

# Finland's path to NATO membership

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## FOREWORD

The spring of 2022 was a historical turning point in the Finnish defense and security policy.

The world changed on the 24th of February when Russia started a war by attacking Ukraine. Putin's decision was shocking, although it did not come as a complete surprise. Tensions had risen significantly since 2014, when Russia took over the Crimean Peninsula.

In Finland, Russia's open war prompted both citizens and politicians to reassess our country's defense policy, in practice, the issue of NATO membership. As the spring went on, the support of citizens and politicians for joining NATO increased significantly.

In order to give depth to public debate and support decision-making, we compiled this publication on Finland's NATO decision. In their articles, a number of top Finnish experts discuss the application process, NATO as an organization, the advantages and disadvantages of membership, and strategic changes in our policy and at the EU level.

The articles in this publication were written mainly during March when it was not yet certain whether Finland would submit its application. The book was published in Finnish at the end of April and, for its part, helped to deepen knowledge and views on the NATO decision.

Most of the works have been translated directly from the originals and thus do not take into account the Finnish decision on 12 May to submit an application to NATO. However, some of the texts have been reviewed by their authors or already looked further and assess the implications of NATO membership from many perspectives in a way relevant even after the decision has been made.

I want to give my warmest thanks to every expert who wanted to contribute to this joint book project of Toivo Think Tank and the Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies.

In Helsinki, June 17th, 2022

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# NATO'S NEW MISSION IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Iro Särkkä

## Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty

*(1) "The Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all and consequently they agree that, if such an armed attack occurs, each of them, in exercise of the right of individual or collective self-defence recognised by Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, will assist the Party or Parties so attacked by taking forthwith, individually and in concert with the other Parties, such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force, to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area. Any such armed attack and all measures taken as a result thereof shall immediately be reported to the Security Council. Such measures shall be terminated when the Security Council has taken the measures necessary to restore and maintain international peace and security." North Atlantic Treaty Organization, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_17120.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_17120.htm).*



## NATO's new mission in the 21st century

NATO's institutional agenda has changed dramatically since the Cold War, as new tasks have emerged alongside Article 5 collective defense.<sup>1</sup> As the Alliance's tasks expanded from territorial defense to crisis management and cooperative security, there was even occasional talk of an identity crisis. Had NATO become a hybrid organization in the 21st century that lacked a *clear strategic vision*?

Russia's invasion of the Crimean Peninsula in 2014 was a wake-up call that put common defense back at the heart of NATO's mission. As a result of Russia's brutal attack on Ukraine in February 2022, this development further accelerated: NATO's new mission is its original mission, to provide collective security and deterrence in the Euro-Atlantic region.

However, in the new, more interdependent world of hybrid threats, collective defense is also taking on new meanings and challenging NATO's traditional role: how to choose and balance traditional territorial defense and new security threats? What is NATO's role in the new, globalized security order? What kind of ally will Finland get from NATO if it decides to apply for NATO membership?

## NATO's renewed strategic concept

NATO's Strategic Concept is the key strategic document that sets the Alliance's strategy and provides a strategic background for Alliance's political and military missions. NATO has published three strategic concepts in the post-Cold War period: in 1991, 1999, and 2010. In addition, more than 20 NATO summits were held between 1990 and 2022, outlining NATO's role in a changed security environment.

Since the 1990s, the Alliance has sought to balance its role in the new Euro-Atlantic security order, which has reflected on its fundamental roles and tasks. In the early 2000s, crisis management and wide-ranging partnerships were highlighted, whereas, in the 2010s, collective defense made a comeback. It is likely that NATO's new Strategic Concept<sup>2</sup>, published at the NATO Madrid Summit in June 2022, emphasizes the importance of collective defense in all different operating environments. Next, I will analyze NATO's mission through its three main tasks, collective defense, crisis management, and cooperative security.

<sup>2</sup> At the time of writing this article, NATO's new Strategic Concept has not yet been published, but NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, however, has emphasized the importance of collective defense in NATO's strategic thinking.

## Collective defense: old, new mission

During the Cold War, collective defense was the undisputed main task of NATO, which materialized in the 1950s as the United States transferred troops and nuclear weapons to Europe. Conceptually, NATO's collective defense has changed dramatically since the end of the Cold War.

Whereas during the Cold War, collective defense was referred to as the ability to counter an armed threat to the Alliance from outside the Euro-Atlantic region (namely USSR), at the present day, the concept of collective defense and deterrence entails an ability to respond to a wide range of symmetrical or asymmetrical security threats. Second, NATO's collective defense has two dimensions: political and military. Militarily, collective defense concerns the usability of military capabilities to serve the purposes of a joint command structure, defense planning, and exercises; the political dimension refers to the willingness of NATO countries to use these capabilities to prevent and resolve conflicts.

Since Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014, collective defense has made a comeback in NATO's strategic thinking. In response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, NATO began to re-establish regional defense through the RAP Readiness Action Plan (RAP). It established Very High Readiness Joint Task Forces (VJTF) to support the NATO Response Force (NRF) in the 2014 Wales Summit Declaration. In addition, contingency plans were drawn up for eastern NATO members and small multinational support units set up in Eastern and Central Europe.

In the 2016 Warsaw Summit, NATO members decided to deploy NATO troops to the Baltic countries and Poland. One year later, NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence (EFP) was launched in Northern Europe and the Baltic Sea region, with rotating combat units of about a thousand troops in each, by the framework state principle. The Brussels Summit in 2018, for its part, launched a new preparedness initiative (4x30) aimed at mobilizing 30 battalions, 30 air squadrons, and 30 naval

combat vessels within 30 days. Furthermore, the Alliance organized several large-scale military exercises involving tens of thousands of soldiers from NATO members and partner countries.

The 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine has led to an intensification of NATO's deterrence and defense in Europe. The Alliance has strengthened its presence on the land, at sea, and in the air and significantly increased the number of troops deployed in Eastern Europe, as well as enhanced its presence in Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia, and Hungary, to prevent the conflict from escalating to the Euro-Atlantic area. However, to credibly carry out its collective mission, NATO has had to respond to Russia's actions by increasing its defense posture on its own territory.

## Crisis management—can world crises be managed?

After the end of the Cold War, NATO found its new mission in crisis management.

The first major NATO crisis management operation was the Implementation Force (IFOR, later Stabilization Force, SFOR 1996) in Bosnia and Herzegovina, launched in 1995. This was followed in 1999 by Operation Allied Force and the subsequent KFOR-crisis management operation (Kosovo Force, KFOR).

Crisis management took on a whole new meaning after NATO took over command of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan in 2003 (ISAF 2001–2014, later Operation Resolute Support, 2015–2021). In 2004, NATO also took over responsibility for the NATO-I Training Mission in Iraq (NTM-I). In 2009, Operation Allied Protector was launched in the Horn of Africa, and Operation Unified Protector in 2011 to protect Libyan civilians. At its best, NATO had more than 150,000 troops simultaneously in various crisis management operations.

The expansion of NATO's mission into demanding crisis management operations changed the focus of the Alliance's activities and required the development of new, rapidly deployable capabilities. However, not all NATO members shared this view on NATO's new mission. NATO was criticized, for instance, for becoming too operations-oriented and no longer sharing a common vision. For some NATO members, ISAF-like overseas expeditionary operations represented a new and much-hoped direction for the Alliance's *raison d'être*. In contrast, many of NATO's first and second enlargement rounds' member states criticized the shift away from NATO's own geographical area. In addition, the line between traditional Article 5 and crisis management operations became partly unclear. For example, concerning the ISAF operation, there were differing interpretations of whether the operation was at some point closer to an Article 5 type rather than a crisis management operation.

The international security environment is becoming increasingly interdependent. Various global challenges, such as climate change, digitalization, and migration, have far-reaching implications for common security. The future will show what role crisis management will play in NATO's role. A return to early 2000s overseas operations seems unlikely at present, but by no means cannot be completely ruled out. Should NATO continue to take proactive measures in the face of these challenges before they surmount into actual security threats?

## Cooperative security - the strategic importance of partners

Cooperative security is one of NATO's three main tasks. In the 1990s, NATO's partnerships started developing through the Partnership for Peace program (PfP, 1994) and the establishment of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC, 1997), the aim of which was to help democratize Central and Eastern European countries. In the 21st century, the importance of global partnerships has further grown. At present, NATO partners include countries such as Australia, New Zealand, Japan, South Korea, and Colombia. In addition, NATO's institutional relations with other key multinational actors, the OSCE, the UN, and the EU, have deepened over the years to the level of a strategic partnership. Indeed, NATO has developed into a global security community that upholds the promotion of democratic values, freedom, and the rule of law.

NATO has been quite open in its partnership policy. An example of this open-mindedness is the development of NATO-Russia cooperation. A special protocol was signed between NATO and Russia in 1997, followed by the establishment of the NATO-Russia Council (NRC) in 2002 to promote security dialogue between NATO and Russia. With the 2008 Georgian crisis, NATO-Russia relations began to deteriorate and have been virtually frozen since the 2014 Russian occupation of the Crimean Peninsula. Ukraine, with which NATO entered an enhanced dialogue in the mid-1990s, has also enjoyed a similar special status as a partner.

Finland and Sweden have achieved significant special status as NATO's partners. Finland has actively participated in the NATO Planning and Review Process (PARP) and the Operational Capabilities Concept (OCC), NATO crisis management operations, and exercises. Finland achieved NATO's Enhanced Opportunities Partner (EOP) status together with Sweden in 2014. During the escalation of the war in Ukraine, Finland also participated in increased information exchange with Sweden.

Although NATO partnership does not automatically lead to membership, Finland's interoperability with the Alliance is high. Has Finland's intensifying NATO partnership now reached a climax, where it lacks only the last seal, the submission of an application for membership in the Alliance? If Finland now joins NATO, it will join the Alliance at the dawn of a new era.

## What is NATO's new normal?

In the aftermath of the Cold War, NATO emphasized a response to new security threats. It developed into a multidisciplinary security actor. New security challenges and more demanding operating environments required the Alliance to develop new capabilities and focus beyond the Euro-Atlantic area. When it was still asked in the early 2010s whether the Alliance had plunged into an identity crisis in the face of the two-way tasks it had set itself, the answer is now clear. NATO has returned to its original mission, the collective defense.

However, the situation is different than during the Cold War days. The Alliance cannot turn its back on the global role it assumed in the early 2000s. In the future, NATO will have to continue to prepare for a wide range of global challenges, even if they are not entirely at the heart of traditional military issues. However, these global challenges may play an indirect role in the emergence of new security crises. On the other hand, because of Russia's war in Ukraine, traditional military threats have inevitably returned to the Alliance's strategic thinking.

I call this an era of uncertainty and asymmetry. In the present as well as the future, the Alliance must build a capacity to respond to both traditional and non-traditional hybrid threats.

*NATO has developed into a global security community that upholds the promotion of democratic values, freedom, and the rule of law.*

In addition, NATO's geopolitical environment is transforming. For example, the growing strategic importance of the High North and the Arctic region has an essential role in collective defense.

Security tensions also test NATO's internal coherence and the resilience of societies, underlining the importance of joint and coordinated action by all NATO countries. Indeed, NATO is currently balancing between global and Euro-Atlantic identity. NATO's mission is to defend its territory from all directions and in five different operating environments, land, sea, air, information networks, and space. Maintaining this "360-degree" perspective for the Alliance is, by all means, not easy, but it is necessary for maintaining its position as the key security player in the 21st century.

As an Alliance of thirty members spread over a wide geographical area, NATO's current challenge is to maintain its strategic coherence. NATO members may have very different views on its role as a collective security provider. Differing opinions are also likely to be found on the equitable burden-sharing between member states. For example, disproportionate national defense spending and contributions to NATO joint operations and common funding have contributed to an imbalance between many European countries and the United States.

However, the arguments of those questioning the unity of NATO have now proved futile. The 2022 war in Ukraine has demonstrated that the Alliance is more united and committed to achieving its shared goals than ever before. As we reach the 2030s, we will see a more credible, cohesive, and determined NATO.

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# THE PROS AND CONS, OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS OF NATO MEMBERSHIP

Tuomas Forsberg

Finland, together with Sweden, decided to apply for membership in NATO in May 2022. This was a significant shift in Finland's post-Cold War foreign and security policy. However, the goal of the membership was stability, not change. After Russia's unprovoked and large-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Finland's security environment changed dramatically. For decades, Finland's policy consisted of a close partnership with NATO and a stated "option" to apply for membership should the security situation change. In this light, the change was predictable.

However, what was not so predictable, was that the policy change was initiated by a dramatic shift in public opinion. In the entire post-Cold War era, NATO membership had been supported only by a minority of Finns, always under 30 percent, and sometimes even under 20 percent, of the citizens. Almost overnight, during the week when the war started, a majority suddenly supported Finland's NATO membership, and in later polls, even three-quarters of Finns. At the same time, the share of opponents to NATO membership had sunk to less than 15 percent. In the Finnish Parliament, an overwhelming majority—188 against 8—voted to apply for NATO membership. Russia's invasion of Ukraine naturally explains this change, but *how* does it explain it?

## Deterrence and Protection

Traditionally, the main reason for the membership is security, conceived both as deterrence and protection should the deterrence fail. Russia's attack on Ukraine demonstrated, at least for the time being, that a national defense roughly the size of the Finnish state's defense budget is not enough for a functioning deterrent. Of course, it must be remembered that the Kremlin underestimated the Ukrainians' capability and will to defend themselves. Nevertheless, as long as Russia has not attacked any NATO country, the idea that NATO has enough deterring power has been strengthened, albeit without any absolute certainty.

Still, the Russo-Ukrainian War has shown that Finland's current national defense, when organized effectively, can prevent Russia from achieving its strategic goals. But it does not prevent destruction, suffering, and casualties. The war has also shown that NATO's military assistance to non-members may be limited. It does not tell us what it would be like for a country that is a member of NATO, but it is clear that it would be much more substantial than what is now given to Ukraine.

Some in Finland were worried that NATO membership could cause Finland to neglect its own defense, and the traditionally high—according to the polls, the highest in Europe—national will to defend one's country might erode. However, as long as the collective memory and geopolitical self-awareness of being a neighbor of a great power remain unchanged, NATO membership will hardly erode the national will to defend Finland.

We do not fully know how the war will affect Russia's willingness to use military force in the future. Currently, Russia has only limited conventional resources as it has suffered many losses in the war. Russia has traditionally respected power. Russia—or its political and military leadership—may come to a conclusion that, after the failure of the war in Ukraine, it will no longer be able to start a similar large-scale land war against its neighbors.

On the other hand, Russia may also learn from the war in Ukraine, and in the medium term, it may become able to wage war more effectively than in Ukraine. However, as long as the conflict between Russia and the West continues and the economic sanctions are maintained, it will be difficult for Russia to modernize its armed forces. Nevertheless, Finns cannot exclude the threat of a large-scale war in some imaginable future.

NATO, of course, can also change. Although Russia's military action and the threat it poses has united NATO, and its mission as a defense pact is clear, there is no certainty that this will remain so for twenty or fifty years from now. In the worst-case scenario, NATO could deteriorate even faster if the United States receives a leader who does not consider NATO to be important for the United States or if the country is otherwise plunged into political turmoil.

However, NATO membership can benefit Finland, even if NATO as an organization was to erode. Finland's membership, together with Sweden, facilitates Nordic and European defense cooperation and can intensify various multilateral and bilateral projects with a number of NATO partners.

## The Russian threat

The counterargument to the deterrent and protection provided by NATO has traditionally been that Finland's NATO membership would weaken relations with Russia and destabilize the situation. For a long time, it seemed that these pros and cons of Finland's NATO membership canceled each other out. The less NATO membership weakened relations with Russia, the less it would be needed. The more it was required, the more it would disturb Russia and hence increase its potential threat.

With the war in Ukraine, estimates of this balance seem to have changed, as Russia's threat may have increased even if Finland had not applied for NATO. However, the period between the

application and the full membership is regarded as problematic. Russia's wars against Georgia and Ukraine gave indications of this: Russia sees its neighbor sliding towards NATO or being under the tutelage of Washington, but without any security guarantees provided by NATO. For the same reason, the old policy of having a close partnership with NATO without Article 5 was no longer regarded as the best strategic position. The option to join NATO was seen as kind of a deterrent that now had failed. For many people, applying for NATO membership was a demonstrative statement against Putin's attempt to define new spheres of influence.

Minimizing NATO cooperation would not have solved the problem. First, keeping Finland's national defense current becomes more difficult without a close partnership with NATO. Secondly, Russia may not be convinced that there were no plans to join NATO, even if cooperation was curtailed: the Soviet allegations that Finland was approaching Germany when it declared neutrality before the Winter War is good historical examples of this. Thirdly, possible Russian aggression may result from reasons other than just the fear of NATO coming closer to its borders, such as neo-imperial motives based on the fact that Finland was once part of Russia. The invasion of Ukraine showed that Russia could find almost any pretext to start a war if it so wished: Patriarch Kirill, for example, justified the war on Ukraine with Ukraine's decadent values.

## Participation in NATO operations

The downside of NATO membership, or at least a potential risk, is the fear that Finland has to send troops to a faraway conflict where Finland does not have a stake at play. Of course, Finland may need to participate in future NATO crisis management operations, and it is difficult not to participate in the first NATO operations after accession. However, as a NATO partner, Finland has already

contributed to many distant NATO operations with a relatively large contingent, such as in Afghanistan.

Second, the likelihood that NATO would start demanding crisis management operations in the Middle East or North Africa, not to mention in East Asia, may have diminished. Experiences from Afghanistan were not encouraging. NATO's focus is now on Russia for quite some time. Of course, the United States may want to gather a number of NATO countries into a future coalition and persuade Finland to join, even if NATO as an organization was not involved in the operation. Yet, similar pressure might exist even without NATO membership if Finland wants to have a strong bilateral relationship with the United States.

## Political Influence

NATO membership can also be seen as beneficial because it gives a seat at the table where information is shared and decisions are made. The political influence that comes with it may be limited as we consider the small size of Finland. Yet, as an active member, it may be able to have a say not only regarding the immediate defense planning but shape the policies of the Alliance as a whole. It is unclear how Finland would use such influence. Still, if Finland wants NATO–Russia relations to improve in the future, it will be easier to develop the relationship from within NATO than from outside.

The flip side of this argument about influence is the commitment to the common policy of the alliance. As a non-aligned country, Finland would have had more leeway, especially in relations between Russia and NATO or the United States. The traditional role of hosting summits and providing good services was based on this. Yet, Finland would be able to continue its global peace mediation activities as a member of NATO, as Norway has done.

*NATO membership can also be seen as beneficial because it gives a seat at the table where information is shared and decisions are made.*

## Identity

NATO membership can also be motivated for identity reasons as a manifestation of a community of values Finland shares. For many, NATO membership would strengthen Finland's western identity and be the last nail in the coffin of "Finlandization." However, for others, Finland's membership in the EU already meant the abandonment of neutrality and belonging to the West. To maintain a separate identity as a non-aligned country may therefore be seen as futile.

NATO membership also shapes the external image of Finland. Due to the war in Ukraine, many have realized that NATO membership would reduce the perception of Finland's country risk. As a non-aligned neighbor of Russia, Finland may appear unstable and affect the attractiveness of economic investments.

On the other hand, identity conceptions also led some to resist Finland's NATO membership. For many, particularly on the political left, NATO was undesirable simply because it was a military alliance or reflected US hegemony. Some regard NATO as representing wrong values, particularly pointing out that there are members that question liberal democratic values, such as Turkey or Hungary.

Although NATO is not a pure value community, Turkey and Hungary are exceptions. The shared willingness to support fundamental international norms and democracy has become apparent in the context of the war in Ukraine. Moreover, if we consider Finland's position on the value map of the World Values Survey, most countries that surround it are in NATO.

## Why NATO 2022?

So which of these reasons is the strongest argument and can explain Finland's decision to apply for membership in NATO? The governmental report to Parliament motivated the membership bid with security argumentation. There was no mention of influence, identity, or values. According to

President Sauli Niinistö, too, the role of NATO as a deterrent was the main reason he thought Finland should join the alliance.

Enhanced military security was also the main reason given by citizens for joining NATO—the importance of these reasons only increased as a result of the war in Ukraine. Influence and identity reasons were secondary. The fear of weakening the relations with Russia, on the one hand, and the risk of Finns being sent to the Baltic states or some faraway conflicts, on the other, were still the main reasons for opposing the membership.

Why did public opinion change so quickly and unequivocally to support Finland's NATO membership only in 2022 and not already in 2014? First of all, the resistance of the Finns to NATO membership had been wide but not deep. Yet, a cognitive shift in attitudes towards NATO membership needed an emotional push. Russia's wars in 2008 and 2014 had only caused a slight change in public opinion. 2022 was different. Russia's war on Ukraine was unprovoked and large-scale: the 1939 Winter War analogy was imminent in Finland and became much more strongly felt than in 2008 or 2014. In a comparative survey, Finland had the largest share of citizens in Europe who believed that Russia, rather than Ukraine or NATO, was responsible for the war.

Moreover, in the runup to the war, Russia had demanded that NATO stop its open-door policy not only with Ukraine but also regarding Finland and Sweden. This was the moment when the President of Finland realized that the earlier policy of just keeping joining NATO as an option would not work.

Putin's war on Ukraine led to the change of opinion toward NATO membership in Finland. This is the easy explanation, but we should qualify that by counterfactuals. Had Putin not demanded that NATO close its open-door policy also with regard to Finland and Sweden, and had Russia just started a "special operation" instead of a destructive full-scale war, the dramatic change in public opinion and thus also the change in sentiment among political leaders would have been unlikely.



# WHAT DOES THE ACCESSION PROCESS LOOK LIKE?

Teija Tiilikainen

If Finland applies for NATO membership, both the Finnish Constitution and NATO's rules and practices will affect the forms and phases of the accession process. Every accession process is different with its duration depending on the political environment and on the extent to which the candidate state fulfills the key membership criteria and commits itself to NATO's obligations.

Finland's deep partnership with NATO, the lessons learned from it, and close military interoperability would speed up the accession process. External attempts to influence by actors such as Russia could, when successful, slow it down.



## NATO's requirements for a new member state

The starting point for NATO's enlargement policy is in art. 10 of the Washington treaty. According to it, any European state in a position to further the principles of the mentioned treaty and contribute to the security of the North Atlantic area can be invited to accede to the organization.

Enlargement was approached in a new light in 1994 when a large group of former Soviet satellite states had expressed their willingness to join NATO. In this context, commitment to democratic values, a market economy, and peaceful resolution of conflicts, together with democratic control of armed forces, became key accession criteria.

From NATO's perspective, the central goal of the accession process is to ensure that a new member state fulfills the membership criteria and commits itself to the organization's fundamental principles. Under current practices, the process has two phases. The candidate state is first accepted to the so-called MAP process (Membership Action Plan), where its capacity to fulfill accession criteria is assessed. On this basis, NATO can then decide to invite the candidate to join the alliance. New members have usually been invited during a summit meeting, which will be organized next time in Madrid in June 2022. Another composition of the North Atlantic Council can equally agree on the invitation.

The formal invitation will be followed by accession negotiations where all the necessary details concerning the accession to NATO's political and military system and the share of costs covered by the new member will be agreed upon. When negotiations are concluded, an accession document will be signed, taking the form of a protocol to be annexed to the Washington treaty. To enter into force, the protocol will have to be accepted by each of the 30 NATO members in accordance with their national requirements.

In many NATO members—albeit not in all—a parliamentary approval is needed. When the ac-

cession protocol has been approved in all NATO countries, the NATO secretary general will present the final invitation to the candidate state. The candidate can then launch its own domestic approval process following its constitution.

## The phases of Finland's accession process

The expression of Finland's will to join NATO is a binding foreign policy act that the President takes, in accordance with art. 93 of the Finnish Constitution, in cooperation with the Government. Their common position will be prepared in the Ministerial Committee on Foreign and Security Policy in its joint meeting with the President.

Parliament's position on NATO accession will be assessed by issuing a governmental report on the topic to Parliament. In that report, the Government will define its views on the changes in the Finnish security environment. This will steer Parliament and its committees to discuss the role of NATO membership and its possible preconditions.

In the framework of this parliamentary process, Parliament's Constitutional Law Committee would probably already consider the constitutional aspects of Finland's NATO accession and formulate its position on the forms of its parliamentary approval. In case the parliamentary preconditions existed, the president would be likely to decide on the membership application based on a governmental proposition.

Finland is expected to fulfill NATO's political and military criteria so well that the MAP procedure set to assess the question could stay very short, and the invitation to the actual accession negotiations could come fast. In this context, public opinion on NATO that has turned overwhelmingly supportive is an essential factor in fulfilling the criteria. Finland's accession to NATO's political and military system, as well as the

financial questions, would be agreed upon in the accession talks.

Finland's position and representation in NATO's military organization and political decision-making are other topics to be agreed upon in the negotiations. Legislative changes required by the accession to NATO, as well as Finland's share of NATO's common budgets, would also be among the topics to be dealt with. Details related to the accession to NATO's military infrastructure and Finland's role in NATO's joint defense planning would also be agreed upon.

Also, the demilitarized and neutral position of the Åland Islands, and its basis in international law, would come to the fore in the accession negotiations as they would affect NATO's functioning on the Finnish territory.<sup>1</sup> Åland Islands would not be the only demilitarized region in NATO.

For the most recent new NATO members, accession negotiations have lasted for a couple of months. Finland would be represented in negotiations by a delegation nominated by the president and NATO by a delegation consisting of NATO officials. The Finnish parliament would be informed about the progress of negotiations.

<sup>1</sup> The Åland Islands is a demilitarized region with extensive autonomy. More information about the Åland islands can be found on the website of the Finnish Foreign Ministry: <https://um.fi/the-special-status-of-the-aland-islands>.

## The approval of Finland's accession protocol

Once the accession negotiations have been concluded, Finland submits a letter of intent to the NATO secretary general, including schedules for legislative and other changes required by NATO membership. On this basis, NATO will prepare the factual accession protocol to be sent for approval to all the 30 NATO members. In most of them, parliamentary approval will follow.

Previous NATO enlargements have not led to problems with the parliamentary approval of any existing NATO members. For example, Turkey has viewed NATO enlargement positively and supported, at least earlier, a Ukrainian and Georgian membership.

In Finland, the accession protocol would have to be approved by Parliament and brought into force by law. Parliament's Constitutional Law Committee would assess if a simple majority could approve the protocol or if a 2/3 majority were required. The latter procedure is used for international obligations that concern the constitution or imply a transfer of authority to an international organization or international body significant for Finland's sovereignty.

The governmental proposal on NATO accession would assess the political and economic implications of NATO membership for Finland and include a detailed view of those legislative changes that accession requires.

Once the parliament has given its approval, the President will sign the decision of Finland accessing NATO. The schedule for the entry into force of the accession protocol will be agreed upon by the parties. Before its membership in NATO starts, Finland should bring the necessary amendments to its national legislation into force.

## The international linkages of Finland's accession process

Above all, Finland's accession process is linked with Sweden's NATO policy. Finland and Sweden form a tight couple with their uniform partnership solutions, and they have come closer to NATO hand in hand during the past few years. If only one of them joined NATO, the other would be left quite alone with its partnership solution. Nor would the deepened bilateral defense cooperation be possible if only one of the countries joined NATO's common defense system. NATO membership would, in this situation, set clear limits to their mutual defense cooperation.

The Finnish and Swedish accession processes are also interrelated with respect to their schedules. Even if none of their constitutions demand a referendum to be arranged on the issue, the developments of their NATO policies affect each other. If Finland is the first to take its NATO accession forward, it will immediately affect the Swedish assessment of their country's security policy situation. Any of them staying outside NATO will have both political and strategic implications.

Also, from NATO's point of view, Finland's and Sweden's simultaneous accession processes can be considered a more straightforward solution than a situation where they take place at different times or with only one of them joining NATO. A simultaneous accession facilitates NATO's adjustment to a new strategic position, making it easier for NATO to grasp the effects of enlargement on its defense planning.

## Finland's NATO process as a target for external influencing

One of the goals of the Russian military and political measures against Ukraine in recent years has been to prevent Ukraine from joining NATO. Even if the position of Finland is from the Russian perspective not comparable to that of Ukraine, Russia may still try to complicate Finland's accession to NATO. This could take place by disturbing Finland's national decision-making process or by affecting NATO's decision-making through one or several of its members.

For instance, the disturbance of Finland's decision-making could occur in the form of a significant hybrid threat operation. An attack against critical infrastructure, the opening of the border to a massive migration operation, or a military operation in the vicinity of the Finnish border could all demand the attention of Finland's political leadership to the extent that decisions on NATO accession would be delayed. When combined with a skillful information operation, such activity could also affect the public opinion on NATO membership.

On the other hand, Russia could try to prevent Finland's accession to NATO by affecting the position of a NATO member with whom it has a particularly close relationship. Even if the Russian war against Ukraine has diminished the likelihood of such a scenario, the use of targeted sanctions for this purpose cannot, however, be entirely ruled out.

## From enhanced partnership to full membership

When Finland's accession to NATO materialized, Finland would gradually start perceiving its security policy role and identity from a new perspective. The Finnish EU membership can function as a point of comparison with how it in many ways repositioned Finland on the map of Europe, physically and mentally.

Along with the NATO membership, Finland would have a new joint agenda with NATO members. Instead of partnership issues, Finland would start dealing with core questions of the transatlantic alliance, such as the focal issues of the new strategy or their implications for NATO's joint command system. The emphases of NATO's common defense and their relation to out-of-area operations would be among the key topics. Finland would also be expected to have viewpoints on the development of NATO's military deterrence and its credibility.

The European dimension of Finland's security policy identity would be paralleled with a strengthening transatlantic dimension. The alliance's relationship with China, with concrete implications for NATO's policy, would be a topic to be addressed during the coming years.

The earlier Finnish policy formulations which revolved around non-alignment or non-participation in military alliances would remain in history. Memberships in the EU and NATO would be defined as the cornerstones of Finland's security policy.



# THE STRATEGIC CULTURE OF FINLAND

Martti J. Kari

## The theory of strategic culture

In 1977, American political scientist Jack L. Snyder researched political culture and decision-making in the Soviet Union. According to Snyder, it is possible to understand and explain the strategic thinking and behavior of the state, i.e., the state leadership, by identifying the historical, institutional, and political factors that influence the leadership's strategic thinking. Snyder called this behavior *strategic culture*. Later, the theory of strategic culture evolved into a tool for political science that seeks to explain and understand the state's actions in making decisions for security policy.

Strategic culture describes how the security policy leadership of a state perceives threats to the country and how it responds to these actual or perceived threats. Responses may include diplomatic means, allying militarily, and the development and use of armed forces.

Strategic culture is influenced by history, geography, technology, model of governance, and changes in the perception of the image of war. History seems to play a major role in how a country's strategic culture develops and evolves.

## Change in strategic culture

The strategic culture can change, but it changes at a slow pace. A factor that changes the strategic culture is a change in its external supporting pillars, i.e., an *external shock*. Another changing factor is the collision of different core principles in the state's strategic thinking. State administration can also change its strategic culture by adopting a new approach to foreign policy issues.

An external shock can change a nation's historical narratives and build alternative norms. An example of the impact of an external shock on a country's strategic culture is the change in German security policy in the 1990s. The post-World War II German strategic culture prevented the use of military force outside Germany. As a result of the humanitarian catastrophe in Bosnia, pacifism lost to realism, and Germany sent crisis management forces to the Balkans for the IFOR operation.

An example of a clash of core principles of strategic thinking is the state of Japan, which sent troops to the UN peacekeeping operation in East Timor to protect democracy.

The third factor that can change the strategic culture is the role of the head of state. Leaders can change their country's strategic culture by taking a new approach to foreign policy issues. The U.S. response to the September 11th attacks is an example of the change in strategic culture caused by all three factors. The external shock pushed once again the United States to give up isolationism and President Bush to declare war on terrorism. The focus of U.S. strategic culture then shifted to the War on Terror and domestic defense.

## Factors influencing the strategic culture of Finland

Historical factors influencing Finland's strategic culture include the time of the Swedish rule and several wars with Russia. The time of the Swedish rule laid the foundation for our state order, democracy, and the rule of law. The wars against Russia and the Soviet Union created a picture of Russia as an attacker in our national memory.

The strategic culture of Finland is also affected by the relatively small size of the country and its people. Despite a high standard of living, the unity of the people, a well-implemented foreign policy, and a strong defense force, the strategic power of our country has been and does remain limited.

## The emergence and change of Finnish strategic culture

Before the Second World War, Finland's strategic culture was still taking shape. The Tartu Peace Treaty, signed between Finland and Soviet Russia in 1920, stabilized our country's relations with the East. The preamble to the agreement states that Russia recognizes the independence of Finland, which declared independence in 1917, within the borders set by the agreement and wants to end the war between the two countries. In 1932, Finland and the Soviet Union signed a non-aggression pact, which the Soviet Union denounced at the beginning of the Winter War.

The strategic culture of Finland has changed during its independence due to a change in the external pillar of strategic culture: an external shock. After its independence, the country sought to resolve its security issues through agreements with the Soviet Union, the so-called Border State Policy, membership in the League of Nations, and aspirations for a union with Sweden. Security issues then meant the same thing as now—how to ensure that the military in the East does not threaten Finland.



## The Border State Policy and the League of Nations

The *Border State Policy* consisted of a system of agreements and secret military cooperation between Poland, the Baltic countries, and Finland on the western borders of the Soviet Union. The idea of a Border State never materialized, as Finland declared in 1935 that it was neutral and in favor of aligning with the Nordics.

Finland became a member of the League of Nations in December 1920. Finland followed the principle of neutrality in its foreign policy. The League of Nations played an important role in Finland's neutrality.

## Nordic alignment

Cooperation with the Nordic countries developed into a Nordic alignment that emphasized neutrality. In 1935, the Nordic alignment became Finland's official foreign policy. Nordic cooperation included, among other things, a joint plan to secure crisis management and common rules of impartiality. However, the partnership did not have the potential to develop into a defense alliance, although there were discussions between Finland and Sweden about defending Åland.

## The wars of 1939–1945—an external shock to our strategic culture

Before World War II, the perception of the threat to our country was evident. It was the Soviet Union. Finland sought to organize its defense based on agreements and membership in the League of Nations. This failed as the Winter War began in late November 1939. The war was an external shock changing our strategic culture. Belief in neutrality as the foundation of Finland's security crumbled. During the armistice, Finland applied for a *de facto* alliance with Germany. The union lasted until the beginning of the autumn of 1944.

## The Agreement of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance of 1948 (The YYA Treaty)

The end of the Continuation War was the next external shock that affected Finland's strategic culture. The only option was a political treaty with the Soviet Union, although the threat remained unchanged. The threat was answered with a defense-like treaty with the Soviet Union in 1948, the *YYA Treaty*. In the agreement, Finland committed to defending its territory if Germany or its ally invaded Finland or, through Finland, the Soviet Union. If necessary, the Soviet Union would help defend Finland. The assistance would have been agreed upon between the parties.

After signing the *YYA Treaty*, Finland began to change the nation's historical narratives and built new alternative norms. The new narratives and norms were based on good relations with the Soviet Union. Finland's neutrality was seen as the guarantee of its security. Elements of Finland's strategic culture during the Cold War consisted of good relations with the Soviet Union and the room for maneuver they provided, which ensured a quiet, gradual transition to Western economic structures.

NATO was described as a military alliance and U.S. weapons a factor that caused instability in Europe. The *YYA Treaty* was the backbone of Finland's strategic culture until the early 1990s, and the thinking of the *YYA* period is still alive.

Even though Finland's foreign policy was accused of being "Finlandized" in the West, the *YYA Treaty* can be considered a successful solution. It guaranteed the security of Finland for more than forty years.

## From YYA Finland to an aligned EU Finland

The collapse of the Soviet Union opened an opportunity to change Finland's strategic culture. Finland changed from a neutral *YYA* Finland to an aligned EU Finland. However, the EU has proved to be a political and economic union without a major

*Elements of Finland's strategic culture during the Cold War consisted of good relations with the Soviet Union and the room for maneuver they provided, which ensured a quiet, gradual transition to Western economic structures.*

military dimension. The most recent example of this is the March 2022 debate on the handover of Polish fighter jets to Ukraine. The EU and EU Poland would have delivered the planes to Ukraine, but NATO and NATO country Poland did not deliver them.

## The Russo-Ukrainian War

The Russo-Ukrainian War, which escalated in February 2022, is an external shock affecting our strategic culture. It collided with the core principles of our country's strategic thinking, according to which EU membership without NATO membership offers the best type of security for Finland. It will be interesting to see whether the war in Ukraine is changing our strategic culture and whether Finland is taking a new approach to security policy solutions, threats, and decisions to organize its defense.

## From the non-allied EU Finland to an allied Finland

The only external threat affecting our strategic culture is Russia, which is how it has always been. Finland has sought to solve the threat of the East through the Border State Policy, the Nordic alignment, by waging war alone, an alliance with Germany, and a military treaty with the Soviet Union.

Now, it is up to us to take a step from the non-allied EU-Finland to a Finland allied with NATO. Then we would no longer be alone. And if Russia were to change and democratize, it would be a great moment for our country to no longer act as a Western outpost but as a Western gateway to a new Russia.

# FROM DEFENSE COOPERATION TO A MILITARY ALLIANCE

Tuomo Repo

## Extensive defense cooperation network as a strategy

Already ten years ago, the Ministry of Defense's strategic plan<sup>1</sup> envisioned that our credible national defense needs a strong network of defense cooperation to support it. According to the strategy set in the security policy environment of the time, the capabilities required by our defense capability would be secured via deepening national and international cooperation. There was no imminent military threat in sight then, but it could not be completely ruled out. Today, we know that the military threat has escalated, although fortunately, it is still not quite immediate. The figure below shows the strategic vision of the defense administration.

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.defmin.fi/files/1830/plm\\_strateginen\\_suunnitelma.pdf](https://www.defmin.fi/files/1830/plm_strateginen_suunnitelma.pdf)

## The Ministry of Defense's strategic plan

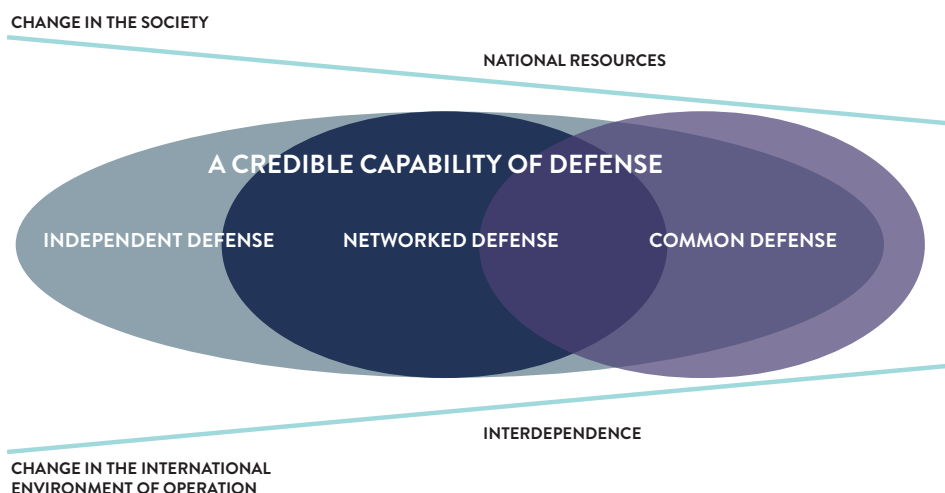


Fig. 1: The strategic vision of the Defense Administration

The Defense Administration has acted by the strategy, and the Defense Forces have carried out extensive international defense cooperation for many years. For example, it has been bilateral with the United States and Sweden and multi-lateral, such as the Nordic cooperation scheme Nordefco and the British-led Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF). In addition, Finland has supported the deepening of EU defense cooperation and has been NATO's Enhanced Opportunities Partner (EOP) since 2014. The forms of collaboration have included situational awareness, training, exercises, and material development issues.

Concrete and open operational cooperation has only taken place with Sweden, and the countries are committed to helping each other in all situations. Cooperation practiced has not included direct security guarantees to date, but instead of common defense, there have been active discussions of interoperability, developing the capacity to receive military assistance and cooperate, and at its best, coordinating defense with our close partners. Although we are NATO's advanced partners, we are not part of NATO's common defense and therefore do not have a NATO security guarantee.

On the other hand, The Ministry of Defense's strategy includes the possibility that the developments in the security environment may lead to a situation where our independent defense and networking might need the support of a common defense, i.e., a military alliance. A case like this may result from unfavorable developments, in which the international rules-and-agreements-based world order is shaken by an actor that is willing to use military force to advance one's political interests. This has unfortunately happened with the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

## The goal of Finland's defense: a preventive deterrent

The goal of the Finnish defense is to form such a preventive deterrent that the opponent abandons the use of military force as an extension of his politics because the price of war would be too high. In the process of building this deterrence, comprehensive security and resilience of society and the solid will of citizens to defend their country are required, in addition to military performance.

Should the deterrence fail, the enemy will be repelled by active military operations conducted by Defense Forces and supported by the whole society's resources, under the principle of total national defense. The preventive deterrent must be verifiable and credible, above all, in the opponent's assessment, that is, in Russia.

## A credible deterrence from a military alliance

Based on the above, the critical question in the current situation is, what actions will strengthen the credible deterrence the most. Our national defense must be a strong part of our society's comprehensive security in all options. But is close cooperation and the readiness to receive possible military aid enough? Or does the foreseeable future also require a military alliance / common defense and the security guarantee that comes with it?

In the current situation, as a militarily non-aligned country, we are not relying on possible outside assistance in defending our country, as it is planned to be done only with our own national capabilities. At the same time, international cooperation is hoped to raise the preventive deterrent sufficiently.

It is hoped that possible external military assistance brings extra strength and resources to counter aggression. Any aid received in *ad hoc* or

*ad hoc alliances* is good, but the best effect can only be achieved by planning, preparing, and training troops together in advance.

Although our own national defense is strong, only the guarantee for foreign military assistance would raise the preventive threshold as high as possible. If, in the near future, further deepening the international defense cooperation does not include credible, clearly stated, and a third-party-verified common defense, i.e., a *de facto* security guarantee, the only option will be to apply for NATO membership resolutely and access NATO's common deterrence, including the nuclear deterrence and security guarantees.

## The key implications of a military alliance

As a member of NATO, Finland's main contribution to NATO's common defense would be a vigorous defense of its territory following Article 3 of NATO, and elements of common defense would supplement it as agreed in accordance with Article 5 of NATO. Finland would continue to decide on its security principles, such as conscription and total national defense.

NATO membership would bring us into joint defense planning in the Baltic Sea area and the northern regions vital to us. In addition to coordinating the defense, joint defense planning would also allow common use of all jointly available resources to be planned, prepared, and practiced in peacetime. This would, of course, be facilitated by Sweden's simultaneous accession to NATO.

The activities described above would significantly increase the credibility of the defense and the preventive deterrent in the entire Baltic

Sea region. They would also improve our security of supply, which depends on our maritime transport in the Baltic Sea. The defense of Northern Finland would also clarify when the defense of the entire Arctic region could be planned, practiced, and, if necessary, carried out together (with Finland, Sweden, Norway, and other NATO resources).

In NATO, decisions require unanimity among member countries. It is feared that joining NATO will lead to situations in which we would be involved in military crises that we could keep out outside the Alliance. However, already with EU membership, we are committed to helping other EU countries also militarily. In addition, because of our geographical position, especially in the case of the Baltic Sea region and the North, we would already be more likely to be directly or at least indirectly involved in a military crisis, should it occur in these regions.

Participation in NATO-led crisis management operations outside NATO's own territory is always decided at the North Atlantic Council and in each member state nationally, and a member also has the option to opt out. History has shown that NATO Partner countries' interest in participating in crisis management has been strong. A large proportion of Partners have participated in operations alongside members following the principles of reciprocity, international solidarity, or burden-sharing.

Amid the turmoil of European security and in the neighborhood of Russia, which is pursuing war as a continuation of its policy, it is wise to increase our contribution to our own national defense and overall security. In addition, together with other Western nations, we must maximize the deterrence of our defense to prevent war. Cooperation must provide the strongest possible military support when needed. Only such a cooperation is credible and produces a sufficient deterrent. This is most likely to be achieved by joining NATO as soon as possible.

# FINLAND'S EU STRATEGY AS A MEMBER OF NATO—WHAT IS CHANGING?

Niklas Nováky

Russia's invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022 has, in a short time, changed the attitudes of Finns toward a possible NATO membership.<sup>1</sup> This historic change has triggered an open and serious NATO debate in Finland, which may lead to NATO membership, possibly as early as summer 2022. The government has launched a new foreign and security policy report to update its views on Finland's security policy position after Russia attacked Ukraine. The report is due to be completed in April, after which the Parliament will have a basis for discussing Finland's possible NATO membership.

This essay considers the implications of Finland's possible NATO membership for the EU's security and defense policy. It argues that Finland's attitude towards individual elements of EU security and defense cooperation may change in the early days of NATO membership, as Finland would probably seek to appear at the beginning of NATO membership as a “model country” for the Defense Alliance and avoid issues of disagreement within NATO.

<sup>1</sup> Check out the chapter by Ruohonen & Vesala in this book.



However, Finland's NATO membership would hardly change the EU's security and defense policy, as most EU countries already belong to NATO and because NATO and the EU have intensified their cooperation in recent years.

The paper describes the role of NATO and non-NATO countries in EU security and defense policy. After this, the effects of Finland's possible NATO membership on the EU's security and defense policy will be examined in more detail. Finally, there is a discussion on the development of EU–NATO cooperation and what can be expected to happen in this area in the near future.

## The role of NATO and non-NATO countries in EU security and defense policy

In the EU, NATO and non-NATO countries do not really have different roles: they are both full members of the EU and have the same rights and responsibilities. Both are also committed in the EU Treaty to developing and implementing the Union's security and defense policy, which is decided unanimously by EU countries (both NATO and non-NATO).

EU member states that are also members of NATO have traditionally emphasized (some more than others) that NATO is the cornerstone of their defense policy and that EU security and defense policy cooperation must be in line with their NATO obligations. Britain was often the loudest of these countries before its January 2020 exit from the EU. Since then, Eastern European countries such as Poland, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania have taken over Britain's role as traditional NATO trustees in the EU. Other EU countries in NATO (such as Germany) give almost equal priority to NATO and EU security and defense policy. Some

(such as France) emphasize autonomous European cooperation more than NATO.

The reservations of certain EU NATO countries about the Union's security and defense policy stem from fears raised in the early 1990s and early 2000s in the United States and certain EU NATO countries that EU security and defense policy could erode European countries' commitment to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and thereby weaken NATO as a whole. For this reason, the former U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, who passed away in March 2022, published a famous article in 1998 in the *Financial Times*. In her article, Albright warned the EU on three issues: European security and defense policy-making should not be separated from NATO, EU security and defense policy should not duplicate NATO structures, and not discriminate against non-EU NATO countries.

However, over the years, the attitude of the United States and NATO towards the EU's security and defense policy has become more positive, noting that the EU is not developing into a defense organization comparable to NATO. Both the United States and NATO now see EU security and defense cooperation, for example, in crisis management and capability development, supporting NATO, helping transatlantic burden-sharing, and strengthening the Defense Alliance's ability to withstand military deterrence against external threats. At the 2021 G7 meeting in Cornwall, Britain, US President Joe Biden even said the EU would provide NATO its "backbone."

However, there are still occasional disagreements over individual EU initiatives or the terminology used by the Union. An example of the latter is the EU's "strategic autonomy," which continues to raise suspicions in Washington and certain EU NATO countries: it is often interpreted as an effort by the EU to strengthen its autonomy *vis-à-vis* the United States.

Also, the EU Treaty emphasizes that the Union's security and defense cooperation does

not run counter to NATO obligations and does not undermine NATO's position as a cornerstone of European territorial defense. NATO is mentioned in two articles of the EU Treaty. The first mention can be found in Article 42.2 on the scope of the EU's security and defense policy. It states that the EU's security and defense policy "shall include the progressive framing of a common Union defense policy," which shall "lead to a common defense, when the European Council, acting unanimously, so decides." Article 42.2 then states that the EU's defense policy shall, *inter alia*, "respect the obligations of certain Member States, which see their common defense realized in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)." In other words, the EU's security and defense policy must be consistent with NATO.

Another mention of NATO in the EU Treaty can be found in Article 42.7, which is often cited by Finland and is known as the EU's *security guarantee clause*. Article 42.7 obliges EU countries to provide "aid and assistance by all the means in their power" to an EU country that has been the target of an armed attack. After that, it is underlined that the obligation to aid must, among other things, "be in accordance with the commitments entered into in the framework of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization shall continue to be the basis and implementing body for their common defense for its members." This is to emphasize that Article 42.7 must not conflict with Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty, through which NATO countries have committed themselves to assisting each other in the case of crisis or attack.

## The effects of Finland's NATO membership on the EU's security and defense policy

Finland's possible NATO membership would not significantly impact the EU's security and defense policy, as most EU countries already belong to NATO. The EU and NATO have also greatly intensified their bilateral cooperation in various areas in recent years, so their co-operation is working well despite occasional disagreements.

Finland's NATO membership would strengthen the partnership between the EU and NATO. Finland has traditionally promoted closer security and defense policy cooperation in the EU and a strong partnership between the Union and NATO. During its presidency of the EU in the autumn of 2019, Finland, among other things, played a significant role in promoting the possibility for so-called "third countries" to participate in capacity-building projects launched within the framework of the EU's Permanent Structural Cooperation (PRY). Although the final decision on this was reached during the German EU Presidency in the autumn of 2020, Finland's work towards it received positive attention from both NATO and the United States. As an EU member state that is also a member of NATO, Finland would probably play a similar role to Germany: Berlin has pursued a strong and credible EU security and defense policy while safeguarding NATO's role as the cornerstone of European territorial defense.

As an EU country belonging to NATO, a German-type role would be a logical option for Finland, considering Finland's networked security and defense policy. Finland's security and defense policy does not rely entirely on any single partnership or structure. However, some of them (especially EU membership and relations with the United States) are more important to Finland than others.

Over the past two decades, Finland has significantly expanded its security and defense policy network. This includes Finland's

EU membership, cooperation with NATO, Nordic cooperation, and Finland's bilateral relations with the United States and Sweden. Newer elements in the network include Finland's accession to the French-led European Intervention Initiative (EI2) in 2018 and the British-led Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF) in 2017. All these elements support each other and increase Finland's national security.

NATO membership would change Finland's security and defense policy network. It would replace the NATO partnership currently part of the network, and it would become by far its strongest and most crucial element. Upon joining NATO, Finland would be covered by the security guarantee in Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty, which would oblige other NATO countries to assist Finland in the event of an armed attack. In the end, the security guarantee in Article 5 is backed by the US military power, so it would be more credible in a crisis than any other element connected to the Finnish defense policy network so far, including the EU membership.

This may partly change Finland's attitude towards security and defense policy cooperation in the EU. This is especially true regarding Finland's attitude towards Article 42.7. of the EU Treaty—an article that Finland has so often emphasized during the last decade. Many EU countries in NATO have had reservations about the obligation to assist under Article 42.7. This is because they are also covered by NATO Article 5, and the EU security guarantee in the event of an armed attack is not as strong as that of NATO. This is because the EU is not a regional defense organization: the Union's security and defense policy focuses on international crisis management, capacity building, and strengthening the EU's internal crisis resilience. In other words, the added value of Article 42.7 has been unclear for many EU-NATO countries, especially those who see Russia as their primary security policy threat.

As a NATO country, Finland would probably lose some interest in Article 42.7. Finland's interest in the EU's security guarantees stems largely from the fact that Finland is not a NATO country and thus does not fall within the scope of the security guarantee in Article 5 of the Defense Alli-

ance. Upon joining NATO, Finland would be covered by the Defense Alliance's security guarantee, which would reduce Finland's need to emphasize the importance of Article 42.7 in discussions on EU security and defense policy. At the beginning of its NATO journey, Finland would probably also strive to be a "model country" for the Alliance and avoid anything that could make a negative impression of it within NATO. This was also seen in the early years of Finland's EU membership in the 1990s and 2000s when Finland sought the "core" of the EU and strongly supported the development of the Union. As a model country for NATO, Finland would probably be silent on initiatives that might be seen as weakening the position of the Defense Alliance in Europe. The strengthening of Article 42.7 would probably be one such issue.

Article 42.7 is unlikely to lose its full effect on Finland if Finland joins NATO. The attitude of EU member states towards Article 42.7 has become more positive in recent years as the list of threats to Europe has grown and become more complex. Russia's initiated hybrid war in Ukraine since 2014, as well as increased cyber-attacks, have increased the need for stronger security guarantees that would also be available in hybrid and cyber-attack situations. Such attacks in the gray area of warfare would not necessarily exceed the threshold for activating NATO Article 5, which is intended to be used above all in more traditional situations directly related to an armed attack.

Since 2014, the EU has significantly increased its toolkit for preventing hybrid and cyber-attacks, so the Union has a lot to contribute to the security of its member states in these areas. As a NATO country, Finland could therefore continue to cherish Article 42.7 in hybrid and cyber situations. Still, it would emphasize NATO Article 5 in more traditional cases of armed aggression, as many other NATO EU countries have done so far.

## The future of EU-NATO cooperation

The partnership between the EU and NATO has developed considerably since the launch of security and defense cooperation in the EU in the late 1990s. This partnership focused on military crisis management in the early 2000s, as EU security and defense policy began to develop from this area of interest. In 2002, the EU and NATO signed the so-called “Berlin Plus” agreement. This agreement allowed the EU to use NATO’s command and planning structures to launch its own crisis management operations if it so wished.

The EU has used the Berlin Plus arrangements in two crisis management operations: the Concordia operation in northern Macedonia in 2003 and the Althea operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which began in 2004 and is ongoing. However, following the 2004 round of EU enlargement to Eastern and Southern Europe, the use of the Berlin Plus arrangements and wider EU-NATO cooperation became more difficult. This is because Cyprus became a member of the EU, and, at the same time, the differences between Cyprus and NATO became part of the EU’s foreign and security policy and a complicating element of EU-NATO cooperation. These disagreements significantly hampered the cooperation between NATO and the EU and, in practice, impeded the use of the Berlin Plus arrangements in EU operations launched after 2004.

During the 2010s, cooperation between the EU and NATO took significant steps forward. This was due to the deteriorating security environment in Europe, which was driven by several negative developments. These included the civil wars in Libya and Syria, the resulting immigration and refugee crisis in the Mediterranean, Russia’s war against Ukraine in 2014, and the increased use of new hybrid and cyber tools worldwide. As a result, the EU and NATO adopted joint declarations in Warsaw in 2016 and Brussels in 2018, committing to intensifying contacts and cooperation in various priority areas, such as the fight against human trafficking, the prevention of hybrid and

cyber-attacks, and supporting their common partners.

Perhaps the two most evident examples of closer cooperation between the EU and NATO are the Hybrid CoE (The European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats), set up in Helsinki in 2017, and the EU’s project to promote military mobility in Europe. Hybrid CoE is researching hybrid threats and, through its research, works to raise awareness of the vulnerabilities that arise at national, European, and international levels. The EU Military Mobility Action Plan, for its part, aims to facilitate the movement of both military and military capabilities across Europe across national borders. This includes harmonizing legislation on military mobility between EU countries and the modernization of Europe’s transport infrastructure.

NATO and the United States have expressed strong support for promoting military mobility in Europe, as it also supports the Defense Alliance’s own capacity to respond to crises both inside and outside Europe. In 2021, the United States even joined together with Canada and Norway as a third country in an EU PRY project to promote military mobility.

Cooperation between the EU and NATO will be even closer in the future. Russia’s war on Ukraine forces both organizations to cooperate with their partners and encourage their own members to prioritize security and defense policy in national budget discussions. In addition to the war in Ukraine, both the EU and NATO are also concerned about very similar broader threats and challenges. These include the growth of China’s power and international influence, climate change and the security challenges it poses, and the global spread of new technologies such as quantum computers and artificial intelligence. In other words, there are currently many incentives for closer cooperation between the EU and NATO.

In March 2022, the EU adopted its new Strategic Compass. The purpose of the compass is to guide the development of EU security and defense cooperation and set new targets for it up to 2030. There is also a lot of talk in the

compass about cooperation between the EU and NATO and the importance of developing it. In short, the compass states that the EU will deepen and broaden its strategic partnership, political dialogue, and cooperation with NATO in various priority areas. These areas include improving Europe's crisis resilience, preparing for new technologies and the challenges they pose, combating climate change, and space-related security and defense cooperation.

## Summary

Finland's accession to NATO would be the most significant change in Finland's post-Cold War security and defense policy. At the same time, it would be a logical continuation of the Western security and defense policy that Finland has pursued since its Hornet deals in the early 1990s. NATO membership would also bring a certain kind of conclusion to Finland's efforts to integrate into the Euro-Atlantic cooperation structures, which it began to approach already during the Cold War.

In the EU, NATO and non-NATO countries do not really have different roles. Some EU countries in NATO emphasize the importance of NATO over the EU in their national security and defense policies, some emphasize the importance of both NATO and the EU, and others prioritize the EU. If Finland decides to join NATO, it will probably choose the golden middle road here: Finland would strive to be an active member in both NATO and the EU's security and defense policy. Therefore, Finland's role as an EU member state in NATO could be similar to that of Germany.

In the early days of its possible NATO membership, Finland may partially change its attitude towards the EU's security and defense policy. As a NATO country, Finland would probably strive to appear, at least initially, as

a kind of "model country" for NATO and to avoid issues that could cause disagreements within the Defense Alliance. One such issue may be the security guarantee in Article 42.7 of the EU Treaty, the importance of which has often been emphasized by Finland in various discussions over the past decade. Many NATO member states have expressed reservations about Article 42.7. Its added value to their security has sometimes been unclear, as they are also covered by the safeguards of Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty. As a NATO country, Finland may change its attitude towards Article 42.7 so that it should talk less about it than before. In this way, Finland would join the majority of NATO member states.

Finland's membership in NATO would not cause major changes to the EU's security and defense policy. Most EU countries are already members of NATO, and NATO and the EU have significantly intensified their cooperation over the last decade due to the deteriorating security situation in Europe.

Russia's war on Ukraine encourages NATO and the EU to intensify their cooperation further, but above all, this cooperation is based on very similar threat analyses from both organizations. These threats include the growth of China's power and international influence, climate change, increased hybrid and cyber-attacks, and the security challenges and uncertainties posed by new technologies. As an EU country belonging to NATO, Finland would continue to support closer cooperation between the Union and NATO, as it has done so far.



# CHANGE IN OPINION ON FINLAND'S NATO MEMBERSHIP IN SPRING 2022

Sini Ruohonen and Antti Vesala

From the beginning of 2022 to the end of March, a record number of surveys were commissioned and published to probe citizens' opinions on Finland's NATO membership. We collected the NATO polls that measured general support in the spring, commissioned by the Finnish Broadcasting Company Yle, Helsingin Sanomat, and the Finnish Business and Policy Forum (later EVA).

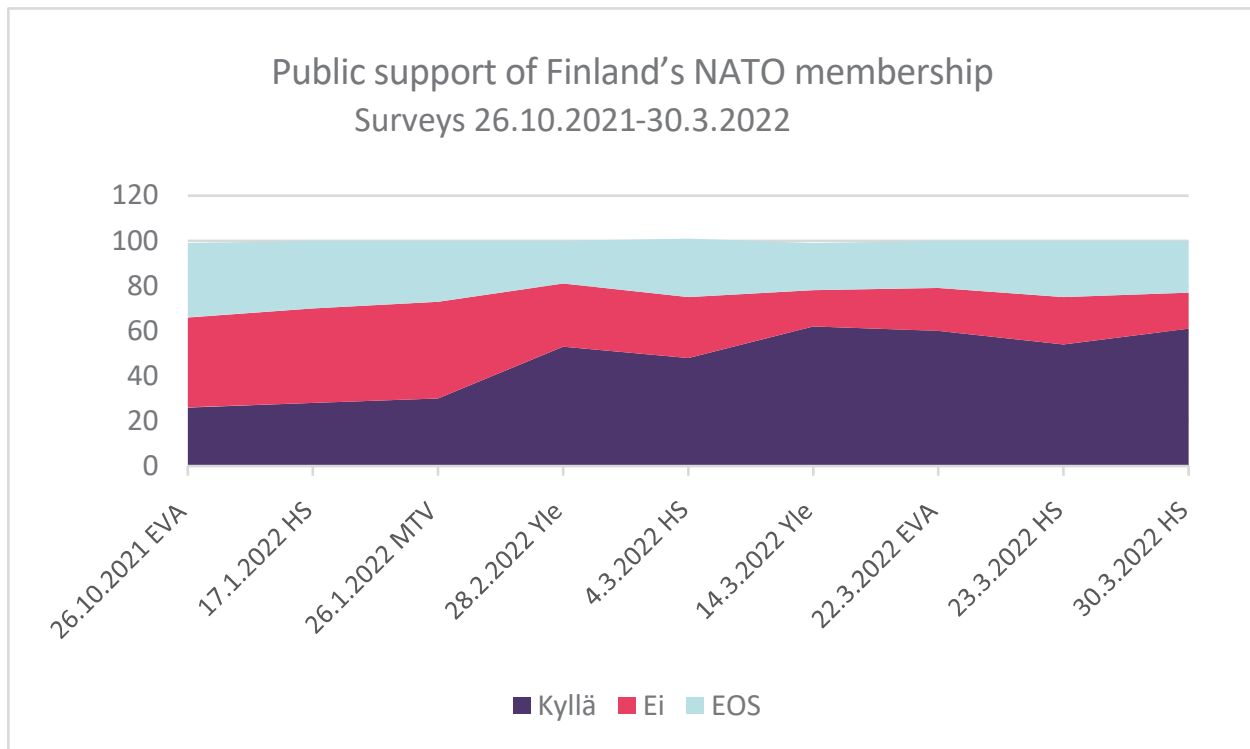
The starting point is the EVA survey published in October 2021. The Finnish Business and Policy Forum (EVA) has been regularly asking Finns about NATO in its *Values and Attitudes Survey* since 1998. Until the survey in autumn of 2021, 14–28 percent of Finns have fully or somewhat agreed with the statement “Finland should join NATO.”

The October 2021 survey did not deviate significantly from the long-term trend. Still, it is noteworthy that the share of negative respondents remained at the lowest level (40% of respondents said they somewhat or completely disagreed with the statement) since 1998. Similarly acted the percentage of “hard to say” respondents.

EVA has interpreted that the international situation and the attitudes of Finns toward Russia have, to some degree, influenced the NATO support over the years. The change of presidents in the United States has also been considered to have impacted public opinion.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.eva.fi/blog/2021/10/26/nato-jasenyyden-kannatuksessa-on-tapahtunut-hyppays/>





Between January and March, Finns were asked for their views on NATO membership in eight surveys. A total of 9,485 responses were received in these surveys, although, of course, some may be the same individuals.

The EVA survey included a statement: “Finland should join NATO,” and there were five possible answers: *strongly and somewhat agree* (bundled with Yes/Kyllä in this figure), *hard to say* (same as EOS in the figure), and *somewhat or completely disagree* (bundled in the figure in No/Ei answer). In this way, we could describe the trend from the NATO surveys produced by three individual parties as clearly as possible.

Helsingin Sanomat (HS) has, for a long time, albeit slightly more irregularly, commissioned NATO surveys with Kantar TNS. The question formulated in HS in the previous and these four January–March polls was: “Should Finland join NATO?”. There were three possible answers: Yes, No, and *I can't say*. Yle's two surveys commissioned by Taloustutkimus had almost the same wording: “Should Finland join the military alliance NATO?” with the same answer options as in Helsingin Sanomat.

Yle's survey on 28 February 2022 saw a decisive change in NATO support relating to all surveys con-

ducted in the previous years. The results were published four days after the Russian invasion of Ukraine began (February 24, 2022). The Taloustutkimus survey was conducted via an Internet panel from February 23 to February 25, 2022, and the number of respondents was 1382.<sup>2</sup> The result of the survey was historical as, for the first time, the majority of respondents were in favor of NATO membership. Of the respondents, 53 percent were in favor of NATO membership, 28 percent were opposed, and 19 percent were indecisive.

The change was enormous; the number of respondents who had a positive and negative practically switched sides. As in previous and future measurements, NATO support was higher among men than women.

The survey also noted a change within the political parties: in the past, the only party with a majority of supporters for NATO was the National Coalition Party. In this poll, the only party with a plurality of supporters staying negative towards NATO membership was the Left Alliance.

At the end of January 2022, Toivo Think Tank conducted a survey on NATO membership with Kantar TNS. This survey included a hypothetical statement later coming regrettably true: “If

Russia starts an open war on Ukraine, I will accept Finland's application for NATO membership." The responses anticipate surprisingly well the change that happened in NATO support since the start of the war. As many as 60 percent of the respondents fully or somewhat agreed with the statement. Only 24% of respondents were negative, and only 16% could not express their opinion.<sup>3</sup>

As the Russian war of aggression and Finland's NATO debate evolved, surveys after another confirmed that the majority of Finns had indeed moved to support the membership with a clear margin. Only in one survey, conducted by Helsingin Sanomat at the beginning of March, the share of supporters was less than half of the respondents (48 percent).<sup>4</sup> However, the news published from this survey aptly drew attention to the fact that, compared to the previous January 2022 survey, which had been commissioned in the same way, the share of NATO supporters had risen by as much as 20 percentage points.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>2</sup> <https://yle.fi/uutiset/3-12336530>

<sup>3</sup> <https://toivoajatuspaja.fi/kyselyraportti-1-2022-nato/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.hs.fi/politiikka/art-2000008659067.html>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.hs.fi/politiikka/art-2000008515424.html>

***As the Russian war of aggression and Finland's NATO debate evolved, surveys after another confirmed that the majority of Finns had indeed moved to support the membership with a clear margin.***

## The polls reflected public confidence in political leadership to resolve the NATO issue

During the spring of 2022, other opinion polls and surveys related to NATO membership were also commissioned. At the same time as attempts were made to extract NATO positions from the President, the Prime Minister, and, of course, the leaders of the parties in Parliament, surveys were commissioned to probe public confidence in the ability of the political leaders to make the right decision.

On January 26, the commercial broadcaster MTV published a NATO poll asking, "Should Finland apply for NATO membership if the top decision-makers favored it?" Those saying yes amounted to precisely half of the respondents; 33 percent answered no, and 18 percent could not say.<sup>6</sup> In a poll conducted by Toivo Think Tank in January 2022, the respondents were given a statement that measured a similar issue: "If the President of the Republic and the Government were in favor of Finland's NATO membership, I would also be prepared to accept it." A total of 63% of respondents fully or somewhat agreed with the statement.<sup>7</sup>

On March 21, the newspaper Maaseudun Tulevaisuus published its own NATO survey. It asked respondents whether Finland should join NATO if the state leadership recommended it. A clear majority of respondents, 61 percent, said yes, only 16 percent said no, and 23 percent could not state their position.

As the general support for NATO became more evident and apparent in numerous surveys, and as these surveys included questions that measured public confidence in political leadership, it probably affected the views of the leadership over the issue of a possible NATO referendum. In a YLE Svenska interview on 30 March, the President of the Republic was interpreted to suggest that a referendum was not needed.<sup>8</sup>

The news made from the surveys sparked public debate over NATO membership. While the war in Ukraine was the number one topic in all media, the issue of NATO as an own foreign and security policy question arose in many media outlets. For example, the topic was covered numerous times in March in Yle's A-studio on television and its Ykkösaamu's radio broadcasts. It was discussed by foreign policy and national defense experts, as well as politicians.

## Most parties and politicians were entirely taken by surprise

One of the core elements of Finland's security and defense policy has long been the so-called NATO option. Truthfully speaking, the concept is empty in the sense that it only means that Finland, as an independent country, maintains its own possibility of applying for membership in NATO if it reaches such a conclusion. A little more precisely, it has been the case that Finland has refrained from excluding NATO membership, at least entirely, from its options. In practice, for most of Finland's political field, the NATO option has meant the opportunity not to take a stand on Finland's NATO membership.

Avoiding the NATO question by hiding behind the option worked really well until February 24, 2022, when Russian forces crossed the Ukrainian border. At the same time, the full-fledged swing in public opinion began, of which the signs had been, of course, visible for some time. If in the past, it had been important to be able to formulate one's NATO position as vaguely as possible, in a few weeks, the situation turned so that all relevant political actors wanted to take part in the debate by stating their position. The case has undoubtedly been challenging for some, for it began to be difficult to maintain a previously negative

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.mtvuutiset.fi/artikkeli/mtv-uutisten-kysely-nato-jasenyyden-kannatus-on-noussut-30-prosentiin-vastustus-laskenut-selvasti-turvallisempaa-olisi-lannen-kanssa/8340650#gs.vbhuwv>

<sup>7</sup> <https://toivoajatuspaja.fi/kyselyraportti-1-2022-nato/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://svenska.yle.fi/a/7-10014841>

position when the state leadership's positive stance started to become evident.

During the first weeks of the war, NATO secretary general Stoltenberg and some other Western leaders repeatedly repeated how NATO defends every inch of its member states' territory. It became equally clear that NATO troops would not be seen defending Ukraine, even though equipment aid would soon be delivered. At the latest, at this point, no one in Finland had any misconceptions that NATO's military assistance for Finland in the case of Russia's attack would be only guaranteed if we were members of the alliance. The difference between membership and non-membership is absolute.

Of the major parties, only the National Coalition Party has had a clear positive NATO position since 2006. In addition, the Swedish People's Party (RKP) has been inclined toward membership. But practically everyone else has been more or less opposed, which has been rational in a situation where there has been clear negative public opinion about NATO. NATO has been a long-standing theme, especially in the presidential elections, but maintaining the option has been the preferred way for most candidates to take a stand. There has therefore been no debate.

The NATO option's domestic political applicability virtually disappeared after Russia's attack on Ukraine, and suddenly supporting NATO had turned from a political burden into a clear resource. At the time of writing (early April), a clear anti-NATO position remains a more widely approved line only among the supporters of the Left Alliance, among all parliamentary parties. The RKP, the Greens, and the True Finns have already practically moved to the yes position to accompany the National Coalition Party and the RKP, and NATO criticism has also virtually disappeared from the speeches of the Christian Democrats. Even in the Left Alliance, practically because of the change in public opinion, the former very clear non-position is melting. For example, party leader Li Andersson has moved from being an opponent of NATO to the group hiding its position.<sup>9</sup>

For the Center Party and the SDP, this topic has been difficult. Already in a January survey conducted by Toivo Think Tank, it was found that

there were clearly more people in favor of NATO membership than against it among both parties' supporters, i.e., in the scenario involving the Russian invasion or when the state political leadership recommended NATO membership.

Admittedly, the parties themselves have been clearly in the no-camp on this NATO issue. For example, on January 1, 2022, Annika Saarikko, the leader of the Center Party, wrote: "The Center Party does not support Finland's NATO membership, but wants Finland to keep up the opportunity open for that as well."<sup>10</sup> The rhetorical layout of this statement is interesting. In the opinion of the Center Party, Finland had to keep open the possibility of something which the Center does not support. In other words, Finland could, for some reason, end up applying for NATO membership, but without the contribution from the Center Party.

At the turn of February and March, the Center Party's positioning concerning the review of the party policy line happened within a few days. First, Saarikko said in a discussion on YLE (in which also the party leaders of the SDP, the National Coalition Party, and the True Finns participated) that the Center Party would consider its NATO position at the June Center Party Congress. A couple of days later, the Center's party government issued a statement saying the position would be considered earlier, "during the spring."<sup>11</sup>

On April 2, Saarikko said that the majority of Centre members support Finland's NATO membership and that she would ask the party council for approval for the state political leadership to make the necessary decisions.<sup>12</sup> Finally, on 10 April 2022, the Central Party Council issued a statement authorizing the party leadership and the Center's representatives in the Finnish government to make *all the necessary solutions* for Finland's security, including applying for NATO membership.<sup>13</sup> Thus, in a little over three months, the reluctance of the Center Party, and perhaps even the position to be interpreted as passive resistance, had turned into a mild acceptance of the "necessary solutions."

The Social Democrats have faced quite similar challenges. As late as the end of January 2022,

for example, Prime Minister Sanna Marin (SDP) gave Reuters an interview in which she described it as unlikely that Finland would apply for NATO membership during her term in office.<sup>14</sup> Erkki Tuomioja, one of the key players in the SDP's foreign and security policy, said on 7th February that he supported the NATO option, but now is not the time to apply for membership.<sup>15</sup> As late as February 21, 2022, Antti Lindtman, Chairman of SDP's parliamentary group, stated that "there is no need for Finland to join NATO." According to Lindtman, "The advantage of a small country is consensus is found on critical issues across parties and the government-opposition boundary."<sup>16</sup> Lindtman, of course, is right here, although the chain of events that began only three days later leads to a completely different outcome than he might have had in mind. At the SDP party council meeting on April 2, 2022, Marin had not yet revealed her own position on NATO. Still, in a public speech, she practically gave reasons for applying for NATO membership.<sup>17</sup>

Among the Finnish members of the European Parliament, the attitude towards the Russian threat and the strengthening of Finland's security has been several steps ahead of domestic parliamentarians. For example, Alviina Alametsä, a Green MEP, said on Twitter on 3 January 2022 that she had ended up supporting Finland's NATO membership.<sup>18</sup> On the same day, the party's second MEP, Ville Niinistö, said he was showing a "yellow light" for NATO membership.<sup>19</sup> At the same time, however, the acting leader of the Greens, Iiris Suomela, kept her own position hidden and appealed to a later party meeting, where this issue would also be decided. A couple of months later, Niinistö's light had already turned green.<sup>20</sup> On March 16, Suomela also said she supported Finland's NATO membership.<sup>21</sup>

The leader of the True Finns changed in August 2021. Jussi Halla-aho, who favored NATO membership, was replaced by Riikka Purra, who opposed NATO membership.<sup>22</sup> When within the True Finns' parliamentary

group, many representatives had in a short time changed their NATO position from negative to positive, on March 29, 2022, Purra also announced her support for Finland's NATO membership.<sup>23</sup> The True Finns parliamentary group took a positive stance on the membership on March 31, 2022<sup>24</sup>, and on the following day, the party board also confirmed the positive NATO position.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.is.fi/politiikka/art-2000008705826.html>

<sup>10</sup> <https://keskusta.fi/ajankohtaista/blogit-puheenvuorot/annika-saarikko-suomi-luo-vakautta-ja-keskinaista-luottamusta/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://keskusta.fi/ajankohtaista/uutiset/keskustan-puoluehallitus-keskusta-kutsuu-suomalaisia-turvallisuuspoliittiseen-keskusteluun/>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.verkkouutiset.fi/a/annika-saarikko-yli-puolet-keskustalaisista-kannattaa-nato-jasenyytta/>

<sup>13</sup> <https://keskusta.fi/ajankohtaista/uutiset/keskustan-puoluevaltuusto-rauhan-on-oltava-kaiken-paamaarana/>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/finlands-pm-says-nato-membership-is-very-unlikely-her-watch-2022-01-19/>

<sup>15</sup> <https://yle.fi/uutiset/3-12305429>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.sss.fi/2022/02/sdpn-lindtman-suomella-ei-ole-tarvetta-hakea-nato-jasenyytta/>

<sup>17</sup> <https://yle.fi/uutiset/3-12388003>

<sup>18</sup> <https://twitter.com/alviinaalametsa/status/1477960931195899908>

<sup>19</sup> <https://twitter.com/VilleNiinisto/status/1477972488709619713>

<sup>20</sup> <https://twitter.com/VilleNiinisto/status/1499713020838256641>

<sup>21</sup> [https://twitter.com/iiris\\_suomela/status/1504082581524041739](https://twitter.com/iiris_suomela/status/1504082581524041739)

<sup>22</sup> <https://riikkipurra.net/2021/07/25/pakkoruotsi-nato-ja-rokotetodistukset/>

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.uusisuomi.fi/uutiset/nyt-tuli-tieto-perussuomalaisista-riikka-purra-haluaa-suomen-natoon/7205f971-b168-4550-9d07-b0e9492b6b11>

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.is.fi/politiikka/art-2000008721815.html>

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.is.fi/politiikka/art-2000008724545.html>

## Historical situation

### - a historical change in politics

In addition to the tightened global security situation, the change in the Finnish NATO position was undoubtedly affected by the fact that the issue was widely discussed in public, several surveys were commissioned (the so-called *Bandwagon effect* raised the number of those in favor with each new survey), political leaders began to take a stance on NATO, and a great number of policy experts gave their reasoned opinion for Finland's accession to NATO. As the Toivo Think Tank survey in January 2022 showed, as many as 80 percent of Finns said they trusted the experts' assessment of the NATO question<sup>26</sup>.

The parties and especially the political leadership made surprisingly quick turns in one of the most significant foreign and security policy solutions in our country's history. In the spring of 2022, Finland's rigid political culture and party apparatus showed unprecedented agility.

<sup>26</sup> <https://toivoajatuspaja.fi/kyselyraportti-1-2022-nato/>

***In practice, for most of Finland's political field, the NATO option has meant the opportunity not to take a stand on Finland's NATO membership.***



# SUMMARY

The rapid escalation of the Russo-Ukrainian War at the end of February 2022 is an external shock that affects our strategic culture. It has collided with the core principles of our national strategic thinking, according to which an EU membership without a NATO membership offers the best security for Finland. It will be interesting to see whether the war is changing our strategic culture and whether we are taking a new approach to security policy solutions, threats, and decisions on organizing our defense.

**In the spring of 2022, the opinion of the Finnish people about NATO membership turned 180 degrees.** As the war progressed in Ukraine, citizens' opinions in polls and the views of the political leadership took a stricter stance in favor of the membership application. The first surveys that included NATO-positive results were commissioned just at the same time as the Russian invasion of Ukraine began in late February.

Politics is often criticized for being slow. Processes take their time, party practices slow down policy-making, and various working groups and special rapporteurs work for months or years to solve problems in our society. However, in the spring of 2022, the Finnish political system showed that decision-making could proceed quickly and with determination if necessary. It seems Finland is moving from an “option” era to a NATO member state era with solid majority support—both from the people and from the Finnish parliament.



The main benefit of Finland's NATO membership is the deterrent created by the Alliance, and the military security it provides if the deterrent fails. The amount of deterrence and possible aid generated by NATO has not changed in any way in recent years: instead, the estimated probability that such deterrence and assistance could be relevant to Finland sometime in the near future has increased.

A benefit of NATO membership is also the access to joint decision-making and the influence that comes with it. The impact of small countries is limited but not non-existent. An active member of NATO may be able to influence not only the defense of his own country but also the policies of the Alliance as a whole.

**Over the past two decades, Finland has significantly expanded its security and defense policy network.** This includes Finland's EU membership, NATO cooperation, Nordic cooperation, and Finland's bilateral relations with the United States and Sweden.

NATO membership would change Finland's security and defense policy network. It would replace the NATO partnership currently part of the network, and it would become by far its most substantial and most crucial element. **Upon joining NATO, Finland would be covered by the security guarantee in Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty, which would oblige other NATO countries to assist Finland in case of an armed attack.** Article 5's security guarantee is ultimately backed by US military power. Under crisis, it would be a more credible commitment than any other element connected to the Finnish defense policy network so far, including the EU membership.

Spread over a wide geographical area and now an alliance of thirty members, **NATO's ongoing challenge is maintaining its strategic coherence.** NATO members may have very different views on its role as a provider of collective security.

However, the arguments of those questioning the unity of NATO have now been proved futile. The war in Ukraine in 2022 has shown that the Alliance is more united and committed to achieving common defense goals than ever before. **As we reach the 2030s, we will see a more credible, cohesive, and resolute NATO.**

Amid the turmoil of European security and in the neighborhood of Russia, which is pursuing war as a continuation of its policy, it is wise to increase our contribution to our own national defense and overall security. In addition, together with other Western nations, we must maximize the deterrence of our defense to prevent war. Cooperation must provide the strongest possible military support when needed. Only such a cooperation is credible and produces a sufficient deterrent. **This is most likely to be achieved by joining NATO as soon as possible.**

A stronger transatlantic dimension would enrich the European dimension of Finland's security policy identity. The Alliance's relationship with China and its concrete effects on NATO's policy will also be discussed in coming years.

Finland's previous policy formulations on military non-alignment or non-military affiliation would be a thing of the past. **In the future, Finland's membership in the EU and NATO would be defined as the main pillars of our security policy.**

The spring of 2022 became a turning point in the Finnish defense and security policy. To accelerate the essential and topical NATO debate, this book provides insight into the stages of the application process as well as the pros and cons of potential membership. We will explain what NATO is as an organization and how membership would change the security strategy of Finland, the Baltic Sea region, and the EU as a whole. We will also describe the changes in public opinion and political leadership.

