



CENTRAL AND EAST EUROPEAN COALITION

POLICY BRIEF

Spring 2013

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NATO AND SECURITY IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

Proactive U.S. leadership is vital to security cooperation with allies in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) through both the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and direct bilateral mechanisms. NATO remains an indispensable force for regional stability, providing member states with essential elements of physical and political security. Strengthening the alliance should remain a top U.S. priority.

The CEEC advocated for the successful enlargement of NATO from the Baltic to the Black Seas and strongly urges the U.S. Congress to support the NATO aspirations of Georgia and other qualified countries seeking membership. Georgian citizens have expressed their support for Georgia’s entry into NATO several times, and Georgia is a substantial contributor of troops to NATO and to other international coalitions in Asia and the Middle East. The CEEC supports the reintroduction of a bill similar to the NATO Enhancement Act, S. 2177, introduced in the last Congress, which would substantially strengthen NATO and NATO partnerships.

At the 2012 Chicago Summit, NATO decided to extend its commitment to protect the Baltic airspace until at least 2018. The agreement is an example of Smart Defense, demonstrating how the Alliance can balance its political and military needs in an economically efficient way. “The NATO air policing mission has both practical and political importance, it is the strongest signal of NATO’s presence in the Baltic region,” stated Estonian Defense Minister Urmas Reinsalu. The CEEC welcomes such measures.

The CEEC supports the efforts of the United States, bilaterally and through NATO, to protect cyber infrastructure from disruption and aggression. It further urges the United States, jointly with its NATO allies, to establish effective counter-measures against cyber attacks, cyber crime and cyber espionage. Acts of cyber aggression against NATO members also represent an ongoing security challenge to the United States.

Action Needed:

- **Support the reintroduction of a bill similar to the NATO Enhancement Act to encourage further enlargement of NATO and to deepen U.S. strategic partnerships with NATO allies.**
- **Support the NATO aspirations of Georgia and other qualified countries.**

DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE RULE OF LAW

The CEEC staunchly supports democracy and the indispensable elements of the rule of law, human rights, minority rights, and historical accuracy, all of which are especially important in the CEE region, considering its history, previous Soviet domination, and ethnic, national and religious diversity. While democracies have emerged and developed in CEE since the collapse of communism, issues remain to be resolved. An autocratic regime still reigns in Belarus. Vestiges of intolerance and discrimination against national minorities linger even within some countries that have joined Western institutions. Denial of crimes against humanity, including the Armenian and Ukrainian Genocides of 1915 and 1932-33, respectively, undermines the pillars of democracy.

Russian revisionist history denies or excuses Stalin-era atrocities and actions, such as the Holodomor (Famine-Genocide) in Ukraine, and the Soviet occupation and deportation of hundreds of thousands of CEE nationals. Russia's continual dissemination of propaganda that distorts and falsifies both current events and history is a powerful tool used to discredit and attack perceived adversaries. Democracy in Russia is threatened, as demonstrated by the repression of NGOs, election fraud and rampant corruption.

The Magnitsky Act was passed into law during the last Congress as part of the Russia Trade bill (Public Law No. 112-208). It is now up to the President (under Title IV), to submit to Congress by mid-April 2013 a list of names of individuals "responsible in the detention, abuse, or death" of Russian lawyer Sergei Magnitsky. The CEEC believes it is key that the law be fully implemented and expanded to include other human rights violators in the Russian Federation, to deny these individuals visa privileges to the United States, and to have their banking assets frozen. Moscow's increasing crackdown against its own citizens is troubling for Russia, for its neighbors in CEE, and for the United States. It is critical that the United States continue to help expose illegal activities by officials of the government of the Russian Federation, and to defend internationally recognized human rights and freedoms.

The Russian government also uses many avenues to influence and attempt to dominate the countries of the CEE region. These have included both political and military actions, economic manipulation (e.g., blocking energy transit, trade barriers, and cyber attacks), accusations of alleged maltreatment and discrimination against people of Russian descent living in CEE countries. In 2008, Russian troops forcibly annexed the Georgian territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, keeping heavy military presence in close proximity to the strategic East-West transportation corridor.

U.S. foreign policy countering Russia's attempts to reestablish a "sphere of influence" in the region should emphasize the promotion of democratic principles and institutions within the Russian Federation. The CEEC urges that U.S. foreign policy also include the aim of improving Russia's relations with its neighbor nations, and that such policy be pursued in a forceful and proactive manner.

The United States needs to lend its moral voice in instances where human rights abuses are implicated. For example, it should urge that the Men's World Ice Hockey Championships not occur in Belarus as long as political prisoners remain detained in that country. The CEEC also is concerned that the Russian Federation has exhibited insensitivity to local native Caucasus populations in using the Sochi Winter Olympics to further cultural imperialism, in addition to ignoring apparent massive corruption and environmental destruction in the Sochi region. The United States should use the opportunity to more closely scrutinize a Moscow regime that is increasingly running roughshod over its own citizens and minorities.

Action Needed:

- **Ensure that the Magnitsky Act is fully implemented, and continue to monitor human rights and corruption issues in the Russian Federation as outlined by the Magnitsky Act.**
- **Cosponsor a human rights bill affirming the Armenian Genocide, to be introduced by Rep. Adam Schiff (D-CA).**

IMMIGRATION AND VISA WAIVER PROGRAM

The CEEC supports fair and equitable immigration laws, which will include a pathway to citizenship.

The CEEC also believes that it is in the best interest of the United States to have the Visa Waiver Program expanded, especially to countries that have demonstrated a capacity and willingness to cooperate with the United States in achieving counter-terrorism goals.

The Visa Waiver Program (VWP) pilot allowed six EU countries from CEE (the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia) to join the VWP in 2008. However, for those not admitted during the pilot, such as Poland and others, an automatic reinstatement of the standard eligibility rules occurred in June 2009.

These rules include requiring the aspiring country to have less than a 3 percent visa refusal rate in order to be eligible for participation in the Program (as opposed to 10 percent that was set in the pilot). These rules have had the unfortunate effect for millions of CEE Americans, mostly of Polish descent, that their relatives still cannot travel freely to the United States.

The CEEC also supports the establishment of a new P visa category to cover groups and individuals coming to the United States for cultural/educational purposes at the invitation of a U.S.-based group with ethnic ties to the invitee's country. This new category includes those coming to present and/or teach ethnic or folk culture, music, theater, dance, or other artistic endeavors of the country of origin.

Action Needed:

- **Cosponsor H.R. 490 (introduced by Rep. Mike Quigley, D-IL) /S. 223 (introduced by Sen. Barbara Mikulski, D-MD), the Visa Waiver Program Enhanced Security and Reform Act currently under consideration in respective Committees on Judiciary that would allow for expansion of the VWP.**
- **Support any bill that would modify the VWP to allow further expansion and inclusion of the most dependable allies of the United States; examples include bills aiming to improve tourism (e.g., JOLT - Jobs Originated Through Launching Travel Act) or addressing various aspects of immigration reform.**
- **Support reform of immigration laws that would offer a pathway to citizenship.**

ENERGY

Energy affects the CEE region's political and economic viability, as well as its social stability. Russia is the current primary and, in many cases, sole source of gas and oil supplies, which it manipulates to attain its political and economic objectives. Evidence of such manipulation includes abrupt cut-offs of gas and oil to CEE countries, price escalations of natural gas to selected EU countries, redirection of gas transit routes through Nordstream (pipeline connection from Russia to Germany via the Baltic Sea), and reductions of gas supplies to Europe during the 2012 severe cold spell.

U.S. policy towards CEE should encourage and promote energy security and facilitate economic collaboration among countries in the region. In addition, the United States can greatly facilitate the region's energy diversification and independence by enacting bipartisan legislation, H.R. 580 and S. 192, the Expedited LNG for American Allies Act. The act seeks to help strengthen our strategic partnerships with key allies by streamlining the regulatory process to export natural gas to NATO countries, which would also reduce the U.S. trade deficit and boost domestic job growth. Furthermore, the United States should promote the development of shale gas technology, infrastructures for LNG distribution, and alternative energy sources, including the development of a natural gas transmission corridor from the Caspian region to CEE.

Additionally, Russian resources are being used to build two large nuclear power plants in Belarus and Kaliningrad. The proximity of the two plants to each other exposes parts of the CEE region's large population concentrations to potentially serious nuclear devastation in case of an accident. At a minimum, the United States should ensure compliance with internationally established standards and encourage the EU to monitor and influence these developments.

Action Needed:

- **Cosponsor bipartisan legislation, H.R. 580 and S. 192, the Expedited LNG for American Allies Act, introduced by Rep. Mike Turner (R-OH) and Sen. John Barrasso (R-WY).**
- **Support energy security and diversification programs in the region, with particular attention to safeguards and adherence to internationally established standards.**
- **Promote and support the planning and possible implementation process of a Southern Corridor for energy, connecting the Caspian basin via the Caucasus and Turkey to the CEE region.**

U.S. ASSISTANCE TO AND PROMOTION OF REGIONAL DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

While many countries within CEE have “graduated” from U.S. assistance programs under the SEED and FREEDOM Support Acts, U.S. funding should remain a priority for Armenia, Georgia, and Ukraine, and at a minimum should be maintained at current levels. Security Assistance Programs levels to the region, such as Foreign Military Financing (FMF) and International Military Education and Training (IMET), should also be maintained. Also, funds should continue to be devoted to promoting democracy in Belarus. Furthermore, financial and other support for governmental and non-governmental programs directed towards anti-corruption efforts and development of civil society in the region are critical.

Exchange programs, a part of public diplomacy, are an acknowledged and successful means of promoting international understanding, good will, and training to citizens of the United States and participating countries, and need to be continued.

Action Needed:

- **Join the Congressional Caucus on Central and East Europe.**
- **Maintain FMF and IMET funding levels for CEE countries.**
- **Support robust funding for the countries of Armenia, Georgia and Ukraine, and continued assistance funding to support democracy in Belarus.**
- **Maintain funding for educational and cultural exchange programs.**

BLACK RIBBON DAY

The CEEC supports the establishment of a national August 23 Black Ribbon Day, to honor and commemorate those who lost their lives, were tortured, deported, lost their property or otherwise suffered under the ravages of the Soviet Communist and Nazi regimes. These repressions touched many Americans of CEE extraction, being directly affected themselves, or having relatives and friends who suffered. The infamous Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact was signed on August 23, 1939, dividing Europe between the Soviet and Nazi regimes. In 2009, August 23 was designated Black Ribbon Day in Canada.

Action Needed:

- **Support designating August 23 as Black Ribbon Day, to commemorate the victims of Soviet Communist and Nazi regimes, and the date of the signing of the infamous Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact.**

CENTRAL AND EAST EUROPEAN COALITION

American Hungarian Federation	Washington Chapter Czechoslovak National Council of America	Lithuanian American Community
American Latvian Association in the U.S.	Estonian American National Council	National Federation of American Hungarians
Armenian Assembly of America	Georgian Association in the USA	Polish American Congress
Belarusan-American Association	Hungarian American Coalition	Slovak League of America
Bulgarian Institute for Research and Analysis	Joint Baltic American National Committee	Ukrainian Congress Committee of America
Congress of Romanian Americans	Lithuanian American Council	Ukrainian National Association