

Towards a new Russia strategy for NATO

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In early 2022, Russia launched its brutal, unjustified, and unjustifiable all-out war against Ukraine. In Ukraine, this meant over two years of suffering, death – and sustained defence and heroic resistance against a murderous regime.

Across the Euro-Atlantic area and beyond, Russia has shattered peace and security. Putin and his criminal system seek to undermine good governance, foster other dictatorships, and seek to change the international order in their favour.

As a bitter irony of history, Russia's aggression and brutality, used internally but also mainly towards other nations like Ukraine, have strengthened NATO. As it is increasingly self-evident that peace and security cannot be taken for granted, NATO is considered more relevant and vital than ever. According to recent opinion polls, some 75 % of Allied populations assess NATO as important to the future security of their country, and some 77% of populations support [maintained or increased investments in defence](#). The Alliance has kept, albeit on occasions with some difficulties, its unity in supporting Ukraine in its defence against Russia. So far, so good. But where is the coherent NATO strategy for responding to Putin's Russia? The short and sobering answer is: Not there yet!

Over the past two years and more, what NATO did when looking at Russia has been, at best, patchwork. Under the leitmotiv of "Understanding Russia better," a stream of external experts and discussions have been held with the stated aim of understanding Russia better, but not more than that. Political consultations took place, also with the EU. And Russia's policies and activities have been assessed. But so far, NATO has been unable or unwilling to answer the question: What is the strategy we should pursue in the years and decades ahead against a revanchist regime whose aggression clearly goes beyond Ukraine? What is our collective response to Putinism, for which the demolition of Ukraine is "just" one building block in the fight against democracies and open societies – and everything NATO stands up for?

When asked why no discussion on a Russia strategy would be tackled head-on, the standard response has been that such an undertaking would be too risky and unlikely to yield any results, as Allies are too far apart. That has typically also been the key argument, at least from the group of conservative voices, every time NATO

wanted or needed to embark on defining a new Strategic Concept. However, the fact that over the decades, NATO achieved just that, i.e. agreeing on new Strategic Concepts, exposes the fallacy of the argument for shying away from a strategic debate.

As a contribution to stimulating such a debate, here are some ideas on how such a new Russia strategy for NATO could look like:

The point of departure: Our Vision

NATO itself has recently updated its vision by adopting the 2022 Strategic Concept at the Madrid Summit: "We remain steadfast in our resolve to protect our one billion citizens, defend our territory and safeguard our freedom and democracy. We will reinforce our unity, cohesion and solidarity, building on the enduring transatlantic bond between our nations and the strength of our shared democratic values. We reiterate our steadfast commitment to the North Atlantic Treaty and to defending each other from all threats, no matter where they stem from. We will continue to work towards just, inclusive and lasting peace and remain a bulwark of the rules-based international order. [...]"

Our vision is clear: we want to live in a world where sovereignty, territorial integrity, human rights and international law are respected and where each country can choose its own path, free from aggression, coercion or subversion. We work with all who share these goals. We stand together, as Allies, to defend our freedom and contribute to a more peaceful world."¹

In combining this vision of NATO nations with the vision underpinning the [Helsinki Final Act, which also The Soviet Union Russia signed in 1975](#), a vision for Russia could be following:

"We want a Russia which respects sovereignty, internationally recognized borders, human rights, and international law. We want a Russia which is peaceful and prosperous, and contributes to a more peaceful and prosperous world."

Shaping our Mission

Building on this vision, the 2022 Strategic Concept gives, in fact, also overarching guidance from which a mission for a future Russia strategy for NATO could be derived:

¹ NATO 2022 Strategic Concept; Preface.

"The Russian Federation's war of aggression against Ukraine has shattered peace and gravely altered our security environment. Its brutal and unlawful invasion, repeated violations of international humanitarian law and heinous attacks and atrocities have caused unspeakable suffering and destruction. A strong, independent Ukraine is vital for the stability of the Euro-Atlantic area. Moscow's behaviour reflects a pattern of Russian aggressive actions against its neighbours and the wider transatlantic community."²

"The Russian Federation is the most significant and direct threat to Allies' security and to peace and stability in the Euro-Atlantic area. It seeks to establish spheres of influence and direct control through coercion, subversion, aggression, and annexation. It uses conventional, cyber and hybrid means against us and our partners. Its coercive military posture, rhetoric and proven willingness to use force to pursue its political goals undermine the rules-based international order:"³

In applying this overarching guidance from the Strategic Concept, NATO's mission in relation to Russia could be the following: *Our mission is to contain Russia in posing a threat to Allied security and to peace and stability in the Euro-Atlantic area and beyond.*"

In this context, it is overdue for NATO to finally declare the [NATO-Russia Founding Act from 1997](#), which Russia has violated repeatedly since 2008 but certainly torn into pieces since its all-out war against Ukraine in 2022, null and void.^{4,5}

Main Strategic Objectives of a future NATO Russia Strategy

To pursue the mission outlined above, the following could serve as main strategic objectives:

- Russia must be defeated in Ukraine, while Ukraine must prevail in its defence against Russia, holding up its sovereignty, independence, and democracy.
- NATO's deterrence and, if needed, defence against Russia must remain efficient.
- NATO's "internal" weaknesses of Allies must be tackled and minimised.
- Russian destabilization and subversion across the globe must be curtailed.

² NATO 2022 Strategic Concept; Preface.

³ NATO 2022 Strategic Concept; Strategic Environment; para 8.

⁴ Just to illustrate: In the Founding Act NATO and Russia commit to "build together a lasting and inclusive peace in the Euro-Atlantic area on the principles of democracy and cooperative security. (...) The present Act reaffirms the determination of NATO and Russia to give concrete substance to their shared commitment to build a stable, peaceful and undivided Europe, whole and free, to the benefit of all its peoples."

⁵ See also: Alexander Vershbow: Russia policy after the war: A new strategy of containment. Atlantic Council, February 2023; [Russia policy after the war: A new strategy of containment - Atlantic Council](#)

- Russia's military build-up and regeneration must be constrained.
- China's partnership of "no limits" with Russia must be curbed.

Main building blocks for a coherent Russia Strategy

The development and implementation of a coherent and holistic containment strategy against Russia is not only a strategic military issue, but it is, above all, a political issue requiring political will, courage, and leadership, as well as a means to forge unity.⁶ If there is one big lesson from past wars, it is that any attempts to appease an aggressor are doomed to fail – as they will only encourage the attacker to pursue aggression further as it clearly delivers benefits.⁷

Some of the points outlined below go eventually beyond NATO's current political agenda. This should be no showstopper. Article 4 of the Washington Treaty gives members the possibility to "consult together whenever, in the opinion of any of them, the territorial integrity, political independence or security of any of the Parties is threatened." So, the mandate is there; it "just" requires political leadership, will and courage to use it.

- **Enable Ukraine to win the war with Russia on its own terms**

Russia's war in and against Ukraine transcends that battle. Russia's revisionist imperialism seeks not only to subjugate Ukraine but to overturn the international order into one where violence, lawlessness and aggression are the norm and countries such as Russia (and others following its model) get away with imposing might over right. So, what is at stake in Ukraine is no less than the world vision enshrined in NATO's 2022 Strategic Concept. Future generations will judge today's leaders on whether they have been up to the challenge – or not.

There is no doubt that since Russia's all-out war against Ukraine (combined with a hybrid one against Ukraine's partners), the US, the EU, NATO nations and partners in a large international coalition have provided unprecedented support to Ukraine to ensure that Ukraine can assert its right to territorial integrity, self-defence⁸ and its right to self-determination.⁹ It is equally clear that, in accordance with international law, parties supporting a nation to execute these rights to self-defence and self-determination do **not** become parties to the conflict. As long as there is no direct

⁶ In that sense also Luis de Aleida Sampaio: "From Deterrence to containment. The future of the International Order is decided in Ukraine". Center for Strategic Decision Research. See also: CEPA: Containing Russia, Securing Europe, 2024.

⁷ See also: Stefanie Babst: Sehenden Auges. Mut zum strategischen Kurswechsel. München, 2023.

⁸ As enshrined in article 51, Chapter VII, of the UN Charter.

⁹ As enshrined, inter alia, in Article 1, Chapter 1, para 2 of the UN Charter.

participation in military combat activities, willing partners would also be allowed to undertake the training of Ukrainian forces in Ukraine.

Notwithstanding, over the past two years, and much too often, too many decision-makers or decision shapers have put themselves in a straitjacket by applying some form of self-censorship to draw self-imposed (but also artificial) "red lines" for their own actions. As the typical argument goes, trespassing on these (self-imposed) "red lines" would lead to a serious escalation of aggression from the aggressor, i.e. Putin and his regime.

This is a fundamental misunderstanding. President Putin is not operating on an escalation and de-escalation ladder. Rather, he respects strengths and exploits weaknesses. Wherever he can, he fosters fears, procrastination, and cowardice – to use to his advantage – and we are all too prepared to fall into that trap ever and ever again. In consequence, the world continues to provide too little support too late to Ukraine – only to then complain about Ukrainians not making the desired progress in defending their country. In fact, providing that assistance in the summer of 2022, before the Russian mobilization of September, could have dealt a decisive blow to the Russian operation.

So far, what we have been witnessing is a collective failure of potentially historic dimensions: The 56 partners participating in the coalition supporting Ukraine, whose combined GDP exponentially supersedes that of Russia¹⁰, have, over the past more than two years, been unable and/or unwilling to support Ukraine in a way that it can win the fight against the aggressor. It is, therefore, of strategic relevance to finally reverse this approach.

With Ukraine waging its existential war of survival, it is defending our world and our values – often with enormous sacrifices. We need to see any investment in Ukraine's defences as an investment in the forward deterrence and defence of Allied security. We finally need to stop dithering¹¹ and provide Ukraine with the political, military, economic and humanitarian aid it needs to prevail. If Russia were to win in Ukraine, the costs to all Allies would be exponentially higher. If Ukraine wins, it is not only winning what it deserves: the future as a democratic, sovereign country; it is also a

¹⁰ Just to illustrate: The combined GDP of only ten of these 56 partners in the Ukraine Defence Contact Group, namely US, Canada, Germany, France, Italy, Spain, Norway, the Netherlands, and Japan is in the region of **43** trillion US Dollars. That of Russia in the region of **1.7** trillion US Dollars!

¹¹ See also Alexander Vershbow: The West can no longer hesitate on Ukraine. Foreign Policy; 03 March 2024.

strategic reinforcement for all rules-based, open societies – and the strongest driver for regime change in Russia.¹²

- **Live up to a new era of collective deterrence and defence**

Putin's Russia is and will remain for the foreseeable future the most significant and direct threat to Allies' security and peace and stability in the Euro-Atlantic area.¹³ In line with the guidance from the 2022 Strategic Concept, consecutive NATO Summits in Madrid and Vilnius have therefore put renewed and reinforced emphasis on collective deterrence and defence.

The related challenges are formidable, if not daunting. It is nothing less than to reverse three decades of reaping the putative "peace dividend" by allowing the constant atrophy and erosion of deterrence and defence capabilities and the establishment of a prevailing mindset which implied that peace and security, at least in the Euro-Atlantic area, can be taken for granted, falling like manna from heavens.

While these days are over, the to-do list for NATO is long and demanding, and not all Allies pursue these with the sense of urgency and determination required in view of the strategic turning point we are facing. Key tasks for Allies include, in particular, expeditiously increasing defence spending¹⁴ and maximising force contributions to fully implement the Vilnius [Defence Investment Pledge](#); meeting current and future capability targets as identified in the NATO Defence Planning Process; to fully resource the new defence plans as agreed in Vilnius to ensure their full executability; to urgently ramp up defence production and implement the [Defence Production Action Plan](#); and to ensure the credibility and effectiveness of NATO's nuclear deterrent mission. Furthermore, innovative approaches such as adopting a NATO economic deterrence agenda should be considered and pursued.¹⁵

In view of Russia increasingly using hybrid warfare methods, including cyberattacks, political interference and covert operations on Allied soil, it seems high time for NATO to also rethink its approach to these types of hybrid threats. The longer we let Russia "get away with it," the more we invite her to intensify these corrosive campaigns.

¹² Cf. for example Andrea-Kendall Taylor and Erica Frantz: The Treacherous Path to a Better Russia. In: Foreign Affairs, Volume 102, Number 4, July/August 2023.

¹³ NATO 2022 Strategic Concept, para 12.

¹⁴ See also Camille Grand: Defence spending: sustaining the effort in the long-term. NATO Review; July 2023.

¹⁵ See Anna Dowd and Dominik Jankowski: Developing an economic security agenda for NATO. In: War on the Rocks, 28 May 2024. [Developing an Economic Security Agenda for NATO - War on the Rocks](#)

To illustrate, it would also seem important to develop a response to Russia's increased "accidental" violations of Allied air space, especially in countries adjacent to Ukraine. In addition, Russia has been using jamming techniques systematically to disable GPS signals of civilian aircraft, e.g. in the Baltic and Black Sea regions. While there are, so far, no indications of a large-scale conventional attack of Russia against a NATO Ally, these incursions and intrusions should be seen as a way to test NATO's resolve and determination. What would NATO do if, following jamming by Russia, two civilian aircraft would collide? NATO needs to develop a response. In sum, NATO needs to rethink and reinvigorate its deterrence and defence posture by making it fit for the age of hybrid warfare.

- **Tackle and minimize internal weaknesses of Allies**

Over the years, if not decades, Russia has been using the full spectrum of hybrid destabilization instruments to undermine democracies, open societies, and Euro-Atlantic security. These range from political interference and pressure, hostile disinformation and propaganda, especially in the context of election campaigns, via malicious cyber activities, e.g. by attacking government networks or critical infrastructure, to the weaponization of energy and the conduit of Russian intelligence and security service activities on Allied territory, including assassinations, sabotage or coup attempts in [Montenegro](#) and [Moldova](#). With Vladimir Putin in power, there is no sign of a reversal of this hostile strategic approach. For NATO and its Allies this means that Russia will exploit and widen, whenever possible, all internal weaknesses. To tackle this set of daunting challenges, a full range of counter-measures should be put into place: NATO needs to enhance further the resilience of all Allies across all of [NATO's baseline resilience requirements](#). Countries like Hungary and Türkiye must be convinced to reduce their energy dependence on Russia. Other counter-measures could include, e.g. (cyber) exercises to signal the Alliance's steadfastness or further limitations to the movements of Russian spies and visa regimes for Russians across Allied nations.

Perhaps more importantly, the principles of good governance to which NATO commits itself in the 2022 Strategic Concept¹⁶ need to be reinforced. While this is easier said than done, NATO has at least four avenues to pursue such a goal: It could set up its own [mechanism for good governance](#) – by establishing within NATO Headquarters in Brussels a "Centre of Democratic (or Societal) Resilience" - a move promoted by the NATO Parliamentary Assembly already for a number of years. An alternative, and eventually less politicised approach, could be the establishment of a dedicated NATO [Centre of Excellence](#) on Good Governance. The Alliance could also

¹⁶ NATO Strategic Concept 2022, Purpose and Principles, para 5.

look into withholding (temporarily) some of the assets and advantages nations can derive from NATO's security investment programme. Finally, nations belonging to both NATO and the EU can reinforce the potential application of [Article 7, i.e. the suspension clause of the EU Treaty](#), if a member country seriously and persistently breaches the principles on which the EU is founded.

We need to bear in mind that a chain is only so strong as its weakest link.

- **Reinvigorate NATO crisis prevention and cooperative security**

With the 2022 Strategic Concept, NATO redefines the earlier core task of crisis management into crisis prevention and management: "We will increase our efforts to anticipate and prevent crises and conflicts. Prevention is a sustainable way to contribute to stability and Allied security. We will enhance support for our partners, including to help build their capacity to counter terrorism and address shared security challenges."¹⁷ This reflects, as one of the bitter lessons learnt from the decades of futile crisis management in Afghanistan, the realisation that crisis prevention is the more effective and a better "return of investment" than the extremely costly military operations. However, the approach pursued so far does not live up to the levels of ambition of the Strategic Concept in general,¹⁸ and in particular also not to the strategic challenges Russia (and by extension other malign actors like notably China) pose among NATO's partners across the globe.

NATO and the EU need to finally realise that leaving partners aspiring for membership in either or both organisations in limbo over protracted periods of time is an open invitation to malign actors to derail a partner's Euro-Atlantic course, intensify bad governance and seed instability. On the EU side, this makes the energetic pursuit of enlargement processes [with candidate countries](#) (with the exception of Türkiye and eventually Georgia) a geostrategic imperative.¹⁹

On the NATO side, this means finally mustering the political courage and leadership to offer, if not membership directly, at least the start of accession talks with Ukraine and, if not too late by now, also with Georgia. The [NATO Study on Enlargement](#), while often referred to as a hindrance to such a move, does not constitute such a showstopper. As a case in point, West Germany, which saw itself as the only

¹⁷ NATO Strategic Concept 2022, para 38.

¹⁸ NATO Strategic Concept 2022, in particular paras 40 to 42.

¹⁹ Current candidate countries at different stages of the accession process are Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Türkiye and Ukraine. Of these, Albania, Montenegro and North Macedonia are already NATO members.

legitimate representative of the German people, was integrated into NATO in 1955, while East Germany remained under the grip of the Soviet Union until 1989.

NATO's engagement with the Global South is so far, at best, modest. Of the 54 African countries, NATO has cooperated more intensely with two, Tunisia and, since 2022, Mauritania, mainly via so-called Defence Capacity Building (DCB) packages. From the current 22 member states of the Arab League, NATO cooperates via similar DCB packages, in addition to Mauritania, with Iraq and Jordan. The limited footprint is largely due to the "strategic" view of some NATO nations, esp. France, that the prevailing actor in engaging Africa and the Middle East should be the European Union, while NATO has been considered more or less "toxic" – although many countries from the regions are strongly interested in intensifying cooperation. A meaningful engagement would, however, require finally investing in crisis prevention and cooperative security at strategic levels, and not as a 'nice to do' fringe activity – as is currently the case across the NATO enterprise, both on the civilian and the military side of the organisation.

Taking this core task to its true strategic level also implies efficiently countering Russia's destabilization in Moldova, the Western Balkans, and the Baltic and Black Sea regions, including Georgia. Looking at crisis prevention and cooperative security as a building block of a Russia containment strategy also implies the need for Allies to find ways to disrupt Russia's illegal arms acquisition, and to curtail military support from countries such as Iran and North Korea for Russia's war against Ukraine.

Most importantly, it must strive to reverse China's deepening bilateral cooperation with Russia. By providing essential support that allows Russia to revitalise its defence industrial base, China is key in enabling Russia's military regeneration.²⁰ While China mainly uses the partnership with Russia as a strategic counterbalance to the US and eventually as a tool to curtail US global power projection, China's long-term strategic interests are also tied to access to markets and technology, trade, and investment. Euro-Atlantic partners, including the EU, while pursuing their "de-risking" strategy, could well use these more as carrots and sticks. As [US Secretary of State Blinken recently flagged during his visit to China](#): "Now, if China purports on the one hand to want good relations with Europe and other countries, it cannot on the other hand be fuelling what is the biggest threat to European security since the end of the Cold War."

²⁰ [China supporting Russia in massive military expansion, US says | China | The Guardian](#)

- **Foster the NATO – EU strategic partnership**

The 2022 Strategic Concept commits NATO to "enhance the NATO-EU strategic partnership, strengthen political consultations and increase cooperation on issues of common interest."²¹ While there is no explicit reference to Russia in the context of NATO - EU cooperation in the Strategic Concept, areas mentioned, such as military mobility, resilience, and countering cyber and hybrid threats, are clearly highly relevant and applicable. Over the past two years, NATO and the EU have, in responding to the Russia threat, largely lived up to their commitment to "play complementary, coherent and mutually reinforcing roles in supporting international peace and security."²² While the EU has been and continues to make massive contributions to financing Ukraine's defence and statehood and imposing a growing series [of sanctions on Russia](#), NATO has been focusing on rebuilding its deterrence and defence capabilities, a security umbrella which allows nations to provide military assistance to Ukraine.

This strategic partnership needs to be further strengthened. This would include NATO nations unequivocally supporting not only the EU sanctions but also efforts to close numerous loopholes.²³ In addition, NATO nations could join forces with the EU to intensify efforts to seize Russia's central bank assets of an estimated US \$300 billion with a view to using them as compensation for the losses caused by Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.²⁴

Furthermore, NATO should work hand in glove with the EU to transform European defence: EU and EU member states need to maintain the momentum of increases in defence investment. We must shift the tide from decades of military erosion and underinvestment, creating capability gaps. The EU could adopt the 2% GDP NATO baseline as its own standard. We should spend more together and not side by side. The EU defence landscape is [too fragmented and therefore ineffective](#): the EU has some 180 major weapon systems; the US has 30. The EU has 17 main battle tanks, while the US has just one.²⁵ There is insufficient joint procurement: only 18% is pursued via European frameworks in 2022. Billions of [Euros are wasted year by year](#) due to duplication, insufficient pooling and joint procurement. NATO should support

²¹ NATO Strategic Concept 2022, para 43.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ [EU sanctions: new rules to crack down on violations | News | European Parliament \(europa.eu\)](#); [New rules criminalising the violation of EU sanctions \(europa.eu\)](#)

²⁴ [On Proposed Countermeasures Against Russia to Compensate Injured States for Losses Caused by Russia's War of Aggression Against Ukraine \(iiss.org\)](#)

²⁵ [Chart: Europe Has Six Times As Many Weapon Systems As The U.S. | Statista](#)

the EU's plans to create the function of a new EU Commissioner for Defence, with a focus on defence procurement.

In addition, NATO should engage with and support the EU in all efforts to strengthen the Russian opposition, be this in Russia proper or in exile. This also implies looking after the security of individual opposition representatives, such as Yulia Navalnaya or finding ways to stay in touch with opposition members jailed in Putin's Gulag. Developing jointly with the EU a long-term communications strategy, notably via social media channels, addressing Russian audiences with the overarching message that "We are not your enemies! We want a better future for Russia and its people!"²⁶ could be another important component.

- **A wild card? Suspending Russia's membership in the UN Security Council**

Russia is not "only" attacking Ukraine. In parallel, it is obstructing multilateral organisations. In the case of the OSCE, Russia's obstructionism has largely paralysed the organization, and uses it as a platform for propaganda or intimidation toward other members. In the case of the UN, Russia would have a particular responsibility to uphold international peace and security, considering its status as a Permanent Member of the UN Security Council. Instead, it (ab)uses its seat and veto right in the UN Security Council to undermine the international order by protecting its own lawless behaviour, or that of its "partners in crime" like recently [North Korea](#), or by derailing the work in the UNSC through contentious and hypocritical proposals.

There has been quite some debate on the idea of suspending Russia's seat and veto right in the UNSC in 2022/3²⁷, but since then, the topic largely disappeared from the radar screen. This is a pity. Admittedly, the hurdles for such a move are significant. However, keeping the debate alive and aiming, for example, for a majority of nations in the UN General Assembly to vote in support of the idea would send a powerful signal not only to Russia. At the same time, it would keep the spotlight on the current dysfunctionality of the UN Security Council and the urgent need to reform it to re-establish the currently lost credibility and relevance.

- **Stand up for our vision – with passion!**

²⁶ In fact, the 2022 Strategic Concept states in para 9 that: "NATO does not seek confrontation and poses no threat to the Russian Federation."

²⁷ Cf. for example: [Expelling Russia from the UN Security Council — a How-to Guide - CEPA](#); [How to expel Russia from the UN | The Hill](#); or: [The role of the UNSC in the Russia/Ukrainian war - Stichting Jason \(jasoninstitute.com\)](#)

Arguably, the most powerful and durable containment starts in the minds and hearts of the people. There needs to be the understanding and will to contain Russia not because we are against Russia per se but because Putinism is a peril to his country²⁸, a threat to peace and stability in the Euro-Atlantic area, and a threat to the very type of societies we want to be.

At the same time, being "against" something is not enough. There needs to be an alternative and more appealing vision: "The West also needs to deploy one of its most powerful weapons: universal liberal values. It was these, as well as Star Wars and dollars that helped bring down the Soviet regime by exposing the inhumanity of its totalitarian system."²⁹

This presupposes that we ourselves fully embrace these universal liberal values. In view of the rise of populism, flaws in our democratic systems, self-doubts, and complacency are on the rise. There are again many who feel either helpless or disenfranchised in view of the rogue behaviours of some states and their leaders, or even explain that authoritarian rulers and systems have numerous advantages over open societies and liberal democracies, such as centralised command and control or the absolute power to impose will, also against public opinion. This is a flawed assessment. On the one hand, it underestimates, in particular, the innovation capacity of open societies and their inherent abilities to come up with solutions in the best interest of majorities. On the other hand, it underestimates the corrosive effect of misguided decision-making by the absolute ruler based on a delusional perception of the world around him.³⁰ Against this backdrop, President Macron's recent [wake-up call for a humanist Europe](#) was both timely and to the point.

For NATO and its nations and people, this wake-up call means to stand up, with conviction and passion, for the vision enshrined in its 2022 Strategic Concept: "Our vision is clear: we want to live in a world where sovereignty, territorial integrity, human rights and international law are respected and where each country can choose its own path, free from aggression, coercion or subversion. We work with all who share these goals. We stand together, as Allies, to defend our freedom and contribute to a more peaceful world."³¹

²⁸ Cf. for example Karl Schlögel: Putins Losung ist: Nach mir die Sintflut". In: Der Spiegel, Nr. 12; 16.03.2024.

²⁹ "Inside Putin's Russia". In: The Economist, March 16th 2024, page 7.

³⁰ More on this and the theory behind it in: Gerlinde Freia Niehus: Außenpolitik im Wandel. Die Außenpolitik Spaniens von der Diktatur Francos zur parlamentarischen Demokratie. 2 Bände. Frankfurt am Main, 1989.

³¹ NATO 2022 Strategic Concept; Preface.

N.B. The views expressed in this article are the author's own and should not be taken to reflect necessarily those of NATO or NATO allies.

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