

In Ukraine, Putin's war poses a fundamental question about the future of Europe and of humanity as a whole: Is positive change possible? The answer is yes, if we'll manage to be realistic, resilient, and reckless.

Let us start, then, by being realistic. The values and solidarity that form Europe's foundation are under threat. Because Europe is surrounded by a group of autocratic states that are working in concert, supporting one another's backward ideas and agendas. These rogue states deliberately undermine our democratic principles and foundations. The worst thing is, they contribute to the root causes of migration – whether by exploitation, intimidation or direct warfare.

Fact is, we are at war and will be in the foreseeable future. No matter how brutal, nothing and nobody has the ability to rewire these global power structures in the short term. How, then, do we counter this ongoing attack on our values and win this war?

The answer is simple: By defending and enforcing Europe's ideals. Our European countries, including the Brussels bubble, each have their trademark strengths. They also have their particular weaknesses, rooted in a tradition of self-centredness of a world that no longer exists. We can no longer pretend that we are still living in the same Europe as last year, or that faraway places somehow matter less.

Europe is not so much a place as it is a set of ideals. This is what keeps us together. We're all part of something that is greater than our egos, greater than our nation states. These ideals, our European ideals, have only increased in meaning over the centuries. Had Europe been merely a notion of place, it would have ceased to exist a long time ago. The opposite is true. And it is showing in many places, it is showing in this room here, today. We *are* Europe.

This is what resilience looks like. I think we all agree that changed times call for new forms of political communication and action. The need of our time is united action, defending our freedoms and our values while always prioritising those who have nothing left to lose. This time, we need to go beyond capacity building to adequately respond to current geopolitical realities.

Radical new approaches are needed, working towards a new culture of resilience and empowerment. For the best strategy to counter systematic disruption and disinformation is innovation. This means building new communities and alliances across borders. Networks are our preferred mode of organisation, fostering a culture of sharing and innovation, a culture of unity.

Let us be clear: These times call for new forms of consensus creation and political dialogue. These times call for being reckless. We must start leading on these issues because, as we have seen, the impossible *is* possible. And because, basically, we have only these two choices: It will be either Europe Bottom-Up or Europe Tits Up. The choice is ours.

Speech by Pieter Boeder at the Migration Working Group conference, May 12, 2022, Athens

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