

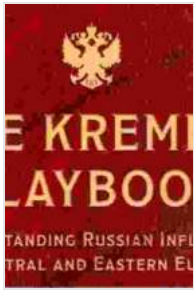
# Understanding Russian Influence in Central and Eastern Europe: CSIS Reports

This report examines Russian influence in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), a region of strategic importance to both Russia and the West. The report draws on a range of sources, including interviews with policymakers, experts, and civil society activists, as well as a review of Russian and Western media and policy documents.

The report finds that Russian influence in CEE is multifaceted and complex, involving a range of political, economic, military, and cultural tools. While Russian influence is not monolithic and varies from country to country, there are a number of common themes that emerge. These include:

- Russia's use of energy and economic leverage to exert its influence
- The Kremlin's support for anti-Western and nationalist political forces
- Russia's use of disinformation and propaganda to shape public opinion
- The presence of Russian military forces in the region, including in Crimea and eastern Ukraine

The report concludes that Russian influence in CEE is a major challenge for the West, and that a comprehensive and coordinated response is required to counter it. The report recommends a number of policy measures that the West could take to strengthen its position in CEE and reduce Russian influence, including:



## The Kremlin Playbook: Understanding Russian Influence in Central and Eastern Europe (CSIS Reports)

by John Jung

★★★★☆ 4.6 out of 5

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Text-to-Speech : Enabled  
Screen Reader : Supported  
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled  
Word Wise : Enabled  
Print length : 86 pages



- Supporting democratic institutions and civil society in CEE
- Promoting economic growth and diversification in the region
- Countering Russian disinformation and propaganda
- Strengthening NATO's presence in CEE
- Developing a more comprehensive and coordinated Western strategy for CEE

Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) is a region of strategic importance to both Russia and the West. The region is home to a number of countries that have historically been part of the Russian sphere of influence, and Russia continues to view CEE as a buffer zone between itself and the West. The West, on the other hand, sees CEE as a region of opportunity for economic growth and political cooperation.

In recent years, there has been growing concern about the extent of Russian influence in CEE. Russia has been accused of using a range of tools to exert its influence in the region, including energy and economic leverage, political interference, disinformation, and military power.

The purpose of this report is to examine the nature and extent of Russian influence in CEE. The report draws on a range of sources, including interviews with policymakers, experts, and civil society activists, as well as a review of Russian and Western media and policy documents.

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Russia has a long history of influence in CEE. The region was part of the Russian Empire for centuries, and even after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Russia retained significant economic, political, and cultural ties to the region.

In recent years, Russia has sought to reassert its influence in CEE, using a range of tools including energy and economic leverage, political interference, and military power. Russia has also been accused of using disinformation and propaganda to shape public opinion in the region.

The Kremlin's growing assertiveness in CEE has been met with concern by the West. The West sees Russia's actions as a threat to its own interests in the region, and as a challenge to the post-Cold War order in Europe.

Russia's political influence in CEE is exercised through a range of channels, including:

- **Support for anti-Western and nationalist political forces:** Russia has been accused of supporting anti-Western and nationalist political forces in CEE, in an effort to undermine the region's pro-Western orientation. These forces often espouse anti-EU and anti-NATO views, and seek to strengthen ties with Russia.

- **Political interference:** Russia has also been accused of interfering in the political affairs of CEE countries, in an effort to influence the outcome of elections and promote pro-Russian policies. This interference has taken a variety of forms, including hacking, disinformation campaigns, and financial support for political parties and candidates.
- **Cultural influence:** Russia also exerts its influence in CEE through cultural means, such as the promotion of Russian language, culture, and media. This can help to shape public opinion in favor of Russia and its policies.

Russia's economic influence in CEE is based on its control over the region's energy supplies. Russia is the main supplier of natural gas to CEE, and it has used this leverage to exert political influence in the region. For example, Russia has cut off gas supplies to Ukraine and other countries in the past as a way to punish them for their pro-Western policies.

Russia has also invested heavily in other sectors of the CEE economy, such as banking, telecommunications, and manufacturing. This investment has given Russia a significant stake in the region's economic development, and it has also given Russia leverage over the region's political and economic elites.

Russia maintains a significant military presence in CEE, including in Crimea and eastern Ukraine. This military presence gives Russia a major advantage in terms of power projection in the region, and it also serves as a deterrent against Western intervention.

Russia has also been accused of using its military to intimidate and coerce CEE countries, such as when it annexed Crimea in 2014 and when it backed separatists in eastern Ukraine.

Russia uses a range of information tools to shape public opinion in CEE, including:

- **Disinformation and propaganda:** Russia has been accused of using disinformation and propaganda to spread false and misleading information about the West and its policies. This information is often designed to undermine trust in Western institutions and promote pro-Russian narratives.
- **Media control:** Russia also has significant control over the media in CEE, especially in countries with large Russian-speaking populations. This control allows Russia to promote its



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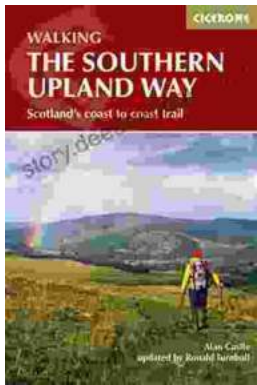
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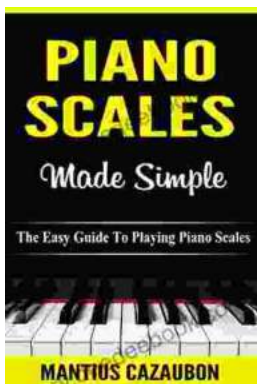
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