The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Putin’s End-of-Year Press Conference, in Quotes

We watched all four hours so you don’t have to.

December 19, 2019



Putin took questions on a variety of topics in domestic and foreign policy. **Kremlin.ru**

President Vladimir Putin held his annual end-of-year press conference on Thursday, answering questions from state media and independent journalists on an array of topics related to Russia's domestic and foreign policy.

Here are the highlights from the marathon presser that lasted four hours and 19 minutes:

On constitutional term limits for the presidency:

— "One thing that could be changed about these [presidential] terms is removing the clause about 'successive' [terms]. Your humble servant served two terms consecutively, then left his post, but with the constitutional right to return to the post of president again, because these two terms were not successive. [This clause] troubles some of our political analysts and public figures. Well, maybe it could be removed."

On climate change:

— “But we're not really sure why global warming is happening, but we need to do something about it.”

— “We have the greenest energy system in the world. New industries have been created: liquefied natural gas, hydropower. Those who believe that we live on old resources are deeply mistaken.”

On U.S. President Donald Trump’s impeachment:

— "You phrase your question as if Trump's presidency is coming to an end. I am not sure that's the case. [The impeachment bill] still needs to go through the Senate where Republicans as far as I know have a majority. It's unlikely they will want to remove from power a representative of their party based on what are, in my opinion, completely fabricated reasons."

On Russia’s spat with Germany over the killing of an ex-Chechen rebel in Berlin:

— “The issue of extraditing Khangoshvili was discussed at the level of our special services but there was no official request, because we knew that it would be refused.”

— “This is an absolute bloody killer. He killed 98 people in the Caucasus — think about it. He participated in the attacks in the Moscow metro.”

On the election of British Prime Minister Boris Johnson:

— "Johnson can be congratulated. He was victorious after all and had a better sense of the British public's mood than his political opponents. And as far as I understand, he intends to implement all of his Brexit plans."

— "In regards to [Russian] interference or non-interference, we've heard many times from official governing bodies in various countries, including Britain, assessments of what is happening inside Russia. Is that interference?"

On China:

— "We do not have a military alliance with China and we do not plan to create one."

— "But our relations with China continue to develop, including in the sphere of defence technologies... I think China is capable of producing its own ballistic missile early warning system, but with our help it can do so sooner. This will improve our strategic partner's ability to defend itself in a significant way."

On the Libyan conflict:

— "Russia is in touch with [Libyan Prime Minister Fayez] al-Serraj and with [eastern Libyan commander Khalifa] Haftar. We are also constantly maintaining dialogue with our partners, including Turkey, Europe and other countries."

— "In our opinion, the best outcome would be for an agreement to be reached between the two conflicting sides that would lead to an end to military actions, and would establish who will rule the country, how, and what responsibilities they would have."

On extending the New START arms control treaty with the U.S.:

— "We are ready until the end of the year to extend the existing agreement, the new START treaty."

— "But thus far there has been no answer to any of our suggestions. And without a new START treaty, there is nothing to curb an arms race. And that, in my opinion, is bad."

On Russia's doping scandal:

— "If WADA does not have any claims against our national Olympic Committee, then our team should be allowed to participate under its own flag."

On Ukraine peace talks:

— "If a revision of the Minsk [peace] Agreements starts, then the situation could enter a complete dead end."

— "Direct dialogue on Donbass is needed. It is lacking."

On internet freedom and the "foreign agents" law:

— "Free internet and sovereign internet do not contradict each other. The ['sovereign internet'] law is aimed only at preventing negative influence in case foreign resources are restricted."

— "We are not moving toward closing off the internet and are not going to do that."

— "It wasn't us who coined the term 'foreign agent.' A similar law has been in force in the U.S. since the 1930s."

— "If you receive money from abroad and do this kind of work, you should indicate this so people know."

On whether a woman can become president of Russia:

— "In terms of management abilities and responsibilities, the requirements cannot differ by gender. The main thing is competence and decency. Women bring a female principle into politics, less aggression, and I think this will be in demand [in the future]."

Reuters contributed reporting.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2019/12/19/putins-end-of-year-press-conference-in-quotes-a68686