

Russia's top five myths about NATO

Myth 1: NATO leaders promised at the time of German reunification that the Alliance would not expand to the East

Fact: No such promise was ever made, and Russia has never produced any evidence to back up its claim.

Every formal decision which NATO takes is adopted by consensus and recorded in writing. There is no written record of any such decision having been taken by the Alliance.

Moreover, at the time of the alleged promise, the Warsaw Pact still existed. Its members did not agree on its dissolution until 1991. Therefore, it is not plausible to suggest that the idea of their accession to NATO was on the agenda in 1989.

This was confirmed by the former Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev himself. This is what Mr Gorbachev said on 15 October 2014 in an interview with Rossiiskaya Gazeta and Russia Beyond The Headlines:

“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.”

Finally, any comparison between NATO and the Warsaw Pact or the Soviet bloc is an utter distortion of history. The fact is that when the countries of Central and Eastern Europe applied for NATO membership, it was of their own free choice, through their own national democratic processes, and after conducting the required reforms - unlike their incorporation into the Soviet bloc and the Warsaw Pact, which was carried out under conditions of military occupation, one-party dictatorship and the brutal suppression of dissent.

Myth 2: Russia has the right to demand a “100% guarantee” that Ukraine will not join NATO

Fact: According to Article I of the Helsinki Final Act which established the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in 1975, every country has the right “to belong or not to belong to international organizations, to be or not to be a party to bilateral or multilateral treaties including the right to be or not to be a party to treaties of alliance.” All the OSCE member states, including Russia, have sworn to uphold those principles.

In line with those principles, Ukraine has the right to choose for itself whether it joins any treaty of alliance, including NATO’s founding treaty.

Moreover, when Russia signed the Founding Act, it 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”.

Thus Ukraine has the right to choose its own alliances, and Russia has, by its own repeated agreement, no right to dictate that choice.

Myth 3: NATO has advanced its infrastructure towards Russia’s borders

Fact: Relations between NATO and Russia are governed by the Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security, agreed in 1997 and reaffirmed at NATO-Russia summits in Rome in 2002, and in Lisbon in 2010.

In the Act, the sides agreed that:

“In the current and foreseeable security environment, the Alliance will carry out its collective defence and other missions by ensuring the necessary interoperability, integration, and capability for reinforcement rather than by additional permanent stationing of substantial combat forces. Accordingly, it will have to rely on adequate infrastructure commensurate with the above tasks.”

This is exactly what NATO has done, transparently and in full accordance with the Founding Act.

Myth 4: NATO's response to the Russia-Ukraine crisis and its reinforcement of Allies in Central and Eastern Europe breaches the Alliance's international commitments

Fact: In addressing NATO's collective defence responsibilities, the Founding Act states that:

"In this context, reinforcement may take place, when necessary, in the event of defence against a threat of aggression and missions in support of peace consistent with the United Nations Charter and the OSCE governing principles, as well as for exercises consistent with the adapted CFE Treaty, the provisions of the Vienna Document 1994 and mutually agreed transparency measures. Russia will exercise similar restraint in its conventional force deployments in Europe."

NATO's defensive response to the Russia-Ukraine crisis is therefore fully in line with the Alliance's undertakings.

Myth 5: NATO has a Cold War mentality

Fact: The Cold War ended over 20 years ago. It was characterized by the opposition of two ideological blocs, the presence of massive standing armies in Europe, and the military, political and economic domination by the Soviet Union of almost all its European neighbours.

The modern world does not feature competing ideological blocs: Russia has neither a credible ideology to export, nor significant international allies who support its aggressive actions in and around Ukraine. In fact, in a vote in the United Nations General Assembly on 23 March 2014, 100 countries voted that Russia's attempted annexation of Crimea was illegal, and just 10, other than Russia, supported it.

The end of the Cold War was a victory for the people of Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, and opened the way to overcoming the division of Europe. At pathbreaking Summit meetings in the years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, Russia played its part in building a new, inclusive European security architecture, including the Charter of Paris, the establishment of the OSCE, and the NATO-Russia Founding Act.

Over the past decades, NATO reached out to Russia with a series of partnership initiatives, culminating in the foundation of the NATO-Russia Council in 2002. No other country has ever been offered such a privileged relationship with NATO.

As stated by NATO heads of state and government at the Wales Summit in September, *"the Alliance does not seek confrontation and poses no threat to Russia. But we cannot and will not compromise on the principles on which our Alliance and security in Europe and North America rest."*

This is NATO's official policy, defined by its highest level of leadership and expressed through all its actions.

For more details, please go on NATO website: <http://goo.gl/OYBAzp>

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