

Toespraak

van de Voorzitter van de Eerste Kamer der Staten-Generaal, prof.dr. J.A. Bruijn, bij de uitreiking van de Nederlandse Onafhankelijkheidsprijs (Dutch Independence Award) 2025 aan Robert D. Kaplan, woensdag 25 juni in Nieuwspoort, Den Haag

datum 25 juni 2025

Ladies and Gentlemen,
Esteemed Board Members of the Stichting Nederlandse Onafhankelijkheid,
Dear Mr Kaplan,

Thank you for inviting me today to present the Dutch Independence Award 2025.

The Dutch Senate has been involved with the Dutch Independence Foundation since its inception in 2018.

The first two editions of the Dutch Independence Day and Lecture were held in the Senate building on het Binnenhof in The Hague.

This is no coincidence. Het Binnenhof, our premises, is the sacred ground on which the Dutch burghers reneged on their allegiance to their king, Philip of Spain, on the 26th of July 1581.

By signing the Act of Abjuration, the Dutch States-General rid themselves of their monarch and chose to govern themselves.

The Act of Abjuration may be over 440 years old, but it is still relevant. It reminds us of the social contract between the people and those who rule them. Of people's rights and the rulers' obligations towards them. Of the right to chart one's course and choose one's future in peace and liberty. So it was in 1581, so it is still today.

About four kilometers from where we are now, NATO leaders have convened today to discuss the future of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, and the safety and security of all of us.

Last week, ahead of the governmental NATO Summit, I was in Brussels together with all Presidents of Parliaments of NATO Member States to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the Parliamentary Assembly of the NATO.

The Parliamentary Assembly has been for the past 70 years a bridge to society, to critical voices, and to democratic checks and balances.

It may seem farfetched, but I do believe that the way the Assembly and the parliaments in the Member States act as guardians of our democratic values when it comes to the decisions our governments make today, here in The Hague, is in spirit of the Act of Abjuration.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

After this short introduction, it is with great pleasure that I now read out loud to all present – and especially to Mr Kaplan – the Jury Report of the Dutch Independence Award 2025:

'Each year, the Dutch Independence Foundation awards the Dutch Independence Award to a thinker, creator or leader who distinguishes themselves through innovative insight and action in the realm of state sovereignty.

In 2025, this honor is bestowed upon Robert D. Kaplan, whose work in international relations and global power dynamics offers a groundbreaking contribution to our understanding of state independence in a shifting world order.

Mr. Kaplan operates in many capacities: as a thinker, author, and scholar. But as an unorthodox analyst, journalist and foreign correspondent, as well as a prominent consultant and lecturer, he is also an active participant in shaping international relations.

He does not approach independence as a static legal condition, but as a dynamic reality shaped by geography, history, and the balance of power.

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In an era when states may be legally sovereign yet practically dependent on global power blocs, Robert Kaplan offers a refreshingly realistic perspective. His work reminds us that true independence gains meaning only in the context of political stability, geographic reality, and cultural resilience.

In works such as 'The Revenge of Geography' and 'The Coming Anarchy', Kaplan demonstrates how physical and historical circumstances both constrain and direct political action.

His insights compel policymakers, diplomats, and citizens alike to develop a deeper understanding of what independence truly means.

Not as an idealistic endpoint, but as an ongoing process of adaptation and equilibrium.

The jury especially commends Mr. Kaplan's ability to make complex geopolitical structures accessible without resorting to oversimplification.

His work is not a call for cynicism, but for realism.

Realism that retains a sense of human scale and historical depth.'

For these reasons, it is my pleasure to present the Dutch Independence Award to Robert D. Kaplan for his innovative and influential contributions to thinking about independence, power, and stability in the 21st century.

Thank you.