

Poles Cite Russia as Threat to Independence in Poll

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WARSAW, Poland — Poles are more worried about their national independence than at any time since at least 1991, soon after the collapse of communism in the region, and 80 percent named Russia as the main threat, a survey shows.

Most of those surveyed would like NATO to increase its military presence in Poland, according to the CBOS poll, local media reported.

The survey showed that 47 percent saw a risk to national independence — the highest level in the poll's history dating back to 1991 — as a result of the Ukraine crisis.

In December last year, before tensions in Ukraine escalated, the survey showed one in seven Poles saw a risk to independence.

Russia's annexation of Crimea has caused the deepest crisis in East-West relations since the Cold War and raised fears in the region's NATO members, including Poland, about their own security.

Eighty percent of respondents said Poland should be most afraid of Russia and 7 percent that Germany was the main threat.

Poland has said it would like NATO to permanently station significant numbers of troops in the country, ignoring any objections Russia might have in this respect.

The CBOS poll showed that 64 percent of respondents would like NATO to increase its military presence in Poland, with 43 percent saying this should be temporary and 21 percent wanting it to be permanent. Twenty-five percent were against increasing NATO's presence in Poland.

Many in Poland see Soviet-imposed communism as one of the greatest catastrophes in the nation's history. The system was toppled in 1989 after more than 40 years.

The survey was carried out April 3 to 9 among 1,028 adult Poles.

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