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**Keep calm and join
NATO**
Finland's and Sweden's
road to the military-political
alliance



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Introduction

Russia has never NOT been THE security issue No. 1 for Finland. Joining NATO is for Finland not the first rodeo with Russia¹. The then defence minister Jyri Häkämies (National Coalition Party) delivered a speech at the Center for Strategic International Studies (CSIS) in Washington on the 6th of September 2007 in which he said:

“In general, Finland is in the privileged position of being in one of the safest corners of the world. However, considering our geographical location, Finland's three main security challenges today are Russia, Russia and Russia.” (Häkämies 2007)

This is still the case. It is noteworthy that he said *challenges*, not *threats*.

The Finns have the perspective of a country that has never trusted Russia to abandon its imperialist mindset, and always felt their freedom is contingent. This has been obvious at least since the year 1703 when Saint Petersburg was founded. It changed Finland's security environment. The main question in Finnish strategic culture has since been: How to ensure that Finland does not face a military security threat from the east? During the cold war the main policy of Finland was to stay outside the conflicts of interests of the great

1 Finland (and its predecessors) has been in war with Russia (and its predecessors) at least in some 24 cases: In the years 1178–87, 1227–28, 1240, 1250, 1292–94, 1300, 1311, 1318, 1322, 1336–39, 1348, 1350–51, 1495–97, 1555–57, 1570–95, 1609–17, 1656–57, 1700–21, 1741–43, 1788–90, 1808–09, 1918, 1939–40, 1941–44. On the other hand, one could also point out that there have been only two wars during the last 100 years.

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powers. In short, to survive.² It is no exaggeration to say that Finland is “the country that never learned to relax.” (Nilsson 2023)

Nobody can do anything about geography³: we are all prisoners of geopolitics. Finland is a state at the Baltic Sea, and this means that logistically Finland is an island, with its toes in the Baltic and the head in the Arctic. Its maintenance and well-being depend on free shipping. The country is isolated by language and geography. Finland has strong interests in the security of the Baltic. As an arctic country Finland is part of the Arctic geopolitical constellation. Lapland is located between the Kola Peninsula, which is strategically important for Russia, and the Norwegian coast, which is essential for NATO. Finland is a frontline state, close to Russia’s important strategic areas. Finland’s primary objectives within NATO will stem from its geostrategic position at the intersection between the Baltic Sea region and the High North, its location in the NATO-Russia frontline, as well as its peripherality vis-à-vis Western centres of military and industrial power. (Pesu and Iso-Markku 2022)

The Finnish-Russian border⁴ is, according to the most recent (2018) official measurement⁵ 1343,6 kilometres long (Huhtanen 2018). The land part is 1080,3 kilometres long, the lakes (125,7 km), rivers, streams (83,6) and the sea (54 km) cover the remaining 263,3 km. This is territory of wolves, bears, wild boar, elks, and lynxes – and well-hidden technologically sophisticated

- 2 At the launch of his book *The Idea of Russia* in Moscow in 2002, the Finnish ex-President Mauno Koivisto, who was the President 1982-1994, was asked by a journalist what the idea of Finland is. He answered with one Russian word: *выжить* (vyzhit'), to survive.
- 3 Joseph Stalin made this point to Juho Kusti Paasikivi, who served as Finland's chief negotiator, in Moscow on 14th of October 1939.
- 4 Pertti Paasio (sd), MP for decades and an alumnus of the political science department of the University of Turku, confirmed to the current author, the following story to be true. When Mr Paasio was foreign minister 1.2.1989–26.4.1991, he was interviewed by an unexperienced foreign journalist, who started the interview with the following query: “Is it not a terrible thing to have this over 800 miles long border together with the Soviet Union?” The quick-witted Paasio replied: “No, in our mind it is an excellent idea.”
- 5 The signing (n=>6000) of all the relevant protocols took altogether one day with Sweden and three with Russia as the latter wanted to sign every single page when the former signed only the first page of every protocol.

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military sensors on both side of the border. The Frontier Guard is trained by the army and militarily organized. A total of 1350 employees supervises the eastern border. 850 at nine border crossing points and 500 off-road. The number of border guard dogs here is 190. Surveillance also uses cameras, motion detection, radar detection, ground vibration monitoring and artificial intelligence-controlled character recognition. (Huhtanen 2023) These are the Finnish numbers. The Russian ones are not known. This is also one of the most peaceful borders Russia is sharing with a neighbouring country, if not the most peaceful.⁶

Nevertheless, the border is the line between Rome and Byzantium, and has been that for the last centuries.⁷ With Finland as a member of NATO, the border will be the longest of NATO-Russia, and NATO's new border with Russia will be twice as long as before Finland's joining. The old border is 1213 kilometres and the new is 2556 kilometres. Finland's part of the new NATO-Russia -border is thus 52,5 %.

The population of Finland (5,5M) makes up just 0,07 percent of the world's population and its areas as much of the total world area. There are only some 17 persons per square kilometre, the most sparsely populated country in Europe. Area wise Finland is the fifth largest country of the European Union (after France, Spain, Sweden, and Germany). Finland is the most forested country of Europe with some 75% of the ground covered by forests. The

6 As the border is quiet and peaceful, the story goes, the border guards on both sides one fine day started fishing. The Finn got fish all the time as the Russian failed completely. So the Russian asked his opposite number: "How come that you get fish all the time and I can't get the first one?" The Finn replies: "Well, you see, on this side of the border, not even the fishes are afraid of opening their mouths."

7 The Finnish poet Uno Kailas formulated this in his poem *At the border* (1931), known by heart by the bulk of adult Finnish population:

Raja railona aukeaa.

Edessä Aasia, Itä.

Takana Länttä ja Eurooppaa; varjelen, vartija, sitä.

A non-poetic translation would be:

The border as a crevasse opens.

In front is Asia, East.

Behind is the West and Europe; as a guard, I protect it.

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average annual temperature in Finland is the same as you have in your fridge: +5 Celsius.

The great German playwright Bertolt Brecht was in Finland during WWII for thirteen months and coined the archetypical description of the Finnish psyche: *Ein Volk, das in zwei Sprachen schweigt*: A people, silent in two languages, i.e. in both official languages, Finnish and Swedish. (Brecht 1961) Finns indeed are fluent in silence. Calmness is in the factory settings of Finns. Finns are calm blooded almost to the point of insouciant apathy.⁸

Some foreigners believe that Finns have ice cubes in their blood veins, but that is not true. By and large Finns are clinically shy.

Sometimes *reactions* to news can be quite revealing. The 13th of May 2022 Newsweek (Van Brugel (2022) run a story with the headline:

“Panic buying breaks out in Finland, bomb shelters checked after NATO move”

The headline was altered to:

“Finns Stock Up on Food, Check Bomb Shelters After NATO Move”

The reactions to the “panic” headline (n>1,6k) on the magazine’s Twitter account was revealing. A few representative examples:

Whoa Newsweek, time to take a chill pill! Finns and panic. That’ll be the day! If anything, folks are last-minute buying beer & chips for the upcoming hockey world championships & Eurovision. Absolutely no panic here. Panic is an unknown concept in Finland. There is no Finnish word for it, we only have this loanword: *paniikki*. I think the only thing that would cause Finns to even consider panic would be if the country is out of coffee. I bought an ice-cream cone. It was warm today. I bought some sushi and washed my bicycle. Actually Finland: We are 100% zen.

Finland is a peace-loving country, where roughly 80 % of adult males under 75 years old know how to use an assault rifle and how to fight in an infantry platoon. They have been trained to⁹. There are some 1,5M registered

8 Once upon a time there was a Finn who loved his wife so much that he once almost told her.

9 The Finnish Defense Forces turn boys into men. A Norwegian officer with many years of experience in UN missions said in an interview in April 2023 that he prefers

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weapons in the country as hunting is very popular. Only the USA and Yemen have more arms per capita than Finland. The Finnish army consists of some 280.000 men and women plus a reserve of some 620.000 well-trained part time soldiers or perhaps more accurately citizen-soldiers as they train on a regular basis.¹⁰ Finland's defence capabilities are exceptionally strong compared to other countries of similar size. Finland is one of the best examples of what strong national defence looks like in Europe. Puts most NATO-countries' capabilities, resilience, doctrinal coherence, spending and readiness to shame in many areas.

Finnish preparedness is not fear-driven. It's based on pragmatic pessimism. There is no reason to panic, if you know what to do even in apocalyptic circumstances. Military service is mandatory for all healthy men regardless of their social background. This is in Finland seen to promote social equality, break down social barriers and promote a sense of shared responsibility for your country, national defence included. Women can apply for voluntary military service if you are a Finnish citizen, 18-29 years old, and your health and other personal characteristics are suitable for military training. Women can serve in all branches and positions of the defence forces. The preparedness is also constantly improved through, among other things, large equipment purchases.

Finland not only *has* an army, Finland *is* an army. The Finnish army is made up by *all* Finns. The terms *total defence* and *total security* are relevant here. In Finland defence is not only a matter for the military. It is something all sectors of life are involved in on a constant base, even during peace times. Total defence is thus a defence policy combining and extending the concept of military defence and civil defence. Comprehensive security makes defence a full societal effort. In Finland the term (*kokonaismaanpuolustus*, total defence) encompasses all measures in civil and military sectors that

to work with Finnish soldiers as "they are focused on the mission, have high work ethic and there is very little drama with them." (Skogberg 2023)

10 The Russian armed forces have a strength of 2,039,758, of which 1,150,628 are soldiers. (Panschin 2023, 11) Russia spends 1/3 of its budget on defense and security (Seddon 2023)

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safeguard the livelihoods and security of citizens against external threats, to defend Finland's independence.

It entails a high level of readiness¹¹ of both the state and its society to defend itself in cases of dangers and catastrophes such as war, crisis, or natural disasters. In adverse conditions Finns do not panic but get busy. They know what to do as they have been trained. Crisis resilience is taught to all citizens. Total defence represents all activities preparing the society for war. It implies that in a state of war or emergency, all functions of society, both military and civilian, are included in the defence efforts. In the event of a crisis, all social institutions, such as army, police, parliament, government and its agencies, local authorities, the health system, civil society organizations, entrepreneurs, and individuals will all be mobilized to defend the state. Public authorities together with business actors, third sector organizations and citizens in general work all for the same goal: to defend the country and keep it secure.

The Security Strategy for Society from the year 2017 is a government resolution, fourth in a series, that harmonises the set of national principles regarding preparedness and guides the preparedness actions taken by the administrative branches. (The Security Strategy for Society 2017)

Since 1961 the Finnish Defence Forces have organized The National Defence Course (Maanpuolustuskurssi, MPK): a training program, which aims, to give military and civilian personnel in leading positions an overall view of foreign, security and defence policy. The purpose is that, even during crisis situations, the management of various organizations remains in the hands of the people who have it under normal circumstances. You cannot apply or register for the course, but you are invited to it.

11 Finns learn already as children that *Fail to prepare* means *Prepare to fail*. It is not wrong to call this attitude *constructive paranoia*: be ready for lots of bad luck. (Diamond 2023). It is a healthy virtue. The attitude could be called *dynamic-pessimism*: better to be prepared than to trust that everything will turn out well.

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The aim of the national defence course is to:

- Give civilian and military personnel in leading positions an overall view of Finland's foreign, security and defence policy as well as the arrangements, readiness and development of various sectors of national defence and the rest of society under normal conditions, disturbances and exceptional conditions.
- Familiarize the participants with the tasks of the various fields of total national defence and their implementation possibilities, as well as the mutual influence relationships in normal conditions, disturbance situations and exceptional conditions.
- Promote the mutual cooperation of the people who work in key positions in the various sectors of the national defence and in situations of disturbances and exceptional conditions of society as a whole, or who are planned to do so, and the communities they represent.

About 50 people are selected for the national course at a time, one third of whom represent business life and the rest political decision-makers, administration, media, science, and culture, as well as the defence forces and the border guard. Altogether some 10 000 Finns have participated. More than 240 of these courses have been arranged. Same kind of courses are arranged on a regional bases, and some 60.000 Finns have participated in these. The course has been very effective in manufacturing consent among the participants.¹²

Foreigners have sometimes difficulties in understanding the Finns' preparedness. There is this institution of *kotivara*, i.e. Home emergency supply kit. Finns are advised by both officials and third sector organizations to keep extra food, water, and supplies around the house for at least 72 hours. Just in case, in all circumstances. The preparedness is so comprehensive that even the very remote possibility of nuclear fallout has been thought of. Bomb shelters and nuke-proof air-raid shelters are a normal feature in Finland, every house of a certain size has one¹³. They are checked on a regular basis.

12 This is not unproblematic as *where all think alike, no one is thinking much*.

13 "A population shelter must be built for a building or a group of buildings on the same lot or construction site, if its floor area is at least 1,200 square meters and people live or work in it or otherwise stay permanently. For industrial, production, storage and assembly buildings, civil protection must be built, deviating from the provisions of this subsection above, if the floor area of the building or group of buildings is at least

Not to check them would be the news. All in all Finland is prepared for most eventualities (Milne 2022a, Diamond 2023).

Finland and Sweden are two of the strongest states in the world. The two Nordic countries are staunch democratic Western powers, and they have invested more in their defences than most NATO members.

Finland is the least failed state in the world and has been so for quite some time. Finland is deemed ‘very sustainable’, with the risk of conflicts and collapse lowest in comparison with all other nations. According to the Fragile States Index (formerly the Failed States Index) of the United States think tank Fund for Peace Finland is the least fragile. (Fragile States Annual Report 2022)

Finland is more often than not at the top in international comparisons measuring the maturity of the state and the vitality of democratic structures, resistance to fake news¹⁴ – and happiness or satisfaction with life¹⁵.

Finland and Sweden have been the strongest candidates for NATO-membership since the foundation of NATO in April 1949. They are stable, democratic states, something which cannot be said of all NATO-countries: among the founding states of NATO was the dictatorial Portugal.

Public opinion¹⁶ trends

Surveys in May and December 2022 show that Finns' will to defend their country is the highest in the history of measurement.¹⁷ Most Finns want

1,500 square meters.” Rescue law (pelastuslaki) 29.4.2011/379, §71: <https://finlex.fi/fi/laki/ajantasa/2011/20110379#L10>

14 In 2022 Finland remained for the fifth year in a row No1 among the 41 European countries included in the Open Society Institute’s (Sofia, Bulgaria) Media Literacy Index measuring the countries potential to withstand the negative impact of fake news and misinformation due to the quality of education, free media and high trust among people. (OSIS 2022)

15 For six years straight, starting in 2018, the World Happiness Report has singled out Finland as the happiest country on the planet. (World Happiness Report 2023)

16 All polling results reported in this paper have been professionally executed and are representative of the public opinion.

17 In February 2023 only one in ten Germans were willing to defend their country with weapons in an event of war. (Bassewitz 2023)

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Finland to be defended militarily if the country is attacked, even under very difficult conditions. The following question has been used 40 times by The Advisory Board for Defence Information (Maanpuolustustiedotuksen suunnittelukunta):

“If Finland is attacked, should the Finns according to you defend ourselves with arms in all circumstances, even when the result would seem to be unsecure?”

In the spring and fall of 2022 altogether 83% on both occasions (68% in 2021) of respondents answered in the positive. In the fall 2022 altogether 87% of men (88% in spring 2022, 79% in 2021), 78 of women (77% in spring 2022, 56% in 2021). (Defmin 2022a,b)

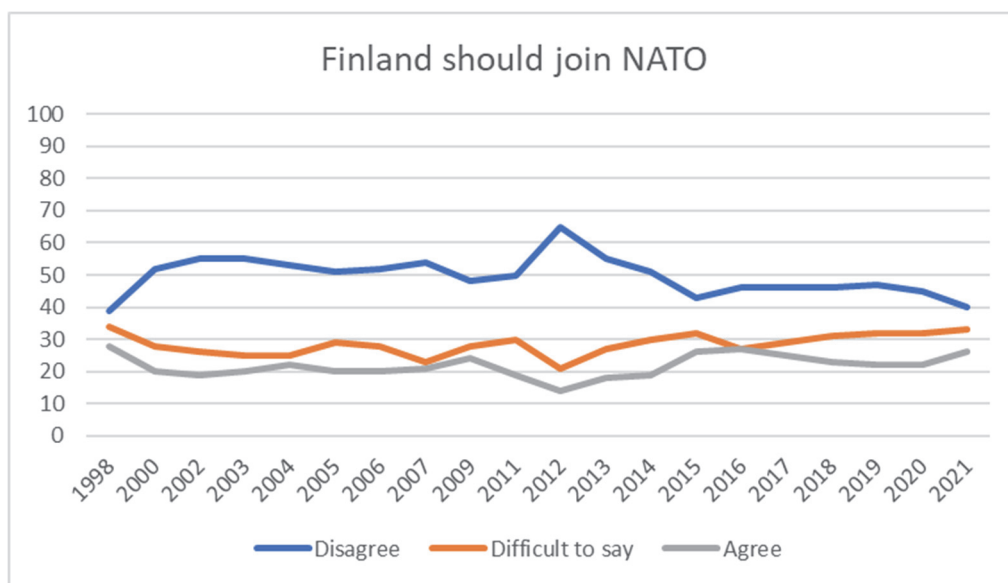
The will to defend the country of the conscripts who returned home in December 2022, confidence in the group's performance in the war and service motivation were at a record high level. The final surveys, which are collected upon arrival, tell the Finnish Defense Forces about the conscript's view of his/her service time. The will to defend the country, the confidence in the group's performance in war and the service motivation of the conscripts who returned home in December 2022 were at the highest level of the entire millennium. During the current form of feedback survey, the average of the final survey of the arrival batch, which has now been repatriated, was the second best. In the final survey of returning conscripts, assessments are given on a scale of 1-5. In a survey of those who returned home in December 2022, conscripts' will to defend the country (4.5), confidence in the troop's performance in war (4.0) and service motivation (3.9) rose to a record level. In addition, e.g. satisfaction with the staff (4.3) and time in the army (4.2) have remained at a high level. Of the conscript leaders, officer cadets received a grade of 4.3 and group leaders 4.0. (Varusmiesten maanpuolustustahto ennätyskorkealla 2022) No army can survive and succeed without its population's support. Finland is no exception. Finns now support the country's existing mandatory military service for men, some >80 % of those polled. Not only support the system, but semi-regularly participate in reserve refresher trainings to maintain and update their skills. Many of those are voluntary. And there are also voluntary defense courses available to further improve your skills.

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After the collapse of the Soviet Union, several European countries felt that the military threat posed by Russia had disappeared. Crisis management operations began to be emphasized in the tasks of the armed forces, which affected the strength, equipment, and structure of the armed forces. When large parts of Europe were sleepwalking and cut its military defence, Finland kept its head cool and continued to prepare for the worst. Finland never discontinued conscription or moved to the expeditionary force model. After the cold war Sweden cut down its military might in terms of manpower by 93%. In the summer of 2009, the Swedish conscription army was transformed into a professional army, and general conscription was abolished in 2010. Nothing as drastic was made in Finland. In Finland history never ended in Fukuyama's sense.

Finns' opinions on NATO have been measured in many opinion polls during the last decades. The Finnish Business and Policy Forum (Elinkeinoelämän valtuuskunta, EVA) has measured Finns' opinion on this since 1998.

To the claim "Finland should join NATO", the following results have been obtained:



(Source: Haavisto 2022.)

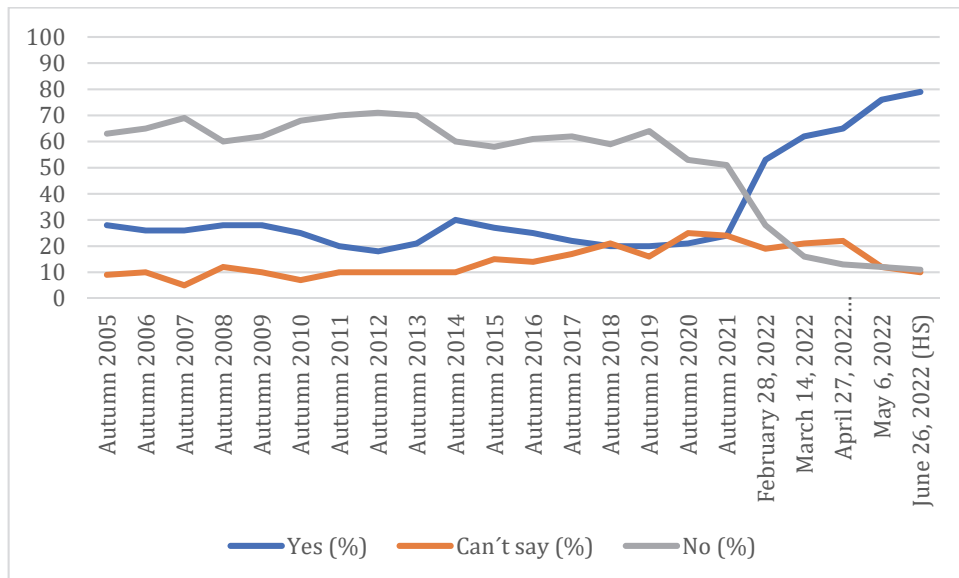
Also, the largest Finnish newspaper Helsingin Sanomat has published polls on the topic regularly.

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Surveys on the NATO membership of Finland have been measured by the following question: “In your opinion, should Finland seek membership in NATO?”. (Sources: A Finnish market and opinion research company *Taloustutkimus*, *Kantar TNS* and *Helsingin Sanomat HS*).

Up to Autumn 2021, only 20-30 % supported Finnish membership in the alliance. Then things changed dramatically. For the first time on February 28, 2022 only a few days after the Russian attack, the majority opinion in the Finnish Gallup was “yes” (53 %) on the NATO membership. On April 27, the share of YES answers had climbed up to 65 % (Figures: Kantar TNS), and on May 6, up to 76 %. The June 26 figure (HS) is even higher at 79 %.



(Source: Kanninen 2022)

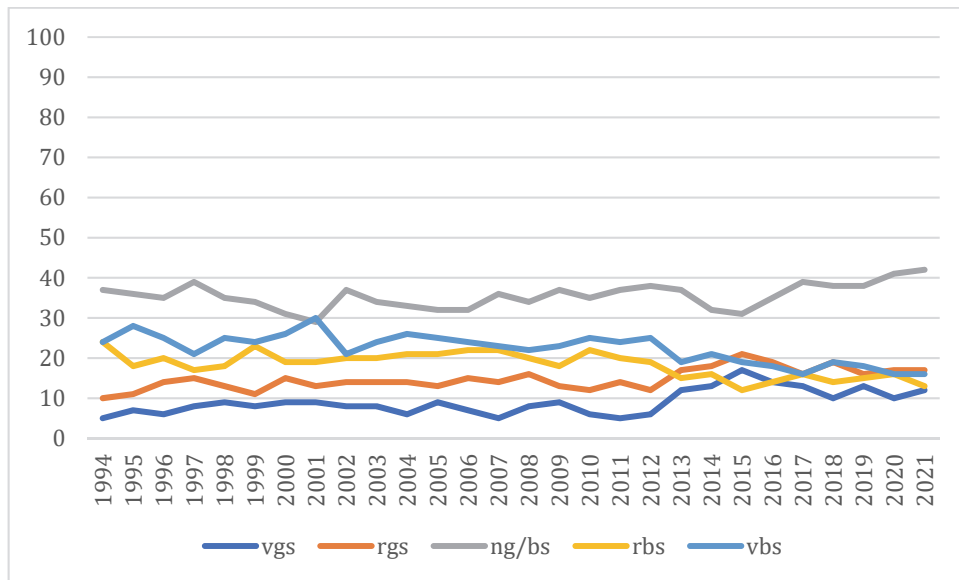
The EVA think tank published in November 2022 a poll which indicated very strong support for Finnish membership. To the question “*How do you feel about our country's NATO membership these days?*” they got the following results (%):

- Very positively 52
- Rather positively 26
- Neutrally 12
- Rather negatively 5
- Very negatively 3
- Don't know 2

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<https://www.eva.fi/blog/2022/11/23/suomalaiset-liittyvat-natoon-yhtenaisina/>

The situation in Sweden has been somewhat different. The question was 'What is your opinion on the following proposition? Sweden should apply for membership in NATO.'



The public opinion in Sweden has been rather stable. Until 2012 the number of those who thought that Sweden should not join NATO was two or three times bigger than the number of those who thought that Sweden should join. In 2013 the opinion changed: the number of membership supporters grew and the number of membership opposers decreased. The two groups have since been almost equal in numbers.

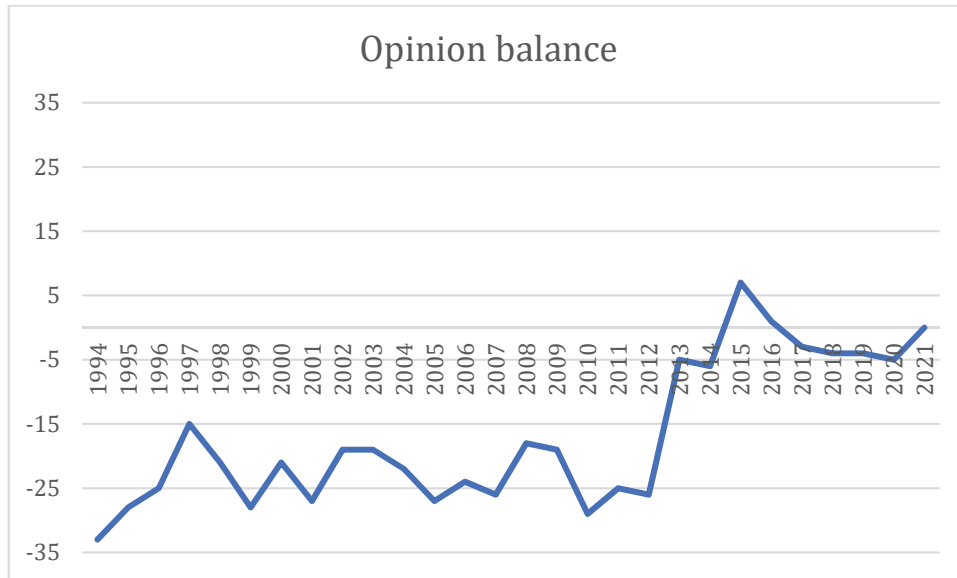
The opinion balance shows the percentage who think it is a very or fairly good proposal minus the percentage who think it is a fairly or very bad proposal. Values can vary between +100 (everyone thinks it's a good proposal) and -100 (everyone thinks it's a bad proposal). Positive values indicate a preponderance of the proportion who consider it a good proposal, while negative values indicate a preponderance of the proportion who consider it a bad proposal. The percentage base consists of those who answered the question.

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Figure

Opinion balance of pro and con -opinions in Sweden 1994-2021.



Source: Own calculations based on Ydén et al. 2022.

To summarize, the Swedish public opinion has not been strongly in favour of Sweden joining NATO during the period 1994-2021. Rather the opposite.

Russia's military attack on Ukraine in February 2022 – that is, after the SOM survey in 2021 was completed – influenced public opinion in a pro-NATO direction. A survey from Sifo in March 2022 49 percent answered yes and 22 percent no to the question "Do you think Sweden should join NATO?" And in a corresponding survey from Novus at the same time, 41 percent answered yes and 35 percent no to the question "Do you think Sweden should become a member of the military alliance NATO?"

(SOM-institutet, Ydén et al. 2022.)

When Demoskop asked Swedes: "Should Sweden join NATO?" twice in 2022, they got the following results (%):

Yes March 51, April 57

No March 27, April 21

Don't know March 22 April 22

(Granlund 2022).

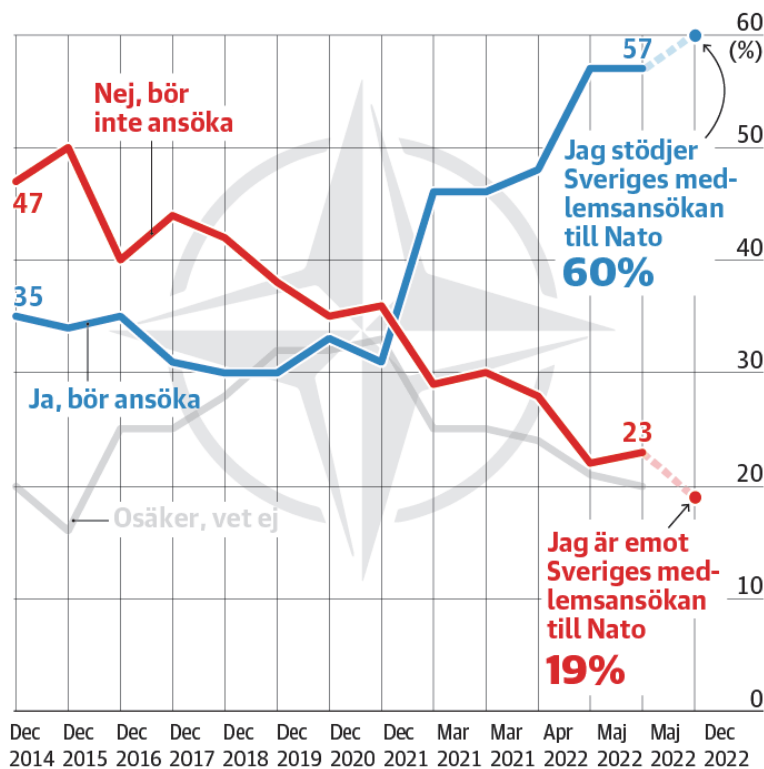
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Question: What is your attitude towards Sweden's application for membership in NATO?

The question that was asked up to and including May 2022: Do you think Sweden should apply for membership in NATO or don't you think so?

Alternatives: Yes, should apply; No, should not apply; Unsure, DK.

New formulation, after May 2022: Do you support Sweden's application to NATO, or are you against Sweden's application to NATO?



Graphic: Stefan Rothmaier Källa: DN/Ipsos Rosén 2023.

What caused this huge change in the public opinion in Finland? Most of the commentators have seen this change as quite natural as the circumstances have changed. Some of them have quoted John Maynard Keynes: “When my information changes, I alter my conclusions. What do you do, sir?”.

What caused the shift? President Sauli Niinistö, known for his occasionally gnomish utterances, was exceptionally clear and direct over Russia's

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responsibility for Finland's NATO membership: "You caused this. Look at the mirror¹⁸", he said on May 11th, 2022. (Milne 2022)

It is only fair to say that there has in Finland always, at least since WWII, been a latent if not always manifest mistrust of Russia/Soviet Union. An almost untranslatable Finnish saying, not a politically correct one, says: *Ryssä on ryssä, vaikka voissa paistaisi*, i.e. *A Russian is a Russian, even when fried in butter*¹⁹. The English expression Russian, the German expression Russe/Russin are neutral, non-pejorative expressions. Ryssä in Finnish is strongly pejorative. The politically correct and neutral Finnish expression would be *venäläinen*. Finns do not, unlike many Russians, think that too much honesty is stupidity. In Finland there is only one concept of truth. In Russia, at least three: official, street and kitchen truths.

What would have happened without the growing support for membership in public opinion polls for membership? We do not know. But it makes prima facie sense to claim, that what changed was first public opinion, and only then the opinion of the political elite. The former change produced the latter. But there never was a public outcry. The change in opinions took place in silence. There are those (for instance professor Henrik Meinander in Hyytinen 2022) who claim that this simplistic picture is untrue, and he and others point out that it was the moves by the political elite, in particular the president of the Republic (Sauli Niinistö) and the government which then produced the change in public opinion. It is noteworthy that the general public has not had access to knowledge about all the moves by the political elite, so the general impression may be based on an uncomplete understanding of the reality.

The critics claim that the causal chain is not

Change in public opinion → change in elite behaviour

18 This entails a subtle reference to the Russian novelist with Ukrainian origin, Nikolai Gogol (1809-1852), who coined the phrase:

"Don't blame the mirror, if your nose is crooked."

Putin is known to use the metaphor himself (NBC News 2022).

19 A Russian proverb says that *A Russian is a Russian even when boiled in milk*, Русский есть русский, даже если его сварить в молоке.

But

Change in elite behaviour → change in public opinion

There is no convincing empirical evidence to once and for all solve this conundrum as much of the basic facts are still unknown to the public. But it is only fair to say, that the political elite signalled in many ways that at least they had changed their mind before the general public changed theirs. It is also quite natural to think that there was some interaction between the elite and mass opinions, as it in a democracy always should be.

The nonexistent NATO-debate

The most important thing to understand about the Finnish discussion on whether Finland should or should not join NATO, was for the most part non-existent, quite literally²⁰. Here the Finns followed the Brecht-doctrine to the fullest. There was never a meaningful *debate* on the merits and disadvantages of joining NATO. It still has not taken place.

There were, of course, no lack of contributions arguing for one side or the other, but they rarely concerned the other parts' argument.²¹ A good example is an article published by 14 heavy weighters in Nordic security policy simultaneously in four Finnish and one Swedish newspaper (Belfrage et al. 2018). The whole NATO or not-NATO communication reminded a *Parallelaktion* in a true Musilian spirit. (Musil 1930).

As paper never refuse ink, there was no lack of published texts on the eventual Finnish NATO-membership. Both pro and con. Both teams had their, mostly unexplicated, criteria or metrics for success/failure. The Finnish public, and not even the security political elite, know, even ex post, what the

20 The word NATO was for the first time ever uttered in the Finnish parliament Eduskunta by the left-socialist MP Yrjö Enne (SKDL) on the 27.5.1959, i.e. ten years after the creation of the Alliance.

21 On Monday November 25, 2002 former president Martti Ahtisaari began strongly pushing Finland to become a member of NATO at the security policy seminar organized in Pori's brigade in Säkylä. Ahtisaari went through the main arguments of the opponents of NATO membership and stated point by point that they are no longer valid: NATO has changed, and Finland remaining outside NATO does not increase security.

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teams thought and used as criteria for success/failure. The NO-camp discussed mainly CON-points, the YES-camp mostly PRO-points. No-one discussed both pro and con points. It remains a mystery, why this immature situation prevailed. There was no proper debate in which both pro- and con-points would have been factored into the cost-benefit -calculation simultaneously. One must conclude that for more than 30 years there was no proper NATO-*debate*. There was no lack of one-sided contributions, both in favour and against membership, but they were both more parallel monologues than examples of a deliberate debate: the pro-camp did not even discuss neither evaluate the con-points and vice versa. Those in favour of membership listed the pros and those against listed the cons. But practically no-one weighted the pros and cons together combined. No serious cost-benefit -analysis were neither presented nor discussed. The bulk of the discussion contributed more heat than light. No-one from the pro-camp stated, what would count as a failure, no-one from the con-camp stated what would count as success of Finnish NATO-membership. The discussions were not *argumentative* in the sense that the conclusions would have been supported, in a logical way, by the premises. The contributions stated conclusions (Finland should/should not join NATO), but the premises were not listed, and the inferences, deductions and judgement processes were typically not presented. It would only be fair to claim that for the most part the Finnish NATO-discussion presented more a shadowboxing show than a serious political debate: an exercise in which agents throw punches at the air as though there is an opponent.

Finns have been discussing NATO on and off for the past 30+ years. Arguments have combined historical and political assessments with questions of identity and values, but it must be said that the quality of the debate hasn't always been great. At times it has been a bit of a joke.

Long after the USSR was gone, Finnish foreign and security policy vis-a-vis Russia was usually still treated as something best discussed behind closed doors or by using euphemisms and opacity. If someone broke ranks, condemnation was swift.

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To be clear, very few in Finland want bad relations with Russia. It is a blunt fact of Realpolitik, that Russia is not going anywhere, at least not in the foreseeable future²². The disagreement was in whether good relations (and a strong army and EU membership) is enough or whether one should also prepare for the worst by joining a military alliance.

When Finns serve in the military, most know why they are there. "You shouldn't assume the enemy will come from the east", goes the old joke²³, "it might try a flanking manoeuvre."

Still, the potential threat posed by Russia is not something most Finns have actively feared. It's more like living close to a situation that could change. Nothing is likely to happen in one's lifetime, but it's good to keep an eye out and prepare, just in case.

Russia's wars in Chechnya (1994-96, 1999-2000), Georgia (2008), Ukraine (2014-) and Syria (2015-) didn't manage to change Finnish attitudes on a large scale, but when Russia amassed troops on Ukraine's border and indicated that Finland should not join NATO, things changed.

The invasion of Ukraine undermined confidence in Russia, its no-NATO comments were reminders of spheres of influence. Finns, like no nation with self-respect, do not like to be told what they should do. War also opened a window of opportunity as Russia was tied down in Ukraine and the US became more welcoming of Finland's NATO membership.

In 2022, Russia signalled in several ways that it considered Finland and Sweden to belong to their sphere of influence. Russia's talk of preventing the expansion of NATO was a cataclysmic change. "Russia itself woke us up –

22 A typical Western error is to underestimate Russia's flexibility and resilience. If Russians are good at something it must be suffering: somehow, they always manage. They have for centuries been world champions in muddling through. In the words of an enigma from the cold war: *How come there is no food in Soviet shops, but most households have food in the pantry?* No satisfactory answer has yet been presented. Many in the West have forgotten the old military wisdom:
It is not those who can inflict the most, but those who can suffer the most who will conquer.

23 As jokes die when explained, I will not even try to.

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by trying to prevent NATO expansions, and by telling the outside world that they are now creating a sphere of influence, which would include Finland and Sweden.”, said President Niinistö in March 2023 (Lehto 2023)

For 12 years, the Russian Federation has tried to build a professional army of one million soldiers – and failed to.

Chronology of events

The Finnish discussion of eventual NATO-membership started at least some 30 years ago. The exact point of time is impossible to say, but a quite realistic starting point is on May 6, 1992, when the Finnish government decided to buy 64 McDonnell Douglas F/A-18 Hornet fighter and attack aircrafts. This caused some speculation on whether Finland is going to join NATO, both in Finland and abroad. In the Fall of 1992 president Mauno Koivisto (sd) visited Brussels and met the NATO Secretary General²⁴ Manfred Wörner.

Finland dropped neutrality in the early 1990s. It is simply wrong to call the country neutral, that is the Russian narrative. Finland was neutral out of necessity during the Cold War. That changed with EU-membership.

In the 1994 presidential elections all candidates were against Finnish NATO-membership. During Mr Martti Ahtisaari's presidentship Finland agreed on Partnership for Peace -co-operation (PPC) with NATO. Finland participated in many crisis management operations in the Yugoslavia during the late 1990's. PPC modified the Finnish armed forces in many ways. NATO-compatibility was the goal, and it was achieved before the end of Mr Ahtisaari's term, i.e. by February 2000. (Hämäläinen 2022)

All presidential candidates were explicitly against Finnish NATO-membership during the last five presidential elections (1994, 2000, 2006, 2012, 2018) bar Nils Torvalds (Swedish Peoples' Party, SFP) during the last one. He got one percent of the votes.

24 More *secretary* than *general*, as the NATO-parlance has it.

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There were a few individuals, so called NATO-enthusiasts, a.k.a. *individual* members of NATO, who supported membership. But for the most part they were not enjoying much public support.

The veteran politician and MP Liisa Jaakonsaari (sd.) called in the parliamentary debate already on the 20th of December 2004 NATO Finland's secret lover (*salarakas*), ie. one that Finland has a close relation with, but of which it was improper to talk about.

A lot of ink has been spent on the so-called *NATO-option*²⁵ i.e. Finland's opportunity to seek for membership in NATO and being accepted as a member.

Most of this discussion has been mere speculation, if not directly misleading. As a matter of fact, Finland and Sweden have never had an option to join NATO. Opportunity yes, option no. No one, and certainly not NATO formally, has promised that Finland would be accepted as a member in case it asked for membership.

An options contract offers the one part of the transaction the opportunity to buy or sell an underlying asset. Unlike futures, the holder is not required to buy or sell the asset if they decide against it. Each options contract will have a specific expiration date by which the holder must exercise their option.

The NATO Open doors -policy does not provide for any option of *joining*, only an option for *seeking* membership. This policy is based on the Article 10 of the North Atlantic Treaty²⁶ reflects the openness of the Alliance to new

25 The word was introduced for the first time in the largest Finnish newspaper column in 1995 (Pennanen 1995): "Unlike the Eastern European and Baltic countries, official Finland and the majority of public opinion do not consider NATO membership to be topical. Even official Finland, however, does not want to definitively exclude it from the "options". In terms of freedom of action in Finland's security policy, maintaining the NATO option has its own advantages." (Translation MW)

26 The North Atlantic Treaty April 4, 1949:
Article 10

The Parties may, by unanimous agreement, invite any other European State in a position to further the principles of this Treaty and to contribute to the security of the North Atlantic area to accede to this Treaty. Any State so invited may become a Party to the Treaty by depositing its instrument of accession with the Government of the

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members. Following the end of the Cold War, the process was reaffirmed at the January 1994 NATO Brussels Summit, at which NATO leaders stated that “We expect and would welcome NATO expansion that would reach to democratic states to our East.”

(<https://www.nato.int/docu/comm/1999/9904-wsh/pres-eng/04open.pdf>)

This statement only provides the *opportunity* to seek membership, but no automatic mechanism for guaranteeing that this would be successful. Joining NATO has never been only in the hand of seekers, i.e. NATO-candidates. It takes two to tango, and all NATO-member states willingness to accept the candidate, not only the candidate's desire. It is not enough that a country keeps its door open for joining NATO, also NATO must keep its own door open.

There have been various formulations concerning a NATO-option in Finnish official documents (government programs, government's reports to the parliament, etc.). Sometimes even formulations that *prima facie* suggest that the country might be willing to join, but in fact only to hide the real preferences to maximize the room for maneuvers.

The interoperability of Finnish and NATO-forces has been trained during various military exercises and did by 2022 reach a completely satisfactory level.

It has been claimed (Penttilä and Karvinen 2002, 13-15), but not very convincingly, that Finland has had at least four opportunities to join NATO:

1. In 1997, when NATO announced its Open door's policy.
2. In 2004 when the Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania) joined NATO.
3. In 2008 after the war in Georgia.
4. In 2014 when Russia occupied the Crimea.

This is pure speculation, and no firm evidence has been presented as to why joining would have been possible.

United States of America. The Government of the United States of America will inform each of the Parties of the deposit of each such instrument of accession.

The Process of Joining

Every country with self-respect wants to maximize its security. Joining NATO is a process. It can be summarized as follows:

1. Allies invite an aspirant to begin accession talks.
2. Accession talks with a NATO team.

The aim of these talks is to obtain formal confirmation from the invitees of their willingness and ability to meet the political, legal and military obligations and commitments of NATO membership, as laid out in the Washington Treaty and in the 1995 Study on NATO Enlargement.

3. Invitees send letters of intent to NATO, along with timetables for completion of reforms. In this step of the process, each invitee country provides confirmation of its acceptance of the obligations and commitments of membership in the form of a letter of intent from each foreign minister addressed to the NATO Secretary General. Together with this letter, they also formally submit their individual reform timetables.

Invitation to join is handed in to NATO on 29 June 2022.

4. Accession protocols are signed by NATO countries.
5. NATO then prepares Accession Protocols to the Washington Treaty for each invitee. These protocols are in effect amendments or additions to the Treaty, which once signed and ratified by Allies, become an integral part of the Treaty itself and permit the invited countries to become parties to the Treaty. From the moment when Accession Protocols are signed, NATO invites representatives of the invited countries to attend meetings of the North Atlantic Council as observers.
6. Accession Protocols are ratified by NATO countries. The governments of NATO member states ratify the protocols, according to their national requirements and procedures.
7. The Secretary General invites the potential new members to accede to the North Atlantic Treaty. Once all NATO member countries notify the Government of the United States of America, the depository of the

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Washington Treaty, of their acceptance of the protocols to the North Atlantic Treaty on the accession of the potential new members, the Secretary General invites the new countries to accede to the Treaty.

8. Invitees accede to the North Atlantic Treaty in accordance with their national procedures. Upon depositing their instruments of accession with the US State Department, invitees formally become NATO members.

Somewhat more precisely the recent steps can be depicted as follows (Penttilä and Karvinen 2002, 274-278 and media reports):

1.12.2021 Russian president Vladimir Putin delivered a speech in which he demanded guarantees that NATO would not enlarge eastwards.

2.12.2021 President Sauli Niinistö replied that Finland keeps its possibility to seek for NATO-membership.

24.12.2021 Maria Zakharova, the Director of the Information and Press Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation since 2015 said that Finland and Sweden joining NATO would lead to “serious military and political consequences”.

30.12.2021 Atte Harjanne, the chair of the Green parliamentary party group demanded to redeem the NATO-option. The chair of the National Coalition Party (Kokoomus) Petteri Orpo demanded parties to reveal their stand on the NATO-issue.

31.12.2021 Prime Minister Sanna Marin (sd) said in her new year's greeting, that Finland will keep the possibility to seek for membership in NATO. MP Anders Adlercreutz, the chair of the Swedish parliamentary party group (SFP) proposed that the NATO-process should be started.

1.1.2022 Niinistö said in his new year speech that the possibility to seek for membership in NATO belongs to the choice set of Finland if we so decide. Annika Saarikko, the chair of the Centre party said that the Centre party does not support Finnish NATO-membership.²⁷

5.1.2022 The Centre said that it does not support Finnish membership in NATO.

27 The Centre party is no exception in changing its mind, though. *All* Finnish political parties represented in parliament have made a U-turn with respect to Finnish NATO-membership. Only the date has changed.

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19.1.2022 PM Marin said to Reuters that she thought Finnish membership in NATO to be very unlikely during this parliamentary term.

1.2.2022 Sergey Lavrov, the Russian Foreign minister mailed a letter to the EU and NATO-countries and demanded security guarantees to Russia.

24.2.2022 Russia attacked Ukraine.

28.2.2022 The public broadcasting company Yle published a poll where the majority (53%) of the respondents were in favour of Finnish NATO-membership.

4.3.2022 Niinistö meets President Joe Biden in Washington. A process was started in which military cooperation between Finland, Sweden, and the USA was enhanced.

5.3.2022 Magdalena Andersson (sd), the Swedish PM and Peter Hultqvist (sd), the Swedish minister of defence came to Helsinki to hear the news from Washington.

7.3.2022 Finland is added to Russia's government's Unfriendly Countries List (Список недружественных стран) among 47 other countries: "foreign states and territories that commit unfriendly actions against Russia, its companies, and citizens."

14.3.2022 62% of respondents in a Yle poll, supported joining NATO.

15.3.2022 Niinistö in JEF-meeting (The UK Joint Expeditionary Force is a United Kingdom-led expeditionary force which may consist of, Denmark, Finland, Estonia, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Sweden, and Norway.) The UK promised to support Finnish membership and as the only NATO-country promised military security during the membership application process.

16.3.2022 Germany gave its political support to PM Marin for Finland's application.

21.3.2022 France gave its support.

24.3.2022 The Social Democratic party board discussed NATO-membership.

31.3.2022 The parliamentary party group of the Finns supported the application almost unanimously.

2.4.2022 The Social Democratic party council gave its thoughts of the eventual membership.

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7.4.2022 Top business representatives of Finland and Sweden gathered in Helsinki in to persuade Sweden to join NATO.

9.4.2022 The party council of the Centre party gave its support to the NATO-application.

13.4.2022 Marin met Anderson in Stockholm. The report on the changes in the security environment was given to the Finnish parliament.

21.4.2022 Sweden advanced the finalizing of its NATO-briefing due to pressures from Finland. A majority of respondents (57%) in a poll Sweden supported NATO-membership. (Granlund 2022)

23.4.2022 The party council of the Greens supported Finnish membership in NATO.

23.9.2022 The party council of the Christian Democratic party supported Finnish membership in NATO.

9.5.2022 76% of respondents wanted Finland to join NATO in a Yle poll.

12.5.2022 Niinistö and Marin published their NATO-view and said that Finland should seek membership as soon as possible.

Prime Minister of Finland on Finland's NATO membership

Government Communications Department and Office of the President of the Republic

Publication date 12.5.2022 10.00

PRESS RELEASE

During this spring, an important discussion on Finland's possible NATO membership has taken place. Time has been needed to let Parliament and the whole society establish their stands on the matter. Time has been needed for close international contacts with NATO and its member countries, as well as with Sweden. We have wanted to give the discussion the space it required.

Now that the moment of decision-making is near, we state our equal views, also for information to the parliamentary groups and parties. NATO membership would strengthen Finland's security. As a member of NATO, Finland would strengthen the entire defence alliance. Finland must apply for NATO membership without delay. We hope that the national steps still needed to make this decision will be taken rapidly within the next few days.

Matti Wiberg

Sauli Niinistö President of the Republic of Finland

Sanna Marin Prime Minister of Finland

13.5.2022 The Swedish NATO-report is published. Türkiye announces that it does not support Finland's and Sweden's application.

15.5.2022 The president and the Ministerial Committee on Foreign and Security Policy (TP-UTVA) and the State Council proposed Finnish NATO-membership. Swedish social democrats decided what to think on the membership issue.

16.5.2022 The Finnish parliament Eduskunta discussed the NATO-application. Foreign minister Pekka Haavisto (Greens) signed the indication to join NATO²⁸.

17.5.2022 President Niinistö called Vladimir Putin and told his counterpart that Finland is applying for membership in NATO. Putin replied, "I don't feel that [Finland's joining NATO] is a threat to Russia." Then he added very calmly, "I think you are making a mistake." (Sander 2023)

17.5.2022 The President of the Republic Sauli Niinistö decided based on the Government's proposal that Finland informs NATO of its interest in starting negotiations on joining NATO. The Finnish parliament decides to join NATO, only 84 days after the Russian attack on Ukraine. The Finnish parliament has 200 members and as the Speaker does not vote, there are altogether maximally 199 votes available in any vote. 188 votes were in favour of joining NATO, 8 were against (six from the Left Alliance, one from the Finns, and one from the populist *Valta kuuluu kansalle*, Power Belongs to the People), 0 abstained, and three were absent (two due to Corona, and one because she gave birth to her child one week earlier). These figures could be contrasted to the vote for independence in 1917 (100-88) and approval of EU-membership in 1994 (152-45)²⁹.

28 With a Danish HAY bullet pen borrowed from a Finnish journalist's girlfriend. When this was made public, the pens were sold out in Helsinki. More than 800 indicated their willingness to buy one. The Finnish National Museum wanted the writing instrument for its permanent collection. (Hanska 2022, Hautanen 2022) The pen belongs now to the collection of the FNM.

29 The alternatives in the 1994 EU-referendum were, according to some joker, *Yes* and *Nyet*. Quite many Finns thought that joining the EU entailed a sort of geo-political

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Finland's and Sweden's accession into NATO will most likely make "not much difference," Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said.

18.5.2022 A letter expressing Finland's interest in the negotiations signed by the foreign minister was delivered to the Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg seven seconds before Sweden.³⁰

There were no great expressions of joy, especially as the war in Ukraine was still going on. This is well in line with the prevailing political culture of Finland, nicely summed up by a Finnish sportsman: *Just leave me alone, I know what to do*, as the Iceman (Kimi Räikkönen) said during the Abu Dhabi Grand Prix on the fourth of November 2012. Not only is he one of the best Formula 1 drivers in the world, but he is also an under sergeant in the Finnish armed force's reserve. The Finnish style is to do, and not to brag about it. You let the deeds do the talking. *Machen, nicht reden*.

28.6.2022 Foreign ministers of Türkiye, Finland, and Sweden negotiated for five hours, and signed a 788 words and ten points with 17 paragraphs memorandum³¹ of understanding at the NATO summit in Madrid. (Trilateral memorandum (2022)).

relocation (*maantiedesiirtymä*, Wiberg 2011, 320) of Finland: it found itself now somewhere in middle-Europe, perhaps close to Switzerland.

30 This is by no means insignificant for Finns. It still hurt many Finnish minds that Finland's Juha Mieto lost with one hundredth of a second to Sweden's Thomas Wassberg in the 1980 Winter Olympics in Lake Placid in 15 kilometers skiing. It is also well remembered in Finland that Sweden in 1991, to surprise for its eastern neighbor, applied for membership in the European Community, completely without informing the Finns. Swedes have later tried to explain that not informing Finland about this drastic move was an accident, but Finns have not been convinced as the Swedish arrogance is so blatant. Swedish vague explanations have been about the fact that "calls were made to the president's office, but that no one answered the phone." (Mattsson 2023) *The lie as an art of state* is not something Finns do associate only with Russia. Many adult Finns remember how the Swedish foreign minister Sven Andersson (sd) lied to Finns in February 1974 claiming that Sweden did not exercise espionage in Finland. The evidence to the opposite was crystal clear. (Meinander 2022, 146) Hence the Finnish saying: *I do not know, what a Swedish handshake means*.

31 The status of the paper is somewhat unclear. Is it an aide-mémoire, memorandum, position paper, official statement, or policy or, due to the composition of the signatories, actually a *state treaty*? Its content does not oblige Finland to take it to the parliament for approval. (STT 2022) The Madrid document is a *memorandum*, not a *contract*, as some may have claimed. It was never treated as a contract. The negotiators may have been playing with the *fertility of ambivalence* a little too much and formulated a document that created more difficulties than it solved. One could

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29.6.2022 NATO Heads of State and Government extended an invitation to Finland and Sweden to join the alliance in the Madrid summit.

4.7. 2022 President Niinistö decided to submit Finland's letter of intent to NATO regarding joining the North Atlantic Treaty and committing to the obligations of a NATO member.

5.7.2022 The accession protocols for both countries were signed on after completion of accession talks. Finland and Sweden became a observer members of NATO.

29.-30.11.2022 Finland and Sweden participate as observers in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council (NAC) at the level of Ministers of Foreign Affairs which was held in Bucharest, Romania.

5.12.2022 The Finnish government presents its NATO membership bill to the Finnish parliament Eduskunta.

13.12.2022 The parliament discusses the proposition.

19.12.2022 President Niinistö, in a JEF-meeting in Riga, Latvia in the context of French president Emmanuel Macron's suggestion that the west should give Russia security guarantees (Brzozowski 2022) cunningly turned the discussion on security guarantees on its head. – “Come on, who needs security here? Niinistö first asked rhetorically and then answered the problem. - Russia's neighbours. - If Russia is able to give its neighbours some kind of security guarantees, why wouldn't we give Russia the same level and equally reliable security guarantees? Niinistö thought and laughed in a macabre way. As reliable? - As reliable as what they give, Niinistö stressed.” (Nurmi 2022).

The Finnish embassy was attacked in Moscow as masked men threw sledgehammers into the embassy yard. The instrument was significant: the Kremlin's mercenary army, Wagner, has adopted the sledgehammer as its unofficial symbol after a former member of the group was executed with a club. The Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs recommended to avoid all travel to Russia.

21.12.2022 Russia's Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu spoke before representatives of the Ministry of Defence at an event. He said that Russia will be moving troops west. Sweden's and Finland's NATO application was pointed out as the reason behind it. “Given NATO's desire to build up military capabilities near the Russian border, as

call it just an *angel paper*: it is not so much about the conclusion of the discussion as about its opening.

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well as expand the North Atlantic Alliance towards Finland and Sweden, it is necessary to create an appropriate unit of soldiers in north-western Russia.”, Shoigu said. The same point was made by Russians already in May 2022. According to Shoigu Russia must establish two strategic regional groupings. (Forsberg 2022, Paananen 2022) Defence Minister Antti Kaikkonen (centre), said that there was nothing new in Shoigu's comments as similar statements have been heard before. The organizational reform is just about returning to the old model. The Leningrad and Moscow military districts have been in operation before, but in 2010 they were merged into the Western Military District.

8.1.2023 Swedish prime minister Ulf Kristersson said in connection with the security conference in Sälen, Sweden that Sweden is unable to fulfil all the conditions that Türkiye requires in order to accept its application for NATO membership. The PM nevertheless believed that Türkiye will accept Sweden's NATO application despite this. Türkiye confirms that we have done everything we said we would do, he said. - They also say that they want things that we cannot and do not want to give them. The Finnish Foreign Minister Pekka Haavisto (green) said in Sälen that Finland is preparing a bilateral defence agreement with the United States. The negotiations on the official document will start in the spring 2023.

11.12.2022 “The solution lies within Erdoğan’s head and its timing is related to Türkiye’s internal politics,” President Niinistö said.

12.1.2023 The Constitutional Law Committee of the Finnish parliament published its opinion on joining the defence union: the parliament could decide on the matter with a simple majority. Joining NATO is not such a significant transfer of authority to NATO that a two-thirds majority is needed.

13.1.2023 The Speaker of the Turkish parliament postpones the Swedish parliament’s Speaker Andreas Norlén's visit to Ankara after a group hoisted a doll representing Turkish President Erdoğan outside Stockholm's city hall for one hour. The puppet was hung upside down and alluded to Mussolini's death, with the message that this is how dictators end. The action is "sabotage against the Swedish NATO application", said Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson. The Speaker would have travelled to Ankara on January 17 together with Finland's Speaker Matti Vanhanen to facilitate the NATO process. Behind the puppet protest were the Rojava Committees, "a network for solidarity and exchange with the revolutionary movement throughout Kurdistan". President Erdoğan spokesperson, Fahrettin Altun, wrote on Twitter that "this is proof that the Swedish authorities have not

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taken the necessary steps against terrorism, as they have claimed lately".

14.1.2023 Ibrahim Kalin, a spokesperson for the Turkish president said that the Swedish parliament must modify its laws, especially those concerning anti-terrorism measures before the Turkish parliament can ratify Swedish membership. He also estimated that this will take at least six months. *The Washington Post* ran an editorial with the title "NATO's internal standoff is a gift to Putin."

15.1.2023 The Turkish newspaper *Haberturk* quotes President Erdoğan saying: "You have to give us about 130 of these terrorists to pass our parliament. Unfortunately, they couldn't do it."³²

16.1.2023 John Bolton, a former US Ambassador to the United States from 2005 to 2006 and 26th US National Security Advisor from 2018 to 2019, suggested in a letter to the *Wall Street Journal*, that NATO "ought to put Ankara's membership on the chopping block." He urged NATO to seriously consider suspending Türkiye's membership or excluding the country from the defence alliance. (Bolton 2023)

18.1.2023 The Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said that Russia will have to resort to "reciprocal military and technical action" if Finland and Sweden join NATO.

19.1.2023 The defence committee of the Finnish Parliament gave its statement to the Foreign Affairs Committee in which it supports Finland's membership in NATO. The representative of the Left Alliance in the committee submitted a dissenting opinion to the statement. The United States urged "those member countries that have not yet ratified the membership of Finland and Sweden to do so quickly."

21.1.2023 Turkish Defence Minister Hulusi Akar cancelled the Swedish Defence Minister Pål Jonson's visit to Ankara due to the planned protest demonstration against Türkiye. The country is stunned that a far-right group has been given permission to demonstrate in front of the Turkish embassy in Stockholm.

22.1.2023 Far-right activist Rasmus Paludan burned the Muslim holy book Koran in front of the Turkish embassy in Stockholm.

32 The exact figure has changed, multiple times. Erdoğan himself has demanded at least 73, 100 and 130 "terrorists" to be extracted from Finland and Sweden. (Kankkonen 2023)

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23.1.2023 Türkiye withdrew its support for Sweden's NATO membership because a Koran was burned. The US said that Finland and Sweden are ready for membership.

24.1.2023 Foreign Minister Pekka Haavisto's outspoken morning opinion about Finland's NATO membership without Sweden was a news bomb in Sweden. Haavisto corrected his statement, emphasizing that Finland would only consider moving forward in the NATO matter if there were permanent obstacles in Sweden's way. According to Haavisto, this was not the case now. President Niinistö visited Borodyanka and Bucha. "There they showed us the brutality of the occupiers and the suffering of the Ukrainian people. There was nothing new about Russia for me", Niinistö stated.

26.1.2023 Türkiye's Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu said that "It is pointless to have meetings with Sweden and Finland now."

28.1.2023 Sweden said it will take a timeout from the negotiations with Türkiye over accession.

29.1.2023 President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan signalled that Ankara may agree to Finland joining NATO ahead of Sweden, amid growing tensions with Stockholm. "We may deliver Finland a different message (on their NATO application) and Sweden would be shocked when they see our message. But Finland should not make the same mistake Sweden did," Erdoğan said in a televised speech.

30.1.2023 Foreign Minister Haavisto: "Sweden is our closest ally in defence and foreign policy. Our position remains the same: Finland's strong desire is to join NATO together with Sweden. This would strengthen NATO's capacity as well as security of the Baltic Sea region and the whole NATO."

1.2.2023 President Erdoğan demanded Sweden to criminalize the burning of the Koran: "We will not say "yes" to their (Sweden's) NATO application as long as they allow the Koran to be burned, Erdoğan told representatives of his AK party in parliament." This was a new demand.

2.2.2023 The majority of respondents think that Finland should not wait for Sweden to ratify NATO membership according to a survey by Taloustutkimus: 53 percent of those who responded to the survey are of the opinion that the realization of Finland's NATO membership must not depend on what Sweden's schedule is like. The respondents were asked the question: "Should Finland join NATO, even if the ratification of Sweden's membership takes longer due to, for

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example, Turkey's opposition, or should Finland wait for Sweden?" 28 percent of the respondents think that Finland should join NATO at the same time as Sweden. 19 percent cannot say which opinion they have. A bipartisan group of twenty-six senators sent a letter to Biden threatening to halt a \$20 billion arms sale to Turkey, including forty F-16 fighter jets, as long as Ankara continues to block Sweden and Finland from joining NATO.

11.2.2023 "If not before Vilnius, then why even after that?" President Niinistö said in an interview.

13.2.2023 Finland and Sweden are announced the year 2022 winners of the Ewald von Kleist Award by the Munich Security Conference for their historic decision to apply for NATO membership in response to the Russian war of aggression. The conference has been honouring leading personalities in security politics who have made an outstanding contribution to international understanding and conflict resolution since the award's inception in 2009.

15.2.2023 "I urge Türkiye to ratify the membership of Sweden and Finland immediately.", Secretary General Stoltenberg said in his press conference at the Meeting of NATO Ministers of Defence in Brussels.

19.2.2023 The Finnish Broadcasting Company asked Finnish parties: Should Finland be ready to join NATO without Sweden? Five parties answered in the affirmative (Centre, CD, KOK, Liik, Finns), one against (Left), and two were not able to say (RKP, Greens), and one (SDP) refused to answer.

20.2.2023 According to Çavuşoğlu, NATO meetings between Türkiye, Finland and Sweden will continue, the Foreign Minister said when meeting Secretary of State Anthony Blinken in Ankara.

22.2.2023 According to President Niinistö, Finland and Sweden meet all the criteria that are required of NATO members. He said that "it seems that Türkiye has special criteria. - We were not aware of this. I don't think NATO rules know them", Niinistö said in a press meeting in Hapsund, Sweden. He also predicted that Finland and Sweden will be members before the Vilnius summit in July 11-12, 2023. Foreign minister Pekka Haavisto asked: "What is the credibility of NATO's open-door policy? Question marks will hang over NATO's open-door policy if Finland and Sweden are not members of the defence alliance by the summit in Vilnius. If we are not NATO members by the time of the Vilnius summit, it is very difficult to see where the next goal post is."

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23.2.2023 The Swedish daily Svenska Dagbladet published in the evening of the 22th of February an extensive article about how "Finland let go of Sweden's hand". According to the newspaper, this happened when the Finnish parliament decided to proceed with the NATO laws and the politicians started talking about the fact that simultaneity depends on Türkiye. Niinistö summed up the future NATO steps at Wednesday's press conference. "Hand in hand in the matters that are in our hands. But that ratification is not in our hands", Niinistö said.

27.2.2023 Türkiye indicated, again, that it might separate Finland's and Sweden's NATO-applications.

28.2.2023 MP Markus Mustajärvi (left) proposed in the parliament's plenary session that the government's proposal on the so-called NATO law and the report made on it be rejected. He proposed that the transport of nuclear weapons on Finnish soil, sea areas and airspace would be prohibited. He also proposed a ban on stationing other countries' permanent forces and NATO bases in Finland. As a third issue, he demanded a ban on allowing any other state or armed forces to use Finland's airspace, sea areas and soil for any hostile activity towards other states. His party colleague, MP Johannes Yrttiaho of the Left Alliance, gave his support to these proposals. Finnish PM Sanna Marin gave a criticized NATO for the delay in the approval of Finland's and Sweden's NATO applications. According to her, this is a burden for the whole of NATO. "Finland and Sweden meet all NATO requirements, but we still have to wait. This calls NATO's open-door policy and credibility into question". NATO's Secretary General Stoltenberg was not startled by this, but stated unequivocally that it would be high time to ratify the applications of both countries. "My own message is that Finland and Sweden have fulfilled the things promised to Türkiye last summer in Madrid. It's time to ratify. Finland and Sweden meet all the criteria." he said in Helsinki.

1.3.2023 Hungarian President Katalin Novák urged the Hungarian Parliament to ratify Finland's and Sweden's NATO membership.

Eduskunta approved Finland's NATO-membership bill by a vote of 184–7. The 'no' votes included six (out of 16) representatives from the Left Alliance, which is part of the centre-left coalition government. The other 'no' was from Anu Turtiainen, who set up a one-man parliamentary group called Power Belongs to the People after being expelled from the opposition Finns Party. One empty vote was cast, seven representatives were absent. All propositions of MP Mustajärvi were rejected as he got support only from some of his party fellows.

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7.3.2023 A delegation led by Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's party colleague and parliament vice-speaker Csaba Hende met the speaker of the Swedish parliament, Andreas Norlén. The precise agenda of the meeting was unclear. The Swedish daily Aftonbladet said in an editorial that "Hungary is simply trying, like a gangster, to demand respect instead of rightfully earning it." (Aftonbladet 2023)

8.3.2023 The delegation continued its journey from Sweden to Finland, where it met with the Speaker of the Parliament Matti Vanhanen (center) and representatives of the parliamentary groups and the foreign affairs and defence committees. The precise agenda of the meeting was obscure.

9.3.2023 The trilateral meeting between Finland, Sweden and Türkiye in Brussels ended without a solution or at least no solution was presented to the public.

14.3.2023 MP Ágnes Vadai of the Hungarian opposition party Democratic Coalition said on Facebook that he received a letter from Deputy Prime Minister Zsolt Semjén, in which he said that Fidesz and the Christian Democrats want to postpone the meeting of the parliament that starts on Monday the 20th. In the letter, the deputy prime minister urges the parliament to postpone its session to the week starting on March 27. Earlier, Hungary announced that a decision on membership ratification should be made around March 21. Semjén justified the postponement with "ongoing discussions with the European Commission".

15.3.2023 Many media outlets reported that the Finnish President Niinistö will travel to Ankara on Thursday the 15th to receive Türkiye's president's approval of the ratification of Finland's application.

16.3.2023 Swedish ex-PM Magdalena Andersson (sd) wrote on Facebook: "There is an increased risk that Finland will join NATO before Sweden. Let me say it like it is: This would not be good for Sweden. It would also mean a setback in relation to NATO's open-door policy, and it cannot be ignored that a split between Finland and Sweden would above all benefit Russian interests."

17.3.2023 Presidents Niinistö and Erdogan met in Ankara, where the host, with pomp and circumstance, signalled willingness to ratify

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Finland's NATO-application³³. All in all, the Turkish delaying of the ratification was a game of chicken – and Erdogan blinked first. Perhaps it was not a good idea to start with bazaar-methods against stubborn Finns³⁴. President Niinistö made it clear, that Finland has asked to join NATO only once, and thus has rejected all implicit or explicit invitations to start or continue presidential negotiations in Ankara. Niinistö pointed out several times that the Finnish membership is not complete without also Sweden becoming a member. *Kaveria ei jätetä*. You do not leave your comrade behind. This idiom from the WWII is in the Finnish socio-cultural DNA. When asked, what kind of concessions, Finland has given to Türkiye, Niinistö replied with the Finnish idiom: *ei edes nappikaupan luokkaa*, literally not even the type of a button shop, i.e. not even on a small-scale or low-turnover trading. “We made it clear the whole time that we weren't going there (i.e. Ankara) to beg for anything. If I wore a hat, I would never have had to pick it up. I never came across a situation where I should have been begging for something special.”, Niinistö said on Finnish tv 18.3.2023.

22.3.2023 The Swedish parliament Riksdag voted on joining NATO. Yes 269, no 37. The no votes came from the Left Party and the Environment Party. 43 were absent and no empty votes were given.

23.3.2023 President Niinistö ratified the so-called NATO-laws. After the President's signatures, the national acceptance of NATO membership in Finland was complete.

27.3.2023 The Hungarian parliament Országház ratified Finland's application with 182 yes and 6 no votes. 11 MPs did not vote. The only parliamentarians who opposed Finland's membership belonged to the far-right opposition party (Our Homeland Movement, *Mi Hazánk Mozgalom*, MHM), which believed that NATO expansion would also expand the war.

- 33 Erdogan was in avuncular mood. He even arranged for new, dry pair of shoes to replace the in the rain drenched ones of a Finnish newspaper's female photographer.
- 34 Finns are miserable underachievers at bazaars, as they are not used to haggling over the price. The current author has, however, testified how his wife has found a successful tactic that comes quite naturally to Finns: investing in silence. On foreign markets you do not leave the stand, but you say nothing. This is very stressful for the seller who finds silence inexplicably unusual and very uncomfortable, even threateningly aggressive. Few foreigners do handle silence. The seller's natural reaction is to present dropping prices, one after the other. The Finn does not open her/his mouth before the price is tolerable. The tactic works.

30.3.2023 The Grand National Assembly of Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi, ratified Finland's application unanimously: Yes 276, No 0. It remains a mystery why so few MPs (only 46 %) participated in the mid-night vote as the parliament has 600 representatives.

4.4.2023 Finland became the 31th member of NATO on NATO's 74th birthday. The process that started with the application in May 2022 took altogether 321 days. This is the fastest accession process in modern NATO history.

After these accession protocols were signed, they must be approved in all NATO membership countries. Depending on the country, this can involve more than one actor, usually the parliament. This was a speedy process, even by NATO standards. It has evolved as follows (the dates show the date when the ratification has been archived in Washington³⁵; not the date of the actual decision by the relevant national body/bodies³⁶):

Nato Timeline of Finnish membership ratification

July 2022

Canada July 5, 2022
Denmark July 5, 2022
Iceland July 6, 2022
Norway July 7, 2022
United Kingdom July 8, 2022
Germany July 20, 2022
Netherlands July 20, 2022
Estonia July 22, 2022

35 In the Finnish case, the relevant documentation was handed over to the Secretary of State Antony Blinken in Brussels (not in Washington) in the context of foreign minister meeting. This was possible under the regulation of the NATO Treaty's paragraph 11: "...The instruments of ratification shall be deposited as soon as possible with the Government of the United States of America."

36 The below dates indicate the date of the end of the parliamentary procedures:
Canada 5 July, Iceland 5 July, Norway 5 July, Estonia 6 July, United Kingdom 6 July, Albania 7 July, Denmark 7 July, Germany 8 July, Netherlands 12 July, Luxembourg 12 July, Bulgaria 13 July, Latvia 14 July, Slovenia 14 July, Croatia 15 July, Poland 20 July, Lithuania 20 July, Belgium 20 July, Romania 21 July, North Macedonia 27 July, Montenegro 28 July, France 2 August, Italy 3 August, United States 3 August, Czech Republic 27 August, Greece 15 September, Portugal 16 September, Spain 21 September, Slovakia 27 September, Hungary 27.3.2023, Türkiye 30.3.2023.

<https://www.nato-pa.int/content/finland-sweden-accession>

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Latvia July 22, 2022

N = 9

August 2022

Poland August 3, 2022

Lithuania August 4, 2022

Luxembourg August 4, 2022

Bulgaria August 9, 2022

Albania August 11, 2022

Belgium August 11, 2022

France August 16, 2022

Italy August 17, 2022

United States August 18, 2022

Romania August 22, 2022

North Macedonia August 22, 2022

Slovenia August 24, 2022

Croatia August 25, 2022

N = 13

September 2022

Montenegro September 13, 2022

Czech Republic September 19, 2022

N = 2

October 2022

Slovak Republic October 4, 2022

Spain October 6, 2022

Portugal October 11, 2022

Greece October 14, 2022

N = 4

Source: Protocol ... 2022.

March 2023

Hungary 31.3.2023

April 2023

Türkiye 4.4.2023

Two countries delayed their ratification of Finland and Sweden: Hungary and Türkiye although Finland and Sweden do tick all the boxes in terms of NATO compatibility. One could call the delayers' chosen tactic as *four-paw braking*.

Let's deal with Hungary³⁷ first.

It was rather obvious that Hungary played time. The reasons for this are not evident, and not even Hungary itself has provided any explanations. Hungary did not openly make any demands on Finland and Sweden. On the contrary, it said all the time that it is only a matter of time before the two Nordic countries' applications will be approved by the Hungarian parliament, which is controlled by Prime Minister Viktor Orban's Fidesz party.³⁸

Hungary and Türkiye³⁹ have dragged their feet. Türkiye⁴⁰ all the time with clear demands on Sweden, less so on Finland. Hungary practiced informal extortion. Hungary tries to keep good relations with Russia, as it has aligned itself with Russia for at least a decade.

Even when Hungary did not openly make demands to approve Sweden, it was increasingly obvious that NATO enlargement was used as a means of pressure not only on Sweden but on the entire EU, which with a few exceptions is the same as NATO.

Hungary was practicing logrolling i.e. tried to exchange favours by reciprocal voting for each other's proposed decisions. Hungary is in desperate need for money from the EU. The EU is not willing to send money to Hungary unless it follows standards of the rule of law. It is only fair to describe Hungary's tactics as that of *implicit negotiations*.

An adviser to the Hungarian government, Zoltán Kovács, published on the Hungarian government's website on 29th of March 2023 three reasons as to why Hungary did not ratify Sweden's application:

1. Sweden's constant undermining of relations
2. The crumbling throne of moral superiority

38 Hungary promised to ratify the membership applications in September, October, December 2022, January, February, and March 2023. (Laukkanen 2023)

39 Türkiye belongs to the bottom 10-20 % out of 202 countries on the V-Dem Institute's Liberal Democracy Index. It has also undergone substantial autocratization during the last 10 years. (Democracy Report 2022, 11) Freedom House classify the country as "Not Free" (Freedom House 2022).

40 The acronym GUBU might apply here as this member state's behavior was grotesque, unbelievable, bizarre and unprecedented.

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3. A lack of care and respect

(Kovács 2023)

Türkiye⁴¹ caused some difficulties, too.

The problems with Türkiye started already in mid-May 2022. Türkiye blocked an early move to fast-track the Nordic countries' requests immediately after Finland and Sweden formally submitted their applications to join NATO, demanding they extradite terrorists and that the alliance respect its concerns. Türkiye blocked a vote by NATO ambassadors on opening talks immediately, suggesting the first stage of the accession process may take longer than the two weeks the alliance planned. President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan told MPs from his AK party the alliance must respect Türkiye's reservations. "Nato expansion is only meaningful for us in proportion to the respect that will be shown to our sensitivities," he said. Türkiye accused Sweden and Finland of harbouring members of Kurdish militant groups it considers terrorist organisations, and also objected to their decisions in 2019 to ban arms exports to Ankara over Türkiye's military operations in Syria. (Henley 2022)

The negotiations with Türkiye on bureaucratic, governmental, and state level have taken many turns and have been non-transparent to put it mildly. Regarding the choice of policy in Finland's foreign policy, it has been a matter of whether Finland takes a principled line in the negotiations, emphasizing the rule of law and human rights.⁴² Or should Finland be opportunistically pragmatic, maximizing the national interest? No clear

41 Finns considered the dispute with Türkiye over Finnish NATO-membership all the way to be a *Batrachomyomachia* or *Froschmäusekrieg*: a trivial altercation. A speed bump on the road to membership, figuratively speaking. Or in the words of the great German poet Theodor Fontane:

Summa Summarum,

Es drehte sich immer um Lirum Larum,

Um Lirum Larum Löffelstiel.

Alles in allem – es war nicht viel.

42 "The promotion of human rights, the rule of law, democracy, peace, freedom, tolerance and equality in all international activities forms the central element of the value base on which Finland's foreign and security policy rests." Government programme of the then current Finnish government (GP)

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choice among these two lines of thought was made by the Finnish political elite, and very little was said on this in the public. There were elements of both idealism and statesmanship in the policy of the government. The Finnish government and civil servants handled their work with Nordic calmness. Finland was not on its knees in front of Türkiye.

Finland did not panic but practiced the tactic that can be summarized in German as follows: *Geduld ist die Stärke der Schwachen, Ungeduld ist die Schwäche der Starken*⁴³. Patience is the strength of the weak, impatience is the weakness of the strong. There has been an air of *sprezzatura* or calculated carelessness in how Finland behaved during the various phases.

It is and has been unclear whether Türkiye consistently all the time presented identical demands or whether the demands have changed during the process. It could of course be the case that the wordings of the demands have been identical, but as these wordings have been vague, there has been a vast number of non-identical operationalizations of them. In at least one respect have Türkiye's demands changed during the process: sometimes the country demanded the extradition of certain individuals from Sweden to Türkiye. These demands are not to be found in the Madrid document.

The motivations for Türkiye's behaviour have been and are still unclear, at least to the public. It is not known whether these motivations are clear even to the country itself. The negotiations between Finland, Sweden, and NATO and Türkiye have not taken place in the open. Various diplomatic channels have been used, and the communications in these channels have not been published. The June document from Madrid is not very helpful as it contains such fuzzy formulations that they can be operationalized in various ways.

Thus, it is unclear what the number of specific demands by Türkiye has been as well as if they have altered during the process. Moreover, it is not clear how many and of what type of concessions Finland and above all Sweden have given. Oddly, these aspects have not been discussed in detail in the Nordic media.

43 Often wrongly attributed to Immanuel Kant, but not to be found in Kant's gesammelten Schriften.

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The multi-level negotiations and several types of interactions with the applicants and Türkiye has resulted in critical voices that suggest that Finland and Sweden have given in to demands by the autocratic Türkiye. The concessions show that it is possible to blackmail Sweden (Stenberg 2022). A leak on these concession points published in the Swedish daily Dagens Nyheter confirms this suggestion (DN 14.12.2022) Even the former Swedish PM Magdalena Andersson (s) said that the government's statements about Türkiye as a democracy and the distancing from Kurdish organizations are going beyond the agreement with Turkey. (Sveriges Radio 2023) Similar concerns have been raised in Finland (Lindelöf Granlund 2022), but no definitive evidence has been presented. Türkiye has rejected these conclusions. Türkiye's ambassador to Sweden called the understanding that Sweden has been blackmailed and that it has sold its soul to the devil a "misrepresentation". Moreover, he claimed that it has not been the case that "Sweden has done everything it could, while Türkiye comes with new demands and that its real goal is incomprehensible. "(Can Tezel 2022).

The Turkish government was anything but satisfied with the Swedish Supreme Court's decision on December 19, 2022 which, for several legal reasons, opposed an extradition of the journalist Bülent Kenes. Türkiye's Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu was not happy with this: "The rejection of our request for the extradition of Bülent Kenes is a very negative development. We no longer want to hear nice words from Sweden and Finland, we want to see concrete action", said Çavuşoğlu at a press conference in Ankara.

The Swedes were not happy with Türkiye. In an opinion poll in late 2022 the respondents were presented with the following question:

"Türkiye makes demands on Sweden to approve Sweden's membership in NATO. Which of the following two options is closest to your own opinion if a conflict were to arise between Swedish laws and legal principles and Türkiye's demands?"

The alternative "Sweden should stand for Swedish laws and our principles of rule of law vis-a-vis Türkiye even if it delays our membership in NATO" got the support of 79 % of respondents. The alternative "Sweden should try to join NATO as soon as possible, even if it means compromising with Swedish laws and principles of rule of law in order to meet Türkiye's

demands” got the support of 10 % of respondents. (11 % could not say). (Rosén 2023)

Why did Türkiye treat Finland differently from Sweden?

1. In Turkish eyes, whether true or not, the two countries attitude towards the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) differs. Türkiye demanded stronger measures from Sweden. There were accusations that the organization is financed from Sweden and that PKK activists can operate too freely in Sweden. Finland was not blamed for this matter.
2. The Koran burning episode in Stockholm caused widespread indignation in Türkiye, and it saw that this was not possible in Finland as it has different legislation.
3. Especially the previous administration in Sweden had quite a lot of dealings with the Kurdish administration operating on the Syrian side, which belongs to the Kurdistan Labor Party party family. Sweden supported it spectacularly. This caused a lot of indignation in Türkiye.
4. Historically the relations between Türkiye and Finland have been quite good. The situation in Sweden was different.

With its braking, Türkiye exposed NATO's casting fault: the requirement of unanimity is difficult to meet in an alliance where two member countries are distancing themselves far from democracy.

Finland joining NATO has been the quickest accession process in NATO-history⁴⁴. Although the Finns were told in Washington in March 2022 in no uncertain terms (Penttilä and Karvinen 2022, 11 and passim), that joining NATO then was out of the question: “For God’s sake, not now”, when the accession process started, all went rather quickly.

In March 2022, the backbone of NATO, the USA (as everybody else) was still uncertain, how the situation in Ukraine would evolve. Since it seemed sure that Russia would not easily win the war against Ukraine, the two Nordic countries have been on an overtaking lane.

44 Greece postponed Macedonia’s NATO-membership for a decade up until 2019.

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Finland and Sweden are the strongest candidates since the foundation of NATO in April 1949. The two are more qualified NATO members than many current NATO members if you consider their overall capabilities, investment in defence, co-operation forms etc. In Finland everything went rather quickly, but in Sweden everything happened in the opinion of the political establishment, not to say anything about the general public, way too rapidly. It is noteworthy that Russia, perhaps because it was busy with Ukraine, did not pay much official attention to the membership processes of Finland and Sweden.

That Finland had to wait for the approval of Hungary and Türkiye was not dangerous, but uncomfortable. Well, sometimes life is. Finns do have a long rubber band of patience. But the country also has a history of rapid developments in security matters.

All big security decisions in Finnish history have finally been quick: Autonomy in 1809, Independence in 1917, Peace in 1944, and joining the EU 1995.

Why didn't Finland join NATO in 1949? Well, we were on the losing side of WWII. Finland wasn't occupied by the Soviets⁴⁵, but they had a military base there until 1956. Finland was also forced to sign an Agreement of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance with the USSR.

The period of "Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance" lasted until the fall of the USSR in 1991. Until then Finland tried to make the best of a difficult situation, with mixed results. The resulting political self-censorship of sorts has been called *Finlandization*⁴⁶ — the bending of a small power to the will of a big power, the process of being obliged to accept the interests of a more powerful neighbouring country, in order to keep its independence and

45 As a matter of fact, Helsinki was the fourth capital of countries participating in the WWII which were *not* occupied during the war. The other three are London, Moscow, and Washington.

46 In case someone would like to agitate a Finn, it is most easily made by starting a moralistic discussion about Finlandization.

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own political system. A small country must always adjust itself to the demands of its large neighbour⁴⁷.

In the 1990s, after the fall of the USSR, Russia was still there but Finland was finally freer to make its own choices. It joined NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP) in 1994 and the EU in 1995⁴⁸ (with Sweden and Austria). At the time, security policy was considered a major reason for joining the EU. Very little of this thinking was made public and explicit.

As for NATO, it wasn't initially clear where it was headed after the fall of the USSR. It took the US a few years to come around to expansion. The wars in Chechnya played a role in encouraging new applicants, but it wasn't until 1999 that new members were admitted.

There have always been at least two different security policy camps in Finland (which was part of Sweden for 600 years), with respect to Russia: The Hats and the Caps⁴⁹. With Finland trying to join NATO, the number of hats is bigger than the number of caps.

The discussants called the other team with nicknames. The con-team called those in favour of membership suffering from, among others:

NATO-kiima (NATO-heat)

NATO-halukkuus (NATO-willingness)

NATO-haukka (NATO-hawk)

NATO-huuma (NATO-ecstasy)

47 There is this politically incorrect saying that in international politics big states behave like gangsters, and small like prostitutes.

48 As Finland in the beginning of her EU-membership followed Germany in almost everything, Finns were at the time in Brussels unofficially called "*English speaking Germans*".

49 The Hats (Swedish *hattarna*) were a Swedish political faction active during the Age of Liberty (1719–1772). Their name derives from the tricorne hat worn by officers and gentlemen. The Hats were in favor of assertive foreign policy, especially towards Russia.

The Caps (Swedish: *mössorna*) were the other relevant political faction. The Hats were responsible for the Caps' name, as it comes from a contraction of Night-cap, a name used to suggest that the Caps were the soft and timid party.

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NATO-keulinta (to hurry or go ahead of others with the bow raised off the ground)

Some even claimed that NATO stands for *No Action, Talk Only*.

The pros called the con-camp:

Haihattelija (daydreamer)

Putinisti (pro-Putin)

Dinosaurius (dinosaur)

Did the pro and con contributions make the decision makers more rational, balanced and based? We simply do not know. But there is very little evidence to suggest that it did. Unfortunately.

The war in Ukraine demonstrated to the general Finnish public that it had

1. overestimated Russia's military might
2. underestimated the Ukrainian military might.

When the Western commentators expressed their surprises about how brutal the Russian army was in Ukraine, the Finns were surprised by the Western surprise. Finns believe that the current Russian Army behaviour is *нормальный*, (normal) i.e. business as usual. For Finns this is *the way* Russia⁵⁰ wages war. Nothing to be surprised about.

Finland and Sweden: Hand in hand

The two Nordic neighbours have many common traits like culture. There are some main differences, too. Sweden is both bigger and richer. The population in Finland is 5,5M and in Sweden 10,4M. Annual GDP in 2021 was for Finland 297575M USd and for Sweden 635664M USd. A Swedish expression crystallize the difference between these two countries: *Det hotade landet och det skyddade*. The threatened country and the protected country.

50 The current president of Russia has three advisers: Ivan the Terrible, Peter the Great, and Catherine the Great. This is the opinion of Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov (Seddon 2023)

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The two countries several times repeated that they are joining NATO hand in hand⁵¹. Finland did not subordinate its own application for NATO membership to whether Sweden applies or not. Military wise there are some important differences between the two neighbours. Sweden is heavy on the blue forces (navy and air force) as Finland is stronger in terms of infantry. The Finnish defence forces have about 1 500 artillery weapons. There are more than 700 of these guns and howitzers, just under a hundred rocket launchers including Heavy Rocket Launchers (MLRS) and more than 700 heavy mortars. With this arsenal, Finland clearly has the largest artillery in Western Europe.

In comparison, for example, from other countries in the Baltic Sea region, only Poland comes closest to Finland, if Russia is not included. Poland is estimated to have around 700 artillery guns. In Germany, the artillery includes about 200 guns. Sweden, which has reduced its defence capability, has about a hundred weapons, and Norway has even fewer. Finland has the second largest land forces in Europe, right after Türkiye. (Tanner 2021)

The self-understanding of Sweden is that their country is a humanitarian and moral superpower, *the* world conscience. Swedes occupy the moral high ground, at least in their own mind. As many Finns think a large part of the Swedish political elite suffers from self-righteousness, and holier-than-thou attitudes as they display moral superiority derived from a sense that their beliefs and actions are of greater virtue than those of the other world citizens. The Swedish national feeling is to be a moral example. Finland is a security-oriented country with awake awareness. Finland has been cautious, for good reasons. Security is traditionally taken very seriously in Finland. The Swedes have, traditionally, been *ready to fight until the last Finn*.⁵²

51 Different metaphors were used: shoulder to shoulder, at the same pace, side by side, collectively, conjointly, together, united, working together, simultaneously, cooperatively, in sync.

52 This is a true story. A Swedish major general gave a presentation in NATO HQ in Brussels with several scenarios in one of which Russia attacked Sweden through Finland. A young female Finn (Catharina Candolin) representing FDF congratulated the general major for his interesting presentation. “But it contained one error”, she said. The entire hall fell silent, the Swede looked tense. She said: “Russia does not

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If the Finns were rather enthusiastic about joining NATO, the Swedes were and still are somewhat more sceptic.⁵³ The public in Sweden has difficulties in following the membership process with all its turns. It was not the only one who thought that things evolve a little bit too quickly. Even the Swedish political elite had and still has difficulties in making up their mind. A history of over 200 years of non-alliance was on stake. Swedes need a lot of time to discuss all available policy options before they decide anything. Things were not waiting, and Sweden was not the one to set the pace.

This attitude was exposed in a statement by a Swedish key politician:

“Damn Finland, now maybe even we must join NATO.” This was said by a frustrated Swedish Foreign minister Ann Linde (sd) to her party fellow on the 18th of March 2022 (Strömberg and Nilsson 2022). Later she described the Swedish 180-degree U-turn as super tough (*jättejobbigt*). (Anderberg 2022). It took the Swedes eight weeks to make their turn in favor of NATO-membership until in April 2022 the leading social democrats made up their mind to be in favour of Sweden joining NATO.

In December 2020 the Swedish parliament decided that Sweden has a NATO-option. But the Swedish government ignored this decision.

On the 30th of March 2022 Swedish PM Magdalena Andersson said in a television interview (SVT 30 minuter), that she “does not count out Swedish NATO-membership”. This was the first clear signal from a Swedish top politician.

To Russia NATO is a European cancer. In Russian eyes Finland and Sweden are doing “*a joint suicide*” by joining the western military alliance. (Sergei Karaganov, Member of the Council on Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation Ministry of Foreign Affairs (RF MFA) in a television program *Sodan kylmät kasvot* in Finnish Broadcasting company Yle 16.5.2022). Vladimir Putin's regime has called Finland's accession a “mistake” and

attack Sweden through *Finland*.” The whole room burst into laughter; the Swede included.

53 The former Swedish foreign minister Margot Wallström (s) said in late March 2023 that the Swedish NATO-process has been ”plågsam och genant”, i.e. “painful and embarrassing” (Expressen 2023)

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“definitely a threat” to Russia (McGee 2022, Kauranen and Lehto 2022). Putin himself has repeated the point ad nauseam.

Finland joining NATO is a textbook example of the so called *Dornbusch's law*: a process takes much longer time coming than you think and then it happens much faster than you would have thought.⁵⁴

Critical voices were raised in late 2022 against Finland's (and Sweden's) commitment to join NATO hand in hand. (Hämäläinen 2022b, Karvala 2022). It has been claimed that it was a mistake of Finland to negotiate and sign the Madrid 2022 document. Moreover, Finland should not wait for Sweden, but join NATO even alone, i.e. without Sweden, as Sweden would certainly not have waited for Finland, goes the argument.

The Finnish foreign policy establishment rejected this criticism and pointed out that NATO also needs Sweden as it does not make military sense to include only Finland. It is not only the will of Finland and Sweden, but it has also been the will of organization NATO and major NATO countries such as the USA that Finland and Sweden join at the same time.

Even when the processes of the two applicants have resembled each other, there have been some differences. More precisely: The different dates for the two countries parliaments NATO process:

Signing of Accession Protocol with NATO: Finland and Sweden 5 July 2022

Bill to the parliament: Finland 5 December 2022, Sweden 7 March 2023

Parliamentary debate: Finland 20 February and 28 February, Sweden 21 March 2023
Parliament decision: Finland 1 March, Sweden 22 March 2023.

We go hand in hand if it's in our hands, Niinistö said in a Swedish interview 19.3.2023.

Finland became a member in the spring of 2023, but Sweden did not. Does this mean that Finland must ratify the Swedish accession in the future? Not anymore as Finland already did this in February 2023. This was made by the

54 This gives the talking heads on media an opportunity to be wrong more than two times.

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following words in a report of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Finnish parliament (UaVM):

"Parliament approves the North Atlantic Treaty signed in Washington on April 4, 1949 referred to in the government's motion HE 315/2022 vp, as amended by the accession protocols signed by July 5, 2022, and the agreement on the status of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, national representatives and international personnel made in Ottawa on September 20, 1951 agreement."

Since the accession protocols of both Finland and Sweden were signed by NATO's 30 member states on July 5, 2022, with the above entry Finland have completed the national ratification for both Finland and Sweden.

Why did the USA not see to it that also Sweden would become a member? Well, maybe the USA did not have enough power to press Türkiye. After all, Türkiye is more important to the USA than Sweden. There was no breakthrough before the NATO's Vilnius summit, but Türkiye promised to ratify the Swedish application "as soon as possible", whatever that means.

What kind of member will Finland be?

NATO is a strong player in world politics. It controls 50% of world's military might and likewise 50% on the world's economic power. NATO has three nuclear states of which two are European (UK and France), and the third is, of course, the USA⁵⁵. However, NATO's internal solidarity is not perfect. On the contrary, it suffers from many kinds of internal disputes.

Finland and Sweden are modest-sized countries – together they would add less than 2 percent to NATO's collective population of roughly 950 million.

No country that joined NATO has previously been as compatible as Finland. Finland is by and large plug and play -compatible. Finland will pack a punch in NATO.

55 No alliances are eternal. In some situations, the US may have a national obligation to betray its allies.

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Finland joining NATO is not only about security policy, but about a kind of *phase transition*⁵⁶ of the nation's self-image. Little by little a realization has begun to creep into the consciousness of Finns: we are now like the Belgians. Belgians can't do anything about their geography. Yet they dare to insult the Germans to their heart's content without fear that the Germans will come and kill them. That would not be possible, because Belgium is part of NATO. (Enqvist 2023)

An experienced Social Democratic MP (Johannes Koskinen) said in the parliament on May 17, 2022, that Finland does not enter NATO with hands up, not with a finger up, but with the head up. A centrist minister (Annika Saarikko) said that Finland will not be a free rider in NATO⁵⁷. The general feeling both among the political elite and the broad public was already in May 2022 and still is, that Finland will become a pragmatic, loyal and trustworthy partner. Finland will continue to be a security *producer*, not a security *consumer*. Finland is from Day 0 net gain to the Alliance. Finland did not require any restrictions/constraints when indicating her willingness to join. If you join a club, you become a member with all obligations and rights. No ifs and buts here.

At its June summit in Madrid, NATO not only identified Russia as a direct threat to the Alliance (for the first time since the end of the Cold War) but also invited both Finland and Sweden to become members, subject to ratification in all NATO member states. The two countries will add substantial strategic depth and capability to the Alliance's deterrence and defence against 'grey-zone' and direct military aggression. Indeed, as a result of the ambitious shift of NATO's deterrent posture – codified at the Madrid Summit – towards 'forward defence' at its eastern and, soon, northern flanks, the Arctic and Baltic Sea regions are emerging as important and increasingly integrated strategic theatres for the Atlantic alliance. When Finland and Sweden have joined the Alliance, NATO's defence of the Baltic Sea region will extend to the entire northern Baltic region. Finnish accession effectively provides NATO with an opportunity to control the narrow Gulf of Finland

56 An example of this is the melting of ice into water. Then the water molecules suddenly organize themselves in a new way and start to flow freely.

57 The idea of free riding is, to most Finns, unthinkable.

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and close off the area to Russian merchant and military assets in times of crisis. Sweden's entry could be used to deny Russia access to the southern end of the Baltic Sea and also raises the possibility of using Gotland as an unsinkable command ship to support allied Baltic Sea operations and interdict potential Russian air and sea deployments. While in the past non-aligned Finland and Sweden might have stayed out of direct combat operations, this will no longer be the case in the future. Instead, stand-off ISR (intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance) assets, protected by combat aircraft, could be deployed all over Scandinavia to support allied operations across the Baltic Sea region. (Barrie et al. 2022)

In many respects, NATO membership means a change in Finland's international commitments. On the other hand, there are also things that will not change. First, membership means that Finland undertakes to help other member countries in the event of a military attack on them. However, in this case too, Finland would be able to decide the form of the aid itself. Armed force is not the only option. When joining NATO, Finland does not give a commitment to participate as a party in future wars. If another member country were to be attacked, Finland should initially offer non-military aid that would not immediately place Finland as a party to the war. NATO membership does not invalidate the entry in the constitution, according to which the president of the republic decides on war and peace with the consent of the parliament. NATO membership does not mean that the parliament delegates to the government the power to decide on war and peace. (Scheinin 2023) And above all, the country is still a cape bounded by the sea in Russia's armpit.

Russia is forced to change the density of forces along its western borders. Moscow will have to monitor the 1,343 kilometres of new NATO border with Finland, which diverts attention from the Baltic states and creates a "troop sink" for Russia. Saint Petersburg, less than 400 kilometres from Helsinki, will be vulnerable to NATO naval blockade. The room for manoeuvre in the Baltic Sea becomes significantly limited for Russia's Baltic Fleet, with its base in Kaliningrad now subject to anti-ship missile strikes from land, sea, and air directed from 360 degrees. Furthermore, Russia's Kola Peninsula directly borders Finland and Norway. One of

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Russia's largest concentrations of nuclear assets crucial to its second-strike capability, including strategic sub-launched ballistic missiles and long-range aircraft, located on the peninsula, and is connected to the rest of Russia through only one mainland route. This means that rather than being able to mass forces all along the borders of the Baltic states, Russia would have to divert tens of thousands of troops to defending Saint Petersburg and protecting its line of communication to the Kola Peninsula. Facing longer-range HIMARS ammunition, Russia would have to worry about artillery strikes from Finnish territory all along the Estonian border. What was a simple overmatch for Russia to attack the Baltics at Narva, Pskov, Braslaw, Grodno, Sovetsk, and the Suwalki Gap will become a complex theatre of operations where Russia may be on the defensive across several thousand kilometres of frontline against highly motivated NATO forces. (Ålander and Alberque 2022). Both Nordic countries may contribute to NATO member states in many ways. Finland could without doubt take a prominent role in NATO in developing societies' resilience and civil preparedness. In most respects Finland will not stand out in any relevant sense, but one: Finland is an exceptional new NATO member to the extent that it has since 1945 constantly been preparing for a large-scale war.

The implementation of the Finnish membership will be the largest change in Finnish defence policy since the WWII. A lot of training will take place and new personnel must be recruited, educated, and trained.

NATO membership means increasing the number of personnel in the defence forces also to handle the obligations brought by membership. The lack of trained officers might become a problem that must be addressed seriously in Finland.

Personnel are needed in NATO for two different entities. The second is personnel to be placed directly in the NATO organization. This amount will only be specified when the membership starts, and the personnel begin to be assigned to their duties.

All in all, about a hundred people are needed for the NATO structures when everything is set up. It takes place over several years and includes all these

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personnel groups – officers, special officers, non-commissioned officers, and civilians.

Another entity that requires personnel is the common defence obligations that apply to all member countries. This also includes the fact that each member country must have the ability to deploy troops outside its own borders. After a long history of military non-alignment, the Finnish debate has focused almost exclusively on what Finland gets nationally, not what it is expected to contribute internationally.

The main driver of Finland's NATO policy – the set of interests, objectives, and tasks it pursues in the alliance – will be the country's geostrategic position.

There are four geographic realities that will heavily influence Finnish NATO policy (Pesu and Iso-Markku 2022):

1. Finland is a Baltic Sea state, dependent on unhindered maritime traffic and with a vital interest in the territorial integrity of the Baltic States.
2. Finland is an Arctic country, with an important role in defending the High North land domain and, indirectly, the Northern Atlantic sealines.
3. Finland is a frontline state, meaning that building credible deterrence vis-à-vis Russia and ensuring the possibility to receive allied reinforcements will be among its key interests.
4. Finland is peripherally located vis-à-vis the Western reserves of military and industrial power, directing its attention towards military mobility as well as security of supply. The possibility to receive allied reinforcements will be among its key interests.

All in all, Finland, which has maintained a strong defence capability and has constantly focused on Russia as a security threat, should have no difficulty adapting to NATO's present and future policies. The strategic location and size of the country, as well as military strengths, including Arctic expertise, can give Finland a decent starting point to make its voice heard as a medium-sized member of the alliance.

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Will the membership be without problems? No. There will most certainly be some problems as international politics is never problem free. There might raise some difficulties, in particular with respect to the local or national demands of protecting Finland, and, on the other hand, demands by NATO. These two preferences might collide. This is quite natural as the resources to advance Finland's and NATO's goals are scarce. As the devil always hides in the details, it remains to be seen how serious these potential difficulties will be. There will always remain the difficulty that Finland and NATO will never share their entire knowledge of the current circumstances and situations. Finland and NATO know only partially the same things. The informational asymmetry remain: both actors know partially different things. This might lead to varying policy recommendations. A potential conflict field emerged as soon as Finland has become a member. One cannot simply wish it away.

One important aspect of NATO has been almost completely disregarded in the Finnish discussion: the constant *change* of NATO. One does not understand the current essence of the defence union by reading the Washington treaty from 1949. NATO has been and probably will in the foreseeable future develop itself with the help of "strategic concepts". NATO has adopted four versions of its strategic concept in the post-Cold War era: in 1991, 1999, 2010 and 2022. They all have interpreted NATO's own jurisdiction very flexibly. Finnish readiness to adopt to this fact of constant change is underdeveloped and might cause problems in the future.

Winston Churchill defined, in his broadcast on October 1, 1939, Russia as "a riddle, wrapped in a mystery, inside an enigma." The result of the war in Ukraine may be what it will be. Anyway, Russia will not disappear completely. Russia is not going to be blank. Over 144 million (or 147 million ones, if you accept the Russian narrative and include the population of Crimea), Russians and their more than 5000 nuclear weapons do not disappear overnight. Finns do realize that Russia will not be a hole in an unoccupied vacuum inside a void of an emptied space without humans. The space now occupied by the Russian federation will not in the foreseeable future be a free space full of nothingness. In the Theatre of the Real the Russian federation will not just disappear. There will always be something

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rather than nothing in Russia's current geolocation. Finland must have a relation to this entity. Even if you have to get along with the eastern neighbour, it does not eliminate the lack of trust.

This relation is shadowed with the knowledge of the dangers of living next door to Russia. Finns do remember the old Russian proverb which says: " *Казахский бержот што плохо лежит*" (also: Казак возьмет все, что не закреплено на земле) or "A Cossack will take whatever is not fixed to the ground" or "The Cossack takes everything that is loose". (Niinistö 2014)

When Finland and Sweden join NATO, the security architecture of northern Europe will change. Each country brings considerable military capabilities to the alliance. Consider air force, just as an example: With Sweden's advanced Gripen fighters added to the F35s now ordered or under delivery to Norway, Denmark and Finland, more than 250 highly modern fighters will be available in the region as a whole. Operated together, they will be a substantial force. (Bildt 2022)

All in all, in the words of the president Sauli Niinistö in his new year's speech for 2023 put it: "Others provide security for us; we provide security for others. Our membership will also strengthen the deterrence of NATO as a whole." (Niinistö 2023) The last comparable boost to Western security was when West Germany joined in 1955. NATO hasn't gained such a militarily capable member since Spain joined in 1982. Between Finland's geopolitical significance and military capability, it's no exaggeration to say the country's NATO membership has fundamentally altered the political-military picture of Europe. (Deni 2023)

One problem might arise as Finland will, no doubt, contribute at least its fair share to NATO. Some Finns might think that Finns contribute more than they should. I call it the *sucker effect*, whereby people want to withhold their contributions to a group to avoid being the victim of the social loafing or free riding efforts of other group members (see Wiberg 2016 for a general discussion). The sucker effect is simply the finding that some individuals/countries will reduce their individual effort when working on a group task because they fear becoming, or being seen as, a 'sucker', i.e. someone who contributes more to the group than others but receives the same

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reward. (Law 2012). The sucker effect is a group dynamic that occurs in the context of differential and/or unfair treatment of members of a group – generally in regard to rewards. The most common consequence is reduced effort on the part of those members who perceive themselves as “suckers,” or victims, of that treatment. (Calhoun 2012) A sucker is originally a slang term for someone considered gullible enough to fall for an obvious prank or con and go about unaware of it. A sucker is one who is easily deceived; a dupe, i.e. a person who is easily deceived or a person who unwittingly serves as the tool of another person or power. Generally speaking, people do not want to be suckers and nobody wants to be a sucker all the time. It remains to be seen whether Finland will become a constant sucker or not.

Finland joining NATO it is not the end point of Finland's foreign and security policy. Finland has military capabilities, which makes the country an interesting partner. The new member brings something to the table that other NATO member countries do not currently have but want.

Groucho Marx refused to join any club that would have anyone like him as a member. No-one in the Finnish political elite asks seriously, why so small part of NATO-member states fulfil the for decades valid criteria of spending at least two percent of their Gross Domestic Product, GDP on military matters. This is a mystery to most Finns or at least to those who are aware of this disturbing fact. It is no exaggeration to call this a taboo in the Finnish political discussion.

In 2006, NATO Defence Ministers agreed to commit a minimum of 2% of their GDP to defence spending to continue to ensure the Alliance’s military readiness. This guideline also serves as an indicator of a country’s political will to contribute to NATO’s common defence efforts since the defence capacity of each member has an impact on the overall perception of the Alliance’s credibility as a politico-military organisation. (Funding NATO 2022).

The record is not convincing: most member states do not meet the criteria. This has been the situation for quite some time, actually since the start of the Alliance.

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Oddly, this is not even discussed seriously among the member states. In Finland promises are made to be kept. *Pacta sunt servanda*. Sometimes this is stretched a bit too far, one might argue: After WWII Finland was the only country to pay war reparations in full.⁵⁸ (60 years after the war reparations)

What kind of a club tolerates that in 2022 only eight (Greece, USA, Poland, UK, Croatia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania) of 30 member states (27%) fulfil their obligation in this respect? And in 2023 only seven (23%) (the above bar Croatia)? (Nato 2022, Nato 2023). Finns will have difficulties in adopting to a political culture where words and deeds do not match. It is much easier for the Swedes.

58 Finland agreed to pay the reparations (300 M dollars in gold corresponding to 6,5 % of GDP) in the Moscow Armistice signed on 19 September 1944, the corresponding protocol was signed in December 1944. Approximately 340 000 railroad carloads were needed to deliver all reparations. The last dispatched train of the deliveries crossed the border between Finland and Soviet Union on 18 September 1952.

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