

NDI Taking Georgians' Pulse

BY NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

The study, published on April 21 by National Democratic Institute (NDI) survey public sentiment amidst Russia conducting large-scale military operations against Ukraine since February 24, which has shown increase in supporting closer ties with the Euro-atlantic organizations and concerns over threats coming from Russia.

Organization conducted 2 public opinion polls - before and after the war in Ukraine. Both studies were conducted through random sampling, telephone survey. The first survey fieldwork was conducted on February 3-15 (2036 interviews), the error was 1.8%, and the second survey was March 9-20 (2024 interviews), the error was 1.6%. They were fielded by the Caucasus Research Resource Centers (CRRC) Georgia.

According to the results, after the start of the war in Ukraine, Russia relinquished its position in the list of Georgia's main economic and political partners.

The majority of respondents still consider the EU to be one of the most desirable political and economic partners for Georgia. However, goodwill towards Russia has declined.

Before the war, 24% of respondents thought that Georgia should have the closest political cooperation with Russia, but now only 13% think so. If Russia was followed by the United States and the EU back in the past, now it comes after Turkey and Azerbaijan.

Following the launch of the brutal invasion, 85% of the public believes that Russia is a 'major threat' to neighbors, as opposed to 73% recorded ahead of the war. 67% of Georgians blame the war on Russia, 11% on President Vladimir Putin, 9% on the U.S. and 5% on Ukraine.

On the contrary, support for the EU has grown in terms of closer political co-operation. If before the war 29% of respondents thought so, now the support has increased to 42%. A similar trend was observed in terms of economic cooperation. Support for the EU has risen from 30% to 40%. The US position is almost unchanged, with support of 28% (before - 29%).

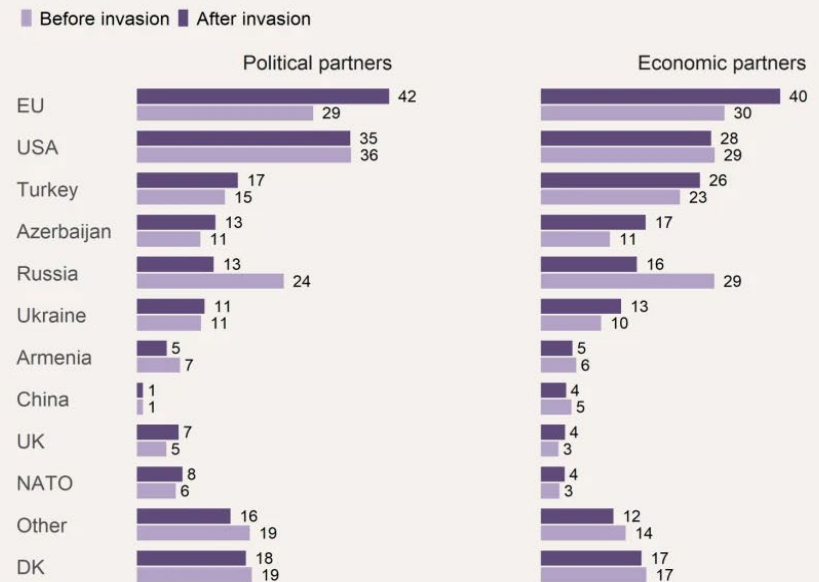
Meanwhile the number of those who believe that Georgia should have closer economic cooperation with Russia has shrunk, from 29% to 16%. It is preceded by the EU, the United States, Turkey and Azerbaijan. Against this backdrop, 39% of Georgians argue the country should limit economic ties with Russia, up from 23% ahead of the war, while 25% advocate for deeper relations, down from 53%. 27% of the public believe Georgia should leave its economic links with Russia as they are, an 11% increase from 16% recorded in February. The question of whether Georgia will benefit more if it rejects Euro-Atlantic integration in exchange for relations with Russia, the population has been asked since 2014. And now the only 10% of respondents agree. In 2015, this number was 30%.

In return, support for the EU increased in this case as well. 69% of respondents believe that Georgia will benefit more from

Russian invasion strengthened belief that Georgia should have closer relations with EU, but limit with Russia

After the Russian invasion, EU, USA and Turkey are top most desired political and economic partners for most Georgians.

Which countries and unions should Georgia have the closest political/economic cooperation with? Up to three answers



Research was funded by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland through the foreign, commonwealth and development office's good governance fund.

Euro-Atlantic integration. Georgians continue to actively support EU membership, the share of supporters of is 82%. The lowest rate in this regard was in 2015, when only 45% of respondents thought so. The poll also found that support for NATO remains solid among the public, despite seeing a 3% decline from 74% before the invasion.

Also, half of the population agrees with the government's decision not to join the economic sanctions against Russia - 49% answer it is 'acceptable, 37% says 'unacceptable'. Supporters of the Georgian Dream and senior citizens are increasingly supporting the government's decision not to allow Georgia to join the sanctions.

The majority of the population supports the introduction of a visa regime with Russia. Currently, Russian citizens do not need a visa to enter Georgia. When asked whether the Georgian government should introduce a visa regime for Russian citizens, 66% answered in favor, 23% said - 'should not introduce'.

According to NDI, the population evaluates the influence of Russia negatively, while the influence of the European Union, NATO and the United States positively.

Also, after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, more people think that Georgia has distanced itself from the EU in the last 5 years. The number has increased from 27% to 36%.

The majority of those polled after the war in Ukraine expect a worsening of the economy in Georgia, the intensification of pro-Russian forces and Russian military aggression. In particular, 80% of respondents expect the economic situation to deteriorate; activation of pro-Russian political forces - 57%; Russian military aggression against Georgia - 52%.

"Young people are the most pessimistic. Tbilisi residents are most worried about the activation of pro-Russian political forces," the study said.

The majority of the population, 64%, do not support / have no answer / refuse to answer any of the existing parties. 22% - Georgian Dream; 7% - National

Movement; 6% - Other parties. The majority of the population does not know or does not name the party that stands closest to their views. Only 35% named a particular party.

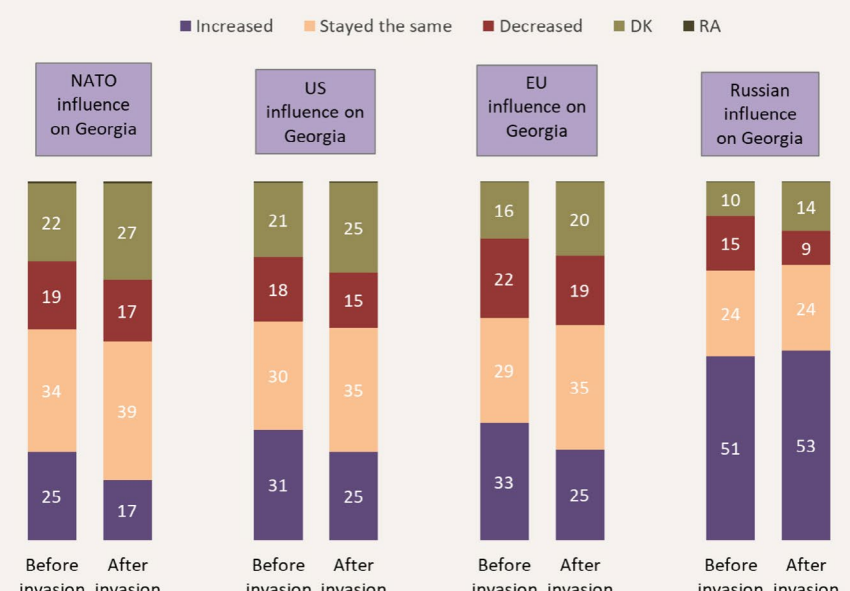
"Individual support rates for parties are so low that they cannot be used to predict election results," the NDI said.

The study found that 98% of Georgians are overwhelmingly favorable toward the Ukrainian people and 87% also hold positive views of the Ukrainian Government. Meanwhile, the Russian Government enjoys favorable attitudes from only 9% of the respondents. 85% of the interviewees hold an unfavorable view of the Kremlin, while 5% do not know. The picture is different when it concerns the public, as 59% of the respondents hold a favorable view of the Russian people, and 36% - an unfavorable one.

The average margin of error in the February survey is +/- 1.8%, while in the March survey it is +/- 1.6%. Respondents were selected by simple random sampling - random dialing.

Every second Georgian says Russian influence on Georgia has increased

In the last 5 years, has the influence of the following on Georgia increased, decreased, or stayed the same? (q19)



EXCHANGE RATES: US DOLLAR - 3.0273 | EURO - 3.2864 | GBP - 3.9540 | 100 RUSSIAN RUBLE - 3.7342 | SWISS FRANC - 3.1937 |

Georgia Has Other Alternatives to Russian Energy Import, Energy Commission Chairman says

By KHATIA BZHALAVA

Georgia will not be in danger if additional sanctions of some form are imposed on the import of electricity from Russia, David Narmania, the Chairman of the Georgian National Energy and Water Supply Regulatory Commission, announced on Thursday, citing that Georgia has alternate options for importing electricity.

Narmania said that Georgia was not entirely dependent on Russia for its energy needs, stressing that electricity is imported from Azerbaijan and Turkey as well. According to him, in a particular month, from which country the electricity is received depends on the offered price. He stressed that despite the alternative options, Georgian authorities would try to further reduce the country's existing energy dependence on Russia.

The Energy Commission Chairman also noted that due to the spring climate conditions the existing hydropower plants in the country would generate enough energy to fully meet local demand, hence it would be no longer needed to import energy.

The National Democratic Institute



► David Narmania, the Chairman of the Georgian National Energy and Water Supply Regulatory Commission, said Georgian authorities would try to further reduce the country's existing energy dependence on Russia.

published a new survey on Thursday, which shows that the number of people in Georgia who believe the country should limit its economic ties with Russia has

increased by 16 percent. As the poll revealed, the European Union, the United States, and Turkey were the top three most desired economic partners for the



► The NDI poll shows that the number of people in Georgia who believe the country should limit its economic ties with Russia has increased by 16 percent.

majority of Georgians following the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

The NDI poll also shows that every second Georgian says Russian influence on Georgia has increased in the last few years, which is regarded as a negative process by the vast majority of the surveyed people. The findings also reveal that 81 percent of people believe the ongoing hostilities in Ukraine will negatively affect the economic well-being of their families, while 80 percent expect an economic decline in the country.

Michel in Kyiv: European Commission will publish its opinion on Ukraine's accession by end of June

During his visit to Ukraine on 20 April, European Council President Charles Michel said that the European Commission would publish its opinion on Ukraine's accession by the end of June and that in the meantime the EU would continue to support the country – financially, militarily and with sanctions against Russia.

Charles Michel travelled to Borodyanka to witness the aftermath of war crimes and met Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky in Kyiv, expressing his admiration for the Ukrainian president's personal leadership.

Summing up what he saw in Borodyanka, Michel described it as 'atrocities': "There are no words to explain what I feel, not as President of the European Council, but as a father, as a human being. These are war crimes. They must be punished. It will be punished. They must pay for what they have done there, and in many other cities and other locations in Ukraine."

Michel said the EU was determined to do everything it can to support Ukraine,



because "we want victory for Ukraine. And that is why we will use all the possible tools in our hands."

Michel announced that, on 5 May, an international donors' conference supported

by the European Commission will launch the work of the trust fund in solidarity with Ukraine. He added that the EU was working closely with international organisations like the IMF, the World

Bank and others to make sure the EU could mobilise funds and investments, so Ukraine could pay its social expenditures and rebuild the country.

Michel also said that he discussed with Zelensky Ukraine's military needs, and that the EU is trying to convince member states to add bilateral support to the €1.5 billion of military equipment provided by the EU. Regarding political support, Michel said the European Commission would publish its opinion on Ukraine's accession before the end of June. "Usually, it takes eight months for the Commission to publish an opinion," noticed Michel. "Then it will be my responsibility to assess when I can put this point on the agenda of the European Council and the Council, to make sure that we have the political discussion to make progress on this."

Finally, Michel and Zelensky discussed further sanctions to maintain maximum pressure on the Kremlin. "We went into more detail and identified some additional elements for us to put proposals on the table of the Council," said Michel.

FRIDAY		APRIL 22	
Day		Some clouds	High: 22°C
Night		Partly cloudy	Low: 8°C
SATURDAY		APRIL 23	
Day		Some clouds	High: 22°C
Night		Partly cloudy	Low: 8°C

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