

European Security in an Age of Rupture

EVENT IN MEMORY OF ACHILLE BOROLI

Bocconi University | 4 MAY 2026

Institutional Remarks

Andrea Boroli Vice President, Fondazione Achille e Giulia Boroli

Welcome to everyone here today. A special welcome to the students who are here, and thank you to all those joining us online for this event in memory of my father, Achille Boroli, who loved Europe as a conscious choice, a Europe designed to defend peace, to reconcile present and past generations, and to build a future of true freedom based on genuine democracy. He particularly loved young people and their right to grow as individuals and citizens, the principles and values that enable us to overcome hostility and differences, and a sound economy that works for the common good.

On behalf of my siblings and the Achille and Giulia Boroli Foundation, I would also like to express our deepest gratitude to Bocconi University for the hospitality that allows us, year after year, to celebrate our father Achille, a courageous and forward-thinking entrepreneur, an innovator, and above all a deeply humane man.

Thank you to the President, Prof. Andrea Sironi, and the Rector, Prof. Francesco Billari; to the Managing Director, Dr Riccardo Taranto; to the Dean for Development and Alumni Relations, Prof. Antonella Carù; to the University's Alumni & Fundraising Department and its extraordinary staff, who are capable of organizing events of such depth as today's; Thanks to Civica, to Professor Francesco Saita, to the leading European universities — with Bocconi at the forefront — that form the consortium, to its lecturers, and to the young people who work with thoughtful dedication to promote the European Union, which is more necessary than ever for both individual and collective peace and progress.

A warm thank you to the Chair in European Studies, where Prof. Gianmarco Ottaviano, Prof. Carlo Altomonte, the researchers, and the students support the European Union with tenacity and hard work.

My sincere thanks go to Professor Nathalie Tocci, a lecturer at the School of Advanced International Studies at Johns Hopkins University and a senior fellow at Bocconi's Institute of European Policymaking. Formerly director of the Institute of International Affairs, one of Europe's leading think tanks and a key reference point for Italian and international geopolitical analysis, Nathalie Tocci has been one of the most influential

voices behind the European Union's decisions over the last decade. She served as Special Advisor to the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs, Federica Mogherini, coordinating the historic EU Global Strategy, and continued in this role under the subsequent High Representative, Joseph Borrell. Nathalie Tocci's ability to combine academic rigor with the pragmatism of international diplomacy will enable us to better understand the challenges facing Europe in the new global disorder.

Before we hear from Nathalie Tocci, I would like to pay tribute to my father, Achille Boroli, the publisher who brought the De Agostini Geographical Institute to the world through its atlases, partwork encyclopedias, and volumes on science, history, nature, health, nutrition and much more. These also supported schools. In short, when there was no internet, there was De Agostini, which entered every home to make information and knowledge available to everyone.

He established the Achille and Giulia Boroli Foundation, personally funding it to carry forward what had always been his goal — both as an entrepreneur and as a man: to support younger generations in their growth and to help others.

For some years now, the Achille and Giulia Boroli Foundation has been a partner of Bocconi University through the Chair in European Studies. This is because the European Union was Achille Boroli's other passion – a clear-sighted passion, rooted in his identity as a liberal and a Catholic, directed against the vices of nationalism, individualism, political ambiguity, and economic and financial greed, which widen divisions, favour the few, and penalize the many.

Today, criticism of the Union seems far removed from the lessons of history, often taking a populist tone. These critics lack the superior intelligence of the founding fathers of a united Europe and of those who devised the Marshall Plan at the end of the Second World War, recognizing that prosperity for all always depends on reconstruction and cooperation, not on sanctions and reparations. Demonstrating even then that true patriotism recognizes the value of interdependence and unity in countering binding and unfavorable external decisions, or shameful blackmail or anachronistic acquiescence, which easily prevail in situations of disunity.

Those who express impatience with the European Union are found both outside and within the Union. External critics often align with European parties that defend a purely national dimension. These internal critics do not wish to relinquish power and privileges. Both groups deny the evidence and seek to convince us that Europe is finished.

The truth is quite different. Europe has the largest market on the planet. In terms of global GDP (according to IMF World Economic Outlook data), the 27 countries together rank second only to the US and are ahead of China, albeit by a narrow margin. In terms of population, the EU is three times the size of Russia and one and a half times that of the US. The EU lags behind in digital technology, but it leads globally in green

technologies and healthcare; with a strong alliance between the public sector, private sector, and universities, it can quickly close the gap.

In recent decades, five countries have been rescued from financial crises (Spain, Ireland, Portugal, Greece, Cyprus) and new institutions have been created: from the ESM to the joint debt of Next Generation EU.

The Union possesses an extraordinary set of values, the legacy of many centuries of global leadership in beauty, genius, art and culture. And for this reason, it possesses the necessary means against autocratic and illiberal tendencies. The recent developments in Hungary are merely the latest example. Europe has the history to lead the reconstruction and affirmation of international law; to halt the resurgence of aggressive nationalism; to oppose profit, ideology and savage cynicism.

Can we consign the familiar West to history? Certainly. But we cannot consign the European Union to history. It has already weathered and overcome many difficulties and has been able to move forward because it has been capable of generating visionary thinking; social welfare and safeguards; equal rights and responsibilities; economic and market freedom; independent schools and universities; free press and unhindered information; integration and exchanges without barriers; and regulations to protect the environment.

There is a new world that needs Europe. There is a need for pride to break the mold and unite Europe as a whole, from the Atlantic to the Urals; there is a need for sincerity in a politics that cares for the common good; there is a need for intelligence to respond to the demand for prosperity and peace; there is a need for heart to respond to the quest for meaning that comes from young people.

We are not the 'little promontory of Asia' that so concerned Paul Valéry. We are Europe, where the Enlightenment and spirituality have managed to go hand in hand.

It is in everyone's interest, even for those who may not fully recognize it, to act as a single entity, because there can be no true national sovereignty without European coordination.

Our greatness and our power depend on this.

The quality of our lives, whether we are young or old, depends on this.

Our security, peace and progress depend on this.

The European Union is our – and your – best opportunity. It is the place where we can freely decide our own priorities. Failing to contribute to its full realization means, in the long run, having economic, civil and political priorities imposed on us by others.

Come on, boys and girls. You are in the right place here at Bocconi, to become the women and men that Europe – and, ultimately, the world – needs.