The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
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Russians Feel More Positive Toward Ukraine Since Zelenskiy's Election, Poll Says

October 15, 2019

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy **president.gov.ua**

Russian attitudes toward Ukraine have improved since the beginning of the year thanks to the election of Volodymyr Zelenskiy as Ukraine's president, a joint study by the independent Levada Center pollster and the Kiev International Institute of Sociology (KIIS) has said.

Ties between the two neighbors have been fraught since 2014, when Russia annexed the Crimean peninsula and conflict broke out between Ukrainian forces and pro-Russian rebels in the country's east. The tide began to turn after Volodymyr Zelenskiy was elected in April and the two countries held a high-profile prisoner exchange last month, Levada sociologist Karina Pipia told the RBC news website.

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According to the study published Tuesday, 56% of Russian respondents assessed their attitude to Ukraine as “good” or “very good.” That figure had fallen as low as 24% in January 2015.

Russian sympathies were on Zelenskiy’s side during the Ukrainian presidential election, Pipia said, because he made improving relations between the two states and restoring peace a central part of his campaign.

Meanwhile, Ukrainian opinions about Russia have worsened this year. Fifty-four percent of its population expressed positive attitudes toward Russia, a decrease from 57% in February 2019.

Volodymyr Paniotto, the general director of KIIS, told RBC that this decrease falls within the margin of error and that Ukrainian attitudes toward Russia have been slowly warming since 2015.

Citizens of both countries who were surveyed said that their countries should be independent and friendly toward one another, with open borders and no visa or customs requirements.

Levada surveyed 1,601 Russians aged 18 and older across 50 regions from Sept.26-Oct.2. KIIS interviewed 2,035 Ukrainians across all regions of the country except Russian-annexed Crimea and separatist-controlled areas of eastern Ukraine.

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