**Finland joins Nato**

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Finland recently joining Nato may have created a ripple of excitement among warmongers sitting in the power corridors of London, Paris and Washington but it also seems to have pushed Europe and the world towards a precarious situation.

The Nordic nation’s accession was sealed during a formal ceremony at the Nato headquarters in Brussels on Tuesday (April 4). Finland has become the 31st member of the military alliance that was formed to counter the rise of communism and the threat of red revolution. This will add some 1,300 kilometres (830 miles) to the alliance’s frontier with Russia.

Nato officials are jubilant over this new development. During the ceremony, Nato Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg heralded the raising of the Finnish flag for the first time at the alliance’s headquarters in Belgium, saying “it will be a good day for Finland’s security, for Nordic security, and for Nato as a whole.”

The Finnish leadership also seems euphoric, hoping to get peace and security with the membership of a US-led military alliance. A statement issued by the Finnish presidency indicates that the Nordic country is optimistic about the future of its security.

To justify its decision to join the alliance, the statement adds, “each country maximizes its own security. So, does Finland. At the same time, Nato membership strengthens our international position and room for manoeuver. As a partner, we have long actively participated in Nato activities. In the future, Finland will contribute to Nato’s collective deterrence and defence.”

The development does not seem to have gone down well with Russia, which had been warning against Nato expansion for years. Moscow has made it clear that any further Nato expansion will not bring more stability to Europe. Russia on Monday had said it would scale up forces near Finland if the alliance sent any troops or equipment to the new member country.

“We will strengthen our military capabilities in the west and northwest if Nato members deploy forces and equipment on Finnish territory,” Russia’s Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Grushko told Russian state news agency RIA Novosti. Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov reiterated that Finland’s accession will force Moscow to “take counter-measures to ensure our own security, both tactically and strategically.”

Contrary to Finland’s hopes, many defence analysts believe that it will increase tensions between Russia and the Western military alliance. Russia has always been wary of Nato intentions. Such apprehensions existed even during the time of Gorbachev and Donald Reagan. Before the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the ruler of the communist country had made it clear that Moscow would not tolerate any eastward expansion of Nato. It is said that he was given assurances that no such expansion would be carried out to undermine Moscow.

But the US and the West had already started undermining Russia’s authority even before the fall of the Soviet Union. In February 1990, Iraq invaded Kuwait and there were ways to force Baghdad to end this invasion through non-military means. But the US and Nato opted to carry out ruthless bombardment across Iraq and Kuwait forcing Iraqi troops to retreat. It is believed that the US-Nato invasion against Iraq was carried out to test Russia’s patience. Given the internal chaos unfolding inside the USSR, Moscow remained a silent spectator

Russian politicians believe that the US and its Western allies did not keep their promises. Soon after the fall of the Soviet Union, Nato and its war machine first helped trigger a conflict in Yugoslavia and later orchestrated its dismemberment through machinations, outright invasion and ruthless bombardment. Western countries were believed to have thrown support behind various belligerent groups fighting in the former socialist country of Europe. The Slavs are ethnically close to Russians and the people of the two countries have strong cultural ties which is why the dismemberment was a big blow to the Russian prestige and power.

It was not only Yugoslavia where Nato and the US played an important role in undermining politicians who may have had sympathy for Moscow but Western countries also tried to take advantage of the crippling economic situation of Russia during the 1990s. They supported the oligarchs in the former communist country who got state-owned assets at throwaway prices, plunging the Russian economy into a deep crisis besides leading to a mushroom growth of various gangsters. They also tried to create chaos in various Russian republics, bankrolling insurgent and Islamist groups that were bent on seceding from the Russian Federation.

Although Russian’s suppression of these minorities was one of the reasons for the insurgencies, Western support for these militants provided Moscow an excuse to put all blame on Western powers. This support and other Western actions perhaps forced Moscow to claim that the West and the US were not ready to give up their cold war mentality.

Finland should not assume that such membership will ensure its security. It is rather a big step towards the Western plan of Russian encirclement. If Sweden and Ukraine also manage to become the member of this war machine club, this accomplishment will be final, isolating the biggest country on earth from the rest of Europe creating immense strategic and economic complications for Moscow.

But such encirclement could be catastrophic for Finland and other aspirants who want to join Nato. It is true that Nato and its member countries have reduced Iraq, Libya, Afghanistan and Syria to rubble. It is also correct that its fire power strikes fear in the heart of several defiant developing countries, but Russia is no Syria or Iraq. Its military is not as weak as that of Libya or Afghanistan. It is equipped with over 3,000 nuclear arsenals and sophisticated supersonic missiles which might go undetected through the Western radar system. It has one of the strongest armies in the world, which has not only curbed internal insurgencies but helped defeat ISIS in Syria as well.

So if a giant country is provoked, it might react in a terrible way and neighbouring states like Finland, Sweden and Norway could be the first casualty of such confrontation. Nordic nations need to realize that the Soviet Union lived in peace with them for almost seven decades except during World War II when Moscow picked a fight with Finland. Russia’s current fears seem logical. The giant country has witnessed at least three invasions – first by Napoleon, second by the US, UK and other Western countries soon after the Russian revolution of 1917 and third by Hitler, which proved to be catastrophic, claiming 27 to 40 million Russian lives.

After witnessing three invasions, why should Moscow not be sceptical of Western intentions? After all, Nato was created primarily to counter the red revolution and its export. No such export exists now. Since the Warsaw Pact is history now, why should Nato exist in the first place? So, instead of joining this evil war machine that has been involved in several conflicts since 1945, Finland should make efforts to normalize ties with Moscow and abolish this war machine.

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