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Finnish Foreign Policy Discourse after the Ukrainian Crisis in 2014

MA Thesis

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ABSTRACT

This master's thesis aims to unpack the discourses on Finnish Foreign Policy after Ukrainian Crisis towards Russia, NATO and Sweden. Referring to the timeframe from 2014 to 2020, this thesis tries to answer question How or Finnish Foreign Policy Discourse changed towards Russia, NATO and Sweden.

The main analysis refers to the official speeches and interviews of the Finnish President, Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs. Also Governmental Reports on Foreign and Security Policy. This thesis finds that some changes have occurred in Finnish Foreign Policy after 2014, but they are not prominent, but more expected.

First of all, Finland associated itself as Western identity, so it supported it's western allies to sanction policy towards Russia, and condemned the acesion of Crimea. Second, Finland increased it's cooperation with Sweden in the scope of security and defence. Third, Finland kept it's good relationship with Russia. The amount of official visits of the heads of two countries to each other portraits it clearly.

Keywords: Foreign Policy, Russia, NATO, Sweden, Security Policy, Defence Policy, Identity

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INTRODUCTION

Former Finnish President Urho Kekkonen once famously stated that Finland should act in world politics as a physician rather than a judge when it comes to East-West confrontation. This expression has experienced a renaissance in the current Finnish foreign policy debate, although neutrality has been discarded in the official foreign policy and replaced with military non-alignment.¹ Finland was always following this line in its foreign policy: keeping a partnership with the West and cooperating with its huge neighbour – Russia.

This description still holds true and is reflected in Finnish-Russian ties today, but it is occasionally muddled by Finland's strong desire to avoid any type of conflict with its eastern neighbour, as noted above. While the Baltic states and even Sweden have felt free to criticise Russia's behaviour, Finnish politicians have a tendency to avoid making strong statements that could be construed as aggressive.

Finland collaborates with NATO in various projects. As a result, Finland has been debating the "for" and "against" of full NATO membership for almost 30 years. Following the demise of the Soviet Union, the question of Finland's future inclusion in the North Atlantic alliance has sparked heated debate in Finland. The ongoing crisis in Ukraine has reignited this debate.

Finland together with Sweden are also forming an alliance to strengthen Nordic defence cooperation with its bilateral partner Sweden. Nordic cooperation is more vital than NATO, here both Finland and Sweden agree on that.

¹ Government Report 6/2004. Finnish Security and Defence Policy. Report to the Parliament by the Council of State.

Research Puzzle

The relevance of the chosen topic is important because Finland's foreign and security policy strategy is based not only on certain unique principles, which will be discussed below but is special in the sense that it has not yet received its final definition in modern conditions. The state is in the sphere of interests of various political blocs in general, and individual countries, for example, Russia, in particular.

In recent years, under the influence of the Ukrainian crisis, the discussion on these subjects in Finland has intensified again, the proportion of its participants among the Finnish elite, who see the Russian Federation as a potential military threat, has increased significantly compared to the 1990s. Various development options in the event of the country's accession to NATO were considered in an analytical report by R. Nyberg and others, in which, however, no definite conclusions were made. Two positions reappeared in the discussions. K. Honkanen and J. Kuusela spoke in favour of the country joining the alliance, since it only protects its members, and provides only limited support to partners.² On the other hand, a supporter of the True Finns party, M. Salomaa, argued that, although Russia is a threat, Finland should rely on security provided by its forces, and not military unions.

In March 2014 Europe was faced with the fact: Russia annexed Crimea. European security was threatened. Finland is a country that shares a long border with its unpredictable neighbour - Russia to renew its strategy in security policy and raise it into agenda. After the events, Zbigniew Brzezinski and Henry Kissinger proposed that Finland could serve as a model for Ukraine's international position. Ukraine would stay outside of NATO and avoid hostility with Russia, benefit

² Mats Bergquist, François Heisbourg, René Nyberg, Teija Tiilikainen. The effects of Finland's possible NATO membership. Report. Finland, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, April 29, 2016

from close economic co-operation with the European Union, Sweden, and Russia, whilst nobody would question its independence and status as a sovereign nation.³

Finland cooperates with NATO in the “The Partnership for Peace” and “The Partnership Interoperability Initiative (PII)” programs. They are also cooperating Nordic supporting cooperation in the field of defence. As a result, there has been an ongoing discussion in Finland for more than 20 years over the “for” and “against” complete NATO membership. The issue of possible membership of Finland in the North Atlantic alliance has become the subject of lively debate in Finnish society after the collapse of the USSR. This problem is significantly actualised after the North Atlantic Alliance has been joined by the Baltic countries in 2004. The recent crisis in Ukraine raised this question again.

There is also controversy regarding this question among scholars. Some claim that NATO membership can involve them in third state conflicts. Even when in the early 1990s, Finland offered to join NATO, they did not want to take responsibility for the defence of the Baltic States, did not have the resources to do so. And if the Baltic countries want to obtain security guarantees, they should refer to the larger countries, to NATO, but not to Finland or Sweden. The second reason for neutrality - the balance of power in Northern Europe. It is based on the status quo of NATO and the neutrality of Sweden and Finland, as well as Russian interests in the region. Finland understands quite clearly that if it joins NATO, it will change the balance of power. Research Director of the Helsinki Aleksanteri Institute Markku Kangaspuro claims: “To change the situation - not in our interest, because we are a country with a population of 5 million people and 1,300 km border with Russia. So Finland needs to think about their safety, not the safety of our neighbours, we can not guarantee”.

However, membership in the EU and approval of several packages of economic and political sanctions against Russia is an obvious proof that Finland can not hope that it will stay away from the big politics. Moreover, on a purely military level, it is unclear how Finland – an EU member and a close partner of NATO – could, for example, stay away from conflict or crisis in the Baltic region. Officially, Russian representatives have assured Finland that it is up to the Finnish people to decide whether to join NATO or not.

³ Tuomas Forsberg & Matti Pesu. The “Finlandisation” of Finland: The Ideal Type, the Historical Model, and the Lessons Learnt

Nevertheless, both President Putin and the Army Commander General Makarov have warned that Finnish membership in the Alliance would be seen as a military threat to Russia. In general, the views of Finnish society about NATO membership are relatively stable, although the recent negative developments and the general instability in the area of regional security slightly increased the share of the Alliance supporters. Polls give different results, but in general over the last decade there were between 60% and 70% of Finns against NATO membership, while 20-30% of the population supported the idea, and about 10% have not yet decided. This contrasts sharply with the results of a survey conducted among the Finnish army officers, about half of which support membership in the Alliance. Among the colonel rank officers and above the share of supporters of NATO membership is even larger - 70%.⁴ Despite this apparent stability of Finland's membership in NATO is not going away from the agenda of public debate on security and defence policy.

The crisis in Ukraine, however, has changed fundamentally the dynamics of the Finnish NATO debate. For many, it has been a wake-up call as much for Finland as for the whole of Europe. European borders are not, it now seems, sacred. The seizure of Crimea and the conflict in Eastern Ukraine have proved to many that Russia is a military threat to its neighbours. The rhetorical mantra in Finnish security policy, that Russia is not a military threat but only an unpredictable superpower, seems to have been proven wrong. This has created serious concerns about Russian - Finnish relations. A core question for Finland now is how to navigate between maintaining friendly relations with Russia on the one hand and supporting the EU (of which Finland is a member) in its policy of isolating Russia economically on the other. The NATO debate has also reached a new level of prominence. The policy of independent and solid defence, the bedrock of Finnish security for decades, is now more openly called into question. Many more now ask whether in the face of Russian aggression Finland could defend itself, and for how long?⁵

Research Design, Research Question and Methodology

In the formation of both the Finnish state itself and its foreign policy strategy, Russian and Western influences were of key importance. The influence of Russia predetermined the "eastern

⁴ Чарли Салониус-Пастернак. Финский опыт нейтралитета. Что нужно учесть Украине? 2015. http://www.euointegration.com.ua/rus/articles/2015/08/5/7036497/view_print/

⁵ Tarja Cronsberg. The NATO divide in Finnish Politics http://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/the-nato-divide-in-finnish-politics_1836.html

vector" of Finnish politics, Sweden - belonging to Western civilisation and Scandinavism. Their complex combination created the preconditions for a policy of neutrality, which, in turn, contributed to the formation in modern conditions of a stable, unique line of military non-alignment, which allows not only to effectively ensure its national interests but also to expand the possibilities of the influence of a small Northern European state on international relations. Patterns, it seems, can be used to assess the Finnish foreign policy during the Cold War, which still causes a lot of controversies. Additional arguments appear in the discussion about the current demand for the institution of neutrality, even though Finland is no longer neutral but non-aligned.

The master's thesis thus aims to provide the answer to the following research question: How Finnish Foreign Policy discourse changed after 2014 towards Russia, NATO and Sweden?

Discourse analysis combined with content analysis will be used as methods. And social constructivism as a theory. Actors, states they make behaviour, they have interests and they have very importantly identity. Their behaviour is shaped by their identity. And context which influences the behaviour of actors or the system consists of ideas, meanings and rules. These three are a social construct. Which pretty much determine the behaviour of actors and the message they are delivering.

Hansen outlined four essential processes for doing discourse analysis-based research. The first stage is to decide on the number of Selves—that is, how many states, nations, or other foreign policy topics one wants to investigate. That is the single Finnish self in my instance. The Other might be defined as superior, inferior, or equal, according to Hansen, and the Self is produced via the delineation of Others.⁶ Russia is regarded as the most prominent Other in Finnish identity literature.

The choice of an intertextual model is the second crucial stage. Official discourse, broader political discussion, and academic discourse are all distinguished by Hansen. Official discourse, as well as other scholarly publications, will be studied for the purposes of this thesis and according to its scope. That is, research will be focused directly on official foreign policy discourse, with an emphasis on political figures with the capacity to pursue and sanction various foreign policies.⁷ For

⁶ Hansen, L., 2006b. Security as Practice; Discourse analysis and the Bosnian war, Routledge. P. 68

⁷ Hansen, L., 2006b. Security as Practice; Discourse analysis and the Bosnian war, Routledge. P.69

my research, I looked for speeches, interviews, and publications by Finland's top foreign policy decision makers. These are: *the Presidents : Sauli Niinistö; Primer Ministers: Alexander Stubb, Juha Sipilä, Antti Rinne, Sanna Marin; Ministers for Foreign Affairs: Timo Soini, Pekka Haavisto.* Also reports on *Security and Foreign Policy for 2004, 2016 and 2020, and Defence.*

Research Structure

Basically, the research question will try to address the topic of how has the Ukrainian Crisis changed discourse on Finnish Foreign Policy. The timeframe under analysis is short, from 2014 - 2020. The research adopts the view that foreign interests are discursively constructed in documents produced by officials, and that language is an integral part of foreign discourse itself. I argue that the language employed in foreign policy documents, military doctrines, defence strategies, and in interviews and speeches of the President, Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs thoroughly intervene with the language of foreign policy.

The thesis is structured as follows. I firstly discuss existing literature on the topic. Then I continue with a theoretical framework and will discuss concepts of identity and foreign policy from a Constructivist position. Then I will discuss methodological framework built on discourse analysis. The final component is the analytical chapter focused on four sections: Finnish foreign policy towards Russia; Finnish foreign policy towards NATO, Finnish foreign policy towards EU and Finnish foreign policy towards Sweden after the Ukrainian Crisis in 2014. In the end I will provide my conclusions and recommendations for further research.

Limitations and potential problems

This is a language-dependent research, but my knowledge of Finnish is minimal. As a result, I try to get around this limitation by relying on official translations of speeches and interviews found on government websites. Another limitation is that I will be merely evaluating official discourses, leaving out broader political discussion. However, I believe that my approach is suitable because the state image is largely seen with people in charge of foreign affairs.

1. THEORY: CONSTRUCTIVISM

1.1. Constructing Identity

By the mid-1990s, in general, modern constructivism was formed as a substantive (meaningful) theory of international behaviour, causing, in the wake of the revision of many postulates due to the end of the Cold War and the need for remodelling approaches, heated debates in the dominant discourse of the theory of international relations.

By the same time, two trends within constructivism were identified — North American and European, differing quite significantly in terms of several issues and research methods. The North American version places special emphasis on the role of "social norms" and "identity" in the construction of world politics and determining the results of foreign policy activities; positivism still dominates in it, and the main interest is focused on "opening deductive mechanisms "from top to bottom" and causal relations between actors, norms, interests, and identity.”⁸

It is to this camp, with some degree of conditionality, that A. Wendt, N. Onuf, P. Katzenstein, and others can be attributed with some degree of conventionality. The European version pays attention to the role of "language", "linguistic constructions" and "social discourses" in the construction of social reality and, of course, "identity"; it is dominated by post-positivistic and interpretative approaches, and along with the deductive one, an inductive (bottom-up) research strategy is widely used. Among its adherents can be mentioned such famous researchers as F.

⁸ Checler, Jeffrey. *Constructivism and Foreign Policy // Foreign Policy: Theories, Actors, Cases*. Ed. by Steve Smith, Amekia Hadfield and Tim Dunne. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2008. P. 73.

Kratochville and T. Hopf.⁹ However, all the differences between constructivists are overcome, as we will see below, by their commitment to the social structuring of world politics.

As a result, constructivism pays attention to objectives, dangers, anxieties, culture, identity, and other "social reality" factors, seeing them as social truths. Constructivists are motivated by the notion that identity, cultural and religious values, political ideas, and political institutions are generated, i.e. constructed, in response to the actors' desires. In other words, social constructivism focuses on a person's consciousness and interests, as well as his role in the world.

This means that the international system is not something infinitely remote from us, it cannot exist on its own. It appears only due to the intersubjective interest of people; from this point of view, it is constituted by ideas, and not by material forces. If we develop this idea, then we can say that the international system is a product of the creation by people of a set of ideas and a system of norms created at a specific time and place.

Therefore, the key concept in constructivism is ideas, both general and particular (individual). Common ideas, being part of the social structure, form culture. The social role of this or that agent is also very important here. The structure and tendencies in the anarchic system of international relations ultimately depend on the dominant roles (according to Wendt, there are three of them - "enemy", "rival", "friend" - in contrast to the friend / foe duality according to Carl Schmitt). Accordingly, they are based on three major traditions in the history of political thought - Hobbesian (Hobbes), Lockian (Locke) and Kantian (Kant).¹⁰

However, the ideas that influence world politics and international relations are more than just individual views and beliefs. We are talking about intersubjective (that is, shared by many people) and institutionalised ideas that manifest themselves in the form of practices or identities embodied not only in the worldview, but also in the "collective memory" procedures, the system of education, and upbringing, and the rhetoric of state figures.

Constructivism as a structural theory of the international system is based on several key statements, emphasises A. Wendt:

⁹ Ibid

(1) states are the main units of analysis in international political theory; (2) the key structures in the system of states are intersubjective rather than material; and (3) state identity and interests are largely constructed by these social structures, rather than being given to the system from the outside by human nature (as neorealists emphasize) or internal politics (which neoliberals would like).¹¹

To grasp the core of constructivist thinking, it is necessary to find out where it converges and where it diverges from neorealism and liberal institutionalism as the two main paradigms that prevailed at the time when constructivism was beginning to form the key concepts of the theory of international relations.

The basic tenets of neorealism are the following: world politics is anarchic; states are rational; they strive for "survival", for self-preservation through the protection of national interests; states have power potential; and, finally, they can never be sure of the nature of the intentions of other states, therefore they are forced to focus on self-help; world politics is formed through behaviour based on the theory of rational choice and decisions of egoistic actors seeking to protect their interests through utilitarian calculations that imply the need to maximise benefits and minimise losses; security and material interests are defined from a position of strength.

Even in conditions of anarchy and lack of supreme authority, the international system does not necessarily have to be based on the principles of competition, as insisted on by realists. An individual or collective security system is quite possible. The system also does not completely predetermine the identity of states. Therefore, treating states as "billiard balls" (a favourite metaphor for realists) fails to explain reality. Whether two states become "friends" or "enemies" is by no means determined by the military structure alone. Identity and social structure play a significantly more important role. The constructivist assertion that the fundamental structures of world politics are social rather than material in nature also implies that these structures shape identities and interests, not just the behaviour of actors. It is in this that constructivism opposes realism.

Constructivists introduced the concept of discursive power (knowledge, ideas, culture, language, and ideology), no less important for the formation of the world order than military power. Discursive force produces and reproduces intersubjective meanings. It determines how material

¹¹ Wendt, Alexander. Collective identity Formation and the International State // American Political Science Review. 1994. No 88. P. 385.

strength, structure, state identity, and even relations between states, as well as other social facts, must be defined and understood. It opens up space for manipulation, for imposing a certain interpretation and obscuring other possible meanings. That's where the moment of defining "friends", "rivals" and "enemies" comes up. Whether a state is a threat or not depends on its type of identity. In doing so, international institutions and norms play a supportive role. That makes cooperation between states more likely.

The thesis has become widespread that democratic states not only do not fight each other (a common statement in Western political thought), but they also form a "collective identity" to support and create institutions of cooperation for specific purposes. Of course, this is not always the case, but the potential for this is taken into account when studying international processes. International norms are automatically accepted by states. Domestic politics is another factor that has a direct impact on the formation of the state's identity.

Thus, constructivism is built based on two main provisions: (1) the structures of human associations are determined by shared ideas rather than by material forces; (2) the identity and interests of purposeful actors are constructed by these shared ideas, and not given by nature.¹²

Identity is the central concept of constructivism and has been a key notion in international relations (IR) research. Identity, according to some scholars, is "an inescapable dimension of being"¹³ and that there is "no world politics without identity".¹⁴ Simply because before figuring out how to best defend their interests, states must first have a better understanding of themselves and their place in international society.¹⁵

Identity creation has been seen as a separation and differentiation from others since Kant and Hegel¹⁶. Self and Other identities are mutually important for an actor to comprehend his or her

¹² Wendt, A. *Social Theory of International Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1999. P. 1.

¹³ Campbell, D (1998) *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. Second Edition. Page 9

¹⁴ Burke, A. (2006) 'Identity/difference', In M. Griffiths (ed.) *Encyclopedia of International Relations and Global Politics*. London: Routledge, pp. 394-396.

¹⁵ Tsygankov, A.P., 2010. *Russia's Foreign Policy Change and Continuity in National Identity*, Plymouth: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers. Available at: <http://www.loc.gov/catdir/toc/ecip0824/2008032901.html>.

¹⁶ Lebow, R.N., 2016b. *National Identities and International Relations* J. Haslam, ed., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

interests and surroundings. National identity, according to Clunan, is an interactive product of the self and its surroundings, and as such, it can be modified and recreated¹⁷. Furthermore, Hopf says that identity is a cognitive instrument that may aid in the processing of vast amounts of data in human brains¹⁸.

Since the 1980s, there has been a growing interest in the concept of identity, particularly in the social sciences.¹⁹ However, there have been some challenges of the idea itself, whether it is viewed as a “return”²⁰ or “discovery”²¹, there has been some criticisms towards the concept itself. The term "identity" is problematic, according to Brubaker and Cooper (2000), because of its overuse and the contradiction between "identity" as an analytical concept and "concept of practice." As a result, before delving into the endeavour to theorise the identity/foreign policy nexus, it is critical to first explore the idea of identity.

There are several known definitions of identity, but none that is universally acknowledged. However, the key functions of this idea that are useful for social analysis are easy to discern. The identity's first and most crucial job is to tell you and others who you are and who others are. Second, identities might indicate a certain set of foreign policy interests or preferences. Finally, a world without identities would be one of Ted Hopf's “chaos, a world of pervasive and irremediable uncertainty, a world much more dangerous than anarchy”²² (Hopf 1998, p.175).

Some scholars, on the other hand, dispute the notion of identity as a whole and consider it as problematic. When it comes to identity research, there is still no consensus on what researchers mean and do not mean when they use the term. Identity has been attacked as a catch-all phrase used

¹⁷ Clunan, A.L., 2009. *The Social Construction of Russia's Resurgence: Aspirations, Identity, and Security Interests*, Johns Hopkins University Press.

¹⁸ Hopf, T., 2002. *Constructivism at Home: Theory and Method*. In G. Stefano & W. Carlsnaes, eds. *Foreign Policy Analysis*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd, pp. 223–263.

¹⁹ Abdelal, R. et al. (2006) ‘Identity as a Variable’, *Perspectives on Politics*, 4(4): pp. 695– 711

²⁰ Urrestarazu, U.S. (2015) ‘Identity’ in *International Relations and Foreign Policy Theory*, in G. Hellmann & K.E. Jørgensen (eds.) *Theorizing Foreign Policy in a Globalized World*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 126-149.

²¹ Berenskoetter, F. (2010) ‘Identity in International Relations’, in R. Denemark (ed.) *The International Studies Encyclopedia*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 3594-3611.

²² Hopf, T., 1998. *The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory*. *International Security*, 23(1), pp.171–200.

to describe a variety of foreign policy behaviours, but it still does not imply that governments with certain identities would act in specific ways.²³

For other researchers, the problem is not that identity is employed as a concept, but rather how it is used as identity is too vague to meet the criteria of social analysis.²⁴ As a result, it is critical to discuss this notion and its connections to foreign policy and interests.

1.2. Constructing Foreign Policy

In modern political science, the dominant approach is that it considers the formation of the national identity of society as an internal socio-political process for a given multi-ethnic community. Therefore, national identity is viewed as a result of the activities of the state and national elites, including, in particular, the search and development of a national idea. National identity is understood, first of all, as a result of the influence of the political system on the population of the country in order to develop in individuals a sense of their belonging to society and the state. In addition, national identity is formed as a result of the interaction of ethnic groups that make up the multi-ethnic community of a given society.

For a long time, such an understanding of national identity and the approach to its study was dominant in the literature on the problems of nation and nationalism. However, over time, the inadequacy of such an approach to the study of national identity was revealed. Theorists and practitioners have come to the conclusion that national identity is not determined exclusively by internal socio-political processes in society. Processes external to the state, that is, the processes of interaction between the state and other states in the system of international relations, also play an important role in its formation.

²³ Finnemore, M. & Sikkink, K., 2001. Taking Stock: The Constructivist Research Program in International Relations and Comparative Politics. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 4(1), pp.391–416. Available at: <http://www.annualreviews.org/doi/abs/10.1146/annurev.polisci.4.1.391>.

²⁴ Brubaker, R. & Cooper, F., 2000. Beyond —identity. *Theory and Society*, 29, pp.1–47. Available at: https://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/soc/faculty/brubaker/Publications/18_Beyond_Identity.pdf.

In terms of the theory of political systems, national identity should be considered as a result of the interaction of the political system of a society not only with its internal, or, as they say in this theory, the intra-societal environment but also with its external, that is, extra-societal environment. The interaction of the political system of society with its extra-societal environment is expressed, as a rule, through the foreign policy of the state as a subject of international relations. The foreign policy of the state is aimed at ensuring national security, national interests of the state in its relations with other states.

It is generally accepted that the study of national identity from the point of view of its influence on foreign policy is seriously hampered by the fact that there is no single universal source of national identity and, for this reason, no regularity in its influence on foreign policy of the state. These difficulties are greatly aggravated by the fact that nationalism and national identity, like any other socio-political and cultural phenomena, are subject to constant redefinition and rethinking. For these and other reasons rooted in the political science literature, it is customary to study the influence of national identity on foreign policy for each state separately, without any attempts to generalise and deduce any general laws.

This dialectic is based on the understanding of national identity in the context of its relationship and interaction with what is called "other" in literature. Similarly, the foreign policy of a state represents its relationship and interaction with the "other", including other states, organisations, peoples, etc. In other words, the "other" is a part of the external, extra social environment of the state, with which it has to enter into certain relationships and interactions.

All nations, to one degree or another, have a national identity and, on this basis, distinguish themselves from other nations of the world. At the same time, national identities can differ among themselves in their intensity and origin. A nation can derive a sense of its identity from a common language, religion, geographic location, collective memory, cultural practices, or a myth of common descent for its members.

Nevertheless, given these prerequisites for the formation of a nation, one cannot overestimate the enormous role that the interaction of the nation with the "other" plays in the formation of national identity, in particular, the feeling of national uniqueness. Here, I mean the acceptance by the nation or its denial of "another", that is, a neighbouring state, another people, ethnos, etc.

To summarise, we can say that national identity serves as a direct link between the individual and society and at the same time between the nation-state and the world community. Foreign policy, which serves as the protection and foundation of national identity, is at the same time a ready-made weapon in the hands of the elite for the mass mobilisation and political consolidation of society. Consolidation based on national identity is, as indicated above, essential for the functioning of all societies.

Otherness techniques are crucial to Leviathan and are inextricably linked to Hobbes "International relations or international order are both concepts that need to be grasped. As a result, both the idea of "state" and "international relations" are mutually constitutive, as Campbell puts it: "neither one authors the other."²⁵ Otherness methods grant performance to identities that only exist in historically and physically specified places. In other words, the methods of otherness give meaning to foreign policy and make it feasible.

Foreign policy, according to Hobbes, is something that is not just external to the state, but also inherent to its own constitution. Foreign policy, in Hobbes' opinion, is one which divides and connects the interior with the outside - the state and the interstate system.²⁶

Foreign policy is understood in this sense as something that distinguishes certain activities as "foreign" and others as "domestic." Foreign policy, in this sense, may be viewed as a boundary-creating political act.²⁷ As a result, foreign policy is a boundary-creating political activity and tool, crucial to the construction of whose name is operated.²⁸ This is to suggest that "the state's" identity is inextricably linked to its foreign policy activities, and may thus be read via this lens with the aid of rigorous analysis. Fear and danger discourses, on the other hand, can override identities based on common values, ethnicity, and political ideals by emphasising primarily exterior state activities. As a result, examining discourses of state identity or national identity frequently revolves on the reproduction of an unstable state identity level.

²⁵ Campbell, David (1992), *Writing Security. United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. p.60

²⁶ *Ibid.* p 60

²⁷ *Ibid* 62

²⁸ *Ibid* 68

As previously stated, Alexander Wendt defines identities as a social picture of how states view themselves and mirror others. That picture can be one of two categories, generally speaking: friend or enemy. However, Wendt claims that these visuals may be transformed by interaction. Finland's transformation from a neutral northern state to the EU's "center" is a well-known example of a transformed self-image. When Finland joined the EU in 1995, it was stated that it wanted to be viewed as a really Western country by the rest of the world.²⁹ Finland purposefully declared itself as a member of the West following a national referendum in 1994, the objective resulting from the norms and interests of a hegemonic account of national identity. It is critical to distinguish the concept that foreign policy creates new identity from the argument that foreign policy occurs in a sphere devoid of ideological events. Whatever foreign policies a state system implements, they must always overcome or neutralise other practices that may express or instantiate alternative identities.³⁰

As a result, representations of danger, adversary, and threats play a critical role in the contestation of political activity's internal and exterior construction. As Heikki Luostarinen, a Finnish journalist, stated in his piece "Finnish Russophobia: The Story of an Enemy", imagine how adversary pictures process our survival and existence experiences.³¹ Merje Kuus, who claims that there has been a revival of geopolitics in post-Cold War discursive practices in Europe, agrees with Luostarinen. She claimed that the word "geopolitics" is still used today to refer to geography as a fixed and stable concept. She points out that talking about geopolitics is still talking about geographical realities—that is, security arguments are founded on assumptions about "natural" borders, whether physical or cultural. This is a crucial concept in the Finnish debate about security and identity, as well as Finland's relationship with NATO. Even if we doubt their existence, we can't get beyond certain geographical realities.³² The social space of "we" and "others" comes from state sovereignty practices in the Westphalian sense, and is thus derived from the realist paradigm's approach to international relations scientific inquiry. In a similar spirit, Hopf claims that systemic constructivists are correct in believing that a component of a state's identity is formed through

²⁹ Harle, Vilho & Sami Moisio (2000). *Where is Finland? The history of national identity politics and geopolitics*.

³⁰ Campbell, David (1992), *Writing Security. United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. p.71

³¹ Luostarinen, Heikki (1989), *Finnis Russophobia: A Story of an Enemy Image*. *Journal of Peace Research*, vol 26:2, p125

³² Kuus, Merje (2007), *Geopolitics Reframed. Security and Identity in Europe's Eastern Enlargement*. New York: Palmgrave Macmillan. p. 5

contact with other states in the international system, rather than just inside itself.³³ He also claims that neorealists are partly correct in saying that a state's identity is shaped by how it witnesses itself from within. Nonetheless, as Hopf points out, methodology can alert us to the fact that domestic discourses are not always enough to explain a state's identity and objectives. In similar situations, he argues, "the prospect of elaborating an account of how the international language of great power politics may mesh with the home narrative" must be considered.³⁴

³³ Hopf, Ted (2002), *Social Construction of International Politics. Identities & Foreign Policies*, Moscow, 1955 & 1999. New York: Cornell University Press.

³⁴ Ibid

LITERATURE REVIEW

“Some distorters of history from our first wave of ‘democrats’ said that ‘little Finland was a mouse in the claws of a huge cat’. To this, I replied that if you are to make that comparison, you would be better thinking of Tom and Jerry, where the little mouse often turns out to be cleverer and more agile than the cat.”
Yuriy Deryabin, The former Russian ambassador to Finland³⁵

At the end of the 20th century after the collapse of the USSR, Finland’s foreign policy underwent significant changes, which were reflected in a shift in the country’s orientation in international relations. Hence, the need to consider the main aspects of the state’s foreign policy at the present stage in terms of the country's orientation in the international space.

On the base of the monument to Juho Paasikivi in Helsinki, his motto is carved: "Awareness of real facts is the basis of any policy." In world politics, the “Paasikivi line” proceeded from the desirability of taking the position of an outside observer, since “the voice of small countries is not heard in international development”.³⁶ Right after the war, Paasikivi, at that time the head of government, and later the president, agreed on cooperation and friendship with the USSR. Reconciled the fire with water and fleeing from the creation of the Finnish People’s Republic, he agreed that Finland would be a neutral state and would coordinate its foreign policy with the USSR.

³⁵ Severnyy Blagovest, 3(12)-2007, p 33

³⁶Туомо Полвинен. Юхо Кусти Паасикиви * Juho Kusti Paasikivi
Из книги «100 замечательных финнов» <https://www.suomesta.ru/2014/04/10/yuxo-kusti-paasikivi-juho-kusti-paasikivi/>

For the country, this meant 40 years of concessions, compromises, and the rejection of part of its sovereignty. This model was later called Finlandization.

Tuomas Forsberg and Matti Pesu in their article “The “Finlandization” of Finland: The Ideal Type, the Historical Model, and the Lessons Learnt” explain Finlandization as a political culture, a policy that was not anti-Soviet but rather militarily neutral as a deceptive tool.³⁷ The article shows Finlandization as “an instrumental strategy” and not as a policy based on identity because Finland was driven by the idea of safeguarding of the country’s sovereignty and not Moscow as a “negative other” in their identity construction.

The American historian and political scientist Walter Laqueur, in his book “Political Psychology of Appeasement,” highlights Finland’s obligations to the USSR, not all of which were spelled out in the 1947-1948 treaties. First of all, Finland could not come up with foreign policy initiatives that would run counter to the interests of the USSR and should regularly express support for Moscow’s actions in the international arena. Helsinki complied with its obligations during the most critical moments of the Cold War.³⁸ For example, in 1956, during a UN vote on the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Hungary, the Finnish government did not join the majority, indicating that agreement on this issue should be achieved, first of all, between the Soviet and Hungarian governments.³⁹

The Ukrainian crisis carries many similar aspects with the Cold War. After the Russian annexation of Crimea, the term of Finlandization was raised on to agenda by Zbigniew Brzezinski and Henry Kissinger as a model for Ukraine’s international position.⁴⁰ Ukraine would stay outside

³⁷ Tuomas Forsberg & Matti Pesu (2016) The “Finlandisation” of Finland: The Ideal Type, the Historical Model, and the Lessons Learnt, *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, 27:3, 473-495, 2016

³⁸ Laqueur, Walter (1980), *The Political Psychology of Appeasement: Finlandization and Other Unpopular Essays*, New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers.

³⁹ Nyysönen, Heino (2006), ‘Time, Political Analogies and the 1956 Hungarian Revolution’, *KronoScope*, 6(1): 43–67.

⁴⁰ Zbigniew Brzezinski, “Russia needs to be offered a ‘Finland option’ for Ukraine,” *Financial Times* (1 February 2014); Henry Kissinger, “To settle the Ukraine crisis, start at the end,” *Washington Post* (5 March 2014).

of NATO and avoid hostility with Russia, benefit from close economic co-operation with both the EU and Russia, whilst nobody would question its independence and status as a sovereign nation.⁴¹

Another telling statement was made by *Washington Post* columnist David Ignatius. “President Vladimir Putin may be ready to accept a neutral country, between East and West, where Russia’s historical interests are recognized,” he wrote.⁴²

Russia’s perspective on the “Finlandization” of Ukraine could be found in an essay by Alexander Lukin, a former vice president of the Russian Foreign Ministry's Diplomatic Academy. Reflecting on a solution to the Ukrainian crisis, he pointed to the "Neutral Status" of Austria and Finland, which, in his words, did not “undermine the democratic systems or the general European orientation of these countries in any way" during the Cold War.⁴³

Despite this, scholars are not unanimous in their views. Some claimed that "Finlandization is not the right choice for the Ukrainian crisis". One such author is Markku Kangaspuro, Director and Professor of Aleksanteri Institute - Finnish Centre for Russian and East European Studies at the University of Helsinki, who criticised the discussions about NATO that developed in Finnish society. According to Kangaspuro, Finland and Ukraine cannot be compared with each other since their geopolitical position is different. He claims that there are no Russian military bases on Finnish soil, therefore Russia does not have such military interests in Finland as in Ukraine and Crimea, where the main military base of the Russian Black Sea Fleet is located.⁴⁴

Keir Giles and Susanna Eskola in the article “Waking the Neighbour: Finland, NATO and Russia” are giving examples of the pros and cons of joining NATO. The important reasons to keep Finland away from membership is to not allow Finnish troops to fight in “foreign” wars and to avoid a negative reaction from Russia. Joining NATO will give Finland improvements in security

⁴¹ Tuomas Forsberg & Matti Pesu. The “Finlandisation” of Finland: The Ideal Type, the Historical Model, and the Lessons Learnt

⁴² David Ignatius, “A Finland model for Ukraine?,” *Washington Post* (20 May 2014).

⁴³ James Kirchik, “Finlandisation is not a Solution for Ukraine,” *American Interest* (27 July 2014): <http://www.the-american-interest.com/2014/07/27/finlandization-is-not-a-solution-for-ukraine/>.

⁴⁴ Бывший госсекретарь США Генри Киссинджер выступает за «финляндизацию» Украины. *Комсомольская Правда*. 2014. <https://www.kp.ru/online/news/1684444/>

and defence forces.⁴⁵ However, membership in the EU and approval of several packages of economic and political sanctions against Russia is an obvious proof that Finland cannot hope that it will stay away from the big politics. Moreover, on a purely military level, it is unclear how Finland – an EU member and a close partner of NATO - could, for example, stay away from conflict or crisis in the Baltic region.

A.M. Smirnov in his “Perspectives of Swedish and Finnish enlightenment to NATO” talks about a long historical period that showed that being in a good relationship with its Eastern neighbour brought to Finland not only "security" but also economic benefits. Exclusion to use Finnish territory as hostile against Russia was one of the main aims of Finnish security policy. And the opposite, tense and tough relationship with Moscow and being involved in different anti-Russian allies caused the losses. He also sees Finland in NATO only along with Sweden but not separately.⁴⁶

Tuomas Forsberg and Tapani Vaahtoranta, the authors of “Inside the EU, Outside NATO: Paradoxes of Finland’s and Sweden’s Post-neutrality,” highlight the similarities between Finland and Sweden in their relationship with NATO and the EU while having different geopolitical and historical memories. They predict that NATO membership their non-aligned status and create a large borderline with Russia. According to the authors, most politicians support the pro-NATO mood, they just need to influence public opinion in favour of membership.⁴⁷

David Yost in his book "NATO's Balancing Act" gives us another review of the European security issues that analyses possible membership of Finland in NATO. He claims that “acting in cooperation with the European Union, the NATO Allies helped to prevent the emergence of a strategic vacuum in Central and Eastern Europe. Without Partnership for Peace and NATO enlargement, the states in this region would have been vulnerable to Russian pressures, and they would have probably renationalised their defence policies and engaged in local rivalries and power

⁴⁵ Keir Giles and Susanna Eskola “Waking the Neighbour: Finland, NATO and Russia” Defence Academy of the United Kingdom. 2009

⁴⁶ Смирнов А.М. “Перспективы просвещения Швеции и Финляндии в НАТО” Геополитика и патристическое воспитание N27/2017

⁴⁷ Tuomas Forsberg and Tapani Vaahtoranta, “Inside the EU, Outside NATO: Paradoxes of Finland’s and Sweden’s Post-neutrality,” *European Security* 10, no. 1 (2001): 71

competitions.” The author emphasises that NATO membership was and will always be profitable for the member countries.⁴⁸

Officially, Russian representatives have assured Finland that it is up to the Finnish people to decide whether to join NATO or not. Nevertheless, both President Putin and the Army Commander General Makarov have warned that Finnish membership in the Alliance would be seen as a military threat to Russia. In general, the views of Finnish society about NATO membership are relatively stable, although the recent negative developments and the general instability in regional security, slightly increased the share of the Alliance supporters. Polls give different results, but in general over the last decade there were between 60% and 70% of Finns against NATO membership, while 20-30% of the population supported the idea, and about 10% have not yet decided. According to opinion polls as of December 2019⁴⁹, only every fifth Finn supported the country's possible entry into a military alliance. Finns have been opposing potential membership of the Alliance for years. This contrasts sharply with the results of a survey conducted among the Finnish army officers, about half of whom support membership in the Alliance. Among the colonel rank officers and above the share of supporters of NATO membership was even larger - 70%.⁵⁰ Despite this apparent stability of views on Finland's membership in NATO, this topic is not going away from the agenda of public debate on security and defence policy.

Scholars from Russia, such as Irina Novikova and Nikolay Mezhevich in their piece “Finland and NATO: how forgetting the lessons of the past can lead to their repetition,” state that Finland is self-makes decisions in the field of security and foreign policy. However, Russia is not deprived of this right either. From the Russian perspective, Finnish “neutral” status in world politics is more than appreciated.⁵¹ In the article, they underline that if Finland would be a NATO member state, it could not succeed in mediation and its ability to pursue a policy of "building bridges" between the West and Russia, which remains an important aspect of Finnish identity. And the former Finnish

⁴⁸ David S. Yost, *NATO's Balancing Act* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press 2014)

⁴⁹ HS-gallup: Enemmistö suomalaisista vastustaa edelleen Nato-jäsenyyttä. URL: <https://www.iltalehti.fi/politiikka/a/e1265ced-7a1a-4850-b464-f702815bcd3>

⁵⁰ Чарли Салониус-Пастернак. Финский опыт нейтралитета. Что нужно учесть Украине? 2015. http://www.eurointegration.com.ua/rus/articles/2015/08/5/7036497/view_print/

⁵¹ Новикова Ирина. Межевич Николай. “Финляндия и НАТО: как забвение уроков прошлого может привести к их повторению”. 2016. (Virmavirta J. Mielipide:Suomen kannattaa lunastaa Nato-optio // Ulkopoliitikka. 2005. Is. 4.)

President Martti Ahtisaari would hardly have received the 2008 Nobel Peace Prize “for important efforts to resolve international conflicts on several continents on for over three decades”⁵²

Teemu Palosaari in his work “Still a physician rather than a judge? The post-Cold War foreign and security policy of Finland” agrees on the importance of Finnish role as a mediator in big politics. Mediation is the best way to act for Finland as a small state. It should stay politically allied but military non-aligned. It should also keep taking part in military crisis management within the EU and NATO. ⁵³

The crisis in Ukraine, however, has changed fundamentally the dynamics of the Finnish NATO debate. For many, it has been a wake-up call as much for Finland as for the whole of Europe. European borders are not, it now seems, sacred. The seizure of Crimea and the conflict in Eastern Ukraine have proved to many that Russia is a military threat to its neighbors. The rhetorical mantra in Finnish security policy, that Russia is not a military threat but only an unpredictable superpower, seems to have been proved wrong. This has created serious concerns about Russian - Finnish relations. A core question for Finland now is how to navigate between maintaining friendly relations with Russia on the one hand and supporting the EU in its policy of isolating Russia economically on the other. The NATO debate has also reached a new level of prominence. The policy of independent and solid defence, the bedrock of Finnish security for decades, is now more openly called into question. Many more now ask in the face of Russian aggression, could Finland defend itself, and for how long? ⁵⁴

Kristian Åtland in his article “North European security after the Ukraine conflict” talks about the changes in European security after a crisis in Ukraine. Even though Finland was always known as a “neutral” and “mediator” policy keeper and a “buffer between NATO and Russia”, it also felt under pressure after events in 2014. He gives probability that if Finland would join the Alliance in the future, which will be not accepted well in Moscow, Russia will build up military strength in the Republic of Karelia. On the other side, NATO enlargement, and he includes here Sweden as well, will strengthen defence and security cooperation in the North. He states that even though NATO has

⁵²Nobel Price Laureates. http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/2008/press.html

⁵³ Palosaari Teemu. “Still a physician rather than a judge? The post-Cold War foreign and security policy of Finland” Swiss Political Science review. 2013

⁵⁴ Tarja Cronsberg. The NATO divide in Finnish Politics http://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/the-nato-divide-in-finnish-politics_1836.html

a “clear conventional advantage” at the aggregative level, Russia keeps superiority over its small neighbours at the local level.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Kristian Åtland (2016) North European security after the Ukraine conflict, *Defense & Security Analysis*, 32:2, 163-176

2.FINLAND'S FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS RUSSIA SINCE 2014

“It is in Finland's interests to know Russia as well as possible.”⁵⁶

The role of Russia was especially vividly manifested in two historical periods: when Finland was a part of Russia with the rights of autonomy and after the end of World War II. At the same time, until recently, Finnish researchers and politicians rarely spoke about the positive Russian influence during these periods. The reason for the "revision" was two dates - the 200th anniversary of Finland's entry into the Russian Empire as an autonomous principality and the 100th anniversary of Finland's state independence. The jubilee year of the 200th anniversary of the entry of the Grand Duchy of Finland into the Russian Empire was celebrated in 2009. As noted by the newspaper "Kaleva", 1809 was "such a significant turning point in the history of Finland that representative events on the occasion of the jubilee year were more than appropriate"⁵⁷. The Russian theme has repeatedly sounded in a positive context in 2017, on the centenary of the Finns gaining independence.⁵⁸

V. Pohljobkin showed that by the beginning of the 20th century Finland, formally part of the Russian Empire, actually possessed all the attributes and rights of a state that was in personal union, because only the head of state remained with the empire - the Russian emperor and the Grand Duke in Finland, as well as foreign policy, while with actual exemptions. Finland's lack of an independent foreign policy at that time, due to being a part of Russia and the weak development of socio-political relations in Finland itself, gave rise to the idea that "a foreign policy alliance with Russia meant, foreign policy in particular".⁵⁹ In this regard, the defence of their foreign policy actions,

⁵⁶ Finnish Government "Russia Action Plan", April 2009

⁵⁷ Kaleva, 06/09/2009.

⁵⁸ The Government is celebrating in Turku. Valtioneuvosto juhlii Turussa // Yle. <https://yle.fi/uutiset/3-5892839>

⁵⁹Похлёбкин В.В. СССР-Финляндия. 260 лет отношений 1713-1973. М.: Международные отношения, 1975. 410с

national foreign policy independence in the end turned and grew into hostility towards Russia. Against this background, various concepts of Finland's foreign policy began to develop both in the second half of the 19th century and much later.

The Russian factor laid the prerequisites for pragmatic, mutually beneficial coexistence, and in the future - cooperation between Russia and Finland. The Russian factor has provided the Finns in the international arena with advantages that not all small countries have. According to Doctor of Historical Sciences L.S. Voronkova, friendly, trusting relations with its eastern neighbour have invariably brought Finland both security and prosperity, and numerous economic benefits, increasing its importance as an international player.⁶⁰ The exclusion of the possibility of using the country's territory for purposes hostile to Russia has been the basic principle of Finland's security policy for a long time.

If we look at the history, Finland's position in Europe during the Cold War was exceptional in many ways. Unlike the countries of Eastern Europe, Finland was never occupied by Soviet troops. The country remained a Western democracy, and thanks to extremely rapid industrialisation in the 1970s, it reached the same standard of living as the countries of Western Europe. This made it possible to create a nordic model of the welfare state. However, throughout the entire Cold War period, Finland had to take into account the security interests of the Soviet Union.

In April 1948, Finland signed a Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance with the Soviet Union. Under the terms of the treaty, Finland pledged to resist any offensive directed against Finland or the USSR through Finland. The contract was valid until 1991. Thanks to it, relations between the two countries stabilised, and the foundation was laid for broad economic cooperation, which naturally contributed to the favourable social development of Finland.

The negative side of the treaty was that it did not strengthen Western countries' confidence in the policy of non-alignment, which was actively pursued by the Finnish government. Nevertheless, President Urho Kekkonen, who ruled the country for a quarter of a century (1956-1981), gradually managed to win international respect in this balancing act between East and West. The 1,300 kilometer common border with the USSR was an irresistible geographic reality. So that Finland

⁶⁰ Свободные от военных союзов Швеция и Финляндия и НАТО // Международная жизнь. 17.03.2017. <https://interaffairs.ru/news/show/17125> (

would not have to suffer greatly from this, the export-oriented industry was allowed to enter into profitable trade agreements with EFTA⁶¹ (1961) and EEC⁶² (1973).

Thus, Finland managed not to enter into conflict with a strong eastern neighbour and at the same time to have increasingly close economic ties with Western Europe. In early August 1975, the leaders of 35 countries of Europe and North America gathered in Helsinki to sign the final document of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. The document recognised the political division of Europe. In Helsinki, general rules of the game on human rights issues were agreed upon, which political dissidents from the countries of the socialist bloc passionately seized upon. The process started in Helsinki eventually led to the final collapse of the Soviet empire in 1991.⁶³

After the Polish uprising of 1863, when the danger of war arose between Russia and Western European countries, Finnish politicians were worried about the prospect of being drawn into the war for Russian interests and turning Finland into a "Theater of war place". During that period in Finnish society, ideas about a neutral position arose.⁶⁴ The idea of proclaiming neutrality promoted by Swedish circles would mean a break with Russia. Several Finnish politicians of that time, however, realised that the idea of "neutrality" was utopian and groundless, which would lead to the loss of independence. One of the most famous Finnish ideologists, Johan Snellman, wrote that only in full friendship with Russia Finland can live and create preconditions for its independence.⁶⁵

V. Pohljobkin singled out six options for the development of Finland's foreign policy at the end of the 19th century, including neutrality, a foreign policy alliance with Russia, or with Sweden. The option of turning Finland into a "bridge" between Scandinavia and Russia, West and East, deserves special attention. Some representatives of the Finnish social and political circles of the time believed that Finland was able to play the role of a neutral mediator in relations between

⁶¹ European Free Trade Association

⁶² European Economic Community

⁶³ История Финляндии. Это Финляндия/ <https://finland.fi/ru/zhizn-i-obshhestvo/istoriya-finlyandii/>

⁶⁴ Voronkov L.S. "Severnoe sotrudnichestvo i osobennosti severoevropskoj integracii [«Northern Cooperation» and Features of the North European Integration]. Moscow: MGIMO-Universitet, 2016. 340 p. 3 (In Russian)

⁶⁵ Otto Utti. J.V. SNELLMAN: WHERE WOULD FINLAND BE WITHOUT HIM? This is Finland/ 2006 <https://finland.fi/life-society/j-v-snellman-without-him-where-would-finland-be/>

Russia and Scandinavia since it has much in common with both sides.⁶⁶ The point of mediation is the desire to exert a softening influence on both Russia and the West, which will make it possible to avoid open clashes between them. This will allow Finland not to be drawn into a potential armed conflict. Here, there should be highlighted that to be involved in other country's problems, therefore be involved in a war, concerning Finland nowadays too. That is one of the reasons why Finland is not rushing into becoming a part of a military alliance.

Between the outbreak of the Ukrainian Crisis in 2014 and 2020 Finnish President officially visited Russia few times. The first visit happened in the same year. "I am not looking for a role to play. But Finland and I are fully committed to working towards peace and a resolution to the crisis if our help is required," the President said. "In fact, I have received direct requests to continue communications with the various parties to the crisis."⁶⁷

The President also mentioned that he had taken note of the discussion about the dangers associated with his trip that had taken place in Finland. "I naturally agree, but my position is that the continuation of fighting is, in any event, the greatest risk."⁶⁸

The Prime Minister's Office issued the Government Report on Finnish Foreign and Security Policy in September 2016. Similar reports are published every four years in Finland. The goal is to set the tone for Finland's foreign and security policy over the following four years. The last report was published in October 2020.

The main goal of Finland's foreign and security policy, according to the report, is "to avoid becoming a party to a military conflict"⁶⁹, and "the goal of Finland's foreign and security policy is

⁶⁶Похлёбкин В.В. СССР-Финляндия. 260 лет отношений 1713-1973. М.: Международные отношения, 1975. 410с

⁶⁷ President Niinistö after visiting Russia and Ukraine: Open line of communication needed. 19.08.2014 <https://www.presidentti.fi/en/news/president-niinisto-after-visiting-russia-and-ukraine-open-line-of-communication-needed/?nodeid=44809&contentlan=2&culture=en-US>

⁶⁸ Ibid

⁶⁹ Finnish Government (2016): Government Report on Finnish Foreign and Security Policy Prime Minister's Office Publications 9/2016, Helsinki: 7

to strengthen Finland's international position, to secure independence and territorial integrity, to improve the security and well-being of Finns, and to ensure that society functions efficiently”⁷⁰.

The balance between common assumptions of security, such as independence and territorial integrity, and more current notions of security, such as society and citizen well-being, is obvious. In comparison to its Nordic neighbours, Finland has one of the most traditional notions of security. This may be seen in the way it talks about Russia. Out of all the Nordic nations, Finland and Russia have the most complicated relations.

Finland's foreign policy toward Russia is heavily influenced by its connections with Russia. Finland was a part of Sweden until 1809 when the country was annexed by Russia. In 1917, Finland declared independence from Russia. Finland was subjected to harsh suppression of Finnish separatists throughout its time as a Grand Duchy within Russia, a process known as Russification.⁷¹ Finland's security strategy was founded on the League of Nations. It was only after the shortcomings of the League of Nations became apparent that the Finnish Parliament decided on a Scandinavian security policy in 1935.⁷² Finland fought two wars with the Soviet Union during WWII, but managed to maintain its independence. The time of the Cold War was influential in establishing the Government Report's views on Russia. Finland managed to stay out of the Warsaw Pact, but the Soviet Union and Finland signed a Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance Agreement.

The Paasikivi-Kekkonen doctrine was applied to Finnish foreign policy throughout the length of the Cold War. Good relations with Russia were a precondition for Finnish survival, with the simultaneous advocacy of Finnish neutrality. During the Cold War, the Finns went to great lengths to maintain these relations, which can be seen through the Note Crisis⁷³ in 1961 and Urho Kekkonen's long presidency. However military preparedness was maintained at all times. Russia

⁷⁰ Finnish Government , 2016

⁷¹ Zetterberg, Seppo (2017) Main Outlines of Finnish History Finland Promotion Board/Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Helsinki <https://finland.fi/life-society/main-outlines-of-finnish-history/> (accessed 01.11.2021)

⁷² Ibid

⁷³ Political crisis in Soviet–Finnish relations in 1961. The note precipitated a crisis in Finland: activating the military provisions of the treaty would have frustrated Finland's post-war policy of neutrality in international affairs and greatly damaged Finland's relations with the West. One of the crucial goals of Finnish foreign policy was to reinforce the credibility of Finland's neutrality in the eyes of Western powers which were skeptical of the country's ability to resist Soviet influence.

was the epitome of existential threat to Finland. When the Soviet Union dissolved, the YYA Agreement from 1948 was replaced with agreements on trade and cooperation in a number of fields.⁷⁴

The importance of bilateral relations between Finland and Russia is highlighted in the Government Report. The Finnish report is the only one of the four to provide a distinct section on the “importance of relations with Russia”. It is also the only study that advocates for direct citizen-to-citizen engagement and support for civil society. Finland continues to promote collaboration and conversation in some of the same ways it did before Crimea⁷⁵, with the goal of maintaining "stable and well-functioning relations"⁷⁶. The Report's attitude to Russia is cautious, yet the threat that Russia poses is not overlooked.

The report avoids creating a broad picture of Russia as an enemy, but it is apparent that Russia poses a threat to Finland. A more modest, indirect kind of existential othering is portraits in the report. Because of the increasingly difficult security situation, the report states early on that “the use of threat or military force against Finland cannot be excluded”⁷⁷, but Russia is not addressed. Russia's return to power politics, on the other hand, is depicted in other portions of the study as a source of fresh instability in Finland's neighbourhood.

This is only one of many instances in which the Report avoids mentioning Russia explicitly, instead alluding to the "tight security situation"⁷⁸ or "unpredictability in the security policy environment"⁷⁹. This type of indirect othering is typical of Finnish Cold War foreign policy.

The Finnish Report is the only one of the four to place a strong emphasis on national security. This, in and of itself, refers back to the Cold War discourse. Other reports portray a Russian

⁷⁴ Ibid

⁷⁵ Finnish Government, 2016: 22

⁷⁶ Finnish Government, 2016: 22

⁷⁷ Finnish Government, 2016: 11

⁷⁸ Finnish Government, 2016:11

⁷⁹ Finnish Government, 2016:11

invasion of the Baltics as a potentially catastrophic danger⁸⁰, the Finnish report pays relatively little attention to the security of the Baltic States. "The security and prosperity of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania are crucial to Finland," according to the report⁸¹. The Report decides to prioritise Finnish national security as a result, and the othering stays oblique.

The absence of Finnish neutrality, which was a cornerstone of Finnish Cold War strategy, is a fundamental distinction. Finland is depicted in the study as a country distinguished by its multilateral connections and membership in international institutions. Through its EU membership, Finland's identity is thoroughly established in the Western value community, allowing for more dramatic othering of Russia. Finland may also establish distance from Russia by claiming that "the EU's shared policies on Russia constitute the foundation for Finland's actions"⁸², without risking a direct worsening of bilateral relations. Russia is seen as a security danger to Europe: "Russia has largely abandoned cooperation-based security thinking."⁸³ Somewhat, it poses a threat to the European security system⁸⁴. Russia is portrayed as having a unique perspective on international affairs, as a challenger to the current order, and as a source of worry for the whole area, including Europe. When the narrative is about the European security and value community rather than Finnish national security, the securitisation is more explicit. Because hybrid tactics produce instability, Russia's use of hybrid warfare and methods is considered as a threat to the rules-based world order. This is in contrast to the Western democracies, which are known for their stability.

The most moving discussions on Russia in the Finnish Government Report can be found in the way the report defines Finnish identity and self. When the self is defined as Finnish national identity, the differentiation discourses are vastly less radical than when the Finnish national identity is defined as membership in the EU and participation in the Western value and security community. In the sense that it is implied that a military threat from Russia cannot be ruled out, Russia

⁸⁰Bringéus, Krister (2016) *Säkerhet i ny tid: betänkande av utredningen om Sveriges försvars- och säkerhetspolitiska samarbeten* Official Reports of the Swedish Government SOU2016:57, Elanders Sverige AB, Stockholm: 43

⁸¹ Finnish Government, 2016: 12

⁸² Finnish Government, 2016: 22

⁸³ Ibid

⁸⁴ Finnish Government, 2016: 22

represents an existential threat to Finland. The indirect distinction, on the other hand, allows for the development of bilateral ties based on discussion at the same time.⁸⁵

At the press conference in 2014 President S. Niinistö stated that relations between Russia and Finland are very multifaceted. “Traditionally, we have developed good trade and economic relations, our political interactions are also good, and in the closer regions, not far from the state border, people visit each other, they travel across the border, go about their business.” He also mentioned large projects that will have a long-term impact on our relations, projects are being promoted, they have nothing to do with sanctions. And sanctions, of course, as President Putin noted, affect the economy, in general, economic activity on a global scale, and the reason for the introduction of these sanctions is the Ukrainian crisis.

This crisis concerns not only Ukraine itself. It is reflected more widely and has an impact on many issues. “We are very worried, I am worried that relations between Russia and the European Union have become cooler. And globally, we also hear talk that we have reached the gateway to a new Cold War” he said.⁸⁶

President S. Niinistö once again underlined the special relationship with Russia: “There are two stories about these early times that I never fail to share. The first is that after the First World War, Finland was the only country to pay the United States its debts. We honour our commitments. The second is how during the Second World War, Finland was the only European country that fought the Soviet Union that was not occupied. We cherish our independence. I am tempted to add that our foreign and security policy ever since has been aimed at ensuring that there will not be a Third World War”.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Finnish government, 2016: 22

⁸⁶ Заявления для прессы по итогам встречи с Президентом Финляндии Саули Ниинистё. 15 августа 2014 года <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/46458>

⁸⁷ Speech by the President of the Republic of Finland Mr. Sauli Niinistö at the Economic Club of Minnesota September 22, 2017 <https://www.presidentti.fi/en/speeches/speech-by-the-president-of-the-republic-of-finland-mr-sauli-niinisto-at-the-economic-club-of-minnesota-september-22-2017/>

The idea of a "bridge", implying Finland's mediation between Russia and the West, has repeatedly appeared on the country's foreign policy agenda in the second half of the 20th century⁸⁸. One of the successful examples of its implementation is the holding of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe and the signing of the Helsinki Final Act in 1975. As Russian Ambassador to Finland P.M. Kuznetsov said: "Finland, pursuing a policy of non-participation in military blocs, traditionally played a prominent role as a platform for major international events". The idea of a "bridge" remains on the agenda at the beginning of the 21st century. It was exactly Helsinki that hosted a Russian-American summit on July 16, 2018.

Finnish experts agree that the choice of Helsinki for negotiations between V. Putin and D. Trump testifies to the high confidence in the "place of negotiations of such high-ranking leaders"⁸⁹. The summit was a "significant domestic political victory" for Finland, a well-deserved recognition of its good relations with both Russia and the United States.

Finnish politicians also appreciated the summit. As Finnish Prime Minister J. Sipilä wrote in his blog, "The Helsinki summit was, first of all, a recognition of the energy and clarity of the line of Finnish foreign and security policy." According to J. Sipilä, "It is important for Finland that the presidents V. Putin and D. Trump met in the Finnish capital"⁹⁰.

After the Ukrainian Crisis, disputes about the role of Russia and the West in the history of Finland are acquiring special relevance. The scale of anti-Russian rhetoric in Finland is breaking all records. As the President of Finland, S. Niinistö notes: "It is hard to imagine what remains unsaid. Winning the competition "who will say worse about Russia" requires ingenuity"⁹¹. Likewise, cultivating the image of Russia as an enemy, they are trying to impose the opinion on the Finnish public that in the sphere of foreign and security policy it is necessary to fully focus on the Western

⁸⁸ Ibid

⁸⁹ American and Russian presidents meet at the Presidential Palace in Helsinki. President of the Republic of Finland. 17.07.2018

⁹⁰ Juha Sipilä. "Finland promotes dialogue in words and deeds" 16.7.2018 <https://www.juhasi.fi/blogi/suomi-edistaa-vuoropuhelua-sanoin-ja-teoin/>

⁹¹ Кто скажет о России хуже? // ИНОСМИ.РУ. 13.10.2017. URL: <http://inosmi.ru/social20171013/240513776.html>

paradigm, abandoning both the policy of military non-alignment and the Eastern vector, which have found themselves in the modern situations supposedly irrelevant⁹².

One of T. Soini's most significant obligations as foreign minister is to cultivate a good connection with Moscow. He said that the effort necessitates not underestimating Russia's military capability or resolve. "As a small nation, we know when big countries are fighting that it's better to be in the audience than in the ring," Soini said. "You can think whatever you want about Russia — and we do — but it's very important to maintain good relations. It's just good policy." - he said. Later he added: "Their economy is horrible, the price of oil is very low, and there are still some limitations on what they can do militarily. But if they make a decision, they do it. No Western power can rival that type of commitment, and one should always keep that in mind."⁹³

During the interview with journalists, Finish president raised the following problem: "We live in a world where there is a kind of vicious circle, from which it is quite difficult to get out. This applies both to the situation in Ukraine and to the issues that we observe here in the Baltic Sea region."

First, in the direction of security, and then in the direction of a political settlement. So none of these directions is moving forward, there is no progress in one direction, if there is no progress in the other direction, and it turns out such a vicious circle, and things do not move forward.

And why I said about the situation in the Baltic Sea region is because we know that in the Baltic countries and other places there is also a certain fear or fear of Russia, they are afraid of Russia there. This is on the one hand. On the other hand, NATO is viewed as a major threat in Russia. And this is how this vicious circle turns out. And to break this circle, the keyword is trust. And to build this trust, it is important that, at least in small steps, we could move forward in the right direction.⁹⁴

⁹² НЕЙТРАЛИТЕТ ФИНЛЯНДИИ КАК ЧАСТЬ ЕЁ НАЦИОНАЛЬНОЙ ИДЕНТИЧНОСТИ. Н.Ю.

Вежливецова. Вестник МГИМО Университета 2019-2, стр 95

⁹³ "How Finland Became Europe's Bear Whisperer". Reid Standish. Foreign Policy. March 7, 2016 <https://foreignpolicy.com/2016/03/07/how-finland-became-europes-bear-whisperer-russia-putin/>

⁹⁴ Заявления для прессы и ответы на вопросы журналистов по итогам российско-финляндских переговоров

1 июля 2016 года

Russia's position regarding security guarantees for Finland was and stays the same. In 2015 press conference V. Putin once again underlined it : "I think Finland's best security guarantee is its neutral status. Because, as soon as a threat arises from a neighbour state, Russia must react accordingly and build its defence policy in such a way as to neutralise a possible threat to its address." ⁹⁵

It is needed to be underlined the new Government Report on Finnish Security and Foreign Policy of 2020. In the new Report it is said: "Finland maintains functioning and close relations with Russia in sectors of key importance for Finland and the EU. Finland cooperates and engages in dialogue with Russia on bilateral issues, the international situation and security, global challenges, such as climate and environmental issues, and Baltic Sea and Arctic region issues, and promotes the economic relations between the countries. The stability of Russia and the respect for human rights in the country are important to Finland, and the dialogue on human rights issues will be continued. Direct contacts between citizens, supported by functioning cooperation in the arenas of, for example, traffic, tourism and culture, are an important part of the relations between Finland and Russia."⁹⁶ However, there is no separate chapter on "The importance of relationship with Russia" compared to previous Governmental Reports. Moreover, it is limited to one sentence "Well-functioning neighbourly relations with Russia are important to Finland" under the chapter of "Goals and priorities – strengthening Finnish security".

⁹⁵ Совместная пресс-конференция с Президентом Финляндии Саули Ниинистё. 16 июня 2015 года <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/49714>

⁹⁶ Government Report on Finnish Foreign and Security Policy. PUBLICATIONS OF THE FINNISH GOVERNMENT 2020 https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/162515/VN_2020_32.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

3.FINLAND’S FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS NATO SINCE 2014

“For most western and central European countries NATO is the answer to their defence prayers. Not for Finland.”⁹⁷

Finnish model is often seen as appropriate one which provides for EU membership, but does not provide for full integration into NATO. Meanwhile, in Finland, after the aggression of Russia against Ukraine, the perception of Euro-Atlantic integration changed slightly and discussions about the country's possible membership in the Alliance revived.

Finland has not attempted to join NATO since the end of the Cold War, despite a growing openness to military cooperation with the West. Fears of Moscow's reaction and Finland's involvement in a confrontation between Russia and the West, as well as the conviction that Europe would be able to construct a new security system following the collapse of the USSR, were among the elements that led to this decision. Finland also wished to maintain a feeling of continuity in its foreign and security policy, which had not taken such a drastic shift after 1991 as the former Eastern Bloc nations experienced. A major reason for this was that Finland's CSCE⁹⁸ heritage is one of the cornerstones of its international identity, serving as a mediator between the East and the West.⁹⁹

⁹⁷Former Defence Minister Jyri Häkämies speech at CSIS, Washington, 06 September 2007 – better known as the “Russia, Russia, Russia” speech.

⁹⁸ Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe.

The Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, also known as the U.S. Helsinki Commission, is an independent U.S. government agency created by Congress in 1975 to monitor and encourage compliance with the Helsinki Final Act and other Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe commitments.

⁹⁹ Piotr Szymański. “With Russia Right Across the Border. Finland’s security policy .OSW-Centre for Eastern Studies. 2018. http://aei.pitt.edu/94234/1/with_russia_right_across_the_border_net.pdf

In the Finnish Security and Defence Policy Report, it is stated that: “Finland’s security policy encompasses both actively creating security and anticipating and responding to security threats”. It says a lot about the starting point for the Finnish approach to security policy which is a comprehensive security concept that involves a wide range of tools. Moreover: “Finland’s security and defence policy guidelines are characterised by continuity, transparency and a strong commitment to European and international co-operation. These are epitomised by active participation in the development of the EU’s common security and defence policy, NATO partnership, Nordic co-operation and international crisis management”.¹⁰⁰ The lines show us how important Finland sees international cooperation and security, and on the other side should be able to always take care of its own security and defence.

We should not forget the fact that Finland is officially no longer a neutral country. In 1992, in the Government Report on Security and Defence Policy, the wording of military non-alignment and self-defence was adopted, and in 1995 the government altogether excluded the concept of “neutrality” from the defence policy report. The Report submitted to Parliament in 1997 contained a clause on the possibility of receiving military assistance from outside: “If Finland’s own resources are insufficient, it can, in accordance with the UN Charter,¹⁰¹ turn to other countries for help to repel the attack.” Instead of “independent defence”, the Finns began to talk about “convincing defence”.¹⁰² It is no coincidence that in the fall of 2008, when the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov called Finland “a respected neutral country”¹⁰³, he immediately received a response from the Finnish Foreign Minister Alexander Stubb, who clearly reminded that Finland is not a neutral country anymore and added: “Since January 1995, we joined the EU and work in close military cooperation, including with NATO”.¹⁰⁴ Also it should be noted that, even while not being a member of the Alliance, NATO influences Finnish security in many ways. Although the Partnership

¹⁰⁰ The Ministry of Defence. The Government's Security and Defence Policy Report 2012

¹⁰¹ Charter of the United Nations. Charter VII: Actions with Respect to Threats to the Peace, Breaches of the Peace, and Acts of Aggression. Article 51. Available at: <https://www.un.org/en/sections/un-charter/un-charter-full-text/>

¹⁰² The Ministry of Defence. The Government report "The European Security Development and Finnish Defence". (1997)

¹⁰³ Helsingin Sanomat International Edition, 10 November 2008, “Stubb to Lavrov: “Finland is not Neutral”

¹⁰⁴ Александр Стубб. Внешняя политика Финляндии не является политикой нейтралитета. Новостной портал Карел-Информ. 15.11.2015. URL: http://www.karelinform.ru/?id=12074_ixzz0XLNu1tqw6b

for Peace (PfP) does not automatically lead to membership in the Alliance, the interoperability achieved through collaboration helps remove any practical barriers to potential membership.

It is noteworthy that the former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Finland, Alexander Stubb, who had previously openly advocated for Finland's membership in the North Atlantic Alliance, soon after taking office became more cautious in his statements. On April 4, 2008, he stated, in particular, that during his tenure in the government Finland would not apply for NATO membership, and even if action would be taken in that direction in the future, a referendum should be considered. Two years later, in one of his interviews in the spring of 2010, Stubb described relations between Finland and NATO as a “civil marriage”. Answering the question about the possibility of joining NATO, he said that Finland takes this issue very pragmatically and is unlikely to become a member of the alliance in the near future. “We are very good and close partners and, in a sense, we are more a NATO country than some members of the alliance. We have 500 troops who participate in various foreign missions, and 80% of them are in NATO operations. In reality, in our relations there is only membership and some associated obligations. We do not close the door to NATO but we don't open it yet” said Stubb.¹⁰⁵

In 2014, fighting for the post of the prime-minister, Stubb again drew the “NATO card” from the playing deck, saying that in the event of his victory he intends to intensify efforts to join Finland to NATO¹⁰⁶. However, in the prime minister's chair, he lingered for less than a year, giving way to the representative of the Center party, Juha Sipila. This party, in its foreign policy is very cautious and restrained, preferring to develop pragmatic cooperation instead of confrontation with Russia.

In August 2014 President has agreed to begin developing a comprehensive evaluation of security policy cooperation in collaboration with the government. This will be a wide review of several aspects of cooperation, such as the EU Security and Defense Policy, NATO, Nordic defence cooperation (NORDEFECO), and bilateral partnerships with countries such as Sweden and the United States. The review will look at all of our collaboration networks.

¹⁰⁵ Александр Стубб. Финляндия и НАТО состоят в «гражданском браке». Новостной портал DELFI. 23.04.2010 URL: <http://rus.delfi.ee/daily/nato/stubb-finlyandiya-i-natosostoyat-v-grazhdanskombrake.d?id=30629577>

¹⁰⁶ Александр Стубб. Естественно, я буду вести страну в НАТО. Сайт телерадиокомпании Yleisradio Oy. 30.04.2014. http://www.yle.fi/uutiset/stubb_yestestvenno_ya_budu_vesti_stranu_v_nato/7216408

As a result, it will not be a NATO report in the traditional sense. Whether or not that report is released, the collaboration with NATO will continue. Sweden and Finland are revising their NATO alliances to meet today's needs, and it will be reinforced at the NATO summit in Wales. NATO is under pressure to reform, with the emphasis moving to territorial defence. The next evaluation may include an assessment of NATO's future direction.

“We will continue to keep military alliance through membership of NATO as an option in our security policy. In this debate, it is useful to remember the big picture, including the lessons taught by the harsh teacher known as history regarding the undercurrents of security policy and the policies of the great powers in particular. The issue of NATO membership cannot be evaluated just by tallying pros and cons on a spreadsheet. We can also not just look at legal details and rules; after all, NATO is not a district court” Niniisto said.¹⁰⁷

It is already more than 20 years that the discussion on the pros and cons of full NATO membership has continued. The issue of Finland's possible membership in the North Atlantic Alliance has been the subject of lively discussion in Finnish society after the collapse of the USSR. This problem became much more relevant after the Baltic States joined the North Atlantic Alliance in 2004. However, it should be borne in mind that such discussions are mainly fuelled by a few - some media, individual researchers and publicists convinced that joining NATO is the only way to ensure Finland's security in the near future. Supporters of this point of view provide a wide variety of arguments in favour of joining the country in the North Atlantic Alliance. As an example, the arguments put forward by the professor J. Virmavirta: “First of all, our thinking in the field of security is guided by fear of Russia, and not by the threat posed by it; secondly, Finland's real defence capability is weaker than it seems; thirdly, Finland, cooperating with NATO, but not being a member of this alliance, does not have sufficient influence and power on the adoption of specific decisions inside the organisation”.¹⁰⁸

The presented argumentation is one of the options for convincing Finnish society that Finland should join NATO. Surveys for 2015 confirmed the Finns' wary attitude towards NATO. The

¹⁰⁷ Speech by President of the Republic Sauli Niinistö at the ambassador seminar on 26 August 2014

<https://www.presidentti.fi/en/speeches/speech-by-president-of-the-republic-sauli-niinisto-at-the-ambassador-seminar-on-26-august-2014/>

¹⁰⁸ Новикова Ирина. Межевич Николай. “Финляндия и НАТО: как забвение уроков прошлого может привести к их повторению”. 2016. (Virmavirta J. Mieliipide: Suomen kannattaa lunastaa Nato-optio // Ulkopoliitikka. 2005. Is. 4.)

number of opponents continues to decrease - 55%, but the proportion of supporters also decreased - 22%. Opponents of NATO remain in the majority even while answering this question: "If Sweden joins NATO, should Finland do the same?" Here, opponents of NATO account for 47%, supporters - 35%. By the end of 2015, the trend is in favour of the undecided. A survey conducted by the Union of Reservists of Finland showed that 40% were against joining NATO, 28% were for joining, and 32% could not give an exact answer.¹⁰⁹ Once former minister and ambassador Max Jakobsson stated: "Debate over NATO membership is ultimately a debate over Russia, albeit indirectly."¹¹⁰

The importance of alliance assurances in deterring Russia is emphasised by a portion of the political center right which sees NATO membership as an investment in Finnish security. Meanwhile, the center left, which believes that joining NATO would damage Finland's security, has long viewed the country's non-aligned position as a factor that helps regional stability.

The legacy of the Winter War and the Cold War neutrality policy, the unwillingness to participate in distant conflicts, and the perception of NATO as an aggressive alliance, as well as the fact that this issue remains a secondary topic on political parties' agendas, all contribute to low public support for membership.¹¹¹

What additional arguments in favour of membership are put forward by proponents of this view? First, one of the most common allegations is the view that NATO is no longer an aggressive military alliance, which could have been considered during the Cold War, and that in the modern system of international relations it is turning into a collective defence organisation (security community) an organisation similar to the OSCE and UN to address global security and crisis management.¹¹² Membership in the military-political union of the West could have a positive effect

¹⁰⁹ "More Finns on the Fence Over NATO Membership". Yle. Available at: https://yle.fi/uutiset/osasto/news/more_finns_on_the_fence_over_nato_membership/8408782

¹¹⁰ Helsingin Sanomat, 16 January 2004, Editorial by Max Jakobsson "Finland, NATO and Russia"/"Suomi, Nato ja Venäjä"

¹¹¹ J. Gotkowska, P. Szymański, *Between co-operation and membership. Sweden and Finland's relations with NATO*, "OSW Studies", February 2017, <https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/osw-studies/2017-03-03/between-co-operation-and-membership-sweden-and-finlands-relations>

¹¹² Nokkala A. Being Interested in a Big Neighbour: Russia and the Finnish Defence Establishment // *Russia Forever? Towards Working Pragmatism in Finnish/Russian Relations*. Aleksanteri Series. Helsinki : 2008

on the image of Finland abroad. It would be a “natural” and “rational” step in terms of restoring Finnish identity as a “Western” and “European” democratic state.¹¹³

Secondly, NATO membership and alliance resources would help to contain military pressure on Finland, the threat of aggression against it and the possibility of a military attack. Moreover, the only threat to Finland’s security is invariably called Russia.¹¹⁴ Since the early 1990’s Finnish newspapers invariably cultivated the negative image of Russia, deliberately exaggerating the negative aspects of domestic life in a neighbouring country and ignoring others. As noted by the famous Finnish professor, Timo Vihavainen: “In the Finnish media, Russia has become the homeland of criminals and a source of bad news”.¹¹⁵ A similar negative image of Russia, certainly was and remains an important argument in favour of NATO membership. Any other economic, geographical, ethnographic argument, are usually not given.

Thirdly, according to NATO supporters, Finland cannot itself resist Russian aggression. However, the Finnish army is equipped with the most modern types of weapons, including offensive ones. Fourth, as a member of NATO, Finland which is considered an expert on Russia will become a member of the Russia-NATO Council,. Historical experience in relations with the Eastern neighbour, according to supporters of joining the North Atlantic Alliance, will undoubtedly be evaluated in NATO¹¹⁶. However, the Council is not working, and its prospects are vague.

And finally, supporters of the pro-NATO orientation are convinced that NATO membership would have a positive impact on bilateral military cooperation between Finland and the USA, for example, in matters related to access to new technology.

¹¹³ Williams M. C., Neumann I. B. From Alliance to Security Community: NATO, Russia and the Power of Identity // Millennium. 2000. Vol. 29. N 2. P. 357–387.

¹¹⁴ Effects of Finland’s possible NATO membership. Ambassador Antti Sierla. [Электронный ресурс] // Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland. 21.12.2007. URL: <http://www.finlandnato.org/public/default.aspx?nodeid=31559&contentlan=2&culture=en-US>; Häkämies in Washington: Russia Finland’s greatest challenge // Helsingin Sanomat. 07.09.2007.

¹¹⁵ Vihavainen T. Does history play a role in Finnish-Russian Relations? // The Two-Level Game: Russia’s Relations with Great Britain, Finland and the European Union / Ed. by H. Smith. Helsinki : Aleksanteri Papers. N 2. (Page 37) 2006

¹¹⁶ Browning C. Constructing Finnish National Identity and Foreign Policy, 1809–2000. Ph.D. Manuscript. University of Wales, Aberystwyth : 2003.(Page 26)

An important counterargument presented to NATO supporters is based on an assessment of the possible results and consequences of joining the Alliance for Finland. Firstly, for many it is obvious that the country's entry into the alliance will negatively affect Finnish-Russian relations. It can provoke Russia to take retaliatory steps, upset the prevailing balance of power in Northern Europe. Moreover, NATO membership could drag Finland into unnecessary conflicts with Russia. The system of regional and sub-regional cooperation of Finland, especially with Russia, will also suffer from joining the alliance; finally lose the meaning and viability of the “Northern Dimension”.¹¹⁷

Moreover, Finland is a democratic country where the authorities have always listened to the opinion of the people. According to opinion polls conducted in Finland in 1995-2008, positions regarding NATO membership show constant fluctuations in society, while supporters of accession are always in a significant minority. However, one cannot ignore the objective factors that currently make Finland's joining NATO unlikely. According to the FIIA report on NATO membership, it is not even possible to have the debate, as NATO is "to many Finns like a red rag to a bull."¹¹⁸

And last, and perhaps most dangerously, membership in the alliance could harm Finland's authority and influence in the EU, as well as its ability to pursue a “bridge-building” policy between the West and Russia, which remains an important aspect of Finnish identity. Mediation mission of the famous Finnish diplomat, President of Finland (1994–2000) M. Ahtisaari in Kosovo conflict would be impossible if Finland were a member of NATO. Ahtisaari would hardly have won the 2008 Nobel Peace Prize “for important efforts in resolving international conflicts on several continents for more than three decades”¹¹⁹. A. Stubb's mission would hardly have been possible during the armed conflict in South Ossetia in 2008, when a politician from little Finland, along with French President N. Sarkozy, became one of the authors of a peace plan.¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ Новикова И.Н. Финляндия и НАТО: «гражданский брак»? // Внешняя политика в эпоху глобализации: сб. ст. С. 85-94

¹¹⁸OSC: Helsingin Sanomat, 13 December 2007, ”Reiteration of Facts Guides Into Realistic Debate on NATO”

¹¹⁹ Официальный пресс-релиз Нобелевского комитета. 10.10.2008. Сайт Нобелевского комитета. URL: http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/2008/press.html

¹²⁰ Новикова И. Н., Межевич Н. М. Финляндия и НАТО: как забвение уроков прошлого может привести их повторению. 2016 (р.2)

In the Government Report on Finnish Foreign and Security Policy Finland's connections with the United States, as well as Finland's relations with NATO, are considered as critical to the country's foreign policy, and there is a desire for more collaboration on all fronts. Both the US and NATO portray Russia as a destabilising force. Even though Finland is not a member of NATO, it is viewed as vital to the Western value and security community when it comes to security. While Russia is considered as a source of regional danger (as stated above), "NATO's presence and conduct offers security to the region"¹²¹. Furthermore, the existence of NATO in Europe is viewed as crucial to Finland's national defence¹²². Finland has definitely abandoned its Cold War neutrality policy, but these remarks also call into question its non-alignment policy.

Since the annexation of Crimea, NATO's increased focus on collective defence has helped to move the center of gravity of Finland-NATO relations from global crisis management to the Baltic Sea area, opening up new opportunities for closer cooperation. The Host Nation Support agreement with NATO, for example, allows NATO to utilise Finland's territory, territorial seas, and airspace in peacetime, crises, and combat situations — all with the assent of the Finnish government (this agreement has been in force since 2016). Furthermore, Finland has been a member of a group of five NATO privileged partners since 2014 as part of the Enhanced Opportunities Partnership, which provides it with opportunities for cooperation in the Baltic Sea region in terms of exercises, military operations, and security consultations¹²³. These take place in a 28+2 format (NATO plus Sweden and Finland).

During one of the official visits, in the press conference President of Russia, V. Putin was asked a question: “What could be done to make Finland and the Finns feel more secure? The answer was the following: “We took all our Armed Forces from the borders of Finland to a depth of 1,500 kilometers. And, despite all the tension, despite the tension in the Baltic Sea region, in other regions of the world, nothing was done that could cause concern for the Finns.

By the way, we are doing this based on Finland's neutral status. Imagine Finland joining NATO. This means that the Finnish troops will no longer be independent, will cease to be sovereign

¹²¹ Finnish Government, 2016: 12

¹²² Finnish Government, 2016: 24

¹²³ Piotr Szymański. “With Russia Right Across the Border. Finland’s security policy .OSW-Centre for Eastern Studies. 2018. http://aei.pitt.edu/94234/1/with_russia_right_across_the_border_net.pdf

in the full sense of the word, they will become part of NATO's military infrastructure, which will suddenly end up on the borders of the Russian Federation.“

As it was mentioned many times, the main concern is NATO near the Russian borders. “Do you think we will continue to act this way: we have withdrawn our troops by 1500, so they will remain there, or what?” he added. Even though Russia will respect any “choice of the Finnish people how to defend their independence, to ensure their safety is the choice of the Finns” but Russia will also defend its own safety, warned V. Putin.¹²⁴

During the election campaign, S. Niinistö constantly stated that joining NATO is now irrelevant for his country, and it makes sense to think about it only if "Russia begins to see the same enemy in the European Union and Finland as it sees in NATO." Currently, he added, "there are no signs of this." Meanwhile, he adds that "the world is changing and the need to apply for membership may arise.”¹²⁵

¹²⁴ Заявления для прессы и ответы на вопросы журналистов по итогам российско-финляндских переговоров. 1 июля 2016 года. <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/52312>

¹²⁵ Zhuravel Valery. On the results of the presidential election in Finland. 2018 <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/ob-itogah-vyborov-prezidenta-finlyandii/viewer>

4.FINLAND'S FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS SWEDEN SINCE 2014

"I would definitely prefer that Finland and Sweden would proceed hand in hand in these issues and act within a Nordic perspective."¹²⁶

Sweden's influence can be viewed in two senses: narrowly, as the Scandinavian influence that shaped Finland's Northern European identity, and more broadly, as the influence that brought Finland into Western civilisation. This process began in the 12-14 centuries and, according to the Finnish historian H. Meinander, became "the first turning point in Finnish history".¹²⁷ These two identities - Northern European and Western - have survived till nowadays. In the expert environment of modern Finland, the point of view is widespread that being a part of Sweden had a positive impact on the formation of statehood and made it possible to create separate Finnish political community.¹²⁸

Nevertheless, throughout the Swedish era the development of the Finnish national culture was restrained or suppressed, the Finnish language was considered the language of commoners, in contrast to Swedish - the language of power, science, and culture. Ethnic Swedes, who had their political formations, educational institutions, cultural institutions, and public organisations, and ensured close ties with Sweden, were an integral part of the internal political life of Finland. All these factors contributed to the formation in Finland of a socio-political structure close to the Scandinavian one. Administrative, judicial, and party structures were formed according to the

¹²⁶ Former Foreign Minister Ilkka Kanerva. Uusi suomi, 26 March 2008: "Eroaa, ei eroa, eroaa...Eroaa, ei eroa, eroaa". Keir Giles, Susanna Eskola. "Waking the Neighbour: Finland, NATO and Russia" 2014

¹²⁷ Meinander H. Istoriya Finlyandii. Linii, struktury, perelomnyye moment [History of Finland. Lines, Structures, Turning Points]. Moscow: Ves' mir, 2008. p.57. (In Russian)

¹²⁸ Why is the year 1809 a significant year for Finland? <https://yle.fi/aihe/artikkeli/2009/01/20/miksi-vuosi-1809-suomelle-merkkivuosi>

Swedish model and changed little during Finland's stay in Russia. Finnish Foreign Minister Timo Soini writes: "For Finland, the historical connection with Sweden significantly influenced the way the legislative administrative system is arranged. This, in turn, has become an anchor for Finland's northern European milestones and an important starting point for our foreign policy activity."¹²⁹

The three-tier administrative-territorial division of Finland can be cited as an example of Swedish influence on the modern political system. Until 2010, the country was divided into communes, counties, and provinces. At present, instead of provinces, there are regional centers with a developed form of local self-government. The Constitution of Finland, which was in force from 1919 to 2000, borrowed a lot from the Swedish. In particular, the specifics of regulating the relationship between the head of state and parliament, the formation of parliamentary control, the institution of the ombudsman, etc. The Swedish influence affected the formation of the socio-political structure when Finland had already become an independent state. This was clearly manifested in the development of public organisations, clubs, and associations, the trade union movement in the labor market, and the formation of a party system with a high proportion of social democratic parties. As noted by the Swedish researcher H. Lindqvist, Finland under the influence of Sweden¹³⁰ has become a Western country with Western-style legislation, religious institutions, and governance. Thus developed the identity of the Finns, as an awareness of belonging to a single socio-economic, religious and socio-political group, close to the Scandinavian. However, since in the legal and administrative terms Finland was an ordinary Swedish province¹³¹ - it had no national laws, national institutions, or direct trade relations with other countries - there could not be any signs of statehood other than Sweden. They arose and became firmly established later, when Finland became part of Russia. The Swedish factor predetermined mainly the Scandinavian / Western identity. Later, this manifested itself in the development of Northern European cooperation, and in Finland's accession to the EU.

¹²⁹ Sweden's thing is ours/Sveriges sak är vår // DN Debatt. January 26, 2018. <https://www.dn.se/debatt/sveriges-sak-ar-var/>

¹³⁰ Ilta-Sanomat. 15.02.2018

¹³¹ Voronkov L.S. «Severnoe sotrudnichestvo» i osobennosti severoevropeskoj integracii[«Northern Cooperation» and Features of the North European Integration].

Moscow: MGIMO-Universitet, 2016. 340

p. (In Russian)

With a comparable position outside of NATO and some components of common history and worldview, it is reasonable that Sweden and Finland are looking at each other, wondering who will be the first to join NATO and seeking some cooperation. According to Swedish Defense Minister Sten Tolgfors, Swedish membership in NATO is contingent on three factors: political support, popular support, and Finland's participation.¹³²

According to the President, Finland and Sweden would make their own decisions if they wished to join NATO. On a theoretical level, President Niinistö addressed the topic of whether the nations should join NATO together. "Of course, that can only happen if it has public support in both countries. That, I understand, is how democracies work."¹³³ Moreover, "Our fates are not automatically entwined," said the President, referring to Finland and Sweden. "The decision-making process seems to be fairly complex. Of course, both countries will take care of their own decision-making. However, this does not alter the fact that they may influence each others' opinions."¹³⁴ In Sweden, the NATO debate is also affected by taboos, although for different historical reasons – to quote one commentator, "the Swedish defence focuses almost exclusively on which countries we should defend ourselves against."¹³⁵

Nonetheless, both Sweden and Finland have criticised Sweden's decision to abolish conscription and reduce the strength of its defence forces. "We don't want to pay to secure our border, and we don't want to make enforceable promises within NATO," one Swedish observer put it. It's not essential to have a vivid imagination to figure out what Finland's defence specialists think of such plan." (The Finnish defence specialists respond with a sarcastic remark about Sweden's unequal defence reform, which has resulted in the country having more generals than artillery pieces.)¹³⁶

The President of the Republic, Sauli Niinistö, hosted the Kultaranta discussions, which started in the spirit of Finnish-Swedish collaboration. Swedish Prime Minister Stefan Löfven was the primary speaker at the meeting. Their opening statements stressed the importance of deeper defence

¹³² Uusi Suomi, 16 February 2008, "Ruotsin puolustusministeri: 'Natoon yhdessä Suomen kanssa'"

¹³³ President Niinistö meets with Prime Minister of Sweden – NATO report discussed. May 9, 2016

¹³⁴ Ibid

¹³⁵ OSC: Per Ahlin, DN.se, 21 May 2008, "Debate With Shackles"

¹³⁶ Kari Huhta, Helsingin Sanomat International Edition 03 August 2008: "In a changing world, Finland's artillery stays the same."

cooperation between their countries. “Finland and Sweden have a history of responding to the challenges of the time. One approach to this involves engaging in closer cooperation. Alongside defence and military cooperation, a closer foreign policy partnership between Finland and Sweden is needed.” said President Niinistö.¹³⁷

The Finnish Foreign and Security Policy Report (2016) according to President Niinistö, covers the four pillars of security policy: defence capabilities, integration with the West, relations with Russia, and international law. "Our active strategy of achieving stability aims for peace and security. This needs both discussion and planning."¹³⁸

Mr. Löfven agreed with his Finnish colleague and also stated that changes in the security situation in the Baltic area will influence Finland and Sweden's future actions. He emphasised the possibilities for Finland and Sweden to collaborate to reduce regional tensions. “The Baltic Sea should be a tension-free region of partnerships. Militarily strong states do not have the right to violate the sovereignty of other countries or direct their security policy decisions. “Finland has a special role in Sweden’s international cooperation policy,”¹³⁹ – he said.

Mr. Löfven highlighted the non-alignment and cooperation foundations of Sweden's foreign and security policy. He also noted that the Baltic region's security is an important aspect of Sweden and Finland's cooperation with NATO alliance. Finland and Sweden's NATO partnership includes discussion of the Baltic region's security.¹⁴⁰

Former Swedish Foreign Minister Carl Bildt, a long-time NATO supporter, has even claimed that Nordic cooperation is more vital than NATO since it can better deal with contemporary security concerns.¹⁴¹ For countries in the Nordic region, establishing effective defence and deterrence capabilities on a national basis has become impossible. This may be less of an issue for

¹³⁷ Kultaranta talks: Closer defence cooperation between Finland and Sweden responds to the challenges of our time. July 1st, 2016

¹³⁸ Ibid

¹³⁹ Ibid

¹⁴⁰ Ibid

¹⁴¹ YLE. Carl Bildt: Nordic co-operation more important than NATO membership. March 1st, 2008 <https://yle.fi/utiset/3-5816663>

Denmark and Norway, who are NATO members, or for Iceland, which has no army and is geographically peripheral, but for Sweden and Finland this could mean a real issue.

Nordic defence cooperation is, at best, a means of bringing Sweden and Finland closer to NATO to address the region's fragmented strategic environment, which makes effective defence planning difficult. Sweden, on the other hand, has a security culture shaped by nearly two centuries of successful neutrality and non-alignment: although it can no longer defend itself, it has committed itself to the defence and security of its Nordic and EU partners, and its security policy is based on the ability to give and receive military aid.¹⁴²

The Nordic Defence Cooperation (NORDEF) pledged to improve defence cooperation and present a more coherent and cohesive grouping within the Baltic Sea area. With the Ukraine crisis and the following worsening of ties between Russia and Western democracies, this has taken on even more strategic significance. During the Cold War, there was little room for a Nordic defence or security identity. With three NATO members and two neutral nations, the area was characterised by a fragile "Nordic balance," with one (Finland) having a special connection with the USSR and the other (Sweden) having an "armed neutrality" policy.¹⁴³

However, as Russia's ties with the West weaken, and especially after the unlawful annexation of Crimea, the area has taken on new geostrategic significance.¹⁴⁴ The formation of NORDEF and the strengthening of Nordic security and defence cooperation are important parts of a larger restructuring of Europe's system security, which is taking place under the shadow of Russia's "new normal" of military aggression.¹⁴⁵

Sweden does not share similar warm attitude towards Russia, and does not "understand" when so does Finland. When in 2016 Russian President was invited with an official visit to Finland, in an interview with Dagens Nyheter, Swedish Foreign Minister Margot Wallström remarked that Sweden

¹⁴² Hugemark, B. (Ed.). (2012). Friends in need: Towards a Swedish strategy of solidarity with her neighbours. Stockholm: Royal Academy of the War Sciences.

¹⁴³ Dyndal, G. (2011). How the high north became central in NATO strategy: Revelations from the NATO archives. *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 34(4), 557–585.

¹⁴⁴ Dahl, A.-S. (Ed.). (2014). Northern security and global politics: Nordic-Baltic strategic influence in a post-unipolar world. London: Routledge.

¹⁴⁵ Wieslander, A. (2015). A new normal for NATO and Baltic Sea security. UIbrief, No.2. Stockholm: Swedish Institute of International Affairs.

would be unlikely to offer a similar invitation to Putin. "When it comes to activities that may be exploited for propaganda or perceived as an acceptance of certain policies," she told the daily newspaper, "you have to be careful." Timo Soini, the Minister for Foreign Affairs replied immediately saying that "it's important that we also engage in bilateral discussions with Russia, and I think it's excellent that President invited Putin to Finland," he replied to Uusi Suomi. "If Sweden makes other kind of decisions, I'll respect that."¹⁴⁶

There are four possible scenarios regarding the membership of these two Nordic countries in NATO: 1) Finland and Sweden will refrain from joining NATO, will maintain the status quo; 2) Finland will join NATO without Sweden; 3) Sweden will join NATO without Finland; 4) both countries will join NATO simultaneously. Each of these scenarios, except the first, could significantly affect the strategic situation in the Northern European subcontinent and the Baltic Sea region, thereby radically changing the geopolitical landscape. Moreover, the transformation of the foreign policy course and the formal military-political status of these two countries could lead to serious consequences in relations with Russia and possible adjustments in the Russian national security strategy.

Let us consider each of the above options in more detail. In the first case, we are talking about preserving the current state of affairs, that is, about the continuation of the policy of military non-alignment by Finland and Sweden in close cooperation with NATO. Most experts agree that this scenario is the most likely, at least for the next decade. Despite intensive interaction with the North Atlantic Alliance, Finland and Sweden still give priority to bilateral cooperation in the field of military-technical cooperation, considering it as the main instrument for ensuring national security. Cooperation is also carried out with the rest of the Nordic countries within the framework of the defence cooperation organisation NORDEFSCO.¹⁴⁷

In addition, there is an alternative military integration with the Baltic states and individual NATO members. For example, in 2016, an agreement on military assistance was signed between Finland, Sweden, and Estonia (a NATO member state). This also includes the trilateral agreement of intent in the field of defence cooperation between the United States, Finland, and Sweden, which was signed in the same 2016. To call a spade a spade, Finland and Sweden, within the framework of

¹⁴⁶ Uusi Suomi. Soini defends decision to invite Putin to Finland after criticism from Sweden. 23.08.2016 .

¹⁴⁷ Воронков Л.С. «Северное сотрудничество» и особенности североевропейской интеграции. Москва, Издательство «МГИМО-университет», 2016. с. 297-310.

such a strategy, are striving to spread the principles of collective security of the Alliance, drawing closer to it, but at the same time not joining it.

Finland hopes to increase the likelihood of a coordinated Finnish-Swedish reaction in the event of a crisis or war through this bilateral cooperation because the effectiveness of Finland's defence operation is in large part dependent on Sweden. Sweden could provide military help to Finland as quickly as possible, as well as secure the transit of military aid.¹⁴⁸ Finland's military forces, particularly the navy and air force, might benefit from the strategic depth provided by Sweden's territory. Since 2014, these two branches of the military forces of both nations have formed the most intense cooperation. It resulted in a high level of interoperability, including common defence scenario exercises like Northern Coasts and Ruska exercises in 2017.¹⁴⁹ Although the Finnish-Swedish agreements on expanding military cooperation include shared use of base infrastructure, they only apply to defence cooperation during peacetime and do not impose any duties during wartime. They are creating a joint Swedish-Finnish Naval Task Group (by 2023), closer co-operation on anti-submarine warfare and developing the concept of a combined Finnish-Swedish Brigade (by 2020).¹⁵⁰

The situation in which Finland joins NATO alone will not be the most forthcoming. It is generally accepted that Finland, perceiving Sweden as its “big brother”, is inclined to make most of the important foreign policy decisions in sync with its western neighbour, as was the case, for example, during their accession to the EU or joining the PFP program. Nevertheless, Finland entered the Eurozone without Sweden, which partly indicates that Finland can apply for NATO membership independently of Sweden, as advocated, for example, by former President Martti Ahtisaari.¹⁵¹

A more depressing scenario is also possible, according to which Sweden will join NATO without Finland. As a result of such a decision of the Swedish leadership, the territory of Finland may overnight turn into a buffer zone between Russia and NATO. Sweden's unilateral admission

¹⁴⁸ Adrian Hyde-Price. Epilogue: “Nordicness” – theory and practice” 2018. Sweden. Routledge.

¹⁴⁹ Northern Coasts exercise to deepen the bilateral cooperation between Finland and Sweden (FISE). September 19th, 2017 <https://merivoimat.fi/en/-/nothern-coasts-harjoituksessa-syvennetaan-fise-yhteistyota>

¹⁵⁰ Final reports on deepened defence cooperation between Finland and Sweden. <https://www.government.se/49baf3/globalassets/government/dokument/forsvarsdepartementet/final-reports-on-deepened-defence-cooperation-between-finland-och-sweden.pdf>

¹⁵¹ Азам Мурадов. Фактор Швеции в диалоге по линии Финляндия — НАТО. 2019 <https://russiancouncil.ru/azam-muradov/>

might lead to a return to Cold War situations, in which Finland must tread carefully to maintain an acceptable balance between Russia and the North Atlantic Alliance while trusting Sweden to function as a bridge to the West. As a result, Stockholm will face major diplomatic issues as well as other challenges.

It must be understood, however, that if Sweden decides to apply for membership, it will be difficult for Finland not to follow suit. According to Tuomas Forsberg¹⁵², a professor at the University of Tampere, the Finns do not want to voice the thesis that Sweden could predetermine Finland's line on this issue, but one way or another, Stockholm's position may indeed be decisive.

The leaders of Finland and Sweden have consistently stressed that they would prefer to synchronise their NATO policies to avoid sudden moves that would catch one of the countries by surprise. When President Niinistö was asked what he would do if Sweden announced its readiness to apply for membership, he replied that he did not want to speculate: "I am not answering the question, what would I do if the sky also began to fall"¹⁵³ - unintentionally implying that Sweden's decision to join NATO could be disastrous for Finland.

Finnish experts argue that NATO membership is more possible if coordinated between Finland and Sweden than if the countries joined the military bloc alone. Moreover, it should be noted that Sweden's NATO membership would primarily create an identity problem for Finland: the Finns have always positioned themselves as representatives of a Nordic country rather than a Baltic one. In this regard, Finland does not want to become a political "outsider" if all other Nordic countries find themselves in NATO.

Finland and Sweden also regularly participate in consultations with NATO countries on security in the Baltic region. However, the former secretary of state of the Swedish Ministry of Defence, a member of the Royal Academy of Military Sciences, Sven Hirdman, believes that the country's rapprochement with NATO will lead to increased tensions and increased military

¹⁵² Финляндия держит НАТО в запасе, 02.02.2018 [Электронный ресурс] // URL: <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/3535750>

¹⁵³ Andrew Cottey. The European Neutrals and NATO: Non-alignment, Partnership, Membership? 2018 . PALGRAVE MCMILLAN <https://books.google.lt/books?id=adFBDwAAQBAJ&pg=PA121&lpg=PA121&dq=niinisto+of+sky+will+fall&source=bl&ots=GzcvTybB8G&sig=ACfU3U338m5-OgW3IjgZihpn5iPFXEeVIQ&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjw2YWptZ31AhUR-yoKHccKc8Q6AF6BAgkEAM#v=onepage&q=niinisto%20of%20sky%20will%20fall&f=false>

spending: “We have been pursuing a policy of neutrality for two hundred years, and, in the opinion of most Swedes, it has served us well. I believe that Swedish security will only worsen after joining NATO. Becoming members of the alliance, we will automatically be drawn into a military conflict if it occurs between Russia and NATO. And if we are outside the military bloc, then, as before, we will have a chance to stay on the sidelines,”¹⁵⁴ he said.

Sweden's accession to NATO would cause a sharp reaction from Russia, and the Kingdom is well aware of the danger of such a step. Moreover, the increase in military spending is unjustified - membership in the alliance will bring the country more military-political problems than good. Swedish Defense Minister Peter Hultqvist said: "The best strategy now is to strengthen military capabilities at the national level, as well as develop bilateral and multilateral cooperation with other countries. No experiments in the field of strategic policy are needed now."¹⁵⁵ Almost all representatives of the Kingdom's authorities adhere to this position.

During the next legislative term (2019–2023), Finland is unlikely to take measures to join NATO. The opposition of the Social Democrats and the Centre Party will not be the only roadblock; even pro-NATO parties (the National Coalition Party and the Swedish People's Party) feel that the application for membership should be postponed due to current tensions between Russia and the West. However, the future of Sweden's security policy will have a significant impact on the progress of the talks on Finland's NATO membership. Sweden's application for NATO membership would stir Finland's anxieties of lingering in a security “grey zone” between NATO and Russia, give a powerful justification to its supporters in Finland, and undermine the opposition of the center left and the general public. It is in Helsinki's best interests to coordinate concerns of prospective NATO membership with Sweden to avoid a replay of the scenario from the 1990s, when Sweden's application for EU membership caught Finland off guard. Another aspect that might lead to a rethinking of Finland's NATO policy is the strengthening of alliance deterrence in the Nordic-Baltic area, which lays a greater emphasis on the distinction between members and non-members.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁴SVEN HIRDMAN AND ROLF EKÉUS | DECEMBER 12, 2020. Swedish membership of NATO is not the way forward.

¹⁵⁵ Peter Hultqvist "Total Defense"—an Interview with Swedish Minister of Defense Peter Hultqvist. 2019.

¹⁵⁶ Piotr Szymański. “With Russia Right Across the Border. Finland’s security policy .OSW-Centre for Eastern Studies. 2018. http://aei.pitt.edu/94234/1/with_russia_right_across_the_border_net.pdf

Sweden can be defined as Finnish significant other/friend. In Foreign Policy and Security Report it is highlighted: “The building of deeper cooperation with Sweden will continue without any predetermined limitations. In an unstable international operating environment, wide-ranging Nordic cooperation is increasingly important.”¹⁵⁷ Sweden is considered as the most important partner and Finland will continue to deepen its foreign and security policy and defence cooperation with Sweden, with no predefined limits.

The economies of Finland and Sweden are currently more intertwined than they have ever been. The integration has been strengthened by two nations due to their participation in the EU. In recent years, Finland and Sweden's security and defence policies have become increasingly similar. The collaboration has grown in strength and breadth.

In Finland's defence policy, improving military cooperation with Sweden will get highly significant. At the moment, neither Helsinki nor Stockholm is considering forming a bilateral military alliance (Stockholm would rather choose NATO membership as an alternative to its non-alignment). One of the reasons for this is that there is still a lack of trust between the two countries, as well as the alliance's deterrent value.¹⁵⁸

The policy of military non-alignment of Finland and its western neighbour Sweden, in principle, is assessed positively. But it is necessary to take into account the fact that it is subject to constant dynamics, and from time to time certain adjustments are made to it, moreover, significant ones. “Finland is country that does not belong to any military alliances. The Government will continue to deepen defence cooperation with Sweden and NATO cooperation based on partnership.”¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁷ Government Report on Finnish Foreign and Security Policy. PUBLICATIONS OF THE FINNISH GOVERNMENT 2020 https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/162515/VN_2020_32.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

¹⁵⁸ Piotr Szymański. “With Russia Right Across the Border. Finland’s security policy .OSW-Centre for Eastern Studies. 2018. http://aei.pitt.edu/94234/1/with_russia_right_across_the_border_net.pdf

¹⁵⁹Prime Ministers Office. Prime Minister Sanna Marin in Parliament on the Government Programme. 16.12.2019

Even though no cardinal changes in the approaches of Finland and Sweden to NATO membership are expected soon, the likelihood that the situation will remain the same in the future is not unconditional.

CONCLUSION

After the events in Ukraine, the security issue went to the top of the agenda in Finland. Even though joining NATO was the most frequently addressed question around the Finnish media and the politicians, it did not move forward, further than newspaper articles.

In order to be able to answer my research question, namely how did Finnish foreign policy discourse change after 2014 towards Russia, NATO and Sweden, I looked at the most representative interviews, speeches of officials from the government as well as prominent papers and newspapers in Finland.

Finland's foreign policy is very much related to its identity, especially when we speak about Russia. Finland is very cautious in its decisions. Russia is a significant other for Finland. Going back to the theory, namely the division between "other"-threat and "other"-friend, Finland considers Russia as the first one, but avoids voicing it in public discourse. While Sweden is perceived as a friendly "other" with Finland which shares a lot of common visions in foreign policy, maybe only except Russia. Finnish-Russian relationship has never been easy, but remained stable since the Cold War.

Finland is a democratic country. It always takes into account the opinion of its people. To make some kind of a decision, especially that important, they would have to hold a referendum. And as the polls in recent last years showed, the majority of the population is against any kind of radical changes in the country's foreign policy. Even though, it should be admitted that after the Ukrainian crisis the population's desire to join military alliance was higher than usual, most recent polls showed that level went down again .

Many researchers as well as politicians see Finnish security guarantees as well as foreign policy be based on NATO, as NATO is a security guarantee for most of the countries in EU, but I would argue and claim, that due to the unique narrative which comes out from the Finnish history, and its special relationship with USSR and now Russia, not joining NATO will actually be a guarantee of Finnish security. From my point of view, Finnish foreign policy does not require huge changes in security

sphere, as long as Finland keeps a careful balance between West and East. And a radical decision such as joining NATO can cause more problems for the country.

For Finland, it is important to continue cooperation but as was clearly shown in the recent Foreign and Security Policy Report, Finland is giving priority to its special bilateral partner Sweden and cooperation within the framework of NORDECFCO.

The difference which also catches the attention among the previous and the latest Finnish Foreign and Security Policy Report is that compared to others specifics and importance of Finnish and Russia relations are not highlighted in separate chapter but taken more into a general context.

As for future recommendations given from my side, I would suggest taking a look maybe a bit broader context, like including Arctic dimension and economic aspects. The latter has a meaningful impact on some foreign policy dimensions. Also, look at the discourse including parliament discussions. It will help to get a broader view of the topic.

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