



Resolution 2444 (2022)¹

Recent challenges to security in Europe: what role for the Council of Europe?

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Russian Federation's unprovoked and unjustified war of aggression against Ukraine, waged in open defiance of international law, has done grievous harm to the international order and unsettled the European multilateral architecture.
2. Reacting to this serious violation of the Council of Europe Statute (ETS No. 1), the Committee of Ministers took the unprecedented decision to exclude the Russian Federation from the Organisation, in line with the unanimous position expressed by the Parliamentary Assembly in its [Opinion 300 \(2022\)](#). This war of aggression represents not only a challenge for the Council of Europe, but possibly also the greatest test for the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) since its creation in 1975, affecting its capacity to carry out its mandate with the consensus of all participating States.
3. The historic changes due to the surge of a large-scale military threat in Europe have led a number of Council of Europe member States to abandon their neutrality, increase their military expenditure and seek membership of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). In parallel, NATO plans to adopt a new Strategic Concept at its Madrid Summit in June 2022, the first in twelve years. Furthermore, the European Union has found a new impetus to develop its Common Security and Defence Policy, with European Union leaders reaffirming their commitment to increase the European Union's capacity in this area at the European Council meeting on 10 and 11 March 2022.
4. All eyes are on the Russian Federation's aggression against Ukraine, but in Europe there are a number of other long-term open or frozen conflicts and various situations of tension. Alongside these, new security threats have emerged over the past two decades. Some threats are transnational, such as terrorism and violent extremism. Some rely on technology, such as misinformation and disinformation, hacking of digital infrastructure or interference in electoral processes. Migrants, energy and food are being weaponised in new forms of hybrid war. Some challenges are environmental and man-made, such as climate change. Some, such as the Covid-19 pandemic, can have a global impact on the economy, democratic governance and the exercise of fundamental freedoms.
5. In this new security context fraught with risks, Council of Europe member States should renew their commitment to the values of democracy, human rights and the rule of law. They should reiterate their support for the Council of Europe as the cornerstone European organisation to develop a shared space where these values can thrive, in the pursuit of peace based upon justice and international co-operation. While Europe is experiencing a period of uncertainty, it should reaffirm its unity around the values which are, and should continue to be, the foundation for its multilateral architecture. The political support for the next phases of European enlargement represents a strategic way of reinforcing the core values of the Council of Europe related to democratic security.

1. *Assembly debate* on 21 June 2022 (19th and 20th sittings) (see [Doc. 15541](#), report of the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy, rapporteur: Mr Bogdan Klich). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 21 June 2022 (20th sitting). See also [Recommendation 2235 \(2022\)](#).



6. Whereas defence issues are excluded from its remit, the Council of Europe should enhance the comprehensive and long-term security of its member States within the scope of its mandate and contribute to making them more resilient in countering threats and preventing conflicts, while providing a platform which is conducive to mutual trust and the development and consolidation of good neighbourly relations.

7. Security is a wider concept than defence and rests to a great extent on compliance with democratic processes, human rights and the rule of law. This notion of democratic security, first endorsed by the Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe at the 1993 Vienna Summit, as well as the concept of “indivisible security”, included in the OSCE Istanbul Charter for European Security of 1999, are today as relevant as ever.

8. In this respect, the backsliding of democracy in Europe should be urgently addressed not only because of its domestic repercussions, but also because of the potential risks for democratic security on the whole continent. Supporting the role of civil society, increasing citizens’ trust in public institutions, innovating democratic practices, finding new ways of involving citizens in decision-making processes, reinforcing adherence to the rule of law and to fundamental rights and freedoms, and safeguarding media plurality and access to information are all essential elements to strengthening the resilience of democracies.

9. In light of these considerations, the Assembly calls on Council of Europe member States to:

9.1. as regards democratic security:

9.1.1. invest in all aspects of a comprehensive security approach, including deep/soft security, human security and democratic resilience;

9.1.2. safeguard their societies from attacks on the good functioning of democracy, including disinformation and misinformation, and particularly from internal or external attempts to undermine, or interfere in, electoral processes;

9.1.3. ensure adherence to the rule of law and to fundamental rights and freedoms, so as to build trust in public institutions;

9.1.4. promote the role of civil society, finding ways of involving citizens in decision-making processes and safeguarding freedom of association;

9.1.5. ensure that the ability to access and impart information is protected, including by guaranteeing an independent and pluralistic media environment;

9.1.6. prioritise good neighbourly relations with each other, and commit to resolving disputes and disagreements through dialogue and diplomacy;

9.1.7. support cross-border co-operation and other efforts to defuse tensions and promote understanding at the local level, including with and among civil society;

9.1.8. tackle socio-economic inequalities, which threaten the democratic stability of our countries and dent citizens’ trust in politics;

9.2. as regards multilateralism:

9.2.1. fully subscribe to rules-based multilateralism while striving to further strengthen it;

9.2.2. review the European multilateral architecture in order to make it more responsive and effective in tackling the present challenges;

9.3. as regards the role of the Council of Europe:

9.3.1. give fresh impetus and political support to the central role of the Council of Europe as the guardian of human rights, democracy and the rule of law in Europe and as a platform for political dialogue, diplomacy and multilateralism;

9.3.2. support the further development of Council of Europe work in the area of democratic security;

9.3.3. allocate the necessary financial resources to ensure the financial sustainability of the Council of Europe;

9.3.4. support the organisation of a 4th Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe, which would address, *inter alia*, the promotion of democratic security, countering democratic backsliding and its root causes, ways to rejuvenate democracy and spur

citizen engagement, and the introduction, within the Council of Europe, of early warning mechanisms to address, in a timely manner, threats to the rule of law, democratic standards and human rights protection in its member States;

9.3.5. allocate the necessary resources to ensure that the Council of Europe can expand its work on confidence-building measures to help lay the foundations for long-lasting peace.

10. As regards its own activities, the Assembly should:

10.1. increase its focus on parliamentary diplomacy as a tool to defuse tensions, promote dialogue, reinforce mutual understanding and enhance confidence building and conflict prevention;

10.2. contribute to the Council of Europe's efforts on early warning in order to address situations which risk posing a threat to the rule of law, democratic security and good neighbourly relations;

10.3. in the context of the Council of Europe's overall reflection on monitoring, consider reviewing its procedure relating to the monitoring of obligations and commitments by member States;

10.4. place greater emphasis in its work on new security challenges and how they relate to democracy, human rights and the rule of law;

10.5. enhance co-operation on deep/soft security matters, confidence building and conflict prevention with other international parliamentary assemblies, including the European Parliament, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and the NATO Parliamentary Assembly;

10.6. strengthen co-operation and carry out joint activities with national parliaments on deep/soft security, confidence building and conflict prevention.