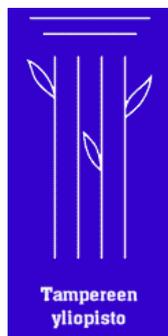


Tampere Peace Research Institute



COMMITTED TO PEACE

**HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION TO FINNISH DEFENSE
AND SECURITY POLICY**

Andrea Calistri

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Tampere Peace Research Institute

Åkerlundinkatu 5 B

FI-33014 University of Tampere

Finland

Tel. +358 3 35 51 76 96

Fax. +358 3 223 66 20

Homepage <http://www.uta.fi/tapri>

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Andrea Calistri

“A people’s perceptions of national security are shaped less by rational calculation of future risks than by lessons drawn from past experiences”.

- *Max Jakobson, 1998;*

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PREFACE

There is a preliminary question that needs to be addressed before presenting this study in detail: why should anyone be interested in Finnish security thinking and defense policy? After all, Finland is among the smallest and most peripheral countries in Europe and its impact on the strategic issues of the European Union is marginal. The main aim of this paper is to show that on the contrary, when dealing with the question of European defense or assessing the impact of the Scandinavian strategic culture on the security policies of the European Union, the attentive observer can not and must not pass up a careful consideration of the position of Finland, a country perhaps of secondary importance in the overall international scenario, but certainly essential in any attempt to coherently craft a common European defense system.

It is indeed impossible to overlook the strategically relevant geographical position and historical heritage of Finland, whose course has always been characterized by an effort to preserve its own national identity and links to western culture, despite the presence of intrusive eastern influences. The struggle between opposing tendencies can however be deemed important in retrospect, because it contributed to the development of Finland as a regional power in two key areas of Europe: Nordic and Baltic. The present-day role of Finland in the European Union was mainly crafted by its experience as a crossroad, or more precisely an energetic bridge-builder, between the ever-fighting East and West, whether described in terms of Kingdom of Sweden and Tsarist Empire, communist bloc and capitalist bloc or European Union and Russian Federation.

This small state of relatively recent independence, situated on the very eastern border of Europe, built on republican democratic institutions and best-known worldwide for having established an extremely advanced welfare state and for having long maintained a position of strict neutrality in international politics, since its origin was in fact involved in the strategies of great powers to gain control of the Scandinavian/Baltic region and create an effective buffer zone against reciprocal threats. The often unwilling involvement in geopolitical calculations of more powerful neighbors certainly crafted Finland's understanding of strategic issues as no other event. The essence of Finnish strategic culture as emerged from history can thus be identified with three main pillars: commitment to the idea of power balancing in the

international society, dating back almost five centuries, non-offensiveness, a concept that goes back about three centuries, and the long-cherished legacy of liberalism.

From the time when Finland was annexed to Sweden, in the 12th century, two major events have transformed the country's political position: firstly, after having been part of the Kingdom of Sweden for six hundred years, Finland became in 1809 an autonomous state within the Russian Empire; secondly, on December 6th 1917 the Parliament of Finland declared the independence of the nation. Although the country's history during these eight centuries is thus sharply divided into three distinct periods, a continuous line of development has characterized the political rights of the people, the functioning of institutions and legislation and, in general, the discourse surrounding foreign and defense policy.

This brief research paper is aimed at providing an introductory yet accurate analysis of several moments of Finland's history, in order to assess the main events that shaped the country's attitude from the early years to present-day, with particular attention devoted to the recent integration of Finland within the political structure of the European Union. Such analysis will facilitate the evaluation of the degree of compatibility between Finnish strategic heritage of neutrality and the common European policies in the comprehensive field of defense.

Providing a picture of a country's security orientations from its very origins to the present day challenges the author with the need of individuating the manifold influences which have contributed to the completion of the mosaic, as it appears to the contemporary observer. Of course, assessing the impact of each single event on the overall outcome would require an investigative effort which goes far beyond the ambitions of this brief working paper; operating a selection of the issues taken into account, forcedly neglecting others, is thus necessary. To facilitate the reader's task, accurate bibliographic reference was however provided, so to fill in the eventual blanks.

I have adhered to a rather schematic methodological approach, dividing the paper into temporal blocs, each of which is in turn sub-divided into conceptual units, so to highlight Finland's position at the crossroad of different yet entwined dynamics. Backed by ample empirical evidence and an extensive bibliography, the study intends to offer an input to more advanced elaboration concerning the ongoing process of change which is re-shaping the foreign and security environment of Finland. For this purpose, the salient stages in the

country's history will be evaluated, in the attempt to extrapolate their actual impact on current Finnish and European security perceptions.

Such a concise historical outlook will gradually introduce the reader to the core of the paper: the development and re-shaping of the concept of neutrality in relation to original national and international security issues in the post-Cold War European environment.

More specifically, the first part of the paper will in brief outline the centuries-long periods of Swedish and Russian domination up to World War I, the achievement of national independence, the diverse pragmatic foreign policies during the inter-wars years and finally the dramatic events of World War II, which left Finland isolated from the West and in bad standing with the East. To understand Finland's present-day security policy, it is indeed necessary, for any reader unacquainted with it, to assess its ancient historical background.

The discussion will especially focus on the defensive interests at stake for the great powers during these centuries and on their effects on Finland's increasing awareness of its role as a bridge between the East and the West. In effect, the long-lasting conflict between Sweden and Russia meant an increase of Finland's weight in the military considerations of the two nations, whereas in the war between the Central and the Allied Powers the role played by Finland was relatively small, yet significant in molding the future strategic perspectives of a small, newly independent country caught in the crossfire of great powers' politics. It will be argued that the early involvement in the antagonism between different civilizations and cultures was indeed a critical factor in crafting Finland's orientation toward a policy of neutrality and non-alignment, two concepts that will be developed in a more recent era, but whose early manifestations can be dated back to these events.

In the second part, subdivided into three chapters, Finnish relations with the Soviet Union, with Western Europe and as a "bridge-builder" between the East and the West will be evaluated, in order to point out the ability of those political leaders who managed to sail the turbulent waters of the Cold War, still maintaining a delicate balance between Finland's natural inclination toward Western culture and economy and the imperative necessity of preserving satisfactory political and commercial relations with the incumbent Eastern neighbor. These years were marked by the emergence of the concept of neutrality, or more precisely put a peace-promoting and active policy of neutrality, interpreted by the Finnish

ruling class as the only possible way to avoid participation in the ideological and potentially military confrontation that quickly emerged from the ashes of World War II.

It will be observed how, even though on strict legal interpretation, the term “neutrality” means the keeping of a sovereign state outside a war, the purpose in Finland’s neutrality was somewhat broader, intended to establish, already during peace, the preconditions for the maintenance of war-time neutrality, by pursuing such a foreign policy as to induce others to trust in its determination to remain neutral and ability to defend itself. This policy’s most important outcomes were to enable Finland to enthusiastically participate in the most important international and regional organizations – the United Nations Organizations (UNO) above all, but the Nordic Council as well – for the dynamic promotion of worldwide peace and disarmament, the strengthening of mutually advantageous economic relations with partners belonging to both blocs and the intensification of political and strategic contacts with the other Scandinavian nations.

The third part of the paper will finally take into account the three components of Finnish security doctrine in the post-Cold War years: the pursuit of full political and strategic integration in the European Union, through its dynamic attitude and active participation in the shaping of the Common Security and Defense Policy (ESDP); the maintenance of a policy of non-alliance and of a credible defensive potential, capable of reaching a high degree of interoperability with NATO or eventual European military structures without resorting to any binding political commitment; the establishment of newly tailored relations with the Russian Federation, the Scandinavian neighbors and the Baltic countries and the various effects that their attitude has on Finland’s security perception.

In an international environment undergoing rapid and unexpected changes, Finland’s economic ties to the European Union (EU) smoothly evolved into official membership in 1995, just in time to play a role in the process of development of new policies and to take part in the last phase of the economic union; for the country, this meant full participation not only in the largest free market area of the world, but also in the most advanced process of political integration, an involvement that implied acceptance of the heritage of values and guidelines of the community. The discussion will be aimed at illustrating how, despite unproblematic overall integration, Finland’s engagement in the uniting of Europe is still somewhat hesitant and incomplete, particularly in the field of defense and security policy: the compatibility

between Finland's unwillingness to take part into any military alliance and the emphasis placed on European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP) by the Treaty of Maastricht and the Treaty of Amsterdam is still at stake.

It will be contended how up to present-day, by taking part in EU-led crisis management operations and initiatives, Finland has succeeded in achieving a high degree of involvement in the outer security dimension of the European Union, without needing to enter any binding obligation concerning the inner security dimension. Whether that will still be possible in the near future is a major question, whose answer remains uncertain: the alternative is no longer between neutrality and military alignment, but between participation and non-participation in the crafting of a system of common defense in Europe. A particularly fitting example of the Finnish original understanding of security will be provided through the analysis of the Northern Dimension initiative, aimed at addressing major cross-regional issues in a more comprehensive way than by simply relying on military means: once again, perhaps in an even more challenging context, Finland resorted to the promotion and strengthening of dialogue and cooperation as the most effective way to improve both regional and global security. The added value of this choice may soon be asked to reveal its full potential in terms of conflict prevention.

Even more complex and troubled is the relationship between Finland and NATO, which will be discussed in the last chapter: the Atlantic Alliance being the core structure of present-day Western security, Finnish orientation toward it can not be underestimated. Whereas most European countries regard the ESDP as a means to give themselves more opportunities for dealing with future crises, but at the same time support closer EU-NATO ties, Finland can be counted among that minority whose policy has a European rather than an Atlantic orientation. Notwithstanding the development of a certain amount of dialogue with the alliance, NATO membership is not deemed necessary in the absence of any specific threat and has been relegated to the rank of a mere option, to be availed only in case of major changes in the security environment. The latest international events, highlighting the possible re-emergence of Russia as a global power, could of course prove decisive in shaping Finnish future point of view, leading to a reconsideration of its overall security approach. Whatever the choice will be, certainly Finland will not renounce its mediation role in this phase of transition.

1. ORIGINS OF FINNISH DEFENSE DOCTRINE

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Already since the Iron Age, the first Viking settlements that formed along the Finnish coastline perceived very clearly the importance of the commercial route to the east that crossed the Baltic via the Åland Islands and then followed the shore of the Gulf of Finland, sheltered by islands, to the River Neva, and up to Lake Ladoga; from there, streams led to the upper course of the Dnieper, and by following that river it was possible to reach the Black Sea, Constantinople, and Arabian lands. In short, the southern coast of Finland was always given special consideration, as a privileged access to the great international trade routes.

Characterized up to that time by an extremely heterogeneous variety of scattered settlements and small colonies, mainly inhabited by hunters and fur traders, since the 12th century Finland started drawing the interest of its neighbor states, specifically due to its extremely convenient geographical position, that rendered this region surrounded by ice a very attractive commercial outpost, as well as an inexhaustible source of valuable raw materials; within a few decades, the competition began to develop into an open conflict between West and East¹, with Sweden on a side and the kingdom of Novgorod on the other, a conflict also heightened by the distinctly religious breach between Roman Catholicism and Greek Orthodoxy.

Therefore, the grand strategic significance of Finland emerged initially as its role as the outpost of Roman-Catholic realm, which in turn laid the foundation for many of the later East–West divisions along Finland’s eastern border. Being located at the intersection of two international societies, the Catholic realm and what later became the Byzantine empire, Finland acquired crucial strategic significance, especially when the latter was replaced by Muscovy’s hegemony. It is no chance, as this study will attempt to illustrate, that Sweden and Russia considered the possession of Finland essential, in order to both protect their own commercial interests in the Baltic area and ensure their control over a strategically vital territory for their respective security: before obtaining its independence in 1917, the area known today as Finland belonged for almost seven centuries to the Kingdom of Sweden, the

¹ JUTIKKALA [1996], pp. 40-41;

first that managed to impose its influence, and for over a century it was integral part of the vast Russian Empire as a Grand Duchy, even if in the frame of relative autonomy².

Over the centuries, several wars have been fought by a plurality of actors – Sweden and Russia above all, but also Denmark and Germany – in order to entrench an influence on this territory. Swedish hegemony in Finland in the 16th century and Swedish-Finnish supremacy in the Baltic region during the 17th and 18th centuries had significant implications for the overall development of Finland’s strategic culture. The main concern regarded the struggle to keep other great powers – Russia in particular – out of the Baltic Sea. Swedish-Finnish hegemony, which fully emerged in the aftermath of the Thirty Years War, was facilitated by deep structural changes in the overall European balance of power: economic and demographic factors were favoring the northern regions of Europe and the Kingdom of Sweden managed to draw relevant benefits for this new situation.

Meanwhile the Russian Empire grew stronger and its interest for Finland became a geostrategic priority³, due to the country’s location at a confluence of the northern extremity of Eastern Europe and the eastern extremity of the Baltic-Scandinavian region. At first, the main concern was preventing any possible Swedish attack against northwest Russia, but later the importance of Finland emerged with regard to the security of the city of St. Petersburg, founded by Peter the Great in 1703, which symbolized his desire to modernize the Empire and became imperial capital shortly after, due to its privileged position of “window on the West”⁴. The era of Russian domination is particularly relevant for the purpose of this study, as peculiarities of Finland’s security and defense policy have often been connected with the fact that the country and Russia are geographically linked together⁵. This big neighbor’s ambitions on Finland’s territory slowly materialized through three successful military campaigns: the Great Northern War (1700-1721), which led to the acquisition of many Baltic territories and turned the Kingdom of Sweden into a second-class regional power, The Hats’ War (1741-1743), whose conclusion for Russia meant the gain of more territories formerly belonging to Sweden, and finally the Finnish War (1808-1809), a triumphant campaign which granted Russia the control over the whole of Finland.

² JUSSILA, HENTILA, NEVAKIVI [1999], pp. 33-37;

³ KARSH [1986], p. 265;

⁴ BATER [2004], p. 191;

⁵ NOKKALA [2008], p. 73;

1.2 THE SWEDISH ERA (circa 1157-1809)

The Kalmar Union, consisting of the unification under a common monarch of the three kingdoms of Denmark, Norway and Sweden, was the first balancer available for Finland in dealing with the threat posed by Russia. Germans, Danes and Swedish all tried to establish commercial colonies on the coast of Finland, but eventually the strengthening of the Catholic Church's and the Swedish Crown's grip on Finland would increase during the 13th century and would last until the beginning of the 19th century. For more than six hundred years, most of the Finland peninsula was an integral part of the Kingdom of Sweden and this left a deep mark, especially in terms of religion, language, political institutions, culture and economy⁶: Swedish became the dominant language of the nobility, administration and education; since then, the Swedish legal and social systems began to take root in Finland and its legacy survived up to present day.

Sweden established its official rule of Finland in 1323, as the Treaty of Nöteborg between the Kingdom of Sweden itself and Novgorod assigned only eastern Finland to the latter, whereas the western and southern parts of Finland were tied to the Western European cultural sphere⁷. It has been correctly pointed out⁸ that one can not reason, without stumbling on 20th century's ideologies, in terms of Swedish "domination", being instead more correct to define this period as a reunion of different regions and peoples under the allegiance of a same monarch: in fact in 1362, Finns were given the right to send representatives to the election of the king in Sweden, and in the 16th century this right was extended to include representation in the Swedish Diet. Some scholars⁹ trace in the actions of Finnish leaders of these years the origin of a distinct Finnish foreign policy designed to further specific Finnish interests rather than those of the Kingdom of Sweden as a whole. A number of reasons may be given in support to this thesis: the looseness of the ties linking together the various parts of the Swedish realm, Finland's geographical isolation, the influence gained through active political participation in the Kingdom's affairs on behalf of the Finnish élite.

⁶ LAVERY [2006], p. 31;

⁷ KORPELA [2002], pp. 384-397;

⁸ MELASUO [1999], p.243;

⁹ JAKOBSON [1968], p. 3;

RENVALL [1963], pp. 4-5;

During the greater part of the Middle Ages, the situation was such that alternating pressures from the East and the West maintained themselves in a kind of equilibrium and no distinct steady thrust in either direction occurred. The emergence in the late 15th century of the Kingdom of Novgorod however brought a decisive change, as relations with the East started to be perceived as a mortal danger to the existence of Finland. However, Swedish influence remained intact. King Gustav Vasa (1523-1560) and his successors invested a lot on external expansion, so that by the middle of the 17th century Sweden became the dominant power in the Baltic area¹⁰; during this glorious period, Sweden created an empire centered on the Gulf of Finland comprising the provinces of Karelia, Ingria, Estonia, Livonia and managed, due to the weakness of Russia, to push the Finnish border further east. Especially king Gustav Adolf (1594-1632) engaged in a series of administrative and military reforms, such as the introduction of conscription and the construction of a powerful navy, which were able to secure the Baltic area from any ambition on behalf of a foreign power.

A victorious campaign against Russia led in 1617 to the Peace of Stolbova, which deprived the eastern rival of any access to the Baltic; furthermore, during the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648) Sweden gained tracts in Germany as well, including Western Pomerania, Wismar, the Duchy of Bremen, and Verden; at the same period Sweden conquered some Danish and Norwegian provinces north of the Sound. These victories may be ascribed to a well trained army, which despite its small size was more professional than most continental armies. However, Sweden was unable to support and maintain its army as the war was prolonged and the costs of warfare could not be passed to occupied countries. With consolidation of the administration in Stockholm, uniform Swedish rule was extended to Finland in the 17th century.

In the second half of that same century, however, Swedish power declined steadily in the face of the rise of France, Prussia and above all Russia, whose position improved notably during the reign of Peter the Great, who looked to re-establish a Baltic presence: Russia, Denmark and Poland signed an alliance aimed against Sweden, but the first move came from Sweden itself¹¹, which sparked the conflict in 1700.

¹⁰ LAVERY [2006], p. 41;

¹¹ JUTIKKALA [1996], p. 201;

The Great Northern War (1700-21) was mainly fought for supremacy in the Baltic Sea. The early part of the war consisted of a continual string of Swedish victories under Charles XII: Denmark was defeated in the summer of 1700, in such a way that she could not participate in the war for a number of years; in November of the same year, also Russia suffered a crushing defeat in the Battle of Narva; Poland was quickly neutralized and surrendered in 1706, even though the peace treaty brought no advantage to Sweden, not even compensation for the expenses of six years of warfare. During the years between 1700 and 1707, two of Sweden's Baltic provinces, Estonia and Ingria, had been seized by the Tsar, and a third, Livonia, had been essentially ruined. To secure his acquisitions, Peter founded the city of Saint Petersburg in Ingria in 1703 and began to build a navy and a modern-style army: when Sweden invaded Russia in 1709 its army suffered a crushing defeat in the battle of Poltava, after which Charles XII fled to the Ottoman Empire and the Swedish armies retreated out of Russia. Peter's victory shook all European courts: in just one day, Russia emerged as a major European power.

This shattering defeat did not end the war, although it decided it. Peter continued his campaigns in the Baltic area: in 1710 the Russians captured Rīga, Tallinn and Viipuri; in 1714 Finland was occupied and it remained under the control of the Russian army until 1721: during this period, known as the Greater Wrath, thousands of Finns were killed or deported to Russia. The years of bloody Russian domination caused the Finns to focus all of their energies around the sole goal of securing their own country, an issue that would be the leitmotiv of Finland's defense policy for the centuries to come. Over the next few years little changed and the war was finally concluded in 1721 by the Treaty of Uusikaupunki, which reflected the bipolar balance set by the Treaty of Utrecht (1713). According to the peace agreement, Russia received from Sweden the Baltic territories as well as a large portion of Karelia, certainly affirming itself as the greatest power in Eastern Europe. Sweden on the contrary lost almost all of its "overseas" holdings gained in the 17th century and ceased to be a major power. After this war, Finland developed a more distinct profile as a part of the Swedish Kingdom, because several actions were carried out in order to rebuild the country after the bloody military occupation, but at the same time the territory remained exposed to the threat of attacks and occupation from its powerful eastern neighbor.

Unable to face Russia alone, Swedish political leaders sought opportunities in the conflicts between major powers to re-conquer some land: the Russo-Swedish War of 1741–1743, known as the Hats' War, which resulted in the Lesser Wrath, a second occupation of Finland by Russian troops. The conflict was instigated by the Hats, the dominant Swedish political party at the time¹², whose denial of strategic realities convinced them that regaining the lost territories had to be Sweden's priority: the threat was soon relieved, when a powerful Russian army inflicted a major defeat to the Swedish. In 1742, following the Russian occupation and vague promises to make the country independent¹³, the attempt to create a kingdom in Finland took place, but the Duke Peter of Holstein-Gottorp, chosen as the future monarch by the Landtag of Turku, later became Peter III, Emperor of Russia, frustrating the hopes of Finland for independence.

As the war unfolded, the Swedish position deteriorated and the army was forced to retreat towards Helsinki, where it was encircled and finally capitulated on September 4th 1742. The Treaty of Turku, signed on August 7th 1743, led many to conclude that Sweden could no longer conduct offensive war against Russia, which also acquired another slice of Finland to the northwest of Saint Petersburg, with the towns of Lappeenranta and Hamina. The territory ceded to Russia, together with the Karelian territories gained in 1721, were later called Old Finland and were incorporated into the newly formed Grand Duchy of Finland in 1812.

Certainly, the Finnish experience of Stockholm's stubborn unwillingness to accept the state of imperial overstretch during the 18th century gave birth to two crucial components of Finnish strategic culture, which was later to play a major role¹⁴: the importance of alliances to balance Russia and a commitment to strategic restraint. Although the concept of neutrality can not still be taken into account, since obviously only an independent country can be neutral and thus only after Finland's gaining independence in 1917 did it become a truly topical issue. After some attempts to find suitable allies, at a time when no rapprochement to Russia appeared possible, Finland oriented itself toward a neutrality of the Scandinavian type, encouraged by how these countries had managed to remain outside of World War I.

¹² BERGMAN, MÜLLER, STRØM [2003], p.6;

¹³ JUTIKKALA [1996], pp. 233-234;

¹⁴ HEIKKA [Mar. 2005], p. 99;

1.3 THE RUSSIAN ERA (1809-1890)

Until the 19th century, the bilateral struggle between Sweden and Russia drew the line between East and West that ran through Finland. The Napoleonic Wars (1803-1815) were decisive in order to determine Finland's place in Europe, because when the Russian Emperor Alexander I concluded the 1807 Treaty of Tilsit with Napoleon, he tried in vain to convince also the Swedish King Gustav IV Adolf to join the Continental System¹⁵. When this peaceful attempt failed, on February 21st 1808, Russian troops crossed the border and captured Hämeenlinna, finding Sweden quite unprepared for the attack: Swedish troops were stationed in various fortresses in Finland, while the rest of the army was unable to leave southern Sweden for fear of a simultaneous attack coming from Denmark.

This was the outbreak of the Finnish War (1808-1809). Shortly after, the Russians with only modest troops overran, basically without resistance, Kuopio, Tampere, Jakobstad, Svartholm and Helsinki. Under a new commander, the Swedish army counter-attacked and the Russian offensive was halted, also thanks to the Finnish population that rose up in guerrilla, fighting as far as Old Finland, which led to some setbacks suffered by the Russians¹⁶; however, even if pushed out of Central Finland, the Russian forces received some considerable reinforcements and eventually launched a new powerful offensive, whereas the Finnish guerrilla movement was gradually extinguishing: as a consequence, Russia's situation in Southern Finland improved significantly. The Swedish situation was further weakened by being at war with France and Denmark, both of whom threatened Sweden's possessions: this forced the Swedes to allocate their main forces to southern Sweden. By that time, Russian forces had overrun all of Finland and on November 19th 1808, the Convention of Olkijoki was signed, forcing the Swedish army to leave the country.

The emperor was, however, now eager to bring hostilities to the territory of Sweden, certain to reach a victorious end. As Russian forces embarked upon an unprecedented march across the frozen Baltic, King Gustav IV Adolf — accused of fatal mistakes leading to the loss of Finland — was dethroned in Stockholm¹⁷. When news of the Russian incursion spread to the Swedish capital, the new king proposed a truce, agreed on by the Russian commander.

¹⁵ LAVERY [2006], pp. 51-52;

¹⁶ KIRBY [2006], p. 73;

¹⁷ TOMMILA [1962], p. 18;

Scattered hostilities continued until May, but the last engagements of the war proved inconclusive and Russian generals succeeded in neutralizing this belated counter-offensive.

The peace negotiations resulted in the Treaty of Hamina, signed on September 17th 1809, according to which Sweden ceded the whole of Finland, part of Lapland and the Ålan Islands to Russia. This way, Russian foreign policy aims had been fully achieved: Finland was under its dominance, creating a buffer state between Sweden and Russia itself, securing St. Petersburg and weakening Sweden to the point where it could no longer represent a realistic threat, due to the dreadful financial situation and low national morale¹⁸. The Hamina treaty merely confirmed the already existing state of international affairs in a peace agreement. Although Russia's fears that Finland might become a start-point for an attack against the Empire were considerably alleviated as a result of the annexation in 1809, they were by no means dispelled: the highest Russian military commanders feared that if a Russo-German war broke out, Sweden would certainly join Germany and attempt to regain Finland¹⁹, now legally belonging to the Russian Empire as the Grand Duchy of Finland, to which in 1812 Russia appended the territories previously known as Old Finland²⁰. The situation which emerged by the Treaty of Hamina was unique because, having been an integral part of the Swedish Kingdom for many centuries, Finland shared a common social and institutional structure with its western neighbors: extensive peasant landownership, Lutheran religion, and a developed local administration. Thus an Eastern-type political dependence of a national minority was combined with a Western-type society and a separate administrative frame²¹.

Why did Alexander create a separate Finnish entity, rather than simply incorporating Finland in the vast Russian Empire? Scholars highlight that maintaining the status quo helped keeping the country peaceful, while still serving Russia's defensive interest²². The national advantage of Finland seemed thus closely linked to the military interest of Russia, a leitmotiv that would mark the country's history in the years to come. Besides, it was customary for the Russian government to rely on co-opted local élites in the minority regions to maintain political order and the prevailing political relations.

¹⁸ HALE [1997];

¹⁹ HOLSTI [1964], p. 65;

²⁰ JUTIKKALA [1996], p. 295;

²¹ ALAPURO [2004], p. 3;

²² LAVERY [2006], p. 52;

Whatever the reason, in preserving its laws, privileges and religion, Emperor Alexander launched a transformation of Finland, which during this period became geographically larger and more unified. The administration of the Grand Duchy was based on its own customs: Scandinavian-type administrative and political institutions, an autonomous civil service and judiciary, an own currency, a national economy and even a small national armed force for a time. In 1812, Helsinki became the capital of the Grand Duchy and the administrative sphere of the Senate, which originally was only empowered to make decisions of little moment, gradually enlarged and developed more into some type of “home government”²³. To a certain extent it is possible to say that for the Finns, relations with Russia was foreign policy, as they could almost negotiate like representatives of a foreign country. Nevertheless, the Russian Emperor maintained full sovereignty over Finland and the new state institutions were anything but democratic, being the products of Russian imperial power rather than Finnish people’s will. Although the country did not have the “rank of a nation”²⁴ yet, this new situation challenged Finland’s people to consider their group identity and to craft their idea of nation, best described by the slogan attributed to professor A.J. Lagus: “Swedes we are not, Russians we will never be, so let us be Finns”²⁵.

Of course, the Grand Duchy represented only a rather small annex of the enormous empire, but not devoid of importance for its defense doctrine, which has changed very little from the advent of long-range weapons to present days²⁶: although the contribution of the Finnish army was merely symbolic in strict military terms, it was commonly believed that the Russian government, concerned especially for the security of St. Petersburg and fearing that Germany might capitalize on its considerable influence in Sweden to use Finland as a staging base for an invasion, aimed at creating in Finland a strong defense against the other Baltic powers.

The idea of systematically “russifying” Finland started to find expression towards the end of the reign of Nicholas I, although it did not represent the tsar’s own thinking, but as this process developed in the second half of the 19th century also the first signs of a growing Finnish nationalism became evident: originating as an academic movement, Fennomania, it incorporated the study of linguistics, folklore, and history, and it eventually developed into the

²³ JUTIKKALA [1996], p. 292;

²⁴ TOMMILA [1962], p. 34;

²⁵ KLINGE [1996], p. 38;

²⁶ HOLSTI [1964], p. 64;

Finnish Party, a political organization that helped to establish a sense of national identity and spread it among people. The leading Finnish nationalist spokesman was the philosopher, journalist and professor Johan Vilhelm Snellman (1806-1881), who saw the increasing use of the Finnish language as the most opportune way for Finland to avoid assimilation by Russia²⁷. The cultural background of the European strategic scenario during the 19th century was the Vienna system, but the conservative and in many ways counter-republican nature of this system was not enough to prevent the forces of nation-building from rising everywhere in Europe. Finland's nationalist awakening, combined with Russia's gradually tightening grip, led the republicans and liberals in Finland to recognize that they had to formulate an exit strategy from the Russian sphere of influence. Discussions on the question of neutrality were initiated in 1863, following the international consolidation and recognition of the notion, but in this early phase the nationalist movement still tended to emphasize the importance of good relations with Russia, in order to gain further political and economic autonomy²⁸: in this view the declaration of neutrality would have certainly been detrimental, provoking a Russian reaction. The 19th century in Finnish culture is thus the story of a nation realizing that defending republicanism required gradually distancing itself from the big neighbor²⁹.

²⁷ LAVERY [2006], pp. 58-59;

²⁸ PENTTILÄ [1994], pp. 8-11;

²⁹ HEIKKA [Mar. 2005], p. 100;

2. SECURITY POLICIES OF INDEPENDENT FINLAND

2.1 INTRODUCTION

All things considered, the years that Finland existed as an autonomous part of the Russian Empire were, with the exception of the final period, a time of friendly relations between the small nation and the great power³⁰. The Russian leadership honored Finland's special position and laws, so that the Grand Duchy was able to continue its development along the path of Western civilization. Some have observed³¹ that in this period Finland was already acting as a subject of European international society and classical international law. The reign of Nicholas II (1894-1917), however, brought a change which altered the balance of this relationship, by violating the autonomy of Finland, and favored the rise of a strong Finnish nationalism.

The Bolshevik revolution, which overthrew the Provisional Government in 1917, drastically changed the perspective of Finnish history. On a side, Finland was finally able to achieve its independence, but on the other this opened the issue of reciprocal relations, complicated by the fact that at virtually no time did Finnish and Soviet security and foreign policy interests coincide: since the beginning, Finland was unwilling to be a part of the Soviet plan of collective security in Eastern Europe put forward in 1933 and thus came increasingly to be placed by the Soviet Union alongside Poland and Germany as potential aggressors³².

Throughout independence, Finnish security policy has been confronted with the permanent dilemma of how to keep on the right side of the Soviet Union and preserve national sovereignty at the same time. Since its own forces obviously could not secure the position of the state, newly independent Finland looked about for outside protection. Observing the foreign policy of the inter-war years, it appears evidently that national defense was the main concern of the administration and that finding trustworthy allies was seen the most logical way to achieve it: each time an attempt to establish closer ties with one country or a group of countries failed, immediately Finland tried to find protection elsewhere.

³⁰ WUORINEN [1948], p. 33;

³¹ HEIKKA [Mar. 2005], p. 33;

³² KIRBY [2006], p. 203;

At the very beginning, in 1918, General Mannerheim established cooperation with the still undefeated Imperial Germany and this short-lived alliance at least saved the country from the Bolshevik Revolution. After Germany's defeat, cooperation with Berlin was replaced by a policy of rapprochement with Britain and France, but it was soon clear to the Finns that the Western powers, remote and preoccupied by more serious issues, would not show sufficient interest in the security of this exposed and hardly accessible country. Dependence on the West was thus abandoned in favor of a new regionalism, the cooperation of the so-called border states – Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland – but this regional grouping was objected by some domestic forces, on the grounds that it antagonized the Soviet Union and could therefore endanger Finland's very independence; thus, this border-state policy was also renounced. Finally, Finland started pursuing the road of neutrality: the first choice consisted of relying on the support of the League of Nations, the international organism conceived by the American President W. Wilson, on which Finland placed its best hopes of finding adequate shelter from any possible aggression; when this proved ineffective, Finland resorted to sheltering under the umbrella of Scandinavian solidarity. Neutrality after 1935 meant basically avoiding any conflict with Russia, although not yet through the kind of active bridge-building policy which was the hallmark of Presidents J.K. Paasikivi and U.K. Kekkonen's foreign policies in the postwar years.

The events of World War II, however, proved that Finland's security strategies had been entirely ineffective in neutralizing the eastern threat, since the Soviet Union showed to be a mighty adversary by militarily defeating Finland in 1940 and heavily pressuring its defense system again in 1943, after breaking the siege of Stalingrad. The Peace Treaty, concluded in Paris in 1947 with the victorious powers, left Finland alone at the mercy of its historical enemy. Whereas other Scandinavian countries – namely Denmark and Norway – were able to shape their postwar defense policy with the aid of the Western powers, Finland, as one of the defeated nations, was faced with the thankless task of building up new foundations for its security without any help. Not many options were available at this point: challenging the Soviet preponderance was clearly impracticable and so was relying on the help of the distant western nations, whose interests did not extend as far as the Gulf of Finland. Only a complete revolution in the understanding of Finnish-Soviet relations could have saved the country from being completely encompassed within the Soviet Union's sphere of influence.

2.2 INDEPENDENCE, CIVIL WAR AND TOTALITARIAN THREATS

The ensuing conflict between Finland and Russia stemmed from divergent understandings of the 1808-1809 events: from a Russian perspective, Finland was conquered in the name of security, whereas the Finns conceived their cooperation with the Russian Empire in moral and legal terms. In the constitutional struggle which followed, Finland looked for help outside its borders: some sought and found help in Western Europe, whereas others established contacts with Russian revolutionary circles which remained intact for decades³³. The ties with the West were the strongest, as its moral support gave the nation courage in its fight against Russia and at the same time retarded the tempo of Russian oppressive measures.

The conflict sparked due to three main events: firstly, the policy of intense russification enacted by Nicholas Bobrikov, appointed governor-general of Finland in 1898 and particularly hated by Finland's people because of his tendency to quell any outburst of Finnish nationalism³⁴; secondly, the February Manifesto, signed by the tsar in 1899, which by decreeing that the laws of the Empire would take higher order of precedence than the laws of Finland significantly contributed to the upraise of an anti-Russian opposition; thirdly, the Conscription Act signed in July 1901, which deprived Finland of its own army: originally established as an independent force with the sole mission of defending the country itself, this army had recently participated to the Crimean War (1854-1856) and to the Russo-Turkish war (1877-1878), but was now going to be incorporated into the Russian army and made available for action anywhere.

These choices made by Russian authorities split the political spectrum in Finland into two main parties: on a side were the Old Finns (or appeasers), those who saw loyalty to Russia as the key to national prosperity and survival, on the other were the Young Finns (or constitutionalists), those who wanted to restore the state's autonomy and constitutional framework. The compliance wing argued that it was impossible for Finland to resist the superiority of Russia, therefore the loss of self-rule could be compensated only by the survival of a nationalist spirit; the autonomist wing, which eventually emerged as the majority, opted instead for a bridge-building policy aimed at regaining the lost autonomy in a legal

³³ WUORINEN [1948], p. 33;

³⁴ JUTIKKALA [1996], p. 353;

framework. Even though the opposition acted mostly through peaceful civil disobedience, one activist managed to assassinate Bobrikov on June 16th 1904. Dissatisfaction was also expressed under the form of a general strike that engulfed Finland in November 1905, shortly after the news of the Russia's shocking defeat in the Russo-Japanese war (1904-1905)³⁵ had spread through the country.

Tsar Nicholas II responded by replacing the Old Finns' majority in the Estates-General, whose strategy of appeasing had proven unsuccessful, with constitutionalists, by providing Finland with a new legislature in 1906 (the existing Estates-General was undemocratic and tended to the exclusion of emerging social forces) and by suspending with his November Manifesto the February Manifesto and all the relative legislation³⁶; unfortunately, these measures were no more than a tactical retreat, soon followed by renewed attempts to submit the new Eduskunta (the Finnish Parliament) to the control of Russian power, depriving Finland of anything other than the right to express an opinion on the imperial legislation. With the Eduskunta effectively rendered impotent and most key places in the public administration occupied by representatives of the Russian Empire, political life fell into a state of inactivity: none of the parties gave any serious consideration to the idea of Finland's independence; the most that was hoped for was a restoration of autonomy within the frame of the Russian Empire.

The outbreak of World War I in 1914 brought new vitality and provided the opportunity to strengthen ties to the West. In the beginning, the war was seen by Finnish people as a great opportunity to regain autonomy, as a reward for the help in fighting Germany³⁷, Russia's most dangerous enemy; however, history took a different direction and the several defeats suffered by the obsolete Russian army caused food shortages, thus producing an acute discontent in Finland, hit particularly hard despite the fact of not being directly committed in combat. The revolution that broke out in Russia in February 1917 and the replacement of the tsarism with a provisional government meant an end to imperialization for Finland: at the initiative of Finnish political parties, based on the general election in 1916, a new Parliament was formed with a majority of Social Democrats, whose leader O. Tokoi became Prime Minister.

³⁵ JUKES [2002];

³⁶ FLORINSKY [1949], p. 330;
JUTIKKALA [1996], pp. 371-372;

³⁷ LAVERY [2006], p. 82;

The new political power was willing to cooperate with the provisional government of Russia, but no agreement was reached. The shared opinion in Finland was basically that the personal union with Russia was finished after the Tsar was dethroned – although they had de facto recognized the provisional government as the ruling power – so it was expected that the authority would be transferred to Finland's Eduskunta, which the provisional government of Russia refused, suggesting instead that the question should be settled by the Russian Constituent Assembly.

The Social Democratic party (Suomen Sosialidemokraattinen Puolue, SDP) from the very beginning shunned the provisional government, seen as an obstacle on Finland's road to independence, and sought to cultivate contacts with the Bolsheviks, who had been kept outside the government but seemed prepared to have Finland's autonomy broadened; on July 17th they passed a bill, the so-called "Power Act", which restricted Russia's influence on domestic Finnish politics and transferred the "supreme authority" to the Finnish Parliament – with the significant exception of defense and foreign policy. For the Russian provisional government this was however far too radical: as the Parliament had exceeded its authority, it was dissolved³⁸.

The minority parties were content, as new elections promised a chance to gain majority, which they were convinced would improve the chances to reach an understanding with Russia; they were inclined to cooperate with the Russian Provisional government, fearing the Socialists' power would grow and result in radical reforms, such as equal suffrage or land reforms. The majority had, of course, the squarely opposite opinion, not accepting the provisional government's right to dissolve the Parliament, the abolition of the Power Act and the cooperation between Finnish non-Socialist forces and the oppressive Russian powers. The result of the elections was a small non-Socialist majority, but the October Revolution in Russia, with the Bolsheviks now seizing the power, turned Finnish politics upside down³⁹: the new majority of the Parliament started to feel a great urge for total independence, whereas the Socialists came gradually to view Russia as an example to follow.

On November 15th 1917, the Bolsheviks declared a general right of self-determination, including the right of complete secession, "for the Peoples of Russia" and on the same day the

³⁸ JUTIKKALA [1996], p. 386;

³⁹ MEDVEDEV [1979];

Eduskunta passed an act very similar to the Power Act, with no reservation made in respect to foreign policy and military affairs. On December 6th 1917, the Parliament approved a formal Declaration of Independence by a vote of 100 to 88. On December 31st the Council of People's Commissars a decree recognizing "the independence of the Republic of Finland as a country"⁴⁰, which on January 4th 1918 was approved by the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, the highest Soviet executive body. It has been noted⁴¹ that the granting of Finnish independence by the new Soviet regime was an ideologically motivated act, in line with Lenin's belief that conceding the right of nations to self-determination would intensify the class struggle in the newly independent countries, eventually leading to the reunification of the socialist republics. Germany, Sweden and France recognized Finland as an independent country on January 4th 1918, soon followed by many other European nations⁴².

From January to May 1918, Finland experienced the brief but bitter Finnish Civil War that colored domestic politics and the foreign relations of Finland for many years. On the one side there were the White Civil Guards, who represented the legitimate authority in the country, on the other side fought the Red Guards, consisting of workers and activists who intended to bring Finland into the orbit of the Bolshevik Soviet Union, following Lenin's exhortation. The defeat of the latter, which appeared obvious after the decisive battle of Tampere (April 4th-6th 1918) was achieved with support from Imperial Germany, whose troops took Helsinki on April 14th. The end of the Civil War raised a new issue: should Finland be ruled by an unelected king or governed by an elected president?⁴³

The supporters of a monarchical system based their arguments on tradition (throughout history Finland was always ruled by a monarch), on foreign policy considerations which induced to think that a German king would have cemented ties between Finland and Germany and on the fact that a foreign monarch would be an impartial force that could mediate the conflicts between political parties and that could serve as a barrier to the spread of violent radicalism. The supporters of a republic instead advanced the argument that strong democratic institutions would be more inclusive, facilitating a broader participation of all social classes to the needed reforms. Since the absence of the Social Democratic party in the months after the war gave the

⁴⁰ Russian Government [Dec. 1917];

⁴¹ KIRBY [2006], p. 199;

⁴² NUMMINEN [1963], p. 32;

⁴³ LAVERY [2006], pp. 91-92;

monarchists the parliamentary majority, on October 9th 1918 Prince Friedrich Karl of Hesse was chosen as king Väinö I of Finland by the Eduskunta.

However, already in November of the same year, Germany's capitulation in World War I meant the end of Finland's monarchy. The Constitution (Regeringsform), drafted by law professor K.J. Ståhlberg and ratified in July 1919, part of which is still in force today, instituted a republic which fused together the parliamentary and presidential systems, this way addressing both the republicans' desire for a strong legislature and the monarchists' call for a strong executive. The introduction of a republican constitution did not completely resolve the crisis of political authority in the country, because the unwillingness of the main political forces to cooperate and overcome their divisions resulted in years of fragile short-term governments⁴⁴, weakened the basis of such a new-born democracy and opened the door to various types of authoritarian tendencies. Despite the presence in the country of a well organized Communist Party (Suomen Kommunistinen Puolue – SKP) which embraced the ideal of a proletarian revolution aimed at overthrowing the moderate government, the real threat to the established order in Finland came from the right: the greatest danger for parliamentary democracy came from the Lapua Movement (Lapuan Liike)⁴⁵, an ardently anti-communist and nationalist organization started in 1929, which in its early days was able to draw enough sympathy among politicians and common people to be able to influence in a determinant way the elections in 1931, which resulted in the presidency of P.E. Svinhufvud, and even to attempt a coup d'état in 1932; both the Lapua Movement and the Patriotic People's League (Isänmaallinen Kansanliike – IKL), another nationalist movement mantled with populism, were clearly inspired to Fascism and the broad support initially shown to them by the political and military élites⁴⁶ caused considerable embarrassment in the diplomatic circles and certainly damaged the country's reputation abroad, as several international observers still looked with extreme suspicion at the close ties between Finland and Germany.

⁴⁴ KIRBY [2006], p. 167;

⁴⁵ SIAROFF [1999], pp. 117-124;

ALAPURO [2004], pp. 8-9;

⁴⁶ LAVERY [2006], p. 98;

2.3 FIRST FOREIGN ORIENTATIONS

The main objective of Finnish foreign policy in the years following its independence was to gain international recognition and to be welcomed in the “family of nations”. As a newly born country in the eastern half of Europe, Finland lay in what the founder of Czechoslovakia, T. Masaryk, called Europe’s “danger zone”. Countries in this area, unable to provide for their own protection, had to find security on a continent where larger powers looked upon their existence with disdain or indifference. Because they had once been parts of larger empires, these new countries feared losing their independence to larger neighbors, Germany and Soviet Union in particular. Yet, like several others in this “danger zone”, Finland failed to find an effective formula for national security before the outbreak of World War II.

In the beginning, having received significant military aid from Germany during the war of independence, it was quite natural for Finland to maintain friendly relations with this great power⁴⁷, which, aside from being its foremost supplier of import-goods⁴⁸, also appeared as the only solid bulwark against the spread of communism: as early as 1918, the government led by Paasikivi tried by all means to keep the country neutral during World War I, in such a way that the political and economic relationship with Germany would not be damaged, as this alliance was hoped to be the best way of protecting Finland’s independence. The military collapse of Germany in November 1918 signified also the end of the pro-German orientation, as from this time on the governing parties rejected the idea of imperial Germany and oriented themselves in the direction of the leading powers Western Europe. Even in the early 1930s, when Germany’s new military rise could have made that country an appealing candidate for a counterweight against the Soviet Union, the image of Nazi Germany gradually deteriorated in Finnish eyes, partially as a result of their trade war with Great Britain in 1934, which harmed Finland’s economy as well, and more generally due to their radicalism⁴⁹.

At the end of World War I, Finland tried to improve its relations with the victorious countries, France and Great Britain above all: the elections held in March 1919, whose outcome was a less pro-German government, fulfilled a fundamental criterion of the allied powers for the recognition of Finland as an independent state, which was finally accorded on May 3rd 1919

⁴⁷ WUORINEN [1948], p. 34;

⁴⁸ MEINANDER [1963], p. 129;

⁴⁹ HEIKKA [2003], p. 49;

by the Council of Foreign Ministers assembled in Paris for the peace conference⁵⁰. In 1919-1920, Finland provided logistical support to Great Britain, which sought to help the counter-revolutionaries in Russia against the Bolshevik forces; even after British activities in the Baltic had decreased, the conservatives continued to hope cooperation in containing Russia. Relations with France remained instead at the basic level of diplomatic support. The Finnish government also considered help from the United States as a potential option: in April 1939 a military attaché was sent to Washington in order to inquire about possible loans for military purchases from the United States, but they were refused under British pressure. The relationship with the main European powers did not measurably improve the country's security either, as the Allies sought to use Finland as a staging area for an operation to capture Petrograd (the name of St. Petersburg since 1914), as a part of a larger effort to remove the Bolsheviks from power: Finnish leaders had little affection for the Bolsheviks, but the Allies' offer of support was too little for such an operation, so they refused to participate⁵¹.

Furthermore, in the uninterrupted quest for allies and notwithstanding the firm opposition of some political forces such as the communists⁵², Finland joined the "general and common family of the League of Nations"⁵³ in December 1920 and was among the most enthusiastic members of the newly created world organization, whose main task was to promote international peace and friendlier international relations. Regarding Finland's primary concern, securing the threat from the East, great hope was placed in Article 10 of the League's Covenant⁵⁴, which required member states to aid any other member state subject to aggression. The policy adopted by Finland during the years of its membership in the League of Nations already anticipated an attitude toward neutrality, as it mainly consisted in stressing the importance of legal solutions to international disputes as well as emphasizing the maintenance of peace and security. At first Finland, like France, even aimed at taking the League in the direction of an effective military alliance⁵⁵; this valuable contribution allowed the country to be represented in the League Council from 1927 to 1930.

⁵⁰ PAASIVIRTA [1965];

⁵¹ KALLENAUTIO [1955], pp. 59-60;

⁵² NOUSIAINEN [1963], p. 191;

⁵³ GOODHART [1951], p. 204;

⁵⁴ Covenant of the League of Nations;

⁵⁵ LAVERY [2006], p. 108;

The weight of the security issue in Finnish membership appears even more evidently when considering its proposal of instituting financial aid to be put at the disposal of all countries attacked without provocation. In spite of all these efforts, soon the League of Nations proved unable to match the request for security needed by small states and the blowback resulting from this paralysis was distinctly felt in Finland⁵⁶.

Since the major powers in Western Europe did not have a sufficiently strong interest in Finland to commit in granting its protection, the immediate alternative was to look towards closer neighbors⁵⁷, joining the “sanitary cordon” sponsored by France, whose objective was to block the Soviet Union off from the rest of Europe. So, in the early 1920s, Finland sought to establish deeper collaboration with the other border-states that had recently emerged along the western frontiers of Soviet Union; in 1921 Poland, Latvia, Estonia and Finland delivered joint protest notes to the Soviet government regarding the violation of the autonomy of East Karelia. This event led to a strengthening of reciprocal relations and eventually to the opening of negotiations among the border states, aimed at initiating a reliable cooperation: the agreement they signed in 1922 in Warsaw was chiefly political in nature, but did have a clause for military cooperation in the event of an attack on one signatory. However, even though the Finnish government removed the military article before submitting the treaty to Parliament for ratification, the combined right and left gave a vote of no confidence, afraid that such an alliance would have ended up damaging the policy of neutrality, drawing Finland into conflicts in Central Europe⁵⁸. Later on, the western powers, too, warned Finland against any alliance with the Baltic countries, whose position externally was regarded as weak. In addition, many in Finland were displeased by Poland’s aspiration to achieve hegemony within the alliance. The consequence of these events, although some still supported the idea of a broad alliance between Scandinavian and Baltic countries, was that the border-state policy gradually withered away and was forgotten.

Despite western conjectures, by 1920 it looked increasingly clear that the Bolsheviks were to keep their grip on power. The government of Finland then decided to normalize relations with its eastern neighbor, by means of a formal peace treaty. Delegations met in the Estonian city of Tartu in June 1920 and for the next five months, argued over the border: the Soviets wanted

⁵⁶ BROMS [1963], pp. 93-95;

⁵⁷ WUORINEN [1948], pp. 34-35;

⁵⁸ LAVERY [2006], p. 108;

the islands in the Gulf of Finland, in order to enhance the defense of Petrograd (renamed Leningrad in 1924); the Finnish side, led by J.K. Paasikivi, opened negotiations by demanding both Russian Karelia (also known as Eastern Karelia) and the Kola Peninsula, territories which had never belonged to Finland in any political or administrative sense, but whose claim reflected the ambition in the political establishment to create a so-called Greater Finland, that would include all speakers of Finnish and closely related languages.

The Finnish demands exemplified a destabilizing factor in interstate relations in Europe after World War I, as on one hand the war advanced the principle of national self-determination that allowed for nations such as Finland to become independent, but at the same time the reorganization of Europe along national lines created new territorial conflicts and convinced many nations, not satisfied with independence within well-recognized boundaries, to pursue irredentism⁵⁹, the policy of seeking neighboring territories with ethnically related populations that historically had belonged to other countries.

On October 14th 1920 both sides compromised in signing a peace treaty, basically reconfirming the pre-independence border; this treaty brought formal peace to Finnish-Soviet relations, but did not succeed in erasing Soviet's dreams of further territorial gain. Shortly after, Moscow offered, by its own initiative, non-aggression pacts to the neighboring states. Finland refused the proposal twice in 1926 and 1927 but eventually concluded in 1932 a mutual non-aggression pact, renewed in 1934 for additional ten years⁶⁰; this fulfilled the constitutionalists' ideal of making Finnish-Soviet relations as legalistic as possible, although in all fairness the Finnish side never regarded the treaty as a credible confidence-building measure toward better relations with its mighty neighbor. Economic relations between instead remained absolutely insignificant, due to the extreme isolation chosen by the Soviet Union, despite the fact that natural prerequisites for fructuous trade were abundant and that Finland made several attempts to extend commerce with its eastern counterpart.

Now it is easy to realize that many of those actions and pronouncements made by the Soviets were a clear preparation for a war of aggression: the closing of the Finnish Consulate in Leningrad, the ending of Finnish traffic rights on the river Neva were all signs that were underestimated by Finland's political and military leadership. The defeat of Trotzky and the

⁵⁹ YAGCIOGLU [1996];

⁶⁰ WUORINEN [1948], p. 39;

rise to power of Stalin had a greater significance than that perceived by most at the time⁶¹: when the Soviets gave up striving for a world revolution and concentrated on the development of socialism in their own country, they soon embraced the old imperialistic attitude of the Russian Empire. This very fact radically changed the position of small neighboring countries, now seen as potential satellites in order to improve Soviet security and economy. When Foreign Minister R. Holsti went to Moscow in 1937, he bitterly became conscious of the fundamental mistrust that still existed in Soviet government circles toward Finland, accused of being plotting with Germany in order to jointly attack the Soviet Union.

Since the beginning of the 1920s, Finland concluded a series of non-political treaties with its Scandinavian neighbors concerning economic arrangements, amicable settlement of disputes and other forms of cooperation⁶². Later on, in 1933, in order to shelter its economy from the fluctuation of the international markets⁶³, recently industrialized Finland had joined the so-called “Oslo group”, seen as a way to get good trade relations with Great Britain, the leading economic power in Europe a great consumer of several Finnish products such as timber, paper and pulp⁶⁴; some years later also The Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg joined the “Oslo group”, trying to develop closer economic relations among the small states of Europe and to follow a common line of neutrality.

In 1934, when the international political scenario was already severely perturbed due to the ascent of Adolf Hitler in 1933 and to the reluctance of the great powers to resort to military measures against Germany and Italy, Mannerheim argued that Finnish security should be seen as part of a comprehensive vision of Nordic security, and called for all Scandinavian countries to strengthen their defenses. Mannerheim argued that, considering the disinterest of Great Britain and France in Finnish affairs and the weakness of the Baltic countries, the Scandinavian countries, and Sweden in particular, could be considered as the only actors with the interest and capability to come to Finland’s aid in case of a crisis. During that decade, Finland entered into cooperation with the Scandinavian neighbors on the basis of neutrality, but the emphasis was placed on the importance of its armed protection and so plans were developed for a mutual defense pact between these countries.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 40;

⁶² CASTRÉN [1963], pp. 53-54;

⁶³ SALMON [1997], p. 172;

⁶⁴ MEINANDER [1999], p 163;

Replacing collective security by a more clearly Nordic orientation became official policy in 1935, when Prime Minister T.M. Kivimäki clearly outlined Finland's purposes regarding this foreign policy strategy in a famous speech delivered before the Parliament: "The Finns believe that of their neighbors, Scandinavia, Sweden in particular, is least likely to become involved in war or other dangerous international complications. Scandinavia has, therefore, the best possibilities for retaining its neutrality. Since Finland's interests also demand, above all, the maintaining of neutrality, it is natural that Finland should align itself with Scandinavia, to which our country is more closely tied than elsewhere not only by bonds of history, but by economics and culture and by the consequent oneness of outlook as well. Finland sees as its responsibility the maintaining of an army for its own defense in order to protect neutrality and independence from danger no matter from what direction it may come, and in order thereby to aid the maintaining of the joint neutrality of all the Northern countries"⁶⁵.

It is no chance that the launch of this so-called "Scandinavian orientation" came at a time of growing tensions throughout Europe and that an immediate consequence of this policy was an increasing distance from the League of Nations, as Finland tried to avoid being involved in conflicts between the major powers by declining to assume any responsibility involved in sanctions⁶⁶. By 1936 all the Scandinavian countries had distanced themselves from the League of Nations and tightened their cooperation with each other. On May 27th 1938, they made a joint statement explaining their neutrality and a plea to the great powers to refrain from the use of force in the settlement of their international controversies and to resort to peaceful means of dispute settling instead. However, this highly promising Scandinavian strategy encountered two main obstacles, that eventually led to its abandonment⁶⁷: firstly, the four states involved could not agree on a common enemy (Norway and Denmark pointed at Germany, Finland was chiefly afraid of the Soviet Union, whereas Sweden held an ambiguous position); secondly, Scandinavian military potential was completely inappropriate to provide any defense in case of an attack, so that the policy of neutrality ended up losing most of its credibility as the probability of a new war kept increasing steadily in the second half of the 1930s. Without the additional security provided by cooperation, Norway, Denmark and Finland were dragged into the war.

⁶⁵ MANNERHEIM [1952], p. 60;

⁶⁶ WUORINEN [1948], p. 37;

⁶⁷ LAVERY [2006], p. 109;

2.4 FINLAND AND WORLD WAR II (1939-1945)

According to the majority of scholars, Finland's road to World War II began on April 14th 1938, when an official of the Soviet embassy in Helsinki named Boris Yartsev, who had received precise instructions from Stalin himself⁶⁸, met with Finland's Foreign Minister R. Holsti, in order to discuss his country's concern about German expansion towards the east and the possibility of a German attack on the Soviet Union, carried out through Finnish territory. After having clarified that, in such circumstances, Moscow would not hesitate to occupy part of Finland, this obscure diplomat proposed formal ties between the two countries: in return for some strategically important concessions, the Soviet Union was prepared to guarantee Finland's inviolability, provide military aid and grant a favorable trade agreement⁶⁹. Talks were conducted for several months, but Finnish authorities treated the proposals with a mix of indifference and skepticism, especially because over the past twenty years they had been trying to achieve protection from, rather than cooperation with, the Soviets. This promise of aid was felt as a threat to the country's neutrality and, possibly, even to its independence.

When the Molotov-Rippentrop non-aggression pact was signed on August 23rd 1939 between Soviet Union and Germany⁷⁰, not many were aware of the secrets provisions according to which Eastern Europe was divided into German and Soviet spheres of influence: in this frame Finland, the Baltic republics and the eastern regions of Poland were placed under Soviet control. At first, the pact caused no anxiety in Finland, because it was rather thought that such an alliance between the two nearest powers would have increased the possibilities for continued peace.

With Germany's invasion of Poland on September 1st 1939, World War II began. Immediately following this event Finland, both individually and jointly with the other Scandinavian countries, issued a declaration of complete neutrality. In the same month, the Soviet Union demanded military bases from the Baltic republics which, lacking the resources to oppose the request, quickly acquiesced. Next, the Soviets turned on Finland: on October 5th Molotov called for "an exchange of ideas with the Finnish government regarding certain concrete

⁶⁸ KIRBY [2006], p. 204;

⁶⁹ WUORINEN [1948], p. 44;

⁷⁰ CARR [1952], pp.134-137;

political questions”⁷¹, obtaining as a response the mobilization of regular army and reservists. Finland had declared the decision not to conclude any alliance with anybody and intended to stick to the policy of neutrality⁷². Some days later J.K. Paasikivi, the negotiator of the peace treaty of 1920, was sent to meet Stalin and Molotov in Moscow; his mission was to stress that Finnish-Soviet relations had been regularized in 1920 and Finland wished to remain outside all conflicts, but the demands brought forward by the Soviets were still rather high: enough territory to place Leningrad outside the range of Finnish artillery and a thirty-year lease of the port of Hanko. These requests once again revealed the strategic importance of Finland’s position in Soviet military thinking, urged to secure Leningrad against a Nazi attack.

Several negotiations were attempted during the fall of 1939, but they led nowhere because the Finnish government remained unwilling to compromise⁷³, especially after having observed the disastrous results of the appeasement policy both for great powers and for small states such as the Baltic republics, militarily occupied and formally annexed into the Soviet Union in June 1940. The politicians, as well as the public opinion, understood that the very foundations of Finnish national existence were at stake. Furthermore Finland, just like other small European states on the eve of World War II, tended to place excessive trust in foreign help, specifically Swedish help, in the context of internationally approved sanctions, in the event of an attack; this belief, based on the country’s self-defined position as the outpost of Western civilization against Bolshevism, was maintained despite clear messages that Sweden would not come to Finland’s defense in the event of war⁷⁴. France and Great Britain were only prepared to give their cautious moral support to Finland. President F.D. Roosevelt of the United States was instead more actively involved in the situation and offered diplomatic aid along with moral support of Scandinavian neutrality⁷⁵.

The invasion of Finland began on November 30th 1939, when the first Soviet troops crossed the border while the airplanes started dropping bombs on Helsinki. On the following day, the Soviet government announced the creation of a Democratic Republic of Finland, a puppet state led by the Finnish communist leader O.V. Kuusinen in the city of Terijoki⁷⁶. As a purely

⁷¹ GRIPENBERG [1965], pp. 75-77;

⁷² WUORINEN [1948], p. 53;

⁷³ JAKOBSON [1961], pp. 113-114;

⁷⁴ HÄRMEINEN [2003];

⁷⁵ WUORINEN [1948], p. 62;

⁷⁶ JUSSILA [1985];

formal pretext to start the war, the Soviets accused Finns of having fired artillery shells on a Red Army unit stationed in a border village. Finland was not prepared to wage war, but in spite of a severe lack of resources and manpower, its armed forces managed to hold their main defensive positions for two whole months and compensated their disadvantages with strategic ingenuity, developing tactics that exploited Soviet weaknesses; these factors led to the greatest Finnish military victory of the war at the village of Suomussalmi in December 1939.

Finland's heroic resistance captured international imagination and deeply affected the main actors involved in the war: public opinion in Great Britain and in France clamored loudly for aid to be sent⁷⁷. It is worth recalling a part of a radio address by Winston Churchill on January 20th 1940, in which he stated: "Finland alone – in danger of death, superb, sublime Finland – shows what free men can do. The service Finland has rendered to humanity is magnificent"⁷⁸. Also, the League of Nations gave its support to Finland by approving a resolution which stated that, since Soviet activities were contrary to general as well as specific treaties, League members should provide all possible aid to Finland, while the Soviet Union would be expelled for having acted in violation of the Covenant. Furthermore, some politicians in Sweden, the Foreign Minister R. Sandler above all⁷⁹, endorsed an intervention in order to try preserving their own country's security from the grave Soviet threat and, although in the end the country did not join the war, two reinforced battalions of volunteers were sent to the front and Sweden also became Finland's largest supplier of arms and non-military equipment⁸⁰. Germany, on the other hand, assumed a definitely inimical attitude toward Finland's struggle, preventing arms and volunteers from passing through. When France and Great Britain finally resolved to provide consistent military aid, in early 1940, Finland balked at accepting their intervention, too little and too late, fearing that it would have only caused a prolongation of military operations conducted by the major powers on its territory.

Soviet hopes of occupying Finland in just three or four weeks were soon dashed. The military stalemate and the possibility of a foreign intervention convinced the military leaders to reach a negotiated settlement with the government of Helsinki⁸¹: the Treaty of Moscow, signed on March 12th 1940, forced Finland to cede almost all of Finnish Karelia (nearly 10% of its

⁷⁷ JUTIKKALA [1996], p. 440;

⁷⁸ WUORINEN [1948], p. 67;

⁷⁹ LEITZ [2001], p. 52;

⁸⁰ UPTON [1979], pp. 54-55;

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 94;

whole territory), all of the Karelian Isthmus, some islands in the Gulf of Finland and the Salla region, in addition to leasing the naval base of Hanko to the Soviet Union for thirty years, but it allowed Finland to preserve its national independence. At a time when many small countries in Europe were disappearing from the map, Finland succeeded in remaining a visible member of the international community. Notwithstanding this success, the peace treaty did not remove the original mistrust between the two countries, especially as the Soviet Union kept considering its neighbor as a potential corridor for invasion by a larger power.

After the peace settlement, Finland continued to seek for security by reviving its pre-war orientation towards the other Scandinavian countries: in accepting the Moscow peace, Finland had simultaneously asked Sweden and Norway if they would be prepared to consider the possibility of a joint defense pact and received a positive answer from both. The Soviet Union opposed the idea of a Scandinavian League from the very beginning, fearing that it would be directed against its interests. Soon afterwards, in April 1940, the German occupation of Denmark and Norway made every possibility of crafting such an alliance unrealistic. Furthermore, the Soviet's annexation of the Baltic republics left Finland and Sweden isolated between two great aggressive powers and unable to establish any political or military alliance, due to Soviet and German opposition to any such plan⁸².

In these circumstances, after the hopes of support in Scandinavia had failed, Nazi Germany became the most logical counterweight to the Soviet Union. The first concrete evidence of more favorable Finnish-German relations was shown in September 1940, when Finland allowed German troops to transit through its territory on their way to Norway, in return for supplies of war material⁸³. Both the domestic and international public opinion accepted the beginning of this cooperation, as it was understood that Finland did not have any other reasonable choice. The rapprochement culminated in June 1941 when, despite one last attempt to maintain a line of neutrality, carried out between June 22nd and 25th⁸⁴, the Finnish government officially decided to join Germany in the invasion of the Soviet Union, although only as a cobelligerent and not as a formal ally. Finland stubbornly tried to fight a separate war, independently from Germany, with its own limited objectives: above all, national defense and security.

⁸² WUORINEN [1948], pp. 90-91;

⁸³ LAVERY [2006], p. 124;

⁸⁴ WUORINEN [1948], pp. 106-109;

This military campaign, which goes under the name of Continuation War, allowed Finland to re-capture all of the territories ceded at the end of the Winter War by September 1941 and to occupy a large portion of Soviet Karelia by the end of that same year. The moral authority of the war was however severely compromised, due to the very fact of fighting besides Nazi Germany, even if Finland distanced itself as much as possible from such an embarrassing partner, for example by refusing to participate in the siege of Leningrad or by entirely rejecting any program of genocidal anti-Semitism⁸⁵. Helsinki kept claiming that its army was fighting a defensive war to guarantee its own security and not taking active part in Germany's offensive war⁸⁶, but the world's democracies did not fully accept a theoretical distinction that appeared rife of paradoxes and in 1941 most Allied powers – with the significant exception of the United States – declared war on Finland, under Stalin's personal pressure⁸⁷.

These events, along with German's defeat in Stalingrad, induced Finnish political leaders to look for a way out of the war since early 1943, but the attempted American mediation failed to find a shared agreement between Finland and Soviet Union, whose requests were too far apart: the Soviets were prepared to grant an armistice only after unconditional surrender, something that the Finnish government could not accept.

When Italy capitulated in the summer of 1943 and the German siege of Leningrad was broken in January 1944, the military situation became desperate for Finland, whose defenses soon started to crumble under the weight of the Soviet advance. The armistice terms proposed by Moscow on February 19th 1944 were almost impossible to carry out, including for example the internment of all German soldiers on Finnish soil, but the Finnish government could not ignore any possibility for continuing discussions. Hence, after some more feverish months of negotiations, despite President R. Ryti's promise to Von Ribbentrop that his country would not have made a separate peace with the enemy⁸⁸, the rapid worsening of the military situation urged Finland to find a compromise.

The agreement for an armistice was found on September 4th and a few days later, on September 19th, the preliminary peace document was accepted in Moscow by the new government led by Marshal C.G. Mannerheim, one of the most prominent and charismatic

⁸⁵ RAUTKALLIO [1987], pp. 229-238;

⁸⁶ WUORINEN [1948], p. 134;

⁸⁷ JUTIKKALA [1996], p. 448;

⁸⁸ KIRBY [2006], p. 230;

figures in Finnish recent history⁸⁹. Finland agreed to retreat to the 1940 borders, accepted to pay war reparations and had to lease to the Soviets the Porkkala peninsula, near Helsinki. The armistice ended the Continuation War, but Finland still had to remove German troops from its territory and this goal was achieved during the so-called Lapland War, fought from October 1944 to April 1945 and defined by some a “fake war”⁹⁰.

The Treaty of Paris, signed in 1947 with the Allied Powers after World War II, besides inflicting on Finland a 300 million dollars war indemnity to be delivered to the Soviet Union, imposed several restrictions to the armed forces: the country was permitted to maintain an army of 34,400 individuals, an air force of 3,000 individuals, 60 combat aircrafts and a navy of 4,500 individuals, with ships totaling 10,000 tons. World War II was not as hard on Finland as it was on several other European countries: about 90,000 soldiers perished in the campaigns, but of all the nations which took arms against the Soviet Union, Finland alone never suffered occupation and was able to retain its independence; nevertheless, Finland failed to achieve its main goals in foreign policy since independence: the neutralization of the Soviet threat and the finding of allies.

After the defeat of the Nazis, Finland’s republican political culture was rather stable, no longer under the menace of a totalitarian revolution. From the perspective security strategy, the post-war situation returned Finland’s dilemma to where it was in the late 1930s: finding a suitable foreign policy to maintain the country safe from the threat posed by the Soviet Union, even more urgently since this emerged as a global superpower. Finland’s own existence was at stake: the extent of Soviet power and the geopolitical reach of the “socialist empire” in Europe after World War II made reliance on the West very difficult, leaving Finland to defend democratic institutions alone, almost a thousand kilometers East of the “iron curtain” that was quickly descending across Central Europe. The solution of linking a Western power to Finland via Sweden was also not available due to Swedish neutrality, but would not have been credible in any case, because the Soviet desire to acquire political supremacy in the Baltic area, had already been tacitly accepted by Great Britain and the United States in Yalta. Of all the other possible options, Germany’s defeat excluded any possibility of further cooperation and a Scandinavian common defense system was inexistent.

⁸⁹ JÄGERSKIÖLD [1986];

⁹⁰ JUTIKKALA [1996], p. 452;

3. FINNISH-SOVIET RELATIONS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Although the outcome of the war had in effect confirmed Finland's existence as an independent country, the very foundations of its security seemed to have been destroyed. Foreign policy had been based on the assumption that the Soviet Union, combining traditional imperialism and communist doctrine of world conquer, was inevitably going to overwhelm Finland by force. Furthermore, the radical left was in such a bold position as to be able to set the domestic political agenda in Finland, due to vast mass support in the working classes and the mighty Soviet Union as a neighbor. In this context, it was necessary to opt for a complete revolution in foreign policy, as the only alternative would have been sooner or later another major clash with the expanding Soviet Union interests.

From a Soviet standpoint, Finland strategic importance had not changed significantly since the outbreak of World War II, because the essential objective in the Baltic, as previously, was to keep Finland from becoming a launching site or advanced base for any hostile military thrust into the northwest Soviet Union. The provisions of the Peace Treaty of 1947 granted the control of key territories to the Soviet Union, but exerting political influence over Finland was still perceived as fundamental by the military experts in Moscow for preserving a secure environment in the Baltic area. Specifically, defensive purpose was rooted, just like two centuries earlier, in the protection of Stalingrad, the second city of the country and a great industrial complex, whose loss would have certainly been a critical wound to the Soviets.

Finland clearly perceived that failure in complying with the Soviet geostrategic imperatives could have meant the loss of national independence, or at least a growing interference in its domestic affairs on behalf of the Soviet Union. However at the present moment, no reasonable alternative was available, except maybe organizing a last fierce military resistance to the advancing Red Army that sooner or later would have invaded the country.

The badly-needed change of orientation took the form of the foreign policy enacted by President Paasikivi in the late 1940s, based on the realistic assumption that the Soviet interest

in Finland had always been pre-eminently a security interest⁹¹, which did not require satellization to be fulfilled; consequently, it was possible – and necessary – to accommodate reciprocal interests in Finnish-Soviet relations in a more flexible way than it had ever been done in the past, through cooperative measures and mutually satisfactory arrangements. The treaty of friendship, cooperation and mutual assistance (FCMA) concluded in Moscow on April 6th 1948 was the first and most tangible sign of the so-called Paasikivi Line. This agreement illustrated without a doubt the two guiding principles of the new strategy – the recognition of Soviet security interests in Finland and the assertion of its neutrality, defined as non-participation in any military alliances or other international alliances which can be regarded as instruments of Great Powers politics. Some authors have highlighted how the underlying philosophy of the Paasikivi line was the idea of a possible and mutually convenient exchange between the two countries involved⁹²: what Finland gives is a solid assurance of non-aggression and territorial security; what she receives is friendly relations with the giant neighbor and non-interference in its domestic affairs. Also trade assumed marked political connotations in this context, as an instrument to further improve the convenience of maintaining good relations⁹³.

In this perspective, the possibility given to Finland to avoid “satellization” can be interpreted as a far-sighted Soviet attempt to shelter the Scandinavian region from the first turbulence of the emerging Cold War: for example, since “Sweden is forced to regard Finland as an extension of her territory”⁹⁴, Soviet troops on the Swedish-Finnish border could have been considered a sufficient threat to induce Sweden to abandon neutrality and join the NATO⁹⁵, making it an extension of the direct East-West confrontation and thus obviously running counter the long Russian tradition of attempting to retain Scandinavia as a buffer zone between its northwest border and the dominant powers in western Europe.

The same security-defense purposes and the creation of a buffer zone, as well as less decisive economic factors, may explain the Soviet desire to include Finland in its sphere of influence. Finland’s position in the Soviet orbit has been often referred to as “exceptional”⁹⁶ when

⁹¹ KUUSISTO [Mar. 1959], p. 37;

⁹² KORHONEN [1969], p. 36;

⁹³ ALLISON [1985], pp. 48-49;

⁹⁴ SANDLER [Dec. 1960], p. 928;

⁹⁵ ANDRÉN [1967], pp. 56-57 and 136-137;

⁹⁶ KUUSISTO [Mar. 1959], p. 49;

contrasted with that of other countries that were drawn, at the end of World War II, into the Soviet sphere of influence, defined as “an area into which is projected the power and influence of a country primarily for political, military-strategic, or economic purposes, but sometimes cultural purposes may be added. States within this area are usually nominally independent, but the degree of influence may be so great as to leave little independence; or it may be as indirect and restrained as to permit considerable independence. A sphere may be more or less exclusive, depending upon the degree of independence states within it enjoy”⁹⁷.

The years 1955-1956 brought in many respects a decisive turning point in Russian-Finnish relations and in the foreign policy of Finland: the Paasikivi line developed into its most logical consequence, a policy of neutrality. When the naval base of Porkkala was returned to Finland by the Soviet Union, the conditions of Finnish neutrality improved significantly, due to the fact that its whole territory was now free of foreign troops. Almost at the same time, after several years of attempts, Finland became a member of the United Nations and also joined the Nordic Council. Since then, the Finnish field of activity in foreign policy constantly widened, its neutrality being formally recognized by the United States, Great Britain and France.

The first years of the Kekkonen presidency were marked by difficulties and misunderstandings in Soviet-Finnish relations between 1958 and 1961, which resulted in two major political crises between the big power and the small neighbor, originated from the continuous need of the Soviet Union to be reassured about Finland’s neutrality policy, in a context of growing international tensions. Well conscious of the strategic meaning of Finland in the context of the Cold War, by no means the Soviet Union intended to risk that the emergence of political forces contrary to the Paasikivi-Kekkonen line would endanger the balance in the Baltic Sea region and in order to do this did not hesitate to resort to a certain degree of well-applied pressure. Also, the increasingly Western orientation of Finnish trade policies, which had already been initiated in 1957, could not be ignored in Moscow. Only Kekkonen’s personal ability and the credit he enjoyed in the Soviet Union made it possible for Finland’s neutrality to survive the crisis and retain its credibility.

Drawing a balance sheet of the Kekkonen era is not easy, but an agreement can be reached on the fact that his foreign policy scored three very important achievements: first, he managed to use his personal influence in Moscow to rebuff several Soviet attempts to draw Finland even

⁹⁷ VLOYANTES [1970], pp. 1-21;

closer both militarily and politically (the rejection of the proposal for Finnish-Soviet joint military maneuvers in 1978 is probably the best-known example); second, he made Finland wealthier, improving both the commercial relations with the Soviet Union and those with the Western countries, for example by signing agreements with the European Economic Community (EEC) and with the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (Comecon), both in 1973; third, he made Finland a reliable partner in the easing of East-West tensions, taking the initiative of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe in 1975, which later developed into a permanent organ, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. It can be said that the fundamental idea behind Kekkonen's foreign policy has been to create a secure position for Finland in the buffer zone between East and West.

3.2 THE “PAASIKIVI LINE” AND THE FCMA TREATY (1944-1948)

The revolution in Finnish-Soviet relations was brought by President Paasikivi, the architect of Finland’s postwar foreign policy, whose nation-wide prestige and intimate knowledge both of his own people and of the Russians made him appear as Finland’s last reserve in a moment when all other means of defending the country’s independence appeared to have been exhausted⁹⁸. He determined the precondition for an innovative understanding of Finnish-Soviet relations⁹⁹, no longer based on the hereditary enmity between the two countries, but rather on the correct assessment of the basic geopolitical facts: first and foremost, Russia’s position was preponderant over Finland due to several factors that could not be altered; secondly, it was indispensable to recognize that the Soviet strategic and defensive interest in Finland was a “legitimate interest” and thus persuade the Soviet leaders that the security of their country was not going to be threatened by Finland: the concept of “legitimate interest” subtly conveyed both the direction and the limit of his policy by implying that Finland would not have been prepared to tolerate anything more than what could be considered legitimate; moreover, formal political assurances or treaties would not have been enough to prevent suspicion, so he adamantly insisted that any resentments and criticism of the Soviet Union in the public opinion or in the press had to be put aside¹⁰⁰, committing the country to a genuinely pro-Soviet policy. In essence, he accepted that Finnish strategic practices could not rest on the logic of defense, which would have been too expensive (requiring almost two times higher budgets) and certainly insufficient to effectively repel an attack of the mighty Red Army, but rather on the logic of deterrence — dissuading the enemy from aggression by increasing its costs. The main tool of the Finnish military strategy in containing the Soviet Union was a flexible and adaptable conventional deterrence doctrine¹⁰¹.

Paasikivi’s line was bitterly criticized by the great majority of the Western countries, where the prevailing view was that the Soviet Union was indeed an aggressive, expansionist power, which could not be appeased but only contained militarily and economically. They probably underestimated the meaning of one of the most important component of this grand strategy,

⁹⁸ JAKOBSON [1968], p. 34;

⁹⁹ HODGSON [Apr. 1959], pp. 145-173;

¹⁰⁰ VLOYANTES [1975], p. 58;

¹⁰¹ HEIKKA [Mar. 2005], p. 105;

which Paasikivi called “puolustustaho”, a concept that can be translated as the will and desire to defend one’s right and independence¹⁰²: crafting a friendlier attitude toward the old enemy by no means meant that Finland intended to submit or give up its way of life.

When Paasikivi received a personal letter from Stalin, on February 23rd 1948 there seemed to be no doubt about the fact that the end of Finland’s independence had arrived, especially considering the following passages of the letter: “As should be known to you, of the three countries bordering on the U.S.S.R. which waged war on the U.S.S.R. on the side of Germany, two – Hungary and Romania – have signed with the U.S.S.R. treaties of mutual assistance against possible German aggression... I assume that Finland, not less than Romania and Hungary, is interested in a pact of mutual assistance with the U.S.S.R. against possible German aggression. In view of those considerations, and wishing to establish conditions for a radical improvement in the relations between our countries with the aim of strengthening peace and security, the Soviet Government proposes the conclusion of a Soviet-Finnish pact of friendship, cooperation and mutual assistance similar to the Hungarian-Soviet and Romanian-Soviet pacts”¹⁰³. Once again, it was thought, the smallest countries of Europe were being taken over one by one by a totalitarian power. The international public opinion took for granted that there was no alternative but to submit¹⁰⁴. Another ominous sign was the sudden return of several Finnish communists who had fled the country after the civil war, among them former Ministers in Kuusinen’s infamous Terijoki government¹⁰⁵.

However, Stalin’s letter came as no surprise for the Finnish government, which did not consider such a solution unacceptable. The idea of a mutual assistance treaty with the Soviet Union had in fact been on and off the agenda since 1945, when Mannerheim had actually drafted an outline agreement in which mutual respect of each other’s independence and non-interference in each other’s internal affairs was clearly stated, furthermore binding the two contracting parties to assist each other with all the forces at their disposal in the event of aggression. But while agreeing in principle with Stalin’s proposal, Paasikivi rejected the unlimited obligation to political consultation in time of peace and automatic mutual assistance in the event of war which were offered, because such a formula would have made Finland a

¹⁰² HODGSON [Apr. 1959], pp. 149-150;

¹⁰³ Time Magazine [Mar. 8th 1948], p. 4;

¹⁰⁴ New York Times, [Feb. 28th 1948], p. 1;

New York Times, [Mar. 1st 1948], p. 22;

¹⁰⁵ KROSBY [Jun. 1960], p.233;

satellite and an ally of the Soviet Union in any future circumstances and thus impaired its freedom of action.

The Eduskunta was fully consulted before starting the negotiations and at each subsequent stage: of the three parties represented in the government coalition, only the leftist People's Democratic League (Suomen Kansan Demokraattinen Liitto – SKDL) was prepared to accept the kind of treaty Stalin had in mind; the Social Democratic Party and the Agrarian Party (Maalaisliitto) both declared their opposition. The chief purpose of the delegation, led by key figures of the Finnish political scenario – Prime Minister M. Pekkala and Foreign Minister C. Enckell above all – that was sent to Moscow in March was to limit Finland's commitments to the bare minimum required to remove the historic Russian fear of Finnish collusion in an attack against Stalingrad, confining Finland's role to the defense, to be carried out by Finns themselves, of its own territory. As Paasikivi declared to the press, the Finns were prepared to promise to fight against an aggressor who attempted to get at the Soviet Union by way of Finland and to accept Soviet assistance if needed, but nothing more, especially not the employment of Finnish troops outside the national territory.

Surprisingly, at the first meeting between the two delegations, on March 25th, Molotov accepted the Finnish draft as a basis for negotiation and he offered no objections to the limitation of the treaty's applicability to the sole defense of Finnish territory, although he did amend the clause regarding Soviet assistance in a manner implying that such assistance would be given automatically in case of an attack against Finland¹⁰⁶. However, when Paasikivi further insisted that military aid could be accepted only in case of extreme need and by agreement between the two parties, the Soviets accepted a final text virtually identical to the original Finnish draft and on April 6th 1948 the treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance (FCMA)¹⁰⁷ was formally concluded in Moscow in the presence of Stalin himself. There was no trace in it of the military clauses which had made the independence of Hungary and Romania illusory.

The key provision of the treaty, in Article 1, stated that “in the eventuality that Finland, or the Soviet Union through the territory of Finland, become the object of military aggression on the part of Germany or any other Power allied with the latter, Finland will, true to its duty as a

¹⁰⁶ SIMMONS [Mar. 1948], p. 428;

¹⁰⁷ FCMA Treaty in MAZOUR [1975], pp. 280-282;

sovereign state, fight to repel aggression”; it further stated that Finnish forces would be acting only within the limits of Finland’s own boundaries and that the Soviet Union would extend to Finland assistance “if necessary” and “as mutually agreed between the parties”; the issue of consultation was dealt with in Article 2, which stated that the parties “will consult in case there is found to be a threat of the military aggression referred to in Article 1”. Concerning the obligation of consultation, Paasikivi stated immediately after the signing of the treaty that such an obligation had been limited as closely as possible¹⁰⁸.

Even if Article 1 and Article 2 specifically dealt with obligations laid upon Finland in the interest of Soviet defense, from a Finnish point of view the most valued provision was the one taken into account in the Preamble, wherein Moscow acknowledged Finland’s “desire to stay outside the conflicts of interest between the great powers”: although according to the general principles of international law the Preamble is regarded as a mere indication of the objectives and purposes of the parties and thus does not reach the degree of substantive obligation it would have if included in the main body of the treaty¹⁰⁹, the inclusion of one of Finland’s cardinal aspirations at the time in a legal instrument, meant for many observers the official recognition of Finland’s neutrality¹¹⁰.

The main interpretative issue that was posed regarding the FCMA treaty of 1948 regarded the presumed incompatibility between neutrality and the limited military obligations provided for by the agreement: it has been objected that being the treaty by form and content a potential military alliance, any Finnish aspirations for neutrality would inevitably have to be abandoned in case of conflict and replaced by military cooperation¹¹¹; others have observed how the ideal of neutrality can instead be considered complementary with limited military obligations, as the latter constituted the necessary precondition for securing the confidence of the Soviet Union, without which neutrality would have been built on sand¹¹². By officially committing to neutrality in the frame of a treaty of alliance, Finland assured the Soviet Union that it would provide neither encouragement nor aid to potential enemy forces. This interpretation inclined Moscow to be favorably disposed toward Finnish neutrality, which after all served Soviet

¹⁰⁸ PAASIKIVI [1962], p. 100;

¹⁰⁹ ROUSSEAU [1944], p. 186;

¹¹⁰ JAKOBSON [1968], p. 43;

¹¹¹ ØRVIK [1972], pp. 180-181;

¹¹² JAKOBSON [Apr. 1962], p. 199;

security interests, so in the course of time, as the policy of neutrality became increasingly credible, the military component of the pact waned.

The treaty, ratified by the Eduskunta on April 28th by a wide majority of 157 votes against 11 with 30 absent, significantly helped to stabilize Soviet-Finnish relations by giving the Soviet Union guarantees that it would not face a military threat from the direction of Finland. But why did the Soviet government so readily accept the Finnish proposals? Stalin's letter was rather straightforward in suggesting a treaty similar to those concluded by the Soviet Union with Hungary and Romania, and yet, when the Finnish negotiators arrived in Moscow a month later, Soviet leaders made no attempt to obtain such a treaty. In the absence of concrete evidence, it is impossible to ascertain exactly which factors induced the Soviet government to radically modify its attitude toward Finland, but scholars have suggested at least three interesting hypothesis: according to the first, the Soviet about-face can be explained by the respect and trust Stalin felt for Paasikivi, under whom Finland could be considered a friendly country and whose domestic prestige and role the Soviets did not want to discredit¹¹³; the second hypothesis takes into account the steady step taken by the Western world, shocked by the events in Czechoslovakia of February 1948, into organizing itself against the Soviet Union (even Norway and Sweden were about to abandon their traditional neutrality)¹¹⁴; the third option highlights the geographical location of Finland which, unlike Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Romania, did not represent a dangerous wedge deep into the Soviet security zone¹¹⁵.

Basically, the Soviet Union, after having considered all of the above mentioned factors, decided to exert a gentle influence upon Finland rather than a tough domination, because the former was sufficient in order to guarantee a credible defense without exposing the Soviet Union to the risks of a counter-balancing western move or to resistance on behalf of the Finnish people. This Soviet soft power in Finland and its influence in its domestic politics was a means to preserve a favorable direction in the small neighbor's foreign policy, but at the same time it left enough autonomy for Finland to continue developing as a western democracy and industrialize its economy with multilateral trade arrangements with countries on both sides of the iron curtain¹¹⁶. Not being formally bound to any bloc, Finland managed to avoid

¹¹³ VLOYANTES [1975], p. 58;

¹¹⁴ JAKOBSON [1968], p. 43;

¹¹⁵ KROSBY [Jun. 1960], p. 241;

¹¹⁶ RYTÖVUORI-APUNEN [2008], p.129;

the presence of Soviet troops on its territory and to stay out of the Warsaw Pact of 1955¹¹⁷. The condition for this mechanism to work properly was that the people in key decision-making positions had to be trusted by the Soviets and considered functional for the continuity of Finnish foreign policy. As long as this balance was kept, Finnish-Soviet relations could develop smoothly, as they did in the first decade after the FCMA treaty, but any malfunction in the mechanism of trust would have led to a sudden change in the attitude of the Soviet leadership toward Finland, as the crises of 1958 and 1961 were to demonstrate.

When the new parliamentary elections were held in July 1948, the results were surprisingly negative for the communist SKDL, which suffered a sharp decline of 11 seats, whereas both the SPD and the Maalaisliitto improved their position in the Eduskunta. Albeit defeated, it was expected that the SKDL would be included in the government, especially considering the new attitude toward the Soviet Union, but their too high demands led to their exclusion from the cabinet formed by the Social Democrat K.-A. Fagerholm. The first sign of negative Soviet response to the new government came from the press, with open criticism and accusations charging Finland with dreams of restoring a fascist regime under foreign control¹¹⁸.

Even when the attacks from the media gradually intensified, but the Soviet government did not undertake any official step, preferring a wait-and-see policy in order to check how trustworthy it could be. Finland's democratic institutions had evidently resisted the influence exerted from the eastern neighbor. On the other side, Soviet leaders were quick to see the importance of friendly relations with their small European non-socialist neighbor as an excellent advertisement for their new foreign policy line which, aimed at a broad reappraisal with the West.

¹¹⁷ MAUDE [1976], p. 13;

¹¹⁸ VLOYANTES [1975], p. 75;

3.3 BETWEEN FAIRWEATHER AND STORMS (1948-1961)

In the late summer of 1955, six months before Paasikivi's second term was over, the Soviet government declared itself prepared for immediately returning to Finland the Porkkala peninsula, leased as a naval base to the Soviet Union for a period of fifty years according to the preliminary peace of 1944, in exchange for a prompt extension of the validity of the FCMA treaty for another twenty years. Paasikivi did not hesitate to accept and immediately left for Moscow, where the agreement was signed on September 19th. It must be observed that, considering the strategic irrelevance of this out-of-date naval base in the nuclear era, the Soviets did not give up anything in terms of the global balance of power, whereas they gained a lot in terms of security by renewing the treaty of 1948, since no one could be sure who might be elected after the retirement of the aging President of Finland. In addition, the Soviet magnanimous concession can be undoubtedly related to the contemporary context of international relations, which as a consequence of the Conference of Geneva was experiencing a moderate relief of tension¹¹⁹. The elimination of this military base so close to Helsinki had instead a much greater importance from a Finnish point of view, not only because it reflected a fundamental improvement of the reciprocal relations, but also because it opened the way to international recognition of Finnish neutrality¹²⁰. A spokesman of the Ministry of Defense gave the following comment on this event: "As the point of departure for this new development we can regard the return of the Porkkala area in 1956. This event engendered the prerequisites necessary for the maintenance of our neutrality even in a crisis situation and the means of safeguarding the integrity of our borders in all directions"¹²¹. The Soviet preparedness to relinquish Porkkala also revitalized hopes that the part of Karelia lost in 1940 could be returned to Finland, but the issue of revising the territorial provisions of the peace treaty were rejected right away by the Soviet leaders, according to whom the borders formed after World War II were to be considered irrevocable.

Nevertheless, being finally able to claim control over its territory, Finland was now entitled to ask others to respect its neutrality in the event of war. Indeed, it is not chance that only a month after the base's evacuation, in February 1956, Finland was for the very first time

¹¹⁹ ALLISON [1985], p. 39;

¹²⁰ JAKOBSON [1968], pp. 45-47;

¹²¹ PÖYHÖNEN [1965], p. 9;

referred to as a neutral country during the 20th Congress of the Soviet Communist party. In that same year, Finland also received the green light for joining the United Nations Organization, as a result of the Soviet-American agreement not to veto each other's candidates for membership, and began participating in the activities of the Nordic Council, an organ of cooperation between the parliaments and governments of five Scandinavian countries created in 1951. Paasikivi's mission was over. The task of securing wider acceptance and recognition of the policy of neutrality rested on the shoulders of his successor, President U.K. Kekkonen. He can be considered without any doubt the architect of Finland's postwar destiny, an exceptionally energetic and talented politician who actively engaged in all major aspects of public life for over four decades. Especially Finland's foreign policy is synonymous with Kekkonen's foreign policy. Born in 1900 and brought up within the traditions of nationalism, since the early 1940s Kekkonen began advocating a more dynamic attitude toward the Soviet Union and after the war became one of the President Paasikivi's most trusted ministers, even if suspected of collusions with the communist circles. Between 1950 and 1956 he served as Prime Minister in five cabinets, emerging as Paasikivi's designated heir¹²². Kekkonen and Paasikivi shared the conviction that foreign policy had to take precedence over domestic policy and that Finland's relations with the Soviet Union had to take precedence over all other foreign policy considerations, but they adopted opposite approaches in working toward this goal: whereas Paasikivi's cautious conservatism strove for optimal adaptation to the prevailing conditions, Kekkonen's bold dynamism emphasized the positive effect of change on Finland's international standing¹²³.

When Paasikivi announced his retirement, just before the presidential elections in 1956, the contest for his succession involved Fagerholm and Kekkonen, with the latter eventually prevailing with the minimum possible majority, thanks to the decisive support of the SKDL. The choice was also appreciated in Moscow, where the post-Stalinian leadership was looking for someone who could perpetuate Paasikivi's truthful policy.

In 1957, however, the invitation to form a new government to the pro-American V. Tanner, tried by will of the Soviet-controlled control commission in 1946 and sentenced to five years and six months of prison due to his responsibilities in Finland's wartime policy, sparked a

¹²² KIRBY [2006], pp. 246-249;

¹²³ BRODIN [1975], p. 17;

deep domestic and international crisis: not only the choice of such an unacceptable politician was bitterly welcomed in Moscow, but it also split the Finnish political parties, so that in the parliamentary elections in July 1958 the Communists were able to emerge as the leading force with 50 out of 200 seats. Shocked by this unexpected result, the moderate parties regained unity and formed a large coalition government under the direction of Fagerholm. Soviet apprehensions over the possible formation of a “reactionary government”¹²⁴ seemed to have been borne out. The reactions were vehement: contrary to diplomatic practice, the Soviet ambassador in Helsinki left for Moscow without paying the customary farewell visit to the President; trade and economic negotiations underway in Moscow were postponed on the pretext of technical grounds; Finnish diplomats in the Soviet Union were isolated; the Soviet press published several anti-Finnish articles¹²⁵. As the pressure heightened, little doubt was left of the fact that it was aimed at forcing the resignation of the government, although no official communication was dispatched on behalf of the Soviets. Under such a pressure, Fagerholm had no other alternative but to resign. Only a personal meeting in January 1959 between President Kekkonen and Premier Khrushchev restored normal diplomatic relations and put an end to the so-called “night frost crisis”.

The events were not devoid of consequences. Above all, it showed that the friendly relations established in 1948 and the Soviet moderation toward Finland, expressed in the form of a soft sphere of influence, could be maintained only on the fundamental condition that it would function satisfactorily, meaning that the Soviet expectations would not be threatened; otherwise, Moscow would not hesitate to resort to harder means of pressure¹²⁶. Finland realized that and all things considered chose to accept a certain degree of foreign interference in order to regain Soviet confidence in its neutrality, considering that a deterioration of Soviet-Finnish relations could bring to the point of weakening the country’s own security.

Another crisis troubled the precarious balance between Finland and the Soviet Union, on the background of high Cold War tensions¹²⁷. This time the cause was a note, delivered to the Finnish ambassador in Moscow on October 30th 1961, proposing “consultations on measures for insuring defense of the frontiers of both countries from the threat of a military attack by

¹²⁴ KRYMOV [Dec. 1957], pp. 131-132;

¹²⁵ HOLSTI [Mar. 1964], p. 75-77;

¹²⁶ VLOYANTES [1975], pp. 103-104;

¹²⁷ JAKOBSON [1968], pp. 69-70;

Western Germany and allied states as it is envisaged by the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance”¹²⁸. According to this document, German rearmament in the frame of NATO constituted a threat to the Scandinavian area, because countries such as Denmark and Norway were being drawn into the sphere of influence of Western Germany. Soviet leaders were greatly concerned about the increasing participation of the northern NATO members into the organization’s command structure¹²⁹ and as a consequence, consultations with Finland were seen as part of a broader range of security measures implemented by the Soviet Union as a response to the mounting tension in Europe.

The sole idea of military consultation with the Soviet government stirred apprehension in Helsinki, where it was feared that they could burden Finland with undesired commitments that would undermine the recently recognized neutrality as well as the Nordic Balance idea, drawing the country into the Soviet strategic bloc and forcing it to be involved in the East-West opposition. Once again most international observers took for granted that Finland had no choice but to enter into the talks and accept whatever the Soviets had in mind, despite the statements made by the Finnish government and aimed at assuring that there was no ongoing crisis with the Soviet Union and that Finland’s intention was to preserve its neutrality while maintaining good relations with all nations.

The Finnish Foreign Minister, A. Karjalainen, met his Soviet counterpart A. Gromyko in the middle of November, but no military experts went with him. During the meeting, the Russians explained how their government felt the urge to start military consultations with Finland, not only due to the above mentioned international developments, but also to the uncertain political situations in Finland itself, where the re-election of Kekkonen in the presidential elections in January 1962 seemed to be questioned by the well-organized “Honka Front”, a coalition led by the Social Democrats and the Conservatives. Any threat to Kekkonen’s position was felt as a threat to Finnish neutrality and thus to Soviet interests in the area¹³⁰ because it was obvious that, if neutrality had to be abandoned, Finland would have certainly joined the West rather than the East as its natural ally. The threat to neutrality, posed by eventual consultations, was used by Moscow as a mean of pressure in order to obtain the desired electoral outcome.

¹²⁸ New York Times [Oct. 31st 1961], p.12;

¹²⁹ ALLISON [1985], p. 39;

¹³⁰ VLOYANTES [1975], p. 112;

Even when Kekkonen dissolved the Eduskunta and anticipated the parliamentary elections, this way shortening the period of domestic political uncertainty, the Soviet leadership kept insisting for military consultations to be initiated, judging the undertaken measures not appropriate to ensure the presidential outcome. Once again, only a meeting between Kekkonen and Khrushchev, held in November in the Siberian city of Novosibirsk, solved the crisis. The Finnish President managed to turn to his advantage Khrushchev's will to reduce tension in Europe and convinced the Soviets that carrying out the consultations would have the effect of alarming the other Scandinavian countries, whose confidence on Finnish neutrality could not be underestimated, consequently causing an intensification of military activities on their territories¹³¹. The joint statement dispatched at the end of the meeting, although somewhat ambiguous, in effect confirmed the interpretation that both parties of the FCMA treaty had to recognize the actual existence of a threat of aggression before consultations could take place, implying that Finland would have the last word on the issue. On that same day, Kekkonen's chief adversary withdrew his candidacy, allowing the former to be re-elected with a two thirds majority.

Such a successful management of the crisis on behalf of Finland did not prevent the most acute observers¹³² from emphasizing the extreme frailty of neutrality in the frame of a sphere of foreign influence, especially in the face of international tensions and conflict. In the autumn of 1961 there were no material grounds to claim the existence of a serious threat of armed attack¹³³ and so Finland was able to retain its peacetime neutrality, but if a war really had to be expected the greater power would have applied more pressure for the alliance to serve its wartime military interests.

¹³¹ ALLISON [1985], pp. 48-49;

¹³² VLOYANTES [1975], p. 124;
HOLSTI [Mar. 1964], p. 82;

¹³³ JAKOBSON [1981], pp.263-264;

3.4 DEVELOPMENTS IN THE LATE COLD WAR YEARS (1961-1989)

The most significant strategic development in Scandinavia in the years following the two Finnish-Soviet crises was the increasing concentration of the great power alliance systems on the Arctic Sea, on the background of the balance of terror¹³⁴. The most recent nuclear-weapons development revolutionized the overall notion of strategic doctrine and defense policy: offensive actions involving the movement of armies, navies and aircraft could be initiated with ballistic missiles fired from far away, whereas defense had to be concentrated in the vicinity of the possible target areas. Most evidently in Soviet-Finnish relations, now that such weapons could cause the devastation of Stalingrad or any other Soviet region from behind the Atlantic Ocean, Finland's geostrategic importance rapidly declined in the eyes of the great power. In this totally innovative context, Finland's main security concern became a possible abuse of its air space, whose protection required the creation of an effective air defense through the acquirement of some up-to-date equipment that was prohibited by the Peace Treaty of 1947. Any proposal for a revision of the latter was of course out of question, since it would have opened an East-West controversy on this point and on several related issues as well, whereas simply reinterpreting the treaty without actually revising it encountered doubt and suspicion¹³⁵. On the other hand, the present situation would have exposed Finland to the risk of not being able to prevent foreign powers from using its air space, dangerously affecting its capability of organizing an autonomous defense outside the provisions for military assistance of the FCMA treaty and thus of remaining neutral.

The issue was first risen in 1961, when the crisis of Berlin highlighted that the Cold War tensions were reaching a climax, but only after some months of negotiations involving the Soviet Union and Great Britain, on October 1962 the British government accepted a reinterpretation of the treaty, on the condition that Finland continued to adhere to its policy of international neutrality, or in other words, that the country would keep a balance between arm purchases from the East and from the West, as the tendency for procurements to be made one-sidedly from one of the two blocs would have risen the suspect of a political dependence "which in certain situations could limit decisively Finland's opportunities to maintain its

¹³⁴ ALLISON [1985], pp. 70-71;

¹³⁵ JAKOBSON [1968], p. 86;

policy of neutrality”¹³⁶. The problem of controlling Finnish air space involved not only the threat perceived by the Soviet Union in the possible use of Norwegian airfields against the Kola peninsula and the Murmansk naval base, but also the possibility, never officially acknowledged in Finland, that during a crisis the Soviets may wish to make use of the existing airfields in Norway to extend air cover for their fleet in the Atlantic Ocean.

The removal of legal obstacles to the creation of an effective air defense also had a more important meaning for Finland: it was the confirmation of the acceptance of its neutrality, both on behalf of the Soviet and the British governments. These developments induced President Kekkonen to declare, on the occasion of Finland’s 50th anniversary of independence in 1967, that the security of the country had never been greater¹³⁷. Since the “note crisis”, Soviet interference in Finnish domestic concerns has been mostly limited to occasional comments in the press and from official spokesmen, but in general the tension level decreased significantly; two examples may indicate the restraint exercised by the Soviets in their dealings with Finnish affairs¹³⁸: in 1971 the Soviet ambassador was recalled from Helsinki after he had become involved in the internal feuds of the Communist Party of Finland; in 1978 a suggestion by a Finnish leftist newspaper that Finnish military forces should hold joint maneuvers with Soviet forces was quickly dismissed by military officials as incompatible with their country's neutrality, with no Soviet rejoinder.

Conversely, the lessening of political strains opened the way for improved economic relations between Finland and the Soviet Union. The thesis of peaceful coexistence, which underpinned the foreign policy strategy of the Soviet Union under Khrushchev, did not affect the economic preconditions of these trade relations, instead strengthening their political content. Since the early post-war years Finnish-Soviet trade had become a primary instrument in Finland’s eastern policy¹³⁹. The war reparations in fact, consisting of goods and machinery requested by Moscow, had the double effect of rapidly expanding and diversifying the Finnish industry to an extent that would hardly have been possible under normal conditions¹⁴⁰ and at the same time of strengthening solid economic ties for the future, since several reparation products were highly valued by the Soviet Union due to the fine standards of Finnish workmanship. After the

¹³⁶ JAKOBSON [1981], pp. 301-302;

¹³⁷ KEKKONEN [Dec. 1967];

¹³⁸ SOLSTEN, MEDITZ [1988];

¹³⁹ ALLISON [1985], p. 112-113;

¹⁴⁰ MAUDE [1976], pp. 103-104;

reparations had been fully paid, for example, Finland continued to deliver ships, machines and other heavy industry products to the Soviet Union as normal exports. Soviet political considerations also had an essential role in enhancing trade between the two countries: as long as Finnish industry remained greatly dependant on Soviet energy sources, oil and electricity above all, Finland would be prevented from participating in the political-economic expansion and integration of Western Europe¹⁴¹.

This trade with the eastern neighbor gained in significance even more, as the import-side grew to comprise goods of vital importance for the national economy: most of the Finnish demand for cereals, petroleum products, coal, coke and synthetic fertilizers, all products which fluctuated widely in availability and price on Western markets¹⁴², has been satisfied through intensive trade with the Soviet Union. The size of Finnish-Soviet trade is demonstrated by the fact that Finland, in spite of a relatively small population, maintained for several years the greatest volume of trade with the East among West European countries¹⁴³. Since trade acted for Soviet leaders as an indicator of the overall state of relations between the two countries, the Finnish government always paid close attention to the volume of trade with the Soviet Union. This was especially true during the years of President Kekkonen, who believed not only in the political benefits but also strongly in the economic benefits of trade with the Soviet Union, acknowledging that the promotion of welfare goals through mutual exchange was a common interest of both countries¹⁴⁴. In this respect, Finland's commercial orientation since World War II exhibits radically different features from those of its policy in the inter-war period, when trade across the Eastern border was extremely insignificant.

The methods of agreement by which this trade developed mainly consisted of contracts extending over several years and comprising fixed quotas of both import and export goods. Detailed yearly agreements were then stipulated within the framework of the long-range contract and concerned the different deliveries of goods. The prices were in principle set according to prevailing market prices and the payments were arranged by means of central clearing. The fact that trade was quantitatively fixed over rather long periods of time had a stabilizing effect on economic activity in Finland, which continued to flourish even when the

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 105;

¹⁴² MILJAN [1977], p. 73;

¹⁴³ Helsingin Sanomat, [Oct. 23rd 1959];

¹⁴⁴ KYRÖLÄINEN [1981], p. 227;

international markets were subject to the dramatic crises of 1967 and 1973. Even when the Soviet Union decided to rise the oil prices to the Rotterdam notation level, in the autumn of 1973, at a time when Finland was importing 74% of its overall oil requirement from the eastern partner, the pursue of mutually profitable trade relations were not damaged¹⁴⁵.

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, Finnish-Soviet economic relations pioneered methods of trade and forms of cooperation between East and West. In 1955 the two countries had concluded a special treaty on scientific-technical cooperation, which was reinforced by a treaty in 1966; the following year Finland was the first Western state to establish with the Soviet Union a permanent commission for economic cooperation, an organism charged with the task of assessing the possibilities for cooperation in various areas, which carried out preparatory work to arrange the treaty of economic, technical and scientific cooperation signed in 1971¹⁴⁶. By the mid-1970s, a great number of joint Finnish-Soviet programs had been completed and new ones were under construction or preparation: Finland built some power plants along its eastern border on Soviet territory; the Soviet Union supervised the construction of the Finnish nuclear power station in Loviisa; several projects for the construction of industrial plants in third countries were created jointly by Soviet organizations and Finnish firms. Associations like the Finnish-Soviet Society, founded in 1944 chiefly for the promotion of cultural relations, must also be remembered for the role they played in launching initiatives for the building up of economic relations¹⁴⁷.

Economic ties with the Soviet Union however did not prevent Finland from cultivating its relations with the Western economies, especially since the second half of the 1960s. From a purely economic point of view, in fact, Finland drew greatly valuable benefits from being able to take advantage of the many opportunities offered by commercial relations in the two directions. This way Finland managed to strengthen further its role between East and West, because it remained clear that each step taken in one direction had to be counter-balanced by a step in the other¹⁴⁸: this is clearly exemplified by the way Finland in 1973 signed both cooperation agreements with the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (Comecon) formed by the Socialist countries and with the European Economic Community (EEC). With regard to

¹⁴⁵ ALLISON [1985], pp. 117-118;

¹⁴⁶ United Nations Treaty Collection [Apr. 20th 1971];

¹⁴⁷ PESONEN [1963], p. 158;

HODGSON [Mar. 1962], p. 86;

¹⁴⁸ ALLISON [1985], p. 125;

the former, Finland first indicated its interest in the new possibilities under the integration program in July 1971, presented its draft on the trade and cooperation agreement in December 1972 and ratified the pact the following year. Although Finland did not become an actual member of the Council as a result of the agreement, it was allowed to “take part, fully or partially, in the implementation of Comecon’s Comprehensive Economic Cooperation and Integration”¹⁴⁹, this way developing multilateral cooperation on questions of mutual interest in various fields of the economy, science and technology. Consequently, several bilateral meetings concerning the removal of trade restrictions were also held between Finland and countries such as Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland and East Germany. East European sources tended to emphasize the model character of the agreement, as the first of its kind with a non-socialist state, stressing the “openness” of Comecon and the various benefits which the cooperating countries could enjoy without fear of losing independence, sovereignty, or neutrality¹⁵⁰.

Aside from lively economic cooperation, this third phase of Soviet-Finnish relations, especially the years between 1968 and 1982, was characterized by a certain attitude of the Finnish administration toward the Soviet Union, at a time when Finnish-Russian relations were undergoing a period of strain, which has often been criticized by foreign observers, who regarded Finland’s foreign policy as being almost entirely subordinated to the interests of the more powerful neighbor. The term Finlandization (Suomettuminen)¹⁵¹ and the theory behind it report, despite the conservation of traditional institutional forms, a severe loss of autonomy in Finland’s domestic policy-making and also, but the claim is controversial¹⁵², in its foreign policy, realized through the adaptation of both government personnel and political strategies to the desiderata of the Soviet Union. When analyzing the relations between two countries whose status and power resources are notably asymmetric it is, of course, hardly surprising to detect in many fields a clear correspondence of policies due to the prevalence of the bigger state’s dictates¹⁵³; such elements of natural conditioning can be pointed out also in the case of Finnish-Soviet relations, but according to the advocates of Finlandization their extent is

¹⁴⁹ SHUIN [Nov. 1973];

¹⁵⁰ TRAND [1973], p. 8;

¹⁵¹ LAQUEUR [Dec. 1977], pp. 37-41;

¹⁵² VESA [2002], p. 132;

¹⁵³ MAUDE [1976], p. 46;

disproportionate and resulted from excessive submissiveness of the ruling élite to the explicit or implicit pressure exerted by the Soviet government¹⁵⁴.

In effect, when by means of special legislation Kekkonen was nominated President for the fourth time in 1974 without having to face an opposition candidate, and then once again in 1978, the facts seemed to fully confirm Finland's compliance. The total loyalty to the Paasikivi-Kekkonen line pursued by every political party in the country as a patriotic duty¹⁵⁵ and the high degree of self-censorship and restraint exercised by or imposed on the media¹⁵⁶ may also be elements to be taken into account when evaluating this phase of Finland's history, as well as the ban of any publication charged with jeopardizing the relations with the Soviet Union (the refusal of publishing A. Solzhenitsyn's "Gulag Archipelago" in 1974 is probably the best-known example of this conduct).

The debate between "prudence" and "servility" is legitimate and worth of in-depth analysis with regard to the specific situations and to the overall context, but when presented in a simplistic way as a-critical prostration the Finlandization theory highlights the lack of adequate understanding of the complexity of both the international political scenario and Finland's internal politics. At least two crucial features of the Finnish-Soviet system can be mentioned in order account for the degree of independence Finland enjoyed even within the foreign sphere of influence: the steady development and prompt Soviet recognition of neutrality is the first and perhaps most important, but also the pursuit and maintenance of strong Western ties, both economically and politically, must be interpreted as a proof that the accuse of passive Finlandization is totally inadequate to summarize this period of Finnish politics.

Kekkonen's withdrawal from public life due to ill health signified of course a major turn for the whole country. Originally the former Foreign Minister A. Karjalainen had been designated in Moscow as Kekkonen's natural heir, but the elections of 1983 were won by the Social Democrat M. Koivisto. However the rearranging of the political scenario was made easier by the lessening of pressure from Moscow, were the wind of change was also starting to blow. In his dealing with the Soviet Union, however, Koivisto maintained continuity, even in the use of

¹⁵⁴ MOURITZEN [1988];

LIEBOWITZ [1983], pp. 275-288;

¹⁵⁵ KIRBY [2006], pp. 273-274;

¹⁵⁶ ALLISON [1985], pp. 156-165;

MAUDE [1976], pp. 48-49;

the channels of communication that his predecessor had built up: in 1983 the FCMA treaty was extended for further twenty years and the rhetoric of firm and friendly relations remained in place. Koivisto established a good working relationship both with M. Gorbachev and with G. Bush, playing a useful role as a mediator in the final stages of the Cold War¹⁵⁷.

Although the overall international situation of the Soviet Union was obviously deteriorating at a fast pace, in difficult moments, such as the Chernobyl nuclear disaster in 1986, Finland refrained from any negative comment. On the contrary, Finnish official policy in the face of the impending breakup of the Soviet Union remained cautious, though considerable assistance and support was unofficially provided to leading figures in the independence movement in Estonia¹⁵⁸. However, under Koivisto, an entirely new approach was gradually adopted to the problematic issue of the relation between the FCMA Treaty and neutrality, aimed at highlighting that no inconsistency subsisted between the two, as they belonged to distinct fields¹⁵⁹. The matter was finally settled in October 1989, when M. Gorbachev officially recognized Finland's neutrality as well as the continued importance of the FCMA Treaty. Shortly afterwards, the twilight of the Soviet Union oriented the relationship between the two countries according to entirely different guidelines.

¹⁵⁷ KOIVISTO [1997], p. 17;

¹⁵⁸ KIRBY [2006], p. 278;

¹⁵⁹ PENTTILÄ [1994], pp. 20-21;

4. FINNISH-WESTERN RELATIONS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The experiences of the war years clearly showed Finland that the vital strategic interests of the Western Powers did not extend to this part of the Baltic, or that at least they were unable to enforce any interest in that area. In effect, they had already recognized such a situation before the outbreak of World War II, when during the negotiations that took place in 1939, involving the Soviet Union, Great Britain and France, it appeared without a doubt that the border-states, including Finland, were to be left under Soviet rather than Western protection against a possible military attack from Germany. The same concept was reaffirmed at the Yalta Conference held in February 1945, where the Soviet legitimate interest in ensuring that the countries on its borders would not be unfriendly, was more explicitly recognized by the “big three” – Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin.

Establishing a closer cooperation with the Soviet Union of course meant missing on the opportunity to participate in the earliest American postwar initiatives aimed at getting Europe back on its feet – the economic aid of the Marshall Plan above all – but on the other side it also meant realistically taking into account the strategic imperatives and the geographical position of Finland, caught between an aggressive superpower and neutral Scandinavian neighbors, with very few opportunities to interact with the West. Considering these inconveniences, maintaining friendly relations with the Kremlin, sometimes bordering on subservience, became an absolute priority for all the governing parties: acts or pronouncements that might be construed as hostile in Moscow were carefully avoided, discreet self-censorship was a widespread practice, continuity of the Paasikivi line was the main concern of the administration. How far could Finland in these difficult circumstances maintain some kind of relations with the West, particularly from the point of view of preserving the credibility of its neutrality?

This seemingly unfavorable situation did not prevent Finland from pursuing the objective of participation in the latest developments of international cooperation among states, a concept that has grown considerably since World War II, as far as becoming one of the dominant processes in world politics. Finland’s postwar foreign policy, as analyzed above, first

concentrated on relations with the Soviet Union, so both the participation in international organizations and the enthusiasm toward Scandinavian cooperation in this early phase had to be relegated to a place of secondary importance, but not for long. Skillful policy and the personal diplomacy of charismatic leaders such as U. Kekkonen and M. Koivisto secured for Finland a position of national sovereignty and considerable autonomy in foreign affairs. The essence of Finland's dilemma in these years was to somehow maintain good relations with both blocs, without raising the suspicion of either. It has been argued that the promotion of détente within international organizations and the building up of a network of contact points served the general purpose of avoiding the actual materialization of this dilemma¹⁶⁰.

Within the limits set by the Soviet Union, Scandinavian regionalism was certainly a cardinal principle of Finland's foreign policy. The interdependence among these formally separated nations is rather obvious and roots deeply in their common cultural and political heritage, but the nature of such a relationship is more complex: without any doubt it is possible to assert that any change in one country in the area has a profound effect on all the others, but the assumption of the existence of a system of check and balances that tends to counteract any alteration needs to be examined with some caution. The Nordic Balance can be defined as a means not only to preserve the existing situation, but also to keep available certain options for modifying it¹⁶¹. The actual achievements of Finland's Scandinavian orientations were rather scarce: from the point of view of security policy, neither a military alliance nor a formalized nuclear-free zone were indeed put into practice due to the different perceptions and commitments of each country; from a political and economic point of view, as well, some limited successes were registered, such as the institution of the Nordic Council and the implementation of a common labor market, but the most relevant accomplishments were obtained by the joint Scandinavian initiatives in the framework of broader structures. Of particular importance to this end is the integration in EFTA, an economic association which involved Finland alongside its Nordic neighbors, replacing the idea of a Scandinavian common market and eventually leading these countries to apply for European Union membership.

¹⁶⁰ MAUDE [1976], pp. 42-44;

¹⁶¹ JAKOBSON [1968], pp. 91-92;

Indeed, closer economic and political cooperation with Western Europe and involvement in the process of European integration had been among the most significant desires of Finnish foreign policy since the end of World War II, because of cultural affinity as well as economic convenience, but for a long time the developments of the international situations made it impossible to pursue them freely. The first step toward the West was taken between 1948 and 1950, when Finland joined the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, fully participating in their economic programs, but still avoiding any political implications of membership that could be seen by the Soviets to link the country to the West¹⁶². For the same reason, aid from the Marshall Plan had been turned down only a few years earlier and the first initiatives to unite Europe were reluctantly ignored. European integration, whose initial progresses regarded the economic level with the association to EFTA and the EEC, must be seen within the general frame of Finland's policy of neutrality, not influenced by such integration. This did not certainly lead to isolation; on the contrary, a successful neutrality opened the doors to multiple and active foreign economic relations¹⁶³. By advancing in partial stages, the Finns have been able to avoid accusations of leaning toward European integration, while at the same time they have been able to keep their markets open to the benefits deriving from such a process.

If economic integration was to be successful, political development would have followed. In fact, starting in 1961 from an external association with EFTA carefully balanced by equivalent measures toward the Soviet Union, Finland was able to gradually improve its situation and shift closer in the direction of Europe in 1973, when a commercial accord with the EEC was reached, although still countervailed by a deal with the eastern economic organization. As the hypothesis of a Soviet armed attack became less and less likely, Finland acquired a certain degree of confidence in its possibilities to approach the European institutions directly, an option that finally materialized after the end of the Cold War and the definitive breakdown of the Soviet Union, opening the way for Finland's membership in the European Union in 1995.

¹⁶² VÄYRYNEN [1981], p. 137;

¹⁶³ MÄENTAKANEN [1969], p. 81;

4.2 PARTICIPATING IN WESTERN INTEGRATION

Although Finland's foreign trade had traditionally been oriented toward Western Europe, which provided the best markets for its exports of wood-processing products, Helsinki's position in international politics did not allow direct participation in any form of European postwar cooperation. Geographically too distant from the area where the first steps of integration were being undertaken and subject to the influence of Moscow, the country had to surrender any hope to be involved in the early initiatives for uniting Europe. Some hard renunciations had to be made, in order to win Soviet approval: one of the earliest examples was in the summer of 1947, regarding the possible participation to the conference of European countries in Paris, in order to discuss their needs under the projected aid plan, conceived by the United States as a means of providing them with the necessary resources to rebuild their devastated societies and impoverished economies.

The participation of the Soviet Union in the preliminary talks with France and Great Britain seemed to imply that Finland could take parts in the discussions as well, especially considering that its economy was not in the position to overlook any aid, no matter where it would be coming from¹⁶⁴. Not participating would have meant missing the opportunity to receive credits for the reconstruction programs and in effect most European countries, the neutrals included, did not hesitate to take part in the Marshall Plan. However, the Soviet Union regarded the initiative as an attempt to construct an anti-communist front in Europe, so that on July 8th 1947, four days after Finland had received the official invitation to participate to the conference, Moscow dispatched an official note to Helsinki, bearing the admonition that accepting the offer would have been inevitably considered an act hostile to the Soviet Union¹⁶⁵: behind the deceptive smokescreen of generosity, the Soviets saw the United States' attempt to bind as many European economies as possible to their own sphere of influence and were not willing to let Finland slide westwards.

After a first heated reaction, Paasikivi realized that his country had no other choice but to comply with the Soviet desire, not being ready to face a conflict with Moscow in an international dispute. Although a negative response may have signified a tremendous blow to

¹⁶⁴ MAJANDER [1994], p. 311;

¹⁶⁵ VLOYANTES [1975], p. 86;

Finland's international prestige and economic relations, on July 10th the government unanimously approved a proposal in which the invitation to the Paris conference was courteously turned down. Making a virtue of necessity, Finland proclaimed a policy of not seeking aid from any quarter, deliberately excluding itself from the first integration processes and institutions of the Western world, where plans for liberalization and multilateralization of trade were being discussed and carried out¹⁶⁶: the country was left out of the OEEC, one of the main steps toward European integration, and of the Council of Europe; other pertinent examples of this policy, some years later, regard the EFTA negotiations in 1958-1959 and the Nordek plan in 1970. Non-participation to these initiatives was the high price Finland had to pay to preserve its own national security.

However, true to its positive attitude toward free trade, Finland took part in other programs that established valuable contacts with the West: it joined the World Bank, which granted indispensable loans for reactivating production and rebuilding infrastructure after the war¹⁶⁷, and the International Monetary Fund, both in 1948. Also, Finland was an eager supporter of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, a treaty signed by forty countries with the aim of progressively reducing barriers to international trade by forcing down tariffs, quantitative restrictions and subsidies through mutual agreements. The GATT treaty was ratified by the Eduskunta in 1949. Another step toward closer economic contacts with the West was the drawing up of the protocol of the "Helsinki Club", signed between Finland and the OEEC countries in 1957, which provided an equivalent for the European Payments Union, considerably easing the payments position in reciprocal trade.

Meanwhile, in Western Europe, the efforts to free and boost international trade were multiplying: the idea of a European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), launched in 1950 by the French Foreign Minister R. Schuman, opened the way to a series of initiatives which, driven forward by the great economic benefits they implied, culminated with the signing of the Treaty of Rome in 1957, for the institution of the European Economic Community (EEC), the first hallmark of the process of European integration. Once again, strategic as well as economic considerations prevented Finland from taking part in the creation of these commercial coalitions, despite the awareness that isolation from the integrating markets of

¹⁶⁶ HAKOVIRTA, PATOKALLIO [1975], pp. 43-44;

¹⁶⁷ DAHLMAN, ROUTTI, YLÄ-ANTTILA [2006], p. 25;

Western Europe would have implied a reduction of Finnish exports toward this area, with disastrous effects for the national economy¹⁶⁸.

Whatever the consequence, the political aims that the newly built organizations were designed to promote, as well as their link with the NATO military alliance¹⁶⁹, could hardly be compatible with Finland's desire for neutrality or with its obligations to the Soviet Union. In effect in Helsinki, as in the other Scandinavian countries, the main factor encouraging involvement in the process of European integration and cooperation was commercial: relying on trade for a relatively high proportion of their gross domestic product (between 20% and 25%)¹⁷⁰, these countries could not afford overlooking the increasing economic integration of Western Europe, the major market for Scandinavian export goods.

When the European Economic Community was established, Finland was not inclined to become a member, as the economic benefits of joining were seen as rather limited, especially considering that Great Britain remained outside as well. More consideration was given instead to the British-Swedish proposal for a free trade area among the industrialized states outside the EEC: however, when the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) was founded, following smooth negotiations, under the Stockholm agreement of 1960, it did not include Finland, because Moscow still regarded Western trade groupings with suspicion, as a danger to its own economic interests: a united, wealthy Europe could start to represent an appealing alternative to a socialist economy for its satellites, impairing the inner stability of the whole Eastern bloc. Things, however, moved forward rapidly: as early as the following year Finland became an associate member of EFTA under the special FINEFTA agreement, perhaps the clearest example of carefully balanced Finnish policy. The Soviet government explicitly recognized Finland's interest in maintaining a trading position in the Western markets, whereas the EFTA countries accepted Finland's interest in the Soviet market¹⁷¹.

From a political perspective, the course of the negotiations for a special agreement with EFTA demonstrated the means by which Finland could preserve relations of mutual trust with the Soviet Union, while edging toward the institutions of Western economic integration: EFTA membership was in fact fully compatible with the policy of neutrality, since the organization

¹⁶⁸ MEINANDER [1963], p. 137;

¹⁶⁹ OJANEN [2000], p. 16;

¹⁷⁰ MILJAN [1977], p. 51;

¹⁷¹ JAKOBSON [1968], p. 66;

was only aiming at free trade, without any political or military implications that could be interpreted as threatening. From a trade-policy point of view, Finland's the FINEFTA agreement was almost equivalent to full membership: all imports of manufactured goods from the other EFTA countries became free of duty in 1968 and several restrictions on the free flow of trade were also eliminated, resulting in a steady increase of Finnish exports; ultimately, Finland did not join EFTA as a full member until 1986, due to foreign policy and foreign trade constraints set by trade relations with the Soviet Union, to which Finland granted the same preferential treatment that it provided to its EFTA partners, for the most part based on the most-favored-nation clause¹⁷².

The benefits brought by the association were obvious¹⁷³: entering a market area of over one hundred million people not only represented an incentive to enhance the overall competitiveness of Finnish economy, but also meant that Finland was able to maintain an equitable position in the international market for its key export goods compared with its main competitors – Austria, Norway and Sweden. The liberalization of trade and capital movements also stimulated Finnish investments abroad and foreign investments in the country¹⁷⁴. Most significantly, all of this was achieved without damaging the special trade relationship with the Soviet Union. Furthermore, reaching an agreement with EFTA was an important step forward toward the realization of those plans for a Scandinavian common market sketched out as early as the 1950s, as in fact this association significantly increased Finnish trade with the other Scandinavian countries¹⁷⁵: exports to Sweden rose by close to 80% and exports to Denmark rose by more than 80% between 1961 and 1966.

There is good reason to emphasize the importance of the FINEFTA agreement also to Finnish trade outside Scandinavia, as for example it broke down tariffs between Finland and its traditionally biggest trading partner, Great Britain. In brief, besides purely numeric results visible in import and export statistics¹⁷⁶, participation to EFTA drastically augmented the efficiency and diversification of Finnish economy within the framework of an increasingly integrating Europe, contributing to a spectacular rise of the gross domestic product. No inconsistency was noted in Helsinki between active participation in the integration process

¹⁷² MEINANDER [1963], p. 138;

¹⁷³ MAUDE [1976], p. 113;

¹⁷⁴ LAITINEN [1975], pp. 181-182;

¹⁷⁵ MÄENTAKANEN [1969], p. 83;

¹⁷⁶ HAKOVIRTA, PATOKALLIO [1975], pp. 36-41;

and neutrality, as clearly exposed in an official statement of 1967: “it is only natural that we have participated in European economic integration and will continue to do so, keeping to our own neutral line in foreign policy. There is no contradiction in this. On the contrary, through participation in integration we have been able to strengthen our neutral position”¹⁷⁷. Stronger commercial ties to the West were seen as a proper counter-weight to the existing economic relationship with the East.

When Denmark and Norway applied for EEC membership alongside Great Britain in 1961, Finland, still conditioned by the above-mentioned note crisis, adopted a more cautious policy in order to avoid further deterioration of its relations with the Kremlin. All British attempts to find bilateral accommodation with the EEC were abruptly halted by general De Gaulle’s controversial vetoes in 1963 and 1967, temporarily reviving enthusiasm for EFTA, which had in the meanwhile proven very useful in increasing the level of trade among its members¹⁷⁸. The prospects for an enlargement of the European Economic Community (EEC), however, improved dramatically after De Gaulle’s withdrawal in 1969: the shift of Great Britain, Denmark and Norway toward EEC membership affected the relevance of EFTA and even cast some doubts on the continued existence of the organization. In April 1970 parallel negotiations with Finland, Sweden and Iceland for the conclusion of appropriate cooperation agreements were initiated. The political problems arising from them strained to the utmost Finland’s ability to harmonize the perceived requirements of neutral policy with the demands imposed by the process of European integration, while retaining Soviet confidence in the continuity of trade relations.

The attraction of the EEC for dominant industrial and economic circles was clear: the entrance of Great Britain in the common market once again urged Finland to adapt its trade strategies accordingly and follow the trend. The government sought instead an economically balanced arrangement that could suit the policy of neutrality¹⁷⁹; more specifically, the objective in Helsinki was the establishment of a commercial arrangement with the EEC, leading to the gradual implementation of free trade in industrial and agricultural goods and to the removal of all barriers and restrictions. The deal, reached a few months after the conclusion of a parallel cooperation agreement with Comecon, was signed on October 5th 1973: it covered a broad

¹⁷⁷ HORN [1967], p. 165;

¹⁷⁸ TURNER, NORDQUIST [1969], pp. 133-134;

¹⁷⁹ APUNEN [1977], p. 333;

spectrum of issues, including the gradual dismantling of tariffs on industrial products, the quantitative restrictions on imports and the progressive reduction of custom barriers.

Despite some attempts to broaden and intensify the cooperation between EFTA and EEC “with the aim of creating a dynamic European economic space”¹⁸⁰, the so-called “Luxembourg Process” failed to obtain the desired results¹⁸¹ and, by the second half of the 1980s, the EFTA countries became frustrated by the slow pace of a dialogue that, besides futile declarations of political will, was still based on an awkward case-by-case approach. At the end of the decade, it still seemed difficult to reconcile European Community membership with neutrality¹⁸², but, as Soviet pressure extinguished little by little, Finland slowly overcame its traditional skepticism toward the supranational features of the community and started seeking closer economic, as well as political, ties with Western Europe.

The need of international markets capable of replacing the Soviet Union’s can be pointed to as a crucial explanation for the rapprochement to the process of European integration: trade with the eastern partner declined from more than 20% of Finnish total external trade in the 1980s to less than 3% in 1992, leading to the natural downsizing of workforce and investments¹⁸³. The sudden collapse of deeply-rooted commerce with the Soviet Union coincided with a recession also in Finland’s western export markets, due to financial speculation and failure of a banking system not used to deal with liberalization.

Challenged by a grave economic crisis, Finland could not afford to miss the European train again. When the European Community, on which all the EFTA countries were highly reliant for their well-being, started to pursue the project of a European Economic Area, the model offered by J. Delors perfectly fit Finland’s expectations: the EEA was an extensive association agreement which, in short, allowed the EFTA countries to access the Single Market without requiring any commitment to the political aspects of integrated Europe. Negotiations for the attainment of this goal were initiated in October 1990, but they only represented the prelude to Finland’s application for full European Union membership.

Sweden’s decision to seek participation in the same period certainly contributed to positively orient Finnish understanding of the implications stemming from joining Europe, but the

¹⁸⁰ European Free Trade Area [Apr. 1984], p. 54;

¹⁸¹ MILES [1996], pp. 48-54;

¹⁸² SUBEDI [1993], p. 255;

¹⁸³ JAKOBSON [1998], pp. 105-106;

failure of the communist coup in August 1991 was the decisive turning point, persuading President Koivisto to give serious consideration to the European issue. After some extensive studies were carried out, the Eduskunta voted in favor of availing the option of full membership and a formal request of application was submitted in March 1992.

Talks started in February 1993 and were rather smoothly completed in March 1994. The agreement was actually regarded by Finnish representatives as an historic hallmark, the beginning of a new era of cooperation in a no-longer-divided Europe¹⁸⁴. The end of confrontation between East and West in Europe removed the security concerns that had for decades prevented Finland to express its natural western orientation in full, creating a whole new situation in which the preconditions for its accession to the European Union were met¹⁸⁵. Finally one of the most “reluctant Europeans”¹⁸⁶, basing on the awareness that participating in that structure was ultimately the only way to secure a larger voice in an increasingly institutionalized continent, successfully concluded its shift toward Europe.

¹⁸⁴ SALOLAINEN [1992], pp. 251-252;

¹⁸⁵ AHTISAARI [1998];

¹⁸⁶ MILJAN [1977], p. 284;

4.3 THE SCANDINAVIAN OPTION: SECURITY ACHIEVEMENTS

Historically, Finland has always considered its Scandinavian neighbors as kin countries, due to the common linguistic, cultural and political characteristics¹⁸⁷, but actual Scandinavian cooperation is a relatively new phenomenon. Throughout the 19th century some scattered initiatives took place: as early as 1840 the proposal for common postal services was put forward¹⁸⁸, whereas the first Nordic legal conference took place in 1872. However, early Scandinavianism did not achieve any tangible result toward political unity or economic integration.

The experience of World War I certainly brought the Scandinavian countries closer together, enhancing the value of cooperation: several new contacts were created and organizations such as the Norden Association were established in order to broaden cultural ties among the peoples. Also, the activities of the “Oslo Group” helped creating the habit of confrontation and dialogue in various fields. The first attempt to establish a successful military cooperation in the region was made in the mid-1930s, but, as a consequence of insurmountable divergences concerning world affairs, the situation of the Scandinavian countries developed quite differently during the years of World War II and Sweden alone succeeded in maintaining that neutrality at which all the countries had aimed.

In the postwar period, law was indeed the first field in which some forms of cooperation were promoted, due to the similarities among the relative legal systems of Scandinavian countries: in 1946, for example, the Ministers of Justice of Denmark, Norway and Sweden appointed an ad-hoc committee to draw up proposals on cooperation on legislation in the region. However, while some significant successes were achieved, they generally have been low-level: efforts during the fifty years following 1945 to coordinate political interests, build a common defense and security system and integrate the Scandinavian economies with each other often collided with divergent national interests¹⁸⁹.

Security emerged as the preeminent field in which to seek for mutual assistance and coordination: at a time when a conventional conflict in Europe was still discussed as a real possibility that had to be taken into account in the elaboration of security policies, in

¹⁸⁷ ANDERSON [1967], pp. 3-8;

¹⁸⁸ WENDT [1959], p. 74;

¹⁸⁹ THOMAS [1996], p. 17;

Scandinavia it quickly became evident that moderation by all the actors involved was the only available key to regional stability, to the benefit of all. Following the peace, some plans for joint Scandinavian defense and security were actually laid: in autumn 1948, a “Scandinavian Defense Committee” was set up with the task of assessing the possibilities for the establishment of a Nordic Defense Alliance involving the Scandinavian countries; in January 1949, delegations from the Danish, Norwegian and Swedish governments participated in the Scandinavian Defense Alliance conferences, but the postwar situation proved to be still unfavorable to cooperation in the field of security policy and the negotiations were not successful, due to Sweden’s eagerness to preserve neutrality within the framework of a limited security arrangement¹⁹⁰. So all proposals of a defense union collapsed and, when the United States administration insisted upon NATO membership as a basic condition for the supply of weapons to the Nordic countries, Denmark and later Iceland were induced to follow Norway into the military organization, while Sweden and Finland remained outside any bloc.

At the same time though, some prerequisites for continued discussions concerning security policy between Finland and the other Nordic countries remained intact, in the name of a common special orientation toward neutrality and in spite of the commitment to militarily binding treaties or alliances. Nordic security decisions formed the base for what later came to be defined the “Nordic Balance”¹⁹¹, posited on the interdependence between Soviet policy toward Finland, Swedish neutrality and Danish and Norwegian low-profile attitude within NATO.

The Nordic Balance concept represented for Finland the adaptation of a whole region to the delicate international situation through careful Scandinavian solidarity, as pointed out by the Foreign Minister A. Karjalainen in a speech delivered in 1967: “my references to the principles of neutrality would be incomplete without emphasizing the importance of our relations with our Western neighbors, the Scandinavian countries. As I said before, the success of our foreign policy depends both on our own resources and efforts and on our geopolitical position. Our Scandinavian neighbors are an important part of this geopolitical setting. Finland is, in many ways, an integral part of Scandinavia. The Scandinavian countries cooperate extensively and closely in almost all fields of life. They have found different

¹⁹⁰ BRADEN MOON [Dec. 1964], p. 660;

¹⁹¹ GOETSCHER [2000], p. 45;
BRUNDTLAND [1975], pp. 96-99;

solutions for their security – Denmark, Norway and Iceland are members of NATO, while Sweden and Finland are neutral – but there are many common interests, above all the maintenance of peace in Northern Europe. To put it briefly: Scandinavia is an area which in a fairly high degree is disengaged from the confrontation between the superpowers”¹⁹².

The Nordic Balance consists of two distinct yet complementary levels, the political and the military. The first level includes the subjective, political ambience borne out of the bilateral diplomatic, trade and cultural relations each of the Scandinavian countries maintains with the Soviet Union and those relationships and arrangements that these nations keep up among them. The second level includes the more objective aspects of military force structure, doctrine and strategy of each of the Scandinavian countries, as expressed in the contexts of both their legal commitment to NATO or to neutrality, and of the strategic East-West confrontation. Thus, the Nordic Balance is best conceptualized and defined as a carefully coordinated zone within which the treacherous tensions of Cold War hostilities are to be attenuated.

Finland’s first attempt to draw the northern countries together toward a common policy of neutrality took place in January 1952, when in the famous “pajama pocket speech”¹⁹³ he proposed that Norway, Denmark and Iceland dispose of NATO membership and resort to neutrality like Finland and Sweden. The line of Scandinavian orientation seemed to emphasize Finland’s cultural and psychological bonds with the West¹⁹⁴ and the aspiration to finally be welcomed in the club of respected democracies, whose aims and love of peace nobody could doubt. However, the military problems and security issues were not identical for all the Scandinavian countries and some were openly skeptical toward neutrality as a viable policy for small nations, so the proposal was welcomed rather coolly.

International conditions at the beginning of the 1960s left their imprint on the outlook of Finnish leadership: the Cuban crisis of 1962 showed that a dangerous threat to peace could arise when nuclear weapons were introduced into an area of interest to the great powers where no such weapons had previously existed¹⁹⁵; the note crisis, more specifically, was taken as an indication of the vulnerability of the Scandinavian region to external pressures. On 28th May

¹⁹² KARJALAINEN [Oct. 1967], pp. 42-43;

¹⁹³ HANHIMÄKI [1997], pp. 119-120;

¹⁹⁴ NOUSIAINEN [1963], p. 189;

¹⁹⁵ PAJUNEN [1975], p. 93;

1963, President Kekkonen presented a proposal for a nuclear-free area to be realized together with the Scandinavian neighbors, in order to prevent the unrest caused by the diffusion of nuclear weapons in the region¹⁹⁶. According to his suggestion, countries forming such zone should enter into mutual undertakings to refrain from manufacturing or otherwise acquiring nuclear weapons and to refuse the deployment of such weapons on their territory on behalf of any other country. The main idea was thus to keep the region a low-tension area in the Cold War scenario and to some extent detached from the global high tensions between the rival blocs and their military alliances, in spite of the fact that some of the Scandinavian actors themselves were actually involved in such alliance systems¹⁹⁷.

It has been noted that the plan for a Scandinavian nuclear-free zone might appear somewhat redundant, the region already being devoid of such armaments¹⁹⁸, but it was actually the possibility that Denmark and Norway could participate in a multilateral nuclear force within NATO which urged Kekkonen to conceive the idea of a nuclear-free zone, in order to stabilize the whole region. The initiative was regarded with a certain suspicion by Western strategists as a Finnish scheme to please the Soviet Union, whose interests of course tended to oppose any NATO plan to militarize Northern Europe¹⁹⁹. As a consequence, Finland failed to initiate a constructive dialogue among the Scandinavian countries on this subject, being their attention focused more on the uncontrolled diffusion of nuclear weapons, which eventually led to the signing of the Non-Proliferation treaty in 1968, zealously promoted by M. Jakobson. Kekkonen's proposal should have been interpreted instead as a means to enhance Finland's security by reducing Soviet opportunities to resort to the military provisions of the FCMA treaty and at the same time to promote détente in Central Europe²⁰⁰.

In a speech delivered in Stockholm in May 1978, Kekkonen renewed and updated his earlier plans for a nuclear-free zone in Scandinavia, arguing that in the case of nuclear war in Europe, Northern Europe would be by no means immune from the effects of great powers' strategies; to avert this danger, he urged the Scandinavian countries to initiate negotiations for an arms control arrangement, founded on the principle of complete insulation from the effects of nuclear strategies in general and new weapons in particular and on the assurance given by

¹⁹⁶ KEKKONEN [1963];

¹⁹⁷ BRUNDTLAND [1982], pp. 119-138;

¹⁹⁸ MAUDE [1976], p. 71;

¹⁹⁹ Izvestiya, 14th August 1959;

²⁰⁰ ALLISON [1985], pp. 64-65;

superpowers that such weapons would not be used under any circumstances against the territories of the state parties. Sticking to its traditional policy, Finland tried to defuse the military threat posed by the newly developed weapons through political means. This time the Swedish government responded favorably to the initiative, as well as the Soviet Union²⁰¹, but the essential difficulty for the creation of the nuclear-free zone was the Danish and Norwegian insistence that such a strategic scheme should be implemented in the broader European context of arms discussions rather than among Scandinavian countries alone. However, the implications for Finland of the imminent deployment of American cruise missiles in Europe, in light of the FCMA treaty, led to the decision in November 1983 to start building the surveillance and interception technology required to shoot down such devices.

Although a common foreign policy was never implemented and the idea of a Nordic Balance was never accepted as an official doctrine, other steps to strengthen the established security situation in the Nordic region in a broader European context were considered. Of the utmost importance were the various confidence and security building measures developed within the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) and its follow-up process, but also the significant degree of coordination of crisis management activities reached by the four Scandinavian countries with the establishment of a joint brigade, through the Nordic Coordinated Arrangement for Military Peace Support (NORDCAPS)²⁰², deserves to be mentioned. These ties gave the Scandinavian countries a certain sense of security with regard to the international situation and had an important impact on their mutual relations, as there was a growing awareness of the importance of relying on each other to face the manifold challenges posed by the Cold War era.

²⁰¹ BORISOV [1981], p. 6;

²⁰² OJANEN [2002], p. 201;

4.4 THE SCANDINAVIAN OPTION: OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

On the political level too, Scandinavian cooperation was an important option for Finland. During the 1951 meeting of the Nordic Intraparliamentarian Union, a private group of Scandinavian members of parliament founded in 1889 and often considered as the predecessor of any other political initiative, an actual proposal for the creation of a permanent council was launched²⁰³. Such a highly developed interaction was meant to create the premises to attain a broad degree of political coordination and integration.

The Nordic Council, established in 1953, is a purely consultative organization consisting of members of the parliaments and of the governments of the Scandinavian countries – namely, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland and Iceland – with no authority to take binding decisions. In principle, there is no limitation on the kinds of questions that may be dealt with, even if its activity mainly focuses on juridical, cultural, economic and socio-political issues, whereas detailed discussions about foreign or defense policy have not taken place because of the differences among the various countries²⁰⁴.

At the time of the preparatory works, the Finnish delegation put forth a reservation that reflected anticipation of negative Soviet reactions to Finland's membership in the Council²⁰⁵. This led Finland to participate in drafting the statute of the Nordic Council, but to stand aside and temporarily turn down the membership when the organism came to life. It was no secret that Soviet leaders harbored suspicion of Scandinavian cooperation: the proposal of a Nordic defensive alliance had not yet been forgotten. So, there was no surprise when they heaped accusations on the Nordic Council upon its foundation and for some years thereafter, charging it with being a mere anti-Soviet instrument to subvert Scandinavia to NATO and American influence and with being aimed at modifying Sweden's status from that of a neutral to that of a member of the Atlantic Alliance. Efforts to include Finland in the organization were blamed by the press on "reactionary and imperialist circles"²⁰⁶ willing to damage the newly established friendly relations between Finland and the Soviet Union.

²⁰³ ANDERSON [1967], p. 23;

²⁰⁴ SOLEM [1977], pp. 36-38;

²⁰⁵ TÖRNUDD [1961], pp. 110-117;

²⁰⁶ *Izvestia*, 19th September 1954;

Stalin's death in March 1953 caused a radical reappraisal of the international situation on behalf of his successors, which culminated, in statements made at the 20th Congress of the Soviet Communist party, in the rejection of the notion that a country not totally submissive to the Soviet Union was to be considered an enemy. On the basis of such considerations, and also in the hope that a stronger Scandinavian unity inclining toward neutrality would have created a detrimental centrifugal force within the NATO camp by reinforcing the latent neutralism of Denmark and Norway²⁰⁷, objections to Finnish participation in the Nordic Council were withdrawn. Furthermore, given the loose character of the organization, there was little danger that Finland could be drawn into matters conflicting with its position in the Soviet sphere of influence.

Finland joined the Nordic Council in late 1955 and in 1956 attended the first meeting as a full member, this way fulfilling the cherished national aspiration for Scandinavian cooperation, which dated back to the prewar years and was included by both Paasikivi and Kekkonen among the fundamental pillars of the country's foreign policy: harmonizing obligations to Moscow, while at the same time pursuing an involvement in the development of an effective regional integration within the Scandinavian subsystem. The cooperation among northern countries did not receive as much publicity as other forms of regional integration, because it was never based on plans for a federation; rather, it can be effectively described as a common pragmatic approach in dealing with mutual problems.

The main achievements of the Nordic Council have been in the social, juridical, cultural and economic fields²⁰⁸: a common labor market, created in 1954, contributed to the harmonization of business legislation; the Nordic Passport Union, implemented in 1958, allowed Scandinavian citizens to freely circulate in the territories of the member states and brought extensive coordination in custom matters; legal cooperation and coordination was keenly promoted by the Nordic Council through non-binding proposal and recommendations aimed at creating similar interpretations of the joint Scandinavian laws.

The most fervent level of Scandinavian cooperation during the Cold War years was, however, the economic one, more specifically the creation of a Scandinavian common market. The idea of crafting the framework for a more intense economic cooperation was first discussed in the

²⁰⁷ HODGSON [Mar. 1962], p. 87;

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 86;

August 1954 session of the Nordic Council, where the economic committee concluded that such a project would have been feasible and desirable for improving the competitive abilities of the countries involved and enable them to take up new kinds of production, paving the way for a higher standard of living in Scandinavia as a whole²⁰⁹. An apposite ministerial committee was appointed some months later to discuss the issue in detail and, notwithstanding a limited but vigorous opposition, the committee presented its main report in July 1957, putting forward a series of proposals for economic cooperation, so that the whole project seemed close to realization in the late 1950s. Finland was especially interested in the hypothesis of a Scandinavian common market and in stronger economic ties with its kin countries in general, since the country was dependent upon exports to Western Europe, although the administration had soon realized the impossibility for Finland to reconcile such an approach to Europe with the preferential relationship with the Soviet Union.

Aside from Finland's ambiguous position, other events proved to be decisive for the internal developments of Scandinavia. In July 1959 Denmark, Norway and Sweden agreed to take part in the creation of a free trade area to facilitate the entry into the European Economic Community; the name of this new organization was the European Free Trade Area (EFTA). Although a Scandinavian common market would have been theoretically compatible with the EFTA, such project started to be no longer perceived as important by some of its members, since most of the economic cooperation among the Scandinavian countries was now taking place within the framework of EFTA, GATT and the OEEC. So when in July 1959 the Finnish government officially confirmed its readiness to enter the Scandinavian common market, the whole project had already been abandoned²¹⁰.

The Nordic Economic Plan (Nordek) was the second major attempt to establish an economic union of the Scandinavian countries, prompted to a large extent by the abortive efforts to find a proper accommodation with the EEC. Following De Gaulle's veto of British membership in 1967, the impression developed among the Scandinavians that they should try to come up with a different solution. The Nordek proposal was put forward by the government of Denmark at the 1968 session of the Nordic Council, where it was received rather enthusiastically, so that by July of the following year the draft treaty was completed. A key part of the Nordek

²⁰⁹ SOLEM [1977], p. 69;

²¹⁰ ANDERSON [1967], p. 135;

proposal was a Scandinavian common tariff, to achieve a high level of industrial competitiveness and differentiation, capable of asserting itself in an integrated European market. In addition, the committee of experts proposed intensified exchanges of economic information, consultation on fiscal policies, harmonization of different instruments of financial policy and extended cooperation in the field of monetary policy²¹¹. A central investment bank was also to be created²¹². Evidently, the Nordek plan represented an attempt to formalize and solidify the already existing integration in Scandinavia. It should be noted that the project, being based on the principle of unanimity, did not involve any element of supranationality.

In the early phases of the negotiations, Finland's commitment to the plan was relevant, as the Nordek plan was seen as a means of strengthening commercial ties with the rest of Scandinavia and reducing their uneasy dependence on the Soviet Union²¹³, but Finnish leaders were fully aware of the Soviet opposition to closed economic communities which may have been detrimental to their economic interests. After a visit to Stalingrad in May 1969, President Kekkonen claimed that Nordek membership would have endangered Finland's policy of neutrality, which required building confidence eastwards by preserving trade relations with the Soviet Union and avoiding any collusion with the West liable to rise suspects in Moscow. Eventually, the decision of the Finnish government in March 1970 not to sign the treaty condemned to failure the whole project.

The reason of Finland's hesitancy and withdrawal is still controversial: the official justification provided at the time for such a quick about-face was that the other Nordic countries were preparing themselves to enter into negotiations with the EEC, which would put the whole Nordek plan in a state of ambivalence²¹⁴; other observers point out the fear of Soviet reactions and the loss of credibility of the whole policy of neutrality²¹⁵; a third explanation might be the preference given by the industrial and economic circles to an agreement with the EEC, seen as a greater opportunity to enhance Finnish wood products exports than the Scandinavian alternative²¹⁶.

²¹¹ SOLEM [1977], p. 80;

²¹² KLEPPE [1970], pp. 48-52;

²¹³ Time Magazine [May 16th 1969];

²¹⁴ LAITINEN [1975], pp. 167-168;

²¹⁵ MAUDE [1976], p. 116;

²¹⁶ KORPINEN [1975], pp. 44-50;

5. BETWEEN EAST AND WEST

5.1 INTRODUCTION

For Finland, the most natural consequence of remaining neutral and maintaining positive political and economic relations with both sides of the Cold War was to play the increasingly important role of a bridge-builder on the global scenario, dynamically mediating between conflicting interests in the international organizations or through the promotion of mutually credible confidence-building measures. The role of a bridge between the East and the West was interpreted in Helsinki as a way to maximize national security, firstly by not antagonizing any of the superpowers or their allies and secondly by promoting worldwide détente: the chosen means to achieve the objective of self-security was strengthening world peace by supporting peaceful settlement of international disputes and striving for the improvement in the well-being of all nations. Most often actions in this direction were carried out within Western structures and political framework, simply because this seemed to provide far more opportunities to implement such a strategy than the communist environment crafted by the Soviet Union.

Finland's attitude toward the German question, besides providing powerful support to the claim of neutrality, can be considered the touchstone of this multilateral security policy²¹⁷: the refusal to recognize until 1972 both political entities, the Western-supported Federal Republic of Germany and the Eastern-supported German Democratic Republic, marked Finland's decision to remain uninvolved from the thorniest political struggles, instead following the road of détente and mediation between opposing ideologies and, more specifically, starting to actually play that bridge-builder role between East and West that was later recognized as the hallmark of President Kekkonen's foreign strategy.

If initially, at the end of World War II, the pursuit of this strategy was impossible due to Finland's isolation in the international scenario, as years went by an increasing number of opportunities became available: the most relevant in the autumn of 1955, when Finland obtained from the new and more conciliatory Soviet leadership the permission to join the United Nations, which soon became a privileged forum in which the national political leaders

²¹⁷ JAKOBSON [1968], pp. 52-58;

could express their broader foreign policy outlook, strengthening the basis of Finland's neutrality through the promotion of peace-keeping operations, human rights and disarmament. Inclusion in the family of nations also meant a clear break with the previous security doctrine, as a multilateral approach to security issues replaced the bilateral channels of the early postwar years.

The well-balanced attitude in the United Nations on one hand certainly impaired the effectiveness and the extent of any Finnish initiative, never inclined to take a firm position in the disputes between the superpowers, but on the other hand it allowed Finland to assume an important position within the organization's structures and subsidiary organs and to focus its energies on other fields of activity: in particular, if the fundamental aim of Finland's policy of neutrality is to promote international justice and peace, the issues of disarmament and human rights can be seen as closely connected, because of course when peace is strengthened through enhanced security and cooperation, the conditions for promoting human rights are also improved; once again, the other Scandinavian countries were often valuable partners for the pursuit of détente within the frame of the United Nations, as several forms of collaboration among these nations were implemented in the course of years.

Besides participating in the existing international organizations, Finland also took initiatives of its own for the achievement of its most significant aims of security policy, that is, the prevention of an East-West conflict, especially since the second half of the 1960s, when both blocs appeared more willing to resort to détente and disarmament measures and a greater number of opportunities for dialogue were accessible. In this new context of more stable international relations, the Finnish government started to explore opportunities to encourage multilateral contacts for the enhancement of security and cooperation in Europe. The scope of Finland's active involvement in the organization and hosting of the Strategic Arms Limitations Talks (SALT) and the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe was to establish multilateral networks for cooperation through international organizations, capable of replacing bilateral arrangements in the case of a crisis. It is not a chance, in fact, that such initiatives coincided with the country's presence on the Security Council during 1969-1970 and renewed interest in the ongoing process of European integration.

Détente and disarmament are closely intertwined, so that significant progress in the latter issue is possible only in conditions of mutual trust and positive political atmosphere. Finland was

particularly clever in crafting such a favorable environment in which to conduct negotiations. Two causes have been pointed out by the commentators to explain Finland's East-West success in alleviating the Cold War tensions and they both refer to the country's strategic position as a communication channel between the ideological, political and military blocs²¹⁸: firstly, the Soviet Union's enhanced receptiveness to the mediation offer in light of the changing worldwide perceptions, a factor that could hardly be influenced by any initiative taken in Helsinki; secondly but equally important, the West's willingness to accept such a mediation, which required the skillful building of contacts and trust, credentials that in fact played a major role in all the Finnish contributions to East-West détente.

Even when the final outcome of the Cold War was no longer in doubt, Finland promptly recognized that the local tensions, which soon replaced the worldwide balance of terror, gave new dimensions and importance to some apparently obsolete security issues, calling for an even "wider participation of the international community in their solution"²¹⁹. Non-proliferation and weapons disposal without a doubt belonged to this category and that is why the attitude toward international relations in Helsinki did not change: the pursuit of disarmament and peaceful dialogue continued through the 1990s and in these first years of the new millennium, by the means of a general effort in taking the lead of various plans for the implementation of armament reductions and the creation of a truly inclusive system of global governance.

²¹⁸ RIES [1999], p. 27;

²¹⁹ KARHILO [Aug. 1992], p. 234;

5.2 FINLAND IN THE UNITED NATIONS

It is probably in Finland's attitude within the United Nations Organization that the essential feature of its Cold War foreign policy, the attempt to reconcile Eastern and Western strategies in the framework of neutrality, can be best seen. The seemingly lack of compatibility between neutrality and membership in an international organization was soon overcome by the very nature of the U.N., an organization which due to its global character was, by definition, bound to impartiality in Cold War disputes.

First of all, the role of the United Nations in maintaining peace and security must be mentioned; this of course was originally the primary task of the organization, the purpose for which it was founded. This was also the reason why Finland applied for U.N. membership at the first possible occasion, shortly after the ratification of the Peace Treaty in 1947, faithful in the new world order and willing to actively take part in its work for international cooperation. An evident sign of the Finnish desire to participate in the U.N. system is contained in the declaration of intent in Article 3 of the FCMA treaty, according to which Finland committed itself to "participate in all measures towards the maintenance of international peace and security in conformity of the aim and principles of the United Nations Organization".

As the international situation developed toward the Cold War, this early enthusiasm was replaced by growing skepticism²²⁰, so that when its admission was halted by the Soviet veto, as a reaction to the refusal of the West to admit certain Soviet-sponsored Eastern European countries in the organization, of all the nations kept waiting due to the arguments between the great powers, Finland was probably the least interested in obtaining a seat in the U.N., seen more and more as a dangerous battlefield of the East-West conflict²²¹. These initial doubts probably reflected the lack of self-confidence that at the time affected Finland's foreign policy, uncertain of the role that neutral countries could play in the organization.

The deadlock was broken in the autumn of 1955 through a "package deal", resulting from a temporary toning down of Cold War struggles, which allowed sixteen new members to be admitted to the organization. The first General Assembly session in which Finland took part, in the autumn of 1956, had to deal with the Hungarian crisis, confronting the country's

²²⁰ MEDITZ, SOLSTEN [1988];

²²¹ JAKOBSON [1968], p. 102;

delegation with a grave strategic as well as emotional dilemma: after having expressed the hope that the Soviet Union was soon to withdraw the troops from Hungary and supported the resolutions recommending the sending of observers, Finland abstained from voting on those condemning the action and demanding the immediate withdrawal of Soviet army. The contradiction inherent in Finland's two major foreign policy objectives – maintaining friendly relations with the East while preserving the credibility of neutrality in the West – were often accentuated in the frame of the United Nations.

Another dramatic event, the Suez crisis, monopolized the attention of the General Assembly in that same year and gave Finland the opportunity to play a more active role: not only by voting in favor of the resolution which approved the first deployment of U.N. troops, but also by providing troops for the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF) peace-keeping mission, as requested by the Secretary General. In the following years, Finland has been involved in a great number of U.N. peace-keeping operations: Finnish officers served under the U.N. flag in several missions, including those in Lebanon, the Kashmir region, Iran and Iraq, whereas Finnish troops were deployed in Cyprus, the Middle East, Yugoslavia and Somalia, just to mention some of the most important contributions.

Due to its neutral position, Finland was a perfect candidate for sending troops for peace-keeping missions under the banner of the world organization²²². As highlighted by the literature, Finland devoted considerable energies to the cause of internationalism and belonged – alongside its Scandinavian neighbors – to the group of the most active participants in peace-keeping in the world²²³: during the period 1956-1997, for example, Finland contributed with about 34,000 men to international peace-keeping under the umbrella of the United Nations. Such a generous commitment to UN crisis management operations, the latest of which was the UNIFIL II in Lebanon in 2006, is just an additional proof of the country's eagerness to play its part in the context of international cooperation.

In general, Finnish U.N. policy has always been characterized by a great consideration and respect of the Security Council, perceived as the organism embodying the ideal of equal participation of great powers and small states to the management of global issues²²⁴. In fact, as

²²² PAJUNEN [1983], p. 164;

²²³ BERGMAN [2004], p. 5;

²²⁴ MAUDE [1976], p. 137;

it is widely recognized²²⁵, multilateral military measures, if undertaken under the auspices of the United Nations, do not conflict with the notion of neutrality. Finland, like other small nations, has a vital interest in supporting and building up the international organization to develop into an efficient instrument for the maintenance of international peace: in all circumstances its representatives emphasized the great significance of Article 2.4 of the Charter, which contains the principle prohibition of the use of force and of the threat to use it. Accordingly, the consistent support provided to U.N. peace-keeping efforts with men, votes and financial contributions reflects the broad compatibility existing between Finnish security strategies and general U.N. aims²²⁶.

Standing on the intersection between East and West always rendered the pursuit of this policy quite problematic, since the country's space of maneuver tended to vary greatly in accordance with periods of increased or decreased international tension²²⁷: except for participating in peace-keeping activities, not directed against any specific enemy, there was nothing particularly constructive that Finland could contribute to the political settlement of major disputes, without being accused of partisanship with any side in the conflict. Thus, adherence to the principle of not supporting any proposal that was found unacceptable by either of the main protagonists of the crisis²²⁸ resulted in a certain degree of passivity regarding far-reaching controversial political issues. For instance, Finland sponsored a very limited number of resolutions in the General Assembly compared to its Scandinavian neighbors²²⁹.

This choice reflected President Kekkonen's conviction that Finland's role in the United Nations was to act as a bridge-builder between East and West, by assuming an active role in lessening international tensions rather than stirring them up. The Finnish delegates repeatedly emphasized their understanding of the U.N. primarily as an instrument of negotiation at the disposal of its members, to be used for the purpose of reconciling differing or conflicting interests, rather than as a tribunal passing moral judgments on the behavior of nations.

Neutrality was the guideline during the Cold War, although, as pointed out by the Foreign Minister A. Karjalainen in a speech in 1967, this notion had to be intended as "not an end in

²²⁵ GOETSCHER [1999], p. 122;

OJANEN [2000], p. 15;

²²⁶ JAKOBSON [1968], p. 107;

²²⁷ VESA [2001], p. 59;

²²⁸ TÖRNUDD [1969], p. 54;

²²⁹ LIDSTRÖM, WIKLUND [1967], p. 184;

itself: it is a tool of foreign policy”²³⁰, meaning that in political confrontations directly involving the interests of the great powers, Finland never took sides, manifesting its desire to stand aloof from any conflict engendered by political interests within the United Nations; in such cases, it was always natural for the Finnish delegation to assume the role of a detached, neutral observer. Through the attentive analysis of voting patterns in the General Assembly²³¹, it has been noted that Finland, especially in the early years, was usually very careful in issues concerning stands on conflicts of power policy.

The cornerstone of this cautious approach is the Charter of the United Nations, on whose stipulations the Finnish representatives base all of their decisions²³²: any attempt to depart from it or to circumvent it was interpreted as an attempt to transform the organization into an arena for the purpose of imposing an interest over another. Accordingly, if the U.N. is bound by Article 1.4 of the Charter to serve as “a centre for harmonizing the actions of nations”²³³, universality and equal participation of all members must be a basic condition: that is why Finland always argued in favor of the admission of the People’s Republic of China. Finland has never been and is not prone to support expressions of condemnation and, in the words of President Kekkonen of 1961, continues to see its task “rather as a physician than as a judge”²³⁴, trying to provide a contribution for the conciliation of conflicting interests, without forgetting its neutrality policy. This explains why Finland has refrained over the years from condemning both American and Soviet actions, as for example the involvement of the United States in the Vietnam war, the military invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 on behalf of the Soviet Union or the occupation of Afghanistan ten years later.

The neutralist policy followed by Finland in the United Nations makes it impossible to classify the country on the basis of its voting behavior, as its unique attitude was designed to suit a unique position²³⁵, but it is not unjustifiable to regard Finland as a member of the so-called “Nordic Group”, in light of the close collaboration its delegation always sought with the other Scandinavian countries, of whose the joint participation to peace-keeping missions is only one of the possible examples. Actually, although Denmark, Norway and Iceland belong

²³⁰ KARJALAINEN [Oct. 1967], p. 42;

²³¹ JACOBSEN [1967], pp. 139-157;

²³² ILVESSALO [1963], p. 126;

²³³ United Nations Organization [Jun. 26th 1945];

²³⁴ KEKKONEN [Oct. 1961];

²³⁵ JAKOBSON [1963], p. 71;

to NATO while Finland and Sweden pursue a policy of neutrality, the differences between the security policies of these countries have little relevance and there are several issues on which the views of the Scandinavian countries are identical or almost, like international disarmament, peaceful settlement of disputes and universality of the organization. Despite the fact that Finland tends to abstain from voting in the General Assembly²³⁶ or to vote differently from the Nordic Group²³⁷ more often than the others, it would be misleading to assess Finland's role in the United Nations outside its Scandinavian context, as consultations among the five delegations of the group take place continuously during the sessions and usually their common identity takes precedence over the separate political characteristics of each.

The Scandinavian countries realized that by acting together rather than individually they have a greater chance of influencing the activities of the organization and thus developed a network of contacts and consultations, entirely voluntary and not binding²³⁸, such as the two regular conferences that are held every year by the Foreign Ministers, in order to exchange information and opinions, mainly devoted to top-level policy coordination in the United Nations. The greater part of this cooperation, however, takes part at the U.N. itself, since representatives of the Scandinavian delegations keep in close contact and hold daily meetings; also, the fact that one delegate speaks on behalf of all his colleagues in the debates has become a frequent practice. Keeping into account the rate of recurrence of joint statements of these countries, the extent of mutual consultation and other practical forms of collaboration in the United Nations and several statements made by spokesmen of the Finnish government, it is quite clear that Finland strives consciously to identify itself politically with the "Scandinavian Group". The extent of this close cooperation with the northern neighbors did not lose its importance even after 1995, when the European Union became the most important reference group in orienting Finland's behavior and choices within the U.N. organisms.

During the 1960s, two major phenomena characterized the development of the United Nations: a considerable increase in the number of member states and a consequent expansion of the structural framework of the organization²³⁹. In this context, leading to the creation of many new organs and to the expansion of formerly existing ones, increasing opportunities

²³⁶ KALELA [1967], p. 163;

²³⁷ JACOBSEN [1967], p. 148;

²³⁸ ENCKELL [1965], p. 41;

²³⁹ LIDSTRÖM, WIKLUND [1967], p. 174;

became available for any member state to actively participate to the specialized subsidiary organs. Finland took its full share of responsibility in serving on many smaller bodies: the Sub-Committee on Angola (1961-1962), the Preparatory Committee and the Committee for the Year of International Cooperation (1963-1965), the Ad Hoc Committee for South-West Africa (1967), the politically important Committee of the Twenty-Four dealing with the implementation of independence in former colonies (1967-1968), the Commission on the Status of Women (1960-1968).

Several Finns were also prominent in UN work involving the careful defining of rights and the limitation of power: for example, professor B. Broms chaired the committee that in 1975 elaborated the definition of aggression. The experienced diplomat M. Jakobson, the champion of Finnish neutrality worldwide, was also proposed as a candidate for the post of U.N. Secretary-General in 1971 and he would probably have been elected, if not for the Soviet veto²⁴⁰. Finland's activity at all levels in the structure of relations established by the United Nations and its specialist committees provided the country with a valuable arena in which to express its independent foreign policy outlook.

There is a clear continuity in Finland's policy within the United Nations, as it is reflected in its overall behavior over the period from its entry into the organization until recent times: a leitmotif can be traced in the ambition, accepted as a guideline by all political parties²⁴¹, of establishing and developing friendly relations with all countries. The accession to the European Union in 1995, however, brought about some modifications in Finnish attitude²⁴²: since the continental institutions became the privileged forum for dialogue on security issues, fewer energies and resources were devoted to U.N. membership, as the country gradually conformed to the shared European foreign policy positions; among other things, this implied taking a more concrete orientation than before on political issues and to re-define its commitment to the more demanding form of EU-led peace-enforcing operations.

Finland's desire to effectively contribute to the purposes of the United Nations is also testified by its participation in the development of the system for the worldwide promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, a constitutionally relevant²⁴³ issue of

²⁴⁰ MAUDE [1976], pp. 140-143;

²⁴¹ NOUSIAINEN [1963], p. 184;

²⁴² VESA [2001], pp. 60-62;

²⁴³ MODEEN [1974], pp. 206-211;

Finnish domestic policy which naturally extended to foreign policy as well. The Charter places the promotion of human rights alongside the maintenance of peace and security as central goals: building on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, drawn in 1948, the U.N. has established a set of major international human rights conventions, which Finland was among the first countries to ratify²⁴⁴, optional articles included. Finland's systematic support of all efforts and initiatives within the U.N. to uphold a strong implementation of human rights everywhere in the world can be seen as another example of a long-term strategy, ultimately aimed at strengthening justice and settling disputes in international relations; in fact Finland tends to conceive human rights as universal, inviolable and inalienable.

The areas of special emphasis in Finnish human rights policy can well illustrate the intense effort made by the country, usually alongside other Scandinavian nations, to promote initiatives within the U.N. specialized organs²⁴⁵. One of such areas is family planning, defined as the right of all individuals to the exercise of their full potential thanks to various measures required to set secure social and material conditions for the development of a family; closely connected with this is the question of the status of women in general and the elimination of any form of discrimination against women worldwide: Finland and Sweden have proven particularly active in this field and it is primarily upon their initiative that the issue was often dealt with by the Commission on the Status of Women and many resolutions were passed. Another key area of Finnish involvement is that dealing with the abolition of death penalty from national criminal law: Finland has always participated in the deliberations on this subject and sponsored the relevant resolutions both in the Economic and Social Council and in the General Assembly²⁴⁶ since the early years until present days, when in fact it voted in favor of the moratorium of the death penalty promoted by the government of Italy in late 2007. Other activities carried out by Finland in the U.N. relate to protection of children, minorities and indigenous peoples; work to combat racism and promotion of non-discrimination are also central themes. Finland's election in 2006 to the permanent U.N. organism for the safeguard of human rights, the Human Rights Council, clearly demonstrated the relevance and international appreciation of its commitment in this field.

²⁴⁴ TÖRNUDD [1975], p. 17;

²⁴⁵ TÖRNUDD [1986], pp. 22-27;

²⁴⁶ SAARIO [1974], p. 98-99;

5.3 THE ISSUE OF DISARMAMENT AND THE CSCE CONFERENCE

Another core element of Finland's active policy of neutrality was the country's participation in several arms control and disarmament initiatives, mainly but not only in the framework of the United Nations²⁴⁷. Actually, in the field of disarmament Finland's own security interests as a small neutral country happened to coincide with those of the international community, especially at a time when the costs of direct military confrontation began to outweigh the benefits. This involvement in such a global issue of course became possible for Finland only since the 1960s, after the stabilization of neighborhood relations and the acquisition of international recognition of the policy of neutrality.

Particular value was attributed to the prevention of uncontrolled nuclear proliferation in Europe, which posed the gravest danger to the very existence of mankind. Therefore, nuclear disarmament was felt as the most urgent task: in this regard, Finland signed in 1963 the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, prohibiting nuclear testing underwater, above ground, and in outer space; moreover, in 1968 it was the first country to sign the major instrument for the attainment of non-proliferation, disarmament and the right to peacefully use nuclear technology²⁴⁸, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons proposed by Ireland; in 1971 Finland was the first country to conclude an agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency concerning the peaceful use of nuclear power (“ The activity of the IAEA has from the very beginning received full Finnish support. Nuclear energy has to be used not as a destructive force but as a beneficial factor in developing humanity. It should therefore only be applied for peaceful purposes.”²⁴⁹) and in the same year also signed the treaty banning the placement of nuclear weapons on the world's seabed; in 1974 an extensive study on nuclear-free zones was carried out by the General Assembly on Finnish initiative and under its direction; in 1975 it joined in the prohibition of the production and stockpiling of biological weapons.

Unable to openly raise the issue of security for fear of damaging the foundations of its neutrality, Finland tended to take part in technical projects rather than in political discourses, but, in general, it can be noted that in an extremely limited number of cases Finland voted

²⁴⁷ VESA [1987], p. 197;

²⁴⁸ International Atomic Energy Agency [Jul. 1st 1968];

²⁴⁹ RYTKÖNEN [Jun. 30th 1975], p. 161;

against or abstained from a U.N. resolution in the field of disarmament²⁵⁰. Since all these initiatives were primarily aimed at securing the European environment from the outbreak of a nuclear conflict, they were also tightly linked to Finland's key aims in security policy. Some clear examples of this attitude can be provided by the statements delivered by the representative of Finland in the First Committee of the General Assembly, in which the possibility of crafting a secure environment is linked to the issue of arms control and reduction²⁵¹.

Moving from the realistic premise that the armament issue had to be interpreted in the overall struggle for power of the Cold War, Finland was well aware of the possibility of using its policy of neutrality in order to work within the broad framework of American-Soviet relations in the issue of disarmament. As early as 1969, probably urged by the events in Czechoslovakia, the government of Finland presented a memorandum to the governments of all European countries, the United States and Canada in order to sound out their position regarding the convening of a Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, to be held in Finland. Even Soviet leaders praised Finland's initiative, judging that the consolidation of a stable security system in Europe could match Soviet geostrategic interests²⁵². After long and extensive consultations, aimed at reaching as much preliminary agreement as possible among the participants²⁵³, the first stage of the conference was held in 1973 in Helsinki, which in the previous years had already been chosen as the site for some of the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT I). The CSCE was an unprecedented event in the history of Europe, with thirty-five countries – including the two superpowers – participating to a far-reaching bridge-building dialogue for the replacement of armed confrontation with mutual cooperation for the attainment of security and peace.

The Finnish capital also hosted the final stage of the CSCE on 30th July – 1st August 1975. This summit, held in the Finlandia Hall, was a major breakthrough in East-West relations, culminated in the signing of the Helsinki Final Act, a document which contained a Declaration on Principles Guiding Relations between Participating States ("the Decalogue") crafted on the basis of the U.N. Charter, as well as arrangements on confidence-building measures and

²⁵⁰ VESA [1983], p. 64;

²⁵¹ PASTINEN [Nov. 3rd 1975], pp. 274-285;

²⁵² ALLISON [1985], p. 106;

JAKOBSON [1998], pp. 80-81;

²⁵³ MAUDE [1976], p. 85;

disarmament, on cooperation in the economic, scientific, technological, humanitarian and environmental fields, on security and cooperation in the Mediterranean area and on follow-up to the Conference. Aside from hosting the event, Finland played an important role during the talks, specifically by reason of its status of neutrality, since it was often capable of finding a compromise proposal to mediate the conflicting views of the East and West on certain issues²⁵⁴.

The signing of the Final Act of the CSCE in Helsinki in 1975 was the high point of the country's commitment to a strategy of active bridge-building. The document not only recognized the legitimacy of neutrality as a foreign policy, a point further demonstrated by hosting the conference in Helsinki, but also remarkably enhanced Finland's sense of security by providing the opportunity to refer to a set of shared normative principles in the case of a threatening conflict situation²⁵⁵. Among these: refraining from the threat or use of force, inviolability of the frontiers, respect for the rights inherent in sovereignty, territorial integrity of states, peaceful settlement of international disputes and non-interference in domestic affairs. The duration of the conference is by itself evidence that finding satisfactory formulation of common elements was not an easy task.

The impact of the Final Act has been widely debated, but it is rather generally accepted that its significance lies in the fact that it provides a dynamic perspective for the development of relations among countries with different political and social systems, taking into account different aspects of national security and at the same time also the fundamental rights of individual citizens²⁵⁶. To a certain extent, it is possible to assert that the Final Act proved that the participation to rival military alliances may not represent an insurmountable obstacle to mutual interaction and cooperation characterized by a balance of interests. The conference, by providing explicit recognition to the mutually accepted ongoing transition from a state of open confrontation to one of non-military confrontation, explicitly confirmed the interest of all the participating states in efforts aimed at lessening military confrontation and promoting disarmament as a complementary tool to political détente in Europe.

The results of such a dynamic commitment toward disarmament, however, were not entirely satisfactory for Finland. Different perceptions and interpretations of the ambiguous provisions

²⁵⁴ KEKKONEN [Apr. 1975], p. 409;

²⁵⁵ MAUDE [1976], p. 131;

²⁵⁶ BIRNBAUM [1987], pp. 73-77;

of the Final Act made the most optimistic expectations quite soon turn into disappointments. The 1970s were coming to an end in conditions of almost relentless arms race, with about 6% of the world's GDP devoted to military purposes²⁵⁷. Disarmament talks in Europe were at a standstill. Also the SALT II agreement signed in 1979 after a protracted period of negotiations between the superpowers, despite the evidence of some successes concerning the prohibition of the use and production of chemical weapons, the comprehensive test ban of nuclear weapons and the overall reduction of arms sales, failed to match Finnish expectations and was considered by most commentators a "partial and limited measure"²⁵⁸.

The continuation of constructive dialogue was considered essential in Helsinki in order to achieve both quantitative and qualitative results in the field of arms limitation. In this light, the initiative taken in October 1979 for the preparation of a comprehensive European disarmament program can be interpreted as a Finnish attempt to revive the new long-cherished pattern of East-West relations, which started to appear as a remote objective after years of stagnation in the CSCE process, as shown by the meeting in Belgrade (1977-1978). The proposal was put forward at the Madrid meeting (1980-1983) and obtained widespread agreement, but opinions differed considerably as to the practical form such negotiations should take²⁵⁹.

For Finland, a major opportunity to stimulate again international interest toward disarmament was the hosting of the 10th Anniversary of the CSCE at the ministerial level in Helsinki in 1985. It was one of the occasions where the first signs of the end of the cold War could be felt, yet the Finnish representatives in official statements pointed out with ill-concealed dissatisfaction how "it is of fundamental importance for the credibility of our joint endeavor that the CSCE commitments are put into effect not only in word but in deed"²⁶⁰. Finland's energetic approach revitalized the whole process: since the Stockholm Conference in 1986, the military negotiations started again to produce tangible results, leading to the signing of the CFE Treaty in 1990 for the balance of armaments between the NATO countries and the former Warsaw Pact members.

²⁵⁷ VIROLAINEN [Sep. 14th 1979], p. 99;

²⁵⁸ KORHONEN [Oct. 1979], p. 101;

²⁵⁹ VESA [1983], p. 46;

²⁶⁰ VÄYRYNEN [Aug. 1st 1985], p. 95;

In the middle of significant change and tensions in the European landscape, the Paris Charter for a New Europe of 1990 institutionalized the CSCE process, which had lost its original purpose with the end of the Cold War²⁶¹, giving life to a permanent structure, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), endowed with strengthened operational capabilities and broader fields of activity. The activity of the new institution has been rather dynamic and it involved actions that range from conflict resolution within the member states to the establishment of democratic institutions and the safeguard of human rights.

Finland also hosted a follow-up meeting and a Summit of the CSCE in 1992. The 1992 Helsinki "Challenges of Change" Document contained a Declaration and an ambitious set of decisions, transforming the Conference into an agent of early warning, conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation and strengthening the CSCE institutions, structures and methods of work accordingly²⁶². The Charter for a New Europe, the Helsinki Document and the Budapest Summit Document of 1994 contain the essential provisions on which the OSCE of today is based. The concept of "human dimension" adopted by the OSCE unmistakably reflects Finland's broad understanding of security, considered not only as the mere absence of war but rather as an extremely complex interaction among democracy, implementation of human rights and rule of law²⁶³: another confirmation of Finland's key role in the process.

In the course of recent years, when the threats posed by the Cold War were abruptly replaced by a set of different but not less dangerous phenomena such as the increase in the number of regional conflicts and the emergence of a renewed global terrorism, Finland has continued to work as a member of the neutral and nonaligned group at several OSCE meetings, where the utmost emphasis was placed on the formation of confidence-building and security-building measures; in addition, the country has hosted a number of OSCE meetings at the expert level, covering all dimensions of the OSCE.

Finnish dedication to the issue of disarmament, however, is not devoid of certain reservations: moving from the theoretical assumption that the end of the Cold War did not remove that of an aggressive war against its territory²⁶⁴, Helsinki, although supporting in principle the

²⁶¹ AĆIMOVIĆ [2000], pp. 179-196;

²⁶² Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe [1992];

²⁶³ Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe [2005], p. 1;

²⁶⁴ Finnish Ministry of Defense [Jun. 2001], p. 28;

connection between disarmament and security, has repeatedly refused to contract obligations that would result in a reduction of its defensive capabilities²⁶⁵, such as the CFE Treaty restricting the use of conventional weapons, or the Ottawa Treaty banning antipersonnel land mines, which will be acceded in 2012. Finland fully supports the purpose of these treaties, but as long as its national defense system will not be capable of matching their requirements without weakening the country's security, no such commitments will be undertaken.

The Chairmanship of the OSCE in 2008 is providing an opportunity for Finland to continue to cultivate the field of comprehensive cooperative security between the fifty-six participating States in Europe, which again is facing new challenges in its development, such as regional conflicts and global terrorism: more specifically, Finland's commitment is aimed at stressing the importance of cross-dimensional initiatives, that are capable of covering the various dimensions of security, on the basis on equal participation to the politico-military dialogue of all the actors involved in the process, including the organization's Mediterranean and Asian partners²⁶⁶.

²⁶⁵ PURSIAINEN, SAARI [2002], p. 7;

²⁶⁶ Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe [2008];

6. FINLAND IN THE WESTERN DEFENSIVE SYSTEM

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous three chapters identified three crucial aspects of Finland's Cold War strategy, which became somewhat outdated with the release of global tension, but still play a determinant effect on the country's own security doctrine. The systemic changes occurred in Europe and in the Soviet Union between 1989 and 1991 compelled Finland to adapt its national strategy and security policy to the new international scenario. Compliance with Soviet interests was no longer required, due to the sudden implosion of the communist system; the door of integration within the Western structure being finally open, Finland had to decide whether or not to follow the example of the other EFTA countries and take the decisive last step toward the European Union. The decision was not so much a question of security policy as a change of domestic and foreign orientation, in which all the factors contributing to the welfare of the nation had to be taken into account. It was necessary to ensure that the country was to find its proper place in the emerging international system in Europe.

The first criteria in establishing a new foreign policy were defined under Koivisto's presidency (1982-1994), but it was only during the term of office of M. Ahtisaari (1994-2000) that a clear security doctrine began to emerge: in this new approach, security and defense lost some of their relevance, making way for the two concepts of dynamic stability and comprehensive security, on the background of a fundamental qualitative transformation of international relations²⁶⁷. At a global level, the 1990s brought the end of traditional power politics, the decline of great ideologies and the withering away of the notion of national state in the frame of an increasingly globalized world²⁶⁸; at a continental level, politico-economic integration and the crafting of a secure European environment appeared as phenomena that could not be overlooked; at a regional level, cooperation with the Scandinavian neighbors, the Baltic states and Russia had to be the main focus of Finland's activity.

The membership issue was brought up for discussion only after the government had formally applied in March 1992, raising an active debate that involved all the political parties as well as

²⁶⁷ PENTTILÄ [1994], pp. 54-55;

²⁶⁸ AHTISAARI [1st June 1994], p. 222;

the public opinion. The issue of security, including the future of neutrality and the relations with Russia, immediately emerged as a controversial point: if at first seemingly inopportune, gradually the impact of accession to the European Union upon Finnish security started to be perceived as a means of protection from international instability and eventually turned out to be one of the most decisive factors in favor of membership²⁶⁹. On October 16th 1994, when the referendum was held, the turnout was relatively low (74%) compared to that in the other applicant countries, but a rather large majority (57%) of the voters opted for joining the European Union. Therefore, starting January 1st 1995, Finland acquired its official position in present-day Europe.

Politically isolated by the geopolitics of the Cold War, forced to abide by the demands of the Soviet Union, this small country had nevertheless managed to keep its economy, domestic institutions and society embedded in the West. The actual integration in the EU was thus not only rapid and easy, but continued smoothly with full participation in the new economic and social policies: the whole “Acquis Communautaire” was accepted at one stroke²⁷⁰, including the highly demanding provision of the Maastricht Treaty, and the road toward the European Monetary Union was pursued without complaints, even if it meant a complete change of direction in terms of monetary policy²⁷¹.

The only areas where Finland’s commitment to Europe and the West remains unclear are foreign and security policy, issues in which the ties of the past still strain Finland’s membership. On the one hand Finland is willing to demonstrate to be an integral part of the European bloc: the burdensome line of neutrality was abandoned and replaced with the less restrictive concept of “military non-alignment” and the establishment and development of the Common Foreign and Security Policy was also favored, even if with some significant limitations. Yet, on the other hand, the willingness to participate in the structures and process of the European Union, the theoretical definitions of national foreign policy and a certain degree of commitment, while important in general terms, are in practice only a partial accomplishment, as long as Finland wishes to remain outside the establishment of a collective system of European defense and to maintain the field of security under national control.

²⁶⁹ MILES [1996], p. 123;

OJANEN [2007], p. 35;

²⁷⁰ ARCHER [2005], pp. 73-74;

²⁷¹ MÖRTTINEN [2007];

So far the intrinsic incompatibility between Finnish position and European objectives has not led to any political clash, due to the great deal of adaptation and flexibility afforded by Finnish foreign policy and, in parallel, to the disagreements and uncertainties that, as of today, are preventing the member states to reach an agreement concerning the future overall development of the European Security and Defense Policy dimension – the double rejection of the Constitution Treaty in 2005 and 2008 clearly testifies the degree of “European disunion”²⁷². Nevertheless, assuming that the process of continental integration will be someday resumed and the necessity of a supranational integrated defense system will be more widely accepted as a matter of fact, it is obvious that eventually Finland’s special position will confront the Finnish leadership itself with a grave alternative: abandoning a long-cherished foreign orientation in order not to lose the pace of an equally cherished integration in Western Europe, or supporting the option of a “double-speed” European Union in which, at the price of a downsized role upon the international scenario, each country can autonomously manage the issues concerning national and common defense and security.

Another alternative is available, consenting Finland to wholly utilize its experience and expertise in alleviating tensions without resorting to hardcore security options: this is the promotion of “grass-root” trans-regional initiatives capable of building informal contacts at the sub-national level, by stressing the shared values and common interests of all participants. An excellent example of how this alternative can result in successful progress is the Northern Dimension, whose underlying thesis is that the interests of geographically interconnected actors, such as Scandinavia, the Baltic countries and Russia, can be best managed simply by enhancing the flexibility and the quality of their mutual cooperation in a wide range of issues, out of any rigid pattern of political or military alliances.

The concept of comprehensive security again turns out to be a valuable perspective from which to consider the origins and developments of the Northern Dimension, in the attempt to evaluate its impact in relation to the geostrategic expectations of the actors involved and of Finland in particular. Indeed, although purely security issues were explicitly excluded from the model of the Northern Dimension, security considerations play a central role in it and affect to a great extent the way in which they deal with cross-border concerns²⁷³. By placing

²⁷² CORALLUZZO [2007], p. 239;

²⁷³ STÅLVANT [2001], p. 12;

further emphasis on the promotion of environmental protection, regional development and economic as well as cultural cooperation, the main objective that Finland tries to achieve is that of smoothing the rough edges of the cleavage resulting from an accentuate unbalance in the prosperity and living conditions between the neighboring regions, thus enhancing its overall security assets. Finnish ability to affect the quality of relations between the European Union and Russia will exert a decisive influence on the future of the project²⁷⁴: to this regard, the low-profile and rather informal character of the Northern Dimension could turn out to be a worthwhile element for preserving a communication channel even during serious political emergencies.

As a consequence of its cooperative orientation, Finland also chose to remain outside Europe's inner military core – NATO. Both ideologically and militarily, the organization today is the backbone of the continental security architecture, but the Finnish government still remains hesitant, due to the traditional commitment to the persisting desire of not being involved in military alliances, potentially capable of involving the country in an armed conflict. A lively debate about the pros and cons of NATO membership has been going on in Finland for years, but at least for the time being its leaders have chosen to remain outside the alliance, backed by the public opinion. Even though ripe with inconsistencies, the mainstream tendency in many political circles is to regard the EU and NATO as two distinct entities, so that no contradiction is seen in taking part in the political and economic integration of Europe while dissociating from the military structure²⁷⁵. Geography is a factor too often overlooked when evaluating this approach: unlike the majority of other members, Finland lies on the most unstable border of NATO and the theoretical as well as practical implications of this position weigh heavy on the choice of not joining the alliance, as in the event of the outbreak of a military confrontation, Finland would find itself exposed to any potential Russian conventional offensive.

The redefinition of NATO's purpose, nature and tasks, which has taken place mainly in the second half of the 1990s, however, has convinced Finland to attain a limited degree of participation in some political and military structures of the alliance, especially in those where Russia was present as well, such as the Partnership for Peace. In the attempt to outlive the

²⁷⁴ HAUKKALA [2001], p. 44;

²⁷⁵ RIES [1999], p. 29;

enemy it was created to address, NATO reinvented itself both as an international organ of military crisis management and as a promoter of “cooperative security” practices between the traditional members and the democracies emerging from the dust of the Berlin Wall. No longer needed as a formally anti-Soviet coalition, the alliance completed its process of adjustment to a new world order, which in practice translated into an eastward shift, with the inclusion of former socialist countries in 1999 and 2004 and several initiatives for the promotion of dialogue and cooperation between the “New NATO” and the “New Russia”.

Since the beginning of the 1990s, the development of Russia–NATO relations has been characterized by two apparently opposite features: on the one hand, the building of mutual trust has been shadowed by several crises, related to Russia’s sometimes strong opposition to the enlargement of the alliance and also to NATO’s actions undertaken outside its own area; on the other hand, institutional cooperation between the two parties has strengthened continuously, especially as a consequence of the establishment of operative consultation round-tables. Moreover, the innovative scenario crafted by the events of September 11th 2001 reinforced on both sides perceptions of the existence of mutual interests and contributed to the evolution of relations on an equal basis, as proven by the activities of the NATO-Russia Council (NRC) established in 2002.

The Russian military intervention in Georgia on August 8th 2008 has probably interrupted this rapprochement, shelving cooperation in military affairs. It is not given to foresee how the global situation will evolve in the near future, but there is broad consensus around the notion that the crisis will not have any direct consequences to Finland’s security environment²⁷⁶. However it is likely that the re-emergence of old tensions will not be overlooked by the centre-right coalition government led by M. Vanhanen at the moment of issuing the 2008 Security Report, especially in relation to the re-assessment of the practicability of the former set-aside NATO option.

²⁷⁶ KARVONEN [Aug. 29th 2008];

6.2 ORIENTATIONS TOWARD THE ESDP

Although the idea of investing in a continental defense system has been on the table since the early 1950s, the failure of the European Defense Community project in 1952 showed that integrating foreign, let alone security and defense policies, was a far too high objective for the pioneers of European integration²⁷⁷. In the following years, some further attempts to reach a certain degree of political coordination in foreign issues were made, but their outcome was generally rather modest and limited, due to the unwillingness of some key actors not to proceed on the way to supranationality in such a sensitive domain of sovereignty. The relevance of foreign political integration has more often been recognized in theory as an ideal goal than it has been pursued in practice. Therefore, when Finland approached the European Community in the early 1990s, the issue of security was just starting to acquire a relevant position in the common agenda: European political cooperation was made part of the community's structure through the Single European Act in 1986 and, some years later, the Treaty of Maastricht broadened the scope of such cooperation through the introduction of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), whose most significant element is the European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP), as one of the three pillars of the Union.

The substantial modifications occurred in the international system between 1989 and 1991, such as the end of the military aspect of the Cold War, the liberation of Eastern Europe from communist rule and the collapse of the Soviet Union, decisively contributed to redesign Finland's attitude toward the process of European political integration, but they did not lead immediately to a fundamental revision of its national security perspective. Still in the early 1990s, whereas the advantages of economic integration within the common market were commonly accepted as non-detrimental to the policy of neutrality, the argument that membership in the European Union would be essentially incompatible with such policy represented the main obstacle to a more extensive Finnish approach to Western Europe²⁷⁸.

A reassessment of the country's foreign policy attitude had been first experimented in mid-1990, with the appointment of a more energetic Minister of Defense²⁷⁹ and, some months later, with the unilateral reinterpretation of the FCMA Treaty and the Paris Peace Treaty,

²⁷⁷ PREDA [1990];

²⁷⁸ OJANEN [2000], pp. 1-2;

²⁷⁹ PENTTILÄ [1994], pp. 60-63;

which had been the cornerstones of Finnish Cold War policy for over four decades. The choice of saying nothing that could be construed hostile or detrimental to the Kremlin was pursued until the final moment, but when the dismantling of the Soviet Union appeared inevitable, Finland rescinded the outdated obligations of the Paris Peace Treaty: after the so-called 2+4 agreement and a few days before the reunification of Germany, Helsinki declared unilaterally that the military restrictions and the references to Germany contained in it were no longer in force. Also, when the communist August Coup fell short in 1991, marking the ultimate failure of the old leadership to regain power in Moscow, the Finnish were quiet but swift to act and, as early as September 2nd, the government publicly announced that an ad-hoc committee had been set up to assess the pros and cons of membership in the integrating Europe²⁸⁰. Furthermore, the FCMA Treaty with the Soviet Union became redundant and was replaced, in January 1992, by a series of simple political and economic agreements of good neighborliness between Finland and the newly born Russian Federation.

The governmental report submitted to the Eduskunta in early 1992 marked a decisive step in Helsinki toward European integration because, due to the redefinition of the overall concept of neutrality²⁸¹ brought about by the far-reaching geopolitical transformations, the combination between the former and the latter was no longer perceived as contradictory: Finland could be a full member of Europe, without needing to become an advanced military outpost²⁸². Finnish contribution to continental defense and security, it was argued, could take various forms other than the military one. Accordingly, As soon as Finland applied for membership in March 1992, its President declared that the country was ready to accept the Maastricht Treaty in full, including those provisions concerning a common foreign and defense policy. The approval of the Maastricht Treaty without reservations might seem surprising, given the uncertain rapport between Finland's foreign policy guidelines and the ESDP contained in the "second pillar" of the agreement, but in fact it was not, mostly because of the vagueness of the language employed in the provisions, which revealed the unpreparedness of the other member states to deal in details with the issue of security²⁸³.

²⁸⁰ AHO [Sep. 3rd 1991], pp. 287-292;

²⁸¹ BRACKETT [1997], p. 4;

²⁸² PENTTILÄ [1994], p. 31;

²⁸³ PESONEN, VESA [1998], p. 49;

It would perhaps be excessive to assert, as some observers do²⁸⁴, that Finland joined the EU for security reasons or that EU membership replaced neutrality as a security policy instrument, yet the notion of Western Europe as a security community, built on reciprocal solidarity among the member states, was somewhat present within government circles, if an important document in 1995 went as far as stating that “Union membership will help Finland to repel any military threats and prevent attempts to exert political pressure”²⁸⁵. The European Union was thus seen as a shield, capable of enhancing national security.

One of the most challenging tasks for the government at this point was to formulate a line of defense and security policy capable of suiting the European context. Quite disparate opinions were expressed on this point, insomuch as at least five distinct positions have been pointed out by the commentators²⁸⁶. The two mainstreams oriented the debate around the alternative between the pursuit of an Atlantic or a European integrated defense system: the Atlanticist school of thought, still concerned with Russia, emphasized the traditional links between Europe and the United States and, accordingly, supports the option of joining the existing western security community – NATO – for attaining protection from the traditional eastern threat; the Continental school instead, representing a younger generation, is aware of the fact that the European Union is gradually assuming a security political profile and thus stresses the importance of Finnish participation in the making of this inner security structure. A third trend has emerged recently, opposing any active participation in a military alliance, stressing liberal issues such as the protection of human rights and the promotion of worldwide development.

The policy of neutrality was starting to be increasingly seen as an obstacle that stood in the way of membership, as it could rise suspects in the other member states about Finland’s will to act by common consent with the general interests of the European Union. Therefore, the traditional definition of Finland’s international status was officially renounced shortly after the admission and replaced in official statements with the concepts of being “militarily non-allied” and having an “independent defense”. In short, these expressions outlined a more pragmatic interpretation of the desire, capable of being compatible with European membership, not to receive any external security guarantees in the form of an armed coalition;

²⁸⁴ OJANEN [2000], p. 103;

²⁸⁵ Finnish Ministry of Defense [Jun. 1995], pp. 57-58;

²⁸⁶ RIES [2001], pp. 33-36;

in some key documents²⁸⁷, the formula “under the present/prevaling conditions” was added as well, in order to enhance the flexibility of the concept, by implying that in changed conditions, which however are not specified, the policy of non-alliance might undergo some degree of reconsideration²⁸⁸. It has been noted that the fact of not being a member of a military alliance does not translate into any concrete expression of policy²⁸⁹, so that the core of the whole question concerning its compatibility with EU membership is for the time being an essentially political one, given that also the contents of the ESDP hold a substantial degree of ambiguity.

As a further confirmation of this new attitude, in his opening statement at the membership negotiations in Brussels, the Finnish Foreign Minister highlighted that his government did not expect to encounter any problems related to foreign and security policies, because Finland was willing to share with the other member states the fundamental values and general goals underlying common foreign and defense policies²⁹⁰. Finland, as well as the other two formerly neutral countries that joined the European club in 1995 – Sweden and Austria – rather than focusing on the purely military side of cooperation, tends to stress the broader concept of comprehensive security: this, besides defense in strict terms, also includes multilevel and multilateral cooperation in the economic, humanitarian, legal and ecological fields. In this perspective, the CFSP appeared in Helsinki not only as a complement to national foreign policy, especially as long as the mechanism of decision-making was to remain intergovernmental, but also as an additional forum in which to promote the achievement of peace, justice and solidarity in the international system²⁹¹.

Despite the optimistic tone of official occasions, the question of compatibility between military non-alliance and European membership has not found a definitive answer yet. As long as the actual ESDP dimension will not be defined more precisely, enough room for compatibility may subsist, but, should the European Union finally decide to expand and strengthen a truly common security and defense policy, a whole new set of doubts would

²⁸⁷ Finnish Ministry of Defense [Jun. 2001], p. 11;
Finnish Ministry of Defense [Mar. 2006], p. 5;
Finnish Ministry of Defense [2008a], p. 2;

²⁸⁸ PESONEN, VESA [1998], p. 50;

²⁸⁹ OJANEN [2000], pp. 238-241;

²⁹⁰ SALOLAINEN [Feb. 1st 1993], p. 258;

²⁹¹ BERGMAN [2004], p. 2;

arise: if the EU became an actual military alliance, the position of a non-allied country within it would be untenable.

In the first delineations of its approach toward the institutional side of the CFSP, the Finnish government stressed the fact that the European Union must be seen first and foremost as an association of independent states, this way closing the gate to any form of supranationalism. Accordingly, foreign and security policy cooperation was seen in Helsinki as an intergovernmental domain, based on the principle of unanimous decision²⁹². The page dedicated to presenting the national defense policy to the international audience on the website of the Ministry of Defense of Finland provides a rather vague definition, which does not address the underlying problems stemming from the country's original position: "The line of action for Finland's security and defence policy is aimed at safeguarding the country's independence and society's fundamental democratic values and at promoting the security and welfare of all citizens. Finland's line of action is based on credible national defence, the functioning of society and a consistent foreign policy as well as a strong international position and an active participation as a member of the European Union"²⁹³.

From a rigorously legal point of view, neither the Maastricht Treaty nor the Amsterdam Treaty contained any explicit clause of military assistance in contrast with this Finnish view, although allusions to security and defense appeared in different forms. In the Dutch capital, more solid ties between the European Union and the Western European Union were called for in order to render the EU a more resourceful performer outwardly, but no actual plans were laid for incorporating the latter's assistance clause (Article 5 of the Brussels Treaty) within the Union's system. Joint actions and common positions can only be agreed on by the achievement of unanimous consent, leaving each country free to opt-out of any military operation, thanks to the possibility of resorting to so-called "constructive abstention"²⁹⁴. For Finland this was an essential condition, given the desire that the interests of all member states would be taken equitably into account in developing the CFSP.

Under these conditions, being militarily non-allied did not imply any major restriction to the practical participation of Finland in the common foreign policies of the EU, especially as this special position was coupled with the establishment of an appropriate western-compatible

²⁹² Finnish Ministry of Defense [Jun. 1995], pp. 57-59;

²⁹³ Finnish Ministry of Defense [2008b];

²⁹⁴ GOETSCHHEL [1999], p. 125;

national defense force²⁹⁵. In effect, coordination of positions in various fields has proven to be rather successful, especially within the frame of multilateral conferences or international organizations, such as the United Nations or the OSCE. Furthermore, remaining outside military structures turned out to be a valuable token to be capitalized in humanitarian help, political mediation, economic intervention and other non-military bridge-building and peace-promoting activities for the settlement of conflicts in areas of European interest²⁹⁶, without having to deal with the obvious restrictions imposed by NATO membership.

On the contrary, the Western European Union (WEU), which, notwithstanding its dormant character, is a formal military alliance connected to NATO, clearly could not fit into this picture. Since the signing of the Maastricht Treaty, EU and WEU were actually linked together, so that upon becoming a member of the former, Finland had no other viable option but to assume the status of observer in the latter in February 1995. The compatibility between this partial approach to a military alliance and the particular orientation of Finland is even more controversial than that with the ESDP, yet participation in the WEU network was judged not only possible by the government, given the practical swerve existing between the WEU and a full-scale military alliance²⁹⁷, but also positive as it provided one more opportunity to dynamically participate in European cooperation by being present when the key decisions were taken²⁹⁸. Such interpretation stemmed from the specific Finnish understanding of the WEU, seen mostly as an organization charged with the task of implementing crisis management or peace-keeping measures within the framework and under the supervision of the European Union's political organs.

The acceptance of this view on behalf of the other member states in Amsterdam meant a double success for Finnish policy-makers²⁹⁹, who in 1996 had presented a joint proposal with Sweden for an alternative to the EU-WEU merger: firstly, the right to fully take part in crisis management despite being militarily non-allied was upheld; secondly, the ties forged between the EU and the WEU were limited to the field of crisis management and peace-making, without extending to the more sensitive area of defense and security policy in strict terms.

²⁹⁵ Finnish Ministry of Defense [2003];

²⁹⁶ CARLSNAES [1998], p. 136;

²⁹⁷ Finnish Ministry of Defense [Jun. 1995], p. 57;

²⁹⁸ Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs [Mar. 1997], pp. 6-47;

²⁹⁹ OJANEN [2000], p. 128;

However, when confronted with some of the most recent informal developments in the security dimension of the European Union, an evident sign of the concrete pressure toward harmonization and convergence in such policy areas, the Finnish ideal of remaining militarily non-allied is more and more often challenged with practical matters. The evident inadequacy in managing international crises, in comparison with NATO's effective operational capability, make the implementation of a common defense system as well as a less restrictive decision-making mechanism fundamental, in order to translate Europe's economic and cultural potential into political weight; however, proceeding in this direction would indeed mark the impossibility for Finland to keep pursuing a road that would lead nowhere, being fundamentally incompatible with the principle of an integrated defense³⁰⁰.

According to the official declaration issued at the end of the Cologne European Council in June 1999, the objective of the member states was to "develop an effective EU-led crisis management in which NATO members, as well as neutral and non-aligned members, of the EU can participate fully and on an equal footing in the EU operations"³⁰¹. The necessity of constructing a European force to promote international peace and stability – the Petersberg tasks – was recognized, but at the same time this formulation, even more than the ambiguous provisions of the Amsterdam Treaty, safeguarded the right to full Finnish participation in the broad field of European defense, by letting each country free to decide whether or not to employ its armed forces in the context of ESDP operations.

The EU commitment to crisis management is shared by most in Helsinki, so that consistent support in terms of men has been given to plenty of operations, such as the Police Mission (EUPM) in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Proxima police operation in FYROM and the Concordia military operation in the same country. A clear line, however, was traced by Finnish domestic legislation in order to define the domain of such participation: while the possibility to resort to the reactive use of defensive force in peace-keeping was widened to match the evolving nature of such operations, the first use of offensive force employed in peace-enforcement missions was firmly rejected.

Some months later, during the Helsinki European Council, all the fifteen member states of the European Union agreed to set up a Rapid Reaction Force, capable of deploying 60,000 men

³⁰⁰ GRIBINSKI [1996], p. 219;

³⁰¹ British-American Security Information Council [Jun. 1999];

for emergency interventions in international conflicts. Finland contributed to the RRF with 2,000 troops, military equipment and expertise³⁰². The Helsinki conference also approved a report on civil crisis management project, including humanitarian aid and the monitoring of human rights: this was welcomed as an important progress in Finland, where it is believed that the EU should concentrate on the whole cycle of conflict, including prevention initiatives, operation of military peace-keeping and civilian reconstruction.

These moderate involvements were acceptable for Finland, which had somehow managed to craft a situation in which full EU membership and the status of being militarily non-allied overcame their fundamental incompatibility³⁰³, allowing the country to remain somewhat below the threshold of common defense. As President T. Halonen phrased it in 2000, Finland “as a fully-fledged member of the EU, is participating in developing its crisis management without being part of a military alliance”³⁰⁴. This way, Finland made a mark on the ESDP and managed to prove to the more skeptical member countries that not relying on any military alliance does not impair the country’s capacity to play a central role in the development of European conflict prevention and crisis management.

Once again, limited commitments were made without implying any form of involvement in an integrated European defense system. When a more demanding commitment to the cause appeared in Article 40 of the 2003 Draft Treaty Establishing a Constitution for Europe³⁰⁵, however, reactions in Helsinki were rather surprised and preoccupied³⁰⁶. Finland was ready to accept in principle that all member states should be committed to defend each other, as long as no binding security guarantees were to be included in the draft. Alongside the other non-aligned countries – Austria, Ireland and Sweden – Finland tried to push for a less binding provision and eventually was able to reach another compromise solution, sponsored by Italy, partially safeguarding its desire to preserve a special status (Article 40.2). Moreover, Finland only reluctantly resolved to accept the institution of the EU Foreign Minister with such extensive authority in determining common foreign and security policies³⁰⁷.

³⁰² BERGMAN [2004], p. 13;

³⁰³ OJANEN [2000], p. 86;

³⁰⁴ HALONEN [May 2000], p. 5;

³⁰⁵ European Union [Oct. 29th 2004];

³⁰⁶ OJANEN [2007], p. 37;

³⁰⁷ STRAND [Sep. 2004], p. 5;

The actual Constitutional Treaty however brought forward the ESDP as an area in which a far-reaching review was demanded in light of the latest international developments – notably, the divisions materialized in the European Union regarding the war against terrorism: the joint French-German proposal to set up a permanent structured cooperation, including WEU’s security guarantees in the final document, was only mildly opposed in Finnish political circles, not quite ready to go that far from the general provisions of the draft, but still willing to keep the pace with Europe. In 2003, the election of a strongly pro-European government eventually led, in the name of foreign policy pragmatism, to the unreserved acceptance of the ESDP evolution, expressed in the 2004 White Paper on security and defense³⁰⁸. The condition of being militarily non-allied is no longer perceived as an impediment to full ESDP support, but certainly the alternative between non-alliance and military commitment is becoming more urgent. The rejection of the Constitution project on behalf of The Netherlands and France in May-June 2005 and the setback of the Lisbon Treaty in June 2008, however, besides casting grave doubts on the future of the Union itself, demonstrated once more that Europe is not yet ready to rely merely on its own defense capabilities.

Having realized this, EU-NATO concurrence has generally been regarded with favor in Finland, where the presence of the United States in Europe and the improvement of transatlantic relations in security issues are deemed necessary for the increase of overall stability and security on the continent: the Finnish Security and Defense Policy report issued in 2001 already explicitly looked at closer cooperation between the European Union and the Atlantic Alliance, for the enhancement of cooperative crisis management capacity³⁰⁹. This statement must not be taken as a definitive abandonment of Finland’s Europeanism, but rather as a proof of the country’s preference for multilateral presence in Europe and its flexibility in accepting various solutions in the interest of European security.

Of course, in the light of the latest events, it is not possible to exactly predict what the future developments of the European Union in the field of defense and security policy will be, but considering that continental integration is often perceived as an ongoing process surrounded by “an aura of inevitability”³¹⁰, steps aimed at reaching further internal cohesion may reasonably be expected to overcome political divisions and divergences about the range of

³⁰⁸ Finnish Ministry of Defense [Jun. 2004];

³⁰⁹ Finnish Ministry of Defense [Jun. 2001], p. 38;

³¹⁰ BICKERTON, [Jul. 2008], p. 1;

common policies. Among these, without any doubts, the strengthening of the highly political dimension of defense and security may represent the ultimate landmark of such integration.

Two alternatives appear: one, a tight defensive structure, would provide the European Union with an effective means of action through increasing majority vote and binding decisions; the other, a looser type of cooperation based on the possibility of opting-out, would be little more than a symbolic gesture, unable to enhance the role of Europe worldwide. In both cases, Finland's capacity to exert some degree of influence on the common security strategies may be consistently reduced³¹¹.

So far, Finland has been rather accommodative and flexible in relation to the ESDP, so that its distinct approach to the question of European security has not caused any major conflict with the other partners and in no circumstances the military development of the EU has been slowed down by Finland's attitude³¹². On the contrary, the general tendency has been to avoid statements of direct incompatibility, highlighting instead the value of the intergovernmental approach to European security and the absence of any pressure for change.

National interest and sovereignty still being powerful guidelines for determining the behavior of most European countries, an integrated defense system is far from being actually established. The process however has been set in motion and someday will find the fuel to proceed forward, most likely when the need of a credible defense architecture will arise in time of crisis. The question of how to endorse such a development is thus not yet high on the political agenda in Helsinki, but it is likely that sooner or later the issue is going to emerge, in the form of a major problem of reciprocal compatibility.

Will it be possible to refrain from participating to some aspects of the future European defense structure, while other countries move forward? How far will it be possible to stretch the notion of military non-alliance? An answer is not yet available. For Finland, as well as for the other non-allied countries in the EU, the crucial present-day issue is the extent of their capacity to influence the direction in which the ESDP is developing.

³¹¹ OJANEN [2000], p. 119;

³¹² OJANEN [2002], p. 196;

6.3 THE INITIATIVE FOR A NORTHERN DIMENSION

Even within the framework of the European Union, Finland has not abandoned its role of a bridge-builder between the West and the East, which however had to be fundamentally readjusted to match the unconventional challenges posed by the post-Cold War era. All of a sudden, opportunities inconceivable until a few years earlier became available; the end of global confrontation no longer required striving to obtain a limited space of maneuver for the promotion of détente and friendlier relations between the two giants; after a long forced absence; a plurality of countries re-emerged on the stage of Europe; the conception of a new integrated system of governance became priority to facilitate the course of everyday contacts. The implementation of comprehensive security can be best noted in Northern Europe, a trans-regional area in which military confrontation was soon replaced by a broader set of political, economic, environmental and legal issues that could only be properly addressed through a responsible, multilateral and multidimensional approach. Finland, due to its geographical position and historical heritage, was the most natural candidate to encourage the advancement of cross-border dialogue between the main actors involved in the area: the European Union, the Russian Federation, the Baltic nations and the other Scandinavian countries.

The concept of a Northern Dimension within the European Union was launched by Finland in September 1997, during a conference whose purpose was to identify the multitude of actors involved in northern affairs. During his speech, Prime Minister P. Lipponen argued in favor of translating the vital interests shared by Northern countries into an official policy of the EU³¹³. The idea of a Northern Dimension itself was not original, as the term had previously been on and off the political debate, giving rise to different interpretations and expectations according to different perspectives. The expression, for example, had also been often utilized by Finnish policy-makers before achieving EU membership, to stress the future role of the Scandinavian bloc of countries within the integrated Europe and the added value of their contribution in terms of welfare and social policies, even though in practice a Northern Dimension of this kind was never pursued³¹⁴.

³¹³ LIPPONEN [Sep. 15th 1997];

³¹⁴ OJANEN [2001], pp. 22-23;

The extent of Finnish initiative of 1997 was instead rather innovative, resembling that of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership launched two years earlier. Geographically, the area of reference was extremely diversified, stretching from Iceland to Russia, including Great Britain, the four Scandinavian countries, the three Baltic republics, Poland and even the United States and Canada. The main focus was however devoted to the border area between the European Union – and Finland in particular – and Russia, whose North-Western regions were still perceived in Helsinki as a grave threat, not so much in strict military terms, but rather in relation to broader issues, such as environmental standards, nuclear safety and migration dynamics. As the project evolved, in fact, the Russian dimension was given increasing emphasis: as early as October 1998, in another speech in Rovaniemi, Ahtisaari, stressed that relations with Russia constituted the most important part of the Northern Dimension³¹⁵. Such contacts between the partners are not limited to the governmental level, but also include a variety of non-institutional actors³¹⁶: regional and local authorities, as well as non-governmental organizations, academic institutions and business communities, all capable of and necessary for establishing a vital environment of cross-border cooperation.

The proposal of implementing new forms of dialogue in this area between the European Union and its neighbors, which immediately gathered cross-party consensus, fully revealed Finland's main intention: to deal with the most complex regional questions under the umbrella of European governance network, rather than alone. It is not a chance, however, that from the very beginning the traditional military security dimension was omitted from the Northern Dimension, judged an ill-suited sector in which to pursue cooperation.

From a Finnish perspective, at least two major geopolitical factors contributed to molding the idea of a Northern Dimension³¹⁷. Firstly, Northern Europe was deeply affected by the collapse of the Cold War security configuration known as the Nordic Balance, occurred along with that of the Soviet Union itself: confronted with an entirely innovative and potentially unstable situation, Finland sought to maximize its defensive capacity by crafting a whole new balance, capable of granting peace and stability to the region. Secondly, standing on the world's deepest socio-economic rift³¹⁸, that between the victorious wealthy Europe and the defeated

³¹⁵ AHTISAARI [Oct. 5th 1998];

³¹⁶ STÅLVANT [2001], pp. 23-24;

³¹⁷ ARTER [Dec. 2000], pp. 680-682;

³¹⁸ NYBERG [Aug. 19th 1999], p. 2;

poor former Soviet countries, Finland was willing to enhance its comprehensive security level by relieving the tensions connected to the perception of this chasm. Consistently with its post-Cold War strategic doctrine, crucial importance was attached by Finland to the multidimensional and cooperative approach, rather than to security in strict military terms, in developing the Northern Dimension: its premise was that European security could no longer be guaranteed through traditional means, but that it was vital to stabilize the social, economic and political situation on the continent through measures of transnational collaboration.

Neither financial contributions nor the creation of new institutions were mentioned in Lipponen's speech, although the actual viability of this offer for stability and security free of charge – an offer that nobody could possibly decline – was discredited by the economists³¹⁹. Yet the initial reaction to the Finnish initiative was rather critical, as most EU members did not feel any urge to develop a Northern Dimension policy or to intensify contacts with Russia³²⁰: within the Union there was skepticism coming mainly from some of the southern countries, such as Spain and Italy; the Scandinavian and the Baltic countries reacted rather coldly to the initiative, seen in competition with the already existing agencies for cooperation (especially the Council of the Baltic Sea States)³²¹; France voiced its unease concerning the inclusion of the United States. Some support was instead shown by the European Parliament and Germany, which welcomed the project as a way to integrate the Baltic States into the EU without alienating Russia; also Norway, Great Britain, Luxembourg and Portugal regarded the Finnish initiative with some interest. In Russia the main focus was rather on the building of the security architecture in Europe, so that officially the idea of a Northern Dimension was dismissed as secondary, although clear informal signs of appreciation were shown.

The role of the Commission was indeed decisive for the success of the plan and its eventual inclusion in the domain of European policies, despite some degree of adjustment³²²: even though initially dubious about the inclusion of non-EU states, J. Santer was aware of the high degree of expertise that Finland could provide on Russian, Baltic and northern affairs as well as on environmental policy, to the advantage of the whole European Union and at no additional cost. The inclusion of the Baltic nations in the EU, the advancement of Russian

³¹⁹ SUTELA [1999], p. 3;

³²⁰ ROSLOE [Dec. 2005], pp. 3-4;

³²¹ STÅLVANT [2001], pp. 15-16;

³²² HAUKKALA [2001], p. 42;

integration into the process of European cooperation, the eastward extension of the zone of stability and welfare as well as the further development of the whole Northern European area were indeed fundamental aims that the Commission could not afford to overleap. The Finnish proposal was thus seen as a major contribution to the overall development of the European Union: a great number of observers have in fact pointed to Finland's ability to "denationalize" the Northern Dimension, that is, to present its own national interest as a common benefit, as the most relevant argument to explain its eventual success³²³.

The Vienna European Council of 1998 approved the interim report presented by the Commission, in which the original guidelines of the project were accepted and the geographical focus of the Northern Dimension was reduced from the global to the regional level with the exclusion of the United States and Canada³²⁴. Some have noted³²⁵ that Vienna marked only an illusory success for Finland, because the means by which the goals had to be addressed were loosely defined, so that the whole concept of Northern Dimension was somewhat debased by the lack of concrete proposals. Finnish European presidency in 1999 was no occasion for further progress either: international events such as the struggles in Kosovo and Chechnya diverted Europe's attention elsewhere and strained EU-Russia relations, contributing to the unsuccessful outcome of the highly-expected Helsinki Foreign Ministers' conference on the Northern Dimension scheduled for November³²⁶.

After some setbacks, an important objective was reached at the Feira European Council on June 2000, where an Action Plan for the establishing of the Northern Dimension was finally approved. Though it did not fully clarify the practical way in which the proposal was to be translated from theory into practice, the document asserted both the centrality of Northern Europe for the EU and the notion of positive interdependence between the EU members and their partner countries, in order to preserve "security, stability, democratic reforms and sustainable development"³²⁷ in the whole northern area. These were also the main goals of the original Finnish proposal of 1997, whose political relevance had dramatically grown in light of the most recent challenges posed by international developments. The connection between

³²³ ARTER [Dec. 2000], p. 685;

OJANEN [1999], pp. 16-17;

³²⁴ European Commission [Nov. 25th 1998];

³²⁵ DANNREUTHER [2004], p. 102;

³²⁶ STÅLVANT [2001], p. 9;

³²⁷ European Commission [Jun. 14th 2000], p.4;

multilevel cross-border coordination and comprehensive security thus replaced hardcore confrontation, emerging as the background of future EU-Baltic-Russian relations.

The imminent accession of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland to the European Union in 2004 was ripe of implications for the region: it of course increased the impact of the Northern Dimension itself both on the EU institutional framework, which was now to count eight members directly involved in the project, and on its relations with Russia, about to become an even closer neighbor of Europe. A second Action Plan was issued in 2003, aimed at reinforcing complementarity, subsidiarity and synergy among all the members, in view of the European Union's enlargement³²⁸.

Finland set the strengthening of this cooperative policy as one key objective of its EU Presidency in 2006, which was fully achieved with the renewal of the Northern Dimension at the Helsinki summit on November 24th, when leaders of the EU, Iceland, Norway and the Russian Federation replaced the vague and outdated Action Plans with the Policy Framework Document and the Political Declaration, two basic documents charged with guiding the activities of the Northern Dimension from now on. The purpose of such renewal was to revitalize the policy itself and emphasize the dedication of all the partners involved. The most significant change to the original proposal, contained in the jointly negotiated documents, was the evolution of the notion of the Northern Dimension into a genuinely common policy involving the EU and its most proximate North-Eastern neighbors.

Since 2007, a permanent, high-profile and structured Northern Dimension Policy was actually implemented by the European Union, aimed, in the words of the statement issued by the Parliamentary Conference on the Northern Dimension held on March 1st 2007, "at providing a common framework for the promotion of dialogue and concrete cooperation, strengthening stability, well-being and intensified economic cooperation, promotion of economic integration and competitiveness and sustainable development in Northern Europe"³²⁹. After having gained such widespread recognition, the common project is thus moving to an advanced level for the discussion on practical means of realizing its full potential: the First International Northern Dimension Forum, held in St. Petersburg on May 13th-14th 2008, is the proof that, after all, peaceful change is possible.

³²⁸ European Commission [Jun. 10th 2003], pp. 2-4;

³²⁹ European Parliament [Mar. 1st 2007];

6.4 THE NATO DILEMMA

The Washington Treaty which established the North Atlantic Treaty Organization was signed on April 4th 1949. Its purpose was to deter a Soviet military attack in Western Europe and to defend the continent from a Soviet attack, should deterrence fail. Originally, when the alliance came into existence, the necessity to maintain friendly and trust-based relations with the Soviet Union, as well as the wish to commit to a credible policy of neutrality, were the two main factors preventing Finland from joining either of the two opposing military structures – NATO itself and the Warsaw Pact. As the international scenario slowly developed, Finnish orientation toward the process of Western European integration became clearer and smoother, eventually leading to European Union membership in 1995. This also implied a sudden approach to the idea of an integrated defense system in Europe, whose current expression was NATO.

Since the end of the Cold War, EU-NATO relations evolved in accordance with Europe's changed strategic landscape: new, ever-broadening security challenges have replaced outdated East-West tensions, drawing the attention on regional conflicts on Europe's borders and beyond. As such, security came to be defined in a more comprehensive way: the main question was no longer how to avoid being drawn into a nuclear war between the superpowers, but by which means to face present-day cross-border threats, such as environmental hazards, international drugs traffic and crime, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, social and economic turmoil and, above all, regional instability. The Balkan War, fought between 1993 and 1997, in fact, proved that neither pursuing a policy of strict neutrality nor relying on a legal clause of military assistance could be any useful in providing help in the face of a crisis³³⁰. Constant global interaction created the need for governance systems operating on the global scale: unavoidably, the whole security architecture of post-Cold War Europe had to be redesigned.

Although the threat NATO was created to meet has disappeared, the alliance had developed assets and institutional practices which proved to be cost-effective in dealing with the new tasks posed by the emerging unstable security environment³³¹. At the American-Russian

³³⁰ JAKOBSON [1998], pp. 124-129;

³³¹ WALLANDER [2003], pp. 710-711;

Helsinki meeting in March 1997, an important step was taken in this direction. The role of NATO was re-defined by the two presidents as the cornerstone to “build an undivided, democratic and peaceful Europe for the first time in history”, of which Russia was to become a respected partner “in making the future for all of Europe peaceful and secure”³³²; the alliance’s new aspiration became that of preserving order and stability in Europe through focused multilateral interventions. In this perspective, expanding NATO eastward and treating Russia as a partner could be reconciled in the name of a common interest, as proven by the decision, taken some months later in Madrid, to begin membership negotiations with Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland, which eventually obtained membership in 1999.

The reassessment of NATO’s international role proceeded in parallel with the rethinking of Finland’s defense and security policy. The more flexible interpretation given since the early 1990s to the old notion of neutrality, now limited to non-participation in military alliances, allowed Finnish political leadership to assume an enthusiastic attitude in regard to the economic, political and even non-binding joint military development of the common policies, but NATO kept to be perceived by most as a distinct entity, whose task stretched far beyond Finland’s willingness to undertake certain kinds of obligations. A deeper NATO commitment to UN and OSCE crisis management operations, however, encouraged even the most skeptical countries to become more participative within the framework of the “New NATO”, especially since this kind of cooperation implied neither any form of automatic military assistance, nor any advancement toward an integrated defense system based on the principle of supranationality.

The so-called “NATO option” first emerged for political discussion in 1995, articulated into a variety of positions, but none of the parties represented in the Eduskunta approved any quest for membership in the alliance at that time. This aversion was probably influenced to a great extent by the mainstream orientation of the public opinion, which was in favor of remaining outside military alliances (in late 1999, more than 60% of respondents in a poll were contrary to NATO membership)³³³. Therefore, an official examination of the pros and cons of joining NATO was regarded as unnecessary, although some sporadic research projects regarding the

³³² CLINTON, YELTSIN [Mar. 21st 1997];

³³³ Helsingin Sanomat [Dec. 9th 1999];

subject have been informally carried out³³⁴. It is not possible of course to evaluate the alternative in terms of black and white, because either choice, joining or remaining outside, would imply advantages as well as disadvantages for Finland, which need to be carefully weighed before reaching any sort of conclusive answer.

The main arguments that have contributed to negatively orient the debate stressed the perception, supported by the majority of the political spectrum, that NATO membership could not represent a viable option, either because it would be interpreted in Russia as an unacceptable provocation, or because it was seen as the road toward American-style militarization and conflict involvement, rather than an instrument for lessening international tensions³³⁵; others stressed that NATO membership would be far too expensive and would result in an impoverishment of the resources devoted to national defense, forcing Finland to depend on the highly unreliable promise of Western assistance³³⁶. All these theses could be rebutted, for example by observing that historically Finland's orientation never had any major influence on Russia, or that NATO mechanisms are based on the principle of unanimity among all the participants, or even that contacts with Russia would not be more problematic from within NATO than they already are from within the European Union, nevertheless the significance of these arguments and their impact on Finnish public can not be ignored.

Membership advocates instead tended to highlight the positive impact that taking part in the NATO would have on national defensive capabilities and the importance of being present at the tables where all the crucial decisions are taken, for obtaining a central political role in the shaping of a fully functional Western security system; according to this argument, NATO membership would allow Finland to take part in the inner security core of Western Europe, enhancing its capacity of managing regional crises³³⁷ and also gaining a significant degree of protection from possible Russian influence. The debate between NATO enthusiasts and skeptics over the issue of membership has been going on and off base for over fifteen years in the country and the basic arguments are still there, but no definitive conclusion has ever been reached. In practice however, the international developments caused Finland to gradually shift toward the alliance, without actually seeking its membership.

³³⁴ HÄMÄLÄINEN [Dec. 1999], p. 2;

³³⁵ NOKKALA [2008], pp. 79-80;

³³⁶ PURSIAINEN, SAARI [2002], p. 32;

RIES [1999], p. 54-55;

³³⁷ RIES [1999], pp. 48-51;

Initially, Finland kept relying only on its own credible armed force, based on conscription and mobilization of a massive trained reserve (up to 430,000 men could be called to arms for territorial defense in the event of a conflict), on the acquisition and maintenance of modern equipment and on the maximization of flexibility and territorial resources before outnumbering enemies³³⁸. Although not seeking to become a formal member of the organization and regardless of a certain degree of criticism and indecision, however, this self-reliant doctrine was partially revised in recent years: Finland implemented limited forms of cooperation with NATO, which in practice drew the non-allied country very close to the alliance, through participation in its cooperative security organs³³⁹. All these activities and commitments were not only perceived as wholly compatible with Finnish security policy of non-alliance, but also seen as unrelated to future NATO membership. The objective that was considered most important in Helsinki's view was not whether to actually join the organization or to remain outside it, but rather the attainment of a natural partnership stemming from shared values and common interests.

From a wide-ranging political point of view, as early as June 1992, the country became an observer in the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC), whose main task was to establish tighter relations between NATO members and the Central and Eastern European non-member countries; the institution was later replaced by the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC); in 1994 Finland also joined the Partnership for Peace program, launched on that same year with the purpose of building trust between NATO members, European non-members and former Soviet Union countries: in its Presentation Document, Finland motivated its posture within the organization as aimed "to expand and intensify political and military cooperation throughout Europe, increase stability, diminish threats to peace and build stronger relationships by promoting the spirit of practical cooperation and commitment to democratic principles"³⁴⁰; in 1997, the first Finnish ambassador was accredited to NATO and a certain interest was expressed in sending forces to work in the Combined Joint Task Forces (CJTF) headquarters. A clear continuity between the objectives of Finnish Cold War and post-Cold War security policy can thus be identified in the wish to craft a secure environment through multilevel interventions in various fields of human activity.

³³⁸ JAKOBSON [1998], pp. 142-143;

³³⁹ RIES [2001], p. 38;

³⁴⁰ Finnish Government [May 1994], pp. 429-431;

From a decidedly military point of view, joining the Partnership for Peace included participation in the Planning and Review Process (PARP) and was aimed at enhancing, through intensive exchange of information, the interoperability capacities among the member states' armed forces – defined as shared systems of command, control and communication – in view of future NATO membership; moreover, Finland took part in several U.N.-mandated NATO-led crisis management operations, such as the Implementation Force (IFOR), the Stabilization Force (SFOR) and the Kosovo Force (KFOR) in the Balkans³⁴¹. Concerning the alliance's operations outside Europe, the Finnish government believes that NATO's global role may be strengthened if it assumes responsibility for stabilization and reconstruction tasks not only in Afghanistan, but also in Iraq³⁴². The increasing support of international crisis management operations within the framework of the Partnership for Peace, coupled with the gradual restructuring of Finnish armed force which has recently been undertaken³⁴³ (the replacement of outdated Cold War gear began in 1994 with the purchase of F-18 fighter aircrafts and translated into a substantial increase of military expenditure), marked the enhanced flexibility of military non-alliance and at the same time proved to be a factor of stability in Northern Europe and in the Baltic Sea region³⁴⁴.

According to President Ahtisaari, “by being fully integrated into the European Union but remaining militarily non-allied, we contribute to a controlled process of change with maximum stability in the northern part of our continent”³⁴⁵. The reference to the position of the newly independent Baltic countries is evident: by not seeking NATO membership, Finland sought to prevent Russia from impeding their accession to the West. With the end of the Cold War, in fact, the artificially constructed political and ideological boundaries in the Baltic Sea region collapsed, allowing economic relations to flourish again and providing the ideal conditions for a cooperative security policy discourse³⁴⁶.

Common intergovernmental institutions were established to jointly discuss and manage an ample spectrum of security-related issues: the Council of the Baltic Sea States was one of the first and most successful initiatives in response to the radical geopolitical changes that were

³⁴¹ FERREIRA-PEREIRA [2006], p. 108;

³⁴² Finnish Ministry of Defense [Sep. 2004], p. 66;

³⁴³ ACKERMAN [Sep. 2007];

³⁴⁴ Finnish Ministry of Defense [Jun. 2001], pp. 24-26;

³⁴⁵ AHTISAARI [Jun. 3rd 1997];

³⁴⁶ NERETNIEKS [2006], p. 357;

taking place in the region. Established in March 1992, the organism provides a flexible forum for regional cooperation in political, economic and cultural matters. The simultaneous admission to NATO (March 2004) and to the European Union (May 2004) of the three Baltic republics of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania marked the beginning of a new era of cooperation among all the countries in the Baltic Sea region and was warmly welcomed in Finland³⁴⁷. During the past decade, extensive military cooperation has also developed in the region, under Finnish and Swedish guidance, due to the former Soviet republics' desire to secure themselves within a Western European framework from any possible revival of Russian expansionist ambitions³⁴⁸: Finland, mainly focusing on Estonia, provided military experts for the training of local troops and donated a large amount of military equipment.

By virtue of this behavior, even if legally not a member, Finland became de facto a representative of NATO's political and military strategy in the Nordic-Baltic region: as one of the most fervent supporters of joining the alliance has observed³⁴⁹, this meant, in practice, giving up the possible benefits of non-alliance in the face of a crisis, without in return being a part of the security guarantees of Article 5. In the event of tense or even hostile relations between Russia and the West, Finland could not distance itself from the confrontation and at the same time could not count on the deterrent effect of being part of a mutually defensive alliance. According to this view, official membership at this point is not much more than a formality, whose carrying out would at least counterweigh the risks of commitment.

So far, such voices went unheard and the country continues to remain outside the boundaries of NATO. This imperfect approach resulted from the realistic consideration that no security deficit was pointed out as a consequence of non-attaining membership in the integrated structure, as long as no imminent menace was impending upon the region; in the words of the 1997 Security Report, "Finland is not the focus of any military threats for which security guarantees provided by a military alliance could be considered necessary for their prevention or repulsion"³⁵⁰. On the contrary, joining the alliance would imply the risk of jeopardizing the

³⁴⁷ VANHANEN [Sep. 28th 2004];

³⁴⁸ HUBEL [1999], p. 249;

³⁴⁹ JAKOBSON [1998], p. 144;

³⁵⁰ Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs [Mar. 1997], p. 52;

completion of Russian transition toward democracy, a factor which kept the United States from applying pressure on Finland at the Madrid summit on NATO enlargement³⁵¹.

While there is still, at least for the time being, no urge to seek NATO membership, the possibility of a future approach has never been discarded by the policy-makers in Helsinki, who keep regarding it as a viable option in case of adverse changes in the country's environment: the same 1997 document goes as far as stating that "if the security constellation in Europe changes essentially, Finland will assess its security situation and arrangements in the light of these developments"³⁵². The main concern for the near future is without any doubt represented by Russia, a great power which is undergoing an internal process of transformation whose final outcome is still unpredictable (will it be an implosion or revival?³⁵³), but has already had detrimental effects on its relations with Western Europe and might eventually result in a spill-over political and economic instability. Still in 2004, however, the Finnish security report, despite the recognition of the increasingly challenging character of the international scenario, did not contain any fundamental reassessment of this strategic doctrine³⁵⁴.

Supervising Russia's smooth transition to democracy is the key task of the "New NATO". The notion of "balance of powers" between Russia and the West was profoundly redefined at the end of the Cold War, but it did not disappear: NATO's eastern enlargement in 2004 can also be seen, from this perspective, as an adjustment to the existing balance. Overall European security, however, can not be achieved simply through adaptation: there is a marked need for a mutually satisfying arrangement, capable of including Russia as a full participant³⁵⁵ in the process of crafting a new world order based on interactive governance. Some limited progress toward this goal was reached on May 27th 1997 with the signing of the Founding Act, a document concerning NATO-Russian relations, which also established the Permanent Joint Council, charged with the task of broadening mutual dialogue. The importance of Finland's position in this area emerges particularly in relation to the task of facilitating a more dynamic Russian understanding of the alliance, no longer constructed for direct confrontation, but

³⁵¹ PESONEN, VESA [1998], pp. 52-54;

³⁵² Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs [Mar. 1997], pp. 48-49;

³⁵³ RIES [1999], p. 18;

³⁵⁴ Finnish Ministry of Defense [Sep. 2004];

³⁵⁵ TRENIN-STRAUSSOV [Jul. 1999], p. 1;

rather evolved into an instrument to achieve a deeper degree of cooperation in the face of the common security problems that are emerging worldwide.

This strategy reached two high points. In 1997, Finland's effort was decisive in arranging the meeting between B. Clinton and B. Yeltsin in Helsinki, an occasion in which the tensions connected to Russian vigorous opposition to NATO were in part alleviated. In 1999 an even more significant accomplishment was the successful mediation carried out by President Ahtisaari himself, in the capacity of U.N. Special Envoy, during the conflict in Kosovo: his diplomatic efforts to bring the Kosovo confrontation to an end once again healed a serious break between Russia and the West, originated after the Kremlin had announced its intention to resort to its veto right in the Security Council, to prevent the use of force against Serbia, and the West, regardless of the lack of U.N. mandate, had nevertheless launched Operation Allied Force; by managing to bring Russia into the mediation process for the solution to the crisis and avoiding its exclusion from the political security process in Europe, Ahtisaari helped restoring the vital relationship between EU-NATO on one side and Russia on the other, an element of major strategic importance for Europe.

Another episode which helped improving NATO-Russian relations, this time independently from Finland's position, was the terrorist attack perpetrated on September 11th 2001 against the United States. Those tragic events, in fact, strengthened the conviction that, in the post-Cold War context, common security interests concern the West as vividly as the East. The "war on terror" became a key area of cooperation, marking an increasing Russian involvement in NATO's strategies and structures: the NATO-Russia Council, which replaced the PJC in May 2002, operates on the principle of consensus and works on the basis of continuous political dialogue on anti-terrorist activities, with particular regard to the early identification of emerging problems, the determination of common approaches and the conduct of joint operations³⁵⁶.

Russia's orientation is indeed another key element that must be taken into consideration when assessing Finland's NATO option: how could the recent rapprochement between Russia and NATO influence the views of the policy-makers in Helsinki? According to those who seek to orientate the country towards the Atlantic, in the current scenario Finnish membership in the organization could turn out to be a valuable instrument to enhance cooperation between

³⁵⁶ North Atlantic Treaty Organization [May 2002];

Russia and the West, whose neighborly relations are often endangered by different security perceptions. It would certainly be in Finland's interest, it is argued, to promote the development of institutionalized cooperation and dialogue between its two major neighbors³⁵⁷, whose harmonious coexistence would both serve its own security interests by reducing the degree of unpredictability in the whole region³⁵⁸ and fulfill a vital precondition for overall stability in Europe. Due to its posture of non-alliance and to the historical heritage of bridge-building, in effect, Helsinki maintained several preferential contact channels with both the East and the West available and thus appears as the perfect candidate for advancing Russian integration into Western institutions through NATO membership.

On the contrary, at it is often pointed out by NATO critics, Finland's capacity to exert such an influence might not derive, if not to a lesser extent, from the fact of being a NATO member country itself, but rather from the opposite condition, that of a dynamic and well-integrated actor within the European Union, not burdened by any sort of military obligation³⁵⁹: it is not a coincidence that Ahtisaari's mediation was carried out under the insignia of the United Nations. Accordingly, in light of the unchanged aversion perceptible in Moscow toward the alliance³⁶⁰, joining NATO would only provoke harsh critical reactions from Russia, potentially endangering the very foundations of the special relationship between the two countries as well. The consistency of such assertions is rather questionable, especially when considering that, being contacts between Russia and NATO unavoidable in practice, Finland could be regarded as a skillful mediator, capable of exerting, in the long term, a decisive influence in order to bring the former adversaries closer to each other. As it was in the case of EU membership, therefore, further integration in the West could prove to have a positive effect on Finnish-Russian confidence-building process.

A further step toward military integration was taken in March 2008, just before the Bucharest summit, when Finland announced its intention to join the NATO Response Force (NRF), a multinational force package whose task is to rapidly intervene for collective defense or crisis management. Through this move does not equate full membership, it can be regarded as a major shift away from non-alliance. The new Finnish administration has since the beginning

³⁵⁷ PURSIAINEN, SAARI [2002], p. 5;

³⁵⁸ RIES [1999], pp. 26-27;

³⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 28;

³⁶⁰ PURSIAINEN, SAARI [2002], pp. 31-32;

revived the debate over NATO, showing that the country is ready to consider the membership option as a realistic one, especially in the light of the European Union's manifest incapacity to organize its own integrated defense system.

The whole debate concerning the impact of the NATO option in relation to Russia was of course profoundly affected by the August 2008 military crisis involving the Georgian regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, which again brought forward the risk of a conflict on the border of Europe and put EU-Russian relations at a crossroad. Finland had, for quite a long time, been aware of the possible re-emergence of Russia as a militaristic and expansionist power: the possibility was already foreseen by the 2004 Security Report, whose words sound almost prophetic today: "during the last few years, Russia has again become an active international actor, which asserts itself more strongly than before as a major power and an equal partner of other big countries. The primary aim of present-day Russia is to expand its influence in the CIS region"³⁶¹.

Even though the likelihood of a military confrontation in the near future is very low, containing Russian ambitions materializes again as a priority on the agenda of Europe and the importance of the task of mediating between competing interests is likely to grow in the near future. Two major elements deserve consideration in the present circumstances: the first is that Russia demonstrated to the whole world that it has not yet accepted to renounce the use of force as an instrument of foreign policy; the second is that the U.N. Security Council, paralyzed by internal disagreements, has once again proven its powerlessness in the face of emergency situations.

According to some representatives of the Finnish government, above all the Foreign Minister A. Stubb³⁶², these facts call for a reorganization of the Finnish foreign and security policy agenda: since the notion of military non-alliance had the sole effect of excluding Finland from playing a role in the crisis mediation effort in Georgia other than obtaining a fragile cease-fire under the insignia of OSCE, the development of a less restrictive approach seems much-needed, as well as the overall periodical reassessment of the NATO membership issue.

³⁶¹ Finnish Ministry of Defense [Sep. 2004], p. 68;

³⁶² STUBB [Aug. 25th 2008];

CONCLUSION

At the end of this study, it is opportune to conclude with some remarks aimed at summarizing the “state of the art” as of today. Several systemic changes occurred over the centuries, re-shaping the very foundations of the security environment in Europe as well as in the Scandinavian-Baltic region: nevertheless, in a way that ironically resembles its most ancient past, Finland still finds itself on the border between two opposing civilization, whose clash might once again endanger the independence, or in the worst case the survival, of the country. The awareness of the existence of this incumbent threat, due to geographical as well as strategic conditions, is the one key element which oriented the security strategy of Finland since the origins and it is likely to continue doing so in the years to come.

Time after time, temporarily satisfying solutions were found to deal with this fundamental security dilemma, each of which contributed to alleviate the most immediate concerns, but none of which outlived the collapse of the system of international relations they were designed for. In the current phase of post-Cold War transition and instability, the readjustment of Finnish security thinking has not yet come to a completion, albeit it is increasingly probable that in the foreseeable future it will find a viable solution to the Europeanist-Atlanticist alternative. The maintenance of a line of non-alliance appears in fact as the least convenient option in terms of security assets, especially considering the degree of bellicosity which affects today’s international system. The pace and timing of this change will widely depend on Europe’s capacity to restore its credibility and on the direction Russia will take in developing its society.

This brings us back to the opening question of this research paper: why should anyone be interested in Finnish security thinking and defense policy? After all, these far-reaching considerations seem to demonstrate that Finland’s security orientation is more than anything decided by external events, outside its domain of control. Having investigated the various phases of its history and having presented its present-day position in security affairs, a more elaborate answer may be attempted, since such a precipitate conclusion would be in many ways misleading, completely overlooking the most peculiar feature of Finnish contribution to the establishment of a European security architecture: that is, tailoring its own space of

maneuver and preserving its capacity to counter-influence the surrounding environment, despite the limitations imposed and the pressure exerted by uncontrollable global dynamics.

Indeed, Finland has much to teach, both to historians of the European integration process and to peace studies researchers. I wish I have been able to demonstrate that by influencing the Swedish monarch, by gaining a certain autonomy within the Russian Empire, by mitigating its alliance with Nazi Germany, by preserving its independence and trade connections from within the sphere of Soviet influence, by promoting détente through peace-making and initiatives for disarmament, by always supporting Scandinavian cooperation and by stressing the importance of comprehensive security within the United Nations and the European Union, Finland not only has managed to survive in a world of bigger powers, but can be also taken as a reference model when it comes to original adaptation to change and total commitment to the cause of peace.

The main purpose of this research is to provide those readers not particularly acquainted with Finnish security background with some basic material for further reasoning. Besides the analysis of Finland security policies in different contexts, however, this journey through the country's history was also undertaken in the attempt to illustrate the consistency and usefulness of two general paradigms underlying the theory and practice of security policy, by applying them to the specific case of Finland. The implicit assumption that is possible to read between the lines of this paper is that the same paradigms may be successfully availed in other case studies and lead to similar conclusions.

The first demonstrates how the security perception of a country is profoundly influenced by its overall historical experience and the particular perspective deriving from it, which transcend contingent political situations and orientate its fundamental choices. More than any other factor, a country's history shapes its people and the way they think about the surrounding environment; accordingly, a line of continuity can be detected in Finland's international attitude, originating from the sufferance derived from having become the battlefield between Swedish and Russian interests, passing through the fruitless quest for alliances and the raising consciousness of the need for neutrality, up to today's skepticism toward any military commitment capable of involving the country in a conflict between Europe and Russia.

The second reveals how even a relatively small country can have a major impact on the security landscape of the European Union, not only by providing the community with an

added value of regional expertise and cross-border contacts, but especially by offering a third, more flexible and probably also more practicable way to the traditional alternative between a defense system still based on national sovereignty, characterized by intergovernmental cooperation, and a really integrated defense structure, based on the principle of supranationality; a country like Finland is the unequivocal demonstration that security can be achieved also through an original approach, reliant on the capacity to nurture and foster constructive dialogue through practical initiatives for the attainment of a stable governance system, without resorting to the use of force.

The future of Europe is questioned by complex domestic and international challenges, which require everybody's involvement to be addressed in a suitable manner, before risking to reach a point of no return. The future development in the field of defense and security is one of the most controversial issues the citizens and their leaders will have to face, but it is not the only one. Finland's voice will be just one of the many forces that will craft the continent's political identity of tomorrow; perhaps it will not even be among the most influential ones, but certainly drawing a lesson from its experience might prove beneficial for looking with renewed confidence at the ideal of perpetual peace in Europe.

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