the System Breaks?

Geopolitical rivalry, weakened state institutions, and climate-driven emergencies increasingly stretch global governance to its limits. What happens if multilateral frameworks fail and trust between states erodes? Can diplomacy function in a world without order? This session explores worst-case scenarios and the role of international actors in damage control, conflict prevention, and humanitarian response.

Topic 2: Transformation – Shifting Powers, Shifting Rules

Emerging powers are asserting themselves, regional blocs are gaining traction, and longstanding hierarchies are being challenged. Is the Westphalian order giving way to a multipolar system—or something entirely new? This panel examines how diplomacy is changing as the balance of power evolves, and whether new structures can emerge to replace the old.

Topic 3: Renewal – Rebuilding Global Governance

Is there a path toward reconstructing a legitimate, inclusive, and effective global order? From institutional reform to new forms of cooperation led by non-Western states or non-state actors, this session considers what a renewed multilateral system might look like—and whether diplomacy can serve as its architect.

Topic 4: Drivers of Disruption – Forces Behind the End of the Old Order

This cross-cutting session examines the structural dynamics accelerating systemic change: elite overproduction, inequality, demographic stress, ecological degradation, and technological disruption. Can diplomacy influence these forces—or is it merely reacting to them? What tools and mindsets are needed to navigate complexity and cascading crises?

Optional: Interactive Workshop: Diplomacy Under Uncertainty – Tools for a Post-Order World

This participatory format invites students and experts to co-develop ideas, frameworks, and practical strategies for diplomacy beyond the traditional rules-based system. Participants will explore how diplomatic practice must adapt to thrive in conditions of unpredictability, instability, and transformation.