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Russia: Background and U.S. Interests

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Summary

Since 1991, Congress has played a key role in the development of U.S. policy toward the Russian Federation (Russia), the principal successor to the United States' former superpower rival, the Soviet Union. In that time, U.S.-Russian relations have gone through positive and negative periods. Each new U.S. Administration has sought to improve U.S.-Russian relations at the start of its tenure, and the Donald J. Trump Administration has expressed similar intentions to rebuild constructive relations with Moscow. In doing so, however, the Administration has indicated it intends to adhere to core international commitments and principles, including retention of sanctions against Russia. Moving forward, the 115th Congress is expected to actively engage with the Administration on questions concerning U.S.-Russian relations.

Over the last five years, Congress has monitored and, together with the executive branch, taken steps to respond to significant concerns about Russian domestic and foreign policy developments. These developments include a trend toward increasingly authoritarian governance since Vladimir Putin's return to the presidential post in 2012; Russia's 2014 annexation of Ukraine's Crimea region and sponsorship and support of separatists in eastern Ukraine; violations of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty; Moscow's ongoing intervention in Syria in support of Bashar al Asad's government; increased military activity oriented toward Europe; and, according to the U.S. intelligence community, cyber-related influence operations that have extended to the 2016 U.S. presidential election.

U.S. responses to these developments have included the imposition of sanctions related to human rights violations, Russia's actions in Ukraine, and malicious cyber activity. The United States has also led NATO in developing a new military posture in Eastern Europe designed to reassure allies and deter further aggression. The Barack Obama Administration, together with Congress, condemned Russia's military support to Asad's government, especially its air strikes on Aleppo.

Members of the 115th Congress have proposed to make permanent, until the crisis in Ukraine is resolved, existing Ukraine-related sanctions against Russia (H.R. 830, H.R. 1059, S. 94, S. 341), as well as to expand sanctions related to Russia's actions in Ukraine (H.R. 830, S. 94), intervention in Syria (S. 138), and cyberattacks against U.S. democratic institutions (S. 94). Members also have proposed to provide congressional oversight over any potential sanctions relief (H.R. 1059, S. 341).

In addition, Congress has begun to investigate Russian interference in U.S. elections. In January 2017, the House and Senate Select Committees on Intelligence announced inquiries into Russian cyber activities and "active measures" surrounding the U.S. election and more broadly. The Senate Armed Services, Foreign Relations, and Judiciary Committees launched or announced related investigations. Members also have proposed a variety of other independent or joint commissions, committees, or investigations (H.R. 356, H.Con.Res. 15, H.Con.Res. 24, S. 27).

At the same time, U.S. policymakers over the years have identified multiple areas in which U.S. and Russian interests are or could be compatible. The United States and Russia have successfully cooperated on key issues, including nuclear arms control and nonproliferation, support for military operations in Afghanistan, the Iranian nuclear program, the International Space Station, and the removal of chemical weapons from Syria. The United States and Russia also have identified other areas of cooperation, such as counterterrorism, counternarcotics, counterpiracy, and global health. Although U.S.-Russian trade and investment were relatively low before sanctions were imposed, economic ties at the firm and sector levels have in some cases been substantial. In 2012, Congress authorized permanent normal trade relations for Russia. In the same year, the U.S. government supported Russia's entry into the World Trade Organization.

This report provides background information on Russian politics, economics, and military issues. It also discusses a number of key issues for Congress concerning Russia's foreign relations and the U.S.-Russian relationship.

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Political Structure and Developments

The Russian Federation (Russia) has a centuries-long tradition of statehood. In its contemporary form, Russia came into being in December 1991, after its leaders joined those of Ukraine and Belarus to dissolve the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR, or Soviet Union). From 1922 to 1991, Soviet Russia was the core of the Soviet Union, established in the wake of the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 and the civil war that followed. The USSR spanned much the same territory as the Russian Empire before it. Prior to the empire's establishment in 1721, Russian states had existed in various forms for centuries.

Today, Russia's multiethnic federal structure is inherited from the Soviet period and includes regions, republics, territories, and other subunits. The country's constitution provides for a strong presidency and central authority. The government is accountable to the president, not the legislature, and observers consider the presidential Administration rather than the Cabinet (headed by a prime minister) to be "the true locus of power."¹

Russia's president is Vladimir Putin, who has led the country as president (2000-2008, 2012-present) or prime minister (2008-2012) for 17 years (see "Vladimir Putin" text box, below). In recent years, opinion polls have reported high levels of support for President Putin. Since the annexation of Ukraine's Crimea region in March 2014, he has consistently received approval from more than 80% of respondents in opinion polls.² This reported approval level is considerably higher than what President Putin received in polls over the previous two years, when his approval rating was in the low 60s.

Russia's bicameral legislature is the Federal Assembly. The upper chamber, the Federation Council, has 170 seats, two each from Russia's 83 regions and republics (including two major cities, Moscow and St. Petersburg) and four from Ukraine's occupied region of Crimea. These deputies are not directly elected but are chosen by regional executives and legislatures. The lower house, the State Duma, has 450 seats, half of which are elected by proportional representation and half of which are in single-member districts.³

The judiciary is the least developed of Russia's three branches. Courts are widely perceived to be subject to political manipulation and control. The Supreme Court is the highest appellate body.

Russia: Basic Facts

Land Area: 6.3 million square miles, about 1.8 times the size of the United States.

Population: 142.4 million (mid-2016 est.).

Administrative Divisions: 83 administrative subdivisions, including 21 ethnic-based republics and the cities of Moscow and St. Petersburg. Russian law considers Ukraine's occupied region of Crimea and the Crimean city of Sevastopol to be additional administrative subdivisions.

Ethnicity: Russian 77.7%; Tatar 3.7%; Ukrainian 1.4%; Bashkir 1.1%; Chuvash 1.0%; Chechen 1.0%; Other 10.2%; Unspecified 3.9% (2010 census).

Gross Domestic Product: \$1.268 trillion (2015 est.); \$26,100 per capita (purchasing power parity) (2016 est.).

Political Leaders: President: Vladimir Putin; Prime Minister: Dmitry Medvedev; Speaker of the State Duma: Vyacheslav Volodin; Speaker of the Federation Council: Valentina Matviyenko; Foreign Minister: Sergei Lavrov; Defense Minister: General Sergei Shoigu.

Source: CIA World Factbook.

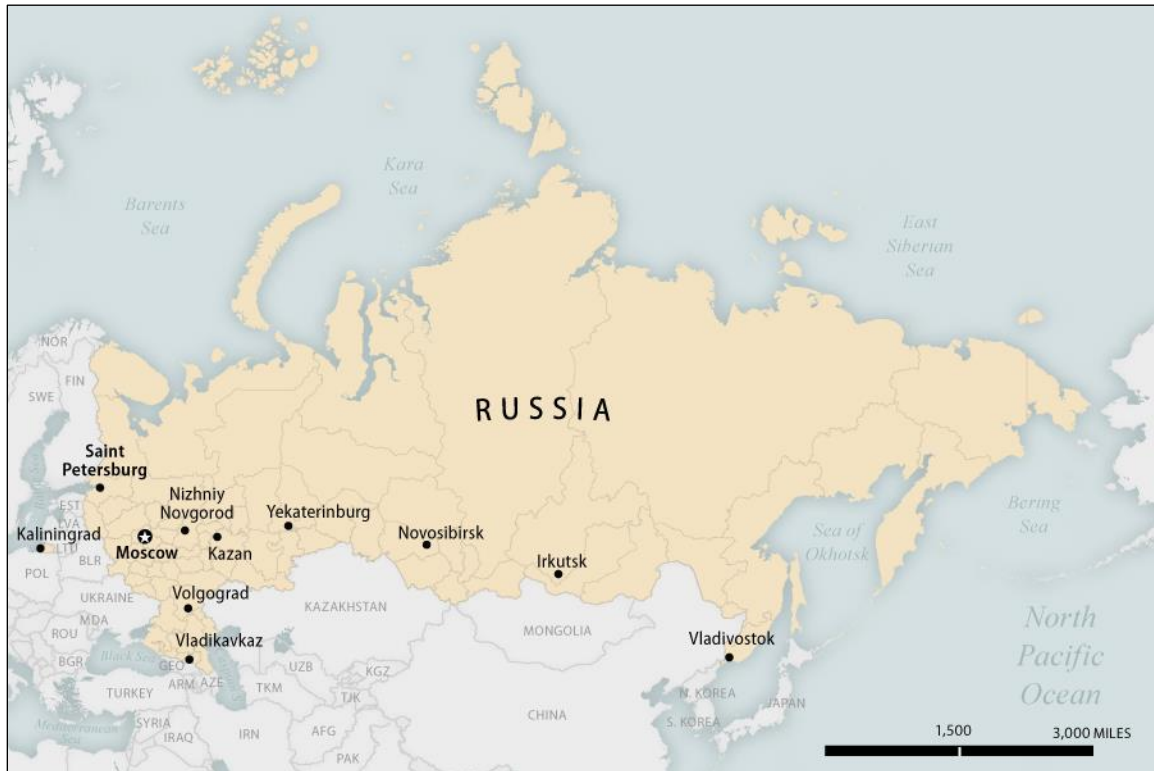
¹ Karen Dawisha, *Putin's Kleptocracy: Who Owns Russia?* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 2014), p. 2.

² Ratings over time are available from the Levada Center at <http://www.levada.ru/eng/>.

³ This mixed electoral system was last used in Russia's 2003 parliamentary elections. In the 2007 and 2011 elections, deputies were elected exclusively by proportional representation. The State Duma also includes members from occupied Crimea: four from majoritarian districts and another four on party lists.

The Constitutional Court rules on the legality and constitutionality of governmental acts and on disputes between branches of government or federative entities. A Supreme Arbitration Court, which handled commercial disputes and was viewed by experts as relatively impartial, was dissolved in September 2014, with its areas of jurisdiction transferred to the Supreme Court.

Figure 1. Map of Russia



Source: CRS graphic.

Democracy and Human Rights

Under President Putin's rule, Russia has experienced a steady decline in its democratic credentials. At the start of the 2000s, the U.S.-based nongovernmental organization (NGO) Freedom House classified Russia as a "hybrid" regime, with democratic and authoritarian elements. By the end of Putin's second term in 2008, Freedom House considered Russia to be a consolidated authoritarian regime. This status continued during the tenure of Putin's handpicked successor for one term, Dmitry Medvedev, despite some signs of liberalization. Since Putin's return to the presidency in 2012, Freedom House has noted a new rise in authoritarian governance in Russia. In its 2016 annual report, the NGO assigned Russia the same "freedom rating" it gave to countries such as China, Yemen, Cuba, and the Democratic Republic of Congo.⁴

⁴ Freedom House scores post-Communist states on an index of "democratic progress," which includes seven different categories of governance and ranges between 1 (most democratic) and 7 (least democratic). States that receive a "Democracy Score" between 4 and 5 are considered "hybrid or transitional regimes"; between 5 and 6, "semi-consolidated authoritarian regimes"; and between 6 and 7, "consolidated authoritarian regimes." Russia's Democracy Score has gone from a 4.88 in 2001 to a 6.5 in 2016. In addition, Freedom House ranks all countries in the world on a "freedom" scale, which includes measures of political rights and civil liberties; Russia's 2017 "freedom rating" is also (continued...)

Russia's authoritarian consolidation includes a wide array of nondemocratic practices. The U.S. Department of State's most recent Human Rights Report notes that the Russian government has "increasingly instituted a range of measures ... to harass, discredit, prosecute, imprison, detain, fine, and suppress individuals and organizations engaged in activities critical of the government, including NGOs, independent media outlets, bloggers, the political opposition, and activists."⁵ The report notes that accused individuals have been "denied due process ... in politically motivated cases" and that the killings of a number of "prominent journalists, activists, whistleblowers, and opposition politicians" have not been thoroughly investigated, including the February 2015 murder of opposition politician Boris Nemtsov. Although those who commit crimes are often prosecuted, suspicions frequently exist that crimes are ordered by individuals who remain free.

Some critics and opponents of the Russian government are said to have become victims of other measures, such as poisoning, in some cases fatally. In February 2017, opposition figure Vladimir Kara-Murza, who lives part-time in the United States, fell seriously ill for the second time in two years while visiting Moscow and had to be placed in an induced coma. Kara-Murza is a frequent visitor to Congress and campaigned in favor of U.S. sanctions on Russian officials. Several Members of Congress issued statements of support for Kara-Murza after learning of his illness.⁶

According to the Human Rights Report, Russian NGOs have been "stymied and stigmatized," including through a 2012 law that requires foreign-funded organizations that engage in activity seeking to affect policymaking (loosely defined) to register and identify as "foreign agents." In addition, a 2015 law enables the government to identify as "undesirable" foreign organizations

Vladimir Putin

After more than 15 years in the Soviet Union's Committee for State Security (the KGB), Vladimir Putin held a variety of governmental positions from 1990 to 1998, first in the local government of St. Petersburg (his native city) and then in Moscow. In 1998, then-Russian President Boris Yeltsin appointed Putin head of the Federal Security Service (FSB), a successor agency to the KGB, and prime minister a year later, in August 1999.

Yeltsin unexpectedly resigned on New Year's Eve, 1999, and Putin became acting president. He was elected president in March 2000, with 53% of the vote. Putin served eight years as president before stepping down in 2008, in compliance with constitutional limits on successive terms. His successor was Dmitry Medvedev, a trusted former presidential chief of staff, deputy prime minister, and board chairman of the state-controlled energy company Gazprom. As prime minister from 2008 to 2012, Putin continued to govern Russia in tandem with Medvedev, who remained informally subordinate to Putin.

In September 2011, Medvedev announced that he would not run for reelection, paving the way for Putin to return to the presidency. In exchange, Medvedev was to become prime minister. Putin's return to the presidency had always been plausible, but the announcement was met with some public discontent, particularly in Moscow. A series of protests followed the December 2011 parliamentary elections, which domestic and international observers considered to be marred by fraud and other violations. In March 2012, Putin successfully won the presidency. His current term extends to 2018 (as president, Medvedev extended the next presidential term to six years).

(...continued)

6.5 out of 7 (not free). Annual scores reflect the state of affairs at the start of the year. See the annual reports for Russia in Freedom House, *Nations in Transit*, at <https://freedomhouse.org/report/nations-transit/nations-transit-2016>, and Freedom House, *Freedom in the World 2017*, at <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/freedom-world-2017>.

⁵ U.S. Department of State, *Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 2015: Russia*, at <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2015&dld=252893>.

⁶ Carl Schreck, "'Poisoned' Kremlin Critic Vladimir Kara-Murza: What You Need to Know," RFE/RL, February 8, 2017, at <http://www.rferl.org/a/explainer-russia-kara-murza-kremlin-critic-poisoned/28298062.html>.

engaged in activities that allegedly threaten Russia's constitutional order, defense capability, or state security, and to close their local offices and bar Russians from working with them.⁷

As of February 2017, 103 NGOs are classified as foreign agents (of these, 39 were added since the start of 2016).⁸ In 2014, Russia's main domestic election-monitoring organization, Golos, was the first organization to be so classified. Just before the September 2016 Duma election, a well-known polling organization, the Levada Center, also was branded a foreign agent; in October 2016, the prominent human rights group Memorial was so labeled, as well.

Six organizations have been barred from Russia for "undesirable" activity. In 2015, barred organizations included the National Endowment for Democracy, Open Society Foundations (including the Open Society Institute Assistance Foundations), and U.S.-Russia Foundation for Economic Advancement and the Rule of Law. In 2016, the National Democratic Institute, International Republican Institute, and Media Development Investment Fund were added to the list.⁹

Russian law also imposes limits on freedom of assembly and expression. Public demonstrations require official approval, and police have broken up unsanctioned protests by force. The fine for participation in unsanctioned protests can be thousands of dollars; repeat offenders risk imprisonment. In 2016, new "antiterrorism" legislation (known as the Yarovaya Laws) hardened punishments for "extremism" (a crime that has been broadly interpreted to encompass antistate criticism on social media), required telecommunication providers to store data for six months, and imposed restrictions on locations of religious worship and proselytization. A 2013 law restricts LGBT rights by prohibiting "propaganda" among minors (including in the media or on the Internet) that would encourage individuals to consider "non-traditional sexual relationships" as attractive or socially equivalent to "traditional" sexual relationships.

Corruption

Observers contend that Russia suffers from high levels of corruption. The U.S. State Department's latest Human Rights Report notes that corruption in Russia is "widespread throughout the executive branch ... as well as the legislative and judicial branches at all levels of government. Its manifestations [include] bribery of officials, misuse of budgetary resources, theft of government property, kickbacks in the procurement process, extortion, and improper use of official position to secure personal profits." Transparency International (TI), a nongovernmental organization (NGO), ranks Russia 131 out of 176 countries on its 2016 Corruption Perception Index, similar to Kazakhstan, Iran, Nepal, and Ukraine (though Russia's TI ranking has improved over time; in 2010, the country ranked 154 out of 178).

Many Russians share these perceptions of corruption. In a February 2016 poll by the Russia-based Levada Center, 76% of respondents said that Russian state organs were either significantly or wholly affected by corruption. Of respondents who engaged in activities such as vehicle registration and licensing, hospital stays, university admissions, and funerals, 15%-30% reported having paid a bribe (as did nearly half of those who reported being detained by traffic police). Estimates of bribe amounts vary. In December 2015, Russia's Ministry of Internal Affairs reported that the average amount of a bribe in criminal cases was around \$2,500. In September 2016, a domestic NGO, Clean Hands, calculated the average reported bribe to be around five times that amount.

⁷ For background, see International Center for Not-for-Profit Law, "Civic Freedom Monitor: Russia," at <http://www.icnl.org/research/monitor/russia.html>.

⁸ The list of organizations currently classified as "foreign agents" is available on the website of the Russian Ministry of Justice (at <http://unro.minjust.ru/NKOForeignAgent.aspx>). Some organizations classified as foreign agents have been declassified after the government determined that these organizations no longer receive foreign funding, and others have shut down. Human Rights Watch notes that a total of 158 organizations have been classified at some point as foreign agents. Human Rights Watch, "Russia: Government vs. Rights Groups," February 6, 2017, at <https://www.hrw.org/russia-government-against-rights-groups-battle-chronicle>.

⁹ The list of organizations classified as "undesirable" is available on the website of the Russian Ministry of Justice (at <http://minjust.ru/ru/activity/nko/unwanted>).

Government officials are occasionally arrested for bribery or compelled to resign from their posts. In 2016, cases included a regional governor who was once an opposition figure, the mayor of Russia's Pacific port city Vladivostok, an Interior Ministry anticorruption official, and the head of the Federal Customs Service. Although observers often presume there may be grounds for arrest or dismissal, these cases tend not to be interpreted as elements of a serious anticorruption campaign but rather as manifestations of political and economic infighting or as a way to remove ineffective or troublesome politicians.

Few of Russia's most senior officials are arrested or dismissed for corruption. On the contrary, many observers, including within the U.S. government, believe that several of President Putin's closest colleagues—and even Putin himself—have amassed considerable wealth while in power. In a January 2016 interview with the BBC, Acting Under Secretary of the Treasury for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence Adam Szubin said that “We've seen [President Putin] enriching his friends, his close allies and marginalizing those who he doesn't view as friends using state assets.” Szubin also noted that Putin “supposedly draws a state salary of something like \$110,000 a year. That is not an accurate statement of the man's wealth, and he has longtime training and practices in terms of how to mask his actual wealth.” Russian government officials reject all such claims.

Sources: U.S. Department of State, *Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 2015: Russia*; Transparency International, “Corruption Perceptions Index 2015”; Levada Center, “Impressions about the Scale of Corruption and Personal Experience,” April 6, 2016 (in Russian); Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Russian Federation, “Today—the International Anti-Corruption Day,” December 9, 2015; Association of Russian Lawyers for Human Rights, *Corruption in Russia: An Independent Annual Report of the All-Russian Anticorruption Social Organization Clean Hands*, September 21, 2016; BBC News, “Russia BBC Panorama: Kremlin Demands ‘Putin Corruption’ Proof,” January 26, 2016.

Government Reshuffles

Many observers agree that Vladimir Putin is the most powerful person in Russia. However, Putin does not rule alone. For most of his tenure, he has presided over a complex network of leading officials and businessmen, many of whom are individuals Putin knew from his time in the Soviet KGB or when he worked in the St. Petersburg local government in the early 1990s.¹⁰ An influential leadership circle below Putin includes government officials, heads of strategic state-owned enterprises, and businessmen. Since 2012, the Russian-based Minchenko Consulting group has produced a series of well-regarded studies that assess who, besides Putin, are the most influential figures in the Russian policymaking process.¹¹ This list specifies 8 to 10 individuals who wield the greatest influence (see “Key Russian Officials Under

Key Russian Officials Under Putin

Alexander Bortnikov: Director of the Federal Security Service (FSB)

Sergei Chemezov: Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Rostec (hi-tech and defense “state corporation”)

Sergei Lavrov: Foreign Minister

Dmitry Medvedev: Prime Minister

Nikolay Patrushev: Secretary of the Security Council

Igor Sechin: CEO of Rosneft (state oil company)

Sergei Shoigu: Minister of Defense

Sergei Sobyenin: Mayor of Moscow

Vyacheslav Volodin: Chair of Parliament

Viktor Zolotov: Director of the National Guard

Notes: Chemezov, Medvedev, Patrushev, Sechin, Shoigu, and Sobyenin are listed by Minchenko Consulting (see footnote 11) as among Russia's eight most influential policymakers under Putin, together with businessmen Yuri Kovalchuk and Arkady Rotenberg.

¹⁰ For a thorough review, see Dawisha, *Putin's Kleptocracy*.

¹¹ The most recent report is Minchenko Consulting, *Politburo 2.0: Dismantling or Reset?*, November 7, 2016 (in Russian), at http://www.minchenko.ru/analitika/analitika_61.html. Another prominent list of influential Russian elites counts Putin's chief of staff, Anton Vaino, and his deputy, Sergei Kiriyenko, among the top 10 leading officials. Dmitry Orlov, “Russia's 100 Top Politicians in January 2017,” *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, February 3, 2017 (in Russian), at http://www.ng.ru/ideas/2017-02-01/5_6917_politics.html. Also see Nikolay Petrov, “Down the Funnel: Russia's Trajectory After 2014,” *Russian Politics & Law* vol. 53, no. 4 (2015), pp. 18-22, and Brian Taylor, “Clans and Networks,” *The Code of Putinism* (forthcoming publication).

Putin” text box), including some who do not hold official positions, as well as around 50 other key individuals in the security, political, economic, and administrative spheres.

Recently, observers have noted some changes to this system of governance.¹² The first change is a reduction in influence of several of Putin’s longtime senior associates, including Putin’s former chief of staff (and former minister of defense), Sergei Ivanov, who was once pegged as a possible successor to Putin. Since 2014, four senior officials close to Putin have retired, and Ivanov and at least one other appear to have been demoted (see “Resignations or Demotions of Longtime Putin Colleagues” text box).

A related change is a steady rise in the number of senior officials who are at least a decade younger than Putin (aged 64) and have risen as Putin’s subordinates more than as his colleagues. Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev (aged 51) straddles this divide; he has worked with Putin since St. Petersburg and was Putin’s handpicked successor to the presidency (2008-2012) after Putin’s first two terms. Others have served Putin or Medvedev for several years and have gained relatively powerful positions.

Several other younger officials have emerged recently. They are generally seen as having no real power bases of their own and as entirely loyal to Putin. Some are bureaucrats who have replaced Putin’s retiring colleagues. Observers also have noted the rapid rise of at least three younger officials who started their careers as members of the presidential security service (i.e., Putin’s bodyguards) who have gone on to serve as regional governors; one is currently a deputy head of the Federal Security Service (FSB).¹³

In assessing the impact of these changes, a few considerations may be useful to keep in mind. First, there does not appear to be a single explanation for the declining influence of Putin’s longtime colleagues. The most common factors that observers suggest are declining efficiency or increasing mismanagement.¹⁴ However, these factors are not evident in every case. Moreover, when they are relevant, the reasons behind them have varied, including corruption, age, and even bereavement (Sergei Ivanov recently lost his son to a drowning accident).

Resignations or Demotions of Longtime Putin Colleagues

Vladimir Kozhin: Head of the Presidential Administrative Directorate (demoted May 2014)

Vladimir Yakunin: Head of the Russian Railways (resigned August 2015)

Viktor Ivanov: Head of the Federal Drug Control Service (retired May 2016; service dissolved)

General Yevgeny Murov: Head of the Federal Guard Service (a more powerful version of the U.S. Federal Protective Service and Secret Service) (retired May 2016)

Andrei Belyaninov: Head of the Federal Customs Service (resigned July 2016)

Sergei Ivanov: Presidential Chief of Staff (and former minister of defense) (demoted August 2016)

Note: Kozhin, Yakunin, V. Ivanov, Murov, and S. Ivanov are subject to U.S. sanctions.

¹² For example, Anders Åslund, “Putin’s Great Purge,” *American Interest*, August 24, 2016, at <http://www.the-american-interest.com/2016/08/24/putins-great-purge>.

¹³ The three are deputy FSB head Yevgeny Zinichev, Governor of Tula region Aleksey Dyumin, and acting Governor of Yaroslavl region Dmitry Mironov. See, for example, Oleg Kashin, “How Do You Get to Be a Governor in Vladimir Putin’s Russia?,” *New York Times*, September 8, 2016, at <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/09/opinion/how-do-you-get-to-be-a-governor-in-vladimir-putins-russia.html>.

¹⁴ For example, Andrew Monaghan, “Putin’s Removal of Ivanov as Chief of Staff Is More About Rejuvenation,” Chatham House, August 15, 2016, at <https://www.chathamhouse.org/expert/comment/putins-removal-ivanov-chief-staff-more-about-rejuvenation>.

Second, the changes do not yet amount to a total turnover. Several of Putin's other longtime colleagues remain in positions of considerable power or influence (see "Longtime Putin Colleagues Still in Power" text box).

Longtime Putin Colleagues Still in Power

Sergei Chemezov: CEO of Rostec, Russia's large state-owned military-industrial complex, who oversees scores of hi-tech and defense companies across the country.

Nikolay Patrushev: Chair of the National Security Council. Colleagues reportedly have referred to Patrushev as "Russia's most underestimated public figure." He is thought to have had considerable influence in shaping Russia's recent anti-Western foreign policy trajectory, including the annexation of Crimea.

Igor Sechin: CEO of Rosneft. Sechin has long been considered one of the most powerful officials in Russia, with not only influence over the state-owned oil sector but also unofficial ties to elements of the FSB. Last year, Sechin was subject to some speculation that he risked overstepping his bounds and losing power, but he ultimately appeared to strengthen his position at the expense of various rivals.

Viktor Zolotov: Head of the National Guard. Zolotov is considered to be singularly loyal to Putin. He now heads a new security apparatus that officially serves as a special police force to combat terrorism and organized crime but is widely considered to be Putin's "personal army" and, potentially, a repressive tool for fighting civil unrest.

Other Longtime Putin Colleagues Still in Power: Andrei Fursenko (Presidential Aide), German Gref (Sberbank), Dmitry Kozak (Deputy Prime Minister), Alexei Kudrin (Vice Chair, Presidential Economic Council), Alexei Miller (Gazprom), Sergei Naryshkin (Foreign Intelligence Service), Yevgeny Shkolov (Presidential Aide), and Nikolai Tokarev (Transneft). Some influential businessmen also are longtime colleagues of Putin: Arkady and Boris Rotenberg, Nikolai Shamalov, and Gennady Timchenko.

Notes: Chemezov is subject to U.S. and European Union (EU) sanctions (as are Kozak, Naryshkin, and A. Rotenberg). Sechin is subject to U.S. sanctions (as are Fursenko, B. Rotenberg, and Timchenko). Patrushev (and Shamalov) are subject to EU sanctions. In addition, Rostec is subject to U.S. (and, partially, EU) sanctions, and Rosneft is subject to U.S. and EU sanctions.

Third, this gradual "changing of the guard" is occurring against the backdrop of what observers characterize as frequently vicious struggles for wealth and influence among different power centers, but most often between the FSB (in particular, its Interior Security Department) and others: the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Investigative Committee (a kind of Federal Bureau of Investigation), Chechen strongman Ramzan Kadyrov, and a more liberal (i.e., economically oriented) wing of the Russian government.¹⁵ Considerable speculation has occurred that such rivalries on occasion lead to developments that Putin does not control. Potential examples include the February 2015 murder of opposition politician Boris Nemtsov, which was blamed on people close to Kadyrov, and the November 2016 arrest of Minister of Economic Development Alexey Ulyukaev, which observers suspect is linked to a rivalry with Rosneft CEO Igor Sechin, considered one of Russia's most influential policymakers.¹⁶

September 2016 State Duma Elections

On September 18, 2016, Russians elected the State Duma, the lower house of parliament. Russia's last parliamentary elections, in December 2011, triggered a wave of protests against

¹⁵ For example, Karina Orlova, "The Siloviki Coup in Russia," *American Interest*, September 21, 2016, at <http://www.the-american-interest.com/2016/09/21/the-siloviki-coup-in-russia>.

¹⁶ For example, Joshua Yaffa, "The Unaccountable Death of Boris Nemtsov," *New Yorker*, February 26, 2016, at <http://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/the-unaccountable-death-of-boris-nemtsov>, and Ilya Matveev, "The Big Game: Ulyukaev, Sechin and Russia's Neopatrimonial Privatisation," *OpenDemocracy Russia*, November 21, 2016, at <https://www.opendemocracy.net/od-russia/ilya-matveev/big-game-ulyukaev-sechin-and-russias-neopatrimonial-privatisation>.

electoral fraud and heralded the rise of a revitalized opposition against President Putin's government. Five years later, expectations of democratic change have subsided. With a voter turnout of 48%, the ruling United Russia (UR) party won a resounding victory, with more than 75% of the seats (as opposed to 53% in 2011). All other seats went to those considered *loyal* opposition parties and deputies. No parties genuinely in opposition (sometimes termed the *liberal* opposition) won any seats.¹⁷

Table 1. Election Results to the State Duma, September 18, 2016

	Party List %	Party List Seats	Single-Member Seats	Total Seats	% of Seats
United Russia	54.2%	140	203	343	76.2%
Communist Party (KPRF) ^a	13.3%	35	7	42	9.3%
Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR) ^a	13.1%	34	5	39	8.7%
A Just Russia ^a	6.2%	16	7	23	5.1%
Other	11.2%	0	3	3	0.7%
Yabloko ^b	2.0%	0	0	0	0.0%
PARNAS ^b	0.7%	0	0	0	0.0%
Total	98%	225	225	450	100%

Source: Central Election Commission of the Russian Federation, at <http://www.vybory.izbirkom.ru>.

Notes: Total party list percentage is calculated out of the total number of valid and invalid ballots.

- a. The KPRF, LDPR, and A Just Russia parties are considered the *loyal* opposition parties. These parties criticize the government, if not President Putin, but typically support its legislative initiatives.
- b. Yabloko and PARNAS are *liberal* opposition parties considered to be genuinely in opposition to the government. They fall under the "Other" category, which includes several small parties that did not meet the 5% threshold for party list representation.

The ruling UR party traditionally polls lower than President Putin, who does not formally lead the party, but it appeared to benefit from a surge in patriotic sentiment unleashed by Russia's annexation of Crimea, Russia's so-called defense of pro-Russian populations in eastern Ukraine, and appeals for national solidarity in the face of Western criticism.¹⁸ UR also experienced a certain renewal in advance of elections; party primaries promoted the rise of many candidates new to national politics and eliminated a number of sitting deputies.¹⁹

At the same time, the Russian government took measures after the last election to bolster the victory of UR and minimize opposition gains across the country.²⁰ Fourteen parties that received at least 3% of the vote in the last election or held at least one seat in a regional council competed in the 2016 election. Other parties technically could register after collecting 200,000 signatures,

¹⁷ For additional background, see CRS Insight IN10573, *Russia's Parliamentary Elections*, by (name redacted)

¹⁸ Denis Volkov, "How Long Will It Be Before 2011-2012 Style Mass Protests Reemerge?," *Intersection*, September 8, 2016, at <http://intersectionproject.eu/article/society/how-long-will-it-be-2011-2012-style-mass-protests-reemerge>.

¹⁹ Darrell Slider and Nikolai Petrov, "United Russia's 'Primaries': A Preview of the Duma Elections?," *Russian Analytical Digest* no. 186 (July 15, 2016).

²⁰ Vladimir Gelman, "Correction of Errors: How the Kremlin Re-equilibrated Authoritarian Elections in 2016," PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 437, August 2016, at <http://www.ponarseurasia.org/memo/correction-errors-how-kremlin-re-equilibrated-authoritarian-elections-2016>.

but no such registrations were approved. In addition, state-controlled media and government officials subjected opposition leaders to a barrage of negative publicity, branding them as agents of the West.²¹ Restrictions on mass demonstrations tightened. A centrally controlled redistricting process led to the carving up of urban centers that leaned toward the opposition. Finally, the election date was moved up from December 2016, considerably shortening the campaign period.²²

UR also benefited from a change in electoral rules restoring a mixed electoral system that had been in place through 2003 parliamentary elections. UR's financial and administrative resources across the countryside were expected to help the party win more seats via single-member races than it would in a purely proportional contest; indeed, UR candidates won more than 90% of these races.²³ By comparison, in the contested 2011 election, when seats were allocated entirely by party-list vote, UR officially won 49% of the vote (as opposed to 54% in 2016) but only 53% of seats (as opposed to 76% in 2016).

Election observers also raised concerns about fraud. The election observation mission of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) noted that the counting process was bad or very bad in 23% of the polling stations it observed. One widely cited statistical analysis by a Russian scholar also suggested the election was marred in certain areas of the country by high levels of fraud, including ballot-box stuffing.²⁴

Besides UR, the three parties that gained seats have served in parliament already and are known as the loyal opposition. These parties criticize the government, if not President Putin, but typically support its legislative initiatives. Two are longtime fixtures of Russian politics: the Communist Party (KPRF, led by Gennadiy Zyuganov) and the right-nationalist Liberal Democratic Party (LDPR, led by Vladimir Zhirinovskiy). The third, A Just Russia (led by Sergei Mironov), is a center-left party that flirted with the opposition in 2011-2012 before returning to the fold (and expelling some of its members, who remained in opposition).²⁵

The Opposition

As noted above, no liberal opposition party won Duma seats in the 2016 elections. However, two liberal opposition parties, neither of which was in the previous parliament, were eligible to compete: Yabloko (identified with its former longtime chairman Grigory Yavlinsky) and

²¹ For example, Yelena Plotnikova and Robert Coalson, "Samara Governor Offers a Stark Choice: United Russia or the CIA," RFE/RL, September 10, 2016, at <http://www.rferl.org/a/russia-samara-governor-merkushkin-united-russia-cia/27978955.html>.

²² Nikolay Petrov, "Putin's Gamble on Russia's Duma Elections," European Council on Foreign Relations, September 8, 2016, at http://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_putins_gamble_on_russias_duma_elections_7109.

²³ Felix Riefer, "Russian Parliamentary Elections to Take Place Under New Rules," *Deutsche Welle*, August 16, 2016, at <http://www.dw.com/en/russian-parliamentary-elections-to-take-place-under-new-rules/a-19478968>.

²⁴ OSCE/ODIHR International Election Observation Mission, Russian Federation—State Duma Elections, "Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions," September 18, 2016, at <http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/russia/265186>; Leonid Bershidsky, "Russia Proves Vote Fraud Can Happen Anywhere," Bloomberg View, September 26, 2016, at <https://www.bloomberg.com/view/articles/2016-09-22/russia-proves-vote-fraud-can-happen-anywhere>; Olga Sichkar, Jack Stubbs, and Gleb Stolyarov, "Phantom Voters, Smuggled Ballots Hint at Foul Play in Russian Vote," Reuters, September 20, 2016, at <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-russia-election-fraud-idUSKCN11Q1RI>.

²⁵ Vladimir Kara-Murza, "Back on the Leash: The End for A Just Russia," Institute of Modern Russia, January 29, 2013, at <http://imrussia.org/en/politics/377-back-on-the-leash-the-end-for-a-just-russia>; Gabrielle Tétrault-Farber, "Dmitry Gudkov, L'Enfant Terrible of the State Duma," *Moscow Times*, October 6, 2014, at <https://themoscowtimes.com/articles/dmitry-gudkov-lenfant-terrible-of-the-state-duma-40113>.

PARNAS (led by a former prime minister, Mikhail Kasyanov, as well as, previously, Boris Nemtsov, slain in 2015). Both parties consider themselves European-style liberal democratic parties, though other parties criticized PARNAS for including at least one populist firebrand near the top of its list.²⁶

In addition, 18 single-member races were contested by candidates representing the Open Russia movement, founded by former oil magnate Mikhail Khodorkovsky, who served 10 years in prison on charges deemed by the opposition and most observers to be politically motivated.²⁷

The party of another prominent opposition leader, anticorruption activist and 2013 Moscow mayoral candidate Alexei Navalny, had its registration revoked in 2015, ostensibly for technical reasons. The party was unable to participate in the election. Navalny himself is barred from running for political office due to a 2013 criminal conviction that resulted in a suspended sentence. Navalny supporters and most outside observers deemed the case (and a second one) to be politically motivated, and in February 2016, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) concluded that the trial had violated Navalny's rights.²⁸ After the September 2016 parliamentary election, the Supreme Court overturned Navalny's sentence in connection with the ECHR ruling, returning the case to the district court. However, in February 2017, the district court again ruled against Navalny.²⁹

Opposition fragmentation was an issue prior to the election. Opposition leaders protected their individual brands and appeared to fear that these brands could be damaged by formal unification with other parties (electoral blocs have been banned since 2005). In 2015, Navalny's Party of Progress joined with PARNAS and others in a "Democratic Coalition," which was to run candidates under the PARNAS banner. The coalition soon encountered difficulties, however. It was barred from registering candidates in September 2015 regional elections, and in spring 2016 the coalition collapsed after PARNAS leader Kasyanov was targeted in a scandal involving alleged hidden video footage of an affair with a party colleague.³⁰

For now, observers tend to see Vladimir Putin's rule as relatively stable. Ongoing economic difficulties (see "The Economy," below) have led to small-scale protests across Russia, as prices have risen, salaries have fallen, unemployment has grown, and social spending has been reduced. For now, however, these protests do not show signs of catalyzing a new kind of political movement.³¹ Moreover, although the government is cutting expenditures in education and health

²⁶ Nataliya Vasilyeva, "Russian Opposition Faces Infighting, Apathy at Upcoming Vote," Associated Press, September 12, 2016, at <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/a178ad99cd8f49e59e7f84a50f775b16/russian-opposition-faces-infighting-apaty-upcoming-vote>.

²⁷ Ola Cichowlas, "Russian Election Watch 2016: Noteworthy Candidates," *Moscow Times*, September 12, 2016, at <https://themoscowtimes.com/articles/russian-election-watch-2016-noteworthy-candidates-55249>.

²⁸ Meduza, "Navalny Wants Supreme Court to Review His First Criminal Conviction, Saying He's Being Kept from Elections Intentionally," August 22, 2016, at <https://meduza.io/en/news/2016/08/22/navalny-wants-supreme-court-to-review-his-first-criminal-conviction-saying-he-s-being-kept-from-elections-intentionally>.

²⁹ Neil MacFarquhar and Ivan Nechepurenko, "Aleksei Navalny, Viable Putin Rival, Is Barred from a Presidential Run," *New York Times*, February 8, 2017, at <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/08/world/europe/russia-aleksei-navalny-putin.html>.

³⁰ Meduza, "Russia's Democratic Coalition: The Opposition Is Being Barred from Elections Again. Here's What You Need to Know," July 29, 2015, at <https://meduza.io/en/feature/2015/07/29/russia-s-democratic-coalition>; Meduza, "The Strange Death of Russia's 'Democratic Coalition,'" May 31, 2016, at <https://meduza.io/en/feature/2016/06/01/the-strange-death-of-russia-s-democratic-coalition>.

³¹ Sean Guillory, "Kremlinology: An Intervention," OpenDemocracy Russia, September 13, 2016, at <https://www.opendemocracy.net/od-russia/sean-guillory/kremlinology-intervention>.

care (as well as defense), it is increasing social spending in other areas in the lead-up to the next presidential election, currently scheduled for March 2018.³²

Potential future scenarios tend to center on succession politics, whether engineered by Putin or prompted by his incapacitation or untimely passing. As late as December 2016, Putin claimed that he had not yet decided whether to run for reelection. In the event of a controlled succession (in 2018 or after), observers speculate about a number of well-known potential successors. However, the eventual choice also could be a relatively unknown figure; Putin himself was a highly unexpected choice to succeed his predecessor, Boris Yeltsin.

Other scenarios involve a loss of control by Putin or members of his inner circle, as a result of a collapsing economy, weakened state apparatus, or an external war gone wrong. Some observers have speculated that rival political centers could compete for power in Putin's absence and that this competition could turn violent. In addition, some have voiced concerns that an uncontrolled transition could lead to the rise of more nationalist forces.

Many observers put little stock in the possibility of a democratic transition of power. In such a scenario, candidates are thought more likely to emerge from right-wing nationalist forces or a new post-Communist left, not from a liberal, pro-Western opposition or civil society, whose influence has been seriously undermined by the Russian government.

Local Elections

Formally, Russia has a robust system of subnational elections; in practice, the country's top-down system provides centralized control over key issues. Regional and municipal councils are elected, as are governors of most of Russia's 83 regions and republics (though candidates must secure the signatures of 5%-10% of all their region's municipal deputies, which is seen as a major constraint).

Kremlin-backed leaders dominate local government structures. All but one of Russia's 83 governors are United Russia (UR) members or other government-backed figures. In the Siberian region of Irkutsk in September 2015, Communist Party member Sergei Levchenko became the only gubernatorial candidate since elections were reintroduced in 2012 to defeat a government-backed opponent. UR also has majorities, typically substantial ones, in all regional councils; only a handful of regional deputies across the country are affiliated with the liberal opposition.

Certain regions and cities contain more opposition-minded voters, most notably the two major urban centers of Moscow and St. Petersburg. In the September 2013 Moscow mayoral election, opposition candidate Alexei Navalny won 27% of the vote (incumbent Sergei Sobyenin, Putin's former chief of staff and deputy prime minister, won 51%). Some regions in Siberia and the Far East, as well as in the Northwest, also elect greater numbers of opposition candidates (including the Communists and other loyal opposition parties).

Although Russian law allows for the direct election of mayors in cities other than Moscow and St. Petersburg, most municipalities have an indirectly elected mayor or council head who shares authority with a more powerful appointed or indirectly elected city manager. A few opposition candidates have won competitive mayoral elections, although some of the more prominent were subsequently removed from office and even imprisoned.

Sources: J. Paul Goode, "The Revival of Russia's Gubernatorial Elections: Liberalization or Potemkin Reform?," *Russian Analytical Digest* no. 139 (November 18, 2013), pp. 9-11; Joel C. Moses, "Putin and Russian Subnational Politics in 2014," *Demokratizatsiya* vol. 23, no. 2 (Spring 2015), pp. 181-203; Maria Tsvetkova, "When Kremlin Candidate Loses Election, Even Voters Are Surprised," Reuters, September 29, 2015; Ola Cichowlas, "Endangered Species: Why Is Russia Locking Up Its Mayors?," *Moscow Times*, August 2, 2016.

³² Andrey Movchan, "Pensions and Security: Russian Budget Reveals Government Priorities," Carnegie Moscow Center, December 15, 2016, at <http://carnegie.ru/commentary/?fa=66454>.

The Economy³³

The Russian economy has gone through periods of decline, growth, and stagnation. In the first seven years after the dissolution of the Soviet Union (1992-1998), Russia experienced an average annual decline in gross domestic product (GDP) of 6.8%. A decade of strong economic growth followed, in which Russia's GDP increased on average 6.9% per year. The surge in economic growth—largely the result of increases in world oil prices—helped to raise the Russian standard of living and brought a significant degree of economic stability.

The Russian economy was hit hard by the global financial crisis and resulting economic downturn that began in 2008. The crisis exposed weaknesses in the economy, including its significant dependence on the production and export of oil and other natural resources and its weak financial system. The Russian government's reassertion of control over major industries, especially in the energy sector, also contributed to an underachieving economy. As a result, Russia's period of economic growth came to an abrupt end by 2009. Although Russian real GDP increased 5.2% in 2008, it declined by 7.8% in 2009. Russia began to emerge from its recession in 2010, with 4.5% GDP growth that year, but by 2013 growth had again slowed to 1.3%.

Since 2014, two external shocks—international sanctions and low oil prices—have contributed to considerable economic challenges. In particular, Russia has grappled with

- economic contraction, with growth slowing to 0.7% in 2014 before contracting sharply by 3.7% in 2015;
- capital flight, with net private capital outflows from Russia totaling \$152 billion in 2014, compared to \$61 billion in 2013;
- rapid depreciation of the ruble, more than 50% against the dollar over the course of 2015;
- a higher rate of inflation, from 6.8% in 2013 to 15.5% in 2015;
- budgetary pressures, with the budget deficit widening from 0.9% in 2013 to 3.2% in 2015;
- the use of international reserve holdings to offset fiscal challenges, including exclusion from international capital markets, as reserves fell from almost \$500 billion at the start of 2014 to \$368 billion at the end of 2015; and
- more widespread poverty, which increased from 16.1 million living in poverty in 2014 to 19.2 million in 2015 (13.4% of the population).³⁴

During 2016, Russia's economy largely stabilized, even as sanctions remained in place. Russia's economy contracted at a slower rate (0.8%); net private sector capital outflows slowed, from more than \$150 billion in 2014 to \$15 billion in 2016; inflation fell by more than half since 2015, to 7.2%; the value of the ruble stabilized; and the government successfully sold new bonds in international capital markets in May 2016. Net inflows of foreign direct investment (FDI) into Russia, which essentially came to a halt in late 2014 and early 2015, started to resume in 2016.

³³ This section was prepared by Rebecca Nelson, Specialist in International Trade and Finance. For more, see CRS Report R43895, *U.S. Sanctions and Russia's Economy*, by (name redacted) .

³⁴ International Monetary Fund, *World Economic Outlook*, October 2016, at <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2016/02/>; World Bank, *Russia Economic Report 35*, April 6, 2016, at <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2016/04/06/russia-economic-report-35>; and Central Bank of Russia statistics.

Unemployment remained broadly stable, at around 5.6%, and poverty was projected around 14.6% in the first half of 2016.³⁵

According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Russia's economy is projected to resume modest growth of 1.1% in 2017 and 1.2% in 2018. The IMF argues that the medium-term prospects for Russia's economy are subdued due to the impact of sanctions on productivity and investment, as well as long-standing structural challenges, including slow economic diversification, weak protection of property rights, burdensome administrative procedures, state involvement in the economy, and adverse demographic dynamics.³⁶ Some analysts also have noted that the low value of the ruble may hamper Russia's attempts to innovate and modernize its economy and that the economy's continued reliance on oil makes it vulnerable to another drop in oil prices.³⁷

Impact of Sanctions

It is difficult to assess whether, and to what extent, sanctions on Russia and Russia's retaliatory measures have impacted the country's economy over the past two to three years. Sanctions were imposed at the same time the price of oil, a major export and source of revenue for the Russian government, dropped significantly, by more than 60% between the start of 2014 and the end of 2015.³⁸

That said, many economists, including at the IMF, have argued that the twin shocks of sanctions and low oil prices have adversely affected Russia's economy.³⁹ In 2015, the IMF estimated that sanctions and Russia's retaliatory ban on agricultural imports reduced output in Russia over the short term between 1.0% and 1.5%.⁴⁰ The IMF's models suggest that the effects on Russia over the medium term could be more substantial, reducing output by up to 9.0%, as lower capital accumulation and technological transfers weaken already declining productivity growth. At the start of 2016, a State Department official argued that sanctions were not designed to push Russia "over the economic cliff" in the short run but rather were designed to exert long-term pressure on Russia.⁴¹

In November 2014, Russian Finance Minister Anton Siluanov estimated the annual cost of sanctions to the Russian economy at \$40 billion (2% of GDP), compared to \$90 billion-\$100 billion (4%-5% of GDP) lost due to lower oil prices.⁴² Similarly, Russian economists estimated

³⁵ World Bank, *Russia Economic Report 36*, November 9, 2016, at <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/russia/publication/rer>.

³⁶ International Monetary Fund, *Russian Federation: Staff Report for the 2016 Article IV Consultation*, July 2016, at <https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/sr/2016/cr16229.pdf>.

³⁷ Pavel Koshkin and Ksenia Zubacheva, "The Worst of the Economic Crisis in Russia Lies Ahead," *Russia Direct*, January 22, 2016, at <http://www.russia-direct.org/analysis/worst-economic-crisis-russia-lies-ahead>.

³⁸ Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, "Global Price of Brent Crude," at <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/POILBREUSD>, accessed February 2, 2017.

³⁹ For example, see International Monetary Fund, "IMF Staff Concludes Visit to Russian Federation," November 29, 2016, at <https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2016/11/29/PR16529-Russian-Federation-IMF-Staff-Concludes-Visit>.

⁴⁰ International Monetary Fund, *Russian Federation: Staff Report for the 2015 Article IV Consultation*, August 2015, p. 5, at http://www.elibrary.imf.org/view/IMF002/22733-9781513502441/22733-9781513502441/22733-9781513502441_A001.xml.

⁴¹ Robin Emmott, "Sanctions Impact on Russia to Be Longer Term, U.S. Says," Reuters, January 12, 2016, at <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-sanctions-idUSKCN0UQ1ML20160112>.

⁴² European Parliamentary Research Service, *Sanctions over Ukraine: Impact on Russia*, March 2016, at <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/EPRS/EPRS-Briefing-579084-Sanctions-over-Ukraine-impact-Russia-FINAL.pdf>.

that the financial sanctions would decrease Russia's GDP by 2.4% by 2017, but the effect would be 3.3 times less than the effect from the oil-price shock.⁴³ In November 2016, President Putin stated that the sanctions are "severely harming Russia" in terms of access to international financial markets, although the impact was not as severe as the harm from the decline in energy prices.⁴⁴

In December 2016, the Office of the Chief Economist at the U.S. State Department published estimates of the impact of the U.S. and European Union (EU) sanctions in 2014 on a firm-level basis.⁴⁵ The main finding was that the average sanctioned company or associated company in Russia lost about one-third of its operating revenue, more than one-half of its asset value, and about one-third of its employees relative to non-sanctioned peers.

The longer-term effect of sanctions, if they are kept in place, is unclear. The economic bite of restrictions on U.S. long-term financing for certain sectors or technology for specific Russian oil exploration projects may manifest more prominently in coming years. At the same time, the long-term impact may depend on whether Russia can develop viable and reliable alternative economic partners, particularly among countries that have refrained from sanctions (such as China, India, and Brazil), to fulfill economic activities restricted by U.S. and EU sanctions.

U.S.-Russian Trade and Investment

Even before sanctions were imposed, the United States had little direct trade and investment with Russia. Over the past decade, Russia has accounted for less than 2% of total U.S. merchandise imports, less than 1% of total U.S. merchandise exports, less than 1% of U.S. FDI, and less than 1% of FDI in the United States.⁴⁶ Russia has a much stronger economic relationship with Europe than with the United States. In 2015, nearly 50% of Russia's merchandise exports went to EU member countries, compared to less than 3% to the United States. Nearly 40% of Russia's merchandise imports come from EU member countries, compared to about 6% from the United States.

Over the past three years, U.S. merchandise trade with Russia has fallen by almost half (see **Figure 2**). U.S. merchandise exports to Russia fell from \$11.1 billion in 2013 to \$5.8 billion in 2016. U.S. merchandise imports from Russia fell from \$27.1 billion in 2013 to \$14.5 billion in 2016. U.S. investment ties with Russia also continued to weaken. U.S. investment in Russia was \$9.2 billion in 2015, down from a peak of \$20.8 billion in 2009.⁴⁷ Russian investment in the United States was \$4.5 billion, down from a peak of \$8.4 billion in 2009.

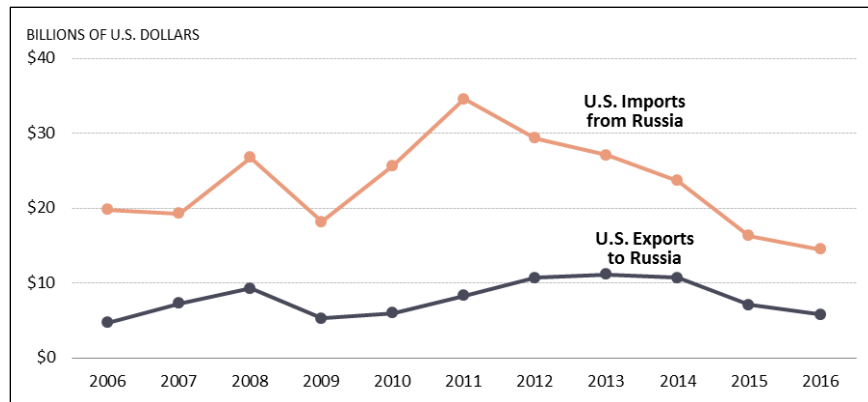
⁴³ Evsey Gurvich and Ilya Prilepskiy, "The Impact of Financial Sanctions on the Russian Economy," *Russian Journal of Economics* (2015), pp. 359-385.

⁴⁴ Nikolaus Blome, Kai Diekmann, and Daniel Biskup, "Putin—The Interview: 'For Me, It Is Not Borders That Matter,'" *Bild*, November 1, 2016, at <http://www.bild.de/politik/ausland/wladimir-putin/russian-president-vladimir-putin-the-interview-44092656.bild.html>.

⁴⁵ Daniel Ahn and Rodney Ludema, *Measuring Smartness: Understanding the Economic Impact of Targeted Sanctions*, Office of the Chief Economist, U.S. Department of State, December 2016, Working Paper 2017-01, at <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/267590.pdf>.

⁴⁶ In this report, trade data is from the U.S. Census Bureau, the Customs Committee of Russia, and Eurostat, as accessed from Global Trade Atlas, unless otherwise noted. U.S. investment data is from the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (on a historical-cost basis).

⁴⁷ U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis. Data is U.S. direct investment position abroad on a historical-cost basis.

Figure 2. U.S. Merchandise Trade with Russia

Source: Created by CRS using U.S. Census Bureau data, as accessed from Global Trade Atlas.

U.S. merchandise imports from Russia tend to be dominated by oil and unfinished metals. Of the \$14.5 billion in merchandise that the United States imported from Russia in 2016, about half was mineral fuels and oils (\$7.2 billion), particularly non-crude oil (\$6.6 billion). Other top U.S. merchandise imports from Russia in 2016 included aluminum (\$1.33 billion); iron and steel (\$1.3 billion); inorganic chemicals, precious and rare-earth metals and radioactive compounds (\$1.2 billion), particularly enriched uranium (\$1.03 billion); precious metals, stones, and related products (\$696 million), particularly unfinished platinum (\$607 million); fertilizers (\$502 million); and fish, crustaceans, and aquatic invertebrates (\$410 million). These products accounted for more than 85% of U.S. imports from Russia in 2016.

U.S. merchandise exports to Russia tend to focus on machinery and manufactured products. Of the \$5.8 billion in commodities exported by the United States to Russia in 2016, the top export was nuclear reactors, boilers, machinery, and parts (\$1.4 billion). Other top U.S. merchandise exports to Russia in 2016 included aircraft, spacecraft, and related parts (\$1.3 billion); vehicles and parts (\$617 million); optic, photo, medic, and surgical instruments (\$438 million); electric machinery and sound equipment (\$421 million); and pharmaceutical products (\$190 million). These products accounted for more than 75% of U.S. exports to Russia in 2016.

Even though overall trade and investment flows between the United States and Russia are limited, economic ties at the firm and sector levels are in some cases substantial. Several large U.S. companies, such as PepsiCo, Ford Motor Company, General Electric, and Boeing, have been actively engaged with Russia: exporting to Russia, entering joint ventures with Russian partners, and relying on Russian suppliers for inputs. The U.S.-Russia Business Council, a Washington-based trade association that provides services to U.S. and Russian member companies, has a membership of 170 U.S. companies conducting business in Russia.⁴⁸

In 2012, Russia joined the World Trade Organization (WTO), and Congress passed and the President signed legislation that allowed the President to extend permanent normal trade relations to Russia (P.L. 112-208). Part of this legislation requires the U.S. Trade Representative to report annually on the implementation and enforcement of Russia's WTO commitments. The 2016 report stresses that although Russia acted as a responsible member of the WTO community in some areas, such as reducing bound tariffs by the required deadline, other areas were more problematic: Russia's actions continued to depart from the WTO's core tenets of liberal trade,

⁴⁸ U.S.-Russia Business Council, at <https://www.usrbc.org/membership>.

transparency, and predictability in favor of inward-looking, import-substitution economic policies.⁴⁹ Separately, some analysts have raised questions about whether Russia's retaliatory ban on agriculture imports from the United States and other countries is compliant with its obligations under the WTO, whereas others argue that the ban may be permitted under the national security exemption. To date, the ban has not been formally challenged at the WTO.

Energy Sector⁵⁰

Russia is a significant producer of various energy forms, including crude oil, natural gas, coal, and nuclear power. In 2015, Russia was the third-largest oil producer, behind the United States and Saudi Arabia; the second-largest natural gas producer, behind the United States; and the sixth-largest coal producer. It is also a significant exporter of oil and natural gas, the latter providing Russia with market power, which it has exploited for geopolitical purposes. Natural gas is more of a regional commodity than oil because natural gas requires expensive infrastructure for transport. (Oil, by contrast, is a global market in which Russia does not have the same type of leverage over countries as it does with its natural gas exports.)

Table 2, below, provides data for all countries in Europe that receive Russian natural gas (EU members are bolded).⁵¹ As the table shows, in 2015 seven EU countries (Bulgaria, Estonia, Finland, Hungary, Latvia, Romania, and Slovenia) relied on Russia for 100% of their natural gas imports in 2015, as did five non-EU countries (Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Moldova, and Serbia). Russian gas imports made up more than half the total gas consumption in 20 countries. However, only three EU countries (Hungary, Latvia, and Lithuania) and three non-EU countries (Armenia, Belarus, and Moldova) depended on Russian gas for more than 20% of their total primary energy consumption.

To maintain its leverage and position as Europe's dominant gas supplier, Russia has sought to develop multiple pipeline routes to reduce its dependence on transit states such as Ukraine and to satisfy regional markets. To the north, the Nord Stream pipeline runs under the Baltic Sea from Russia to Germany; Russia's state-controlled natural gas company, Gazprom, is seeking to build a second, parallel pipeline, Nord Stream 2. To the south, Russia had long planned a South Stream pipeline that would have run under the Black Sea to Bulgaria. That project was canceled at the end of 2014. However, despite initial skepticism and a temporary decline in Turkish-Russian relations, the planned South Stream pipeline has been replaced to an extent by the Turk Stream project, which follows a similar route across the Black Sea but stops at the Turkish-Greek border. Gazprom has signed some contracts for the project, including one for the laying of pipe.

⁴⁹ U.S. Trade Representative, *2016 Report on the Implementation and Enforcement of Russia's WTO Commitments*, December 2016, at <https://ustr.gov/sites/default/files/2016-WTO-Report-Russia.pdf>.

⁵⁰ This section was coauthored with (name redacted), Specialist in Energy Policy. For more on Russian-European energy relations, see CRS Report R42405, *Europe's Energy Security: Options and Challenges to Natural Gas Supply Diversification*, coordinated by (name redacted).

⁵¹ In 2015, Russia also exported natural gas to China, Japan, Kazakhstan, South Korea, and Taiwan.

Table 2. Russian Exports of Natural Gas to Europe (2015)

Country	Russian Imports as % of Total Imports	Russian Imports as % of Total Gas Consumption	Russian Imports as % of Primary Energy Consumption
Armenia	83%	83%	40%
Austria	68%	57%	11%
Belarus	100%	100%	66%
Belgium	30%	58%	17%
Bosnia and Herzegovina	100%	100%	3%
Bulgaria	100%	97%	14%
Czech Republic	48%	47%	9%
Denmark	53%	21%	3%
Estonia	100%	100%	19%
Finland	100%	100%	9%
France	20%	22%	3%
Georgia	15%	15%	4%
Germany	41%	50%	12%
Greece	61%	61%	6%
Hungary	100%	81%	23%
Italy	38%	34%	14%
Latvia	100%	100%	30%
Lithuania	84%	84%	37%
Macedonia	100%	100%	2%
Moldova	100%	100%	68%
Netherlands	8%	6%	2%
Poland	77%	56%	8%
Romania	100%	2%	0%
Serbia	100%	72%	9%
Slovakia	90%	88%	20%
Slovenia	100%	100%	6%
Switzerland	8%	8%	1%
Turkey	54%	54%	17%
Ukraine	44%	21%	8%

Sources: CRS, on the basis of data from Cedigaz (<http://www.cedigaz.org>), industry data provider, 2015; British Petroleum (BP), *Statistical Review of World Energy 2016*, at <http://www.bp.com/en/global/corporate/energy-economics/statistical-review-of-world-energy.html>; and U.S. Energy Information Administration, *International Energy Outlook 2016*, at <http://www.eia.gov/outlooks/ieo>.

Notes: European Union member states are bolded.

Foreign Relations

In recent years, Members of Congress and U.S. policymakers have paid growing attention to Russia's active and increasingly forceful foreign policy, both toward neighboring states, such as Georgia and Ukraine, and in regard to operations further afield, such as the intervention in Syria. Russian actions in these states have led to concerns about the country's respect for fundamental international norms and the possible threat it poses to Western security. These actions have even resurrected talk of a new Cold War.⁵²

Although Russian foreign policy has been increasingly active, observers note that the principles guiding it have been largely consistent since the Soviet Union's collapse in 1991. One principle is to reestablish Russia as the center of gravity for the post-Soviet region and to minimize the military and political influence of rival powers, particularly NATO and more recently the EU. According to the Russian government, the eastward "geopolitical expansion" of NATO and the EU has led to "a serious crisis in relations" between Russia and the West.⁵³ A second principle is to establish Russia as one of a handful of dominant poles in global politics, capable in particular of competing (and, where necessary, cooperating) with the United States.

Beyond these fundamentals, debates exist on a number of related issues. Such issues include whether strong responses by outside powers can deter Russian aggression or whether these responses run a risk of escalating conflict; how much states that disagree with Russia on key issues can cooperate with Moscow; whether the Russian government is primarily implementing a strategic vision or reacting to circumstances and the actions of others; and the extent to which the Russian leadership takes actions abroad to strengthen its domestic position.

Russia and Other Post-Soviet States

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, one fundamental goal of Russian foreign policy has been to retain and, where necessary, rebuild close ties with neighboring states that were once part of the USSR. Many observers inside and outside Russia interpret this policy as laying claim to a traditional sphere of influence. Although Russian policymakers avoid reference to a *sphere of influence*, they have used comparable terms at various times. In the early 1990s, Russia's foreign minister and other officials employed the term *near abroad* to describe Russia's post-Soviet neighbors, and in 2008 then-President (and current Prime Minister) Dmitry Medvedev referred to Russia's neighbors as constituting a "region" where Russia has "privileged interests."⁵⁴

The original mechanism for reintegrating the post-Soviet states was the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), which was established by the Presidents of Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine in December 1991. At its height, the CIS included as full or associate members all post-Soviet states except the Baltics (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, all now NATO and EU members).

⁵² See, for example, Dmitri Trenin, "Welcome to Cold War II," *Foreign Policy*, March 4, 2014, at <http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/03/04/welcome-to-cold-war-ii>, and James Stavridis, "Are We Entering a New Cold War?," *Foreign Policy*, February 17, 2016, at <http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/02/17/are-we-entering-a-new-cold-war-russia-europe>.

⁵³ "Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation," November 30, 2016, at http://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/official_documents/-/asset_publisher/CptlCk6BZ29/content/id/2542248.

⁵⁴ William Safire, "On Language: The Near Abroad," *New York Times*, May 22, 1994, at <http://www.nytimes.com/1994/05/22/magazine/on-language-the-near-abroad.html>; *Economist*, "Medvedev on Russia's Interests," September 1, 2008, at http://www.economist.com/blogs/certainideasofeuropa/2008/09/medvedev_on_russias_interests.

The current CIS (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, and Tajikistan) has had limited impact in promoting regional integration.⁵⁵

Russia has had relatively more success developing multilateral relations with a narrower circle of states. In recent years, Russia has mainly accomplished this aim via two institutions: the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), a security alliance that includes (together with Russia) Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, and the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU), an evolving single market that includes all CSTO members except Tajikistan (a prospective candidate).⁵⁶

Current members of these organizations mostly have joined voluntarily, if not always enthusiastically.⁵⁷ Their goals in joining have been diverse. Although these aims could include the facilitation of trade and investment, as well as protection against a variety of external threats (including terrorism and drug trafficking), they also may include a desire to appease Russia, ensure opportunities for labor migration, promote intergovernmental subsidies, and bolster regime security.

Russia dominates both the CSTO and the EEU. It has around 75% of the EEU's total population, approximately 85% of EEU members' total GDP, and more than 95% of CSTO members' military expenditures.⁵⁸ Russia maintains active bilateral economic, security, and political relations with CSTO and EEU member states, and observers often consider these bilateral ties to be of greater significance than Russia's multilateral relations within these two institutions. Russia's main military facilities in CSTO member states consist of bases in Tajikistan, Armenia, and Kyrgyzstan and radar stations in Belarus and Kazakhstan.

Russia's relations with its CSTO and EEU allies and partners are not always smooth. In addition to expressing differences over the principles and rules of the two institutions, Russia's closest partners have been reluctant to bind themselves entirely to Russia on matters of foreign policy and economic development. None of them followed Russia's lead in recognizing Georgia's breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent states in 2008. Russia secured relatively greater support from partners in its annexation of Ukraine's Crimea region; in March 2014, Armenia and Belarus voted with Russia (and eight other states) to reject United Nations General Assembly Resolution 68/262, which affirmed Ukraine's territorial integrity.⁵⁹

Russia's partners also have cultivated strong ties with other countries. Kazakhstan, in particular, has developed strong relations with China and the West, particularly in the energy sector. China is the largest trading partner of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Although Armenia and Belarus have

⁵⁵ Turkmenistan and Ukraine are associate members. Georgia withdrew from the CIS after its 2008 war with Russia.

⁵⁶ For more on the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU), see CRS In Focus IF10309, *Eurasian Economic Union*, by (name redacted) .

⁵⁷ The most visible reluctance concerned Armenia's membership in the EEU. The Armenian government, which was planning to conclude an association agreement with the EU, abruptly reversed course and declared its intent to join the EEU after a meeting of the Russian and Armenian presidents in September 2013. Kyrgyz President Almazbek Atambayev referred to EEU membership as "the lesser of two evils." TASS, "No Option for Kyrgyzstan But to Join Customs Union—Kyrgyzstan President," October 27, 2014, at <http://tass.com/economy/756666>.

⁵⁸ Stratfor, "Why the Eurasian Union Will Never Be the EU," September 17, 2016, at <https://www.stratfor.com/analysis/why-eurasian-union-will-never-be-eu>; Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, Military Expenditure Database (2015), at <https://www.sipri.org/databases/milex>.

⁵⁹ United Nations General Assembly Resolution 68/262 passed 100-11, with 58 abstentions. Kazakhstan abstained, whereas Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan were absent. U.N. General Assembly Resolution A/RES/68/262, "Territorial Integrity of Ukraine," March 27, 2014, at http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/68/262. The voting record is available at <https://graphics8.nytimes.com/packages/html/world/middleeast/voting.pdf>.

close bilateral relations with Russia in the security and economic spheres, they also have established economic ties to Europe. Both Armenia and Kazakhstan have established institutional partnerships with NATO; Armenia is a troop contributor to the NATO-led Kosovo Force and Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan. For more than 13 years, Kyrgyzstan hosted a major military base and transit center for coalition troops fighting in Afghanistan.

Russia also has partnerships with three post-Soviet states that are not members of the CSTO or the EEU: Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. These three states opt to pursue independent foreign policies and do not seek membership in Russian-led or other security and economic blocs.⁶⁰ Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan are significant energy producers; they partner with Russia but also have developed major alternative transit routes for oil (in Azerbaijan's case) and natural gas. In addition, Russia has cultivated a partnership with Uzbekistan, although the latter has competed with Kazakhstan for regional leadership in Central Asia and has long-standing disputes with Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

Russia's relations with Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine have been the most difficult. These three states have sought to cultivate close ties with the West. Georgia has consistently pursued NATO membership and served as one of NATO's closest non-allied partners in Iraq and Afghanistan. Moldova and Ukraine are also close NATO partners.⁶¹ All three states also have concluded association agreements with the EU that include the establishment of free-trade areas and encourage harmonization with EU laws and regulations.

Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine also have territorial conflicts with Russia, which stations military forces on the states' territory without consent. Since the first years of independence, Georgia and Moldova have confronted separatist regions supported by Moscow (in Georgia, Abkhazia and South Ossetia; in Moldova, Transnistria). Following a steady worsening of relations with Georgia, together with increasing clashes between Georgian and separatist forces, Russia went to war with Georgia in August 2008 to prevent Georgia from reestablishing control over South Ossetia. The war resulted in the expulsion of Georgian residents and the destruction of their villages, as well as Russian recognition of the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Russia has periodically imposed embargoes on key imports from Georgia and Moldova, although both states have managed to partially normalize relations with Russia.

Ukraine Conflict⁶²

Many observers consider that of all the post-Soviet states, Ukraine has been the most difficult for Russia to accept as fully independent.⁶³ Even before 2014, the Russian-Ukrainian relationship

⁶⁰ Turkmenistan is constitutionally neutral. Uzbekistan was a member of the Collective Security Treaty Organization from 2006 to 2012.

⁶¹ At the April 2008 NATO summit in Bucharest, NATO members agreed that Georgia and Ukraine would "become members of NATO." In 2010, Ukraine adopted a "non-bloc" (i.e., nonaligned) status, but its parliament rejected that status in December 2014, after Russia's annexation of Crimea and support of separatists in eastern Ukraine. NATO, "Bucharest Summit Declaration," April 3, 2008, at http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_8443.htm; Steven Pifer, "Ukraine Overturns Its Non-bloc Status: What Next with NATO?," *Kyiv Post*, December 26, 2014, at <https://www.kyivpost.com/article/opinion/op-ed/steven-pifer-ukraine-overturns-its-non-bloc-status-what-next-with-nato-376208.html>.

⁶² This section draws on CRS Report RL33460, *Ukraine: Current Issues and U.S. Policy*, by (name redacted) .

⁶³ In 2008, a Russian newspaper alleged that President Putin told President George W. Bush "that Ukraine is not even a state. What is Ukraine? Part of its territories is Eastern Europe, but the greater part is a gift from us." James Marson, "Putin to the West: Hands off Ukraine," *Time*, May 25, 2009, at <http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1900838,00.html>. The original article was published in *Kommersant*, April 7, 2008 (in Russian), at <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc/877224>.

suffered some turbulence, with disputes over Ukraine's ties to NATO and the EU, the status of Russia's Crimea-based Black Sea Fleet, and the transit of Russian natural gas via Ukraine to Europe. Under Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich (2010-2014), such disputes were largely papered over; by the end of 2013, Yanukovich appeared to make a decisive move toward Russia, postponing Ukraine's association agreement with the EU and agreeing to substantial financial assistance from Moscow.

The decision to postpone Ukraine's agreement with the EU led to the so-called Euromaidan protests, a government crackdown on demonstrations, and violent clashes between protestors and government forces that eventually led to the demise of the Yanukovich regime. Ukraine's armed conflict with Russia emerged soon after Yanukovich fled to Russia in February 2014. Moscow annexed Crimea the next month and facilitated the rise of new separatist movements in eastern Ukraine (the Donbas). In late August 2014, Russia began stepping up its support to separatists in reaction to a new Ukrainian offensive.

Although Moscow officially denies Russia's involvement in the conflict outside of Crimea, most observers agree that Russia has unofficially deployed troops to fight, helped to recruit Russian "volunteers," and supplied Donbas separatists with weapons and armed vehicles. In November 2016, the International Criminal Court, which is conducting a preliminary examination of the conflict, stated that the situation in Crimea "amounts to an international armed conflict between Ukraine and the Russian Federation" and that information concerning the situation in eastern Ukraine "would suggest the existence of an international armed conflict."⁶⁴

In September 2014, the leaders of France, Germany, Russia, and Ukraine, together with separatist representatives, negotiated a cease-fire agreement that became known as the Minsk Protocol (named after the city where it was reached). However, the protocol failed to end fighting or begin a process of achieving political resolution to the crisis.

The parties met again in February 2015 and reached a more detailed, twelve-point cease-fire agreement, known as Minsk-2. This agreement mandates a total cease-fire, the withdrawal of heavy weapons and foreign troops and fighters, and full Ukrainian control over its border with Russia. The agreement calls for prisoner exchanges, the provision of humanitarian aid to residents of the Donbas, and the establishment of an international monitoring regime. The agreement also requires the Ukrainian government to adopt constitutional reforms to provide a special "decentralized" status for the separatist regions, hold local elections, and pass an amnesty law.

To date, most observers perceive that little has been accomplished in implementing the provisions of Minsk-2, despite commitments by all sides. For some of the twelve points, compliance has been sporadic. For others, no compliance has taken place whatsoever. Fighting has continued since February 2015. Although the conflict's intensity has subsided at various times, a new round of serious fighting arose at the end of January 2017 and lasted for several days. As of mid-November 2016, the Office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights estimated that the conflict had led to at least 9,700 combat and civilian fatalities.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ International Criminal Court, Office of the Prosecutor, *Report on Preliminary Examination Activities 2016*, November 14, 2016, pp. 35, 37, at https://www.icc-cpi.int/iccdocs/otp/161114-otp-rep-pe_eng.pdf.

⁶⁵ The Office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights estimated that this figure includes more than 2,000 civilian deaths. The total number of casualties does not include the 298 individuals who died in the July 17, 2014, shootdown of Malaysian Airlines Flight 17. Office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights, *Report on the Human Rights Situation in Ukraine: 16 August to 15 November 2016*, p. 10, at http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/UA/UARepor16th_EN.pdf.

NATO-Russia Relations⁶⁶

The Ukraine conflict has heightened long-standing tensions between NATO and Russia. Three days after Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea, then-NATO Secretary-General Anders Fogh Rasmussen declared that NATO could "no longer do business as usual with Russia."⁶⁷ Accordingly, Russian actions in Ukraine resulted in a series of actions by NATO and its members intended to counter Moscow and to reassure Central and Eastern European allies that NATO will protect them against potential acts of Russian aggression.

Even before the Ukraine conflict, post-Cold War efforts to build a cooperative NATO-Russian partnership had at best mixed results. Allies sought to assure a suspicious and skeptical Russia that NATO did not pose a security threat or seek to exclude Russia from Europe. The principal institutional mechanism for NATO-Russian relations is the NATO-Russia Council (NRC), which was established in May 2002, five years after the 1997 NATO-Russia Founding Act provided the formal basis for bilateral cooperation. Recognizing that NATO and Russia face many of the same global challenges and share similar strategic priorities, Russian and NATO leaders structured the NRC as a "consensus" forum of equals with goals that included political dialogue on security issues, the determination of common approaches, and the conduct of joint operations.⁶⁸ Formal meetings of the NRC were suspended in April 2014, although meetings reconvened in 2016.

Prior to the suspension, NATO and Russia had identified a number of areas for cooperation. In 2010, they endorsed a Joint Review of 21st Century Security Challenges, intended to serve as a platform for cooperation.⁶⁹ The review identified several common security challenges, including instability in Afghanistan, terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, piracy, and natural and man-made disasters. Previously, operations related to Afghanistan were frequently highlighted as a key example of enhanced NATO-Russian cooperation. From 2008, Russia allowed the transit over its territory (via air and land) of cargo for NATO's International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan. Russia and NATO member states also jointly trained Afghan, Pakistani, and Central Asian counter-narcotics officers, with a view toward reducing narcotics transit to and through Russia. Finally, the NRC established a Helicopter Maintenance Trust Fund to provide maintenance, repair support, and training for Afghanistan's use of Russian helicopters.⁷⁰

Nonetheless, disagreements within the alliance and between NATO and Russia persisted on some core issues. In particular, although a 2010 agreement to pursue cooperation on missile defense was seen as a significant breakthrough, ensuing negotiations were marked by disagreement and increasingly vocal Russian opposition to NATO plans.

After Russia's actions in Ukraine, NATO moved to implement what its leadership characterized as the greatest reinforcement of NATO's collective defense since the end of the Cold War. In

⁶⁶ This section draws on CRS Report R43478, *NATO: Response to the Crisis in Ukraine and Security Concerns in Central and Eastern Europe*, coordinated by (name redacted) and CRS Report R44550, *NATO's Warsaw Summit: In Brief*, by (name redacted).

⁶⁷ NATO, "A Strong NATO in a Changed World," speech by NATO Secretary-General Anders Fogh Rasmussen at the Brussels Forum, March 21, 2014, at http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_108215.htm.

⁶⁸ NATO, "NATO-Russia Council," April 15, 2016, at http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_50091.htm.

⁶⁹ NATO, "NATO-Russia Council Joint Statement," November 20, 2010, at http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_68871.htm.

⁷⁰ NATO, "NATO-Russia Counter-Narcotics Training Reaches Milestone," April 19, 2012, at http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_86310.htm; NATO, "NATO-Russia Council Expands Helicopter Maintenance Trust Fund Project for Afghanistan," April 23, 2013, at http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_100106.htm.

2014, the allies agreed to a Readiness Action Plan (RAP) intended to reassure allies in the eastern part of the alliance and improve NATO's ability to adapt to new security threats in the region.⁷¹ Under the RAP, the allies bolstered existing reassurance measures by, for example, adding aircraft to NATO's Baltic Air Policing mission and significantly increasing the number of military training exercises in Eastern Europe. NATO also created new capacities to respond to a potential attack on an ally. NATO resolved to further enhance its forward presence in Eastern Europe in 2016. At its Warsaw Summit in July, allies announced new rotational deployments of four combat battalions of about 800-1,200 troops each to Poland and the Baltic States. They also agreed to bolster land, air, and sea forces in the Black Sea region.⁷²

The United States has been a key architect of and contributor to NATO's reassurance and collective defense initiatives, and it has sought to adjust U.S. force posture in Europe in response to Russian actions. The enhanced U.S. military presence in Eastern Europe—dubbed Operation Atlantic Resolve—has primarily consisted of increased rotational deployments of air, ground, and naval assets and a significant increase in military exercises.⁷³ To fund these increased U.S. military activities, Congress has appropriated around \$2.4 billion since 2015 for a new European Reassurance Initiative (also referred to as the European Deterrence Initiative) in the Department of Defense's Overseas Contingency Operations account.

Recent Air and Sea Incidents

Since 2014, Russia has adopted an increasingly aggressive posture with its air and sea patrols and military exercises. According to the Lithuanian Defense Ministry, for example, NATO fighter jets scrambled to intercept Russian aircraft violating Baltic countries' airspace 140 times in 2014 and 160 times in 2015. A 2014 report by the European Leadership Network provides a list of selected "high risk" or "serious" incidents during that year. The incidents include the following:

- In March 2014, a Russian military reconnaissance aircraft flying with its transponder switched off to avoid commercial radar came within 100 meters of colliding with an SAS 737 passenger plane taking off from Copenhagen. Another similar episode occurred in December 2014.
- On four separate instances during 2014, Russian fighter aircraft intercepted U.S. and Swedish reconnaissance aircraft.
- In April 2014, an unarmed Russian fighter aircraft made 12 low-altitude passes of the destroyer *USS Donald Cook* in the Black Sea, coming within 1,000 meters at an altitude of 150 meters. In September 2014, Russian fighters flew within 300 meters of the Canadian frigate *HMCS Toronto* in the Black Sea.
- In June 2014, Russian aircraft approached the Danish island of Bornholm in what appeared to be a simulated attack. In September 2014, Russian aircraft over the Labrador Sea practiced cruise-missile attacks against the U.S. mainland and Russian aircraft violated Swedish airspace while conducting a mock bombing run.
- In September 2014, Russian officials detained a Lithuanian shipping vessel operating in international waters in the Barents Sea and towed it to Murmansk.
- A "massive outburst" of Russian air activity occurred along NATO's borders in October 2014 in conjunction with a large Russian military aviation exercise.

A list of selected incidents that have occurred subsequently includes the following:

- In June 2015, six unarmed SU-24s flew 500 meters from the destroyer *USS Ross* in international waters in the Black Sea.

⁷¹ For more, see CRS Report R43698, *NATO's Wales Summit: Outcomes and Key Challenges*, by (name redacted)

⁷² U.S. Mission to NATO, "Secretary Carter's Defense Ministerial Press Availability," October 26, 2016, at <https://nato.usmission.gov/october-2016-secretary-carter-defense-ministerial-press>; NATO, "Press Conference by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg," October 26, 2016, at http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_136581.htm.

⁷³ For details on Operation Atlantic Resolve, see the Department of Defense's OAR website at http://www.defense.gov/home/features/2014/0514_atlanticresolve/.

- In October 2015, U.S. fighter aircraft intercepted two TU-142 reconnaissance/antisubmarine aircraft that reportedly came within one nautical mile of the aircraft carrier *USS Ronald Reagan* east of the Korean peninsula.
- In January 2016, an SU-27 reportedly came within 5 meters of a U.S. RC-135 over the Black Sea.
- On two occasions in April 2016, SU-27s came within 15-25 meters of a U.S. RC-135 reconnaissance aircraft in international airspace over the Baltic Sea and reportedly performed a barrel roll over the top of the U.S. aircraft.
- On two other occasions in April 2016, Russian SU-24 bombers made several low-altitude passes of the *USS Donald Cook* in the Baltic Sea, reportedly coming within 10 meters of colliding with the ship.
- In September 2016, an SU-27 fighter aircraft intercepted a U.S. Navy P-8 conducting routine operations in international airspace over the Black Sea, reportedly coming within 3 meters of a collision at one point.
- In February 2017, an SU-24 fighter aircraft flew within 200 meters of the *USS Porter* guided missile destroyer in the Black Sea. Another two SU-24 aircraft and an IL-38 maritime patrol aircraft also flew near the destroyer.

Sources: “NATO Jets Scrambled 160 Times to Protect Lithuanian Airspace in 2015,” *Lithuania Tribune*, January 6, 2016; European Leadership Network, “Dangerous Brinkmanship: Close Military Encounters Between Russia and the West in 2014,” November 2014; and European Leadership Network, “Russia-West Dangerous Brinkmanship Continues,” March 12, 2015; additional media reports (full citation information available from the author).

Note: Prepared by (name redacted), Analyst in European Affairs

EU-Russian Relations⁷⁴

Like NATO, the EU has had to reconsider its relationship with a more assertive Russia and the implications for European security and stability. Especially after the July 2014 shootdown of Malaysian Airlines Flight 17 over Ukraine, the EU closely coordinated with the United States in imposing sanctions on Russia (on U.S. sanctions, see “Ukraine-Related U.S. Sanctions on Russia,” below). Even after the imposition of sanctions, Russia is the EU’s fourth-largest trade partner (behind the United States, China, and, since 2015, Switzerland) and main supplier of natural gas (see **Table 2**, above).

Crafting common EU policies has been challenging, given various EU member states’ different national histories and economic relations with Russia. Many in the EU have long advocated for a pragmatic “strategic partnership” with Russia based largely on commercial and energy ties, as well as practical cooperation on certain foreign policy issues. Countries such as Poland and the Baltic states, by contrast, have tended to view Russia more as a potential threat to themselves and their neighbors.

The sharpness of such divisions within the EU appeared to diminish before 2014, but Russia’s annexation of Crimea caused a distinct shift in perceptions across the board. Traditional advocates of pragmatism moved more into alignment with those who have tended to view Russia with greater wariness.

Furthermore, many in Europe have expressed concern about Russia’s efforts to expand its influence on the Continent by other than military means. Media reports and outside experts contend that the Russian government is seeking to influence European politics, elections, and policymaking with an array of tools. Such measures reportedly include the use of disinformation and pro-Russian fake news, cyberattacks on government and political party websites, and the cultivation of relations with European political parties and allies broadly sympathetic to Russia. Efforts by the Russian government to influence Europe’s political landscape appear aimed at sowing disunity and destabilizing the EU and NATO.

⁷⁴ This section was coauthored with (name redacted), Specialist in European Affairs. Also see CRS Report R44249, *The European Union: Current Challenges and Future Prospects*, by (name redacted)

In recent years, a new and increasingly evident ideological link has appeared between European far-right parties and the Russian leadership.⁷⁵ Most of these far-right parties tend to be antiestablishment and anti-EU, and they often share some combination of extreme nationalism; a commitment to “law and order” and traditional family values; and anti-immigrant, anti-Semitic, or anti-Islamic sentiments.⁷⁶

Concrete evidence of direct financial support from the Russian government to European political parties is difficult to identify. Widespread speculation exists, however, that the Russian government has funneled money through Russian banks or other organizations and individuals to far-right parties in Europe. Many suggest that Russia also has been proactive in offering organizational expertise, political know-how, and media assistance to parties on Europe’s far right. Russian support reportedly has included establishing and coordinating pro-Russian parties, nongovernmental civil organizations, and think tanks, and supporting friendly media outlets. Russian diplomacy also offers far-right parties access to political networks, including by sponsoring forums and conferences that develop and coordinate national doctrines and policies.⁷⁷

Many European leaders worry about the possibility of Russian interference, including through cyberattacks on government or political party computer systems ahead of important national elections in France, Germany, and elsewhere in Europe in 2017.

Russia’s Intervention in Syria⁷⁸

Russian military involvement in Syria dates back to the 1950s, when the former Soviet Union embraced Syrian nationalist rulers as a counterbalance to U.S. regional partners. Soviet and Russian Federation naval forces have accessed a facility at the Syrian port of Tartus since the early 1970s, using it as a logistical hub to enable longer Mediterranean operations. Former Syrian President Hafiz al Asad (1971-2000) regularly hosted Soviet military and economic advisers but resisted Moscow’s attempts to leverage Russian military assistance to gain greater or permanent access to shore facilities. Syria eventually became the largest Middle East recipient of Russian equipment and training, with Russia supplying the majority of Syria’s tanks, artillery, fixed-wing aircraft, and helicopters. Before the start of Russia’s current intervention in Syria, Russian personnel continued to be based in Syria to maintain Russian military equipment and train Syrians, although their numbers fluctuated over time.⁷⁹

⁷⁵ See, for example, Dalibor Rohac, Edit Zgut, and Lorant Gyori, *Populism in Europe and Its Russian Love Affair*, American Enterprise Institute, January 2017, at <http://www.aei.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Populism-in-Europe-and-Its-Russian-Love-Affair.pdf>; and Alina Polyakova et al., *The Kremlin’s Trojan Horses*, Atlantic Council, November 2016, at <http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/publications/reports/kremlin-trojan-horses>.

⁷⁶ A few parties on the left or far left also appear to harbor more friendly views toward Russia. These parties include Greece’s *Syriza* (which has led the Greek government since 2015) and Bulgaria’s Socialist Party.

⁷⁷ Political Capital Institute, *The Russian Connection: The Spread of Pro-Russian Policies on the European Far Right*, March 14, 2014, at http://politicalcapital.hu/library.php?article_read=1&article_id=100.

⁷⁸ This section was coauthored with Carla Humud, Analyst in Middle Eastern Affairs, and Christopher Blanchard, Specialist in Middle Eastern Affairs. For an overview of the Syria conflict, see CRS Report RL33487, *Armed Conflict in Syria: Overview and U.S. Response*, coordinated by (name redacted).

⁷⁹ For background on Russia’s Syria policy, see Dmitri Trenin, *The Mythical Alliance: Russia’s Syria Policy*, Carnegie Moscow Center, February 2013, at <http://carnegie.ru/2013/02/12/mythical-alliance-russia-s-syria-policy-pub-50909>; and Samuel Charap, “Russia, Syria and the Doctrine of Intervention,” *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy*, vol. 55, no. 1 (2013), pp. 35-41.

Over the summer of 2015, Moscow began a gradual buildup of Russian personnel, combat aircraft, and military equipment inside Syria. Russia began airstrikes in September,⁸⁰ initially focusing on Syrian opposition targets, including some groups reportedly backed by the United States. In 2016, Russia expanded its targeting to include Islamic State forces, although it continues to target U.S.-backed rebel groups occasionally. In addition, Russia continues to resupply Syrian military forces, although Russian officials have stated that they are merely fulfilling existing bilateral contracts.

To date, airstrikes have constituted Russia's primary offensive military effort in Syria. These strikes have enabled forces loyal to Syrian President Bashar al Asad to reverse some opposition gains, particularly in and around Aleppo. Russia's introduction of advanced air defense systems in Syria also reportedly constrains the ability of other aircraft to operate freely in the area—complicating proposals calling for the establishment of a no-fly zone. At the same time, Russia has pushed for cooperation between U.S. and Russian military forces in Syria against terrorist groups—which in Russia's view includes groups fighting the Asad government. Russian ground forces in Syria appear to have played a limited combat role and seem to be focused primarily on defending Russian bases and installations in Syria—although some may be embedded as advisers with Syrian military forces.⁸¹

Going forward, Russia may continue operations against Syrian rebel groups, with the aim of weakening any credible or capable opposition to the Asad government. This course of action could place the Syrian regime in a stronger negotiating position vis-à-vis rebels, while also accomplishing Russia's goal of avoiding Western-led regime change in Syria. In the short term, Russia potentially could extend its operations in Islamic State-held areas of central and eastern Syria. As U.S.-assisted Syrian Democratic Forces move toward the Islamic State's declared capital at Raqqa, they eventually may be operating in proximity to Russian and/or Turkish forces. Over the long term, Russia may seek to retain influence with the Syrian government by advising and assisting the Syrian military. Russia has negotiated agreements to maintain a long-term presence at both the Tartus naval facility and the Hmeimim airbase, but it could still gradually reduce its military footprint in the country to focus on other regional or international priorities. In January 2017, Russia and Turkey facilitated peace talks in Astana, Kazakhstan (Russia's CSTO ally and economic partner).

Analysts have offered a variety of motivations for Russia's intervention in Syria.⁸² In general, the series of losses suffered by Syrian government forces in 2015, concerns about U.S. and other third-party security assistance to Syrian opposition groups, and the potential for broader U.S.-led coalition military operations in Syria all may have contributed to Russia's decision to directly enter the conflict when it did.

⁸⁰ In October 2015, the United States and Russia signed a memorandum of understanding to establish a safety-of-flight protocol for aircraft operating in the same airspace.

⁸¹ See Mark Galeotti and Jonathan Spyer, "Russia to Defend Core Syrian Government Areas," *IHS Jane's Intelligence Review*, September 22, 2015; Jeffrey White, "Russia's Military Strategy in Syria Becoming Clearer as Its Forces Engage in Combat," Washington Institute for Near East Policy, Policy Watch 2503, October 9, 2015, at <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/russias-military-strategy-in-syria-becoming-clearer-as-its-forces-engage-in>; and Dmitry Gorenburg and Michael Kofman, "There Is No Russian Withdrawal from Syria," *War on the Rocks*, March 18, 2016, at <https://warontherocks.com/2016/03/there-is-no-russian-withdrawal-from-syria/>.

⁸² See, for example, Paul Stronski, "Russia's Fight in Syria Reflects the Kremlin's Fears at Home," Reuters, September 29, 2015, at <http://blogs.reuters.com/great-debate/2015/09/28/russias-fight-in-syria-follows-a-dangerous-pattern>, and Ekaterina Stepanova, *Russia's Policy on Syria After the Start of Military Engagement*, Policy Memo No. 421, PONARS Eurasia, at <http://www.ponarseurasia.org/memo/russias-policy-syria-after-start-military-engagement>.

The prospect of Asad's defeat—assuming Moscow believed such an outcome was possible—could have had several negative implications for Russia. It could have meant the loss of a key ally in the Middle East, a region in which Russia was seeking to expand influence to help establish itself as a global power and peer competitor to the United States. It also could have set another major precedent for violent regime change in the Middle East (after Iraq and Libya), something Moscow has increasingly opposed as a dangerous example to Russia's neighbors and, ultimately, to Russia itself. Finally, Russian authorities have insisted that the final beneficiary of the Asad regime's collapse would be the Islamic State and other extremists who would be the likely victors in the ensuing contest for national power.

Extremist success in Syria could promote the spread of Islamist extremism to other countries, including within Central Asia and Russia itself. Russian authorities claim that up to a few thousand Russian citizens, predominantly from Muslim-populated republics in the North Caucasus, have fought with the Islamic State and other extremist movements in Syria and Iraq. Since Russia's intervention, commanders once affiliated with the Al Qaeda-aligned Islamic Emirate of the Caucasus, established in 2007, reportedly have pledged allegiance to the Islamic State and formed a local affiliate, the Wilayah Kawkaz.

Russia's leadership may have believed that intervention, although potentially risky, could help to avoid certain negative outcomes. In addition, the leadership may have believed that intervention could achieve additional objectives if, as expected, it shored up the Asad regime, bolstered Russian influence in Syria, and staved off the collapse of the state and a takeover by Islamist extremists. In addition, analysts have suggested that international criticism and sanctions related to Russia's actions in Ukraine encouraged the Russian government to seek ways to reassert its global influence. By intervening in Syria, Moscow could demonstrate its ability to project military power past its immediate neighborhood, test existing and new capabilities, and make Russia an unavoidable diplomatic player on an issue of significance to the United States and other countries.

Russia's Global Engagement

With the exception of its Syria intervention, Russia's foreign policy priorities traditionally have focused primarily on the post-Soviet region and the West. However, Russia (like the Soviet Union before it) actively pursues foreign relations on a global scale. Russia is one of five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council, where it plays a significant role. Until 2014, Russia was a member of the Group of Eight (G8), together with the West's seven leading economies (including Japan).⁸³ It is also a member of BRICS, an alternative group of states with large economies that also includes Brazil, India, China, and South Africa. In these and other international fora, Russia has engaged on global issues such as nonproliferation (including combatting the nuclear weapons programs of Iran and North Korea), counterterrorism, counterpiracy, and global health. Russia is a leading oil and gas exporter (see "Energy Sector," above) and the second-largest major weapons exporter in the world (its top clients are India, China, and Vietnam). Russia has constructed nuclear power plants in Europe, Iran, India, and China, with more under construction or planned.

In addition, Russia has cultivated a variety of bilateral partnerships around the globe. In Asia, Russia's main partner is China, with which it has close security, economic, and political relations, although Russia has concerns about China's inexorable rise. In addition, Russia has cultivated good relations with Japan, with which it still has a territorial dispute over islands Russia annexed

⁸³ This group has since returned to the status of the Group of Seven (G7).

at the end of World War II. It also has developed good relations with India, Pakistan (more recently), Afghanistan, Vietnam, and across Southeast Asia.⁸⁴ In the Middle East, Russia's Syria intervention is exceptional in scope but reflects a long-standing policy of fruitful relations with regional governments including Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Libya, and Sudan. In Latin America, Russia has sought to reengage with Soviet-era partners Cuba and Nicaragua, as well as Venezuela, Brazil, and others. In sub-Saharan Africa, Russia has not developed similarly strong relations. However, it has begun to expand its focus on this region, which used to house several close partners of the Soviet Union (including Angola, Ethiopia, Mali, and Mozambique).

The Military⁸⁵

Russia's armed forces surprised most U.S. and European observers with their actions in Ukraine starting in March 2014 and in Syria starting in September 2015. Since the end of the Cold War, conventional wisdom about the Russian military has tended to indicate a force in relative decline, with aging Soviet-era equipment and with technology and a philosophy of warfare lagging well behind that of the United States and many NATO allies. Analysts noted that the shortcomings of Russia's military appeared to be confirmed by its relatively lackluster performance in the 2008 conflict with Georgia.

Over the past three years in particular, many analysts have been struck by the improved capabilities exhibited by the Russian military, as well as the unexpected ways in which Russia has used its military:

- Russian special forces, elite airborne troops, and naval infantry effected a swift and bloodless seizure of Crimea in March 2014.
- The subsequent Russian involvement in the conflict in eastern Ukraine highlighted the practice of "hybrid warfare," centered on the use of irregular "separatist" forces covertly backed by the regular military, along with an information and propaganda campaign orchestrated to create misdirection and spread an alternate international narrative.
- The campaign in Syria, in addition to serving a number of broader Russian interests and diplomatic objectives, has allowed Russia to test and display how various components of its military work together in an expeditionary setting.
- The Syria operation has demonstrated noteworthy capabilities, such as the launch of long-range cruise missiles from naval vessels in the Caspian Sea and the deployment of Russia's most modern combat aircraft. It also has highlighted the Russian military's ability to effect "area denial" with an air defense "bubble" of overlapping advanced missile systems.⁸⁶
- At the same time, Russia has been upgrading or constructing new facilities in the Arctic and reactivating Soviet bases in the Arctic that fell into disuse with the end of the Cold War. In December 2014, Russia launched a new Arctic Joint Strategic

⁸⁴ For more, see CRS Report R44613, *Northeast Asia and Russia's "Turn to the East": Implications for U.S. Interests*, by (name redacted) .

⁸⁵ This section was coauthored with (name redacted), Analyst in European Affairs.

⁸⁶ Thomas Gibbons-Neff, "Top NATO General: Russians Starting to Build Air Defense Bubble over Syria," *Washington Post*, September 29, 2015, at <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/checkpoint/wp/2015/09/29/top-nato-general-russians-starting-to-build-air-defense-bubble-over-syria>.

Command. In addition, Russia has been forming two new brigades specializing in Arctic warfare.

- Over the past several years, Russia also has adopted an increasingly aggressive posture with its air and sea patrols and military exercises (see “Recent Air and Sea Incidents” text box, above).

Russian Military Modernization

Since 2008, Russia’s military has undergone substantial reforms. The reform program has focused largely on streamlining command structures and increasing professionalization, increasing unit combat readiness and personnel training, and reequipping forces through an ambitious acquisition program. Although many of Russia’s reform efforts have faced myriad challenges, partial reversals, and other setbacks, some of the efforts appear to have been at least partly successful in achieving their objectives and yielding improved capabilities.

Russia also has pursued an ambitious modernization program as it steadily increased defense spending, at least until 2016, when the defense budget declined for the first time in years. In 2010, Russia announced a new 10-year State Armaments Program (SAP) for 2011-2020, calling for approximately 20 trillion rubles in new weapons procurement over that period. (This figure amounted to approximately \$664 billion at the time but was approximately \$328 billion as of December 2016 due to depreciation of the ruble.) Prior to returning to the presidency in 2012, then-Prime Minister Putin outlined the procurement goals of the SAP:

In the coming decade, Russian armed forces will be provided with over 400 modern land and sea-based inter-continental ballistic missiles, 8 strategic ballistic missile submarines, about 20 multi-purpose submarines, over 50 surface warships, around 100 military spacecraft, over 600 modern aircraft including fifth generation fighter jets, more than 1,000 helicopters, 28 regimental kits of S-400 air defence systems, 38 battalion kits of Vityaz missile systems, 10 brigade kits of Iskander-M missile systems, over 2,300 modern tanks, about 2,000 self-propelled artillery systems and vehicles, and more than 17,000 military vehicles.

The plan calls for upgrading 11% of military equipment each year, with a final goal of increasing the share of modern weaponry to 70% of total inventory by 2020. For 2015, President Putin related the expected share of “modern weapons” was 32% in the Army, 33% in the Air Force, 40% in airborne units, and “over 50%” in the Navy and aerospace defense forces. Some analysts have questioned the definition of *modern* in this context, noting that in some cases the term appears to include newer versions of older designs.

Although the SAP has achieved some significant results, the process also has faced considerable challenges and encountered delays. Since 2014, the Russian economy has been negatively affected by falling oil prices and international sanctions, with a prolonged recession accompanied by severe currency depreciation, high inflation, and increased capital flight. The downturn has strained public finances and complicated long-term budgetary and planning efforts. Accompanying an overall decline in defense spending from 2016, the approval of a new 30-trillion ruble (approximately \$492 billion) SAP for the period 2016-2025 was postponed until 2018 due to the instability of economic conditions. Additionally, some analysts doubt that the Russian defense industry can produce and deliver the full complement of equipment at the pace and scale envisioned by the SAP.

Sources: Dmitry Gorenburg, *Russia’s State Armaments Program 2020: Is the Third Time the Charm for Military Modernization?*, Policy Memo No. 125, PONARS Eurasia, October 2010; Vladimir Putin, “Being Strong: National Security Guarantees For Russia,” *Rossiiskaya Gazeta*, February 20, 2012; TASS, “Putin Prioritizes Task to Keep Pace of Armed Forces Modernization,” May 12, 2015.

Russia’s Military Footprint in Europe

Russia’s Western Military District stretches from its border with Finland in the north to its border with northeastern Ukraine and includes Kaliningrad, a Russian territorial exclave wedged between Poland and Lithuania. Officially, the Western Military District hosts around 400,000 troops (or 40% of Russia’s total military forces). Unofficial estimates put the number closer to 300,000 (with total active military forces at around 830,000 in 2016). The Western Military District includes the 6th Army, 20th Guards Army, and 1st Guards Tank Army; the 6th Air Force and Air Defense Army, as well as Airborne Troops; the Baltic Fleet (based in Kaliningrad), naval

infantry, and coastal defense forces; and intelligence, support, and special forces units.⁸⁷ In May 2016, Russia announced plans to put two new divisions in the Western Military District and another in the Southern Military District (Caucasus, Black Sea, and Caspian region), totaling approximately 30,000 new troops.

Defense experts say that Russian forces stationed in the region, including surface ships, submarines, and advanced S-400 air defense systems, could “allow [Russia] to effectively close off the Baltic Sea and skies to NATO reinforcements.”⁸⁸ According to a RAND report based on a series of war games staged in 2014 and 2015, a quick Russian strike would be able to reach the capitals of Estonia and Latvia in 36-60 hours.⁸⁹

Kaliningrad is a key strategic territory for Russia, allowing the country to project military power into NATO’s northern flank. The territory has a heavy Russian military presence, including the Baltic Fleet and two airbases. In October 2016, the Russian Minister of Defense reported that Russia also had stationed Iskander short-range nuclear-capable missiles there.⁹⁰ Many consider the deployment of Iskander missiles in Kaliningrad to be a response to new NATO deployments. Sources close to the Russian military have said that it is “part of a long-standing plan to modernize Russia’s non-nuclear ballistic missile system.”⁹¹

According to NATO officials, Russia is using Kaliningrad “to pursue what is known as an anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) strategy for surrounding areas. That involves a strategic layering of surface-to-air missiles to block off NATO’s air access, if needed, to the three Baltic states and about a third of Poland.” According to one Russian analyst, “Moscow’s plan for Kaliningrad is not to flood it with troops and firepower, but to modernize its military infrastructure.”⁹² Analysts also have observed that Kaliningrad’s geographic isolation creates the potential for a scenario whereby Russia tries “to seize the 100-kilometer wide strip on the Polish-Lithuanian border known as the Suwalki Gap that separates the exclave from Belarus, a Russian ally.”⁹³

In addition to the increased militarization of its western flank, Russia has increased its military presence in neighboring countries. It has extensively militarized Ukraine’s occupied region of Crimea, home of the Black Sea Fleet and an estimated 23,000-28,000 troops.⁹⁴ It also continues to

⁸⁷The official number is from Russia’s Ministry of Defense, at <http://structure.mil.ru/structure/okruga/west/history.htm>. For unofficial estimates, see International Institute of Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 2017*, February 13, 2017, pp. 211, 218-219; Anna Maria Dynier, “Russia Beefs Up Military Potential in the Country’s Western Areas,” Polish Institute for International Affairs, June 13, 2016, at <https://www.pism.pl/publications/bulletin/no-35-885>; and Andrey Frolov, “Russian Army in 2014 and Western Military District” (presentation), at http://www.defmin.fi/files/2840/Andrey_Frolov_Russian_army_SPb_25_04_2014.pdf.

⁸⁸ Henry Meyer, “Putin’s Military Buildup in the Baltic Stokes Invasion Fears,” Bloomberg, July 6, 2016, at <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2016-07-06/putin-s-military-buildup-in-the-baltic-stokes-invasion-fears>.

⁸⁹ David A. Shlapak and Michael W. Johnson, *Reinforcing Deterrence on NATO’s Eastern Flank: Wargaming the Defense of the Baltics*, RAND Corporation, September 30, 2016, at http://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1253.html.

⁹⁰ BBC News, “Russia Deploys Nuclear-Capable Missiles in Kaliningrad,” October 9, 2016, at <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-37597075>.

⁹¹ Lidia Kelly, “Russia’s Baltic Outpost Digs in for Standoff with NATO,” Reuters, July 5, 2016, at <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-nato-russia-kaliningrad-idUSKCN0ZL0J7>.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Meyer, “Putin’s Military Buildup in the Baltic Stokes Invasion Fears.”

⁹⁴ Reuters, “In Crimea, Russia Signals Military Resolve with New and Revamped Bases,” November 1, 2016, at <http://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/russia-crimea>, and Dave Gilbert and Fred Pleitgen, “Russia Puts on Show of Military Strength in Crimea,” CNN, September 9, 2016, at <http://www.cnn.com/2016/09/09/europe/crimea-war-games-pleitgen>.

sponsor and support separatist movements in eastern Ukraine, including unofficially deploying as many as 12,000 troops to the region at their height in 2015 and, more recently, 5,000-7,500 troops, according to the Ukrainian government.⁹⁵

Russia also has stationed military forces in the breakaway regions of Georgia and Moldova without these states' consent. Since Russia's 2008 war with Georgia, its military bases in Abkhazia and South Ossetia have housed some 3,500-4,000 personnel each. In Moldova, Russia continues to deploy 1,500-2,000 troops in Transnistria (of which Moldova accepts a few hundred as peacekeepers).⁹⁶ In 2016, Russia finalized an agreement with the de facto authorities of Abkhazia, establishing a joint group of military forces in the occupied region. It also concluded an agreement to establish a joint air defense system with its longtime military ally Armenia (which hosts around 3,300 Russian troops).

Unannounced Military Exercises

Since 2009, Russia has significantly increased the frequency of large-scale strategic exercises and short-notice "snap drills," serving to bolster the readiness of its forces, rehearse for a variety of contingencies in its neighborhood, and gain experience in the rapid redeployment of large numbers of personnel and equipment. In 2009, Russia alarmed many U.S. and European observers with exercises rehearsing an attack on Poland and the Baltic countries and culminating in a simulated nuclear strike on Warsaw. In March 2013, the Russian Air Force reportedly conducted a mock nuclear strike against Sweden. An exercise involving 150,000 troops in February and March 2014 unfolded in conjunction with the seizure of Crimea and helped to mask the operation. At the tactical level, smaller-scale unit exercises and live-fire exercises reportedly also have increased in frequency.

NATO officials assert that Russia has staged about a dozen unannounced, large-scale, snap military drills in 2015-2016, including in the run-up to the July 2016 NATO summit in Warsaw. Besides testing units' readiness for battle, mobilization procedures, equipment, and command systems, the exercises are presumed to be a signal to NATO through the display of forces and weaponry. NATO countries such as Poland, Romania, and the Baltics are concerned about a repeat of tactics used during the takeover of Crimea, with putative exercises morphing into an actual assault operation.

Sources: Matthew Day, "Russia 'Simulates' Nuclear Attack on Poland," *The Daily Telegraph*, November 1, 2009; Stephen Blank, "What Do the Zapad 2013 Exercises Reveal?," Jamestown Foundation, October 4, 2013; Testimony of Ian J. Brzezinski, in U.S. Congress, Senate Committee on Armed Services, *United States Policy on Europe*, hearings, 114th Cong., 1st sess., April 28, 2015; Gustav Gressel, "Russia's Quiet Military Revolution, and What It Means For Europe," European Council on Foreign Relations, October 2015; Edward Lucas, *The Coming Storm: Baltic Sea Security Report*, Center for European Policy Analysis, June 2015; Damien Sharikov, "Putin Calls Snap Drill to Test Battle-Readiness of Russian Military," *Newsweek*, June 4, 2016; Associated Press, "NATO: Russia Increasingly Staging Snap Military Drills," August 29, 2016.

U.S.-Russian Relations

For more than 25 years, the U.S.-Russian relationship has gone through positive and negative periods. The spirit of U.S.-Russian "strategic partnership" forged by Presidents Bill Clinton and Boris Yeltsin in the early 1990s was gradually overtaken by increasing tension and mutual

⁹⁵ On estimates of Russian troops in Ukraine, see Reuters, "Some 12,000 Russian Soldiers in Ukraine Supporting Rebels: U.S. Commander," March 3, 2015, at <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-russia-soldiers-idUSKBN0LZ2FV20150303>; Bellingcat, *Russia's War in Ukraine: The Medals and Treacherous Numbers: A Bellingcat Investigation*, August 31, 2016, at <https://www.bellingcat.com/news/uk-and-europe/2016/08/31/russias-war-ukraine-medals-treacherous-numbers>; RFE/RL, "Kyiv Says Russia Has at Least 5,000 Troops in Eastern Ukraine," November 29, 2016, at <http://www.rferl.org/a/ukraine-russia-troops-crimea/28146059.html>; International Institute of Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 2017*, p. 224.

⁹⁶ International Institute of Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 2016*, February 9, 2016, p. 201; Ekaterina Zgurovskaya, "Global Presence," *Gazeta.ru*, December 16, 2015 (in Russian), at <https://www.gazeta.ru/army/2015/12/16/7972523.shtml>.

recrimination, in large part as a consequence of disagreements over Russian efforts to reestablish a sphere of influence in the post-Soviet region and over U.S. promotion of NATO enlargement to Central and Eastern Europe and military intervention in the former Yugoslavia.

Presidents George W. Bush and Vladimir Putin believed they could restore U.S.-Russian relations, particularly in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. The two countries reshaped their relationship on the basis of cooperation against terrorism and the economic integration of Russia with the West. However, tensions arose again around a number of issues, including the Iraq War; the so-called color revolutions in Ukraine, Georgia, and Kyrgyzstan involving protests against electoral fraud that unseated corrupt regimes; Russian energy and security pressure on its neighbors; and U.S. and NATO plans for missile defense. Cooperation continued in some areas, but the August 2008 Russian-Georgian conflict (see “Russia and Other Post-Soviet States,” above) caused bilateral ties to deteriorate to their lowest point since the Cold War.

U.S.-Russian Relations in the Obama Administration

Upon entering office, the Obama Administration believed it could prompt yet another “reset” of relations with Russia’s new president, Dmitry Medvedev, a relatively liberal Russian political figure who nonetheless remained informally subordinate to Prime Minister Putin. During a July 2009 meeting in Moscow, Presidents Medvedev and Obama established the U.S.-Russia Bilateral Presidential Commission consisting of 21 working groups to address a broad spectrum of issues. The commission’s working groups met regularly for more than four years, until their activities were suspended as a result of Russian actions in Ukraine.⁹⁷

During this period, the United States and Russia cooperated in a number of areas. This cooperation resulted in the following:

- a new strategic arms control agreement (the 2010 New START Treaty);
- supply of U.S. and NATO troops in Afghanistan via the Northern Distribution Network, which allowed for ground and air transit of supplies through Russia;
- cooperation in Afghan counternarcotics and combat helicopter maintenance;
- Russia’s accession to the World Trade Organization;
- the imposition of new multilateral sanctions on Iran and development of the eventual Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action in 2015;
- multilateral sanctions on North Korea; and
- the removal of chemical weapons from Syria.

Despite this progress, however, U.S.-Russian relations remained challenging in several respects. In 2011, Putin expressed disapproval of the establishment of a U.N.-supported no-fly zone in Libya, despite Russia’s abstention during a U.N. Security Council vote. Libya’s subsequent collapse into civil war and the killing of Muammar al Qadhafi were, in Russia’s view, evidence that Western policy in the Middle East (after the Iraq War) remained wrongheaded and in violation of international norms.⁹⁸

⁹⁷ For more on the U.S.-Russia Bilateral Presidential Commission, see U.S. Department of State, “U.S.-Russia Bilateral Presidential Commission,” at <https://2009-2017.state.gov/p/eur/ci/rs/usrussiabilat/index.htm>.

⁹⁸ Ellen Barry, “Russians Say Anti-U.S. Attack in Libya Vindicates Their Position,” *New York Times*, September 12, 2012, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/13/world/europe/russians-say-anti-american-attack-in-libya-vindicates-their-continued...>

U.S.-Russian relations worsened with Russia's disputed December 2011 parliamentary elections and Putin's March 2012 return to the presidency. Two days after the parliamentary elections, then-U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton expressed "serious concern" about the election and implied that it had been "neither free nor fair."⁹⁹ In response, Putin accused the State Department of interfering in Russia's internal affairs and, ultimately, seeking to promote regime change.¹⁰⁰ Subsequently, Putin infused his presidential campaign with a heavy dose of anti-Americanism, painting the Russian opposition and pro-democracy NGOs as Western pawns. State television accused the new U.S. ambassador and architect of the reset policy, Michael McFaul, of plotting revolution after his first meeting with opposition and civil-society activists.¹⁰¹

Relations continued to decline from there. In December 2012, the Sergei Magnitsky Rule of Law Accountability Act (P.L. 112-208, Title IV) entered into law as part of a broader piece of legislation normalizing U.S. trade with Russia. The Magnitsky Act imposes sanctions on individuals involved in the detention, abuse, or death of Sergei Magnitsky, a Russian whistleblower who died after being sent to prison, as well as others whom the United States determines are "responsible for extrajudicial killings, torture, or other gross violations of internationally recognized human rights" in Russia.¹⁰² Russian reaction was intense, as the sanctions were seen as a direct assault on the legitimacy and integrity of the government and an "unwarranted intrusion into its internal affairs."¹⁰³ In response, the Russian government terminated an adoption agreement that had entered into force the month before and banned U.S. adoptions of Russian children.¹⁰⁴

In the wake of the Magnitsky Act, the Russian government also moved to dismantle a number of other links between Russia and the United States. The day after the act was introduced, President Putin signed Russia's "foreign agent" law requiring foreign-funded organizations that engage in activity seeking to affect policymaking to register and identify as foreign agents. In September 2012, Russia requested that the United States close down foreign assistance under the U.S. Agency for International Development. Russia also informed the United States that it was unwilling to renew an umbrella agreement that had supported nonproliferation-related Cooperative Threat Reduction (Nunn-Lugar) programs in Russia since 1992 (see "Nuclear Arms Control and Nonproliferation," below).

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⁹⁹ Hillary Rodham Clinton, "Remarks at the OSCE First Plenary Session," U.S. Department of State, December 6, 2011, at <https://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/20092013clinton/rm/2011/12/178315.htm>.

¹⁰⁰ David M. Herszenhorn and Ellen Barry, "Putin Contends Clinton Incited Unrest over Vote," *New York Times*, December 8, 2011, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/09/world/europe/putin-accuses-clinton-of-instigating-russian-protests.html>.

¹⁰¹ Paul J. Saunders, "U.S. Ambassador's Rough Welcome in Moscow: Is the Reset Failing?," *Atlantic*, January 23, 2012, at <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/01/us-ambassadors-rough-welcome-in-moscow-is-the-reset-failing/251808>.

¹⁰² As of February 2017, sanctions have been imposed on 44 individuals under the Sergei Magnitsky Rule of Law Accountability Act (P.L. 112-208, Title IV). For more on the Magnitsky sanctions program, see U.S. Department of the Treasury, "The Magnitsky Sanctions," at <https://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/Programs/pages/magnitsky.aspx>.

¹⁰³ Reuters, "Russia 'Outraged' over Senate Passing Magnitsky Bill," June 27, 2012, at <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-russia-usa-rights-idUSBRE85Q0EK20120627>.

¹⁰⁴ RFE/RL, "Putin Signs Bill Banning U.S. Adoptions," December 28, 2012, at <http://www.rferl.org/a/putin-signs-bill-banning-us-adoptions-magnitsky/24810783.html>.

In the months before the evolution of Ukraine's Euromaidan protests and Russia's annexation of Crimea, two other issues dominated U.S.-Russian relations: Edward Snowden and Syria. The United States and Russia disputed the fate of Snowden, who took refuge in Moscow in June 2013 after releasing classified U.S. government documents; he was granted asylum in Russia in August 2013. That month, the White House announced it would "postpone" a U.S.-Russian presidential summit planned for September because of inadequate "progress in our bilateral agenda" since Putin returned to the presidency.¹⁰⁵

One area of cooperation at this time was the removal of chemical weapons from Syria. The United States and Russia surprised many by coming to agreement in September 2013, after Russian officials supported a remark by U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry that U.S. military intervention could be avoided if Syria were to give up its chemical weapons.¹⁰⁶ Despite fundamental differences between Washington and Moscow over the war in Syria, the United States and Russia cooperated to secure passage of U.N. Security Council Resolution 2118, which endorsed the agreement on chemical weapons removal and called for peace talks with the aim of establishing a transitional government in Syria.¹⁰⁷

In 2014, U.S. relations with Russia deteriorated further in reaction to Russia's invasion and annexation of Ukraine's Crimea region and Russia's sponsorship and support of separatist militants in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions (the Donbas). The United States, in coordination with the EU and a number of other states, promised to impose increasing costs on Russia until it "abides by its international obligations and returns its military forces to their original bases and respects Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity."¹⁰⁸ The United States suspended discussions on trade and investment and military-to-military contacts, as well as certain kinds of nonproliferation and energy research cooperation.¹⁰⁹ Russia also was removed from the G8, and the United States, EU, and other allies introduced sanctions on Russia for its actions.

Ukraine-Related U.S. Sanctions on Russia¹¹⁰

Since 2014, the United States has imposed sanctions on more than 520 individuals and entities in response to Russia's aggressive actions in and toward Ukraine.¹¹¹ Former President Barack Obama, in issuing decisions to curtail economic relations, declared Russia's activities in Ukraine

¹⁰⁵ The White House, "Statement by the Press Secretary on the President's Travel to Russia," August 7, 2013, at <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2013/08/07/statement-press-secretary-president-s-travel-russia>.

¹⁰⁶ Henry Meyer, Nicole Gaolette, and David Lerman, "Russia Seizes on Kerry Comment on Syria Giving up Weapons," Bloomberg, September 9, 2013, at <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2013-09-09/kerry-sees-unbelievably-small-strike-on-syria-s-chemicals>.

¹⁰⁷ The United States and Russia also had previously supported U.N. Security Council Resolutions 2042 and 2043 (April 2012) calling for a cease-fire. The text of U.N. Security Council Resolution 2118 is available at <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/doc/2118>.

¹⁰⁸ The White House, "Fact Sheet: Ukraine-Related Sanctions," March 17, 2014, at <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2014/03/17/fact-sheet-ukraine-related-sanctions>.

¹⁰⁹ See testimony by Eric Rubin, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, in U.S. Congress, House Foreign Affairs Committee, *U.S. Foreign Policy Toward Ukraine*, hearings, 114th Cong., 1st sess., March 6, 2014, at <https://2009-2017.state.gov/p/eur/rls/rm/2014/mar/223023.htm>.

¹¹⁰ This section draws on CRS In Focus IF10552, *U.S. Sanctions on Russia Related to the Ukraine Conflict*, coordinated by (name redacted) and see CRS Insight IN10634, *Overview of U.S. Sanctions Regimes on Russia*, by (name redacted) and (name redacted).

¹¹¹ In addition to individuals and entities in Russia, this total includes former Ukrainian officials, de facto officials of Crimea and the Donbas secessionist entities, and Crimea-based companies. EU sanctions are broadly similar to U.S. sanctions, although each has imposed sanctions on individuals and entities that the other has not.

as threatening the peace, security, stability, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of Russia's neighbor and, in turn, as constituting a threat to U.S. national security.

Current sanctions derive their authority from a series of executive orders (EOs) issued in 2014, as well as legislation (P.L. 113-95; P.L. 113-272) that partially replicates sanctions from the executive orders and includes mandatory and discretionary sanctions, with national security waivers.¹¹²

To date, designations are based on authority established in the executive orders. In issuing the executive orders, President Obama identified individuals and entities subject to economic restrictions for having undermined the stability of Ukraine, misappropriated its state assets, annexed Crimea to Russia, used illicit armed force in Ukraine, or conducted business, trade, or investment in Crimea. Any individual or entity designated pursuant to these orders is subject to the blocking of assets under U.S. jurisdiction, prohibitions on transactions with U.S. persons, and denial of entry into the United States. The Department of the Treasury, which has authority to designate individuals and entities, has continued to do so since the initial findings of 2014.

In addition, in what are known as *sectoral sanctions*, the Department of the Treasury has restricted selected transactions related to investment or debt holding in a number of key financial, energy, and defense companies, as well as transactions related to the development of deepwater, Arctic offshore, or shale oil projects. The Department of Commerce also has denied export licenses for military, dual-use, and energy-related goods for some 160 designated end-users (most of which are subject to Treasury sanctions).

Other sanctions are specified in legislation. For example, the Ukraine Freedom Support Act (P.L. 113-272) specifically mandates sanctions against state-run arms exporter Rosoboronexport; Russian entities that transfer weapons to Syria, Ukraine, Georgia, or Moldova; and Gazprom, if the company is found to withhold natural gas from NATO member states.

Almost three years since sanctions were first imposed, their effectiveness in changing Russian policy has been limited, although they have negatively affected the Russian economy (see "Impact of Sanctions," above). Russia has not reversed its occupation and annexation of Crimea, nor has it dropped support for the Donbas separatists. Since sanctions were introduced, however, Russia has signed two agreements that recognize all of the Donbas as a part of Ukraine and Russian-backed rebel military operations have been limited to areas along the perimeter of the current conflict zone.

Malicious Cyber Activity¹¹³

On January 6, 2017, the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) released a declassified report on Russian activities and intentions related to the 2016 U.S. presidential election.¹¹⁴ The report states that the Central Intelligence Agency, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and the National Security Agency have "high confidence" that President Putin "ordered an influence campaign in 2016 aimed at the US presidential election" in order to

¹¹² For more on Ukraine-related sanctions, see U.S. Department of the Treasury, "Ukraine-/Russia-Related Sanctions," at <https://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/Programs/Pages/ukraine.aspx>, and U.S. Department of State, "Ukraine and Russia Sanctions," at <https://2009-2017.state.gov/e/eb/tfs/spi/ukrainerrussia/>.

¹¹³ This section draws on CRS Insight IN10635, *Russia and the U.S. Presidential Election*, by (name redacted) and (name redacted).

¹¹⁴ "Assessing Russian Activities and Intentions in Recent US Elections," Intelligence Community Assessment 2017-01D, January 6, 2017, at https://www.dni.gov/files/documents/ICA_2017_01.pdf.

“undermine public faith in the US democratic process, denigrate [Hillary] Clinton, and harm her electability and potential presidency.” The report also contends that the Russian government “aspired to help President-elect Trump’s election chances when possible by discrediting Secretary Clinton and publicly contrasting her unfavorably to him.”

Unofficial allegations of Russian interference in the presidential election were made public in or around June 2016.¹¹⁵ Allegedly, the Russian government illicitly collected and authorized the release of emails and documents of the Democratic National Committee (DNC) and emails of Clinton’s campaign chairman, John Podesta. These operations were alleged to be part of broader collection efforts against the Democratic Party. Targets included other Clinton campaign staffers (some of whom had emails released) and the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (which had emails and personal information released).¹¹⁶

Operations focused on the Democratic Party, in turn, appear to have been part of a broader campaign against U.S. and international targets. In the United States, targets allegedly included a number of Republican-connected individuals, including state-level officials and campaigns, as well as former NATO Supreme Allied Commander Phillip Breedlove and former Secretary of State Colin Powell.¹¹⁷ Although collection efforts included Republican targets, FBI Director James Comey stated in a January 10, 2017, hearing that Russian hackers breached and exfiltrated data from “old domains” of the Republican National Committee (RNC) and that investigators found no evidence that the current RNC or the Trump campaign were “successfully hacked.”¹¹⁸ No emails connected to either the committee or the campaign were released.

The majority of released emails, including most of those from the DNC and Podesta, were disclosed by WikiLeaks, which allegedly received emails from Russian intelligence-connected sources. Other emails and materials were released by online persona Guccifer 2.0 and website DC Leaks, both allegedly linked to Russian intelligence.¹¹⁹

The ODNI report generally corroborates these claims. It also corroborates further claims that “Russian intelligence accessed elements of multiple state or local electoral boards” and that the Russian government engaged in international propaganda efforts through state-run media and “quasi-government trolls” to praise Trump and denigrate Clinton.¹²⁰ Although some state-level voter registration systems may have been hacked, the ODNI found no evidence of tampering with vote tallies or that information in emails released by WikiLeaks had been tampered with prior to

¹¹⁵ Ellen Nakashima, “Russian Government Hackers Penetrated DNC, Stole Opposition Research on Trump,” *Washington Post*, June 14, 2016, at https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/russian-government-hackers-penetrated-dnc-stole-opposition-research-on-trump/2016/06/14/cf006cb4-316e-11e6-8ff7-7b6c1998b7a0_story.html.

¹¹⁶ On early reports of Clinton campaign and Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee intrusions, see SecureWorks Counter Threat Unit Intelligence, “Threat Group-4127 Targets Hillary Clinton Presidential Campaign,” June 16, 2016, at <https://www.secureworks.com/research/threat-group-4127-targets-hillary-clinton-presidential-campaign>, and Joseph Menn, Dustin Volz, and Mark Hosenball, “Exclusive: FBI Probes Hacking of Democratic Congressional Group—Sources,” *Reuters*, July 29, 2016, at <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-cyber-democrats-exclusive-idUSKCN1082Y7>.

¹¹⁷ Elias Groll, “Russian Hacking Campaign Hits Republicans, Too,” *Foreign Policy*, August 12, 2016, at <http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/08/12/russian-hacking-campaign-hits-republicans-too>.

¹¹⁸ Testimony of FBI Director James Comey, in U.S. Congress, Senate Select Intelligence Committee, *Russian Intelligence Activities*, hearings, 115th Cong., 1st sess., January 10, 2017. Transcript available at <http://www.cq.com/doc/congressionaltranscripts-5017431>.

¹¹⁹ Thomas Rid, “How Russia Pulled Off the Biggest Election Hack in U.S. History,” *Esquire*, October 20, 2016, at <http://www.esquire.com/news-politics/a49791/russian-dnc-emails-hacked>.

¹²⁰ “Assessing Russian Activities and Intentions in Recent US Elections,” Intelligence Community Assessment.

the emails' release. The report also states that although Russia pursued Republican-affiliated targets, it "did not conduct a comparable disclosure campaign."¹²¹

On December 29, 2016, President Obama imposed sanctions for election-related malicious cyber activity by expanding an existing executive order issued in April 2015.¹²² The Obama Administration identified nine individuals and entities, including Russia's two leading intelligence agencies, as subject to sanctions for election-related malicious cyber activity.¹²³ Designees are subject to blocking of assets under U.S. jurisdiction, prohibitions on transactions with U.S. persons, and (for individuals) denial of entry into the United States.

Congress has begun to investigate Russian interference in U.S. elections. In January 2017, the House and Senate Select Committees on Intelligence announced inquiries into Russian cyber activities and "active measures" surrounding the U.S. election, as well as more broadly. The Senate Armed Services, Foreign Relations, and Judiciary Committees have launched or announced related investigations.¹²⁴ Members also have proposed a variety of other independent or joint commissions, committees, or investigations (H.R. 356, H.Con.Res. 15, H.Con.Res. 24, S. 27). In addition, the 2017 Intelligence Authorization Act (S. 133) proposes the establishment of an executive interagency committee for countering active measures by Russia to exert covert influence.

Nuclear Arms Control and Nonproliferation¹²⁵

During the Cold War, arms control negotiations and treaties played a key role in the relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union. Arms control negotiations were often one of the few channels for formal communication. The talks provided the United States and the Soviet Union with a forum to air their security concerns and raise questions about plans and programs. During the 1990s, as the relationship between the United States and Russia improved, arms control no longer played a central role in fostering cooperation between the two nations. Nonetheless, since 1992, the United States and Russia have negotiated three arms control treaties, of which two ultimately entered into force: the Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty of 2002 and the New Strategic Arms Reduction (New START) Treaty of 2010.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Executive Order 13694, "Blocking the Property of Certain Persons Engaging in Significant Malicious Cyber-Enabled Activities," 80 Federal Register 18077, April 2, 2015; Executive Order 13757, "Taking Additional Steps to Address the National Emergency With Respect to Significant Malicious Cyber-Enabled Activities," 82 Federal Register 1, January 3, 2017. Also see U.S. Department of the Treasury, "Sanctions Related to Significant Malicious Cyber-Enabled Activities," at <https://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/Programs/pages/cyber.aspx>.

¹²³ The White House, "Fact Sheet: Actions in Response to Russian Malicious Cyber Activity and Harassment," December 29, 2016, at <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2016/12/29/fact-sheet-actions-response-russian-malicious-cyber-activity-and>.

¹²⁴ Office of Richard Burr, U.S. Senator for North Carolina, "Joint Statement on Committee Inquiry into Russian Intelligence Activities," press release, January 13, 2017, at <https://www.burr.senate.gov/press/releases/joint-statement-on-committee-inquiry-into-russian-intelligence-activities>; U.S. House of Representatives Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, "Joint Statement on Progress of Bipartisan HPSCI Inquiry into Russian Active Measures," January 25, 2017, at <http://intelligence.house.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=758>; Martin Matishak, "Senate subpanel launches new Russia hacking probe," *Politico*, February 2, 2017, at <http://www.politico.com/story/2017/02/russia-hacking-investigation-senate-graham-whitehouse-234556>.

¹²⁵ This section draws on CRS Report R43037, *Next Steps in Nuclear Arms Control with Russia: Issues for Congress*, by (name redacted) CRS Report R41219, *The New START Treaty: Central Limits and Key Provisions*, by (name redacted) CRS Report R43832, *Russian Compliance with the Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty: Background and Issues for Congress*, by (name redacted) and CRS Report R43143, *The Evolution of Cooperative Threat Reduction: Issues for Congress*, by (name redacted) and (name redacted).

Currently, the New START Treaty and the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty are the two fundamental nuclear arms control agreements between the United States and Russia. The New START Treaty expires in 2021, though it may be extended for a period of five years; the two countries must meet the treaty's limits on strategic arms by February 2018. The treaty limits each side to no more than 800 land-based intercontinental (ICBM) and submarine-launched (SLBM) ballistic missile launchers and heavy bombers equipped to carry nuclear armaments; within that total, each side may retain no more than 700 deployed ICBMs, SLBMs, and heavy bombers. The treaty also limits each side to no more than 1,550 deployed warheads. In addition, the treaty requires extensive monitoring and inspection activity.

With regard to the INF Treaty, most experts agree that the elimination of intermediate-range missiles in Europe mitigated a key source of potential instability. However, in 2014, the United States charged Russia with violating the INF Treaty by developing a ground-launched cruise missile with a range between 500 and 5,500 kilometers, which is banned by the INF Treaty (the treaty does not ban or restrict air-delivered or sea-based missiles).¹²⁶ In October 2016, press reports indicated that the Obama Administration believed Russia may be moving toward deployment, as it had begun to produce the missile in numbers greater than what was needed for a test program; in February 2017, press reports further indicated that the Administration had concluded that Russia had deployed a battalion of the prohibited missile by the end of 2016.¹²⁷

The United States and Russia also are party to other arms control treaties and agreements. Some of these agreements mandate strategic exercise and missile launch notifications. The United States signed a "hotline" agreement with the Soviet Union in 1963, establishing a permanent means for emergency communications; this agreement was updated in 2008. The United States and Russia still use the system; reports indicate that President Obama used it to communicate with President Putin about the hacking and interference with the U.S. elections.¹²⁸ The two countries also established Nuclear Risk Reduction Centers (NRRC) in 1987. These centers have served as a mechanism for the parties to provide notifications and transmit data mandated by bilateral arms control agreements and the 1988 Ballistic Missile Launch Notification Agreement. Consequently, the NRRCs remain significant for the implementation of other agreements.

In addition, since 1992, the United States has spent more than \$10 billion to help Russia (and the other former Soviet states) dismantle nuclear weapons and ensure the security of nuclear weapons, weapons-grade nuclear material, other weapons of mass destruction, and related technological know-how. This funding supported the Cooperative Threat Reduction Program managed by the Department of Defense, along with nonproliferation programs managed by the Departments of Energy and State. These programs helped to transport, store, and eliminate weapons in Russia. They also funded improvements in security at storage areas for nuclear weapons and materials. Over time, the United States allocated a growing proportion of its funding to projects that focused on securing and eliminating chemical and biological weapons and securing storage sites that house nuclear warheads removed from deployed weapons systems.

¹²⁶ U.S. Department of State, *Adherence to and Compliance with Arms Control, Nonproliferation, and Disarmament Agreements and Commitments*, July 2014, pp. 8-10, at <https://www.state.gov/t/avc/rls/rpt/2014/230047.htm>.

¹²⁷ Michael R. Gordon, "Russia Is Moving Ahead with Missile Program That Violates Treaty, U.S. Officials Say," *New York Times*, October 19, 2016, at <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/20/world/europe/russia-missiles-inf-treaty.html>; Michael R. Gordon, "Russia Deploys Missile, Violating Treaty and Challenging Trump," *New York Times*, February 14, 2017, at <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/14/world/europe/russia-cruise-missile-arms-control-treaty.html>.

¹²⁸ David E. Sanger, "White House Confirms Pre-election Warning to Russia over Hacking," *New York Times*, November 16, 2016, at <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/17/us/politics/white-house-confirms-pre-election-warning-to-russia-over-hacking.html>.

The memorandum of understanding that governed implementation of U.S.-Russian cooperation in threat reduction and nonproliferation expired in June 2013. In its stead, the United States and Russia signed a new bilateral protocol to a 2008 Multilateral Nuclear Environmental Program in Russia Framework Agreement, a vehicle under which countries aid Russia with Soviet-era weapons cleanup work.¹²⁹ Under this new framework, the two countries agreed to cooperate on some areas of nuclear security but nuclear weapons dismantlement and chemical weapons destruction projects ceased. The United States and Russia also continued to cooperate on nuclear nonproliferation objectives in other countries, such as removing weapons-usable fuel from research reactors, and planned bilateral nuclear research projects.

Joint nonproliferation efforts declined further after Russia's actions in Ukraine. In April 2014, the U.S. Department of Energy put certain joint research projects and meetings on hold.¹³⁰ In December 2014, Russia informed the United States it would no longer accept U.S. assistance in securing nuclear materials under an agreement to cooperate on protection, control, and accounting of nuclear materials (the agreement expires in 2017).¹³¹ At the end of 2014, Congress stated that most nuclear security activities in Russia were to be completed no later than 2018 (P.L. 113-291, §3122), and Congress has since imposed restrictions on nonproliferation assistance funding to Russia, except with a national security waiver (P.L. 114-92, §3121).

The most prominent remaining bilateral nuclear security projects in Russia ceased in 2016. On October 3, 2016, President Putin issued a decree suspending participation in a bilateral U.S.-Russian weapons plutonium disposal agreement (the 2000 Plutonium Management and Disposition Agreement, or PMDA).¹³² The next day, Russia suspended participation in a 2013 cooperative agreement on nuclear- and energy-related research (which already had been largely frozen since 2014) and terminated a 2010 agreement on exploring options for converting research reactors from weapons-usable fuel (which had been largely completed).¹³³ Both sides said they would continue to work on pledges made under the PMDA.

Outlook

Like the Administrations before it, the Trump Administration says it seeks to rebuild constructive relations with Russia. Following a January 28, 2017, call between Presidents Trump and Putin, the White House issued a statement noting that the call “was a significant start to improving the relationship between the United States and Russia that is in need of repair.” The statement also said the two presidents expressed hope that their countries “can move quickly to tackle terrorism and other important issues of mutual concern.”¹³⁴ One week later, Vice President Mike Pence

¹²⁹ U.S. Department of State, “A New Legal Framework for U.S.-Russian Cooperation in Nuclear Nonproliferation and Security,” June 19, 2013, at <https://2009-2017.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2013/06/210913.htm>.

¹³⁰ David E. Sanger and William J. Broad, “U.S.-Russia Nuclear Deal Stalls as Tensions over Ukraine Rise,” *New York Times*, August 2, 2014, at <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/03/world/europe/us-nuclear-deal-with-russia-fails-as-tensions-rise.html>.

¹³¹ Bryan Bender, “Russia Ends U.S. Nuclear Security Alliance,” *Boston Globe*, January 19, 2015, at <https://www.bostonglobe.com/news/nation/2015/01/19/after-two-decades-russia-nuclear-security-cooperation-becomes-casualty-deteriorating-relations/5nh8NbtjitUE8UqVWFfIooL/story.html>.

¹³² For more, see CRS Insight IN10594, *Recent Developments in U.S.-Russian Nonproliferation Cooperation*, by (name redacted) and (name redacted), and CRS Report R43125, *Mixed-Oxide Fuel Fabrication Plant and Plutonium Disposition: Management and Policy Issues*, by (name redacted) and (name redacted).

¹³³ Lidia Kelly, “Russia Suspends Nuclear Agreement, Ends Uranium Research Pact with United States,” Reuters, October 5, 2016, at <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-russia-usa-nuclear-uranium-idUSKCN12521J>.

¹³⁴ The White House, “Readout of the President’s Call with Russian President Vladimir Putin,” January 28, 2017, at (continued...)

underlined that President Trump “was determined to go forward and see whether or not we might be able to start anew in a relationship with Russia.”¹³⁵ In his first public remarks on February 16, 2017, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson noted the United States would “consider working with Russia where we can find areas of practical cooperation that will benefit the American people.”¹³⁶

Many observers, including from the previous Administration, concur that improved U.S.-Russian relations would be welcome. In an article published in December 2016, for instance, then-Secretary of Defense Ash Carter wrote that the United States would “work to preserve cooperation on issues where our interests align, and hold the door open to renewed partnership in the future.” Carter noted that “Russia is simply too big, too powerful and potentially too dangerous to be ignored or fully isolated.”¹³⁷

A key debate, however, revolves around whether the United States can succeed in building improved relations with Russia while maintaining strong commitments to its allies and standing firm on fundamental principles. Some observers believe that at least incremental progress is possible.¹³⁸ Others have expressed doubt that the United States can successfully cooperate with Russia, even on an issue as central to the Administration as the fight against the Islamic State.¹³⁹

There are signs that Trump Administration policy toward Russia may be evolving. President Trump continues to make statements that suggest he prioritizes building good relations with President Putin. At the same time, U.S. officials have signaled their commitment to principles that, they say, will continue to underpin U.S. relations with Russia. On February 2, 2017, U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley opened her first public remarks by referring to a recent flare-up of violence in Ukraine, noting that “the dire situation in eastern Ukraine is one that demands clear and strong condemnation of Russian actions.” She stated that “the United States continues to condemn and call for an immediate end to the Russian occupation of Crimea” and that “Crimea-related sanctions will remain in place until Russia returns control of the peninsula to Ukraine.”¹⁴⁰ In his February 16 remarks, Secretary Tillerson noted that “where [the United States and Russia] do not see eye to eye, [we] will stand up for the interests and values of America and her allies” and that the United States expects Russia “to honor its commitment to the Minsk agreements and work to de-escalate the violence in ... Ukraine.”¹⁴¹

In the first weeks of the 115th Congress, many Members of Congress have expressed their sense that the United States should adhere to core international commitments and principles as the

(...continued)

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/01/28/readout-presidents-call-russian-president-vladimir-putin>.

¹³⁵ Kailani Koenig, “Mike Pence: Trump ‘Has Every Right to Criticize’ Other Branches of Government,” NBC News, February 5, 2017, at <http://www.nbcnews.com/politics/politics-news/mike-pence-trump-has-every-right-criticize-other-branches-government-n716996>.

¹³⁶ Rex W. Tillerson, “Remarks Following Meeting With Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov,” U.S. Department of State, February 16, 2017, at <https://www.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2017/02/267671.htm>.

¹³⁷ Ash Carter, “A Strong and Balanced Approach to Russia,” *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy*, vol. 58, no. 6 (December 2016), p. 61.

¹³⁸ See, for example, several of the contributions in *The National Interest*, “Symposium: Advice to President Trump on U.S.-Russia Policy,” November 28, 2016, at <http://nationalinterest.org/feature/symposium-advice-president-trump-us-russia-policy-18522>.

¹³⁹ See, for example, Jennifer Rubin, “Trump’s Misguided Plea for Russian Help,” *Washington Post*, February 6, 2017, at <https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/right-turn/wp/2017/02/06/trumps-misguided-plea-for-russian-help>.

¹⁴⁰ Ambassador Nikki Haley, “Remarks at a U.N. Security Council Briefing on Ukraine,” U.S. Mission to the United Nations, February 2, 2017, at <https://usun.state.gov/remarks/7668>.

¹⁴¹ Tillerson, “Remarks Following Meeting With Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov.”

Administration seeks to rebuild relations with Russia. Bipartisan groups of Members have introduced legislation to make permanent, and in some cases expand, sanctions imposed in response to Russia's actions in Ukraine (H.R. 830, H.R. 1059, S. 94, S. 341), intervention in Syria (S. 138), and cyberattacks against U.S. democratic institutions (S. 94), as well as to provide congressional oversight of "any decision to provide sanctions relief" (H.R. 1059, S. 341).¹⁴² Legislation also has been introduced calling on the U.S. government not to take any actions that would recognize Russia's annexation of Crimea (H.R. 463, H.R. 830, S. 94), calling on Russia to comply with its commitments to halt violence in Ukraine (H.Res. 88), and reaffirming the U.S. commitment to NATO while calling on Allies to maintain agreed-upon levels of defense spending (H.Res. 135, S.Res. 54).

Moving forward, Congress is expected to continue playing an active role in shaping U.S. policy toward Russia. At a February 9, 2017, hearing on "The United States, the Russian Federation and the Challenges Ahead," Senator Bob Corker, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, suggested that Congress could work with Administration officials on Russia "to empower them to create policies that we would support."¹⁴³ In doing so, Members of Congress may consider several issues. These issues could include the following:

- determining whether to make existing Ukraine-related and cyber-related sanctions on Russia permanent and/or to expand them;
- identifying effective and appropriate responses to Russian interference in U.S. and European domestic political processes;
- assessing current and possible future measures to reassure European allies and partners and to deter potential Russian aggression;
- considering ways to promote Russia's compliance with its commitments to resolve the Ukraine conflict;
- considering ways to respond to Russian violations of the INF Treaty;
- assessing whether it is possible to find ways to cooperate with Russia in the fight against the Islamic State, and;
- examining whether other policy areas remain in which cooperation with Russia is both possible and in the U.S. interest.

¹⁴² Office of Lindsey Graham, U.S. Senator for South Carolina, "Bipartisan Group Of Senators Introduce Legislation Establishing Congressional Oversight of Russia Sanctions Relief," press release, February 8, 2017, at <https://www.lgraham.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/2017/2/bipartisan-group-of-senators-introduce-legislation-establishing-congressional-oversight-of-russia>.

¹⁴³ U.S. Congress, Senate Foreign Relations Committee, *The United States, The Russian Federation and the Challenges Ahead*, hearings, 115th Cong., 1st sess., February 9, 2017. Transcript available at <http://www.cq.com/doc/congressionaltranscripts-5040224>.

Appendix. Related Bills and Resolutions in the 115th Congress

H.R. 356 (Swalwell). Protecting our Democracy Act. Introduced January 6, 2017; referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

H.R. 463 (Connolly). Crimea Annexation Non-recognition Act. Introduced January 12, 2017; referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

H.R. 530 (Engel). SECURE Our Democracy Act. Introduced January 13, 2017; referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs, and in addition to the Committees on the Judiciary and Financial Services.

H.R. 830 (Engel). STAND for Ukraine Act. Introduced February 2, 2017; referred to the Committee on Ways and Means.

H.R. 1059 (Hoyer). To provide for congressional oversight of actions to waive, suspend, reduce, provide relief from, or otherwise limit the application of sanctions with respect to the Russian Federation, and for other purposes. Introduced February 15, 2017; referred to the Committee on Ways and Means.

H.R. 1182 (Rogers). To require certain actions regarding Russian Federation noncompliance with the INF Treaty, and for other purposes. Introduced February 16, 2017; referred to the Committee on Armed Services, and in addition to the Committees on Foreign Affairs and Intelligence (Permanent Select).

H.Con.Res. 15 (Waters). Asserting that Congress should expend the resources necessary to investigate thoroughly the nature and extent of Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election, including whether there was collusion between persons associated with the Russian government and persons associated with the presidential campaign of Donald J. Trump to influence the outcome of the election. Introduced January 31, 2017; referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

H.Con.Res. 24 (Langevin). Establishing a Joint Committee on Russian Interference in the 2016 Election and the Presidential Transition. Introduced February 14, 2017; referred to the Committee on Rules.

H.Res. 58 (Ros-Lehtinen). Expressing the sense of the House of Representatives regarding unanswered questions into the fate of Raoul Wallenberg. Introduced January 24, 2017; referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

H.Res. 88 (Harris). Calling on the Russian Federation to stop the violence in Ukraine, and for other purposes. Introduced February 3, 2017; referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

H.Res. 135 (Bishop). Urging North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) member countries to meet or exceed the two percent gross domestic product commitment to spending on defense. Introduced February 16, 2017; referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

S. 27 (Cardin). A bill to establish an independent commission to examine and report on the facts regarding the extent of Russian official and unofficial cyber operations and other attempts to interfere in the 2016 United States national election, and for other purposes. Introduced January 4, 2017; referred to the Committee on Rules and Administration.

S. 94 (Cardin). Counteracting Russian Hostilities Act of 2017. Introduced January 11, 2017; referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

S. 133 (Burr). Intelligence Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017. Introduced January 12, 2017; reported by the Select Committee on Intelligence on January 20, 2017.

S. 138 (Rubio). Preventing Destabilization of Iraq and Syria Act of 2017. Introduced January 12, 2017; referred to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

S. 341 (Graham). A bill to provide for congressional oversight of actions to waive, suspend, reduce, provide relief from, or otherwise limit the application of sanctions with respect to the Russian Federation, and for other purposes. Introduced February 8, 2017; referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

S. 430 (Cotton). A bill to provide for compliance enforcement regarding Russian violations of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, and for other purposes. Introduced February 16, 2017; referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

S.Res. 54 (Blumenthal). A resolution expressing the unwavering commitment of the United States to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Introduced February 7, 2017; referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

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