

Finnish parliament approves proposal to join NATO

Andrea Peters
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The Finnish parliament voted Wednesday to approve its government's proposal to join NATO, with just 12 lawmakers out of 200 dissenting. The same day, Russia announced it is permanently ending its participation in the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS), an 11-member intergovernmental organization tasked with managing issues related to security and economic development in the region.

As Finland, along with Sweden, formally submitted their NATO membership applications yesterday, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Moscow released a statement declaring, "The governments of NATO and the European Union in the CBSS have rejected equal dialogue and the principles upon which this regional structure in the Baltics was built and are consistently transforming it into an instrument of anti-Russian policy." It described the atmosphere in the CBSS as one of "Russophobia" and "lies."

In March, the organization suspended Russia's membership and stated it might be readmitted if it adhered to "fundamental principles of international law." Belarus, which held observer status in the CBSS, was ejected at the same time.

In the course of a comment in the Russian financial news outlet *Kommersant* appealing for Moscow to respond to the crisis in the Baltic with restraint, Russian political scientist Andrei Kortunov laid out the implications of what has now happened.

"The Baltic Sea is now actually turning into a 'NATO lake,' which will require retaliatory measures to build up the Russian naval presence in this area, air defense forces, land-based missile systems, and so on," he said. With the line of contact between Russia and NATO doubling should Finland's application for admission to the trans-Atlantic alliance be approved, Moscow will have to militarize its northwestern border

to a new level, dramatically beefing up its forces in Karelia and around Murmansk.

The breakdown of the CBSS, which was formed in 1992 with the express purpose of promoting interstate cooperation in the post-Soviet era, is a manifestation of the crisis gripping the global order as the US and NATO go barreling head first towards world war. Other institutions are also giving way.

On Wednesday, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs sent the Duma (parliament) a list of proposed international organizations from which the country may withdraw. It includes the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the World Health Organization (WHO), along with at least 10 others. Already, 14 WTO members have ended Russia's status as a "most favored nation" trade partner.

The departure of Russia from the WHO under conditions in which the COVID-19 pandemic is, despite all official declarations to the contrary, hardly under control will gravely undermine scientific coordination around the monitoring and treatment of the disease with a country that occupies one-tenth of the world's landmass.

Canada, the US and the Scandinavian countries have suspended their participation in all meetings of the Arctic Council, which is currently chaired by Russia and charged with responsibilities similar to those of the Council of the Baltic Sea States but in the northern polar region.

In a statement on Wednesday, Nikolai Patrushev, head of Russia's security council, described the contemporary state of affairs as "an unprecedented geopolitical crisis" and charged the US and NATO with provoking "the collapse of the global architecture of security and the international system [of] law and agreements." He insisted that the West's policies

threaten “Russia’s statehood and very existence” and that the conflict over Ukraine has been used to “conduct an undeclared war against Russia.”

In an opinion piece published the same day, the editorial board of the *Washington Post* demanded that the war in Ukraine continue and that efforts to negotiate a ceasefire be halted. While recent efforts on the part of France, Germany and Italy to end the bloodshed were “understandable,” opined the newspaper, “the risks of relaxing the pressure on Mr. Putin before he is thoroughly beaten, and *maybe not even then*, are too high.” [Emphasis added.] It insisted that Paris, Berlin and Rome not let “their desire to shorten this destructive war—and thus limit the damage both to Ukraine and to their own hard-pressed economies” stand in the way.

If a “thoroughly beaten” Putin is not enough, what is? The answer is: War with Russia until the very end, until Russia itself is destroyed.

The fact that, as the *Washington Post* tacitly acknowledges, Ukraine will be turned into a wasteland and the economies of Europe plunged into crisis as a result is the cost of doing business.



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