

BRIEF N°1.3: WHAT DO UKRAINIANS THINK ABOUT CURRENT NEGOTIATION APPROACHES?

July-December 2025

Societal buy-in is crucial for any peace process; hence, there is a need to understand how the Ukrainian public views the current and potential future negotiations. To analyse public opinion on specific negotiation issues, this Brief draws on 25 national surveys conducted by 11 leading international and Ukrainian organizations, as well as three civil society public statements ([see full Annex](#)).

1. ATTITUDES TOWARDS UKRAINE'S LEADERSHIP AND PARTNERS

1.1. Corruption scandals moderately decreased support for Zelensky. The data across multiple surveys suggests that the July corruption scandal and subsequent protests led to a [6-10%](#) drop in trust in the president. By contrast, the November "Mindich scandal" increased public perception of high-level corruption (by [8-9%](#)) without significantly affecting Zelensky's ratings. Still, a clear majority ([59%](#)) of respondents believed Zelensky bore personal responsibility for the "Mindich scandal." Zelensky, Zaluzhny and Budanov [remained](#) the most likely candidates in a hypothetical future presidential election.

1.2. Trust in American and European partners. Trust in the US declined sharply, from [41%](#) in December 2024 to [21%](#) in December 2025. By contrast, trust in the EU remained broadly stable over the same period, standing at [46%](#) in December 2024 and [49%](#) in December 2025.

2. SUPPORT FOR UKRAINE'S NEGOTIATION APPROACH

2.1. Acceptance of an unspecified negotiated settlement is increasing, while support for a military solution is decreasing. At present, support for negotiations stands at around [59-69%](#), and support for a military solution at around [24-33%](#), depending on the wording used.

2.2. Ukrainians remained open to clearly-defined compromises, but not to capitulation. A majority of respondents ([54%](#) [August]; [69%](#) [December]) indicated they could accept a peace deal involving *de facto* Russian control over the occupied territories, provided this excluded legal recognition of the occupied territories as Russian, included reliable Western security guarantees, maintained EU accession talks and linked any gradual sanction relief on Russia to clear conditions. Additionally, [51%](#) of respondents in November stated they would protest should the Ukrainian government agree to "compromises that...are unacceptable."

2.3. Ukrainians continued to believe in victory and showed slightly more readiness for a longer war, as compared to spring 2025. A clear majority of respondents continued to express belief in an unspecified version of Ukraine's victory, although levels have declined over time ([80%](#) [July]; [74%](#) [October]; [63%](#) [December]). A majority of respondents (across multiple surveys from August to December) [believed](#) that the war would last one or two years or longer rather than finish in 2026. Readiness to endure the war "as long as necessary" had gradually decreased since 2022 but slightly increased again by late 2025 ([47%](#) [October]; [62%](#) [December]).

2.4. Mobilisation. In September, among adults not currently serving in the military, [54%](#) of those who decided to answer this question said they were "definitely" or "rather" ready to join the Defence Forces, while [38%](#) reported they were "definitely" or "rather not" ready.

Civil society. Along with continued demands for [justice](#), more civil society actors began to publicly admit the inevitability of difficult compromises and restated the red lines: [no concessions](#) that lead to further loss of sovereignty, including limiting Ukraine's Defence Forces, and protecting the [rights](#) of Ukrainians in occupied territories.

3. SECURITY

3.1. Security remains critical to any prospective resolution. More respondents prioritised security guarantees ([58%](#)) over regaining territory ([31%](#) [both August]). Prospective peace plans with more clearly-defined security guarantees received [15%](#) more support than those with vaguely-defined conditions.

3.2. The "Steel Porcupine" self-reliance model [remained](#) the preferred form of guarantee against future invasion. Since the summer, strengthening the Ukrainian army has been consistently ranked [more often](#) above NATO membership and other prospective security guarantees.

4. TERRITORIAL CONTROL

4.1. Support for unspecified territorial compromises remained a stable, if minority, stance since December 2024 ([38%-39%](#)) and dropped slightly to [33%](#) at the end of December 2025.

4.2. The majority of respondents continued to oppose *de jure* recognition of the occupation ([89%](#) [September]; [77%](#) [November]; [58%](#); [76%](#) [both December]) as well as any transfer of unoccupied land to Russian control ([90%](#) [September]; [66%](#) [December]).

4.3. Restoring Ukraine's 1991 borders is not ranked as the top priority. Priorities [stated](#) as more important include the return of Ukrainian prisoners and abductees, the preservation of statehood, the cessation of rocket attacks and a [return](#) to the 2022 line of contact.

5. SANCTIONS

5.1. A strong majority opposed any unspecified sanctions relief on Russia ([77%](#) [September]; [73%](#) [November]), though resistance has slightly decreased over time.

5.2. Acceptance of gradual security-anchored sanctions relief increased. When presented with a peace package within which sanctions were lifted gradually "after establishing a lasting peace," a narrow majority ([54%](#) [July-August]) would be willing to accept this. This stance became more pronounced ([69%](#) [December]) when sanctions were proposed to remain "until a stable peace is established and the threat of a second attack by Russia disappears."

6. POST-WAR ARRANGEMENTS

6.1. The majority of respondents rejected the notion of holding elections during ongoing fighting ([87%](#) [March]; [82%](#) [December]). Conditions that soften resistance to holding elections included a [ceasefire](#) backed by reliable security guarantees, and a ceasefire with the [lifting of martial law](#).

6.2. Positive attitudes towards the EU, and desire for membership, remained strong but hope for accession within the next ten years has dropped by almost [10%](#) from 2024 to 2025. Approval of or desire for [EU accession](#) consistently ranks slightly [higher](#) than for NATO membership in many surveys.

6.3. Current language policy should be retained but implemented without coercion. A clear majority support the current policy favouring Ukrainian as the sole state language while rejecting coercive implementation ([87%](#) in October) and opposing official status for Russian either [in the whole of the country](#) or in [some regions](#).