
European defence and security: von der Leyen (EU Commission), we need a “new mindset” and the “political and moral courage to stand with Ukraine for as long as it takes”

Iran’s attack on Israel “marks a shift towards open confrontation. And it shows us the nature of modern warfare”, said the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, as she spoke at the European Defence and Security Summit in Brussels today. The attack marked a turning point in the weapons used and the speed and effectiveness of defence systems, the president explained, which shows “the real value of consistent long-term investment in advanced defence capabilities and technologies” and the “value of building partnerships and cooperating with allies”. This was the “latest signal of intent of a new league of authoritarians” who work to “tear up the international rules-based order”. Europe, von der Leyen continued, is in the midst of a world that “is as dangerous as it has been for generations”, which is why “it is time for the European awakening on defence and security”. We need to work “with all of the speed and all of the political will that is required” on a security architecture that leaves the responsibility for armies in the hands of Member States, while also fostering cooperation in other sectors, such as finance, research, innovation, and industry. Von der Leyen evoked “a more sovereign Europe” in the field of defence, which is vital to strengthening NATO. Preparation, investment, partnerships are the three guiding principles we should work on. We need a “new European defence mindset”, and – the president said towards the end of her speech – “the political and moral courage to stand with Ukraine here on European soil for as long as it takes”. A Russian victory would cost “far greater than any saving we could make now”. And likewise, “facing multiple threats and conflicts without being prepared” would be much more expensive than we can afford.

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