



CENTRAL AND EAST EUROPEAN COALITION

POLICY BRIEF

Fall 2014

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UKRAINE

The riveting Revolution of Dignity in Ukraine’s central Maidan square during the brutal winter months of November 2013-February 2014 demonstrated a people’s desire to define their nation’s political identity and focus their efforts to integrate into Western institutions.

In the context of U.S. geo-strategic interests, the current war in Ukraine cannot be understood without recognizing its potentially far-reaching consequences for the world’s security. Russian President Putin’s expansion of a “Russkiy Mir” (Russian World) includes tanks and armaments supplied to Russian-led terrorists in eastern Ukraine, and political, economic, social, cultural, and religious aggression and encroachment directed against Ukrainian sovereignty and other countries in the region. As a result, the Russian invasion of Ukraine is rightly viewed with alarm by our NATO allies, most particularly by those in Central Europe. It is a threat to the stable trans-Atlantic security framework that has emerged since the fall of the Soviet Union.

Ukraine’s inclusion into Euro-Atlantic structures clearly serves U.S. national interests. The security of the United States lies in the expansion of democracy, not in the appeasement of aggressor states making imperial claims. Furthermore, the United States has provided public and politically binding security guarantees, including the 1994 Trilateral Agreement which requires Washington’s engagement when Ukraine’s security is threatened. In exchange, Ukraine renounced its nuclear weapons and acceded to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) as a non-nuclear state. These assurances were critical for Ukraine and they included U.S., British, and Russian support for Ukraine’s independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity. Today, each of these security components has been compromised.

Action Needed:

- **Support H.R.5190, the "Ukraine Security Assistance Act of 2014," which provides \$100M of military assistance to Ukraine and designates Ukraine as a Major Non-NATO Ally (MNNA), introduced by Rep. Jim Gerlach (R-PA) and co-sponsored by Reps. Marcy Kaptur (D-OH) and Sander Levin (D-MI), co-chairs of the Congressional Ukrainian Caucus.**
- **Support H.R.5241, the "Crimea Annexation Non-recognition Act," which prohibits the United States from recognizing the de jure or de facto annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation, introduced by Rep. Gerald Connolly (D-VA).**
- **Demand withdrawal of covert and overt Russian forces and equipment from Ukraine and use sanctions to achieve such withdrawal.**

The crisis in Eastern Europe and Ukraine, specifically, will not just go away. In an informationally interconnected and economically interdependent world, the United States must take the lead in promoting international norms and consolidating geo-political stability. Today, Russia's intellectuals and democrats look towards Ukraine and the West for their inspiration and their hopes. With American support, a democratic, independent Ukraine can be that keystone of freedom in the region.

NATO AND SECURITY IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

Proactive U.S. leadership is vital to NATO's continued strength and effectiveness as a defensive alliance, which protects its member states as well as the peace and security of the European continent. Russia's invasion of Ukraine and continued escalation of armed conflict threatens both Ukraine's independence and the welfare of millions of people in Europe.

Russia is also pursuing intimidation of the Baltic countries, such as the kidnapping of an Estonian security official from Estonian territory, incursion into Baltic airspace by military air craft, large scale military exercises adjacent to Lithuania and Poland, a simulated arial nuclear attack of Warsaw, as well as disruption of sea traffic by unscheduled naval exercises within the Baltic countries' sea zone.

The CEEC welcomes NATO's decision, at its most recent summit in Wales, U.K., to establish a rapid reaction force of at least 4,000 troops for the defense of member states. We are also pleased that NATO will expand and enhance its partnership with Georgia and that NATO will hold the "Rapid Trident" and other joint exercises with Ukraine's armed forces. The CEEC has supported the increase of military training exercises in Europe, as well as the increase in NATO's air policing mission to protect NATO members in the Baltic Sea region, including naval surveillance in the Black Sea, since Russia began its military incursions in Ukraine this year. The CEEC believes it is time to establish permanent NATO bases in the Alliance's eastern member states, since any objection has been removed by Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The CEEC supports both increased NATO and U.S. bi-lateral military assistance to Ukraine to secure Ukraine's peace and security, as well as stability on NATO's eastern flank.

The CEEC advocated for the successful enlargement of NATO over the past two decades, and continues to urge the U.S. Congress to support NATO membership for Georgia and other qualified countries seeking membership. The CEEC supports the reintroduction of a bill similar to the NATO Enhancement Act, S. 2177, introduced in the 112th Congress, which would substantially strengthen NATO and NATO partnerships.

The CEEC supports the efforts of the United States, bilaterally and through NATO, to protect cyber infrastructure from disruption and aggression. This includes establishing effective counter-measures against cyber attacks, cyber crime and cyber espionage.

The CEEC also urges the United States to review its current planned missile defense system, and re-align it to more effectively protect all NATO member states, allies and partners.

Action Needed:

- **Establish permanent NATO bases in the Baltic region and provide increased training and weaponry to CEE countries.**
- **Support the reintroduction in the new Congress of a bill similar to the NATO Enhancement Act (112th Congress) to promote further enlargement of NATO and to deepen U.S. strategic partnership with NATO allies.**
- **Support NATO membership for Georgia and other qualified countries.**
- **Support increased spending for NATO operations and maintenance in FY 2015 through the U.S. Department of Defense appropriations bill.**
- **Provide lethal defense weaponry to Ukraine.**

VISA WAIVER PROGRAM AND IMMIGRATION REFORM

The CEEC 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 fair and equitable immigration laws, which will include a pathway to citizenship, as well as 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:

- **Support any legislation that would modify the VWP to allow further expansion and inclusion of the most dependable allies of the United States, such as Poland. Examples of such legislation include:**
 - **H.R. 1354, Jobs Originated Through Launching Travel Act (JOLT Act), introduced by Rep. Joe Heck (R-NV).**
 - **S.223 and H.R. 490, the Visa Waiver Program Enhanced Security and Reform Act introduced by Sen. Barbara Mikulski (D-MD) and Rep. Mike Quigley (D-IL).**
- **Support reform of immigration laws that offer a pathway to citizenship.**

ENERGY

Energy security and safety are vital to the energy deficient CEE region. Currently, Russia is the primary and, in many cases, sole source of gas and oil supplies, which it manipulates to attain its political and economic objectives. This is evident with abrupt cut-offs of gas and oil to CEE countries, price escalations to selected EU countries, redirection and/or reductions of gas supplies to Europe, such as disrupted natural gas supplies to Ukraine in June 2014.

U.S. policies could assure a secure and safe source of energy to the CEE countries. First, U.S. policy should facilitate immediate and prioritized export of its LNG supplies to NATO countries, and any other foreign country if the Secretary of State determines that such exportation promotes U.S. national security interests. Secondly, it is essential that U.S. policy support interconnection of electrical and gas resources with their western EU counterparts to improve efficient utilization of energy supplies.

Action Needed:

- **Co-sponsor 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 H.R. 2771 and H.R. 2471, Expedite Our Economy Act of 2013, introduced by Rep. Ted Poe (R-TX), to repeal the requirements under the Natural Gas Act for obtaining authorization for the exportation or importation of natural gas, and for other purposes.**
- **Support S. 2083, the American Job Creation and Strategic Alliances LNG Act, introduced by Sen. Mark Udall (D-CO), to expedite the application and approval process for importation or exportation of natural gas to a World Trade Organization member country.**

The passage of legislation to export LNG from the United States would loosen Russia's monopoly of energy supplies and their use for political manipulation throughout Europe. LNG exports will lead to the establishment of global gas markets with non-discriminatory pricing, thus making it difficult for Russia to dictate pricing based on geopolitics. A global LNG market would promote transparency in pricing and invigorate investments and economic developments.

The CEEC is particularly concerned about the operations and accident hazards posed by a nuclear power plant being constructed in Belarus just across from Lithuania's border and just 30 miles away from Lithuania's capital Vilnius with a population of about 700,000. The United States should actively advocate for full compliance of any new nuclear power plant with internationally established safety standards and monitoring while such plants are constructed.

The United States has to re-engage in energy diplomacy in the Caspian region to make sure that resources of the region contribute to the energy security of CEE. The functioning infrastructure, that allows hydrocarbons from the Caspian region to be shipped to European markets, is a vivid demonstration of the success of proactive U.S. diplomacy in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Development of the Southern Gas Corridor, that will ensure delivery of natural gas resources from the eastern and western shores of the Caspian Sea to Europe via the South Caucasus and Turkey, has to be reinstated as a major policy priority of the U.S. government.

To assure a safe and secure supply of energy in the CEE region, the United States should endorse and encourage the development of a unified plan for natural gas sourcing, infrastructure (connectivity, pipes, storage), and integration of electrical systems. To achieve this, the transfer and implementation of innovative technologies for energy efficiency and environmentally friendly production of local natural resources need to be facilitated with appropriate financial incentives. Activities involving the transfer of technological innovation and training would result in job creation in both the United States and CEE countries.

DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS, THE RULE OF LAW, AND THE INFORMATION WAR

The CEEC staunchly supports democracy and the indispensable elements of the rule of law, human rights, minority rights, freedom of the press 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.

Action Needed:

- **Ensure that Magnitsky Act sanctions against the Putin regime are fully implemented. The United States should continue to closely monitor human rights and corruption issues in the Russian Federation as required by the Magnitsky Act.**
- **Co-sponsor a human rights bill affirming the Armenian Genocide, H.R. 227, introduced by Rep. David Valadao (R-CA), which calls on the President to work toward: (1) equitable and durable Armenian-Turkish relations based upon Turkey's acknowledgment of the facts and consequences of the Armenian Genocide, and (2) a comprehensive international resolution of this crime against humanity.**
- **Pass the Senate version of H.R. 4490, the bipartisan United States International Communications Reform Act of 2014, sponsored by Ed Royce (R-CA) and Eliot Engel (D-NY), to ensure that U.S. international broadcasting efforts effectively counter Russian disinformation.**

The Russian government uses many avenues in its attempts to dominate the countries of the CEE region. Putin's ongoing war in Ukraine is just one example. Others include 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, and also disinformation and propaganda. 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. In 2014, Russian troops forcibly annexed Crimea, and are attempting to take over parts of Eastern Ukraine.

Russia sees the aspirations of neighboring CEE countries toward integration with the European Union as a threat. As a reaction, it has threatened economic ramifications should aspiring countries advance EU Association Agreements and has pressured them to join an alternative Russian-dominated Eurasian Customs Union. 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 the United States to condemn Russia's blatant intimidation and attempts to undermine the independence of countries in the region. U.S. policies towards Russia in this regard should be pursued in a forceful and proactive manner.

To deter Russia, the CEEC urges strong sanctions – visa restrictions and asset freezes against individuals. The CEEC strongly supported the Magnitsky Act, which was passed into law during the last Congress as part of the Russia Trade bill (Public Law No. 112-208). In the spirit of that law, the CEEC believes that the provisions need be fully implemented and expanded to include other human rights violators in the Russian Federation. While Putin's crimes against Ukraine are growing, Moscow's increasing crackdown against its own citizens is troubling for Russia's internal growth. This also does not bode well for its neighbors in CEE, and for the United States. Until human rights are respected by Russia, both outside of and within its borders, it is critical that the United States continue to help expose violations by the Russian Federation, and to defend internationally recognized human rights and freedoms.

Russian revision of history denies or excuses Stalin-era atrocities and actions, such as the Holodomor (Famine-Genocide) in Ukraine, Soviet occupation of CEE countries, murder and deportation of millions of CEE nationals. Russia's propaganda distorts and falsifies both current events and history. It 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 United States needs to lend its moral voice against human rights abuses. The United States needs to counter Putin via the airwaves, to expose Moscow's lies and present our values via competent and fully-funded U.S. international broadcasting. The CEEC supports important reforms to address the Broadcasting Board of Governors' management structure, clarify the mission of our international broadcasters, and empower our journalists.

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. Security Assistance Programs levels to the region, such as Foreign Military Financing (FMF) and International Military Education and Training (IMET), should be enhanced. 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.**
- **Enhance 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.**

TRADE AND ECONOMIC INTEGRATION

An essential component to achieving and maintaining well-functioning democracies in CEE is having healthy and growing economies. The CEEC favors policies and reforms that encourage the continued integration of CEE countries into Western institutional structures, thus supporting their economic development. The CEEC supports expansion of opportunities to realize the benefits of economic growth, through increased trade, and market economic systems based on the rule of law, appropriate regulation, transparency, and ethical business practices.

Action needed:

- **Actively support and implement U.S. foreign and defense policies that strengthen CEE countries in moving toward greater integration with Western institutions.**
- **Monitor TTIP negotiations to ensure that the agreement mutually benefits the United States and the countries of the CEE region.**

Currently, a number of CEE countries are in various stages of pursuing increased economic integration with Western institutions, particularly through adoption of Association Agreements (AA) with the European Union. The CEEC opposes Russia's pressure on the acceding countries to defect from the AA process and instead, move toward integration with a Russia-dominated customs union. The CEEC strongly favors the continued integration of CEE countries in Western institutions, and believes that the active support of U.S. foreign and defense policy is crucial to success of the integration process.

A number of CEE countries that are well integrated into EU institutions are striving to improve their economic performance, provide better employment opportunities, and adjust to the challenges of a dynamic, competitive world economy. The CEEC supports the proposed Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership agreement (TTIP). The agreement aims to expand the already robust economic relationship between the United States and the EU, through further reduction of tariffs, and better coordination of regulatory regimes which will support trade-in-services and encourage a robust investment climate. The CEEC seeks to ensure that the agreement benefits both the United States and the countries of the CEE region.

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. National Black Ribbon Day is already officially observed by EU members, Canada and Georgia. Legislation designating August 23 as a “Black Ribbon Day” passed on May 22, 2014, in the U.S. House of Representatives as part of a National Defense Authorization Act (H.R. 4435), and must now be taken up by the Senate. A conference committee of both houses must work out any differences.

Action Needed:

Support Black Ribbon Day legislation in the Senate through passage of Sec. 1266 of the House Committee Report 113-460 (H.R. 4435).

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
Belarusian-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