



RUSSIA REFORM MONITOR

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Russian Government Actions and U.S. Policy

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Related Categories: Democracy and Governance; Human Rights and Humanitarian Issues; International Economics and Trade; China; Middle East; Russia

RUSSIA REWRITES WWII HISTORY

While the West commemorated the 75th Anniversary of D-Day last month, the Kremlin made sure to broadcast its own version of the historical narrative. At a weekly news conference in early June, Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova disputed the significance of the Normandy landings that freed western Europe from Nazi occupation. Zakharova claimed that the historic Allied efforts on D-Day actually did not impact the course of the war, since the Red Army's victories on the Eastern Front and the sacrifices of the Soviet people had "pre-determined" Germany's ultimate defeat. (*The Moscow Times*, June 5, 2019)

[EDITOR'S NOTE: Russia's official retelling represents a massive distortion of settled history. World War II formally began with the Nazi invasion of Poland in September 1939, in the wake of the German-Soviet Nonaggression Pact signed by Nazi foreign minister Joachim von Ribbentrop and his Soviet counterpart, Vyacheslav Molotov, a month earlier. In June of 1941, however, Hitler turned on Stalin and invaded the Soviet Union in an offensive known as "Operation Barbarossa." The Soviet Union survived the Nazi onslaught only through massive amounts of equipment and other aid that were supplied to the USSR via America's Lend Lease Program.]

MOSCOW, BEIJING DRAW CLOSER

Russia and China have issued a joint statement affirming their intentions to cooperate closely in the realms of nonproliferation and arms control. The statement begins by recognizing the special responsibility borne by nuclear weapons states, denouncing actors who are destroying or altering arms control agreements, and lamenting the deleterious effects of these actions and of a lingering Cold War mentality on strategic stability. The statement then calls out the United States for its withdrawal from the Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty and its "destabilizing" pursuit of global and space-based missile defense capabilities. Beijing and Moscow then reaffirm their support for major existing arms control agreements like the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, the Chemical and Biological Weapons Conventions, and the laws governing the use of outer space for peaceful purposes, while drawing particular attention to a joint Russian-Chinese proposed treaty to prevent the placement of weapons in space. (Official Website of the President of Russia, June 5, 2019)

CHINA POISED TO PENETRATE RUSSIA'S TELECOM SECTOR

China's leading telecom company has secured a coveted role as the supplier of Russia's first 5G network. The deal, signed by Huawei and Russia's MTS in June, provides for the development of 5G technologies and the rollout of initial networks in Russia by 2020. The leaders of the two companies publicly praised the agreement, highlighting the fact that it was signed on the sidelines of a bilateral meeting between Chinese President Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin as a sign of the significance of technology partnerships in the broader relationship between the two countries. The deal also represents a major victory for Huawei, whose business has suffered due to the ongoing U.S.-Chinese trade dispute. Washington has been working to dissuade its partners from using Huawei networks and products, fearing that their deployment poses a national security risk by making massive amounts of sensitive data vulnerable to Chinese espionage. (*CNN Business*, June 6, 2019)

MOSCOW, RIYADH COORDINATE ENERGY POLICY

After the latest round of talks between OPEC's energy ministers regarding the imminent expiration of production cuts, all signs indicate a continuation of the *status quo* – largely due to Saudi and Russian consensus on the issue. Saudi Energy Minister Khalid Al-Falih noted that "a rollover is almost in the bag," but remained wary of the influence of disruptive factors like the political situations in Iran and Venezuela. Moscow, a non-OPEC member that exercises an ever-growing level of influence over the bloc's policy, had previously been reluctant to agree to continued production cuts. However, in comments after the OPEC meeting by Russian Energy Minister Alexander Novak indicated that Russia would support continued cuts given potentially slowing demand and the downward pressure on the market of the ongoing U.S. trade dispute with China. The final decision on production volumes will be made at the next OPEC ministerial, the date for which had been tentatively set for early July. (*The Moscow Times*, June 7, 2019)

CHAOS AT SEA

A U.S. naval cruiser narrowly avoided a collision with a Russian destroyer last month. The two warships came within 100 feet of each other on the otherwise open ocean of the Philippine Sea in an incident that has prompted competing outraged accounts from both navies. U.S. 7th Fleet spokesman Commander Clay Doss criticized Russia's actions as "unsafe and unprofessional," asserting that the U.S. cruiser *Chancellorsville* was maintaining a steady course when the Russian vessel changed course and accelerated towards it, forcing the U.S. ship to undertake an emergency maneuver in order to prevent a collision. For its part, the Russian Pacific Fleet alleged that it was the *Chancellorsville* that changed course, crossing the *Admiral Vinogradov's* path and forcing the Russian vessel into emergency maneuvers. The incident unfolded amid a recent increase in unsafe encounters between U.S. and Russian military forces, particularly involving Russian fighter jets buzzing U.S. planes and airspace. (*Navy Times*, June 7, 2019)