

## NATO-Russia relations: The background

NATO began reaching out to Russia in 1990. Over the following two decades, the Alliance proposed to Russia an unprecedented series of partnership initiatives. This fact sheet sets out the key dates and events in the relationship.

### 1990 London Summit: The first outreach

On 5-6 July 1990, the NATO Summit in London proposed to the countries of the then Warsaw Pact a joint declaration which would state that:

“We are no longer adversaries and reaffirm our intention to refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state.”

In that spirit, the Alliance invited President Gorbachev on behalf of the Soviet Union, and representatives of the other Central and Eastern European countries to come to Brussels and address the North Atlantic Council.

Also at the London Summit, the Alliance invited the states of the Warsaw Pact to establish regular diplomatic liaison with NATO. “This will make it possible for us to share with them our thinking and deliberations in this historic period of change”, said the London Declaration [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official\\_texts\\_23693.htm?selectedLocale=en](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_23693.htm?selectedLocale=en)



### 1994: The Partnership for Peace

At the Brussels Summit of 11 January 1994, NATO decided to launch the Partnership for Peace programme (PfP) as:

“An immediate and practical programme that will transform the relationship between NATO and participating states” [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official\\_texts\\_24470.htm?selectedLocale=en](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_24470.htm?selectedLocale=en)

The programme was open to all the states of the former Warsaw Pact, including Russia.

The founding principles of the Partnership for Peace, to which all partners subscribed when they joined, included the “protection and promotion of fundamental freedoms and human rights, and safeguarding of freedom, justice, and peace through democracy”.

Partners also committed to “to refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State, to respect existing borders and to settle disputes by peaceful means.”

The principles of the Partnership for Peace can be viewed here [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official\\_texts\\_24469.htm?selectedLocale=en](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_24469.htm?selectedLocale=en)

Russia’s then foreign minister Andrei Kozyrev signed the Partnership for Peace document on 22 June 1994, and as such, Russia was the first country to join PfP.

### 1997: The NATO-Russia Founding Act

On 27 May 1997, NATO leaders and President Yeltsin met in Paris to sign an act expressing their determination to “build together a lasting and inclusive peace in the Euro-Atlantic area on the principles of democracy and cooperative security”.

The Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation established a unique body, the Permanent Joint Council, “to build increasing levels of trust, unity of purpose and habits of consultation and cooperation between NATO and Russia, in order to enhance each other’s security and that of all nations in the Euro-Atlantic area and diminish the security of none”.

It established the goal of cooperation in areas such as peacekeeping, arms control, counter-terrorism, counter-narcotics and defending deployed troops against missile attacks (so-called “theatre missile defence”).

In the Founding Act, NATO and Russia made a number of commitments and also agreed on principles which would underlie their cooperation: human rights, civil liberties and the development of free market economies; refraining from the threat or use of force against each other, as well as against any other state, its sovereignty, territorial integrity or political independence; respect for sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of all states and their inherent right to choose the means to ensure their own security; and prevention of conflicts and settlement of disputes by peaceful means.

The Founding Act can be read here [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official\\_texts\\_25468.htm?selectedLocale=en](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_25468.htm?selectedLocale=en)

## 2002: The NATO-Russia Council

On 28 May 2002 in Rome, NATO leaders and President Putin signed a declaration on “NATO-Russia Relations: A new quality”, [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official\\_texts\\_19572.htm?selectedLocale=en](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_19572.htm?selectedLocale=en) with the aim of “enhancing our ability to work together in areas of common interest and to stand together against common threats and risks to our security”.

The declaration reaffirmed the signatories’ adherence to the goals, principles and commitments of the Founding Act, and established the NATO-Russia Council as a unique body of equal members, which would take decisions by consensus. No other partner has ever been offered such a privileged partnership.

The NATO-Russia Council (NRC) also increased cooperation in areas including counter-terrorism, crisis management, arms control and theatre missile defence.

Following the launch of the ISAF mission in Afghanistan, NATO-Russia Council cooperation on Afghanistan began. This became one of the most extensive areas of cooperation including Russian provision of transit routes for ISAF, counter narcotics training for officers from the region, and support for Afghanistan’s helicopter fleet.



## 2008: The Bucharest Summit

On 4 April 2008, the NATO-Russia Council held a summit in Bucharest, attended by President Putin and NATO heads of state and government. The participants “renewed their commitment to the goals, principles and objectives set forth in the Founding Act and the Rome Declaration”.

Furthermore, they agreed to long-term cooperation to fight drugs trafficking in and around Afghanistan, intensified cooperation on counter-terrorism, and reaffirmed their determination to continue to work in this constructive spirit in the future to ensure that the NRC fulfill its potential by identifying and pursuing opportunities for joint action on a wide range of security issues.

[http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official\\_texts\\_8962.htm?selectedLocale=en](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_8962.htm?selectedLocale=en)



## 2008: The Georgia crisis

On 19 August 2008, less than two weeks after the eruption of the Georgian crisis, NATO Foreign Ministers met in an extraordinary session to discuss the Alliance’s response.

They agreed that Russia’s military action had been “disproportionate and inconsistent with its peacekeeping role, as well as incompatible with the principles of peaceful conflict resolution set out in the Helsinki Final Act, the NATO-Russia Founding Act and the Rome Declaration”, and decided that there would be no business as usual in the framework of the NATO-Russia Council (NRC )

The statement by NATO Foreign Ministers can be read here: [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official\\_texts\\_29950.htm?selectedLocale=en](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_29950.htm?selectedLocale=en)

Informal engagement with Russia resumed in December 2008 (see foreign ministers' declaration here: [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official\\_texts\\_46247.htm?selectedLocale=en](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_46247.htm?selectedLocale=en))

While fundamental disagreements of principle of over Russia's actions in Georgia remained, the Alliance's Summit in Strasbourg and Kehl on 4 April 2009 agreed to the resumption of formal contacts, underlining the importance of the principles established in the Founding Act and the Rome Declaration. (Strasbourg/Kehl Summit Declaration of 4 April 2009 here: [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news\\_52837.htm?selectedLocale=en](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news_52837.htm?selectedLocale=en))

## 2010: The Lisbon Summit



In November 2010, NATO leaders and President Medvedev met in Lisbon for a NATO-Russia Council (NRC) Summit. They agreed to embark on “a new stage of cooperation towards a true strategic partnership”, based on the goals and principles of the Founding Act and the NATO-Russia Rome Declaration.

NATO invited Russia to jointly explore the possibility of cooperating on defending NATO-Russia Council (NRC) states against missile attacks (“territorial missile defence”), an invitation not offered to any other partner. They also agreed to reinforce cooperation against terrorism and to work together to counter piracy.

The Lisbon NATO-Russia Council Joint Statement of 20 November 2010 can be read here: [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news\\_68871.htm?selectedLocale=en](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news_68871.htm?selectedLocale=en)

At the same time, NATO leaders adopted a new Strategic Concept [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official\\_texts\\_68580.htm?selectedLocale=en](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_68580.htm?selectedLocale=en) to guide the Alliance's development. The Strategic Concept stated that “NATO-Russia cooperation is of strategic importance as it contributes to creating a common space of peace, stability and security. NATO poses no threat to Russia. On the contrary: we want to see a true strategic partnership between NATO and Russia, and we will act accordingly, with the expectation of reciprocity from Russia. The NATO-Russia relationship is based upon the goals, principles and commitments of the NATO-Russia Founding Act and the Rome Declaration, especially regarding the respect of democratic principles and the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of all states in the Euro-Atlantic area.” (Strategic Concept adopted in Lisbon on 19 November 2010, Paragraphs 33-34.

In the following three years, the NATO-Russia Council took on further cooperation to support Afghanistan's helicopter fleet, conducted counter-piracy and submarine-rescue exercises, launched a project to dispose of obsolete munitions in Russia, and discussed cooperation in the disposal of Syria's stocks of chemical weapons.

## 2014: The Ukraine crisis

When Russia launched its illegal military action against Ukraine, the North Atlantic Council met in emergency session to discuss the implications. On 2 March 2014, the Council agreed that “military action against Ukraine by forces of the Russian Federation is a breach of international law and contravenes the principles of the NATO-Russia Council and the Partnership for Peace” (statement here [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official\\_texts\\_107681.htm?selectedLocale=en](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_107681.htm?selectedLocale=en)) and called for consultations in the NATO-Russia Council.

On 5 March the NATO-Russia Council met to discuss the crisis. Russia's continued escalation of the crisis prevented any progress on the issue. Therefore, On 1 April 2014 NATO foreign ministers decided to suspend all practical civilian and military cooperation with Russia, but to maintain political contacts on the level of ambassadors and above, to allow NATO and Russia to exchange views, first and foremost on this crisis (paragraph 6 of statement here [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news\\_108501.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news_108501.htm)).

In addition, Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen announced that military and civilian meetings in the NATO-Russia Council framework were suspended, and that NATO Allies would review the full range of NATO-Russia Council cooperation. [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/opinions\\_107743.htm?selectedLocale=en](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/opinions_107743.htm?selectedLocale=en)

When NATO foreign ministers met in June 2014, they agreed to maintain the suspension of practical civilian and military cooperation with Russia and that any decision to resume cooperation would be conditions based.

The suspension of practical cooperation triggered by Russia's actions covered areas including counter-terrorism, missile defence, support to the Afghan forces, and counter-piracy.

## Conclusion

Over the past twenty years NATO has consistently worked to foster closer cooperation and trust with Russia. However, Russia has violated international law and has acted in contradiction with the principles and commitments agreed in the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council Basic Document, the NATO-Russia Founding Act, and the NATO-Russia Rome Declaration – the key principles upon which our cooperation is based. The Alliance is, therefore, in the process of re-evaluating relations with Russia.

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