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## **FINLAND AND SWEDEN'S ACCESSION TO NATO: SECURITY RISKS AND PROSPECTS**

*According to the general opinion, a certain geopolitical balance was established in the Northern European region during the Cold War. History has proved that most military operations in the Baltic region require access to what is today Finland's air, sea, and land. Of particular importance is the control of the Åland Islands, which border Swedish waters and serve as the "eastern gateway" to the Baltic Sea. Russia's proposals (demands) on security guarantees which were sent by the Russian Foreign Ministry for discussion on the 15th of December 2021 and made public on the 17th of December 2021, are often mentioned as the main reason for Finland and Sweden's official and decisive accession to NATO. Allegedly the draft agreements on security guarantees proposed by Russia to the United States and NATO, and in particular, on the non-expansion of the Alliance to the East and the limitation of any forward presence, were perceived by Finland and Sweden as an unacceptable attempt to infringe on their national sovereignty and the right to determine how to ensure their security. Ultimately, the full-scale military conflict in Ukraine that began on the 24th of February 2022 is often claimed to be the main rationale behind Finland's and Sweden's accession to NATO. This very conflict is said to have highlighted significant military and political tensions and threats from the side of the Russian Federation and finally convinced the governments of Finland and Sweden, as well as the governments of NATO member states, of the necessity to expand the North Atlantic Alliance on the basis of Finland and Sweden. However, the problem is much broader and deeper, and its genesis is not limited to Russia's recent (ultimatum) proposals for security guarantees and/or a military conflict in Ukraine. Moreover, Finland's and Sweden's accession to NATO does not necessarily mean greater security for these countries and the NATO bloc overall.*

**Keywords:** Finland, Sweden, NATO, security risks, security perspectives.

**Introduction.** From the end of World War II until the end of the Cold War the security policies (and in particular "freedom from any alliances") of Finland and Sweden were usually considered separately due to the different historical experiences of both countries, as well as their involvement in cooperation with different great powers and military-political blocs. In Sweden's case, it was interaction with the North Atlantic Alliance, and in Finland's case - with the USSR to which Finland had significant military and political (and other) obligations.

In the context of the balance of military and political forces in the North of Europe, the defence policy of Finland and Sweden during the Cold War was usually described within the framework of the concept of the "Nordic balance". This concept was developed and first substantiated by the Norwegian researcher Arne Olav Brundtland [4] and used by Scandinavian authors [10,32] as an analytical tool to explain the specifics of security relations in the Nordic region. The so-called northern balance was generally recognised by Soviet authors [16,23,26,30], and among other things, it assumed that the reaction to Sweden's accession to NATO would be a military shift of the USSR towards Finland, and vice versa.

The end of the Cold War resulted in a decisive breakdown of the "balance of power" in Central and Eastern Europe, as well as in the Baltic region and Northern Europe. This changed not only the nature of Finland's and Sweden's defence policies (and their interaction with NATO), but also the way researchers assessed these policies. For three consecutive decades, three approaches were to dominate. The first one, in particular, presented in L. Michel's "Sweden, Finland and NATO: From "Virtual" to Formal Allies" [28], as well as in M. Holmström's monograph "The Hidden Alliance: Sweden's Secret Relations with NATO" [20] and K. Korhonen's "A Transfer Treaty: In This Way Finland is Being Dragged" [24], was to argue that Sweden and Finland, even without formal membership in NATO, had been significantly integrated into its structure for a long time and actively participated in its activities. The second approach was based on the idea of regional cooperation between the two countries in the field of defence policy, both with each other and with their neighbours, regardless of their bloc affiliation, and with Sweden and Finland retaining "freedom from any alliances". This approach has been advocated by, among others, G. Åselius [2], H. Ojanen [33], Z. Sliwa [37], J. Tarkka [41], T. Forsberg [14], and others. At the same time, the third approach, presented in particular by U. Möller & U. Bjereld [29], as well as T. Forsberg & V. Tapani [15], relied on the concept of "post-neutrality" which was understood as the concept and strategy of formal non-alignment, which allegedly gradually evolve and are constantly redefined in both political and ideological terms.

In late 2021 and early 2022, due to the urgency of the problem itself, the issue of Finland and Sweden's accession to NATO came into the focus of attention of an even greater number of scholars, journalists, politicians, etc. Still, we believe that most of these works lack a historical perspective and consistency.

Russia's proposals (demands) on security guarantees which were sent by the Russian Foreign Ministry for discussion on the 15th of December 2021 and made public on the 17th of December 2021, are being often mentioned as the main reason for Finland and Sweden's official and decisive accession to NATO [3]. Allegedly the draft agreements on security guarantees proposed by Russia to the United States and NATO, and in particular on the non-expansion of the Alliance to the East and the limitation of any forward presence, were perceived by Finland and Sweden as an unacceptable attempt to infringe on their national sovereignty and the right to determine how to ensure their security. Ultimately, the full-scale military conflict in Ukraine that began on the 24th of February 2022 is often claimed to be the main rationale behind Finland's and Sweden's accession to NATO. This very conflict is said to have highlighted significant military and political tensions and threats from the side of the Russian Federation and finally convinced the governments of Finland and Sweden, as well as the governments of NATO member states, of the necessity to expand the North Atlantic Alliance on the basis of Finland and Sweden [18, 8,9,38].

However, the authors assume that the problem is much broader and deeper, and its genesis is not limited to Russia's recent (ultimatum) proposals for security guarantees and/or a military conflict in Ukraine. Moreover, Finland's and Sweden's accession to NATO does not necessarily mean greater security for these countries and the NATO bloc overall.

Thus, these issues require detailed and systematic study, which will ultimately enable a clearer assessment of security risks and security prospects for Finland and Sweden's accession to NATO.

**The aim of the study.** The study intends to definition the security risks and security prospects of Finland and Sweden's accession to NATO.

In view of the goal, the following research tasks are **defined**:

- analyze the security policy of Finland and Sweden during the Cold War. "Northern Balance";
- justify the security policy of Finland and Sweden after the end of the "Cold War". Integration into the EU and NATO;
- to substantiate the ways of formation and effectiveness of the geopolitical aspects of the accession of Finland and Sweden to NATO.

**Research Methodology.** The approaches that were applied to achieve the goal of the study are systematic and interdisciplinary.

In addition, common academic research methods were employed, including induction and deduction, analysis and synthesis, comparison and analogy, generalisation and abstraction, as well as specific research methods, including descriptive, prognostic, problem-chronological, and content analysis, etc.

**The results.** During the Cold War, a certain geopolitical equilibrium was established in the Northern European region which is known in the academic literature as the Northern Balance.

In the classical concept of the "Northern Balance" A.O. Brundtland foresaw the following operational factors that demonstrate the dynamics of the theory.

1. Membership of Norway and Denmark in NATO on the basis of "minimum conditions". In Norway's

case, it meant (a) that through a note to the Soviet Union in 1949, the government pledged "not to have bases for the military forces of foreign countries on Norwegian territory as long as Norway is not under attack or threat of attack" and (b) involved the decision of the Norwegian parliament in 1961 declaring that the country would not allow nuclear weapons to be stored on Norwegian soil in peacetime.

2. Sweden's policy of "freedom from any alliances", based on strong traditions of national defence.

3. Finland's policy of neutrality under the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance with the Soviet Union.

By the Northern Balance, A.O. Brundtland argued that the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance between the Soviet Union and Finland "in certain aspects" should be considered a potential military alliance. This potential Soviet-Finnish alliance in the East balanced the membership of Norway and Denmark in NATO, with Sweden acting as a so-called neutral buffer between them [32, p.44].

Consequently, if military cooperation within NATO increased, it could be counterbalanced by the Soviet Union's strengthening of military cooperation with Finland. And vice versa, Norway could influence Soviet policy towards Finland by reassessing its defence policy (for example, by allowing NATO to deploy military bases and nuclear facilities on its territory). This ensured a certain balance of global forces and regional stability in the region [40, p.226].

But, in fact, not only the Scandinavian region, as in A.O. Brundtland's classic concept, but also the Baltic region could be divided into three parts: The USSR and its Eastern Bloc allies (the GDR and Poland), NATO member states (Germany, Denmark and, to some extent, Norway), and (conditionally) neutral states such as Finland and Sweden. It was generally believed that this geopolitical configuration ensured stability in the Baltic and Northern Europe due to the balanced interests of the USSR and NATO in the region. The issue of Finland and Sweden's membership in NATO was certainly not on the agenda, as it would have undermined confidence in the neutrality policy of both states, would have guaranteed to cause concern among the Soviet leadership, and, ultimately, significantly aggravated the situation in the region.

At the same time, despite the formally neutral status of both countries and their regional neighbourhood and interaction, Finland's and Sweden's foreign policy during the Cold War was somewhat different.

During the Cold War, both in theory and practice, the Finnish version of neutrality was linked to the confrontation between the US and the USSR, where Finland was considered a small state [35, p.29]. After World War II (and as a result of it) Finland was quite dependent on the USSR, in particular, in 1948, the two states signed the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance (*Dogovor o druzhbe...*). The most important thing for Finland was the preamble of the agreement in which the Soviet Union recognized Finland's determination to stay out of the conflict of the great powers and Finnish politicians considered this interpretation as a Soviet recognition of Finland's neutrality [45, p.12].

At the same time Sweden, while formally declaring neutrality or "freedom from alliances", was so-called "secret member of NATO" [14, p.1166] through close (mostly bilateral) ties and agreements. Specifically, in 1952, Stockholm and Washington signed a mutual assistance agreement, according to which Sweden undertook to provide NATO with its airspace and military infrastructure, if necessary. In return, the United States committed to defend Sweden in the event of an attack by the USSR. Sweden also actively developed defence cooperation with Norway and Denmark which had been NATO members since the Alliance's founding, but Sweden itself did not maintain official contacts with NATO until the early 1990s [21, p.66-67].

During the Cold War Finland and Sweden were wary of European integration, believing that such policies would potentially undermine the credibility of their neutral positions. However, in 1995, a few years after the collapse of the global bipolar order, Finland and Sweden simultaneously became full members of the EU. The simultaneous accession of Finland and Sweden to the European Union brought the standpoints of the states closer in many ways. And since (according to the Maastricht Treaty of 1992) EU member states have a common foreign and security policy, by joining the EU, Finland, and Sweden have, in fact, lost the status of "neutral" states that independently determine their foreign and security policy [5,27,31]. Finland and Sweden are among the states that support the development of the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP), in particular, through their participation in EU battlegroups [27,28].

In early 1992. The Russian Federation and Finland signed a treaty that replaced the former Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance between the USSR and Finland. According to the new treaty, Finland no longer had any obstacles to entering into political or military alliances with a third party (*Dogovor mezhdru Rossijskoj...*). In other words, Finland regained full sovereignty and opened the way to a new interpretation of neutrality. After a lengthy debate on whether joining the EEC (later the EU) was consistent

with the principle of neutrality, in 1992 the Finnish government defined the country's foreign policy strategy as a combination of independent defence and military non-alignment, which generally opened the way for Finland to join Western political structures and blocs [45]. "Military non-alignment" (as a substitute for "neutrality") was adopted as an official formulation by the Finnish parliament in March 1997. The other two fundamental principles of Finnish foreign policy were an independent defence policy and Finnish membership in the European Union [35].

In the early 1990s, the expanding concept of security and the emergence of new threats made Sweden hesitate to join the EU. At the same time, the Conservatives, led by Carl Bildt, came to power in Sweden for the first time in many years. The political declaration of the new government stated that full participation in European cooperation was Sweden's priority. Under such circumstances, Sweden's neutrality policy had to undergo certain transformations [19]. The Swedish policy of neutrality was considered to be incompatible with EU membership, but the political will of the new government to join the EU was stronger than the desire to maintain state neutrality. Such an erosion of the neutrality principle, which was generally recognised by the Swedish government itself, was seen as a logical consequence of Sweden's entry into an organisation based on solidarity. The updated wording of 1991 sounded like "non-participation in alliances in peacetime, aimed at neutrality in war" [19,35].

Finland's and Sweden's foreign policy bias towards neutrality was once again brought into question when they co-joined the Partnership for Peace (PfP) programme, which was launched at the NATO Brussels Summit in January 1994. The Partnership for Peace became an effective platform for rapprochement between Finland and Sweden and the North Atlantic Alliance, although formally, according to the leadership of these states, PfP (as well as subsequent programmes to deepen military cooperation with NATO) did not contradict the policy of Finland and Sweden's nonalignment with military alliances [35].

Finland's and Sweden's accession to PfP was considered acceptable as it supported the transformation of military capabilities and improved interoperability with NATO member states without the obvious risk of joining the Alliance. It was believed that the PfP offered the necessary freedom to individually decide in which areas and how to cooperate with NATO. Finland and Sweden have consistently strengthened their relations with NATO and participated in many of its conflict management operations (e.g., in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Afghanistan, Libya, counter-piracy, etc.) [45,27].

In the early 1990s, Finland and Sweden expressed their interest in cooperating with NATO, but did not officially inform NATO of any intention to join the Alliance. At the same time, Finland and Sweden (represented by their leadership) have repeatedly emphasised that although they did not seek NATO membership then, they did not exclude such a possibility in the future [31,35].

Thus, after the end of the Cold War, Finland and Sweden actively sought opportunities to join the Euro-Atlantic security system, but at the same time tried to minimise their permanent commitments.

One of these "palliatives" was the establishment of the Nordic Defence Cooperation (NORDEF) in late 2009, which brought together the supposedly non-aligned Sweden and Finland and three NATO member states: Norway, Denmark, and Iceland. This organisation covered, among other things, strategy development and cooperation (including planning and execution) in NATO- and EU-led operations, and potentially UN-led operations. NORDEF acted as a channel for Finns and Swedes to access information on NATO activities and thinking, etc. [1,28].

The annexation of Crimea in 2014 prompted Finland and Sweden to reassess their defence capabilities on a practical level and opened new public discussions on the feasibility of these countries' accession to NATO [9]. The NATO Summit in Wales, held in September 2014, was crucial in terms of qualitatively reinforcing Sweden and Finland's cooperation with the North Atlantic Alliance. At the summit, Sweden and Finland were granted the status of Enhanced Opportunities Partnership and signed Host Nation Agreements with the Alliance, which facilitated NATO military exercises on their territory [25,31].

These decisions became the legal basis for the mutual integration of the member states of the bloc into the military training activities of Finland and Sweden, as well as for the participation of the latter in the combat training of the Alliance forces (primarily the Rapid Reaction Force and especially its naval component). These decisions identified the course of Finland and Sweden to establish multidirectional (particularly institutionalised in a number of fields) military and political cooperation with the Alliance. For example, as soon as in 2016-2017, Sweden and Finland engaged their strike forces (from all branches of the armed forces) in the process of training NATO's rapid reaction forces [42].

According to the documents, the political elites of Finland and Sweden were in principle ready for their countries' official accession to NATO long before 24 February 2022, but were waiting for the right moment

"taking into account changes in the international security environment". In particular, the document titled "Government Report on Finnish Foreign and Security Policy" (2020) stated that: "NATO is a key player in promoting transatlantic and European security and stability. ... In the changed security environment, the strategic importance of Northern Europe has increased, and NATO has opened up new opportunities for cooperation for Finland and Sweden. ... Retention of national space for manoeuvre and freedom of choice are also integral parts of Finland's foreign, security, and defence policy. This preserves the option of joining a military alliance and applying for NATO membership. Decisions are always reviewed in real time, keeping in mind changes in the international security environment. The interoperability achieved through cooperation ensures that any practical obstacles confronting potential membership are removed" [17].

The right moment for changes in Finland's and Sweden's official policy on NATO membership came at the end of 2021 when Russia launched large-scale military exercises on Ukraine's border. The Russian leadership sought assurances that NATO (and its infrastructure) would no longer expand eastwards [3]. In return, Finnish President Sauli Niinistö made it clear that Finland reserved the right to join NATO. Niinistö later stated that the impetus for starting the membership application process was that Russia tried to deny Finland and Sweden's right to freedom of choice, but the final decision came only after Russia had invaded Ukraine [31].

On the 18th of May 2022, Finland and Sweden simultaneously submitted their applications to join NATO to NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg. On the 29th of June 2022, at the NATO Summit in Madrid, NATO Heads of State and Government formally invited Finland and Sweden to join the Alliance. On the 5th of July 2022, the Protocols of Accession of both countries to NATO were signed. On the 4th of April 2023, following the ratification of the relevant Protocol by all Allies, Finland officially became the 31st member of NATO (RATIFICATION OF FINLAND...).

On the 5th of March 2024, the President of Hungary Tomas Szuik signed the Protocol of Ratification of Sweden's Accession to NATO (approved by the Hungarian Parliament on the 26th of February 2024). Hungary became the last country to ratify the protocol, thus removing the last obstacle to Sweden's membership in the North Atlantic Alliance (Uhorshchyna zavershyla ratyfikatsiiu...). On the 7th of March 2024, Sweden officially became the 32nd member of NATO (Sweden officially joins...).

Since the end of the Cold War (and as a result of it), the defence (and more broadly, security) policies of Finland and Sweden have changed dramatically, and their contours have become more similar than ever before. Specifically, on the path to NATO, Finland and Sweden have tried to act within the framework of the "together and at the same time" principle [21]. However, despite all the similarities, there were some differences in the security policies of Finland and Sweden, primarily due to the differences in (pre)histories and geopolitics of Finland and Sweden.

While Finland has a difficult experience of wars with Soviet Russia and the USSR in the twentieth century and a long land border with Russia (almost 1300 km), Sweden is separated from Russia by a kind of buffer zone, namely Finland. Finnish diplomat and journalist Max Jacobson offered the following perspective on the geopolitical situation in the region: "On a higher level Finland and Sweden are closer than ever before, but on a deeper level the geopolitical border has not disappeared. Finland is still a border country, a buffer to Sweden to the east" (Jacobson, 1998, as cited in Forsberg & Vaahtoranta, 2001). On this basis Christer Wahlbäck described Finland as a "threatened country" in contrast to "protected" Sweden (Wahlbäck, 1999, as cited in Forsberg & Vaahtoranta, 2001).

Even though Sweden is geographically distant from Russia and has no common land border with it, its geographical location (especially in terms of confrontation with Russia) can hardly be overestimated. The geographical location of the Swedish island of Gotland and the deployment of combat systems there allows it to control sea and air routes through the Baltic Sea, and above all to control its central part which is directly related to the security of the Baltic republics [6].

Finland is also of strategic importance for the security of the Baltic States and the Baltic region in general. As history has shown, most military operations in the Baltic region require access to what is currently Finland's air, sea, and land. In particular, control over the Åland Islands, which border Swedish waters and serve as the "eastern gateway" to the Baltic Sea, is important [7].

In addition, Finland (together with Estonia) can geostrategically control the Gulf of Finland, and through it - the key "waterway" between Russia's semi-exclave in the Baltic - the Kaliningrad region - and the rest of Russia.

On the 13th of August 2022, in his interview with the Finnish newspaper Iltalehti, Estonian Defence Minister Hanno Pevkur stated that "the Baltic Sea will become NATO's inland sea when Finland and Sweden

join NATO". He said that Estonia and Finland intend to integrate their coastal defence systems. And since "the range of Estonian and Finnish missiles exceeds the width of the Gulf of Finland, it means that we [Estonia and Finland] can connect our anti-missile defences and share all the information between us" [22].

Roughly the same logic can be seen in Estonia's attempts to introduce a maritime "contiguous zone" in the Gulf of Finland. The Estonian leadership believes that this will allow Estonia to inspect Russian warships and civilian vessels, and eventually block unwanted Russian shipping through the Gulf (Estoniaa mozhе perekryty...). As a result, the Russian naval headquarters in St. Petersburg may be cut off (at least by sea) from the Russian Baltic Fleet. And the Kaliningrad region will become Russia's only access to this important body of water [22].

Thus, the establishment of NATO's geostrategic control over the Gulf of Finland through Finland's accession to the Alliance (and its further military integration with Estonia), puts Russia's key "waterway" in the Baltic at risk [7,22].

The Kaliningrad region is a small Russian semi-exclave on the Baltic Sea bordering Lithuania and Poland, but its role in Russia's military strategy in the Baltic cannot be overstated. The Kaliningrad region is the base of Russia's Baltic Fleet where advanced S-400 air defence systems and even Iskander missile systems are deployed. The Iskander missiles can carry nuclear or conventional warheads and have a range of 250 miles, allowing them to reach Riga, Vilnius, and Warsaw. At the same time Russia is keeping its navy and naval forces in the region on alert, particularly by conducting naval exercises, modernising runways at Chernyakhovsk and Donskoye air bases in Kaliningrad region, etc. [7,44].

At the same time, the Kaliningrad region is a double-edged sword for Russia (and, ultimately, for the entire region). Although Kaliningrad is Russia's forward bastion in the Baltic, which is supposed to ensure the implementation of Russia's defence and security strategy in the region, it is also vulnerable in terms of its possible defence [34]. For the authors, this means that the risks for Finland and Sweden, and especially the Baltic states, are only growing.

Finland's and Sweden's accession to NATO significantly strengthens the Alliance's military capabilities, both on the northern and eastern borders and in general. Sweden has relatively small but well-equipped and trained armed forces, as well as a developed military-industrial complex, while Finland retains a large mobilisation potential, a system of universal military service, and an effective territorial defence system [28].

The significant military potential of Finland and Sweden can be effectively used in the Scandinavian, Baltic or even Arctic theatre. In the context of the reduction in the quantitative characteristics (number of personnel, weapons, and military equipment) of the armed forces of NATO member states, which has been observed in recent decades, Finland's and Sweden's accession to the Alliance is of paramount importance [28].

In any case, considering the geopolitical location of forces in the Baltic, NATO's increased presence in the region (by bringing Finland and Sweden into the Alliance) gives NATO more effective control over the region. Most importantly, it expands the Alliance's ability to respond quickly and effectively to a possible Russian military aggression against the three Baltic republics - Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania [7].

At the same time, the expansion of NATO (and its capabilities) through the accession of Finland and Sweden does not automatically mean greater security in the Baltic region. Although the Russian leadership has made numerous claims to the contrary, NATO's expansion in Northern Europe is seen as a serious challenge and potential threat to Russia [38].

**Conclusion.** According to the general opinion, a certain geopolitical balance was established in the Northern European region during the Cold War, which is called the "Northern Balance" in the academic literature. The classic concept of A.O. Brundtland referred to the Scandinavian region, but, as a matter of fact, the Baltic region might fit into this concept.

The Baltic region could be divided into three parts: The USSR and its Eastern Bloc allies (the GDR and Poland), NATO member states (Germany, Denmark, and, to some extent, Norway), and (conditionally) neutral states such as Finland and Sweden. It was generally believed that this geopolitical configuration ensured stability in the Baltic and Northern Europe due to the balanced interests of the USSR and NATO in the region. Of course, the issue of Finnish and Swedish membership in NATO was not raised, as it would have undermined confidence in the neutrality policy of both states, guaranteed to cause concern for the Soviet leadership, and, as a result, fundamentally aggravated the situation in the region.

The situation changed fundamentally after the end of the Cold War when Finland and Sweden began to actively seek opportunities to join the Euro-Atlantic security system, but at the same time tried to minimise their long-term commitments.

Yet in the early 1990s, Finland and Sweden expressed their interest in cooperating with NATO, and repeatedly made it clear that while they did not aspire to NATO membership at that point, they still did not rule out the possibility in the future.

Assisted by European security initiatives (the EU Battlegroups) and regional security structures (NORDEFECO), Finland and Sweden had gradually deepened their cooperation with NATO and adopted its standards.

As the documents attest, the political elites of Finland and Sweden were in principle ready for their countries' official accession to NATO long before 24 February 2022, but they were waiting for the right moment to "take into account changes in the international security environment". The appropriate situation arose in late 2021 and early 2022 when the Russian leadership resolutely demanded guarantees that NATO (and its facilities) would no longer expand to the East, especially after Russia invaded Ukraine.

Although Sweden is geographically distant from Russia and has no common ground border with it, its geographical location (especially in terms of confrontation with Russia) cannot be overestimated. The geographical location of the Swedish island of Gotland and the deployment of combat systems there allow it to control sea and air routes across the Baltic Sea, and above all to control its central part, which is directly related to the security of the Baltic republics.

Finland is also of strategic importance for the security of the Baltic States and the Baltic region as a whole. History has proved that most military operations in the Baltic region require access to what is today Finland's air, sea, and land. Of particular importance is the control of the Åland Islands, which border Swedish waters and serve as the "eastern gateway" to the Baltic Sea.

In any case, considering the geopolitical location of forces in the Baltic, increasing NATO's presence in the region (by bringing Finland and Sweden into the Alliance) gives NATO more effective control over the region. Most importantly, it enhances the Alliance's ability to respond quickly and effectively to a possible Russian military aggression against the three Baltic republics - Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania.

At the same time, the expansion of NATO (and its capabilities) by adding Finland and Sweden does not automatically mean greater security in the Baltic region. Although the Russian leadership has made numerous claims to the contrary, NATO's expansion in Northern Europe is seen as a serious challenge and potential threat to Russia.

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### **Сокур Н., Гнездова С., Остапчук Т., Остапчук Л. Вступ Фінляндії та Швеції до НАТО: ризики та перспективи безпеки**

Дослідження присвячено визначенню ризиків та перспектив вступу Фінляндії та Швеції до НАТО. Прийнято вважати, що у період холодної війни в північноєвропейському регіоні встановився певний геополітичний баланс. Історія довела, що для більшості військових операцій у Балтійському регіоні потрібен доступ до повітря, моря та землі Фінляндії. Особливо важливим є контроль над Аландськими островами, які межують зі шведськими водами та служать «східними воротами» до Балтійського моря. Пропозиції (вимоги) Російської Федерації щодо гарантій безпеки, які були направлені МЗС Росії для обговорення 15 грудня 2021 року та оприлюднені 17 грудня 2021 року, часто називають головною причиною офіційного та рішучого вступу Фінляндії та Швеції до НАТО. Тобто, запропоновані Російською Федерацією США та НАТО проекти угод про гарантій безпеки, зокрема про нерозширення Альянсу на схід і обмеження будь-якої передової присутності, були сприйняті Фінляндією та Швецією як неприйнятна спроба посягати на їхній національний суверенітет і право визначати, як забезпечити свою безпеку. Зрештою, повномасштабний військовий конфлікт в Україні, який розпочався 24 лютого 2022 року, часто називають основною причиною вступу Фінляндії та Швеції до НАТО. Саме цей конфлікт підкреслив значну військово-політичну напругу та загрози з боку Російської Федерації та остаточно переконав уряди Фінляндії та Швеції, а також уряди держав-членів НАТО в необхідності розширення Північноатлантичного альянсу на основі Фінляндії та Швеції. Однак проблема є набагато ширшою та глибшою, і її генезис не обмежується нещодавніми (ультиматумними) пропозиціями Російської Федерації щодо гарантій безпеки та/або військового конфлікту в Україні. Крім того, вступ Фінляндії та Швеції до НАТО не обов'язково означає підвищення безпеки для цих країн і блоку НАТО в цілому.

**Ключові слова:** Фінляндія, Швеція, НАТО, ризики безпеки, перспективи безпеки.