

MYTH 1: NATO PROMISED RUSSIA IT WOULD NOT EXPAND AFTER THE COLD WAR

Fact: Such an agreement was never made. NATO's door has been open to new members since it was founded in 1949 – and that has never changed. This “Open Door Policy” is enshrined in Article 10 of NATO's founding treaty, which says “any other European State in a position to further the principles of this Treaty and to contribute to the security of the North Atlantic” can apply for membership. Decisions on membership are taken by consensus among all Allies. No treaty signed by the United States, Europe and Russia included provisions on NATO membership.

The idea of NATO expansion beyond a united Germany was not on the agenda in 1989, particularly as the Warsaw Pact still existed. This was confirmed by Mikhail Gorbachev in an interview in 2014: “The topic of 'NATO expansion' was not discussed at all, and it wasn't brought up in those years. I say this with full responsibility. Not a single Eastern European country raised the issue, not even after the Warsaw Pact ceased to exist in 1991. Western leaders didn't bring it up, either.”

Declassified White House transcripts also reveal that, in 1997, Bill Clinton consistently refused Boris Yeltsin's offer of a 'gentlemen's agreement' that no former Soviet Republics would enter NATO: “I can't make commitments on behalf of NATO, and I'm not going to be in the position myself of vetoing NATO expansion with respect to any country, much less letting you or anyone else do so...NATO operates by consensus.”

Source: <https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/115204.htm>

MYTH 2: NATO IS AGGRESSIVE AND A THREAT TO RUSSIA

Fact: NATO is a defensive alliance, whose purpose is to protect our members. Our official policy is that "NATO does not seek confrontation and poses no threat to the Russian Federation" NATO didn't invade Georgia; NATO didn't invade Ukraine. Russia did.

NATO has reached out to Russia consistently and publicly over the past 30 years. We worked together on issues ranging from counter-narcotics and counter-terrorism to submarine rescue and civil emergency planning – even during periods of NATO enlargement. However, in 2014, in response to Russia's aggressive actions against Ukraine, NATO suspended practical cooperation with Russia. We do not seek confrontation, but we cannot ignore Russia breaking international rules and undermining our stability and security.

In response to Russia's use of military force against Ukraine, NATO deployed four multinational battlegroups to the Baltic States and Poland in 2016. Before Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea, there were no Allied troops in the eastern part of the Alliance.

In response to Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, NATO has significantly reinforced its deterrence and defence posture, including the addition of the four new battlegroups in the eastern part of the Alliance already mentioned. At the NATO Summit in Madrid, Allies agreed that Russia is the most significant and direct threat to their security and to peace and stability in the Euro-Atlantic area. Allies also agreed to further strengthen NATO's stance. However, Allies remain willing to keep open channels of communication with Moscow to manage and mitigate risks, prevent escalation and increase transparency.

Source: <https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/115204.htm>

MYTH 3: NATO IS ENCIRCLING AND TRYING TO CONTAIN RUSSIA

Fact: NATO is a defensive alliance, whose purpose is to protect our member states. Our exercises and military deployments are not directed against Russia – or any other country.

This myth also ignores geography. Only 6% of Russia's land borders touch NATO countries. Russia has land borders with 14 countries. Only five of them are NATO members.

Outside NATO territory, the Alliance only has a military presence in Kosovo and Iraq. The KFOR peacekeeping mission is carried out with a United Nations Security Council mandate.

NATO's non-combat mission in Iraq contributes to the fight against terrorism and is carried out at the request of the Iraqi government, with full respect for Iraq's sovereignty. In contrast, Russia has military bases and soldiers in three countries – Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine – without the consent of their governments. Moreover, Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine has shattered peace in Europe, undermining international security and stability.

Source: <https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/115204.htm>

MYTH 4: NATO'S INTERVENTIONS IN THE FORMER YUGOSLAVIA, KOSOVO AND LIBYA PROVE THAT THE ALLIANCE IS NOT DEFENSIVE

Fact: The former Yugoslavia did not break up because of NATO. The Alliance did not use military force to change borders in the former Yugoslavia. From 1992-1995, NATO conducted several military operations in Bosnia, including enforcing a no-fly-zone and providing air support for UN peacekeepers. These activities were mandated by the United Nations Security Council, of which Russia is a member. NATO air strikes against Bosnian Serb positions in 1995 helped pave the way for the Dayton peace agreement, which ended the war in Bosnia that had killed over 100,000 people. From 1996 onwards, NATO led multinational peacekeeping forces in Bosnia, which included troops from Russia. The European Union took over that mission in 2004.

The NATO-led operation in Libya in 2011 was launched under the authority of two UN Security Council Resolutions (UNSCR), 1970 and 1973, neither of which was opposed by Russia. UNSCR 1973 authorised the international community "to take all necessary measures" to "protect civilians and civilian populated areas under threat of attack". This is what NATO did, with the political and military support of regional states and members of the Arab League.

NATO's operation in Kosovo in 1999 followed over a year of intense diplomatic efforts by the UN and the Contact Group, of which Russia was a member, to end the conflict. The UN Security Council repeatedly branded the ethnic cleansing in Kosovo and the mounting number of refugees as a threat to international peace and security. NATO's mission helped to end large-scale and sustained violations of human rights and the killing of civilians. KFOR, NATO's ongoing peacekeeping mission in Kosovo, has a UNSC mandate (UNSCR 1244) and is supported by both Belgrade and Pristina.

Source: <https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/115204.htm>

MYTH 5: NATO MISSILE DEFENCE THREATENS RUSSIAN SECURITY

Fact: NATO ballistic missile defence is not directed against Russia and cannot undermine Russia's strategic deterrence capabilities. It is designed to protect European Allies against missile threats from outside the Euro-Atlantic area.

The Aegis Ashore site in Romania is purely defensive. The interceptor missiles deployed there cannot be used for offensive purposes. The interceptors contain no explosives. They cannot hit objects on the Earth's surface – only in the air. In addition, the site lacks the software, the hardware and infrastructure needed to launch offensive missiles.

NATO invited Russia to cooperate on missile defence, an invitation extended to no other partner. Unfortunately, Russia refused to cooperate and rejected dialogue on this issue in 2013. Russian statements threatening to target Allies because of NATO's ballistic missile defence are unacceptable and counterproductive.

Source: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_111767.htm#Myths

MYTH 6 : NATO ENLARGEMENT THREATENS RUSSIA

Fact: NATO is a defensive alliance. Our purpose is to protect our member states. Every country that joins NATO undertakes to uphold its principles and policies. This includes the commitment that "NATO does not seek confrontation and poses no threat to Russia," as reaffirmed at the Brussels Summit this year.

NATO enlargement is not directed against Russia. Every sovereign nation has the right to choose its own security arrangements. This is a fundamental principle of European security, one that Russia has also subscribed to and should respect. In fact, after the end of the Cold War, Russia committed to building an inclusive European security architecture, including through the Charter of Paris, the establishment of the OSCE, the creation of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council, and the NATO-Russia Founding Act.

Source: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_111767.htm#Myths

MYTH 7: NATO'S PRESENCE IN THE BALTIC REGION IS DANGEROUS

Fact: NATO has taken defensive and proportionate steps in response to a changed security environment. In response to Russia's use of military force against its neighbours, Allies requested a greater NATO presence in the Baltic region.

In 2016, we deployed four multinational battlegroups or "enhanced forward presence" to Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland. In 2017, the battlegroups became fully operational. More than 4,500 troops from Europe and North America work closely together with home defence forces.

NATO's presence in the region is at the request of the host nations, and Allied forces uphold the highest standards of conduct, both on and off duty.

As part of NATO Allies' commitment to transparency, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania host Russian arms control inspectors. In Estonia, for instance, Russian inspectors recently conducted a Vienna Document Inspection, observing parts of exercise Spring Storm in May and June 2021.

Source: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_111767.htm#Myths

MYTH 8: NATO NUCLEAR SHARING AND NUCLEAR EXERCISES VIOLATE THE NON-PROLIFERATION TREATY

Fact: NATO's nuclear arrangements have always been consistent with the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). The NPT is the cornerstone of the global non-proliferation regime. It has an essential role for international peace and security.

For decades, the United States has had nuclear weapons on the territory of some European NATO members as part of NATO's deterrence and defence capabilities. These weapons remain under the custody and control of the United States at all times. Furthermore, NATO's nuclear arrangements predate the NPT. They were fully addressed when the treaty was negotiated.

It is Russia that is using its nuclear weapons as a tool of intimidation. Russia uses irresponsible nuclear rhetoric and has stepped up its nuclear exercises. Russia is also expanding its nuclear capabilities by investing in novel and destabilising weapons. This activity and this rhetoric do not contribute to transparency and predictability, particularly in the context of a changed security environment.

Source: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_111767.htm#Myths

MYTH 9: NATO'S ENHANCED FORWARD PRESENCE VIOLATES THE NATO-RUSSIA FOUNDING ACT?

Fact: NATO fully abides by the NATO-Russia Founding Act. In response to Russia's illegal and illegitimate annexation of Crimea and military build-up close to Alliance borders, NATO has deployed four multinational battlegroups – around 4,500 troops – to Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia and Poland.

These forces are rotational, defensive and well below any reasonable definition of "substantial combat forces." There has been no permanent stationing of substantial combat forces on the territory of eastern Allies. In fact, total force levels across the Alliance have substantially reduced since the end of the Cold War.

By signing the NATO-Russia Founding Act, Russia pledged not to threaten or use force against NATO Allies and any other state. It has broken this commitment, with the illegal and illegitimate annexation of Crimea, the territory of a sovereign state. Russia also continues to support militants in eastern Ukraine.

Source: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_111767.htm#Myths

MYTH 10: RUSSIA HAS THE RIGHT TO DEMAND A GUARANTEE THAT UKRAINE AND GEORGIA WILL NOT JOIN NATO

Fact: Every sovereign nation has the right to choose its own security arrangements. This is a fundamental principle of European security and one which Russia has also subscribed to (see Helsinki Final Act here)

When Russia signed the NATO-Russia Founding Act, it also pledged to uphold "respect for sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of all states and their inherent right to choose the means to ensure their own security".

Ukraine and Georgia have the right to choose their own alliances, and Russia has, by its own repeated agreement, no right to dictate that choice. We reject any idea of spheres of influence in Europe – they are part of history and should remain part of history.

Source: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_111767.htm#Myths

MYTH 11: NATO HAS TRIED TO ISOLATE OR MARGINALISE RUSSIA

Fact: For more than three decades, NATO has consistently worked to build a cooperative relationship with Russia.

NATO began reaching out, offering dialogue in place of confrontation, at the London NATO Summit of July 1990 (declaration [here](#)). In the following years, the Alliance promoted dialogue and cooperation by creating the Partnership for Peace (PfP) and the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC), open to the whole of Europe, including Russia.

In 1997, NATO and Russia signed the Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security, creating the NATO Russia Permanent Joint Council. In 2002, this was upgraded, creating the NATO-Russia Council (NRC) (The Founding Act can be read [here](#))

We set out to build a good relationship with Russia. We worked together on issues ranging from counter-narcotics and counter-terrorism to submarine rescue and civil emergency planning.

However, in March 2014, in response to Russia's aggressive actions against Ukraine, NATO suspended practical cooperation with Russia. At the same time, NATO has kept channels for communication with Russia open. The NATO-Russia Council remains an important platform for dialogue. That is why NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg has invited all members of the NATO-Russia Council to a series of meetings to improve security in Europe.

Source: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_111767.htm#Myths

MYTH 12: NATO SHOULD HAVE DISBANDED AT THE END OF THE COLD WAR

Fact: At the London Summit in 1990, NATO leaders agreed that "we need to keep standing together, to extend the long peace we have enjoyed these past four decades". This was their sovereign choice and was fully in line with their right to collective defence under the United Nations Charter.

Since then, sixteen more countries have chosen to join NATO. The Alliance has taken on new missions and adapted to new challenges, all while sticking to its fundamental principles of security, collective defence, and decision-making by consensus.

At the Brussels Summit in June 2021, NATO Allies agreed to do even more together to modernise and adapt the Alliance, to chart its course for the next decade and beyond. NATO's next Strategic Concept will be the blueprint for this adaptation. At a time of increased global competition, Europe and North America continue to stand strong together in NATO. The security challenges Allies face are too great for any country or continent to face alone. Together in NATO, we will continue to protect over 1 billion people.

Source: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_111767.htm#Myths

MYTH 13 : NATO'S OPERATION IN AFGHANISTAN WAS A FAILURE

Fact: NATO is conducting an honest, clear-eyed assessment of its engagement in Afghanistan, looking at what worked, and what did not. There are also difficult questions to be asked of the broader international community.

NATO led the military efforts in Afghanistan for many years, but this was not just a military effort. Many others, including our national governments, the European Union and United Nations, also made major investments in trying to develop and build a better future for Afghanistan. We all have difficult questions to answer.

At the same time, we should recognise the significant gains we made together. NATO's mission prevented Afghanistan from being a safe haven for international terrorism. There have been no terrorist attacks from Afghanistan against our countries since 2001.

The international community, supported by our military presence, also helped create the conditions for significant social and economic progress. These gains cannot be easily reversed and we can see that from the role the younger generation, women and free media are playing today. While we no longer have troops on the ground, the international community still has leverage over the Taliban, including financial, economic and diplomatic tools. We will continue to hold the Taliban to account on terrorism, free passage, and human rights.

Source: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_111767.htm#Myths

MYTH 14 : NATO'S OPERATION OVER KOSOVO WAS ILLEGITIMATE

Fact: The NATO operation for Kosovo followed over a year of intense efforts by the UN and the Contact Group, of which Russia was a member, to bring about a peaceful solution. The UN Security Council on several occasions branded the ethnic cleansing in Kosovo and the mounting number of refugees driven from their homes as a threat to international peace and security. NATO's Operation Allied Force was launched to prevent the large-scale and sustained violations of human rights and the killing of civilians.

NATO-led peacekeeping operation, KFOR, which initially included Russia, has been under UN mandate (UNSCR 1244), with the aim of providing a safe and secure environment in Kosovo.

Source: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_111767.htm#Myths