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Finland in NATO Alliance: Causes and Consequences

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Introduction

Russia's second aggression against Ukraine (started on February 24, 2022) led to serious and very intense changes in the existing security, political, social, and economic processes at the world level. The consequences of that aggression strongly affect numerous states and organizations. Even if they are not even (in)directly connected with aggression. Globalization processes that were, as it is now quite visible, planned and applied without

safety fuses. They enabled the rapid spread of the crisis to almost all spheres of human life on a global level. This is particularly relevant to the situation when the direct cause of the crisis is the permanent member of the UN Security Council. This prevents the effective functioning of the UN as a global and security architecture in the processes of development, stopping crises, conflicts and wars, and imposing peace. The Russian aggression against Ukraine showed

that the NATO alliance can compensate for the impossibility of effective UN action and, even indirectly but also through the decisions of allied countries on an individual level, to be of essential help to the attacked in defending its own sovereignty (nation and state) against illegal and unprovoked aggression.

NATO Alliance

The Founding treaty of the NATO Alliance signed on April 4, 1949 (entered into force on August 24, 1949) defines several goals: erasing possible future pretensions within Europe by creating a framework for political-military cooperation and communication; encouraging European political integration processes; and fighting against Soviet expansionism. Over time and based on existing and anticipated geo-security and geo-political processes, the goals and tasks of the NATO alliance were adjusted. More and more emphasis was placed on the peaceful resolution of crises and conflicts preventing the outbreak of wars and conflicts. The emphasis is on the policy of deterrence and conflict prevention.

First expansion of NATO to Eastern Europe took place on October 3, 1990.

Over time, the number of NATO members, based on the provisions of Article 10 of the Treaty increased. Until the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the collapse of the Soviet Union and communist bloc of states belonging to it, the bloody collapse of the SFRY, only countries from Western Europe were admitted becoming members. However, the collapse of the Soviet bloc and the initiated processes of democratization in the largest number of new/old countries also led to a change in attitudes towards the NATO alliance. The leaders of the democratization process in these countries saw the NATO as an Alliance they wanted to join, and no longer as a primary opponent. The first expansion of NATO membership to the so-called Eastern Europe took place on October 3, 1990. After numerous challenges that the then government of the Federal Republic of Germany successfully resolved, the reunification of Germany took place. The GDR ceased to exist, and the territory became part of the FRG, at the same time becoming part of European community and NATO Alliance.

NATO alliance today counts 31 members.

Over time, the number of members increased, solely and exclusively, based only on the free will of the countries that sought membership. After procedures they had to satisfy, and the

unanimous acceptance of the expansion of membership by the existing allies, they become members of NATO. Alliance, for non-member states, organized whole range of international cooperation development programs, aiming to establish better communication and conflict prevention. The emphasis of all these programs was, and still is, the development of partnership and cooperation at the international level beyond the framework of the Alliance in supporting the peace activities of the Allies at the global level. The NATO alliance today counts 31 members and 36 countries with which it has developed different kind of partnership program relations (Russia, Belarus and Afghanistan were linked to the NATO alliance through partnership ties, but that cooperation was suspended due to security reasons and their unacceptable actions).

Finland, Sweden, and NATO

The development of partnership relations with Russia was one of the fundamental goals of the NATO alliance at the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century. Everything changed after the first Russian aggression against Ukraine in 2014, and especially after the second aggression in 2022. As one of the consequences of unjustified Russian aggression against Ukraine, the decision of Finland and Sweden to join the NATO alliance is of long-term

strategic importance. With this decision, both countries abandoned their previous neutrality. That decision significantly changed their position in relation to Russia. The decisions received strong support from the population of those countries. They also received the support of almost all members of the NATO alliance. Türkiye and Hungary stood on the way to the membership of Finland and Sweden. Today they are blocking only Sweden's membership.

After the fall of the Berlin wall, Finland distanced from its policy of neutrality.

After the fall of the Berlin wall, Finland distanced from its policy of neutrality. This change of Finland's foreign and security policy is called "Europeanisation". Even during their military non-alignment, Finland and Sweden were closely connected with the NATO alliance through various cooperation programs. Both countries joined the NATO Partnership for Peace program in 1994, "Enhanced Opportunities Partner" and "Host Nation Support" (Finland since 2014, Sweden since 2016). They actively participated in numerous other cooperation programs, joint activities, and military operations. Both, prompted by a significant change in the existing security environment and processes, decided to initiate the process for admission to the NATO in mid-May 2022.

For many years, Finland has been strongly associated with the NATO alliance.

For many years, Finland (as well as Sweden) has been strongly associated with the NATO alliance (as an organization and with members of the alliance) at the individual and group level. This is particularly evident in the existence of Nordic Defense Cooperation (NORDEF). This platform for joint defense cooperation with the aim of strengthening and developing joint defense capabilities, weapons, human capacities and education, training and operations was founded by Norway, Denmark, Iceland, Finland, and Sweden. The platform was founded in 2009 by integrating already existing platforms for cooperation in the defense domain and expanded with additional activities in accordance with new needs. The member countries of that platform should also be viewed through the prism of a special geo-security and geopolitical entity. They are in the very north of Europe, they control entry/exit to/from the Baltic Sea, they claim large areas of the Arctic and the Arctic Ocean, they have (Finland's) border with Russia 1343 km long, they are an integrated political entity, they are aware of significant security challenges with which they were faced in the past (wars between themselves and with other opponents).

Finland in NATO and Russia: win-win-lost situation

Even during the Cold War, Finland, although neutral, always invested in its own defense and security because Finland was aware of negative experiences from its history, primarily arising from the fact that it borders Russia, as well as from all the challenges arising from the fact that it is located on Baltic Sea. After Russia's unjustified aggression against Ukraine in 2022, there were significant changes in the security situation in the East and North of Europe. That aggression showed how important membership in the NATO alliance is. It can be reasonably assumed that it is membership in the NATO alliance that prevents Russia from the aggression against Baltic states (Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia).

NATO alliance prevents Russia from the aggression against Baltic states.

Namely, the idea behind the aggression against Ukraine was clearly and publicly recognized: on the one hand, the restoration of autocratic Russia within the borders of the former Soviet Union as a world power equal to the USA; the weakening of the influence of the NATO alliance in Europe; an attempt at the internal disintegration of the

Alliance; destabilization of Europe; and a return to a new form of the Cold War. Such an idea rightfully caused the concern of the countries with which Russia borders and influenced their change of existing paradigms. Neutrality is no longer an option that can be reliably counted on as a means of deterring Russia from fulfilling its aggressive and neo-imperialist stance. The President of Finland, based on the proposal of the Finnish government, on May 17, 2022, initiated the process of accepting Finland into the NATO alliance. After several challenges related to geo-security and geopolitical issues, Finland on April 4, 2023, became a 31st Ally within the NATO.

Neutrality is no longer an option that can be counted on as a means of deterring Russia.

Finland's NATO membership is a win-win relationship for both. Finland, with its 5.54 million residents and a GDP of around 300 billion euros (2021), has become a member of the Alliance that has proven as an Alliance that guarantees security, stability, and preservation of sovereignty to its members, in addition to deterring of a potential aggressor from aggression to one of the members. The Alliance resists all the challenges it faces. Although the decision-making process is slow (compared to decisions made at the individual level of an

allied country or some other states outside of the Alliance), it should be known that this process is a consequence of democratic procedures and actions within the Alliance. The alliance has shown that once it decides, either from the political or from the security-military domain, it has the means to fulfill/execute/impose that decision(s). Allies will supplement the existing capacities of the Finnish armed forces with their knowledge, abilities, and capabilities in those areas where Finland is weaker or insufficiently equipped and trained. The Alliance will enable Finland to end, in a logistical sense, its "isolation". Logistical supply of Finland in case of necessity, conflict, or war into which Finland could be drawn against its will, is quite a demanding activity (when Sweden is going to become an Ally, this challenge will be mainly solved). By joining the Alliance, maritime logistics routes, as part of the key critical infrastructure, will receive additional and very valuable and reliable protection.

Finland's NATO membership is a win-win relationship for both.

On the other hand, NATO is getting a reliable Ally that, even before its official acceptance into the Alliance, strongly and intensively participated in numerous activities of the NATO at all levels (except for decision-making). The Finnish armed forces were already, through

indirect participation in the NORDEFCO, almost completely integrated into the NATO command and control system. Finland participates in numerous activities of the Alliance. Finland is a democratic country. The Finnish state, with the help of society, is making serious efforts to protect its own democracy and freedom of society to be more resilient to future security challenges. Finland has a developed economy in the production sector of modern, especially digital, technologies that are important for the better and safer functioning of the NATO alliance as well as the members. Finland is a stable country whose armed forces are very well trained, equipped, organized, structured and effective. Finland is able, as it has shown so far, to independently take care of the security and safety of its border with Russia. Russia is aware that Finland is not a threat to it. Finland's membership in NATO provides additional capabilities, knowledge, and opportunities to NATO. The Finnish armed forces have around 24,000 active members and about 280,000 conscripts. Finland can count on a total of about 900,000 members of the armed forces in case of necessity. Budgetary allocations for the defense of Finland is around 5.8 billion euros, or about 1.96 of Finland's GDP.

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There should be no doubt that Finland, in case of activation of Art. 5. of the NATO treaty will engage its forces. Furthermore, Finland can, together with some other existing members, additionally work on developing the Alliance ability to operate in difficult weather and terrain conditions. Finland has developed an effective system of managing existing assets in the time-space environment in which it exists, which is an extremely valuable experience. Finland's experiences in the "David vs Goliath" war in 20st century with an emphasis on the key doctrinal and strategic determinants that help "David" in the fight against a numerically superior opponent, will also be of great importance for NATO. Finland was one of the first countries to decisively embark on an organized fight against hybrid threats. That is why Finland initiated the establishment of a Hybrid CoE as a gravitational point of gathering knowledge, experience, and abilities, from the academic, political, security, business, private and public domains to strengthen the ability of societies and states to fight against modern and upcoming threats. This is one more reason in a series of numerous reasons why Finland will continue to support Sweden's entry into the NATO, because both Finland and Sweden know that Swedish membership in NATO will put both in a winning position. Then all the Nordic countries (members of NORDEFCO) would become Allies within NATO. This would

significantly increase the security of Northern Europe.

Finland initiated the establishment of a Hybrid CoE.

Finland significantly contributes (especially with its capacities, knowledge, experiences and skills in the human, aviation, and artillery domains) to the strengthening of the defense and deterrent capacities of NATO aimed at deterrence, just as preventing and stopping conflicts and wars. These are just some of the reasons why Finland's membership in the Alliance is a win-win situation for both Finland and the Alliance. At the same time, these are the reasons why this is a losing situation for Russia. Russia is facing the consequences of its decisions of strategic importance that have proved disastrous. By launching aggression against Ukraine, Russia lost its importance in almost all segments in which it operated and operates at the global level. Moreover, the completely opposite happened to what they expected and hoped for: the demonstration of the strength and capabilities (human and technical-technological) of their armed forces; the knowledge and management of complex and demanding processes such as war; the re-institution of Russian importance and influence globally; pressure on the NATO and its members with attempt to impose intensive

internal divisions; the effectiveness of the own intelligence community in conducting complex operations; the quick defeat of Ukraine and its full occupation.

Entry of Finland into NATO is a strategic loss for Russia.

Russia did not fulfill any of its strategic goals by attacking Ukraine. And that is why the entry of Finland into NATO, as well as the very probable entry of Sweden in due time, is a strategic loss for Russia. Russian announcements that they will place their additional two military divisions on the border with Finland if Finland joins NATO, and that they will also place their missile-nuclear potential along the border with Finland, are proving, for now, to be firing from an empty gun.

The role of Hungary and Türkiye

First Türkiye, and then Hungary, opposed the admission of Finland and Sweden to the NATO, stating the reasons that prompted them to take such decision. It is necessary to say that the mentioned reasons can be resolved in constructive and open communication at the bilateral and multilateral level of several different interested entities. It is expected that the USA, which has some open issues with

Türkiye of a more serious nature, will once again play an important role in that process. Such adaptation of Türkiye to the new reality, along with the expected defeat of Russia in Ukraine, could put Hungary in a much more difficult situation. For quite some time, Hungary's actions have been significantly burdening, slowing down and stopping the process of making numerous decisions both within the EU and now the NATO alliance. Sweden should be patient, responsible, and accept the arguments put forward by Türkiye and Hungary, especially about non-interference in their internal processes. Assessments on whether a country is undemocratic, whether it violates human rights and freedoms, whether it collapses the legal order, should be expressed, and articulated in a reasoned, open, and democratic discussion/communication at the level of the EU, or/and the Council of Europe, and not at the bilateral level.

Sweden and NATO

It should be emphasized that the issue of admitting Sweden to the Alliance is extremely important for the complete stabilization and security of Northern Europe. Although Sweden is part of the NORDEFCO cooperation, as well as a signatory to numerous agreements on cooperation with NATO (the same as Finland)

and thus indirectly strongly connected with the NATO, it is still necessary to work on its admission to the Alliance. The doubts raised by Hungary and Türkiye should be resolved and common language found to resolve these differences. Namely, admitting Sweden to NATO is also a win-win situation for NATO and Sweden, and a loss for Russia. Accepting Sweden would complete the security and defense system in the north of Europe by integrating all the countries located in that area within the NATO protective umbrella.

Admitting Sweden to NATO is also a win-win situation for NATO and Sweden.

At the same time, this would significantly strengthen the position of the Baltic member states of the NATO (Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia), which in the event of a possible Russian aggression (whether by classic kinetic means or non-kinetic influence operations) can count on a strong, quick and effective reaction by provided assistance of their immediate neighbors.

Conclusion

With Finland's entry, both Finland and NATO benefit. The only real loser is Russia, which became a victim of its own wrong decisions,

made especially at the strategic level. One of the series of these decisions is the decision to launch an unjustified aggression against Ukraine in February 2022. Finland's entry into NATO significantly strengthened the security and stability of the whole of Europe. This leads to a stronger connection between the EU and NATO on a strategic, as well as on an operational and tactical level, due to the fact that 22 EU member states are also members of the NATO alliance. With the entry of Sweden into NATO, that number will increase. Only four EU members (Austria, Cyprus, Ireland and Malta) will remain outside of NATO. It is necessary to make additional efforts in secret/shadow diplomacy to find a solution of Sweden's blockade. The solution must be such that it guarantees a win-win situation for everyone involved in the process. The NATO has proven to be a guarantor of the security and sovereignty of the

members. Both Finland and Sweden recognized this and that is why there was a significant change in their security and foreign policy. The experience that Finland brings to NATO will significantly help the Alliance in strengthening NATO capabilities in the fight against hybrid threats and in organizing an effective defense system that can deter any possible opponent.

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