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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Most Russians Want Eastern Ukraine to Break Away from Kiev, Poll Shows

By The Moscow Times

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Members of the separatist self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic drive armoured vehicles, with Saint George slaying the Dragon displayed on a red flag, near Yenakiieve, Donetsk region, Feb. 4, 2015.

More than six in 10 Russians want eastern Ukraine to break away from the Kiev-controlled part of the country, a new poll has shown, with support for separatism having grown in a matter of weeks.

But the survey, conducted by independent pollster Levada Center, also found that Russians were divided on what form the self-proclaimed "people's republics" should take if they seceded from Kiev.

While 19 percent of those polled said they would like eastern Ukraine to join Russia, 43 percent said they would like it to become an independent state, the Interfax news agency reported Thursday. This compares to 13 percent and 40 percent, respectively, in December, the report said.

Levada Center polls also indicate that the number of Russians who want the self-proclaimed republics to remain part of Ukraine but given more autonomous powers had declined to 17 percent from 25 percent over the same period, Interfax reported.

Russians are much more unanimous in their views of last year's annexation of Crimea, with 84 percent of respondents supporting the move and only 12 percent opposing it, with 4 people saying they could not answer, the report said.

The poll was conducted on Jan. 23-26 among 1,600 people in 134 of Russia's cities and towns. No margin of error was provided, but Levada Center polls usually give a margin of error of no more than 3.4 percentage points.

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