

# BRIEF N°1.2: WHAT DO UKRAINIANS THINK ABOUT CURRENT NEGOTIATION APPROACHES?

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Societal buy-in is crucial for any successfully negotiated solution. Ukrainians live with the negative legacy of the failure of the Minsk agreements and will require great effort to be persuaded to accept any potential peace deal. It is thus crucial for all actors involved in negotiations to understand how the Ukrainian populace views the current negotiation process to avoid similar resistance.

This brief summarizes key topics where we observe degrees of consensus among a) the general populace and b) Ukrainian organized civil society ([see full Annex](#)). A first version of this brief was published in April 2025 and included national opinion polls and civil society public statements dated until March 2025. This updated version includes opinion polls released from May 1<sup>st</sup> to June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2025.

## 1. SUPPORT FOR UKRAINE'S LEADERSHIP AND NEGOTIATION APPROACH

### [Annex 1](#)

**1.1. Support for state leadership remains stable.** The events in the Oval Cabinet caused a slight increase in support for President Zelensky over the spring (up to 74%), which went down to 65% in June. The US-Ukraine Minerals Agreement was seen positively. However, 41% of Ukrainians thought that Ukraine is moving towards authoritarianism. A June poll found that if elections were held that month between Zelensky and former armed forces commander-in-chief Zaluzhny, the latter would win in the second round.

**1.2. Support for negotiations is stable.** Most Ukrainians support some form of negotiations with Russia (up to 81%). However, only 25% of respondents to a May poll believed that the first round of direct negotiations in Turkey on May 16<sup>th</sup> would positively impact the peace process.

**1.3. Support for a ceasefire moved from conditional to unconditional.** Although in February and March, Ukrainians rejected Russian conditions for a ceasefire and advocated for Western-supplied security guarantees as a condition of their own, a May poll identified support (74%) for a ceasefire without conditions from either side.

**1.4. Support for fighting slightly increased.** Ukrainians (up to 73%) declared in March that Ukraine should continue fighting even without US support, though what precisely was meant by "fighting" was undefined. A June poll noted that for the first time since late 2023, the number of Ukrainians who reported readiness to endure the war for another year or for as long as necessary has slightly increased. A December 2024 poll (published in May 2025) reported that about 25% of respondents were willing to serve in the armed forces or participate in an armed resistance movement, of which only 16% expressed immediate readiness to serve.

**1.5. Readiness for civil society inclusion.** Ukraine's expert community and civil society have already contributed to official proposals like the 10-point Peace Formula, [victory plan](#) and [current negotiations](#). Women's organizations in particular requested [women's participation](#) in negotiation delegations at all levels. However, at the moment, there are no institutionalized mechanisms for including civil society in track one negotiations.

## 2. A ZONE OF POSSIBLE AGREEMENT, AS PERCEIVED BY THE GENERAL POPULATION IN UKRAINE AND RUSSIA [Annex 2](#)

**The most acceptable package deal.** Distinct [Ukrainian](#) and [international](#) groups of researchers<sup>1</sup> have independently identified a package acceptable to both the Ukrainian and Russian peoples. It included ending the fighting along the current front line with the following conditions: a) Ukraine is to be provided sufficient security guarantees, b) Russian control of currently occupied territories is to be tolerated but not officially recognized and c) sanctions against Russia are not to be immediately but instead partially, conditionally and gradually lifted.

## 3. SECURITY [Annex 3](#)

**3.1. Consensus on the need for security arrangements.** Both the general public and organized [civil society](#) have claimed that a stable peace deal requires sufficient, functional security guarantees/packages<sup>2</sup> involving preferably both the US and Europe. Three surveys recorded 83%, 82% and 55% resistance to a ceasefire without appropriate guarantees.

**3.2. NATO membership no longer the preferred form of security guarantee.** Three March surveys found more support for a prospective peace deal involving a Western peacekeeping force<sup>3</sup>, improving domestic defense capacities or other "real security guarantees" from the West than for one guaranteeing NATO membership. Two polls (March/May) indicated that reducing the army as a condition of a peace deal was rejected far more strongly (80% and 81%) than refusing NATO (37% and 52%) or EU (51%) membership. Ukrainians still hope that the US can provide some security along with the EU.

## 4. TERRITORIAL CONTROL [Annex 4](#)

**4.1. Resistance to undefined<sup>4</sup> "territorial compromises" remains stable.** A return to Ukraine's 1991 borders remains a clear preference. At the same time, KIIS surveys demonstrate that openness to Ukraine giving up "some of its territories" rose steadily from December 2022 to December 2024 (from 8% to 38%), but since then has remained stable through June.

**4.2. No *de jure* recognition of occupation.** One March poll and one June poll recorded a strong majority rejection of *de jure* recognition of Russian occupation (82% and 68%) as well as unwillingness (78%) to transferring unoccupied parts of partly-occupied regions to Russian control in order to end the war.

**4.3. *De facto* tolerance of Russian control becomes more acceptable when combined with attractive conditions** such as a) promises of NATO deployment in case of further aggression or b) a military contingent deployed to the line of contact or c) gradual instead of immediate sanctions relief.

## 5. JUSTICE AND ACCOUNTABILITY [Annex 5](#)

**Societal demands for justice and accountability.** Multiple civil society statements confirmed the [importance of justice and accountability](#). However, there was no consensus regarding whether these should be subject to negotiation with Russia or rather adjudicated by independent, international and national legal mechanisms.

## 6. HUMANITARIAN ISSUES

### [Annex 6](#)

**6.1. Priority for return of PoW, civilian hostages, and deported children** in the negotiated solution was emphasized by the civil society in the "[People First](#)" campaign.

**6.2. Human rights protection in the occupied territories.** For the first time, prominent Ukrainian Human Rights organizations issued a statement [demanding](#) that any negotiated solution establish Russia's obligation to protect the rights of Ukrainians living under its temporary control.

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## 7. SANCTIONS

### [Annex 7](#)

**Conditional lifting of sanctions on Russia is possible.**

While there is strong rejection (78%) of full sanction relief as a condition for ending the war, two studies (March/May) indicated willingness to consider conditional, partial and gradual sanction relief provided there are security guarantees and other conditions in place. Ukraine's civil society [demanded](#) that sanctions pressure on Russia should be increased.

## 8. DOMESTIC POLICY

### [Annex 8](#)

**8.1. Consensus on non-interference in domestic policy.** More Ukrainians expressed resistance to (50%) than support for (37%) a prospective peace deal requiring Ukraine to consult with Russia on "important decisions" regarding domestic policy.

**8.2. Openness to elections has increased provided conditions such as a stable ceasefire and reliable security guarantees.** A May poll indicated that willingness to hold post-ceasefire elections (with appropriate security guarantees) slightly increased over the spring, from 78% resistance to 71%). However, a June poll indicated that nearly 58% supported calling an election following a ceasefire and the lifting of martial law. A [statement](#) signed by over 400 civil society organizations warns that at least six months will be needed after a stable ceasefire to guarantee competitive and democratic elections.

**8.3. Resistance to language demands as a part of the agreement remains stable.** Russian as a second state language is rejected by 48% (March). The official use of Russian in certain territories was rejected by 54% (March) or supported by merely 15% (June).

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1. Based on a conjoint experimental methodology, where respondents were shown different combinations of peace deal components such as territorial concessions, security guarantees, sanctions relief, etc., and were asked to evaluate or choose between scenarios.

2. Although some security options, like increasing Ukraine's capacity for self-defense, are not technically 'guarantees,' opinion polls use 'security guarantees' as an umbrella term for all security-related options.

3. Existing opinion polls do not distinguish between a deterrence/reassurance force, which does not require Russian consent, and a peacekeeping/monitoring force, which would form a component of a peace agreement and thus require Russia's consent.

4. "Undefined" refers to a lack of distinction between *de jure* recognition of Russian control or merely tolerating *de facto* control.