

Crimea, Ukraine and the West: The Highlights of Putin's Annual Speech

By [The Moscow Times](#)

December 04, 2014



Russia's President Vladimir Putin addresses the Federal Assembly, including State Duma deputies, members of the Federation Council, the heads of the Constitutional and Supreme courts, regional governors, heads of Russia's traditional religious faiths and public figures, at the Kremlin in Moscow on Dec. 4, 2014.

In his annual state of the union address on Thursday, President Vladimir Putin portrayed Russia as a strong state that would overcome its current difficulties.

Here is a roundup of the best quotes:

Ruble

"The Central Bank has moved to a floating rate but that does not mean that the Central Bank has moved away from influencing the ruble market, that the ruble exchange rate can be the subject of financial speculation without any consequences."

"I ask the Central Bank and the government to carry out tough coordinated action to fight off the desire of the so-called speculators to play on the fluctuations of the Russian currency."

"The authorities know who these speculators are and have instruments to influence them. The time has come to use those instruments."

"The weakening of the ruble creates risks of a short-term spike in inflation."

Sanctions

"This is not just a nervous reaction of the U.S. and their allies to our stance in regard to the events and coup in Ukraine; not even in regard to the so-called Crimean spring. I am certain that had all this not taken place ... they would come up with another reason to contain Russia's growing capabilities, to influence it or, even better, use it for their own goals."

"The policy of containment was not invented yesterday. It has been applied to our country for many, many years ... every time when anyone only thinks Russia has become strong, independent, such instruments are applied immediately."

"But there is no point in talking to Russia from a position of strength."

"We will never pursue the path of self-isolation, xenophobia, suspicion and search of enemies. All this is manifestation of weakness, while we are strong and self-confident."

"Our goal is to have as many equal partners in the West and in the East ... Under no circumstances are we going to wind down our ties with Europe."

"The so-called sanctions and external limitations are a stimulus towards a more effective, accelerated achievement of our goals."

Economy

"I propose freezing the current tax conditions and not changing them for the next four years."

"I propose a full amnesty for capital returning to Russia ... This means that if people legalise their resources and property in Russia, they get firm guarantees that they won't be bothered by various bodies, including law enforcement bodies; that they won't be bothered or asked about the source and the ways the capital was acquired; that they won't fall under criminal or administrative persecution; that there will be no questions from the tax and law enforcement bodies to them."

"Let's do it now but [only] once."

"Everyone wishing to should take this [opportunity]."

"We all understand that the origins of money can be different, they were earned and obtained in various ways, but I am confident that the offshore page in the history of our economy, our country should be closed."

"As for small business, I propose providing 'inspection holidays' for them. If an enterprise enjoys a solid reputation, and it had no significant complaints in three years, then over the next three years I propose not to carry out planned checks on the state and local levels at all."

"The quality and the scale of the Russian economy should correspond with our geopolitical and historic role. We should escape the trap of zero growth. In three to four years we should reach a growth pace exceeding the global average."

"This is the only way to raise Russia's share in the global economy, which means to strengthen our influence and independence."

"We should wipe the critical dependence on foreign technologies and industrial production."

"Russia will be open for the world, for cooperation, for attracting foreign investments, for carrying out joint projects. But the main thing we need to understand is that our development depends on ourselves first and foremost."

"By 2018 we need to bring the level of annual investments to 25 percent of GDP."

State Budget

"For the next three years we should set a goal of cutting budget outlays and ineffective spending by no less than five percent from the overall spending in real terms."

Crimea

"Finally, there was a historic reunification of Crimea and Sevastopol with Russia."

"For Russia, Crimea ... has a great civilizational and sacred meaning."

"And this is exactly how we are going to treat this from now on and forever."

Ukraine

"Every nation has an inalienable, sovereign right to its own path of development ... Russia always has and always will respect that. This applies fully to Ukraine, the brotherly Ukrainian nation."

"We have condemned the coup, the forcible seizure of power in Kiev in February. What we are seeing now in Ukraine, the tragedy in the southeast, fully confirms that our position is right."

"How can one support an armed seizure of power, violence, murder? ... How can one support the attempts that followed to suppress with the help of armed forces the people in the southeast who did not agree with this lawlessness? ... This is pure cynicism. I am sure that the Ukrainian nation itself will judge these events in a just way."

Defense

"We do not intend to get involved in a long-term arms race but we will securely and in a guaranteed way safeguard the defensive capabilities of our country in new conditions."

"There is no doubt about it — this will be done. Russia has the capabilities and non-standard solutions. No one will manage to gain military superiority over Russia."

"Our army is modern, combat-ready. As they say now, it is 'polite' but formidable. We will have enough strength, will and courage to protect our freedom."

"Persistent work to develop the U.S. anti-missile shield system, including in Europe, continues. This poses a threat not only to Russian security but to the whole world ... in terms of a possible violation of the strategic balance of forces."

"I think this is also bad for the United States itself since it creates a dangerous illusion of invulnerability, strengthens the drive to unilateral decisions that are often, as we see, not thought-through."

"Inappropriate use or embezzlement of budget allocations for state defense orders should be considered a direct blow to national security ... We have just had a traditional meeting in Sochi with the leadership of the Defence Ministry, with commanders of types and branches of the armed forces, with leading designers of defense enterprises. For some items, prices grew two, three, four times and there are also cases when the price rose 11 times since the start of work. That does not correspond with inflation, with nothing at all... I want to highlight again that I am drawing the attention of law enforcement bodies to this. In this regard, I instruct the Defence Ministry... other structures involved to work out a system of tough operational control over the use of resources from state defense orders."

Agriculture

"Efficient major agricultural companies and farms have appeared in Russia and we will support them."

"The current growth in the agriculture industry stands at six percent."

Russia

"If for a number of European countries national pride is a long-forgotten term and sovereignty is too much of a luxury, for Russia real state sovereignty is an absolutely indispensable condition of its existence."

"We will be sovereign or be dissolved, lost in the world."

"There is no doubt they would have loved to see the Yugoslavia scenario of collapse and dismemberment for us — with all the tragic consequences it would have for the peoples of Russia. This has not happened. We did not allow it."

"Hitler also failed when, with his hateful ideas, he was going to destroy Russia, throw us back behind the Urals. Everyone should remember how it ended."

"We will stand up for the diversity of the world. We will deliver truth to people abroad... And we will do this even in those cases when governments of some countries are trying to build around Russia something next to a new Iron Curtain."

"As of Jan.1, 2014, Russian population stood at 144 million people, 8 million more than forecast by the United Nations ... It is expected that at the end of 2014, taking into account Crimea and Sevastopol, Russia's population will exceed 146 million people."

"A healthy family and a healthy nation; traditional values passed on to us by our ancestors combined with a dedication to the future; stability as a condition for development and progress; respect for other nations and states with guaranteed safeguarding of Russian security; defending its legitimate interests — these are our priorities."

"The difficulties we are facing also create new possibilities for us. We are ready to meet any challenge of the times, and win."

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