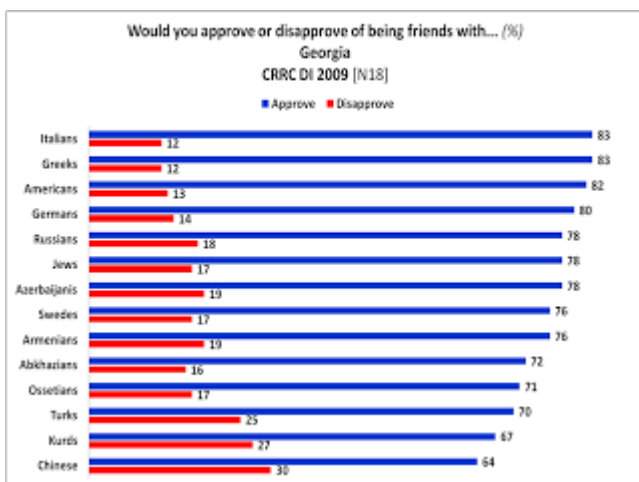


Monday, October 11, 2010

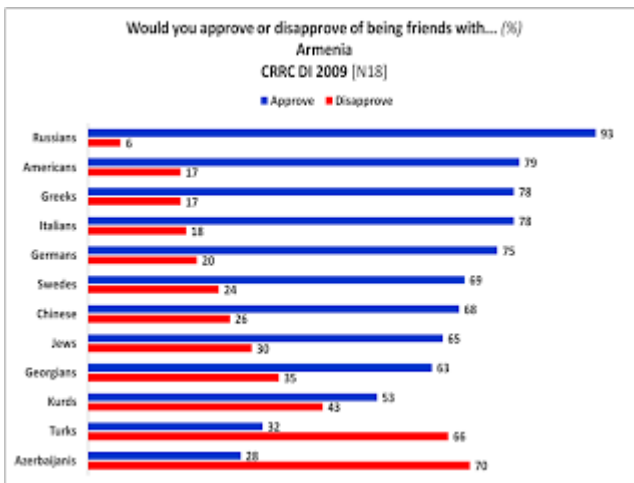
[Will You Be My Friend? Gauging Perceptions of Interethnic Friendship in the South Caucasus](#)

With ever-increasing globalized societies, ethnically homogeneous states are fewer and fewer. Increased mobility has resulted in freer movement for migration and travel, and advances in technology have made constant communication easy across the globe. No doubt, these developments have made friendships between different nationalities more common, and even taken for granted in many places. Yet traditional values persist, and by examining attitudes towards this phenomenon, we can gain an understanding of a country's social dynamics as well as predicting potential conflicts.

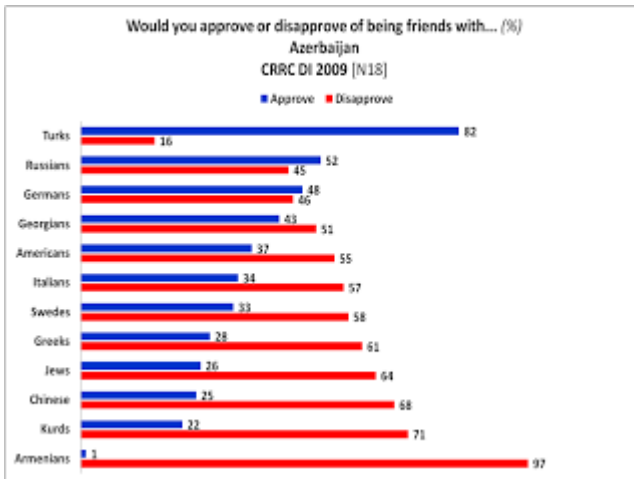
In the CRRC 2009 Caucasus Barometer survey, respondents in all three Caucasus countries were polled about whether or not they approve of friendship and in a separate question to be discussed later, of marriage (of a woman of their ethnicity) with various other nationalities. Of the three countries, Georgians are the most accepting of friendship with other ethnicities of the three countries, with an overwhelming majority of respondents approving of friendship with every nationality, Italians and Greeks scoring the highest at 83%, followed closely by Americans, at 82%.



The majority of Armenians approve of friendship with other nationalities, with the exception of Turks and Azerbaijanis, of which 66% and 70% disapprove of respectively. Notably, the highest level of approval of friendship with another ethnic group is 93% for Russians, followed by Americans, at 79%.



Azerbaijan is by far the most disapproving of friendship with other ethnicities. Most Azerbaijanis disapprove of interethnic friendship with the exception of 82% approving of friendship with Turks, and 52% favoring friendship with Russians. While unsurprising within the context of protracted strife between Armenia and Azerbaijan, a staggering 97% of Azerbaijanis disapprove of friendship with Armenians.



What accounts for such different attitudes toward interethnic friendship? Why are Georgians the most “friendly” while Azerbaijanis the least? A high level of Georgians’ approval of friendship with Russians as well as Abkhazians and Ossetians suggests that political tension between nations alone is not sufficient for animosity on a personal level. While tracking the root causes of such attitudes is not straightforward, uncovering them could have profound policy implications for fostering peaceful relations in part through positive attitudes toward friendship across ethnicity. What do you think are the causes of such rifts and what is the policy direction to improve tolerance on a state level? Check our [data](#) to find out more and post a reply with your thoughts.