

# [***Putin is set to win 6 more years in power. Here's how it will affect the war and Russia's relations***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BJ5-7S91-JC5B-G0TN-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

Vladimir Putin is poised to sweep to another six-year term in [*this week's presidential election*](https://apnews.com/hub/russia-election), even though Russians are [*dying in Ukraine*](https://apnews.com/hub/ukraine) in a war grinding through its third year and his country is more isolated than ever from the rest of the world.

The all-but-certain outcome comes through his [*rigid control of Russia*](https://apnews.com/article/russia-propaganda-putin-election-ukraine-712036dee8da10e35cb0d75d6ad53eea) established during his 24 years in power — the longest Kremlin tenure since Soviet leader Josef Stalin.

Putin, 71, has [*silenced virtually all dissent*](https://apnews.com/article/russia-putin-crackdown-opposition-dissent-prison-532705369591610a94e9e86340233380) through harsh new laws that impose heavy fines or prison on independent voices. Critics have succumbed to unexplained deaths or fled abroad. The ballot features three other token candidates who publicly support his policies.

**How is the war affecting the election?**

Putin has focused his campaign on a pledge to fulfill his goals in Ukraine, describing the conflict as [*a battle against the West*](https://apnews.com/article/russia-putin-election-822c76b8ee3665a04d57cded0b42b225) for the very survival of Russia and its 146 million people.

In a state-of-the-nation [*address*](https://apnews.com/article/russia-putin-state-nation-ukraine-war-security-b7f3e66caf093f405f8bbc278d9ca581) last month, he charged that the U.S. and its NATO allies “need a dependent, waning, dying space in the place of Russia so that they can do whatever they want.”

Putin has repeatedly argued that he sent in the troops in February 2022 to protect Russian speakers in eastern Ukraine and prevent Kyiv from posing a major security threat to Moscow by joining NATO. Ukraine and its allies describe the Russian invasion — the largest conflict in Europe since World War II — as an unprovoked act of aggression by the major nuclear power.

He says Russian forces have the upper hand after the [*failure of Ukraine’s counteroffensive*](https://apnews.com/article/ukraine-russia-war-putin-zelenskyy-4c62940dd5ae56bc753cee7dbddbe3fb) last year, arguing that Ukraine and the West will “sooner or later” have to accept a settlement on Moscow’s terms. Putin praised his troops fighting in Ukraine and promised to make them Russia's new elite.

Ordinary Russians know little of their military's many setbacks in the war, with casualties out of view and state-run media carrying accounts only of Moscow's successes.

**How is the economy affecting the election?**

The [*economy’s resilience*](https://apnews.com/article/russia-economy-putin-election-ukraine-97a5f92113e54cd9af0aa31778069a3e) in the face of bruising Western sanctions is a big factor behind Putin’s grip on power in Russia, a major player in the global energy sector. The economy is expected to grow 2.6% this year, according to the International Monetary Fund, compared with the 0.9% expansion predicted in Europe. Inflation is forecast at more than 7% but unemployment remains low.

Military industries have become a key growth engine, with defense plants churning out missiles, tanks and ammunition. Hefty payments to hundreds of thousands of men who signed contracts with the military have helped boost consumer demand, contributing to economic growth.

In his campaign, Putin has promised to extend cheap mortgages subsidized by the government to help young families, particularly those with children, boosting his popularity and energizing the booming construction sector.

He also pledged to pour more government funds into health care, education, science, culture and sports, while continuing efforts to eradicate poverty.

**What impact is the crackdown having?**

Putin has methodically tightened control on Russian ***politics*** since becoming president in 2000, pushing through constitutional changes that can keep him in power until 2036.

The Kremlin's [*crackdown on dissent*](https://apnews.com/article/russia-putin-crackdown-opposition-dissent-prison-532705369591610a94e9e86340233380) reached unprecedented heights after the invasion of Ukraine, leaving a scorched-earth political landscape ahead of the vote.

A repressive new law approved days after the invasion criminalized any public criticism of the war, and protests have become effectively impossible with police swiftly dispersing unauthorized gatherings. The number of arrests, criminal cases and trials has soared, and long prison terms are more common.

Putin has denigrated opposition activists and war critics as spoiled Western stooges, once describing them as “foam washed away” by his “special military operation.”

His [*biggest critic, Alexei Navalny*](https://apnews.com/article/russia-alexei-navalny-funeral-9263c4d0688b883fa9f853f5d0310e45), was serving a 19-year sentence on extremism charges when he died at age 47 in an Arctic penal colony. Other leading opposition figures also got long prison terms comparable to those given to “enemies of the people” during Stalinist repressions. Prominent Kremlin foe, Vladimir [*Kara-Murza*](https://apnews.com/article/russia-crackdown-putin-kara-murza-prison-e0115af6f83d23412f996226e3240b1f) got the harshest sentence of 25 years on treason charges over an anti-war speech.

But even minor critics were muzzled. A St. Petersburg artist got seven years for replacing supermarket price tags with anti-war slogans, while a Moscow poet was sentenced to seven years for reciting verses against the war in public.

Most independent news outlets were shut and many moved their operations abroad, while the state-controlled media relentlessly hammered home the Kremlin’s narratives.

**How will Russia's policies be affected?**

Putin will likely use his predictable victory as proof of overwhelming public support for the war.

Many observers expect him to toughen his course and escalate the war. Some say the Kremlin could launch another round of mobilizing reservists to swell the military's ranks and try to extend its gains in a big, new offensive.

The Kremlin is set to ramp up its war rhetoric, casting the country as a besieged fortress facing Western aggression. Repression against opposition activists and war critics is likely to expand, with authorities abandoning any semblance of decorum in their ruthless efforts to eradicate signs of dissent.

Moscow’s foreign policy is likely to become even more aggressive, and Russian authorities may increasingly try to deepen divides in the West with disinformation and propaganda, as well as appealing to conservative circles in the West by promoting the image of Russia as a bulwark of traditional values.

In Moscow's relations with China, India and countries of the Global South, Putin’s election victory will help cement existing alliances by reinforcing the message of his firm control over Russian ***politics***.

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