Published in Cottey A. (eds) The European Neutrals and NATO : Non-alignment, Partnership, Membership?. London: Palgrave Macmillan. ISBN: 978-1-137-59523-2.
https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-59524-9_5

Finland and NATO : : Strategic Choices and Identity Conceptions

Tuomas Forsberg

Finland has decided to remain militarily non-aligned, although the country has been willing to develop defence cooperation inside the EU and a partnership with NATO. In fact, it is the only EU country bordering Russia that is not a member of NATO. The question of Finland's NATO membership has been discussed in public since the end of the Cold War, and the debates have intensified with the ongoing crisis in Ukraine and Russia's confrontation with the West. At the same time, Finland has been keen on deepening its partnership with NATO, engaging in an 'enhanced partnership' and signing a Host Nation Support agreement with the Atlantic Alliance. Despite the intensified discussion, it is nevertheless unlikely that there will be a swift decision to apply for full NATO membership.

Finland's current relationship with NATO has evoked a great deal of international interest recently, in light of the increased tensions between the Alliance and Russia that have become palpable in the Baltic Sea region (Andersson, 2014; Buhne, 2015; Chakarova, Kokcharov and Imeri, 2015; Giles and Eskola, 2009; Seip, 2015). This discussion reflects some of the general attitudes towards strategies of deterrence and containment when dealing with Russia. More systematic research endeavouring to explain Finland's policy choices and decision-making on the issue has been lacking, which is not surprising given the earlier stability in the area and Finland's modest size. Even including Finnish-language analyses and popular overviews, scientific contributions on the issue are few and they tend to deal with NATO as a whole (Ries, 1999; Forsberg, 2002; Honkanen and Kuusela, 2014; Karvinen and Puistola, 2015; Salomaa, 2015). On the other hand, the government has commissioned two reviews of Finland's NATO membership besides the regular general reviews of the country's security and defence policy (Bergquist, Heisbourg, Nyberg and Tiilikainen, 2016; Sierla, 2007).

This chapter argues that understanding Finland's relationship with NATO, including some of its apparent paradoxes, requires a knowledge of psychology and domestic politics more than insights into geopolitics and strategy. The chapter begins with an overview of Finland's historical relationship with NATO, starting from the Cold War and moving on to the post-Cold War era. This will be followed by a discussion of the domestic political factors in the debate and decision-making over NATO membership. The key determinants of Finland's membership with NATO with then be assessed: Russia, NATO itself and the United States, and Sweden. Finally, strategic rational choice elements are contrasted with psychological factors to do with perception and decision-making, and the issue of whether Finland could eventually join NATO and for what reasons is considered.

It is commonplace to argue that Finland became a political entity as an autonomous Grand Duchy under the rule of the Russian Empire. Although Finland did not have a foreign policy of its own, the question of neutrality emerged even during the Crimean War, when the British and French navies bombed the Finnish coastline and the war affected trade relations. The nation-builders at the time regarded the idea of neutrality as folly for the most part, however, and believed that loyalty to the Czar would best guarantee Finland's security and economic prosperity as well as development as a nation-state.

Finland gained independence in 1917 after the October revolution in Russia, but this was quickly followed by a brutal civil war between the 'Whites' and the 'Reds'. The war ended in a victory for the former, who had already held a majority in the parliament before the war. During the inter-war period, Soviet Russia was naturally perceived as an existential threat since the key leaders of the 'Reds' had escaped there, and it was widely believed that external assistance was needed to counterbalance Soviet power. In its foreign policy, Finland first tried to lean on Germany: the government had already accepted a German intervention in the civil war of 1918, but the German orientation came to a rapid end when Germany lost the First World War, and the allied powers refused to recognize Finland's independence if the country aligned itself with Germany. At the beginning of the 1920s, the Finnish government then chose to align itself with the other new eastern 'rimstates', Poland and the Baltic states, but this plan fell through because Poland's foreign policy was regarded as too adventurous and therefore risky in the aftermath of the Russo-Polish war of 1920. The 'rimstate policy' was followed by a more abstract orientation towards the League of Nations, but Finland effectively tried to boost its relations with the leading European powers in the organization, England and France. When the League of Nations started to appear weak in the mid-1930s with the rise of Mussolini's Italy and Hitler's Germany, which challenged the international security order, Finland adopted yet another foreign policy orientation and tried to approach the Nordic countries, particularly Sweden. The Nordic orientation was then manifested as a policy of 'strict neutrality' between Hitler's Germany and Stalin's Soviet Union.

As far as Finland was concerned, the Second World War was divided into two – or even three – phases. First was the Winter War in 1939–40 when the Soviet Union attacked Finland, as a result of which the country had to give up large areas of land in the east, almost the entire province of Karelia, including the second biggest city in the country, Viipuri. The interim peace ended when Finland joined Nazi Germany in its attack against the Soviet Union in 1941 in the so-called Continuation War, where Finland occupied areas in Soviet Eastern Karelia. Germany was not the preferred ally because it had de facto backed the Soviet Union during the Winter War, and aversion towards Nazism was widespread, but it was seen as the lesser of two evils by the elite. The Continuation War subsequently ended in a second defeat in September 1944. The third phase of the war was when the Finnish forces had to drive the remaining German forces out of Finland's territory in 1944–45. As a result of the war, the 1940 border was re-established with some additional areas given to the

Soviet Union in the north, as confirmed in the 1947 Paris Peace Treaty, but Finland was spared the Soviet occupation and annexation that befell the Baltic states.

During the immediate post-war years, Finland needed to fulfill its peace treaty obligations after the lost war and convince the Soviet Union that it did not pose a threat: since Finland itself could not challenge the Soviet Union, the threat was seen as coming from hostile countries that would be able to use Finland's territory to launch an attack against the Soviet Union. Gaining trust was not easy with Moscow, where Stalin was inclined to fear the worst, but he eventually respected Finland's independence and its post-war leaders. In 1948, Finland and the Soviet Union signed the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance (FCMA Treaty), which included Finland's aspiration to remain neutral but also a clause on joint military consultation if a threat were jointly identified. In this sense, as there was no automaticity in the implementation of the military clause, the treaty was different from that signed by those Eastern European states that joined the Warsaw Pact, which was President Juho Kusti Paasikivi's (1946-56) achievement in the negotiations based on Stalin's initial proposal. Although neutrality was mentioned in the treaty – an object of later disagreements over interpretation between the parties – it was not flagged while the Soviet Union maintained its military base near Helsinki up to 1955.

For Finland, NATO membership was impossible to countenance during the Cold War (see Hanhimäki, 1997). The FCMA Treaty symbolized Finland's adaptation to the new foreign policy line that was based on the friendly relations with the Soviet Union. The return of the Porkkala base strengthened the belief of the Finnish leaders that the Soviet Union did not have any immediate expansionist aims with regard to Finland. At the same time, the idea that foreign countries would be able to help Finland was castigated; it was seen as both utopian, seeing as Finland had been left to fend for itself during the Winter War, as well as dangerous because such thinking would lead Moscow to believe that such plans were being crafted in secrecy. Although Germany was named as the enemy in the peace treaty and the FCMA Treaty, everybody understood that in practice the key concern was the United States and the Atlantic Alliance (and when West Germany joined in 1955, it underlined the Soviet-leaning perception that NATO was a threat).

Nevertheless, Finnish leaders remained suspicious regarding the ultimate objectives of the Soviet Union. Paasikivi stressed the importance of good neighbourly relations with the Soviet Union, but he was also of the opinion that, by accepting the FCMA Treaty, Finland had complied as much as possible. The 'Finlandization' model that Finland had adopted signified that the country would be as flexible as possible in its relations with the Soviet Union, paying lip service to the policy of friendship but safeguarding the essence of its sovereignty at the same time (Forsberg and Pesu, 2016). Beneath the veneer of all the official talk of trust and friendship, a constant battle over the limits of this sovereignty was fought. Finland avoided criticizing the Soviet Union and upheld the idea of friendship, but rejected joint military exercises and maintained as credible a military deterrent as possible based on a large mobilization capability. Finland also developed economic relations with the Soviet Union, but avoided creating vulnerable economic dependence. Moreover, the cultural

contacts were limited, preserving the cultural gap; in this connection, the Russian language was spoken by very few and the tiny Russian minority consisted mainly of the Czarist era emigrants. Finally, it was important for the Finnish parliament and president to be the ones making the decisions on who was able to form the government and serve as minister, otherwise it would be a slippery slope, although the Russian opinion could be taken into account. At the same time, a rather benign image of the Soviet Union was easier to accept for the Finns, because the civilian population had not encountered Soviet atrocities of the same magnitude as those that had deeply traumatized the people of the Baltic states or Poland. The FCMA Treaty thus became the bedrock of Finnish-Soviet relations throughout the Cold War, with the result that, even in 1988, by which time perestroika had gained a foothold in the Soviet Union, 80 per cent of Finns still supported the treaty.

In many ways, the Finnish policy of neutrality combined with friendly relations towards the Soviet Union was consistent until the end of the Cold War, and maintaining a clear distance from NATO was an essential part of it. Although the strategic room for maneuver increased when compared to the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, the policy aimed at strengthening Finland's position internationally through membership of international organizations had to be implemented without violating Soviet interests, which meant that Finland stayed out of international organizations and cooperation schemes when the Soviet Union resisted the idea. The first decision was to refrain from the Marshall Aid, but Finland obtained Western economic assistance by other means. Whereas Moscow clearly signaled its resistance to Finland membership of organizations that it had labelled as 'anti-Soviet', such as NATO and the European Economic Community (EEC), the participation in Nordic cooperation was acceptable, although the formation of a Nordic Economic Union (NORDEK) in the late 1960s, which was seen by Moscow as a stepping stone to the EEC, was not. Moscow nonetheless accepted that Finland could conclude a free trade treaty with the EEC in 1973, but it contained special provisions that included less time than normal to withdraw from the treaty, and no political development clause (Antola, 1989). Furthermore, Finland refrained from publicly criticizing Soviet domestic or foreign policy. For example, Finland did not condemn the Soviet invasions of Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Afghanistan, yet it also avoided criticizing the United States and NATO in the name of its policy of neutrality. The Finnish paradox, according to President Urho Kekkonen (1956-82), was that Finland could only approach the West if it simultaneously approached the East: the better the relations with Moscow, the better they were likely to be with the West (Kekkonen, 1961).

In these circumstances, NATO membership was hence not considered possible and military cooperation with NATO countries was extremely limited (Penttilä 1991). Moreover, NATO was not seen as a stabilizing factor in Northern Europe: Finland did not subscribe to the idea of a Nordic balance whereby the Finnish FCMA Treaty was balanced with Norwegian and Danish NATO memberships. Military contacts with NATO countries, even with Norway and Denmark, were sensitive. An exception was the Nordic military training programme for UN peacekeeping operations. Apart from standard military-to-military contacts, through visits and military attachés, Finland engaged with NATO countries mainly in procurement policy. In fact, Finland had to

consult the UK in procurement issues because the UK was a signatory of the peace treaty (Finland had not been at war with the United States, which was hence not a signatory of the peace treaty). London, and Washington in particular that London consulted in the issue, had a surprisingly restricted interpretation of the peace treaty in 1962, when Finland wanted to upgrade its anti-aircraft defense system by buying British missiles, because they feared that such missiles could be used against NATO's strategic bombers (Penttilä, 1991, 106-107; Visuri, 1994, 198-204).

The conclusion that can be drawn from this brief historical review is that history, in itself, does not determine policies; rather, the collective memory of the past and the constructed historical lessons do (Browning, 2002). The experiences of NATO members Norway and Denmark, as well as those of the Baltic states, were different from Finland's. Finland's historical tradition of neutrality is shorter than Sweden's and the experience is mixed. Nevertheless, many Finns believe that Finland's neutrality policy was the key to its success during the Cold War. Unlike other Eastern European states, Finland did not become a Soviet bloc country, prospered economically, and benefited from having good relations with both East and West. The saying 'if it ain't broke, don't fix it' applies, and explains Finland's orientation in the post-Cold War era.

Post-Cold War Evolution

The end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Soviet Union swiftly transformed Finland's geostrategic position. Finland was rather slow to react to this change but it renegotiated the FCMA Treaty in 1991 and concluded a regular friendship treaty with Russia without any military clauses in 1992. Even more importantly, on the eve of German unification in September 1990, Finland unilaterally reinterpreted the peace treaty so that the clauses that placed restrictions on Finland's armed forces were regarded as null and void (Penttilä, 1994).

At first, the new situation seemed only to solidify Finland's neutrality, but this interlude was short-lived. Finland soon abandoned the term neutrality and reduced it to military non-alignment, which was considered a more technical term and did not imply political neutrality. This change was made as Finland applied for membership of the EU. The most immediate reason for the policy change was Sweden, which rather unexpectedly announced its plan to apply for membership in autumn 1991. Finland followed suit – the imperative was partly economic since in many fields, such as forestry, Sweden and Finland were competitors in the European market – but President Mauno Koivisto (1982–1994) argued that at the end of the day the economy was secondary and general security policy reasons constituted the primary motivation for applying for EU membership (Koivisto, 1995, 246). An intensive public debate over the pros and cons of membership was conducted and 57 per cent of Finns supported it in the referendum held in 1994, which sealed the country's membership in 1995 (Arter, 1995, 1996).

NATO membership was only discussed as a theoretical option, since prior to 1994 it was not clear to the Finnish leaders that NATO had any intention of enlarging. Finland, however, wanted to develop its relations

with NATO, since its role was soon deemed central. It joined the Partnership for Peace (PfP) in 1994, as well as the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC) in 1997 and quickly expanded its relations with NATO (legend has it that Finland joined the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC) as an observer in 1992 by accident, the Finnish Ambassador accepting the invitation from a Norwegian colleague to attend the meeting in Oslo). For example, Finland took part, first cautiously but soon more eagerly, in the PfP Planning and Review Process (PARP), which was aimed at developing the armed forces on the basis of interoperability. Finland also participated in the NATO-led crisis management operations in Bosnia, Kosovo and Afghanistan.

The official image of NATO improved after the Cold War years, and the Alliance, as well as the presence of the United States, was seen as essential for European stability (Forsberg and Vaahtoranta, 2001). Although the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) was still seen as a Finnish brainchild of sorts, it became clear that NATO was there to stay. At the same time, NATO's past role in the Cold War was now assessed positively in Northern Europe. In the post-Cold War Europe, NATO was mainly seen as an organization for crisis management, 'the only international organization with the ability to handle militarily demanding crisis management tasks', and its role in broad-based comprehensive security cooperation was emphasized, although its core function of providing collective defence was not denied. The key test was the Kosovo War in 1999: Finland was hesitant to support NATO's air campaign against Yugoslavia at first because it lacked the UN mandate. Eventually, Finland did so on the basis of the necessity of preventing a humanitarian crisis from ensuing, and President Martti Ahtisaari played a major role in the peace negotiations that ended the conflict (Forsberg, 2000).

Finland developed its so-called 'option' policy towards NATO membership at an early stage. Accordingly, Finland was not seeking full membership or Article 5 security guarantees, but reserved an 'option' to do so if circumstances changed. Yet the exact nature of the change was never spelt out clearly. The Government Report on Security Policy delivered to the Parliament in 1995 stated that 'Finland will not seek new defence solutions', but 'if the international environment changes essentially, Finland will reconsider its security choices in the light of this development'. Similar formulations were then used in the subsequent security and defence policy white books published in 1997, 2001, 2004, 2009, 2012 and 2016 (Finnish Ministry of Defence, nd). The exact formulation of this 'option' often constituted a major political tug-of-war between the parties. Indeed, the sentence was over interpreted and often overshadowed other more important issues. In the 2004 Report, for example, the paragraph read as follows: 'Finland is continuously monitoring the changes occurring in NATO, the development of its capability and the organization's international significance. Applying for membership of the Alliance will remain a possibility in Finland's security and defence policy also in the future' (Finnish Ministry of Defence, 2004, 82). In the foreign and security policy review of 2016, the stance was the same: 'While carefully monitoring the developments in its security environment, Finland maintains the option to seek NATO membership' (Prime Minister's Office, 2016, 24).

The president has a key role in directing foreign and security policy and thus also defining Finland's relationship with NATO. The first linkages were already established under Koivisto's tenure and they expanded under President Martti Ahtisaari (1994–2000). For example, Finland's ambassadorial level mission to NATO was established in 1997. Ahtisaari had a much more positive view of NATO than Koivisto, but he did not, however, support Finland joining NATO when in office, although he has since advocated membership. Trying to join the EU and NATO at the same time was considered too risky in terms of popular support. His hands were tied by political resistance, including his own party, the Social Democrats, who held key positions in the government, as well as the prevailing public opinion, which remained rather sceptical towards NATO. Moreover, those among his advisors who were more willing to consider membership also wanted to postpone the decision for identity reasons, so that Finland would not join NATO along with the former Warsaw Pact countries. Hence, there was no decision about applying for NATO membership during Ahtisaari's term as president: the issue was not even properly tabled. As Steven Blank observed in 1996, 'one gets the impression the government would like the issue of Finland and NATO to go away from the headlines' (Blank, 1996, 14-15).

President Tarja Halonen (2000–2012) was less sanguine about developing Finland's relationship with NATO than his predecessor, and particularly objected to Finland joining the Alliance. In her inaugural speech, she stated very clearly that Finland should not aim for NATO membership, and in her memoirs she was even more explicit about her task of defending Finland's militarily non-aligned status against pressure from within the administration. Finland's perspective on NATO was often ambivalent at that time, and also shaped by generally critical views of the Bush administration and the Iraq war. NATO's 'big bang' enlargement, which included the Baltic states in 2004, was first seen as indifferent or even detrimental to the security situation in the Baltic Sea region, although Finland stressed the countries' sovereign right to join a defence alliance. The Government Report of 2001 hinted at this attitude: 'If NATO decides to take new members, enlargement should, in Finland's view, be carried out so that it strengthens security and stability for the whole of Europe' (Finnish Ministry of Defence, 2001, 34). Yet, when the enlargement was declared, Finland welcomed it and was relieved that it would no longer bear the responsibility, along with Sweden, for defending the Baltic states should the question arise.

At the same time, during Halonen's term in office, cooperation with NATO was not halted but Finland sought to preserve its status as a first-class partner. As long as the Finland remained as a partner with no article 5 commitments and participation in NATO-led military operations could be seen as a continuation of the peace-keeping tradition, new forms of cooperation were generally seen as acceptable. NATO cooperation was urged particularly by the Ministry of Defence but the administrative elite did not highlight the expanding ties in political terms. The critics soon labelled such tactics as 'inching towards NATO'. Against such criticism, many key politicians reminded citizens of the dangers of 'anti-Americanism' and wanted to keep the 'option' as real as possible. Moreover, although Finland was a staunch supporter of European Union (EU) security and

defence policy, it often sided with the Atlanticists on many institutional questions relating to European defence. The willingness to participate in the NATO Response Force (NRF) in a supplementary role was announced in 2008 and Finland has participated in its activities since 2012. Finland also deemed it important to participate in NATO's crisis management activities because this guaranteed an invitation to the Alliance's meetings. Halonen, however, wanted Finland to participate in UN peace-keeping operations as well, as a balancing act.

Halonen's term as president came to an end in 2012 when Sauli Niinistö (2012-) was elected president, but Finland's policy towards NATO did not change much. Two important decisions were made, however. First, Finland upgraded its partnership to 'Enhanced Opportunities' at the Wales NATO Summit in 2014. This status corresponded with the country's wishes to develop its partnership in a tailored manner on a country-by-country basis rather than as a general policy towards a wider group of countries. Second, Finland also signed the Host Nation Support agreement (Memorandum of Understanding) with NATO that had been under preparation for several years. Moreover, in October 2016 Finland concluded a bilateral defence deal with the United States similar to Sweden's (Yle News, 2016; Ministry of Defence of Finland, 2016).

A Foreign Ministry review of Finland's defence cooperation published in 2015 contends that it has been important for Finland to be one of the more advanced partner countries in order to be able to maximize the benefits of the partnership. Finland wants to remain an advanced partner in the future as well and prefers to continue close cooperation with Sweden within the PfP framework. However, the report underlines that 'the goals of partnership will, naturally, be defined on a national basis and from Finland´s perspective'. The report considers that the focus of the PfP policy is shifting as NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) operation in Afghanistan has been terminated. The crisis in Ukraine will, according to the report, also bring about changes to the context in which partnership activities will be carried out, but 'Finland does not see any need to change its central premises or goals' (Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 2015, 58-64).

Developing Relations with NATO

As a partner country, a great deal of Finland's cooperation with NATO was related to crisis management. Finland was an active peacekeeper during the Cold War, participating in UN operations in Suez, Cyprus, the Golan and Lebanon to name the most prominent. Finland wanted to preserve this role in the post-Cold War era too, but in practice, its role was diminishing relatively speaking. In any event, in the post-Cold War era, when peacekeeping activities were generally shifted from the UN to NATO as well as to the EU, Finland accepted that if NATO had received a UN mandate for a crisis management operation, Finland should try to contribute to such an operation. Finland has, indeed, participated in most of NATO's peacekeeping operations with contingents commensurate with the size of the country. 150 men took part in IFOR/SFOR in Bosnia-Herzegovina, up to 700 men in KFOR in Kosovo, where Finland also assumed the lead nation role of

the Multinational Task Force South three times, 200 men in ISAF in Afghanistan, serving mainly in the north, as well as 80 soldiers in the post-ISAF assistance mission Resolute Support. However, Finland did not participate in NATO's Unified Protector operation in Libya in 2011, although it had a UN mandate. One explanation for this is that not all western NATO states participated, but another is that the decision was to be made just ahead of the parliamentary elections in 2011 and it was simply easier for government candidates to avoid the potentially difficult issue amid the campaigning.

Another principal area of cooperation, not unrelated to crisis management, was the development of interoperability between Finnish and NATO armed forces. Even many NATO sceptics regarded this as a technical rather than a political activity since it was accepted that NATO's standard had become the overall international standard that was also applied in the EU Battlegroup and Nordic exercises. In the PARP process the goal was mainly international crisis management, but since 2010 Finland has chosen its Partnership Goals more consciously from the perspective of national defence requirements. Although Finland regarded its defence system as being different from the NATO mainstream, based on territorial defence and conscription, it took NATO's goals of developing 'Smart Defence' and the 'Connected Forces Initiative' (CFI) seriously. Moreover, Finland also developed military cooperation with NATO in order to improve its readiness to receive military aid. In this regard, the conclusion of the Host Country Support agreement was crucial.

Bilateral cooperation with NATO member states also increased tremendously after the end of the Cold War. With regard to the United States, the paramount decision was to buy 64 F/A-18 Hornet fighter jets in 1992 (Crossette, 1992). This purchase led to intensive cooperation between the air forces that radiated outwards to the overall political and military relations between the countries. Procurement also played a visible role in relations with Germany since right after German unification Finland bought redundant East German Soviet tanks cheaply, and later in 2003 and 2014 hundreds of used Leopard tanks from Germany and the Netherlands.

Nordic cooperation has also played an increasingly important role in Finland's defence policy. Overall, Finland's partnership with NATO has developed in tandem with Sweden and their bilateral relationship is often seen nested in this larger framework of Western security cooperation (Pyykönen 2016). Although the primary partner among the Nordic states has been Sweden, with which Finland has concluded many bilateral arrangements, cooperation is also carried out with the Nordic NATO countries in the context of NORDEFCO (Nordic Defence Cooperation) (Forsberg, 2013). For example, Finland and Sweden have identified several areas for cooperation and launched joint projects with Norway, including exercises in the Northern Calotte area. The most famous of these activities is the biannual aviation Arctic Challenge Exercise in which many NATO countries also participate. Yet Finland did not participate in the Icelandic airspace patrol operation, partly for legal reasons, but also because the political opposition regarded engaging in an activity that might incur the risk of encountering Russian forces while patrolling a NATO country as too dangerous.

Finland's role as a NATO partner country is generally praised by NATO representatives. When NATO Secretary-General Anders Fogh Rasmussen visited Helsinki in 2012, he stated that 'Finland is a model partner for NATO. Because you fully understand the importance of cooperative security' (Rasmussen, 2012). NATO and Finland 'share the same principles and values'. He also welcomed Finland becoming a full member, if the country chose to do so. Similarly, Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg (2015) assured in 2015 that 'there is an excellent relationship between Finland and NATO and Finland is one of our most active and closest partners'. From NATO's point of view, Finland's contribution to NATO-led operations and the development of smart defence was seen as valuable. A particular aspect of Finland's crisis management profile has been the emphasis put on civilian crisis management. Finland has also highlighted the role of women in international peace and security and cooperation with NATO on the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 in this context. Most recently, more emphasis is put on information exchanges on "hybrid warfare", coordinating exercises, and developing joint situational awareness. At the same time, one of the key points of President Niinistö's discussions with Stoltenberg in 2016 was the question of how to enhance dialogue with Russia and reduce tensions in the Baltic region: Niinistö deemed small issues such as air safety as important (The President of Finland, 2016).

The Domestic Politics of NATO Membership

Finland's policy towards NATO can also be regarded as an outcome of domestic politics, reflecting not just one position but a compromise between several. Indeed, the national consensus over the current NATO policy is mainly instrumental, since both those who favour Finland's membership in NATO as well as those who oppose it, can subscribe to the 'option' in principle, but disagree over when the 'option' should be redeemed. Often several schools are detected without clear parameters. There are the stereotypical 'Atlanticists' and 'Friends of Russia' on opposite sides, and there are the 'Europeanists', who put EU defence before NATO and even 'Nordicists'. Then there are 'Globalists' who think that the biggest security problems are not of military nature but to do with climate change and other environmental catastrophes as well as global unequality and think that NATO does not help to solve them. Yet the clearest divide is often between the liberal internationalists and conservative nationalists, although these groups are not coherent in their views on NATO (Haukkala and Vaahtoranta 2016).

Nevertheless, domestic power relations affect Finland's policy towards NATO. There are three levels of domestic politics in Finland related to the question of NATO membership and the policy towards NATO in general that should be distinguished. First is the President, who has traditionally been the leader of foreign policy but whose constitutional powers have been curtailed, since European policy is part of the Prime Minister's domain. The second level is the government and the key parties that form it and build a majority in the parliament. Thirdly, there is public opinion. As Finland's NATO membership would require support at

all these levels, the domestic politics of NATO in Finland has to be regarded in terms of the interplay between all three.

As already mentioned, President Ahtisaari has been in favour of NATO membership but when in office he did not initiate any formal process. By contrast, his successor as President, Tarja Halonen, also a Social Democrat in terms of party background, saw herself as a guarantor of Finland's militarily non-allied status and an interlocutor with President Putin. Although President Sauli Niinistö is a conservative, he has not been willing to push for NATO membership openly. On the contrary, he has argued that Finland has not joined NATO because it would damage the country's good relations with Russia, which he sees as a prerequisite for Finland's security. On occasion, he has been rather cryptic in his views regarding NATO and possible Finnish membership. 'Sitting on the fence' is one of his famous metaphors. In August 2013, he argued:

> Dissatisfaction with our current NATO policy — consisting of close cooperation with NATO and the potential of applying for membership at some point — often appears in two different ways. Viewing this as sitting on the fence, one way is to think we should be quick about jumping over the fence, while the other is to think we should not have climbed it in the first place — or at least there was no point to it. I happen to think that being on top of the fence is quite a good place to be. Our present position serves our interests well at this point in time, taken overall. We have freedom to take action, we have choices available, and we have room to observe and to operate. We are not pulled one way or the other (Niinistö, 2013).

Traditionally, the Finnish president has been charged with acting as a guarantor of good relations between Finland and Russia, and Niinistö has clearly taken on this role. Indeed, if the president wants to avoid the role of a ceremonial president, he is institutionally geared towards playing an active role in bilateral relations with Russia, since EU-related foreign policy matters belong to the domain of the prime minister. However, as mentioned earlier, Niinistö has also been keen on developing Finland's partnership with NATO: in October 2016 he paid a historic visit to the NATO Headquarters in Brussels.

With regard to the major parties, only the Conservatives (*Kokoomus*) have adopted a pro-NATO stance. The party leader and current Minister of Finance, Petteri Orpo, as well as his predecessors and former Prime Ministers Alexander Stubb and Jyrki Katainen, have openly favoured NATO membership. Yet, even when Stubb and Katainen were prime ministers, they did not have a chance to actively foster this party position. In a multiparty system, the government is bound to consist of a coalition of at least two major parties, and as political security decisions are traditionally based on a broad consensus, in practice three of the present four (or two out of three) major parties would be needed to back any membership bid.

The biggest party at the time of writing, the Centre Party, has traditionally been loyal to the policy of military non-alignment and the 'old guard' of the party is doctrinally rather rigid in their attitudes towards NATO, while those in the party who would approve a closer relationship with NATO are in a clear minority. The Party

Leader and Prime Minister from May 2015, Juha Sipilä, has not a notable background in dealing with foreign and security political questions but he has asserted that he does not support Finland's NATO membership, although he is in favour of a factual debate on the issue. The government chose not to make any firm statements on its NATO policy, but did launch a review process.

The majority of Social Democrats are also against Finland's membership of NATO, with former President Halonen and long-time foreign minister Erkki Tuomioja (2000-07 and 2011-15) famously associated with a reserved attitude towards the issue, but again, there are also a few prominent supporters of NATO within the party ranks as well. The current party leader, Antti Rinne, represents the very traditional line: 'In my opinion, it is absolutely clear that at present, Finland should not apply for NATO membership. My position is that NATO membership would increase the risks to our foreign and security policy' (Yle News, 2015; see also Sputnik News, 2015). However, he believes that cooperation with NATO is still important.

Moreover, the populist Finns party (formerly known as the 'True Finns') – the second biggest party in the 2015 parliamentary elections – also favours military non-alignment, but their logic is based more on the idea of preserving Finland's traditional defense system and the country's will to defend itself, rather than on profoundly critical judgments about NATO. Thus, the party leader and current Minister of Foreign Affairs, Timo Soini, has not ruled anything out: in one interview he said that he himself does not know his stance on NATO membership (Martikainen, 2015). For the 'Finns', NATO appears a lesser 'evil' than the EU. It is worth noting that Soini has praised relations with the US, supported the bilateral defence agreement, and regarded overall the US role in security questions as essential for Finland.

The smaller parties have different positions with regard to NATO's role and Finland's membership in it. The Swedish People's Party supports membership and several of its party leaders who have held the post of Minister of Defence in previous governments have been outspoken advocates of joining the Alliance. The Greens, as a party, are against membership, but in reality divided on the issue, whereas the Left Alliance is the fiercest opponent of Finland's closer links to NATO.

This overall political situation whereby many parties with no preformed blocks form the government leads to rather complex games when coalition agreements are negotiated. The six-party government formed in 2011 included a clause in the programme that precluded the government from preparing an application for NATO membership despite the fact that the 'option' of applying was preserved in principle. The three-party government formed in 2015 kept the 'option' as before, but dropped the notion that denied preparation, because it was deemed as superfluous.

Over the years, public opinion has been rather stable on the NATO issue: while around 60 per cent support cooperation with NATO, support for membership has varied between 20 to 30 per cent of the population on average, while the majority, 60 to 70 per cent, have been against (ABDI, 2016; Forsberg and Pesu, 2017). Support for Finland joining NATO reached its nadir during the Kosovo and Iraq wars, but grew slightly when the perception of the Russian threat increased after the Georgian war and the Ukrainian conflict. Yet the

changes were not significant and the percentage of supporters was never bigger than that of opponents. The mostly pro-NATO media content has had little effect on making Finns more favourably disposed towards NATO over time. Indeed, politicians and public opinion are against joining NATO for the most part, whereas the foreign policy elite, consisting of officials, journalists and researchers, as well as military officers, largely support NATO membership (Rahkonen, 2007; Vento, 2016).

Figure 1.

Although there is no visible quantitative trend in support of NATO membership, there may have been a qualitative change more recently. Those in favour of NATO membership are more convinced than ever that they are right. For those who supported NATO membership in the past, the Russian threat was not the key issue, but rather Finland's willingness to belong to the relevant organizations that can better influence its security environment and allow it to participate in decision-making. Since the Ukraine crisis, NATO membership supporters have advocated their position more intensively and openly, while those defending the policy of military nonalignment have needed to defend their views more effectively than before.
As long as the majority of the public at large are against NATO membership, politicians will tend to stick to the existing policy line. Nevertheless, the relationship between public opinion and party positions is a chicken-and-egg question. There is some evidence to the effect that if the government supported NATO membership, public opinion would change. Less than one-third of the population supports membership, but only roughly one-third opposes it consistently. The opinion of the remaining one-third is volatile and might change were the leadership to argue for membership, but there is no certainty of the issue. Leading politicians and parties have circumvented the public opinion issue by stating that a referendum would be organized on the membership question (O'Dwyer, 2014).

NATO Membership as a Security Question

The key issue in debates over Finland's membership of NATO is naturally Russia. Russia and its possible aggressive military intentions towards Finland is often the key reason for supporting membership of the Alliance, although many supporters denied this logic, particularly before the Georgian war and the Ukrainian crisis. Nevertheless, the argument is the traditional one: Finland is too small to defend itself alone and membership would provide the best guarantees that the country can have, firstly as a deterrent to raise the threshold of military invasion, and secondly as an insurance policy to obtain military assistance if required. Alternatives such as the EU or Sweden are not seen as trustworthy.
Those who prefer Finland's military non-alignment often state that there is no 'security deficit' for which NATO membership would be needed, but they are not necessarily unanimous in harbouring a benign view of Russia as a state. In fact, many defense enthusiasts are concerned that with NATO membership Finland would

be inclined to give up its territorial defense based on conscription, while the traditionally strong will to defend the country would diminish. Some have feared that Finnish forces would be required to defend the Baltic states rather than their own country, and that a commitment to defending the Baltic states would send out the wrong signal to the United States about the importance of its presence in the Baltic Sea region. Moreover, neutrality is preferred in terms of stability. Conventional wisdom has it that Finland should avoid provoking 'the Bear'. It is the legacy of Cold War thinking that Russia does not have offensive interests with regard to Finland, and that its military goals are defensive. According to this line of thought, a military conflict between Russia and Finland would only emerge if Finland were allied with enemies that have military designs on Russia, or if Russia perceived that to be the case. Ergo, Finland should not join NATO (see e.g. Blombergs, 2016).

The idea that provoking Russia by joining NATO is dangerous and should be avoided comes up against a number of counter-arguments. One is that Russia already perceives Finland as a potential adversary and that NATO membership would sharpen this image only slightly. Russia's assertive and sometimes arrogant behaviour is seen as proof of its strategic interests in Finland, irrespective of NATO membership. Some express criticism that Finland already bears the political, military and economic costs of NATO membership, but fails to reap the benefits. 'We share the risks, but do not get the security guarantees', argued Jaakko Iloniemi, a former diplomat and *éminence grise* of Finnish diplomacy, at a June 2014 seminar hosted by Finland's president (Iloniemi, 2015). Moreover, it is not clear what causes offence to Russia because almost any form of military or political cooperation can be deemed provocative. Limiting defence policy options based on what Russia deems acceptable could imply that Finland would not be able to deepen Nordic defence cooperation, participate in NATO exercises or have national military bases or manoeuvres in proximity to Russia's borders.

It is clear that Russia would prefer that Finland did not join NATO, but politicians and security experts disagree over what Russia's countermeasures would be. Those more inclined towards NATO membership generally believe that the measures would be restricted and temporary, and that it would be possible to continue good relations with Russia in the same manner as Norway or Germany after a frosty interlude. Those in favour of NATO membership think that Russia would, in fact, benefit from having more amicable nations in NATO. Yet the sheer uncertainty about Russia's reaction should Finland attempt to join the Alliance plays a role in the debate. Finns do not want to portray an image of betrayal that could be held against them (Saari and Pursiainen, 2002). Conversely, Finland does not command as much visible good will from Russia as it used to. For example, the Russian Foreign Ministry has criticized Finland for human rights violations in a disproportionate manner. President Vladimir Putin's personal envoy, Sergei Markov, said in an interview with Finland's Swedish-language newspaper *Hufvudstadsbladet* in June 2014 that 'Finland is one of the most Russophobic countries in Europe, together with Sweden and the Baltic states' (Lauren, 2014). As if to underline the sentiment, Russia has also violated Finland's airspace and simulated a military attack on the

country (Blair, 2015). Indeed, it is considered that membership ‘would constitute a significant political defeat for Moscow’ and that ‘Finno-Russian relations would take a beating and the political reaction would be harsh and probably also “personal”’ (Bergquist, Heisbourg, Nyberg and Tiilikainen, 2016). When visiting Finland in July 2016, Putin sarcastically noted that ‘NATO would gladly fight Russia to the last Finnish soldier’ and indicated that Russia would need to respond and shift troops if Finland joined NATO and (RT.com, 2016). It is not difficult to imagine other possible countermeasures by Russia. The Finnish dairy products sector is already suffering from the Russian sanctions against the EU and in the spring 2016 Russian authorities allowed a couple of thousand asylum seekers to enter the Finnish border which was seen as an intentional change of a previous long-term practice. By various means, Russia would most certainly try to affect the result of the referendum on NATO, if it were organized. Accidentally or not, Russian military planes violated the Finnish air space on the same day when the bilateral defence agreement with the US was signed.

Influence as an Issue

A second dimension of Finland’s debate on NATO has dealt with political influence. Once again, the argument runs both ways. Those who support NATO membership argue that Finland should have a seat at the table where important decisions are taken, whereas those who are against NATO membership believe that Finland would lose its sovereignty and be forced to succumb to NATO decisions and dispatch its soldiers to foreign wars.

Those in favour of Finland’s membership of NATO argue that this would guarantee Finland’s access to information and to the decision-making bodies that crucially affect its security. As Finland’s former ambassador to the UN and Sweden and foreign-policy heavyweight Max Jakobson noted in 1997, ‘(T)o remain outside of NATO is to be without a seat at the table where the decisions on European security will be made’ (Barber, 1997). Even if Finland is a valued partner, it does not receive the material that is circulated amongst NATO members, it does not have voting rights and it does not participate in defence planning. Prime Minister Katainen stated once that Finland is like a pitiful bloke in NATO’s hallway trying to find out what is discussed inside. Additionally, it is argued that Finland’s membership of NATO would also dispel suspicions inside the EU that the Nordic country is not truly committed to shared goals. The political leaders have complained that the representatives of a non-NATO member states are not able to get EU top posts in foreign and security policy (Grüne, 2009, 37).

The opposite view is that NATO membership would curtail Finland’s sovereignty and would not bring any additional benefits in terms of influence in international affairs. Those who subscribe to this view claim that Finland would not be able to influence NATO’s decisions to any great extent, but would have to accept them and adapt to them. Moreover, in global politics, Finland’s ability to shape policies, for example in the UN, would be diminished because the country would be seen as just another appendage of the larger Western

bloc. President Halonen, in particular, stressed that Finland can better offer good services as peace mediator if the country remains militarily non-aligned.

Identity Matters

Identity questions have played a prominent part in the NATO debate in Finland (Rahkonen, 2006). Socially constructed elements of identity have largely supported military non-alignment in the country. For Finns, neutrality has many positive connotations. The internalized Cold War teaching was that neutrality reflects the Finnish mentality and maximizes freedom of choice (Rainio-Niemi, 2003). Moreover, as in Sweden, there is a strong psychological commitment to the belief that being outside of military alliances is ethically grounded. Militarily non-aligned countries are believed to be able to serve as bridges or mediators in international conflicts. Diversity is regarded as a positive value on a global scale. Hence, military non-alignment is seen as being compatible with nationalism and sustaining the will to defend, as well as with pacifist and cosmopolitan thinking. Finland has not always identified strongly with Sweden, but Sweden's status as a militarily non-aligned country is important because it creates a natural and positive in-group (Forsberg, 2016).

On the other hand, NATO membership is likewise defended for reasons of identity. In the simplest terms, NATO can be seen as the antithesis of Russia. If Russia is the constitutive 'other' vis-à-vis Finland, there is a logical proclivity for NATO membership. However, this is an argument that is seldom used by those who advocate Finland's membership of NATO, and is more typically the interpretation put forward by critical academics or membership opponents (Harle and Moisio, 2000). By the same token, pro-NATO pundits do not argue that Finland should join NATO in order to become more Western, but rather to remain as such. It seems that for most people, EU membership already solved the question of Finland's Eastern or Western identity in favour of the latter. Rather, the argument is therefore that military non-alignment is seen as unnatural in the context of the EU, where mutual defence guarantees already exist and almost all countries are members of NATO. President Ahtisaari has defended Finland's joining NATO by stating that 'I don't want Finland to be the odd one out when most other states are already members' (YLE News, 2008). At the same time, he stressed that NATO membership should not be viewed as a move against Russia. The adaptation to a Western identity should therefore be seen as a propelling factor for Finland's membership of NATO quite independently of whether Russia is seen as a negative other or not.

Some additional identity factors can also make it more difficult to support Finnish membership of NATO. Firstly, the central identity aspiration during the Cold War was to become a Nordic country rather than the fourth Baltic state (as designated in the Molotov-Ribbentrop Treaty of 1939). In these circumstances, it has been difficult to abandon this achievement and join NATO along with the Baltic states and other Central and Eastern European countries that were once a part of the Soviet bloc. For example, Prime Minister Paavo Lipponen stated in 1995, when the first-round enlargement debate on NATO emerged on the agenda, that

the NATO membership question was not topical because ‘Finland is not an eastern European country’ (Keskinen, 1995). The tendency to emphasise the different backgrounds and motivations of the Baltic States still plays a role in security policy, although they have joined the EU, too. Although Ahtisaari, for example, argued in 2010 that if Finland were not a member of NATO, it would affect the country’s image, asking ‘are we going to be in the same group as Belarus and Ukraine?’ (YLE News, 2010), very few people actually think that Finland would fall into the same category with those countries despite it is not a member of NATO and shares a border with Russia. Secondly, identity also matters when NATO is equated with American hegemony in the world. There is an identifiable anti-American undercurrent in Finland that shapes public discourse and, occasionally, political decision-making. It is telling that Finnish public opinion regarding NATO membership has been weakened because of American policies, particularly the Iraq war, more than it has been strengthened by Russia’s behavior and growing military clout.

Rational and Psychological Factors

Can Finland’s NATO policy, with its emphasis on partnership but rejection of membership combined with the stated ‘option’ to join the Alliance should circumstances change, be understood rationally? I have already argued that it can be seen as a domestic political compromise between two opposite positions without any strategic logic of its own. Yet there are arguments that can be put forward in defence of the ‘option policy’ towards NATO.

First, it is possible to construct a strategic rationale for the policy of military non-alignment combined with a strong partnership with NATO, membership of the EU and deepening Nordic defence cooperation. This strategic equation is based on the idea that full membership of NATO, and particularly joining when Russia is keen on safeguarding its status, would provoke Russia more than it would enhance security. So the real question is not whether Finland aspires to be a member of NATO or not, but how to join the Alliance without provoking Russia.

Moreover, preserving the NATO option – political trust and inter-operability granting the possibility to plug in militarily – is also seen as a better deterrent than NATO membership as such. According to this logic, Russia would not exert any significant military pressure on Finland because this would push the country to join NATO, which would, in essence, be perceived as a defeat. As President Niinistö argued, the option is a security policy instrument and Russia knows that it is an instrument (Laurén, 2016). The historical lesson is that the Soviet Union did not want to upset the military balance in Northern Europe because it feared that Denmark and Norway would abandon their restrictions in their NATO policy and that Sweden could move closer to the Alliance. However, if the readiness to apply for NATO membership acts as a deterrent for Russia, it is unclear what kind of Russian actions would indicate that the deterrent has failed, and trigger the process for joining NATO. Niinistö himself said that ‘if the situation evolves into something that is very serious, we have to rethink’ (Schauman, 2016). Apparently, neither Russia invading a neighboring country and annexing a chunk

of its territory, nor frequent violations of Finnish airspace constitute such actions. Yet Russia's behaviour in the area of the former Soviet Union (besides the Baltic states) is not seen as posing a direct threat to Finland and, further, the airspace violations practically stopped when they were made public.

Moreover, the policy of stating that Finland has an option to join NATO despite being unwilling to apply for membership can also be defended on the grounds that it symbolizes the sovereignty of the state in line with OSCE principles. Having the option to apply for and eventually join NATO is important, regardless of whether Finland would ever opt for full membership. This explains why many are willing to support the right to join NATO, in some hypothetical circumstances, although they do not spell out what those circumstances might be.

From the critic's perspective, the strategic logic of the present policy with regard to the NATO option is not well thought-out. A crucial dilemma, however, exists with regard to the right timing in the light of 'changed circumstances'. In times of crisis, when there is a need to join a military alliance, it is questionable whether the Alliance would accept new members; whereas, in times of peace, when it is possible to change policy, there is no perceived need. Moreover, over time, maintaining credibility for the option incurs more costs in terms of preserving a positive image of Finland in the eyes of the key NATO countries, and even runs the risk that some of the smaller ones could block or delay membership in the event that Finland would seek it.

Both rational reasoning and psychological belief systems may also explain why the Ukrainian crisis and Russia's growing military assertiveness have only resulted in a slight increase in support for NATO membership. The rational explanation is that such Russian behaviour has already been factored into the analysis. The psychological explanation is that facts do not matter as such since the question has more to do with identity, and facts are interpreted to suit existing beliefs. Indeed, only a few public figures have changed their opinion on NATO membership because of the Ukrainian crisis but, interestingly enough, some of the most prominent converts are former communists or belong to the Green Party, and are willing to admit that their view of Russia has changed and affected their NATO stance.

The Factors for Change

What is the likelihood that Finland's policy towards NATO will change and, in particular, that the country will seek to join the Alliance? Finland has preserved the 'option' of applying for membership, but there have been no major changes regarding the membership question during the post-Cold War era. Although various stumbling blocks to membership, such as the need to support Russia's process of democratization, have lost their meaning, the decision to apply has not been taken. Indeed, it does not seem very likely that Finland would suddenly send a membership application to Brussels, but a change is not out of the question. In particular, we should consider three factors: Russia, the United States, and Sweden.

Perhaps surprisingly, Russia's military action towards Georgia and Ukraine has not altered Finland's policy towards NATO very much, although military exercises with the US in the region have been conducted more

than before. Public opinion towards Russia has been rather stable, with roughly one-third of citizens harbouring a negative opinion, one-third neutral and one-third positive (Forsberg, 2006). As argued earlier, although the threat perception of Russia has increased due to the Ukrainian crisis, it has not changed the basic calculus much. The logic is that the degree of provocation towards Russia caused by joining NATO in times of crisis is thought to grow concurrently with the increased level of deterrence and protection that would be achieved through membership. Yet, there are some notable statements indicating that Russia's behaviour can influence, and has influenced, opinions. Former Prime Minister Matti Vanhanen, not an advocate of NATO membership in the past (indeed, rather to the contrary), wrote in his book that if the stability in the Baltic Sea area were shaken by Russia's behaviour, Finland would not turn towards Russia but towards NATO (Vanhanen, 2016). He also expressed the hope that Russia would be cognizant of this fact.

The second factor is NATO itself and the United States, which is so closely associated with the Alliance as its leading member. Indeed, in the early stages, it was argued that Finland would join NATO when the Alliance had become a pan-European security organization. NATO has transformed itself and enlarged, but obviously the Finns would not consider it truly Pan-European unless Russia joined. The image of the United States also plays a role, but it is more of a negative factor than a positive one. US President George W. Bush was very unpopular, but even if the perception of Barack Obama has been decidedly more positive, this did not serve to increase the support for NATO membership. Clearly. Donald Trump's election to President has been seen as an argument against NATO membership, although President Niinistö immediately assured that Finland's possible membership in NATO does not depend on one person (Finland Today, 2016).

Sweden is, however, an outside factor that can determine whether Finland will apply for membership. Sweden's bid for EU membership was the essential catalyst for Finland's own EU application in 1992. Nevertheless, Finland joined the Eurozone without Sweden, which indicates that Finland might apply for NATO membership independently of Sweden as advocated for example by former President Ahtisaari. If, however, Sweden decided to apply for membership, it would be hard for Finland not to follow suit. Finnish and Swedish leaders have constantly stressed that they would prefer to synchronize their policies with regard to their relationship with NATO and try to avoid sudden moves that would take the other by surprise. The group that assessed the effects of Finland's NATO membership concluded that the 'possible NATO membership would be considerably more benign for Finland if such a decision were made in a coordinated manner by Finland and Sweden, than if Finland joined alone. Similarly, a Swedish decision to join NATO and a Finnish decision not to join would leave Finland isolated and exposed'. However, the choice would still be precarious (Bergquist, Heisbourg, Nyberg and Tiilikainen, 2016, 57). When President Niinistö was asked what he would do, should Sweden announce its readiness to apply for membership, he replied that he did not want to speculate: 'I am not answering the question of what I would do if the sky were falling either', unintentionally implying that a Swedish bid for NATO membership might be catastrophic for Finland (MTV

Uutiset, 2015). Yet, Sweden's membership in NATO would pose foremostly an identity challenge for Finland, rather than changing the strategic calculus.

Conclusion

From neutrality during the Cold War, Finland has progressed into military non-alignment and a close relationship with NATO in the post-Cold War era. I have argued in this chapter that Finland's relationship with NATO can be seen as a rational strategic choice, but it cannot be fully understood without paying attention to domestic politics, psychological factors and identity politics. The arguments are so interwoven with strategic and identity elements that it is not always possible to say which one comes first.

There has been a NATO membership debate in Finland since the mid-1990s, but no essential changes in the overall support for membership, which has remained in a clear minority. As of 2016, the current president is not actively against NATO membership, but nor is he is actively for it either. Only one of the major parties supports NATO membership, and at least two of the bigger parties should actively support it and a third refrain from strongly opposing it in order for NATO membership to be pursued by the government. Only one-third or less of the population support Finland's membership.

The Ukrainian crisis has led to an intensified debate and Finland's partnership with NATO has been upgraded, but concrete steps towards Finnish NATO membership have not been taken. The security environment in Europe has changed, but the psychology remains more entrenched. One is not willing to fix something that is not seen as broken yet. Russia's bullying tactic of threatening with consequences if countries join NATO may weaken its international image, but nevertheless influences the decision-making process by increasing the risks. Moreover, the perceived uncertainties with regard to the US commitment to NATO and Europe in general after Trump's election to President have possibly already reduced the value of the article 5 guarantees, although the real impact remains to be seen at this writing.

References

ABDI (2016) 'Finns' opinions on Foreign and Security Policy, National Defence and Security', Bulletin 2/2016 (Helsinki: Advisory Board on Defence Information, Ministry of Defence), http://www.defmin.fi/files/3579/ABDI_(MTS)_December_2016_Report_in_english.pdf

Andersson, J. J. (2014) 'Nordic NATO: Why It's Time for Finland and Sweden to Join the Alliance', *Foreign Affairs Online*, 30 April, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/finland/2014-04-30/nordic-nato

Antola, E. (1989) 'The Finnish Strategy: Adaptation with Restrictions', in Möttölä, K. and Patomäki, H. (eds) *Facing the Change in Europe: EFTA Countries' Integration Strategies*, (Helsinki: The Finnish Institute of International Affairs, 1989) pp. 55-70.

Arter, D. (1995) ‘The EU Referendum in Finland on 16 October 1994: A Vote for the West, not for Maastricht’, *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 33: 3, 361–387.

Arter, D. (1996) ‘Finland: From Neutrality to NATO?’, *European Security* 5: 4, 614-632.

Barber, T. (1997) ‘Finns shun prospect of security in larger Nato’, *The Independent*, 19 March, http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/finns-shun-prospect-of-security-in-larger-nato-1273730.html.

Bergquist, M., Heisbourg, F., Nyberg, R. and Tiilikainen, T. (2016) *The Effects of Finland’s Possible NATO Membership: An Assessment*. (Helsinki: Ministry for Foreign Affairs).

Blair, D. (2015) ‘Russian forces “practised invasion of Norway, Finland, Denmark and Sweden”’, *The Telegraph*, 26 June, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/russia/11702328/Russian-forces-practised-invasion-of-Norway-Finland-Denmark-and-Sweden.html.

Blank, S. (1996) ‘Finnish Security and European Security Policy’, 27 September, U.S. Army War College, http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/report/1996/ssi_blank.pdf

Blombergs, F. (2016) ’Suomen NATO-jäsenyys realismin näkökulmasta tarkasteltuna’, in Fred Blombergs (ed.), *Suomen turvallisuuspoliittisen ratkaisun lähtökohtia* (Helsinki: National Defence University), 277-337.

Browning, C. S. (2002) ‘Coming Home or Moving Home? Westernizing Narratives in Finnish Foreign Policy and the Reinterpretation of Past Identities’, *Cooperation and Conflict*, 37:1, 47-72.

Buhne, N. (2015) ‘Russia and the Baltics: Hard Choices – Finland and NATO’, *Mc Gill International Review Online*, 3 November, http://mironline.ca/?p=6110

Chakarova, L., Kokcharov, A. and Imeri, D. (2015) ‘Finnish and Swedish NATO membership unlikely before 2020 despite growing support, Russia to retaliate economically’, *Jane’s Intelligence Review*, 13 October 2015, http://www.janes.com/article/55246/finnish-and-swedish-nato-membership-unlikely-before-2020-despite-growing-support-russia-to-retaliate-economically.

Crosette, B. (1992) ‘Finland in $3 Billion Deal for 64 McDonnell Douglas Combat Jets’, *The New York Times*, 8 May.

Finland Today (2016) ‘President Niinistö: The Relations Between Finland and the U.S. Are Closer Than Ever’, 9 November, http://finlandtoday.fi/president-niinisto-the-relations-between-finland-and-the-us-are-closer-than-ever

Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs (2015) *Review on Finland’s Security Cooperation*, Publications of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 3/2015 (Helsinki: Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland), pp. 58-64.

Finnish Ministry of Defence (nd) ‘Finnish Security and Defence Policy’, http://www.defmin.fi/en/publications/finnish_security_and_defence_policy.

Finnish Ministry of Defence (2001), Finnish Security and Defence Policy 2001, http://www.defmin.fi/files/1149/InEnglish.pdf

Finnish Ministry of Defence (2004), Finnish Security and Defence Policy 2004, Government report 6/2004.

Forsberg, T. (2000) ‘Finland and the Kosovo Crisis. At the Crossroads of Neutrality and Europeanism’, *Northern Dimensions: Yearbook of Finnish Foreign Policy 1999* (Helsinki: Finnish Institute of International Affairs), pp. 41-49.

Forsberg, T. (2002) *Nato-kirja* (Helsinki: Ajatus).

Forsberg, T. (2006) ‘Is Russia Still seen as a Threat’, in Smith, Hanna, (ed.). *The two-level game: Russia’s relations with Great Britain, Finland and the European Union* (Helsinki: Aleksanteri Institute, 2006).

Forsberg, T. (2013) ‘The Rise of Nordic Defence Cooperation: A Return to Regionalism?’, *International Affairs*, 89, 5, 1161-81.

Forsberg, T. (2016) ‘Suomen Nato-politiikka konstruktivismin näkökulmasta’, in Fred Blombergs (ed.), Suomen turvallisuuspoliittisen ratkaisun lähtökohtia (Helsinki: National Defence University), 363-378.

Forsberg, T. and Pesu, M. (2016) ‘The “Finlandisation” of Finland: The Ideal Type, the Historical Model, and the Lessons Learnt’, Diplomacy and Statecraft 27:3, 473-495.

Forsberg, T. and Pesu, M. (2017) ‘The Role of Public Opinion in Finland’s Foreign and Security Policy”, In Cheng, T-J and Lee W. (eds) *National Security, Public Opinion, and Regime Asymmetry: a Six-Country Study*,

Forsberg, T. and Vaahtoranta, T. (2001) ‘Inside the EU, Outside NATO: Paradoxes of Finland and Sweden’s Post-Neutrality’, *European Security*, 10: 1, 68-93.

Giles, K. and Eskola, S. (2009) ‘Waking the Neighbour – Finland, NATO and Russia’, Special Series no. 09/14 (Shrivenham: Research & Assessment Branch, Defence Academy of United Kingdom, 2009).

Grüne, Y. (2009) ’Kyse on vaikutusvallasta’, In T. Suominen and J. Karvinen (eds) *Suomi ja Nato – Suomen Atlantti-Seuran 10-vuotisjulkaisu* Suomen (Helsinki: The Atlantic Council of Finland), 33-37.

Hanhimäki, J. M. (1997) Containing Coexistence: America, Russian and the ”Finnish Solution” 1945-1956. (Kent: The Kent State University Press).

Harle, V. and Moisio, S. (2000) *Missä on Suomi? Kansallisen identiteettipolitiikan historia ja geopolitiikka*. Tampere: Vastapaino.

Haukkala, H. and Vaahtoranta T. (2016) ’Suomen turvallisuuspolitiikan linjat ja koulukunnat’, in Fred Blombergs (ed.), *Suomen turvallisuuspoliittisen ratkaisun lähtökohtia* (Helsinki: National Defence University), pp. 55-76.

Honkanen K. and Kuusela, J. (2014) *Uusi Nato?* [Also in Swedish: *Ett Nytt Nato?*] (Helsinki: Atlantic Council of Finland).

Iloniemi, J. (2015) *Maantieteelle emme mahda mitään* (Jyväskylä: Docendo).

Karvinen, J. and Puistola J-A. (2015) Nato ja Suomi. (Helsinki: Auditorium).

Kekkonen, U. (1961) ‘Finland`s Position in International Politics,’ Speech given at the 855 National Press Club, Washington, 17 October,

www.doria.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/8542/TMP.objres.1454.html?sequence=1

Keskinen, J. (2015) ‘Lipponen muistuttaa Venäjän merkityksestä’, *Demari*, 15 May.

Koivisto, M. (1995) *Witness to the History: The Memoirs of Mauno Koivisto President of Finland 1982–1994*. (London: Hurst).

Lauren, A-L. (2014) 'Vill ni vara med och starta ett tredje världskrig?', Interview with Sergei Markov, *Hufvudstadsbladet*, 8 June.

Laurén, A-L. (2016) 'Finlands president tror på dialog med Putin', *Dagens Nyheter*, 16 June, http://www.dn.se/nyheter/varlden/finlands-president-tror-pa-dialog-med-putin/

Martikainen, T. (2015) 'Merikasarmin iloinen isäntä', Interview with Timo Soini, *Ulkopolitiikka* no. 3, 2015, 3-7.

Ministry of Defence of Finland (2016) Statement of Intent on bilateral defence cooperation between Finland and US, Press Release 7 October, http://www.defmin.fi/en/topical/press_releases/statement_of_intent_on_bilateral_defence_cooperation_between_finland_and_us.8013.news

MTV Uutiset (2015) 'Niinistö tuskastui Nato-kysymyksestä: "En vastaa siihenkään, jos taivas putoaisi niskaan"', *MTV Uutiset*, 17 October, http://www.mtv.fi/uutiset/kotimaa/artikkeli/niinisto-tuskastui-nato-kysymyksesta-en-vastaa-siihenkaan-jos-taivas-putoaisi-niskaan/5502464.

Niinistö, S. (2013) Speech at the Annual Ambassadors' Meeting, Finlandia Hall, Helsinki, 27 August, http://www.presidentti.fi/public/default.aspx?contentid=282762&nodeid=44809&contentlan=2&culture=en-US.

O'Dwyer, G. (2014) 'Finland to Put NATO Membership to Referendum', *Defense News*, 5 June, http://www.defensenews.com/article/20140605/DEFREG01/306050039/Finland-Put-NATO-Membership-Referendum.

Penttilä, R. E. J. (1991) *Finland's Search for Security through Defence, 1944–89* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan).

Penttilä, R. E. J. (1994) *Finland's Security in a Changing Europe: a Historical Perspective*, (Helsinki: National Defence College).

The President of Finland (2016) 'President Niinistö and Secretary General Stoltenberg stressed the importance of dialogue in relations with Russia', The President of the Republic of Finland Webpage, 9 November, http://www.presidentti.fi/Public/default.aspx?contentid=354114&nodeid=44810&contentlan=2&culture=en-US

Prime Minister's Office (2016) Foreign and Security Policy Review 2016, Government report 7/2016, http://formin.finland.fi/public/download.aspx?ID=159273&GUID={BE1F0734-B715-4C7F-94AA-CBFD3AF7EA5A}

Pyykönen, J. (2016) Nordic Partners of NATO: How similar are Finland and Sweden within NATO cooperation? FIIA Report no. 48. (Helsinki: The Finnish Institute of international Affairs).

Rahkonen, J. (2006) Journalismi taistelukenttänä. Suomen Nato-jäsenyydestä käyty julki-nen keskustelu 2003-04. Tampereen yliopiston tiedotusopin laitoksen julkaisuja, Tampere: University of Tampere).
Rahkonen, J. (2007) ‘Public Opinion, Journalism and the Question of Finland’s Membership of NATO’, *Nordicom Review* 28:2 , 81-92.
Rainio-Niemi, J. (2003) ‘A People too well Educated: Truths of the second republic and public opinion in the Finnish NATO debate’, in *Yearbook of Finnish Foreign Policy* (Helsinki: The Finnish Institute of International Affair).
Rasmussen, A. F. (2012) ‘NATO and Finland: Building Security Together in the 21st Century’, Speech by NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen in Helsinki, 12 November, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_91346.htm.
Ries, T. (1999) ‘Finland and Nato’ (Helsinki: National Defence College, Department of Strategic and Defence Studies,).
RT.com (2016) ‘Putin: Russia to respond if Finland joins NATO’, *RT*, 1 July, https://www.rt.com/news/349185-putin-nato-dialogue-start/
Saari, S. and Pursiainen, C. (2002) *Et tu Brute! Finland’s NATO Option and Russia*, Working Paper no. 1 (Helsinki: Finnish Institute of International Affairs 2002).
Salomaa, M. (2015) *Puhutaan Natosta* (Jyväskylä: Docendo).
Schauman, S. (2016) ’Sauli Niinistö Nato-ajankohdasta: Emme tietenkään odota niin kauan, että se olisi liian myöhäistä’, *Verkkouutiset*, 19 June, http://www.verkkouutiset.fi/kotimaa/sauli%20niinisto%20nato%20ajankohta-51949
Seip, M. (2015) ‘Is It Time For Finland to Join NATO?’ *National Interest Online*, 4 June, http://nationalinterest.org/blog/the-buzz/it-time-finland-join-nato-13044;
Sierla, A. (2007) ‘Suomen mahdollisen Nato-jäsenyyden vaikutukset’ (Helsinki: Ministry for Foreign Affairs).
Vanhanen, M. (2016) *Ulkopolitiikkaa* (Nurmijärvi: Matti Vanhanen,).
Sputnik News (2015) ‘Entering NATO Would Pose Security Risks for Finland – Finance Minister’, *Sputnik News,* 23 March, http://sputniknews.com/europe/20150322/1019844251.html.
Stoltenberg, Jens (2015) ’Opening remarks by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at the joint press point with the Prime Minister of Finland, Alexander Stubb’, Helsinki 5 March, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_117895.htm?selectedLocale=en
Vento, H. (2016) ‘Sotilaat haluavat Natoon’, *Suomen Kuvalehti*, 26 February.
Visuri, P. (1994) *Puolustusvoimat kylmässä sodassa* (Helsinki: WSOY).
YLE News (2008) ‘Martti Ahtisaari Wants Finland in Nato’, *YLE News*, 11 October, http://yle.fi/uutiset/martti_ahtisaari_wants_finland_in_nato/6114764.
YLE News (2010) ‘Ahtisaari: Nato ei ole uhka Venäjälle’, YLE, 18 December, http://yle.fi/uutiset/ahtisaari_nato_ei_ole_uhka_venajalle/2230099.

YLE News (2015) Interview with Antti Rinne, 22 March.

YLE News (2016) 'Defence Minister: Finland wants defence pact before US elects new President', YLE 22 August, http://yle.fi/uutiset/defence_minister_finland_wants_defence_pact_before_us_elects_new_president/9112666