

# [***Putin Has Another Crisis on His Hands***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6B61-DX01-DY68-13T4-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Length:** 538 words

**Byline:** Aila Slisco

**Highlight:** Jason Jay Smart, an expert on post-Soviet ***politics***, told Newsweek that the Russian president is "facing another grave crisis."

**Body**

Russian President [*Vladimir Putin*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/vladimir-putin?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) is facing the domestic zero hour, which has likely been exacerbated by Moscow's ongoing war in Ukraine, a political adviser on post-Soviet and international ***politics*** told *Newsweek*.

Putin, who is seeking another term in the March election, faces backlash over power outages that have plagued Russia in recent months, often resulting in a life-threatening lack of heating.

"Putin is facing another grave crisis due to the ongoing heating disaster" that was pushing Russia toward "the breaking point," political adviser Jason Jay Smart told *Newsweek*.

"There have been estimates that perhaps thousands of Russian civilians have frozen to death," Smart said. "Incredibly, the genesis of this crisis, as a UK [Ministry of Defense (MoD)] report said today, is that the Kremlin has been pushing regional governors in Russia to make infrastructure cuts, since early 2022, to help finance the war in Ukraine."

"This is another sign that Russia is becoming increasingly unstable and nearing the breaking point," he added.

Outages had left approximately [*25 percent of Moscow residents*](https://www.newsweek.com/russia-maps-moscow-power-outage-heat-winter-freeze-emergency-1859079?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) without heat in brutal winter weather as of earlier this month, while a 60-year-old Russian Navy officer [*reportedly*](https://www.newsweek.com/russian-navy-officer-frozen-death-home-1860090?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) froze to death in his home near St. Petersburg after losing power on January 3.

A British MoD intelligence update posted on Thursday to X, formerly [*Twitter*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/twitter?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships), suggested that the blackouts were due to the Ukraine war using up funds that might have otherwise gone to maintain an aging utilities infrastructure.

"In recent months, there have been heating breakdowns in 16 locations across Russia," the update reads. "These breakdowns amidst sub-freezing temperatures are an expansion of an existing problem that has plagued Russian cities and towns for decades, but has likely become more acute due to Russian wartime policies"

"Russia has routinely prioritised military spending over reinvestment in general public infrastructure," it continues. "Additionally, mobilisation has likely led to a workforce shortage across all industries including qualified heating engineers and plumbers."

The ministry went on to say that Putin had asked Russian Minister of Emergency Situations Aleksandr Kurenkov to resolve the issue, calling it "a key concern for Putin ahead of the forthcoming Russian presidential elections."

*Newsweek* reached out for comment to Putin's office via email on Thursday.

While the blackouts have prompted some Russians to directly appeal to Putin and [*demand accountability*](https://www.newsweek.com/russia-podolsk-putin-freezing-moscow-1858527?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) from local officials, the heating crisis is far from the only problem the Russian president faces at home.

Domestic discontent is also growing over the rising cost of groceries, with rampant inflation and Western sanctions having pushed the prices of items like eggs, meat and vegetables past the point of being affordable for many Russians.

Family members of deployed Russian troops have also been [*protesting*](https://www.newsweek.com/putin-election-headquarters-disrupted-angry-wives-russian-soldiers-1862923?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) the treatment of their loved ones in Ukraine, where there is seemingly no end in sight to a conflict that has dragged on for nearly two years.

Opinion polls in Russia indicate that the domestic troubles have done little to impact Putin's approval rating, which has taken only a [*tiny hit*](https://www.newsweek.com/vladimir-putin-approval-ratings-2024-presidential-election-1856173?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) leading into the election.

[*Link to Image*](https://d.newsweek.com/en/full/2340803/vladimir-putin-heating-crisis-outages-russia-ukraine.jpg)

**Graphic**

Vladimir Putin Heating Crisis Outages Russia Ukraine

ALEXEY DANICHEV/POOL/AFP

Russian President Vladimir Putin during a meeting in St. Petersburg on December 26, 2023. Post-Soviet ***politics*** expert Jason Jay Smart told Newsweek on Thursday that Putin is facing "another grave crisis due to the ongoing heating disaster" in Russia.

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