



**DEALING WITH RUSSIA:
THE TAG RUSSIA STRATEGY 2024**

September 9th, 2024

“We are determined to constrain and contest Russia’s aggressive actions and to counter its ability to conduct destabilising activities towards NATO and Allies. For our next Summit, we will develop recommendations on NATO’s strategic approach to Russia, taking into account the changing security environment”.

The NATO Washington Summit Declaration, July 10 2024

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DEALING WITH RUSSIA

ABSTRACT

How to deal with Russia? If ‘Plan A’ was to force Russia out of Ukraine rapidly, it has failed. ‘Plan B’ must be to forge a position of relative Western strength in what is becoming a proxy systemic confrontation between the West and Russia (and its supporters). To do that, the West will need to demonstrate to Moscow that it is Ukraine’s strategic depth. Ukraine’s incursion into Western Russia creates just such an opportunity, although it also reveals the character of contemporary Russia, the weakness of its strategy and the danger of desperate miscalculation by the Moscow regime.

In December 1967 the landmark Harmel Report was delivered to the Alliance. Entitled “The Future Tasks of the Alliance” it stated, “Military security and a policy of détente are not contradictory but complementary. Collective defence is a stabilizing factor in world politics. It is the necessary condition for effective policies directed towards a greater relaxation of tensions. The way to peace and stability in Europe rests on the use of the Alliance constructively in the interest of détente. The participation of the USSR and the USA will be necessary to achieve a settlement of the political problems in Europe”.

The aim of the TAG Russia Strategy 2024 is to re-establish a just, equitable and international rules-based twenty-first century system of which Europe is a part in the face of the current assault by the Putin regime and by so doing ultimately create the conditions for dealing with Russia. The specific goals are thus:

1. Halting and if possible reversing Russian aggression of which the attack on Ukraine is the most egregious example.
2. Deterring future destabilizing behaviour.
3. Reinforcing sanctions and other forms of pressure until Russia is again prepared to abide by international law and respect the sovereignty of its neighbours.
4. By demonstrating both resolve and reason the creation in time of the conditions for a return to dialogue leading to reform of Russia and its world view.

At the core of the Strategy is the need to keep diplomatic channels open for dialogue to reduce risks - as was done to good effect during much of the Cold War – whilst at the same time demonstrating resolve. For that to happen the West, with Europeans to the fore, must accept it is engaged in long-term strategic competition with an aggressive, revanchist, authoritarian Russia that seeks to impose a Putinesque vision of a renewed Russian empire. Russia’s war on Ukraine must also be seen in the context of a wider global and systemic challenge by authoritarian regimes committed to creating a world order that reinforces their respective positions of power and influence.

To prevent that, the Strategy adopts five lines of action: military, information, resilience, economic, and diplomatic. It also proposes two phases, the short term which is nominally out to 2030 and the longer term beyond. The situation in the closing months of 2024 demands an immediate focus on the military, intelligence, and coercive economic measures, with diplomatic efforts in support. For any such strategy to work the complete support of the United States is vital because Putin and the Kremlin place the greatest importance on the appearance of equality with Washington.

Therefore, the stakes of the Russo-Ukraine War could not be higher. For Moscow (and Beijing) what is at stake is not only the future of the rules-based international system, but the influence of the West in the twenty first century world. Russia and China are challenging the collective West and the principles of the rules-based international order established following World War Two. Whilst the West fully accepts that the system must evolve to reflect the reality of power in the twenty-first century world whilst Moscow simply seeks the destruction of the system for the sake of it, Beijing rather wants to gain economic and thus power advantage. If they succeed the result will inevitably be the forced abandonment of a system designed to foster security and stability as opposed to the dangerous anarchy of *Machtpolitik*.

THE ALPHEN GROUP

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SITUATION

“Russia seeks to fundamentally reconfigure the Euro-Atlantic security architecture. The all-domain threat Russia poses to NATO will persist into the long term. Russia is rebuilding and expanding its military capabilities, and continues its airspace violations and provocative activities. We stand in solidarity with all Allies affected by these actions. NATO does not seek confrontation, and poses no threat to Russia. We remain willing to maintain channels of communication with Moscow to mitigate risk and prevent escalation”.

The NATO Washington Summit Declaration, July 10 2024

How to deal with Russia? If ‘Plan A’ was to force Russia out of Ukraine rapidly it has failed. ‘Plan B’ must be to forge a position of relative Western strength in this proxy systemic confrontation between the West and Russia (and its supporters). To do that, the West will need to demonstrate to Moscow that **it** is Ukraine’s strategic depth. Ukraine’s incursion into Western Russia creates just such an opportunity, although it also reveals the character of contemporary Russia, the weakness of its strategy, and the danger of desperate miscalculation by the Moscow regime.

Winston Churchill once described Russia as “a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma”. Today, Russia is a dilemma wrapped in aggression inside a threat. The primary goal is to return stability and security to Europe and, eventually, to turn Russia into if not a partner at least a benign competitor. History suggests that dealing with Russia is always best done from a position of relative strength. The injection of \$61 billion of US aid as part of the ten-year US-Ukraine Defense Agreement in addition to further commitments from European partners will keep Ukraine in the fight, but only over the short-term. Last year, the TAG designed a Ukraine Strategy but that was only one half of a strategy that must also directly address the Russian threat. To do that, the West must also face up to its own strategic and political constraints. It is now clear that few Western states are willing to provide Ukraine with all the forces and resources they desperately need to expel Russian forces from the entirety of Ukraine. It is also clear the sanctions regimes imposed on Russia are also being circumvented.

The West’s definition of success must remain the re-establishment of Ukraine as a secure and sovereign European democracy with all the rights and responsibilities that entails. The critical issue the TAG Russia Strategy 2024 (the Strategy) thus addresses is how. The hope in time is that, by containing, resisting, and dealing with Russia, Moscow will realise the importance of re-establishing the normal business of statecraft: diplomatic, economic, and legitimate information exchange, with the military option retained as a distant deterrent. However, given the threat Russia clearly poses to members of both the EU and NATO, military deterrence must remain to the fore for the foreseeable future, sanctions maintained and possibly strengthened, defences maintained against weaponised Russian information and disinformation, with military deterrence based on the worst the Russian state and its armed forces might be able to inflict.

Recent statements by Putin shows that he considers himself to be in a state just short of war with the Alliance – the systemic grey zone. Direct Russian military action against NATO remains unlikely and would be suicidal for the Putin regime. By moving Sergei Shoigu to the National Security Council, and with the appointment of economist Andrei Belousov as his replacement as Minister of Defence, Putin is also preparing for a long ‘war’ against free Europe.

A leaked February 2023 document also reveals the scale of China’s secret military aid to Russia which has increased markedly since 2022, not least the shipment of over 3 million 155 mm artillery shells from Beijing’s satellite, North Korea. The Kremlin has also bought cheap Iranian drones and re-purchased helicopters, missiles and missile defence weapons already sold to clients around the world. Moscow was also forced to remove computer chips from domestic appliances to offset the impact of Western sanctions on such technologies, but such shortages have also been eased with Chinese support. And, although the threat of Western sanctions on Chinese state enterprises and banks

operating in Russia has seen several of them withdraw lines of credit to the Russians, suspend joint ventures, and even withdraw from Russia, Beijing remains resolute in its support for Moscow.

The longer term? For Moscow and Beijing, the war is a test of Western resolve to defend not only the rules-based international system, but the continued influence of the West in the twenty first century world, after twenty years of failed campaigns in Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya. More precisely, the two super-autocracies are challenging the collective Western will to shape the geopolitical environment and defend Europe. Whilst the West fully accepts that the world order must and will evolve to reflect the reality of power in the twenty-first century world, adaptation must not mean subjugation.

This strategy will only be as good as its execution in the face of active Russian resistance. The primary requirement is to decide on the source of Strategic Direction. There is an urgent need for the Western Allies to decide how and by whom their collective efforts are to be directed to achieve the goals outlined below. The strategy covers five lines of action: military, information, resilience, economic, and diplomatic. These activities must be coordinated between states, prioritised and focussed in their effect. Whose is the directing mind and hand? What responsibilities and authorities are to be allocated to this body?

OUTCOMES

The method of the Strategy is incrementally to change the emphasis of the West's relationship with Russia over 2024-2035 from coercion and military stand-offs to diplomacy, mutual economic benefit and respect for the rules-based order.

There are five specific outcomes sought:

1. To stop the Russians destroying Ukraine now and in the future by ensuring Ukrainians remain an independent people in full control of their internationally recognized borders.
2. To ensure the Alliance and EU apply sufficient legitimate coercive capability across the military, informational, resilience, economic, and diplomatic spectrum to deter and defeat any further Russian aggression.
3. To demonstrate to Russia that the collective West will defend the rules-based international system for as long as it takes.
4. To convince Russia of Allied resolve through a markedly increased defence commitment by the European Allies together with Canada to the defence of the Euro-Atlantic Area.
5. To keep open the prospect of dealing with Russia over the shape of a future peace for both Ukraine and wider Europe.

THE STRATEGY

PRINCIPLES OF THE STRATEGY

The TAG Russia Strategy is established on the following principles:

1. Dealing with Moscow must be based on demonstrable military and diplomatic strength.
2. A direct NATO-Russia war must be avoided.
3. Much of the additional military effort required to deter and defeat an aggressive Russia must come from the European Allies as part of the agreed NATO Force Model.
4. Russian aggression and attempts to change borders by force must not in any way be rewarded nor legitimized
5. Ukraine must have very considerable influence over and open access to all and any negotiations.
6. Russia must pay reparations for the death, destruction, and damage it has inflicted on Ukraine as part of a sustainable and robust peace settlement.

7. The lifting of sanctions on Russia will only come over time and in response to concrete and verifiable actions.
8. The West must be clear that any eventual dealings with Russia on wider European security must proceed from the principles and framework of already established agreements.
9. The West must insist on the right to reflect Western principles and terms in any wider European security arrangement, including Ukraine's place in it.
10. No Ally should contribute more than 50% of any individual NATO capability area, as pursued through the NATO Defence Planning Process.
11. Reinforcement of the strategic relationship between defence, deterrence and resilience by reconceptualising the escalation ladder across information warfare, cyber warfare, conventional warfare, and, ultimately, hypersonic and nuclear warfare.

THE SHORT TO MEDIUM TERM: 2024-2030

MILITARY

Allies must fulfil all the pledges they made, and measures agreed, at the Madrid, Vilnius and Washington Summits by fully enacting and enabling the Concept for Deterrence and Defence of the Euro-Atlantic Area. Thereto:

1. Fulfil the commitment to 2% defence investment pledge as a baseline, and the completion and enactment of SACEUR's "Family of Plans". The "Family" is part of as package of measures which include the NATO Readiness Initiative; the conducting of NATO Steadfast Defender; the largest such exercise to Europe since REFORGER.
2. Undertake forward deployment of brigade-sized NATO Enhanced Forward Presence units to each front-line country that requests them.
3. Substantially increase pre-positioning of materiel configured in unit sets and stocks as well as the return to Europe of US combat formations previously called back to the Continental United States (CONUS), both as new deployments and in rotational exercises.
4. Bolster the Air Policing Mission; the bolstering of the dual capable aircraft (DCA) mission via measures related to dispersal, readiness alert times and training; reinforce the designation of cyber and space as "operational domains"; the creation of two new operational NATO Commands.
5. Fully adopt the graduated response plans (GRPs) and the first regional defence plans (2022) developed since the Cold War.
6. Broaden and modernize Allies' ability to defend against hybrid threats by developing information and cyber capabilities that strengthen conventional and nuclear deterrence through their threat to Russian resources, forces, and capabilities.
7. Further develop the Ukraine Defence Capabilities Group to coordinate increased weapons and ammunition transfers to Ukraine, with a new headquarters at NATO.
8. Publicly fashion a broad NATO strategy to counter Russia's "escalate to deescalate" strategy under any scenario.
9. Modernise existing NATO deterrence and develop a more precise NATO nuclear response doctrine.
10. Further assist Ukraine to improve the resilience of its armed forces and help deter any further aggression, building on Ukraine's work with NATO under the Enhanced Opportunities Partnership (EOP) programme and its Annual National Programme (ANP).

INFORMATION AND RESILIENCE:

Credible resilience and robust information and communication strategies go together. The latter

reinforce co-operation by helping to adapt societies to challenges through effective strategic communications and public affairs and public diplomacy. Resilience underpins deterrence and resilience is impossible without partnerships – institutional, national and across an increasingly interactive civil-military spectrum of capabilities and capacities. Thereto:

1. Identify early shared threats to economic and energy security; threats to the democratic process; and threats to critical infrastructures and systems.
2. Enhance protection of vulnerable areas of governance and society which an adversary would be most likely to seek to exploit to coerce and threaten via covert or open aggression.
3. Strengthen critical infrastructures such as communications and energy nodes, continuity of government infrastructure, cyber defences, and military mobility-related transportation nodes.
4. Work with groups in society susceptible to disinformation and propaganda.
5. Give enhanced resilience measures significantly more financial support, both at the national, EU and NATO levels.
6. Generate deterrence of digital attacks by having the capacity to respond to Russian information attacks within Russia itself, specifically through denial of critical services.
7. Promote far better understanding of Moscow's "grey zone" doctrine of hybrid and information warfare, including covert action, sabotage, energy blackmail, countersanctions, support for pro-Russian separatists, and other hybrid attacks.
8. Launch a multi-platform information campaign to counter the Russian regime's propaganda. The message should be that whilst the West stands firm against Russian aggression, it does not seek to punish ordinary Russians.
9. Devote greater effort to protecting NATO and nationally owned and operated communications networks and information services, as well as critical military and civilian infrastructure, against cyber and physical threats, notably through enhanced survivability measures, including hardening and dispersal.
10. Apply a multi-layer and multi-lever information campaign in Russia with discreet support for influence leaders beyond the Kremlin.
11. Develop effective shared systems for consequence management by anticipating, preventing, preparing, and recovering from shocks.
12. Build capacities and resources to withstand and adapt to adverse events through stockpiling and reinforcing supply chains with redundant systems.
13. Create whole of society partnerships with the industrial, technology, commercial and financial sectors by carrying out a series of exercises, training, and education.
14. Strengthen systemic integrity against multiple threats by the adoption of an all-hazards approach.
15. Examine best practice regional and national approaches.
16. Reinforce internal capabilities/reserves to function in any crisis via long-term joint planning.
17. Better understand the role of emerging and disruptive technologies (EDT) in future resilience together with the establishment of collectively agreed metrics to measure progress from current levels of resilience towards future resilience.
18. Allied leaders must explain more effectively to their citizens what is at stake, why a ceasefire in current conditions would only help Putin seize victory from the jaws of defeat, and why it is vital to maintain sanctions and supply advanced weapons to the Ukrainians for as long as it takes to defeat Russia and expel Russian forces from Ukrainian lands.

ECONOMIC:

The military and diplomatic lines of strategy are likely to work only if Russia is economically isolated. Thereto:

1. Craft a new economic statecraft strategy that goes beyond sanctions to economically decoupling Russia from the West, allied to a diplomatic demarche to convince other major economies to join the effort.
2. Seek to end all and any Western dependence on Russian energy and other raw materials, including Rare Earth Metals.
3. Exclude Russia completely from the SWIFT bank transfer system, as well as from US, UK and EU financial and other markets (including a ban on the sale of Russian sovereign debt).
4. Further confiscate Russian assets and property held abroad, managing and absorbing any damage that such action might do to the international financial system.
5. Use Russian assets held in Western financial institutions to pay for Ukrainian rearmament and reconstruction.
6. Exert much greater effort and stricter control over sanctions implementation together with the prevention of sanctions bypassing, including via third states.
7. Punish all and any bank that has bilateral relations with Russia, possibly through eventual exclusion from the Western financial system.
8. Punish all and any major corporation that continues to trade directly or indirectly with Russia illicitly by excluding them from Western markets.

DIPLOMATIC:

Even if some form of peace is fashioned it will make no sense to pretend that the security environment after Russia's invasion of Ukraine is anywhere comparable to the more benign security environment in 1997 when the NATO Russia Founding Act was signed. The West must collectively undertake several demarches designed to isolate Russia and coerce a change in Russian behaviour. Thereto:

1. Undermine Chinese support for Russia. China's claim that it enjoys a 'friendship without limits' with Russia is questionable.
2. The West should tentatively explore ways to ease tensions with China over Taiwan and in the South China Sea, possibly under the auspices of the G7, whilst insisting on freedom of navigation of internationally recognised waters.
3. Exploit key wedge issues, such as threats by Russia to use nuclear weapons. Chinese leaders have reportedly warned Moscow not to use, or threaten to use, nuclear weapons in the conflict with Ukraine.
4. Re-state Western support for Ukraine to demonstrate to Moscow strategic clarity, political determination, the capability, and capacity to prevail, and strategic patience, none of which are immediately apparent.
5. A new Western diplomatic demarche towards the Global South is needed to convince India, and a host of other countries, to withhold support from Russia. An increasingly powerful group of major non-aligned states with Brazil, India, Indonesia, Nigeria, the Philippines, and South Africa needs persuading.
6. Publicly state a collective determination to reinforce the bilateral security commitments under the G7 Vilnius Initiative and commencement of the pre-integration of Ukrainian forces into NATO.
7. Turkey has complex relations with both Russia and its Western Allies. Therefore, increase efforts to fully align Turkey with NATO, EU and coalition goals and approaches in return for Ankara receiving renewed security guarantees. For example, such steps might include the re-opening of all aspects of the EU-Turkey relationship.
8. In 2025, hold a specially convened Conference of Democracies (a modern version of the Congress of Vienna) in a major European capital to consider the principles of a new post-war European security system.

9. Establish Future Planning Groups (FPG) charged with proposing concrete confidence and security-building measures for a free Europe across diplomatic, resilience, military, and economic lines of action.
10. Forge a new Allied regional strategy towards the Black Sea Region and the Caspian Sea Region to counter Russia, to include measures to resolve so-called frozen conflicts and end Russia's illegitimate occupations of Moldovan and Georgian territories (Transnistria, Abkhazia, South Ossetia).
11. Increase pressure on Azerbaijan to end the war with Armenia and reduce Russian influence.
12. Contest Russian influence across Central Asia by offering new economic and aid incentives.

THE LONGER-TERM: BEYOND 2030

It is unlikely Russia will become a benign actor in European and world affairs for many years. Therefore, the need for credible military deterrence and societal and government resilience of Western societies will remain, not least because Russia is not the only threat Western democracies face.

DIPLOMATIC

History suggests that it is only when Russia acknowledges the West's countervailing power allied to the collective political will to use it if needs be that Moscow will accept the need to return to a rules-based order reinforced by all-important institutional structures. Such a posture must always inform Western diplomatic efforts. Thereto:

1. Re-state that the determination of the West must and will remain the complete and irreversible withdrawal of Russian forces from all of Ukraine's sovereign territory.
2. Re-state that whilst the West is fully committed to a just and equitable peace in Europe Russia's renewed membership of the European security order will only take place after suitable reparations and other confidence-building measures.
3. When negotiations for an enduring and equitable peace agreement do eventually begin (and they will), the West must support Ukraine's insistence that there can be no 'land for peace'.
4. The West, in consultation with Kyiv, must also consider its minimum conditions for a peace settlement beyond a mere cease-fire precisely so that serious negotiations may begin.
5. Any eventual peace agreement must be linked to Russia's future behaviour, and not just to ending its aggression in Ukraine.

INFORMATION, RESILIENCE AND ECONOMIC

The partnership between proportionate military defence and strengthened societal resilience are the very essence of credible deterrence. Russia is seeking to exploit weaknesses and vulnerabilities therein. Thereto:

1. Enhance the resilience of Allied societies against lethal and non-lethal threats generated by AI.
2. Systematically examine all facets of Russia behaviour across the conflict spectrum and diplomatic, resilience, economic and military lines of strategy.
3. Undertake an audit of critical Allied vulnerabilities across political, military, cyber, hybrid and other grey-zone forms of short-of-warfare by NATO's Critical Emergency Preparedness Committee (CEPC) and establish courses of action.
4. Carry out a systematic audit of Russia's critical vulnerabilities and the means and ways to

- exploit such weaknesses.
5. Undertake an audit of threats to critical energy and communications infrastructure, including possible hybrid attacks on Norway and its energy exporting infrastructure; hybrid attacks on new energy infrastructure on the western side of the Black Sea; attacks on undersea communications networks, including seriously disruptive cyber- attacks; and possible targeting of military supply convoys.
 6. Strengthen protection against disabling attacks on cyber, digital, economic and physical attacks on its commercial and financial centres.

MILITARY

NATO's core defence planning assumption is correct: on the current trajectory Russia will present a direct and increasing threat to NATO Allies within 3-5 years. Therefore, given the clear and present danger Russia also poses over the longer-term, we need to see the establishment of a larger, stronger European role and contribution, alongside and in partnership with the essential, enduring role and contributions of North American Allies. Thereto:

1. European Allies to publicly commit to collectively providing two thirds (67%) of NATO's overall required operational capacity ideally by 2030 but no later than 2035, as part of NATO Force Model development.
2. Build output metrics for rapidly usable forces, enablers and other capabilities needed to execute advance plans across SACEUR's Area of Responsibility.
3. Further enable European nuclear forces, missile defences, cyber and space capabilities, through broader and deeper nuclear consultation and cooperation between France, UK, and US, on the one hand, and non-nuclear Allies, on the other.
4. Establish an audit above and beyond the NATO Defence Planning Process to ensure Non-US Allies deliver on their commitments as part of a reinforced and accelerated NATO Agenda 2030.
5. Further develop the new Allied Reaction Force (ARF) as a vehicle for an expanded NATO Readiness Initiative.
6. Fully implement the Defence and Deterrence of the Euro-Atlantic Area (DDA), the 2019 Military Strategy and the NATO Force Model to strengthen NATO's conventional deterrence posture and operational capacity.
7. Establish and enforce a new high-end interoperability standard to ensure forces are able to act in concert and to effect under extreme duress at the highest levels of conflict.
8. Further enable European conventional forces and capabilities through improved infrastructure.
9. Further streamline military mobility in support of a much stronger European collective operational capacity for all NATO core tasks.
10. Promote greater complementarity between European and US security assistance contributions to Ukraine as part of a rebalanced Alliance.
11. European Allies to progressively assume a greater share of common responsibilities across the NATO Command Structure, the NATO Defence Planning Process, NATO common budgets, the NATO Science and Technology Strategy, the NATO Warfighting Capstone Concept, and other such processes.
12. Better use multilateral, and regional groupings of Allies to build willing and able modular coalitions, such as the Combined Joint Expeditionary Force (CJEF) and Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF).
13. Reinforce NATO-EU cooperation through command-and-control interfaces between the Alliance and the Commission to enhance the contribution of the Union to Euro-Atlantic security.
14. Improve standardization of forces, equipment, ammunition, and resources from the low to

- high ends of the conflict spectrum, particularly among the European members of the Alliance, but also with North American forces.
15. Accelerate development, sharing and integration of emerging and disruptive strategies into NATO defence and deterrence systems, by better exploiting the Defence Innovation Accelerator for the North Atlantic (DIANA).
 16. Revitalize defence technological and industrial bases on both sides of the Atlantic to better respond to current and future defence and deterrence requirements.
 17. Expand the European Defence Technological Industrial Base (EDTIB) through a shadow factory scheme, including with Next Gen companies which can reinforce the defence supply chain.
 18. Markedly increase funding and investment mechanisms through NATO to help foster research and Next Gen tech start-ups.
 19. Make it easier and cheaper for Allies and Partners to buy each other's capabilities off the shelf (COTS).
 20. Plan for structured defence investment of at least 3% of their Gross Domestic Product (GDP) annually by 2030 on defence BEFORE such increases take place to remedy existing shortfalls and meet the requirements across all domains arising from a more contested security order.
 21. Invest at least 20% of Allied defence budgets on equipment, including related Research and Development, using agreed metrics and definitions.
 20. Reinforce relationships with academia to better understand Future War. Measures will include strengthening the logistical sustainability of forces; defence industrial and technological innovation and the better sharing of scientific research, notably in the fields of artificial intelligence, Big Data and machine learning, and quantum computing, industrial development, production and cooperation, and the standardization of materiel.

DEALING WITH RUSSIA

Any credible Western strategy for dealing with Russia must grip four issues: the situation on the ground; Russia's evolving campaign aims; the possible strategic, political, and operational impact on NATO of additional security aid packages to Ukraine, and future options. However, the paradox of any Western strategy is that it is ultimately dependent on reform in Russia. What is clear is that until then there can be no peace. Consequently, there are only two strategic choices realistically on offer. Make peace with Russia at Ukraine's expense in the hope it will close a chapter and make Europe more secure. OR make peace with Russia only when Ukraine has been successfully defended and in so doing send a clear message to the world about the West's collective determination to resist such aggression. Making the right (namely the latter) choice will come down to whether or not the collective West has the political courage and will, allied to a willingness to bear the risk any such strategy demands. Any Russia strategy of substance will also demand something Europeans find hard: the considered, concerted and consistent application of statecraft. Anything else is simply denial.

**The Alphen Group,
September 2024**