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Introduction

In February 2022, a war broke out in Ukraine which attracted the world's attention. All eyes turned to witness what would happen to this ruthlessly attacked country and its somewhat unexpected, heroic defence in the face of Russian aggression. The fate of a country invaded by Russia brought the problems of Europe's security architecture to the fore once again, as had been the case several times in the 20th century. It is no stretch to say that one of the most significant results of the Russian invasion has been the initiation of the procedure of the enlargement of NATO in the north of the continent. Two hitherto neutral (or non-aligned) countries, namely, Finland and Sweden, have decided to apply for NATO membership which will inevitably change the geopolitical situation of the Baltic region and the situation of the European north significantly. Today, the procedure of the accession of these two northern states is already in motion, and it seems that, in 2023, they will become full members of the North Atlantic Pact. In this context, it is necessary to ask what the public's opinion is, or, to put it colloquially, what do average people from the USA, Canada, and European member states of NATO really know about their future northern allies? And does what they know go beyond certain stereotypes?

The editors of *Studia Europejskie – Studies in European Affairs* have created the unique opportunity to improve the level of knowledge about one of the two aforementioned countries – and in this edition's case, it is Finland. They have decided to organise a special issue of their journal exclusively dedicated to that particular country, and put it in the hands of guest editors who have invited recognised specialists to share their opinions and views on various aspects of Finland; its history, society, politics, relationships with its neighbours, its economy, culture, security questions etc., and give them the pages of an entire, special issue of their journal. Although Finland is one of the states constituting the northern part of the European Union (EU) and which has held the Presidency of the Council of the EU three times to date (in 1999, 2006, and 2019), public knowledge about its socio-economic, political, and cultural realities as well as its historical experience, is rather limited in countries situated to the south. In this sense, Finland remains somewhat an enigma and still waits to be thoroughly explicitised or, essentially, 'discovered'. This lack of information is, however, inspirational to a degree, and the expected Finnish membership of NATO has sparked a new wave of interest in all things Finnish. For researchers in Finland, but also in other European countries, discovering this Finnish *terra incognita* – in a wider-audience sense – actually offers an opportunity to present the results of their own research and bring today's Finland closer to the international public.

The invitation from guest editors of this special Finnish issue of *Studia Europejskie – Studies in European Affairs* has been accepted not only by Finnish and Polish scholars, but also by their colleagues from Sweden and Germany. It is also important that the arguments of those invited authors have been based on scientific approaches and analyses, thereby characterising each paper's research.

The guest editors believe that the collection of works proposed as the content of this special issue of *Studia Europejskie – Studies in European Affairs* will bring Finland closer not only to readers in Poland, but also to anybody else who wants to know more about Russia's neighbour to the west. Bearing in mind the public significance of their work, they wish the readers an engrossing, intellectual adventure which broadens their perspective on the country that was (according to the ancient Roman poet Virgil) once part of *Ultima Thule* and, today, in difficult times, co-constitutes the northern flank of a Europe not free from anxieties about the future, yet full of hope for tomorrow's success.

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In the Shadow of the Eastern Neighbour. Finland in the Security Policy of Russia and the Soviet Union from Peter the Great to Contemporary Times

Abstract

Throughout its history, Finland's relations with Russia have generally been determined by Russian attempts to secure control over the eastern part of the Baltic Sea region. In medieval times, it was mainly about the control of trade routes, especially between Novgorod, and Western Europe and Byzantium. After the founding of the new city of St. Petersburg by Peter the Great in 1703, the rulers of Russia were faced with the problem of ensuring security to that city. From a Russian point of view, it became vitally important to gain control over lands on the eastern side of the Baltic Sea. When Finland became a Russian province in 1809, it seemed that the Baltic security dilemmas of Russia had finally been resolved. However, the collapse of Tsarist Russia in 1917 changed that particular situation. Finland became independent, and Russia's border moved east to the outskirts of St. Petersburg (renamed Petrograd during World War I).
For the leaders of the Soviet Union, which had replaced the Romanov Empire, World War II provided an opportunity to try to regain lost Finnish territories. Although the Red Army did not manage to conquer Finland, during two wars (occurring between 1939–1940 and 1941–1944), the post war settlement saw the Soviet-Finnish border shift back westwards. Finland also had to reckon with the requirements of the USSR's security policy and make it a priority of its own foreign policy.

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After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Finland modified its policy of neutrality and adopted a doctrine of non-alignment that has remained in place to this day. However, the increase of tensions in international relations in recent years, due to Russia's aggressive foreign policy threatening its neighbours, has forced Finnish statesmen to rethink their country's security policy. After the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, Finland, together with Sweden, decided to apply for NATO membership. The ratification procedure is ongoing.
The aim of this paper is to analyse, in a longer historical perspective, what Finland's place was as regards the Russian and Soviet security policy, from Peter the Great to our times. The methodological approach reflects the chronology of events which have occurred in the eastern part of the Baltic Sea region in the last 300 years. They are described to provide readers with necessary facts, and create the background for conclusions on the reasons for the Russian/Soviet policy towards Finland and, in a broader sense, the northern coasts of the Gulf of Finland.

Keywords: Finland, Russia, Soviet Union, Eastern Baltic, Sankt Petersburg

Historical Preconditions: Russia, Sweden, and Finland. From the Great Northern War to 1809

On March 29th, 1809, during a session of the Diet of Finland, Tsar Alexander I of Russia, after receiving the oath of allegiance from the representatives of Finnish states and recognising him as the ruler of Finland, pledged that he would rule the country that had just come under his rule in accordance with its laws, and its inhabitants would be able to preserve their religion and customs (Jussila et al., 1999, pp. 14–16; Lavery, 2006, p. 52). It thus became an autonomous part of the Romanov Empire, a Grand Duchy which was formally united with Russia by a personal union. Thus, it began a new phase in Finland's history which, for six centuries, had been a part of the Kingdom of Sweden. It began as a result of the Russia/Sweden war, in 1808–1809, which ended in victory for Russia (Lindgren, 1959, pp. 9–14; Jussila et al., 1999, pp. 14–16).

The Finnish War, as the conflict of 1808-1809 went down in history, ended with Russia achieving a goal that its rulers had dreamed of at least since the time of Ivan IV Vasilyevich, better known as Ivan the Terrible. This was to provide Russia with secure access to the Baltic Sea and control the trade routes running through the eastern part of the Baltic region (Wittram, 1973, pp. 30–38; Ochmański, 1980, pp. 110–114, 134; Sundberg, 1998, pp. 74–86, 126–135, 220–227; Kagarlicki, 2012, pp. 134–145).

However, it was Peter the Great who took the Russo-Swedish conflict to a completely different level when, in 1703, during the Great Northern War (1700–1721), he decided to build the Peter and Paul Fortress on land formally still belonging to Sweden – the nucleus of St Petersburg, and the future capital of the Russian Empire, which came about ten years later (Troyat, 2005, pp. 102–103, 115–120; Carrère d'Encausse, 2014, p. 60; Anisimow, 2017, p. 179). Peter the Great's decision was a demonstration of his aspirations. The centre of his empire was to be located on the Baltic Sea. It was, therefore, clear that Tsar Peter was no longer interested in controlling the trade routes through the Baltic Sea and its coastal areas, but rather in shifting the centre of gravity of the empire westwards to the Gulf of Finland. By founding St. Petersburg at the mouth of the Neva, he had achieved his goal (Troyat, 2005, p. 185; Anisimow, 2017, p. 184; Istoricheskij fakul'tet Moskovskogo Gosudarstvennoho Universiteta imeni M.V. Lomonosova, N.D.).

Thus, if St. Petersburg was to continue and develop as the capital of the entire empire, the Russian rulers had to answer the question of what to do to ensure its security. This could only happen after assuming control of both the northern and southern shores of the Gulf of Finland. According to this concept, Finland and Estonia were to be assigned the role of buffer zones which would protect St. Petersburg from the west. After all, the geopolitical fact created by Peter the Great had to have its consequences. Sweden not only lost the war and its status as a regional Baltic power, but also began to lose its Finnish borderlands to Russia, which had "always" been a part of its territory.

For the next eighty-eight years, despite Russia's growing power and Sweden's gradual loss of importance, the kingdom of the Swedes did not give up on regaining its lost position and territories. Russian-Swedish relations in this period can, therefore, hardly be characterised as being friendly and peaceful. It is, in fact, to the contrary; in the 17th century alone, two more wars broke out. The first of them, occurring between 1741–1743, was lost by Sweden, and, in its course, Finland found itself under Russian occupation (LeDonne, 2003, p. 50; Bazylow, 2005, p. 160; Oakley, 2005, pp. 129–132; Anisimow 2017, p. 205). In 1743, the Swedish government had to ask for peace, as a result of which the Finnish lands with such cities as Lappeenranta (in Swedish, Vilmanstrand) and Hamina (Frederikshamn) were absorbed into Russia's borders (Kruhse, 2006; Bagger, 1993, pp. 55–56).

In 1788, Sweden struck back. This time, however, the primary cause of the war was the internal situation of the Swedish kingdom (King Gustav III Vasa, trying to strengthen his position and prestige in the country, also needed success in foreign policy) (LeDonne, 2003, pp. 111–112; Troyat, 2006, pp. 263–264). The Swedish commanders planned to launch a combined fleet-and-land army attack through Finnish territory on St. Petersburg. However, such an operation succeeded only partly, because the Swedish troops operating in Finland were too weak (Jägerskiöld, 1957, pp. 317–319). In August 1790, a new peace treaty was signed at Värälä (in Swedish, Wereloe), near Kouvola. It confirmed the current course of the Swedish-Russian border and abolished the right of Russia to interfere in Sweden's internal affairs, primarily related to succession to the throne in Stockholm (Jägerskiöld, 1957, pp. 334–336; Russkaja Ideia, 2007). In any case, by 1790, the Swedes had finally come to terms with the loss of their former eastern Finnish borderlands.

Autonomous Grand Duchy of Finland – The North-western Buffer Zone of the Russian Empire (1809–1917)

Meanwhile, in 1807, at Tilsit, after the dismantling of Prussia, Napoleon met with Emperor Alexander I of Russia to outline the framework of the order in which the two powers would coexist in the future (Lefebvre, 1969; Seton-Watson, 1989, p. 114; Bazylow, 2005, p. 194; Hårstedt, 2011, pp. 63–64). Although these agreements lasted only five years, anyone who underestimated their long-term significance would be mistaken. The two rulers then divided their spheres of influence in Germany, Central Europe, and the Baltic region in an attempt to settle the most pressing foreign and security policy issues of their countries. When one looks today at the engravings depicting Napoleon and Alexander tenderly embracing each other or exchanging handshakes, one is irresistibly reminded of the photographs recording similar scenes from 23rd August, 1939, when Joachim von Ribbentrop, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Third Reich, was received in the Kremlin by Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin. Then, just as 132 years earlier, the superpowers entered into alliances and delimited their spheres of influence, and the smaller countries had to bear the consequences. It was no coincidence that, both in 1807 and in 1939, one of the countries that Russia/the Soviet Union desired the control of and indeed had as one of its objectives, was Finland. At Tilsit, Napoleon, seeing no point in directly subjugating a recalcitrant Sweden which had caused him some trouble by allying with the English, not only agreed to have the country within Russia's sphere of influence, but even insisted that Emperor Alexander order his troops into the territory of Sweden, thus forcing it to join the continental blockade of Great Britain (Carlsson, Höjer, 1954, pp. 109–111; Ochmański, 1980, p. 190; Saunders, 1992, p. 49; Luntinen, 1997, p. 30; Bazylow, 2005, p. 194). The Russian ruler did not need much encouragement to organise an armed expedition against Sweden. After all, here was an opportunity to achieve a strategic goal of the Russian Empire, which was to turn the Gulf of Finland into internal Russian waters. Taking into account that Estonia and Swedish Livonia (northern Latvia including Riga) had already been conquered by Russia as a result of the Great Northern War, it can be concluded that the aforementioned scenario outlined by Peter the Great was simply being consistently implemented by his successors, and Alexander I, as fate would have it, was destined to complete this mission. Russian armies entered Finland on February 21st, 1808 (Frilund, N.D.). The campaign appeared to be victorious. The most important result of the conquest of Finland was that Russian garrisons could now be deployed in Finnish cities without any hindrance and that the march of foreign armies on St. Petersburg through Finnish lands had now become something difficult to imagine (Luntinen, 1997, pp. 46–47, 49–54; Klinge, 1993, pp. 100, 125).

As a result of the war of 1808–1809, the Åland Islands also came under Russian rule (Gardberg, 1995, p. 7; Kleemola-Juntunen, 2019, pp. 4–5). Never before had Russia ruled in northern Europe over lands located so far west. Moreover, the possession of the strategically located archipelago allowed the Russians to reverse the geostrategic realities in the entire region. Now, it was not Swedish castles that were located on the far outskirts of St. Petersburg, but Russian troops deployed on the far outskirts of Stockholm. Although the Swedish capital was still beyond the sea, the nearest Russian outposts were only one hundred and sixty kilometres from that city. Finding Finland in Russian hands also put a definitive end to any Swedish dreams of greatness.

The fortress at Bomarsund on the Åland Islands is a symbol of the furthest extent of imperial Russian rule in northern Europe, like a border stone thrown into the middle of the Baltic Sea. Construction of the fortress began in 1832, but it was never completed (Kleemola-Juntunen, 2019, p. 5; Åland Museum, N.D.; Visit Åland, N.D.). During the Crimean War in August 1854, the British fleet landed 12,000 troops in the archipelago. The Russian troops surrendered after three days of fighting (Duckers, 2011; Grehan, Mage, 2014). The Allied fleet was then able to sail on and ravage the Finnish coast with their ships' guns, also attempting further landing operations. Although it did not succeed in attacking St. Petersburg directly, nor in threatening Russian garrisons deployed on the territory of the Grand Duchy, the events that took place on the Baltic (Finnish) front of the Crimean War must have influenced the thinking of those responsible for the military security of the Russian state (Luntinen, 1997, pp. 91–96; Duckers, 2011). On the one hand, it turned out that only by controlling the exit from the Baltic Sea would Russia be able to gain free access to the North Sea and the Atlantic. Without this, ships with Russian grain bound for the ports of Western Europe could always be stopped in the Danish straits. However, the powers that fought against Russia in the first half of the 1850s did not want to allow any such kind of expansion. Therefore, together with the Treaty of Paris ending the Crimean War, the Åland Convention was imposed on Russia. According to its provisions, Russia had to agree to demilitarise the archipelago (Gardberg, 1995, pp. 7–8, 87–89; Kleemola-Juntunen, 2017, pp. 5–7). Therefore, it can be concluded that on the day of signing both documents, that is, on 30th March 1856, the range of Russia's internationally acceptable military presence in the Baltic Sea basin was defined. This boundary was the coast of Finland, and respect for Russian rule over the Grand Duchy was an expression of the recognition of the geopolitical realities created by Peter the Great. After all, more than a hundred and fifty years after its foundation, St. Petersburg could not be moved to another place, which was understood in London, Paris, and Vienna.

For the next thirty-four years, the status quo prevailed in the Baltic Sea region. A glance at a map of the region is enough to see the order that prevailed there. From the mouth of the Tornio River in the very north of the Gulf of Bothnia, to the mouth of the Niemen River, the entire Baltic coast belonged to Russia. Further on, up to the border with Denmark established as a result of the victory of the Prussian-Austrian coalition over the Danes in 1864, the Baltic coast stretched under Prussian and, from 1871, German rule (Cranckshaw, 1981, pp. 163–175; Hafner, 2009, pp. 163–175). Sweden retained sovereignty over the western side of the Gulf of Bothnia and beyond to the Kattegat, and Denmark over the Jutland Peninsula and the islands set in straits through which the North Sea can be crossed. In this configuration, Finland was an extremely important part of the Russian empire, making it the Baltic state par excellence, controlling, precisely thanks to the possession of Finnish lands, the entire eastern part of the Baltic Sea.

Soon after the ascension to the throne of Germany's new emperor, Wilhelm II, German-Russian relations began to deteriorate. Wilhelm II broke with the policy of self-restraint pursued by Bismarck, who understood that although Germany was the most powerful state in Europe, it would be weaker than a coalition that could be formed to stop its over-expansion (Hafner, 2009, pp. 65–66, 80, 83, 90–110). The new emperor was thinking about how to make Germany into a superpower of the first magnitude, and this had to lead to confrontation with France, eager for revenge for the defeat of 1870, along with with Great Britain, and with Russia, a country at that point in time still basically friendly to the Second Reich. When, in 1890, Bismarck resigned, and Germany did not agree to an extension of the Reinsurance Treaty concluded in 1887, as proposed by Russia, it became clear that the paths of the two Baltic powers began to diverge (Rich, Fischer, 1955, pp. 116–132; Cranckshaw, 1981, pp. 402–406; Lampe, 1996, pp. 133–134; Hafner, 2009, pp. 78, 83; Klinge, 2010, pp. 167–169, 174). From a Russian point of view, this meant that Germany could become an opponent with whom a clash could occur in the areas around the Baltic Sea.

Finland felt the changes in international politics at the turn of the nineteenth century, during the so-called first Russification period (1898–1905) (Polvinen, 1995; Jussila et al., 1999, pp. 66–83). Suspicion of pro-German sympathies among Finns by Russian politicians and military officials coincided with the rise of conservative and nationalist movements in Russia, for whom anyone who was not a right-wing-thinking, preferably Orthodox Russian, was a potential threat to the state. Although the Finnish elite showed admiration for the then flourishing German culture, art, science, industry, and general organisational efficiency, this did not mean selling out to Germany (Klinge, 1993, p. 206; Klinge, 2000, p. 102). Adherents of blunt Russian nationalism seemed to have forgotten that the Finns repeatedly managed to prove their loyalty to the Emperor/Great Duke. This was, after all, during the years of the Crimean War, when they not only did not think of the upcoming opportunity to return to the rule of the kings of Sweden, but bravely participated in the defence of the coasts of their country against the British and French ships firing on them and attempts to land on Finnish soil. Later, in the late 1870s, Finnish soldiers made history by participating in a war against Turkey that brought independence to Bulgaria (1877–1878) (Laitila, 2003). And yet, this did not convince those Russian nationalists, politicians, and military men, who imagined that the Finns might benevolently receive German troops if they invaded the Grand Duchy, to march on St. Petersburg from there.

Although the fears of the Russians about the possibility of the Germans attacking the Russian capital from the side of Finland were not unjustified because the rapidly expanding German navy could easily carry out such an operation, the policy of tightening the screw (among others, attempts to limit or even eliminate Finnish autonomy and to establish direct Russian rule in the Grand Duchy) by the Russian authorities should be regarded as a serious mistake, which, in the-short-and-long run, had to affect the state of Russian-Finnish relations, and, as a result, turn against Russia's strategic interests in the eastern part of the Baltic Sea region (Luntinen, 1997, pp. 163–180; Jussila et al., 1999, pp. 72–78; Kelly, 2011, pp. 166–222). The fate of Governor General Nikolai Ivanovich Bobrikov, the direct implementer of the Russian course calculated on the Russification of Finland and its unification with the rest of the empire, rises to symbolic status here. He was shot in June 1904 by an official of the Finnish senate (government), Eugen Schaumann (Canzanella, 2010, p. 545). This was evidence of the fact that the Finns regarded what they had experienced from the Russian authorities after decades of successful co-existence with Russia under the Romanov dynasty as something not only unjust but also incomprehensible. Only a few years earlier, events such as the mass participation of Finns in a civil disobedience campaign in response to Russian violations of the Grand Duchy's constitution or the assassination of the tsarist governor-general would have been unthinkable (Huxley, 1990, pp. 143–252; Canzanella, 2010, pp. 545–548).

The assassination of Bobrikov, along with the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–1905, and the outbreak of the 1905 revolution (which had a tumultuous course in Finland) halted the Russification drive of the tsarist authorities in the Grand Duchy for several years (Jussila et al., 1999, pp. 79–83). However, the Russians, faced with increasing tensions in international politics and deteriorating relations with Germany, soon resumed it in 1908 (Jussila et al., 1999, p. 121; Meinander, 2011, pp. 120–121). This time, it consisted not only in taking action to extinguish the autonomy of the Grand Duchy, but also in increasing the number of Russian garrisons and the powers of Russian commanders (especially after the outbreak of World War I). It led to the emergence of anti-Russian sentiment in many circles of Finnish society, with a simultaneous strengthening of pro-German tendencies (Jussila et al., 1999, pp. 90–91; Klinge, 2000, p. 108; Meinander, 2011, p. 121). This phenomenon was particularly noticeable among patriotically-minded youth, among whom the idea of political activism, i.e., an active struggle against Russia to preserve and expand Finnish autonomy, or even to achieve full independence, gained popularity already after the outbreak of the war. The very fact that about 2,000 young Finns went over to the side of the enemy, most often via neutral Sweden to Germany, posed no real danger to Russia, but it was a telling sign of the mood prevailing among the vast majority of Finns and was an image defeat for a still-powerful Russian empire (Halter, 1938; Jussila et al., 1999, p. 91; Keßelring, 2005; Meinander, 2011, p. 121).

Russia/the Soviet Union and Independent Finland (1917–1944)

Meanwhile, the number of Russian troops deployed on Grand Duchy territory was systematically growing. Importantly, after the outbreak of war in 1915, they returned to the Åland Islands (Luntinen, 1997, p. 272). But Finland, for the time being, was spared the horrors of war. Apart from the annoying presence of Russian troops, the inhabitants of the Great Duchy could only feel and observe gradually-increasing problems with their food supply, fuel, and other necessary goods. This state of affairs prevailed until the February Revolution in Russia, or even longer, until the outbreak of the Finnish civil war in January 1918 (Luntinen, 1997, pp. 357–368). In any case, nothing happened during the first three years of World War I that would undermine Russian control over Finland. The Germans did not attack the country, and the Finns, despite their dissatisfaction with the Russification-war regime established in the Grand Duchy by Russia's civil and military authorities, did not openly rebel against it (Kirby, 1979, p. 39; Meinander, 2011, p. 121).

Only the last weeks of 1917 brought a change in the political and military situation in the eastern part of the Baltic Sea region. After a tense period in relations between the Finnish Senate and the Russian Provisional Government over the issue of whom, after the fall of the Tsar and the end of the Finnish-Russian personal union, should have sovereignty over the Grand Duchy, along with the dissolution of the Social-Democratic dominated Finnish Parliament by Alexander F. Kierenski's government (which proved that the Russians did not intend to give up Finland), and the takeover of power in Petrograd by the Bolsheviks, in December, Finland declared independence (Jussila et al., 1999, pp. 92–106; Upton, 1980, pp. 35–55, 102–202; Haapala, 2014, pp. 42–49). Its authorities quickly realised that without recognition of this fact by any Russian government, even if it were also the government of Soviet Russia not recognised by anyone, there was no chance for any international stabilisation of the new state. Therefore, on the last day of 1917, the chairman of the Finnish Senate, Pehr E. Svinhufvud, at the head of a delegation, visited the Russian Bolshevik leader Vladimir I. Lenin in Petrograd, asking for recognition of Finnish independence, to which he agreed (together with the Council of People's Commissars) and which was confirmed a few days later by the Executive Committee of the Congress of Councils (Upton, 1980, pp. 196–198).

Lenin took this decision hoping that the recognition of Finland's independence would be seen in the world as proof of the Bolsheviks' respect for the principle of self-determination of nations, and that the country would soon return to the bosom of an already-Soviet Russia as a result of a revolution similar to the one that had swept away the Provisional Government in Petrograd a few weeks earlier and brought the Bolsheviks to power (Upton, 1980, pp. 42–43, 186–187, 412–413). However, these calculations turned out to be wrong. The civil war unleashed by the forces of the radical Finnish left ended in their defeat, and Finland retained its independence proclaimed at the end of 1917 (Upton, 1980, pp. 473–515; Tikka, 2014, pp. 102–108). As a result, Russia (it did not matter much whether tsarist, “white’ or “red’) lost control over the Finnish lands, which restored the situation from the time of Peter the Great, that is, its border moved eastward, all the way to the outskirts of Petrograd, whose name, after Lenin’s death was changed again, this time to Leningrad.

At this point, it is necessary to return for a moment to the first years of Russian rule over Finland. It was then that an important, although somewhat underestimated, event took place. In 1812, emperor Alexander I added so-called Old Finland (Finnish: Vanha Suomi, Russian: Staraya Finliandia, Swedish: Gamla Finland) to the Grand Duchy of Finland. Thus, Hamina, Savonlinna, Lappeenranta and Viipuri [Vyborg], but also Käkisalmi and Sortavala, located on the shores of Lake Ladoga, that is, the lands that Russia conquered from Sweden in 1743 and some of those which the Swedes had to give over as early as 1721 to Russia, were again included in the Finnish lands (Harle, 2000, p. 162; Korpela, 2008). This situation can be compared to the giving of Crimea in 1954, on the 300th anniversary of the Pereyaslav Agreement, to Soviet Ukraine, a place at least theoretically autonomous, like Finland in the 19th century, decided upon by the authorities in Moscow and headed by Nikita S. Khrushchev, the First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, because both the tsarist state and the USSR were supposed to last forever (Solchanyk, 2001, pp. 165–167; Zadorozhnii, 2017, pp. 56–59). In both cases, however, this did not happen, and, what is more, it came to pass years later that Russia laid claim to both Finland and Ukraine and decided to settle both disputes by force.

However, for the time being, the leaders of Soviet Russia and later the USSR could not think about an armed conquest of Finland and had to accept the reconfiguration of borders near Petrograd; an unfavourable move from a Russian point of view. This became clear already on March 3rd, 1918, when peace was made in Brest-Litovsk between Soviet Russia and the Central Powers. This treaty gave Germany and its allies victory on the eastern front in the Great War and was intended to make possible the realisation of the idea of Mitteleuropa as described by Friedrich

Naumann in 1915 (Naumann, 1915, pp. 478–479). However, the peace dictated at Brest also sanctioned, from a military point of view, a shifting of the Russian border on the north side of the Gulf of Finland almost to the gates of Petrograd. After all, in Article 6 of this treaty, Soviet Russia undertook to evacuate the Åland Islands and demilitarise them, and to remove Russian troops and the Russian Red Guards from Finland (Wikisource, N.D.). Later that same month, the Bolsheviks moved the seat of their power to Moscow, which again became the first capital of Russia. They did it mainly because of the fear of a possible seizing of Petrograd by the German army, but from where – if not from Finland – would come its troops? In March (in Åland) and in the first days of April 1918 (in Hanko and Loviisa), there landed the Danzig-formed German Baltic Division, (Menger, 1974, pp. 134–135; Putensen, 2021, pp. 31–32). Germany significantly helped the legal Finnish government to end the civil war quickly and victoriously. They did this in order to transform Finland into a German protectorate and base for possible military actions in Russia (von Ludendorff, 1919, pp. 207–208).

Returning to Petrograd/Leningrad, however, it is true that the border now ran through its distant suburbs, and the rise of an independent Finland and Estonia left only small patches of coastline north and southwest of it in Russian hands. But the city itself continued to exist after all, and its importance increased to the extent that Leningrad was now the only Soviet Russian port located on the Baltic Sea. Thus, the geopolitical realities created by Peter the Great proved to be permanent once again. Even the German victory and the dictates of the Brest Treaty did not change them. This made one assume that the problem of the city's security, as understood by the Russian and now Soviet leaders and generals, and the inextricably-linked issue of control over the areas situated on both sides of the Gulf of Finland would sooner or later become the order of the day once again.

Therefore, it is not surprising that, in the interwar period, the most important problem in the security policy of Finland was relations with the eastern neighbour, perceived as the main and only real threat to its independence which had been proclaimed in 1917. In spite of the conclusion of a peace treaty in the Estonian city of Dorpat (Tartu) in October 1920, and another peace treaty on June 1st, 1922 (this time it was called the "Agreement on measures to secure the inviolability of the Soviet-Finnish border"), the Finnish supreme authorities tried to work out as realistic and effective a concept of foreign policy as possible, which would allow them to count on international assistance in the event of the need to defend against armed aggression of the Soviets (United Nation, 1921; Smith, 1958, pp. 195–207; Heninen.net, 1991). Therefore Finland engaged in attempts to create a political-military alliance around Poland. These plans, however, were not realised, among other things, because the Parliament of Finland did not ratify the agreement concluded in Warsaw on March 17th, 1922 (Estonia and Latvia were also parties to it), according to which the Baltic Union, i.e., a regional grouping of the Baltic border states was to be created (Skrzypek, 1972, p. 166). This represented, on the one hand, the lack of faith of most members of the Finnish political elite in the effectiveness of an alliance with the other signatories of the Warsaw agreement, and on the other, their conviction that it would be better if Finland turned to Germany or the Scandinavian countries in search of security. At that time in Helsinki, they were already thinking about how to provide Finland with either the support of a state that could effectively oppose the expected Soviet expansion westwards, or to do something basically impossible, i.e., break with Finland's previous geopolitical reality or, in other words, get out of the broadly defined Central Europe, created after World War I and fulfil Finland's aspiration to become a part of a neutral Scandinavia (Browning, 2008, p. 147; Upton, 2016, pp. 170–171). Aware of the different realities of the 20th and 21st centuries and the distance separating the two countries, this aspiration of Finland could be compared, for example, with the aspirations of Slovenia, the former Yugoslav republic which, after gaining independence in 1991, tried to prove that the Balkans, with its instability and unpredictability, starts only behind its southern borders (Izakowski, Kalinowska, Szymańska, 2013).

In the interwar period, mutual suspicion and far-reaching distrust prevailed in Soviet-Finnish relations. The border, closely guarded on both sides, was in fact a line separating completely different, hostile, and incompatible worlds. Although on 21st January 1932 both countries concluded a non-aggression pact, for the Soviets it was a tactical action calculated only to gain time and avoid a two-front fight, if the next target of the Japanese expansion in Asia, demonstrated in 1931 in China, turned out to be the far eastern areas of the USSR (Large, 1973; Haslam, 198, pp. 83–106).

In turn, the Finnish leaders, still looking for a way to increase the security of their country, also needed time. They were under no illusions about the gigantic and ever-growing disproportions between the military potentials of the Soviet Union and Finland. They also foresaw that it was only a question of time until the Red Army moved west, at least to regain the areas lost after the fall of tsarist Russia, to wit, unfettered access to the Baltic Sea. Therefore, in the mid-1930s, they returned to the idea of tying their homeland to the neutral Scandinavian kingdoms (Suchoples, 2003, pp. 3–22). These kingdoms, however, were not eager to enter into closer relations with the country, which seemed to be one of the most obvious targets of the expected Soviet expansion. Therefore, when, on 30th November 1939, the Soviet Union attacked, the Finnish army had to repulse the aggression of the numerically superior and better-armed enemy alone (Trotter, 1991; Tuunainen, 2016).

The invasion of Finland in November 1939 was a brutal, unprovoked attack. However, it is worthwhile to reflect on the circumstances, the goals of the Soviet attack, and the question of what the aggressor actually managed to achieve. The similarity of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact to the 1807 agreement between the emperors of France and Russia has already been mentioned. At the beginning of 19th century Napoleon "gave" Sweden to Russia, just as a few days before Germany's attack on Poland, Hitler "gave' Finland, among other countries, to Stalin. In both cases, war broke out in northern Europe for basically the same reason – the desire of an eastern power to control the northern coast of the Gulf of Finland in order to move its border away from St. Petersburg/Leningrad. All this took place in circumstances indicating that sooner rather than later there would be a conflict between the rulers and dictators aligned in Tilsit and Moscow, wishing to bring about the unification of Europe under their leadership and according to their ideas. In both cases this ended in war, during which Finland became a battlefield.

Already in April 1938, Stalin proposed to Finland the conclusion of a Soviet-Finnish military alliance in the face of the expected expansion of the Third Reich (Suchoples, 2019, pp. 454–455). If the Finnish government had agreed to the Soviet initiative (this and several modifications to the initiative, put forward in the following months), the USSR would have non-violently restored the situation from the years 1914–1917, when Russian garrisons were stationed in Finland, protecting Petrograd from the possibility of a German attack led through the territory of the Grand Duchy. However, wishing to preserve the neutrality of their country and avoid provoking Germany, the Finns consistently refused to allow the Soviet Union to become the protector of their independence (Suchoples, 2019, pp. 454–461).

Finland did not yield to Soviet territorial demands and, therefore, the Winter War 1939-1940 had to break out. However, the unpreparedness of the Red Army caused that the new Finnish War was, to use the idiom, no walk in the park. The hard resistance of the Finns and the terrible losses suffered by the attackers, compounded by unusually harsh weather, meant that the war ended on 12th March 1940 with the signing of a Peace

Treaty in Moscow (Heninen.net, 1997b; Trotter, 1991, p. 263). What did the Soviet Union gain from it? There was a shifting of the border in Eastern Karelia about 150 kilometres to the west, more or less to the line of the border of the Russian Empire established in 1721 in the Treaty of Nystad (in Finnish, Uusikaupunki), in addition to the western part of the Fisherman Peninsula on the Barents Sea, portions of the districts of Salla in Lapland and Kuusamo in Northern Ostrobothnia, and the leasing of land in Hanko for a Soviet naval base (Heninen.net, 1997b; Trotter, 1991, p. 263). Tens of thousands of dead and wounded Soviet soldiers was the price the USSR paid for occupying only a portion of Old Finland, which Sweden had lost in the Great Northern War in the 18th century, 5,000 square kilometres in two sparsely populated counties, thanks to which, for strategic reasons, the Soviet border shifted in their area about 80 kilometres westward, and 321 square kilometres of the Finnish part of the Fisherman Peninsula in the far north, and the Baltic Fleet ship base at the southernmost point of Finland guarding, together with the Soviet military bases in Estonia, the entrance to the Gulf of Finland. And that was it. Of course, 26,000 dead and missing soldiers, the loss of Viipuri, the second largest city, an important cultural centre of the country, and a total of 11% of its territory and the need to resettle more than 400,000 refugees from areas taken by the USSR was a painful experience for the Finns, but they managed to defend their independence (Danielsbacka et al., 2020, p. 131).

The result of the Soviet-Finnish war was reflected in German-Soviet talks held in Berlin in mid-November 1940. They were devoted to the division of the spheres of influence in the world between the Third Reich, the USSR, Japan, and Italy (Weeks, 2002, p. 142; Miyake, 2010, pp. 348–349). The People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, Vyacheslav Molotov, and German Chancellor Adolf Hitler spent a surprisingly long time discussing Finland's future. Perhaps the most interesting statement by Molotov regarding Finland was made on the first day of the Berlin talks. He then said that from a Soviet point of view, the Finnish issue had still not been resolved (Memorandum of the Conversation Between the Führer and the Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars Molotov in the Presence of the Reich Foreign Minuter and the Deputy People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, Dekanosov, as Well as of Counselor of Embassy Hilger and Herr Pavlov, Who Acted as Interpreters, in Berlin on November 13th, 1940). This revealed that, for the USSR's leadership, settling the problem of Finland meant its annexation together with the Åland Islands and the areas separating the Soviet Union from Sweden and Norway. This way, the dilemmas of the USSR's security policy in the

Baltic Sea region would be resolved, and bridgeheads would be created for this power to expand in Scandinavia.

However, no new German-Soviet agreement was concluded at that time. It was very much to the contrary; the outbreak of war between the existing allies began to approach (Weeks, 2002, pp. 142–145). Therefore, it should be acknowledged that, in the long run, the most important consequence of the Winter War was that at the turn of May and June 1941, when the Third Reich was preparing an attack on the USSR, Finland's authorities decided that it would fight again with its eastern neighbour, but this time with Nazi Germany as its ally (Vehviläinen, 2002, pp. 85–89). Then, for the first and only time since the Swedish-Russian war of 1788–1790, the scenario in which Finnish territory was used to invade Russia/the Soviet Union by a third country became reality.

In 1944, after the Continuation War, when the Finnish army fought with the Red Army at the side of the German Wehrmacht, Finland still had to give up the territory of Petsamo, which meant that it lost the rich deposits of the nickel ore located there along with access to the Arctic Sea (Polvinen, 1986, pp. 26–29, 35; Hjlem, Maud, 2021, pp. 33–35). Moreover, instead of the Hanko base which had been evacuated in December 1941, the USSR demanded a 50-year lease of the Porkkala Peninsula, where the Red Army had established a strong artillery base. Firing from there, the Soviet heavy artillery could not only easily cover a considerable part of the Gulf of Finland with their fire-power, but also shell Helsinki (Polvinen, 1986, pp. 26–29, 35; Tynkynnen, Jouko, 2007, pp. 10–11). Thus, if one compares the eastern border of Finland set in the armistice agreement concluded with the Soviet Union on September 19th 1944 with the eastern border of Finnish lands set in the Nystadian peace of 1721, the only significant difference was that relatively small areas of parts of the Salla and Kuusamo counties were again ceded to the Soviet Union. In Karelia, on the other hand, the Finnish border, established in 1940 and finally confirmed in 1944, ran further to the east than it had in the first years after the Russian occupation of the country in 1809, that is, before the territories of Old Finland, conquered not only by Peter the Great during the Great Northern War but also by Empress Elizabeth during the war of 1741–1743, were generously returned to the Grand Duchy by Emperor Alexander I in 1812.

Certainly, a number of favourable circumstances helped Finland to retain its independence after World War II. One of them was the fact that the Red Army had captured the southern coast of the Baltic almost as far as Lübeck (Meinander, 2011, p. 156; Vehviläinen 2002, pp. 135–151; Erfurth, 1979, pp. 176–198). This made the USSR the hegemon of the entire Baltic region and solved Soviet security dilemmas both in the area of Leningrad and the Gulf of Finland, along with solving the problem of competing on this body of water with the other superpower, the now defeated and partially-controlled Germany.

In Times of Soviet Hegemony (1944–1991)

The signing of the armistice agreement of 1944 and, later, in 1947, of the peace treaty, ended a stage in Soviet-Finnish relations that had begun after Finland's declaration of independence, marked by mutual suspicion, dislike, and finally hostility during the war. However, it was only the conclusion of the Agreement of Friendship, Co-operation and Mutual Assistance (FCMA) on 6th April 1948 that laid the foundations for relations between the two states during the Cold War (Jussila, Hentilä, Nevakivi, 1999, pp. 245–247). According to this document, the USSR was given, in practice and at the moment when its leaders considered it appropriate, the right to call upon the Finnish side to hold talks on political and military questions that could become a prelude to the deployment of Soviet military troops on Finnish territory. Therefore, the Finnish leaders did what they could from then on to ensure that such consultations never took place, and the Soviet dictators had no doubts as to the good will of the Finns towards the USSR and their fulfilment of the obligations they had assumed in 1948. On the other hand, both states confirmed what they had already agreed to in article 3 of the Paris Peace Treaty of 1947, in that they would not join alliances and coalitions directed against one of the parties to the agreement (Jussila, Hentilä, Nevakivi, 1999, pp. 245–247). In other words, the Soviet Union promised that, as long as Finland did not bind itself to any alliance considered in Moscow as that which threatened the interests of the USSR and remained neutral on the international arena, it would not seek to change the democratic order of the Finnish state.

It seems that Finland's relations with the Soviet Union after World War II can be compared to the ties linking the autonomous Grand Duchy of Finland with the Russian Empire in the more distant past. Both in the 19th century and after 1944, once in St. Petersburg and later in Moscow, it was recognised that the requirements of the security policy of Russia/the USSR could be met by Finns ruling their country independently and, in the end, it was unnecessary to introduce direct Russian rule there (apart from the twofold and unsuccessful attempts to Russify it in 1899–1905 and after 1908) or to establish a communist regime, or to transform Finland into yet another Soviet republic. In short, both Russia and the Soviet Union could be sure that from the side of Finland and the Gulf of

Finland, nothing threatened them and that the Finns themselves would do their best, knowing how much they could lose, if it was otherwise. On the other hand, the autonomy of the Grand Duchy – as well as the FCMA Agreement of 1948 – set the framework for Finland's self-reliance and independence on the international arena and in military affairs.

At this point, however, it is necessary to mention one more factor that clearly favoured Finland in the first years after the end of the Second World War, namely, the specific balance of power created in northern Europe at that time, which also contributed significantly to the maintenance of the independence by Finland. When it became clear that maintaining the unity of the anti-Hitler coalition after the defeat of Germany would not be possible and it turned out that the words of Winston S. Churchill about the Iron Curtain dividing Europe were true, the Scandinavian countries had to choose the direction of their security policy (Aalders, 1990, pp. 125–153; Muller, 1999). All three kingdoms feared Soviet expansion, and their leaders wondered how to protect them from its effects. Eventually, in 1949, Denmark and Norway, as well as Iceland, decided to join the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Sweden, the largest and strongest among them, chose the option of neutrality (Aalders, 1990, pp. 125–153; Petersen, 1991, p. 63; Bergqvist, 2016). In addition, Swedish neutrality also strengthened Finland's position and its neutrality, which could thus serve as a buffer separating Sweden from the USSR.

In 1956, the Soviet Union returned the Porkkala base to Finland (Petersen, 1991, p. 63). Its strategic importance diminished with the rapidly advancing development of missile weapons and aviation. Of course, the abandonment of the Porkkala base was used for propaganda purposes by the USSR to demonstrate that (unlike the United States) it was giving up one of its military bridgeheads located outside the Soviet Union (United Nations, 1956; Allison, 1995, pp. 38–39). In any case, if it had been recognised in Moscow that the Porkkala base was still necessary to maintain Soviet military control of the Gulf of Finland and its northern, Finnish coasts, the Soviet leaders would certainly not have made the decision to cede it to Finland earlier. Anyway, this gesture did not alter the geopolitical situation in the Baltic region.

On the other hand, the Soviet leadership did not intend to completely give up its influence on the internal situation in Finland. Although the consent of the USSR to the accession of the former allies of Nazi Germany, including Finland, to the United Nations in December 1955, as well as the already-mentioned return of the Porkkala base, might have indicated that the Soviets were beginning to accept a little more freedom for the countries in the Soviet Union's sphere of influence, nothing could be further from the truth (Conforti, 2005, p. 34; Higgins et al., 2017, p. 12). The Soviets reminded the Finns of the limits of their freedom within the framework of Soviet-Finnish bilateral relations under the terms of the FCMA Agreement. When, in 1958, it became possible that the Finnish government would include unacceptable social democratic politicians in Moscow, the Soviet Union initially suspended talks on several economic issues important from the Finnish point of view, and when this did not "discipline' the Finns, the Soviet ambassador in Helsinki, Viktor Z. Lebedev, left for home on leave in October, as it was announced, and was subsequently transferred to another post, leaving the Finnish capital without a suitably senior Soviet representative (Billington, 1964, pp. 134–135; Lundstrom, 2012, p. 333; Rainio-Niemi, 2021, pp. 86–88). The Finnish authorities understood the significance of this gesture. In January 1959, President Urho K. Kekkonen went on an allegedly private visit to Leningrad, during which he met "incidentally' with Khrushchev and Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei A. Gromyko to resolve the crisis in mutual relations. Meanwhile, the Finnish government resigned. A new, minority cabinet was appointed in its place, with a composition that did not raise any objections from the Kremlin authorities. Then, in early February, the new Soviet ambassador, Alexei V. Zakharov, arrived in the Finnish capital, which finally ended several months of tension between Finland and the Soviet Union (Billington, 1964, pp. 134–135, 136; Fields, 2020, p. 318, fn. 18). A good summary of the events were words Khrushchev said at the time of Kekkonen's visit to Leningrad. Then, the Soviet leader said that although Finland had the right to decide who sat in its government, the USSR had the right to express its opinion on the matter (Lundstrom, 2012, p. 333). In this way, he clearly delimited the limits of Finland's freedom in domestic politics, and its authorities, by accepting this position of the USSR, demonstrating that the Soviet point of view would not be ignored in Helsinki. These realities prevailed in Soviet-Finnish relations until the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991.

After the Collapse of the Soviet Sphere of Influence (1991–2022)

In 1992, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Finland and Russia concluded a Treaty on the Foundations of Mutual Relations. This replaced the Soviet-Finnish agreement of 1948 and meant that Finland regained freedom in its foreign policy (Heninen.net, 1997c; Lukacs, 1992, pp. 50–63). However, the Finns remembered that their country was still a neighbour of Russia and that its border with its eastern neighbour was still 1,340 kilometres long. In doing so, they had to redefine its security policy. The majority of Finnish society – at the turn of the 20th and 21st century – opposed the possibility of Finland's membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, convinced that neutrality (or non-alignment) had served the country well (Aunesluoma, Rainio-Niemi, 2016, pp. 59–60; The Barents Observer, 2017; YLE, 2019). Despite this, Finland still remembers the lessons of history. Therefore, being aware of the weaknesses of their country, Finnish politicians have long been looking for appropriate points of support for its security policy. This was behind Finland's entry into NATO's Partnership for Peace program as early as 1994, although this was not intended to lead to full membership of the alliance (von Moltke, 1994, p. 6). Certainly, membership of the European Union (obtained in 1995) has further stabilised its situation in the international arena (Kirby, 2006, pp. 280–284).

It was also impossible to forget that after East Germany and Poland threw off the yoke of communism and the Baltic states regained their independence, the borders of the areas controlled by Russia shifted eastwards again on the southern shores of the Gulf of Finland as they had after the First World War. They now end at the Narva River, which marks the Russian-Estonian border. It differs only slightly from the border established between Estonia and Soviet Russia in 1920 (United Nations, 1922; Levinsson, 2006, pp. 98–110). Considering that relations between Russia and Finland are now based on the 1992 treaty, and are thus characterised by the equality of the parties to the treaty and that of the countries around the Baltic Sea, and that only Russia has remained a non-member of both the European Union and NATO (if Finland and Sweden are accepted as its members) since 2004, one must wonder how Russia's power ambitions, which have recently been increasingly manifested in the Baltic region can be realised. At least a partial answer to this question was what happened at the Russian-Finnish border in 2015, and then, in the following years, in Finnish airspace. It was then that dozens of citizens of Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, Nepal, Somalia, Syria, and other countries seeking asylum in Finland appeared at Finnish border crossings (Nilsen, 2015; Alho, 2021, pp. 89–91). It was obvious that it was the Russian authorities who were directing these people towards Finland, causing the government in Helsinki and the whole of Finnish society to worry about the possible number of refugees on the territory of their country, which could drive it into chaos and paralysis.

In the face of these worrying developments, Finland has taken a number of measures to strengthen its security. The country signed a number of bilateral letters of intent and military cooperation agreements with NATO partners between 2016 and 2018 (Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, USA, and the UK) and with Sweden (the Ministry of Defence of Germany et al., 2004; YLE, 2016; Polskie Radio24.pl, 2017; the Swedish Armed Forces, 2020; Kaikkonen, Bakke-Jensen, Hultqvist, 2020; the U.S. Departament of State, 2021). Since 2017, Helsinki has also been home to the NATO-EU European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats. During these years, its leaders, President Sauli V. Niinistö and Prime Minister Juha P. Sipilää, have repeatedly expressed concern over Russia's actions and indicated that it is Russia that is destabilising the situation in the Baltic region (Finnish Government, 2016; President of the Republic of Finland, 2017).

The situation changed after February 24th, 2022, that is, after Russia invaded Ukraine. The Russian aggression against a neighbouring country has radically changed the attitude of both the Finnish political elite and the public towards the issue of membership in the North Atlantic Pact. The Finns, after a relatively short internal debate, strongly supported the accession of their country to NATO (Bishop, Ellyatt, 2022; France 24, 2022; Wienberg, 2022). This decision was certainly facilitated by a similar development in Sweden. Representatives of both countries applied for admission to the alliance as early as May, at its headquarters in Brussels (NATO, 2022). Meanwhile, during a North Atlantic Pact summit held in Madrid on 29th and 30th June 2022, Finland and Sweden were formally invited to join the alliance. This initiated the accession process, that is, the ratification procedure for NATO enlargement by two northern states by the parliaments of all states belonging to the alliance (Finnish Government, 2022; Sweden invited to join NATO at Madrid Summit, 2022).

Conclusions

The accession of Finland and Sweden to NATO will be a real revolution, and not only in terms of the security policy of these two countries. This is particularly evident in the example of Finland. Its long border with Russia will now become the external border of the alliance. Although the Finnish authorities do not plan to locate the pact's military bases on their country's territory, it has already been covered by NATO security guarantees. This means that if, in the future, Russian leaders wanted to move the current border with Finland by force, they would have to take into account the reaction of 32 member states of the alliance, including the nuclear powers, i.e., France, the United States, and Great Britain. Moreover, it is hard not to notice that the accession of Finland to NATO together with neighbouring Sweden will transform the Baltic Sea, after becoming almost entirely an internal sea of the European Union in 2004, to almost completely an internal sea of the North Atlantic Pact. The accession of Finland and Sweden to NATO is therefore changing the security architecture in the Baltic Sea region. In the case of Finland, it also eliminates the determinants of its foreign policy resulting from the realities of the international order formed after World War II.

It can be said that, in a sense, the situation resembles that which was sanctioned by the peace concluded in 1323 between Sweden and Novgorod. Then, under that agreement, the border was established between two civilisation circles (the Western and the Byzantine). It was also the eastern border of the Finnish lands. On the other hand, Finland's accession to NATO in the 21st century will make its border with Russia, especially in the context of the ongoing war in Ukraine, a line dividing the worlds of different values – open liberal democracy and the so-called (and possibly bankrupt) Russian *mir*.

In past centuries, Finland experienced the effects of a struggle between the superpowers for control of the Baltic Sea and its shores repeatedly, starting from times medieval. Its strategic location on the Gulf of Finland meant that – especially since the times of Peter the Great and the founding of St. Petersburg – Russian rulers were constantly interested in extending military control over its territory and preventing any other state from being able to launch an attack on Russia from Finnish lands or impede that power's access to the Baltic Sea. It was no different in the 20th century, when Finland became an independent state, one which fought for survival in 1939–1940 and at the end of World War II, and later successfully tried to properly arrange its relations with the Soviet Union, a neighbour whom, thanks to its Machiavellian approach to the outside world, could never be fully trusted. Although in the last decade of the second millennium and the first decades of the 21st century, relations between Moscow and Helsinki have been free from dramatic events, tensions have arisen in recent years in connection with Russia's attempts to destabilise the situation by means of actions characteristic of hybrid wars in the areas adjacent to this country with the aim to restore, strengthen, or even expand Russian spheres of influence and to implement its superpower, not to say imperial ambitions. In recent months, it has also turned out that Russian leaders, in order to achieve their goals, have been and are able to invade a neighbouring country. Finland's response to the resulting threats is to join NATO, which makes any attack or attempts to re-subjugate Russia problematic. Nevertheless, the Finns hope for the continued peaceful coexistence and cooperation not only of their own country, but also of other Baltic states with Russia. However, they also take into account the possibility of less optimistic and even dangerous scenarios, so as not to be surprised by the future, which is unpredictable today.

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It Is About Protection. Defence in Finland's Steps to NATO

Abstract

After Russia invaded Ukraine, Finland quickly applied for NATO membership. This step is not necessarily that drastic should Finland's security policy development in the long term be examined with one's focus set on a gradually-developed defence policy. It represents an important continuity in security policy, but also played a central role in advancing Finland's steps to becoming NATO members. On the basis of different studies and accounts, the following points seem to be critical in constructing a preliminary narrative about Finland's road to the Alliance.

After the Second World War, Finland's western relations became dependent on its bilateral relations with the Soviet Union. Finland was aware that it could not expect any support from the West as regards its security. Despite a security policy based on recognising facts, and the FCMA Treaty with the Soviet Union, the eastern neighbour was seen as the main, and, later on, the only military threat on the basis of history and Finland's vulnerable geopolitical position. The threat, however, was concealed by so-called "doubletalk" in security policy discourse until the 2010s. In this context, state defence was developed to be an independent and modern territorial defence, ultimately there to defend against a large-scale invasion. Finland's defence enjoyed high legitimacy and confidence in society, especially from the 1970s. Security policy was raised above normal politics to be a kind of super-politics with a strong political consensus.

When the Cold War ended and Finland joined the European Union, defence policy and the defence establishment got a leading role in working an approaching NATO. Finland's opportunities to conduct stabilisation policy in its close neighbourhood were seen as being limited, especially after Russia adopted a self-asserting foreign and security policy towards the

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West after 2007. At the same time, the subsequently increased cooperation, networking, and integration stimulated perceptions about western defence dependence. This increased emphasis on defence actually turned people's attention to the extra security that NATO membership might provide. Applying for NATO, however, required the shock of a Russian invasion of Ukraine before the Finnish public was ready to see the risks of NATO membership as being less than that of its benefits.

Keywords: Finland, Security Policy, Defence, NATO, Russia

Introduction

After Russia invaded Ukraine on the 24th February 2022, Finland quickly decided to apply for NATO membership. The country's application was handed over to the Secretary General of NATO on the 18th May, together with Sweden's application. Among most members of the Alliance, it received a very positive response. In various statements, it was often emphasised that Finland and Sweden would bring forth a prominent addition to NATO's collective defence in spite of the fact that half of the eastern land-border of the alliance would be Finland's border with Russia.

The most essential change in often-repeated preconditions for Finland's NATO decision seemed to be public opinion that turned favourable as regards NATO membership in a rather short period of time. According to polls from the Advisory Board for Defence Information (ABDI), the number of those favouring membership rose from 24 to 68% between autumn 2021 and spring 2022 (MTS, 2022).

In public discussion, the decision was regularly seen as a unique step in the history of Finland's foreign, security, and defence policy. At the same time, critical opinions and those voices which warned about the risks of NATO membership faded.

But the depth of the current change can also be at least preliminarily questioned if Finland's security policy is examined in the long run after WWII or, specifically, after the Cold War, and if those factors which represent parallel patterns with NATO membership are studied. The move from a kind of neutrality or non-aligned policy to an allied policy is not necessarily particularly drastic should one pay attention to the different elements of security policy.

In every foreign policy, security represents an essential purpose, together with autonomy, welfare, status, and prestige (Holsti, 1995, pp. 84–87). At the same time, it also represents a collection of problems that a state aims to solve through its security policy, trying to prevent any threats to national security and reduce the vulnerability of that state in order to meet such threats effectively.

Defence policy is not necessarily and solely about the forming and use of military force, but also includes other measures to protect against different threats arising from the operating environment of the state and to lower that state's vulnerability (Buzan et al., 1998, p. 190). In spite of a wide understanding of security, its military sector still tends to dominate, especially if violent threats are intensive in the operating environment. They are often considered as requiring the greatest of attention and preparedness, even if non-violent threats may be more prominent in peace time.[1]

Security policy can be divided into different segments of action; stabilisation policy, conflict management, and protection. Stabilisation policy aims at achieving a secure and stable operating environment that generates as few threats as possible and which provides the opportunity to control them at the source. In the policy of a small state, this action is largely the domain of foreign policy, and its instruments are diplomacy along with economic rewards and/or sanctions. Conflict management includes a wide use of instruments, usually in cooperation with other states in various international conflicts.[2] The third segment, protection, is mainly carried out via defence policy.

In this article, the role of defence policy in Finland's security policy over time is specifically clarified, along with how it has potentially affected Finland's road to NATO and to the adoption of the country's current security policy.

Finland's Security Policy After the Second World War: Time Periods and Turning Points

Fact-recognising Security Policy

At the end of the Second World War, Finland had to re-evaluate its security policy. In the Continuation War of 1941–1944, Finland, fighting alongside Germany, had at best strived for a strategic result whereby the

[1] The defence capability of a state is a wider concept than its military-based defence capabilities, even if the latter is often and ultimately decisive, should the country find itself under the threat of an invasion. In the frame of comprehensive security, all of the action aiming to provide protection in the face of threats and rebuking them actively or passively is part of using one's defence capability.

[2] This approach is based on an analysis of Möttölä (1995). Instead of protection, he used a concept of deterrence-defence to depict a segment of action that, above all, was about military defence capability and the defence solution of the state.

threat from the east would be fended off. When this did not materialise, Finland changed tack completely and began to treat and handle the new situation as a bilateral conflict between Finland and the Soviet Union (Apunen, Wolff, 2009, pp. 448–450). After the Second World War, Finland had to create a relationship that tried to take into account its great-power interests and reinforced international status as best as possible with the war's winner. In this process, the entirety of Finland's security policy held something of an ethos of cautiousness, wherein relations with the Soviet Union became a factor to centralise policy and a norm of underlining its orthodoxy. A so-called "sensitive ear" towards Soviet policy was largely understood as a precondition that Finland could develop its relations with the West. Finland was certainly a democracy and a western country by its identity and wanted to stay as such.

When the short, honeymoon-like period of mutual understanding between the allied great-powers began to escalate into confrontation after the Potsdam Conference in July 1945, Finland was left decidedly more alone with the Soviet Union. No support for Finland's security was expected from the West. Foreign policies, especially new relations with the big, eastern neighbour, were emphasised. Defence policy was very much in the background, not least because Finland's defence faced heavy restrictions in the beginning. But, for conducting new policy, it was very important, however, that Finland's Defence Forces were not beaten at war and that the country remained unoccupied. The future of Finland's defence had one important starting point; the very legitimacy of its own defence in the eyes of the people, that the country's Defence Forces would prevail in spite of various post-war restrictions, and that no foreign forces would be allowed in the country. The constitution remained in place without any upheaval. Finland received special treatment from the winning states, partly because it was left out of the main focus in the final settlements of the war (Visuri, 2015, pp. 253–254).

The time period right after the war can be described as a period of "fact-recognising security policy", following the words of its central architect, J.K. Paasikivi.[3] The foreign policy could be labelled as "the Paasikivi Doctrine". Essentially, it was based on a concept that Soviet interests as regards Finland were military-strategic and defensive. The Soviet Union had to be reassured that Finland would not put its territory on offer as a base for offensives to the east (Visuri, 2015, pp. 250–254). A turn that clarified and stabilised policy came soon after the Paris Treaty

[3] Prime Minister (and, from 1946, President of Republic) J.K. Paasikivi talked about recognising the facts in his speech on Independence Day on 6th December, 1944. That speech is often regarded as an important doctrinal speech.

of 1947, when Finland and the Soviet Union made a Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance (the FCMA Treaty) in April 1948. That treaty can also be interpreted as the creation of a political connection between Finland and the Soviet Union that Stalin had gradually pursued from 1938 (Apunen, Wolff, 2009, p. 453).

In a strategic great-power context, when the Cold War began to loom, it was favourable for the Soviet Union to ensure that Finland would be ready to act militarily if a threat from the west actualised. Finland managed, however, to secure its independent defence in that the FCMA Treaty did not bring an alliance with the Soviet Union unlike in Eastern Europe in areas where the Soviet forces had advanced during World War II. Finland was able to influence the obligations of the treaty, and Finland's role in defending the Soviet Union was restricted to the defence of its own territory. Soviet assistance would have depended on consultations had a threat appeared. President Paasikivi tried to keep Soviet influence in Finland as reduced as possible, but, at the same time, he underlined the fulfilling of agreements and aimed to prevent the Soviet Union itself from acting against those agreements (Visuri, 2001, p. 25; Manninen, 1993).

Some effect on Soviet attitudes towards Finland after the war may have been due to the fact that Stalin had noticed the stiff Finnish resistance against the attacking Soviet forces in 1944 (Meinander, 2012, pp. 382–392). Additionally, the Soviet Union did not have the confidence that Finland's extreme left would make a revolutionary change and actually support Soviet policy, which often occurred in post-World War Eastern Europe (Holmila, Mikkonen, 2015, pp. 191–200). In repelling such a change, President Paasikivi played an important role against the efforts of the communists. A way for that to happen was also paved by the result of parliamentary elections in March 1945.

The most significant security threats in Europe have been political and also largely military in nature. Finland's most central security problem was defined in this context. The FCMA Treaty did not remove the notion that Finland's most immediate threat was the Soviet Union and its military might, and any political threat towards the organisational stability of the state was, essentially, secondary (Buzan, 1991, pp. 118–122). The threat posed by the Soviet Union was not a topic to be widely and publicly debated, but, gradually, defence arrangements began to refer to its existence. The FCMA Treaty gave rise to the possibility to crystallise a military threat from the West as a basis of Finland's defence. Independent of people's beliefs or disbeliefs on this topic, it was in the text of Treaty. The imagery of a western threat was undoubtedly also specified by a mutual breach of relations between the winners of WWII, the founding of NATO in 1949, and the increasing interests of the United States towards northern parts of Europe.

One alternative in an operational order of the Defence Forces in 1952 entailed a scenario that the Soviet Union might be an invader and demand passage rights through Finland's Lapland on the basis of the FCMA Treaty (Tynkkynen, Jouko, 2005).[4] Defence planning against the eastern threat was, at the beginning, considered a highly sensitive subject, but the peacetime contingency of the Defence Forces and the location of personnel and materiel as elements of action capability created the necessary conditions to be ready for military pressure and unwanted "help" from the Soviet Union. In a secret analysis of the Defence Command presented in 1960, it was said that the eastern threat had already been taken into account during the 1950s. In addition, defending Finland's eastern border had been planned already at the end of the same decade (Tynkkynen, 2006, pp. 452–461; Tynkkynen, Jouko, 2005). In August 1962, a Defence Forces evaluation stated that the Soviet Union might invade northern Norway, and NATO's air forces might hit targets in the Soviet Union already at the first stages of east/west operations. In that case, the Soviet Union would push its air defence to the territory of Finland (Visuri, 2010, pp. 126–128).

Politicians hardly had any wider knowledge about top secret evaluations and plans. They were not able to raise the eastern threat as a policy target on their basis. The President of Republic and the Chief of Defence, however, had a very open discussion (Visuri, 2010, pp. 133–134).

Because of war-based experiences and Soviet policy, the majority of politicians did not really have any major doubts about the need to be ready for any threats from the east. The discrepancy between public policy and militarily-necessary-evaluated preparedness brought a phenomenon that prevailed through the Cold War and, in some occasions, even after until Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. It can be characterised as *doubletalk*. During the Cold War, Finland had a so-called "Soviet dilemma" that applied to discourses: eastern relations were to be *represented* properly (Nokkala, 2009, pp. 13–17; Iloniemi, 2015).

Risto E.J. Penttilä has described a similar phenomenon. Finland had two defence policies at the same time during the Cold War. The first was officially declared and concerned good relations between Finland and the Soviet Union, whereas the second could be inferred only from contextual matters, and it was aimed at defending against a Soviet attack (Penttilä, 1988; Penttilä, Karvinen, 2022, p. 27).

[4] Primary threat scenarios were in the west. A NATO attack, though, was not considered very probable in official threat models in 1952, because NATO was not considered to have sufficient forces available for such an attack in northernmost Europe.

The Paris Peace Treaty of 1947 and the FCMA Treaty laid an important part of the framework for Finland's post-war defence policy, whose substance emphasised developing an independent defence. However, it took Finland's security position and interests into account in a way that would not cause any harm to Finland. For its part, this policy created freedom of action for Finland's relations with the West, even if they began to concretise more only after 1955 in the so-called "Spirit of Geneva", when Finland entered the United Nations, and the Soviet Union handed back the Porkkala region that Finland had had to rent to the Soviet Union as a naval base at the end of the war.

Finland's security depended strongly on foreign policy, but, from 1952, the state's defence improved its position. Among other measures, new legislation and organisation of the Defence Forces were introduced. Finland's freedom of action in foreign policy was still rather limited, the country's international position weak, and not many opportunities to influence the security environment dominated by great-power relationships existed. Conditions in which to conduct defence policy improved when the Defence Council was re-established in 1957. It united ministers to follow the situation, to plan, and to prepare. Despite that, the conditions in which to improve defence readiness were still poor, because governments were short-lived and tensions as regards the Cold War were high (Visuri, 2010, p. 43).

In the international situation, a turning point was about to occur, and the steps towards it were nuclear competition, a weakening of relations between the western powers and the Soviet Union together with controversies about the status of Berlin, and the establishment of the Warsaw Pact. Crises in Finnish-Soviet relations included the period of the so-called "night frost" in autumn 1958 along with the Note Crisis between October and November 1961. Relations between the great powers reached a low point during the Cuban Missile Crisis in October 1962.

During the time period of fact-recognising security policy, the foundation for stabilised protection against threats primarily by means of defence policy and military readiness was created. An important precondition for this was that Finland came out of the Second World War with relatively little political or societal damage, as compared with most other states in Europe; the Defence Forces having not been completely beaten, Finland not having had to surrender, and the Soviet Union not bringing its forces to the country or demanded anything which would lead to deep controversies in the democratic Finnish society. One factor in that situation was probably that the Soviet Union wanted Finland in its own camp in a dividing Europe, but could not do that from an uncompromised political power-position.

Security Based on Active Neutrality Policy and Independent Defence

In the great-power political environment, the condition of Mutual Assured Destruction was reached, and it was apt to also stabilise Finland's strategic position and its long-term defence and improve Finland's action capability in conflict management. In 1956, Finland began to participate in United Nations' peacekeeping in Suez and, in 1964, in Cyprus (Holma, 2012, pp. 25–38). More room opened for "active, peace-willing neutrality policy" that was coined in the "Paasikivi-Kekkonen Doctrine" (Visuri, 2006, pp. 174–175; Apunen, 2012, p. 19).

The time period from the beginning of the 1960s until the end of the Cold War in 1990 can be called the period of "security based on active neutrality policy and independent defence". The turning point really occurred in the years 1960–1964. Finland could now clear a better way for its policy towards western countries that had security-policy importance as well. It was still dependent on maintaining good eastern relations, but Finland's policy was gradually better understood in the West. At the same time, conditions for Finland's role as a bridge-builder between the East and West emerged (Valtasaari, 2015, p. 69). The strategic position of Finland eased remarkably until the middle part of the 1960s (Valtasaari, 2015, p. 69).

At the beginning of the 1960s, there emerged both the need and the conditions to develop defence and defence policy in a way that is still recognisable to this day in the form of Finland's defence and the role of defence policy in the country's current security policy. Steps towards total defence, or the absolute crisis readiness of different sectors of society, were taken at the same time, and, in that sense, military force was of the utmost importance (Visuri, 2006, pp. 166–167). The FCMA Treaty and the specific neutrality policy that included staying out of conflicting great-power interests brought together an element that had a stabilising effect on the operating environment. It was also part of the so-called "Nordic balance", whose concept was adopted in the 1960s (Penttilä, Karvinen, 2022, p. 36).

The Note Crisis of 1961 turned out to be something which clarified Finland's defence policy and reinforced its defence capability (Visuri, 2010, pp. 83–84).[5] It was largely improved by new materiel purchases. In

[5] However, Visuri does not consider an "awakening" brought by the crisis as a complete turn in defence policy, because decision makers already knew the central problems of national defence before the Note. It was because of crisis awareness which made it easier to get programmes more easily accepted after the crisis. Visuri has also paid attention to communication problems among security political leadership. These were problems which did not disappear.

the 1980s, Lt.Gen. Ermei Kanninen described the decade of the 1960s as the most prominent post-war decade of buying defence materiel (Kanninen, 1988, pp. 10–16).

This is how the neutrality policy of President Kekkonen's time was crystallised as a framework for defence policy. So-called "omni-directional defence" supported the neutrality policy, and President Kekkonen used the Defence Forces to support it educationally from a conscript-and-military-personnel perspective as regards their knowledge and understanding of correct policy (Salminen, 1995, p. 368).[6] It was easier than it had previously been to argue for the need of defence without pointing to a potential enemy, when it was something of a social taboo to present the Soviet Union as such. On the other hand, open, negative talk about western actors, specifically the United States and NATO, did not match the neutral security policy, either.

The concept of "security policy" was officially launched in the 1960s. Its pillars were foreign policy and, subordinate to that, national defence.[7] In addition, this definition matched with the development of total defence with all of its sectors.

The work of parliamentary defence committees[8] started in 1970, and this made it easier for the Parliament to develop long-term defence capabilities. Committees could make recommendations and reinforce any existing plans of the defence establishment, which were then approved by the parliament (Kanninen, 1988).

All the western countries were somewhat shaken by the societal radicalism witnessed at the end of the 1960s. After the situation had calmed down in Finland and until the recession in the middle of the 1970s, security policy was clarified. At the same, a security and defence political consensus was reinforced. This was one of the central patterns in Finland's cold-war security policy. It was lifted above the rest of politics and "party-politicking" to be a kind of so-called "super politics". The preconditions for this move were partly born when no single party tried to question threat perceptions in the form that widely-endorsed norms allowed for them to be presented.

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[6] Defence was seen as a good tool "to educate the people to support the leadership of the state" in foreign policy. "Neutrality education" and a citizen's will to defend were central concepts.

[7] It was notable that instead of "defence policy", the concept of "national defence" was emphasised. It could be understood to refer to "a-political" common and consensus-seeking practical activities.

[8] The first committee gave its memorandum 1971, the second 1976 and the third in 1981.

In public opinion, the will to defend rose considerably. According to polls from the Advisory Board for Defence Information (ABDI), the percentage of those who said that defence against an attack would be necessary, even if the result was uncertain, rose to 73% in the middle of the 1980s, whereas it had been 42% at the beginning of the 1970s. Finland's policy was evaluated as being well-conducted by 84–96% of Finns in the 1970s. The FCMA Treaty was considered as positive for Finland's international status by 80% of respondents, and this level remained throughout the mid 1980s (Kekäle, 1998, pp. 26, 34, 62).

The threat from the Soviet Union was still held as the primary threat in Finland's security policy. Military security in the face of the Soviet threat was the central problem in the event of a surprise attack. Such a threat perception had appeared already in the 1950s, but the Soviet-led occupation of the then-Czechoslovakia in 1968 made the threat even more urgent (Palokangas, Jouko, 2006).[9] The work of the Third Parliamentary Defence Committee in 1981 condensed a doctrine of crisis management[10] policy in Finland's defence policy (Komiteanmietintö, 1981). It emphasised a so-called "grey phase"; a crisis between peace and war that was more probable than sudden, all-out war. Finland was evaluated as having the ability to influence crisis development and also to gradually raise its defence readiness.

In Finland's policy, a rather strong reliance on the mutual nuclear deterrence between the Great Powers prevailed, even if the continuing arms race sparked worries. Finland's defence could not be measured for any kind of nuclear war, but conventional defence was developed to better meet those surprise-and-large-scale offensive scenarios which were deemed most plausible. Until the 1960s, Finland's defence was still very much based on thinking about where Finland's specific geographical conditions, such as the vast land-area, were not sufficiently utilised. Gradually, a new military doctrine was adopted and a change from so-called "front-defence" to territorial defence took place. It also supported other elements of security policy. The Defence Forces were reorganised, and a new division of military regions was adopted in 1966 (Visuri, 1989).

The Soviet Union did not consider Finland a neutral state, but preferred the FCMA Treaty that determined Finland's position and the

[9] According to Maj. Gen. Juhani Ruutu, the former concept of "capture attack" was later changed to be "surprise attack", because politicians were afraid that the word "capture" referred too much to the Soviet Union.

[10] The term here was not about the management of some distant international crisis, but denoted the management of a crisis wherein Finland would be involved on its own soil.

opportunity to define the character of its policy. In the West, however, there was much more readiness to regard Finland as being neutral (Visuri, 2006, p. 226). From the beginning of the 1970s, the Soviet Union tried to sharpen its stance on Finland's neutrality policy, on obligations that the Treaty placed upon Finland, and to tighten military relations with Finland. This development peaked in 1978 when Marshall Ustinov made a well-known proposal about joint military exercises concerning both Finland and the Soviet Union. Finland decisively rejected the proposal under the lead of President Kekkonen. These events increased the level of mutual understanding between the president and the military leadership (Visuri, 2010, pp. 217–222, 236–241).

The security-and-defence-based political consensus was further reinforced as the mid 1980s approached. One obvious reason was the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan along with various conflicts over so-called "euro missiles", but nothing happened which would have triggered any major change of course in Finland's security policy. The beginning of change in Europe, largely connected with the change of Soviet policy in Gorbachev's era, a tighter course of U.S. nuclear and disarmament policy, along with the impending political awakening of Eastern European states made Finland at first rather cautious about the possible security benefits. When the change in the security environment gathered more momentum, Finland concentrated on primary and existential issues in national security. Security concepts began to simultaneously widen as a signal of an approaching turning point. Finland, in addition to concentrating on its primary and existential issues, also had its system of the aforementioned total defence that provided a solid basis for developing a comprehensive level of security which would subsequently take different security issues into account later in the 2000s.

At the core of security policy was the notion that any kind of a so-called "loosening" of defence capability was not warranted. It was very much to the contrary; the change witnessed in Europe in the second half and the end of the 1980s along with the widening of security concepts were often taken to mean that the world would be changing to be a more uncertain place, and it was used as an argument to maintain defence readiness.[11] While the rest of Europe began to talk about a "peace dividend" and professionalising militaries, Finland's course began to be one of contrast. One factor was undoubtedly that an independent defence was relied upon

[11] This kind of evaluation was especially put forward by the military leadership. As an example, Chief of Defence, Adm. Jan Klenberg (1992) stated that the forming Europe of the future seemed to be "more challenging and dangerous than before". His general evaluation was that "threats against a state like Finland will be greater than earlier".

in the middle of major changes in the operating environment. Allying militarily was more often present in small-circle discussions from the beginning of the 1990s, but it was rarely believed that it would come into existence any time soon. "Credible national defence" was the basic course that was evaluated to best serve Finland. Independent defence was seen to set high requirements for Finland's defence capability (Ministry of Defence, Finland, 1997, pp. 46–47). Finland also cleared more room in its foreign, security, and defence policy by unilaterally renouncing restrictions that the Paris Peace Treaty from 1947 had applied to Finland's defensive capability (Pesu, 2017, pp. 25–26).

The end of the Cold War meant a challenge to Finland's security-policy arguments, a fact that was often overlooked. A potential adversary that had legitimised that which can be understood as a kind of omni-directional defence suddenly disappeared from the west. As it was not possible to be silent about the threat from Russia all the time, the non-allied doctrine needed new arguments. There was no need nor possibility to talk about any "Nordic balance" any more.

In a way, the end of the Cold War and inherent international upheaval, despite its destabilising factors (Blomberg, 2011, p. 657) opened a door for Finland to become part of European integration and the European Community. In security policy, the actual turning point was the first part of the 1990s. In defence policy, the turn came somewhat later, in 1997, when it was possible to infer that Finland was developing a "spearhead" for its defence forces, even if it was maintaining the ability to mobilise, if necessary, large forces compared with the size of its population (Nokkala, 2013, pp. 97–98, 103). The message of this so-called "spearhead thinking" was intended especially for the West. It conveyed that Finland understood the requirements of modern technology in both fighting wars and military crisis management, a so-called "revolution in military affairs", and that Finland was not a consumer of security from a western perspective, but rather a benefactor of wider, regional security.

A Committed and Networked Policy of Wide Security and Military Non-alignment

Finland entered the European Union on 1st January, 1995. Its membership improved opportunities for stabilisation policy as part of security policy in Finland's close neighbourhood. One such opportunity was the Northern Dimension of the European Union.[12] Finland began to conduct much

[12] Prime Minister Paavo Lipponen initiated the programme in his speech in Rovaniemi in 1997.

more multilateralism in its policy, though bilateralism, especially as regards Russian relations, was important. Claiming, recognising, and trying to reinforce economic and security interdependence over the eastern border and, in a wider sense, in East-West relations was the order of day immediately after the Cold War, even if this course did not largely succeed from today's perspective. A rather common belief was that Russia could be positively assured from Finland's viewpoint if it were drawn into an ever-closer cooperation with the West. Some basis for this belief was given by a change in attitudes towards Finland's neutrality policy in the last years of the Soviet Union that seemed to continue in Yeltsin's Russia.

The emphasis on interdependence did not, however, concern defence policy. After the FCMA was abandoned, Finland did not want to depend on Russia in developing and using its own defence capability. All eyes were turned to the West in every other sense apart from threat perception. Changing the basic course of security policy by joining the European Union was important, but in its course of action, a major change happened in defence and conflict management. Finland's defence policy internationalised, and Finland began to participate essentially more to international civilian-and-military crisis management and also to missions other than traditional peacekeeping. The first steps in this sense had already been taken before Finland's EU membership (Holma, 2012, pp. 41–92). European integration raised the number of Finland's opportunities to participate in the development of common European security and defence policy and, at the same time, to deepen cooperation in a NATO context, considering a more active and more demanding management of regional crises such as that in the former Yugoslavia. However, there were also problems about military allying which came to the fore because of the Maastricht Treaty and its distant objective of common defence (Blomberg, 2011, pp. 477–484). In that context, the Western European Union (WEU) firstly seemed to reinforce its status, but NATO's change was, however, decisive. It represented a vital transatlantic connection. NATO's status also began to be reinforced, because it was accepted to set common standards for developing the armed forces of European states, and also when eastern European states began to strive for membership in the Alliance[13]. Finland rather quickly adopted a new perception about NATO, even if the country did not aspire to be a member.

As regards the agenda of NATO, its basic task, collective defence, did not seem as prominent as before, unlike for Finland, where the defence of its territory was above every single other purpose of the military. A strong

[13] Even if their membership interests at the beginning also raised a lot of doubts specifically in the United States about the weakening of NATO.

orientation of NATO into international crisis management and peace-support missions was undoubtedly one reason why Finland did not long for membership. Despite that, discussion of allying began more common in 1992. It was in that year that Finland was allowed to participate as an observer of the meeting of foreign ministers of the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC). The possibility that Finland would ally in the future was not excluded (Nokkala, 2001, p. 149) especially inside the defence establishment. Finland began to develop the compatibility of its Defence Forces with NATO, though only through small steps at the beginning.

In 1992, Finland also began to look for opportunities to widen its participation in military crisis management within the context of the European Union and NATO as and when its EU membership became reality. Opportunities for the NATO course appeared when Finland joined NATO's Partnership for Peace Programme (PfP) in 1994, followed by the Planning and Review Process (PARP). Even if the interoperability of the Defence Forces was primarily developed for peace-support operations, it was rather clear that it opened a window for Finland to receive help for defence purposes if necessary. The renewal of peacekeeping legislation in 1995 laid the foundation for Finland's participation in the NATO-led IFOR/SFOR operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1996. The government in Finland, however, emphasised strongly that PfP did not imply any changes to Finland's defence solution (Penttilä, Karvinen, 2022, p. 71).

Hardly any doubts about increasing crisis management participation were raised in the Parliament. Also most small parties supported the reinforcement of European cooperation. Only the USA's and NATO's critics on the extreme political Left were ready to resist a more international orientation in the defence and military crisis management policy. It was enough for a majority of the Parliament that Finland would not participate in any peace-enforcement efforts and still take advantage of the increased participation which would improve Finland's own defence capability along with the development of the Defence Forces.

The Deputy Secretary of State of the United States, Strobe Talbott, had privately explored Finnish perceptions about its readiness for NATO membership in August 1995. He let it be known that the USA would be ready to engage in a long-term collaborative effort to advance the matter. Talbott mentioned that he wished that NATO would first enlarge to countries such as Finland before the countries of the Warsaw Pact (Tarkka, 2017, p. 28) In June 1997, Talbott had even "offered" membership to Finland, when he met Prime Minister Lipponen (Penttilä, Karvinen, 2022, pp. 92–93). This proposal was rejected, which was of course in line with the 1995 and 1997 Reports of the Government (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Finland, 1995; Ministry of Defence, Finland, 1997). In a way, it reflected Finland's specific cautiousness towards in-depth cooperation with NATO, especially when the country's main efforts were being focused on the obligations and opportunities of EU membership. In addition, public opinion did not support any changes to the status quo. In 1997, 67% of Finns were of the opinion that Finland should remain militarily unallied. If Finland, however, decided to ally itself with NATO, the most favoured choice was the membership without hosting any forces or bases of other NATO states in peacetime (Kekäle, 1998, p. 91).

Cautiousness, however, played no part as regards the practical applications of the defence establishment. Although Finland began to edge towards NATO using small steps of technical and everyday cooperation and training and materiel, the scale difference between a tight partnership and full membership began to slowly diminish by this action. The hidden importance of common PfP or "in-the-spirit-of-PfP" exercises cannot be underestimated, even if their imagined exercise situations drew crisis management rather than defence to mind.

In Finnish policy, it has often been an outspoken claim that Finland has no "security deficit" – it was along those lines that the issue was publicly argued (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Finland, 1995). Here we have some echoes from the time of Finland's neutrality policy; specific risks were seen to be included in NATO membership due to the fact that Russia considered NATO its opponent, and was expected to cause nasty consequences for Finland if tensions were to arise. No obscurity about Russia's doubts towards NATO existed. At the turn of the century, in evaluations about situations wherein Finland applied for NATO membership, one essential potential scenario was a subsequent, increased Russian threat. Also, a footnoted example coming out of Sweden might have had an effect (Törnudd, 2001, pp. 72–78) These factors, however, were not in play in the second part of the 1990s. Security-based, political decision-making was not informed by the idea that membership in a military alliance should be strived for when tensions were low.

The Report of the Government to the Parliament from 2001 boiled Finland's doctrine down to three main factors: credible defence capability, staying "militarily non-allied in the current situation", and participation in international cooperation in order "to strengthen security and stability". Defence capability was to be dimensioned just so, in order to secure territorial integrity and independence along with the living conditions of Finnish citizens. In the development of defence capabilities, the readiness to receive help in a crisis situation was also taken into account. Finland's attitude to NATO's enlargement was that it should be done so that it reinforces the stability and security of the whole continent and prevent new lines of division and spheres of interest. Finland would develop its defence policy and national defence on the basis of its geopolitical position and historical experience (Ministry of Defence, Finland, 2001).

In the next Report, in 2004, the analysis of the operating environment and the presentation of Finland's doctrine was clearly more detailed than it had been three years earlier. The central evaluation of NATO was that the importance of its defence tasks had been reduced, and that Russia was not seen as a threat in the strategic planning of the Alliance. The Report also stated that NATO estimated that it had several years' time to react should the situation in Russia change. In the report, Russia was described as continuing to be "the most important military power in Finland's neighbouring areas". Finland's stance on NATO membership was briefly defined thus; "Applying for the membership of the Alliance will remain a possibility in Finland's security and defence policy in the future" (Prime Minister's Office, 2004).

Even if – according to polls – a clear majority of Finns supported staying militarily unallied, it also revealed that as a result of its cooperation, Finland was gradually committing itself to NATO membership. In the years 1998–2004, the share of that thinking oscillated between 45% and 66%. In the autumn of 2004, it stood at 64%. Cooperation with NATO was considered positive by 70% of respondents (MTS, 2004, pp. 18–20).

But no party dared to begin supporting actually applying for NATO membership. Leaving it to wait until times had changed also reflected a reliance on Finland's own independent defensive capability as a necessity whose basis went as far back as the Cold War. 58% of Finns, in the autumn of 2004, considered Finland's ability to defend as being good in a conventional war. That percentage had clearly risen since the end of the 1970s. The will to defend was also good; 80% were of the opinion that Finns should defend against an attack even if the end result seemed uncertain. Only 18% declared that they would try to leave the country if war broke out (MTS, 2004, pp. 28–30, 34–35).

Reliance on Finland's defensive capabilities had probably received a boost from the security political consensus in the 1980s, and materiel purchases in the 1990s. Because of those things, the Army was often said to be in a better shape than ever after the Second World War. The dissolution of the Soviet Union brought some new threat-perceptions whose substance, though, was not military or political, but more societal and environmental. One can point to the eventual refugee crises and pollution hot-spots near the Finnish border as examples. These issues, however, did not challenge the country's major defence policy.

Striving for NATO membership was also hampered by Finland's identity. For various, interrelated reasons, those states which applied for membership in the 1990s were not considered as such a reference group for Finland to suggest that it should apply at the same time. Finland's position and history were so different in comparison to those candidate states. The state leadership had also some fears that entering NATO might bring about internal divisions, and the country's attention, in any case, was being focused on the European Union (Penttilä, Karvinen, 2022).

The Soviet Union's dissolution along with European integration caused political turbulence. In spite of that, Finland's comprehensive security was considered as being of good quality. The stabilising of the new doctrine was helped by the fact that Russia did not react negatively to Finland's membership in the EU, and great-power relations eased during Yeltsin's time to a much more palatable level from what they had been in the Gorbachev era.[14] The FCMA Treaty was abolished, and a totally different agreement between Finland and Russia was adopted at the beginning of 1992 (Blomberg, 2011, pp. 407–439).[15] This event was an important turning point in Finland's eastern relations and, on a larger scale, in security policy. Relations with Russia were, in a security sense, defined as in many other agreements with European countries; there was a ban on the use of and threats of force, a ban on giving territory to a third party to use it against a party of the agreement, and a ban on assisting an invader militarily if the party of the agreement in any case were to face such an invasion. The obligation to negotiate was restricted to multilateral frameworks in crises which endangered international security.

New steps in security-based political action were presented around the turn of the century. So-called "hard" security was brought in on the agenda of Nordic cooperation. Finland also began to aim at attaining closer bilateral-defence cooperation with Sweden, with signs thereof coming already in the middle of the 1990s. Also, bilateral cooperation with the United States began to develop; the decision in 1992 to purchase

[14] The war in Kosovo in 1999, however, cooled relations between the USA (and NATO at the same time) and Russia. Putin's entrance to the presidency in Russia promised a new start to great-power relations at the beginning.

[15] Blomberg has thoroughly described this two-phase agreement process. At the beginning, an agreement about good-neighbour relations and cooperation was drawn up with the Soviet Union, but it was soon useless. A new agreement was signed on 20th January 1992. The FCMA Treaty, which had been seen as a potential complicator for Finland's road to EU, was considered expired.

F18 Hornet jet fighters from the United States was a visible political step in this sense (Pesu, 2017, pp. 28–32). Later, in the 2010s, Sweden and the United States became the two most important states for Finland's networked security and defence cooperation, which, from a certain viewpoint, could also be seen as a substitute for any rapid NATO membership.

In the first decade of the 2000s, the pending crisis in European economy and Finland's rising debt began to have an effect on defence development. The parliament made considerable cuts to defence spending at the same time when the Defence Forces had already come to the conclusion that the whole organisation needed some rationalisation. Financial perceptions caused the feeling that defence capabilities in the coming years would be seriously jeopardised without it (Nokkala, 2014, pp. 254–260, 283–286).

In light of this development, the non-allied-security-policy solution seemed to be challenged at the beginning. Different discussions of cooperation with both different states and NATO gained more pace in Finland especially, because Russia had, in 2004, adopted a foreign policy course that was more independent and underlined Russia's position as a great-power (Mankoff, 2009). Russia began to challenge the United States and the western powers more openly in the area of the former Soviet Union, which it considered to be its sphere of interests. This reached its peak when Russia occupied Crimea in 2014. Additionally, NATO started to re-emphasise its basic task of collective defence, where Russia had remained a central military threat despite different public statements within the Alliance after the Cold War.

In Finland, several NATO reports have appeared since the 1990s, and in the year 2007 alone there were two, one by Charly Salonius-Pasternak from the Finnish Institute of International Affairs and another by Antti Sierla from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs (Salonius-Pasternak, 2007; Sierla, 2007). Usually, in separate reports, the most important benefit from potential membership was increased deterrence. Discussions about the sufficiency of defence capabilities became more regular because of weakened East/West relations. Finland had not denied the continuity of East/West conflict at a strategic level. In public discussion, the often-heard "Finland's geopolitical position" and "Finland's history" were connoting expressions about the fact that in such a conflict, Finland is always geographically in a frontline position, and historical experience would reinforce this position.

The basic solution to stay outside a military alliance was maintained "at least for the time being" and was often labelled as the "NATO option

(Penttilä, Karvinen, 2022, pp. 73–74, 163–169).[16] It was seen to imply that it was not the time to apply for membership, but, if necessary, it could be done. Finland currently meets application preconditions, should the situation in Finland's operating environment require it.[17] At the same time, it was rather obvious that Finland wanted to send a delicate message to Moscow, in that if Russia applies any harmful pressure, Finland may send in its NATO application and probably be granted membership which, of course, would be detrimental to its eastern neighbour. In reality, then, the NATO option was also a tool of dissuasion. But what really had a special importance was that public opinion remained critical as regards NATO membership, and NATO was understood to expect strong public support behind Finland's application. According to the polls, the main reason for public reluctance was that being a NATO member could mean that Finland would be drawn into conflicts that did not concern it (Hägglund, 2014; Iloniemi, 2015, pp. 174–176).[18]

Russia's overall reaction to the memberships of Eastern European states turned out to be relatively mild and it was not considered by NATO to be a major increase in threat. In Finland, the word was that Russia considered Finland already "lost" (Penttilä, Karvinen, 2022, p. 85; Iltalehti, 2014).[19] So, today, it might not be such a big difference from Russia's viewpoint any more as regards whether Finland is actually a NATO member or merely has the NATO option. Russia, though, has warned Finland several times

[16] Points out that the term "NATO option" was first used by the headline editor Erkki Pennanen of the newspaper Helsingin Sanomat on 8th March, 1995. Actually the NATO option came into use in 2004, when, after the security and defence political report of the government, it became "a central element of security policy".

[17] One of these requirements was the compatibility of the Defence Forces.

[18] In a study of ABDI (MTS) in December 2007, 48% maintained that Finns would enter into war outside the country and used it as an argument for not joining NATO. 46% found staying out of Great Power controversies to be a good argument for not joining. 43% were of the opinion that the United States had too much power and influence in NATO. – Also, many expectations rose that NATO membership would jeopardise both the general military conscription service and the will to defend. This doubt was authoritatively presented by Gen. Gustav Hägglund.

[19] Claims that in the Soviet Union, Finland was already counted into the western block because of its EU membership. According to them, the Foreign Ministry of Finland had already made a report in 1996, according to which Russia would treat Finland as an adversary in a conflict. Finland's non-allied status would be an inducement for Russia to use Finland's territory. Researcher Pauli Järvenpää, a former diplomat and director of the Ministry of Defence, evaluated on the basis of Russia's exercise Zapad in 2013, that "Russia considers Finland as an enemy, even if Finland as a country outside NATO has no security guarantees of Article 5".

about applying, but obviously it has hardly had any effect on Finnish considerations (Juntunen, 2012).[20]

After the Russian occupation of Crimea, in a poll from December 2014, 46% of Finns were of the opinion that the military situation in Finland's neighbouring area would become more of a threat over the following 10 years. Reliance on Finland's independent defence had somewhat lowered. Two years earlier, 51% had considered that Finland's defence opportunities would be either quite bad or very bad in a conventional war, but by 2014, that percentage rose to 63%. 56% wanted more money for defence. In spite of these figures, the will to defend remained high, foreign policy and defence policy were considered well-conducted, and 58% were still of the opinion that Finland should not ally itself with NATO (MTS, 2014).

Russia's policy did not move Finland's decision makers much closer to apply for NATO membership in 2014. However, Finland, together with Sweden, were granted an enhanced partnership of NATO in the Wales Summit in December, after which the international exercising of the Defence Forces was ramped up. Another forward step for Finland was its under-signing of a host-nation agreement[21] with NATO in 2014. That agreement improved the country's readiness to receive external military help.

However, in the second half of the 2010s, it was still unclear whether the NATO approach that largely happened on the level of the execution of defence policy would lower the threshold to apply for membership, or actually raise it. Would Finland be so satisfied with the level of support reached by cooperation and the level of Finland's defence capability that no possible risks involved with membership would be taken? (Nokkala, 2013, p. 104). Even if Russia had taken Crimea, it was continuously repeated that Russia posed no threat to Finland.[22]

In the foreign and security political Report of the Government 2016, the goal of Finland's policy was defined as reinforcing Finland's international position, independence, and territorial integrity, improving the security and welfare of Finns, and maintaining the functionality of Finnish society. Of all states and other international actors, Russia was

[20] One of more recent examples was the speech of Nikolai Makarov, the Chief of Russian General Staff, in Finland on 5th June, 2012. Soon after, President Putin expressed his negative stance and so supported his top soldier.

[21] Memorandum of Understanding regarding the Provision of Host Nation Support for the Execution of NATO operations.

[22] For exaple, the Operational Chief of Staff of the Army Brig. Gen. Petri Hulkko announced, on 29th January, 2016, that "We are not threatened by any military threat" (Radio Suomi Rovaniemi, 2016).

referred to the most in the report. Its leadership was said to aim for a more major Great-Power status. It had largely overruled cooperative security and challenged the European security order. Finland's objective was, however, to "maintain stable and well-functioning relations" with Russia. NATO was described as being responsible for stabilising the security situation in Finland's close neighbourhood. The commitment of the United States to NATO and its military investment in Europe were essential for Finland's security. Cooperation between Finland and the United States was going to be intensified in order to reinforce Finland's defence capability. In NATO-policy, "…while carefully monitoring the developments in its security environment, Finland maintains the option to seek NATO membership" (Finnish Government, 2020b).

In the following year of 2017, the Government's Defence Report highlighted the weakening of the security situation in Finland's nearby areas post the occupation of Crimea and because of the conflict in Eastern Ukraine. Military tension has risen in the Baltic Sea region, and insecurity has grown far and wide (Prime Minister's Office, 2017). At the same time, Finland's Defence Forces carried out military cooperation with NATO on 14 subject areas. These were argued for by the development of national strategic-planning capability, and the compatibility and improvement of national defence and know-how of its personnel, and action-capability of its forces (Mission of Finland to NATO, 2017). On the web-pages of Finland's Mission to NATO, the credibility of NATO security guarantees in the Baltic Sea region was also described as a Finnish interest (Prime Minister's Office, 2016).

Continuity and Change in Finland's Security Policy Until 2022

Phases of change in Finland's security policy have mostly been connected with deep changes in the international environment, specifically the Great-Power political environment and the anticipating of such change happening. On the other hand, and also separately from international change, turns in the state's economy have had an effect. The domestic political coalition has had a lesser influence, because for the development of security and defence, usually those who were moderate and supported security and defence development had been in power. The influence of the president and, especially from the 1970s, military leadership, can be evaluated as being prominent.[23]

[23] The influence of military leadership grew especially during the period of Gen. Lauri Sutela from 1974.

The majority of important turning points judged by the depth of their consequences have been connected with changes of policies of the prominent great powers of the era. One of them was the Soviet Union/Russia, particularly when it started operating under a revisionist policy. Defence-political turning points have also followed changes in the basic course of Finland's foreign and security policy.

Turning points, however, have not been particularly fundamental since 1948. Specifically out of necessity and the independence of defence, a sufficient and even reinforcing consensus has been extant. Even if national defence has been wanted to be as self-powered as possible, external help would have been welcome from the West in crisis situations, if it had only been available, but no expectations about getting such help were upheld in Finnish policy. Help from the East has been met with major doubts and potential resistance (Harle, Moisio, 2000). Even if the basic doctrine of defence policy can be seen as being quite stable and even gradually more solid at least until the 2010s, some political twists existed about the level of defence spending at least until the 1970s.

The most important turning points wherein security policy clearly changed were; 1) Finland's 1960s break out of the isolation that resulted from WWII, and 2) the turn affiliated with the end of the Cold War and Finland's being granted access to the EU. In the first turning point, a major development of Finland's defence policy was emphasised in the shadow of activating Finland's neutrality policy. In the second turning point, the former neutrality policy was skipped for (politically) committed, but not militarily-allied policy.

After 2000, Finland's security policy also became more political. Even if the basic consensus prevailed, discussion was liberated. It obviously increased the influence of public opinion in politics, but did not bring about any major controversies. Defence committees of the 1970s and 1980s were discontinued, replaced by security and defence political reports in 1995. Security strategies for society began to direct the development of comprehensive security in the 2000s. This change gave rise to stability and new continuity to security policy.

The central threat-image was something Finland had to regulate with specific "doubletalk", at least at the beginning. This situation was eased by a so-called "no directions" policy. When talking about threats, the policies of different states were not talked about at the same time. Threats were often argued by "Great-Power relations", Finland's "geopolitical position" or otherwise by factors related to the international system (Nokkala, 2001, pp. 244–260). After the Cold War, however, Finland could no longer use this kind of argumentation especially about military threats. This problem pushed threat-images to the sidelines and were alleviated in discourse (Nokkala, 2013). There was no alternative for the central threat-image of Russia, because Finland in any case tied itself more strongly to the West. Additionally, it was not possible to keep silent about Russia's changed policy and actions especially after 2007. But Finland did not want to openly underline Russia as the practically sole military and existential threat because depicting the threat as being too great would have undermined societal support for Finland's defence. Concealing the threat in official talk was a determined strategy. It would be premature to say how much this stance involved messages to the West saying that Finland's entering of NATO would not be a burden for the Alliance.

In the turning point of the end of the Cold War, Finland's defence started, rather logically, to be connected with western European and Euro-Atlantic structures largely by the lead of institutional military-to-military cooperation, and the main lines of policy were, of course, politically accepted by the Government and the Parliament. These developments also led to an understanding that Finland's western defence dependence had grown. Oft-heard expressions about Finland's doctrine were that it was "committed" and "networked", especially in the defence establishment. As such, it was clear in Finland's politics at the end of the 2010s that keeping up as independent a defence as possible may turn out to be a challenge and would not sufficiently reduce vulnerability. Reliance on Finland's defence was somewhat weakened. The Defence Forces, though, still managed to be reformed in spite of their curtailed financing in the first part of the 2010s by organisational and partly doctrinal changes, but securing protection – the basic element of Finland's security policy – by external support began to tempt decision makers ever more.

Additionally, Finland's active role in influencing its operating environment, that is, through its stabilisation policy, had narrowed, and opportunities in bilateral policy with Russia curtailed. As regards its Russia policy, Finland leaned more heavily on the European Union. All of this lowered the threshold of sending a membership application to NATO, even if the final push did not occur before the international, war-based shock of 2022.

Finland's NATO-Decision

In the spring of 2015, the Government still characterised Finland as "a militarily non-allied state which is engaged in a practical partnership with NATO and it maintains the option to seek NATO membership"

(Ministry of Finance, Finland, 2015). In 2016, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs published a NATO report, in which Finland is "close to the limit of what a non-member can achieve with NATO". If Finland joined NATO, it would probably strengthen Finland's "immediate security" and deterrence against any potential attack against the country. Membership was expected "to constitute a significant defeat for Moscow", yet open conflict would not be necessarily the result (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Finland, 2016).

In the Programme of Sanna Marin's government in December 2019, Finland was described as the safest country in the world and stated that it "[wanted] to stay that way". Finland was also described as being "a militarily non-allied state and maintains its own credible defence capability". Finland also continues "its wide-ranging cooperation with NATO based on its partnership" (Finnish Government, 2019). The foreign and security political report in 2020 did not entail any new delineation. This time, Finland was defined as a militarily unaligned state which "maintains a credible national defence capability" (Finnish Government, 2020b).

Change in Finland's policy began to occur in 2021, when Russia commenced major military exercises on the borders of Ukraine. At the beginning of December, Putin gave his so-called "sphere of interest" speech in which he wanted guarantees that NATO would not enlarge any further. The President of Finland, Sauli Niinistö, let it be known that Finland was keeping its NATO options open. Later on, Niinistö said that a push to begin the membership application process was when Russia tried to "deny our freedom of choice". Finally, the decision came about only after Russia had invaded Ukraine (Ilta-Sanomat, 2022). Already before the invasion, on 19^{th} of February, 2022, President Niinistö stated in a Security Conference in Munich that Finland does not have a special relationship with Russia. He characterised the relationship as a neighbour-based relationship "on the common border of more than 1,000 kilometres".

Finland's state leadership condemned the Russian invasion with strong words on the very day of 24^{th} of February. "Now masks have been stripped, only the face of war is visible" (Helsingin Sanomat, 2022c). An intense discussion about NATO started right away in the Finnish media. A very common stance was that Russia could not be relied on any more, and that Finland must not be afraid of joining NATO. Also, the situation before the Winter War 1939 was often recounted; the invasion of Ukraine had pointed out that Russia could invade a militarily unallied Finland.

The course of public opinion had been slightly turning towards Finland filing for NATO membership already before the Russian invasion in 2022. However, 56–64% had, for the entire time, been against joining, whereas

17–26% had been in favour. In January 2022, the share of those of a pro-joining stance rose to 28% and those against joining went down to 42% (Helsingin Sanomat, 2022e).

The will to defend rose considerably after the invasion. In January 2022, 56% of Finns were of the opinion that Finns should defend militarily against an attack to the country, and in March this was the opinion of 75% of the people. Respectively, in January, 67% believed that conscripts would be willing to defend the country by taking up arms, and in March this share had risen to 82% (Helsingin Sanomat, 2022f).

President Niinistö stated in an interview with the broadcasting company YLE on 26th March that NATO membership would be "the most sufficient security" and its greatest benefit would its preventive effect. This matched with earlier arguments in NATO reports. According to Niinistö, NATO membership would, however, permanently increase tension on the Finnish/Russian border (Helsingin Sanomat, 2022g). The President had, from the beginning, desired a public-wide discussion. He also reminded the country that NATO membership entails risks, that being the reason why the consequences of the decision should be carefully examined (Helsingin Sanomat, 2022h).

At the very beginning of March, President Niinistö travelled to meet President of the United States Joe Biden. According to information from Risto E.J. Penttilä and Jyrki Karvinen, the United States took a very cautious stance on Finland's and Sweden's aims, and its reasons were obviously partly connected with U.S. domestic policy and partly to the idea that Putin should not be provoked into any stronger, further action (Penttilä, Karvinen, 2022, pp. 262–266). The situation changed because, among other reasons, Russia's offensive did not manage to achieve what it had set out to achieve; Ukraine put up incredibly strong resistance to the Russian offensive. So, there was more room for consideration on Finland and Sweden, and the decision-making process in Finland could be advanced without great hurry. The process also included an introduction of a new NATO report. Finland also had time to collect the support and stances of other NATO members. At the same time, Sweden's NATO report was awaited.

The Finnish Government published a report on 13th April which talked of "a fundamental change" in Finland's and Europe's security environment. The security situation was "more serious and more difficult to predict than at any time since the Cold War". The change was also judged to be long-lasting. The military situation in Finland's close neighbourhood was described peaceful and that no military threat was targeted at Finland. Finland was preparing for a situation in which military force would be used solely against Finland. The consequences of the country's potential NATO membership were dealt with from different perspectives. The most important of which would be Finland's access to NATO's common defence and to the sphere of security guarantees. The deterring effect of Finland's defence would be "considerably stronger than it is at present". Separately, it was stated that, as a member, Finland would still maintain and develop its own strong defence capability and continue bi-and-multilateral defence cooperation. The country's NATO membership would not imply neither an abolishing of general conscription nor a noteworthy change in the level of Finland's participation in NATO's crisis management operations. Furthermore, the Report came to the conclusion that "failing to react to the changes in the security environment could lead to change in Finland's international position and a narrowing of Finland's room to manoeuvre" (Finnish Government, 2020a).

The Parliament received a governmental report about Finland's applying for NATO membership on 15th May in which it partly repeated the statements of the abovementioned Report from April. A strong national defence capability and NATO membership would together be a credible security solution. Finland's defence capability and resilience would reinforce NATO's common defence across the entire area of the Alliance (Finnish Government, 2022). The Parliament endorsed a report concluded by the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Parliament about the Report in April and the Report about Finland's joining NATO on 17th May. The next day, the application was given to the Secretary General of NATO, and, on 19th May, President Niinistö and Swedish Prime Minister Magdalena Andersson were in Washington, where President Biden expressed his full support for the application and also stated that Finland and Sweden would reinforce NATO. The two countries were invited to join NATO and got its observer statuses on 29th of June while waiting for ratification. It was quickly advanced in the parliaments of the member countries except for Hungary and Turkey.

As until the end of November 2022, Russia had not focused on Finland with any visible adversarial action that could be connected to Finland's changing position after NATO's decision. Such action has often been expected and, after the Cold War, used as arguments saying that Finland should not join NATO. During the spring of 2022, other negative measures were also much speculated by various experts. Certain continuity was, however, seen in Russian statements. Russia has declared for a long time that NATO enlargement would cause changes in Russian defence planning.

Public opinion seemed to very much welcome NATO's decision. In evaluating the effect of different actors to Finland's security, NATO's effect was considered positive by 68% in an ABDI poll in December 2022, while it had been just 31% one year earlier. 89% of the Finns questioned said that Finland's membership in NATO increases security. Only 34% had said the same one year earlier. 85% said that Finland's defence policy has been conducted either very well or quite well during the previous years. The will to defend reached a new high; 83% of the Finns were of the opinion that it would be necessary to defend by taking up arms in all situations, even if the result seemed uncertain. 58% wanted more defence spending, and 89% relied quite a lot or very much on the ability of the Defence Forces to defend the country against different military threats (MTS, 2022).

Conclusions – The Role of Defence Policy in Finland's Security

Finland's final move to NATO membership is a result of a long period of development with several phases and factors as well as explanations. However, the most central issue has been Finland's Russia-based problem, namely, the threat posed by Russia, that by its substance has been military and emphasised Finland's defence policy and capability. Stabilisation policy has been restricted. It has been, above all, foreign policy efforts to influence the Soviet Union/Russia so much so that the threat would not increase. Efforts to underline "normal" good neighbourly relations were most prominent especially from the 1960s to the 1980s.

An essential continuity factor in Finland's security policy has been a geopolitical factor in the form of the close neighbourhood of the great power that was the Soviet Union. But it is not just geography at play; the neighbour was and is so different from that of Finland which identifies itself as being democratic and western and which has a unique, historical experience of relations with its formerly-Soviet neighbour. That lived experience reinforced the habit of seeing it as a specific kind of threat, the notion of which did not fade away deeply enough after the Second World War and the introduction of Finland's new foreign policy. Therefore, reducing Finland's vulnerability by protective action was important from the very beginning. On the other hand, only in the 1960s did some preconditions to improve the credibility and sufficiency of defence-related capability to better fit into foreign policy emerge.

Security-political discourse about the Soviet Union/Russia did not (in its most visible patterns) clear out the threat perception that prevailed, and was less common and only really accessible in some institutional discourses. Talking about the Soviet Union/Russia was normatively guided. Doubletalk tells of a specific pattern that only now seems to be changing.[24]

Why, then, did Finland not seek an allied relationship with the West earlier? More systematic answers to that question are awaited. Some preliminary potential explanations can be put forward, though. Adjusting the threat image is one. The second is the increased reliance on the Defence Forces, in spite of a few set-backs in the situation where expectations of getting help from the West were low, and the feeling about being alone with the big and different Soviet Union in security terms was strong. After the Cold War, when NATO became an ever more important partner for Finland, especially during the 2010s, the readiness to take risks as regards security policy obviously rose. The NATO membership problem was allowed to be politicised, especially when the former "above politics character' of security policy somewhat weakened and the discussion was liberated.

Also, the image of NATO in Finland was relevant. How would NATO really bring some extra value and integrity to Finland's defensive capabilities? When NATO seemed to orientate itself more away from collective defence, this development lowered Finland's interest in considering membership in the Alliance. This, from Finland's perspective, meant that NATO was not as readily seen as a producer of such security that was most important to Finland, and the Alliance was also judged to be a creator of some risks at the same time. For Finland, NATO membership has not been an issue about belonging to the right camp, or seeking for some necessary status or prestige, or because NATO is a community of common values; it has been, first of all, just a pragmatic question about reinforcing deterrence and a level of defence that Finland may not be able to produce alone, should it turn out to be necessary because of actual Russian policy of using its military force, not just because of its capabilities and military posturing.[25]

[24] It is important to understand that doubletalk was not a question of what was officially declared secret, but a social phenomen in ordinary discourse about security policy. Moreover, it was like a play whose actors were decision-makers and the audience the Finnish public audience. The message, however, stood, and was largely meant to be heard by an international audience as well.

[25] In this article I have not dug into a strategic analysis of Finland's neighbourhood, but it is important to note that Finland's proximity to Russia's strategic areas of the Kola Peninsula and St. Petersburg or its attention to the Baltic Sea area have been rather permanent strategic factors over decades. The government's Defence Report 2021 states, if somewhat generally, that "Russia maintains significant conventional warfighting capabilities in Finland's neighbouring areas and has, during the past few

For those political forces in Finland which had long advocated for NATO membership after the Cold War, it was easy to give the Defence Forces a role in promoting the NATO approach by apolitical, practical cooperation. The Defence Forces' own stance on Russia and institutional practices have also influenced security and defence policy in the political process. A rather stable and unified institutional discourse on Russia was formed within the defence establishment. Russia has been a very special element in that. Finally, this trait has played an important role in developing defence policy and getting additional deterrence by allying (Nokkala, 2008).

This is how Finland's defence against the Soviet/Russian threat was formed to be such a permanent element in security policy that it had such a powerful effect towards Finland's allying, not from weakness, but from strength in weakness. The role of defence policy and defence in Finland's security policy has also been kept going by the strong legitimacy of the Defence Forces and the whole defence system in society, one sustained by cultural patterns. A strong will to defend has prevailed for decades, if compared internationally. Relations between the Defence Forces and Finnish society have been close largely because of general conscription. The politico-military culture has been unified. Finland's somewhat peripheral position in Europe, and its front-line position as the neighbour of the great power Russia, has been apt in strengthening societal influence on forming security policy.

The weight of continuity factors in Finland's security policy stems from reasons which may not fade away for a long time with its allying. NATO will probably be seen as an organisation that brings "in certain cases" extra security for Finland, especially military security due to Finland's geographic position as a neighbour of Russia. Finland will fill its obligations to the Alliance, but the defence and comprehensive security of Finland stand strong at the core. Finland will also probably be a strong contributor to NATO, specifically in its neighbourhood of the Nordic and Baltic Sea regions. Finland's security discourse will be probably evermore open, but at the same time more multiform in the future.

years, increased its military capacity in particular in its western region. It has continued the modernisation of its armed forces." – "During the last few years, Russia has positioned some of its most technologically advanced weapons systems and increasingly more capable forces close to Finland." – About Finland's strategic environment before the Russian occupation of Crimea, see Nokkala, 2014, pp. 232–253. About newer developments in the north, cf. Rautala, 2022.

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A Convincing Finnish Move: Implications for State Identity of Persuading Sweden to Jointly Bid for NATO Membership

Abstract

This article examines the consequences for Sweden's state identity by the decision of Finland and Sweden to apply for membership in NATO. Taking its starting point in Sweden's shattering loss of its easternmost provinces in the 1809 Treaty of Fredrikshamn, it explores Sweden's initial formulations of a policy of neutrality and its evolution until the end of the Cold War. The article then directs attention to how Social Democratic leaders managed to institutionalise a Swedish "active foreign policy", exerting a lasting, formative influence on Sweden's state identity. It also addresses the rapprochement of Finland and Sweden after the end of the Cold War and the consequences of the bilateral dynamics that characterised their EU-membership applications. The article critically discusses how Sweden reformulated its concept of neutrality into a nebulous concept of non-alignment and adopted a security policy rooted in a cooperative security approach. Based on key findings drawn from this historical account, this article addresses the processes that lead to Finland and Sweden unexpectedly deciding on jointly applying for NATO membership. It concludes with a forward-looking assessment of how a Swedish NATO membership will ultimately stabilise Sweden's adaptable state identity and its implications for the Nordic countries' regional military strategy.

Keywords: Sweden, Finland, State-Identity, Neutrality, Non-Alignment, NATO Membership

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Introduction

In the last thirty years, critical scholars have studied how norms and identity influence the outcome of political leaders' foreign-policy decision-making by deconstructing and reconstructing narratives of state identity (Hyde-Price, 2004). However, there is no consensus on the definition of state identity and its impact on foreign policy. Tiilikainen (2006, pp. 74–78), examined how Finland's small state identity and security concerns relating to its 1,340 km common border with Russia formed the basis for its accession to the EU, replacing its Cold War policy of neutrality with "a policy of firm commitment to European integration". The present study illustrates how Finnish policy-makers used established representations of Finland to not only articulate its interests and gain popular support for remaking its foreign policy, but also to convince Swedish policymakers to follow suite. Such linking of a particular policy change with widely-accepted "state representations", including internal and external dimensions and "beliefs about the appropriate behaviour", represent state identity politics (Alexandrov, 2003, p. 39). Claims that identities and interests exist in parallel in foreign policy – as "interests are produced by identities" and that policy-makers select a state identity based on certain interests – gained support in Tiilikainen (2006). This article also draws on the role of state identity politics to discuss the present transformation in Sweden's foreign policy.

Finland and Sweden share a common heritage, but pursued distinctly different foreign and security policies and there was only very limited defence cooperation during the Cold War (Tiilikainen, 2006, p. 76; Lundqvist, Widen, 2016, p. 358). They differed because of Finland's common border with the Soviet Union and their 1948 Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance (FCMA), which explicitly prohibited Finland from pursuing certain policies.[1] To make matters worse, Finland had to pay costly war reparations to Russia (St. Petersburg Times, 1952). Sweden, for its part, maintained the largest defence expenditures among the Nordic states throughout the Cold War and developed close security links with the U.S. (Wieslander, 2022, pp. 42–43). After the Cold War, these formerly neutral states pursued parallel foreign policy change processes that have, incrementally, become joint.

This article addresses the research question: What are the consequences for Sweden's state identity of its joint bid with Finland for NATO

[1] Following the 1961 Berlin Crisis, Richard Lowenthal coined the pejorative term "Finlandisation" to describe Russia's political influence over Finland in the Cold War (Laqueur, 1977).

membership? It proceeds as follows; the first section discusses the origins of Sweden's policy of progressive neutrality and its developments up until the end of the Cold War. The article then continues by mapping and discussing how Swedish policy-makers remodelled its foreign and security policy to fit into the concept of a non-aligned EU Member State. Its third section explores the common heritage of Finland and Sweden from the loss of the 1808–1809 war and how these sister nations eventually became brothers in arms. The fourth section addresses how Finnish policy-makers convinced its Swedish counterparts that they should jointly apply for NATO membership. The concluding two sections discuss the consequences for Sweden's state identity by becoming a NATO member and provide a forward-looking estimate on its regional military strategic consequences.

Sweden – A Progressive Neutral and a Diplomatic Actor on the World Stage

For almost 200 years, Sweden pursued a progressive policy of non-alignment and neutrality. It has oscillated between pursuing its security internally – i.e., declaring itself neutral and observing balance-of-power mechanisms – or externally, by seeking collective security through active contributions to the international community. This choice of policy originated in the turbulent aftermath of its 1808–1809 war with Russia, in which Sweden lost not only eight eastern provinces – which made up one-third of its territory and one fourth of its population – but also its status as a regional great power (Alapuro, 2019, p. 19). Before settling the peace agreement, the "men of 1809" deposed and expelled King Gustav IV Adolf to Switzerland – a state with a long history of pursuing a policy of true neutrality (Tersmeden, 1998, p. 37; Schindler, 1998, p. 155).[2]

The 1809 coup d'état induced Swedish policy makers to adopt a new political system, the Instrument of Government, which is commemorated by a national day on June 6th. Charles John[3], the de facto head of state and pending successor to the crown, introduced the policy of neutrality and expected it to become "an enduring feature of the Swedish state" Rightly, it "fuelled an important [domestic] battle of ideas" which has continuously influenced its policies and strategies (Agius, 2006, pp.

[2] Switzerland, as well as Austria, are "true neutrals" bound by their constitution and international agreements respectively to declare themselves neutral in the event of war (Bjereld, Johansson, Molin, 2022, pp. 23–24).

[3] Born as Jean Baptiste Bernadotte, he was a former French Field Marshall serving under Napoleon Bonaparte.

60–62). Here, we must bear in mind that Sweden has neither codified its policy of neutrality, nor made it bound by international treaty (Wahlbäck, 1986, p. 11). Sweden has consistently based its policy of non-alignment and neutrality on the assumption that the territories of Nordic states would remain beyond the great powers' conflicting interests, and linked it to a "strategic calculus" that centres on remaining insulated from conflict and war (Huldt, 1995, p. 139; Agius, 2006, pp. 61–63). On this basis, ideas about "Scandinavianism" in Swedish policy have waxed and waned over the years, depending on its leaders' political orientation.

Neutrality remained an enduring and successful feature of Sweden's foreign and security policy, based on balance-of-power considerations until the end of World War 1 (Hopper, 1945, pp. 436–437). Sweden's foreign and security policy had been that of "passive" neutrality until 1914, but developed into an increasingly "pragmatic" policy of neutrality as the war progressed (Westberg, 2016, p. 32). Swedish Social Democratic Party (SAP) leader Hjalmar Branting, who had served in coalition governments since 1917 and as prime minister for three minority governments in 1920–1925, explored a different path in the 1920s. Swedish neutrality thus transformed into an active policy promoting democracy, disarmament, and "international co-operation (…) to achieve international peace and security" by building a system of "collective security" through the League of Nations (1920, p. 3; Stern, 1991, pp. 82–83). Although its active policy of neutrality made Sweden "the harbinger of a new international order" (Ruth, 1984, p. 70), it withdrew from its collective security obligations in 1936 because the League of Nations had become a major disappointment (Agius, 2006, pp. 71–72). Pressed by escalating regional military tensions, Sweden returned to a policy of neutrality.

The Second World War proved to be challenging, not only to the rules of neutrality laid down in the Hague Conventions, but also to the credibility of the strict neutrality that Sweden had declared in September 1939 (Wahlbäck, 1998, p. 105). Sweden violated the rules by facilitating the regular rail transport of German soldiers to and from occupied Norway in 1940–1943, and by allowing Germany to re-deploy an army division from occupied Norway to Finland via Swedish territory in 1941. Sweden adhered to a policy of strict neutrality only as long as there were no immediate threats to its sovereignty or as long as its key national interests were not under threat. According to Agius (2006, pp. 78, 85), Sweden's policy of neutrality "lacked integrity" due to: i) its support of Finland by facilitating volunteer forces; ii) its submissiveness to German military requests until 1943; and iii) its support of allied forces in the last years of the war. Until now, Sweden's policy of neutrality had proved flexible, pragmatic, and self-serving, i.e., keeping Sweden out of conflict while maintaining its sovereignty and trade. From now on, its official doctrine would read thusly; "non-aligned in peacetime, aiming to be neutral in war".

The SAP was continuously in government from 1932 to 1976. In 1945 to 1962, the foreign and security policy of Sweden was characterised by caution and restraint under Foreign Minister Östen Undén (SAP), who placed emphasis on international law and the balance of power (Bjereld et al., 2022, p. 17). In this period, Sweden built a reputation of commitment to the United Nations (UN). Driven by ideals and by pursuing diplomacy and mediation in Middle East conflicts, Swedish diplomats Dag Hammarskjöld – Secretary-General of the UN from 1953 to 1961 – and Gunnar Jarring – Permanent Representative to the UN between 1956–1958 – laid the groundwork for what would later become Sweden's "active foreign policy" (Krasno, 1999; Uppsala University, 2022; Fröhlich, 2018, pp. 61–63, 67–68). Hammarskjöld, having served as cabinet secretary at the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1949–1951, strengthened the independence and impartiality of the UN. His skilful management of the Suez Crisis in 1956, in which the UN established its first peacekeeping force, was one of many reasons for posthumously awarding him the Nobel Peace Prize in 1961. Sweden not only took on mediating roles in international disputes and conflicts from the 1950s, it also made itself a spokescountry for the rights of small independent states (Goetschel, 1999, p. 120; Möller, Bjereld, 2010, p. 376). Even so, the sole focus of the Swedish Armed Forces in the Cold War was territorial defence, and its participation in international military missions was marginal (Hellquist, Tidblad-Lundholm, 2021, p. 40). Sweden was, to some extent, on its own on. There was no Nordic defence or security identity in a region "defined in terms of a delicate Nordic balance" made up of three NATO allies and two neutrals (Hyde-Price, 2018, p. 436).

From 1962, Swedish policymakers began to pursue an "active foreign policy", characterised by taking independent positions in opinion formation (Bjereld et al., 2022, pp. 17, 224–225). In 1968, during the Vietnam War, the SAP had invited the North Vietnamese leader Nguyen Tho Chanh to Sweden. Swedish Prime Minister Olof Palme and Chanh marched side by side through Stockholm, after which Palme sharply criticised the U.S.' invasion of Vietnam in an infamous, high-profile speech, prompting the U.S. to issue sharp protests. Their clash culminated with the U.S. freezing its diplomatic relations with Sweden in 1973–1974. However, Prime Minister Olof Palme criticised not only the U.S. and the West but also the Soviet Union throughout the 1960s and the 1970s, while stressing the need for solidarity with states of the so-called Third World. In 1968, he established this enduring formulation of Sweden's neutrality policy: "We decide autonomously on Sweden's policy of neutrality. Its essence is non-alignment in peace aiming at neutrality in war. This is why we neither join military alliances, nor enter any great power bloc. Therefore, we must build confidence in our ability to maintain our chosen policy through firmness and consistency, and confidence in our volition not to give in to pressure from foreign powers" (Palme, 1968).

This policy of neutrality did not imply aspirations to isolation, even though SAP leaders realised their limited opportunities to influence developments in the world. Palme (1968) thus declared, "the policy of neutrality does not condemn us to silence" and identified a niche in which this small state could fulfil its self-imposed "obligation to work for peace and reconciliation between peoples, for democracy and social justice" (Palme, 1968). This role – resonating with the social-democratic political concept of a domestic "people's home"– not only gained voter support and helped the SAP maintain power until 1976; it became a core part of Sweden's state identity. Here, we must bear in mind that the ten-year détente-era of cooperation between the U.S. and the Soviet Union – starting in the late 1960s and reaching its height by the signing of the Helsinki Final Act in 1975 – reduced military tensions significantly and facilitated this height of Swedish activism (Longley, 2022).

In this period of détente, Prime Minister Olof Palme (SAP) turned the objective of the Swedish Armed Forces into "a political manifestation" cutting defence spending by one third and reducing its capabilities to demonstrate to the world its willingness to disarm (Fältström, 2016, p. 95). To this end, the Swedish Armed Forces adopted a new doctrine that conceptualised the notion of "marginal deterrence", in turn serving to justify Sweden's maintenance of only a limited defence capability. As noted by Gerner (1986, p. 319), disarmament reduced Sweden from the status of "a medium power" in the early 1960s to "a weak power" in the 1980s. Recognising that Great Power rivalry had consigned the period of détente to the history books and facing political criticism after serious Soviet submarine intrusions in Swedish territorial waters, Prime Minister Olof Palme (1984, pp. 280–282) declared that the "first line of defence" in Sweden's policy of neutrality was its foreign policy. He deplored the apparent need for an increase in defence spending to maintain the credible military capabilities needed for maintaining Sweden's territorial integrity, stressing the need for Sweden to remain non-aligned to continue on the beaten path of non-alignment and active "internationalism".

The above account elucidates how Sweden distinguished itself from dominant understandings of how a neutral state should behave in the anarchic international system by holding alternative and activist views of security, based on socialist norms and values. SAP leaders pursued state identity politics by implementing its socialist beliefs about appropriate state behaviour. Their consistent advancement of these normative ideas through an active policy of neutrality in 1960–1989, served to shape Swedish state identity. As noted by Möller and Bjereld (2010, p. 376), SAP leaders did not just make neutrality a guiding principle in Sweden – it institutionalised it. The end of the Cold War did not nullify the consequences of this deliberate act. Rather, it influenced decades of Swedish foreign and security policy by limiting its willingness to sign binding defence treaties.

Sweden – A Non-Aligned EU Member State That Assumes Responsibility

With the end of the Cold War, Sweden pursued the peace dividend while it remodelled its foreign and security policy. In this process, the transformation of the European Communities into the supranational European Union (EU) played a key role (Lundqvist, 2017, pp. 69–70). Sweden became an EU member in January 1995 – joined by Austria and Finland – after successfully completing the negotiation process following its formal request to accede, submitted by Prime Minister Ingvar Carlsson (SAP) in July 1991 (EPRS, 2015, p. 3). At this time, Sweden was sceptical of the political and economic model of the European Community (EPRS, 2015, p. 45). However, a financial crisis in 1991–1993 and its dependency on economic cooperation and free trade in Europe proved decisive for the Swedish decision. Sweden was a founding member of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) in 1960 and remained so until it joined the EU (EFTA, 2014; EPRS, 2015, p. 3). This arrangement had allowed Sweden to maintain its policy of neutrality, its independence in its political decision-making, its national sovereignty, and its social democratic welfare system. However, the "evolution of the Community to the European Union and the introduction of the Euro" (EPRS, 2015, p. 45) during its accession period proved to have profound political consequences. Through the 1992 Maastricht Treaty, the EU adopted a three-pillar structure including a Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) as well as Police and Judicial Cooperation in Criminal Matters.[4] The CFSP deepened further

[4] The European Communities became its first pillar, the CSFP the second, and Justice and Home Affairs the third.

by the EU's 1999 launch of the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP), and the 2003 European Security Strategy (ESS) (Lundqvist, 2017, pp. 69–70).

As Swedish policy-makers preferred to lead rather than follow, they braced themselves for an inevitable change in state identity. Accordingly, they adjusted Sweden's national security discourse to that of the EU by placing emphasis on the international dimension of security, and stepped up the transformation of its defence forces (Lundqvist, 2017, p. 70). Their new representation of Sweden became that of a non-aligned EU member that could be trusted in taking responsibility for European security. Sweden implemented a wide concept of security and developed an "innovative" comprehensive approach that combined "economic, political, and military instruments of power in crisis management". The heritage of the Olof Palme era is apparent in the emphasis placed on international security perspectives and on pursuing a comprehensive approach based on foreign policy by SAP policy-makers, echoing his words of "taking responsibility for Sweden by promoting peace and international solidarity" (Palme, 1984, p. 283). The fact that the ESS replicated the threats specified in the 2002 U.S. National Security Strategy, but employed another set of policy tools to address them, was a perfect fit for Swedish policy-makers who could link popular "beliefs about (…) 'appropriate behaviour' with the radical policy-change associated with being an EU Member State" (Lundqvist, 2017, p. 70).

In 2002, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden Anna Lindh (SAP) reformulated Swedish security policy, phrasing the word "neutrality" in the past tense as follows: "Sweden is militarily non-aligned. This security policy, including the possibility of [declaring] neutrality in the event of [regional] conflict, has served us well" (Government Offices of Sweden, 2002, p. 6). The Parliamentary Defence Committee relegated it to the status of a footnote in 2004 (Government Offices of Sweden, 2004, p. 38). Now, it focussed on explaining how Sweden was formulating its new foreign and security policy based on the CFSP and its 2003 landmark strategy – the ESS. It involved a "new focus on increasing the EU's crisis management capacity" that Sweden would address jointly with its Nordic-Baltic neighbours. The Committee expected the ESS to promote a common European security culture. This effectively transformed Swedish identity, making Sweden intent on addressing regional and global threats within the EU framework.

The signing of the Treaty of Lisbon in 2007 – launched as a constitutional project in 2001 to amend the Treaty on European Union – made things even clearer. It introduced a clause on mutual solidarity and assistance between

Member States being subject to a terrorist attack or disaster, and set aims for enhanced cooperation on defence – including defence integration and permanent structured defence cooperation (Treaty of Lisbon, 2007).[5] In addition, Article 188 R established the "solidarity clause" by laying down that "[s]hould a Member State be the object of a *terrorist* [emphasis added] attack or the victim of a natural or man-made disaster, the other Member States shall assist it at the request of its political authorities" (Treaty of Lisbon, 2007). However, Sweden interpreted the Treaty of Lisbon as implying that EU Member States would assume a joint responsibility for Europe's civil and military security (Government of Sweden, 2009, p. 9). Based on a proposal from the Swedish Defence Commission, the Swedish Parliament issued a unilateral declaration on solidarity in June 2009 stating, "Sweden will not remain passive if another [EU] Member State or Nordic country suffers a disaster or an attack. We expect these countries to act in the same way if Sweden is affected". Based on this interpretation of the Treaty of Lisbon, the Swedish Parliament decided that "Sweden must therefore be able to both give and receive *military* [emphasis added] support" (Government of Sweden, 2009, p. 9). We can thus infer that Sweden, at this time, had high expectations for the EU's growing crisis management capabilities – and its policy-makers were more than willing to offer active contributions.

Sweden joined NATO's Partnership for Peace programme in 1994, and, three years later, it did the same with NATO's Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (Finlan et al., 2021, p. 365). While its army, navy, and air force focussed on international peace-support operations – whose intensity peaked at the turn of the millennium – Sweden began to dismantle its national defence capabilities (Hellquist, Tidblad-Lundholm, 2021, pp. 12, 42). In 2004, the Parliamentary Defence Committee defined participation in international military operations as a means to strengthen Sweden's defence capability (Government Offices of Sweden, 2004, p. 13). The Swedish Army made battalion-sized contributions to a NATO-led peacekeeping force in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1995, and in Kosovo from 1999 (Finlan et al., 2021, p. 365). In 2002–2015, it made sizeable contributions to the NATO-led *International Security Assistance Force* in Afghanistan. The Royal Swedish Navy helped keep Lebanese waters open through contributions to the *United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon* in 2006 and 2007 (Government Offices of Sweden, 2007, pp. 4–10). Thereto, it made five separate naval contributions to the EU-led *Operation Atalanta*

[5] Article 11 of the Treaty of Lisbon established the aim to base the CSDP on "the progressive framing of a common defence policy that might lead to a common defence".

off the coast of Somalia in 2009–2017 (SwAF, 2019). The Swedish Air Force enforced a no-fly zone over Libya in 2011 as part of the NATO-led *Operation Unified Protector* (Doeser, 2014). Tellingly, Sweden's sole focus on international security perspectives and UN-mandated expeditionary operations led naval strategist Till (2013, p. 43) to use the Royal Swedish Navy to illustrate the novel phenomenon of "post-modern" navies.

This account is instructive on Swedish policy-makers' willingness to take an active part in the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), laid down in the provisions of the Lisbon Treaty. Facing rapidly changing geo-economic realities [its GDP fell by more than 5 percent in 1990 to 1993 (Perbo, 1999, p. 325)], and the risk of being sidelined on key European markets, Sweden was remarkably agile in adapting its foreign policy to one of non-alignment. Although its policy-makers could not foresee the consequences of the EU's forthcoming CFSP when submitting Sweden's membership application, they soon became advocates for boosting the capabilities of the EU to respond to crises on its borders. The reorientation of Swedish foreign and security policy in the 1990s resulted from a "process of Normative Europeanization" making Europe the new territorial and normative point of reference for its defence and security (Brommesson, 2010, p. 238). Its policy-makers formulated a type of logic based on "common values" among EU Member States being best defended by "common security". By net contributions, Sweden's former state-identity as a neutral entity smoothly morphed it into one of a non-aligned EU Member State assuming responsibility.

Sweden and Finland – Sister Nations That Became Brothers in Arms

"Svea, let your mountains double their treasure! Let the harvest flourish in the night of your forests! Guide the river's billows around like tamed subjects, and regain Finland back within Swedish borders!" Tegnér (2022).

Sweden and Finland share a common history. Since the thirteenth century, the Baltic Sea has proven itself *not* to be a separating barrier between Sweden's eastern and western provinces along the coasts of the Gulf of Bothnia and the Gulf of Finland (Alapuro, 2019, p. 19). Rather, this common body of water served to unite its eastern provinces with Stockholm, the hub of the unified state, by allowing the transfer of "[i]deas, people and goods" (Engman, 2009, p. 52). In this era, the concept of "Finland" was a geographical rather than a political term and the elites of these provinces spoke Swedish. The provinces in the southwest of what would become the Republic of Finland in 1919 were "more oriented to Stockholm than to each other" and represented part of the core of the Swedish kingdom (Alapuro, 2019, p. 19). In the era of the Napoleonic wars, the 1809 Treaty of Fredrikshamn meant that Sweden lost an integrated part of its territory to its main rival in the Baltic Sea Region (Engman, 2009, p. 23). Stenroth (2005, pp. 13, 17) has conceptualised the loss of Finland as a traumatic event fuelling Swedish nationalism, perhaps most vividly described in the award-winning poem "Svea" by Esaias Tegnér (2022).

Contrary to the eloquently-phrased desires by Tegnér, Crown Prince Charles Johan made Sweden an ally of Russia, Prussia, and Austria in 1812 (Hwasser, 1938, pp. 3–20). Instead of retaking Finland, he redirected the Swedish efforts towards supporting a coalition war on France. The coalition defeated the army led by Napoleon Bonaparte at the Battle of Leipzig in 1813, which obliged him to abdicate in 1814 (Dwyer, 2017). In 1813, Sweden also launched a military attack on Denmark, forcing the King of Denmark and Norway Frederick VI – an ally of Napoleon Bonaparte – to concede Norway to Sweden in the 1814 Treaty of Kiel (Hwasser, 1938, pp. 37–40; Britannica, 2022). Norway and Sweden established the United Kingdom of Sweden and Norway, which partly compensated Sweden for its territorial losses in 1809 and provided secure borders in the west. Russia, for its part, made Finland "a separate entity in governmental, financial, and religious affairs" – the Grand Duchy of Finland – in an effort to transfer the loyalties of its elite to the Tsar, "the new sovereign", and forestall any potential attempts by Sweden to retake its lost provinces (Alapuro, 2019, p. 22). Russian authorities initially supported incipient Finnish nationalism as a means to break existing bonds to Sweden, but from 1899, they subjected Finland to two periods of "Russification" that severely curtailed its autonomy (Lundin, 1981, pp. 419–447). This caused resent among the Finnish population, fuelling their desires for gaining independence. Interestingly, the attempts by Swedish kings and Russian Tsars to keep their newly gained territories proved to be brief chapters in history. The Swedish-Norwegian union turned out to last until 1905 while the Grand Duchy of Finland managed to gain independence from Russia in December 1917, partly facilitated by the Russian February and October Revolutions. While the secessions of Finland and Norway were peaceful, Finland experienced a violent civil war in January–May 1918 (Alapuro, 2019, pp. 3, 156–161).

Social Democracy played key roles in Swedish and Finnish politics in the 20th century. In Finland, this left-wing political movement embarked on a turbulent and violent path at first. Founded in the former provincial capital Turku in 1899, in a congress attended by then Swedish SAP leader Hjalmar Branting (Hilson et al., 2019, p. 9), the Finnish Social Democratic Party (SDP) secured a majority in the 1916 Finnish parliamentary election following the introduction of universal suffrage.[6] Also in 1899, the Swedish Confederation of Workers in Finland was established (Kaihovirta et al., 2019, p. 190). When losing its majority in the 1917 parliamentary election, the SDP initiated a coup d"etat and declared Finland a socialist republic that escalated into the Civil War of 1918, claiming the lives of 1.2 percent of Finland's 3 million population and leaving harrowing memories of citizens turning against each other (Seitsonen et al., 2019, p. 3). After the war, it reformed and distanced itself from revolutionary socialism (Kaihovirta et al., 2020, pp. 189–197). Until the end of World War II, the SDP pursued political cooperation but had limited influence on Finnish politics. It then identified the issue of national unity in the labour movement as a success factor. The Swedish-speaking minority in Finland became an ethnic minority of key importance, which the SDP sought to unify with the Finish-speaking majority. Here, Prime Minister of Sweden Tage Erlander (SAP) made key contributions, stressing the need for cohesion within Finnish and Nordic Social Democracy. N.B. Erlander descended from the so-called Swedish-Finns who migrated from the Savolax province in Finland to the province of Värmland in Sweden in the 16th century (SVT, 1984).

As noted by Hilson et al. (2019, pp. 3–6), the Nordic region is distinctive as a result of the common histories among the Nordic states that have produced shared features such as a "dominance of Lutheran faith"; an "absence of feudalism"; and "traditions of local self-government within a strong and centralised state". These features have, in turn, produced "a strong political culture of participation and representation" that has forged acceptance regarding strong "popular movements" and "high rates of women's labour market participation", in turn promoting gender equality (Hilson et al., 2019). In this context, Sweden is "understood as synonymous with the history of Social Democracy" – or rather, Nordic Social Democracy, which has a distinct red colour despite the many shades that are particular to the labour movements and the distinctive features of each Nordic state. Here, widely differing experiences among the Nordics of World War II have had an enduring influence on "attitudes and politics among the labour movements" (Hilson et al., 2019, pp. 17–18). Germany occupied Denmark and Norway; Finland sided with Germany in the

[6] Founded as the *Finnish Labour Party* in 1899, it adopted the name *Social Democratic Party* in 1903.

war on the Soviet Union; while Sweden combined a policy of neutrality with an appeasement of Germany. Their differing experiences were not conducive to Nordic trust and solidarity. Denmark and Norway became founding members of NATO in 1949; Finland became bound by the FCMA treaty with the Soviet Union; and Sweden maintained its policy of non-alignment.

The social and political bonds between Finland and Sweden deepened in the decades that followed the end of World War II. Given the stable electoral successes for labour parties, mainly but not only in the Nordic region, some scholars have referred to this period as a "happy moment" for Social Democracy (Hilson et al., 2019, pp. 18–20). Blessed by having the competitive advantage of an intact infrastructure and population after successfully managing to stay out of the warfighting, Sweden enjoyed an unprecedented era of stability and prosperity. In this period, women's participation in the labour market increased markedly. The SAP had the privilege of administrating a booming industrial expansion. In the 1960s, Sweden received an influx of hundreds of thousands of Finnish-born workers who temporarily or permanently staffed Sweden's expanding export industries. These workers and their families, the leaders of the SAP and Swedish citizens, all benefitted from the seemingly evermore-expanding Swedish welfare state. In 1950, the number of "Swedish Finns" amounted to 45,000.

In 1980, this figure had increased more than fivefold to 250,000 – rendering "Swedish Finns" the biggest minority in Sweden (Archives of the Swedish Finns, 2017). The term "Swedish Finns" refers to people who descend from Finnish-speaking Finland, and who enjoy official minority status in Sweden. The term "Swedish-Finnish Swedes" represents a sub-category referring to people who descend from Swedish-speaking Finland (Bruun, 2018). The "Swedish-Finnish Swedes" who lack official status as a minority in Sweden, make up 25 percent of the "Swedish Finns" and 20 percent of all people of Finnish origin who speak Swedish as a native language (Potinkara, 2022, p. 4). This has led some Finnish scholars to refer to Sweden as "the fifth region", adding it to the four Swedish-speaking provinces in Finland.[7]

An ever-recurring concern in Finland is whether they can trust the political leaders of Sweden. This concern partly stems from their serious dispute concerning the territorial rights to the Åland Islands during and after the 1918 Finnish Civil Was (Hayes, 2018). The islanders submitted a petition to King Gustav V requesting Sweden annex the Åland Islands,

[7] Namely, "Nyland", "Åboland", "Åland", and "Österbotten".

which he granted and to where he deployed a military detachment. The League of Nations eventually ruled in 1921 that the Åland Islands belonged to Finland, but granted the islanders a certain degree of autonomy. Finnish doubts regarding Sweden's reliability also stem from their differing views on whether or not Sweden provided the military support it had promised Finland prior to the Russo-Finnish Winter War of 1939–1940. In the 1930s, Sweden informally reassured Finland that it would provide military aid if it was attacked, which convinced Finnish policy makers that they could swiftly establish a "defensive alliance" with Sweden if required (Heydarian Pashakhanlou, Berenskötter, 2021, pp. 88–89). Here, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland Erkki Tuomiojas noted in retrospect that "Sweden has never failed its obligations or promises towards Finland, in contrast to "the Finns' own expectations and hopes" (Tuomiojas, 2015). One must take the differing geostrategic situation of Finland and Sweden into account when evaluating their negotiations during the 1930s, he argues, as Finland feared the Soviet Union more than Germany, while Sweden feared both. A military alliance between Sweden and Finland was therefore unrealistic, Tuomiojas concludes, noting that Sweden abandoned neutrality and "declared itself a non-belligerent country in the Winter War and contributed arms deliveries and volunteers to Finland's defence in a way that should have been valued higher than a large part of the bitter Finns were ready to do" (Tuomiojas, 2015).

The sense of a Swedish proneness to engage in surreptitious affairs to the detriment of Finland gained strength in their pursuit of a coordinated policy in their negotiations with the European Communities (EC) on membership in 1989–1990. Finnish policy-makers repeatedly sought reassurance from Sweden that it would not apply for membership in the EC separately from Finland (Bruun, 2017). In the event of that being the case, they anxiously pleaded for advance information. Finland's worst-case scenario was that Sweden would apply for membership separately and leave Finland stranded. At that time, the need to compete on equal terms on Europe's major markets was just as crucial for Finland as for Sweden. However, while Sweden was free to make an informed choice, the FCMA treaty tied Finland to the Soviet Union and left its foreign affairs to Moscow's discretion. In June 1990, Swedish policy-makers assured their Finnish colleagues that Sweden would not apply for membership in the EC, but bring negotiations on a trade agreement to an end. Pressed by an escalating economic crisis, Swedish Prime Minister Ingvar Carlsson (SAP) announced on 26th October 1990 that Sweden would apply for full membership in the EC (Government of Sweden, 1990). His statement came as a shock to Finnish President Mauno Koivisto and created a deadlock on Finland's negotiations not only with the EC but also with EFTA on a trade agreement (Bruun, 2017).

After Boris Yeltsin dissolved the Soviet Union in 1991, Finland declared the FCMA treaty void in January 1992. With a two-year delay, Finland also applied for membership in the EC. Alas, the failure of Swedish Prime Minister Carlsson to inform his Finnish counterpart on this critical policy-change left a permanent mark on their bilateral relations. Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland Erkki Tuomiojas (2015) testified to Carlsson and Koivisto, spontaneously returning to the incident with deep regret. Yet, he placed emphasis on an agreement made at the millennium that "Sweden and Finland will never cause each other any surprises in security policy, but inform and consult each other before every more significant security policy decision" (Tuomiojas, 2015). Since Finland and Sweden jointly joined the EU in 1995, these sovereign sister nations that share a common history have honoured this agreement.

Bohlin et al. (2021, p. 6) suggest that "the loss of Finland has practically no significance for [Sweden's] self-image whatsoever". However, it is worth reminding ourselves that Finland and Sweden have ever more strongly emphasised their affinity and commonalities due to the fact that Russian actions – Russia being a common adversary through centuries – have increased regional security pressure. In 2007, the Swedish Government appointed the Minister of Foreign Affairs to lead the work of a National Committee in 2008 and 2009, tasked to deepen "the affinity between Sweden and Finland in *inter alia* cultural life, business and research" (Government Offices of Sweden, 2007, pp. 12–13). Activities performed in Sweden and Finland included parliamentary seminars, historical exhibitions on the 1808–1809 war, bilateral sports events, and cultural events. They minted coins in the currencies of euro and Swedish krona to commemorate the events of 1809 (Riksbanken, 2011). The coin embossing on Sweden's 2009 "1-krona" depicts the sea as a connecting link and quotes the poet Anton Rosell, commemorating Sweden's relations with Finland as "[t]he wonderful tale of a land on the other side of the sea".

Russia's short but intense war against Georgia in August 2008 ushered in a new phase in its foreign policy (Larsson et al., 2008, pp. 10, 90). The fact that Georgia had been an active partner to NATO since 1994 raised questions regarding how NATO managed threats to their territorial integrity. By its willingness to use arms to change previously recognised state borders in Northern Europe, Russia was deteriorating the integrity of the regional security environment. These considerations influenced the decision by Swedish policy makers to issue unilateral security guarantees to its Nordic neighbours and EU-members alike in 2009. It also spurred the Nordic states to launch the multilateral Nordic Defence Cooperation (NORDEFCO), "(…) as a means to an end of promoting comprehensive defence cooperation" (Lundqvist, 2017, p. 53; Brommesson et al., 2022, p. 3). The pooling and sharing of military capabilities that Sweden pursued within NORDEFCO proved to be key to its integration into the EU (Lundqvist, Widen, 2016, p. 351). After the Georgia war, Sweden once again had to consider military threats to its territory and its sovereignty, which posed challenges to its now limited territorial defence capabilities and its new identity as a provider of international security.

The 2008 Georgian War resulted in a more than decade-long simmering debate on whether Sweden should apply for NATO membership. At the time, a coalition government led by the Conservative party held power. The Foreign Affairs Committee (Swedish Parliament, 2009, pp. 1, 11–14) stressed the need to address threats to peace and security jointly with other states. It dismissed Parliamentary Motions on: i) ceasing discussions on joining NATO that "risked weakening the credibility of Swedish security policy" ii) accentuating Sweden's persisting desire for non-alignment; iii) instantly terminating Sweden's commitments to NATO's PfP programme; and iv) declaring that Sweden would only conduct peace-support operations on behalf of the UN. The fact that parliamentarians from the SAP, the Left, and the Green parties put these proposals forward for debate – while proposals from the Conservative Party called for a review of whether Sweden should apply for NATO membership – illustrate the split between left and right-wing parties. The report stressed the need for Sweden to deepen its participation in NATO operations to "best avert" threats to peace and security, while emphasising that the "EU held a special position in Swedish foreign and security policy". It welcomed the strengthening of the ESDP, but cautioned that "closing the door to the EU for Turkey would be a mistake of historic proportions" (Swedish Parliament, 2009). Alas, the EU decided to do just that.

The Russian attempts to reshape the geopolitical and strategic context in Northern Europe served to evoke declarations of solidarity between the Nordic countries. So did the growing uncertainties regarding "the reliability of the U.S.' security commitment to Europe" (Hyde-Price, 2018, p. 438) and their ever-shrinking military capabilities inflicted by repeated cuts to their defence budgets. In the words of former Swedish Supreme Commander Håkan Syrén (2009, pp. 62–63), Sweden had "reached the end of the road (…) in its pursuit of maintaining a versatile and modern armed force on a strict national basis". These factors motivated the launch of the NORDEFCO cooperation. At this time, Sweden viewed Norway as its "preferred partner with whom it shared border [and] the vision of establishing [an EU] battle group" (Lundqvist, Widen, 2016, pp. 358–360). However, Finland was also a close partner in the Baltic Sea Region with whom Sweden had conducted regular naval exercises since the end of the Cold War, maintained a combined Amphibious Task Unit since 2001, and operated an interface for exchanging target data in the Northern Baltic Sea since 2006. A shared desire to conduct cost-effective-crisis-response operations within the framework of the EU's CSDP motivated the deepening of their bilateral peacetime capacity and capability.

In response to Russia's invasion and annexation of Crimea, Finland and Sweden became NATO Enhanced Opportunities Partners along with Australia, Georgia, Jordan, and Ukraine at NATO's 2014 Wales Summit (Government Offices of Sweden, 2022a). In 2016, they signed Host Nation Support (HNS) agreements with NATO, to facilitate the receipt of NATO military support in the event of a crisis or war and to be host nations for NATO-led military exercises. From 2015, they acted unitedly within multilateral fora such as the EU, NATO, NORDEFCO, the Northern Group[8], and the UN (Lundqvist, 2020, p. 24). In the words of the then-Ministers for Defence in Sweden and Finland, Hultqvist and Haglund (2015) respectively, "[b]oth [countries] have long traditions of military non-alignment and both have a responsibility for the security around the Baltic Sea and our immediate area. Both Finland and Sweden base their security policies on the principle of building security cooperatively with other [states]" (Hultqvist, Haglund, 2015). The two ministers thus recognised certain commonalities in the state identities of Sweden and Finland.

Even if these small states were on the same page, they were in different books. Finland, for its part, enacted a law on the exchange of operational military support with Sweden in the case of war in July 2017, while Sweden failed to adopt a corresponding law until September 2020 – citing its legal complexity (Lundqvist, 2020, p. 24; Swedish Parliament, 2020). In 2018, Finland and Sweden extended their defence cooperation beyond situations of peace and crisis, setting no *a priori* limits on their military cooperation. Here, Sweden opted to maintain its revamped identity as "non-aligned" by refraining from issuing mutual defence guarantees while pursuing bilateral joint planning and preparations for wartime

[8] The U.K launched the Northern Group initiative in 2010 to deepen its bi-and-multilateral defence relationship with Nordic and Baltic states, including Germany, the Netherlands, and Poland. The initiative addressed its "security concerns closer to home", while reflecting its economic priorities and growing concerns about climate change and resource competition in the Arctic (Depledge, 2012).

cooperation with Finland at "all levels of the Participants' defence, the policy and military levels including the strategic, operational, and tactical level" (Lundqvist, 2020). Occasionally, Finland and Sweden failed to coordinate their decision-making. This is illustrated by Finland joining the German-led *Framework Nations Concept* in 2017 with Sweden joining in 2018; and Finland joining the *European Intervention Initiative* in 2018 while Sweden joined in 2019 (Lundqvist, 2020, p. 25).

The aforementioned notwithstanding, Finland and Sweden did act in tandem in their U.S. and U.K. relations – jointly joining the U.K.-led Joint Expeditionary Force at a signing ceremony in Stockholm in 2017 and upgrading their respective bilateral cooperation to a trilateral cooperation in 2018. As shown by the Swedish naval exercise *SWENEX-21*, they maintained their long-term objective of conducting combined military operations and integrating their units under national commands (SwAF, 2021). In 2021, they launched the strategic *Hanaholmen Initiative* – including an annual bilateral, high-level forum with decision-makers in crisis management and a course inclusive of decision-making training – to complement their existing military cooperation (SEDU, 2021). The Nordic dimension gained traction when Sweden joined NATO's *Air Situation Data Exchange* system in 2010 (Engvall et al., 2018, pp. 35, 42–43; Nordic Defence Cooperation, 2021, pp. 11, 19). Since then, Sweden has been exchanging filtered air-surveillance data needed for joint responses to incidents on the Scandinavian Peninsula and for Nordic Cross Border Training, e.g., the country has been hosting the annual air force *Arctic Challenge Exercise* series since 2013. Since 2017, Sweden has exchanged such information with Finland bilaterally. Under Finnish Chairmanship in 2021, the Policy Steering Committee of the Nordic Defence Cooperation tasked its Military Cooperation Committee "to take prompt actions" to implement the *Nordic Enhanced Cooperation on Air Surveillance*.

A Convincing Move by Finland

In the autumn of 2021, military analysts warned about the risks for an outbreak of what could be "the most serious war in Europe since 1945" (The Economist, 2021). They noted that: i) low temperatures would likely make vast land areas in southeast Ukraine freeze solid in January 2022; ii) Russia was in a deployment cycle for its conscripts; and iii) recent flare-ups in the Russian-annexed provinces of Donetsk and Luhansk could serve as a pretext for a Russian invasion. Analysts also warned that "the 100,000 Russian troops amassed near the border [were] more than mere theatre" (The Economist, 2021) and that Russia was calling up its reserves and establishing field hospitals. U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken warned of a large-scale Russian invasion at the meeting between 57 foreign ministers of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe in Stockholm on 2nd December (Holmström, 2022). Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden Ann Linde, for her part, questioned his warnings. "Talking about war makes the situation for Ukraine more difficult" (Bjon, 2022), she argued, stressing that the Swedish Military Intelligence and Security Service assessed the risk of an invasion as unlikely. So did the heads of states in Europe who engaged themselves in diplomacy, convinced that they could avert a Russian attack on Ukraine (Bjon, 2022). In retrospect, we know that Chinese officials had "direct knowledge about Russia's (…) intentions before the aggression started" and, at a summit on 4th February 2022, "asked senior Russian officials not to invade Ukraine before the end of the Winter Olympics in Beijing" (European Parliament, 2022). Here, Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping issued a joint statement declaring "no limits" to the friendship between China and Russia, while China "officially joined Russia's demand for a halt to NATO's expansion".

On December 17th 2021, the Russian Ministry for Foreign Affairs published a request for "a legally binding guarantee that NATO would give up any military activity in Eastern Europe and Ukraine", set out in a draft agreement with NATO member states and a draft treaty with the U.S. (Tétrault-Farber, Balmorth, 2021). Finland and Sweden did not take this lightly. The request would imply that their territories would become part of a Russian-controlled "sphere of interest". In the words of President of Finland Sauli Niinistö, Russia thus "unilaterally redefined Finland's sovereignty" by demanding an end to NATO's policy of an open door (Bjon, 2022). Then Swedish Minister for Defence Peter Hultqvist declared the request "completely unacceptable", as it would "create a Russian sphere of interest where the Russian side will be able to exert influence over countries in our immediate area" (Lindberg, 2021). At the turn of the year, a lively debate began on whether or not Finland should apply for NATO membership (Bjon, 2022). Several political parties – including some having previously been opposed to NATO membership – now considered this option seriously and the public opinion began to shift towards a more advantageous view on NATO in January 2022. On 24th January, Finland asked NATO to confirm that the policy of an open door still applied and swiftly received an affirmative answer from NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg. At the end of March, the majority of the parliamentary group of the Finns Party also declared themselves supportive of Finland applying for NATO membership.

Sweden's path to apply for membership in NATO was somewhat winding to say the least. In 2016, when the legal counsel referral of Sweden's Host Nation Support agreement with NATO stirred-up political debate, Minister for Foreign Affairs Margot Wallström and Minister for Defence Peter Hultqvist stressed, "it would not unsettle the principle of military non-alignment" (Wallström et al., 2016). Critics affirmed this was a "much-needed step", but which failed to address "the fact that Sweden needs to design a roadmap towards NATO membership" (Enström, Wallmark, 2016). In 2020, official declarations from Prime Minister Stefan Löfven (SAP) and Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde (SAP) emphasised the continuity of this policy – "Sweden's security policy prevails. Military non-alignment serves Sweden well and contributes to stability and security in Northern Europe". In February 2021, Minister for Defence Peter Hultqvist (2021) made it known that Sweden was maintaining and further developing its multinational "cooperation" and "coordination" with Denmark, Finland, the U.K., and the U.S. "on the basis of military non-alignment" (Hultqvist, 2021). Scholars have referred to this policy as "the Hultqvist doctrine" described by the man himself as a "natural evolution of non-alignment" and the "self-evident foundation for international defence cooperation" (Wieslander, 2022, p. 36).

The key argument for Sweden maintaining non-alignment has been that it "contributes to predictability and stability in the Baltic Sea region" (Wieslander, 2022, pp. 49–50). This points to the crux of the riddle concerning the "Hultqvist doctrine". SAP leaders manoeuvred "within the acceptable range [of the internal dynamics of the party] which include[d] close cooperation with NATO and the U.S., as such not uncontroversial in the leftist [fraction of the] party" (Wieslander, 2022). On January 22nd 2022, Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde thus told NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg that Sweden has "extended experience of military non-alignment, which has served us well for a long time, also in very difficult situations. And we are confident that it will continue to serve us well" (TT, 2022a). She affirmed this position in the February 17th 2022 Statement of Foreign Policy, declaring "[t]he Government does not intend to apply for NATO membership. Our security policy remains firmly in place. Our non-participation in military alliances serves us well and contributes to stability and security in northern Europe" (Embassy of Sweden, 2022). Soon, many would call into question the alleged firmness of this policy.

At that time, President of Finland Sauli Niinistö moved away from a perceived need for a "super gallup", as public opinion had turned from one of opposition to a wish for Finland to apply for NATO membership

(Bjon, 2022). On March 30th 2022, when opinion polls showed that over 60% of Finland's population supported Finnish NATO membership, he declared, "NATO needs to know about the people's support. We already have that, I believe" (Bjon, 2022). The Finnish debate on NATO accession ended in Finland, as hardly any parliamentarians commented on the absent referendum. From February 24th, when Russia launch its invasion of Ukraine, Prime Minister Sanna Marin (SDP) and President Niinistö often appeared together – pursuing Finland's foreign policy in close coordination. On March 4th, President Niinistö got a head start by meeting in-person with U.S. President Joe Biden in Washington to discuss European security and deepening of their defence cooperation (Hupa, 2022). Prime Minister of Sweden Magdalena Andersson, who was absent in the meeting, was called up by President Biden at the end of their meeting to be informed on the outcome. The following day, President Niinistö met with Prime Minister Andersson in Helsinki for further deliberations.

When Prime Minister Magdalena Andersson, on March 30th, received the question "[i]sn't it obvious that [Sweden] should remain non-aligned?", she opened up about change in Sweden's foreign policy based on "an updated security policy analysis" (TT, 2022b). "[N]othing should be ruled out in this situation", she said, adding "we must decide on what is best for Sweden's security – now and for the future" (TT, 2022b). April 2022 included frequent bilateral in-person meetings between the prime ministers, the ministers for defence, and other key policy makers who visited their sister parties to align timetables (Bjon, 2022). On April 13th, the prime ministers gave a joint press conference in Stockholm signalling accelerated agendas and a deepening bilateral partnership, shortly before the Finnish government presented its new security policy analysis to its parliament (TT, 2022c). On May 13th, the Swedish Government presented its "updated security policy analysis" in the Swedish Parliament, concluding that "membership in NATO would increase Swedish security" (Hupa, 2022). The key sentence in the report is that Sweden – despite being a NATO Enhanced Opportunities Partner (EOP), and having activated a deepened information exchange through the Modalities for Strengthened Interaction mechanism – "does not participate in [NATO's] decision-making and is not covered by the collective defence obligations" (Government Offices of Sweden, 2022c, pp. 3, 5, 27–28). The harsh reality of its "altered security environment following Russia's aggression" follows from the fact that the Swedish Government noted that Ukraine – despite being a NATO EOP – had to bear the effects of "Russia's large-scale aggression" without NATO intervening (Government Offices of

Sweden, 2022c). Russia's war on Ukraine had ultimately invalidated the assumption of the "Hultqvist doctrine" that various solidarity mechanisms could serve as substitute of NATO security guarantees. Sweden thus had to become a NATO member.

The middle part of May 2022 proved intense. On May 12th, President Niinistö and Prime Minister Sanna Marin went on the record to say that Finland would apply for NATO membership (Haglund, 2022). On May 15th, the Finnish Government approved the Report on Finland's Accession to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (Government of Finland, 2022a). On May 16th, Prime Minister Andersson announced that Sweden would follow suit, stating, "[t]he best thing for Sweden's security is that we join NATO and that we do it together with Finland" (Torvalds, 2022). On May 17th, President Niinistö made public Finland's interest in joining NATO (Government of Finland, 2022b). May 17th also marked the start of a two-day state visit from Finland to Sweden, where President Niinistö and Mrs Jenni Haukio visited Sweden at the invitation of King Carl XVI Gustaf of Sweden (Swedish Royal Court, 2022). They received full honours, including a cortège through the streets of Stockholm to the Royal Palace. In a statement, King Carl XVI Gustaf of Sweden emphasised that "the proximity between Finland and Sweden is not only geographic. We also share history, culture, and values. We are colleagues and partners. Friends and family." (Swedish Royal Court, 2022). During that visit, a delegation including representatives from the Finnish Government and industry accompanied the President of Finland. On May 18th, Sweden and Finland submitted their membership applications, after which, U.S. President Biden welcomed the three leaders to the White House – declaring his desire to call them "friends, partners – and NATO allies".

All NATO member states signed the accession protocols on July 5th, 2022, granting Finland and Sweden invitee status to NATO (Government Offices of Sweden, 2022b). On September 27th, Slovakian legislatures became the twenty-eighth NATO member state to ratify the amended NATO treaty that will welcome Finland and Sweden as full members, should Hungary and Turkey also ratify it (Atlantic Council, 2022).

Consequences for Sweden's State Identity

Altoraifi (2012, p. 23) suggests that "[s]tate identity plays a pivotal role in shaping foreign policy decision-making at (…) times of great change or flux". However, the case of Sweden shows that foreign policy decision-making can also play a decisive role in reshaping the identity of a state.

On October 12th–13th 2022, the Ministers for Defence of Finland and Sweden actively participated in the NATO Defence Ministers' Meeting, which, in the words of the NATO Secretary General, addressed "key challenges for our security" (NATO, 2022a). Minister for Defence Peter Hultqvist, for the first time ever, officially represented Sweden at the table on a NATO ministerial meeting to discuss common security, illustrating the sea change implemented in Swedish foreign and security policy in little more than six months. As accounted for above, the Swedish government neither initiated nor controlled the process. It was the strength and the ruthlessness of "Russia's unprovoked and unjustified attack on Ukraine" (The White House, 2022) – whose stated aims have fluctuated during the course of the war (CFR, 2022) – which overturned stances previously held by Finland and Sweden on foreign and security policy. Fear that this war would not be confined within the borders of Ukraine but involve the Baltic Sea Region was accentuated by Russia's demand for a regional sphere of interest. Fear created a sense of urgency overturning existing assumptions on the value of cooperative security in the face of an imperialist aggressor in the region.

Throughout history, Finland and Sweden have been a security policy "community of destiny" (Wilén, 2021). In this dyad, Finland has been "the threatened" country because of its 1,340 km shared border with Russia, while Sweden has benefited from being the "protected" one. Accordingly, Finnish policy-makers have been keener to consider a defensive military alliance with Sweden than its Swedish counterparts. When Russia attacked Ukraine, Finland realised that it had to act – preferably in concert with Sweden – in what could be a limited window of time for revising its security policy. If either Finland, Sweden, or both were to be subject to direct Russian threats before submitting their membership applications, it could complicate the accession process. Sweden's more dubious attitude to NATO membership also depended on its government's heritage of the "Palme era" and the strength of its normative "feminist foreign policy", focussed on promoting gender equality, peace, and sustainable development as outlined in UNSCR 1325 and 2250 (Socialdemokraterna, 2022). Faced with a Russian aggressor, which has made threatening demands, Finland and Sweden had the incentives they needed to show unity and resolve. Their bid to join NATO proved a firm and unexpected response to Russia's blatant violation of the international rule-based order.

Sweden's application for NATO membership had immediate and pervasive consequences for its foreign and security policy. In April 2021, Swedish Ministers Linde and Hultqvist (2021) marketed it as "successful, not least because of its stability and predictability", "resolute" and "adapted to today's reality" – "based on a broad concept of security linking security with human rights, democracy, and the principle of the rule of law". In October 2022, it was history. So were their ideas on "non-alignment providing Sweden freedom of action in any given situation in the way that best benefits de-escalation and peaceful development, thus securing Sweden's independence in foreign policy" (Government Offices of Sweden, 2022b, pp. 57–59). Now, NATO membership "would not only safeguard Sweden's security, but also contribute to peace and security in the entire Euro-Atlantic region". Sweden would also "contribute to NATO's deterrence and defence measures" and cooperate with other NATO member states on "the operational planning in the defence of Sweden and its closest international neighbourhood". This would "raise the threshold for military conflicts and thereby provide a conflict-deterrent effect in northern Europe" (Government Offices of Sweden, 2022b, pp. 57–59). The government had replaced formulations such as "independence in foreign policy" with value words like "common security" and "influence" on NATO's "political and legal acquis" (Government Offices of Sweden, 2022b, pp. 57–59). Plainly put, Sweden no longer defined itself as a partner promoting cooperative security by contributing to NATO-led exercises and operations. Its state identity was transforming into that of a NATO ally.

Values are important to Sweden. Swedish policy-makers have emphasised values and ideals in the country's global role since the mid-1960s, and presented "top-down" as representations of its national interests (Simons, Manoilo, 2019, pp. 1–2). Ideologically inspired by "socialist models of third world development" they initially branded this small state a "moral superpower", a niche role that gained popularity and earned it a key role on the global stage until the Cold War ended (Dahl, 2006, pp. 895–896, 908). Although Sweden had some success in defining itself as a role model for the world, the self-imposed moral superiority of Swedish policy-makers also stirred-up serious friction, e.g., with Israeli leaders (McDonough, 2017). In an unusual exhortation to society aimed at making Swedish citizens accept mass migration in 2013, then Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt (conservative party) had some success in rebranding Sweden as a self-perceived "humanitarian super power" (Simons, Manoilo, 2019, p. 2). The coalition government under Prime Minister Stefan Löfven (SAP) extended this notion into a "feminist foreign policy" agenda in his parliamentary keynote speech in October 2014.

As Dahl (2006, p. 908) rightly concludes, Sweden was "neither very moral nor much of a superpower". Rather, SAP leaders pursued an "activist" foreign policy and were "blind to the human rights atrocities performed in the east", and why "the entire idea of a "third way" between democracy and communist dictatorship" served to "undermine western democracy" (Dahl, 2006, p. 908). One might ask why the notion of Sweden as some sort of superpower has been so prominent in the last 60 years. Tilly (1981, p. 16) offers a valid answer, arguing that Sweden "is a shrunken remainder of the expansive power which, at one time or another, dominated Norway, Finland, Estonia, Livonia, and other important parts of the North". The will of Swedish policymakers to "punch beyond Sweden's weight", i.e., have a larger say in international politics than its current "size of population and territory, resource endowment, economic capability, military strength" (Waltz, 1993, p. 50) would suggest that it is deeply embedded in its state identity. They thus opt to excel in Waltz's additional criteria "political stability and competence" to gain a relational advantage to influence or change the behaviour of other states.

Values are important also to NATO. The common values shared by its member states are "the principles of democracy, individual liberty, and the rule of law" – which aligns with long-held Swedish values – forming the basis of its guiding principle of collective defence (NATO, 2019). Sweden adhere also to the latter since May 2022, but the agreement between Turkey, Finland and Sweden furthermore stipulates support to the "fight against terrorism" with "unwavering solidarity and cooperation" (NATO, 2022b). This involves a significant Swedish foreign policy change, as Turkey defines the Kurdish Yekîneyên Parastina Gel (YPG) militia – closely linked to the Partiya Yekîtiya Demokrat (PYD), a political party in the autonomous Syrian region Rojava – as a terrorist organisation. As late as November 2021, SAP Party Secretary Tobias Baudin signed an agreement with the politically independent parliamentarian Amineh Kakabaveh on deepening Sweden's cooperation with the PYD (Socialdemokraterna, 2021). Seven months later, Sweden and Turkey agreed *not* to "provide support to YPG/PYD", establishing that "the [Partia Karkaren Kurdistan] PKK was a proscribed terrorist organisation" and committed itself to preventing its activities (NATO, 2022b). Sweden also confirmed that a "new, tougher, Terrorist Offences Act [would enter] into force on 1st July" while preparing a "further tightening of [its] counter-terrorism legislation". Furthermore, Sweden committed itself to address Türkiye's pending deportation or extradition requests of terror suspects expeditiously and thoroughly" (NATO, 2022b). To this end, the parties to the memorandum established a Permanent Joint Mechanism. Implementing the agreement is decisive to whether or not Turkey will ratify Sweden's membership application, and is why the negotiation rounds receive significant media attention.

Sweden's new policy on nuclear weapons represents another significant change in its foreign policy. Swedish policy-makers, mainly from the political left, long pursued a hard-line policy on the total elimination of nuclear weapons – demanding effectuation of the action plan adopted in 2000 by the UN Nuclear Proliferation Treaty Review Conference (Government of Sweden, 2002, p. 7). They repeatedly called for strict control of the arms trade as a means to improve global security. Swedish government representatives also voted in favour of the UN adopting the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in 2017, which entered into force in January 2021. Following parliamentary debates and a report by an expert, Sweden refrained from signing and ratifying it – pointing to "several shortcomings" and arguing that the treaty failed to "offer a credible and effective path towards either nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation or the promotion of the peaceful use of nuclear technology" (Government Offices of Sweden, 2022d; Swedish Parliament, 2019). Swedish Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde (SAP) completed this change process by signing Sweden's application for membership of NATO, declaring that "Sweden accepts NATO's approach to security and defence, including the essential role of nuclear weapons" (Government Offices of Sweden, 2022e). Swedish Supreme Commander Micael Bydén, for his part, did not request any restrictions in the Swedish Armed Forces' integration into NATO – neither regarding nuclear weapons nor the permanent stationing of NATO forces on Swedish territory (TT, 2022d). Sweden's altered policy on nuclear weapons and openness to a temporary or permanent deployment of forces, relates to its policy-makers' accommodation of the key role of deterrence and defence in NATO. Sweden must thus make substantial contributions to NATO's common capabilities. In fact, NATO defines deterrence and defence of alliance territory as its most prioritised "core task" in its latest *Strategic Concept*, followed by the tasks of pursuing cooperative security and crisis prevention and management (NATO, 2022c).

To sum up, the deterioration of the regional security environment induced by Russia's invasion of Ukraine and its threatening statements on a new regional security order made Sweden reconsider the usefulness of its policy of non-alignment. However, such change might have been impossible if Finland had not taken the lead, initiating a process that rapidly led Sweden to make decision as regards applying for NATO membership. This, in turn, invalidated the previous core argument by the Swedish government not to upset stability in the region, since such a move would risk the security of Finland. The convincing Finnish move on applying for NATO membership stunned the SAP-led Swedish government. It had seemed so unlikely that the "threatened" part of the Finish-Swedish dyad would dare make it. The fact that the Finnish Government was led by the SPD, while NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg was a former Norwegian Social Democratic Prime Minister (Ap), was likely conducive to alter the firm and long-held stance by the Swedish SAP to base its security policy on a web of security cooperation. Facing the risk of looming regional war, SAP leaders replaced its normative, liberal, foreign policy with a narrower, realist-oriented policy with a focus on military security. We can now distinguish the features of Sweden's new state identity – a Nordic NATO member state, strategically positioned on the Scandinavian Peninsula in the Baltic Sea Region, punching above its weight and assuming responsibility in a very powerful alliance. Its heritage as a former: i) regional power; ii) moral superpower; iii) diplomatic superpower; and iv) humanitarian superpower; has already morphed into the search for an influential military role in Scandinavia. Key words in these identity narratives are *super*, i.e., Sweden showing excellence, and *power*, i.e., Sweden being influential. Maintaining this self-image is beneficial to its policy makers in their pursuit to prepare Sweden to assume a new leadership role.

Closing Remarks – Some Military Strategic Consequences

Sweden holds the largest territory among the Nordic states and it spans the length of the Scandinavian Peninsula. U.S. military leaders have repeatedly stressed the military strategic value of Sweden controlling the Island of Gotland, situated in the middle of the Baltic Sea (Traub, 2022; Holmström, 2017). Its geography dominates much of the Baltic Sea Region and it is key in enabling NATO to defend Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland – a scenario that has exercised in the NATO *BALTOPS* series since the 1990s. This notwithstanding, the military dynamics are even stronger in the High North. Russia's pursuit of a strategy of military dominance in both regions have made the two regions geostrategically interconnected, rendering them a NATO theatre of operations on its Northern Flank. Finland, Sweden, and the U.S. have jointly addressed this fact since 2018, when they signed a trilateral agreement to deepen their defence-based relationships (Lundqvist, 2020, pp. 23–26). Norway, Finland, and Sweden followed suit in their 2020 *Trilateral Statement of Intent on Enhanced Operational Cooperation*. When updating their statement on November 22nd 2022, they *inter alia* committed themselves to "[c] onduct[ing] common operations planning in areas of mutual interest, especially in the northern parts of Finland, Norway, and Sweden" and "scenario-based discussions and exercises based on requirements from current national operations planning and common security concerns" (Government Offices of Sweden, 2022f). They also agreed to prepare for the "conduct [of] combined or coordinated military operations".

Their timely statement indicates the focus of the efforts they will undertake, organising a cost-effective joint Nordic defence of the "Cap of the North" and preparing for receiving and integrating them with U.S. military forces that deploy to this theatre. These will be the U.S. 2nd Marine Expeditionary Force, which will deploy through Norway, the U.S. Second Fleet and parts of the U.S. Air Force. The "Cap of the North" is a vast and sparsely populated area, offering only limited lines of communication. It risks being subjected to heavy Russian attacks in order to provide it a sizeable buffer zone around its Northern Fleet – tasked with hosting Russia's nuclear second-strike capacity – coined the "Bastion" concept. Since this theatre of operations includes the North Atlantic and the Barents Sea, and that access to resources represent key national interests, operations will include all domains, all military services along with civilian agencies assigned responsibilities within the concept of total defence. To this end, the accession of Finland and Sweden to NATO will fundamentally alter the military strategy along NATO's Northern Flank – paving the way for a deepened integration between the Nordic states and strengthening their Nordic and NATO identities.

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Between Russia, Sweden, and Finland: The Åland Question Since 1809

Abstract

This contribution addresses the strategical, political, and cultural significance of the Åland Islands between Russia, Sweden, and Finland from 1809 to the present day. During the first half of the 19th century, Russia fulfilled, with the conquest of the Åland Islands, one of its military goals which had been in place since the Petrine period, namely, to push forward the country's military control as far as to the Western border of Finland in order to secure Russia's capital St. Petersburg, and to threaten the capital of the kingdom of Sweden, Stockholm, in order to prevent a Swedish act of revenge for the loss of Sweden's control of the Eastern Baltic during the Great Northern War. At the same time, the islands were, in a political and cultural sense, an important ingredient of the upcoming Swedish and Finnish national movements. After the loss of Finland, the countries had tried to find solace in national culture and past glories. In this respect, the question of why Sweden, during the Finnish Civil War, sent troops to the Åland Islands can be interpreted as part of Sweden's anti-Russian military agenda as well as being part of its cultural mission to protect the islands against Finnish and Russian attempts to make the island part of Finnish or Russian culture, and to subdue the overwhelmingly-Swedish-speaking population in the context of a Finnish national state. This Swedish-Finnish opposition, though, turned, during the interwar period, into a secret collaboration against Russian military interests in the Eastern Baltic region, whereby the control of the Åland Islands played a central role. Despite minor yet critical situations, the islands have enjoyed relative calm ever since. However, the outbreak of Russia's Ukrainian War threatens to cast doubt once again on the islands' status.

Keywords: Åland Islands, International Conventions, Sweden, Russia, Finland

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The history of the Åland Islands seemed at first and for centuries to be a history of a remote archipelago somewhere up in the North bearing no significance. Later on, and for more than two hundred years now, the Åland Islands have become a much-disputed-and-finally-internationally-renowned success model for demilitarisation and neutrality politics. Against this background, the following paper will concentrate on the strategic, political, and cultural significance of the Åland Islands, located between Russia, Sweden, and Finland from 1809 to the present day. It starts from the assumption that the inclusion of the Åland Islands into the Russian Empire's geostrategic concept in the Northwest dated back to the military constellations of the Great Northern War (1700–1721) and mainly aimed at preventing a suspected Swedish act of revenge against Russia and, namely, St. Petersburg, whose naval base in turn represented a massive threat to Swedish security interests. At the same time, the islands were, in a political and cultural sense, an important ingredient of the upcoming Swedish and Finnish national movements, which, after the loss of Finland in 1809, betook themselves to take refuge in their cultural pride and the importance of language for the identity of the people. They also strongly propagated, as an enemy image, the theory of a "Russian threat", which had to be resolutely countered (Kuldknepp, 2014). Thus, one question to be answered is, why did Sweden, although officially a neutral country, send troops to the Åland Islands during the Finnish Civil War? Was it for strategic, political, or cultural reasons? The same question applies to Finland, which had, in 1918, only just gained independence from Russia. A third question is, what strategic, political, and cultural significance did the Åland Islands have after World War I, and how did they thrive after being placed, by international law, under the control of the Republic of Finland in 1921?

Due to the long period dealt with, research literature forms the basis of the subsequent account. Original sources have only been used when key events and official acts had to be verified and particularised. This combined approach will hopefully lead to a multi-faceted and, at the same time, a not-overly-detailed, small-meshed perspective on what might be called a litmus test history of an international reconciliation of interest.

A Place of Baltic Power Politics: The Åland Islands Before World War I

For centuries, the Åland Islands formed the central part of the kingdom of Sweden. There was no question as regards whether or not they belonged to Sweden or Finland, because there was no Finland in a political sense nor as a distinct legal or political territory before 1809. What was called the Grand Duchy of Finland after 1809 and is now known as the Republic of Finland, in former times was nothing but the eastern part of the kingdom of Sweden. At most, the Grand Duchy of Finland under the governance of Duke John (who ruled as duke between 1568–1592) brother and vassal of king Erik XIV (ruling between 1560-1568), which formed a part of the kingdom of Sweden during the second half of the 16th century, pointed to some kind of political distinctiveness. But in these times, Finland had not, as in the 19th century, a separate diet, separate estates and laws, or any separate institutions to rule the country – except for the duke who ruled over domestic affairs with absolute power, but depended in matters concerning Sweden in its entirety completely on the realm's central ruler, namely, the king of Sweden. It was the same army and navy that defended, and the same diplomats who represented, the Duchy of Finland like any other region of the empire. Finland thus was a mere geographical and linguistic notion for a part of the Swedish conglomerate state, which did not even carry any particular status of distinctiveness such as, for example, Sweden's Baltic, German, or Lapponian provinces. What's more, the very *notion* of Finland – for centuries – only referred to a small piece of the later Grand Duchy, namely the region surrounding the city of Åbo (in Finnish, *Turku*), which, in more recent times, has gone under the notion of so-called "Finland proper" (in Swedish, *Egentliga Finland*, and in Finnish, *Varsinais-Suomi*) (Huovinen, 1986).

This situation changed with the Swedish-Russian war of 1808–1809 and the peace treaty of Fredrikshamn (in Finnish, *Hamina*) in September 1809. The ceded lands of Sweden's Eastern parts turned into a northwestern part of the Russian Empire. Officially, the new territory went under the name of a Grand Duchy of Finland, attached to St. Petersburg by personal union, with the Russian Tsar ruling in Finland as a Grand Duke. The Grand Duke, though, did not reside in Finland. Instead, a Russian governor was appointed to execute the Grand Duke's power (Klinge, 1997, pp. 32, 198; Virrankoski, 2001, p. 414; Nesemann, 2003).

According to Tsar-Grand Duke Alexander I's promise on the 1809 Diet of Borgå (in Finnish, *Porvoo*), the Russian Tsar, used to autocratic rule in Russia proper, could rule in the Grand Duchy only with the consent of the Finnish estates, represented in the Finnish Diet. Furthermore, having assured the Finnish estates of the maintaining of the Swedish constitutions and fundamental laws (in Swedish, *regeringsform*, and, more precisely, the *regeringsform* of 1772 *and* the constitution on unification and security of 1789), the Tsar inherited the political role of the former Swedish king. This meant that he, as supreme commander of the imperial army and navy, had to decide on matters of foreign policy and especially on questions of war and peace (Backman, 2006, pp. 19–20; Österreichische Nationalbibliotek, 1772, p. 15; Tommila, 2008; Hakala, 2009).

For Russia, Finland was primarily of strategic and symbolic interest. This applied especially to the Åland Islands, which were part of the newly-shaped territory. During the negotiations before the Fredrikshamn treaty, Sweden had clearly insisted on the islands, which were geographically closer to mainland Sweden than to Finland, being handed over to the kingdom of Sweden and also insisted on a provision in the peace treaty forbidding the islands to be fortified by Russia. But Russia resolutely refused. The same applied to the British concepts of a "balance of power" and "open seas", which was to say, in the case of the Baltic Sea region, that Russia's attempt to dominate the Baltic had to be contained by any means (Nesemann, 2003; Tommila, 2008; Hakala, 2009).

The acquisition of the Åland Islands indeed enabled Russia's government to pursue one of its central political objectives since the times of Peter the Great, i.e., to usurp Sweden's naval supremacy over the Baltic (*dominium maris Baltici*), a goal which had partly been impeded by the British and Dutch at the end of the Great Northern War. Thus, Russia repeated a policy already known from the first half of the 18th century, when, in 1719, the Russian army used the Åland Islands as a base for raids on mainland Sweden (Lind, 2019; Ullman, 2006), and when, during the so-called "Little War" (in Swedish, *Lilla ofreden*, and in Finnish, *Pikkuviha* 1741–1743), the Åland Islands formed the westernmost outpost of Russia's military presence in the Baltic Sea region. After 1809, the geostrategic position of the Åland Islands once again proved to be crucial in order to block Swedish, British, or any other naval forces from entering the Gulf of Finland by controlling the entrance to the Gulf from the Åland Islands on the one hand, and by Russian navy stations in Riga and Reval (in Estonian Tallinn) on the other[1] (Åselius, 2018, p. 469; Grainger, 2014). At the same time, blocking the Gulf of Finland would secure the main body of the Russian navy stationed in Kronstadt (St. Petersburg) as well as the capital of the Russian Empire itself. What's more, fortifying the Åland Islands signified a deterrence to Sweden, which the Russian government expected would incite a war of revenge in order to regain Finland and the Baltic provinces – as already demonstrated in the Swedish-Russian wars of 1741–1743 and 1788–1790 (LeDonne, 1994).

As a consequence, Russia started, in 1830, to fortify the Åland Islands by building the great fortress of Bomarsund (Robbins, 2004, pp. 55–76;

[1] The Royal British Navy had, after all, intervened 20 times in the Baltic Sea area before 1814.

Robins, Skogsjo, Orjans, 2006). But this undertaking, designed to house around 5000 men and 500 canons, came to an abrupt end as a result of a number of British and French campaigns in Baltic waters during the Crimean War (1853–1856), known in Finland as the Åland War (in Finnish, *Oolanin sota*, and in Swedish, *Åländska kriget*, 1854–1856). Clearly, their aim was to interrupt Russia's communications and foreign trade via the Baltic Sea and to block the Russian navy in Kronstadt. An initial campaign in April 1854 failed to be successful. However, in August of the same year, a combined British and French fleet under the command of Charles-Eugène Pénaud (1800–1864) managed to advance to the entries of the Gulfs of Finland and Botnia with the Åland Islands at the centre of attention. The British and French besieged the unfinished fortress of Bomarsund and blew it up in early September, because there seemingly was no chance of holding the fortress during the winter of 1854/1855. More raids and bombings followed along the Botnian coastline and in the Gulf of Finland until 1855. The siege of Sveaborg (in Finnish, *Suomenlinna*) and St. Petersburg again was a failure. But the British and French had at least achieved their main goal, namely, to blockade Russia's oversea trade in the Baltic (Colvile, 1941, pp. 541, 72–80; Lambert, 1983; 2011; Greenhill, Giffard, 1988; Suhonen, 2011; Johnson, Malmberg, 2013; Rath, 2015).

After Russia's surrender on January 16th, 1856, and the ratification of the Paris Peace Treaty (Traité de paix, 1856), negotiated between the Ottoman Empire and its allies Austria, France, Great Britain, Prussia, and Sardinia on the one hand and Russia on the other, a special convention obligated Russia to demilitarise the entire Åland archipelago (Traité de paix, 1856, pp. 31–33). For decades to come, Russia would then be in no position to neglect the provisions of the Treaty of Paris. Indeed, for more than a half century, the islands remained, in terms of navy policies and geostrategy, a remote spot on the Western outskirts of the Russian Empire. The Ålanders were free to return to a relatively calm and quiet life, concentrating on activities such as fishing, sailing, trade, and handicraft (Kåhre, 2018; Vostrov, 2018; Kuvaja, Hårdstedt, Hakala, 2008; Rotkirch, 1986, pp. 357–376, 359–361).

Only when war broke out in 1914 did a fundamentally reformed and militarily restored Tsarist Empire turn the islands, against the provisions of the Åland convention of 1856, into a navy base for British and Russian submarine vessels (Sauramo, 1937, pp. 198–202). As a consequence, the islands became a hot military target again. As an example, on 25th July, 1916, the German airship SL9 attacked the port of Mariehamn and bombed the boats of the Russian 5th submarine squadron (Gustavsson, 2004, pp. 68–70, 76–80). In order to prevent a large-scale German invasion, Russia started to build, with the consent of its allies France and Great Britain, but again in contravention of the Paris Peace Treaty, a number of docks and airfields on the islands. This, in turn, fuelled suspicions in Sweden that Russia was about to rearm the islands in order to attack Sweden and to threaten the country's neutrality. Sweden, therefore, insisted on guarantees that the fortifications be demolished after the war. But these demands were, from Russia's side, not granted by written documents. Promises coming by way of word of mouth formulated by allied diplomats were the best Sweden could achieve. It is documented, though, that Russia intended to keep the fortifications after the war in order to turn the islands into an impregnable fortress (Sauramo, 1937; Dreijer, 1972, pp. 17–18; Jonas, 2019, pp. 111–112; Isaksson, 1983; Rotkirch, 1986, pp. 362–364).

Finnish Independence, Civil War and the Turn to Ethnic Arguments

In March 1917, Russian mariners and soldiers organised, as a consequence of the "February Revolution" in Russia, demonstrations in the streets of Mariehamn, which led to the abdication of Tsar Nicholas II (who ruled between 1894–1917) on March 18th, 1917. With law and order shattered on the islands, a small group of Åland activists thereupon formed under the leadership of Mariehamns vice district chief (in Swedish *vicehäradshövding*) Carl Björkman (1873–1948). It was largely composed of Åland members of Swedish and German intelligence services engaged as foreign agents on the islands committing acts of sabotage against Russian military facilities. From March to April 1917, they met several times in order to establish contact with, *inter alia*, Swedish politicians. In May 1917, the activist group succeeded to get in touch with the Swedish historian and right-wing liberal Nils Edén (1871–1945), who was anxious, as were other Swedish politicians, to prevent a contagion of the Russian February Revolution to Sweden. At the same time, soldiers from the Åland Jäger (hunters) regiment succeeded in manoeuvring a German submarine with explosives through Åland's Russian mining belt in order to sink the boats of a Russian submarine unit in Mariehamn. On August 20th, 1917, a meeting with a considerable number of participants took place in Finström. They had decided to appeal to the Swedish king and government to support the reunification of the Åland islands with Sweden. They also pinned their hopes on Nils Edén, who had been appointed prime minister of Sweden since October 19th, 1917, and who, in principle, supported the Åland activists and the "white" Finns, but who, on the other hand, was anxious to avoid any impression that Sweden collaborated with the Germans (Gerdner, N.D.). And when, shortly after the October Revolution, the new Soviet government proclaimed that all nations and ethnic groups of the former Russian Empire should decide for themselves which form of government they wanted to choose and to which state they wanted to belong, the principle of national self-government was enforced even on a political basis. The people of Åland at least took this proclamation seriously by organising a voluntary plebiscite, which mobilised 95% of all Åland inhabitants then present on the islands to sign an address to the Swedish king and people. This address stated that it was "the population of Åland's earnest wish and firm will to achieve the region's integration into the Swedish Empire". However, the Åland delegation didn't succeed in getting the address past Russian border controls to present it both to the Swedish king Gustaf V (who ruled between 1907–1950) and to the then-minister for foreign affairs Johannes Hellner (1866–1947) before February 3rd, 1918. The situation was further complicated by the fact that the Swedish government, which, on January 16th, had officially expressed hopes that the Åland question would come to a satisfying solution after the independence of Finland, had failed to establish contact with the Russian government. Moreover, the Finnish Civil War broke out in January 1918, augmenting ethnic and territorial questions about Åland with the ideological hatred between the "Red Guards" (communists) and the "White Guards" (anticommunists) (Dreijer, 1972, pp. 19–26; Gihl et al., 1951; Bondestam, 1972, Rotkirch, 1986, pp. 364–365).

The Finnish Civil War flashed over to Åland on 10th February, when a unit of 460 White Guard members of the Vakka-Suomi region fled from the town of Uusikaupunki (in Swedish, *Nystad*), crossed the frozen sea and landed on the islands. Some minor clashes occurred with Soviet soldiers, but they were not really eager to fight the Finns and hurried to catch the open sea. Meanwhile, the Åland delegation, supported by parts of the Swedish press, had urged the Swedish government to take action, if not for the reunification of the Åland Islands with Sweden, then at least for the humanitarian cause to evacuate Swedish citizens from mainland Finland via Pori (in Swedish, Björneborg) and the Åland Islands. On February 13th, the Swedish government actually decided to send troops to Åland in order to protect the islands' inhabitants from any violent acts carried out by Russian and Finnish troops and to start negotiations with the Russian government. These negotiations were stopped, though, by the activities of Turku Red Guardists, who, on February 17th, ferried themselves to Åland in order to fight the Swedes and the Finnish White Guards. A short encounter ended on the same day with only a handful of casualties. But when the situation escalated once again, Sweden urged the Finnish White Guards to leave the islands by spreading among the troops an order allegedly given by General Carl Gustav Mannerheim (1867–1951) that the Åland White Guards had to be ferried over to the Finnish mainland. They actually left Åland on 20th February. At the same time, Sweden sent more troops in order to press Russia to leave the islands, which promptly happened (Anderson, 1919; Berglund, 2017).

German Occupation

One week later, the situation on the islands changed radically. After the lapse of the Russian-German armistice on February 18th, German troops invaded Finland and the Åland Islands as part of "Operation Faustschlag" (Operation Punch). Its background was to secure, in the North, access to the Arctic Sea, to break the Murmansk railway, and to control Petrograd (before 1914: St. Petersburg). Maybe even more far-reaching aims, such as transforming the Baltic Sea into a German inland sea, played a certain role. The Åland Islands as such were only one little peace in a greater design, but they served as a stepping stone for count Rüdiger von der Goltz' (1865–1946) "Ostseedivision" to disembark on the southwestern coasts of Finland. One of the results of Operation Faustschlag was that the Swedish and German government agreed, on March 5th, 1918, to share the islands between Sweden, Germany, and White Finland. Any remaining Russian soldiers were captured, and Russian vessels confiscated. Sweden pulled its troops out little by little. The last Swedish military units retreated on May 26th, 1918. By contrast, the Germans stayed until September 1918 (Fleischmann, 1918; New York Times, 1918; Tuchtenhagen, 2004; Hecker-Stampehl et al., 2004, pp. 145–164; Eerola, 2001; Vainio, 2008, pp. 10–11; Rotkirch, 1986, pp. 365–366).

The Åland Convention on Neutrality and Demilitarisation (1921)

After the official end of the war, Swedish nationalist groups hoped that the question of the reunification of Åland with Sweden could be included in the discussions preceding the Treaty of Versailles, which never materialised. Even a new referendum in 1919, one which brought together 9,900 (96.4%) of roughly 10,000 potential voters and an affirmation of over 95% to join the islands to Sweden, had little to no effect (Lindqvist, 2014). The Åland question at this time had turned from a matter of regional activism to an ideological and strategic struggle between Sweden and

Finland. During the 19th century, Swedish nationalist sentiment had grown strong, due to, among other things, the loss of Finland in 1809, the fortification of the Åland Islands in the 1830s, and the loss of Norway in 1905. From the Swedish political elites' and army officers' point of view, the loser nation that was Sweden now needed some kind of foreign policy success in order to regain its national dignity. Finnish intellectuals and political leaders in turn had struggled to retain Finnish autonomy and fought Russification fiercely. They had, since the middle of the 19th century, constructed a Finnish identity, whose concept of an enemy not only included Russian nationalism, but also a past of Swedish rule in Finland. The Åland activists' argument that the islands should return, due to their Swedish past, language, and culture, to the kingdom of Sweden, resembled a battle cry to Finnish nationalists. As a consequence, the new Finnish government resolutely declined to cede the Åland Islands to Sweden, but at least offered cultural and administrational autonomy to their inhabitants. The Åland inhabitants, in turn, declined the compromise and thus a stand-off ensued (Nordman, 1986, pp. 139–158; Norman, 1986, pp. 177–213).

The British government therefore urged Sweden to commit the Swedish-Finnish dispute to the League of Nations, founded as a result of the Paris peace conference in January 1920, but Stockholm refused. Only after the British had made use of its right to initiate debates in the League's sessions and the case of Åland had come before the Council of the League of Nations on 9th July, 1920, were international negotiations resumed (Modeen 1973, pp. 20–56).[2] On April 16th, 1921, the League's Åland Commission vehemently stressed Finland's right to sovereignty and recommended before the League's Council that Åland should become part of the recently-founded Finnish state (League of Nations, 1921d; Summers, 2007, pp. 410–417).[3] This position was confirmed by the Council

[2] Despite the Finnish government's protests, which were based on the claim that the Åland question would be, from a political perspective, a purely domestic problem, the League started its work immediately. See the Report of the International Committee of Jurists, League of Nations Official Journal, Special Supplement no. 3, October 1920. League of Nations, Council, Minutes of the Ninth Session of the Council of the League of Nations Held in Paris, September 16–20, 1920. League of Nations, Official Journal, 2 (Jan–Feb 1921), p. 78. Conclusions of the Cabinet meeting of 30th September 1920 (National Archives, CAB 23/22/15). For the complete procedure, see Tore Modeen: De folkrättsliga garantierna för bevarandet av Ålandsöarnas nationella karaktär. Mariehamn: Ålands kulturstiftelse, 1973 (= Skrifter utgivna av Ålands kulturstiftelse VII), pp. 20–56.

[3] The Commission of Jurists consisted of former Swiss president Felix Caloner (1863–1952), former Belgian foreign minister Eugène Beyens (1855–1934), and former

(League of Nations Official Journal, 1921b, pp. 697–701). On October 20th, 1921, Sweden, Finland, Germany, the United Kingdom, France, Italy, Denmark, Poland, Estonia, and Latvia signed a convention to resolve the Åland question not only in the context of the new international system of the Baltic Sea region, but also by recognition of Europe's victorious powers, namely, Great Britain and France. On the basis of the so-called *Ålandservitud* of 1856, the islands should remain demilitarised, obtain neutral status, and enjoy internal autonomy. Essentially, Finland had to guarantee its inhabitants the right to use the Swedish language, allow them to live according to their traditional culture and customs, and grant specific rights on land property and taxes (Clerc, 2010, pp. 53–70; Hannikainen, 1993, pp. 13–14; Hannikainen, 1954, pp. 614–651, 619–626; Björkholm, Rosas, 1990, Barros, 1968, pp. 3–4; Rotkirch, 1986, pp. 367–370).

The situation had thus been remedied between Sweden and Finland. But a question mark remained, since the Soviet Union had not been invited to participate in the negotiations, let alone sign the treaty. For the time being, however, the Ålanders could start building their autonomy. On June 9th, 1922, the islands' parliament, the *lagting*, met for the first time. It was that very day, which henceforward became the "Day of Ålands Autonomy" (in Swedish, *Ålands självstyrelsedag*) (Jungar, 1986, pp. 159–172; Eriksson, Johansson, Sundback, 2006).

After 1921

The governments of Sweden and Finland were aware, though, that by signing the 1921 convention, the Åland Islands would not become a permanently quiet place. In the years between the wars, they secretly discussed a plan of a joint defence of the islands in case of a Soviet assault on Åland's neutrality. In this so-called "Stockholm-Plan' (or "Åland-Plan"), formulated in 1938, both governments acted on the assumption that Åland in principle had to be kept demilitarised. Finland should, however, have the right to use some of the southerly islands in order to install military facilities for the prevention of Soviet violations. But the Stockholm Plan was not popular among the islanders, and in the autumn of 1938, peasants demonstrated against the plan in the streets of Mariehamn. Nevertheless, the plan was met with the consent of the signatory powers in January 1939. A protest note, sent to the League of

US-ambassador to the Ottoman Empire Emil Nielsen (no life data available). These "Rapporteurs" delivered their report to the Council on 16th April, 1921. League of Nations, Council documents B 7 21/68/106, 16 April 1921.

Nations by the Åland opposition, arrived too late and was thus rendered immaterial. Finally, it was the Soviet Union that vetoed and obviated the plan's implementation (Gustavsson, 2012; Rotkirch, 1986, pp. 370–371).

The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact (August 23rd, 1939), which, *inter alia*, divided the Baltic Sea region into a German and a Soviet sphere of influence, produced new tensions and reminded Sweden and Finland of the unsettled matter of the Stockholm Plan. In Sweden, discussions concerning implementation restarted, but were eventually abandoned on October 24th, 1939, despite a small number of violations of Finnish territorial waters by Soviet war vessels. When Soviet troops crossed the Finnish border more than a month later (November 30th), war was a fact, and Sweden proclaimed neutrality. The defence of the Åland Islands was now an exclusively Finnish matter. The islands were occupied by regular Finnish troops, supplemented by units of Åland volunteers. The territorial waters around the islands were mined.

After the Winter War (30th November 1939 – 13th March 1940), Finland was forced to abandon the Åland volunteer units and to demilitarise the islands, a procedure thoroughly controlled by Soviet troops. When the so-called "Continuation War" (25th June 1941 – 19th September 1944) broke out in 1941, the islands were again occupied by Finnish troops and defended by 700 volunteers, but had to return to the stipulations of 1940 after the truce of 1944. In 1947, the demilitarisation of the Ålands was confirmed during the preliminary negotiations for a Finnish-Soviet peace treaty in Paris 1947 (Ålands landskapsregering, N.D.).

Despite political tensions in Cold War Europe and repeated violations of Finnish and Swedish territorial waters by Russian submarines and other war vessels, the time after 1945 was for the Åland Islands a period of Nordic and European integration and peaceful building of the islands' fishery, shipping, and trade connections. In 1954, Åland was given the right to use its own flag. In 1970, the islands became a member of the Nordic Council. The foundation of the "Peace Institute" (*Ålands fredsinstitut*) in 1992 established, worldwide, the "Åland model" as a pattern for demilitarisation and neutrality politics as well as for the handling of international conflicts and minority questions. A referendum of the Åland inhabitants in 1994 resulted in the islands' EU membership one year later. In accordance with Finland, the EURO currency replaced the hitherto used Finnish Mark in 2002 (Tudeer, 1993, pp. 107–130; Ålands fredsinstitut, N.D.; Högman, 1986, pp. 117–137; Hannikainen, Horn, 1997).

Since the outbreak of the Ukraine War in February 2022, the Åland Islands are once again one of the hot spots of a possible Russian assault on Finland, Sweden, or some of the NATO member states. This hazardous situation has even increased since Finland's applying for NATO membership in May 2022. So far, Finland, contrary to Sweden in the case of Gotland, and in accordance with the interests of the islands' population, insists on the demilitarised status of the islands. The fact remains though, that the Åland islands can, technically speaking, easily be reached either by Russian missiles or Russian vessels and invasion forces. And as soon as Finland and Sweden are fully-fledged NATO members, the islands will, in a NATO-alliance sense, be at the centre of attention again.

Conclusions

Ever since 1809, the Åland Islands' status was closely connected to the question of its geopolitical and geostrategic significance for the neighbouring states. When Sweden lost Finland after the Swedish-Russian War of 1808–1809, its main interest was to prevent Russia from using the islands as a military base for potential assaults on mainland Sweden. Napoleon's famous bon mot that the Åland Islands represented a pistol pointed at the heart of Sweden put it in a nutshell. That Russia would not violate Sweden's territorial waters in the Gulf of Finland was even in the interest of Great Britain and France. This was the reason why they, after the end of the Crimean War, forced Russia to sign a peace treaty that determined the demilitarisation and neutralisation of the Åland Islands. Its stipulations formed a *leitmotif* of all treaties and other legal documents up to the present day.

A second central theme was the question of the Åland Islands' political affiliation. Immediately after the breakdown of the Russian Empire in 1917, four options were available: 1) that the islands remained part of the Grand Duchy and Republic of Finland respectively, 2) that they be returned to Sweden for historical and cultural reasons, 3) that they be returned to Russia for military reasons, and 4) that they be turned over to Germany, the dominant sea power of the time and presumably in the future. Given the developing civil war in Finland, the first option seemed doubtful. The second option seemed logical, but Sweden's political will did not prove to be strong enough to realise the project. The third option depended on the future of the Soviet Union and its gaining of power in foreign policy questions. The fourth option, for several months, seemed to be the most likely, but with the breakdown of the German Empire in November 1918 vanished as a probable scenario. However, the very fact that there at all existed four options in 1917–1918 required an international solution, eventually formulated by a 1921 convention. This 1921 convention found answers to the military question and to the problem of a political affiliation, but could not prevent a return to traditional military and political patterns and a questioning of the 1856 and 1921 formulas in times of crisis (such as World War II). It seems that the process of Nordic and EU integration and the growing weakness of the Soviet Union and the Russian Federation led to a preliminary stabilisation of the Åland question.

Given that the present deterioration of the Baltic's security lies as a consequence of the Ukraine War (since 24th February 2022), this situation could rapidly change. On the other hand, Russia's threat on North-eastern Europe will intensify Swedish-Finnish military co-operation and political integration, e.g., in the context of future NATO membership having been discussed for several years in both countries only to be formally applied for in May 2022 (Tolgfors, 2016. Lindberg, 2021). For Finland, there even is a domestic dimension. The Åland Islands are, though autonomous, part of Finland's Swedish-speaking community, and their official language, Swedish, is an official language in Finland. Accordingly, no "foreign body sensation" exists in Finland as regards the Åland Islands. In this sense, Åland is an integral part of the Finnish state and a cultural bridge to Sweden. And, for historical reasons, there is a strong sense of belonging together, in spite of Finland's Russian imperial affiliation and occasional disputes between Finland and Sweden after Finland's independence (Tarkiainen, 2008; Villstrand, 2009; Engman, 2016; Meinander, 2016; Tandefelt, 2015; Stjernfelt, 1991). This also means that both nations will jointly and decidedly resist any Russian claim on the Åland Islands in the future.

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Finland in the Mediterranean

Abstract

This article aimes to shed light on the rich, but rather enigmatic relationship between Finland and the Mediterranean world. These interactions have been approached since Antiquity, but this paper's focus has been on 19th and 20th centuries and especially on the last three decades.

About thirty years ago, when Finland was preparing itself to join the European Union, it also had to build up a real Mediterranean policy of its own. It was in the Corfu European Council in June 1994 when the then-president realised that the country needed such a policy. Thus, in 1995, when Finland joined the EU, it also participated in the Barcelona Euro-Mediterranean Conference and signed the Barcelona Declaration that established the Barcelona Process forming the structures for European Union cooperation with the southern and eastern Mediterranean countries. The participation into this structural process was felt important for Finland mainly for two reasons. Firstly, the country wanted to be a full and active member of the EU and thus contribute to every field of activity that are important for the union. Secondly, we Finns realised that if we wanted the southern European countries to understand and to cooperate with our own ambitions in the northern part of Europe, we needed to show solidarity towards the aims and needs of our southern partners in the Mediterranean. All this resulted in Finland being surprisingly active in all Euro-Mediterranean cooperation environments. This concerned not only official state activities, but also other public sectors as well as civil society actors and NGOs. These Euro-Mediterranean activities became so many and so multiform that we can deal only with a few of them here as examples.

Keywords: Finland, Mediterranean, Middle East, Union for Mediterranean, European Union, Security

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Introduction – Prelude

For a non-coastal, Mediterranean country such as Finland, the Russian attack and the resultant war against Ukraine in February 2022 changed almost everything. This obviously prevails over official state politics and public opinion, but also does so over the atmosphere among civil societies. This, unfortunately, means a reduction of alternatives and a polarisation of our world views. We have started to look only within our own backyard and begun an internal battle that can be compared with, to use the biblical idiom, Jacob wrestling with the unknown angel. The issue was about trying to join NATO, and all other considerations, simply disappeared from Finland's scene and landscape. The very same concerns the Mediterranean world; everything else has seemed to just fade behind the horizon.

About thirty years ago, when Finland was preparing itself to join the European Union, it also had to build up a real Mediterranean policy of its own. It was in the Corfu European Council in June 1994 when the then-president realised that the country needed such a policy. Thus, in 1995, when Finland joined the EU, it also participated in the Barcelona Euro-Mediterranean Conference and signed the Barcelona Declaration that established the Barcelona Process forming the structures for European Union cooperation with the southern and eastern Mediterranean countries. The participation into this structural process was felt important for Finland mainly for two reasons. Firstly, the country wanted to be a full and active member of the EU and thus contribute to every field of activity that are important for the union. Secondly, we Finns realised that if we wanted the southern European countries to understand and to cooperate with our own ambitions in the northern part of Europe, we needed to show solidarity towards the aims and needs of our southern partners in the Mediterranean.

All this resulted in Finland being surprisingly active in all Euro-Mediterranean cooperation environments. This concerned not only official state activities, but also other public sectors as well as civil society actors and NGOs. These Euro-Mediterranean activities became so many and so multiform that we can deal only with a few of them here as examples.

Some Preliminary Notes

One of the first domains where Finland as a state started its cooperation with the Mediterranean world took place around environmental issues and the protection of its sea areas. Here, Finland has experience as regards international cooperation in a Baltic Sea context dating back to the 1970s and proposed to share what it had learned with the Mediterranean. In 1997, Finland hosted the first ever Conference of the Ministers of Environment within the Barcelona Process. Two years earlier, the Barcelona Declaration, for the first time in history, mentioned the importance of civil societies in a major international treaty. The Helsinki ministerial conference in 1997 saw, for the first time, civil society representatives present in the meeting. In addition, and parallel to this ministerial meeting, there was a civil-society event where different environmental associations gathered in a common two-part seminar both in Helsinki and in Montpellier.

In practice, all this Euro-Mediterranean environmental cooperation resulted in the active participation of Finnish actors in the SMAP[1] that has had a leading role in the establishment of the rules of the game in this environmental domain. Two years later, an activity within the same category consisted of training for environmental journalists during the first Finnish EU Presidency in 1999. This training was provided by the TAPRI[2] Mediterranean Studies Project and was divided in two parts. The first part, conducted in the French language, took place in Tampere for journalists of Maghrebi countries, and the second part, conducted in English, was for journalists hailing from the Middle East, and which took place in Capri. Simultaneously, SYKE[3] had started a long-term activity in the Mediterranean environmental cooperation which, in the first phase, concerned the wetland areas in different parts of the Mediterranean and, in the second phase, focused on the cost of not addressing environmental pollution in the coastal areas especially in the Maghreb.

At the beginning of the new millennium, Finland started to be very active in the Euro-Mediterranean cultural cooperation and in the creation of the Anna Lindh Foundation.[4] Finland was the only Nordic country that was represented in the Advisory Council of this new foundation for the first ten years, and its role in the Board of Governors was remarkable from the very beginning. This was especially notable during the second Finnish EU Presidency in 2006, when the country's contribution to Euro-Mediterranean political dialogue was recognised by many partners as being the best since 1995. This was due to the devotion of Finland's diplomats in charge of the EuroMed and their willingness to listen to each of the partners. Let us also note that the first ever EuroMed Dialogue

[1] SMAP, Short and Medium Term Action Plan.

[2] TAPRI, the Tampere Peace Research Institute, founded in 1970.

[3] SYKE, the Finnish Environment Institute.

[4] The Anna Lindh Euro-Mediterranean Foundation for the Dialogue between Cultures, its headquarters are located in Alexandria, Egypt.

Award was bestowed upon Father Paolo dall'Oglio[7] in Tampere in 2006 by the Anna Lindh Foundation and by the Finnish Foreign Minister Erkki Tuomioja. At the same time, the "8th EuroMed Conference of Ministers for Foreign Affairs", the "Barcelona VIII", also took place in Tampere. In that foreign ministers' meeting, they actually managed to reach a consensus on a final declaration for the first time since the beginning of the Barcelona Process in 1995, which had occurred over a decade before.

During the second Finnish EU Presidency in 2006, the second EuroMed Conference of the Ministers of Environment also took place, this time in Cairo. Yet another high point of that Finnish EU Presidency consisted of the Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference entitled "Strengthening the Role of Women in Society", and was held in Istanbul. The conference's main issues were women's economic rights, women's political and civil rights as well as women's cultural and information rights. This conference resulted in a follow-up process that was dedicated to the promotion of gender equality for more than a decade after the fact.

One of these follow-up events took place in Helsinki in autumn 2011, six months after the beginning of the Arab Spring and the revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt. The Finnish NGOs had organised an important meeting called *North to North – Women as Agents of Change*. This meeting allowed for Nordic and Mediterranean (mostly from the southern and eastern Mediterranean) civil societies to exchange ideas in a face-to-face setting for strengthening and improving the situation of women. This meeting was a good example of how the Arab Spring accelerated the direct North-North cooperation (Hynninen, 2011). In the field of civil societies, the second Finnish EU Presidency was the main promoter of the EuroMed Civil Society Forum that took place in Marrakesh in November 2006. It was the first time this forum had been realised in the southern part of the Mediterranean. Thus, it had a historical importance as it somehow also obliged the southern countries to pay attention to the civil societies and to their role in Euro-Mediterranean cooperation. More generally, this strong Finnish engagement was visible also when the Barcelona process was renewed and transformed into the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) in the EuroMed Summit in Paris in 2008. This notable engagement could be seen in the participation of both the President as well as the prime minister of Finland in this summit being thus the only country to do so. However, the road to that Parisian EuroMed 2008 Summit was rather complicated and difficult. Finland and Sweden had been especially put out because the original French proposition of the Union for the Mediterranean included only the immediate coastal and riverain countries. Concerning their Mediterranean activities and their Mediterranean *acquis*, Finland and

Sweden took the French proposition almost as a deliberate insult. That the Union for the Mediterranean finally consisted of all the EU Member States was so not only due to Angela Merkel but also very much to Nordic anger.

During the last decade, Finland's Euro-Mediterranean activities have maybe been less visible, but they are nonetheless solid and stable in their continuous support and participation in EuroMed processes. Let us not forget that even today it is a Finnish diplomat who is the chairperson of the body of the UfM's Senior Officials. When it comes to the Anna Lindh Foundation, this same body acts as its Board of Governors as does its chair person. In these organs both, the Senior Officials, usually experienced, senior diplomats, concentrate their efforts on strategic planning and general supervision. Concerning the Union for the Mediterranean, they are the main deciding body between ministerial conferences. Nevertheless, all these different forms of participation by the state as well as by other public and civil society actors during recent decades are only the very top of the iceberg when comparing it with the richness of Finland's heritage concerning the Mediterranean world in history and in cultural domains.

The Mediterranean World as a Cultural Reference for Finland

Finland has had an especially cultural relationship, including scientific research and studies, with the Mediterranean world for over a thousand years at least, and, if we also count some Roman writers of Antiquity, even two millennia. Concerning the Arab world, we have writers such as Ibn Fadlan who met Finns and other Vikings in Russian rivers and who maybe even travelled in this Nordic corner of the world (Abu-Chacra, 2004).

The Moroccan geographer Al-Idrisi wrote about Finland and other eastern Baltic countries (Tallgren-Tuulio, Tallgren, 1930). In Finland, he most probably concentrated on Turku and Häme, mentioning those places in his Baltic geography. However, there is a possibility that he confused several names because their Arabic written forms are very difficult to interpret and so to know exactly what they indicate is challenging. Ibn Khaldun, certainly the best-known Maghrebi scholar in the Middle Ages, even describes in his world history publication *Muqaddimah* some provinces in Finland such as Turku and Häme (Ibn Khaldun, 1967). Usually, those scholars never visited Finland. Ibn Fadlan, however, may be an exception. More generally speaking, besides those eminent Arab scholars, most of the occasions of contact between Finland and the

Mediterranean world consisted of exchanges in the fields of scientific and cultural activities. As regards civil society actors, the most common entities, besides scholars, seemed to be pilgrims and sailors.

Scholarly Performance and Heritage

In the late Middle Ages, Finnish pilgrims started to circulate in the Mediterranean world, most of whom headed to Santiago de Compostela, with some even previous to that having visited the Holy Land. Around the turn of the first millennium, the Christianisation of the Baltic occurred, and Scandinavian countries actually reduced their relations with the Arab world as they now concentrated on the northern shore of the Mediterranean, and on the Catholic world. The same kind of phenomenon took place at the end of the Middle Ages when the Lutheran Reform cut the Nordic contact with the Catholic world and, as a consequence, also did away with the tradition of the pilgrims wandering to the Iberian Peninsula (Hjärpe, 1993).[5]

The field of scientific activities concerns the natural sciences as well as human sciences – botanists, entomologists, linguistics, sociologists, anthropologists, folklorists, etc. are all counted among them. The same kind of variety is also valid as regards the cultural domains i.e., painters, writers, musicians, and composers must also be included. Let us also note that this did not concern only the Northern shore of the Mediterranean but that Finnish artists were active also in the southern and eastern shores of Mare Nostrum. There are many major studies on painters, musicians, and composers in North Africa (Rissanen, 2003; Ådahl, Wessel, 2002; Tyrväinen, 2014).

Besides a handful of Finnish scholars being active in the Mediterranean world in the Middle Ages, it was only as regards the 17th century that we can seriously speak about scientific exchange. In theory, Arabic had been taught since the foundation of the Academy of Turku, the first university in the country in 1640. In practice, it started to be taught just at the beginning of the following century (Aalto, 1971). During the two following centuries, scientific life in Finland accelerated, first in Turku, and then, after the great fire that destroyed the city in 1827, in Helsinki where the university then moved.

As far as the 18th century is concerned, one of the most interesting Finnish scholars in the Mediterranean world was Peter Forsskål, who took

[5] Jan Hjärpe presents how the Christianisation of the Nordic countries also signified their perification in their relations with Mediterranean Europe. The same goes for the Reform which cut relations with Rome and other parts of the Catholic Europe.

part in a famous Danish expedition named Arabia Felix in the 1760s. The research work done by Peter Forsskål during that expedition resulted in an encyclopaedia of local flora that contained the names of plants in Latin and in Arabic, and remained an authority in that matter for more than a century (Matinolli, 1960). 19th century Finland witnessed the emergence of Fenno-Ugrian studies when Finnish linguists, anthropologists, and folklorists travelled around Karelia and even in Siberia looking for traces of any origins of the Finns and their language. This domain was scientifically and methodically very advanced and of excellent quality. At the end of the century, this experience exerted a huge influence on those who studied the Mediterranean world; they actually applied the very same rigorous approaches. In this context, we can pay attention to the scientist Theodor Schvindt, who spent the first half of his scientific career in folkloristics in Carelia and then moved to Egypt where he studied everyday life in rural areas (Haltsonen, 1947). There are several cases, including that of Theodor Schvindt, wherein one studies local life in the Middle East and pays attention to elements that were theretofore often neglected (Weir, 2012).

One of the most important and internationally-known Finnish scholars through the ages also belongs to our Mediterranean domain. Edvard Westermarck is seen as the father of sociology in Finland. Thus, Finnish sociology was born in Morocco where Edvard Westermarck spent more than nine years during a period of almost five decades. About one third of his scientific publications concerned that country where he went for the first time in 1898 (Westermarck, 1929), and to which he visited for the last time in May 1939, just four months before his death (Melasuo, 1993). Even if the theoretical framework of Edvard Westermarck is already out of mode, the documentation he collected in Morocco is of permanent value, often due to its high quality due to the rigorous, 19th-century requirements of the Fenno-Ugrian tradition. Around ten years ago, in a multidisciplinary conference concentrating on human and social science studies of northern Morocco, the attending linguists paid tribute to Westermarck, saying that it was only through the help of his notes that we today have an idea of how certain words in Berber and in local colloquial Arabic were pronounced a hundred years ago (Mezzine, Vignet-Zunz, Brigui, 2018).

For Finns, some more political-style relations with the Mediterranean world started during the First World War when we shared some common experiences with Maghrebi political activists, with both groups trying to realise their projects for the advance of independence. These activists met each other, for instance, in 1916 in La IIIe Conférence des Nationalités in

Lausanne (*Revendications des Nationalités*, 2016). The Maghrebi activists kept on publishing a more or less regular publication called the *Revue du Maghreb*. This review reported that, in the Lausanne conference in 1916, the "Finnish delegation was received with sympathy and got a lot of applause as well as a mention that the independence of their nation was desirable" (*Revue du Maghreb*, 1916).[6] The Mediterranean world played a role of reference for Finnish scholars until the 1950s when, little by little, the elite of the country started to turn towards the Anglo-American world that today holds a dominating position in the cultural and scientific landscape of Finland.

Nevertheless, the importance of the Mediterranean world after the Second World War can be seen in the creation and location of Finnish cultural-and-scientific institutes outside the country. Their existential specificity is that their aim is to make advancing Finnish scientific research more than distributing the glorious research achievements of Finland. The first of Finland's foreign scientific institutes was created in Rome, Italy, in 1954, and was called Villa Lante, and the second was established in Athens, Greece, thirty years later. They were followed by Finnish Institutes in Paris 1990, the Middle East's FIME in 1994,[7] and Madrid in 1996. The two institutes in Paris and in Madrid also advocate for Finnish culture at large besides their promoting of scientific research cooperation. The Ibero-American Institute, as it is called in Madrid, also covers Portugal and the entirety of Latin America. There are many other Finnish cultural-and-scientific institutes that were also created subsequently that are not located in the Mediterranean. These number 18 in total. It is worth of noting that five out of the 18 Finnish institutes are focussed on the Mediterranean world, and that they are specifically scientific-research-and-study-oriented establishments. The fact that the two aforementioned institutes located in Italy and Greece were created much earlier than the others, and that those two were located in the Mediterranean, also emphases the cultural importance of the Mediterranean world until the 1950s and beyond.

Cultural Heritage Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow

By the times of the Renaissance, and especially since the beginning of the 17th century, the Mediterranean world started to excite the Nordic imagination. One of the first rectors of the University of Uppsala even

[6] The citation is translated by the author of this article.

[7] FIME, the Finnish Institute in the Middle East, located in Beirut. https://www.fime.fi/en/.

believed that Sweden was the reincarnation of the lost city of Atlantis (Melasuo, 2012; Vidal-Naquet, 2005). In Finland, and still in the first half of the 20th century, some writers depicted the Finnish as a people originally hailing from the island of Crete, or even from North Africa (Vuorio, 1931).

We have already learned how Protestant reform represented an important and rather brutal break for Finland; a cut with Rome, that is, with Catholic Europe and the Mediterranean. However, as with all the breakdowns in relations, including and especially those provoked by the Reform, they remain relative as we can see in the diverse continuation of the Nordic activities in the South (Hjärpe, 1993; Dagen, 2015).

In reality, Greek Orthodoxy and the Orthodox Church had also held an important position since the 11th century in Finland. This meant that the relationship between Finland and Constantinople (today's Istanbul), continued through history and also after Protestant reform. The position of the Orthodox Church was strengthened during the 19th century when Finland was an autonomous duchy of the Russian Tsar. Since Finland gained its independence, the Orthodox Church of the country has tried to strengthen its independence, and nowadays depends directly on Istanbul. Concerning the Orthodox tradition, Finland differs clearly from other Nordic countries. Same is valid in what comes to Judaism and Islam, we have a living but small communities of these two religions that came to Finland during the 19th century, mostly by people moving from the Russian empire. Here, Finland is also different from other Nordic countries. In a very modest way, these experiences strengthen the country's understanding of religious and cultural pluralism – at least in theory. More or less at the same time, that is, at the end of the 19th century, the contemporary relationship between the Iberian Peninsula and Finland started through Spanish activities. In the 1890s, Spain created its first consulate in Finland, and the first Spanish consul was Angel Ganivet, author of the famous *Cartas Finlandesas*, commonly read, to the author's understanding, in Spanish schools during the entirety of the 20th century, and it is maybe still the case today (Ganivet, 1993). *Cartas Findandesas* contains an interesting description of Finland and its distinctiveness. In spite of a Finnish translation of the book published in 1964 and a second edition published in 1993, it is actually only recently that Finns began to discover who Angel Ganivet really was. In 1998, on the hundred-year anniversary of his death, as far as the author knows, at least two scientific colloquia were organised in Finland and one in Spain, but, in reality, perhaps some more took place (Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriö, 1998).

The first half of the 20th century started with a visit of the rather important and well-known Finnish author Joel Lehtonen (1881–1934) to Tunisia in 1914. Travelling around the country and taking in such places as Tunis, Sfax, and Gafsa inspired Lehtonen to write the poetic account *Under the Crescent*, wherein he compared the people of his own village in faraway, rural Finland to Tunisians finding people similar all over the world (Lehtonen, 1919).[8] After the First World War, some Finns were present and active in the Rif War in the 1920s, a war that involved the French as much as the Spaniards against Abdelkrim and his so-called "Republic of Rif' in northern Morocco. Professor Edvard Westermarck, who was very critical towards European, and especially French colonialism, was of a consenting attitude towards the Rifians and their desire for independence. Westermarck even defended Abdelkrim in September 1925 in the Finnish press.[9]

The impact of Maghrebi writers in Nordic countries and in Finland is rather remarkable. One of the first was Moustafa Lachref, an Algerian diplomat and writer, who visited a conference of literature already at the end of the 1940s. He was followed by fellow countryman Mohammed Dib who is certainly the most important Maghrebi author whose literary output touches upon Nordic countries, the first of which being Finland. Since 1986, Mohammed Dib had visited Finland several times, taking part in different literature events, especially in the Lahti International Writers' Reunion. Among his works, the most interesting certainly is his *La Trilogie Finlandaise* (1985-1994) that consists of *Les Terrasses d'Orsol* (1985), *Neiges de Marbre* (1989), and *Le Sommeil d'Eve* (1990), as well as the later *L'Infante Maure* (1994), which all deal with the Nordic world, with a special focus on Finland (Déjeux, 1983). Unfortunately, this Finnish trilogy from the pen of Mohammed Dib is hardly known in Finland, and has not even been translated into Finnish, and this represents a real loss for Finnish literary culture. Only two books by Mohammed Dib have been translated into Finnish – *La Grande Maison* (1952), and *L'Indencie* (1954). Mohammed Dib translated himself some Finnish writers' works into French which were published in the Revue Europe magazine. Mohammed Dib approached the Nordic mythology with his *Le Sommeil d'Eve*, which bore striking similarities to *The Wolf's Bride* (Sudenmorsian, 1928/1930) by Aino Kallas, a Finnish author. Aino Kallas was married to an Estonian diplomat and they spent a number of years in Rabat, and

8 Much later that is 2016 there was a half documentary, half fiction movie by *Heikki Huttu-Hiltunen* based on this book of Joel Lehtonen. In that movie Huttu-Hiltunen includes element of Finnish Civil War in 1918 and the Arab Spring in Tunisia. In 2019, there was an exhibition of Joel Lehtosen's visit to Tunisia in the National Archives of Finland.

9 Turun Sanomat, 15.9.1925.

maybe in that there was something that Mohammed Dib found familiar (Déjeux, 1991, Aïssani, 2016).

After returning to the North, Aino Kallas published at least two texts about her experiences in Morocco – *Marokon lumoissa: pieniä kirjeitä Marokosta* (Under the Charms of Morocco: Small Letters from Morocco, 1931), and *Päiväkirja vuosilta 1927–1931* (*A Diary on the Years 1927–1931*) (Kallas, 1956). There are also a number of Moroccan writers who have had Nordic experiences. One of the most interesting is Abdelkébir El Khatibi,[10] and his text *Un été à Stockholm* (1992), wherein he tries to understand the Nordic way of living in the summer that must be rather exotic for a Maghrebian. Another Moroccan, Tahar Ben Jelloun, is certainly the most known Maghrebi writer in Nordic countries, especially in Finland, with about a dozen of his works having been translated into Finnish. Even though he has visited Finland several times, none of his books deal directly with Nordic countries. Nevertheless, he sometimes has a very critical appreciation of the Nordic societies in his numerous interviews according to different media; he once described Stockholm as a city where people do not even look each other.

If we want to understand the relations between Finland and the Mediterranean world from deeper societal perspectives, we should pay attention to the impact of tourism, mobility, and migration as well as to gastronomy. Over the last six decades, hundreds of thousands Finnish tourists have spent time in the Mediterranean, most of whom seek the sun and a more suitable climate, especially in the winters, for their holidays. They were also after a more tolerant ambiance than the Protestant North with all its societal restrictions. Unfortunately, there are no serious studies on what kind of image these tourists cultivated as regards the Mediterranean world. Nevertheless, it is obvious that these Mediterranean holidays had an impact on Finnish society (Jacobsen, 1991; Melasuo, 1995). The Arab Spring, however, had a decreasing effect on Nordic and Finnish tourism towards Northern Africa; people quickly grew afraid of the unstable situation and menacing atmosphere. However, paradoxically, the image of Northern Africa, with all those revolutions related to spring 2011, started to excite Finnish civil society, and there was a rush to show solidarity towards Tunisians and to Egyptians, as will be later detailed.

Since the 1960 onwards, migrants from Northern Africa started to move to Nordic countries including Finland. This phenomenon accelerated in 1995 when Finland and Sweden became members of the European Union, and even more in 2001 when these two countries joined the Schengen

[10] Abdelkébir El Khatibi is the grandson of the president of the Republic of Riff Abdelkrim el-Khatibi in the 1920s.

area. Little by little, this started to have an impact on the populations. Finland and Sweden have rather different histories as regards this kind of mobility; Sweden has a long past of incoming strangers – mostly Finns – whereas in Finland, foreigners came much more recently. For instance, in Finland, the number of Muslims has increased spectacularly during the last five decades.

The Maghrebi-origin populations are increasingly playing the role of bridge and intermediary transport between the Mediterranean and Nordic worlds, simultaneously making life and the cultural landscape richer here in the North. This Mediterranean influence can be seen, for instance, in the domains of alimentation. In Finland, among the first so-called "ethnic' establishments were Italian and Spanish restaurants. The success of pizzerias was so important that the Finnish national pizza (with ham and pineapple) was soon invented. It is already almost three decades since the Turkish kebab replaced traditional Frankfurter and Russian meat pie in Finland. In some larger cities, there are even local producers of Algerian merguez, a spicy, red sausage. With regard to Maghrebi couscous, that early arrived in Finland, but disappeared rather quickly some forty years ago. It has made a return, and can be found in the shops, but in forms that are more adapted to local tastes. There is also a rather strong presence of more general Eastern Mediterranean cuisine in Finland, including hummus and tahini, and can be found in most supermarkets. All these cultural exchanges and human contact between the Mediterranean world and Finland are important for several reasons. Firstly, it is to do with the number of Finnish families whose grandparents and other relatives are living in Mediterranean countries, and visa versa; the number of Mediterranean families having grandchildren or cousins in Finland has significantly increased during the last half of the century. In general, concerning relations between the civil societies, these family connections represent a extremely important change. Secondly, concerning the second or third generation of Finnish citizens having Mediterranean roots, our enterprises as well as public sectors have started to mobilise these compatriots in their professional activities with the southern countries. This makes those relations more credible. More generally, an important number of Finnish citizens who have roots in the Mediterranean world have succeeded as regards their personal career in Finland. We can find them in almost all fields and all levels in the social and professional life of the country.

Finland in the Mediterranean Today

During the nearly-three decades since the Barcelona EuroMed Conference in 1995, the Finnish interactions concerning the Mediterranean world and the cooperation with it have maybe increased in volume. Nevertheless, what is more obvious is that they have become more diverse, even versatile, and they also vary along rather short-term conjunctures.

At the beginning of this millennium, Finnish cooperation took often place together with other Nordic countries. In the South, it was the representatives of the Iberian Peninsula who were active. In this context, let us make note of two events that had a more general impact. An Iberian initiative resulted in the colloquium *European Peripheries: The Nordic Countries and the Iberian Peninsula* in 2000 in Alcalá de Hénares. This event was an extraordinary manifestation on the importance of peripheries in Europe and especially as it succeeded in including a Maghreb-based dimension (Beltrán, Maestro, Salo-Lee, 2002). This gathering in Alcalá was followed two years later by a new colloquium in Barcelona on *La cooperació regional al Baltic i a la Mediterrània*, organised by the Catalans, the Finns, and the Swedes with important Maghreb-based participation – as such, it was a real Nordic-Mediterranean meeting. Let us also not forget that, in general, the Catalans are as remarkable as the Nordics are in this field of escaping Europe (Oliván-Pena, Weltner-Puig, 2003).

About ten years later, inspired by the Arab Spring, different actors of civil society engaged rather strongly with Tunisia. A good example of this engagement has been the contribution of Finnish parliamentary parties to the *Tunisian School of Politics*,[11] whose aim is to perfect the performance, first of all, of young Tunisian politicians hailing from all parliamentary parties. Even the Finnish Police have been mobilised to Tunisia. Since 2014, the Finnish Police University College has participated in the formation of Tunisian police and gendarmerie (Police University College, N.D.).

[11] "Tunisian School of Politics" (TSOP) is a common initiative between Centre des Études Méditerranéennes et Internationales (CEMI) in Tunis, The Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD), Demo Finland and Bulgarian School of Politics "Dimitry Panitza", http://www.cemi-tunis.org/pages/partenariat/ecole-politique-de-tunis/, and https://demofinland.org/en/tunisian-school-of-politics-alumni-visit-to-finland/.

Finland and the Mediterranean – Common Security

During the same year of 2011 when the Arab Spring first occurred in Tunisia and Egypt, myriad other things happened which affected Finland's relations with the Mediterranean world. The war in Libya divided the Nordic and Baltic countries. Norway and Denmark are members of NATO, and, as such, it was relatively easy for them to take part in the military campaign of the Alliance in which even Sweden, a neutral country, participated. Yet Finland, another neutral country, refused to be part of the campaign, this decision provoking a heated and highly controversial debate in the country.

Besides Finland, there were three other major Baltic Sea countries – Germany, Poland, and Russia – which did not participate in the NATO campaign against Muammar Gaddafi's Libya. Thus, the war in Libya divided the Nordic and Baltic Sea countries more than anything else had done since the end of the Cold War. All this demonstrates how the Mediterranean dimension is important to security politics in the Baltic Sea area which, of course, includes Finland. In this domain of security politics in the Mediterranean world – in the Maghreb and in the Middle East – an important yet discrete priority for Finland has been a UN project entitled, *Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction*. In October 2011, the USA, the UK, and Russia published information that Finland had been nominated as a facilitator for this project and that a conference for the establishment of this zone would take place in 2012 in Finland. However, due to the USA and Israel and their opposition to this, it was not possible. Nevertheless, the idea was not abandoned, and the preparations have been continuing in such a way that allows for rapid action as and when the moment calls for it.[12]

All these examples indicate that the relations of Northern Europe and Finland with the Mediterranean world have been proactive, even if they have not been ostensibly visible during the first almost-three decades of the Barcelona Process.

Conclusions – Our Future

This article has aimed to shed light on the rich, but rather enigmatic relationship between Finland and the Mediterranean world. These interactions have been approached since Antiquity, but this paper's focus

[12] This kind of international confidence for a Nordic country is based on long experience – more than 60 years, and on the excellent results in Finland and Sweden's peace-keeping activities in the Middle East under the auspices of the UN.

has been on 19th and 20th centuries and especially on the last three decades. Even if the purpose of our approach has been Finland, it has become increasingly obvious that the main Finnish performances and undertakings in the Mediterranean world have taken place in the context of Nordic and Baltic approaches, and today this is more the case than ever before.

Thus, in the discussion of renewing the Mediterranean policy of the EU, the Nordic approach has been sustained by Spain and the Maghrebi countries. The Maghrebi countries have especially expressed their disappointment on the actual state of affairs, and their support for the Nordic approach is based on their wish for more equality in the Euro-Mediterranean partnership. These relations have sometimes, however, been rather complicated. During the Swedish EU Presidency in 2009, the European Union adopted an *EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region* (EUSBSR). Its application was supposed to be assured by the *Baltic Sea Action Group* (BSAG, N.D.). Concerning the Mediterranean world, this strategy and its action group can facilitate cooperation in several domains. In fact, the next step was taken in 2013 in Stockholm when the *Memorandum of Understanding between the Permanent International Secretariat of the Council of the Baltic Sea States (PIS CBSS) and the Secretariat of the Union of the Mediterranean (UfMS)* was signed. The raison d'être of this agreement is to develop interactions between the two mega-regions in the economic and environmental domains. Curiously, in the text of the agreement, we can find a Nordic paternalism, a seriously shocking and visible remnant of the *Barbars del Norte*. The object of the agreement is to develop the Mediterranean peoples, and their responsibilities on the Euro-Mediterranean questions by listing, alas, only Mediterranean priorities. Good examples come entirely from the Baltic world, but nothing in the agreement implies the idea that the Nordic world could also have something to learn from the South (Melasuo, 2012; UfMS, 2013).

All the Nordic countries, except for Norway, are members of the Union for the Mediterranean. However, it is Norway that is the most active country by having a concrete project within the UfM, and the state seems to have a need to reassert its presence and its role in Euro-Mediterranean cooperation. Norway states clearly that the neighbours of the EU are also its neighbours and that the key element of *The Norwegian Government's Strategy for Cooperation with the EU 2014–2017*, is its cooperation with the European Union (Government.no, 2014). This polemic from almost ten years ago shows us that the Nordic countries, and maybe especially Finland, which seems to be one of the most racist countries in EU Europe (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2018), have still much to learn in order to be able to cooperate on equal bases with the Mediterranean world. Or maybe it is better to say, as Mohammed Arkoun put it when visiting Finland many years ago, that “Europe can reach her own goals only by returning to her original Mediterranean values” (Arkoun, 1990). Thus, if Europeans seriously desire to face the challenges of our time such as climate change, the Coronavirus pandemic, the war in Ukraine, globalisation etc., there is a need to further strengthen the Euro-Mediterranean community that will allow us all to continue living decent lives.

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Prioritising National Competitiveness over Support for Democracy? Finnish Media Policy in the 21st Century

Abstract

Ever since the launch of the World Press Freedom Index almost 20 years ago, Finland has always been among the top five countries of that index. According to the annual Reuters Digital News reports, Finnish people also have the highest level of trust in the news media and one of the highest levels of press readership in the EU. Most of the media companies are doing quite well, while Google and Facebook have a much less dominant role in the advertising market than elsewhere in Europe. In this context, you might expect Finland to have a comprehensive and visionary media and communications policy to support democracy. However, our meta-study of Finnish media and communications policy based on two recent reports

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to the Ministry of Transport and Communications, other earlier studies, along with official documents as well as statistical data suggests that is not the case. Our analysis shows that most decisions have been pragmatic *ad hoc* solutions serving economic interests rather than any specific media and communication policy goals. A closer examination also proves that Finland does not fit into the Nordic Media Welfare State model either, despite a long, shared history and cultural ties.

Keywords: Media Policy, Regulation, State Support, News Media, Finland

Introduction

Ever since the launch of the World Press Freedom Index almost 20 years ago, Finland has always been among the top five countries of the index. It has had the highest ranking in the world twelve times, beating all its Nordic neighbours except Norway (Reporters without Borders, 2021). According to annual Reuters Digital News reports, Finnish people also have the highest level of trust in the news media and one of the highest levels of press readership in the EU (Newman et al., 2021, p. 9; Reunanen, 2021, pp. 8–11, 46–47). Most of the media companies in the happiest country of the world (State of the Planet, 2021) are doing quite well, while Google and Facebook have a much less dominant role in the advertising market than elsewhere in Europe.

In this context, you might expect Finland to have a comprehensive and visionary media and communications policy to support democracy and media freedom. However, our meta-study of Finnish media and communications policy based on two recent reports for the Ministry of Transport and Communications, other earlier studies, along with official documents as well as statistical data suggests that is not the case. Our analysis shows that most decisions have been pragmatic *ad hoc* solutions serving economic interests rather than any specific media and communication policy goals. A closer examination also proves that Finland does not fit into the Nordic Media Welfare State model either (Ala-Fossi, 2020), despite a long, shared history and cultural ties.

The term “Media Welfare State” is a concept used to characterise traditional features of the Nordic countries’ media systems. The distinct principles and features of media policies in this model have included the understanding of communication services as universal public goods, institutionalised editorial freedom, cultural policy extending to the media, and a tendency to choose consensual policy solutions that involve cooperation between both public and private stakeholders (Syvertsen et al., 2014).

Despite being commonly associated with this model, we argue that media policy in Finland is increasingly characterised by selective deregulation and policymaking that is increasingly based solely on competition legislation, as a result of which, the media are considered equal to other goods and services.

This article is divided into three main sections. After an overview of the present-day media landscape in Finland and the existing legislation on media ownership and competition, we analyse the development of public support and regulation of the Finnish news media in the last two decades. Based on the long-term social importance as well as the amount of public support granted, our analysis focuses on the printed press and electronic media sector, especially television broadcasting. In the final section, we discuss the special characteristics and outcomes of the Finnish media policy.

Current Media Business Landscape

Finland is a small and sparsely populated country with its 5.5 million inhabitants and land area of 304,000 square kilometres. The country has two official languages: Finnish (86.9% of population) and Swedish (5.2%). The native Sámi is recognised as a minority language while the most common foreign languages include Russian (1.5%) and Estonian (0.9%). Politically, Finland has been described as a stable Nordic country with three major parties ruling the scene in turn, the centre-left Social Democratic Party, the centre-right National Coalition Party, and the centrist Center Party, while smaller parties typically alternate in government coalitions. However, in 2011 general elections nationalist Finns Party broke this traditional hegemony and displaced Center Party from the top three. Finland's current government, led by Prime Minister Sanna Marin (SDP), is a centre-left, liberal coalition of five parties holding 117 of the parliament's 200 seats.

Volume of the market

Although a welfare country in media consumption, during the 2010s the total volume of the mass media market in Finland both rose and fell, ending at around €3.9 billion in 2019. Despite slight growth in the late 2010s, the total volume was, even before the COVID-19 pandemic, still slightly lower than at the beginning of the decade and the share of the mass media of the GDP had fallen from 2.1% to around 1.6%. When assessing the development of the mass media as a whole, it is necessary to observe that there are significant differences in developments in the various sub-industries of the media. Electronic media has grown significantly while the volume of print publishing has declined constantly (Björkroth, Grönlund, 2015; Ala-Fossi et al., 2018; Ala-Fossi et al., 2020).

According to the data provided by Statistics Finland (Statistics Finland, 2021, table 1.7.), the total number of companies in mass media industries increased during the 2010s by just over a tenth from 2,830 to 3,143 companies in 2019. During the same period, the number of publishing companies fell by 11% and the number of paid-for daily newspaper titles declined by almost one third from 52 to 36. The decrease in the number of titles is due to both abolitions, mergers with other newspaper titles, and a reduction of the number of weekly issues. Despite uncertain business prospects, the number of nationwide free-to-air television channels has risen from 13 to 22 and paid channels from 9 to 38, whereas the number of radio channels with nationwide distribution has increased from 16 to 26 (Ala-Fossi et al., 2020, pp. 83–90).

Because of staff reductions in the publishing industries in the 2010s, the employed labour force in newspaper, magazine, and news agencies has, according to the Statistics Finland (Statistics Finland, 2021, figure 1.14.), fallen by one-third to less than 9,000 employees. Due to redundancies and continuous employee co-operation negotiations, the total number of employees in news media is expected to continue to decline. The development curve of the total number of personnel in radio and television has also clearly declined in the 2010s and the total number of employees has dropped by 15% to approximately 4,400.

The fast spread of ICT and, according to Lehtisaari et al. (2012), the rise of the Internet, the digitalisation of information and the dissipation of boundaries between media platforms, convergence changes the socioeconomic field in which newspaper publishers operate. Ala-Fossi (et al., 2020, p. 112) have stated that, in Finland, digital distribution platforms have gained popularity while traditional distribution channels have lost ground. Some researchers have found a so-called "disruptive' development in the Finnish publishing industry (Södergård, Bäck, Koiranen, 2016), whereas other sectors of the media industry have survived the digital turn better. Changes in media usage has affected both the advertising and marketing communications more broadly. At the same time, the emergence of a free-of-charge online news supply has affected people's willingness to pay for journalistic content (Grönlund, Björkroth, 2011, p. 26) and, according to the Reuters Institute Digital News Report's country report of Finland, one fifth (20%) of Finns paid for online news in 2021 (Reunanen, 2021, pp. 24–25).

Ad revenues and print media decreasing

Finnish news media is still significantly dependent on advertising revenues from their printed editions and therefore it is quite sensitive to changes in the amount and targeting of advertising (Ala-Fossi et al., 2020, pp. 18–19; Grönlund, 2014, pp. 37–40). In addition, local free sheets are completely dependent on print advertising, as it is their only source of revenue. The growth in media advertising was quite moderate during the 2010s and, in 2020, due to a drop caused by COVID-19 pandemic, it was approximately at about the same level as at the turn of the Millennium, i.e., at €1.1 billion. The share of media advertising of GDP has dropped markedly from 0.8% to approximately 0.5%. In a broader perspective, the redistribution of all marketing communications efforts is one of the key forces that change the business environment of all media companies (Ala-Fossi et al., 2020, p. 19; Grönlund, 2014, p. 39.) At the same time, consumer payments increased in importance, a trend most visible in the audiovisual sector wherein paid channels and over-the-top streaming services are gaining ground. During the last decade, the share of subscription sales for daily newspapers rocketed from 46% to 67%, reflecting a corresponding drop in advertising sales (Hellman, 2021, pp. 104–105).

In the 2010s, printed newspapers' share of total media dropped substantially from more than one-third (38%) to distinctly less than one-fifth (16%). Despite this development, most provincial newspapers, and especially local newspapers, are still significantly dependent on advertising and circulation revenues from their printed edition. Online advertising has instead continued to grow strongly and its share of total media advertising in 2020 was already almost half (47%). Statistics by the Finnish Advertising Council and Kantar TNS indicate that two major international players, namely Google and Facebook, collect the majority of digital advertising revenue. In 2020, social media and search engine advertising accounted for almost two-thirds (63%) of all digital advertising (Statistics Finland, 2021, table 1.4.)

More than half of media use online

Finns spend quite a lot of time following the media and, according to a TNS Atlas Intermedia study, in 2019, Finns aged 15–69 spent more than eight hours a day watching, listening to or reading different media. Finns spent more than seven times more time following electronic media than on printed media. The Internet alone, including newspaper and magazine online services, social media, music, and movie streaming services, accounts for half (50%) of all media usage. By comparison, the share of print newspaper reading is only 20 minutes per day (4%) (Statistics Finland, 2021, table 1.19.)

According to the *Use of Information and Communications Technology by Individuals* study (Statistics Finland, 2020), Finns are avid users of information and communications technology. For example, four-fifths of the population (aged 16 to 89) used the Internet several times a day and Finns use it regularly for communication, including following the media, shopping, and everyday tasks. Online newspapers and television companies' news pages are among the most frequently followed media. In 2020, Facebook (58%) was the most commonly used social network service, followed by WhatsApp (50%), and then Instagram (39%). Young people used WhatsApp more often than Facebook but in older age groups the situation was the opposite (Statistics Finland, 2021, table 1.18.).

Competition Law and Media Consolidation

The deregulatory tendency mentioned above can be seen in the policies, or, better still, the lack of policy concerning media ownership. Within the last decades, the Finnish mass media markets have become highly concentrated for at least three reasons. Firstly, foreign investments used to be strictly limited in Finland but, since the 1990s, the Finnish media policy has not actively aimed at preventing acquisitions or consolidation with any ownership limitations or regulations. Secondly, it is likely that at least indirect tax subsidies favouring the largest newspapers may have even accelerated ownership concentration of the newspapers. And finally, there is no special competition legislation for media to prevent ownership concentration or to protect diversity of ownership.

Media consolidation and concentration constitute a challenging issue for media policy. Firms tend to pursue competitive advantages, such as market leadership and economies of scale, which often favours and leads to consolidation. While concentration may strengthen the emergent firm and consolidate industry as a whole, media policy research sees concentration also as a threat both to the market and democracy. Firstly, economic concentration may hinder the effective operation of the market and decrease consumer welfare. Secondly, a concentration of ownership may lessen the diversity of ideas and media content and arm major media with monopoly power to dictate news agendas and frames, thus suppressing the democratic process. (Harcourt, Picard, 2009, pp. 3–5; Just, 2009, pp. 97–99.)

In Finland, newspapers, radio, and television are all heavily concentrated media sectors. The highest degree of concentration is in radio broadcasting, which is dominated by three key players, while the lowest concentration, at the national level, is in the press (Ala-Fossi et al., 2020, pp. 110–111; Manninen, Hjerppe, 2021, p. 10). However, it is newspaper publishing that is presently characterised by frequent mergers and shows the briskest pace of consolidation. In 2021, almost a third (30%) of all member publications, both newspapers and local free sheets, of the News Media Finland (NMF), belonged to the Keskisuomalainen Group. When measured by the number of titles, the five largest newspaper groups own more than half (57%) of all member titles of the NMF, with the ten biggest groups owning two-thirds (68%). Between 2010 and 2020, the CR3 figure, expressing the net sales-based market share of the top three newspaper houses nationally, went up from 0.51 to 0.65 (Ala-Fossi et al., 2020, p. 92; Hellman, 2021, pp. 106–109.) At the same time, most of the remaining regional newspapers have reached a monopoly-like position in their markets, as they own the majority if not all the local papers and even free sheets in the surrounding area (Hellman, 2022). This means that, although Finland is sparsely inhabited, there are practically no "news deserts" even in the northernmost parts of the country (Virranta, 2021). So far, there is no systematic research on the impact of consolidation on newspaper content. However, incidental knowledge suggests a dramatically increased recycling of articles and content syndication, thus lending support to earlier results from, e.g., Belgium and Norway (Hendrickx, Ranaivoson, 2021; Sjøvaag, 2014). Big media companies have effectively concentrated the administration, sales, as well as printing and journalistic content production of their papers, resulting in, on one hand, less diversity and fewer jobs, but many local brands in the corporate portfolio on the other.

Finland does not have separate competition legislation concerning the media, but the media is regulated within the framework of general competition legislation. According to the Competition Act and EU competition rules, the activities of companies must not restrict competition and companies may not take part in a cartel, excessively restrict contractual partner's activities or abuse its dominant market position. In Finland, the Finnish Competition and Consumer Authority (FCCA) monitors competition law compliance and, according to the Competition Act, major company acquisitions in excess of a certain level of turnover must be reported to the FCCA. Acquisitions that are subject to notification may not be implemented before the approval of the authority. The FCCA will prohibit company acquisition if it significantly prevents competition in the market, i.e., creating a dominant position in the market or reinforcing an existing dominant position. In addition to prohibiting the acquisition, the FCCA can also impose conditions on the acquisition.

Effective economic competition includes the freedom of undertakings, within the boundaries of legislation, to enter the market and the right to freely determine its conduct and means of competition. In addition, consumers must be able to choose the options that they prefer. Effective competition encourages market participants to continue to operate along with the development of new products and services. Many newspaper publishers have responded to the challenges of media market changes by expanding to other media or new business areas to strengthen their market position and revenue base (Grönlund, Björkroth, 2011, pp. 719–720). While the newspaper industry is dominated by traditional, domestic newspaper publishers, the broadcasting sector is, since digitisation in the early 2000s, characterised by a growing number of domestic and international players that have launched a growing number of channels and other audio or audiovisual services. There have been a lot of mergers, concentration, and consolidation in the media industry over the last couple of decades. In 2020, Sanoma Corporation was, in terms of turnover, by far the largest media company in Finland. The second largest media company was the public broadcaster Yleisradio Oy (Yle) followed by Otava Oy, Alma Media Oyj and Keskisuomalainen Oyj (Statistics Finland, 2021, table 1.6.).

Between 2000 and 2021, the FCCA considered its decisions as regards approximately 30 media company related acquisitions. Almost all of them were approved as such, and only a few of the decisions were directly related to the news media. During the same period, the FCCA made approximately twenty other decisions, mostly related to suspected abuses of dominant positions, concerning media companies. In addition, Kärkimedia Oy (among others) was granted an exemption for cooperation in newspaper advertising marketing. In a small market such as Finland, there is a tendency to favour the growth and competitiveness of viable, incumbent media companies. The rationale is that the consolidation of firms consolidates the whole industry, and, as a result of which, a small circle of powerful owners control the industry (Trappel, 2011, pp. 121–125).

Print Media Subsidies and Support

High rates of newspaper circulation as well as a high reach of printed newspapers with long-term subscriptions were characteristic for Nordic media markets for decades (Hallin, Mancini, 2004). In Finland, the separateness of the Finnish language also protected the sector from foreign competition (Södergård, Bäck, Koiranen, 2016, p. 16). Newspapers were considered such important media that, after WWII, they were given reduced or zero rates of value-added tax (VAT) and, since the 1960's, states have also directed press subsidies to protect regional and political diversity. Even today, this is the core of the press subsidy system in Scandinavian countries, but not, however, in Finland. As a consequence of a deep fiscal crisis of the state in the 1990s, direct press subsidies were abandoned almost completely. Two decades later, the traditional zero-rate VAT of newspapers was replaced with a less expensive tax reduction for exactly similar reasons (Ala-Fossi, 2020, pp. 139–140).

Press subsidies and other forms of financial support represent a positive policy effort to secure the viability and versatile content of the media. The traditional Nordic system of press subsidies is designed to support media diversity and the plurality of opinions. For this aim, it is based on a combination of direct support for selected titles in need and indirect tax support in the form of reduced or zero-rate VAT for newspapers and magazines. Various press subsidies were provided throughout the second half of the twentieth century and a study by Picard and Grönlund (2003) shows that support rose significantly in the 1970s and 1980s.

Based on a governmental inquiry into newspaper mortality and its causes, the Finnish parliament decided to launch selective subsidies, along with a parliamentary press subsidy based on parliamentary representation in 1971. Moreover, beginning around 1980, new types of direct press support were allocated for news agencies, opinion and religious journals, and joint newspaper distribution systems. During the 1991–1993 economic depression, parliament heavily cut state spending. The indirect support for newspaper delivery through the postal system was abolished already in 1995, while direct subsidies were gradually decreased and never restored to their former level despite an economic recovery and the subsequently increased strength of the national economy. Both selective and parliamentary press subsidies were last distributed in 2007 (Ala-Fossi, 2020, pp. 113–114).

However, political parties still have the option to support their constituents through general party subsidies but, during the 2010s, most of the party-affiliated newspapers were either cancelled or became weeklies, monthlies, or went online. In addition, from the beginning of 2012, VAT rate on newspaper and magazine subscriptions was increased from the zero rate to a reduced rate of 9%, which was increased to 10% from the beginning of 2013. All the abovementioned decisions have officially been aimed to relieve a sudden and deep fiscal crisis of the state with no publicly expressed media policy goals.

Based on annual calculations from the VATT Institute for Economic Research – which operates in the administrative domain of the Ministry of Finance, the cumulative benefit of tax support for newspapers and magazines was around €3 billion in the 2000s, and still around €1.5 billion in the 2010s. According to the VATT Institute, in 2020, the benefit of the abovementioned tax subsidy was estimated to be approximately €125 million (Ala-Fossi et al., 2020, p. 12).

While the direct press subsidies had always been much smaller than indirect tax support, abandoning them was fatal only for so-called "second' and "third' newspapers in competitive markets. In addition, the remaining indirect support favoured big papers with the largest circulations. This, in turn, accelerated a series of acquisitions and ownership concentration of Finnish newspapers. As a result, the Finnish newspaper publishing industry is now highly consolidated. In terms of reach and readership, the overall dominance of the few national newspapers, such as the popular *Ilta-Sanomat* and *Iltalehti* but also the more serious *Helsingin Sanomat*, has been accentuated (Media Audit Finland, 2021).

A newer form of aid is media innovation support (2015–2018), whose original aim was to help the media industry to survive the ongoing change in the field and develop new, growing, international business. Innovation support was targeted primarily at companies already operating in the media sector. However, support was also granted to non-media companies if they were considered being able to help media companies in their restructuring. Business Finland, an innovation-funding, trade-and-investment-promotion organisation, fully owned by the Finnish Government, coordinated and granted media innovation support and it was possible to apply for funding to, *inter alia*, product and service development, new business model creation etc.

From 2015 to 2018, the total amount of media innovation support was approximately €29.4 million and 119 actors distributed it among 147 projects. The amount of funding for individual projects ranged from somewhere over €22,500 to almost €3.7 million (Ala-Fossi et al., 2018, pp. 228–230). Funding was granted especially to small and newly-established companies and the average project size was 149,000 euros (4Front, Gaia Consulting, 2018). A significant part of the allocated funding, 35%, went to software companies and only 22% to publishing or radio and television programming companies (Ala-Fossi et al., 2018, pp. 228–230). Although the media innovation support was spread broadly, it hardly changed the structural dominance of the major firms in the industry; the criteria for the support emphasised international business development, thus not favouring smaller regional companies or traditional media.

COVID-19 pandemic support

The exceptional situation that began in the spring of 2020 created challenges for the economy, which led to the creation of a number of financial subsidies for companies. The support system was set up very quickly in some cases and there have been several subsidies, all with different requirements, conditions, and reporting. For example, media companies have been able to apply for at least three different types of support from different sources and authorities. Our calculations of the amounts and distribution of the various COVID-19 support received by the media companies are based on published financing decisions of the Finnish Transport and Communications Agency Traficom, the State Treasury, and Business Finland.

In June 2020, the Ministry of Transport and Communications set up a working group of media representatives and experts to assist in the preparation of a temporary state grant to support journalism because of the difficulties created by COVID-19. During the consultation period, it was proposed that an independent media support board be appointed for awarding aid. However, this was abandoned as it was decided that aid would be distributed to all eligible companies. The criteria were primarily economic, and no content assessment was implemented. The COVID-19 pandemic support was available in autumn 2020 for media operating in Finland, whose advertising sales and turnover have decreased significantly due to the coronavirus epidemic and which met other conditions for receiving support. The amount of support was €7.5 million and the purpose of this state grant was to support the production of journalistic content. In total, 121 media companies applied for the grant from the Finnish Transport and Communications Agency Traficom. The grant was awarded to 97 companies that had applied for support for 236 media outlets. The maximum amount of grant was €800,000 per company (group of companies). According to Traficom, the amount of the grant per editorial person was approximately €3,700 for companies other than those where compliance with the abovementioned ceiling of €800,000 affects the final amount of aid granted. The majority of supported media outlets were newspapers (75%) and magazines (17%). The twelve largest beneficiaries accounted for three quarters (77%) of the total amount of COVID-19 support. The largest beneficiaries of the support were among Finland's largest media companies, such as Alma Media Oyj, Kaleva Oy, TS-Yhtymä Oy, and Keskisuomalainen Oyj. The remaining support, (23%), was distributed to 85 media companies.

The State Treasury's business cost support was intended for companies whose turnover has fallen significantly because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The aim of the cost support was to assist businesses in difficult situations caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and to reduce the number of companies going bankrupt by giving them more time to adjust their activities and costs during the Covid crisis. The support was granted based on actual costs and the decline in company turnover. The first application round started in summer 2020 and the application period for the fourth round of the cost support ended on 30th of September 2021. During the four application rounds, a total of around €1 million in cost support was granted to 27 publishing companies. Of the companies that received cost support, seven were news media companies which received a total of just over €120,000.

In addition, Business Finland, in the spring of 2020, launched a new financial service aimed at mitigating the COVID-19 pandemic economic. This funding was allocated for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and midcap companies operating in Finland, whose businesses were suffering as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The beneficiary could also be a purely domestic company, which does not meet Business Finland's normal internationalisation criteria. In total, approximately €6.8 million was granted for 102 publishing companies. Among them were 26 news media companies, which received a total of just over €1.9 million in funding.

The COVID-19 pandemic support for media did not clearly express longer-term media policy goals. The purpose of the support was to compensate for the decline in advertising revenues of news media companies caused by the pandemic. The distribution mechanism for the support was mechanistic and the criteria for support as simple as possible. Therefore, it led to the expected outcome in a concentrated market and, despite the large number of beneficiaries, most of the aid went to the largest media companies.

Other News Media Support and Regulation

Public broadcasting and marketisation

State-aid channelled to a public broadcaster in order to secure a sufficient public service media provision is yet another positive media policy measure applied by most European countries but is particularly characteristic of the Nordic model (Syvertsen et al., 2014, pp. 71–95). When the pan-European tidal wave of deregulation ran high in the 1980s, Finland chose a balancing strategy, which, at the same time, aimed at consolidating the public broadcasting company Yle and paving the way for new, commercial entries (Svendsen, 2011, pp. 136–140). Local, commercial radio stations were first allowed in 1985 and, in 1997, the first nationwide commercial radio station was launched, while the local stations were given increasingly free rein to form into so-called "station chains' (Ala-Fossi, 2005, pp. 167–214). As for television, Finland, as is tradition, applied an individual model of semi-commercialism with private, commercial company MTV collaborating with Yle within a shared channel system. In 1993, MTV was granted a channel of its own, MTV3, and, in 1997, another rival, Nelonen, controlled by Sanoma, was launched. This established a dual industry structure with 40–50% of the broadcasting market being controlled by Yle and the rest by two or three major commercial chains (Hellman, 1999, pp. 199–213).

Although Yle's status was strengthened by 1993's enacting of a new Act on Yle, which defined its public service duties and granted the company a special, privileged status (Laki Yleisradiosta, 1993), further legislation in 1998 (Laki televisio-ja radiotoiminnasta, 1998) and 2003 (Viestintämarkkinalaki, 2003) cemented the new dual structure and opened up the gates for a growing number of commercial rivals to enter the market. Technically, this was enabled by the digitisation of television broadcasting, carried out progressively between 2001 and 2009. Research has shown how digitisation accelerated marketisation and favoured major, incumbent domestic players, such as Sanoma and MTV, by letting them launch new channels while also allowing some international firms, such as Discovery, Canal+, and Disney, to corner the Finnish market and leaving Yle more exposed to competition (Hellman, 2010; Jääsaari, 2007). Of course, digitisation helped the public broadcaster to expand its services, but it also made it the engine of the transition and the one to foot the bill. The company was given a leading role on the digitisation path, but it was also decided that no additional public funding for this task would be provided. Yle, as a result, was forced to divest and sell its nationwide broadcast network infrastructure to finance the digitisation of television (Soramäki, 2017). The new infrastructure company, Digita, was sold first to Télédiffusion de France (TDF) in 1999, but the ownership of the Finnish broadcast networks has since changed several times. In 2018, First State Investments sold Digita to Digital Colony, a firm based in the United States (Ala-Fossi, 2020, pp. 136–137).

Dispute over Yle's funding and remit

Finland was one of the first Nordic countries to abandon the traditional receiver-based licence-fee model in 2013, replacing it with a new, tax-based system. Today, state-aid of approximately €540 million per year allocated to Yle represents the largest annual amount of public funding for the production of news and journalistic content. The earmarked Yle tax itself is debatable for a loud minority that claims not to need or use Yle's services but, in particular, it is the sheer magnitude of funding that has given rise to a permanent confrontation between Yle and the Finnish Media Federation which represents the private media and printing industries. As the present media policy rationale aims desperately at balancing between the conflicting interests, policymakers have become increasingly sensitive to critical claims by the commercial media that Yle is being financed too generously, enabling it to spread out too widely and disturb the market.

Yle was facing a deepening financial crisis already before the worldwide economic crisis hit the media industry in 2009. The licence-fee model had served well with few updates for decades but since 2003, the numbers as well as earnings started to decrease. The sharpest drop came in 2007 after the digital switch-over of television. The system generated less and less income even after the price of the licence was repeatedly raised (Ala-Fossi, 2012). The public funding of national broadcasters have special protection in the EU, but in practice the foundation of Yle's funding was falling into pieces at the same time the broadcaster had extra expenses caused by digitisation, and it was also developing new internet-based public services like Yle Areena (2007), the company's audio/video-on-demand platform. The only way out of the crisis was to develop a new funding system, which turned out to be a politically difficult process.

In the 1990s, major newspaper publishers in Finland had, at first, serious doubts about the importance of the Internet, partly because of their previous, less-successful new media projects. This gave Yle a head start in developing new Finnish Internet-based online services for general audiences (Lindblom, 2009, pp. 233–234). When the publishing companies finally realised what had happened and how important a media platform the Internet was becoming, they started to openly demand the exclusion of Yle outside the Internet. However, as soon as the Ministry of Transport and Communications nominated a parliamentary working group to prepare a new funding system for Yle in 2008, the newspaper publishers' criticism found itself a new target. A year later, the working group made a unanimous proposal about how and how much Yle should be funded, but the proposal was condemned by the press. The fierce publicity campaign against the proposal was able to create a political dispute, which effectively prevented the creation of a legislative proposal before the general elections of 2011 (Ala-Fossi, Hujanen, 2010, pp. 11–19). However, a slightly updated version of the funding system found enough support in the newly elected parliament and a new income-linked, personal and earmarked Yle tax came into force in January 2013. The new system even had an automatic index mechanism, which was designed to keep Yle's income steady in relation to constantly rising expenses. The new funding system was considered to be future-proof and more just than the old flat-rate payment for households (Ala-Fossi, 2012, pp. 41–42).

At the same time, commercial media struggling with decreasing income saw the new, steady flow of income to public service media as an additional threat to its own development. In a public debate, the editors-in-chief of the newspapers repeatedly presented Yle as an over-resourced, state-owned media organisation which would be a growing threat not only to private media, but especially to the freedom of speech. The celebrated index mechanism was frozen by the Parliament already before the general elections of 2015. By the time of the elections, the private media campaign against Yle had reached its peak, and, after the election, the parties of the new Sipilä government, a centre-right-wing coalition, kept their promise and appointed two separate working groups to study the Finnish media markets. The second one, led by MP Arto Satonen, concentrated only on the remit and funding of Yle. Some of the proposals of the Satonen group in 2016 were obvious admissions to the private media sector such as the freezing of the index mechanism until 2019 and obligations to increase acquisitions from independent producers (Parlamentaarisen työryhmän muistio, 2016). But the group did not propose any drastic funding cuts or demolish the Yle funding system. From the viewpoint of the Finnish Media Federation, their political campaign had failed (Karppinen, Ala-Fossi, 2017).

That is why the Federation changed its tactics in 2017 and filed a complaint with the EU Commission, claiming that Yle's textual online content was in conflict with the EU state aid rules (Medialiitto, Avance, 2017). After (secret, not public) discussions with the Commission's DG Competition, Sanna Marin's government, in December 2020, proposed an amendment to the Act on Yle echoing the private media claims. The proposition would limit Yle's text-based journalistic content dramatically and limit it mainly to support the audio and video content on its TV and radio channels. In practice, this could mean less competition to commercial online news providers – but also limit freedom of speech disproportionally and widen inequalities related to access to news, developments that contradict the traditional role of media in the Nordic welfare states. Although the amendment was publicly criticized, the Parliament finally endorsed it in March 2022. Meanwhile, another complaint to the EU Commission was filed in

April 2021 by Sanoma Corporation. Sanoma's claim is that Yle's online learning services and video-on-demand services fall outside its public service remit and should either be cancelled or narrowed radically (Sanoma, Geradin Partners, 2021).

The continuous uncertainty and debate about Yle's funding, and the two complaints in particular, illustrate how the earlier consensus in Finnish media policy on the undisputed status of national media institutions such as Yle has unravelled (Nieminen, 2010, pp. 55–56). It appears that the public broadcaster is increasingly exposed to assaults that question its legitimacy.

Public support of commercial media

While the public broadcaster Yle was obliged to carry out the digitisation of television and finance it by selling its broadcast network, the Finnish government decided to favour the interests of the commercial broadcasters and to smooth their path to digitisation by firstly halving their operating licence fees in 2002 and, later in 2007, totally abolishing them. These fees represented 22–24% of the turnover of each broadcaster, amounting, in 2000, to €47 million. What was annoying for MTV3 and Nelonen was not the licence fee in itself, but the fact that it was allocated to finance YLE, making up some 15% of YLE's turnover. The abolition of the fee somewhat muted the criticism of the media firms, claiming that YLE was competing against them with their money, but, as shown above, did not silence the continuous attacks by the industry lobby against the "too generous" funding of the company. (Hellman, 2010, p. 198) Yet, this concession can be seen as an annual support worth dozens of millions to commercial media companies.

In mobile communication, Finland has declared spectrum auctions since 2013, but as far as licences of broadcast communication are concerned, a more protective strategy has been applied. Unlike, for example, Sweden, commercial broadcasters in Finland do not have to pay more than a small administrative fee for the programming licences they are granted. Moreover, since the new Information Society Code (917/2014) came into force in 2015, no expediency consideration of applicants, or a so-called "beauty contest' between them, is exercised by the operating licence authority as far as there is adequate transmission capacity available (Tietoyhteiskuntakaari, 2014, section 25).[1] In other words, any applicant who is solvent and has the apparent ability to broadcast regularly, is

[1] Today, the law is known as the Act on Electronic Media Services (Laki sähköisen viestinnän palveluista, 2014).

automatically fit to gain a programming licence. This can be seen as a helping hand for both incumbent companies and new entrants. It should be noticed that, since 1994, the public broadcaster Yle has been exempt from the licencing procedure. It has, in fact, a special right to obtain the spectrum capacity it requires for its radio and television operations.

Meanwhile, the government also saved two individual private news organisations from a looming bankruptcy with tailor-made cash injections. Both the Finnish News Agency (STT) as well as MTV3 News are relatively big players with monopolistic positions in their fields, but from a historical point of view, they have also had a special relationship to the state as well as to public broadcasting, which may go some way to partly explaining their continuing protection.

MTV3 (formerly MTV) has a special historical position in relation to Yle because it was established already in 1957 to collect additional funding for nationwide Finnish television service of Yle. Here, Finland chose a different path from other Nordic countries, where commercial television was not introduced until the 1990s (Hellman, 1999, pp. 71–73). MTV produced and delivered mostly drama and entertainment on its own broadcast slots on Yle channels until 1981, when the company was allowed to launch its own television newscasts (Hellman, 1999, pp. 396–408; Lyytinen, 2006). The idea was to create a private alternative, a commercial competitor for Yle news to provide additional diversity. News production soon became a central part of MTV's company profile, and it was in an essential role in 1993 when MTV was able to get their own nationwide television channel, MTV3 (Hellman, 1999, pp. 94–101). The second commercial TV channel in Finland, Nelonen, started four years later and, during the following decade, the number of channels multiplied rapidly because of the digitisation of television.

At first, some of the new channels had licence obligations to also provide news and some tried to follow the example of MTV3, but news operations turned out to be quite expensive. Even though Nelonen was supported by the *Helsingin Sanomat* news organisation, by far Finland's biggest newspaper, it was constantly forced to seek new and more efficient ways to produce television news. Simultaneously with the abolition of expediency consideration, all licence conditions were removed in one fell swoop, and TV channels were able to abandon news programming entirely (Ala-Fossi, 2020, p. 140). The fragmentation of the television advertising market and redistribution of media advertising income combined also hit the business results of MTV3 hard. In 2013, it had to lay off several journalists, cancel and shut down current affairs programmes and, finally, in 2015, also had to outsource their entire TV news production.

To solve the problem, Sipilä's government appointed another working group to study the future of commercial TV news. In 2017, this so-called Harkimo group proposed an offering of special state support in the amount of €8 million (Kaupallisen television uutistoimintaa tarkastelevan työryhmän raportti, 2017). In the end, the government decided to grant aid of not more than €1 million in 2018 but a maximum of €2 million in the following year – if the applicant TV channels met the requirements of a new licensing category called "public interest channels" with special obligations for television news delivery. Mediahub, a sub company of MTV3 news production, thought this was a good model, but Sanoma was critical towards this type of specialised state support and decided to close down its newscasts on Nelonen after 20 years on the air.

MTV3 had been able to get specialised state support already earlier in the form of €1.5 million of media innovation support. This was used between 2015 and 2018 for building the company's new online consumer service called C More (4Front, Gaia Consulting, 2018). Specialised support in the form of €3 million for TV channels with public interest licence obligations for news production and delivery in 2018–2019 was eventually granted entirely to MTV3 News. At the time, there were only two channels with a required licence and, accordingly, formally eligible to apply for the support – and the other channel (Alfa-TV) would have used the money for starting a news operation from scratch. Targeted state support may have given some extra boost for new ownership arrangements. MTV3 was near bankruptcy in 2015, but three years later Bonnier, MTV3's proprietor, was able to sell it together with the rest of its Nordic TV business to Telia, a Swedish multinational telecommunications company and mobile network operator.

The Finnish News Agency (STT), a company owned by the largest newspapers in Finland, was able to gain a monopoly and special co-operative partnership with the newly independent republic already in the 1920s. The newspapers had their doubts about the new media of the time, but after STT started to deliver the news for Yle radio in 1926, this arrangement gave the press both a chance to control the news on air as well as to get some extra income to support the news agency. In addition, the state also paid direct support until the 1950s to keep STT running (Rantanen 1987, pp. 119–120). Although Yle started its own in-house news production for radio and television in 1965, it continued to deliver STT news too on the radio until 2003. In 2006, Yle decided to give up its subscription of the STT news agency service. As a result, STT lost €1.3 million of annual income and was forced to lay off journalists. During the following decade, some of the largest newspapers including *Kauppalehti* and *Helsingin Sanomat*, which were also owners of STT, cancelled their subscriptions. The news agency was owned by the largest commercial media companies in the country, but the owners were also rivals with no shared vision of the future of the agency.

At that point in 2016, the Satonen working group proposed – in practice, they actually ordered – Yle to return as a paying subscriber of STT (Parlamentaarisen työryhmän muistio, 2019, p. 5), which was a traditional way to channel public money indirectly to support the private news agency owned by the largest commercial publishing houses. A new agreement with Yle was signed in 2017, but there were more setbacks to come as the agency had to shut off its Swedish-speaking department. STT eventually found itself staggering on the verge of bankruptcy, and the owners announced that they must have direct public support to save the company. Quite soon after the government agreed to help STT with a one-time €1 million earmarked direct state support for the agency in 2018, Sanoma, the largest owner of STT, acquired a qualified majority (75.4%) of STT shares from two other publishers and Helsingin Sanomat returned as a subscriber of STT services. Again, a cash injection by the state helped the private owners to make up their minds.

In the spring of 2021, the Ministry of Transport and Communications published its proposal for a permanent aid mechanism in support of journalism (Wirén et al., 2021). This report was based on the work of the working group of media representatives and experts that was initially set up to assist in preparing a temporary State subsidy for journalism. The working group proposed editorial production support as the main form of journalism support. As another form of support, development aid could be granted not only to start-up media, but also to existing media for development projects. Both grants were targeted to support the media providing news and current affairs content. In addition, the working group proposed specific support for community media. The model as a whole would promote reliable, diverse, and socially significant communication. However, in the government's budget negotiations later that spring, no funding was allocated to follow the report's proposals.

Discussion: Media and Communications Policy Without a Cause?

As the examples above indicate, it is difficult to find an overriding strategy or a vision behind recent media and communications policy. Instead of any specific long-term media policy goals or principles, many of the recent Finnish media policy decisions have served pragmatic aims of solving emergent regulatory problems or serving existing economic interests.

This is reflected, for example, in competition policy and approaches to media concentration, which have been guided by the rationale of fostering “national champions”, and consolidate the whole industry, rather than supporting plurality through smaller, independent actors. Paradoxically, in Finland, public support to the media industry is primarily given in the form of indirect, not direct, aid and presents itself rather in the form of non-intervention policy than active, deliberate interference. The reduced VAT rate for newspapers and magazines as well as the programming licences free of charge for private broadcasters provide the most obvious examples of the first strategy while the liberal, *laissez-faire* approach to media mergers and concentration is illustrative of the second. Both measures help the large legacy companies to survive, while the so-called “number two” options have been left little space to manoeuvre.

Similarly, the direct support mechanisms, such as the COVID-19 support or state subsidies to STT and MTV3 have been guided by short-term needs of established market actors, rather than long-term goals of shaping the structure of the media market. As a result, a small circle of powerful owners controls the industry. The market of all news media sectors is highly concentrated but, at the same time, the number of channels and titles has remained high thus leaving no major, so-called “news deserts’ in Finland.

In the first decade of the 2000s, Finland was one of the first countries to adapt to the new digitised media environment. Finland was in the forefront in transforming television broadcasting into the digital era, starting from 2001; in 2008 the Finnish government announced a policy programme “Broadband to All by 2015” (Ministry of Transport and Communications, 2008) (which, in 2022, is still waiting to be completed); in 2010 Finland was the first country in the world to decree a broadband Internet connection as a Universal Service Obligation (Ministry of Transport and Communications, 2010); and in 2014 it was the first country to create a converged regulatory framework for electronic media and telecommunications (Ministry of Transport and Communications, 2013; Nieminen, 2013).

After this period of activity, however, Finnish media policy has been criticised by many as being *ad hoc* based, reactive, and lacking a clear vision or guiding principles (Ala-Fossi, 2020; Karppinen, Ala-Fossi, 2017; Koivunen, 2018). Despite references to abstract principles, such as citizens’ communication rights, in the high-level media policy programmes, actual policy-making has been sectorally focused and often driven by short-term industry interests. One reason for the lack of coherent policy principles lies in the fragmentation of media policy issues across several ministries and regulatory policies. The Ministry of Transport and Communications, for example, mostly approaches media from the perspective of infrastructure and markets, whereas issues related to democracy and freedom of expression belong to the field of the Ministry of Education and Culture or the Ministry of Justice. The general impression is that the Government is waiting for new policy initiatives from the European Commission, without its own active policies.

To some extent, the lack of coordination and foresight has been recognised by policymakers. In 2017, the government announced a media policy programme (2018–2023) with the aims of safeguarding citizens' access to information, the conditions of producing journalism, and the diversity of Finnish media. The aim was to look at media policy comprehensively across the administration and improve evidence-based media policy-making. As part of preparing the programme, the government invited researchers to inform policy-making. In 2017, the Ministry of Transport and Communications also commissioned a university consortium to produce a multidisciplinary academic study of the current state of media policy in Finland by bringing together expertise from journalism studies, communication studies, business economics, and law (Ala-Fossi et al., 2018; Ala-Fossi et al., 2020). Instead of a traditional sectoral approach, the study sought a holistic way of evaluating the development of the media and communications field.

Experiences from researcher participation in media policy, however, indicate that its impact in shaping actual policy-making is limited at best (Grönlund et al., 2020). In addition to government and ministries, stakeholder groups, such as media companies and industry associations, have their own media policy agenda and interests to lobby (Grönlund et al., 2020, pp. 168–169). According to the media policy review, the media industry and government actors account for the overwhelming majority of participation in policy consultations and committees, and the role of citizens, civil society, and academic researchers has often been marginal (Ala-Fossi et al., 2018, pp. 261–276). Studies on stakeholder participation also show that when round table discussions are organised, there is often no consistent understanding of the issues or reliable information on the direction of development among the different stakeholders (Grönlund et al., 2020; Lund, 2016).

Examined against the ideals of the Nordic Media Welfare State, it seems that the understanding of communication services as a public good or deliberate cultural policy to promote media pluralism have not consistently been featured as the guiding principles of Finnish media policy-making. Instead, media policy has been characterised by selective deregulation, in which media and communication are seen as goods and services on par with other market products.

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Explaining Finnish Economic and Social Success – And Happiness

Abstract

This article explores the reasons behind the high economic and social rankings for Finland. It also reflects on why Finland is considered the "happiest" country in the world (according to a World Happiness Report). Using empirical data from two studies – an article comparing high-and-low-tax countries, and the aforementioned recent World Happiness Report – it compares Finland with its Nordic neighbours and other Western, especially Anglo-American, countries. The essay outlines a so-called "Finnish model' and looks for the roots of this model. Comparing measures in several dimensions – effort, culture, institutions, and economic and social outcomes – the essay tries to find characteristics that are particular for Finland. Education, innovation, and economic security, as well as trust, gender equality, resilient conflict solutions, and geo-historical luck, are crucial to Finland's success. Three notable Germans – Luther, Hegel, and Marx – have influenced Finnish culture and society in different ways. Is Finland the country that comes closest to the ideal – "From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs" (Marx, 1875).

Keywords: Finland, International Rankings, Competitiveness, Happiness, Geo-historical Impacts

Introduction

What are the reasons behind Finland's high rankings in several international comparisons? Why has Finland succeeded economically and socially, and why is the country considered the "happiest" in the world?

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We use empirical data from an article by two Canadians, N. Brooks and T. Hwong, comparing high-and-low-tax countries, and from a recent World Happiness Report 2022, to explore these questions. Using the results, a so-called "Finnish model' is outlined, and the historical and cultural features that have contributed to the present standing are indicated.

In 2000, the Global Competitiveness Report, published by the World Economic Forum and Harvard University, ranked Finland number one in global competitiveness, ahead of the United States, Germany, the Netherlands, and Switzerland. From 2003 onwards, Finland was often the best in the Programme for International Student Assessment (hereafter, PISA) exams for 15-year-olds, comprising reading, mathematics, and science. In 2009, the Legatum Prosperity Index, "the world's only global assessment of wealth and well-being", placed Finland on top. The next year, Newsweek, seeking to find out "which country would provide you the very BEST OPPORTUNITY to live a healthy, safe, reasonably prosperous, and upwardly mobile life," awarded Finland the title of "The Best Country in the World". For the fifth year in a row, Finland, according to the World Happiness Report 2022, had the highest "evaluation of life," and thus was judged to be the "happiest" country in the world.

These high rankings have not only bewildered foreigners, but also – and especially – Finns themselves. The Canadian journal of opinion *Inroads* asked for a piece on why Finland had managed to succeed both economically and socially. The article *Finland. A Remote and Cold Country's Success Story* was published in 2009.[1] It stressed geo-historical, cultural, and institutional factors and drew on the rich data published in a Canadian study comparing high-and-low-tax countries. When Finland once more was ranked as the "happiest" country in the world, *Inroads* ordered an article explaining the reasons for this prominent position. The article *Why is Finland the Happiest Country in the World?* appeared in an online journal in its summer/autumn issue of 2022.

These earlier pieces are deployed to give an overview of Finnish society, and to suggest the reasons why it has been so thriving and lucky. Most of the text is copied and only slightly revised from the two earlier studies.

From the Glorious 1980s to the "Great Slump" and the Nokia Saga

"It is a lottery prize to be born in Finland." This saying was coined already in the 1970s, but it was generally accepted during the 1980s when

[1] Already in 2008, the journal *Research on Finnish Society* published the article, titled *Finland – Twelve Points!*

Finland was experiencing stable economic growth in a world troubled elsewhere by inflation, unemployment, exchange-rate volatility, and chronic public deficits. After the revaluation of the markka in 1989, statistics showed that in terms of GDP per capita (uncorrected for differences in the domestic price levels), Finland was among the top nations of the world; a sense of euphoria soon spread on the economics pages of our newspapers and journals. Finland had become the "Japan of the North."

Then befell the *suuri lama*, or the "great slump" of the early 1990s. Finland became the first OECD country to experience such a dramatic economic crash since the end of the Second World War. The most visible causes were a banking crisis in the wake of a deregulation of the credit market, and the collapse of trade with the former Soviet Union. The aforementioned euphoria turned into an almost tangible sense of crisis. Not until a glorious victory over Sweden in the ice hockey world championships of 1995 did times become more cheerful. Also, the remarkable success of Nokia was highly encouraging. A few years earlier, this archetypical national conglomerate had been on the brink of bankruptcy, but now it was a world leader in a rapidly expanding niche.

By the end of the 1990s, Finland had again become a success story.

Admirers of the Finnish Model

At the beginning of this century, texts describing Finland as a model country began to appear more often than before. Admirers came from various parts of the world and represented a variety of ideological leanings.

Back in 2005, Richard Lewis wrote a book entitled *Finland, Cultural Lone Wolf,* asking why Finland was number one in global competitiveness and mobile phones; the least corrupt country in the world; the world leader in managing water resources; and why are Finns regarded as the ideal peacekeepers[2] (Lewis, 2005). The renowned Spanish sociologist Manuel Castells and his Finnish co-author Pekka Himanen published a book in 2003 called *The Information Society and the Welfare State: The Finnish Model.* The story they told was of a country that had been on the frontier of an informational revolution, but which managed to maintain an egalitarian welfare society.

Boris Kagarlitsky, director of the Institute of Globalization Studies in Moscow, and a Marxist dissident in Soviet times, described Finland in his

[2] According to the book, Lewis "lectures and consults world-wide with clients that include Mercedes-Benz, Nokia, Rolls Royce, Volvo, Deutsche Bank, and Unilever".

book *The Revolt of the Middle Class* (2006) as “the northern exception”.[3] According to Kagarlitsky, the so-called “Californian model’ builds the network as a gigantic supermarket, while the Finnish model builds it as a vast library. In the former, everything is about the purchase of goods, whereas in the latter, it is about access to knowledge, information, and socially necessary services (Kagarlitsky, 2006, pp. 294–295).

Even the Swedes paid attention to Finnish achievements. During an election campaign in 2006, the bourgeois parties – which won a historic victory over the social democrats – consistently praised the Finnish way of handling things; the authority of Finnish teachers, the tax-subsidy for hiring household services, Finnish membership in the European Economic and Monetary Union, and the building of a new nuclear plant. There were also Fennophiles on the other side of the Atlantic. Canadians Neil Brooks and Thaddeus Hwong compared the high-tax Nordic and the low-tax Anglo-American countries. They singled out the United States and “(...) another country Canada might wish to emulate – Finland”, and they found that, “This pattern, with the United States ranking about the lowest among industrialised countries and Finland near the top, is evident on most of the remaining social indicators we examine – relating to social goals such as personal security, community and social solidarity, self-realisation, democratic rights, and environmental governance” (Brooks, Hwong, 2006, p. 10).

Effort, Culture, Institutions, and Performance

The study by Brooks and Hwong contained ninety economic and social indicators for twenty countries. They arranged the countries into four groups, with Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden as the “social democratic” Nordic group, Australia, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, United Kingdom, and the United States were classified as Anglo-American, “liberal” welfare states, Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, and the Netherlands constituted the “corporatist” continental European regimes, and Greece, Italy, Portugal, and Spain represented the “Mediterranean welfare states,” in which pensions were generous but other state support systems were less prominent, giving family and church a greater role.

These indicators were used to identify in which sense Finland was particular. By rearranging the data into four categories labelled; 1) effort,

[3] The book reminds one of the early Russian Fennophiles such as Peter Kropotkin, the noble anarchist who wrote: *Finland: A Rising Nationality* (1884), and Grigory Petrov, whose *Finlandija, strana belykh lililij* (1907) was to be used as a schoolbook in Kemalist Turkey.

2) culture and institutions, 3) economic performance, and 4) social performance, I tried to find in which dimensions Finland was exceptional, and to capture some of the characteristics of what could be seen as a Finnish model.

In a Nordic comparison, the distinctive aspects of the Finnish model were the central status of export-competitiveness and the peculiar constellation of interest-mediation. This was also one of the findings of a project comparing the economic and social-policy models of the Nordic countries (Mjøset, 1987; Andersson et al., 1993). These characteristics still held true, but instead of high investments and timely devaluations, the emphasis had shifted to the development of a national system of innovation involving all sectors of society. The effort-indicators therefore comprehend education, research & development, and creativity. Two indicators chosen to reflect the peculiar interest-mediation were the economic security index compiled by the International Labor Organization, and the degree of unionisation. These effort-indicators are shown in Table 1.

Culture and institutions – factors that influence a country's performance – are reflected in some of the indicators collected in Table 2. How much can you trust people? How much confidence do you have in political and judicial institutions? To what degree are women emancipated and empowered? The level of taxation and fiscal responsibility are also important aspects of the spirit of a nation. In our earlier studies of the Nordic models, we found that "[t]he Finnish welfare state has adopted many Nordic characteristics, but social policy has been more subordinated to "economic necessities' than in other Nordic countries" (Andersson et al., 1993, p. 9).

The results of the efforts, and of the cultural and institutional settings, are summarised in Tables 3 and 4. Table 3 lists typical economic performance indicators, such as growth, productivity, inflation, trade, jobs, and competitiveness. Table 4 contains indicators related to well-being, poverty, income-distribution, health, long-term unemployment, violence, and self-realisation. Economic and social-performance indicators were used to assess the results apparently due to efforts made and to cultural and institutional settings.

There are, however, some troublesome aspects related to the figures in the tables. In general, the indicators are not averages over a long time-period, but picked from one or the other of the years at the beginning of the 21st century. Some of the variables could be considered as efforts instead of performances or institutions and vice versa, but to make the presentation clear, all indicators belonging to the same dimension are presented together. Finland is compared to its own group – the Nordics

– and to the three other groups. Often, the Nordic countries – including Finland – differ from the rest, but Finland is by no means exceptional in the Nordic context. Sometimes it would be a better fit in another group – often continental European. A bold figure marks those indicators where Finland is above or below the average of all four groups. This does not mean that Finland necessarily is number one, but that it is exceptional even by a Nordic comparison. The averages are the ones calculated by Brooks and Hwong, which means that Finland is included in the Nordic averages.

Education, Innovation, and Economic Security

Education and innovation were the most clearly stated effort-dimensions. The belief in the importance of education, research, and innovation as means to good economic and social performance has always been strong in Finland. The educational results are better than what one would expect from looking at the input-indicators. Finland's expenditures on education were only on the level of the average of the whole sample, and clearly lower than in the other Nordic countries. Finnish children spent fewer hours at school than do pupils in other OECD countries. Despite this, they scored high in the PISA studies in reading, science, and maths. Finnish schools also were relatively effective in reducing the differences that arise from the status of the parents.

Regarding research and innovation, the strong Finnish input effort was clearly noticeable. It had the highest proportion of researchers, and the second highest percentage of GDP directed towards R&D. This significant input corresponded to high values for different output indicators, including, innovation, creativity, patents, and royalties.

The Finnish institutional set-up for innovative activities is rather unique, with a distinct division of labour between state-funded institutions. The Academy of Finland supports academic research. The Finnish Funding Agency for Technology and Innovation, Tekes, was established to promote applied research explicitly directed towards innovations. Today, it is now called Business Finland, and is also responsible for supporting the internationalisation of the Finnish economy and firms. The Technical Research Centre of Finland, VTT, engages in the development of new technologies in cooperation with companies and the public sector. The Finnish Innovation Fund, SITRA, acts as a public venture company, financing some rather differing, innovative projects. This systematic effort to develop into a high-tech economy and society is certainly one reason Finland stands out when it comes to different measures of innovative

Table 1. Effort Indicators Related to the "Finnish model"

Dimension	Indicator	Finl	Nord	Angl	Cont	Medi
Education	Total public and private expenditures of GDP	5.8	6.4	5.9	5.7	5.0
	Public expenditures on education	5.7	6.2	4.8	5.2	4.7
	Expenditures on pre-primary education (for children at least 3 years old)	0.4	0.7	0.3	0.5	0.4
	Completed upper secondary education (among people aged 25–64)	75.9	81.5	73.0	71.1	40.2
	Completed university or college education	33.0	32.3	33.0	23.0	16.0
	Completed university education	16.4	22.1	20.6	14.1	12.3
	PISA 2003 score Reading	**543**	512	517	500	477
	PISA 2003 score Reading	**548**	503	512	508	481
	PISA 2003 score Maths	**544**	516	513	517	466
	Difference of PISA maths scores attributed to status of parents	**61**	70	74	92	75
Creativity	Innovation capacity index	**0.98**	0.95	0.89	0.87	0.76
	Innovative capacity (Gans & Stern)	**173**	137	84	77	15
	R&D % of GDP	3.4	3.4	1.7	2.2	0.9
	R&D researchers per 10 000	**17.7**	11.6	7.3	6.8	3.9
	Network Readiness Index	**1.72**	1.61	1.43	1.15	0.32
	Broadband subscribers per 100	15.0	15.8	9.5	12.8	6.3
	Global creativity index	**0.68**	0.67	0.56	0.57	n.a.
Investment	Net national saving of GDP	8.4	11.6	5.8	7.4	5.2
	Change in gross fixed capital	4.8	5.6	8.2	2.0	3.3
	Inward FDI % of GDP	2.5	0.9	3.7	8.3	0.2
	Inward FDI performance	1.8	0.8	2.3	4.7	1.0
Social mediation	Economic security index	**0.95**	0.94	0.70	0.82	0.74
	Union density	**76.2**	71.5	23.9	30.0	24.7

Source: Brooks, Hwong, 2006.

capacity. The Nokia saga would be incomplete without reference to the Finnish system of innovation.

As for savings and investments, the Finnish effort no longer differs manifestly from that of other countries. This contrasts with the years before 1990, when Finnish investments in fixed capital were exceptionally high and were pushed by an ambitious developmental state that made room for an elevated level of nationally-funded projects. Foreign direct investment continues to play a relatively small part in Finland's economy, and there have been several setbacks for Finnish companies in their endeavours to establish overseas production in North America, Germany, and Russia.

The high score on the Economic Security Index provided by the ILO has been particularly important for one's understanding of the Finnish effort. This indicator could also be referred to the cultural and institutional background variables, but since there had been strong forces promoting income policies and innovative cooperation at the company level, it was put on the effort list. According to an ILO study of more than 100 countries on the socio-economic security of workers, Finland was ranked second after Sweden, but ahead of Norway, Denmark, and the Netherlands. Finland was on top in two dimensions, "the possibility of the employees to influence their work" and "protection against illegal firings". It was second in "the ability to develop working skills", and third in "the possibility to make one's voice heard e.g., through the trade union" (Helsingin Sanomat, 2.9.2004).

This ranking explains why Finnish industry, despite strong trade unions, has been able to rapidly introduce new technologies. Through systematic cooperation between the companies and the unions, with one accepting a rapid introduction of innovative technology, and the other giving some guarantees that the workers would be involved and re-educated, the resistance to change has been smaller than in, for instance, continental corporatist nations. In most international studies on competitiveness, strong trade unions are regarded as a drawback for Finland, but this is in error. On the national and firm level, strong union participation in economic decisions can improve competitiveness. In Finland's case, moderate national income policies had kept relative unit-labour costs in check until the employers' union refused to continue to accept those policies. At the company level, openness to innovation has been strong.

Trust, Gender, and Fiscal Caution

Social trust, gender relations, and fiscal policy were referred to the cultural and institutional infrastructure category. Trust in the public sector and certain forms of solidarity are almost inbuilt in Scandinavian culture. The link between the state and civil society has been strong since the start of the national project in the 19th century. We return to this when looking for the reasons for Finnish "happiness".

Table 2. Cultural and Institutional Indicators

Dimension	Indicator	Finl	Nord	Angl	Cont	Medi
Social solidarity	Agreeing that people can be trusted	57.4	63.9	37.9	36.3	25.6
	Corruption perceptions index	**89.9**	88.0	86.7	85.8	78.2
	Having frequent political discussions with friends	**6.61**	18.2	13.3	17.3	15.2
Confidence	in Parliament	42.3	52.7	32.1	42.2	39.6
	in major companies	42.9	51.5	51.0	45.0	42.2
	in the Justice-system	66.7	68.9	45.8	51.2	40.0
Gender	Gender-Gap Index	5.19	5.35	4.65	4.40	3.81
	Gender empowerment	0.83	0.87	0.77	0.81	0.65
	Female labour-force participation	72.9	75.0	68.6	64.9	58.0
	Female doctors of all doctors	**53.2**	42.5	31.9	36.6	40.5
	Women in parliament	37.5	39.5	21.4	29.5	18.7
	Women in government	**47.1**	44.3	21.8	31.3	20.1
	Agreeing that when jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job	9.0	8.0	17.0	22.9	22.8
Fiscal policy	Taxes of GDP	44.2	46.9	32.0	40.6	36.3
	Total government revenue	52.5	56.9	38.0	49.7	46.9
	Surplus or deficit to GDP	1.9	4.1	0.1	-2.1	-3.5

Source: Brooks, Hwong, 2006.

Gender equality is less of an issue in Finland than in the other Nordic countries; it is mostly taken for granted. Prudent fiscal policies have been a characteristic of the Finnish system. In comparison to the other Nordic countries, Finnish government finances have been cameralistic rather than Keynesian. In good times, social benefits have been developed based on corporatist interest mediation, and, in recessions, reductions in social expenses have been agreed to as economic necessities. This, however, has changed since the 2009 financial crisis, the coronavirus crisis, and the war in Ukraine.

The indicators confirm that social trust, gender equality, and stern fiscal policies were typical for Finland, although not exceptional when compared to the Scandinavians.

When looking at the set of indicators, the indicator tagged as “having frequent political discussions with friends” sets Finland apart. It differed completely from that of other Nordic countries and was lower than for any other country in the set. How can this be explained? Did Finns discuss little in general? Had consensual policies permeated society so much that there is little cause for political discussions? Are the Finns so satisfied with how things are going that they do not bother with politics?

Economic and Social Performance

Growth and competitiveness have been Finland's central economic goals for a long time. As can be seen from the table below, Finland continued to be successful on both accounts. Its multi-factor productivity growth was impressive, surpassed only by that of Ireland. Thanks to cautious national income policies, changes in unit labour-costs had been moderate, and the surplus on the current account substantial. In the World Economic Forum rankings of competitiveness, Finland acquired the top positions for many years. It is fascinating to consider that when the US was set as the standard other countries should emulate, Finland ranked third after Australia and Canada. The Finnish effort had clearly been successful on this score. The only dent in the shield was the high rate of unemployment. Despite more than a decade of impressive economic growth, the mass unemployment of the 1990s receded agonisingly slowly.

Table 3. Economic Performance Indicators

Dimension	Indicator	Finl	Nord	Angl	Cont	Medi
GDP	GDP per capita USD PPP	30600	32825	32083	30360	23550
	GDP per cap. growth-rate 1995–2004	**3.7**	2.8	4-1	2.1	2.8
Productivity	GDP per hour worked USD	39.2	44.1	38.2	44.7	31.3
	Growth 1995–2004 in GDP per hour worked	2.3	2.1	2.5	1.5	1.5
	Multi-factor productivity growth 1995–2002	**2.2**	1.2	1.7	0.8	0.8
Labour costs	Change in unit labour cost	1.0	1.0	2.1	0.0	4.3
Inflation	Consumer prices	**0.4**	0.8	2.8	2.1	2.7
Debt	Government debt	52.5	54.8	42.8	74.5	88.5
Trade	Current account	5.1	7.4	-3.2	3.3	-5.1
Jobs	Employment growth	1.5	0.9	2.5	0.2	1.8
	Unemployment	8.5	6.2	5.0	7.9	8.7
	Labour-force participation	74.3	77.8	75.4	71.5	68.3
Competitive-ness	Growth competitiveness	**5.76**	5.66	5.35	5.41	4.54
	Scoreboard (USA = 100)	82.6	79.4	82.7	70.2	52.0

Source: Brooks, Hwong, 2006.

Well-being, equity, and health are Finland's most prominent social goals, but its social performance is mixed. It trailed behind both its Scandinavian siblings and several other countries as to public social and health expenditures. Homicides and suicides were highest in Finland, and male life expectancy was still relatively low. Few were very happy. On the other hand, Finland scored highly on several indicators – income inequality between the richest and the poorest was the smallest of the sample; infant mortality and low birth-weights were the least frequent; the sense-of-freedom and life-satisfaction rankings were remarkably good; the use of cannabis was infrequent, but, although not included in this set of indicators, the misuse of alcohol was notorious. However, in relation to the money spent on social problems and health, Finland's performance is astonishingly good.

Table 4. Social Performance Indicators

Dimension	Indicator	Finl	Nord	Angl	Cont	Medi
Well-being	Human development index	0.947	0.952	0.948	0.942	0.926
	Public social expenditures of GDP	24.8	26.9	17.4	25.7	22.4
Poverty	Relative poverty	6.4	5.6	12.6	8.0	13.4
	Child poverty rate	3.4	3.3	15.9	10.6	14.6
	Child poverty in single-parent households	10.5	9.2	45.2	29.6	25.7
	Poverty rate of the elderly	10.4	9.2	13.5	7.5	22.9
Income-distribution	Net old-age pension replacement	78.8	66.5	47.4	76.2	89.2
	Relative income of disabled persons	83.0	86.0	67.0	85.8	68.9
	Gini coefficient	26.1	24.7	32.1	26.3	34.9
	Incomes of the richest 10% to the poorest 10%	**5.6**	6.5	12.4	8.1	11.4
	Ratio of incomes at the 90th percentile to those at the 10th	2.9	2.9	4.6	3.3	4.7
Health	Percentage of GDP spent on health care	**7.40**	8.98	9.55	9.64	8.90
	Public expenditures on health	**5.66**	7.40	6.36	6.85	5.89
	Infant mortality per 1000 live births	**3.1**	3.5	5.5	4.3	4.3
	Low birth weight of live births	**4.1**	4.8	6.5	6.5	7.3
	Male life expectancy	**75.1**	76.2	76.2	75.6	75.9
	Female life expectancy	81.8	81.4	81.1	81-6	82.0
Unemployment	Long-term unemployed	24.9	19.8	17.5	42.7	46.8
Violence	Homicides per 100 000	**2.5**	1.4	2.2	0.9	1.1
	Suicides per 100 000	**21.0**	15.2	11.1	16.2	6.1
Self-realisation	Sense of freedom	**86.7**	82.7	84.4	75.4	73.4
	Index of Economic Freedom	1.85	2.0	1.8	2.1	2.5
	Annual hours worked	1737	1550	1752	1478	1809
	Percent of population using cannabis	**2.9**	3.8	11.6	6.7	5.9
	Very happy	24.7	34.1	39.4	35.0	18.6
	Life satisfaction	**89.9**	88.0	86.7	85.8	78.2

Source: Brooks, Hwong, 2006.

Geo-historical Luck and Inter-cultural Coping

So how can we account for the success of a remote, cold country that, in its national anthem, actually praises itself for being poor and remaining so? We have already encountered three different explanations: culture, gender, and the role of the state. To these, a fourth can be added; geographic-historical position and how the Finns have managed it. But firstly, a brief return to the first three, and then a take on the fourth. According to the previously-mentioned Richard Lewis, who is an expert on cultural differences and conflicts, the Finnish culture is unique. These remarkable people speak a language unique in its origins and have kept their cultural identity intact despite the influences of powerful neighbours in the forms of Sweden and Russia. Pursuing a so-called "Lone Wolf' policy, Finland raised itself from a struggling, war-battered state in 1945, to one of the most developed countries in the world (Lewis, 2005, cover).

Lewis makes a schematic comparison of Finnish and Swedish communication-patterns. He stresses that Finns use minimal speech, increase succinctness as and when needed, and strive for clarity. Swedes, on the other hand, set the scene in a semi-formal and proper way, include plenty of context, and discuss until they reach a consensus. They then stick to this consensus, becoming immediately reluctant to accept any resistance to it and believing that the Swedish way is the best (Lewis, 1999). Such observations have often been made in studies of Finnish and Swedish leadership cultures. However, stressing the differences between the two countries does not explain why both are successful, or why there are plenty of successful Swedish-Finnish joint companies. It would be more appropriate to stress the similarities between Finnish and Scandinavian values in general. The long co-evolution with Sweden and the maintenance of the Nordic traditions (such as Lutheranism) even while being part of the Russian empire, were crucial for the development of Finnish culture and institutions. The role of the Swedish language is still significant. The co-existence of two linguistic groups and the large proportion of bilingual persons have been quite fruitful in the Finnish case. Solutions to linguistic conflicts have been unique and relatively successful.

Another feature that has often been cited is the strong position of women. Back in 2006, Finland celebrated the 100-year jubilee of the full political rights of Finnish women (and men), and although the women of New Zeeland were the first to get the right to vote, it should be remembered that it took several decades before they got the right to stand as candidates. In *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations. Why Some Are so Rich and Some so Poor*, the American economic historian David S. Landes underlines this factor when he explains why certain cultures have not been able to develop. In general, the best clue to a nation's growth and development potential is the role and status of women, to wit; the economic implications of gender discrimination are most serious. To deny women is to deprive a country of labour and talent, but even worse – it is to undermine the drive of boys and men to attain achievement (Landes, 1998, pp. 412–413).

There are several studies of early female emancipation in Finland. Already by 1905–1907, almost a third of university students were women and today Finnish women are the most educated in Europe (Kalland, 2003). According to the Human Development Report 2002, they also – together with Danish women – have the highest ratio of incomes in relation to men. Interestingly enough, Richard Lewis (2005) stresses the cultural differences between men and women in Finland. According to him, they constitute two separate nations. This observation is fascinating since it resembles the most popular Finnish cartoon couple, a responsible, enlightened, ideal citizen by the name of Viivi, and a frivolous and inventive male pig called Wagner. When women work full time and take on social responsibilities, men are allowed to be somewhat cranky, creative, and venturous. This fact could explain the high rates of male suicide, violence, and irresponsible drinking on the one hand, and the achievements in innovative activities and sports on the other.

In their book on the Finnish informational model, Castells and Himanen (2003) also stress culture and national identity, but to them the role of the state has played a crucial role in forming its culture and national identity. The public sector has provided free education at all levels. And the role of the state in the innovation-system has been, as noted above, crucial. The system of progressive taxes and universal social security redistributes incomes and mitigates poverty. Day-care and public social and health services have been relatively efficient and have thus enabled women not only to work full-time, but also to find jobs in the public sector.

The Finnish state has been archetypically developmental, and the relationship between the state and civil society has been close and built on mutual trust. This is probably the result of Finland's location between the two remarkably different historical powers of Sweden and Russia. A developmental state in close cooperation with civil society was a necessary condition for creating a Finnish nation sandwiched between them.

This leads us to the fourth factor behind the success story of Finland; its geographic, historical position. The close cultural links with Sweden have facilitated the Finnish emulation of Swedish technological and social advances. Before 1917, Finland stood in a special relationship with Russia, a fact that aided the export of processed goods to the Empire (especially the capital of St Petersburg). A similar relation arose after WWII in that Finland was then the only "Western" country that traded extensively with the Soviet Union. It was able to provide its eastern neighbour with a large range of goods, some of which were technically advanced.

The peasantry managed to avoid serfdom both during the Swedish era and after 1809, when Finland became a grand duchy under the Tsar. According to the Swedish constitution, the peasantry formed a so-called "fourth estate" alongside the nobility, the clergy, and the bourgeoisie. The constitution was adapted to the new situation when Finland was annexed to Russia. Thanks to the dominant Lutheran influence and to a nationalist movement that relied on education as a major tool, the peasantry was largely literate. And peasant ownership of the forests was shielded by the state. In the north-eastern parts of the country, with few peasants but with large, remote forest areas, the state controlled the resource.

Finland's economy had traditionally been based on wood, until electronic products, chemical-based products, and metals and machinery exports, from a percentage perspective, took the lead. An economy based on the extraction and exports of raw materials, however, runs several risks. The source may eventually be depleted, or the price of the raw material may collapse due to changes in technology or consumption patterns. The stream of income from exploiting a natural resource may also crowd out the development of other productive sectors. Politics in the country may focus on the dictates of the resource sector and the control over the income stream it enables. An extractive economy often misses out on the kind of learning-by-doing that an industrial economy normally experiences. The resource-extraction sector itself is liable to become dependent on know-how and machinery produced in the developed centre. Countries experiencing a combination of these risks may fall into an "extractive economy trap" (Bunker, 2007).

Finland, however, has managed to avoid such traps. Forests are a renewable resource, have a variety of potential uses, and have been an important energy-source; houses, tools, and ships have been made of wood, and wood can be refined into necessities such as tar or paper. Felling trees is best done in wintertime when there are few other employment opportunities for a rural labour force. Forestry has been, therefore, a good complement to farming. Peasant households were able to finance small investments along with the education of their children by cutting down and selling some of their forest. The well-organised, forest-owning peasantry (involved in cooperative manufacturing based on wood), and the exporters of tar and of sawn products and paper, jointly influenced the regulations concerning forestry. Instead of falling into a resource trap, Finland was thus able to use its forests in ways that promoted cooperation among independent producers and between those producers and the state.

A Lucky Country

For the fifth year in a row, Finland, according to the World Happiness Report 2022, (Helliwell et al., 2022) has the highest "evaluation of life," and thus is judged to be the "happiest" country in the world. Finnish media have not said much about the new happiness report. The government-funded *Good News from Finland*, "a service that covers positive and globally interesting news topics related to Finnish businesses and innovations," noted it in a rather laconic report that began:

> *Finland has been named the world's happiest country for the fifth consecutive year in the 10th edition of the World Happiness Report.*
> *The country secured the top spot with a score that was "significantly ahead" of other countries in the top 10: Denmark, Iceland, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Sweden, Norway, Israel, and New Zealand.*
> *The Nordics overall were commended for strong social cohesion, an excellent balance between family and working life, and free education and healthcare. The authors of the report also viewed that the region merits special attention for their generally high levels of personal and institutional trust, and handling of COVID-19.*

The scores for eight countries – four Nordic and four Anglo-American – are shown in Table 5. More remarkable than Finland's number one position for the fifth year in a row is that its lead over the number two, Denmark, as well as the others, has widened perceptibly.

Table 5. Happiness Scores. Eight Selected Countries

Rank	*Country*	*Happiness 2021*	*Change since 2008*
1	Finland	7,821	+0.361
2	Denmark	7.636	-0.111
7	Sweden	7.384	-0.060
8	Norway	7.365	-0.290
13	Ireland	7.041	-0.142
15	Canada	7.025	-0.455
16	United States	6.977	-0.150
17	United Kingdom	6.943	+0.055

Source: World Happiness Report, 2022. Helliwell et al., 2022.

Why “happiness” has risen in Finland while the opposite is the case for most other comparable countries is something of a mystery. After the financial crisis that started in 2008, Finland’s economy recovered more slowly than the economies of most other nations. Finland was hit by the demise in popularity of Nokia’s mobile phones and by the stagnant global demand for both paper and investment goods – Finland’s leading exports. Furthermore, as a member of the euro area, Finland not only was dragged down by the euro crisis, but also could not adjust its exchange rate, whereas its main rival, Sweden, could. The economy reached its pre-crisis level only shortly before the Covid pandemic broke out. So why did “happiness” increase in Finland despite the many economic troubles that started in 2009 and continued for almost a decade? Is it possible to explain why the Finns seems to be so satisfied with their lives?

Each country’s happiness score is based on people’s answers to a single question:

> *Please imagine a ladder, with rungs numbered from 0 at the bottom to 10 at the top. The top of the ladder represents the best possible life for you and the bottom of the ladder represents the worst possible life for you. On which rung of the ladder would you say you personally feel you stand at this time?*

The happiness report uses six variables to assess how much they contribute to the total score of each country. Based on these results, we compare Finland to three Nordics – Denmark, Sweden, and Norway – and four majority English-speaking countries – Ireland, Canada, the United States, and the United Kingdom. Comparing the variables, however, offers only partial insights, and therefore some personal thoughts on why the Finns have responded so positively to the question on which the report is based have been added by the author.

Explaining the Happiness Score

The first two variables chosen to assess why the almost 150 countries included in the study get their different scores are available from standard UN organisations:

- *GDP per capita* in purchasing power parity (World Development Indicators);
- *Healthy life expectancy* (WHO Global Health Observatory data repository).

The remaining four variables depend on a set of questions answered by the respondents included in the poll. These are expressed feelings rather than systematically-produced facts:

- *Social support* – “If you were in trouble, do you have relatives or friends you could count on to help you whenever you need them, or not?”;
- *Freedom to make life choices* – “Are you satisfied or dissatisfied with your freedom to choose what you do with your life?”;
- *Generosity* – “Have you donated money to a charity in the past month?”;
- *Corruption perception* – “Is corruption widespread throughout the government or not?”, and “Is corruption widespread within businesses or not?”.

But the six explanatory variables don’t explain everything. Hence there is a seventh category that measures the extent to which life evaluations are higher or lower than those predicted by the six variables. This “prediction error” (which could be positive or negative) is added to the score of a hypothetical country called “Dystopia,” so named because it has values equal to the world’s lowest national averages. The score for Dystopia calculated in this way is 1.83.

Table 6. Share of Happiness Scores Attributed to Each Explaining Variable

Country	Dystopia	GDP/ cap	Support	HLE	Freedom	Generos- ity	Corruption
Finland	**2.518**	1.842	**1.258**	0.775	**0.736**	0.109	**0.534**
Denmark	2.226	1.953	1.243	0.777	0.719	0.188	0.532
Sweden	2.003	1.920	1.204	**0.803**	0.724	0.218	0.512
Norway	1.925	1,997	1,239	0,786	0,728	0,217	0,474
Ireland	1,743	**2,129**	1,166	0,779	0,627	0,190	0,408
Canada	1.924	1.886	1.183	0.783	0.659	0.217	0.368
US	2.214	1.982	1.182	0.628	0.574	0.220	0.177
UK	1.967	1.867	1.143	0.750	0.597	**0.289**	0.329

Source: World Happiness Report, 2022. Helliwell et al., 2022.

As can be seen in Table 6, Finland does not score exceptionally well as regards several of the variables. Its GDP per capita is the lowest of the eight countries. Healthy life expectancy in Finland is lower than in the other Nordics, Ireland, and Canada. Finnish generosity is surprisingly low in comparison to the rest. It is, however, on top in three of the variables: social support, the freedom to make life choices, and corruption perception. And, truly, Finns do care about their relatives and friends and participate actively in voluntary organisations. The educational system and the social services guaranteed by the welfare state do broaden the freedom to make life choices. People do trust the authorises and one another. If you say you are going to do something, you can be counted on to do it – on time.

But the residual category is the one in which Finland most clearly stands out. This means that much of Finland's superiority remains unexplained. There are a few factors that may help fill this explanatory gap.

One factor is the remarkable size of the "boomer" generation in Finland. The largest population cohorts are those born after World War II. The same goes for many countries, but the Finnish case is exceptional, with 23 per cent of the population aged over 65. In general, as the world report also shows, the 60-plus age group is significantly happier than the average, possibly because of pensioning. As the boomers retire, average happiness increases relatively more in Finland because of its extraordinary age structure.

Another factor is that Finns are used to and better prepared for a variety of crisis situations. The Finnish civil war of 1918, the wars in which Finland was defeated between 1939 and 1944, the accommodation to Soviet pressures during the Cold War, and the extreme depression of the 1990s are different examples. Finland's preparedness laws and reserve stocks were far more superior to Sweden's, and the same could probably be said in relation to other countries. When the pandemic started, Finland was able to react faster and was better equipped than most countries. In times of crisis especially, the people trust the leadership and are prepared to follow any instructions issued by the government and official experts.

Closeness to nature was an important factor during the pandemic. People moved to their summer cottages or engaged in distanced work. Those staying in the cities made frequent family excursions to nearby forest lands. A joke had it that Finns enjoyed the end of the pandemic social distancing guideline of two metres, since now they could maintain a distance of five metres!

It is also possible that the high Finnish happiness rankings are affected by the way grades are given in Finnish schools. These grades range from 4 to 10. A 4, the lowest number, means that you have failed; a 7 is quite satisfactory; and an 8 is rather good. To be accepted into a gymnasium (a seat of further academic learning) – as is half the cohort yearly – you should have an average of at least 7, and an average of 8 will most likely be enough. The Finnish respondents, asked to assess their well-being on a scale of 0 to 10, might be influenced by this grading system; in most other countries, a 6 might be considered satisfactory and a 7 quite good, whereas Finns might think of a 7 as merely satisfactory, and an 8 as acceptable.

Three Historic Germans

Despite this caveat, the rankings done by the happiness researchers are presumably largely correct. And in that regard, we may highlight the influence of three Germans in particular on Finnish national culture. There are other Germans that could be mentioned, such as Carl Ludvig Engel, the architect who rebuilt the centre of Helsinki, or Fredrik Pacius, the composer of the national anthem. But the ones most influential are no other than Martin Luther, G.W.F. Hegel, and Karl Marx.

Without Luther, the translation of the Bible into Swedish and Finnish, and the urge to teach people how to read at least part of the text, would not have happened so soon. Luther emphasised the positive aspects of life and regarded work as a calling, not a means to enrich oneself. Everyone should, (according to Luther's thinking) contribute as a member of the family and society. Most Finns still stretch and fold their sheets in a way that is practiced by Lutherans.

The philosopher and statesman J.V. Snellman (1806–1881), one of the most important promoters of Finnish nationalism, was an ardent Hegelian, writing his dissertation in defence of the second of the three abovementioned Germans, namely, Hegel. In his most influential treatise, *Läran om staten* (The Theory of the State), he elaborated the process of building a national spirit, culture, and formation (in Swedish *bildning*). Following Hegel, Snellman stressed that freedom for all was only possible through the state. He saw the presence of God in people who went beyond their limits to serve the good of the nation.

In 1863, Snellman was called to a cabinet post in the Senate, in effect as minister of finance and prime minister. He managed to get the Russian Tsar, who ruled as Grand Duke of Finland, to proclaim a language decree that would gradually give Finnish a position equal to that of Swedish. A separate Finnish currency was introduced, and Snellman managed to tie it to silver instead of the Russian rouble. Without Snellman's Hegelian vision and verve, the unity of the nation would not have been strong enough to withstand the threat of the Russification that took off at the end of the century.

The influence of Hegel in 19th century Finland differs from that in Denmark and Sweden, where Hegelianism was marginalised. The most influential philosopher in Sweden was Christopher Jacob Boström (1797–1866), who openly dissociated himself from Hegel. All students at Swedish universities started with an obligatory course in philosophy, marked by Boström's "rational idealism". One of the most influential people in Danish history was N.F.S. Grundtvig (1783–1872), a pastor, author, poet, philosopher, historian, teacher, and politician. His philosophy gave rise to a new form of nationalism in the last half of the 19th century. In 1848, he was part of the Danish Constituent Assembly that wrote the first constitution of Denmark. Like Boström, Grundtvig was a critique of Hegel. Comparing the formative influence of Grundtvig, Boström, and Snellman may help us to understand some of the social and spiritual differences between these three "lucky" countries.

The influence of the third-mentioned German, Karl Marx, can be seen in the adoption of Marxism by Finland's Social Democratic Party in its program of 1903. At the beginning of World War I, party membership was more then 100,000, which made it the largest social democratic party per capita in the world (Blanc, 2022). From the start of the democratically elected lantdag (the Finnish parliament before independence), it was the biggest party in the assembly.

In the 1916 election, the social democrats won a majority in the lantdag. Oskari Tokoi became the world's first social democratic prime minister. A Finnish translation of *Das Kapital* was commissioned and paid for by the state. After the February 1917 revolution in Russia, Tokoi's senate decided to transfer the powers the tsar had exercised as Grand Duke of Finland to the lantdag. The head of the Russian Provisional Government, Alexander Kerensky, however, dissolved the parliament and ordered new elections, which the bourgeois parties went on to win.

In the interwar period, the Social Democrats, together with the Agrarian Party, founded by the republican democrat Santeri Alkio, were able to back up those liberal and conservative politicians who were prepared to resist two serious efforts to overturn the republic and democracy. Finland was the only continental country that participated in the war and yet retained its democratic order throughout the ordeal. The development of a welfare state began in the 1930s and accelerated after 1966 with the left in the majority in the parliament. As quoted at the start of this article, Boris Kagarlitsky saw the Finnish model as a vast library. It could be half-seriously asserted that the country that comes closest to Marx's communist principle – "From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs" – is most likely Finland.

Citing this slogan, the obligatory remark that the Finnish language has no gender should be added. Both "he" and "she" are *hän*; "his" and "hers" are *hänen*. The five parties that make up the present Finnish government, representing all historical shades of the republican, liberal, radical, and green left, are all led by women. Of the three parties in opposition only one, the conservative National Coalition Party, is (still) led by a male.

What Can be Learnt from the Finnish Example?

If the reasons for the apparent Finnish success are complex and unique, then to try to copy it would be a mistaken venture. However, there are some lessons to be learned from its experience:

- Development is strongly dependent on persistent characteristics such as geography and culture. Each nation must find solutions that fit its specific situation. You can learn from your neighbours, but you should not try to copy them. Even more, you should not try to implement a universalistic blueprint (such as Soviet-type communism, Washington-consensus neoliberalism or even the "Nordic model");
- The character of the state is crucial. There needs to be a certain persistence that can take the shape of a conscious or unconscious model. In the Finnish case, the emphasis on international competitiveness goes far back in time. Today's system of innovation is due to state policies;
- Gender relations matter a great deal. The welfare state, properly implanted, is an economic asset since it is a condition for the emancipation of women. The emancipation of women is, again, crucial for national economic development;
- Economic security is a precondition for dynamism "with a human face." If workers and citizens feel that they have a certain economic security, even if a firm restructures, they are prepared to accept changes associated with new technologies or with international openness. They are also prepared to invest in education;
- To educate the whole population and to educate their educators well is a superior investment. Probably the main reason for Finland's success in education is that its teachers are more educated than in most other countries;
- Sustainable conflict-solutions yield many advantages. Finland lies on the edge between two cultures and has therefore had more than its fair share of conflicts. There have been, however, some good examples of conflict-solutions, such as: the liberation of the crofters, the treatment of the Swedish and Orthodox minorities, the integration of Communists, and consensual income policies.

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The Case of Finnish Innovative Society: Shaping Legal Higher Education in Line with the Ideals of Social Solidarity

Abstract

In a dynamically changing World, the process of educating students at universities must also change. The changes implemented, however, should be well thought out. The events of the last two years related to the pandemic have caused a global revolution in teaching methods, which have had to be modified to transfer knowledge remotely. Such *ad hoc* changes are contributing to a change in how higher education is viewed, especially in the context of traditional fields of studies such as the law, which have so far been reluctant to embrace new trends in curriculum design and educational methods. Because of their natural attachment to national legal systems, these faculties have been slower than others to undergo internationalisation, i.e. student exchanges in the educational process (due to difficulties with subjects being recognised abroad). For years, the Nordic countries, and especially Finland, have been among the leading countries in the world with regard to shaping effective and innovative systems of education, including higher education.

Keywords: Finland, Legal Higher Education, Innovations, Public Governance, Legal Mind

Introduction

The concept of innovation has become a permanent feature of Nordic governance mechanisms, and has entered the vocabulary of legal language even though, as Wolfgang Hoffmann-Riem, who has been researching

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innovation in the context of legal solutions and theoretical-legal frameworks for understanding innovation for many years, notes, there is still no legal definition of the phenomenon or systematisation of the terms associated with it. Cultural and social innovation is a prerequisite for technological innovation. The capacity to innovate grows out of specific features of a society. It is not universal in nature. It must always be seen in the specific context of a community's traditions, history and experiences. As Hoffmann-Riem rightly points out, technology – most often identified with innovation in colloquial language – is in fact merely an instrument that arises as a product of an innovative society, i.e. a society that is ready for change and invests in making changes in various spheres of its social, economic and political life. Innovative solutions and practices can be found within the entire system of state administration (not only selectively in specific segments of the economy) – including at the boundary between the public and private sectors (Hoffmann-Riem, 2008, pp. 588 ff.).

In the case of innovation in the public sector, expenditures incurred on modernising public administration (e.g. in the context of digitalisation, such as the introduction of artificial intelligence in the delivery of public services) are taken into account, but so are expenditures on research and development (Cooke, 2016, pp. 190 ff.; Suksi, 2021). The first model is known as scientific and technology-based innovation (STI). The second model concerns innovation based on learning by doing, by using, and by interacting (DUI), i.e. non-technological innovation. The first type concerns the technological sphere, while the second type is related to organisational structure and the institutional dimension. Both models of innovation affect the performance of the administrative system and can take the form of revolutionary upgrades of existing solutions (so-called radical innovations). They are examined in terms of the results achieved following changes of a technological nature (e.g. digitisation), or changes related to the modernisation of the organisation of specific management processes. It is also possible to combine both types of innovation in public administration reforms (Lundvall, 2007, pp. 95 ff.). It is assumed on the basis of empirical research that Finland, in its efforts to combine these types of innovations, pursues the DUI model with a high degree of commitment; this corresponds to Finnish patterns of combining different environments and consensual decision-making. Indeed, the DUI model is considered to be inclusive, practice-driven, interactive and diversified (Cooke, 2016; Thoma, 2017).

The Nordic countries including Finland are an example of the so-called positive innovation paradox. That is, they are able to generate a relatively higher level of innovation and economic performance than other countries from a given amount of input (e.g. R&D expenditure). The reasons for this phenomenon are attributed to, among other things, Nordic egalitarianism, equal opportunities through education, and the social security system. With regard to innovation, Finland additionally sustains public venture-capital networks, activating the private sector in cooperation with the public administration according to the principles of New Public Management. Studies confirm that public spending as a proportion of GDP is relatively in the Nordic countries in comparison with other parts of Europe. Underlying these mechanisms is the idea of social solidarity (Parrilli, Heras, 2016, pp. 748 ff.; Cooke, 2006, pp. 192, 194; Paakkala, 2011).

In the introduction, it is therefore necessary to consider what social solidarity is. In general, it can be understood as a combination of interests and responsibilities in the context of a specific community. Solidarity can be seen within the framework of the coexistence of different social groups – family, neighbourhood, and institutionalised governance structures, such as, for example, local government, state central administration, or international organisations (Hiilamo, 2014, p. 299).

Solidarity can also be looked at from the subjective side – in the context of actors engaged in a reciprocal relationship to pursue certain common interests. These actors share risks and responsibilities for their actions. Further, solidarity can be interpreted in an object-based context, when looking at the process of identification with a particular object of interest. In the case of public administration, this is most often about the axiological dimension of its actions, i.e. solidarity with specific values considered important in a given legal system. The literature also distinguishes subjective solidarity, which means identification of the individual with specific values or ideals within a given community. This is complemented by intersubjective solidarity, which is more relevant from the point of view of public administration considerations, and focuses on interactions within a given social group (Mędrzycki, 2021, pp. 39 ff.; Warmbier, 2015).

This understanding is close to the understanding of social solidarity in the Finnish legal system (see e.g. Section 19 of the Finnish Constitution guarnteeing the right of social security). It has become a foundation for development, and for building national identity. According to research prepared in 2011 for the Finnish Ministry of Employment and Economy, the country's education system contributes significantly to social solidarity. Education at all levels is an element that consolidates society. The right to education is enshrined in section 16 of the Finnish Constitution:

"Everyone has the right to basic education free of charge. Provisions on the duty to receive education are laid down by an Act. The public authorities shall, as provided in more detail by an Act, guarantee for everyone equal opportunity to receive other educational services in accordance with their ability and special needs, as well as the opportunity to develop themselves without being prevented by economic hardship. The freedom of science, the arts and higher education is guaranteed" (Finlex, 2019).

The legislator is therefore obliged, in accordance with the constitution, to create a system that makes it possible to create equal opportunities for access to education, irrespective of people's financial condition, abilities or place of residence. Finnish teenagers outperform their peers in countries with a similar GDP per capita in the demanding PISA test of reading comprehension, problem-solving and mathematical skills (PISA-tutkimus, 2022). Significantly from the point of view of the social solidarity developed in accordance with constitutional ideals, the results do not differ between regions, or between students. Education is therefore an important mechanism for levelling the playing field and building collective thinking about the state (Sabel et al., 2011, p. 9).

The first part of this article is an analysis of the specifics of the Finnish higher education system. The second part deals with the relationship between public policy innovation and the education system in the context of processes of legal internationalisation. The aim of the article is to show how belonging to the legal family of the Nordic countries influences thinking about the higher education system, and how this translates into innovative public policies.

The Role of Legal Higher Education in Innovative Society

Higher education is one of the most important areas of public governance in a modern democratic state. At the same time, it is a specific area of public governance that is difficult to compare or contrast with other forms of activity by public institutions (Ferlie, Musselin, Andresani, 2008). The importance of the education system, and especially higher education, stems from the contribution education makes to the development of state and social structures. A well-educated society is an informed, understanding and active society. An effective system of higher education is a necessary element in building the rule of law based on a legal system that can be readily understood by citizens. It is not without reason that numerous sociological studies have shown that a higher percentage of educated people translates directly into greater understanding and acceptance of norms related to the functioning of the citizen within state structures (Theobald, 2018). That is, into an understanding of administrative decisions, court rulings, and legally non-binding communications issued as part of various forms of non-imperious administrative actions.

The integrated structures within which European states function add to the multiplicity and complexity of normative orders. They are complicated and difficult to understand for many educated lawyers, let alone laymen. The complexity and hermetic nature of normative orders has been the subject of scientific analysis for many years. Quoting one of the many studies on the subject, it should be emphasised that various "modern legal systems, including the 'Acquis' underlying the European Union, are very much like 'virtual cathedrals'; enormous constructions of legislative instruments. Just making accessible all the instruments and procedures by themselves will not provide citizens with sufficient insight. In order to attain such insight, effective methods of disseminating legal knowledge to the public are needed" (Mommers et al., 2009, p. 52). As the complexity of normative systems increases, thinking about education within the social sciences, including law and administration, is changing. The process of the cosmopolitanisation of law, associated with the creation of complex, transnational regulations (especially in public law), means it is necessary to modify how lawyers in European countries are educated. There is a growing need to expand the catalogue of subjects covered (Joerges, Kreuder-Sonnen, 2017).

In search of new solutions, European legal education systems are introducing subjects in the field of data management, artificial intelligence, new solutions in copyright law, issues related to blockchain in public administration, the digitisation of healthcare, and the introduction of new technologies in financial markets (Robinson, 2020). In this way, the changing world is forcing not just a reaction by national legislators and the international bodies that coordinate supranational regulations, but also by the decision-makers who shape systems of higher education. The goal of modern universities is to prepare graduates to the fullest possible extent for the new challenges they will face. This applies above all to the network structures of international administration, which have become a permanent component of the functioning of public bodies. National administration at the centralised and decentralised levels can no longer function without being part of cooperative structures of various kinds. Consequently, the process of legal education is changing. From a traditional, conservative field of study, the law is becoming dynamic.

It is looking for new problems in an evolving conceptual grid, and for new issues to be analysed. This identification of needs also involves identifying higher education problems, such as "inappropriate training for modern practice of law, unneeded and esoteric courses, ideological bias in teaching, arbitrary admissions policies, undue reliance on standardized tests, (…) "publish or perish' mentality instead of focus on quality of teaching, (…) lack of specialization and innovation, bloated administrative staffs" (Carney, 2020).

Functioning in an internationalised world requires law graduates to be prepared in a way that goes far beyond knowledge of national laws. Even if they limit their future professional activity to practising law in their home country, they will need to know international regulations, both in civil law and in the complex, dynamically evolving substantive administrative law (e.g. environmental law) (Bauer, Trondal, 2015).

The modernisation of Nordic study programmes and educational methods is based on the ideas of making the state and its educational structures innovative, and equalising opportunities, which is characteristic of the Nordic enabling state. Education is one of the basic elements that are supposed to create opportunities, regardless of a person's wealth, place of residence, origin or social status. It is one of the pillars of social policy, especially in the context of higher education, which is the foundation for the professional development of individuals and an important driving force of national economies (the Finnish economy is a "knowledge-based economy") (Suorsa, 2007, pp. 16 ff.; Ylä-Anttila, 2006, pp. 9 ff.).

As indicated in the introduction, the starting point is the constitutional guarantee of free access to education at all compulsory levels, which also includes meals for students and travel to school. Equal study opportunities, meanwhile, are provided by a system of public loans and scholarships. Prime Minister Sanna Marin's government programme includes changes in 2023 related to the income thresholds (by 50%) at which students will be able to receive financial aid. This will allow them to undertake parallel work without losing public support. The changes also provide for an increase in funding for scholarships and food supplements in university canteens. EUR 6 million will be reserved for a regional student loan compensation scheme (Opetus- ja Kulttuuriministeriö, 2022a).

The Finnish education system implements the ideals of social solidarity through a system of mechanisms aimed at realising the potential of every learner – whether pupil or university student. This involves developed support instruments, mainly in the form of extra-curricular lessons. Every student, if he or she requires support in his or her learning processes, can receive it through supplementary and compensatory lessons, as well as through individual contact with an appropriate specialist, such as a psychologist. The education system shows great flexibility. Higher education in Finland is based on universities and universities of applied sciences (Fin. *ammattikorkeakoulut*) (Musiał, 2015, pp. 6 ff.). A variety of subjects can be studied, regardless of previous choices. Previous stages of education are recognised when changing one's field of study or place of study (Studies Service, N.D.). The university education system, according to constitutional assumptions, is regulated by an act of law (Finlex, 2009).

Legal studies have a two-tier nature. Graduates with the title "asianajaja" complete a three-year bachelor's programme (Fin. *oikeusnotaari*) and a two-year master's programme (Fin. *oikeustieteen maisteri*) (Finlex, 2004). An additional part of their education is a four-year apprenticeship in private practices, law firms or public legal aid offices (induction training), followed by a bar exam (Finlex, 1958). Full-time legal studies are offered at three universities in the country – Helsinki, Turku and Rovaniemi (University of Lappland, N.D.; Global Scholarschip, N.D.). In addition, interdisciplinary programmes, including law studies, are offered at the University of Eastern Finland, School of Law in Joensuu (e.g. environmental law within the Environmental Studies and Earth Sciences programme).

The Finns integrate various subjects in their study programmes that respond to the challenges of today. For example, at the master's level at the University of Helsinki, which is regarded as the top university in the country for the study of law, students can take the following subjects: Law and Society, Legal Cultures and Comparative Law, Legal Conflict Management and Alternative Dispute Resolution, Critical Approaches to Legal Studies, Perspectives in Legal Policy Studies, and Sustainability in International law. Finns try to see the education system for lawyers in a modern way, as reflected in the slogans advertising these courses on university websites: "Our task is to actively and critically observe phenomena and decision-making in society from a legal point of view" (e.g. University of Turku: Law – Licence to think critically). All universities where law is taught provide intensive academic exchanges. Finnish universities are involved in a number of international programmes, offering entire degrees in law in English, including at the doctoral level (University of Helsinki, N.D.).

For many years, the Nordic countries, and primarily Finland, have been implementing solutions in higher education in response to changing social, economic and political conditions. Finland has remained in the top three (alongside Sweden and Denmark) of the most innovative countries in Europe since 2010 (second only to Sweden in 2022). The European Innovation Scoreboard points to a number of innovation factors, most notably attractive research systems, including higher education, solid investment in research and development, as well as use of information technologies (European Innovation Scoreboard, 2022).

The Finnish model of decentralisation in education is regarded as one of the most interesting and inspiring solutions in Europe (Lavonen, 2017). The efforts made in lower education are also reflected in how well students are prepared to become university candidates. In the educational process, it is important to recognise and understand problems, and to logically connect the content presented with the acquisition of necessary or useful skills. This has an impact on education policy; for example, in relation to progressive digitisation (Opetus-ja Kulttuuriministeriö, 2022b).

One should not approach rankings uncritically and view Finland's education system as ideal. No such solutions exist anywhere in the world. On the other hand, there is no doubt that the relatively small community of theoretical lawyers and legal practitioners, compared with other European countries, has created an education system that functions well and is systematically improved.

The Nordic Legal Mind

In analysing the higher education system for the education of Finnish lawyers, it is worth highlighting the existence of a phenomenon that Pia Letto-Vanamo and Detlev Tamm call the common Nordic legal mind (Letto-Vanamo, Tamm, 2019). The Nordic countries show close similarities in thinking about the law. This is expressed in the close cooperation seen within the Nordic Council, which in the field of higher education has been taking initiatives to bring the higher education systems of the Nordic countries closer together for many years. In 2017, a strategy for increased regional cooperation was adopted, which stipulates that member states will endeavour "to exploit the opportunities inherent in Nordic cooperation to a far greater extent" (Nordic Council, N.D.). Although such documents are of a declaratory, legally non-binding nature, they do set out policy objectives that find expression in legislative initiatives in individual Member States. The rationale for Nordic cooperation, including in the field of higher education, is to build up a common belief system that finds expression in various joint initiatives at international forums, including within the European Union. The Nordic states represent a consensual model of lawmaking, which applies to all levels of normative development

– from local government to central government – within the national legal orders. However, this model is also translated into the behaviour of Nordic countries' representatives in cooperative platforms at the international level (Tiilikainen, 2006). A number of quantitative studies based on surveys of diplomats from EU member states, but also of officials in the administrative apparatus of the European Union itself, confirm that representatives from Finland, Denmark and Sweden are among the most effective negotiators, largely identifying with the "European negotiating system"[1] (Naßmacher, 2013, pp. 23–29).

Finland shares German patterns in many aspects of a pragmatic understanding of the system of law, and shaping that law for a particular community. Finnish consensualism (Finnish consensual culture) feeds into German visions of multilateralism, compromise-building, and the inclusion of different actors in the process of lawmaking and law enforcement (Haugevik, Sending, 2020). To quote Stefan Sjöblom, it can be stated that "Finnish representative democracy is based on a multiparty system, proportional representation, and a strong element of personalised voting. It is characterised by a tendency towards consensual democracy, partculary after the 1960s" (before the adversarial period) (Sjöblom, 2011, p. 245).

Innovation in the case of the Nordic countries, including Finland, stems directly from the belief that concrete solutions of both a legislative nature and an executive nature, related to the application of the law, are intended to serve citizens (Niemivuo, 1991). Policymakers' ideas are preceded by an extensive consultation process involving various stakeholders, including – directly – the citizens. A common feature of the Finnish and other Nordic systems is a social conception of the state, which is reflected in its regulative and redistributive functions. The state in the Nordic countries is semantically combined with the term society. The term society in all Nordic languages, including Finnish, directly refers to public authorities (Fin. *yhteiskunta*) and has little in common with, for example, the French semantic concept of society (Fr. *société*) understood in the context of the rights and freedoms of individuals liberating themselves from an oppressive state apparatus in the name of the ideals of the French Revolution (Kettunen, 2019, p. 143).

In the case of the Nordic countries and Finland, a so-called statist individualism is observed. It is the state and its administrative apparatus that guarantees the welfare and development of citizens. The emancipation of the individual from various forms of dependence linked, for example, to

[1] Cf. the German concept of understanding the European Union as the so-called *Verhandlungssystem*.

economic status, is achieved through state interventionism. It is the state, through high taxes and a complex system of public institutions providing social security (e.g. programmes for full employment, programmes for reducing homelessness) and public services for healthcare and education, that enables equal opportunities (Trägårdh, 1997).

In Finland, unlike in the other Nordic countries, the social democratic party does not and has not played a leading role in shaping the political system. From the point of view of the normative order, the long-standing dominance of agrarian groupings, which are closely linked to the agricultural nature of social structures in Finland, is significant. Innovation, in this case, is a derivative of locality. Regional communities are one of the primary reference points in the search by decision-makers at different levels of administration for normative and institutional solutions that are suitable for citizens (Kettunen, 2001, pp. 226 ff.).

State institutions undertaking their activities in the broad sense of social solidarity have strong legitimacy. This understanding of the state and public services corresponds to classical theoretical concepts that are part of the social solidarity strand. Mention may be made hereof the French legal theorist Léon Duguit, who understood the concept of public services through the prism of the usefulness of public administrative bodies. These were intended to serve citizens functioning within a specific state community. Within Duguit's framework, it is the general interest of the collective, not the interests of particular social groups, that matters. This corresponds to the vision of modern affluent welfare states, among which, in the European context, Finland is at the forefront in terms of social security for as many social groups as possible: children, the elderly, large families, the unemployed, the disabled and others (infoFinland.fi, N.D.). The welfare state is understood in this context as an "all-encompassing form of solidarity" (Hellman, Monni, Alanko, 2017, p. 9).

The innovation of Finnish public policies corresponds to the classic classifications introduced by Duguit. Finnish public policy in various sectors includes the following elements:

- continuity of functioning, irrespective of political changes;
- predictability of public administration activities;
- transparency and openness of the functioning of the public management system at different levels, which is related to, among other things, the wide availability of public information to citizens;
- equality in access to public services for all citizens, regardless of their place of residence (including in remote, sparsely populated areas of the country) or wealth;

- active participation of citizens in shaping public services through, inter alia, consultative processes (Fr. participation du citoyen);
- ease of access to public services for citizens resulting from rapidly growing digitalisation (Fr. accessibilité);
- simplicity of solutions and practices related to the execution of the law by public administration (Fr. simplicité) (Löwenberg, 2001, pp. 67–78).

The Finns see innovation in a systemic, comprehensive way. This fits in with the knowledge-based societal planning characteristic of all Nordic countries. Innovation is understood as the efficient use of new solutions, services and processes in markets and society. Specific regulations introduced, e.g. in the context of reforming the education system, should be seen through the prism of such an understanding of innovation and modernisation of the state identified directly with society. Normative standards are seen in the Finnish normative order as an important instrument for the most rational functioning and rationalisation of society. Social policy (Fin. sosiaalipolitiikka) is understood as a fundamental part of societal policy (Fin. yhteiskuntapolitiikka). In this sense, social policy is shaping a society that is modern and "growth-oriented" – i.e. innovative.

Conclusions

For many years, Finland has been at the top of rankings examining the effectiveness of public governance, the efficiency of public policies, and the implementation of good administration and regulations. It ranks top when it comes to judicial independence, the stability of its banking system, the efficiency of its education system, and combatting corruption and organised crime (Hedlund, 2020; Statistics Finland, 2018). Most often, it shares the top spot in such rankings with the other Nordic countries. The phenomenon of the Nordic countries being forerunners in constructing innovative models of public management has been the subject of research in various academic disciplines: law, administration and management sciences, but also sociology and economics (Kananen, 2016; Anttiroiko et al., 2011). This points to the internal integrity of the region, which is expressed in similarities among its national legal systems, administrative practices and culture, and which has a dynamising effect on the search for and development of public policy innovations (Parrilli, Heras, 2016, p. 749).

While the region as a whole, thanks to strong and constantly intensifying regional cooperation, often acts in consort in the international environment (Haugevik, Sending, 2020, p. 110), Finnish solutions nevertheless show originality, and deserve a separate analysis, especially since Finland is gradually coming to the fore. Regional studies show that innovation related to public management mechanisms and modern administration is increasingly being developed in Finland (Kohtamäki, 2021, pp. 50 ff.).

In Finland, of greatest importance is its large investment of public funds in developing new technologies and supporting research centres searching for innovative solutions in various market sectors. Among the most important actors of this type is a government agency institutionally linked to the Ministry of Employment and Economy – the Finnish Funding Agency for Technology and Innovation (Fin. *Tekniikan edistämiskeskus*, TEKES), which merged in 2018 with Finpro, the agency for the economic promotion of Finland abroad. These now operate as a government organisation, Business Finland, which is active in the Team Finland network and deals, among other things, with the broad internationalisation of public services through information exchange, shortening contact paths between individual agencies and public administrations in partner countries, facilitating economic investment in Finland, and supporting the activities of Finnish investors abroad.

Networking is one of the basic tenets of modifying the Finnish administration, as can be seen in the aforementioned reform of the Tekes agency. The idea is to bring together as many actors as possible in joint platforms that connect experts from different fields and sectors (e.g. by opening up to the private sector) in order to develop solutions that are as flexible and innovative as possible (e.g. under the *We Make Finland Known to the World* programme).

Networking is also a typical method of university management in Finland. An increasing number of faculties are interdisciplinary: the law is being combined with economics, sociology, computer science or language studies (see e.g. University of Eastern Finlnad, Kuopio/Joensuu). The Finnish model of university education, which offers courses in the social sciences, is stable, and subject to a gradual, thoughtful and logical evolution, as opposed to, for example, Central European countries such as Poland that are still struggling with the burden of their political transformation, and where the changes introduced in their education systems are not always evolutionary. In many cases, they can even be considered revolutionary – in that they abolish existing schemes (e.g. evaluation of academic staff), replacing them with completely new tools. This leads to uncertainty (Syryt, 2018). Measures of this revolutionary type are often of a remedial nature – an ad hoc response to a crisis rather than a well-thought-out plan of action. Yet, in the face of the profound changes taking place in society, long-term strategies for higher education are indispensable.

In this context, it is worth drawing on Finnish models, especially those concerned with how higher education is understood in such fields of study as law or administration, which are important for the functioning of the state. This understanding stems from the conviction that a stable, well-funded educational sector guarantees a society's innovativeness in many dimensions.

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State Aid Trends in Poland and Finland – Similarities and Differences

Abstract

State aid is one of the financial instruments available to EU member states for intervention in domestic markets. On the one hand its use is prohibited by Article 107(1) TFEU, but on the other hand there are many exemptions, including regional and horizontal state aid. Given the centralised system for State aid in the EU, one could expect that the volume and structure in terms of forms and purposes of public aid granted should be similar from one member state to the next. Considering the diversity among what are now 27 member states, both from the perspective of experience in managing the economy and the directions of its development, the objective of this article is to capture and evaluate the similarities and differences in the approach taken to State aid as an instrument of intervention in two relatively different countries – Poland and Finland. To this end the comparative analysis will not only cover Poland and Finland themselves but also their respective groups of countries – the Visegrád Group and Scandinavian members of the EU. The above analysis permits the conclusion that the structure of public aid relative to the main purposes of granting differs significantly between Poland and Finland, in favour of Finland, from the perspective of the achievement of the EU objectives associated with the successive economic strategies.

Keywords: State Aid, Poland, Finland, European Union

Introduction

State aid is one of the available instruments of state intervention available in a free-market economy. Its purpose is to incentivise companies to take specific action they would not opt for in normal circumstances

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(von Mises, 2011), or to assist enterprises in connection with crisis situations such as the COVID-19 pandemic (Ambroziak, 2022), as well as to achieve specific socio-economic goals of the grantor (Wojtyna, 1990). The accepted view is that for financial intervention of the state to be admissible, so-called market failure has to occur, i.e. the failure of the more or less idealised system of market economy to sustain desirable forms of activity (consumption and/or production) or prevent undesirable forms (also referring to consumption and/or production) (Bator, 1958). There is also the phenomenon of government failure due to the finite resource of information, skill and knowledge, limited and unsuccessful oversight by the state, incomplete control of bureaucracy, as well as political influence (Grand, 1991).

In light of the above, in a European Union characterised by four Treaty freedoms (movement of goods, services, capital and persons), a decision was made to prohibit State aid within the single market (Consolidated version of the Treaty, 2008, Article 107(1)). Simultaneously exceptions were made for narrowly defined categories of aid (Consolidated version of the Treaty, 2008, Articles 107(2), 107(3)) fulfilling the criteria of State aid granted owing to market failure. It must be emphasised that any intervention by the state, and above all financial aid, may have negative consequences for the beneficiary's competitors. In the case of the EU, without any tariff and non-tariff barriers such as physical control, technical requirements and the various systems of indirect taxation, this principle concerns not only companies from the relevant state but, in principle, all member states. As a consequence a somewhat restrictive system was created for the admissibility of specific categories, forms and volumes of public aid granted by the governments of EU member states, with the European Commission as the watchdog for reliance on its Treaty prerogatives. As a result the governments of member states are obliged to prepare so-called aid schemes according to Commission guidelines, with a requirement of prior notification for the purpose of securing the Commission's approval, or to prepare them in line with the regulation waiving the notification requirement (Commission Regulation, 2008; 2014).

Given the centralised system for public aid in the EU, one could expect that the volume and structure in terms of forms and purposes of public aid granted should be similar from one member state to the next. It should be observed, however, that although the rules for granting public aid have been harmonised the decisions themselves on whether to provide financial support for specified business organisations or as to the direction and intensity to be taken by such intervention relative to the economy as a whole are still the exclusive domain of the member states.

Considering the diversity among what are now 27 member states, both from the perspective of experience in managing the economy and the directions of its development, the objective of this article is to capture and evaluate the similarities and differences in the approach taken to public aid as an instrument of intervention in two relatively different countries – Finland and Poland. Each of them developed in different politico-socio-economic circumstances following World War II and neither of them founded the EEC in 1958. The difference in dates of accession to the EU is 19 years, the same as the length of Poland's membership in the EU at present. Moreover, moreover, both countries represent two different blocs: Central and Eastern Europe, including the Visegrád Group, and Scandinavia, respectively.

In order to capture the relative both similarities and differences between the approaches taken by the two countries regarding the problem of public aid, the comparative analysis will not only cover Poland and Finland themselves but also their respective groups of countries – the Visegrád Group (Poland, Czechia, Hungary and Slovakia) and Scandinavian members of the EU (Finland, Sweden and Denmark). The analysed period spans from 2004 to 2020, ensuring that comparable data is available.

The data used in this article originates from State Aid Scoreboard, i.e. the European Commission's annually updated public-aid database, and Eurostat. The first part of the article will deal with the significance of the public aid granted by Finland and Poland in their economies. Next, in connection with the elaborate system of exclusions from the requirement of notification to the European Commission, the degree of use of available mechanisms by the two countries will be discussed. The third part will discuss the results of the comparative analysis of the structure of public aid by purpose in both countries with regard to the EU's programmatic documents. Conclusions and recommendations will mark the end of this article.

Intensity of State Aid

Neither Poland nor Finland were among the top state-grantors of public aid in 2004–2020. In the examined period the value of aid granted by Poland doubled from EUR 2.1 billion to EUR 5.2 billion, whereas in Finland it quadrupled from EUR 614 million to EUR 2.4 billion. Poland's total public aid in 2004–2020 constituted approximately 4.7% of all aid granted in the EU, while for Finland the corresponding figure is a low 1.8% (Chart 1). It is worth noting that neither the remaining member states of the Visegrád Group, of which Poland is a member, nor those of the Scandinavian Group, to which Finland belongs, are significant aid grantors, in contrast with the decisively increasing, since 2014, position of other EU Member States.

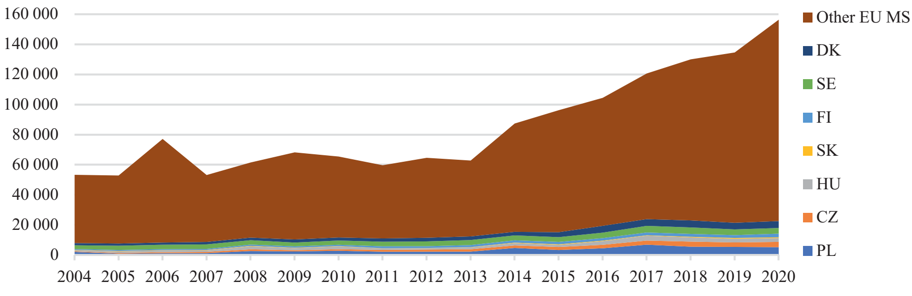


Figure 1. Structure of Public Aid in the EU According to Selected Countries in Years 2005–2020 (in mln EUR)

Source: Own calculations based on State Aid Scoreboard 2021 (European Commission, 2022).

In order to measure the intensity of public aid across EU member states, the Commission calculates the ratio of state aid to GDP. However, we decided to use a Relative State Aid Intensity Index (RSAI) based on the well-known Balassa (1965) Revealed Comparative Advantage (RCA) Index. The RSAI is calculated as the relationship between the value of state aid in either a given EU member state or the European Union as a whole, and the value added of selected sectors in a given EU member state or the EU. The RSAI measures the relative intensity of state aid in a given country against the average intensity of public aid in the European Union. In order to make sure that the output of our calculation of the Relative State Aid Intensity Index is symmetric, the final formula is as follows (Ambroziak, 2021):

$$RSAI_i = \left(\left({}^{x_i}/_{v_i}\right) / \left({}^{X_{EU}}/_{V_{EU}}\right) - 1 \right) / \left(\left({}^{x_i}/_{v_i}\right) / \left({}^{X_{EU}}/_{V_{EU}}\right) + 1 \right) \quad (1)$$

where:

x_i – value of state aid in country i;
v_i – value added of country i;
X_{EU} – value of state aid in the EU;
V_{EU} – value added of the EU.

If the final value of RSAI is a positive number it means that state-aid intensity in a given country in relation to its GDP is higher than the EU average, and when the value is a negative number it means that the intensity falls below the EU level. In the examined period Poland, along with Czechia and Hungary, belonged to the group of states with a relatively high amplitude of changes to the RSAI. For these states, periods of significant growth and fall strongly correlated with EU financing for various activities can be identified (Figure 2). It must be noted that the funds placed at the disposal of Polish central or local authorities, if forwarded to enterprises, are regarded as public funds meeting the criteria defined in Article 107(1) TFEU. As a consequence, in the case of Poland, one can observe a dynamic increase in the intensity of aid in 2008–2010, which is when during the financial crisis funds from the multi-annual perspective for 2007–2013 were released, and in 2016–2017, which is when the distribution of the funds from the 2014–2020 perspective started. In the years that followed, the respective nominal volume decreased and with

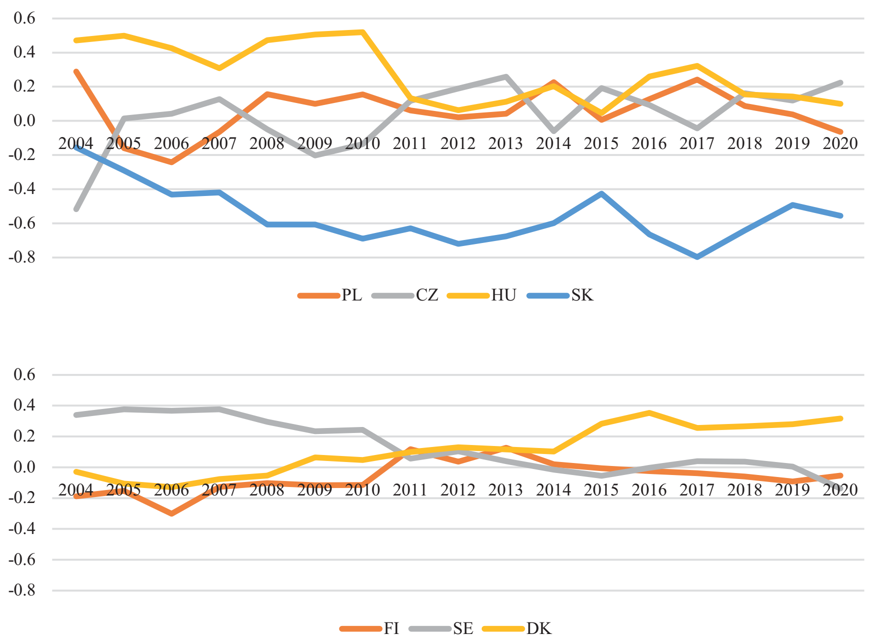


Figure 2. Revealed State Aid Intensity Index in Poland and Finland as Well as Selected EU Member States in 2004–2020

Source: Own calculation based on State Aid Scoreboard 2021 (European Commission, 2022).

it the degree of intensity of aid in Poland. Similar path of development was recorded by other Visegrád group countries, although sometimes with 1–2 years of delays due to prolonged negotiations with the Commission on respective national operational programs. A specific situation was observed in Slovakia, where aforementioned Relative State Aid Intensity Index recorded negative values. It means that the government of Slovakia less intervened in the market in comparison to the EU-27 average.

A similar correlation cannot be observed in the case of Finland and other Scandinavian states. Although the examined period shows an increasing trend for Finland's RSAI, this appears to be driven mostly by the years immediately following the economic and financial crisis. Over the years only in 2011 to 2013 did the RSAI increase significantly. By contrast, as for the other two Scandinavian countries, polar opposite trends can be identified – in Sweden the intensity of public aid decreased gradually until it fell below the EU average, and in Denmark it increased above the EU average.

GBER State Aid

Articles 107 and 108 TFEU require member states to notify the European Commission of each and every aid programme and refrain from any grants pending the Commission's approval. The more member states the greater the caseload and complexity of the programmes, leading to an elongated processing time. For this reason, in order to focus on the most important aid scenarios with significant potential for distorting the competition in the internal market, the Commission first introduced individual exemptions and, in 2008, a set of categories of aid exempted from the mandatory notification on the basis of the General Block Exemption Regulation – GBER (EC 2008), expanded in 2014 (EC 2014).

It must be emphasised that the greater the share of aid covered by the GBER, the more closely the direction of the state's intervention, including the intensity and categories of aid granted, aligns with the EU's general interests. The GBER has received several amendments due to a succession of multi-annual financial perspectives and new socio-economic strategies for the EU, from the Lisbon Strategy, through the Europe Strategy, to Fit for 55. Each such strategy provided focus for the European Union's activities and, through the GBER, to some degree also those of member states, prompting intervention in support knowledge, research and development, innovation and, recently, environmental protection and energy efficiency.

Already during the first years of the new system, the share of GBER-covered aid reached 36% of the total value of public financial support in Poland, to increase in the following years and eventually exceed 70% after the year 2017, which saw the launch of funds from the last multi-annual financial perspective (MAFP). Out of other states belonging to the Visegrád Group a similar path was followed by Hungary, resulting in a level slightly in excess of 80%. Czechia took a somewhat different approach, observing a significant increase of the index in the 2007–2013 MAFP period, although followed by a decrease in 2014–2020. To this regard Scandinavian states, and Finland in particular, opted for a similar course of action to Poland, gradually increasing the GBER share in the general aid mix, although they stopped at lower levels – 56.5% (Denmark) and 65.5% (Finland).

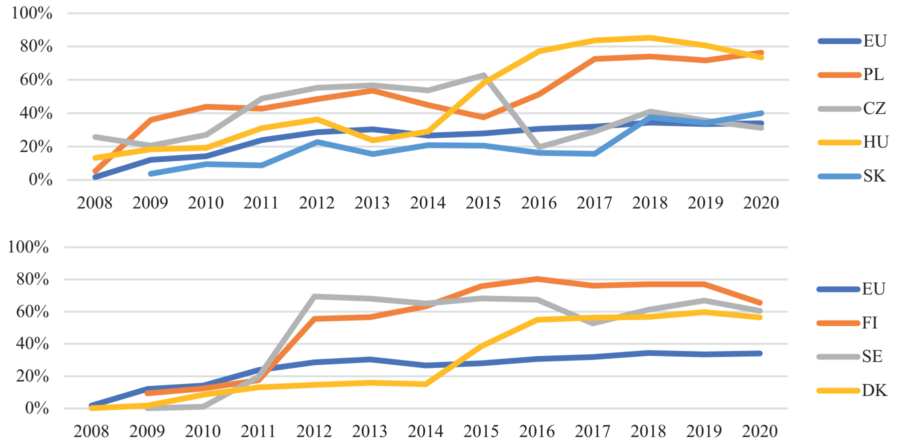


Figure 3. Share of State Aid Covered by Exemptions From the Mandatory Notification of Aid Programmes to the European Commission

Source: Own calculation based on State Aid Scoreboard 2021 (European Commission, 2022).

Similarities of State-aid Structures to the EU Average

To map Poland's position *vis-à-vis* Finland and other EU member states in terms of state-aid objectives, we introduced a similarity index (For more information see Ambroziak 2021). The formula of the state aid similarity index (SASI) is as follows:

$$SASI_j = \{\textstyle\sum_i \min\,[X_j^i, X_{EU}^i]\}100 \qquad (2)$$

where:

X_j^i – represents the share of category i in total state aid in EU member state j

X_{EU}^i – represents the share of category i in total state aid in the European Union

The SASI range is from 0%, indicating the lack of similarity of the state aid structure by categories, to 100%, which represents a structure identical to the EU overall structure. In Poland's case SASI placed between 43 and 68% in the examined period (Figure 3). Other than 2004 the lowest values were recorded in 2011–2013, i.e. the final years of the 2007–2014 MAFP, with European financing drawing to an end. Simultaneously the index took high values during the period of the largest access to EU funds in Poland. A similar trend was identified in respect of Czechia and Slovakia, although the respective SASI exceeded 80% and 70% in the last two years.

When it comes to the Scandinavian countries, the indisputable leader is Finland, for which the SASI exceeded 80% already in 2005–2006 and, following several years in decline, even 65%, returning to the previous high level in recent years. The other states of the region gradually approximated their aid structures to the EU average, resulting in above-70% levels, similarly to Czechia and Slovakia.

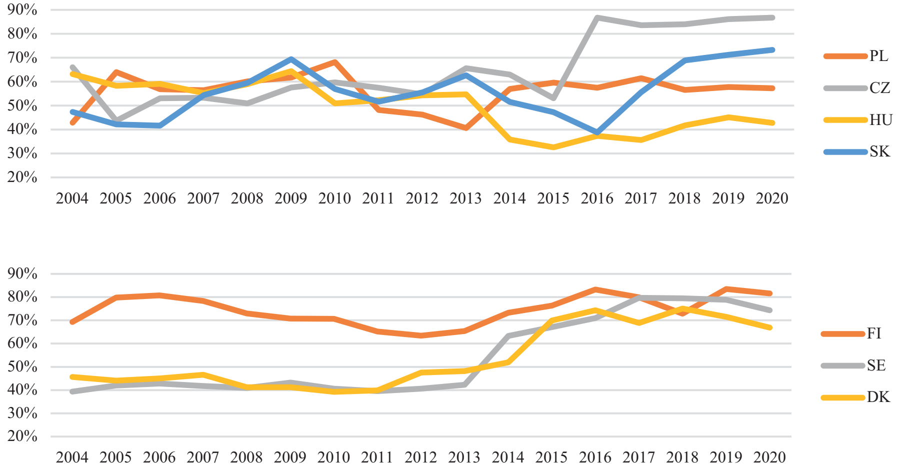


Figure 3. SASI in Selected EU Member States

Source: Own calculation based on State Aid Scoreboard 2021 (European Commission, 2022).

The significant difference between Poland and Finland in SASI levels results primarily from differences in the structure of public aid granted. In Finland's case environmental protection, including energy savings, began to dominate already in 2011, to exceed 64.9% in 2020 (Figure 4). This appears to be the result of the EU's climate targets (Oberthür, von Homeyer, 2022). This is a much better score compared to Denmark, where the share exceeded 50% of the total value of public aid only in 2015, but also a much weaker score compared to Sweden, with the latter's approximately 80% ratio in 2004–2016. In Poland's case similar increases were observed, and in the first years of implementation of multi-annual financial perspectives, i.e. 2008–2011 and 2014–2018 – to 12.8% and even 28.6%, respectively. It is worth noting, however, that the percentage fell significantly near the end of the 2007–2013 MAFP and continued at around 22–25% in 2019–2020. A similar trajectory applies to Czechia and to a lesser extent Slovakia, with the role of environmental aid increasing significantly to approximately 60% and 40% respectively, under the 2014–2020 MAFP. The weakest result belongs to Hungary – under 10%. However, it must be emphasised that, considering the average EU index at more than 50%, the values recorded for Poland are decisively low.

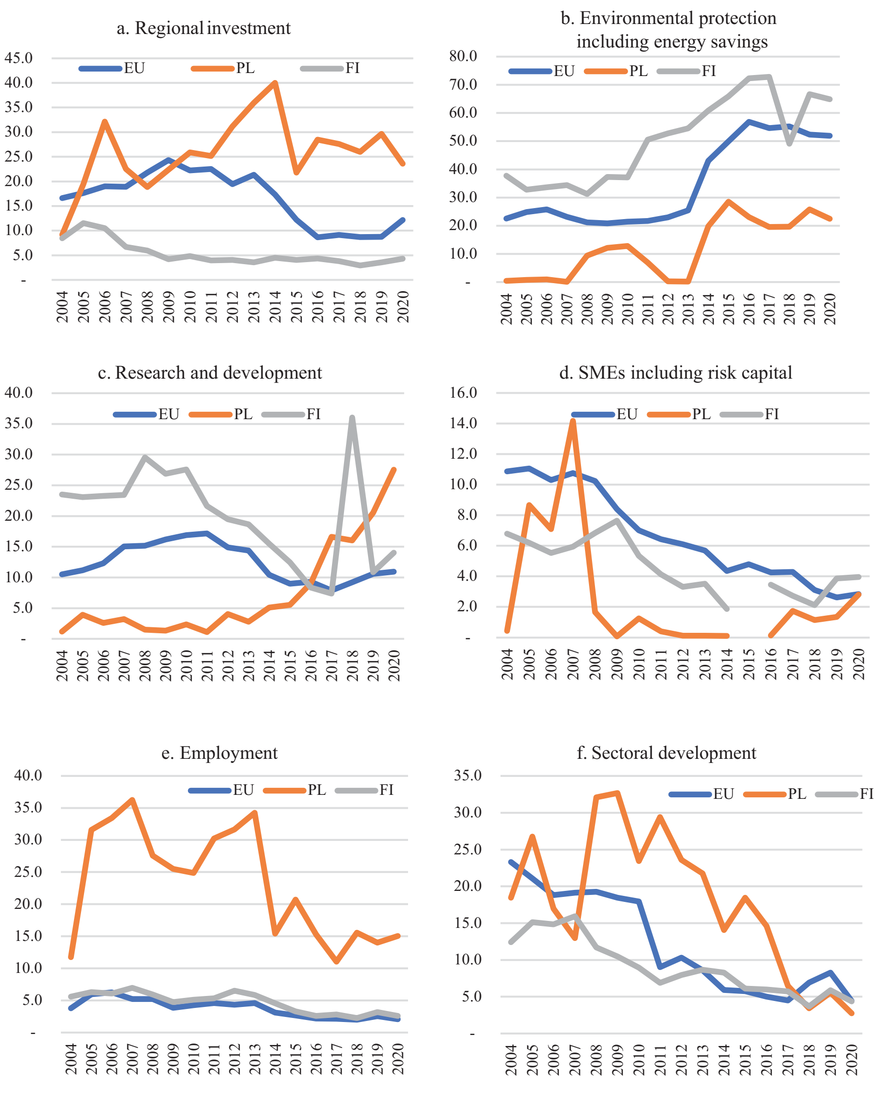
Regional investment aid was a particularly significant category of public aid in Poland's case. It predominated in the mix of public funding for entrepreneurs since the accession to the EU, reaching 32.1% already in 2006, to reach 40% in 2014, even after falling to 18.8% in 2008. In the recent years of 2019 and 2020, the share of this aid in public funding granted to enterprises was 29.6% and 23.6% respectively. Even higher values have been observed for Hungary and Slovakia, approximately 40% and 30% respectively of total public aid, for several years now. These levels decisively exceed the average EU values, by more than double for Poland in the last few years. In Finland and Sweden's cases the share of regional investment aid in the total value of public aid decreased gradually in the examined period to a level of 3–4% in recent years, and in Denmark's case it has never exceeded 0.5%.

The third category of public aid in the EU in terms of significance is support provided for research, development and innovation (RDI). For Poland this was insignificant for many years in the examined period, with a share not exceeding 5% until 2014. It was the inclusion of funds from the 2014–2020 financial perspective that brought about a significant re-evaluation of the aid policy in Poland resulting in a direction more favourable to supporting research, development and innovation. As a consequence, in 2019–2020 the share reached 20.5% and 27.6%, meaning double the EU average for the relevant period. Other countries in the Visegrád Group also recorded increases under the succeeding financial perspectives, although not in the same spectacular degree as Poland did in 2020 (Czechia 15.3%, Hungary 8.8% and Slovakia 4.1%). The situation was completely different in Finland, where the examined period 2004–2020 saw a gradual (with the exception of 2018) decrease in the significance of this type of aid to 14% of the total value of public aid. Even lower values were recorded by Sweden and Denmark (4.0% and 4.5% respectively).

Of especial importance to Poland is employment aid, and thus assistance to create new workplaces and retain existing ones. In the period 2005–2013 employment aid constituted more than a third of the total value of public aid, primarily thanks to EU funds and the aid-programme structure in the country. Under the 2014–2020 MAFP this share decreased by more than a half. However, the fact that the significance of this type of aid depends on the national authorities is attested by the insignificance of Czechia's and Slovakia's scores (approximately 0.01%) and the variance of Hungary's (from 2.4% to 30.6%). The importance of employment aid in the Finnish aid mix is similar to the EU average, keeping within the 5.9–7.0% limits until 2013, later to decrease gradually to 2.6% in 2020. The significance of this type of aid in Sweden and Denmark was a wholly different picture. While the share in total public aid in Sweden was essentially void of significance (not exceeding 0.3% in 2004–2020), in Denmark it maintained a very high level owing to special employment programmes until 2014 (49–65%), later to decrease gradually to 14.3% in 2020.

A specific type of public aid is support for small and medium enterprises (SMEs). The importance of that category of beneficiaries consists of being the most populous in every member state of the EU due to very often representing family enterprises and sole-traders. That last case is often the legal form taken by self-employment so that one can work for a given employer but do so on the basis of a business-to-business contract, thanks to which all fiscal and social burdens are shifted to the independent contractor. As a consequence, permissible SME aid allocations under EU law (for participation in fairs, consulting and collaboration) are relatively insignificant in Poland from the perspective of their share in the total value of public aid (2.8% in 2020). A similar value was recorded in Slovakia (3.6% in 2020); however, in the light of the preceding years, similarly to Hungary's and Czechia's cases, that aid does not play a significant role. SMEs in Finland can count on decisively more systematic support, at a 2.1–4.0% ratio in recent years. By contrast, in both Sweden and Denmark the significance of SME aid is next to none (below 0.7% in 2020).

Attention is drawn to 2020, which is when member states launched numerous assistance programmes to support enterprises affected by lockdowns due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In the case of Poland such support is estimated to have been especially large compared to the country's GDP, translating into a reduction in financing from standard European funds. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic the European Commission allowed public aid for enterprises suffering from lockdowns. That aid

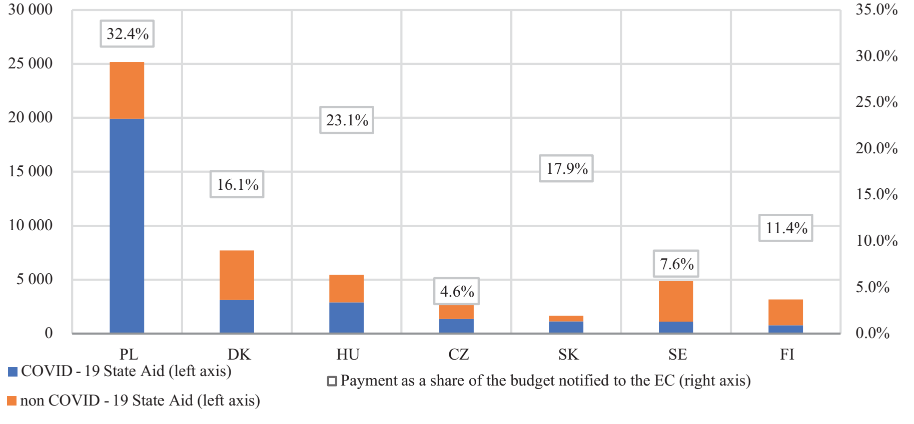


Note: to keep the clarity and transparency of charts presentation only Poland, Finland, and the EU-27 are presented on the graphs.

Figure 4. Major Categories of State Aid in Poland and Finland in the Context of the EU in 2004–2020 (as a share in total state aid in %)

Source: Own calculation based on State Aid Scoreboard 2021 (European Commission, 2022).

was offered on separate terms, in significantly higher amounts for all entrepreneurs compared to the previous situation (Ambroziak, 2022). It would be difficult to fit into one of the standard aid categories, but its analysis clearly assists with the identification of the approach taken by the member states to the problem of potential losses incurred by companies. Before granting the aid, member states were required to obtain approval for their aid programmes. That was the case with Poland and Finland, notifying the European Commission of programmes totalling EUR 61.4 billion and EUR 6.7 billion respectively, reflecting 11.7% and 2.8% of their respective GDPs (Figure 5). For the remaining Visegrád states, the ratio oscillated from 6.9% to 13.7%, with 3.1% to 6.2% for Scandinavian states. This increasing trend for market intervention is confirmed by data on the utilisation of the Commission-approved budget and the value of aid granted relative to the GDP. In 2020 Poland consumed 32.4% of the total notified to the European Commission, while Finland only 11.4%. That translates to, respectively, 3.78% and 0.32% of their GDPs.



Note: the ratio of COVID-19 state aid in relation to GDP is provided in parentheses.

Figure 5. COVID-19 State-aid Budgets and Payments in EU Member States in 2020

Source: Own calculations based on State Aid Scoreboard 2021 (European Commission, 2022).

Conclusions

The analysis of the intensity of public aid in Finland and Poland clearly highlights a difference in the approaches taken by the two countries. In Poland's case there is a growth trend stimulated by EU funds, resulting in a general increase in state aid intensity exceeding the EU average, although slightly lowering in the last 3 years of the period under research. Finland, in turn, sustained its engagement on a relatively even (constant) level below the EU average.

Considering the high share of GBER-covered aid in the total value of public aid both in Poland and Finland, one can conjecture that a significant portion of that aid goes to purposes coinciding with the assumptions of long-term EU strategies. A problem surfaces, however, when analysing the aid structure according to the purpose. For Poland, despite the gradual increase of the Similarity State Aid Index to almost 60%, there is still a drastic difference compared to Finland and other Scandinavian states. That attests to the gradual but decisively too slow adoption and fulfilment of European Union objectives supported by state intervention. In other words, public aid in Poland was granted for different purposes than in Finland, the latter somewhat significantly approaching the overall EU index.

The above disparities arose primarily within the structure of the public aid granted. In Poland's case the share of aid granted for environmental protection and energy efficiency was three times less than in Finland and twice less than in the EU. This means that the climate goals adopted in the EU are covered with public funding, including EU funds, only in an insignificant degree. If the ambitious goals of climate policy were to be achieved in Poland, this deficiency in public funding would have to be compensated with private funds belonging to enterprises. At the same time Poland recorded a several-times-higher share of regional investment aid compared to Finland. There are two main reasons for this. Firstly, Poland truly has regions meeting the conditions for regional aid, i.e. aid for new investment and creation of new and retention of existing workplaces (Consolidated version of the Treaty, 2008, Article 107(3)(a)); it would appear that the investment attractiveness of such regions needs to be improved. Secondly, this type of support is both the easiest for the public administration to grant and for the beneficiaries to account for. The consequence is the aforementioned significant share of support sometimes attracting investments (sometimes, due to the problematic institution of the so-called incentive effect, it will suffice to file an aid application before initiating the investment and the aid will be accepted as indispensable to the implementation), without any precise definition of an ultimate purpose coinciding with the EU's development objectives. With regard to aid for research, development and innovation, Poland decisively increased the share of that aid in the total value of public aid granted, whereas Finland, similarly to the EU as a whole, recorded a gradual decrease following the significant growth during the 2007–2013 MAFP. This means, on the one hand, that Polish enterprises had expected and required support in this regard, although the intervention was somewhat late in coming compared to the EU's more developed member states. Whereas the current dominant is environmental-protection aid in support of modern solutions that require research and development with a view toward innovative solutions anyway, Poland is focusing on aid for unspecified RDI activities (while continuing to fall behind the schedule on the European Union's climate goals). It is also worth noting the SME aid that provides a specific financial support for that sector, as it concerns itself with a narrow pool of purposes, due to which the role of such support has been decreasing gradually both in Poland and in Finland.

The above analysis permits the conclusion that the structure of public aid relative to the main purposes of granting differs significantly between Poland and Finland, in favour of Finland, from the perspective of the achievement of the EU objectives associated with the successive economic strategies – from focusing the intervention on R&D to environmental protection and energy efficiency. Analysis of both countries against the background of their neighbours within the Visegrád and the Scandinavian groups, respectively, supports the conclusion that the specific direction of the former case is the consequence of goals and assumptions adopted as part of the multi-annual financial perspectives. The above mean that for countries such as Poland, their aid policies are shaped largely, though not fully, by EU funds. An example can be found in the specific categories of employment aid and R&D aid, with significant differences highlighted in the discussed groups. At the same time one can see that Finland's aid policy is aligned with EU objectives, as attested by the increased funding for environmental protection and energy efficiency in the last couple of years. Poland can also be seen to follow the direction taken by other member states, such as Finland, but with a several years' delay. Simultaneously one has to emphasise that Poland's economic policy is based precisely on public aid, as exemplified by the pandemic period, during which the COVID-19 share reached the highest level in the EU at 3.78%, with 0.32% in Finland.

To identify the causes of the discovered differences one would have to analyse the various aid programmes, both in Poland and in Finland, from the perspective of the main beneficiaries, purposes and budgets disposed and spent. Such a study would make it possible to verify the hypothesis of Poland's delay in action relative to EU-level activities, as offered in the final part of this article.

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