Europe’s Anti-Russian Fixation: The Cost of Confrontation and the Failure of Strategic Judgment

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Andrei Martyanov’s warning on Ukraine, energy, military power and a European political class that confuses hostility with strategy



By Frank Dumon | Political commentary | 13 November 2026

1. The bill for Europe’s geopolitical certainties is coming due

> Europe has spent years presenting its confrontation with Russia as a test of moral seriousness. Political leaders speak of values, solidarity, sanctions, deterrence and an inevitable strategic outcome. Yet beyond the declarations lies a question that European citizens have every right to ask: what has this policy accomplished, what has it cost, and where is the credible path to peace? The most enduring insight in Martyanov's commentary is not one of his predictions about a particular weapon, negotiation or military operation. It is the warning against confusing political rhetoric with actual power. Europe has constructed a formidable vocabulary of confrontation. It must now demonstrate an equally formidable capacity for self-examination.

That question stands at the centre of Andrei Martyanov's commentary. Martyanov, a Russian-born military analyst and outspoken critic of Western strategic thinking, argues that the central issue is no longer simply the battlefield in Ukraine. It is the future security architecture of Europe itself. In his interpretation, European governments have mistaken their political wishes for military realities, surrendered much of their diplomatic independence to Washington and imposed severe economic costs on their own societies.

His delivery is frequently abrasive. He sometimes extends condemnation of governments to entire national populations, and the language in the transcript includes personal insults and threats that should not be adopted as political argument. Nevertheless, beneath the rhetoric is a serious strategic challenge. What if Europe's present course does not weaken Russia into submission? What if confrontation is becoming permanent, while the economic and diplomatic position of Europe deteriorates? And what if the people who will pay for this choice are not the ministers delivering speeches, but workers, pensioners, families and future generations?

These questions must be discussed openly. To ask them is neither to celebrate war nor to deny Ukrainian suffering. It is to reject the notion that one approved interpretation of the conflict should exhaust public debate. A continent that calls itself democratic should be capable of examining the consequences of its own decisions.

2. From opposing Russian state policy to institutionalised hostility

The word *Russophobia* is politically charged. It is sometimes used too broadly, as though every criticism of the Russian government were prejudice against the Russian

people. That would be wrong. Governments can be criticised without condemning nations, and Russia's use of military force against Ukraine raises real questions under international law. But the reverse error is equally dangerous: pretending that measures directed against Russian media, cultural institutions, economic exchange and ordinary citizens have no wider social or cultural consequences.

In March 2022 the European Union suspended the broadcasting activities of RT and Sputnik, explaining that the decision responded to Russian state-backed disinformation. The EU's stated rationale was information security. Critics, however, are entitled to ask what long-term safeguards protect pluralism when governments determine that certain foreign perspectives must disappear from ordinary distribution channels. The issue is not whether RT is impartial; the issue is whether restrictions are narrowly justified, transparent, proportionate and subject to scrutiny. The Council's original decision provides the official case; it does not settle every civil-liberties question raised by that decision.

Likewise, Russia is too often treated in European debate as a permanent civilisational adversary rather than a country with which Europe shares geography, history, art, science, trade routes and unavoidable security interests. The distinction matters. A critical discussion of the Kremlin is legitimate; sweeping suspicion of Russians as Russians is not. The Russian people are not identical to their government, just as the peoples of Germany, France, Belgium, Poland or Britain are not identical to their political leaders.

Martyanov's anger reflects his conviction that much of Europe has forgotten that distinction. His conclusion is more absolute than the evidence permits: Europe contains significant disagreement over sanctions, energy, military aid and negotiations. It is therefore more accurate to speak of an entrenched anti-Russian policy orientation among many governing institutions than of a unanimous hatred shared by hundreds of millions of Europeans. That narrower statement is also the more powerful criticism, because institutions make decisions and can be held accountable for them.

3. The security question Europe failed to settle

The present confrontation did not begin in February 2022, even though Russia's full-scale invasion marked a decisive and destructive escalation. The underlying European security dispute reaches back across decades: NATO enlargement, the unresolved place of Russia in the post-Cold War order, the wars in the former Yugoslavia, disagreements over missile defence and the deterioration of arms-control arrangements.



In the 1999 OSCE Charter for European Security, participating states endorsed principles that are often discussed separately but should be read together. Every state has the freedom to choose its security arrangements, including alliances. At the same time, states committed themselves not to strengthen their security at the expense of others. The coexistence of those principles is difficult, but difficulty does not justify simply ignoring one of them.

From the Russian perspective, NATO's movement towards its borders, and especially the prospect of Ukrainian membership, posed an unacceptable strategic problem. From the perspective of Ukraine and many Eastern European states, alliance membership offered protection against Russian pressure. Both security perceptions exist. The fact that neither side accepts the other's reasoning does not make those perceptions irrelevant. Serious diplomacy begins by recognising that adversaries have security interests even when we dispute their claims.

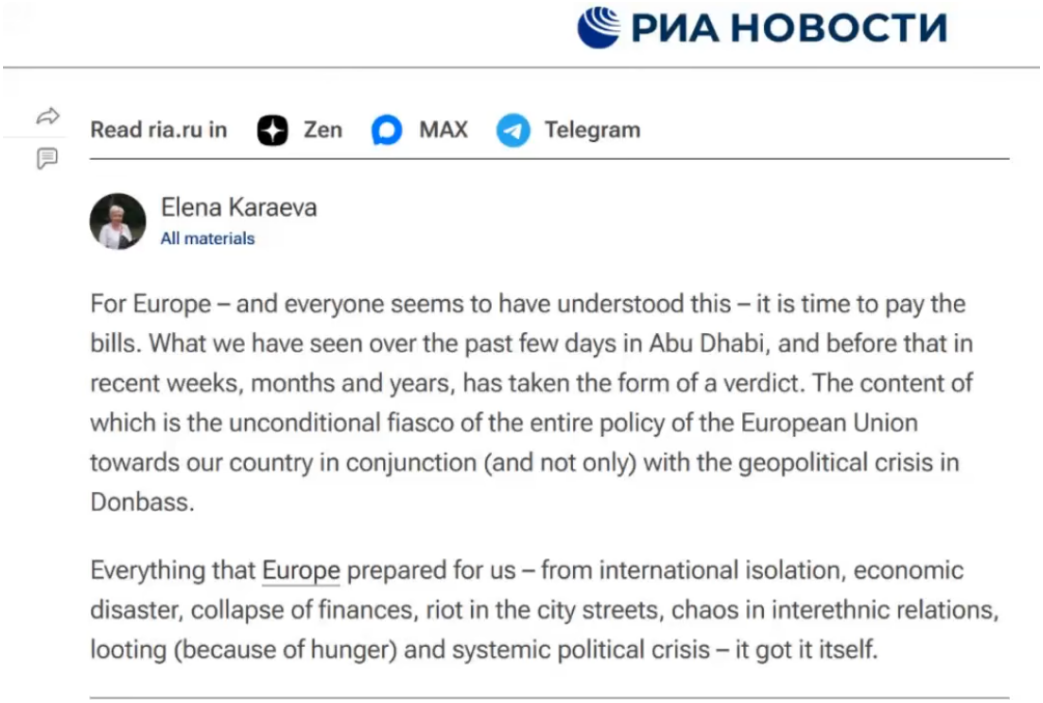
In December 2021 Moscow submitted draft security agreements calling, among other things, for limits on NATO enlargement and certain military deployments. The proposed restrictions were extensive and included demands that NATO members could not reasonably accept without compromising the autonomy of other states. Yet it would also be inaccurate to say that no diplomatic exchange took place: NATO responded in writing in January 2022, offering discussion on risk reduction, transparency and arms control while rejecting a veto over alliance membership.



What failed was not the complete absence of communication, but the failure to establish a mutually acceptable European security settlement before catastrophe. The lesson is uncomfortable for everyone. A security order that only one side regards as legitimate is not necessarily a stable order. Equally, an appeal to security concerns cannot grant a great power a right to invade its neighbour. European diplomacy must be capable of holding both propositions at once.

Instead, much of the public argument has hardened into a contest of slogans. The 2022 NATO Strategic Concept formally identifies Russia as the alliance's most significant direct threat. Russia increasingly portrays the Western alliance system as hostile. As mutual threat perceptions intensify, the space for compromise narrows. Martyanov argues that Europe now confronts the consequences of a security system built without a durable accommodation with Russia. Even those who reject his interpretation of responsibility should recognise the risk that he identifies.

4. Energy policy: economic realism sacrificed to geopolitical certainty



For European industry, natural gas has never been merely another commodity. It is energy, industrial feedstock and a determining factor in the cost of producing fertilisers, chemicals, glass, steel and countless other goods. Europe's previous energy relationship with Russia was not an act of charity. It was a commercial structure that, despite political risks and asymmetries, supported major parts of European manufacturing.

Brussels has now made a different choice. The European Commission's REPowerEU programme records a fall in Russia's share of EU gas imports from approximately 45 per cent in 2021 to 12 per cent in 2025. In January 2026 the EU adopted a legal framework for progressively and permanently ending imports of Russian natural gas. The political message could hardly be clearer: the relationship is no longer to be managed as a normal commercial partnership.

European institutions justify this decision on security grounds. Their concern is not invented. The International Energy Agency describes reductions in Gazprom's short-term sales before the invasion and severe pipeline-supply cuts in 2022. Europe therefore did not simply abandon a perfectly reliable supplier without provocation. Russia also used or restricted its supply position in ways that aggravated the crisis. Any serious account must acknowledge this.

But acknowledging Russian actions does not exempt European policymakers from explaining the price of their response. Reducing dependence on a single supplier is prudent. Replacing that dependence at any economic cost, while offering no credible route to future coexistence, is another matter. Europe's energy choices should be

judged by affordability, industrial competitiveness, security of supply and environmental consequences together, not only by their symbolic political value.

The Draghi report on European competitiveness, commissioned by the EU itself, identified a stark structural disadvantage: at the time of its analysis, European gas prices were three to five times those in the United States, and industrial electricity prices were two to three times those of major competitors. This is not a claim from a Russian commentator. It is an admission in one of the European Commission's own major economic assessments.

Prices have not moved in a straight line. Eurostat reported in November 2026 that average non-household gas prices in the first half of 2026 were 6.7 per cent lower than a year earlier. That matters: it would be false to write that every gas price continues endlessly upward. But lower prices than the peaks of a crisis do not automatically restore the competitive conditions under which investment decisions were made. A factory that closes, relocates or abandons expansion cannot always be brought back by a modest decline in the next reporting period.

For European citizens the essential question is simple: how much industrial strength, employment and purchasing power should be surrendered in pursuit of a confrontation for which no clear economic exit strategy is visible?

5. Chemical factories, disappearing investment and the social cost

The consequences are not abstract. Europe's chemical sector offers an unusually clear warning. The European Chemical Industry Council (Cefic) reported in January 2026 that announced chemical-plant closures during 2022–2025 had risen sharply, affecting roughly 37 million tonnes of capacity—around nine per cent of European production capacity—and an estimated 20,000 direct jobs. Its closures and investments analysis also pointed to a serious deterioration in prospective new investment.

Not all those closures can be attributed to the loss of Russian energy. Weak demand, global overcapacity, regulatory burdens, the cost of capital, Chinese competition and trade policy also matter. Yet the energy-cost disadvantage is central, and Cefic's own 2026 assessment continued to describe a substantial European gas-price gap relative to the United States.

German statistics reveal the same pressure in a more complicated economic picture. Destatis reported in November 2026 that production in energy-intensive German industries in the third quarter was 3.5 per cent below the second quarter. Industrial

output elsewhere in the economy showed signs of recovery. That distinction matters, because the crisis is neither a uniform collapse of all European production nor an imaginary problem: it is a structural threat concentrated in activities for which energy is decisive.

Every closure has consequences beyond an accounting statement. Skilled workers leave, apprenticeships disappear, local suppliers lose contracts, municipalities lose tax revenue and Europe's technological knowledge is gradually dispersed. If chemical intermediates formerly manufactured in Europe must be imported from elsewhere, the environmental and strategic costs do not vanish. They are transferred along global supply chains.

Martyanov's broader contention is that European policymakers are insulated from such costs. It would be impossible to establish the private motives of every minister, but there is an evident democratic responsibility here. Citizens were promised security and resilience. They are entitled to a transparent balance sheet showing who benefits, who pays and whether the same security objectives might be achieved at lower economic and human cost.

6. One dependency exchanged for another?

European officials proudly point to the rapid diversification of gas supplies. This achievement is real. It also deserves a harder question: independence from whom, and dependence upon what instead?

According to Eurostat's examination of LNG trade, the United States increased its share of EU liquefied natural gas imports from roughly 29 per cent in 2021 to 53 per cent in 2025. LNG supply is flexible and can arrive from multiple exporters, but it also carries the costs of liquefaction, shipping, regasification and global market competition. Europe's position has changed substantially. Its new energy arrangements create different dependencies, especially on transatlantic trade and internationally traded gas.

It would be unfair to conclude that American LNG automatically makes Europe a political captive of Washington. Markets, contracts and sources are more diverse than that. It is equally naive to pretend that commercial dependence never has strategic consequences. A European energy policy worthy of the name should measure dependencies in every direction, including the United States, the Gulf and critical-mineral suppliers, rather than declaring one direction unacceptable and all others harmless.

Europe’s long-term interest is a balanced energy system: efficient industry, diversified supply, affordable electricity, prudent domestic production, renewables where technically and economically effective, nuclear power where democratically chosen, and the capacity to maintain workable commercial relations when political circumstances permit. Energy policy should serve society; society should not be y.



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Martyanov’s military argument is blunt. He

believes that Western governments overestimate their ability to dictate outcomes in Ukraine and underestimate Russian industrial mobilisation, military adaptation and willingness to endure a prolonged conflict. He challenges the habit of treating expenditure in dollars as a direct measure of battlefield strength. The cost of a weapon, the number that can be manufactured, its effectiveness in combat and the speed with which it can be replaced are different quantities.

That is a legitimate analytical distinction. A sophisticated but scarce system may be strategically less useful than large numbers of simpler weapons adapted to the actual battlefield. Drone warfare, electronic countermeasures, artillery production and repair capacity have all forced militaries to reconsider peacetime assumptions. Europe should examine actual production rates and procurement delays with the same seriousness that it examines defence budgets.

However, the numerical missile-price comparisons in the supplied transcript are not adequately sourced to serve as verified evidence. They mix proposed programme expenditure, uncertain production volumes and contested estimates of Russian unit costs. Dividing a five-year budget by a target procurement number can give an illustrative average, but not necessarily the final unit price, which may include research, infrastructure and other costs. Likewise, estimates attributed to Ukrainian intelligence require an identifiable publication and consistent definitions before they can be treated as established fact.

The more important point does not depend on those particular figures. European governments should be honest about the limits of their defence-industrial capacity and the consequences of entering a prolonged contest of production and attrition. There is a practical difference between declaring a strategic ambition and possessing the resources to fulfil it.

Evidence also complicates the claim that Europe contributes nothing. The Kiel Institute's Ukraine Support Tracker reported that Europe led in aid allocations during the first half of 2026. Yet European military support remained substantially dependent on weapons made in the United States. Of the defence-industry procurement covered in Kiel's first-half analysis, approximately 30 per cent by value went to American firms. This is an uncomfortable combination: Europe is paying substantial sums and still relies on a supplier outside the continent for important military systems.

It is legitimate to ask whether ever-larger commitments, in the absence of an agreed political end state, are a strategy or a means of postponing the moment when difficult diplomatic choices must be made.

8. The paradox of European strategic autonomy

For years European leaders have spoken about strategic autonomy. In practice, Europe's position on Ukraine remains entangled with the priorities, capabilities and domestic politics of the United States. Washington remains a central actor in negotiations and military support, while European institutions attempt to secure a role in shaping the settlement that will determine their own continent's security.

Martyanov interprets this marginalisation as the natural consequence of strategic weakness: Europe supplied political rhetoric and material resources but did not control the fundamental military or diplomatic balance. His verdict is sweeping. The underlying question is unavoidable: how can Europe claim geopolitical maturity if the most consequential negotiations about European security cannot be sustained through an independent European diplomatic channel?

The EU's own official position is not that diplomacy is forbidden. In its June 2026 conclusions, the European Council welcomed diplomatic efforts and stated its readiness to increase engagement, while calling for an end to Russia's military aggression and security guarantees for Ukraine. That statement should be recognised accurately. The problem is not the complete absence of diplomatic language; it is the limited trust and negotiating space beneath that language.

European leaders cannot expect Russia to treat their demands as neutral security proposals while their broader political relationship is defined by sanctions, military support to Russia's adversary and categorical public hostility. Equally, Russia cannot expect other states to trust a new security order without credible assurances against renewed military coercion. An agreement requires concrete reciprocal commitments, not merely the insistence that one side accept the other's narrative.

Europe should therefore consider a more independent diplomatic initiative aimed at defining verifiable military restraints, incident-prevention measures, arms-control arrangements and a long-term regional security framework. Such an initiative would need Ukraine at the table, because a stable arrangement cannot be built by treating the country whose territory is at stake as an object rather than a participant.

9. Ukraine must not disappear behind the struggle over Europe

This is the most important qualification to Martyanov's geopolitical thesis. Ukraine is not merely a battlefield on which Russia and the West demonstrate their strength. It is a country inhabited by millions of people with political rights, families, homes and futures. Their suffering cannot be erased by declaring that the conflict is really about the European security order.

The UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine reported in October 2026 that its verified civilian casualty figures for January–September 2026 reached 2,570 killed and 15,211 injured, substantially above the comparable period of 2025. Those numbers are not geopolitical abstractions. Behind each entry is a person. The continuing destruction demands urgency from anyone who genuinely cares about peace.

The United Nations General Assembly resolution of March 2022 demanded the withdrawal of Russian military forces from Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders. That is part of the legal and diplomatic record, whether or not an eventual settlement follows the Assembly's position in full. A serious article cannot pretend that questions of territorial sovereignty vanish because a military analyst predicts further Russian advances.

There is also an ethical obligation to distinguish the wishes of governments, the aspirations of ordinary Ukrainians and the calculations of foreign powers. The right of Ukrainians to live without bombardment should not be reduced to a public-relations instrument. Nor should it become an excuse to reject every proposed ceasefire, reciprocal guarantee or negotiated arrangement before the terms are even examined.

A policy that calls itself solidarity must ultimately be judged by whether it can help create a secure and viable peace for those who endure the war most directly.

10. Predictions of inevitable victory are not a peace plan

Martyanov is emphatic about Russia's resilience and the limits of Western power. He treats Russian negotiating positions as rooted in military realities rather than exaggerated demands and expects those realities to force political concessions. His analysis serves as a corrective to complacent Western claims that Russia could simply be exhausted into surrender.

But strategic confidence is not the same as verified certainty. Even where one side appears to hold important advantages, the timing and terms of a settlement remain uncertain. Battlefield reports, future economic conditions, domestic political changes and the danger of escalation can all alter the picture. No honest analyst can turn a prediction into an accomplished fact merely by stating it forcefully.

There is a broader lesson here for Europe. The danger is not only that European leaders may have misjudged Russia's staying power. It is also that they may have built a policy whose political legitimacy depends on refusing to acknowledge those misjudgments. When leaders equate changing course with admitting moral defeat, they make strategic correction unnecessarily difficult.

A confident European democracy should be able to say: our assumptions must be tested, our objectives must be reviewed, and the lives and livelihoods at stake matter more than saving political reputations. That is responsibility, not capitulation.

11. Memory, Russian culture and Europe's unfinished history

Martyanov repeatedly invokes the Soviet experience of the Second World War. His point is that Western assessments of Russian endurance often underestimate the historical memory of invasion, immense loss and the defence of national survival. The destruction experienced on Soviet territory during the war remains central to Russian historical consciousness. European leaders would be foolish to dismiss that

memory when analysing Russian threat perceptions.

Historical memory, however, can be used in two very different ways. It can foster mutual understanding and caution, or it can become a weapon for declaring present opponents heirs to the crimes of previous generations. It would be wrong to condemn today's Germans collectively for Nazism, just as it would be wrong to identify all Russians with contemporary decisions of the Kremlin. The legacy of the Second World War should deepen our resistance to collective blame.

Europe also diminishes itself if it permits geopolitical hostility to harden into hostility towards Russian civilisation. Russian literature, music, philosophy, science and the sacrifices of Russian and other Soviet peoples belong to the history of the continent and the world. Cultural contact does not require political approval. On the contrary, the preservation of intellectual and human connections can be especially valuable when governments are estranged.

Europe's public life needs room for scholars, artists, historians, dissidents and ordinary citizens who reject the demand that every cultural relationship be interpreted as a test of political loyalty. None of this requires silence about the war. It requires recognising that civilisation is larger than the decisions of the current political class.

12. What a serious change of European policy would look like

Criticism without an alternative is too easy. Europe cannot return to 2021 by wishing the war away. It must deal with the reality of damaged trust, the destructive experience of Ukraine, the military expectations of Russia and the genuine fears of Eastern European states. Yet this is an argument for a serious policy revision, not for endlessly repeating the same declarations.

First, rebuild the habit of direct diplomacy. Europe needs reliable channels with Moscow at political, military and technical levels, even amid profound disagreement. The objective should be measurable risk reduction: communication mechanisms, protection of civilian infrastructure, prevention of dangerous incidents and the groundwork for monitored limitations on weapons deployments. Direct contact is not political approval; it is a basic instrument of statecraft.

Second, make European security negotiations genuinely comprehensive. The 1999 OSCE principles need to be taken together. Ukraine's sovereignty and choices matter; so do the security concerns of Russia and neighbouring countries. A future settlement must seek arrangements that can be verified and maintained, rather than a victor's declaration that no further negotiation is necessary. Europe

should revive the logic of common security without granting any state an unlimited veto over another.

Third, subject the sanctions-and-energy strategy to a public cost-benefit review. EU institutions should publish clear assessments of industrial closures, employment impacts, energy imports, price competitiveness, military spending, social costs and measurable strategic results. A policy of such historic consequence should never be exempt from democratic re-evaluation simply because it was introduced in the name of morality. Existing restrictions need not all be reversed overnight; each should have a stated purpose, a test of effectiveness and a transparent route for revision if circumstances change.

Fourth, restore European industrial capacity as a security priority. Energy-intensive manufacturing is not a dispensable relic. It is part of Europe's ability to provide employment, maintain technical expertise and support essential infrastructure. Policy should encourage reliable and affordable energy, predictable regulation, investment in modern production and serious evaluation of supply-chain vulnerabilities. A Europe that loses its industrial foundation will possess fewer instruments of autonomy, whatever language its leaders use.

Fifth, make room for public disagreement. Citizens should be able to question military aid, sanctions, NATO policy, media restrictions or diplomatic strategy without being caricatured as enemies of democracy. The same standard applies to critics of Moscow: their views must also be heard. A free political culture is tested most severely when the subject is emotionally charged and the majority feels certain.

Finally, define peace as an outcome rather than a slogan. A durable peace will require difficult discussions about ceasefire verification, the rights and security of civilians, reconstruction, territorial disputes, sanctions and the future European military balance. Those discussions will be uncomfortable. Refusing to undertake them is not a substitute for a strategy.

13. The greater danger is Europe's refusal to reconsider

The most enduring insight in Martyanov's commentary is not one of his predictions about a particular weapon, negotiation or military operation. It is the warning against confusing political rhetoric with actual power. Europe has constructed a formidable vocabulary of confrontation. It must now demonstrate an equally formidable capacity for self-examination.

The evidence does not support every sweeping assertion made in the original video. Europe is neither a single Russophobic personality nor an economy without

strengths. European support for Ukraine is real; Russia has also contributed to Europe's energy crisis through supply cuts; and the legal claims surrounding Ukraine cannot be dismissed as irrelevant. Those facts should remain on the record.

But they do not erase Europe's strategic failures. Expensive energy has damaged industrial competitiveness. Essential manufacturing capacity is under pressure. Military ambitions exceed important parts of Europe's production base. Diplomatic channels remain inadequate to the scale of the danger. And political leaders too often speak as though a permanent economic and security rupture with the largest country in Europe and its vast Eurasian hinterland can carry no long-term price.

I do not believe that Europe's future should be built upon permanent hostility towards Russia. Its future should rest on peace, economic realism, independent diplomacy, respect for human dignity and the willingness to confront inconvenient facts. That does not mean surrendering principle. It means recovering the distinction between principles and political pride.

The question Europeans should put to Brussels, Berlin, Paris, London and every other centre of power is not whether their leaders can deliver another speech condemning Moscow. They have demonstrated that ability beyond doubt. The question is whether they can offer a believable path towards security, industrial renewal and peace—one that serves European citizens and does not treat the lives of Ukrainians and Russians as expendable pieces in a geopolitical contest.

Europe does not need an eternal enemy to define itself. It needs the courage to change course before the costs become irreversible.

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