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U.S. Policy in Ukraine: Countering Russia and Driving Reform

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Testimony by

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Chairman Corker, Ranking Member Menendez, Members of the Committee, thank you for the invitation to speak this morning. It is an honor.

Over one year has passed since Moscow began its invasion of Ukraine, introducing to the world a new term: “little green men.” Using these troops over 11 months ago, the Kremlin began its hybrid war in Ukraine’s east. The political class in Washington, policy makers, and influence wielders are slowly coming to understand what is going on. In the most powerful capitals in Europe, the process is even slower. Only in the eastern reaches of Europe – Poland, the Baltic States, Romania, Moldova, Georgia — is the crisis in Ukraine properly understood. That is no surprise. Proper understanding of the crisis and an adequate response is essential for the very survival of these states.

Ukraine, the states of the former Soviet Union, NATO, and the EU face the problem of Kremlin revisionism. President Putin has stated on numerous occasions his dissatisfaction with the peace in Europe and Eurasia established at the end of the Cold War. He has at his disposal substantial means for acting on his dissatisfaction and most important of all, he has used those means. It is time policymakers in major capitals understood this.

The Post Cold War Order

What is the post-Cold War order that Mr. Putin finds so objectionable? It is the peace that emerged just before and after the dissolution of the Soviet Union with the following traits:

- the countries that were subservient to Moscow in the Warsaw Pact pursued independent internal and foreign policies;
- due to an agreement accepted by the leaders of Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and Kazakhstan, the Soviet Union dissolved and its constituent republics became independent states. (It is important to note that this decision was taken exclusively by Russian and other leaders in

the Soviet Union. The West played no part in this and then President George H.W. Bush even advised against it.);

- it was understood that disputes in Europe would be resolved only by negotiations and other peaceful means;
- the tensions and geopolitical competition that characterized 20th century Europe and made it history's bloodiest were a thing of the past;
- to reduce political tensions and to promote prosperity, European integration would continue, including the countries of the former Soviet bloc; and
- Russia and the West were now partners, and ever closer relations were in prospect.

The Putin Doctrine

Mr. Putin, senior Russian officials, and commentators have made their views of the post-Cold War order clear. In numerous statements Mr. Putin and other senior Russia officials have:

- called for a Russian sphere of influence in the former Soviet space;
- described Georgia, Ukraine, and now Kazakhstan as failed or artificial states;
- asserted Moscow's right and even duty to protect not just ethnic Russians, but Russian speakers wherever they happen to reside. (Russian speakers make up 25 percent of the population of Kazakhstan; as well as our NATO allies Estonia and Latvia. There are also significant Russian populations in countries that used to be part of the Soviet Union.); and
- called for new rules for the post-Cold War order, or "there will be no rules."

The Kremlin Tool Box for Undermining the Peace of Europe and Eurasia

To understand the challenges posed by a country, it is necessary to understand not only its intention, but also its potential. To his credit, Mr. Putin has overseen the rebirth of a strong Russia. He has accomplished this by establishing some stability in the political system; instituting sound fiscal policies; permitting, within certain limits, entrepreneurs to make business decisions; and inviting Western investors. He was also a major beneficiary of the rise of gas and oil prices.

Mr. Putin presides over the world's sixth-largest economy. He controls one of the world's two largest nuclear arsenals, the strongest conventional military in Europe, and the world's second-largest arms industry. In short, Mr. Putin's revisionist intentions are supported by a substantial economy—albeit one under pressure due to falling hydrocarbon prices—and one of the world's three most powerful militaries.

Were Moscow's attack on the post-Cold War order purely rhetorical, it would be problematic, but manageable. Unfortunately, this assault has been comprehensive. It involves Russia's information apparatus, intelligence services, criminal networks, business community, and military.

The heavily subsidized Russian media has been conducting a virulent anti-Western and particularly anti-American campaign for years. Mr. Putin's media have fanned xenophobia and

intolerance throughout Russia. This campaign has been part of Mr. Putin's effort to 1) reduce the chance that the Russian people are attracted to democratic ideas, and 2) mobilize the Russian people to support his aggression in neighboring countries.

Russian intelligence services and connected criminal networks play an important part in Mr. Putin's efforts to undermine the post-Cold War order. First, we should note that the very organization of Moscow's intelligence agencies provides a clue to its intentions. The Soviet Union's intelligence service (the KGB) was split in half. The FSB was given responsibility for domestic security. The SVR was given responsibility for foreign intelligence. The fact that the independent states of the former Soviet Union were the responsibility of the FSB tells us what Moscow thinks of their independence.

A main purpose of the FSB—and the GRU, Russian military intelligence—is to penetrate the security organs of the neighboring states to ensure that they will promote Russian interests as defined by the Kremlin. That includes, as we have seen in Ukraine, making sure that the military, police, and intelligence will not mobilize against Russian-led insurrection or invasion.

Corruption, a major feature of Mr. Putin's Russia, is an important tool for the Kremlin in promoting its influence in the Near Abroad. The Kremlin understands that corrupt foreign officials are more pliant. Cooperation between Russian intelligence services and criminal organizations figures here. For instance, the siphoning off of vast resources from the gas sector into private hands has created a huge scandal in Russia and Ukraine. Shadowy companies—Eural Trans Gas, RosUkrEnerg—were set up as operators in a scheme put together by Semion Mogilevich, a major Russian crime boss.

As he consolidated power in Moscow, Mr. Putin established that Russian companies were subject to Kremlin control to promote objectives abroad. Gas and oil production is the heart of Russia's economy. Mr. Putin has used these assets to promote his foreign policy in a number of ways. He has built gas pipelines to Western Europe around Ukraine and even ally Belarus so that he can use gas as a weapon against these countries, while maintaining access to his wealthy customers in the West. He has hired shameless senior European officials to work as front men in his companies.

Gazprom has established business practices regarding the carrying of Central Asian gas in its pipelines and the delivery of gas to European customers that violate EU energy policy and maximizes Russian leverage in dealing with individual countries. For instance, Gazprom practices have made it harder for European countries to supply gas to Ukraine. This is done so that the Kremlin can punish Kyiv by cutting off the supply of gas. Lucrative arrangements with specific companies in select EU countries also build constituencies that will support Kremlin foreign policies.

As a last resort, of course, Mr. Putin has modernized and rebuilt the Russian military; and he has not hesitated to use it in pursuit of his revisionist objectives in Georgia and Ukraine.

The Kremlin Record Before the Ukraine Crisis

The crisis in Ukraine originated not in Ukraine, but in the minds of Mr. Putin and the Russian security elite that find the post-Cold War order unacceptable. While the broad extent of

today's crisis is Mr. Putin's responsibility, its roots go back to imperialist thinking in Russian security circles since the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

In this respect, I commend to the committee Serhii Plokhy's excellent work, "The Last Empire: The Final Days of the Soviet Union." Dr. Plokhy describes how even Mikhail Gorbachev and Boris Yeltsin objected to Ukraine's 1991 referendum, in which 91 percent of the Ukrainians, including 54 percent in Crimea, voted for independence from the Soviet Union (and Russia). It is worth noting, too, that when the results of the Ukrainian referendum became clear, these two relatively liberal Russian politicians began to assert Moscow's right to protect Russians in Ukraine—the same "principle" that Mr. Putin has been using to justify his aggression.

From the very first days of the post-Soviet world, Moscow's security services developed the "frozen conflict" tactic to limit the sovereignty of its neighbors. It supported Armenian separatists in the Azerbaijan region of Nagorno-Karabakh in order to exert pressure on Azeris, South Ossetians, Ajarians, and the Abkhaz in Georgia to pressure Tbilisi, and the Slavs in Transnistria to keep Chisinau in check. For those who mistakenly blame current tensions with Moscow on the West, it is worth noting that Moscow had its frozen conflicts policy in place before discussions of NATO enlargement.

Russian activity in the Near Abroad in the 1990s was just a prelude to Mr. Putin's policies. He unleashed a massive cyber attack on Estonia in 2007 to express his unhappiness with a decision to take down a memorial to the Red Army in Tallinn. This attack took full advantage of the security service-criminal nexus in Russia described above. (Due to corruption, Russia, a nation rich in mathematicians, has not produced a world-class cyber company, but it does have the world's best hackers.). While it was clear that the attack in Estonia originated in Moscow, the West chose not to state this clearly or to make it an issue in its relationship with Mr. Putin.

In 2008, Moscow provoked a conflict with Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili and used its army to defeat the Georgian military. In that same year, Moscow recognized Georgia's breakaway regions as independent. Moscow's aggression was condemned in the West, albeit to varying degrees. It is both amusing and sad to note in retrospect that then French President Nicolas Sarkozy agreed to sell Moscow the Mistral aircraft carrier as a reward for observing the ceasefire that he had negotiated.

This episode revealed a weakness of Western diplomacy toward Russia that Mr. Putin has been exploiting regularly in the current Ukrainian crisis. Mr. Putin commits an act of aggression, threatens further aggression, and then graciously accepts Western gifts in exchange for not escalating the violence. While the American response to Mr. Putin's aggression was not craven, President Obama launched his naive reset with Mr. Putin only a year after the Georgian war.

Mr. Putin's Ukraine Adventure and the West's Reaction

Mr. Putin's adventure in Ukraine began when he decided at some point in 2013 that it would be unacceptable for Ukraine to sign a trade agreement with the EU. This prospect had not disturbed him in the past. When I served as Ambassador in Ukraine, it was clear that Moscow strongly opposed NATO membership for Ukraine, but it had not taken a position against EU

membership for the country. And of course, the prospective trade agreement was a good deal short of membership. It is important to remember this when reading the arguments of those who claim that this crisis is actually due to NATO enlargement.

Most Ukrainians, including then President Yanukovich, who was often described as pro-Kremlin (a simplification), wanted the EU deal. Partly due to Kremlin pressure — Moscow had been banning Ukrainian exports — Mr. Yanukovich backed away from the trade deal in late November 2013. The next day, there were tens of thousands of demonstrators on the streets of Kyiv protesting this decision. When Mr. Yanukovich tried to clear the streets with strong-arm policing, he roused hundreds of thousands of demonstrators, tired of his corrupt and increasingly authoritarian rule. Mr. Putin's offers of lower gas prices and a loan of \$15 billion did not satisfy the demonstrators. For two months Mr. Yanukovich alternated between police methods and inadequate concessions to persuade the protestors to go home. He failed. Sergei Glaziyev, Mr. Putin's principal adviser on Ukraine, was publicly urging Mr. Yanukovich to use force to deal with the protesters.

Finally in late February 2014, Mr. Yanukovich either permitted or ordered the use of sniper fire to terrorize the protesters into leaving the streets. A hundred people died as a result. But the demonstrators did not leave the streets; they were enraged and Mr. Yanukovich's political support collapsed. He fled the country a few days later for Russia.

In response, the Kremlin launched its invasion of Crimea with "little green men," who looked like and were equipped like Russian soldiers, but without the insignias and flags of the Russian military. The U.S. and Europe placed some mild economic sanctions on Russia in response. They were also making every effort in private diplomacy and public statements to offer Mr. Putin an "off ramp" for the crisis. That the West had such a tender regard for Mr. Putin's dignity was not unnoticed in the Kremlin and certainly made Mr. Putin's decision to launch his hybrid war in the Donbass easier. The Sarkozy model was holding and has yet to be broken.

Since Mr. Putin launched his decreasingly covert war in Ukraine's East, he has escalated his intervention several times. It began last April with Russian leadership, arms, and money. When Ukraine launched its counteroffensive under newly elected President Poroshenko last June, the Kremlin sent in increasingly sophisticated weapons (including the missile system that shot down the Malaysian airliner in July), more mercenaries (including the Vostok Battalion of Chechens), and finally the Russian army itself in August. Only the use of regular Russian forces stopped the Ukrainian counteroffensive. Throughout this period, the West was slow and weak in confronting the Kremlin. For instance, the G-7 leaders had warned Mr. Putin in early June that if he did not cease his intervention in Ukraine by the end of the month, Russia would face sectoral sanctions. Yet by the end of June, despite the introduction of major Russian weapons systems into Ukraine, there was no more talk of sectoral sanctions. Only the downing of the Malaysian passenger jet in July and the invasion by Russian troops persuaded the Europeans to put those sanctions in place.

After the regular Russian forces defeated the Ukrainian army in early September, Germany and France helped negotiate the Minsk I ceasefire. However, Russia repeatedly violated its agreement by introducing more military equipment and supplies into Ukraine and taking an additional 500 square kilometers of Ukrainian territory. This escalated aggression did not lead to any additional sanctions last year.

Despite the Russian offensive that greeted the New Year, EU foreign policy chief Mogherini was floating the idea of easing sanctions. As the violence increased, Ms. Mogherini dropped the subject. But in February, Germany and France helped negotiate a new ceasefire, Minsk II, with terms far worse for Ukraine. Mr. Putin certainly enjoyed this process. The Sarkozy pattern was unbroken. For violating Minsk I, Mr. Putin received a much more favorable ceasefire, which he promptly violated by seizing the strategic town of Debaltseve. And why not? While Western leaders huff and puff at each new Kremlin aggression, they hope out loud that this is the last one. And then, occasionally they levy additional sanctions on Russia.

What the West Should Expect Next From the Kremlin

Nowhere has Mr. Putin stated clearly what he needs to stop his war against Ukraine. Western leaders have fallen all over themselves offering solutions publicly and privately to assuage the Russian strongman, but to no avail. There is a simple reason for this. Mr. Putin's objective in Ukraine is, at a maximum, to establish a compliant regime in Kyiv. This is something that he cannot achieve, because a large majority of Ukrainian citizens despise him for the bloody war that he unleashed. His minimum objective is to destabilize the country, so that it cannot effectively reform itself and orient its policy toward Europe.

Mr. Putin has not stated these objectives formally, because they are things he cannot admit in polite society. But destabilizing Ukraine means that he cannot sit still in the territories that have already been conquered by his proxies. He has to continually stir the pot by military action and/or terrorism/subversion. A good example of terror was the bombs set off in Kharkiv that killed demonstrators at last month's rally honoring those killed by snipers on Kyiv's Maidan Square.

Leaders in Washington, London, Berlin, and Paris need to understand what their counterparts in Warsaw, Riga, Tallinn, and Vilnius understand: that Kremlin ambitions go beyond Ukraine. If the West does not stop Mr. Putin now, they will find him revising the post-Cold War order elsewhere. It is time to break the Sarkozy pattern.

Mr. Putin is not hiding his ambitions. While we do not know precisely where he may move next, we know the candidates. The Kremlin has proclaimed its right to a sphere of influence throughout the post-Soviet space, as well as its right to protect ethnic Russians and Russian-speakers wherever they reside. This just happens to include the entire post-Soviet space, including some countries that were never part of the Soviet Union, but were members of the Warsaw Pact. Kazakhstan's Russian-speaking Slavic community is 25 percent of its population. The same is true in Estonia and Latvia.

Last August, Mr. Putin called Kazakhstan an artificial country created by the genius of President Nazarbayev. Mr. Putin noted that Russians in Kazakhstan faced no ill treatment under President Nazarbayev, but speculated that problems could arise once he passes the scene. Kazakhstan's Slavs are located along the border with Russia, in areas that contain a good percentage of the country's oil resources. Just as the West's weak reaction to Moscow's Georgian invasion emboldened Mr. Putin to strike in Ukraine, so too will a Western-tolerated Kremlin victory in Ukraine endanger the former states of the Soviet Union. Is that an acceptable outcome for Western statesmen?

The danger goes beyond the grey zone, to states that enjoy membership in the EU and NATO. While never recognized by the United States, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania were incorporated into the Soviet Union; and two of those states have large Slavic communities. A good number of serious thinkers and statesmen say that Mr. Putin's reach will not extend to the Baltic States, because they are members of NATO and have Article 5 protection under the NATO Charter. That is, of course, a critical deterrent, but does Mr. Putin understand this?

Mr. Putin has wondered publicly, as have other senior Russian officials, why NATO is still in existence. After all, they opine, it was created to stop the Soviet Union, which dissolved 25 years ago. It is no secret that the Kremlin would like to weaken the alliance. Mr. Putin has been playing games in the Baltics to probe for weaknesses and to challenge the applicability of Article 5. The list is not small. In 2007, he unleashed the devastating cyber-attack on Estonia. Last September, on the day that the NATO summit ended (two days after the visit of President Obama to Tallinn), the Kremlin seized an Estonian counter-intelligence officer from Estonia. A few weeks later, Russia seized a Lithuanian ship from international waters in the Baltic Sea.

What the United States and the West Must Do

First, Western leaders need to understand the nature of Mr. Putin's threat. In charge of one of the world's most formidable militaries and a large economy, he is intent on upsetting the post-Cold War order. He represents a threat to global order far larger than ISIL, and notably larger than a radical-Mullah-run Iran seeking nuclear weapons. NATO statesmen who labeled ISIL and not Russia an existential threat to the alliance will be figures of fun for future historians.

Recognizing this means that we will cease to take seriously the argument that we must let Mr. Putin violate the sovereignty of multiple neighbors in order to get his help with Iran and ISIL. It would also mean that we would spend more resources dealing with the Kremlin menace than we devote to ISIL.

This last point is especially important in the intelligence area. The intelligence resources that we devote to an aggressive nuclear superpower is significantly less than what we use to monitor a rag tag bunch of terrorists numbering no more than 20,000. It also matters when looking at financial and military support for Ukraine, as we will discuss below.

If we understand that Mr. Putin's ambitions extend to the entire post-Soviet space, including perhaps our Baltic NATO allies, we recognize that we have significant interest in stopping Mr. Putin's aggression in Ukraine. We do not want Mr. Putin's grasping hand extending to additional countries, and we have a vital interest in stopping him if he moves against Estonia, Latvia or Lithuania. It is very much in our interest to make his life so uncomfortable in Ukraine that the Kremlin thinks twice about additional aggression.

First, on Ukraine.

Sanctions

In Ukraine, our short and middle term objectives should be to prevent further Russian aggression, which will allow President Poroshenko to reform and develop Ukraine in peace. That is

not easy to do, since Mr. Putin's plan is precisely the opposite, to keep the pot boiling. Our policy should not be to refrain from taking any "provocative" action, in the hopes that this time the Kremlin will actually observe the Minsk II ceasefire. This approach has failed multiple times for over a year. It guarantees that the crisis will escalate, because the only world leader who believes that there is a military solution to the Ukraine crisis has an office in Red Square.

To increase the odds that Mr. Putin does not move beyond the current ceasefire line, we must address his vulnerabilities. He has at least two. First of all, his implicit deal with the Russian people is that he delivers prosperity and they let him rule the country. The Russian economy is under serious pressure today because of the sectoral sanctions levied last summer by the U.S. and EU, in addition to the sharp fall of hydrocarbon prices. The sanctions will bite harder with time, especially if oil prices remain low.

The last serious sanctions were put in place last September. Since then, Moscow has taken over 500 square kilometers of additional Ukrainian territory and violated both the Minsk I and II ceasefires. For that, both the U.S. and the EU should either level additional sectoral sanctions or extend last year's sectoral sanctions. In response to the latest Kremlin aggression, the EU renewed some sanctions imposed last spring early. That was not enough. Besides additional major sanctions for the substantial aggression over the past six months, it is time for the U.S. and Europe to take the initiative. Specifically, they should reach agreement on new sanctions that will be imposed if the Kremlin's proxies seize Mariupol or any additional territory in Ukraine. This might serve as a deterrent for the Kremlin.

Part of this deterrent could include a public discussion of removing Russia from the SWIFT system of financial payments. Actually barring Russia from SWIFT would have a devastating impact on Moscow's economy; it would also be controversial globally. But an effort by the U.S. to put it on the agenda would create substantial pressure on Moscow and encourage the Europeans to be less cautious in applying additional sectoral sanctions.

It is important to note here that the Obama Administration has done a good job in regards to sanctions. It understands that the key to success is to make sure that both the U.S. and the EU sanction Russia. I fully understand that there is reluctance in corners of the EU to do so. The administration has worked hard, and largely with success, to impose sanctions in tandem with Europe. But as described above, the process has been too slow.

Military Assistance

Mr. Putin's second vulnerability concerns the use of his army in Ukraine. While his media have spread a sea of vitriol among the people of Russia, it has not been able to persuade them that Russian troops should be used in Ukraine. Since last summer, numerous polls by Moscow's Levada Center have shown that a large majority of the Russian people oppose using troops in Ukraine. Since his people do not want Russian troops in Ukraine, he is telling them that no troops are there. He is lying to his people. Thousands of regular Russian troops were used in August and September to stop Ukraine's counter-offensive. Our intelligence now estimates that there are anywhere from 250 to 1,000 Russian officers in Ukraine. Ukrainian intelligence claims that there are as many as 9,000 or 10,000 Russian troops in Ukraine. I am not endorsing the higher figures. I do believe,

however, that since we are not devoting enough intelligence assets to the Russia menace, our numbers are far from certain; and if they err, it is likely on the low side.

In any case, Russian casualties are a vulnerability for Mr. Putin. He is burying his dead in secret. More casualties make this harder to do. What this amounts to, is that we should give Ukraine defensive, lethal aid, so that it may defend itself.

I was one of a group of eight former U.S. officials who issued a report urging the Obama Administration to provide \$1 billion in defensive arms, including lethal equipment, to Ukraine for the next three years (<http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/publications/reports/preserving-ukraine-s-independence-resisting-russian-aggression-what-the-united-states-and-nato-must-do>). For a major national security priority, \$1 billion a year is not a great deal of money. In the first six months of Operation Inherent Resolve against ISIL, the U.S. spent \$1.5 billion.

The purpose is to deter further aggression — and to stabilize the situation in the rest of Ukraine. Opponents of this idea argue that this would not deter the Mr. Putin, because the Kremlin has escalation advantage, and Ukraine is more important to Russia than the U.S. It may be true that Ukraine is more important to Moscow than Washington, but it is not more important to Moscow than to Kyiv. Kyiv and the Ukrainian people will continue to fight the aggressors. Why do we want to disadvantage the victim of aggression by denying them arms?

Some opponents of providing weapons argue that Kremlin military strength means that it can defeat any weapons system we provide. And if that happens, it would be geopolitical defeat for the U.S. This is simply false. We can pursue a policy of weapons supply without taking responsibility for securing Moscow's defeat. We can provide weapons while making clear that we have no intention of using American troops. This was the successful rationale behind the Reagan Doctrine, which challenged Soviet overreach in Third World conflicts around the globe by providing weapons.

The last point is this. If we understand that Mr. Putin's aim of revising the post-Cold War order may mean aggression in countries beyond Ukraine, it is very much in our interest to make his experience in Ukraine as painful as possible. That will make him more vulnerable at home and will leave him with fewer resources for mischief elsewhere.

The Obama Administration is reviewing its position on weapons for Ukraine. Many senior figures in the Administration support this. It is time for the White House to make the decision to send weapons to Ukraine. Chancellor Merkel made clear during her visit to Washington last month, that while she opposes the supply of weapons to Ukraine, she would work to ensure that such a decision by the US did not undermine transatlantic unity.

Such military equipment must include light anti-armor weapons — the massing of Russian tanks was critical as Moscow's proxies seized Debaltseve in violation of Minsk II — and counter battery-radar for long range missiles. 70 percent of Ukrainian casualties come from missile and artillery fire. The report also recommends sending armored Humvees, secure communications equipment, equipment to jam Russian unmanned aerial vehicles, and medical supplies.

Within the U.S. Government, Congress has taken the lead on the supply of weapons for Ukraine, when it passed the Ukraine Freedom Support Act. That bill authorized the expenditure of USD 340M for weapons. Congress may need to act once again. But this time it is essential to pass

legislation that both authorizes and appropriates USD 3B over three years. This is the most pressing national security danger at the moment. Congress needs to appropriate resources.

There is also a critical economic element in the Ukraine crisis. This involves both comprehensive reform in Ukraine and Western assistance to help Ukraine pay its short term international debt. I have not dwelt on this here because this testimony focusses on the broader Kremlin danger. But it is important to note that the West needs strongly encourage the Poroshenko/Yatsenyuk team to implement reform and provide the necessary financing on the debt problem.

In addition, while focusing on stabilizing the security situation in Ukraine's East, the West must not recognize in any way Moscow's annexation of Crimea. The U.S. and Europe can support the people of Crimea by:

- maintaining the sanctions already passed in response to the Kremlin's taking of Crimea;
- refusing to confer legitimacy on Moscow's control of Crimea, just as the U.S. refused accept the to recognize the Soviet Union's "incorporation" of the Baltic States after the signing of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact;
- passing legislation forbidding its citizens and companies from conducting business with Russian authorities and companies in Crimea, except when the government of Ukraine agrees;
- making sure that their courts are open to suits by the government, companies, and citizens of Ukraine for the use of Crimean assets and resources by the Russian government and others not authorized by the government of Ukraine.

Countering Revisionism Beyond Ukraine

The U.S. must act in two different geo-political areas beyond Ukraine to deal with Moscow's revanchist tendencies. Most importantly, we must act decisively to strengthen NATO and deterrence in the new members of the Alliance, especially the Baltic States. Since the Kremlin offensive in Ukraine's East began last spring, NATO has taken a number of positive steps in this direction. Last April, the Pentagon deployed infantry units of 150 troops to Poland, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. This is a "persistent," but rotating deployment. Washington is also planning on deploying 150 Abrams tanks and Bradley fighting vehicles to Poland. Air patrols in the Baltic States have tripled in the past year. And more NATO ships are entering the Black Sea than in the past.

These are all good measures. So too was the decision at the Wales summit to create a rapid response force that could deploy 5,000 soldiers within 48 hours; and the decision by NATO defense ministers last month to place some headquarters' functions in Bulgaria, Romania, Poland, and the Baltic States.

Still, two more steps are needed in the short term. First the deployment thus far is too small. During the Cold War, our "trip wire" force in Germany was 200,000 troops. We should put forward in the Baltics at least a fully equipped battalion. Of even more importance, we need a quickly but carefully worked contingency plan for the appearance of Kremlin provocateurs among the Slavic population of Estonia or Latvia. This plan should include elements for small provocations, such as the kidnapping of the Estonian intelligence official. We should also work

within the Alliance to achieve agreement to formally review the NATO-Russia Founding Act if Moscow's proxies seize significant territory in Ukraine.

The second area that requires a new policy is that grey zone in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, and Central Asia where Moscow claims a sphere of influence. Do Western policymakers believe that Moscow has a right to order things in this area as it chooses – never mind the preferences of the other states? If not, the U.S., NATO, and the EU need to consider measures that will strengthen these countries. Some are relatively simple. Countries interested in a stronger U.S. and/or NATO security connection would certainly welcome more American or NATO military visits. For Georgia that might mean more port visits by a more proactive NATO presence in the Black Sea. In Central Asia, that might mean more CENTCOM visits for Uzbekistan. We might enhance cooperation with all interested Central Asian states in offsetting the potential destabilizing impact of our withdrawal from Afghanistan. While this may seem counterintuitive, this last initiative need not exclude the Kremlin. Indeed we can also help strengthen some nations on Russia's periphery by projects that include the Kremlin. This would also demonstrate that our policies are designed not just to discourage Kremlin aggression, but also to seek cooperation on matters of mutual interest.

Policy in the grey zone should also focus on state weaknesses that Moscow exploits in order to exert its control. As discussed above, the Kremlin uses its intelligence services to recruit agents in the power ministries of the post-Soviet states; and it uses its firms to acquire key sectors' of these countries' economies and to buy political influence. With interested countries, the U.S. and NATO should offer programs to help vet the security services and military in order to establish that they are under the full control of the political leaders in these states. At the same time, the U.S. and the EU offer programs to uncover corruption in the financial and other sectors' of these countries' economies.

A Final Policy Recommendation

There is one more element of Mr. Putin's aggressive policy that needs to be addressed: the weaponization of information. An admitted admirer of Nazi propagandist Joseph Goebbels, Mr. Putin has gained nearly complete control over the Russian media and turned it into an instrument promoting extreme nationalism. Its disinformation has been successful especially at home, but also in neighboring countries. The budget for broadcasts by Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty in Russian and other languages of the former Soviet Empire was sharply curtailed after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. At the time, that made sense. It no longer does.

In response to the crisis in Ukraine, the Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG) in FY15 increased its budget for Russian-language programming by 49 percent to USD 23.2M. It will be asking for an additional USD 15.4M for FY2016. I would certainly endorse this request for additional funds, but would also suggest that Congress reach out to the BBG to see if, in fact, more resources are not required.

A Kremlin Problem, Not a Russia Problem

The challenge that we face is rooted in Mr. Putin's style of leadership, a style which privileges the security services, with their neo-imperial policy preferences, criminal connections,

and disdain for civil society and democracy. None of the policies recommended in this paper are directed against the people of Russia. The assassination of Boris Nemtsov last month is a reminder of a truth uttered by the great Russian historian, Vasily Klyuchevskiy, in his lectures on Russian history. He observed that the expansion of the Russian state abroad is inversely proportional to the development of freedom for the Russian people. In other words, expansion abroad means repression at home. That is certainly the pattern that Mr. Putin has established. Opposing Mr. Putin's aggressive policies is not only vital to our national security, but a service for the Russian people as well.