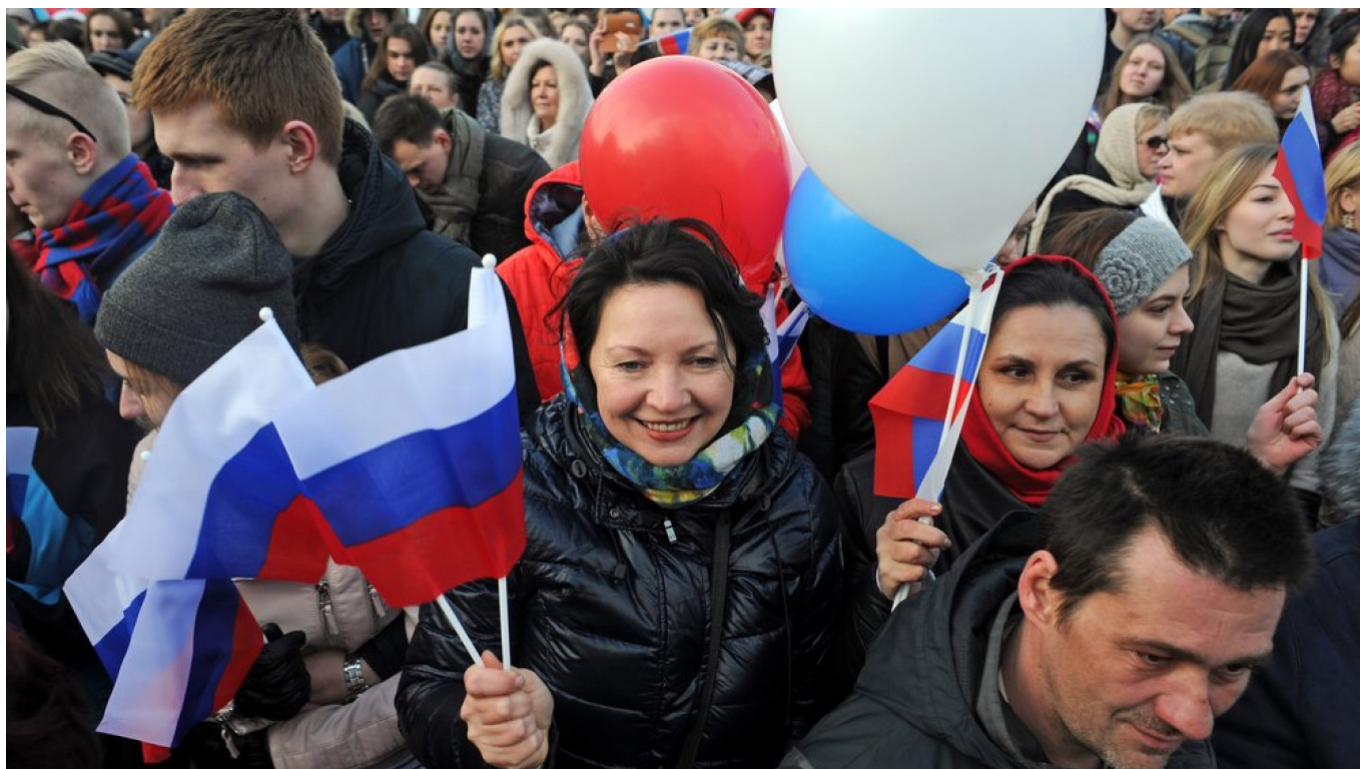


Share of Russians Predicting Better Ties With the West Hits 5-Year High – Poll

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Andrei Lyubimov / Moskva News Agency

The number of Russians forecasting improved relations between their country and the West has reached a five-year high, the independent Levada Center pollster said Monday.

Public support for Russia's annexation of Crimea from Ukraine has remained in the high 80s in the Levada poll since 2014, despite it leading to economic sanctions and strained Russia-West relations. Almost two-thirds of its respondents said the annexation "caused more good" to Russia, versus nearly one-fifth who said it "caused more harm."

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A total of 54 percent of respondents [told](#) Levada that Russia's relations with the West will return to pre-annexation levels, up from 46 percent last year. Meanwhile, 34 percent said they expect the "new Cold War" to continue.

“The peak among those who believe the conflict will be put on the back burner is a hope and not a sober estimate,” Levada director Lev Gudkov [told](#) the Vedomosti business daily.

Dmitry Badovsky, the head of the Institute of Socio-Economic and Political Research (ISEPR), observed that “the ‘Crimean Consensus’ remains intact, but the authorities no longer have a ‘Crimean Effect’ on [their] ratings.”

Since 2014, an average of 46.8 percent of respondents said they anticipated improved ties with the West, according to Levada. An average of 35 percent forecast strained relations in the same period.

Levada conducted the survey among 1,600 respondents in 50 Russian regions between March 21 and March 27.

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