

# Geopolitical Analysis of the Entry of Finland and Sweden to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

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Russia's invasion of Ukraine has significantly altered the pattern of alliances and geopolitical balances on the European continent to such an extent that countries like Finland and Sweden that have traditionally remained neutral are now applying to join the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). These two countries fear that Russia, which is currently trying to reposition itself, could try in the near future to invade these two Nordic countries to prevent the West (European Union, United Kingdom, and United States) from increasing its military presence and its military force in the Scandinavian peninsula and in the Baltic Sea. The enlargement that the European Union (EU) has carried out since the 1990s, and that has also meant the expansion of NATO, has been viewed with great concern by the government of Vladimir Putin, who considers that the United States and the European Union did not fulfill their commitment to former Russian President Mikhail Gorbachev to respect the sphere of influence of the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). Within the framework of this geopolitical confrontation, Helsinki and Stockholm do not want to run the risk of being invaded by the Russian army, which is why they seek to take advantage of the principle of collective security that NATO membership would grant them.

*Keywords:* Geopolitical alliances and balances, West vs. Russia, Finland, Sweden, NATO expansion, areas of influence, collective security, national security

## NATO Creation

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization emerged in 1949 through the Washington Treaty in which 10 countries on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean agreed to defend each other in the event of an armed aggression against one of them. The signatory countries of that treaty were Belgium, Canada, Denmark, the United States, France, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, Norway, the Netherlands, Portugal, and the United Kingdom. The birth of NATO was framed in the era called "Cold War" that was characterized by the ideological confrontation between the blocks of socialist and capitalist countries led by the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and the United States of America (USA) respectively. With the creation of NATO, the Western bloc tried to protect its areas of influence and prevent the countries that comprised them from passing into the sphere of domination of their rival.

As regards the treaty, it is a short document consisting of a brief preamble and 14 articles. The preamble establishes very clearly that the countries that make up the organization share the principles of democracy,

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individual liberties and are guided by the rule of law, likewise that they are determined to unite their efforts for the collective defense and conservation of the peace and security (The North Atlantic Treaty).

Of the articles that make up said instrument, 5 and 10 stand out.

Article 5 says:

The Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them, which takes place in Europe or in North America, shall be considered as an attack directed against all of them, and accordingly agree that if such an attack occurs, each of them, in the right of individual or collective legitimate defense recognized by Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, will help the Party or Parties attacked, subsequently adopting, individually and in agreement with the other Parties, the measures that deems necessary, including the use of armed force, to restore security in the North Atlantic area. Any armed attack of this nature and all measures adopted as a consequence will be immediately brought to the attention of the Security Council. (The North Atlantic Treaty)

Regarding article 10, it says the following:

The Parties may, by unanimous agreement, invite to join any European State that is in a position to promote the development of the principles of this Treaty and to contribute to the security of the North Atlantic area. Any State that is thus invited may become a Party to the Treaty by depositing the corresponding instrument of accession with the Government of the United States of America. This Government will inform each of the Parties that it will have the deposit of said instrument of accession. (The North Atlantic Treaty)

As can be seen, the central point of the fifth article claims the right of individual and collective legitimate defense contained in article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations and constitutes the binding element and central objective of said treaty. With regard to the tenth article, the substantive part means that the States that make up NATO can invite any country in the North Atlantic area to join. In this sense, this pair of articles constitutes the columns of this important document that has allowed the strengthening of the organization and the growth of the countries that make it up.

### **Creation and End of the Warsaw Pact**

At the end of the 40s of the last century (XX), the emergence of NATO was seen as a serious threat by the socialist bloc for this reason, and in order to counteract its presence, the USSR promoted the Friendship Treaty, Collaboration and Mutual Assistance, better known as the “Warsaw Pact” signed in that Polish city and made up of “Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Poland and Romania, as well as China as an observer. Yugoslavia, for its part, despite also being a communist country, did not enter due to its disagreements with the Soviet leader, Iósif Stalin” (Montes, 2021). This treaty was signed six years after that of NATO, that is, in 1955.

The objective of said treaty was to neutralize the threat posed by the Western military alliance and foster what has been called a “balance of power” taking into consideration that the sum of the armies that comprised it could deter NATO from an attack. against him. Through this Pact, Moscow increased its military power, not to the level of its Western counterpart, but enough to increase its response and negotiation capacity.

## OTAN vs Pacto de Varsovia

Miembros hasta 1991

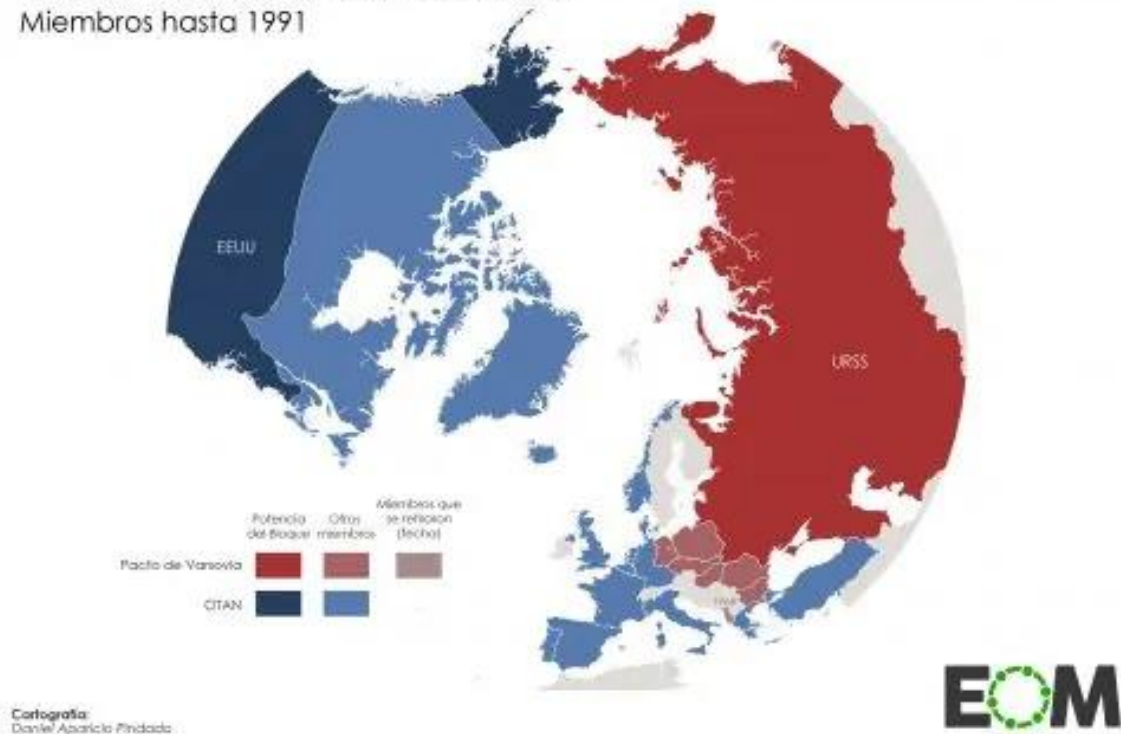


Figure 1. NATO vs Warsaw Pact (Montes, 2021).

The socialist military alliance came to an end in 1991, shortly after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the dismemberment of the USSR. The structural crisis that that country faced at the time and the military spending implied by both its own Army and the support of the Warsaw Pact precipitated the debacle of both.

### Fall of the Socialist World, Expansion of the EU, and Enlargement of NATO

After the fall of the “iron curtain”, the nascent Russia continued to see NATO as a threat, so in the midst of negotiations between Moscow and governments of Western powers to delimit the new areas of influence, Moscow asked for firm guarantees that the Western military alliance not expand into Eastern Europe, something to which the United States and European countries committed themselves but only in word, because they never signed a written agreement to accept that commitment.

Faced with the evident weakness of Russia in the 1990s and early 2000s, the European Union (EU), the economic-commercial arm of the West, seized the opportunity and began its expansion towards Eastern Europe to wrest from Moscow a good part of the countries that once belonged to the zone of influence of the USSR and transfer them, in economic-financial, commercial, and monetary terms, to the sphere of domination of the European Union. The former West Germany, leader and driving force of the EU, with the support of France and the consent of Washington and London, promotes the expansion of the European alliance at a dizzying pace in such a way that between 1993 and 2007, in just 13 years, 10 countries of the former zone of influence of the USSR manage to cover the three stages, association signature, accession signature, and membership signature to enter the European Union as full members.

Table 1

*European movement. Chronology of the European Construction.*

country	Signature accession	Signature membership
Bulgaria	14-XII-1995	1-I-2007
Slovakia	27-VI-1995	1-III-2004
Slovenia	10-VI-1 996	1-III-2004
Estonia	24-XI-1995	1-III-2004
Hungary	31-III-1994	1-III-2004
Latvia	13-X-1995	1-III-2004
Lithuania	8-XII-1995	1-III-2004
Poland	5-IV-1994	1-III-2004
Czech Republic	17-I-1996	1-III-2004
Romania	22-IV-1995	1-I-2007
Turkey	14-IV-1987	CANDIDATE
Ukraine	5-IX-2022	?

Note. Recovered <http://www.movimientoeuropeo.org/cronologia-ue/> Table of own elaboration.

In this context and simultaneously, NATO, the armed wing of the West, began in 1999, after the reunification of Germany, its fourth stage of expansion to grant membership to three countries, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland.

Table 2

*NATO Enlargement.*

February 18, 1952	Greece Turkey	First
May 9, 1955	Western Germany	Second
May 30, 1982	Spain	Third
October 3, 1990	German Reunification	
March 12, 1999	Czech Republic Hungary Poland	Fourth
29 March 2004	Bulgaria Estonia Latvia Lithuania Romania Slovakia Slovenia	Fifth
April 1, 2009	Albanian Croatia	Sixth
June 5, 2017	Montenegro	Seventh

Source: Wikipedia. Recovered [https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ampliacci%C3%B3n\\_de\\_la\\_OTAN](https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ampliacci%C3%B3n_de_la_OTAN) (Table of own elaboration).

As can be seen in the table above, in 2004 NATO concluded its fifth stage of expansion incorporating seven countries, three of them former Soviet republics, we refer to Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania also called Baltic republics, two of them, Estonia and Latvia adjoining Russia and Lithuania adjoining the Russian exclave of Kaliningrad.



Figure 2. World Map Project. Baltic countries on map. Recovered. <https://proyectomamundi.com/europa/paises-balticos-en-mapas/>.

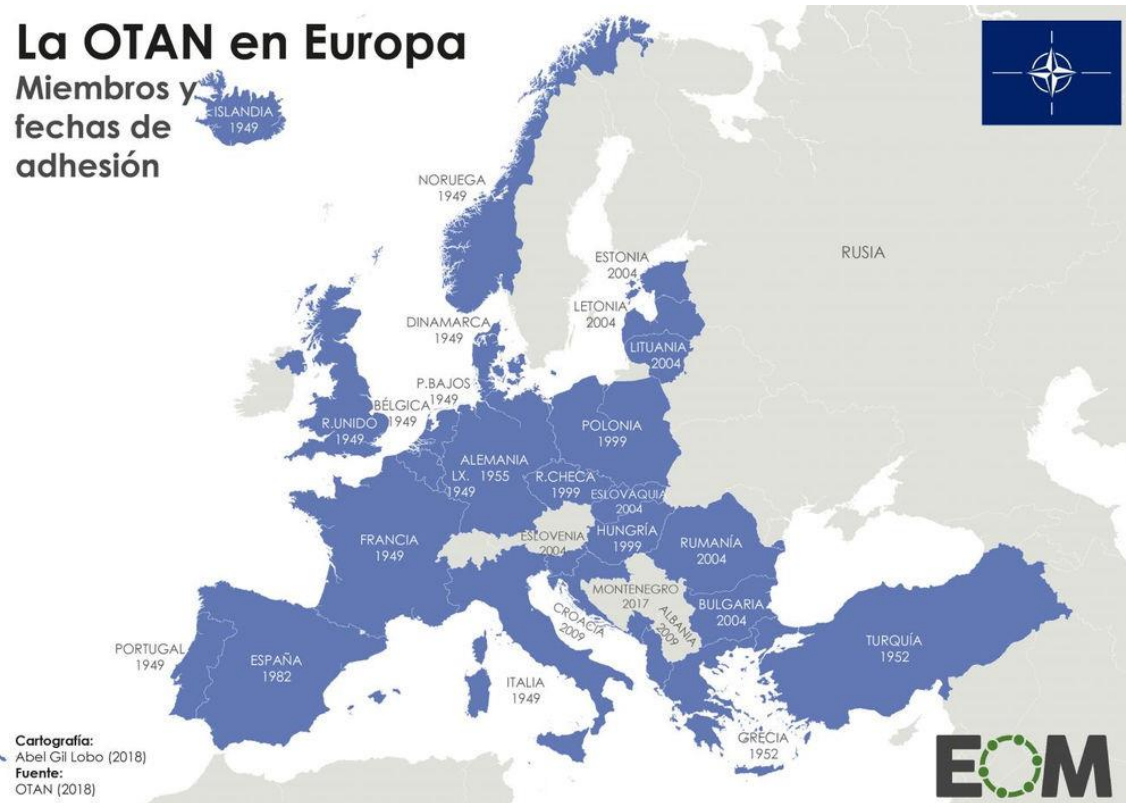


Figure 3. Gil Lobo, Abel (2018). NATO in Europe. Members and dates of accession. The World Order. Open Embassy Foundation. Recovered <https://www.embajadaabierta.org/post/70-aniversario-de-la-otan>.

All of the above was considered by Russia as a real affront and as a sign that the geopolitical struggle between that country and the West had not ended.

In the year 2000, Vladimir Putin won the presidency of his country and as a former member of the KGB and a wide connoisseur of the *mudus pensandi* and *modus operandi* of the former USSR, one of his main objectives was to reposition Russia and try to return part of his greatness it possessed before the fall of the Berlin Wall. The Russian president is a pragmatic individual, autocratic and well versed in geopolitics. He served twice as prime minister, in the periods 1999-2000 and 2008-2012, he has also been the president from 2000 to 2008 and from 2012 to date (2023) for a total of 18 years as head of the Executive Power with prospects of remaining until 2036, by virtue of the reforms made by the legislators of his party to the Russian Magna Carta.

### **Conflict Russia-Ukraine**

Within the framework of the Russian repositioning and the Ukrainian conflict that occurred in 2014, known as “Euromaidan”, the so-called second cold war restarted. Euromaidan was a popular revolt in Ukraine, caused mainly by the refusal of the then pro-Russian president Victor Yanukovych to sign an association agreement with the EU, the protests escalated to the point that Yanukovych was ousted and fled to Russia. His place was taken by the pro-European Petro Poroshenko who continued the process of rapprochement with Germany and the European Union.

This situation was interpreted by Russia as the departure of Ukraine from its sphere of influence and the imminent loss of the Crimean peninsula, a point of enormous geostrategic importance because the naval military

base known as the “Black Sea Fleet” is located there. The Russian navy ships that are there have access to the Mediterranean Sea through the Bosphorus and Dardanelles straits, which allows maritime connection with the Tartus naval base, which is located on the western coast of Syria, this last partner country, friend, and ally of Russia.

Under the pretext of protecting the Russian-speaking community located in Crimea, a territory with strong ethnic, cultural, and historical ties to their country, the government of Vladimir Putin carried out an express referendum that concluded with the independence of Crimea and its immediate annexation to Russia which allowed it to maintain a military presence in the Black Sea and, of course, the important military naval base located in Sevastopol. It should be noted that Ukraine, the United States, the European Union, and more than 100 countries do not recognize the annexation of Crimea to Russia, considering it contrary to International Law and a serious violation of Ukrainian sovereignty.

The aforementioned rekindled the geopolitical struggle between the United States-European Union duo against Russia, which worsened with the latter’s invasion of Ukrainian territory on February 24, 2022, in which there are rebel groups that accept and support the Russian presence. The goal of the invasion was and still is to rescue Ukraine from the zone of influence of the West. We believe that the so-called “special military operation” contemplated three scenarios, the first was the advance and seizure of all Ukrainian territory, the second was that Russian troops arrive in Kiev and establish a pro-Russian government, and the third is to appropriate the region of the Donbas and the entire eastern part of Ukraine in order to establish a corridor that could connect Russia with the Crimean peninsula by land, even until it seized the southern region of Ukraine and closed the outlet to the Black Sea.

In relation to the above, it must be recognized that Putin said several times that the expansion of the EU and particularly of NATO towards the Russian borders in Eastern Europe represented a danger to the national security of his country and that if Ukraine, which received an invitation to join NATO since 2014, agreed to join that military alliance and refused to take a neutral stance (still called Finlandization at the time), the Putin government would take whatever steps it deemed appropriate.

In this context, it is logical to think that the conflict will continue indefinitely because the West is providing economic and military support to Ukraine, thereby seeking to corner and bogging down the Russian army in the Donbas area, gradually undermining it morally and militarily and, above all, the Russian government allocates large amounts of money to pay for the military offensive while the United States and the EU maintain and increase the economic sanctions whose purpose is to suffocate the Russian economy or at least weaken it and force Putin to negotiate the end of the war despite said sanctions have not achieved their goal and, consequently, have not succeeded in getting the Russian president to change his position on Ukraine. To date, the Ukrainian army continues to fight against the Russian armed forces to drive them out of a part of the southern coastal area of their country, the region called Donbas, which includes the territories of Lugansk and Donetsk, and other regions of the East, which are of enormous economic-industrial importance for Ukraine.



## AVANCE DE LA LÍNEA DEL FRENTE

Posiciones de las fuerzas militares durante el curso de la ofensiva

Avance u operaciones rusas

Áreas recuperadas y contraofensivas reivindicadas por los ucranianos

Zona del Donbás

**24 de febrero**

Inicio de la invasión por cuatro frentes: al norte hacia Kiev, al noreste hacia Járkov, al este en el Donbás y al sur hacia Jersón



**24 de marzo**

Las fuerzas rusas alcanzan su mayor avance, y llegan a la periferia de Kiev, donde son detenidos en Irpin



**6 de abril**

Las tropas rusas se retiran del norte de Ucrania y se concentran en el Donbás y en el sur



**24 febrero 2022**

inicio del conflicto

FEB. 2022 | MAR. | ABR. | MAYO | JUNIO | JULIO | AGOSTO | SEPT. | OCT. | NOV. | DIC. | ENE. 2023 | FEB.

**15 de julio**

El conflicto se estanca. El ejército ruso toma Mariúpol (20 mayo), Severodonetsk (24 junio) y Lisichansk (3 julio), pero la línea del frente apenas se mueve



**14 de noviembre**

Ucrania lanza contraofensivas en las regiones de Járkov (finales de agosto y principios de sept.) y en Jersón (mediados de nov.), reconquistando cerca de 17,000 km<sup>2</sup>



**1º de febrero**

La línea del frente se estabiliza de nuevo y los combates se intensifican en el Donbás, en torno a Bajmut. Rusia ocupa 18.1% del territorio ucraniano



Fuente: AFP

Figure 4. Advance on the front line. Positions of the military forces during the course of the offensive. Source: Mondragón (2023). Recovered <https://www.excelsior.com.mx/global/hay-que-apoyar-a-ucrania-la-guerra-no-acabaramanana-embajador-de-polonia-en-mexico/1572159>.

## Historical Background of Finland-Russia Relations

In a way Finland was a creation of Russia because at the beginning of the 19th century this country was the eastern flank of the Kingdom of Sweden. However, the Russians feared that at some point the Swedish army might attack their then capital Saint Petersburg, which was a few miles away. For this reason, the Russian Empire invaded and conquered the territory that is now Finland and created the Grand Duchy of Finland, which was established in what is known in geopolitical terms as a “buffer state” or “mattress state”, a strip of territory wide enough to avoid being the victim of aggression from a rival power as the Kingdom of Sweden was then.

For almost a century Finland enjoyed a good share of autonomy, however, at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, the Russian Empire attempted a process of Russification, but after almost 100 years of autonomy, the Finnish population had generated an esprit de corps and a feeling of nationalism that prevented the St. Petersburg government from achieving its goal. The internal divisions in Russia did not help its



political elite to establish a well-defined and long-term project of Russification either, especially when the Russian Revolution was approaching in the second decade of the 20th century.

The advent of the First World War, but above all the collapse of the Russian Empire by the Bolshevik Revolution, allowed the Grand Duchy of Finland to proclaim its independence and the Republic of Finland to emerge in 1917 and in 1920 it entered the League of Nations.

For just over 20 years Finland managed to consolidate itself as a State, however, at the end of the 1930s and before the advent of World War II, Russia demanded that Finland cede part of its territory to supposedly protect the city of Leningrad, formerly St. Petersburg, a request that was rejected by Helsinki for this reason, Russia decided to invade it. At that time there were two additional reasons for attacking Finland, the first was to try to recapture what was once the Grand Duchy of Finland and establish the Finnish Democratic Republic and second, to expand its presence in the northern Baltic Sea which would have allowed to increase the Russian maritime fleet in that area.



Figure 5. Loss of Finnish territories at the end of the war with the Soviet Union. Source: [journal21.ch/stepmap.de](https://journal21.ch/stepmap.de) Journalistischer Mehrwert. 2015. Recovered <https://www.journal21.ch/artikel/ende-des-sowjetisch-finnischen-krieges>.

In November 1939 Russia attacked Finland in the so-called “Winter War” thinking that it was going to be a quick and relatively simple battle due to the smallness of its army and the scarce military equipment, however, the surprise was great because the resistance that the Finnish army showed during the first two months was significant, forcing Moscow to redouble its efforts, substantially increasing its military strength. Given the

intensity of the fighting and the losses on both sides at the beginning of March 1940, both parties reached an agreement known as the Treaty of Moscow (March 12, 1940), “Finland had to cede Finnish Karelia” (Laurelhillcemetery.blog, 2022); “The eastern half from Salla municipality...the strategically important Fisher Peninsula in the north and the Hanko peninsula in southern Finland [where] the Soviets were able to operate a naval base for 30 years” (Journal21.ch, Journalistischer Mehrwert, 2015); “Accepting the armistice cost Finland the 11% of its territory” (Laurelhillcemetery.blog, 2022).

Moscow’s triumph in the Winter War left a taste of defeat due to the little territorial gain and its high cost in terms of dead and wounded soldiers and the loss of military equipment, but above all due to the failed strategy against an army small and apparently weak. The “winter war” was closely followed by Adolf Hitler who, seeing the ineffectiveness of the Russian army, later planned the “Red Beard” operation to attack Russia.

The Winter War generated strong anti-Russian sentiment among the Finnish population and a sense of insecurity over potential future military aggression from Moscow. For this reason and as revenge, Finland discreetly supported Germany in its invasion of Russia, which was called the “Continuation War”, but later and seeing the imminent defeat of Hitler, it adopted a position of neutrality so as not to provoke a violent response by part of Moscow. After the Second World War, Finland distanced itself from Russia and, like its neighbor Sweden, they decided not to get involved in international political issues that could generate friction and lead to conflicts.

### **Finland’s Application for NATO Membership**

In the midst of the Russo-Ukrainian war and heightened tensions between Moscow and the West, in May 2022 the President of Finland Sauli Niinisto and the Prime Minister of that country Sanna Marin requested to join NATO (MSN.com, 2022). Finland, since the end of World War II, had remained non-aligned, militarily and politically neutral so as not to provoke Russia. It is evident that the Finnish historical resentments, the wars between Finland and Russia, and the invasion of the Putin government in Ukraine made her change her position, joining NATO seemed to her the best option to safeguard her territorial integrity, without caring about the reaction of Russia.

In January 2023, within the framework of the World Economic Forum in Davos, the Finnish Prime Minister stated that “For Finnish citizens, security is the priority”, and that her country would support Ukraine “for as long as necessary”. Be it one or 15 years, since the message from democratic countries must be that Russia “cannot win this war”. A victory for Moscow would imply “the possibility of Russia invading another neighbor”, such as Finland. On that same occasion, the prime minister added that “this perspective is what made her country abandon military neutrality to apply for NATO membership.” (Noticias Yahoo, 2023).

A poll conducted in Finland by Yle, the Finnish public radio, in the April-May 2022 period showed that 72% of its citizens were in favor of joining NATO. In February of that same year, the intention to vote in favor was 53% and just one month later, in March, it had already risen to 62%. In that same informative note, it was pointed out that the opinion of the Finnish parliamentarians was in the same direction, even the president of the chamber, Matti Vanhanen, pointed out that “joining NATO is not a decision that goes against anyone. If we join the NATO my response to Russia would be: You caused this, look in the mirror.” (Antena 3 Noticias, 2022).

It should be noted that Finland shares a border of “1,340 kilometers, the longest border with Russia in the European Union (EU) and the second in Europe (after Ukraine)” (Agencia EFE, Finlandia, 2022) which makes it difficult for the army of that country to safeguard such a wide extension of territory and, on the other hand,

facilitate a possible Russian military incursion. For now, and at the beginning of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, many Russian citizens decided to leave their country and go to neighboring states such as Finland, for this reason the government, with the support of its parliament, decided “to build a fences and other types of barriers on the border to increase national security” which will imply a cost of “several hundred million euros” taking into consideration that said fence will be “several meters high and [...] video surveillance cameras in the border sections considered to be of greater risk.” (Agencia EFE, Finlandia, 2022).



*Figure 6.* Finland has the longest border with Russia in the European Union and the second longest in Europe after Ukraine. Source: Agencia EFE (2022). Recovered <https://www.altonivel.com.mx/actualidad/internacional/finlandia-aprueba-muro-fronterizo-para-frenar-llegada-de-rusos/>.

For its part, the Kremlin has repeatedly warned Helsinki that its entry into the Atlantic Alliance will have serious consequences, which is why the Finnish government fears that Russia could orchestrate a migratory crisis similar to the one it had on the border between Poland and Belarus in end of 2021. (Agencia EFE, Finlandia, 2022)

Because Finland’s probable entry into NATO represents a threat to Russia, the Kremlin spokesman Dmitri Peskov as well as the Foreign Ministry expressed their deep concern in May 2022 and pointed out that in view of the Helsinki decision, Moscow “will see forced to take retaliatory measures, both of a military-technical nature and of another type, to prevent threats to its national security from arising” (Gómez, 2022). As can be seen, the threatening tone of the Russian government was evident in the face of the potential change in the geopolitical balance because the NATO would approach the northern border of Russia and for the strengthening of the Atlantic Alliance by adding the Finnish army to the military force of the armed wing of the West.

Russia’s response to the measures adopted by Finland also occurred in the energy field because the Russian state company Gazprom announced, in May 2022, that it would cut off the gas supply to that country for not meeting Moscow’s demand to pay in rubles the purchases of that hydrocarbon. For its part, the Finnish gas company Gasum responded to Moscow that if it suspended its supply it would go to international courts; however, the possibility of not having Russian gas was not a problem for Finland because this country, although it bought 2,200 from Russia million cubic meters a year, that amount only represented “5% of all the energy consumed by the Nordic country” (Agencia EFE, Gazprom, 2022), even Finland is a net exporter of gas to the countries of the Nordic region.

Another threat that Moscow carried out was the suspension of electrical energy, thus, in May 2022, the Russian company ROA Nordic, in charge of supplying 10% of the total that Finland consumes (AFP, 2023) suspended the supply in its entirety, however, Helsinki already knew that this was going to happen and already had a plan to replace the electricity coming from Russia.

Regarding the military aspect, Finland had already had joint training with NATO, such as the one carried out by the Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF), which was carried out with a Finnish tank brigade, British tanks and troops, Americans, Estonians, and Latvians. In this regard, the Ministry of Defense of the United Kingdom indicated that the objective was “to deter Russian aggression in Scandinavia and the Baltic states” (Gardner, 2022).

In reality, the joint military exercises between Finland and Sweden with NATO are not new, they have been carried out since the mid-90s of the last century (MSN.com, OTAN, 2022) and coincide with the entry of both into the EU which took place on January 1, 1995, which demonstrates the close link that exists in belonging to the European alliance and the North Atlantic military alliance

### **Historical Background of Sweden-Russia Relations**

In the 17th century Sweden consolidated itself as a regional power of its time, it faced different battles that allowed it to extend its domains until it became an empire that even allowed it to conquer territories in continental Europe, countries that we now know as Poland and Lithuania. At the beginning of the 18th century, Sweden had its first great confrontation with Russia, from which it emerged as the broad winner, however, the then King Charles XII decided not to persecute and annihilate the Russians and decided first to overthrow the Polish King Augustus II, an objective that he did achieve. But that gave the Russian army time to reorganize and rearm.

When it was decided to invade Russia, the latter's military forces were well prepared and armed and faced the Swedes with strength, strategy, and determination, which led them to victory. From this moment begins the debacle of the Swedish empire that failed to recover from defeat. In 1719 the same Carlos XII tried to expand his domain to its western side and faced Norway, but he did not achieve his mission. In those years, King Charles XII died, which left his government and army without leadership, which caused Sweden to cede several previously conquered territories in 1721 and caused it to lose presence and begin the debacle of the Swedish Empire. No longer rivaled, Russia emerged as an empire and established itself as the dominant nation of Eastern Europe.

Throughout the 18th century, Sweden gradually and systematically lost the last territory it controlled until Russia, fearing a potential revival of Sweden, invaded that country, and seized a large part of its territory to convert it into the Grand Duchy of Finland, a semi-autonomous region of the Imperial Russia, which, as we said earlier, became a buffer state, a kind of shield to prevent any expansionist attempt by Sweden, which at that time was still a weak nation that did not represent any threat.

During World War II, Germany approached Sweden to supply it with some essential minerals for the production of war equipment and was even subject to a maritime blockade that isolated it from Europe, for this reason and for fear of being invaded, Stockholm decided to collaborate with Hitler's government; even some volunteers from that country participated in Operation Barbarossa with which Germany invaded Russia. This situation occurred for two reasons, firstly because of Swedish resentment against Russia and secondly because of Sweden's fear of being invaded by the Axis powers. At the end of the war, Sweden moved away economically

and politically from Germany and became closer to the West, especially European powers and the United States, maintaining a foreign policy of neutrality.

The fall of the socialist world and the dismemberment of the USSR was the propitious occasion to request its entry into the European Union and in 2022 and before Russia's invasion of Ukraine, seeking its membership in NATO. Although Sweden is not bordered by Russia, it does not want to run the risk of being a victim of future expansionist attempts by the government of Vladimir Putin, in addition, and due to historical, cultural, geographical, national security, and geopolitical reasons, Stockholm and Helsinki have been acting jointly, which is a sign of the closeness, solidarity, common vision, and esprit de corps that exists between them.

### **Sweden's Application for NATO Membership**

In May 2022, Swedish Foreign Minister Ann Linde stated that Sweden would take Finland's assessments of NATO membership into account, as her country was also considering joining the military alliance and even noted that "Finland is Sweden's closest partner in security and defense" (CNN, 2022).

From a military perspective, the inclusion of the Finnish and Swedish armies in NATO would substantially improve the Alliance's defensive capacity, particularly in northern Europe, a region in which the Russian army outnumbers it in quantitative terms (Gardner, 2022). From a political point of view, the entry of the two Nordic countries would strengthen the union of the old Continent and the United States in terms of mutual defense, in this way a clear and direct message is being sent to Vladimir Putin that practically all of Europe stands in solidarity and rejects the invasion carried out in Ukraine.

It is not surprising that Sweden is acting in tandem with Finland if we take into account that at the end of the 14th century this country, together with Sweden and Norway, which formed the Kalmar Union that lasted until the third decade of the 16th century. After this date, Sweden grew and strengthened until it became an empire that rivaled that of Russia. During World War II Sweden remained officially neutral, however, it collaborated with Nazi Germany for fear of being attacked, however, and almost at the end, it helped the allied powers. At the end of the war and having suffered no damage to its infrastructure, Sweden experienced significant industrial growth, but it was also a beneficiary of the Marshall Plan, which further boosted its economic development.

During the cold war period and in terms of its foreign policy, Sweden, like Finland, maintained a position of neutrality to avoid friction with Russia, however the Swedish government established strong and close ties with the United States and with the European powers. Thus, and after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the Swedish government saw the opportunity to distance itself from Russia and joined the European Union, although it did not adopt the euro as its currency.

Sweden's accession to the EU occurred in the context of the dismemberment of the Soviet Union, the strengthening of the integration model in a good part of the capitalist countries and the replacement of GATT by the World Trade Organization, which generated, temporarily, a unipolar world led by the United States and, as a corollary, a strengthening of NATO although at that time Sweden did not request its membership because it saw Russia as very weakened and did not consider it a danger to its national security.

Already located at the beginning of the third decade of the 21st century and in the era known as the Second Cold War, characterized again by the sharpening of the geopolitical confrontation between Russia and the United States, Sweden, like Finland, does not want to be victims of the attempt to repositioning of Moscow so that, faced

with the potential threat to their territorial integrity and sovereignty, they choose to join the armed wing of the West, that is, NATO.

### **Formalization of the Entry of Finland and Sweden to NATO**

On May 12, 2022, the Finnish government announced its intention to join NATO, backed by the fact that 76% (Antena 3 Noticias, 2022) of its citizens support such a decision. In those days, Sweden was also analyzing the possibility of joining the Atlantic Alliance, even its Prime Minister, Magdalena Anderson, exclaimed: “What is best for our security?” (Alcantud, 2022). This declaration preceded the start of the parliamentary debates in both countries to present their formal request for admission to the NATO summit in Madrid that took place in June 2022. On that occasion, Spain was the host of the summit in commemoration of the 40th anniversary of joining the Atlantic Alliance.

Since 2017, the year Montenegro joined, no other formal entry application had been registered. In 2008 there was a first rapprochement of Ukraine to NATO under the presidency of Viktor Yushchenko, however his departure from the presidency completely suspended those first talks. In 2020 Volodimir Zelensky unveiled his “National Security Strategy” in which he expressed his interest in joining NATO, which set off alarm bells in Moscow and was one of the reasons why Putin decided to invade Ukraine on February 24, 2022.

The start of hostilities between Russia and Ukraine was the trigger for Finland and Sweden to decide to join NATO like this, and in the aforementioned summit that took place between June 28 and 30, 2022, qualified by the Department of Security National of Spain as “historical” the applications from the two Nordic countries were entered. At said summit, the strategic concept was updated by virtue of the fact that “the Euro-Atlantic area is not at peace. We cannot rule out an attack against the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the allies” and it was further emphasized in the terms of “deterrence and defense, crisis prevention and management, and collective security” likewise and in the final communique. Emphasis was made that “no one should doubt our strength and determination to defend every inch of Allied territory, preserve the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all Allies and prevail against any aggressor” obviously making reference to Russia but without neglecting China (Departamento de Seguridad Nacional de España, 2022).

The document “Results of the NATO Summit in Madrid” states that the Atlantic Alliance will have 32 member states, but stresses that “of the 27 countries that are part of the European Union, 23 will in turn be members of the Alliance Atlántica: some figures that reveal the importance of cooperation in security matters between the two organizations” (Departamento de Seguridad Nacional de España, 2022) which shows once again that belonging to the EU, in most cases, precedes joining NATO.

In this context and shortly before Finland and Sweden presented their formal request to join the Atlantic Alliance at the Madrid Summit, the Turkish government had become the main obstacle, the president of that country Recep Tayyip Erdogan said that Turkey did not give in and described Sweden as a “hotbed of terrorist organizations” for having offered asylum to Kurdish opponents of his government, he also said that his country was suffering from the sanctions imposed by Sweden and criticized the governments of Finland and Sweden for having suspended sales of armament.

For a new member to join NATO, the approval of the Executive and Legislative branches of the 30 members that make up the military bloc is required. Once the requests are formally accepted, the petitioners have the right to attend the sessions of the North Atlantic Council as “official guests”, but still without being able to invoke the principle of collective defense established in Article 5 of the Washington Treaty.



Within the framework of the Madrid Summit, an alternating meeting was held, chaired by Jens Stoltenberg and attended by the Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and the Prime Ministers of Finland and Sweden, Sauli Niinistö and Magdalena Anderson, respectively, in which an agreement was reached, agreement in which the two Nordic countries pledged to support Turkey in defense of its national security, in modifying its internal legislation to take action against members of the Kurdistan Workers' Party present in its territory and considered by Ankara as an organization terrorist attack and the signing of an extradition agreement with the Turkish government. Likewise, it was agreed that Helsinki and Stockholm would lift the ban on selling arms to Turkey (EFE, 2022).



Figure 7. Maps of Sweden (2023). Source: <https://maps-sweden.com/maps-sweden-regions/gotland-sweden-map>.

For its part, the US government, and as a gesture of attention to Ankara, began negotiations with the Erdogan government in order to lift sanctions for the purchase of S-400 air defense systems from Moscow as well as the probable sale of forty F-16 planes and military equipment to improve the capabilities of that country's army (Europa Press, 2022). In this way Ankara lifted the veto for the formal acceptance of the applications of Finland and Sweden.

Regardless of the application for NATO membership, Finland and Sweden have been preparing for a possible armed conflict against Russia for several years. General Timo Kivinen, head of the Finnish armed forces, said in June 2022 that his country could count, in the event of war, with 280,000 soldiers and 870,000 reservists. This country is also in a process of modernizing its army and among its plans is the purchase of 2,000 drones and high-altitude air defense equipment. It has also signed a contract with the American company Lockheed Martin for the acquisition of 65 fighter planes F-35. He also intends to buy four warships from the United States (Kauranen, 2023).

Shortly before the Madrid Summit and as a sign of its closeness to NATO, the North Atlantic alliance carried out its annual military exercises called BALTOPS (Baltic operations) in which the two Nordic countries actively participated in order to defend themselves against a hypothetical foreign invasion that would begin on the island of Gotland, belonging to Sweden. This island territory is located in the heart of the Baltic Sea, 60 miles from Swedish territory and 100 miles from the north coast of Latvia, which is why it is considered a strategic point and in the event of a conflict with Russia, it would most likely be the first target from Moscow. The military

maneuvers that took place in June 2022 included the participation of 7,000 soldiers and 45 warships from 14 NATO affiliated countries. Throughout history, the island of Gotland has been the object of several military incursions, the last one being carried out precisely by Russia in 1808. Due to the dismemberment of the USSR, Sweden demilitarized that island in 2005, however, and due to the annexation of Crimea to Russia, the Swedish government re-established a military regiment in 2014 as a deterrent action against a possible Russian military incursion (Brooks, 2022).

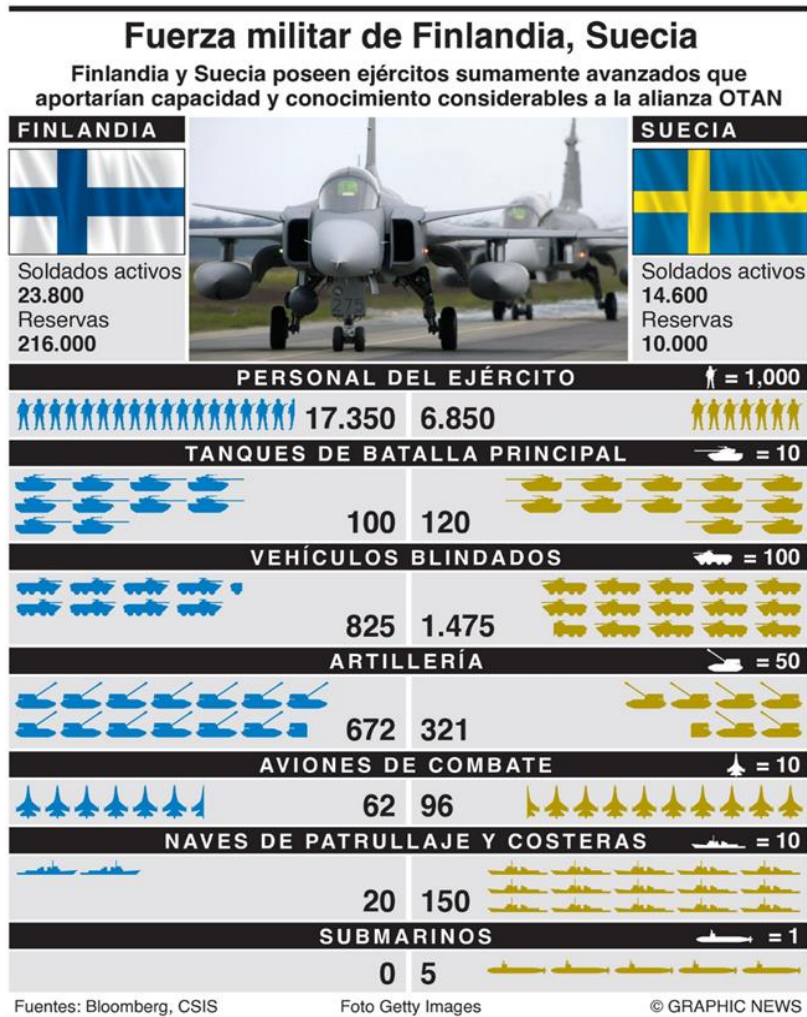


Figure 8. Finnish and Swedish military forces. Source: Bloomberg, CSIS (2022). <https://www.jornada.com.mx/notas/2022/05/16/mundo/suecia-pide-entrar-a-la-otan-habra-respuesta-dice-putin/>, *La Jornada*: [https://www.jornada.com.mx/ultimashst19/2022/05/16/suecia-pide-entrar-a-la-otan-habra-respuesta-dice-putin-482.html/suecia-2013-finlandia-otan.jpg-6328.html/image\\_preview?bc=2022-05-16T09:07:50-05:00](https://www.jornada.com.mx/ultimashst19/2022/05/16/suecia-pide-entrar-a-la-otan-habra-respuesta-dice-putin-482.html/suecia-2013-finlandia-otan.jpg-6328.html/image_preview?bc=2022-05-16T09:07:50-05:00).

Vladimir Putin’s government has always viewed the BALTOPS operations with distrust and fear, and as a response, it also carried out military exercises with the intention that his country be prepared for a probable NATO military incursion into its territory, however, this scenario is unlikely.

However, regardless of the result of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, it is very likely that the two Nordic countries will enter the North Atlantic bloc in the short or medium term and with it practically all the coasts of the Baltic Sea, with the exception of the port city of San Petersburg and the enclave of Kaliningrad, whose

coastlines are small, will remain under the control of NATO affiliated countries whose military strength will be substantially increased and will greatly exceed its counterpart, the Collective Security Treaty Organization (heir to the Warsaw Pact) led by Russia and which is made up of five former Soviet republics that are Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. For this reason, and on several occasions, Moscow has said that the entry of Finland and Sweden into NATO will have serious consequences.

One of those fulfilled threats was the deployment in the Baltic Sea, in February 2023, of ships equipped with nuclear weapons and submarines belonging to the Northern Fleet (Colás, 2023). It should be noted that Vladimir Putin has repeatedly stated that if his country saw his existence threatened, it would resort to nuclear weapons, statements that are part of his intimidation speech and his nuclear doctrine.

### **Turkey, the Main Obstacle to the Entry of Finland and Sweden Into NATO**

Despite the fact that, as we pointed out above, Finland, Sweden, and Turkey signed an agreement within the framework of the Madrid Summit in which they promised to take action against militants of the Kurdistan Workers' Party settled in their territory, extradite dissidents considered by Ankara as terrorists and lift the veto on arms exports to Turkey, the president of that country Recep Tayyip Erdogan said in November 2022 that his country would not give its final acceptance to the entry of the two Nordic states into NATO until July 2023, after the Turkish general elections to be held in June of that year, however that may not be true.

On that same occasion Erdogan also pointed out that neither Finland nor Sweden had complied with the Madrid agreements because he still saw demonstrations against his government in both countries. On the other hand, the Turkish president said that he had given the Swedish government a list of 73 Kurdish opponents requested in extradition, but until November 2022 Stockholm had only sent a single person to Turkey for fraud (Colchen, 2022).

It should be noted that virtually all European countries are reluctant to extradite dissidents, suspected terrorists, or suspected criminals to Turkey because there are no guarantees of fair and legal trials because the Legislative and Judicial branches lack independence and only they obey instructions from the Executive branch, which is characterized by not respecting freedom of expression, human rights, or democracy.

Apart from Turkey, Hungary has shown reluctance to accept the two Nordic countries in NATO, although it has done so less vehemently in this regard. It should be noted that the Hungarian government led by Viktor Orbán has been characterized as nationalist, conservative, and eurosceptic and he has even shown sympathy for the policies adopted by Vladimir Putin, he has received criticism from state and non-state actors for his authoritarian and anti-democratic attitudes, as well as for attacks on the media that do not sympathize with his political project. Regarding the Russia-Ukraine conflict, the Hungarian president has stated that he will not send lethal weapons to Kiev and that sanctions against Moscow should even be reduced. These statements have made several political leaders of the old continent uncomfortable and have isolated him from the European Union, and especially from neighboring countries such as Poland, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic. President Orbán has expressed his solidarity with the times that the Turkish government manages and indicated that its ratification of the entry of Sweden and Finland into NATO could take until June or even until Turkey approves the accession.

The position adopted by Viktor Orbán is actually a message to the United States and the European Union not to submit, to show defiance, and to take advantage of the opportunity to show the nationalist inclination of their foreign policy. With this attitude, he also intends to look good in front of the Turkish government in order

to later obtain some favor from Erdogan. Internally, Orbán intends to ingratiate himself with his supporters and maintain or increase his popularity and, of course, obtain electoral profitability.

At the beginning of March 2023, a delegation of four Hungarian deputies belonging to the ruling Fidesz party traveled to Helsinki and Stockholm to learn more about the motives of the two Nordic countries for joining the Atlantic Alliance and to clarify some criticisms of both governments about certain authoritarian and anti-democratic biases of the Orbán government, however, Finnish congressmen, in the voice of the vice-president of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Finnish Parliament, Erkki Tuomioja, were angered by such an attitude and pointed out that “Finland has nothing to negotiate and has nothing explain to the Hungarian delegation”. It should be noted that the economic-commercial and political relationship of the two Nordic countries with Hungary is minimal, so there is no reason for the Orbán government to condition or want to obtain any advantage or type of benefit from grant ratification (Nagy, 2023).

It is necessary to point out that once Turkey grants its ratification, Hungary will do the same, the Budapest government would have no arguments to continue objecting to the entry of the two Nordic countries, in addition to the fact that it could not maintain its refusal because it lacks the specific weight, in political and geopolitical terms that Ankara has, if the opposite occurs, it would face strong and severe pressure from the European Union.

To further complicate the situation, in January 2023, an incident was recorded in Stockholm, near the Turkish embassy, which President Erdogan took advantage of to increase his rejection of Sweden’s entry into NATO. Rasmus Paludan, a far-right Swedish politician, burned the Koran. The Turkish president criticized this fact and demanded an explanation from the Swedish government, which replied that it could not do anything against Paludan because it would mean violating freedom of expression. Erdogan considered the burning of the holy book of Muslims a grievance and a lack of respect for the beliefs of the Islamic community. There were even several demonstrations against Sweden in various Muslim countries. The foregoing led to the cancellation of the visit of Pal Jonson, Swedish Defense Minister to Ankara, which meant the interruption of the approaches between the two governments to obtain Turkey’s consent for Sweden’s accession without there being a date to resume the talks.

Finland, which had been acting in conjunction with Sweden and which promised not to join NATO if Stockholm did not, would be reflecting on whether to wait for communication between Turkey and Sweden to be restored or act independently.

In this context, in October 2022, in the framework of the first meeting of the European Political Community, a forum attended by 44 leaders of the European Union and some other non-EU leaders, President Erdogan said that “his government is willing to do ‘everything possible’ to facilitate Finland’s entry into the Atlantic Alliance because it does not give shelter and support to people it considers terrorists” (La información Mundo, 2022), unlike what I had seen in the Swedish case, however, to date, nor the Turkish parliament has not ratified the entry of Finland nor has Helsinki broken the alliance with Stockholm in its objective of achieving joint membership in NATO.

In response to the position of Turkish President Jens Stoltenberg, NATO Secretary General, declared at the beginning of February 2023 that Sweden and Finland must enter the Atlantic Alliance “together”, adding that together they applied for membership, together we invite them, and together must achieve membership (Infobae, 2023).

### **The Earthquake in Turkey and the Aid Provided by NATO, Finland, and Sweden**

On February 6, 2023, a disastrous earthquake struck Turkey and Syria, leaving a trail of death and destruction of enormous proportions. As regards Turkey, the death toll exceeded 52,000 and material damage exceeded 100,000 million dollars according to World Bank calculations (DW, 2023). This telluric movement also had collateral effects and paused the negotiations between the two Nordic countries with Ankara.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, the Atlantic Alliance, Helsinki, and Stockholm were among the first to provide assistance to the Turkish government in dealing with the disaster. The day after the earthquake, NATO, Finland, and Sweden sent 1,400 rescuers to try to get as many people out of the rubble and the Swedish presidency decided, on February 6, 2023, “to activate the integrated political response to crises (IPCR) to coordinate EU support measures in response to the earthquake in Turkey and Syria, in close collaboration with the European Commission” (Padinger, 2023) the Council of the EU said in a statement. Perhaps this could serve for later, when Turkey has recovered from the effects of the earthquake, resume talks with Helsinki and Stockholm in a more constructive way so that your parliament grants the ratification of these two countries to join NATO.

The truth is that up to now Erdogan has made a political handling of the requests from Finland and Sweden seeking electoral profitability in the face of the elections that should be held in May 2023. In his public discourse he has always criticized the protests of the dissidents that they are in Sweden and he has magnified them to show an image of a president committed to the defense of the sovereignty and national security of Turkey and thereby increase his level of approval within his country and incidentally throw a smokescreen over the serious problems that afflict your country. The earthquake that occurred in a part of Turkey gave him the ideal pretext to indefinitely postpone talks with Finland and Sweden to grant them their NATO membership and try to obtain some kind of benefit to strengthen his regime. The Turkish president, who has been in power for 21 years, intends to perpetuate himself in the presidential chair and continue leading an authoritarian and repressive government that does not respect freedom of expression, democracy, or human rights.

The attitude assumed by Erdogan has several purposes, such as increasing the approval of his compatriots inside his country and abroad selling dearly his acceptance for the entry of the two Nordic countries into the North Atlantic military bloc, but also to highlight the importance geopolitics that your country has on various issues such as immigration and using it as a bargaining chip to obtain economic and political benefits from its European neighbors. Erdogan knows perfectly well that 30 votes are needed for Finland and Sweden to join NATO and that if he postpones their acceptance indefinitely, it also goes well with Moscow, which will be the main loser due to the enlargement and rapprochement of its borders by the Atlantic Alliance that it will surely strengthen and increase the number of military bases in the Scandinavian peninsula and, of course, the military force in the Baltic Sea area.

With Erdogan’s attitude, Vladimir Putin buys time to at least try to dominate and later appropriate the eastern side of Ukraine and once that objective is achieved, perhaps try to sign an armistice with Kiev to realign his army and increase his presence in the north of Ukraine. Russia, right on the border with Finland, which, as we pointed out before, is very long.

As can be seen, Erdogan plays a decisive role in this matter, he has outlined his political and geopolitical objectives well and, for some time, he will have the upper hand by subjecting his decisions to the European Union, to the Anglo-Saxon duo (United States and United Kingdom), to Finland and Sweden, and to Russia.

### Conclusions

Since its emergence, NATO was seen as a serious threat by the socialist bloc for this reason, and in order to counteract its presence, the USSR promoted the Treaty of Friendship, Collaboration and Mutual Assistance, better known as the Warsaw Pact. The objective of said treaty was to neutralize the threat posed by the Western military alliance and foster what has been called a “balance of power” taking into consideration that the sum of the armies that comprised it could deter NATO from an attack against him.

After the collapse of the socialist block, the nascent Russia continued to see NATO as a threat, which is why Moscow began negotiations with governments of Western powers to establish a gentlemen’s agreement so that it would not expand and reach its borders.

Faced with the obvious weakness of Russia in the 1990s and early 2000s, the European Union, as well as NATO, seized the opportunity and began their expansion into Eastern Europe to wrest from Moscow a good part of the countries that once belonged to the zone of influence of the USSR and transfer them, in economic-financial, commercial, monetary, and military terms, to the sphere of domination of the West, the above was considered by Russia as a true affront.

The aforementioned rekindled the geopolitical struggle between the United States-European Union triffecta, Great Britain against Russia, which worsened with the latter’s invasion of Ukrainian territory on February 24, 2022.

Finland, since the end of World War II, had remained non-aligned, militarily and politically neutral (this way of conducting foreign policy was called “Finnishization”) so as not to provoke Moscow. It is evident that Russia’s invasion of Ukraine made it change its position; joining NATO seemed to it the best option to safeguard its territorial integrity. Finland’s probable entry into NATO represents a threat to Russia, which is why the Kremlin made its deep concern known in May 2022 and pointed out that, given the Helsinki decision, Moscow would take all kinds of retaliatory measures to prevent its national security from being threatened.

Within the framework of the Second Cold War and Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, Sweden, like Finland, does not want to be a victim of Moscow’s attempt to reposition itself, so, faced with the potential threat to its territorial integrity and sovereignty, it opts to join to NATO. The application for membership was formalized at the Summit of the Atlantic Alliance in Madrid in June 2022.

In this context and shortly before Finland and Sweden submitted their formal application to join NATO, the Turkish government had become the main obstacle, the president of that country Recep Tayip Erdogan said that Turkey would not give in and described Sweden as a stronghold of terrorist organizations for having granted asylum to Kurdish opponents of his government, he also said that his country was suffering from the sanctions imposed by Sweden and criticized the governments of Finland and Sweden for having suspended arms sales to him.

However, regardless of the result of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, it is very likely that Finland and Sweden will enter the North Atlantic block in the short or medium term and with it practically all the coasts of the Baltic Sea, with the exception of the port city of Saint Petersburg. and the enclave of Kaliningrad, will come under the control of NATO affiliated countries whose military strength will be substantially increased and will greatly exceed its counterpart, the Collective Security Treaty Organization (heir to the Warsaw Pact) led by Russia.

Despite the fact that, as we pointed out lines above, Finland, Sweden, and Turkey signed an agreement within the framework of the Madrid Summit in which they promised to take action against militants of the



Kurdistan Workers' Party settled in their territory, extradite dissidents considered by Ankara as terrorists and lifting the ban on arms exports to Turkey, the president of that country Recep Tayip Erdogan said at the end of 2022 that his country would not give its final acceptance of the entry of the two Nordic states into NATO until July of 2023.

Once the Erdogan government grants its ratification, Hungary, which has supported Ankara's refusal to accept the entry of the two Nordic countries, since it does not have the same specific weight in political and geopolitical terms as Turkey, will have no other option to grant its approval unless it seeks to anger the EU and face some range of sanctions

Finland, which had been acting in conjunction with Sweden and which promised not to join NATO if Stockholm did not, would be reflecting on whether to wait for communication between Turkey and Sweden to be restored or act independently.

Erdogan knows perfectly well that 30 votes are needed for Finland and Sweden to join NATO and that if he indefinitely postpones their acceptance, it will be good for Moscow, which, if the expansion of the North Atlantic military bloc is consummated, will be the main loser. The Turkish president plays a decisive role in this matter, he has outlined his political and geopolitical objectives well and, for some time, he will have the upper hand by subordinating the European Union, the Anglo-Saxon duo (United States and United Kingdom) to Finland Sweden and Russia to their decisions.

Finally, it should be noted that, within the framework of the Second Cold War, the transformation of the scheme of alliances and geopolitical balances in Eastern Europe continues its march and that the danger of an escalation of the conflict between world and regional powers remains latent.

### **Epilogue**

Political pressure from the United States and European powers finally made Turkish President Recep Tayip Erdogan ask his country's Legislative Branch to ratify Finland's entry into NATO, which occurred on April 4, 2023, with which the Nordic country becomes the 31st member of the world's largest military alliance. The foregoing, as we point out throughout the article, has many meanings, including that Russia verifies that its invasion of Ukraine was perceived as a threat to Finland's national security and that, consequently, Helsinki abandoned its historic position of neutrality. Due to the above, NATO gains one more member, increases its geographical coverage, and expands and strengthens its military power. For its part, Russia, which has always opposed NATO expansion considering it a threat to its security and its natural area of influence, will try to increase its military infrastructure in the border area with Finland and will radicalize its discourse and actions against West. Sweden, for its part, will have to continue negotiating with the Turkish government to grant it its endorsement to join the North Atlantic military alliance, but without haste because it does not face the imminent danger of an armed aggression by Moscow and is also surrounded by States that do belong to NATO such as Norway, Finland, the Baltic countries, Poland, Germany, and Denmark.

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