



Austrian Forum for Peace: Between Transatlantic Erosion and Geopolitical Reorientation

The second day of the conference was dedicated to the consequences of the end of the transatlantic leadership role of the USA

The second day of the Austrian Forum for Peace (1 July) focused on transatlantic shifts driven by the United States' retreat from its global leadership role. In panel discussions, international experts reflected on challenges and new strategies in peacebuilding, as well as Europe's relationship with Russia and current security dilemmas.

Transatlantic Drift and Europe's Search for New Responsibility

In the morning panel titled *"Transatlantic Drift – Who Will Lead on Peace and Human Security?"*, leading figures from research and diplomacy discussed Europe's current role in global peace policy.

Wolfgang **Petritsch**, President of the Austrian Institute for International Affairs (oiip), recalled the historical image of Europe as a "sleeping continent" after World War II—a condition that, he argued, now firmly belongs to the past. Geopolitical tensions on Europe's periphery and political upheavals within suggest a fundamental turning point. The cultural shifts associated with the rise of figures like Donald Trump are, in Petritsch's view, not the cause but rather a symptom of deeper transformations.

British peace researcher Oliver P. **Richmond** criticized the reversion to outdated frameworks and called for new conceptual thinking beyond state-centric categories. He emphasized that theories of peace and conflict studies must better address issues such as global, gender-based, historical, environmental, and

racial justice. At the same time, the U.S. has lost international trust—casting doubt on future partnerships.

The panel was moderated by Irene **Giner-Reichl**, former Permanent Representative of Austria to the United Nations in Vienna and former ambassador to China, Mongolia, Brazil, and Suriname.

Public Discussion: Rethinking Europe's Approach to Russia?

In the early evening, more than 100 guests attended a public panel discussion titled *"Europe without Washington? New Strategies for Dealing with Russia"*. Moderated by Damita **Pressl**, the lively debate featured Heinz **Gärtner** (University of Vienna), Alexander **Dubowy** (Eastern Europe analyst), Georg **Häsler** (NZZ), and former Austrian Foreign Minister Ursula **Plassnik**. The discussion revealed differing perspectives on the future of European security policy, on relations with Russia, and on the role of peacebuilding.

Gärtner referred to the historic significance of the CSCE (Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe), which made key contributions to supporting civil society movements in the Eastern Bloc during the 1970s—particularly in then-Czechoslovakia.

Plassnik emphasized the importance of multilateral efforts in light of the war in Ukraine. As an example, she cited the 2024 peace summit in Switzerland, where heads of state and government sought to bring



Russia to the negotiating table. At the same time, she criticized Austria's current security stance, arguing that modern security policy is no longer about symbolic principles, but rather about the concrete protection of the population, democratic institutions, and national territory.

Disinformation and Peace

The issue of hybrid warfare—especially through targeted disinformation—was also widely discussed. This topic will take center stage on today's conference agenda (2 July): before the traditional Burgfest celebration, the documentary *"How to Build a Truth Engine"* (executive producer: George Clooney) will be shown, free of charge. Director Friedrich Moser will be present afterward for an open discussion with the audience.

The Austrian Forum for Peace is made possible by the Province of Burgenland and with the support of: Bank Burgenland, BDO, Burgenland Energie, Kalchbrenner IT-Dienstleistungs GmbH, OSG, Siemens, Ströck and Wiener Städtische.

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