

Poll: Only 3% of Russians Think West Is Meddling in Ukraine

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A woman surveys damage done to a house, which according to locals was recently damaged by shelling, in the suburbs of Donetsk on Jan. 30, 2015.

Despite widespread state news reports that Western governments had been meddling in Ukraine, only 3 percent of Russians think this is true, a respected state pollster said Monday.

The Ukraine conflict, which has heightened diplomatic tensions between Russia and the West to levels unparalleled since the Cold War era, has sparked international information wars, with Russian and Western media outlets often reporting starkly different versions of the same events.

While Western media outlets have broadly reported that Moscow has bolstered the east Ukrainian rebel forces with men and arms, Russian media outlets have largely blamed the West for orchestrating the ouster last February of Ukraine's former Kremlin-friendly leader, Viktor Yanukovich.

The results of a recent poll by the Russian Public Opinion Research Center (VTsIOM) suggest that such reportage may not have a strong impact on viewers' perceptions.

VTsIOM asked respondents a series of questions about their views on Ukraine.

When asked to describe in a few words what is currently happening in Ukraine, 50 percent said "civil war." Seventeen percent said "genocide, the killing of civilians, and terror," while another 17 percent said "anarchy, lawlessness, and banditry." Meanwhile, 3 percent said fascism, a significant reduction from the 7 percent who responded as such in October.

About two-thirds of Russians (63 percent) say that tensions in the conflict are on the rise, up from about one-third (38 percent) in October.

About a quarter of Russians (26 percent) say that there is a "rather high probability" that Russia will launch military activity in the region. Another 10 percent is "convinced that a war between the countries is already under way."

Conversely, more than half of Russians do not think Russia will go to war with Ukraine: 33 percent said it was unlikely, and 21 percent said it was impossible.

The survey was conducted on Jan. 24-25, polling 1,600 people across 46 Russian regions. The statistical margin of error was no more than 3.5 percent, the pollster said.

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