



April 2023, 118th Congress

CEEC Policy Brief

Russia's invasion of Ukraine and its continuing wars of aggression have finally awakened the world into recognizing and responding to Russia's (sic) imperialism. Many of the 20 million Americans whose heritage lies in the Central and East European (CEE) region are descended from refugees of Russian imperialism and serve as a warning for us to not be naïve. Unless Russian imperialism is defeated, we risk the freedom, democracy, and sovereignty of the Free World. Therefore, every effort must be taken to combat hybrid warfare, military aggression, disinformation, cyber-attacks, corruption, energy weaponization, nuclear threats, and crimes against humanity. CEEC believes that a decisive Ukrainian victory matters for the national security for the United States and its NATO allies.

Below are our policy recommendations for this Session of Congress.

NATO/Regional Security Assistance

The United States and our NATO allies must totally commit to Ukraine's victory over the invading Russian forces and to Ukraine's liberation of its occupied territories. We urge sustained support from Congress and the Biden Administration for all requested military support and equipment in a timely manner to ensure Ukraine's victory. To deter Russian aggression against NATO allies bordering Russia, we request increased military assistance to Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania vis-à-vis Foreign Military Financing (FMF), and Baltic Security Initiative appropriations, and in the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA).

U.S. leadership in a strong and unified NATO is the cornerstone of security for all of Europe, and especially the CEE countries, including our indispensable allies like Poland, which hosts the U.S. Enhanced Forward Presence deployment. To provide security, we urge pathways for Ukraine and Georgia to join NATO. The CEEC strongly supports continued and increased U.S. military cooperation with our NATO and non-NATO partners, including the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative. We welcome European Deterrence Initiative authorizations and increases in FMF funding for all nations in the region, as well as for NATO-qualified nations, including Georgia and Ukraine. We also support NATO membership for Sweden and look forward to seeing its candidacy progress by the time of the NATO Summit in Lithuania in July 2023.

The CEEC supports the efforts of the people of Belarus, led by Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, who continue to fight for freedom from the Lukashenka regime. Thousands of Belarusian political prisoners continue to be detained, and we urge the U.S. to act for their release.

We support:

- H.R.535 – Defending Ukraine's Territorial Integrity Act.
- S.Res.72 – Designating Russian actions in Ukraine as genocide.
- Expressing the Ukrainian famine (Holodomor) is recognized as a genocide.
- S.804 (IS) Black Sea Security Act of 2023
- H.R.1680- Black Sea Security Act of 2023 (introduced by Keating and Turner).

State Sponsor of Terrorism

We urgently call upon U.S. and NATO leaders to pass the following legislation and act to designate Russia a state sponsor of terrorism (SST), and the private mercenary Wagner Group a foreign terrorist organization (FTO):

- H.R. 506 and S.416: Holding Accountable Russian Mercenaries (HARM) Act to designate Wagner Group a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO).
- Russia as a State Sponsor of Terrorism Act (no bill introduced yet)
- H.R. 294: Non-Recognition of Russian Annexation of Ukrainian Territory Act.
- H. Res. 41: Urgently call for justice for all atrocities committed by members of Russia's forces in Ukraine.
- H.Res.154 and S.Res.72: Recognizing Russian actions in Ukraine as a genocide-explicitly condemn the genocide of Ukrainians and supports tribunals and international criminal investigations.
- Provide necessary resources to investigate and prosecute Russian war crimes in Ukraine.
- H.Con.Res.29 - Condemning the Russian Federation's kidnapping of Ukrainian children.
- S. Res 128 - Condemning the Russian Federation's kidnapping of Ukrainian children.

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Energy Security

The Three Seas Initiative (3SI) is a forum of countries located between the Baltic, Adriatic and Black Seas. It will host a summit in Romania this summer. The CEEC strongly supports all the priorities of the 3SI, the continued U.S. support, and European north-south connectivity, as well as the development of infrastructure networks and digital services within these 12 countries (Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, the Slovak Republic, and Slovenia) and its new partner, Ukraine. We also urge the inclusion of Georgia as a partner nation within 3SI to strengthen Georgian economic freedom from Russian threats.

Cybersecurity

Despite intense cyberattack attempts, Russia's cyber capabilities have been largely inconsequential in its territorial advancement in Ukraine. However, Russian cyber intrusions have been more successful in gathering intelligence assets. This was widely revealed during the release of U.S. top secret information in April. The War in Ukraine is the first major conflict to widely use cyber capabilities. As such, Congress should continue to be prepared to enhance U.S., NATO, and Ukrainian cyber defense capabilities and operations to spread awareness in countering these persistent threats.

Disinformation

Russia's most successful export is undoubtedly the spreading of false information to mislead enemies abroad and prevent its own citizens from learning the truth about the outside world. These psychological operations (psy-ops) are mostly executed through social media platforms; and through local proxies, who willingly and unknowingly amplify Russian false information both online and offline. When it comes to election interference, Russia manipulates Western democracies through influence campaigns by promoting socio/economic divisions and tensions. We must properly support U.S. government anti-disinformation policies/initiatives at DHS and DOS, and the Global Engagement Center, to counter Russian influence campaigns in their amplification of divisive political issues.

Sanctions

Sanctions on the federal and state level should be implemented at the fullest extent of the law to cripple Russia's economic ability to wage war. We believe that sanctions imposed by the Countering America's Adversaries through the Sanctions Act (CAATSA) are commendable but have left loopholes. Designating Russia as a state sponsor of terrorism will ensure that these loopholes will be sealed. Congress also has the power and should investigate corporate compliance with sanctions. On the state level, states should cut their contracts with Russian and Belarusian entities, as well as divest their public funds from Russian and Belarusian assets.

Kleptocracy

For years, the world has watched Putin's kleptocratic mafia organization, which masquerades as the Russian government, terrorize Russia's neighbors and wreak increasing havoc around the world. Putin's kleptocracy and weaponization of corruption remain major threats against democracies in Europe and beyond. We commend Congress for establishing the bipartisan Congressional Caucus against Foreign Corruption and Kleptocracy and support further Congressional action through the reintroduction and/or enactment of the following legislation:

- Justice for Victims of Kleptocracy Act: (HR 137 Rep. Cohen, no Senate companion)
- Revealing and Explaining Visa Exclusions for Accountability and Legitimacy Act (REVEAL). (No 118th Congress bill yet)
- Combatting Global Corruption Act (HR 457 Rep. Cohen/S. 53 Sen. Cardin)
- Golden Visa Accountability Act (No 118th Congress bill yet)
- Transnational Repression Accountability and Prevention Act (TRAP). (No 118th Congress bill yet)
- Counter-Kleptocracy Act (No 118th Congress bill yet)
- Countering Russian and Other Overseas Kleptocracy Act (CROOK) (No 118th Congress bill yet)

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