



Written by [James Heiser](#) on November 3, 2009

Russia Simulates Invasion of Poland

In September 1939, the Red Army of the Soviet Union invaded Poland under the pretense that the Polish government could no longer protect Ukrainians and Belarusians living in eastern Poland. Now it has been revealed that Russia has, in essence, marked the 70th anniversary of that infamous event with “war games” simulating a future invasion of Poland.

In 1939, the Molotov-Robbentrop Pact between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union paved the way for the two totalitarian regimes to divide Poland between them. After Germany had invaded and seized a portion of Poland, Stalin’s Foreign Minister, Vyacheslav Molotov, [declared](#),



A situation has arisen in Poland which demands of the Soviet Government especial concern for the security of its State. Poland has become a fertile field for any accidental and unexpected contingency that may create a menace for the Soviet Union... Nor can it be demanded of the Soviet Government that it remain indifferent to the fate of its Blood Brothers, the Ukrainians and White Russians inhabiting Poland, who even formerly were nations without rights and who now have been utterly abandoned to their fate. The Soviet Government deems it its sacred duty to extend the hand of assistance to its brother Ukrainians and White Russians inhabiting Poland.

Now, thousands of Russian and Belarusian troops have carried out “war games” in which Poland was the hypothetical aggressor. According to a report at [Telegraph.co.uk](#):

The manoeuvres are thought to have been held in September and involved about 13,000 Russian and Belarusian troops.

Poland, which has strained relations with both countries, was cast as the "potential aggressor."

The documents state the exercises, code-named "West," were officially classified as "defensive" but many of the operations appeared to have an offensive nature.

The Russian air force practised using weapons from its nuclear arsenal, while in the Russian enclave of Kaliningrad, which neighbours Poland, Red Army forces stormed a "Polish" beach and attacked a gas pipeline.

The operation also involved the simulated suppression of an uprising by a national minority in Belarus — the country has a significant Polish population which has a strained relationship with authoritarian government of Belarus.

The U.S. government has repeatedly claimed that the proposed “[missile shield](#)” for Eastern Europe is intended to protect the region from a hypothetical attack from Iran, and denied that the shield was intended as part of a defense against future Russian aggression. However, the recent Russian/Belarusian “war games” are simply the latest sign that events are continuing to spiral toward



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increased tension in Eastern Europe. Twenty years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, American troops remain in Europe, NATO and the European Union have expanded to include much of the former Warsaw Pact, and Russia is returning to an increasingly hostile footing.

The implicit threat from Russia drew an understandably anxious reaction from Poland. As reported by [Telegraph.co.uk](#):

Ordinary Poles were outraged by news of the exercise and demanded a firm response from the government.

One man, identified only as Ted, told Polskie Radio: "Russia has laid bare its real intentions with respect to Poland. Every Pole must now get off the fence and be counted as a patriot or a traitor."

Donald Tusk, Poland's prime minister, has tried to build a pragmatic relationship with the Kremlin despite widespread and vocal calls in Poland for him to cool ties with Moscow.

After spending 40 years under Soviet domination few in Poland trust Russia, and many Poles have become increasingly wary of a country they consider as possessing a neo-imperialistic agenda.

Bogdan Klich, Poland's defence minister, said: "It is a demonstration of strength. We are monitoring the exercises to see what has been planned."

Wladyslaw Stasiak, chief of President Lech Kaczynski's office, and a former head of Poland's National Security Council, added: "We didn't like the appearance of the exercises and the name harked back to the days of the Warsaw Pact."

The Russian troop exercises will come as an unwelcome sight to the states nestling on Russia's western border who have deep-rooted anxieties over any Russian show of strength.

With a resurgent Moscow now more willing to flex its muscles, Central and Eastern Europeans have warned of Russia adopting a neo-imperialistic attitude to an area of the world it still regards as its sphere of influence.

In July, the region's most famed and influential political figures, including Lech Walesa and Vaclav Havel, wrote an open letter Barack Obama warning him that Russia "is back as a revisionist power pursuing a 19th-century agenda with 21st-century tactics and methods."

Moscow and Minsk have insisted that Operation West was to help "ensure the strategic stability in the East European region."

What are the implications of such growing tensions for American foreign policy? The United States did not send countless thousands of troops to Europe to counter a "19th-century agenda" but to confront totalitarian ideologies that threatened the interests of the United States. As tensions continue to grow in Eastern Europe, the burden of America's elected representatives is to weigh what best serves the security and interests of the United States, and to question whether a "19th-century agenda" should drive American foreign policy, or whether a large and wealthy European Union may finally be told to see to its own security and interests.

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