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Europe's defence against Russia

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The large-scale offensive launched by Russia against Ukraine on 24 February 2022 marked a real turning point in the history of Europe. It radically altered the European security order, and there will probably be no turning back. The cooperative, treaty-based security order has been transformed into a system based on a balance of power, deterrence and containment^[1].

By waging a brutal and illegal war against Ukraine, Russia's objectives have not changed. Its actions demonstrate total disdain for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of an independent neighbouring state. This Russian aggression, in flagrant violation of international law and the United Nations Charter, demonstrates Russia's determination to undermine the foundations of the European security order.

There is nothing to suggest that, in the area of our common security, Russia will resume respect for existing treaties and commitments. It is becoming increasingly isolated from the international community. Its recent hybrid operation to redirect foreign nationals to Finland's eastern border is further evidence of this trend.

Russia is and will remain on the doorstep of the European Union. It is essential that, on the international stage, the European Union continues to act resolutely and in a spirit of unity to stem Russian aggression, that it prepares for the future and that it invests in defence.

THE EUROPEAN UNION'S UNCONDITIONAL SUPPORT FOR UKRAINE MUST CONTINUE

Supporting Ukraine must remain our strategic priority. Ukraine's security is not the only issue at stake here; our security and the fundamental principles of international order are also on

the line. This aggression is not only a brutal and unjustified attack on Ukraine, but also an attack on Europe's cardinal values of freedom, democracy and human rights. The European Union must remain united and continue to work towards a just and lasting peace in Ukraine, on its own terms. Failure is not an option. The parameters have been defined by President Zelensky in his Peace Plan, which embodies our values and has our unwavering support.

We must send a strong message of our continued support for Ukraine in the face of Russian aggression and as it sets out on the road to Europe. Its integration into European and transatlantic security structures is crucial.

At European level, we must make strong commitments to Ukraine in terms of security, resolve the issue of the Peace Facility in view of providing it with ongoing financial support, maintain and step up the pressure exerted on Russia through sanctions, and support the country on the road to membership of the European Union.

The EPF is essential to encourage Member States to provide military aid to Ukraine in a spirit of solidarity. The creation of a large, multiannual Ukraine Fund under the [European Peace Facility](#) is therefore essential to demonstrate our shared commitment to Ukraine over the long term.

We must also reiterate, at European level, our common commitment to strengthening the

^[1] This text was originally published in the 'Schuman Report on Europe, the State of the Union 2024', Editions Marie B., April 2024, 236 p.

capacity of the European defence industry and speed up the manufacture of munitions. European crisis management tools have proved particularly useful in providing the Ukrainian security authorities with the means to act. The Member States are committed to the continued training of the Ukrainian armed forces through the EU Military Assistance Mission in support of Ukraine ([EUMAM](#)), which to date has trained well over 30,000 Ukrainian soldiers. It is vital to step up the EU's support for civilian crisis management to help Ukraine to reform and rebuild its security sector as well as its law enforcement agencies. All this will create a societal and institutional resilience that will contribute to Ukraine's resistance and deter Russian aggression.

EUROPEAN COOPERATION ON SECURITY AND DEFENCE MUST BE STRENGTHENED

As things stand, we must ensure that Europe is able to continue to provide support to Ukraine and, if necessary, to defend itself. The European Union has a major role to play in strengthening European defence. Within the Union, cooperation in this area strengthens European defence capabilities and, indeed, transatlantic security.

The Member States of the European Union have never invested so much in their defence since the end of the Cold War. At European level, defence spending has risen by 12%. This is creating new opportunities for security and defence cooperation. We should take advantage of these. Europe already has many tools and commitments that can help us boost this cooperation. The [Strategic Compass on Security and Defence](#), adopted in the wake of the Russian attack on Ukraine, demonstrates the growing importance of the European Union as a provider of security. It sets out a clear direction and objectives for our future work. Its ambitious implementation is vital. Within the Union, we need a Rapid Deployment Capacity, increased military mobility, access to strategic areas, investment in innovative capabilities and technologies, and even closer cooperation with NATO and the United States.

It is essential that we continue to strengthen [Permanent Structured Cooperation](#) (PESCO), both to meet our commitments and to implement our projects. PESCO provides us with a legal framework that allows us to plan, create and invest together in joint capability projects, while improving operational preparedness and our ability to combine forces. Firstly, we must invest at all levels in European defence capabilities. In developing them within the Union, we must take account of both traditional and new threats. The Union's initiatives should contribute to the development of defence on a European, but also on a national scale.

Secondly, it is understandable that some Member States spend most of their defence budgets on immediate and routine purchases, such as ammunition. However, we must continue to invest in research and technology. This is the best way to secure Europe's capabilities and strategic interests in the future.

We must pay particular attention to the development of the European defence industry and the elimination of barriers to increased output. In the long term, cooperation and interoperability should also serve the interests of each country. We would benefit from creating a single market for defence equipment within the Union and including the European defence industry in the taxonomy of sustainable financing. We could also act more effectively in the defence field by introducing joint procurement. In the defence industry, we also need to consider ways of strengthening cooperation between Ukraine and the European Union. With this in mind, the European Council has called for the definition of a new European Defence Industrial Strategy.

In the field of security and defence, a strong European Union is also in NATO's interest. The importance of an effective transatlantic relationship in terms of assistance to Ukraine cannot be overstated. Enhanced cooperation between them is extremely important as it is mutually beneficial and strengthens transatlantic security order as a whole. A concerted and complementary approach

between NATO and the European Union is the best way to guarantee the security of key industrial and technological sectors, critical infrastructures, strategic materials and supply chains. In the wake of Russian aggression, the importance of this cooperation has taken on a new dimension, especially in the areas of strategic communication and disinformation.

The further into the future we look, the harder it becomes to separate security policy from a thriving economy, technology and innovation. Protecting our values requires us to remain competitive on the international stage. The same applies to the defence industry. In the face of growing geopolitical competition, it is vital that the twenty-seven Member States deepen the ties that bind them in all areas so as to increase the resilience of our societies and economies. Our aim must be to achieve a level playing field for all companies within the European Community, whatever their size. To succeed in the long term, state aid and inward-looking policies are not the answer. An efficient and transparent market economy, which creates wealth and redistributes it to all, while opening up new horizons for all peoples, has always been the hallmark of the West. This generates a competitiveness that we need equally for geopolitical reasons.

COMBATING HYBRID INTERFERENCE AND INVESTING IN GLOBAL SECURITY

Russia is using a full range of hybrid threats. The protean nature of hybrid interference poses a serious threat to European security. The erosion of trust, the destabilisation of economic and political systems and the disruption of critical infrastructures can have dramatic consequences. The European Union, as an entity founded on the principle of collaboration, must define comprehensive strategies to combat hybrid threats, strengthen cybersecurity measures and increase Member States' resilience to disinformation campaigns.

The work carried out in Helsinki by the European Centre for Combating Hybrid Threats ([Hybrid CoE](#)),

which is open to both EU and NATO Member States, has been strengthened and is now capable of helping even more effectively to enhance the capabilities of participating states to combat and prevent hybrid threats.

Combating complex and interconnected security threats requires a holistic approach. This recognises that security is a variable concept that goes well beyond traditional military defence and integrates economic, societal, environmental and political dimensions. It aims to respond to a whole range of challenges and threats that a nation is likely to face in today's interconnected world. By integrating military, civil, economic and societal dimensions, Finland is trying to create a comprehensive and adaptive security framework capable of responding effectively to the complex and dynamic nature of modern security threats, including those originating in Russia.

EUROPEAN VALUES, THE FOUNDATIONS OF OUR RESILIENCE

At a time when Russian aggression against Ukraine is threatening our security, it is essential that we continue to promote peace and security and respect our common values: freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law. The latter supported by civil society can act as bulwarks against attempts to undermine democratic governments.

Russia has been surprised by the way citizens and businesses across the European Union have chosen to defend Ukraine and the values Europe stands for. We are not acting here under duress, but of our own free will.

Democracy, the will and ability of citizens to influence their own future, individual freedoms and the indivisibility of human dignity form the core of European societies. We Europeans share these values. Ukrainians are fighting courageously to defend them. Without the territorial integrity guaranteed by international law and the freedom of each State to choose its own security policy, very

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little is left. The European Union's enlargement policy and NATO's policy of openness are the cornerstones of the European security order.

With increasing prosperity and opportunities for the people, their choice is invariably liberal democracy. Freedom and democracy will never go out of fashion.

Within the Union, it is what unites us and enables us to face adversity. So let us keep it that way!

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Finland's Minister for Foreign Affairs

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