

US and NATO Respond to Russian Demands Over Ukraine



► US rules out Russian demand to halt NATO's eastward expansion, but says it is open to talks on arms control.

BY NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken announced that Russia expects 'large-scale results' if it chooses the 'path of aggression' against Ukraine. At the same time, he called on Moscow to engage in diplomacy and end the crisis over the mobilization of troops along Ukraine's borders.

On January 27, he said that the United States did not yet know what the Kremlin planned to do with Ukraine and the demands for a re-enactment of existing European security structures.

Previous day Blinken said in his speech that the United States had officially given Russia a written response to the so-called Moscow ultimatum on security guarantees.

The United States and NATO delivered separate written responses to Russia's security demands to reach a diplomatic solution to the crisis over Ukraine continue.

The US ambassador to Russia delivered Washington's reply to Moscow, which is seeking security guarantees that NATO will halt its eastward expansion into former Soviet republics. According to Blinken, the letter offers Russia a 'serious diplomatic path' to end the impasse.

"The document we've delivered includes concerns of the US and our allies and partners about Russia's actions that undermine security, a principled and pragmatic evaluation of the concerns that



► The US and its European allies have threatened to impose harsh economic sanctions on Russia should it invade Ukraine.

Russia has raised, and our own proposals for areas where we may be able to find common ground," Blinken said, stressing that stressed that Washington and its allies would not agree to curb the NATO admissions process for new members.

"The military alliance's door remains open," he added.

"We have an obligation to test that proposition, to pursue the diplomatic path, to leave no diplomatic stone un-

turned, because for sure it's far preferable to resolve these differences peacefully consistent with our principles than it would be to have renewed aggression, renewed conflict, and everything that will follow from that. But the point is we're prepared either way," Blinken said.

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said the alliance delivered its own written response to Russia 'in parallel with the United States'.

"We call on Russia once again to immediately de-escalate the situation. NATO firmly believes that tensions and disagreements must be resolved through dialogue and diplomacy," Stoltenberg said. He called for re-establishing formal ties between Russia and NATO, and opening channels of communication to avoid escalation. The US and NATO have held a series of talks with Russian officials over the past few weeks, but the negotiations so far have failed to end the crisis.

"We see more troops not only in and around Ukraine, but also now in Belarus where Russia is in the process of deploying thousands of troops, hundreds of aircraft, S-400 air defence systems and a lot of other very advanced capabilities," he said. Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Grushko said Russia will 'study' the NATO proposal. "We will read it. Study it. The partners studied our project for almost a month and a half," he commented.

Moscow demanded in December that Washington and NATO guarantee that the North Atlantic Alliance would not expand eastward and would never include Ukraine and Georgia. Against the backdrop of this Russian demand, he gathered more than 100,000 soldiers and a large amount of military equipment near the borders of Ukraine. The West fears that Russia is preparing to intervene in Ukraine. Moscow says it has no plans to do so.

EXCHANGE RATES: US DOLLAR - 3.0696 | EURO - 3.4625 | GBP - 4.1464 | 100 RUSSIAN RUBLE - 4.8759 | SWISS FRANC - 3.3351 |

State Security Service confirms Unlawful Destructive Actions Near Mejvriskhevi Village

By KHATIA BZHALAVA

Unlawful and destructive activities are observed in the vicinity of Mejvriskhevi village near the occupied Tskhinvali region, the State Security Service of Georgia (SSG) reported. The agency did not specify the activities, however, they denied the process of illegal 'borderisation' in the vicinity of the village. According to the locals, new so-called 'border signs' have been installed by the occupation forces along the separation line running in the village. As they note, there is a danger that the part of the cemetery of the village might soon end up on the Russian occupied side due to the relocation of the so-called border.



► "As locals note, occupation forces have installed the so-called 'border signs' along the separation line running in the village."

cated one kilometer from the cemetery. Now the white bands are tied to trees and bushes near the cemetery," said a resident of the village Nodar Zangurashvili. The state service said the

European Union Monitoring Mission (EUMM) had been informed on the issue and the above will also be discussed at all relevant format meetings. Georgian Parliament Speaker



► According to the State Security Service of Georgia, the European Union Monitoring Mission (EUMM) has been informed of the issue.

Shalva Papuashvili echoed the information released by the State Security Service of Georgia (SSG), stating that Georgian people live under constant threat with 20% of

the country occupied by Russia. According to him, any step that the Georgian government takes aims to strengthen the country's security to avoid additional threats.

NDI Poll: Deterioration of the Economy at the Forefront of People's Minds

Poll results released by the National Democratic Institute (NDI or the Institute) and CRRC Georgia on 27th of January finds that Georgians see insufficient progress on the top national issues of concern and think the situation regarding poverty, crime, territorial integrity, and education has gotten worse in the last 10 years. Public concerns are consistent across political affiliation, signaling opportunities for political parties to work together to address the common needs of Georgia's citizens. New poll finds that a majority of Georgians do not think anyone - neither government or opposition parties - is acting in their best interest. Georgians also remain skeptical of the newly elected parliament's willingness to address their concerns. 53% of the population does not believe parliament is passing legislation on issues that matter to them, while 52% do not believe an MP will take action if citizens tell him/her about problems in their district. Only a third believes that parliament regularly communicates with the public.

Government, Parliament and local councils." says Alan Gillam, NDI Georgia Country Director.

In light of extreme political polarization, Georgians are supportive of a wide cross-party collaboration. 80% agree that their favorite political party should cooperate with all other political parties in the parliament, even if the views of some parties might be unacceptable to them. This perception is consistent across political affiliation. A majority of Georgians believe that domestic actors are best placed to facilitate mediation between the opposition and the government. A plurality (34%) thinks Georgian political parties themselves would make best facilitators during negotiations, while 11% find the president as a suitable moderator. 18% would look to the international community, believing western partners are needed for negotiations.

"The public clearly have stated that the political parties in Georgia need to work together to resolve these challenges. The need for economic recovery, exacerbated by the pandemic, remain fundamental challenges in the upcoming period and should focus the minds of Government and opposition alike." Gillam commented.

Although living in a democratic state remains important for the majority (92%), only 39% believe Georgia meets this criteria. Further, 34%

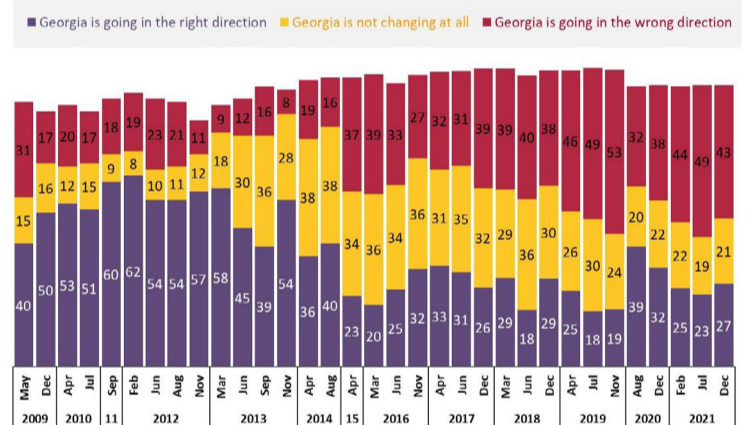
think Georgia is no longer a beacon of democracy, while 25% says Georgia has never been a good example of democracy to begin with. Only 23% of citizens agree that Georgia is a good example of democracy for the neighboring states.

Finally, as Covid-19 continues to dominate the lives of citizens across the world, Georgians praise the Government for doing a good job handling the Covid pandemic (50%). What remains alarming is the high level of vaccine hesitancy - 42% said they would not get vaccinated; 29% said they are already vaccinated, 25% said they intend to receive a vaccine. Among those who are hesitant, the main reasons are concerns about the quality of the vaccine (38%) and possible side effects for those with pre-existing health conditions (20%). 34% of vaccinated individuals say they will not get a booster, or are undecided about it.

The results reflect data collected between December 7-13, 2021, through telephone interviews with a nationwide representative sample of Georgia's adult population, excluding occupied territories, that included 2,099 completed interviews. The average margin of error is +/- 1.4%. Respondents were selected using the random-digit-dial method. This poll was carried out by CRRC Georgia. NDI's survey work is funded by UK aid from the British people.

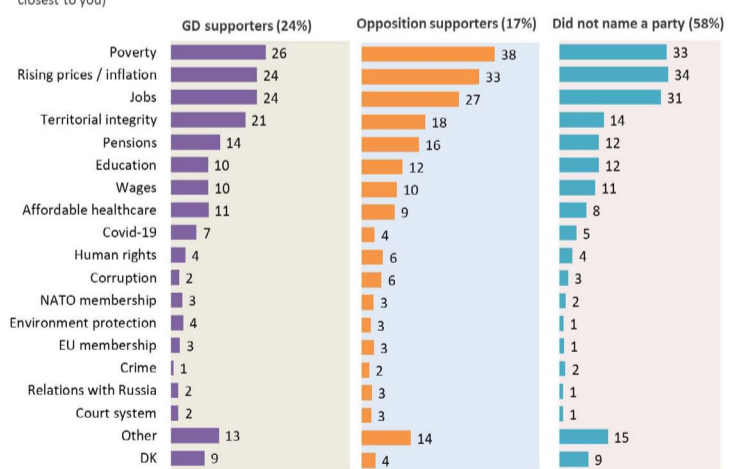
Plurality say Georgia going in the wrong direction

There are different opinions regarding the direction in which Georgia is going. Which one do you agree with? (q4)



Public concerns are consistent across political affiliation

What are the most important national level issues facing you and your family? Please name up to three. (q5 X Party closest to you)



FRIDAY JANUARY 28
 Day: Mainly sunny, High: 6°C
 Night: Clear, Low: -4°C
SATURDAY JANUARY 29
 Day: Mainly sunny, High: 7°C
 Night: Partly cloudy, Low: -4°C

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