

PEACE AND SECURITY

UKRAINE — RUSSIA: IS CONFLICT-FREE COEXISTENCE POSSIBLE?

Results of the Expert Survey

Maksym Khytko
December 2021



Ukrainian, Russian and German experts share the opinion that a quick settlement of the conflict between Ukraine and Russia is impossible, and the popular “simple” recipes for settlement cause scepticism among the surveyed specialists.



There is no consensus among experts on the optimal model of coexistence between Ukraine and Russia, but there is a shared vision of areas of interaction that are the most and the least risky for bilateral relations.



According to the surveyed experts, the U.S. and the EU are the external players that have the best opportunities to contribute to the settlement of the conflict between Ukraine and Russia.

Content

	Foreword	2
1	Key Findings	3
2	Research Design	5
3	Research Results	7
3.1.	Not much optimism for the short- and mid-term perspectives	7
3.2.	Factors that could improve/deteriorate relations, reduce/increase risk of confrontation.....	9
3.3.	Common challenges and potential areas of cooperation	15
3.4.	Is Russia ready to perceive Ukraine as an independent country?	18
3.5.	Models of coexistence.....	19
3.6.	Potential facilitators	20
4	Prospects for Further Research	22

FOREWORD

After more than seven years of the ongoing Russia–Ukraine conflict, there is no clear vision of the prospects for relations between the two countries either at the official or expert levels. Existing studies focus mainly on searching ways to cease armed confrontation and to restore the territorial integrity of Ukraine. Undoubtedly, the peaceful settlement and the return of territories and citizens are priorities for Ukraine, but achieving these goals also requires a comprehensive vision of relations with Russia taking into account the broad context, as well as shaping a strategic vision that would help lay the groundwork for conflict-free coexistence in the future.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine Dmytro Kuleba has repeatedly rightly stated that Ukraine needs to “learn to live with Russia.” It is impossible to do that without a sober analysis of various factors of bilateral relations, objective assessment of interests and security considerations of all stakeholders, including key global actors, taking into account the development prospects for the full range of bilateral and multilateral relations.

In this context, the Foreign Policy Council “Ukrainian Prism” and the Representation of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation in Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova decided to hold an expert survey on key factors and prospects of Ukraine–Russia relations, involving experts from Ukraine and Russia, as well as Germany which is an active participant in the Normandy negotiating format as well as an important political and economic partner of Ukraine and Russia.

The project did not aim to embrace the positions of the whole expert communities of Ukraine, Russia and Germany but to get the views of professionals with expertise on the relationship between Ukraine and Russia, which could provide the foundation for preliminary conclusions and help identify the directions for further researches. It should be noted that the results of the study reflect the generalized positions of the experts surveyed, not the institutions they are employed as well as organizations and specialists who held this study.

The survey reveals both the representative differences in the views of experts from different countries on some issues, and an unexpected similarity of assessments on others. In particular, the study indicates that the experts of the

three countries share the idea of a complex nature of the conflict between Ukraine and Russia that cannot be quickly settled, especially with the help of the “simple” recipes. The study shows that solutions that seem obvious at first glance will not always be truly effective given the wider context and associated risks.

We hope the results of the expert survey will be useful not only to officials, diplomats, politicians and experts involved in the elaboration of public policy, but also to a wide range of citizens seeking a better understanding of interstate relations.

The organizations performing the research express special gratitude to the project coordinator of the Representation of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation in Ukraine Maria Koval-Honchar for her valuable contribution to the project implementation.

MARCEL RÖTHIG

Resident Representative in Ukraine and Moldova, Friedrich Ebert Foundation

MAKSYM KHYLKO

Director of the Russian and Belarusian Studies Program at the Foreign Policy Council “Ukrainian Prism”

1

KEY FINDINGS

Without claiming to reflect the positions of the whole expert communities of Ukraine, Russia and Germany, the study provided an opportunity to get views of professionals with expertise in Ukraine–Russia relations, as well as to make some preliminary conclusions important for shaping further research. The methodology and detailed presentation of the expert survey results are specified in the relevant sections of this publication. This section presents several conclusions that reflect both the key trends identified as well as a few rather unexpected results.

1. The surveyed experts from all the three countries share the idea of the impossibility of a simple and quick settlement of the conflict between Ukraine and Russia. For the short (1-2 years) and mid-term (3-5 years) perspectives, the majority of the experts predict the maintenance of the current status quo, or further deterioration of political relations and the curtailment of economic cooperation, as well as military escalations along the contact line in ORDLO (certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions). The optimistic point is that only a few experts believe a full-scale military escalation between Russia and Ukraine is likely.
2. Unexpectedly, Russian experts were those who expressed optimism looking at the long-term perspective (6-15 years): two thirds of them believe that ORDLO will be returned to Ukraine within this time window, and economic and political cooperation between Ukraine and Russia will intensify. In contrast, only 15% of Ukrainian and 11% of German experts believe in such a scenario (at the same time, the majority of them predict more pessimistic scenarios).
3. The majority of the surveyed experts of the three countries adhere to the position that the course of the Ukraine–Russia confrontation depends rather on the policy of the Russian Federation than on Ukraine. At the same time, Ukrainian and German experts do not expect significant changes in the Kremlin’s policy after the transit of power in Russia, presumably believing that the main causes of the conflict are broader than Putin’s personal position.
4. Rather unexpectedly, a relative majority of Russian experts support the idea that Ukraine’s accession to the EU would have positive consequences for the development of Ukraine–Russia relations (support for this factor by absolute majority of Ukrainian experts was predictable). Even more surprisingly, Russian experts represent the smallest share of those who believe that Ukraine’s accession to the EU would have negative consequences for Ukraine–Russia relations (meanwhile, significantly more Ukrainian and German experts express the corresponding cautiousness).
5. While a relative majority of the surveyed experts from all three countries favoured the positive impact of possible Ukraine’s EU accession on Ukraine–Russia relations, only a majority of Ukrainian experts believe in the same effect of Ukraine’s joining NATO. Instead, the majority of German and Russian experts consider it as a factor increasing the risk of confrontation. Predictably, the opposite reflections are expressed on the option of non-alignment policy / neutrality – it is supported by the majority of Russian and German experts, but by only a quarter of Ukrainian experts.
6. The majority of the surveyed experts, including Ukrainian, do not share the widespread reservations that improving EU and U.S. relations with Russia would have a negative impact on relations between Ukraine and Russia. The majority of the experts also do not believe that further extension of Western sanctions against Russia or minimizing the volume of Ukraine–Russia trade would have a significant impact on relations between the two countries and the risks of their confrontation.
7. German and Russian experts more than their Ukrainian colleagues expect the potentially positive impact of successful reforms and economic growth in Ukraine on the development of its relations with Russia. At the same time, experts from all three countries agree that confrontational risks in relations with Russia would increase in case if a deep economic crisis takes place in Ukraine. Therefore, strengthening the economy is important for Ukraine, including in the context of enhancing security.
8. Interesting trends are observed in the experts’ assessment of the factors that shape Russian citizens’ perception of Ukrainians as a separate nation with the right to an independent country with its own domestic and foreign policies. German and Russian experts much more often than their Ukrainian colleagues distinguish the building of strong democratic institutions, the rule of law, strong

economy and high standard of living among these factors. Meanwhile, Ukrainian experts distinguish the EU and/or NATO accession to be the most convincing factor.

9. Despite the widespread in Ukraine opinion that the majority of Russian citizens will never perceive Ukrainians as a separate nation and Ukraine as an independent state, only one Ukrainian expert chose the corresponding answer option.

10. The majority of the surveyed experts are sure that the imperial ideology and belief in the concepts of the “Russian world” and the “triune Russian people” are the factors that prevent the Russian high-ranking officials from perceiving Ukraine as an independent country. In addition, among such factors the experts most often mention the following: concerns of the current Russian leadership that the potential success of a democratic Ukraine will become an attractive example for the citizens of Russia and other countries, which Moscow considers its zone of privileged interests; conviction of the Russian leadership that Ukraine’s independence poses a threat to Russia’s security; ambition to include Ukraine in Russian integration projects, including the economic ones; weakness of Ukraine’s economy.

11. While suggesting their own options of factors / conditions that can reduce the risk of full-scale military conflict between Ukraine and Russia, experts from all three countries with minor variations emphasised the need to increase Ukraine’s defence capabilities, in particular with the help of the West. Ukrainian and German experts suggested similar ideas on the need to strengthen Ukraine’s bilateral military cooperation with the partner countries, as well as increase Western investment in Ukrainian economy. Several Ukrainian and Russian experts shared the idea of providing Ukraine with international security guarantees in the form of bilateral or multilateral agreements.

12. According to the balance of positive and negative assessments by the surveyed experts, the following areas are potentially the most promising and least risky for bilateral interaction between Ukraine and Russia: economics; climate change and environmental protection; healthcare; fight against crime.

13. None of the options for answering the question “Relations between which countries could be considered as the optimal model for coexistence of Ukraine and Russia?” gained the support of more than a third of the surveyed experts from Ukraine, Russia or Germany. On average, the experts chose the following models of coexistence more often than other options: Finland–USSR; Poland–Germany; Canada–USA; Croatia–Serbia.

14. The surveyed experts from the three countries share the position on the external players who have the best opportunities to contribute to the settlement of the conflict between Ukraine and Russia – the United States and the European Union. It is noteworthy that Russian and German experts gave an equal number of votes to both actors, while Ukrainian experts gave a significant advantage to the United States. It should be noted that none of the surveyed experts chose the United Nations – that is an important indicator of assessing the effectiveness of this organization, the Charter of which lists maintain of peace as the first purpose.

15. The surveyed Ukrainian experts place less hope on the potential contribution of NGOs to the settlement of the conflict than their Russian and German colleagues do. The most popular answer of Ukrainian experts on possible role of NGOs was about their contribution to solving the problems of human rights violations, particularly in Crimea and ORDLO. Meanwhile, Russian and German experts more often chose the options of offering expert platforms for discussions on issues that are taboo or too sensitive for politicians; reducing tensions and building confidence between Ukrainian and Russian peoples; increasing interest of Ukrainian and Russian societies in settling conflict.

2

RESEARCH DESIGN

The goals of the study were to find out how the experts from Ukraine, Russia and Germany see the development of relations between Ukraine and Russia in the short, mid and long term perspectives; which factors affect the bilateral relations – positively or negatively; how to avoid further deterioration and escalation; what could be the optimal model for coexistence of two countries; what external actors could contribute to settlement between Ukraine and Russia; how could civil society actors contribute to this settlement.

The study included three main stages: elaboration of a questionnaire, survey of experts, analysis of the survey results.

The expert survey was performed using a self-completion questionnaire method for specialists in Ukrainian-Russian relations – experts from three countries: Ukraine, Russia and Germany. The selection of these three states is stipulated by the following reason: 1) Ukraine and Russia are parties to the conflict and these countries are the object of study; 2) Germany is an active mediator in the Normandy negotiating format, as well as an important political and trade partner of both Ukraine and Russia.

The elaboration of a questionnaire for experts followed several stages. Initially, a group of experts of the Russian and Belarusian Studies Program of the Foreign Policy Council “Ukrainian Prism” compiled a list of questions meeting the goals of the study, and offered various answer options based on the principles of academic objectivity and impartiality.

The preliminary questionnaire was suggested for evaluation to the specialists of the Representation of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation in Ukraine to make suggestions, clarifications and additions. Subsequently, three Ukrainian independent experts, specialists in Ukrainian-Russian relations and conflict studies, were asked to assess the compliance of the updated questionnaire with the goals of the study and the principle of objectivity. Taking into account the comments made, the final questionnaire was formed.

The questionnaire contains 15 questions, of which 11 are closed with the possibility to offer own answer,

3 open questions, and 1 closed without the own answer option.

The survey was performed using Google Forms, links to which were sent exclusively to the experts invited to take part in the survey. The experts filled out the questionnaire in June – July 2021.

The selection of experts to participate in the survey was carried out in the process of consultations between the Russian and Belarusian Studies Program of the Foreign Policy Council “Ukrainian Prism” and the Friedrich Ebert Foundation offices in Kyiv, Moscow and Berlin, given that experts from these countries were invited to participate in the survey.

The project did not aim to interview a large number of experts and embrace the positions of the whole expert communities of Ukraine, Russia and Germany. It aimed at getting the views of professionals with expertise on the relationship between Ukraine and Russia that could provide the foundation for preliminary conclusions and help identify the directions for further researches.

The list of experts to participate in the survey included competent specialists in Ukrainian-Russian relations who had relevant expertise experience on topic studied and showed a tendency towards objectivity in their professional assessments and political impartiality in expert work. Given that the research topic is more politically sensitive for Ukrainian experts as citizens of the country that is the victim of aggression, it was decided to interview more Ukrainian experts than their Russian and German counterparts, and to display the survey results in percentages for each country separately.

In order to comply with the principle of proportionality, the questionnaires were sent to the experts one by one according to separate lists on Ukrainian, Russian and German experts until the number of questionnaires predetermined by the research objectives was filled in: 20 questionnaires completed by Ukrainian, 9 by Russian and 9 by German experts. Due to the political sensitivity of the topic, inclusion of the experts’ names and affiliations to the general list of respondents was optional. The right to anonymity was exercised by four Ukrainian, four Russian and one German experts.

Analysis of survey results

After the experts completed the questionnaires, the survey results were summarized, systematised, analysed and presented in the form of conclusions and charts with comments to them.

To make the comparison relevant and to ease the perception of the survey results, the latter are presented as a per-

centage (separately for experts from Ukraine, Russia and Germany) and rounded to whole numbers. The sum of the answers to some questions may differ from 100%, because in several cases individual experts did not answer all the questions, and in some others cases, instead of choosing from the proposed options, the experts provided their own answers.

3

RESEARCH RESULTS

3.1. NOT MUCH OPTIMISM FOR THE SHORT- AND MID-TERM PERSPECTIVES

Experts from all three countries generally are not too optimistic about the development of relations between Ukraine and Russia in the short term (1-2 years) perspective. At best, they believe that the status quo will remain, although deterioration of political relations and military escalations on the contact line in ORDLO are also likely (see Chart 1). The most frequent answers of the experts are the following:

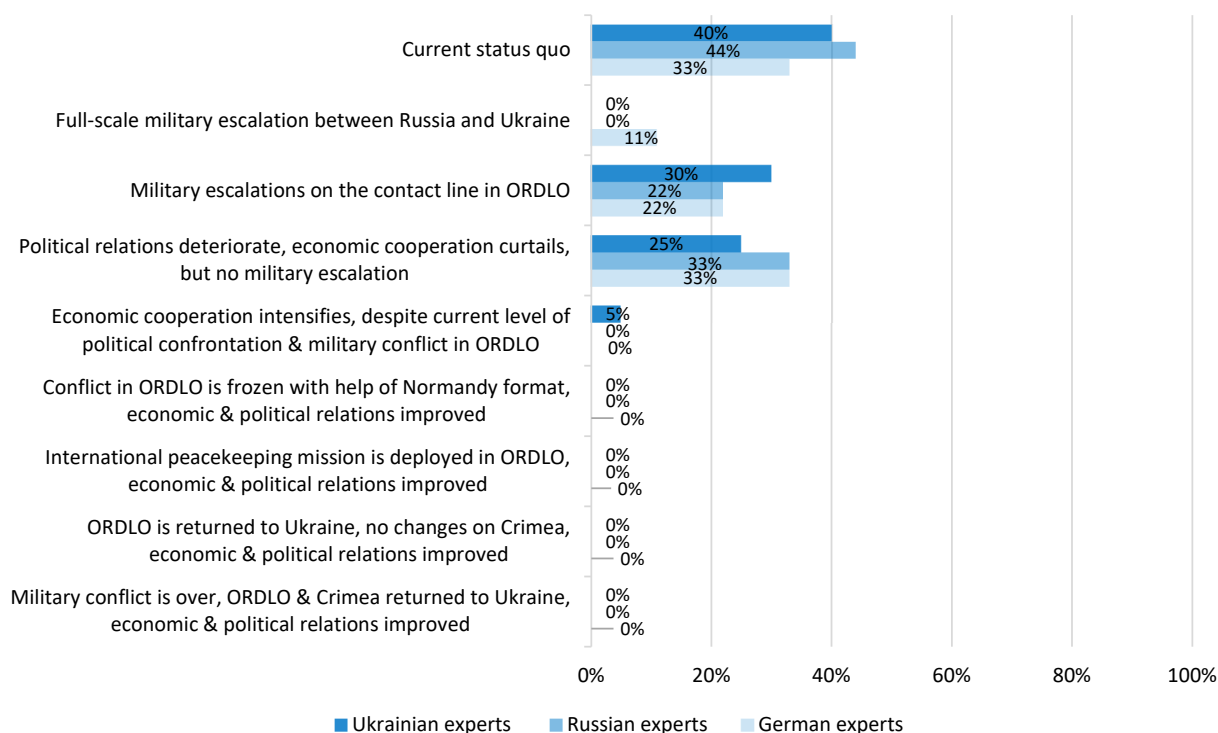
- current status quo will remain – this option is considered as the most likely by 44% of surveyed Russian, 40% of Ukrainian and 33% of German experts;
- political relations will deteriorate, economic cooperation will curtail, but there will be no military escalation between Russia and Ukraine – such development is expected by 33% of Russian, 33% of German and 25% of Ukrainian experts;
- there will be military escalations on the contact line in ORDLO – this option is considered as the most likely by 30% of Ukrainian, 22% of Russian and 22% of German experts.

- current status quo will remain – this option is considered as the most likely by 44% of surveyed Russian, 40% of Ukrainian and 33% of German experts;
- political relations will deteriorate, economic cooperation will curtail, but there will be no military escalation between Russia and Ukraine – such development is expected by 33% of Russian, 33% of German and 25% of Ukrainian experts;
- there will be military escalations on the contact line in ORDLO – this option is considered as the most likely by 30% of Ukrainian, 22% of Russian and 22% of German experts.

When answering the same question, but about the mid-term (3-5 years) perspective, surveyed experts from all three countries most often express the opinion that political relations will deteriorate and economic cooperation will curtail, but there will be no military escalation between Russia and Ukraine: 44% of Russian, 35% of Ukrainian and 22% of German experts (see Chart 2).

Chart 1.

How will Ukraine-Russia relations develop in the SHORT-term (1-2 years) perspective? (one answer)



Meanwhile we observe some differences with the second most frequent choice option. Among Russian (33%) and German (22%) experts the second most frequently chosen option is the following: military escalations on the contact line in ORDLO. But among Ukrainian experts, the second and third place among the most frequently selected options are shared by the following options (with 20% each): current status quo will remain; and economic cooperation between Russia and Ukraine will intensify, despite remaining of the current level of political confrontation and military conflict in ORDLO.

Proposing own answer options, one Russian expert notes that further course of events will depend on the transformation of Ukrainian society, the transformation of power in Russia as well as relations between Russia and the West. One German expert assumes there will be a creeping incorporation of ORDLO into Russia, although Moscow will not formally recognize it. Another German expert remarks that the development in the mid- and long-term perspective will depend on the Russian president’s “ability to continue his policy of the “Russian world” and undermine any democratic attempts”.

A full-scale military escalation between Russia and Ukraine is considered as probable in the short-term perspective by only one expert (German) and in the mid-term perspective – by only two experts (one Ukrainian and one German).

As for the long-term (6-15 years) perspective, the most widely chosen option can be met only among the answers of Russian experts – 67% of them believe that ORDLO will be returned to Ukraine, but the issue of Crimea will remain as it is now, while economic cooperation between Ukraine and Russia will intensify and the political climate of relations will improve. At the same time, this option was chosen by only 15% of Ukrainian and 11% of German experts (see Chart 3).

In contrast to this relatively optimistic view of the Russian experts, there is no univocally preferable choice of certain options among their Ukrainian and German colleagues. The most frequent answers are as follows:

- political relations will deteriorate and economic cooperation will curtail, but there will be no military escalation between Russia and Ukraine (22% of German, 20% of Ukrainian and 11% of Russian experts);
- current status quo will remain (22% of German and 5% of Ukrainian experts);
- there will be military escalations on the contact line in ORDLO (11% of German, 11% of Russian and 5% of Ukrainian experts);
- military conflict in ORDLO will be frozen thanks to the Normandy format negotiations, economic cooperation between Ukraine and Russia will intensify and the political climate of relations will improve (15% of Ukrainian and 11% of Russian experts).

Chart 2.
How will Ukraine-Russia relations develop in the MID-term (3-5 years) perspective? (one answer)

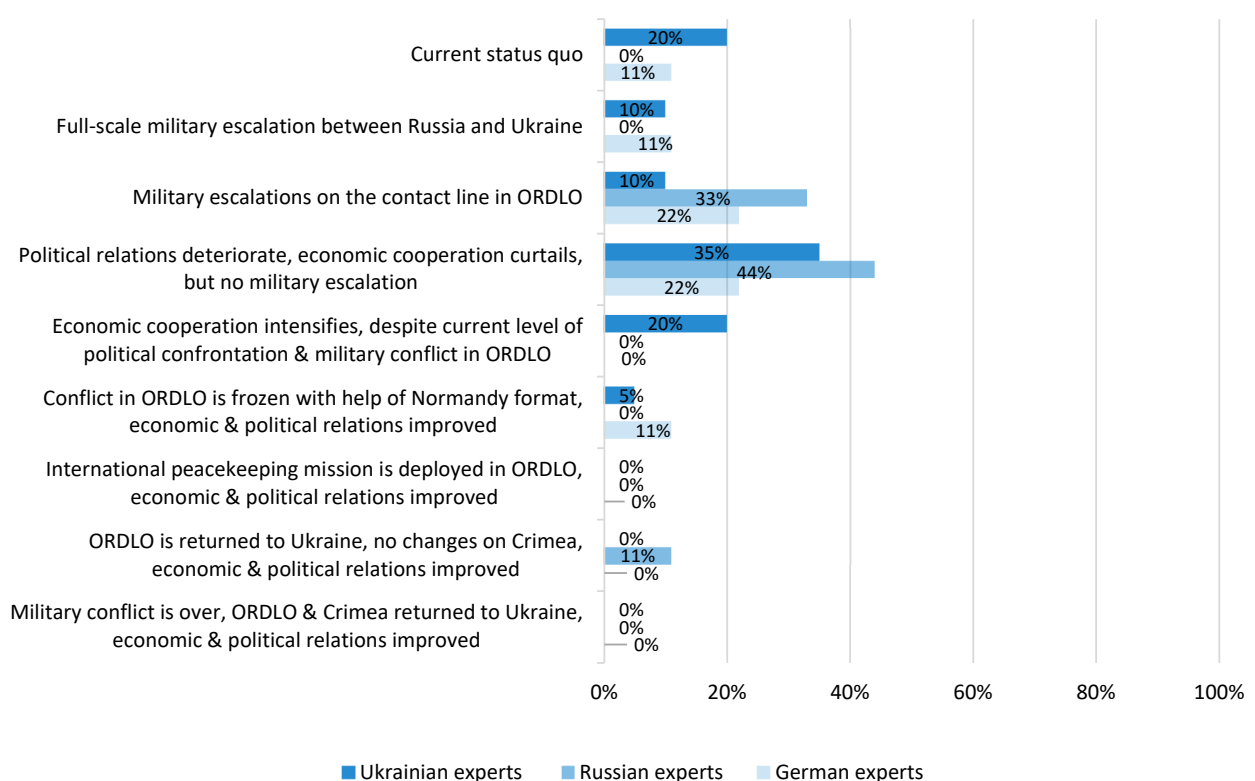
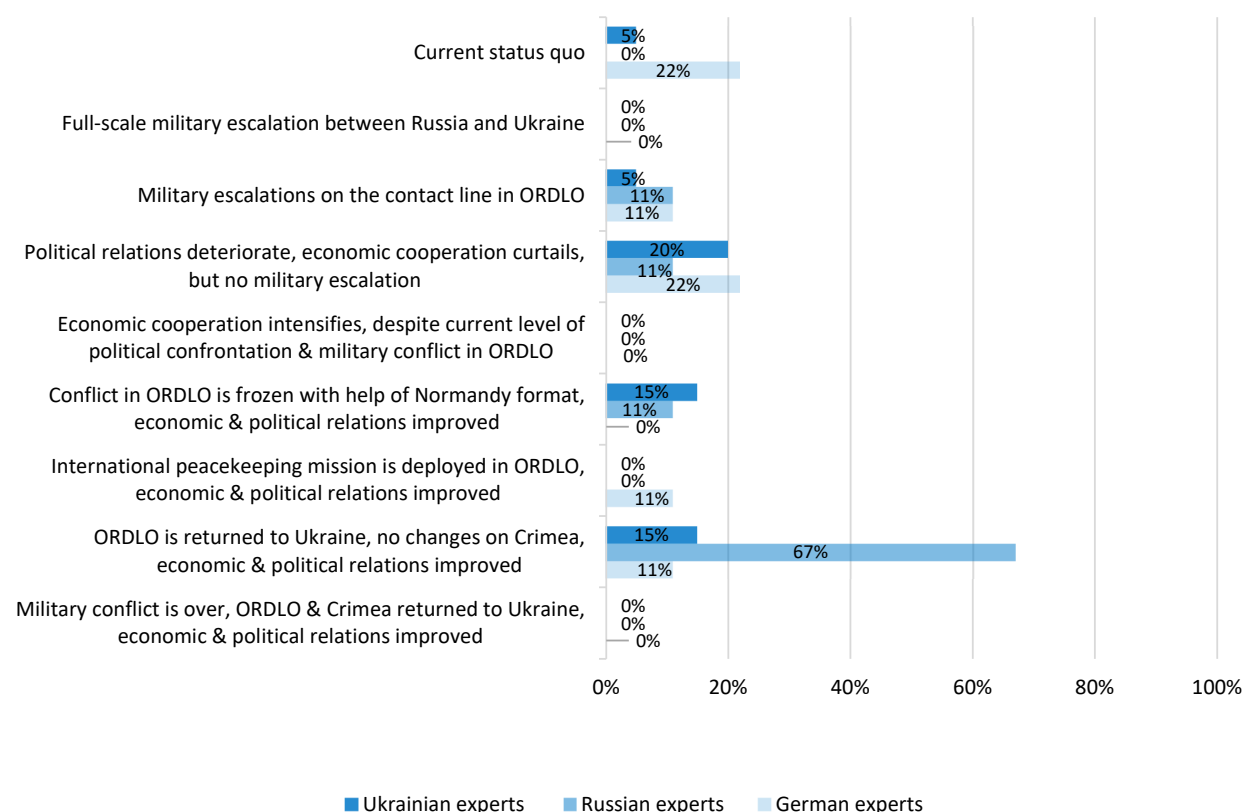


Chart 3.

How will Ukraine-Russia relations develop in the LONG-term (6-15 years) perspective? (one answer)



Five Ukrainian experts suggest their own answer options. One of them expresses the opinion that in the long-term perspective the level of cooperation between Ukraine and Russia will remain consistently low, and the conflict in the Donbas will have the same intensity as it is now. Another expert believes that the conflict cannot be settled, because it is caused by Russia's imperial ambitions on the one hand and Ukraine's desire to be an independent state on the other. Since Russia is a stronger party, the situation will not be resolved until significant transformations in Russia, which are unlikely in the outlined perspective. Another expert believes that economic cooperation between Ukraine and Russia will intensify, but this will have no effect on improving relations, and the conflict will remain half-frozen. One expert assumes the possibility of Russia's disintegration in the long-term perspective. Another expert believes that in the long-term perspective Ukraine and Russia can resume peaceful coexistence.

None of the surveyed experts chose the option of returning not only ORDLO, but also Crimea to Ukraine, even in the long-term perspective (up to 15 years).

Looking for grounds for optimism, it can be noted that none of the surveyed expert considers as the most likely the option of a full-scale military escalation between Russia and Ukraine in the long-term perspective.

3.2. FACTORS THAT COULD IMPROVE/ DETERIORATE RELATIONS, REDUCE/ INCREASE RISK OF CONFRONTATION

Experts from all three countries are close in their assessments of more than half of the factors suggested in the questionnaire that could influence the development of Ukraine–Russia relations (answer options were as follows: “improve relations / reduce risk of confrontation”; “deteriorate relations / increase risk of confrontation”; “will not affect significantly”).

The absolute majority of experts from all three countries are in favour of the ability of four factors to improve relations / reduce risk of confrontation between Ukraine and Russia (see Chart 4). It is noteworthy that three of these four options imply political changes in Russia itself, and the fourth option is about the active position of the world community:

- 1) building strong democratic institutions, ensuring the rule of law and freedom of speech in Russia (positive influence of this option is expected by 100% of Russian, 100% of German and 95% of Ukrainian experts);
- 2) coming to power in Russia of political forces willing to improve relations with the West (100% of Russian, 100% of German and 75% of Ukrainian experts);

- 3) Russia's abandoning of promoting the concept of the "Russian World" (100% of German, 89% of Russian and 70% of Ukrainian experts);
- 4) deploying an international peacekeeping mission to the military conflict zone in ORDLO (67% of Russian, 67% of German and 60% of Ukrainian experts).

On three more factors, a relative majority of experts from all three countries are in favour of their ability to improve relations / reduce risk of confrontation between Ukraine and Russia (see Chart 4), but at the same time, quite a lot of experts expect that these factors could cause deterioration of relations (see Chart 5):

- 5) improving EU and U.S. relations with Russia, easing sanctions: 78% of Russian, 67% of German and 40% of Ukrainian experts (at the same time, another 35% of Ukrainian and 22% of German experts believe that this factor could deteriorate relations / increase risk of confrontation between Ukraine and Russia);
- 6) successful economic reforms in Ukraine, economic growth: 67% of German, 56% of Russian and 45% of Ukrainian experts (while 35% of Ukrainian, 22% of German and 11% of Russian experts believe that this factor could deteriorate relations / increase risk of confrontation between Ukraine and Russia);
- 7) Ukraine's accession to the EU: positive impact of this option is expected by 55% of Ukrainian, 44% of Russian and 44% of German experts (while 35% of Ukrainian, 33% of German and only 11% of Russian experts believe that this factor could deteriorate relations / increase risk of confrontation between Ukraine and Russia).

Against this background, it is interesting to note the following points:

- the widespread opinion in Ukraine that a potential improvement of relations of the EU and U.S. with Russia would have negative consequences for Ukraine in the context of its relations with Russia is supported by only 35% of surveyed Ukrainian experts, while 40% have the opposite opinion;
- German (67%) and Russian (56%) experts more than their Ukrainian colleagues (45%) rely on possible positive impact of successful reforms and economic growth in Ukraine;
- Ukrainian (35%) and German (33%) experts more often than their Russian colleagues (11%) express cautions regarding the confrontational potential of Ukraine's possible accession to the EU for Ukraine–Russia relations.

It is also worth mentioning that reflections of the experts from different countries on building strong democratic institutions, ensuring the rule of law and freedom of speech in Ukraine are similar to the factor of economic growth in Ukraine. The majority of Russian and German experts

(56% of each) believe that this would help to improve relations / reduce risk of confrontation between Ukraine and Russia. At the same time, only 30% of Ukrainian experts share such a vision, while the same number of Ukrainian experts argue it would only deteriorate relations / increase risk of confrontation with Russia, and 40% believe it would not significantly affect the relations (see Charts 4; 5; 6).

While a relative majority of experts from all three countries are in favour of the positive influence of Ukraine's possible accession to the EU on relations with Russia, only a majority of Ukrainian experts support a positive vision of Ukraine's possible accession to NATO. At the same time, their German and Russian colleagues believe it would increase risk of confrontation (see Charts 4; 5).

Ukraine's accession to NATO:

- will improve relations / reduce risk of confrontation: 55% of Ukrainian, 33% of German and 22% of Russian experts;
- will deteriorate relations / increase risk of confrontation: 67% of German, 44% of Russian and 35% of Ukrainian experts.

The opposite is observed on the option of Ukraine's possible return to non-aligned politics / proclamation of neutrality: the majority of Russian and German experts believe it could reduce risk of confrontation between Ukraine and Russia, while a relative majority of Ukrainian experts believe it could increase risk of confrontation (see Charts 4; 5).

Ukraine's return to non-aligned politics / proclamation of neutrality:

- will improve relations / reduce risk of confrontation: 78% of Russian, 56% of German and 25% of Ukrainian experts;
- will deteriorate relations / increase risk of confrontation: 40% of Ukrainian, 33% of German, 0 Russian experts.

It is also worth mentioning that the majority of the surveyed experts from all three countries believe that expanding of the Normandy format by including the United States and other countries makes little sense: 78% of Russian, 78% of German and 50% of Ukrainian experts believe this would not have significant impact (see Chart 6).

Despite the widespread opinion in Ukraine on the feasibility of strengthening sanctions against Russia, only 33% of German, 25% of Ukrainian and 11% of Russian experts believe that the imposition of new, tougher EU and U.S. economic sanctions against Russia could reduce risk of confrontation between Ukraine and Russia. Along with that, 35% of Ukrainian, 22% of German and 22% of Rus-

sian experts expect that such a step would increase risk of confrontation. At the same time, a relative majority of the surveyed experts from all three countries (67% of Russian, 44% of German, 40% of Ukrainian experts) believe that making sanctions tougher would not have significant impact (see Charts 4; 5; 6).

One more fairly common in Ukraine vision that lacks support among the surveyed experts is about the course to minimizing bilateral trade between Ukraine and Russia. Only 11% of German and 10% of Ukrainian experts believe that this would help to reduce risk of confrontation (none of the Russian experts supported this option). Along with that, 44% of Russian, 33% of German and 15% of Ukrainian experts shared the opinion that such course would increase risk of confrontation. And the majority of experts from all three countries (70% of Ukrainian, 56% of Russian and 56% of German) believe that minimizing bilateral trade between Ukraine and Russia would not have a significant impact on their relations (see Charts 4; 5; 6).

It is interesting to mention that the surveyed Ukrainian experts presume worse consequences of the potential deep economic crisis in Russia than their Russian and German colleagues: 55% of Ukrainian, 44% of Russian and 22% of German experts believe that such a crisis in Russia would increase risk of its confrontation with Ukraine (see Chart 5). Along with that, 44% of Russian, 44% of German and 30% of Ukrainian experts presume reduction of confrontation risk due to the impact of this factor (see Chart 4).

At the same time, the absolute majority of experts from all three countries presume negative consequences in case of a potential deep economic crisis in Ukraine: 67% of Russian, 67% of German and 65% of Ukrainian experts believe that such a crisis in Ukraine would increase confrontational risk in its relations with Russia (see Chart 5). Therefore, strengthening the economy is important for Ukraine including in the context of enhancing its security.

The experts' assessments of the generational change factor impact also deserve interest. The absolute majority of the surveyed experts from all three countries (70% of Ukrainian, 67% of Russian and 67% of German) believe that natural generational change in Ukrainian society will not have a significant impact on Ukraine–Russia relations (see Chart 6). However, the experts are divided in their assessment of the question about natural generation change in Russian society: 67% of Russian experts expect improvement of relations / reduction of risk of confrontation between Ukraine and Russia (see Chart 4). On contrast, 50% of Ukrainian experts do not expect this factor to have a significant impact on bilateral relations (see Chart 6). The opinions of German experts are equally divided among all three options: will improve, will deteriorate, and will not significantly affect the relations (see Charts 4; 5; 6).

It is also worth mentioning the opposite expectations of German and Ukrainian experts on the one hand, and Russian experts on the other, regarding the possible transit of power in Russia to Vladimir Putin's successor within the current ruling system: 67% of German and 60% of Ukrainian experts believe this would not have a significant impact on Ukraine–Russia relations (see Chart 6), while 67% of Russian experts expect improvement of relations / reduction of the confrontation risk (see Chart 4).

Among experts' own suggestions of factors / conditions which could reduce risk of full-scale military conflict between Ukraine and Russia, one option (with minor variations) was mentioned by the experts of all three states, namely:

- increasing Ukraine's defence capabilities, including through Western assistance.

Ukrainian and German experts also suggested:

- strengthening bilateral military cooperation of Ukraine with other countries, in particular, with the United States, Great Britain, Turkey, Poland, and Romania;
- increasing Western investment in Ukraine's economy (one German expert also suggested automatic granting permanent residency permissions to EU, U.S. and other Western citizens moving to Ukraine);
- increasing the price of military escalation for Russia (including through sanctions);
- possible crisis in Russia (several Ukrainian experts wrote about the resource crisis or possible collapse of Russia, while one German expert mentioned the possible "internal chaos" in Russia).

Ukrainian and Russian experts expressed similar opinions on:

- the need to provide Ukraine with international security guarantees in the form of bilateral or multilateral agreements.

Ukrainian experts also named the following options that could reduce risk of a full-scale military conflict between Ukraine and Russia:

- increasing the resilience of Ukrainian society to hybrid threats;
- domestic political stabilization in Ukraine;
- convincing demonstration by Ukraine and partners of their readiness to resist;
- deployment of European and American troops and weapons on the territory of Ukraine (one expert proposed deployment of U.S. nuclear weapons);
- increasing the efficiency of EU institutions;
- an effective strategy of the West to deter Russia;
- professional pragmatic policy;
- finding an interim compromise through negotiations.

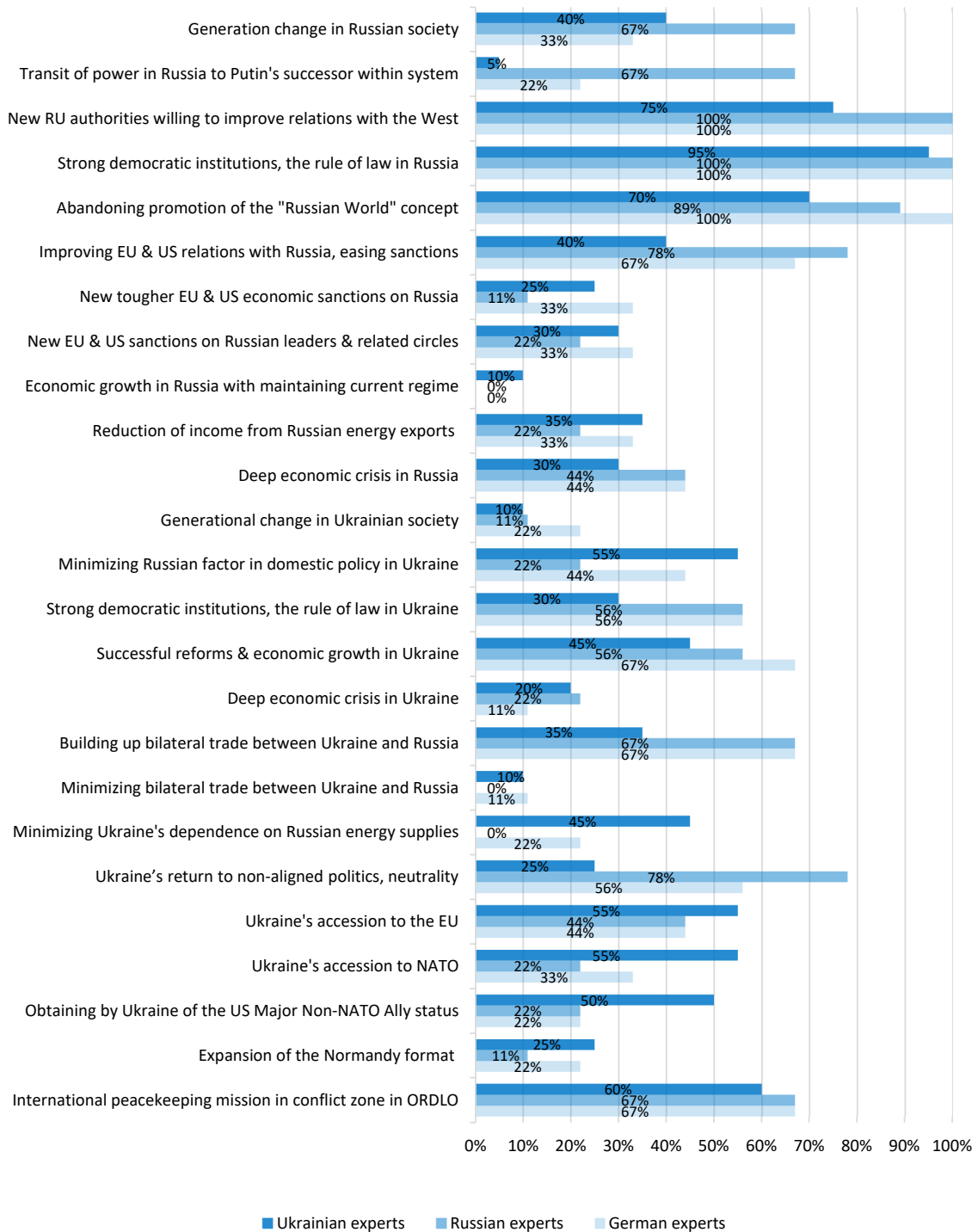
Russian experts suggested the following own options:

- successful implementation of the Association Agreement and start of Ukraine's accession to the EU procedure;
- Ukraine's abandoning the NATO membership course;
- approval and implementation of new measures of de-escalation and implementation of the Minsk agreements;

- restoration of economic ties between the territories controlled by Kyiv and ORDLO, as well as between Ukraine and Russia;
- the political will of the high authorities of both countries;
- unreadiness of Russia and Ukraine to afford a full-scale military conflict in terms of concomitant losses, as well as their unreadiness to invest in the reconstruction of the Donbas.

Chart 4.

Experts who believe these factors could IMPROVE Ukraine–Russia relations / reduce risk of confrontation, %



German experts suggested the following own options:

- re-definition of Russian interest as a result of changes in Russia and growing stability in Ukraine;
- substantive change in Russian policy towards Ukraine and the corresponding conflict transformation;
- policy change in Russia away from the "Russian world" towards the European integration;
- improving diplomatic relations between Ukraine and

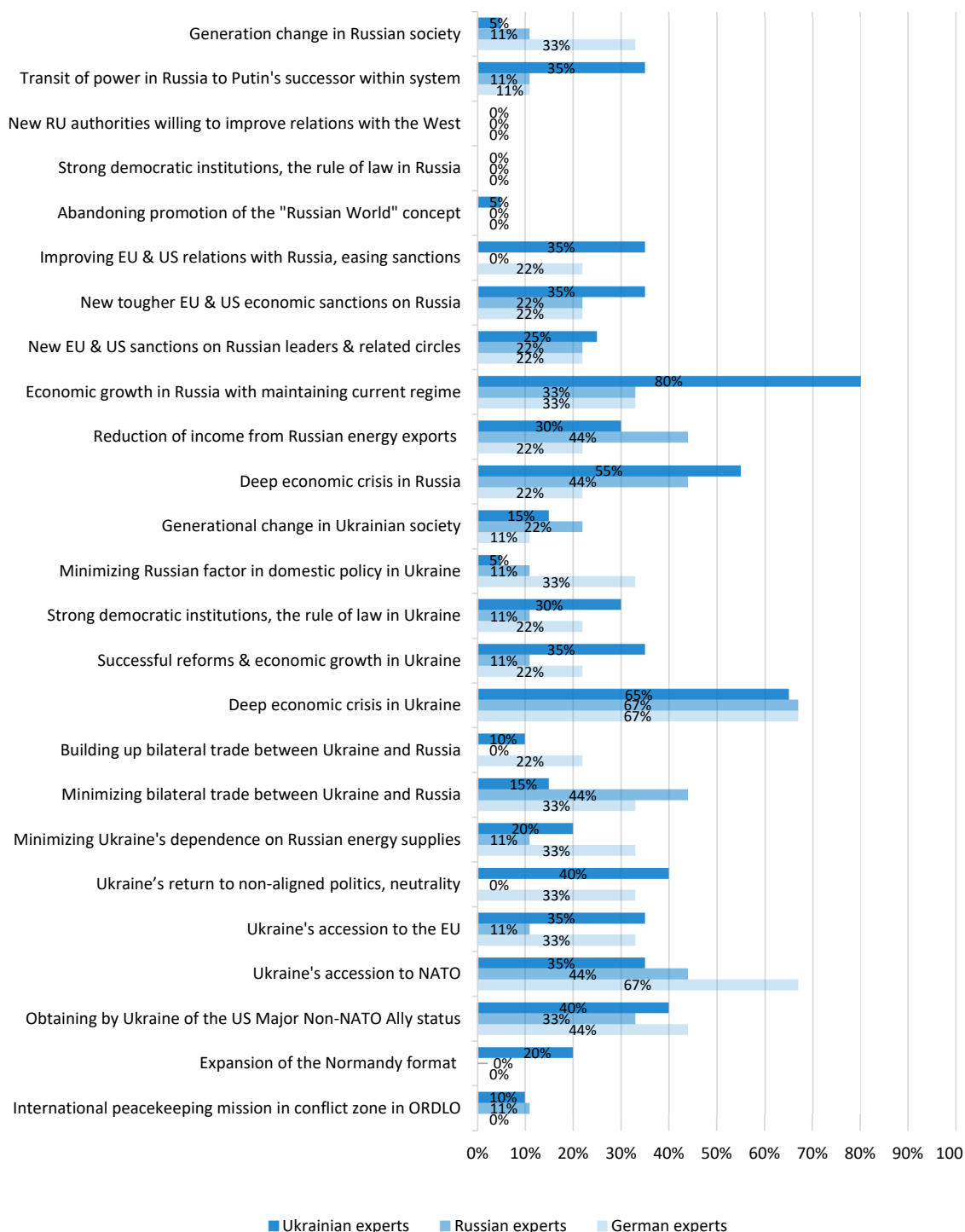
Russia and increasing exchange of contacts at the level of societies;

- "more awareness in Ukraine that its military is not a match for Russia";
- deterioration of relations between Russia and China.

Suggesting their own options of factors / conditions that could increase risk of a full-scale military conflict between Ukraine and Russia, experts from all three countries

Chart 5.

Experts who believe these factors could DETERIORATE Ukraine–Russia relations / increase risk of confrontation, %



mentioned the following:

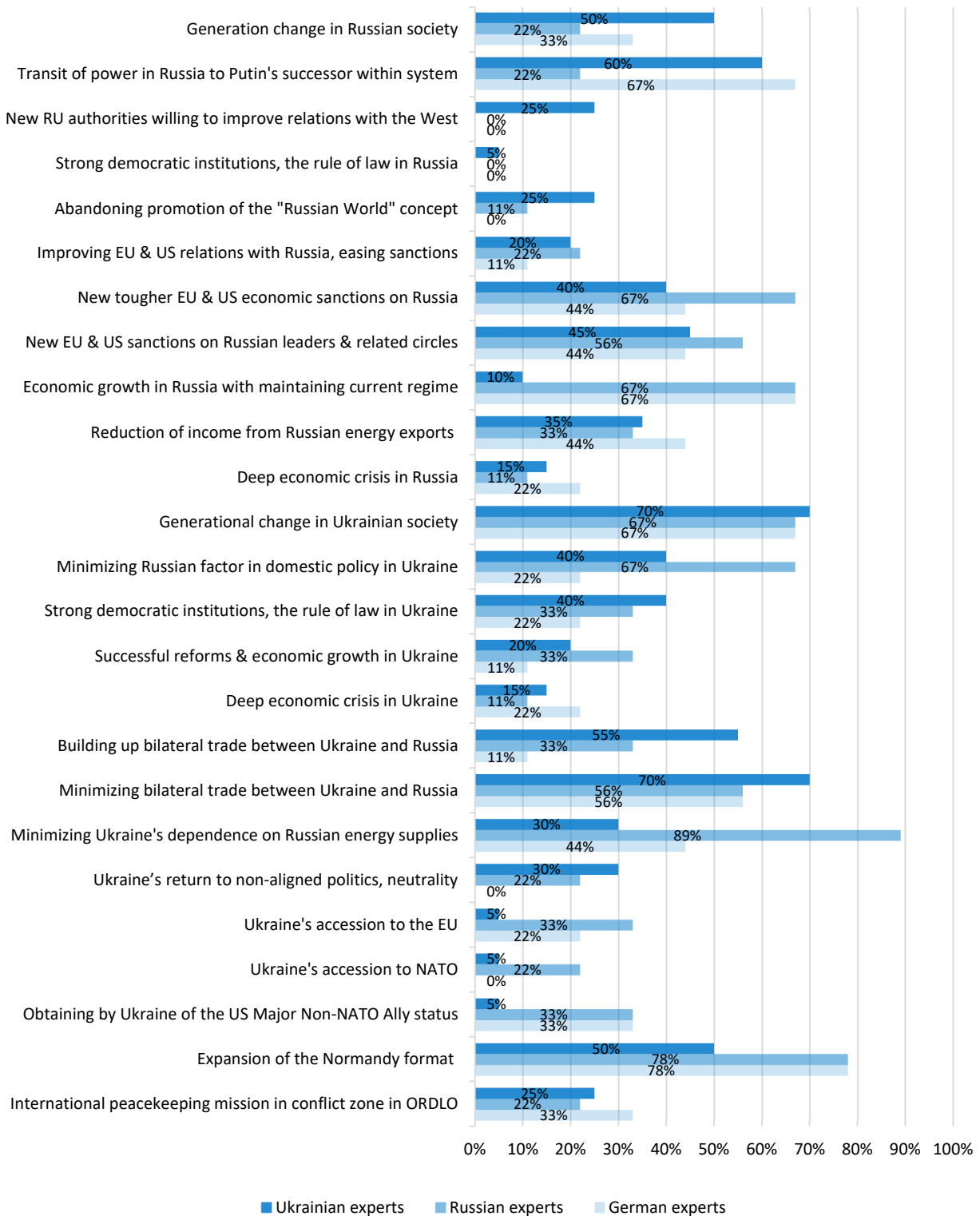
- weakening the unity of the West and its support for Ukraine;
- severe domestic political crisis in Russia; establishment of a harsh dictatorship by Vladimir Putin or his more radical successor.

Ukrainian and German experts also named among the potential risk increasing factors the following:

- significant deterioration of Russia’s relations with the United States and the West in general;
- launch of the Nord Stream 2 and possible termination of gas transit through the territory of Ukraine.

Chart 6.

Experts who believe these factors WOULD NOT SIGNIFICANTLY AFFECT Ukraine–Russia relations, %



Russian and German experts named as a potential risk:

- a possible attempt of Kyiv to settle the issue of ORDLO or Crimea through a military operation.

Ukrainian experts most often mentioned the risks associated with a possible deterioration of the domestic political situation in the country:

- weakening of public institutions in Ukraine;
- growing internal contradictions and conflict-generating factors in Ukraine;
- destabilization of the situation in Ukraine;
- loss of Kyiv's influence on the situation in the regions;
- demoralization of Ukrainian society and loss of the will to resist;
- further expansion of the "Russian world" in Ukraine;
- "pseudo-patriotic competitions".

Among other factors that could increase risk of a full-scale military conflict, Ukrainian experts also mentioned the following:

- rapprochement of Ukraine with the EU and/or NATO without accession and without building proper security infrastructure;
- "great agreement" between the U.S., the EU and Russia;
- attempts of appeasement in response to aggression, which will stimulate further escalation.

Russian experts named the following potential risk factors:

- closing Russia in a geopolitical ghetto;
- recognition by Russia of the independence of the self-proclaimed "republics" in ORDLO;
- maintaining an unstable armistice without the prospect of a mutually acceptable political settlement;
- attempts to settle the conflict on the initiatives of NATO or the United States.

German experts named the following risk increasing options:

- unforeseen incident on the contact line;
- shortage of fresh water reserves in Crimea;
- poor governance, increasing corruption and informal rules, political instability in Ukraine.

3.3. COMMON CHALLENGES AND POTENTIAL AREAS OF COOPERATION

Among the most urgent common challenges for Ukraine and Russia (respondents could choose up to three options), two options received the greatest support from the surveyed experts (see Chart 7):

- deepening economic stratification of societies: 89% of Russian, 45% of Ukrainian and 44% of German experts;

- pandemics: 56% of German, 33% of Russian and 25% of Ukrainian experts.

Other common challenges most often indicated by the experts:

- low level of political culture of the people: 44% of Russian, 40% of Ukrainian and 11% of German experts;
- climate change, environmental problems: 44% of German and 40% of Ukrainian experts (at the same time, none of the Russian experts marked this challenge);
- emergence of new dividing lines in Europe: 44% of German, 33% of Russian and 5% of Ukrainian experts;
- brain drains: 44% of German, 22% of Russian and 15% of Ukrainian experts.

One Russian expert suggested own answer option – a common for the post-Soviet area economic and technological degradation, as well as a weak capacity for self-modernization. One German expert suggested that both Ukraine and Russia lack a development model that aims at stability, security and prosperity of the people.

In responses to the question "In what areas does cooperation between Ukraine and Russia have more chances to be equally beneficial to both sides?" (respondents could choose up to three answers), it is noticeable that in the conditions of the ongoing war, Ukrainian experts are much less optimistic about the prospects of mutually beneficial cooperation than their Russian and German colleagues.

The most frequent choices of the surveyed experts are the following areas (see Chart 8):

- 1) economics: 67% of Russian, 44% of German and 20% of Ukrainian experts;
- 2) education and science: 56% of Russian, 56% of German, but only 10% of Ukrainian experts (at the same time, significantly more Ukrainian experts (25%) consider this area to be one of the most jeopardizing for bilateral relations – see Chart 9);
- 3) climate change and environmental protection: 56% of German, 33% of Russian and 25% of Ukrainian experts;
- 4) healthcare: 44% of German, 11% of Russian and 10% of Ukrainian experts;
- 5) fight against crime: 22% of German, 22% of Russian and 15% of Ukrainian experts.

It is noteworthy that none of the surveyed Ukrainian experts sees prospects for mutually beneficial cooperation with Russia in the areas of culture; information sphere and mass media; and international policy. At the same time, none of the Russian experts considers energy as a potential mutually beneficial area.

In their own answer options, two Ukrainian experts note that mutually beneficial cooperation is impossible

Chart 7.
The most urgent common challenges for Ukraine and Russia (one to three answers)

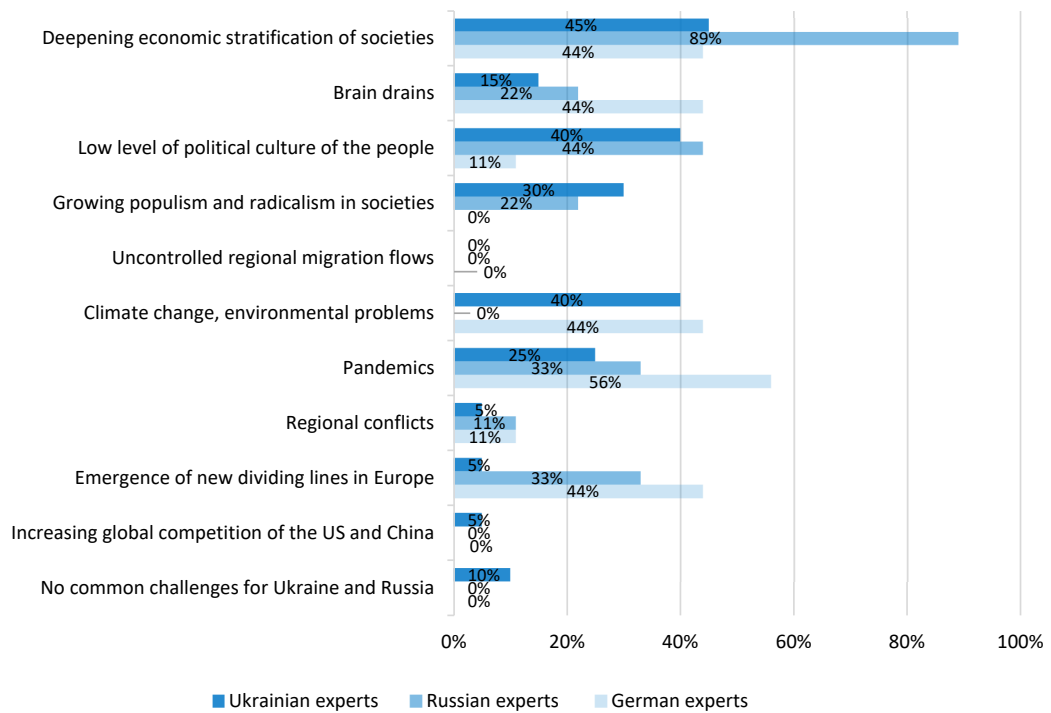
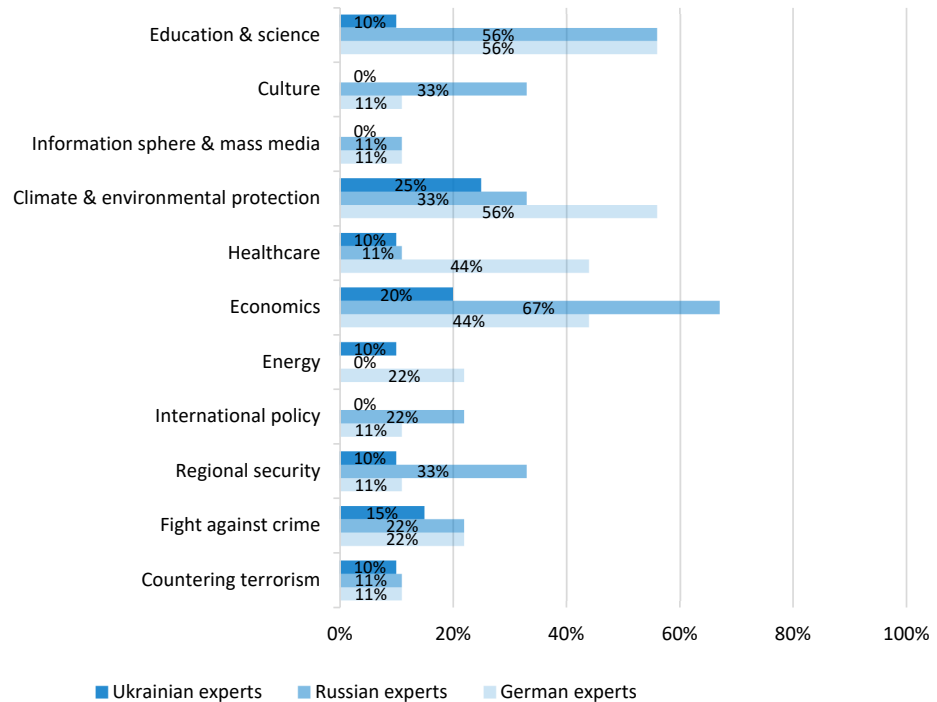


Chart 8.
In what areas cooperation between Ukraine and Russia have chances to be equally beneficial to both sides? (one to three answers)

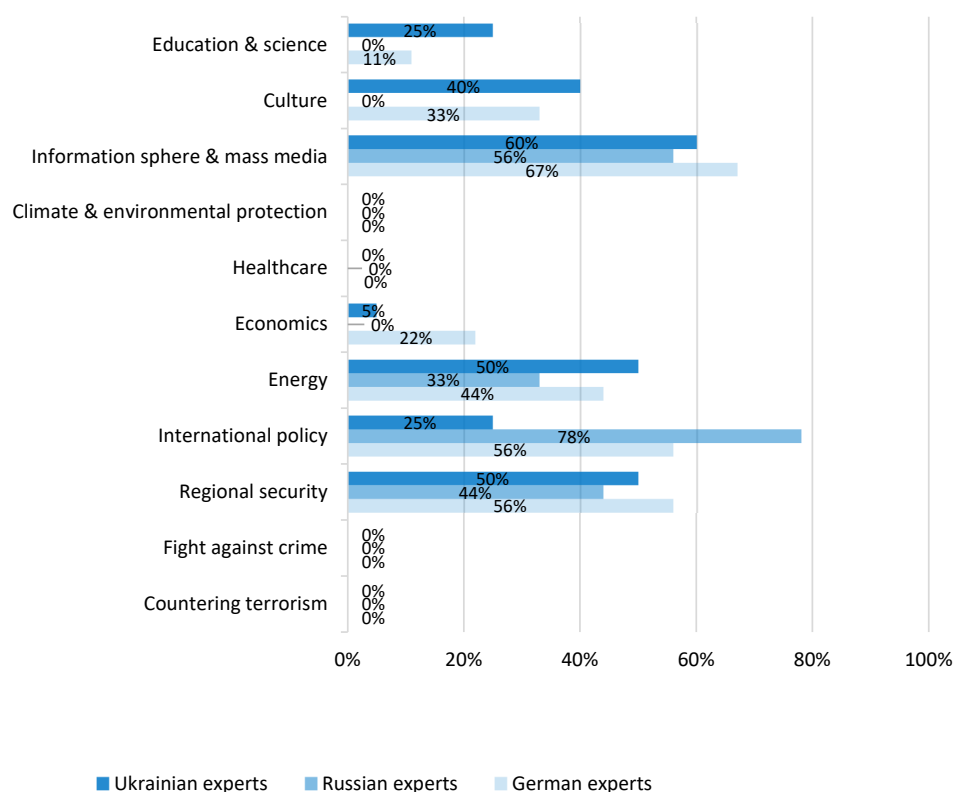


now, given that Russia's actions are aimed at depriving Ukraine of its subjectivity and absorbing the country. Two more Ukrainian experts express the opinion that

mutually beneficial cooperation between Ukraine and Russia is impossible, but without explaining the reasons. One Ukrainian expert believes that cooperation can take

Chart 9.

Interaction in which areas most of all jeopardizes bilateral relations between Ukraine and Russia? (one to three answers)



place on the issues of de-occupation and compensation for damages. One Russian expert suggests that cooperation on various issues that are important for a wide range of countries could be mutually beneficial. One German expert believes that in the event of a change in Russian policy, cooperation in all of the mentioned areas could be mutually beneficial. Another German expert stresses that in the current circumstances, Russia uses its economic influence to corrupt the political process in Ukraine.

Answering the question “Interaction in which areas most of all jeopardizes bilateral relations between Ukraine and Russia?” (respondents could choose up to three answers), the experts most often mention the following areas (see Chart 9):

- information sphere and mass media: 67% of German, 60% of Ukrainian and 56% of Russian experts (this is the only area that the absolute majority of the surveyed experts consider jeopardizing for bilateral relations);
- international policy: 78% of Russian, 56% of German and 25% of Ukrainian experts;
- regional security: 56% of German, 50% of Ukrainian and 44% of Russian experts;
- energy: 50% of Ukrainian, 44% of German and 33% of Russian experts.

It should be noted that none of the surveyed experts considers the following areas of interaction to be among

the most jeopardizing for bilateral relations (see Chart 9):

- climate change and environmental protection;
- healthcare;
- fight against crime;
- countering terrorism.

In addition, only 22% of German and 5% of Ukrainian experts (and none of the Russian experts) consider the economics to be among the most jeopardizing area of interaction for bilateral relations.

To note: among the potential mutually beneficial areas of cooperation, economics is the first most frequent choice of the surveyed experts, climate change and the environmental protection – the third, healthcare – the fourth, and fight against crime – the fifth most frequent choices (see Chart 8). Thus, according to the balance of positive and negative assessments, these areas can be considered as potentially the most promising and least risky for bilateral interaction, if the appropriate preconditions are in place.

According to the experts’ assessments, the most problematic area of interaction is the information sphere and mass media that is the first in terms of negative potential for Ukraine–Russia relations (see Chart 9), and at the same time, the last in the list of potentially mutually beneficial areas of cooperation (see Chart 8).

3.4. IS RUSSIA READY TO PERCEIVE UKRAINE AS AN INDEPENDENT COUNTRY?

Among the answers to the question “What factors prevent the Russian high-ranking officials from perceiving Ukraine as an independent policy country that has the right to its own domestic and foreign policy?” (respondents could choose up to three answers), one option is supported by the absolute majority of the experts from all three countries (see Chart 10):

- imperial ideology / belief of the Russian leadership in the concepts of the “Russian world” and the “triune Russian people”: 67% of Russian, 65% of Ukrainian and 56% of German experts.

Other most frequent answers are the following:

- concerns of the current Russian leadership that the potential success of a democratic Ukraine will become an attractive example for the citizens of Russia and other countries, which Moscow considers its zone of privileged interests: 78% of German, 45% of Ukrainian and 33% of Russian experts;
- conviction of the Russian leadership that Ukraine’s independence poses a threat to Russia’s security: 56% of German, 45% of Ukrainian and 22% of Russian experts;
- ambition to include Ukraine in Russian integration projects, including the economic ones: 44% of German, 33% of Russian and 30% of Ukrainian experts;
- weakness of Ukrainian economy: 56% of Russian, 25% of Ukrainian and 22% of German experts.

It is interesting to mention that the option of potential success of a democratic Ukraine as an example for the citi-

zens of Russia and other countries in the region is much more often chosen by German experts (78%) than by their Ukrainian (45%) and Russian (33%) colleagues.

On the other hand, Russian experts (56%) much more often than Ukrainian (25%) and German (22%) colleagues indicate the weakness of Ukraine’s economy as a factor hindering perception of Ukraine as an independent state.

It is also noteworthy that the factor of Ukraine’s dependence on EU and U.S. support (often mentioned by Russian politicians and propaganda media), as well as presence of pro-Russian forces in the elected public bodies of Ukraine – are the least frequent choices of the experts from all three countries (see Chart 10).

Suggesting own answer options, one Ukrainian expert mentions that the problem lies not in the Russian authorities’ perception of Ukraine as an independent state, but in perception of Ukraine as a threat. Another Ukrainian expert notes “the existential rejection” of Ukraine and the West by the Russian high-ranking officials. One Russian expert considers that the Russian authorities, in principle, do not perceive Ukraine as an independent state, believing that Ukraine always depends either on Moscow, or on Washington, Brussels or Berlin. Another Russian expert considers that current stance of the Russian authorities on Ukraine is influenced by the corresponding request of the older generation of Russians. One German expert considers that perception of Ukraine by Russian high-ranking officials is influenced by the close historical ties between the people of two countries since the times of Rus, as well as by Russia’s security concerns.

In response to the question “What factors could contribute to shaping among the majority of Russian citizens of the perception of Ukrainians as a separate nation that has

Chart 10. What factors prevent the Russian high-ranking officials from perceiving Ukraine as an independent country (one to three answers)



Chart 11.

Factors shaping among Russian citizens the perception of Ukrainians as a separate nation with right to an independent state (one to three answers)



the right to an independent country with its own domestic and foreign policy?" (respondents could choose up to three answers):

- Ukrainian experts (50%) give preference to the option of Ukraine's accession to the EU and/or NATO, while for Russian and German experts (33% of each) this option is only in third to fifth places;
- the most frequent choice of Russian experts (78%) is building a strong economy, achieving a high standard of living in Ukraine; this option is also supported by 67% of German and only 45% of Ukrainian experts;
- German experts prefer the option of building strong democratic institutions and ensuring the rule of law in Ukraine (78%); the same option is supported by 67% of Russian and only 40% of Ukrainian experts (see Chart 11).

Thus, Russian and German experts rely more than their Ukrainian colleagues on building an economically strong, democratic and legal state as factors of shaping Russian citizens' perceptions of Ukraine's independence.

It is also interesting to note that German experts (56%) place more hope on abandoning anti-Ukrainian propaganda in the Russian media than their Russian (33%) and Ukrainian (20%) colleagues do.

Despite the widespread view in Ukraine that most Russians will never perceive Ukrainians as a separate nation and Ukraine as an independent country, only one Ukrainian expert surveyed chose the "nothing will help" option, and no Russian or German expert chose this option (see Chart 11).

Offering own answer option, one Ukrainian expert suggests that Russians will begin to perceive Ukrainians as a separate nation only if the Russian Federation is disintegrated itself. At the same time, another Ukrainian expert suggests that most Russians already perceive Ukraine as a separate state and Ukrainians as a separate nation.

3.5. MODELS OF COEXISTENCE

None of the options for answering the question "Relations between which countries could be considered as the optimal model for coexistence of Ukraine and Russia?" (respondents could choose one option or suggest their own) got the support of more than a third of the surveyed experts from Ukraine, Russia or Germany. And among the experts' own options, not a single one was repeated more than twice. At the same time, on average, experts more often than other options chose the following models of coexistence (see Chart 12):

- Finland – USSR (33% of Russian, 20% of Ukrainian and 11% of German experts);
- Poland – Germany (22% of German, 15% of Ukrainian and 11% of Russian experts);
- Canada – USA (22% of Russian, 11% of German and 10% of Ukrainian experts);
- Croatia – Serbia (22% of German, 15% of Ukrainian and 0 Russian experts).

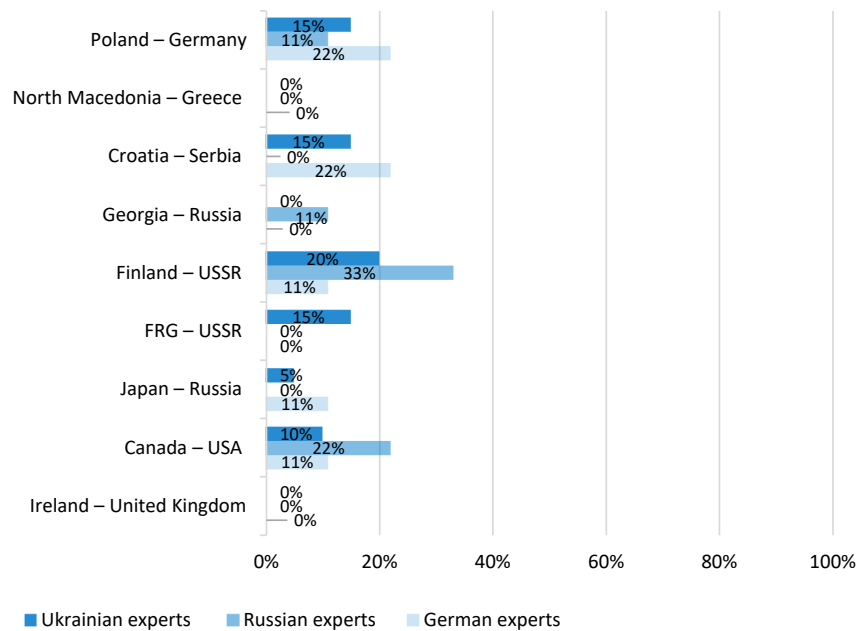
Ukrainian experts chose the following models: Finland–USSR (20%), Poland–Germany (15%), Croatia–Serbia (15%), FRG–USSR (15%), Canada–USA (10%), Japan–Russia (5%). In addition, two Ukrainian experts in their own answer options proposed Poland–Russia as the optimal model; one expert named Greece–Turkey as the optimal model. One expert said that "no model would work with Russia."

Russian experts chose the following options: Finland–USSR (33%), Canada–USA (22%), Poland–Germany (11%), Georgia–Russia (11%). One Russian expert answered: "The optimal model for bilateral relations would be Canada–USA, but in reality, it is unlikely and does not fully meet the interests of the Ukrainian people."

German experts chose the following models: Poland–Germany (22%), Croatia–Serbia (22%), Finland–USSR (11%), Japan–Russia (11%), Canada–USA (11%). One German

Chart 12.

Relations between which countries could be considered as the optimal model for coexistence of Ukraine and Russia? (one answer)



expert expressed the opinion that none of the proposed models really fitted. Another German expert suggested Cyprus–Turkey as the optimal model.

3.6. POTENTIAL FACILITATORS

Among the answers to the question “Which external player has the best opportunity to contribute to the settlement of the conflict (in the broadest sense) between Ukraine and Russia?” (respondents could choose one option or suggest their own), there were two obvious favourites of the experts – the United States and the European Union. At the same time, while Russian and German experts gave an equal number of votes to both these actors, Ukrainian experts gave a clear preference to the United States (see Chart 13):

- United States: 50% of Ukrainian, 33% of Russian and 33% of German experts;
- European Union: 5% of Ukrainian, 33% of Russian and 33% of German experts.

It is also worth noting that at least a small number of surveyed experts placed hopes on a settlement at the bilateral level, on the OSCE, G-7 and NATO, but no expert chose the UN, the Charter of which listed maintaining of peace as the first purpose.

Offering own answer options, one Ukrainian expert named the International Criminal Court, while another suggested that the conflict would end in case of internal changes and transformations in Russia itself. One Russian expert suggested Kazakhstan as an external facilitator. One German expert said that the EU, France, Germany and the U.S. together could help.

Answering the question “What can be the contribution of Ukrainian and Russian civil society organizations to the settlement of the conflict between the two countries?” (respondents could choose up to three answers or suggest their own):

- Russian and German experts (78% of each) most often chose the option “offer expert platforms for discussions on issues that are taboo or too sensitive for politicians”, while only 25% of Ukrainian experts chose this option;
- instead, the most popular response option of Ukrainian experts (55%) was to “contribute to solving the problems of human rights violations, particularly in Crimea and ORDLO” (that was not the most often choice of German (44%) and Russian (33%) experts – see Chart 14).

There were also noticeable differences in the frequency with which experts from different countries chose the following options:

- “contribute to increasing interest of Ukrainian and Russian societies in settling conflict and starting peaceful coexistence”: 56% of German, 44% of Russian and 35% of Ukrainian experts;
- “help reduce tensions and build confidence between Ukrainian and Russian peoples”: 67% of German, 44% of Russian and only 15% of Ukrainian experts.

In general, the surveyed Ukrainian experts placed less hopes on the potential contribution of civil society organizations to the settlement of the conflict than their Russian and German counterparts did (see Chart 14).

Chart 13.

What external actor has the best opportunity to contribute to settlement of the conflict between Ukraine and Russia? (one answer)

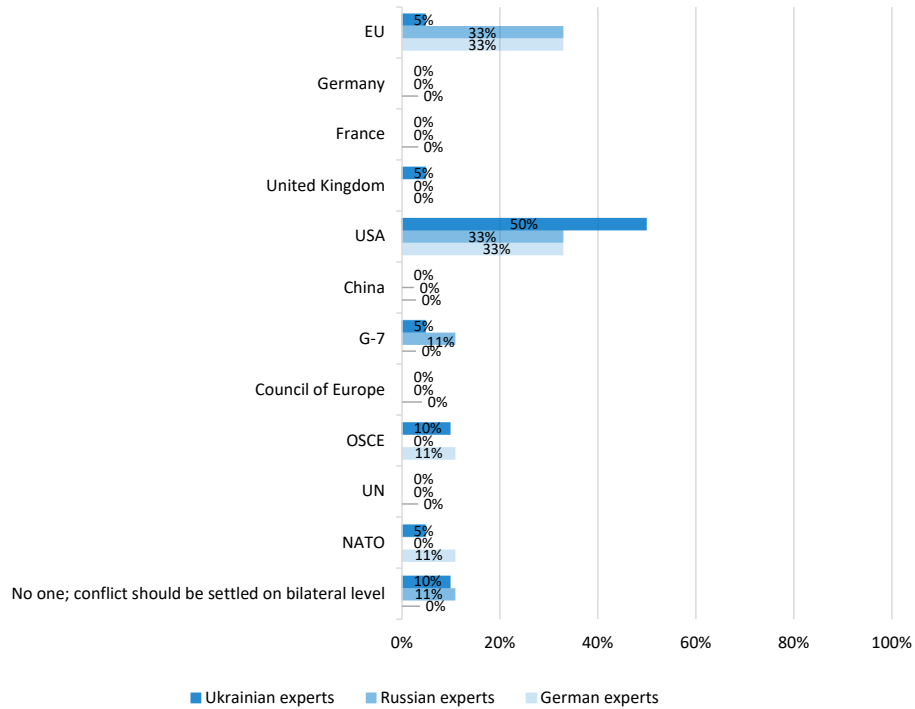


Chart 14.

What can be the contribution of Ukrainian and Russian civil society organizations to settlement of the conflict? (one to three answers)



Offering own answer option, one Ukrainian expert suggested that NGOs could offer non-public expert platforms for dialogue on the existential issues underlying the conflict. Another expert suggested “contributing to the overthrow of the authoritarian aggressive regime in Russia.” One expert proposed strengthening the capabilities of the Ukrainian army through volunteer organizations. Another expert said that the civil society sector in Russia was destroyed, so it could not exert influence.

4

PROSPECTS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

In addition to identifying positions of Ukrainian, Russian and German experts important for the better understanding of Ukraine–Russia relations, this study also highlighted the need for further comprehensive and thorough study of this issue. This would help to shape strategic vision based on analysis of interconnections of the entire complex of factors affecting these relations both in the bilateral dimension and in the regional and global contexts.

In order to elaborate the issues for such future research, the surveyed experts from Ukraine, Russia and Germany were asked to suggest their own options of questions that should be considered in the context of studying Ukraine–Russia relations. Experts named the following issues:

- consequences of the occupation of Crimea for bilateral relations;
- who is most interested in the continuation of the conflict;
- the role of the elites of the two countries in inciting and possible settlement of the conflict;
- how to shape political will to resolve the conflict;
- possible options for implementation and modernization of the Minsk agreements;
- study of a long-term scenario for 20-25 years, taking into account one generation change;
- who and how can influence Russia’s behaviour on the world stage;
- how to change the imperial mentality of Russians;
- how the respondent identifies events in eastern Ukraine (as Russia–Ukraine war, Russian aggression, or civil war, uprising), in order to correlate this answer with other positions.

AUTHOR

Maksym Khylo, Russian and Belarusian Studies Program Director, Foreign Policy Council “Ukrainian Prism”

EXPERTS WHO TOOK PART IN THE SURVEY

Anton Barbashin, Sergey Belanovsky, Mykola Bielieskov, Sergiy Gerasymchuk, Olga Gulina, Olena Zakharova, Julia Kazdobina, Mykola Kapitonenko, Nadia Koval, Valeriy Kravchenko, Reinhard Krumm, Stefan Meister, Hennadiy Maksak, Volodymyr Manzhola, Oleksiy Melnyk, Viktor Mironenko, Dmitriy Ofitserov-Belskiy, Sarah Pagung, Garry Poluschkin, Maksym Rozumny, Marcel Röthig, Mykhailo Stepyko, Ihor Todorov, Andreas Umland, Sergiy Fedunyak, Artem Fylypenko, Sabine Fischer, Karsten D. Voigt, Dmytro Shulga, and four more Ukrainian, four Russian and one German experts who preferred to remain anonymous.

IMPRINT

Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung | Representation in Ukraine
34, Pushkinska Street, Kyiv 01004 Ukraine

Responsible:
Marcel Röthig | Resident Representative for Ukraine
Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung

Tel: +38 (044) 234 0038 | Fax: +38 (044) 451 4031
<http://fes.kiev.ua>

To order a publication, contact us at
mail@fes.kiev.ua

Commercial use of all media published by the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) is not permitted without the written consent of the FES.

FRIEDRICH EBERT FOUNDATION REPRESENTATION IN UKRAINE

The Friedrich Ebert Foundation is a political fund headquartered in Germany. Our activities are focused on the key ideas and values of social democracy: freedom, justice and solidarity. Our international cooperation is facilitated by a network of representative offices in over 100 countries around the world. Our efforts are aimed at supporting peaceful cooperation and human rights, providing assistance to the creation and consolidation of democratic institutions based on the principles of social

justice and rule of law, such as free trade unions and strong civil society.

We actively stand for a social, democratic and competitive Europe in the framework of European integration processes. Guided by these principles since its opening in 1996, the FES Representation in Kyiv has supported dialogue with Ukrainian partners on a wide range of issues such as sustainable democratic development and human safety.

UKRAINE — RUSSIA: IS CONFLICT-FREE COEXISTENCE POSSIBLE?



Ukrainian, Russian and German experts share the opinion that a quick settlement of the conflict between Ukraine and Russia is impossible, and the popular “simple” recipes for settlement cause scepticism among the surveyed specialists.



There is no consensus among experts on the optimal model of coexistence between Ukraine and Russia, but there is a shared vision of areas of interaction that are the most and the least risky for bilateral relations.



According to the surveyed experts, the U.S. and the EU are the external players that have the best opportunities to contribute to the settlement of the conflict between Ukraine and Russia.