

THE STRAITS TIMES

FOR SUBSCRIBERS

Europe and Asia have a shared stake in each other's security

In a dangerous world, as seen in Russia's aggression against Ukraine, Europe and Asia need each other to defend the rules-based international order.

Josep Borrell



A photo from May 31 showing damage from a Russian missile strike in a residential area in Sloviansk, Ukraine. PHOTO: NYTIMES

PUBLISHED 4 HOURS AGO

In a globalised world, there is no "faraway". A war or major security crisis in one region affects everyone. It is also impossible to "compartmentalise", to think that security tensions will not affect the economy. We can see it from the shock waves [Russia's war against Ukraine](#) is sending around the world, creating a global food and energy crisis.

Europe and Asia have a deep and shared interest in upholding what we call "the rules-based

international order" which is the condition for everything we hold dear. It makes states secure, people free and companies willing to invest. It therefore matters that this order is under growing threat.

Russia's brutal aggression against Ukraine is the most dramatic example, creating a more dangerous world for all of us. It is a frontal attack on the United Nations Charter by a permanent member of the Security Council, violating the prohibition on the use or threat of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state.

Neither Europe nor Asia can accept a world where military aggression against a weaker neighbour is somehow "normalised". Faced with aggression, there is no neutrality. The European Union has always stood for the primacy of international law - from the Crimea to the South China Sea - and will continue to do so. We count on our international partners to do the same.

This war is affecting people far beyond the European continent. We see fast-rising energy costs and food shortages and the whole world is risking stagflation. As usual, the biggest effects will be on those least able to shoulder them. All because of Russia's war and its blockade - not our sanctions.

When it comes to Ukraine, our goal is clear: to ensure that Ukraine succeeds in defending its sovereignty and democracy. To that end, we must keep Ukraine economically afloat and militarily able to resist. We have adopted six packages of sanctions on Russia and we are providing €9 billion (S\$13 billion) in macro-financial support for Ukraine.

We are financing military assistance to Ukraine - most of it lethal equipment - so far for a total of €2 billion - and this is on top of what EU states do bilaterally.

We are drawing wider lessons. On energy: we are cutting once and for all the EU's dependence on Russian fossil fuels. This process is underway with a ban on coal and a gradual phase-out of oil imports, reaching 90 per cent by year's end.

Stepping up defence spending

On security and defence, there has also been a major acceleration. We adopted the strategic compass in March with all 27 EU states. This is our operational guide to develop the EU into a stronger and more capable security provider. Among other plans, we agreed to develop a rapid deployment capability and do live military exercises: a first in EU history. And we do all this while strengthening our partnership with Nato, based on the evident truth that a stronger EU role on security and defence will also strengthen Nato.

We know well that if you have defence ambitions, you need the capabilities to back them up. Here, we have a lot of work to do but also a new chance with defence budgets rising across the EU.

In 2021, total EU defence spending was over US\$220 billion (S\$303 billion), against the United States' US\$800 billion, China's US\$293 billion and US\$65 billion for Russia, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. So Europeans do spend a sizeable sum overall.

But the rate of change is very different compared to others. The share of spending that goes on joint investment is going down, even as total spending goes up.

Last week, together with the European Commission, I presented to European leaders an analysis of our defence investment gaps. The figures are striking. From 1999 to 2021, EU combined defence spending rose by 20 per cent against 66 per cent for the US, almost 300 per cent for Russia and 600 per cent for China. When it comes to the share of joint investment spending it reached a historical low of 8 per cent of all equipment spending.

Spurred by Russia's war, EU states have announced increases in their defence budgets of an additional €200 billion in the coming years. That is welcome. But we need to ensure that Europeans not only spend more on defence but also do more of that spending together.

MORE ON THIS TOPIC

[Why EU is stepping up role in Indo-Pacific](#)

[Europe makes moves to up its game in Asia](#)

This is what we are committed to doing with financial incentives for member states for more joint procurement. We are also strengthening the EU's defence, industrial and technological base. With EU funds, we are supporting research and development, especially in potential disruptive new technologies.

All this will make European armies stronger. It will also make us better partners for security cooperation with Asia.

In a dangerous world, Europe and Asia need each other and should work together to uphold a world based on agreed rules and law, not might makes right.

- Josep Borrell is the EU high representative for foreign affairs and security policy and vice-president of the European Commission.

MORE ON THIS TOPIC

[The inexorable drift towards an Asian Nato](#)

[Ukraine war's fallout seeps into Asia](#)



In Your Opinion



2): In Your Opinion

00:00 / 26:06

Does a family of 4 in Singapore really need \$6,426 a month



In Your Opinion

Follow podca

Synopsis: The Straits Times' opinion editor Grace Ho takes a hard look at political and social issues of the day with her expert guests. Podcaster: Grace Ho Produced by podca

Does a family of 4 in Singapore really need \$6,426 a month for basic living standard? (Pt 2): In Your Opinion 26:0
Synopsis: The Straits Times' opinion editor Grace Ho takes a hard look at political and social issues of the day with her expert guests. In this second-parter, ... May :

Does a family of 4 in Singapore really need \$6,426 a month for basic standard of living? (Pt 1): In Your Opinion 16:0
Synopsis: The Straits Times' opinion editor Grace Ho takes a hard look at political and social issues of the day with her expert guests. In this episode, the fir... May :

Singapore's 4G refresh of the social compact should include politics: In Your Opinion 18:0
Synopsis: The Straits Times' opinion editor Grace Ho takes a hard look at political and social issues of the day with her expert guests. In this episode, she a... Apr :

How do we get more people to cycle to work? - In Your Opinion 18:0
Synopsis: The Straits Times' opinion editor Grace Ho takes a hard look at political and social issues of the day with her expert guests. In this episode, she lo... Apr :

Analysing sentiments of some pro-China Singaporeans and differing views over Ukraine crisis: In Your Opinion 24:0

Get unlimited access to exclusive stories and analyses by the ST newsroom

Choose your plan

Join ST's Telegram channel and get the latest breaking news delivered to you.

E-paper

Podcasts

Facebook

RSS Feed

Instagram

Telegram

Twitter

Youtube

- SINGAPORE
- ASIA
- WORLD
- OPINION
- LIFE
- BUSINESS

- TECH
- SPORT
- VIDEOS
- PODCASTS
- MULTIMEDIA

[Terms & Conditions](#)

[Need help? Reach us here.](#)

[Data Protection Policy](#)

[Advertise with us](#)

[Sign up for our daily newsletter](#)

Enter your e-mail

[Sign up](#)

[More newsletters](#)
By registering, you agree to our [T&C](#) and [Privacy Policy](#).