

Finnish Foreign Policy

As a democracy with a free-market economy, Finland has strong ties to the West. A member of the Nordic Council with Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Iceland, it shares a common labour market and reciprocal welfare benefits. Finland is also a member of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the Council of Europe, the United Nations (UN), the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), and other financial institutions.

Finland's geographic location, small population and historical experience have necessitated the development of close and mutually beneficial relations with the U.S.S.R. Under the 1948 Finnish-Soviet Agreement on Friendship, Co-operation and Mutual Assistance, in force until 2003, Finland is committed to resist armed attack against Finland, or against the U.S.S.R. through Finland.

This does not give the Soviet Union the right to send troops into Finland by unilateral decision, since the clause is "subject to mutual agreement" by the two countries. Finland maintains healthy economic ties and ongoing political dialogue with the U.S.S.R.

In light of a need to maintain a careful balance with its Eastern and Western neighbours, Finland is a member of the Neutral and Non-Aligned Group and has constantly pursued a policy of neutrality that is recognized by both East and West.

Because Finnish security concerns would be threatened by conflict anywhere in Europe, it strongly supports arms control and disarmament; in particular, Finland seeks the establishment of a Nordic nuclear-free zone. Since 1955, Finland has been an active member of the UN and its specialized agencies, and was elected for a two-year term on the Security Council (1989-90).

Finland is particularly active in UN peacekeeping forces such as UNIFIL (Lebanon), UNDOF (Middle East), UNTSO (Middle East), UNMOGIP (India/Pakistan), UNFICYP (Cyprus) and UNTAG (Namibia).

Finland was host to the 1975 Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) at which the Helsinki Agreement was signed; it hosted the 10th anniversary commemoration in 1985 and has been selected to host the 1992 CSCE follow-up meeting.

Finland met its 0.7% of GNP target for foreign aid in 1989. It has bilateral development programs of concentration with selected states located mostly in Africa and Asia, with 30% of its bilateral aid going to the least developed countries (LDCs).

Finland's armed forces number 36,500, of which the army accounts for 31,000. Military service is compulsory for men, followed by refresher courses up to the age of 50. Finland has reserves of 700,000, some 210,000 of which, with the regulars, would form a fast deployment force in an emergency. The defence budget amounts to 1.4% of GNP. Finland manufactures about one third of its own military equipment and buys the rest equally from East and West.