

# 2015/6/1: We do not step into the same river

## We do not step into the same river

### A new European East-Policy has to be a realistic Russia-Policy (part 2)

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From the German and European point of view, for Ukraine a security-political culture of unilateral self-restraint is postulated. Like in a mantra, the Federal Government unanimously rejects any military assistance for Ukraine, regardless of the fact that its armed forces are hardly capable of action and only fit for very limited defence. The misgivings of the German chancellor Angela Merkel that western deliveries of arms would trigger dynamics of escalation are to be taken seriously. Equally justifiable, however, is the attitude of the Ukrainian president Petro Poroschenko, who assumes that lacking military defence capabilities might lead to offensive against the Ukrainian armed forces in East-Ukraine. The arsenals, however, are asymmetrically distributed in favour of the rebels. As has been described already, the military equipment of the Ukrainian army is in a disastrous condition. The Kurdish Peschmerga get German weapons for self-defence against the terrorist militia "Islamic State" (IS). The Ukrainian army, on the other hand, are deprived of such possibilities. There may be good reasons for this, but the politically interested citizen would like to be plausibly informed about them by the Federal Government. In this particular context one tends to ask the fundamental question as to the readiness, worthiness and capability for defence against a vastly superior adversary with the capability of dominating an escalation. The situation picture of 2014 made clear that NATO has only very limited capabilities to defend the Baltic States against a massive Russian offence, although it serves for enhancing conventional deterrence. On the other hand, does not especially Article 5 of the NATO-Treaty - with its declared assistance in the case of an armed offence, which represents the core of the alliance – pump security into its member states? In principle this is the case, but as is generally known, the thus triggered case of alliance does not automatically include military reactions. On the contrary, each member state of the alliance is free to decide of what kind its contribution will be in order to re-establish and preserve "the security of the North-Atlantic region". Thus, the spectrum of assistance reaches from a telegram of sympathy to the use of nuclear weapons. Under the code name „Eagle Guardian“, the military emergency plannings also include Poland and the Baltic states in case of a Russian offensive. Time and again, the political river connecting us with Russia both historically and culturally shows different degrees of cold and warmth. All attempts at converting it into a broad and deep channel of democracy have failed so far, because of the nature of its river bed which, over the centuries, on the Russian side, has been formed in a state-controlled way. This, however, will not and must not keep us from stepping into it time and again, with the hope and perspective for lasting commonalities. At the same time we are aware of the fact that it never is the same river, but it is bordered by trusted banks.