

NATO's border with Russia to double in length as Finland joins US-led alliance

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The final obstacle for Finland to become the 31st member of the US-led NATO aggressive military alliance was cleared late Thursday when the Turkish parliament voted unanimously to approve Helsinki's membership application. With approval now assured from all existing NATO members, Finland will be formally admitted as a member at the next NATO summit scheduled for Vilnius in July.

The move marks a massive escalation of the war on Russia by the US and NATO, whose border with Russia will be more than doubled. Finland shares a 1,340-kilometre land border with Russia and will become the seventh state with a Baltic Sea coast to join NATO. Only Sweden, whose accession to the alliance is pending approval from Turkey, remains formally outside of the military alliance. Once Swedish membership is finalised, likely following the presidential election in Turkey in May, Russia will be entirely surrounded by NATO adversaries in the Baltic Sea.

The confirmation of Finnish NATO membership comes in the wake of a significant intensification of the war in Ukraine since the beginning of the year. The imperialist powers have drastically stepped up their shipments of high-powered weaponry, including battle tanks and surface-to-air missiles, increasing the likelihood of a direct shooting war between NATO and Russian forces. Debates on sending fighter jets and even ground troops are well under way, moves which would radically increase the threat of a clash between nuclear-armed powers.

Representatives from NATO and the Western imperialist powers responded with enthusiasm to the news. NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg tweeted, "I look forward to raising Finland's flag at NATO HQ in the coming days. Together we are stronger and safer." Finland's US ambassador Douglas Hickey described the decision as an "historic moment" and said Finland is a "strong, capable partner that shares NATO's values."

To describe the references to Finland's NATO membership ensuring "security" and "stability" as Orwellian would be an understatement. What it in fact indicates is how the present situation ever more resembles

the first half of the 20th century, when the world's great powers sought to repartition the world in their interests. In the aftermath of World War I and during World War II, the Finnish bourgeoisie served as willing accomplices of the imperialist powers as they sought to inflict a military defeat on the Soviet Union and turn the area that is now Russia and the former Soviet republics into the direct possessions of American, German, and British capital for ruthless plunder. This is the same path now being followed by the Social Democrat-led government of Prime Minister Sanna Marin and right-wing President Sauli Niinistö.

After bloodily crushing the Finnish revolution in 1918, which broke out in direct response to the conquest of power by the Bolsheviks in Russia, the Finnish ruling class used their newly established "independence" to subordinate themselves to German and subsequently British imperialism. Finland served as a base of operations for the counter-revolutionary whites, who received extensive military aid from the imperialist powers.

During World War II, the Finnish ruling elite exploited the counter-revolutionary policies of the Stalinist bureaucracy to justify a military and strategic alliance with Nazi Germany. Determined to recapture territory lost in the 1939-1940 Winter War, Finnish forces participated in the Nazis' war of annihilation against the Soviet Union in a conflict that became known as the Continuity War. Finnish forces were involved in the brutal siege of Leningrad, now St. Petersburg.

The balance of power between the imperialists and the Stalinist Soviet bureaucracy following World War II, together with the post-war economic equilibrium under the hegemony of US imperialism, enabled the ruling elites in the Nordic region, including in Finland, Sweden, Norway, and Denmark, to posture as guardians of a haven of peace in a world riven by great power conflicts. Substantial concessions in the form of social programmes and welfare benefits were made to working people, while Finland and Sweden remained formally "non-aligned" in the Cold War.

Conditions in the region today could hardly be further

removed from this earlier period, which is still hailed by “progressives” around the world as an example of how capitalism can be “reformed.” The Nordic countries are now frontline states in the imperialist war aimed at subordinating Russia to the status of a semi-colony and seizing control of its vast natural resources. The social programmes once held up as examples of the “Nordic model” have either been slashed to the bone or eliminated entirely.

Major NaTO exercises take place on a regular basis involving Finland and Sweden, and American troops have massively expanded their operations in Norway. An agreement with the Norwegian government recently granted the US unimpeded access to so-called “agreed areas,” something which Washington is seeking to replicate in Sweden and Finland.

Earlier this month, Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden struck an agreement to operate their approximately 250 US-built F-35 fighter jets as part of a single Nordic fleet. The March 24 letter of intent commits the four countries to create a “unified Nordic Air Defence.” Danish air force commander Major General Jan Dam commented, “Our combined fleet can be compared to a large European country.” The signing of the deal took place at the Ramstein Air Base in Germany, where NATO Air Command Chief General James Hecker was also present. Military officials from the four Nordic countries are also working on transforming the major NATO Cold Response exercise, traditionally hosted in Norway, into a Nordic Response maneuver that will encompass the entire Nordic region.

In its report on Finland’s NATO membership, the *New York Times*, followed by media outlets internationally, portrayed the move as being “set off by the invasion of Ukraine.” This is a flat-out lie. Like the war in Ukraine itself, the integration of Finland and soon Sweden into NATO was prepared over decades of ever more aggressive US imperialist wars around the world and NATO’s eastward expansion up to Russia’s borders.

As part of NATO’s initial expansion following the dissolution of the Soviet Union in the 1990s, Finland and Sweden were among the first members of the “Partnership for Peace,” a NATO initiative that enabled them to participate in joint exercises and gain experience with NATO procedures and equipment. Both Finland and Sweden became NATO “enhanced opportunity partners” together with Ukraine in 2014, and joined the Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF), a British imperialist-led alliance of Baltic and Nordic NATO members, in 2017. Putin’s reactionary invasion of Ukraine merely served as the pretext to implement plans to formally bring Finland and Sweden into the military alliance that had long been in the works.

The reactionary nationalist Putin regime, representing the

interests of the criminal capitalist oligarchy that emerged from the dissolution of the Soviet Union, has no progressive response to the escalation of military aggression by the imperialists throughout the Nordic region. In line with its disastrous invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Russia responded to the imminent confirmation of Finland’s NATO membership by issuing blood-curdling threats of military retaliation. A statement from Russia’s embassy in Stockholm Wednesday declared, “If anyone still believes that this will somehow improve Europe’s security, you can be sure that the new members of the hostile bloc will become a legitimate target for Russia’s retaliatory measures, including military ones.” Swedish Foreign Minister Tobias Billström responded by summoning the Russian ambassador to the Foreign Ministry in Stockholm.

The only way to stop the dangerous military build-up in the Nordic region and the threatened expansion of the US-NATO war on Russia to the Baltic is through the building of an international anti-war movement in the working class. Workers throughout the Nordic countries, the rest of Europe, Russia, Ukraine, and internationally must be united on the basis of a socialist and internationalist programme to put an end to imperialist war and the capitalist profit system that gives rise to it.

The basis for such a movement arises out of the same objective crisis that is propelling the imperialists towards world war. Throughout Europe, workers are entering into mass struggles amid the unbearable cost of living and attacks on their social and democratic rights due to the subordination of all aspects of social life to the war. The urgent political task is to make workers conscious of the fact that their struggles must be directed towards the seizing of political power from the bourgeoisie to prevent the eruption of a global conflagration that would call the very survival of humanity into question.



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