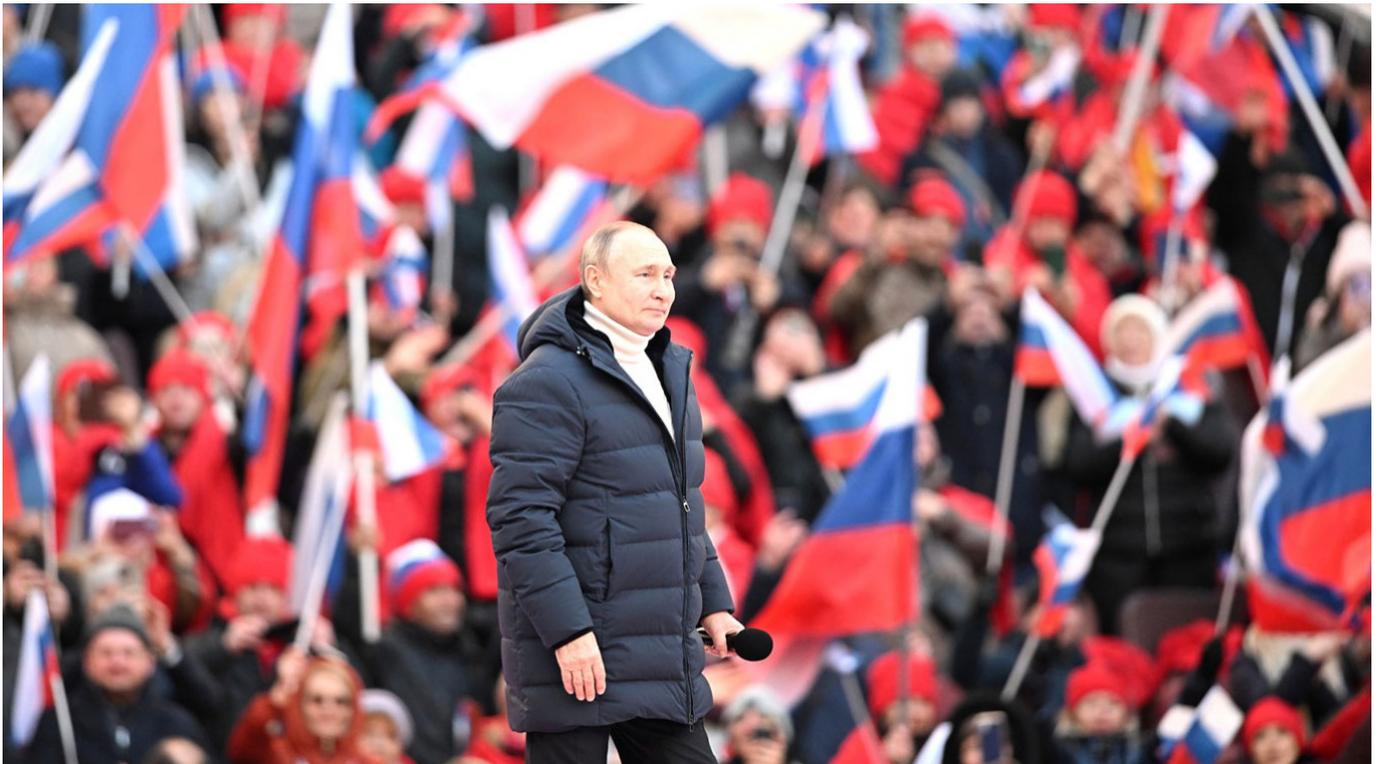


# Putin's Approval Surges After Launch of 'Military Operation' in Ukraine

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Russian President Vladimir Putin's approval rating jumped by over 10% amid his offensive in neighboring Ukraine, according to a poll by the independent Levada Center polling agency [published](#) Wednesday.

Eighty-three percent of Russian respondents said they approve of Putin's actions in March, Levada said, up from 71% in February and 69% in January.

But experts warn that the figures might not be an accurate gauge of the current mood at home, as the public tends to rally around leaders in times of war.

“Those numbers only indicate that the country is in a situation of war, and people understand this – both respondents and non-respondents,” Greg Yudin, a political scientist and expert in polling, told The Moscow Times.

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And given Russia's harsh crackdown on anti-war voices that includes a new law criminalizing the spread of "fakes" about the military and the detentions of thousands of protesters, many respondents might be hiding their true opinions.

The jump in Putin's rating echoes that seen in 2014, when Moscow's annexation of Crimea from Ukraine sent his approval to an all-time high.

Levada director Denis Volkov also advised against drawing parallels to 2014 – when Putin's approval ratings soared to all-time highs following the annexation of Crimea.

"The conditions today are different: the conflict itself is bigger, and this, in theory, may strengthen the ratings of the authorities, but the economic consequences will be more significant," Volkov said.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has dragged on for over a month, with the Kremlin confirming [1,351](#) deaths – a figure Ukraine and NATO say is considerably higher.

More than half of Levada's respondents – 59% – said they believe their country is "heading in the right direction," and the share of those who approve of the State Duma's activities is up from 47% to 59%.

Volkov also noted that these figures will likely change in the coming months given the current uncertainty of the economic situation stemming from Western sanctions.

"In the future, this may see figures go in a downwards direction. There is no big euphoria, people feel the seriousness of the situation."

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