

What do Belarusians think about participation in Russia's invasion of Ukraine?

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Chatham House published results of their online surveys on Belarus's participation in Russia's invasion in Ukraine. Without having access to the raw data and without being able to cross-tabulate, I can assume the following. The public opinion is pretty fragmented. There is a core (appr. 1/3) of those who read Russian/Belarusian official media, think Belarus is neutral, is not an aggressor, and that Russian troops on Belarusian soil is fine (the official line); there is a probably a smaller share (> 1/4) of those who think Belarus in a participant of this war, is an aggressor, and that Russian troops should withdraw from Belarusian soil (the opposition line). The opinions of the rest is a combination of the above.

There's been some sort of optimism in what concerns the willingness to send Belarusian troops to war with Ukraine: 3% would agree that Belarusian army should fight on the Russian side; 1% agrees that it should fight on the Ukrainian side. Does it mean that only 3% would support Lukashenko if he sends troops to Ukraine? No. Again, without having access to the raw data, one can speculate that GIVEN that from 20% (primarily) to 40% (so some extent) rely on Bel and Ru media AND that they believe Belarus is neutral (the message promoted there), they have no reason to support sending troops to Ukraine NOW. However, if the dominant framing changes, Lukashenko and Putin agree that Belarus should officially enter the conflict, approx. the same share (>30%) would believe Belarus is a party to this conflict and therefore should send its troops. Let's also keep in mind that this survey only covers urban population who use internet and thus under-represent Lukashenko's support base in rural areas.

Will there be a popular resistance? A relative (or even absolute) majority would not support sending Belarusian troops to Ukraine. Will they protest? Probably not, given the new wave of outmigration, the continuing police repressions, and the censorship in the media.

Does that say anything about Belarusians' attitude to those Belarusians who went to fight on Ukraine's side? Not much, but it's probably more than 1% (the question was about Belarusian as a country) but hardly more than a third (hard-core opposition supporters).

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