

ISSUE BRIEF

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Addressing Russia's Continued Pernicious Actions Abroad

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Russia's invasion and annexation of Crimea and its continued aggression against Ukraine are proof of what many already knew, the failed "Russian reset" policy is dead, and Russia's actions continue to destabilize its neighborhood. In place of the reset, the U.S. needs to implement a comprehensive long-term strategy for addressing a revanchist Russia.

To highlight the ways in which Russia's actions are undermining stability in Europe, The Heritage Foundation has published five *Issue Briefs* addressing the impact of Russian influence in Ukraine, the South Caucasus, the Nordic-Baltic region, the Balkans, and the Arctic. These papers lay out the challenge for the U.S. and suggest strategic steps U.S. policymakers can take to counter Russian actions. Critically, as a new Congress takes their seats, policymakers should recognize the need for a comprehensive long-term strategy for dealing with Russia, in which each region's specific challenges are appropriately and fully addressed.

Russia's Invasion of Ukraine: The U.S. Needs a Strategy

By Luke Coffey and Daniel Kochis

Issue Brief No. 4306, November 26, 2014

<http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2014/11/russias-invasion-of-ukraine-the-us-needs-a-strategy>

This paper, in its entirety, can be found at
<http://report.heritage.org/ib4321>

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In November 2013, former Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich postponed signing an Association Agreement with the European Union after receiving an ultimatum from Moscow to choose between closer ties with Europe or with Russia. One year later, Yanukovich is out, a pro-Western government is in power, Russia has illegally annexed the Crimea, and the Ukrainian oblasts of Donetsk and Luhansk are in rebellion. A fragile cease-fire remains in place, although localized fighting is an everyday occurrence.

The U.S. needs to continue to back Ukraine. The U.S. should keep Russia isolated diplomatically and, if necessary, increase targeted economic sanctions against Russian and separatist figures and offer lethal military assistance to the Ukrainian armed forces.

Russia and the South Caucasus: A Situation the U.S. Cannot Ignore

By Luke Coffey

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While the U.S. and NATO are focused on Russian activity in Central and Eastern Europe, three developments in the South Caucasus merit closer attention:

1. Recent political instability in Georgia,
2. Possible Russian annexation of Georgian break-away territories, and

3. Increasing tensions between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the Armenian-occupied Azerbaijani territory of Nagorno-Karabakh.

In all three developments, Russia's influence can be detected behind the scenes. Although the South Caucasus is geographically distant from the U.S., events there can have serious ramifications for the transatlantic community. Events in the South Caucasus can impact regional security and, by extension, America and Europe's security. Therefore, it is in America's national interests to keep a close eye on developments in the region.

Russia's Provocations in the Nordic-Baltic States: The U.S. Needs a Strategy to Support the Region

By Luke Coffey and Daniel Kochis

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<http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2014/12/russias-provocations-in-the-nordic-baltic-states-the-us-needs-a-strategy-to-support-the-region>

Russia's aggressive posture against its neighbors has a profound impact on U.S. allies in the Nordic and Baltic region. The Baltic states are on NATO's front line and view Russia as an existential threat. Nordic states, especially non-NATO members Finland and Sweden, have felt Russian pressure this year. Lately, three issues have kept tensions running high in the region: Russian air incursions, Russian maritime incursions, and incursions across the Estonian-Russian border.

The U.S. and NATO need to set in place a robust, long-term strategy to bolster the collective defense of NATO member states and help to secure the Nordic and Baltic region.

The U.S. Must Counter Russian Influence in the Balkans

By Luke Coffey

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<http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2014/12/the-us-must-counter-russian-influence-in-the-balkans>

The Balkans region continues to be an area of instability for Europe. Although security has improved dramatically in the region since the

1990s, there is still a potential for violence resulting from sectarian divisions. Sluggish economies, high unemployment rates, and endemic political corruption have exacerbated these tensions. Moscow has exploited these tensions in an effort to advance a pro-Russia agenda with the goal of keeping the countries in the region out of the transatlantic community.

The U.S. needs to stay engaged in the Balkans, remain committed to the region's security, and work with European allies, particularly Germany, to advance a transatlantic agenda.

Russian Military Activity in the Arctic: A Cause for Concern

By Luke Coffey

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<http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2014/12/russian-military-activity-in-the-arctic-a-cause-for-concern>

While the West has primarily been focused on Russia's recent actions in Eastern Europe, Moscow has continued with its plans to militarize the Arctic. Russia's strategic goals in the Arctic are to secure current and potential energy resources located in the region and to maintain military superiority above the Arctic Circle. Although the threat of armed conflict among the Arctic powers remains low, the U.S. should consider the implications of Russian militarization in the region in light of Moscow's recent aggression in Ukraine.

Moving from Reaction to Strategy

The biggest difference between Russia and U.S. foreign policy is that Russia has a strategy that it is willing to patiently implement. So far, the U.S. response to Russia's aggression against Ukraine and its influence and aggression against other regions has been reactionary, not strategic. Until the U.S. puts in place a comprehensive, long-term strategy for dealing with Russia, it will continue to be a few steps behind Putin and less able to grapple with Russia's destabilizing influence in Europe.

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