



RUSSIA REFORM MONITOR

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

Russia Reform Monitor No. 2292

February 20, 2019 **Ilan I. Berman, Margot van Loon**

Related Categories: Democracy and Governance; Human Rights and Humanitarian Issues; Russia

A COMPLEX OUTLOOK FOR EMIGRATION

Perceptions of emigration are more unpopular among Russians today than they have been in almost a decade, according to a new Levada Center poll. The study, which took place in the wake of a recent report that the Russian government underreports emigration rates, polled 1,600 Russians across 52 regions during the last weeks of 2018 regarding their attitudes toward emigration and emigres in general. Although 61 percent of respondents said that they "absolutely" would not want to leave the country permanently, and only 17 percent voiced a willingness to do so, the picture becomes more complex when broken down by age. 41 percent of Russians aged 18-24 expressed a desire to move abroad, but only five percent of respondents older than 55 voiced the same sentiment. Older respondents also reported more negative views of people who choose to leave. Sociologists who helped design the study hypothesized that "many continue to feel that they are part of a great power and not in need of anything foreign." (*The Moscow Times*, February 4, 2019)

[EDITORS' NOTE: Given the effect of Russia's increasingly authoritarian political climate on pollsters and respondents alike, the results of public opinion surveys in Russia should be viewed with some caution.]

AFTER THE INF, A NEW ARMS RACE?

Now that a February 1st deadline has launched the six-month countdown to America's withdrawal from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, Moscow has wasted no time in upping the ante. Vladimir Putin announced that Russia will also withdraw from the treaty in the same timeframe, and instructed his defense minister, Sergei Shoigu, to begin "retaliatory measures." Analysts anticipate that as part of these measures, Moscow will hasten its stockpiling of the 9M729 - a controversial Russian missile that the United States has pointed to for years as an INF violation.

Shoigu has also announced that the Russian Ministry of Defense will pursue the development of new ground-based missile systems that would have been prohibited under INF, including a version of the *Kalibr* cruise missile system (with a range of roughly 1,400km) and a long-range hypersonic missile system that would pose serious theoretical challenges to U.S. missile defense capabilities. Since the Russian military already has sea- and air-based versions of these systems, Shoigu asserted that a land-based variant with an extended range would be cheaper and quicker to develop than starting from scratch, and has ordered production of the systems to be completed by 2021. It remains unclear what a realistic timeline and budget for this accelerated development will be. (*Wall Street Journal*, February 5, 2019; Moscow Itar-TASS, February 5, 2019)

UP NEXT: PATRIOTIC ECONOMICS

Controversy over a banned Russian economics textbook is shining a spotlight on the Kremlin's growing willingness to engage in academic censorship. Author Igor Lipsits, a professor at Moscow's Higher School of Economics, received word from his publisher that the textbook he had written had been removed from the national list of approved textbooks (a functional ban) after an Education Ministry review determined that the book failed to "promote love for the Motherland." His publisher recommended editing the text to show a more optimistic view of Russia's future and praise the actions taken by the Kremlin in the face of Western sanctions, but Lipsits has refused, protesting that "I'm not keen to revive my [Soviet-era] skills at windbaggy... I'm too old now for ideological somersaults."

The incident is part of a more pervasive pattern. Since 2012, the Ministry has exercised an extensive level of control over the content of high school textbooks, aided by a single publishing company with ties to the Kremlin that dominates the market. A non-profit organization representing other textbook publishers and authors published an open letter to President Putin last May, complaining that the "lack of professionalism and incompetence shown in organizing and carrying out expert reviews of textbooks" was hurting the country's future. (*Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, February 6, 2019)