

# BRIEF N°1: 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 the potential peace deal currently under negotiation. 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. This summary is based on the most recent national opinion polls as well as on public statements made by prominent civil society organizations ([see full Annex](#)). We clustered the issues into seven groups based on a systematic [conflict analysis](#): leadership and negotiation approach, security, territories, justice and accountability, humanitarian issues, sanctions and domestic policy.

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

### [Annex 1](#)

**1.1. Support for state leadership.** Popular support for President Zelensky rose (as high as 74%) following the encounter in the Oval Cabinet and other events in February 2025.

**1.2. Negotiations and ceasefire.** Although most Ukrainians now support some form of negotiations with Russia (up to 81%), such support is not unconditional ([see Annex 1.2](#)). Polls indicate that the majority of Ukrainians reject ceasefire proposals that entirely conform to Russian demands (79%) or that do not involve security guarantees. Furthermore, Ukrainians (up to 82%) declared as late as March that they are prepared to continue fighting even without US support.<sup>1</sup>

**1.3. Civil society inclusion.** Ukraine's expert community and civil society have already assisted the government with developing proposals on the 10-point Peace Formula, [victory plan](#) and [current negotiations](#). Women's organizations in particular request [women's participation](#) in negotiation delegations at all levels.

1. No opinion polls provide any data on the actual readiness of men to mobilize and fight now.

## 2. SECURITY ISSUES

### [Annex 2](#)

**2.1. Consensus on the need for security arrangements.** Both the general public and organized [civil society](#) claim that a stable peace deal requires sufficient, functional security guarantees/packages<sup>2</sup> involving Western allies. Two surveys record 83% and 55% resistance to a ceasefire without appropriate guarantees.

**2.2. No consensus on precisely which security mechanisms would be most conducive to sustainable peace.** Although Ukrainians continue to express support for NATO membership, most recent surveys showed a stronger preference for domestic military power (i.e. Ukraine's increased capacity for military self-defense). The possibility of a non-NATO, European deterrence contingent or peacekeeping force also holds support.<sup>3</sup> [See Annex 2.2](#) for nuance on preferences for specific mechanisms.

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. That said, some experts instead use more precise terms like "security package."

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

### 3. TERRITORIAL CONTROL

#### [Annex 3](#)

**Openness to “territorial compromises.”** Openness to undefined territorial concessions has increased over time. Only one poll distinguished between legal and de facto territorial control, identifying strong rejection (82%) of legal recognition of Russia’s annexation of Ukrainian territories. Multiple polls showed disagreement over which territories in particular can remain under de facto Russian control, and under which conditions. [See Annex 3](#) for additional nuance.

### 4. JUSTICE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

#### [Annex 4](#)

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

### 5. HUMANITARIAN ISSUES

#### [Annex 5](#)

**5.1. PoW, civilian hostages and deported children.** Ukraine’s organized civil society has strongly [stated](#) that any negotiated solution should include the exchange of prisoners of war, the release of civilian detainees and the return of forcibly transferred Ukrainian children.

**5.2. Human rights protection in the occupied territories.** 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. Importantly, this was the first time that civil society officially recognized the possibility of continuing de facto Russian control.

### 6. SANCTIONS

#### [Annex 6](#)

**Lifting sanctions on Russia.** The general public strongly opposes (78%) lifting all sanctions from Russia as a condition for ending the war. Furthermore, Ukraine’s civil society demands that [sanctions not be lifted](#) until Russia makes viable steps to halt its aggression against Ukraine as well as the occupation of Ukrainian land.

### 7. DOMESTIC POLICY

#### [Annex 7](#)

**7.1. Non-interference in domestic policy.** More Ukrainians express resistance to (50%) than support for (37%) a prospective peace deal requiring Ukraine to consult with Russia on “important decisions” regarding domestic policy.

**7.2. Elections.** A majority of Ukrainians (62%) declared that elections should not take place until the war formally ends, or at least until after a ceasefire has been reached (19%).<sup>4</sup> A [statement](#) signed by over 400 civil society organizations warns that at least six months will be needed after a stable ceasefire in order to guarantee competitive and democratic elections.

**7.3. Language.** Polls indicate resistance to accepting the use of the Russian language as a condition for a peace deal. One poll reports categorical rejection for making Russian a second state language (48%), while a second reports disapproval of using the “Russian language in some parts of the country” (54%).

4. The survey does not ask whether respondents desire for elections to take place immediately after a ceasefire or after said ceasefire proves stable.