

Peace in exchange for territories

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More and more Ukrainians seem to be leaning towards the idea of peace achieved through negotiations. At the same time, the majority still opposes the transfer of any territory to Russia, even the Crimean Peninsula. But this situation indicates the beginning of a change in public opinion in favor of possible compromises.

The results of a survey conducted two weeks ago by the Kiev Sociological Institute showed that 44% of Ukrainian citizens are in favor of starting official negotiations with Russia. A third part of Ukrainians would agree to cede part of their territory to Russia in order to end the conflict. A year ago, about 10% of Ukrainians were ready to agree to the loss of territories.

Ukraine held its first peace summit, to which representatives of Russia were not invited. Preparations are currently underway for the second summit. And representatives of Ukraine declare the need for representatives of Russia to participate in it.

Representatives of the Kremlin and Kiev declare their readiness to negotiate. However, the positions of the parties are currently opposing and no one of them is going to demonstrate a willingness to make concessions.

One of Zelensky's key advisers said last week that making a deal with Putin now would be like signing a deal with the devil. And while a Kiev Institute poll showed a threefold increase in the number of people willing to give up territory for peace, 55% of Ukrainians oppose any territorial concessions.

A year ago, 86% of residents of Ukraine's southern regions, including Dnipro, Zaporizhzhia, Mykolaiv, Kherson, and Odessa, said they were against handing over any territory to Russia. Now, more than half of respondents said they either supported ceding some territory or were undecided. Only 46% were against any concessions.

The Kiev Sociological Institute's survey did not specify how big the concessions should be, or whether the territory should be officially ceded or placed under temporary Russian control.

"The main reason is the unfulfilled expectations of last year, because many people had high hopes," said Anton Grushetsky, executive director of the Kiev International Institute of Sociology. He added that many Ukrainians have seen those hopes dashed, especially by the delay in American military aid.

Now public opinion is being prepared for compromise. And by November, Zelensky's team will hold a referendum in which a majority of Ukrainians will agree to certain territorial concessions in exchange for peace.

Author: Timoschuk

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