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RUSSIA’S WAR: A EUROPEAN CHALLENGE FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF A NEUTRAL STATE

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Abstract

The reactions in Europe, particularly in the EU member states, to Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine have been very diverse, including those of neutral countries. While Finland and Sweden joined NATO as quickly as possible, Austria continues to uphold its neutrality.

Russia is waging a hybrid war against all of Europe, which includes influencing the information space. As we now know, Germany was identified by Russia as an easy target and has been subjected to particularly intense manipulation, mainly due to its influence on decision-making at the EU level. The aim of these attacks is to pull states away from the Western alliance and turn them into advocates for Moscow. The political extremes, especially right-wing populists, could be strengthened by targeted propaganda and disinformation, leading to societal division and state destabilization.

Due to the shared language space, attacks on Germany also significantly affect public opinion in Austria. Additionally, Austria’s neutrality has become another target of Russian influence.

In addition to the much-discussed attacks on the internet, particularly on social media, there are other, less obvious channels of influence. These include paid or unpaid influencers who spread Russian positions as politicians or experts on television, in books, discussions, newspapers, etc. In Austria, Russian agents have even infiltrated the domestic intelligence service. This poses a significant threat to our security.

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