

In the first half of this decade, many illusions have been shattered in Europe. The illusion that peace in our continent was achieved once and for all. The illusion that prosperity might matter more to Putin than war and his delusional dreams of empire. The illusion that Europe on its own was doing enough on security – be it economic or military, conventional or cyber. Today there is no time for any more illusions. Putin squandered the peace dividend to prepare for his war against Ukraine. As a result, the world is more dangerous than it has been for generations. Europe must rise to meet this reality.

The second half of the decade will likely be even more conflict-prone. Russia's war against Ukraine has put geopolitics further into flux. There is a growing level of strategic coordination between Russia and China. And it is coupled with stronger cooperation with North Korea and Iran. It is a new league of authoritarians. At the same time, we and our partners across the globe face multiple tests. With conflict in both Europe and the Middle East, and tensions running high in the Far East, even a large defence industrial base – like that of the US – can face challenges. Whoever the next US President will be, we should take for granted the current level of US engagement in our region.

The consequences for Europe are clear. It is in our strategic interest to support Kyiv in this war, for as long as it takes. Ukraine is a future member of our Union. Its border with Russia will be our Union's border. Its capacity to deter a future Russian attack will contribute to our security. More broadly, we are already being called to play a stronger role in our region and beyond. I think for instance of the Union's naval operation in the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean, Operation Aspides, to protect vital global trade routes and our supply chains from Iran-backed Houthi terrorists. All of this creates a new kind of responsibility for our Union – which I call strategic responsibility.

We Europeans must be on guard. This means for Member States and Member States to step up coordinated. Strategic responsibility also calls for a stronger European contribution within and to NATO. Since the beginning of Russia's full-scale war of aggression, the idea of strategic responsibility has driven our work on defence. As this book shows, many taboos have fallen. For the first time ever, Europe is giving military assistance to a country under attack. For the first time ever, we are training troops involved in an inter-state European war. For the first time ever, we are mobilising Europe's defence industry to sustain a country's war effort. For instance, with our new Act to Support Ammunition Production, we have contributed to quadrupling Europe's production capacity for ammunition. And we are now extending a similar approach to other critical industrial supply lines, too. We are asking our defence industry to switch to war-time mode, so that the rest of Europe doesn't have to.

Before the war, in 2021, our Member States spent €214 billion on defence. In 2024, that will rise to almost €300 billion. But how is this money being spent? Last year, almost 80% went outside the EU. This is simply not sustainable. Our taxpayers' money should be used to improve our own competitiveness, and to create more jobs right here in Europe. We need a new European mind-set from the EU, but also from industry and investors. To persuade our Member States to buy in Europe, we need the European defence industry to step up. This means that we must establish robust supply chains that can be trusted in crisis. So that a rising demand can be met by a rising supply of made-in-Europe defence capabilities.

We also need a new mind-set beyond our defence industry. After World War Two, European integration started as a peace project, but also as a security project. Its industrial genesis, with coal and steel, had a central security dimension. Through the decades, this security dimension has continued to grow – because peace requires security. Most of our Union’s policies have direct security implications: from trade to research, from energy to communications. At times of unprecedented threats, we must refocus our attention on the security dimension of everything we do. We must once again think about our Union as, intrinsically, a security project. This is the true change of paradigm that Europe still needs, towards a true European Defence Union.

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Foreword to Nicolas Gros-Verheyde’s book, *La défense européenne à l’heure de la guerre en Ukraine. Des tabous tombent ?*