

Turmoil May Hit Political Ratings

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The annexation of Crimea will only temporarily distract Russians from worrying about the economy, a respected economist said, suggesting a rally in President Vladimir Putin's ratings may not last.

A weaker ruble, leading to inflation, and slower growth may eventually hurt Russian budgets, and voters could turn against the ruling elite, Mikhail Dmitriyev, of the Moscow-based Center for Strategic Research think tank said.

"If there is no economic growth, it is likely that the influence of Crimea and other foreign policy events on political ratings will not be long-lasting," Dmitriyev, who predicted mass protests against Putin in 2011 to 2012 said in an interview.

"The population will start to look at politics from the point of growing economic struggles." However, Dmitriyev, a former first deputy economy minister under Putin, said it would be a while before Putin's popularity was affected.

"For now, the situation in Crimea is to the fore and is shaping the population's political mood," he said.

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