



## RUSSIA REFORM MONITOR

The American Foreign Policy Council's Review of  
Russian Government Actions and U.S. Policy

# Russia Reform Monitor No. 2283

January 4, 2019 **Ilan I. Berman, Margot van Loon**

**Related Categories:** Arms Control and Proliferation; Democracy and Governance; Human Rights and Humanitarian Issues; Military Innovation; Science and Technology; China; Russia

### HUMAN RIGHTS, RUSSIAN STYLE

Russian law does not recognize human rights the same way as does the West, Russia's Prime Minister has said. Rather, legal protections in the Russian Federation only extend to those "values that are traditional for Russian society," Dmitry Medvedev explained in a lengthy interview with the magazine "Law." In terms of "recognizing and protecting human rights," Medvedev detailed, "the Russian Constitution sets the limits to claims for the protection of such rights, while not recognizing those that are clearly in conflict with the values that are traditional for Russian society." This, he argued, is "a special, original and innovative approach to the perception of human rights." (*Current Time*, December 12, 2018)

### KYIV GOES ITS OWN (RELIGIOUS) WAY

In the wake of this Fall's religious split between Russia and Ukraine, Kyiv is moving forward with formalizing an independent religious authority. In mid-December, Ukraine officially elected the head of a unified Ukrainian Orthodox Church - completing its spiritual separation from the Russian Orthodox Church. Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko has hailed the move as representing "the final acquisition of independence from Moscow." (*National Public Radio*, December 16, 2018)

### NEW SIGNS OF SINO-RUSSIAN WEAPONS COOPERATION

Moscow and Beijing are reportedly working together on heating experiments to modify layers of the atmosphere in a manner that may have potential military applications. Although the results of the experiments were published last year in the Chinese journal *Earth and Planetary Physics*, a group of Chinese scientists recently shared new details regarding the collaboration with the *South China Morning Post*. Reportedly, the 2018 joint tests involved extremely sensitive technology and generated massive electrical spikes in the skies over Eastern Europe. The same principles and technologies could be applied to disrupt satellite communications during a conflict scenario. (*Newsweek*, December 17, 2018)

### THE KREMLIN DECLARES WAR ON RAP MUSIC

Is Russian government censorship manifesting in new crackdowns on the country's musicians? The Kremlin has published a statement in which President Vladimir Putin points to the glorification of sex, drugs, and protest in rap lyrics and expresses his belief that the government should "guide" the country's musicians in their framing of social issues. Putin's statement is the latest development in a growing controversy over Russian musical freedom of expression. Since October, at least seven performers have been forced to cancel their concerts, with rappers and other performers popular with younger demographics facing the greatest scrutiny due to their focus on controversial social issues.

One popular rapper, who goes by the stage name Husky, was forced to cancel a performance while his lyrics were "checked for extremism"; when he chose to continue his performance in the street outside the venue, he was arrested for hooliganism. Attendance by opposition leader Alexei Navalny at a subsequent protest charity concert in Moscow in Husky's honor has since highlighted the growing nature of the "rap conundrum" in the Russian national consciousness. (*CNN*, December 18, 2018)

### NUKES IN CRIMEA?

European leaders are concerned about Russia's militarization of the Crimean peninsula - a place where Brussels fears nuclear weapons may have already been deployed by the Kremlin. The revelations are part of a new dump of confidential diplomatic cables which were posted in recent weeks on a public website by unknown hackers. The trove of data includes a Spring 2018 warning from EU diplomats that Crimea, which Russia annexed in 2014 after a stage-managed referendum, was a "hot zone where nuclear warheads might have already been deployed." (London *Guardian*, December 19, 2018)