The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russians Increasingly Unsure That Crimea Grab Will Pay Off

By The Moscow Times

March 23, 2015



A woman holds portraits of President Vladimir Putin and Pro-Russian head of Crimea Sergei Aksyonov during a concert marking the first anniversary of Russia's annexation of Crimea, in central Simferopol Mar. 16.

Russians have grown increasingly skeptical in the past year with regard to the consequences of Russia's annexation of Crimea last March, a survey by independent pollster the Levada Center revealed Monday.

While 79 percent of respondents believed last May that the annexation would have positive political and economic consequences for Russia, this March only 69 percent were found to agree.

Following Russia's annexation of Crimea, amid the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, Moscow's relations with the West have plunged to lows unparalleled in the post-Cold War era. The tensions have provoked waves of sanctions that — paired with the plummeting price

of oil — have dealt a devastating blow to the Russian economy.

The study also revealed a reduced appetite among Russians for territorial expansion, with 57 percent saying they want the country to retain its current borders. Still, 34 percent of respondents said that Russia has the right to absorb former Soviet territories if the rights of ethnic Russians are under threat.

The number of Russians who believe the annexation was driven by a desire to restore "historical justice" by returning Crimea to Russia surged to 40 percent, up from 32 percent in March last year.

Fifty-five percent of respondents said they believe Russia had been guided primarily by an interest in "defending Crimea's ethnic Russian population from violation of its rights and from a threat to its security and well-being."

When asked whether Russians and Ukrainians were "one people," 52 percent said yes. That number was 56 percent one year ago.

The poll was conducted among 1,600 respondents with the margin of error not exceeding 3.4 percent.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2015/03/23/russians-increasingly-unsure-that-crimea-grab-will-pay-off-a45045