



## RUSSIA REFORM MONITOR

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

# Russia Reform Monitor No. 2288

January 28, 2019 **Ilan I. Berman, Margot van Loon**

**Related Categories:** Democracy and Governance; Economic Sanctions; Energy Security; Europe Military; Human Rights and Humanitarian Issues; Missile Defense; Europe; Middle East; Russia; Ukraine

### **RUSSIAN EMIGRATION, BY THE (REAL) NUMBERS**

A new analysis from Russian news outlet Proekt claims that the Russian government is gravely underreporting emigration levels. While Moscow's official statistics agency, ROSSTAT, recorded 377,000 emigrations in 2017 (already a six-year high), Proekt used data from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to show that the actual figure is likely six times greater. Most of the emigrants are reportedly highly educated younger Russians seeking better economic opportunities. As a result, Russia has 10.6 million people living outside its borders – the third highest number in the world. Only India and Mexico have more émigrés, according to United Nations statistics. (*The Moscow Times*, January 16, 2019)

### **DIFFERENCES OVER INSPECTIONS, COMPLIANCE DOOM INF TALKS**

In early January in Geneva, U.S. and Russian officials met in an ultimately unsuccessful attempt to salvage the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov criticized the United States for not fully considering the compromise proposal presented during the talks, and he claimed that President Trump is scapegoating Moscow to justify withdrawing from the treaty. However, the dialogue reportedly broke down over the Russian delegation's refusal to agree to full inspections of the country's new 9M729 nuclear-capable cruise missile system, a provocative capability that Washington claims violated the terms of the treaty long before the U.S. decision to withdraw. After the meeting, both U.S. Under Secretary for Arms Control and International Security Andrea Thompson and NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg remained pessimistic about the probability of Russia returning to INF compliance. Barring any eleventh-hour changes, the United States remains on track to begin its six-month withdrawal from the treaty on February 2nd. (Reuters, January 16, 2019)

### **MOSCOW'S MANIPULATION EFFORTS IN EUROPE**

Russia is continuing to wage a campaign of disinformation in Europe in an effort to influence the continent's politics amid turmoil over "Brexit" and EU cohesion. Social media giant Facebook has revealed that it successfully identified two separate information warfare initiatives tracing back to Russia, including one with direct links to the Kremlin, as part of its ongoing efforts to strip propaganda and "fake news" from its platform. The company claims that it has deleted over 500 separate pages and accounts related to the two efforts so far - many of them linked to Russian state propaganda channel *Sputnik* - that were spreading "misleading content aimed to influence people in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Estonia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Romania, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan." (*New York Times*, January 17, 2019)

### **MOSCOW VERSUS AMERICA'S NEW MISSILE DEFENSE STRATEGY**

The Kremlin has proclaimed that the recently released U.S. Missile Defense Review (MDR) is the harbinger of a new arms race in space. The Russian outrage stems primarily from provisions in the MDR concerning arrays of space-based sensors and other advanced systems designed to counter the hypersonic capabilities currently being developed by Moscow and Beijing, as well as threats from other rogue actors. During his formal release of the guidance, President Trump specifically called out the hypersonic threat, promising that a modernized U.S. missile defense would be "unrivaled" as space inevitably becomes a new warfighting domain. However, the Russian Foreign Ministry compared the MDR unfavorably to the Reagan-era Strategic Defense Initiative and warned that its implementation would "deal another heavy blow to international security." (*Washington Post*, January 18, 2019)

### **A RUSSO-TURKISH MEETING OF THE MINDS OVER SYRIA**

President Trump's unexpected December decision to withdraw American forces from Syria has kicked Russia's regional plans into high gear. Meeting in Moscow, Russian President Vladimir Putin and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan have pledged to more closely coordinate efforts in northern Syria, where the activities of terrorist groups like the al-Qaeda affiliated Al Nusra Front remain a "serious concern." The agreement in principle lays the groundwork for greater military cooperation between Russia and Turkey, which have historically been on opposite sides of the Syrian civil war. (*Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, January 23, 2019)