

# A New Security Policy for Eastern Europe?

An Analytical Report by Dr Falk Bomsdorf

**Executive Summary**

Kharkiv, Kramatorsk and Sloviansk – Ukraine 2017



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NATO and the Different Perspectives in  
Security Demands in Eastern Europe

Hybrid Warfare and Propaganda

The Cyber War and Its Challenges

Future  
of  
Freedom

Annual Consultation for East and Southeast Europe

Organized by

Friedrich Naumann  
STIFTUNG **FÜR DIE FREIHEIT**

## Executive Summary

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The “Future of Freedom” Annual Consultation for East and Southeast Europe, which has been conducted since 2015 by the Regional Office of Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom for East and Southeast Europe, based in Sofia, Bulgaria, this year took place in Kharkiv as well as in Kramatorsk and Sloviansk in eastern Ukraine. Its focus was on the security of Eastern Europe—for good reasons, since there is a war being waged in that region. From 28 to 30 May 2017, representatives from 15 Eastern European countries as well as from Germany and from the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats in the European Parliament discussed the threats and dangers facing Eastern Europeans and ways to counter them.

In the foreground of the discussions was Russia. The Kremlin has abandoned the liberal model and has again started expansion through power politics. In pursuit of its meanwhile openly revisionist goals, Moscow is not limiting itself to the former member states of the Soviet Union, but is clearly trying to bring back into play the Russian influence in Eastern Europe. The Kremlin underpins its approach with a strong military component and its direct use, as the wars against Georgia and Ukraine show. Although not all participants shared the view that they are once again in the Cold War, it remained undisputed that the Eastern Europeans are on the frontline of democracy. It is in this perspective that the liberal democrats can no longer treat Russia as a partner, but must see a rival or even an opponent in it.

This is all the more so, as the participants unanimously stated, when the threat to their security from cyberspace also emanates from Russia. Like the West as a whole, Eastern Europeans see themselves as particularly vulnerable here—they are all highly computerised, with the result that the entire infrastructure, together with the government and the administration, is vulnerable to attacks from the internet, like they have already been made against Ukraine, Estonia and Bulgaria and have been attributed to Russia. Do such attacks mean war within the meaning of Article 5 of the NATO Statute? The participants were not sure; but they shared the conviction that Russia is in the meantime assuming a much more aggressive cyber posture than before.

The participants agreed that the dangers Eastern Europeans are facing are not only military in nature, but also stem from the socio-political, social-economic sphere in their own country. The mistakes committed here—such as the acquiescence in corruption—can grow into a bigger threat than the military one. Ultimately, many Eastern Europeans feel at risk due to the policies of important Western

European states, also including Germany in particular, which they regard as a unilateral orientation towards Russia.

Critical questions were raised as to whether NATO is taking into consideration the specificities and needs of Eastern Europe adequately. Can the Alliance currently deter the Kremlin at all? In any case, a clear strategy is needed for NATO's eastern flank. If the Alliance fails there, it will be the end of NATO. The deployment of four battalions to the Baltic States and to Poland is a step in the right direction. The Western European partners, however, need to step up their defence efforts to reinforce the credibility of their security policy.

With regard to Ukraine, the recommendation of the European liberals to strengthen the civilian component of security was agreed in principle, but met with scepticism from the Ukrainian participants: How can this be achieved if the big neighbour Russia is overrunning the country with war and the West does not want to help seriously? With regard to Ukraine and the war imposed on it, neither does the EU have a clear strategy nor is it demonstrating convincing political leadership. The excursion of the participants into the front-line cities in eastern Ukraine, in addition to the new insights gained there, made it clear that in its efforts to weaken Ukraine and to bring it back into the Empire, Russia has achieved exactly the opposite. Russia has lost Ukraine, some say forever.

What can liberals do for the security of Eastern Europe and thus for the security of Europe as a whole? *Firstly*, Western Europeans must engage with Eastern Europe and overcome their ignorance in this regard. *Secondly*, they must get off the high horse of those who think, with a paternalistic attitude, that they know what Eastern Europeans need to do and what not to do. *Thirdly*, they must counter the tendency to classify Eastern Europe only from a geopolitical point of view: as a buffer state which should protect Western Europe from Russia. *Fourthly*, all Europeans must do their homework and implement the main takeaways from the Kharkiv consultation: Security ultimately lies in the legitimation of the state and of society, in their sustainability. Accordingly, the political agenda for the liberal forces in Eastern Europe is: fulfil the demands of the constitution, implement a state under rule of law as well as a socially responsible state, and lead the daily battle against the enemies of open society. *Fifthly*, ultimately, the liberals in both Eastern and Western Europe have to be aware of who is confronting them on their eastern border in the form of Russia, what the Putin system is all about, and what kind of goals it pursues. The Germans have a special responsibility in all of this: They must keep Western and Eastern Europe together and counteract the recent significant increase in centrifugal forces. The German liberals are therefore called upon to do their utmost to advocate that Germany and the European Union invest in the stability of Eastern Europe and thus in the security of Europe.

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