

END OF FINNISH NEUTRALITY AND THE EFFECTS OF THE WAR
IN UKRAINE ON MULTILATERALISM IN FINLAND

TUĞRUL BİLTEKİN

BOĞAZİÇİ UNIVERSITY

2025

END OF FINNISH NEUTRALITY AND THE EFFECTS OF THE WAR
IN UKRAINE ON MULTILATERALISM IN FINLAND

Thesis Submitted to the
Institute for Graduate Studies in Social Sciences
in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of

Master of Arts
in
Political Science and International Relations

by
Tuğrul Biltekin

Boğaziçi University

2025

End of Finnish Neutrality and the Effects of the War
in Ukraine on Multilateralism in Finland

The thesis of Tuğrul Biltekin
has been approved by:

Assoc. Prof. Zühre Aksoy Terzibaşoğlu
(Thesis Advisor)

Assoc. Prof. Alper Yağcı

Assist. Prof. Mehmet Ali Tuğtan
(External Member)

April 2025

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, Tuğrul Biltekin, certify that

- I am the sole author of this thesis and that I have fully acknowledged and documented in my thesis all sources of ideas and words, including digital resources, which have been produced or published by another person or institution;
- this thesis contains no material that has been submitted or accepted for a degree or diploma in any other educational institution;
- this is a true copy of the thesis approved by my advisor and thesis committee at Boğaziçi University, including final revisions required by them.

Signature.....

Date

ABSTRACT

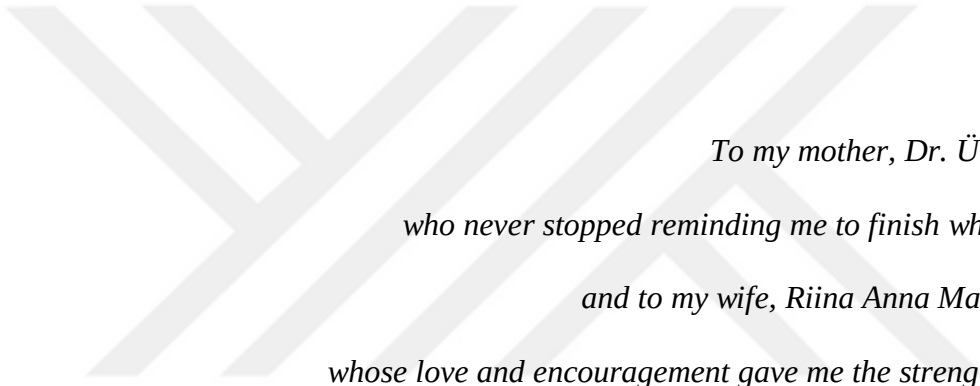
End of Finnish Neutrality and the Effects of the War in Ukraine on Multilateralism in Finland

This thesis analyses Finland's decision to join NATO, arguing that the move was not merely a reaction to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, but a strategic shift aligned with liberal internationalism. While security concerns increased, Finland's choice also reflected long-standing normative and institutional preferences. Using a qualitative case study, the research applies process tracing and structured comparison to official speeches, parliamentary records, and government reports. Findings indicate that liberal internationalism offers the most comprehensive explanation for Finland's foreign policy transformation. Realist views highlight threat perception but fail to explain Finland's consistent support for multilateral, rule-based security structures. Constructivist insights further illuminate how national identity and values influenced the departure from neutrality. Finland's NATO accession represents both a response to geopolitical threats and a conscious commitment to institutional integration. Rather than relying on ad-hoc deterrence, Finland sought stability through collective security. This thesis contributes to debates on alliance formation, small-state strategies, and the future of liberal institutions. It shows how Finland's case challenges traditional realist assumptions and exemplifies how small states can reinforce multilateralism during global uncertainty.

ÖZET

Finlandiya'nın Tarafsızlığının Sona Ermesi ve Ukrayna Savaşının Finlandiya'daki Çok Taraflılık Üzerindeki Etkileri

Bu tez, Finlandiya'nın NATO'ya katılım kararını incelemekte ve bu adımın yalnızca Rusya'nın Ukrayna'yı işgaline verilen bir tepki değil, liberal uluslararasılıkla uyumlu stratejik bir yönelim olduğunu öne sürmektedir. Güvenlik kaygıları artsa da, Finlandiya'nın tercihi uzun süredir devam eden normatif ve kurumsal yönelimleri de yansıtmaktadır. Niteliksel bir vaka çalışması olarak yapılandırılan araştırma, süreç izleme ve yapılandırılmış karşılaştırma yöntemlerini; resmi konuşmalar, parlamento tutanakları ve hükümet raporları üzerinde uygulamaktadır. Bulgular, Finlandiya'nın dış politika dönüşümünü en kapsamlı şekilde açıklayan yaklaşımın liberal uluslararasılık olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır. Realist görüşler tehdit algısına odaklansa da, Finlandiya'nın çok taraflı ve kurallara dayalı güvenlik yapılarına verdiği sürekli desteği tam olarak açıklayamamaktadır. Yapısalcı bakış açısı ise ulusal kimlik ve değerlerin tarafsızlıktan vazgeçilmesindeki etkisini aydınlatmaktadır. Finlandiya'nın NATO üyeliği, jeopolitik tehditlere verilen bir yanıt olmanın yanı sıra kurumsal entegrasyona yönelik bilinçli bir taahhüdü de temsil etmektedir. Finlandiya, düzensiz caydırıcılık yerine kolektif güvenlik yoluyla istikrar aramıştır. Bu tez, ittifak oluşumu, küçük devlet stratejileri ve liberal kurumların geleceği konularına katkı sunmakta; Finlandiya örneğinin realist varsayımlara meydan okuduğunu ve küresel belirsizlik dönemlerinde küçük devletlerin çok taraflılığı nasıl güçlendirebileceğini göstermektedir.



*To my mother, Dr. Ülkü Biltekin,
who never stopped reminding me to finish what I started,
and to my wife, Riina Anna Maria Biltekin,
whose love and encouragement gave me the strength to return,
thirty years later, and finally complete this journey.*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Background.....	5
1.2 Research question and objectives.....	9
1.3 Theoretical framework: Liberal internationalism.....	10
1.4 Methodology	32
1.5 Significance of the study.....	35
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW	38
2.1 Finland's foreign policy.....	38
2.2 Finland's neutrality policy	53
2.3 Multilateralism and Finnish foreign policy.....	61
CHAPTER 3: THE WAR IN UKRAINE	73
3.1 The war in Ukraine: Background and causes.....	75
3.2 Geopolitical, economic, and humanitarian implications	78
3.3 Finland's strategic response	80
3.4 Conclusion	83
CHAPTER 4: THE END OF FINNISH NEUTRALITY	86
4.1 Finland's historical policy of neutrality.....	87
4.2 The evolution of Finnish neutrality	91
4.3 The impact of the war in Ukraine on Finnish neutrality.....	96
4.4 Conclusion	98
CHAPTER 5: MULTILATERALISM AND FINLAND	101
5.1 The role of multilateralism in Finnish foreign policy.....	101
5.2 The impact of the war in Ukraine on Finnish multilateralism	105
5.3 Finland's engagement in multilateral organizations.....	108
5.4 Conclusion	112
CHAPTER 6: ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION.....	113
6.1 The impact of the war in Ukraine on Finnish foreign policy.....	113
6.2 The implications for Finland's security and defense.....	120
6.3 The implications for Finland's multilateralism.....	124
CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION	130
7.1 Key findings.....	130
7.2 Implications.....	131

7.3 Contributions to theoretical debates	132
7.4 Limitations and future research directions.....	133
7.5 Revisiting Finland's choice considering global shifts	134
7.6 Final reflections.....	135
REFERENCES	137



ABBREVIATIONS

COVID	Coronavirus Disease
CSDP	Common Security and Defense Policy
ESDP	European Security and Defense Policy
EU	European Union
FIIA	Finnish Institute of International Affairs
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IMF	International Monetary Fund
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PfP	Partnership for Peace
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
US	United States
WHO	World Health Organization
WTO	World Trade Organization
WWII	World War II
Yle	Finnish Broadcasting Company

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

For decades, Finland's policy of neutrality allowed it to maintain stability in a complex geopolitical landscape. However, the war in Ukraine and worsening Russia-West relations exposed vulnerabilities in this approach, prompting a strategic reassessment. On March 1, 2023, the Finnish Parliament approved country's NATO membership. Finland's decision to join NATO in 2023 was the culmination of a decades-long security evolution, rather than an abrupt shift. While the war in Ukraine accelerated this process, Finland had already aligned its defense policies with NATO's strategic objectives through joint exercises, interoperability programs, and Western security cooperation long before its official application.

This thesis contributes to the literature by offering a focused analysis of Finland's transition through the lens of liberal internationalism. By integrating thematic analysis with process tracing, it provides a nuanced understanding of how small states can leverage multilateralism to navigate systemic challenges. The study also fills a gap in the existing research by contextualizing Finland's NATO membership within the broader liberalist framework, offering insights into the interplay between normative values and strategic imperatives.

Finland's Foreign Policy Shift in a Changing Security Landscape:

The decision to join NATO reflected Finland's recognition that neutrality alone could no longer guarantee security in an era of geopolitical instability (Finnish Parliament, 2024a). As President Alexander Stubb emphasized: "Finland is an open society. Openness means free media, lively civil dialogue, democratic decision-making and respect for the rule of law. Hostile actors may try to use this openness

against us. Sometimes we are frustrated by the system's unresponsiveness and slowness. But openness and democracy are strengths" (Stubbs, 2025a). This statement underscores Finland's rationale for choosing NATO, as the alliance's core values align with Finland's long-standing democratic principles.

The thesis examines how Finland's security concerns, particularly following the war in Ukraine, accelerated its already ongoing integration into NATO. This shift was not merely a reaction to Russian aggression but a deliberate strategy to embed Finland's security within multilateral frameworks that emphasize institutional cooperation, regional stability, and collective defense. As Minister for Foreign Affairs Elina Valtonen stated: "European security and strategic competitiveness go hand in hand. A strong and competitive single market and sustainable economic growth are strategic goals in themselves. They also facilitate investments in our common security and defence" (Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, 2025). This demonstrates how Finland's NATO membership aligns not just with military security concerns but with broader regional stability and economic interdependence, which are key tenets of liberal institutionalism.

This thesis explores the influence of the war in Ukraine on Finnish multilateralism. It examines how the war exposed the limits of neutrality for small states, highlighting Finland's vulnerabilities within existing security frameworks. Consequently, Finland has reassessed its security policy and deepened its engagement with international organizations, aligning with multilateral governance principles. As Minister for Foreign Affairs Valtonen highlighted: "Changes in the operating environment and new kinds of threats require new responses. [...] Strengthening European security is a key priority for us" (Ministry for Foreign

Affairs of Finland, 2025). This underscores Finland's initiative-taking role in maintaining European stability through NATO, the EU, and OSCE mechanisms.

In his April 4, 2023, statement, then Finnish President Sauli Niinistö described NATO membership as essential for Finland's security and a demonstration of its commitment to collective defense and multilateral cooperation within a rules-based order. President Niinistö emphasized: "NATO membership ensures Finland's security while aligning with democratic norms" (Niinistö, 2023)

NATO Membership as a Strategic and Normative Decision:

The war in Ukraine highlighted the complexities of Finland's foreign policy, reinforcing a shift that had been gradually unfolding since the end of the Cold War. It emphasized the growing significance of multilateralism, not as a sudden departure from neutrality, but as a logical extension of Finland's evolving security strategy.

This conflict marked a critical juncture, compelling Finland to reassess its stance on neutrality and prioritize collective defense through NATO membership. However, Finland's accession to NATO was not only a security decision but also a commitment to strengthening the alliance's collective defense structure. By fully integrating into NATO's strategic framework, Finland enhanced regional security coordination, reinforced European deterrence efforts, and contributed to the alliance's broader multilateral governance mechanisms. This move demonstrates how small states can navigate geopolitical uncertainty by embedding themselves within institutional security frameworks rather than relying on unilateral deterrence alone.

By analyzing Finland's foreign policy adjustments through the lens of liberal internationalism, this thesis addresses crucial questions about how the conflict reshaped Finland's perception of security risks and its engagement with neighboring

countries, the EU, and NATO. The study contributes to debates on European security and the role of small states, highlighting Finland's ability to adapt its foreign policy to evolving geopolitical challenges. This transition aligns with broader patterns observed among small liberal states, which often navigate external pressures through multilateral engagement and institutional alignment. As Michalski et al. (2024) note, the weakening of the international rules-based order has compelled states like Finland to recalibrate their foreign policy roles, prioritizing security through alliances such as NATO.

The thesis will argue that Finland's decision to join NATO reflects its commitment to liberal principles, particularly multilateralism, democratic governance, and institutional collaboration. By embedding its security strategy within multilateral frameworks like NATO, Finland aligns with liberal internationalism's emphasis on fostering cooperation and ensuring collective security through shared governance. The thesis will show that this strategic shift not only addresses immediate security threats but also reinforces Finland's role in upholding a rules-based international order.

While realism, particularly Walt's Balance of Threat (BoT) theory, explains Finland's NATO accession in terms of external security threats, it does not fully account for Finland's preference for institutional security over independent deterrence. If Finland's NATO accession were purely a reaction to military threats, a realist approach would suggest a focus on military buildup or bilateral defense pacts rather than full NATO integration. Instead, Finland actively sought multilateral security guarantees, aligning with the liberal internationalist argument that security is best ensured through institutional cooperation rather than unilateral balancing. BoT theory suggests that states are not merely against the strongest powers but those

perceived as the greatest threats (Walt, 1985). While this theory offers insights into Finland's evolving threat perception, a more detailed discussion of its applicability and limitations will follow in Section 1.3.3.

This thesis argues that Finland's choice reflects a broader liberal commitment to multilateral institutions and democratic values. Liberalism offers a more holistic perspective, situating Finland's response within a framework of institutional collaboration and normative alignment, rather than solely focusing on immediate security concerns.

1.1 Background

Finland's historical neutrality, rooted in pragmatic diplomacy during the Cold War, allowed it to balance relations with both the West and the Soviet Union. However, the war in Ukraine has exposed vulnerabilities in this approach, compelling Finland to reevaluate its stance on neutrality and prioritize multilateral engagement grounded in liberal internationalism.

Cold War Neutrality and the Evolution Toward NATO:

Throughout the Cold War, Finland maintained a policy of neutrality under a strategy often referred to as Finlandization. This term describes the country's careful balancing act, preserving sovereignty while accommodating Soviet interests to avoid direct confrontation. While this policy allowed Finland to maintain independence and democratic institutions, it also imposed foreign policy constraints, limiting its ability to fully align with Western security structures.

Cold War neutrality, or "Finlandization" shaped Finland's strategic approach, but post-1995 EU membership marked a gradual shift toward deeper institutional security cooperation (Zimmermanová et al., 2020). This transition is discussed

further in Chapter 4. Finland's EU membership reinforced its role in global governance structures such as the WTO and OSCE, prioritizing legal norms and collective decision-making. This integration demonstrated Finland's long-standing liberal orientation.

From EU Integration to NATO: Finland's Gradual Security Transition:

Finland's security policy shift toward NATO was not an abrupt decision but rather a gradual evolution influenced by geopolitical realities and domestic factors. While Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 intensified the security debate, Finland did not immediately pursue NATO membership but instead expanded its defense cooperation with NATO. Three key factors explain this measured approach:

1. Public Opinion and Political Hesitations:

In 2014, Finnish public support for NATO remained low, with polls indicating that only 26% of Finns favored NATO membership. This reluctance reflected a broader political consensus that while NATO was a valuable security partner, full membership might unnecessarily provoke Russia.

By contrast, following Russia's 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine, public opinion shifted dramatically (Clausnitzer, 2022). This issue is discussed in more detail in section 2.1.3 Recent shifts and influences.

2. Russia's Security Posture and Hybrid Warfare Focus:

Unlike in 2022, when Russia directly threatened Finland and Sweden over NATO membership, its 2014 actions were focused on Crimea and Eastern Ukraine. While Russia's increasing hybrid threats and airspace violations were acknowledged in Finnish security assessments, policymakers at the time believed that enhanced defense cooperation, not full NATO integration, was sufficient to deter potential aggression.

By 2022, however, the collapse of European security norms and Russia's escalatory rhetoric made NATO membership the only viable long-term security guarantee (Ministry of Defence, 2023).

3. Strategic and Diplomatic Caution:

In 2014, Finland maintained a pragmatic balancing strategy, preferring to strengthen EU defense mechanisms and NATO partnerships rather than seek immediate membership. Finnish policymakers feared that an application for NATO at that time could be interpreted by Moscow as a hostile act, increasing regional tensions without providing immediate security benefits.

By 2022, however, the strategic consensus had changed, Russia's aggression against Ukraine had irreversibly altered Finland's security landscape, leading to a broad political agreement that NATO membership was the only path to long-term security stability (FIIA, 2024).

Thus, Finland's NATO accession in 2023 was not simply a reaction to immediate threats but a result of years of gradual security alignment, shaped by evolving public opinion, changing Russian behavior, and the realization that neutrality no longer provided sufficient deterrence.

As highlighted by a Finnish Parliament affiliated Finnish Institute of International Affairs - FIIA's Briefing Paper, this transition represents not only a strategic shift but also a reaffirmation of Finland's dedication to shared governance and mutual defense (FIIA, 2022). The war in Ukraine accelerated this transition, prompting Finland's 2023 decision to join NATO as part of its alignment with collective security frameworks (Finnish Parliament, 2024a).

The war in Ukraine and escalating security concerns have driven Finland to adjust its foreign policy. Its NATO membership on April 4, 2023, marked a

departure from non-alignment while Finland's stance has evolved over time.

Historically, Finland adopted a policy of neutrality during the Cold War to navigate the delicate balance between East and West. However, after the Cold War, Finland's policy shifted towards military non-alignment. This means that while Finland is not a member of any military alliance, it has engaged in extensive defense cooperation with NATO and other Western countries. In summary, Finland has transitioned from a policy of neutrality to one of military non-alignment, reflecting its changing security and defense priorities, as not only a response to immediate threats but also a strategic commitment to the liberal principle of collective defense to promote regional stability and global peace.

The war in Ukraine has significantly shaped Finland's approach to multilateralism, requiring careful navigation of economic ties with Russia while maintaining solidarity with the EU and NATO. Finland's active participation in global institutions like the UN and OSCE underscores its dedication to liberal principles of cooperation and shared governance. However, the complexities of maintaining a multilateral strategy in a rapidly evolving geopolitical landscape highlight the tension between liberal ideals and the practical demands of international relations.

1.2 Research question and objectives

Research Question:

How does Finland's transition from neutrality to institutional alignment, examined through liberal internationalism, redefine its regional security role and influence in global governance?

Objectives:

1. Analyze the historical evolution of Finnish neutrality through liberalism, emphasizing the influence of international institutions, democratic principles, and collective security frameworks on Finland's foreign policy.
2. Examine the transformative impact of the war in Ukraine on Finland's foreign policy, particularly its shift from neutrality to NATO membership and institutional alignment.
3. Assess Finland's strategic engagement within regional and global institutions, focusing on how its multilateral strategies advance democratic norms and collective security.
4. Evaluate the implications of Finland's multilateralism post-neutrality, particularly its role in NATO and its contributions to European stability.
5. Investigate how liberal internationalism explains Finland's transition to institutional alignment, offering insights into the adaptability of small states within evolving geopolitical contexts.

1.3 Theoretical framework: Liberal internationalism

Why Liberal Internationalism Best Explains Finland's NATO Accession:

Liberal internationalism is the dominant theoretical framework guiding this thesis, explaining Finland's NATO accession as an institutional alignment rather than a reactive security move. While elements of liberal institutionalism and economic interdependence contribute to the analysis, the primary argument remains that Finland strategically embedded its security policy within NATO's multilateral framework as part of its long-standing commitment to institutional cooperation and collective security.

Finland's decision to join NATO was not merely a pragmatic security move but a continuation of its long-standing commitment to rule-based governance, where security is achieved through institutionalized cooperation rather than unilateral military balancing. As a democracy embedded in the EU, OSCE, and other international institutions, Finland has historically prioritized rule-based cooperation over unilateralism. NATO membership aligns with this broader liberal approach, reinforcing Finland's role in strengthening institutional stability, rather than solely reacting to external threats. The shift therefore represents both a strategic security choice and a reaffirmation of Finland's normative commitment to liberal governance and multilateralism.

Multilateral Security as Finland's Strategic Choice:

Collective security mechanisms promote stability by fostering cooperation and shared responsibility among states. Research indicates that practicing collective security principles enhances both system endurance and individual state survival in a realist world (Cusack & Stoll, 1994). As a small state navigating an unpredictable geopolitical environment, Finland has sought to embed its security strategy within

institutional frameworks that emphasize cooperation among democracies. This decision aligns with liberalism's assertion that collective security mechanisms, such as NATO, mitigate the risks of anarchy in the international system while reinforcing the norms of democratic governance and institutional collaboration (Ruggie, 1992; Tesón, 2011).

Liberal internationalism serves as the primary theoretical framework of this study, emphasizing multilateral institutions, democratic governance, and cooperative security as key mechanisms for ensuring long-term stability (Keohane, 2012). Unlike realism, which interprets Finland's NATO accession as a reaction to external threats, liberalism explains it as a strategic choice for institutional security. While Walt's BoT theory suggests Finland joined NATO solely in response to Russian aggression, this thesis demonstrates that Finland had already pursued deeper security integration before 2022, reflecting a liberal commitment to multilateralism. As elements of liberal institutionalism and economic interdependence are relevant, the core argument remains that Finland strategically pursued NATO membership as part of its long-term commitment to institutionalized security cooperation.

As has been mentioned before, the thesis adopts liberal internationalism as its primary framework, while also incorporating elements of liberal institutionalism, which focuses on the role of institutions in shaping cooperation, and economic interdependence theory, which highlights how economic ties reduce conflict. Elements of liberal institutionalism are incorporated to analyze Finland's policy shift through its deeper institutional integration within NATO (Keohane & Martin, 1995).

Liberal theories of international relations emphasize the influence of individuals and social groups on state policy, highlighting state-society connections, interdependence, and decision-making processes (Moravcsik, 2012). They also

prioritize human rights advocacy, and the establishment of a liberal system rooted in universal ethical values (Garaee & Moradi, 2016). In addition, it is considered that liberal institutions and values have a pacifying influence. However, historical examples reveal a conflict between the warlike history of liberal governments and the anticipation of pacifism (Doyle, 2019).

In general, liberalism in foreign policy prioritizes the protection of freedom, advancement of democracy and human rights, and the creation of a liberal global system; in International Relations it emphasizes the role of institutions, norms, and democratic governance in mitigating anarchy and fostering cooperation. Central to this is the concept of institutionalism, which argues that international organizations like NATO and the EU enable states to address shared security concerns through structured collaboration. Liberal internationalism, as articulated by Tesón (2011), underscores Finland's strategic shift toward NATO as an extension of its commitment to democratic governance, institutional cooperation, and collective security.

During parliamentary debates, Finnish leaders repeatedly emphasized NATO's role in enhancing multilateral cooperation, reflecting Finland's alignment with liberal principles of shared governance and institutional collaboration (Finnish Parliament, 2024b). Furthermore, President Niinistö underscored the importance of Finland's NATO membership for fostering democratic unity and strengthening collective security, in line with liberal values (Niinistö, 2023). In his March 2024 address, President Niinistö reiterated the necessity of NATO membership for democratic unity and collective security, underscoring Finland's liberal approach to foreign policy (Niinistö, 2024).

By prioritizing institutional collaboration, Finland exemplifies the liberalist assertion that shared governance and adherence to norms provide a more sustainable and cooperative approach to addressing security challenges than unilateral strategies. In building upon the liberalist foundations mentioned above, it is important to underscore how contemporary scholars analyze and critique liberal institutionalism, the idea that international institutions, norms, and laws create collective rules to encourage cooperation among states (Su, 2023). Traditionally, liberal institutionalism rests on three main pillars: democratic governance, free-market economies, and multilateral frameworks (Lake, 2020). These pillars work in tandem to reduce uncertainty and promote mutual gains, thus facilitating more stable and peaceful interstate relations. However, recent research shows that such institutional logic can be undermined by power asymmetries, the rise of authoritarian states that dispute liberal norms, and the domestic populist backlashes within democratic countries themselves (de Robertis & Tkachenko, 2020; Simmons & Goemans, 2021).

Scholarly debates also highlight that liberal institutions often embody the policy preferences of dominant democratic powers, most notably the United States and its Western allies, while smaller or emerging states feel pressured to align to these frameworks (Bátora, 2021). This alignment can generate tensions, as institutions like the WTO or the IMF are sometimes perceived as benefiting core members at the expense of states with limited bargaining power. Additionally, as Lake (2020) observes, if great powers pull back from their commitments to sustain these institutions, whether due to shifting domestic politics or alternative economic models proposed by rival powers, the liberal international order can be thrown into question.

Closely tied to liberal institutionalism is democratic peace theory, which posits that democracies are less likely to engage in war with each other due to shared norms, institutional checks, and interdependent economic ties (Dunne, 2009). While robust empirical support confirms that democracies rarely fight, critics warn against conflating correlation with causation. Some note that shared strategic interests, rather than democratic values alone, might drive peace (Wu, 2014). Others point to the fact that democracies still occasionally wage war or support interventionist policies against non-democratic regimes (Bakker, 2020).

Indeed, as Debebe (2019) demonstrates in a post-conflict African context, transplanting liberal or democratic frameworks into societies fractured by violence can inadvertently encourage renewed tensions if local political cultures are not integrated. In that sense, the universalistic premise of democratic peace theory must be revisited to ensure it accommodates historical legacies, regional security dynamics, and the voices of diverse stakeholders (Simmons & Goemans, 2021). Hence, while democratic peace theory remains central to liberalism's explanatory power, the theory's assumptions can be evaluated in cases, such as Finland, where democracy and institutional alignments (e.g., membership in the EU or NATO) converge with distinct security concerns.

While democratic peace theory posits that democracies are less likely to engage in conflict with one another due to shared norms and institutional constraints, economic interdependence highlights how trade and economic ties create mutual benefits, reducing the likelihood of conflict. Economic interdependence, often discussed as part of liberal institutionalism, suggests that states embedded in economic and institutional networks are less likely to engage in conflict (Keohane & Nye, 1977).

As economic interdependence plays a supporting role in Finland's security realignment, this thesis centers on liberal internationalism, emphasizing the primacy of multilateral security over economic interconnectedness. In Finland's case, its long-standing economic integration with the EU and cooperative security arrangements with NATO members further reinforced the rationale for NATO accession (Keohane & Martin, 1995). Economic incentives thus complemented security motivations, aligning with the broader liberal institutionalist arguments. As previously mentioned, Liberal institutionalism underscores the importance of multilateral organizations in fostering cooperation, resolving disputes, and ensuring stability. Together, these tenets explain how liberal principles guide state behavior in promoting a rules-based international order. Finland's alignment with NATO exemplifies these tenets, particularly institutionalism, as it seeks to embed its security strategy within a multilateral framework that promotes collective action and shared governance.

1.3.1 Justification for selecting liberal internationalism

The selection of liberal internationalism as the theoretical framework for this thesis is driven by its direct applicability to analyzing Finland's foreign policy, particularly its shift from neutrality to NATO membership in response to the war in Ukraine. While realism highlights Finland's security concerns, it primarily views state behavior through the lens of power politics and military balancing. However, Finland's NATO accession was not just a reaction to immediate threats but a broader strategic realignment within multilateral institutions.

Liberal internationalism provides a more comprehensive explanation by situating Finland's decision within a framework of multilateral cooperation,

democratic values, and institutional security commitments, aspects that realism tends to overlook. Unlike realism, which primarily views NATO membership as a response to immediate security threats, liberalism emphasizes the role of institutions, norms, and collective governance, which better explains Finland's long-term strategic alignment with Western institutions.

Liberal internationalism, as a theoretical framework, posits that international stability and peace are best maintained through institutionalized cooperation, democratic governance, and economic interdependence (Ikenberry, 2018). Keohane (2012) argues that liberal internationalism provides a means of global order through a rules-based system, reducing the likelihood of unilateral aggression. Finland's NATO accession was not merely a defensive reaction to Russia's actions but a proactive strategic choice to institutionalize its security within multilateral frameworks. Finland's evolving security policy reflects a broader trend among small liberal states adapting to shifting geopolitical dynamics. This transition aligns with shelter theory, wherein small states historically seek security and political protection from Western institutions. Finland's NATO membership is the latest phase of a long-standing shelter-seeking strategy, previously reflected in its EU membership, Nordic cooperation, and even its Cold War neutrality. The necessity for credible and efficient security guarantees has remained a consistent driver of Finland's foreign policy (Thorhallsson & Stude Vidal, 2023). By embedding itself within NATO, Finland ensures access to a reliable security framework that complements its long-standing commitment to institutional cooperation and collective security.

In Finland's case, its NATO accession can be seen as an extension of these principles, as it sought institutional alignment rather than simply balancing against an external military threat. Unlike a purely realist approach that would emphasize

military deterrence alone, Finland's decision reflects a deeper commitment to institutional cooperation, shared governance, and democratic stability within a collective framework (Pesu & Iso-Markku, 2024).

In conclusion, while the war in Ukraine accelerated Finland's decision-making process, its NATO accession was the result of a long-term evolution in security thinking, shaped by Finland's broader commitment to institutional engagement. By embedding itself within NATO, Finland ensures that its security policy remains tied to a broader rules-based order, reinforcing the liberalist argument that long-term stability is best maintained through structured cooperation rather than ad hoc alliances. This framework underscores Finland's strategic engagement with multilateral organizations like NATO and the EU, emphasizing collaboration over unilateralism.

Liberalism's emphasis on safeguarding liberty and promoting global freedom aligns closely with Finland's liberal internationalist approach. This approach integrates multilateralism, institutional cooperation, and democratic governance, providing a basis for Finland's decision to join NATO. By embedding its security strategy within multilateral frameworks, Finland demonstrates how liberalism facilitates collective defense while reinforcing shared values and institutional norms.

1.3.2 Realism vs. liberalism in Finland's NATO shift

While realism emphasizes Finland's pragmatic response to external threats, particularly Russian aggression, it frames NATO membership as a strategic adaptation to shifting power dynamics in an anarchic system (Sterling-Folker, 1997; Taliaferro et al., 2009). Realism highlights the interplay between structural international factors and domestic political pressures in shaping foreign policy decisions.

Neorealism, similarly, focuses on how the structure of the international system influences state behavior. In this case, Finland's alignment with NATO can be viewed as a response to the changing balance of power in Europe, particularly in reaction to Russian aggression. Structural constraints push states like Finland to align with stronger powers, enhancing their security within an anarchic international system (Sterling-Folker, 1997).

The Limits of Realism in Explaining Finland's NATO Membership

However, while realism and neorealism provide valuable insights into Finland's security concerns, they fail to explain why Finland actively sought to embed itself in NATO's political and strategic decision-making structures. Realism views alliances as temporary, interest-driven arrangements, yet Finland's NATO accession reflects a long-term commitment to a multilateral security architecture. This broader institutional and normative dimension, central to liberalism, is key to understanding Finland's shift away from neutrality. Liberalism offers a more comprehensive perspective, emphasizing Finland's alignment with multilateral institutions, its commitment to democratic values, and its pursuit of long-term stability through collective governance. This alignment underscores the practical application of

liberalism in addressing security challenges, promoting human rights, and strengthening global cooperation.

Despite the strong case for selecting liberalism as a guiding theory, recent scholarship shows how liberalism's universal claims can clash with deeply ingrained sovereign boundaries and national identities (Simmons & Goemans, 2021). These researchers argue that liberalism often assumes that open markets, democratic norms, and supranational institutions seamlessly override territorial sovereignty. In practice, however, states remain protective of physical borders and use them to shape group identities, especially in times of geopolitical tension (de Robertis & Tkachenko, 2020).

These critiques do not negate the value of a liberal framework, but they do highlight the importance of balancing liberal assumptions with realist considerations about state power, domestic politics, and the constraints of historical alliances. For Finland in particular, as a small democracy managing its relationship with Russia, it is crucial to recognize that while liberal institutionalism offers powerful tools, such as EU membership and a robust partnership with NATO, territorial imperatives and historical neutrality traditions cannot be dismissed. Liberal theory thus proves valuable, but its universal premises require context-specific calibration to ensure that democratization, institutional cooperation, and sovereignty concerns are jointly addressed.

However, Liberalism's focus on institutional collaboration and collective action still provides the most effective framework for analyzing Finland's foreign policy adjustments. It highlights how Finland's alignment with NATO reflects a broader commitment to multilateralism and the liberal principles that have long shaped its international strategy.

1.3.3 Connection to Finland's foreign policy changes

Finland's foreign policy adjustments reflect a convergence of theoretical insights, where liberalism provides the foundational framework, complemented by realism and constructivism to explain the strategic and normative dimensions of its shift to NATO membership. Realism explains Finland's response to external threats, but it does not fully capture the role of identity transformation and democratic norms, which constructivism helps elucidate.

As stated above, while realism frames Finland's NATO membership as a pragmatic response to Russian aggression and shifting power dynamics (Sterling-Folker, 1997), this perspective does not fully explain Finland's active pursuit of deeper institutional integration. Liberalism situates this decision within Finland's broader commitment to multilateralism and institutional collaboration, highlighting how NATO membership aligns with Finland's strategic goal of embedding itself within cooperative security frameworks rather than merely responding to immediate threats. Realism focuses on power politics and self-help, but it does not fully account for Finland's deliberate institutional integration with NATO beyond mere security concerns. Unlike a purely defensive alignment, Finland's NATO accession represents a deeper commitment to collective governance, mutual obligations, and democratic security partnerships. By embedding its foreign policy within these frameworks, Finland reflects the liberal assertion that global stability is best achieved through shared governance and adherence to international norms (Tesón, 2011).

Institutional Alignment and Finland's Democratic Identity:

Realist scholars, most notably Mearsheimer (2017), challenge the effectiveness of international institutions, arguing that they merely reflect underlying power

structures rather than genuinely constrain state behavior. While this critique holds in some cases, Finland's NATO accession demonstrates that institutions can serve as security stabilizers by creating binding commitments, fostering military interoperability, and ensuring collective action in times of crisis. He contends that states act in their own security interests, and institutional commitments cannot override the anarchic nature of the international system. However, Keohane and Martin (1995) counter this view, asserting that institutions facilitate cooperation by reducing uncertainty and creating long-term incentives for compliance. Finland's decision to join NATO demonstrates this institutional logic, as it sought legally binding security guarantees rather than relying on informal balancing mechanisms.

Stephen Walt's BoT theory refines the classical realist balance of power model by arguing that states align not simply against the most powerful state but against the one they perceive as the greatest threat (Walt, 1985). This threat perception is shaped by four key factors: aggregate power, offensive capabilities, geographic proximity, and perceived intentions (Walt, 1990). Finland's strategic calculations shifted not only due to Russia's military strength but because of an increasing perception that Russia was willing to use force unpredictably and in violation of international norms. This shift in perceived intentions made NATO membership a logical response within the BoT framework.

In the case of Finland's NATO accession, Walt (2022) argues that the defining factor was not just Russia's military strength but its increased willingness to use force against its neighbors. Finland did not join NATO during the Cold War, despite Soviet military superiority, because the Soviet Union had not exhibited direct military aggression toward Finland after World War II. However, Russia's invasion

of Ukraine in 2022 demonstrated a shift in its perceived intentions, making NATO membership appear necessary (Walt, 2022).

While BoT theory explains why Finland perceived Russia as a growing security threat, it does not fully account for why Finland joined NATO rather than seeking alternative balancing mechanisms, such as deepening bilateral security arrangements. Liberalism provides a more comprehensive explanation by highlighting Finland's preference for institutionalized security guarantees and multilateral cooperation rather than unilateral deterrence strategies. If Finland's alignment with NATO were solely driven by immediate military threats, it would have pursued membership after the annexation of Crimea in 2014. However, at that time, Finnish policymakers opted for a more cautious approach, choosing to enhance NATO cooperation rather than seek full membership. Instead, Finland pursued deeper interoperability with NATO while maintaining formal non-alignment (FIIA, 2022).

By contrast, the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 fundamentally altered Finland's strategic calculations. Unlike in 2014, when political elites exercised caution regarding NATO membership, the events of 2022 led to a rapid shift in public opinion, with strong majority support emerging in favor of NATO accession. This domestic political dynamic reinforced Finland's strategic shift and made NATO membership the only viable security option within a democratic decision-making framework. Russia's actions were now perceived as a direct and immediate challenge to the European security order, triggering a rapid shift in Finnish public opinion and political consensus (Yle, 2022).

Liberal internationalism offers a more complete explanation by emphasizing how Finland's decision was not just about military security but also about embedding

itself in institutional structures that reinforce long-term stability, economic security, and democratic values (Pesu & Iso-Markku, 2024). Finland's accession to NATO was not purely a reaction to an external threat but a deliberate effort to align with multilateral governance frameworks that ensure collective defense, shared security, and institutional cooperation (Finnish Parliament, 2023; FIIA, 2022). As Moravcsik (2012) argues, states often seek institutional alignment not merely for immediate defense but to secure long-term benefits through structured cooperation. Finland's decision reflects this logic, demonstrating a shift from reactive threat balancing to a broader commitment to international governance and multilateral security.

Furthermore, Finland's NATO accession was shaped by democratic deliberations, parliamentary consensus, and alignment with Western institutional norms, aspects that realism does not sufficiently explain (Koskimaa & Raunio, 2024).

1.3.4 Constructivism, identity, and Finland's NATO integration

The liberal perspective is further enriched by the incorporation of constructivist insights, which highlight the importance of identity and norms in shaping state behavior. As Katzenstein (1996) argues, state interests are not merely a reflection of material capabilities but are constructed through social interactions and the internalization of global norms. Finland's NATO membership was shaped by a broader normative transformation, as seen in parliamentary discussions and the government's strategic framing of security threats (Finnish Parliament, 2024b). Finland's identity as a democratic, neutral state is being redefined in response to external security threats, particularly the war in Ukraine, displaying how global liberal norms influence domestic policy shifts. The interplay between these

international norms and Finland's internal practices illustrates how the country has adapted its foreign policy to align with broader Western security frameworks (Cortell & Davis 2005), embracing liberal principles of multilateralism and collective defense. NATO's partnership with Finland has been built on shared democratic principles and mutual respect for multilateralism. This collaboration underscores Finland's alignment with liberal internationalism, where cooperation strengthens collective security (NATO, 2023).

Constructivism complements this analysis by explaining how Finland's evolving national identity and historical memory played a role in shaping public and elite perceptions of security. Constructivist perspectives highlight Finland's identity shift. The abandonment of neutrality was not solely based on security concerns but also on a redefinition of national identity in response to evolving European security norms. However, while constructivism accounts for why Finland perceived NATO as a desirable security partner, liberal internationalism provides the strongest framework for understanding the institutional mechanisms through which Finland sought collective security guarantees.

Constructivism provides additional insights by highlighting Finland's evolving national identity, shaped by historical experiences, social contexts, and the internalization of liberal norms (Wendt, 1999; Katzenstein, 1996). Finland's shift from neutrality to NATO membership reflects a broader normative transformation, where security concerns intersect with evolving national identity. By aligning itself with Western defense mechanisms and liberal democratic governance, Finland actively repositioned itself within the Euro-Atlantic security community, reinforcing its self-perception as a fully integrated Western democracy. This shift is not just about security but also about Finland redefining its international role.

By joining NATO, Finland aligns itself with a community of states that share common democratic values and principles of collective defense, reinforcing its identity as a fully integrated Western nation rather than a peripheral neutral actor. This shift illustrates how Finland's security choices were not only shaped by external threats but also by an internal redefinition of its role as a committed member of the liberal international order. Parliamentary debates and government statements further illustrate this shift, framing NATO membership as both a security strategy and a reflection of Finland's values-driven approach to international relations (Finnish Parliament, 2024b). This rhetorical framing was not merely a justification for NATO membership but part of a deeper reconceptualization of Finland's role in global politics. The war in Ukraine accelerated this identity shift, reinforcing the perception that Finland belonged to a democratic alliance that upholds shared norms and values rather than remaining in a strategic grey zone.

Katzenstein's work on norms and identity in national security (1996) demonstrates how international norms shape state behavior and influence state identities. In Finland's case, this identity transformation was reinforced by institutional choices, such as deepening ties with the EU and NATO, which not only provided security benefits but also reaffirmed Finland's self-image as a European democracy committed to multilateralism. The war in Ukraine accelerated a shift in national self-perception, pushing policymakers and the public toward a security framework that prioritizes institutional solidarity over past neutrality. This perspective explains why Finland's decision to join NATO was framed not only as a strategic necessity but also as a reaffirmation of its liberal-democratic values, further reinforcing its institutional commitment to the West. Finland's integration into NATO marks a redefinition of its historical neutrality, signalling a deeper alignment

with Western security norms and a commitment to multilateral cooperation. Rather than being merely a pragmatic security calculation, Finland's decision to join NATO reflects a deeper internalization of Western security norms. The shift is driven by an evolving national discourse that increasingly sees NATO membership as a natural extension of Finland's commitment to democratic governance, rule-based international order, and collective responsibility.

Together, realism and constructivism enrich our understanding of Finland's foreign policy shift, balancing immediate security imperatives with long-term normative transformations. While realism explains Finland's security calculations, constructivism highlights how NATO membership was also a normative choice, an affirmation of Finland's commitment to multilateral governance and a Western-oriented identity that aligns with liberal internationalist principles.

Furthermore, Finland's strategic realignment, marked by a strengthened dedication to Western security frameworks and proactive involvement in multilateral platforms, reflects the liberal emphasis on institutional collaboration as a mechanism for long-term stability. By joining NATO, Finland gains not only a security guarantee but also a stronger voice in shaping European defense policies within a collective decision-making structure. Finland's foreign policy aligns with the fundamental principles of Liberalism, demonstrating a sophisticated comprehension of how democratic unity, joint efforts, and compliance with global standards may strengthen a nation's security and promote stability at both regional and global levels. By participating in NATO's strategic decision-making, Finland gains enhanced diplomatic leverage, allowing it to influence European security policies more actively while reinforcing its multilateral commitments.

The shift towards a foreign policy trajectory that is more engaged in multilateralism and prioritizes security highlights the significance of liberalism in understanding Finland's strategic decisions. This statement emphasizes the impact of liberal ideals and institutional frameworks on the foreign policy decisions of countries like Finland. It suggests that these values and frameworks both shape and mirror the strategic imperatives and ethical concerns that guide Finland's approach to navigating the complexities of modern international relations. This study seeks to analyze the implications of Finland's foreign policy evolution for its role in promoting international cooperation, enhancing regional security, and upholding the principles of liberal internationalism in a time of global uncertainty using a Liberal perspective.

Liberalism's focus on collaboration, organizations, and ethical ideals provides a strong framework for comprehending Finland's adaptations in foreign policy. Finland's strategic alignment with Western security mechanisms and its initiative-taking stance on multilateral engagement reflect a liberal internationalist approach to international relations. This highlights the enduring significance of liberal ideals in shaping the policies of small states on the global stage.

1.3.5 Theoretical perspectives on Finland's NATO accession

As previously outlined in 1.3.1, Finland's NATO accession aligns with liberal internationalist principles of institutional cooperation and multilateral security. Finland's foreign policy decisions illustrate the practical application of liberalism. Its integration into the EU and subsequent decision to join NATO demonstrate a deliberate strategy of aligning with multilateral frameworks that prioritize shared values and collective action. By choosing NATO, Finland reinforces its identity as a

proactive participant in the liberal international order, leveraging institutional collaboration to address both immediate threats and long-term strategic goals.

Multilateralism, a cornerstone of liberalism, plays a critical role in Finland's foreign policy. As defined by Ruggie (1992), multilateralism involves institutionalized cooperation among three or more states to address common challenges. Finland's NATO membership reflects a deliberate strategy to enhance security through multilateral frameworks, where democratic norms and collective defense efforts are prioritized.

The interplay between liberalism, realism, and constructivism offers a comprehensive framework for understanding Finland's foreign policy behavior. Liberalism serves as the dominant framework, emphasizing multilateralism, collective security, and cooperation. Realism and constructivism complement this by addressing Finland's security concerns and evolving national identity, respectively. The following diagram illustrates Finland's foreign policy behavior through the overlapping theories of liberalism, realism, and constructivism. It emphasizes Finland's reliance on liberalism as the primary framework, integrating multilateralism, collective security, and cooperation.

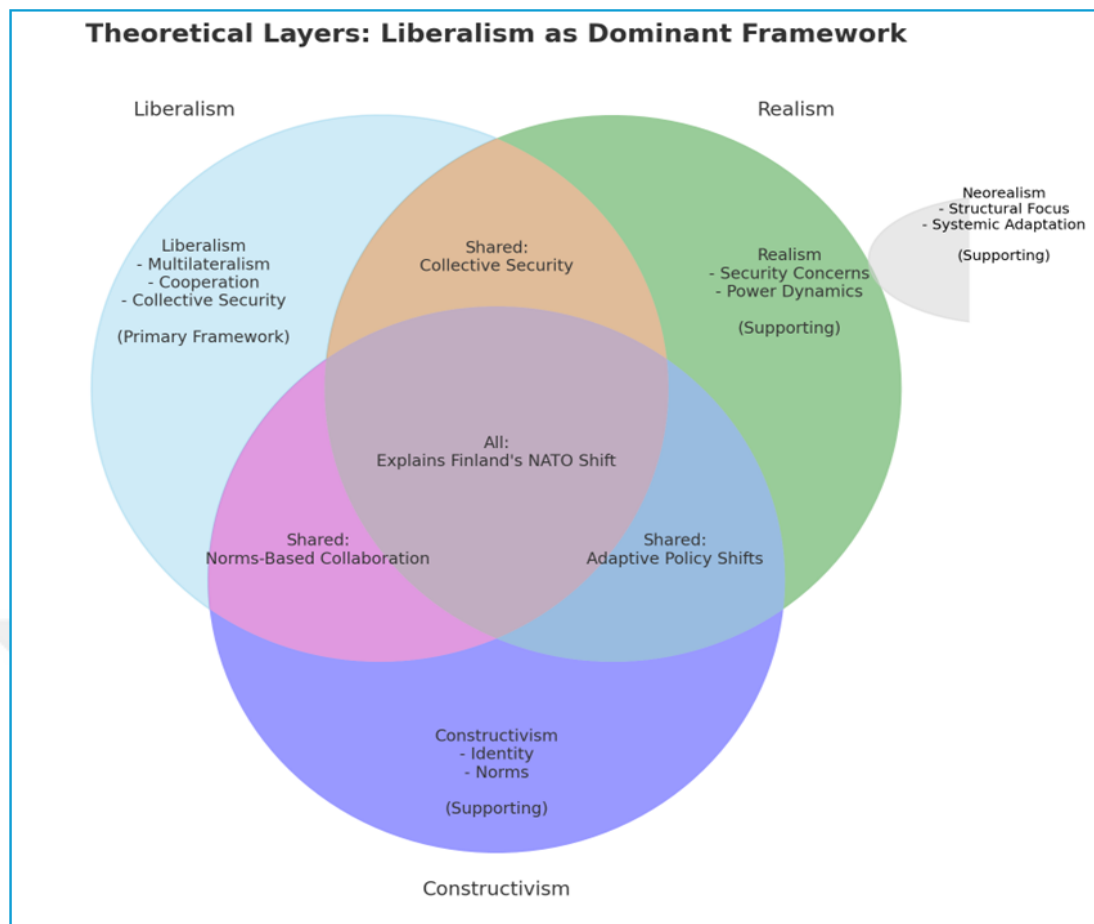


Figure 1. Theoretical layers explaining Finland's NATO shift (Liberal Internationalism as Primary Framework)

As shown in above Figure, Finland's NATO accession is best explained through the liberal internationalist framework, which emphasizes institutionalized security, multilateralism, and collective defense arrangements as mechanisms to ensure long-term stability. While realism provides insight into Finland's response to security threats, and constructivism helps explain the identity transformation from neutrality to NATO alignment, the overarching rationale remains embedded in liberal internationalist theory.

To further clarify how Finland's NATO accession aligns with these theoretical perspectives, following Table categorizes Finland's foreign policy shifts according to its liberal internationalist foundation, complemented by realist security imperatives and constructivist identity evolution.

Key Concept	Theoretical Framework	Finland's Policy Application	Relevance to NATO Accession
Institutionalized Security & Collective Defense	Liberal Internationalism (Keohane, 2012; Ruggie, 1992; Tesón, 2011)	Finland's NATO accession reinforces long-term institutional security, aligning with the EU, OSCE, and NATO's collective defense mechanisms (Finnish Parliament, 2024d).	Finland prioritized multilateral security over unilateral defense, embedding itself in NATO's institutionalized deterrence framework.
Threat Perception & Strategic Alignment	Realism (Walt, 1985; Sterling-Folker, 1997)	Finland assessed Russia's invasion of Ukraine as a direct security threat, leading to rapid shifts in public and political consensus for NATO membership (Finnish Defence Forces).	Finland balanced against Russia's growing aggression, aligning with NATO for deterrence, consistent with Walt's Balance of Threat (BoT) theory.
Normative & Identity Transformation	Constructivism (Wendt, 1999; Katzenstein, 1996)	Finland's public discourse shifted from neutrality to active participation in Western defense institutions (Koskimaa & Raunio, 2024).	NATO membership was framed not just as a security measure but as a reaffirmation of Finland's democratic and multilateral identity.
Multilateralism & Shared Governance	Liberal Institutionalism (Keohane & Martin, 1995; Moravcsik, 2012)	Finland emphasized NATO membership as institutional integration rather than mere military alignment, ensuring participation in joint decision-making processes (Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, 2025).	Finland actively sought membership to reinforce the rules-based international order, aligning with its liberal internationalist commitments.
Long-Term Security & Strategic Stability	Hybrid Approach (Liberal Internationalism + Realism)	NATO accession was a security decision within a structured alliance, rather than an isolated military shift (Finnish Parliament, 2024b).	Finland's policy reflected a rational security response, but its institutional embedding within NATO was driven by Liberal Internationalist logic.

Table 1. Finland's NATO Accession through Theoretical Layers

This Table clarifies that while Finland's NATO accession was partly a reaction to external threats (Realism) and involved an identity shift (Constructivism), it is best understood through the framework of Liberal Internationalism. Finland did not merely seek military protection but actively pursued institutional alignment, rule-based security guarantees, and democratic multilateralism.

From a Liberal Internationalist perspective, Finland's shift was not just a pragmatic reaction to Russia's aggression but a broader commitment to multilateral defense arrangements. Keohane (2012) argues that institutionalized security through alliances like NATO enhances stability by reducing uncertainty and increasing collective deterrence.

Finland's policy statements, particularly from President Stubb and Foreign Minister Valtonen, explicitly frame NATO membership as a continuation of Finland's commitment to rule-based multilateral governance rather than a short-term security solution (Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, 2025).

While BoT theory (Walt, 1985) explains why Finland identified Russia as an increasing threat and sought alignment with NATO for deterrence, this explanation alone is insufficient. If Finland had only been motivated by military concerns, it might have sought a bilateral defense treaty or focused on national military expansion. Instead, Finland pursued full NATO membership, embedding itself institutionally within the alliance's collective security mechanisms, which aligns more closely with Liberal Internationalist theory.

Additionally, Constructivism offers further insight into Finland's transformation, particularly in the role of identity in shaping state preferences. As Katzenstein (1996) argues, security alignments are not merely strategic but also

reflect normative shifts in state identity. Finland's policy discourse increasingly framed NATO membership as a continuation of its democratic and rule-based international engagement, rather than a break from its historical foreign policy traditions (Finnish Parliament, 2024b).

Finland's NATO membership reflects a fundamentally liberal internationalist shift, reinforced by realist security concerns and Constructivist identity transformation. While Finland faced direct military threats, it chose an institutional security framework over unilateral defense measures. NATO membership was thus not merely about military deterrence but a deliberate decision to integrate Finland's security policy within a multilateral, rule-based system.

This confirms the centrality of Liberal Internationalism in explaining Finland's foreign policy transformation, while Realism and Constructivism provide secondary insights into its strategic motivations and identity evolution. By embedding itself in NATO's collective security framework, Finland ensured both deterrence and long-term institutional stability, reinforcing its strategic alignment with democratic multilateralism.

1.4 Methodology

This thesis employs a qualitative case study approach, focusing on Finland's foreign policy shift from neutrality to NATO membership as a unique case of small-state adaptation to geopolitical pressures. A case study approach is particularly well-suited for this research because it enables an in-depth exploration of Finland's unique transition, offering valuable insights into the interplay between security imperatives and liberal frameworks (Yin, 2003).

Case Study Approach and Data Collection:

Primary sources, such as parliamentary debates, government statements, and reports from the Finnish Ministry of Defence, are central to the analysis. These materials provide direct insights into Finland's reasoning for NATO membership, particularly regarding the war in Ukraine's impact on its security priorities. For example, parliamentary debates from 2024 (Finnish Parliament, 2024c) emphasize the importance of NATO's multilateral framework in addressing collective defense needs. These primary sources are complemented by secondary materials, including scholarly articles, books, and think tank reports, which provide contextual analysis and support the evaluation of Finland's policy shift within a broader European security framework.

Thematic analysis identifies recurring patterns in Finland's transition from neutrality to multilateralism, particularly its institutional alignments and security strategies. This method involves systematically coding qualitative data, such as official statements, policy documents, and academic literature to uncover themes like security perceptions, liberal multilateralism, and institutional engagement. A deductive approach, guided by the theoretical framework of liberalism, ensures that identified themes align with the core research objectives and theoretical underpinnings (Moravcsik, 2012).

Process Tracing and Structured Comparison in Policy Analysis:

To ensure a systematic analysis, this study employs complementary qualitative methods, including process tracing and structured comparison. Process tracing maps the sequence of events leading to Finland's NATO membership, providing a chronological understanding of key decisions and their underlying motivations (Collier, 2011). Finland's engagement in NATO exercises, such as those defending

the northern region, provides valuable data for process tracing. These exercises illustrate how Finland's policy decisions align with liberalist principles and adapt to evolving geopolitical needs (Finnish Defence Forces, 2024). The application of process tracing allowed this study to map the causal sequence of events from the war in Ukraine to Finland's NATO membership. For instance, parliamentary debates and policy statements provided key data points illustrating how Finland's decisions were rooted in liberalist principles.

Structured comparison further contextualized Finland's foreign policy shifts by evaluating its pre- and post-Ukraine war strategies, ensuring a consistent analysis of multilateralism and collective defense frameworks. Structured comparison offers a framework for evaluating Finland's foreign policy before and after the war in Ukraine, ensuring consistency in analyzing shifts in security perceptions and multilateral engagement (George, 1979). Together, these methods provide a nuanced understanding of Finland's policy evolution and its alignment with liberal principles.

The methodology combines process tracing to establish the causal sequence of Finland's foreign policy decisions, particularly its NATO membership, and structured comparison to situate these shifts within broader patterns of multilateral engagement. For example, the analysis traces parliamentary debates and public opinion trends to demonstrate how liberalist principles influenced Finland's decision-making. Additionally, structured comparison highlights differences in Finland's security posture before and after the war in Ukraine, illustrating the transformative impact of liberalism on its foreign policy trajectory.

The research is grounded in a theoretical framework of liberalism, as outlined in the introductory chapter. Liberalism emphasizes the role of international organizations, democratic governance, and collective security in fostering stability

and cooperation. This framework provides a logical structure for analyzing Finland's foreign policy decisions, particularly its responses to heightened security challenges and geopolitical upheavals.

To ensure the accuracy and reliability of the findings, the study employs a rigorous approach to source selection and analysis. Only credible and well-documented primary and secondary sources are utilized. Potential biases and limitations within sources are carefully assessed to provide an impartial and comprehensive understanding of Finland's foreign policy transformation.

Finally, the research acknowledges inherent constraints, such as the accessibility of certain primary materials and the dynamic nature of international relations and security policies. These challenges are mitigated by adopting a flexible analytical approach and revising interpretations as new information emerges.

1.5 Significance of the study

This thesis examines the transformative impact of the war in Ukraine on Finland's foreign policy, contributing to broader debates on small-state diplomacy and the resilience of liberal internationalism. The geopolitical upheaval triggered by Russia's 2022 incursion catalyzed a critical reassessment of Finland's neutrality, pushing it toward closer alignment with Western security mechanisms, including NATO membership (Alberque, 2022; Arter, 2022). Unlike previous studies that frame Finland's NATO accession as a direct response to security threats (e.g., Arter, 2022; Lahti, 2023), this thesis demonstrates that Finland's long-term institutional engagement with NATO predates Ukraine war. By doing so, it highlights the role of liberal institutionalism in alliance formation, moving beyond conventional threat-response models.

Public and political consensus on joining NATO, as documented by Lahti (2023) and Xia (2022), underscores a shift in Finland's domestic landscape.

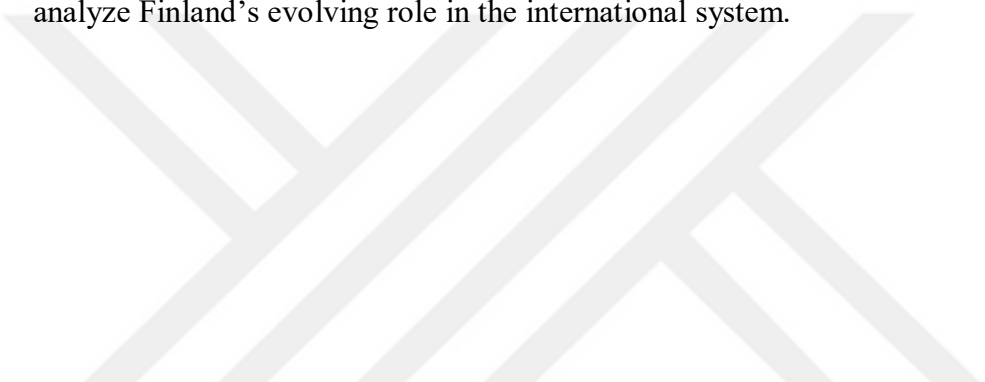
Historical comparisons to the Winter War provide strategic insights, illustrating how Finland's past responses to Soviet demands have shaped its current approach to security challenges (Chorny, 2019; Uutela, 2020). These historical reflections not only illuminate current geopolitical dynamics but also contribute to broader discussions on European security and the potential resurgence of Cold War-like tensions. Finland's post-war development serves as a valuable case study for other nations, particularly Ukraine, as highlighted by Kurbet (2022). This transition reflects both a pragmatic response to security threats and a normative shift in Finland's identity, aligning with liberal values of collective security and democratic governance.

This study contributes to academic discussions on Finnish foreign policy by exploring the concepts of neutrality, alignment, and multilateral participation within the framework of liberal internationalism. It highlights Finland's evolution toward a more proactive role in international affairs and examines the implications for small states navigating complex geopolitical landscapes. By addressing Finland's historical legacy and its strategic adjustments in response to Ukraine conflict, the thesis provides a comprehensive analysis of how small states adapt their foreign policies amid geopolitical upheavals.

The findings of this study have wider implications for the future of European security, emphasizing the significant role small states play in shaping regional stability. It offers valuable insights into Finland's strategic responses, contributing to the discourse on multilateralism and providing policy recommendations to strengthen

Finland's commitment to collective security and institutional collaboration in the current geopolitical context.

This chapter has established the theoretical foundation of this study, identifying liberal internationalism as the dominant framework while integrating insights from realism and constructivism. By examining Finland's NATO accession through these perspectives, this study highlights how security imperatives, institutional cooperation, and democratic values intersect in shaping foreign policy. This theoretical foundation sets the stage for the following chapters, which will analyze Finland's evolving role in the international system.



CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter evaluates key scholarly contributions to Finland's foreign policy evolution, including its trajectory from neutrality to NATO membership, and identifies gaps in existing research that warrant further exploration.

2.1 Finland's foreign policy

Academics have extensively studied Finland's foreign policy, focusing on its historical background, development, and notable changes influenced by regional and global events. This literature review explores the evolution of Finland's foreign policy, from its early independence through the Cold War to contemporary challenges, with a particular focus on the implications of the war in Ukraine.

The study of Finland's foreign policy has extensively highlighted its adaptability and strategic foresight in navigating complex international environments. While much of the literature evaluates Finland's historical neutrality and multilateral engagement, this thesis emphasizes a liberal internationalist perspective to examine Finland's deliberate alignment with institutional frameworks like NATO and the EU.

The parliamentary decision on NATO membership in 2023 serves as a pivotal case study, demonstrating Finland's transition from neutrality to collective defense. This decision underscores Finland's strategic pivot towards institutional frameworks, emphasizing multilateralism as a cornerstone of its foreign policy. According to President Niinistö, this shift underscores Finland's commitment to multilateral

security and reflects its historical adaptability in response to geopolitical challenges (Niinistö, 2023).

The study examines Finland's ability to adjust strategically in dealing with international relations, its stance on security and neutrality, and the effects of contemporary geopolitical conflicts on its foreign policy goals. In his 2025 New Year's Speech, President Stubb emphasized Finland's commitment to multilateral security and institutional collaboration, particularly through NATO membership (Stubb, 2025). This research examines scholarly works to identify significant events in Finland's foreign policy history and points out areas in the literature that should be explored in future research.

The liberal framework, with its emphasis on multilateral cooperation, international norms, and democratic governance, provides a comprehensive lens for understanding Finland's strategic alignment with NATO and the EU. This approach helps frame Finland's foreign policy not merely as a reaction to external threats but as a deliberate alignment with institutions that uphold collective security and shared democratic values (Moravcsik, 2012; Tesón, 2011).

While much of the literature discusses Finland's foreign policy through a liberal lens, realist interpretations are occasionally mentioned, particularly when assessing Finland's security decisions as pragmatic responses to external threats. This thesis, however, emphasizes the liberal internationalist perspective.

2.1.1 Historical context and evolution

Finland's foreign policy path since gaining independence reflects a trajectory shaped by liberal internationalism. While Finland has demonstrated strategic adaptability to regional and global shifts, its proactive involvement in international institutions

highlights a long-standing commitment to multilateral governance rather than a purely pragmatic response to security concerns.

Finland's foreign policy has been deeply rooted in liberal internationalism, prioritizing cooperation through international institutions and regional frameworks. Its strategic engagement with organizations such as the UN, the EU, and the OSCE reflects a long-standing commitment to multilateral diplomacy (Aaltola, 2011; Clerc, 2023; Suchoples, 2023). Rather than merely responding to shifting geopolitical circumstances, Finland has actively sought to institutionalize its security and foreign policy within liberal multilateral structures.

During the Cold War, Finland's neutrality was not merely a survival mechanism but a carefully managed policy that balanced sovereignty with multilateral engagement. Even in its non-aligned era, Finland strategically integrated itself within international institutions, maintaining economic and diplomatic ties that would later facilitate its seamless transition to NATO membership. The Agreement of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance with the Soviet Union in 1948, while limiting Finland's strategic autonomy, also allowed it to engage with international institutions and participate in the global economy under structured diplomatic arrangements (Forsberg & Pesu, 2016).

Post-Cold War, Finland's integration into the European Union signified a decisive step toward institutional multilateralism, reinforcing its long-standing liberal orientation. The dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 prompted Finland to reassess its policy of neutrality, gradually transitioning toward a security strategy embedded in multilateral frameworks. The shift from neutrality to non-alignment, and to NATO membership, was not a sudden departure but a structured evolution that aligned with Finland's long-standing Liberal Internationalist commitments

(Clerc, 2023). This transition was not an abrupt shift but a continuation of Finland's historical emphasis on collective security, economic interdependence, and adherence to democratic norms (Zimmermanová et al., 2020).

Finland's response to global political developments has prompted a reexamination of the concept of "Finlandization", emphasizing the country's adaptability and pursuit of dependable foreign policy principles, such as identifying possible friends and protectors of its independence (Uutela, 2020). By embedding itself within Western institutions, Finland institutionalized its commitment to a rules-based international order, prioritizing cooperation over unilateral security measures. Recent geopolitical developments, such as the war in Ukraine, further underscore Finland's liberal commitment to institutional cooperation as it transitioned toward NATO membership, reflecting a deliberate alignment with shared governance and democratic values.

Finland's strategic transition is the result of long-term planning that integrates national defense within a broader multilateral security framework. Finland's post-WWII experiences emphasized the importance of institutional cooperation, leading to a steady enhancement of its territorial defense capabilities while also embedding security within rules-based international governance. This dual approach; strong national defense combined with deepening multilateral alignment, has reinforced public trust in Finland's security strategy (Nokkala, 2023).

Finland's foreign policy also aims are exemplified by its cultural diplomacy and dedication to sustainable development. Finland has utilized cultural diplomacy to further its foreign policy objectives, promote societal modernization, and bolster its worldwide influence, all while actively participating in international organizations. In addition, Finland's adherence to the Paris Agreement and the Sustainable

Development Goals demonstrates its commitment to tackling worldwide issues like climate change, highlighting the country's proactive and responsible position on the global platform.

Finland's foreign policy is characterized by a comprehensive approach that effectively manages the interaction between security considerations, economic tactics, cultural diplomacy, and sustainability obligations. Finland's ability to respond to historical problems and current global issues is highlighted by its complex and diverse policy landscape.

2.1.2 Key principles and objectives

Finland's foreign policy prioritizes collective security, democratic government, and multilateral collaboration, demonstrating liberal internationalism. Finland uses institutional frameworks to shape the rules-based international order rather than just adapting to external security demands. Its partnership with UN campaigns and human rights advocates is part of its long-term plan to strengthen global governance systems. Liberalism holds that international institutions encourage collaboration, eliminate conflict, and promote shared values (Ruggie, 1992; Tesón, 2011).

As mentioned previously, Finland's NATO membership is more than just security alignment; it is a determined endeavor to support liberal institutionalism by integrating security in a global governance framework rather than an ad-hoc alliance or national deterrent. Small governments like Finland use multilateral institutions to compensate for inadequate material resources and improve their international position and security, according to Michalski et al. (2024). Finland's NATO membership illustrates this institutional collaboration method for stability.

Finland has strategically evolved its foreign policy to deepen its institutional engagement, reinforcing its commitment to multilateralism in response to changing global dynamics. Rather than merely reacting to security concerns, Finland has sought to institutionalize stability through structured diplomatic mechanisms. Following the Global Financial Crisis, Finland enacted structural adjustments to enhance economic resilience, aligning with the liberal emphasis on interconnected economic governance (IMF, 2023). Since the Cold War, its foreign policy focus has expanded beyond cultural diplomacy to include military crisis management and peace mediation within institutional frameworks. Finland's EU membership has further reinforced this liberal trajectory, integrating security cooperation into a broader multilateral governance approach rather than relying on military non-alignment.

2.1.3 Recent shifts and influences

Finland's foreign policy has undergone a fundamental realignment, moving from neutrality to full institutional integration within NATO. While the war in Ukraine accelerated this transition, Finland's strategic shift was already rooted in a broader commitment to liberal internationalism. NATO membership represents not only a security imperative but also a deliberate choice to deepen Finland's engagement with multilateral governance structures, reinforcing collective security and institutional cooperation as core tenets of its foreign policy. The war in Ukraine catalyzed a political consensus in Finland, with broad support across the political spectrum reflecting a unified stance on sovereignty, solidarity with Ukraine, and the need for institutionalized security. As Finland's Foreign Minister and OSCE Chairperson-in-Office Elina Valtonen (2025b) stated: "Supporting Ukraine's territorial integrity,

sovereignty and independence is at the heart of the OSCE's work and our Chairpersonship" (Valtonen, 2025b). This statement highlights Finland's leadership role in multilateral security efforts and reinforces its broader commitment to institutional cooperation.

The dramatic shift in public opinion following Russia's invasion of Ukraine was not merely a response to an external threat but also an affirmation of Finland's commitment to multilateralism as the most effective security strategy. By integrating into NATO's strategic framework, Finland strengthens regional security coordination and contributes to the alliance's collective defense mechanisms. This move demonstrates how small states navigate geopolitical uncertainty by embedding themselves within institutional security frameworks rather than relying solely on national deterrence.

Polling data revealed a surge in "support for NATO membership, increasing from 53% in February 2022 to 62% in March to 76% by May 2022", reflecting widespread confidence in institutionalized collective defense mechanisms (Yle, 2022b). This public consensus underscores the alignment of Finland's policy with liberal values, particularly democratic governance, where decision-making reflects the will of the people. As liberalism emphasizes the role of societal preferences in shaping state policy, Finland's response to public sentiment demonstrates its commitment to integrating democratic principles into its foreign policy. This shift exemplifies the liberal perspective that institutional collaboration among democracies enhances stability and addresses shared threats more effectively than unilateral approaches (Keohane, 1984; Doyle, 2019).

In line with Keohane (1984), institutional liberalism explains Finland's NATO membership better. Liberalism emphasizes institutions, cooperation, and

democratic values, while realism emphasizes security risks. Finland chose a multilateral alliance over unilateral militarism, following liberal institutionalism. Finland joined NATO to demonstrate its long-term commitment to institutional cooperation and collective security, not just threat balancing. In a changing geopolitical landscape, Finland's security strategy must be reevaluated. Michalski et al. (2024) also note that Finland's transition is typical of small liberal states, which have had to adjust their foreign policies to address external security threats while maintaining democratic norms and institutional engagement.

The complete support from Finnish political groups, including the typically populist Finns Party, for the application for NATO membership signified a significant departure from Finland's neutrality. This shift indicates a growing acknowledgment of the need for stronger security partnerships in response to Russian aggression, as well as the requirement for a strengthened defensive system against prospective threats (Suchoples, 2023). Finland's defense budget has been strengthened, and new laws have been put in place to protect against Russian hybrid threats, signaling a shift towards a more proactive defense and foreign policy approach.

Finland's historical relationship with Russia, shaped by cautious diplomacy and strategic neutrality, provides essential context for its NATO accession. However, unlike Sweden's more hesitant approach, Finland's structured institutional strategy enabled a swifter transition. Finland's extensive pre-existing cooperation with NATO, along with its long-standing integration within Western security frameworks, meant that its accession was not merely a reaction to Russian aggression but a logical extension of its established multilateral engagement. As NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte stated: "Since Finland became a NATO Ally eighteen months ago, the

Alliance has become stronger, and Finland has become safer. Finland has highly capable military forces and cutting-edge capabilities, and you are investing more than 2% of GDP in defense” (Rutte, 2024).

This reinforces the view that Finland’s NATO membership is not just about immediate security needs but about contributing to the collective defense architecture within NATO and strengthening multilateral security commitments.

Furthermore, the wider consequences of this strategic reorganization go beyond national defense, indicating a fundamental change in Finland’s approach to international diplomacy, security cooperation, and regional stability. Current geopolitical tensions have led Finland to redefine its security doctrine, reflecting a broader trend of realignment among states in the Euro-Atlantic region in response to changing global power dynamics (Skorzewska-Amberg, 2023).

Finland’s foreign policy realignment marks a milestone not just in its national security strategy but in its broader contribution to multilateral security governance. By integrating into NATO, Finland reinforces the institutional foundations of collective defense, emphasizing shared responsibility and democratic resilience.

2.1.4 Gaps in literature

While Finland’s NATO accession is widely discussed in existing literature, there remain critical gaps regarding its broader implications for multilateralism and institutional alignment. Specifically, research has yet to fully examine how Finland operationalizes its liberal commitments beyond security concerns, particularly in promoting institutional governance and collective defense norms. This thesis addresses this gap by analyzing how Finland, as a small state, contributes to the

institutional foundations of NATO and advances liberal values within security alliances.

Existing studies have analyzed Finland's military transformation (Nokkala, 2023), media landscape (Van Ommen, 2016), and historical diplomatic strategies (Romanov, 2020), yet they overlook the institutional implications of Finland's NATO accession. Nokkala (2023) provides insights into Finland's rapid NATO integration but frames it solely as a military necessity rather than a structured institutional alignment. Van Ommen (2016) explores Finnish media discourse on Russia but does not address foreign policy realignment within NATO. Romanov (2020) analyzes President Ahtisaari's diplomatic strategies but offers limited contemporary relevance in explaining Finland's current multilateral commitments.

These gaps highlight the need for a focused analysis of how Finland embeds itself within NATO's institutional framework and contributes to liberal security norms. Arter (2022) examines Finland's past military non-alignment policy and its transition to seeking NATO membership after Putin's invasion of Ukraine. The study highlights the influence of historical worries but does not pinpoint any new unexplored regions' post-conflict.

Areas of Finnish foreign policy that are considered lacking in research are the significance of public diplomacy as a form of "soft power" for the state, the proper establishment of state priorities and values, and effective national branding, which have not been thoroughly examined. Finland's transition from military non-alignment to NATO membership requires deeper exploration, particularly concerning its role in promoting liberal norms within NATO and its implications for Nordic-Baltic regional security. An analysis has been conducted on Finnish political parties' reactions to Ukraine conflict, which includes their support for Ukraine and the move

towards NATO. However, there is a lack of research on the emergence of populist parties and their position that combines opposition to COVID-19 measures with pro-Putin sentiments. Finland's securitization of the Putin administration, with the goal of enhancing defense capabilities and implementing sanctions against Russia, requires further investigation. The literature pays little attention to the impact of evolving relations with Russia, which is characterized by rising defense expenditures and the enactment of laws to counter hybrid attacks.

The lack of inclusion of understudied regions posts the war in Ukraine in military and security policy literature indicates a gap in addressing Finland's response and policy changes after the conflict. The studies focus on historical contexts, policy evolution, and societal attitudes towards Russia and NATO. However, they also suggest the need for more research on Finland's foreign policy adjustment in the new geopolitical environment shaped by the war in Ukraine. This suggests a topic for future research, examining how Finland manages its foreign policy in response to evolving security dynamics in Europe, its position on NATO after conflicts, and the consequences for Finno-Russian ties in the future. Comparative studies on NATO alignment among small liberal states could offer insights into shared strategies and their implications for regional security dynamics.

While the existing literature provides substantial insights into Finnish foreign policy, including its transition from neutrality to NATO membership and its evolving relations with Russia, there remain gaps in addressing how liberalism frames these changes. Specifically, there is limited exploration of how Finland operationalizes its commitment to democratic governance, multilateralism, and institutional collaboration within NATO. Future research should investigate Finland's role in promoting liberal norms within NATO and the broader implications for Nordic-

Baltic regional security. Additionally, further study is needed to analyze how Finland balances multilateral aspirations with its evolving security strategy in response to geopolitical tensions. Dinçer's study (2022) examines Finland's reaction to the Russian occupation of Ukraine using securitization theory. It emphasizes Finland's view of Russia as a military danger and its subsequent decision to join NATO. This signifies a change in Finnish security policy but does not provide details on new or unexplored aspects of Finnish foreign policy that have arisen as a direct result of the war in Ukraine.

Clerc (2023) examines Finland's cultural diplomacy from the postwar era to the Cold War, highlighting the state's involvement in global cultural connections and its impact on foreign policy. This gives context for understanding Finland's use of soft power, but it does not discuss how these techniques may have changed in response to recent geopolitical shifts.

The study conducted by Anisimovych-Shevchuk and Troian (2022) emphasizes the significance of soft power, national branding, and the enhancement of Finland's public diplomacy. This illuminates Finland's methods of projecting its values and influence globally, but there is a need for more research on how Finland's public diplomacy has adjusted to the challenges presented by the conflict in Ukraine and the wider impact on Finno-Russian relations, as well as Finland's role in the EU and NATO.

These findings highlight the necessity for more study that specifically focuses on the intricacies of Finland's foreign policy following the war in Ukraine. The research could investigate how Finland's historical policy of neutrality and military non-alignment, its cultural and public diplomacy initiatives, and its domestic political discourse have been impacted by or adjusted to the evolving security situation in

Europe since 2014. This will enhance the understanding of the specific areas of Finnish foreign policy that are under-researched and require further analysis considering current geopolitical changes.

Examining defense strategy and legal frameworks in reaction to hybrid assaults within the context of Finland's changing relations with Russia may uncover innovative security measures being adopted to counter escalating threats. This emphasized sector, marked by increased defense expenditure and legislative actions, provides essential insights into Finland's strategic realignment on the global stage, especially regarding security and defense policy.

Overall, the current literature offers a strong basis for comprehending Finland's foreign policy evolution and historical background. However, the conflict in Ukraine has brought about new factors that require additional research. The identified understudied topics, including the growth of public diplomacy, the move from neutrality to NATO membership, the political landscape's response to the conflict, and the securitization of the Putin regime, offer promising opportunities for future research. By addressing these gaps, we may enhance the scholarly discussion on Finnish foreign policy and gain a better grasp of the wider impact of Ukraine war on international relations and security policy in the Nordic region and beyond.

While existing literature explores Finland's security shift, there is limited research on how Finland will navigate internal NATO decision-making and its role in alliance burden-sharing. Future studies should assess Finland's post-accession strategy within NATO's evolving institutional framework.

Future research should also examine Finland's operationalization of democratic governance, institutional collaboration, and public diplomacy within multilateral frameworks to provide a comprehensive understanding of its foreign

policy transformation. While existing research discusses Finland's NATO accession in military terms, it overlooks its broader institutional impact. This thesis contributes to the field by analyzing Finland's NATO alignment as an extension of its multilateral strategy rather than a purely security-driven response. By examining Finland's engagement within NATO, this study highlights how small states can influence institutional norms and governance structures within security alliances, advancing liberal principles of collective defense and democratic cooperation.

2.1.5 Conclusion

The literature reveals a strong foundation for analyzing Finland's foreign policy through a liberal lens. However, it lacks a comprehensive understanding of how Finland's NATO alignment integrates multilateral principles and promotes regional security. This thesis builds on these insights to explore Finland's evolving role in European security.

When studying Finland's foreign policy path, the liberal theoretical framework provides valuable understanding of the country's deliberate alignment with Western security structures and its nuanced involvement in global diplomacy. The information collected and examined in this study underscores Finland's dedication to liberal principles, including international collaboration, adherence to the legal system, and the advancement of human rights and democratic governance. Finland demonstrates its commitments by its active participation in international organizations, its strategic evaluation in response to geopolitical changes, and its commitment to improving regional and global security.

Finland's decision to pursue NATO membership, motivated by the need to manage changing security threats, particularly Russia's aggressiveness in Ukraine,

highlights a liberal internationalist approach to security. This viewpoint argues that global alliances and institutions have a crucial function in guaranteeing joint protection and upholding global tranquility.

The deficiencies found in the existing body of literature, namely on Finland's utilization of soft power and the development of its policy of neutrality, indicate specific areas where the liberal framework can provide additional clarity on the underlying dynamics. Future research, inspired by liberal theories, should investigate how Finland's adjustments to its foreign policy in response to present issues contribute to the broader discussion on the effectiveness of liberal institutions and principles in navigating the intricacies of the current global system.

These gaps underscore the need for a focused analysis of Finland's liberal commitments, which this thesis addresses by examining the interplay between institutional collaboration and evolving security dynamics. This research, based on the principles of liberal international relations theory, not only sheds light on the strategic factors that influence Finland's foreign policy choices but also enhances our comprehension of the role played by tiny nations in the global system. As President Stubb articulated: "Together, we have defined value-based realism as the guiding principle of the Government Report on Finnish Foreign and Security Policy. The aim is to help Finland find its way in this difficult global political transition" (Stubb, 2025b).

This reflects Finland's attempt to navigate global uncertainties while upholding its commitment to a stable, rules-based international system. This study highlights the enduring significance of liberal principles, demonstrating how institutional collaboration and multilateralism shape foreign policy strategies amidst global uncertainties.

In conclusion, this chapter underscores Finland's strategic realignment within a liberal framework while highlighting gaps that necessitate further exploration. Finland's NATO accession represents more than just a security shift; it signifies a strategic adaptation within a multilateral framework. By embedding itself within NATO's institutional structures, Finland is not merely reacting to external threats but proactively shaping its international engagement through liberal institutionalism. This study highlights the enduring significance of liberal principles, demonstrating how institutional collaboration and multilateralism shape foreign policy strategies amidst global uncertainties.

2.2 Finland's neutrality policy

Finland's assessment of its neutrality policy, a fundamental aspect of its foreign policy since World War II, demonstrates a sophisticated technique used by a small state to maneuver through the divided geopolitical environment of the Cold War and its consequences. This literature study part tries to analyze Finland's neutrality, examining its origins, evolution, and the recent shift towards NATO membership. The discussion goes beyond the historical narrative to explore the conceptual foundations of "Finlandization," the influence of geographical proximity to the Soviet Union, and the internal and external factors leading to the reassessment of the policy, drawing on works by authors like Dincer (2022), Lahti and Palonen (2023), Suchoples (2023), and Xie (2022).

This review examines the academic literature to clarify the complex and strategic choices that have influenced Finland's endeavors to maintain its independence and security amidst changing international dynamics. Neutrality allowed Finland to preserve its sovereignty while skillfully balancing relations

between East and West, a crucial strategy for its survival during the Cold War. The review evaluates Finland's neutrality policy from both historical and theoretical perspectives, highlighting its strategic use of non-alignment as a diplomatic tool. By examining key scholarly debates, it addresses Finland's shift from neutrality to NATO membership and the broader implications for multilateralism within the liberal institutionalist framework.

2.2.1 History and evolution of Finland's neutrality policy

Finland's adoption of neutrality after World War II was driven by a combination of historical legacies, geopolitical realities, and domestic political considerations. Initially, neutrality was a necessary measure to safeguard sovereignty in the face of Cold War superpower rivalries. Over time, however, Finland's neutral stance evolved beyond mere survival strategy into a structured form of institutional engagement, aligning with principles of liberal institutionalism. This approach highlights the role of international organizations and diplomatic adaptability in maintaining long-term stability without formal military alliances (Zimmermanová et al., 2020). Situated between the Soviet Union and Western Europe, Finland carefully navigated its foreign policy to avoid direct alignment with either bloc while preserving security and economic cooperation. This strategy allowed Finland to maintain sovereignty, foster cooperative relations with the Soviet Union, and engage effectively in the global economy despite Cold War ideological tensions (Lundqvist, 2023; Xie, 2022).

Finland's decision to maintain neutrality after World War II resulted in the concept of "Finlandization;" a policy of strategic accommodation with the Soviet Union. This approach enabled Finland to preserve its democratic institutions and

economic prosperity while avoiding direct Soviet dominance (Forsberg & Pesu, 2016). However, Finlandization also meant that Soviet influence permeated Finnish domestic politics, affecting the political landscape through selective exclusions of certain parties and the appointment of officials aligned with Soviet interests. While Finlandization shaped Finland's Cold War-era neutrality, the post-Cold War period marked a decisive shift towards multilateralism, reflecting a deliberate transition to institutional security frameworks.

Forsberg and Pesu (2016) argue that Finlandization successfully preserved Finland's sovereignty and prevented Sovietization, but it also introduced significant constraints, such as self-censorship and political corruption, limiting Finland's domestic political autonomy. This analysis challenges the simplistic notion that Finlandization was purely a conciliatory policy towards the Soviet Union; rather, it had profound implications for Finnish political culture, shaping the country's cautious foreign policy stance. These historical lessons remain relevant today, particularly in understanding Finland's shift towards NATO membership amid renewed geopolitical tensions.

During the Cold War, Finland's neutrality policy was a pragmatic adaptation to its geopolitical reality, carefully balancing its proximity to the Soviet Union with a commitment to democratic governance. This policy aligns with liberal institutionalism, which emphasizes structured international engagement to maintain sovereignty and stability. Despite constraints, neutrality enabled Finland to cultivate global economic and diplomatic ties, applying liberal principles within the limits imposed by Cold War geopolitics (Zimmermanová et al., 2020). However, Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine exposed the limitations of neutrality, prompting a parliamentary reassessment of Finland's security stance. The decision to seek NATO

membership was driven by heightened security concerns and the recognition that institutional security frameworks offered stronger guarantees than neutrality (Finnish Parliament, 2024c).

Throughout much of the 20th century, maintaining neutrality enjoyed broad political and public consensus in Finland, driven by wartime experiences and a pragmatic understanding of geopolitical vulnerabilities. This consensus guided Finland's foreign policy towards a Scandinavian orientation, emphasizing regional cooperation and shared security interests while upholding its non-aligned stance (Enos-Attali, 2021). Earlier efforts to establish a Northern European collective security system, including Sweden's proposal for a regional military alliance, highlighted the complexities of coordinating Nordic security concerns. Although these initiatives did not materialize, they laid the groundwork for Finland's post-war neutrality policies and broader regional security considerations (Korunova, 2020).

Finland's neutrality faced new challenges and opportunities in the post-Cold War era. While Finlandization shaped its Cold War-era security culture, the country gradually integrated into European security frameworks, particularly through participation in the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy. The 2014 Ukraine crisis marked a turning point, intensifying Finland's cooperation with NATO while it formally remained a non-member. This period reflects Finland's attempt to balance regional security concerns with the need to avoid provoking Russia (Zimmermanová et al., 2020).

Finland's post-World War II neutrality was marked by strategic flexibility, diplomatic engagement, and a nuanced approach to regional security. This pragmatic policy enabled Finland to safeguard its sovereignty while adapting to shifting geopolitical conditions. As the global security landscape evolved, so too did

Finland's approach, reflecting a careful balance between historical legacies, geopolitical realities, and domestic political considerations.

2.2.2 Recent changes and challenges

Finland's long-standing neutrality has undergone a significant transformation due to shifting geopolitical realities, particularly in response to Russia's assertive actions in Ukraine. Historically, Finland maintained a delicate balance between East and West, leveraging neutrality as a strategic tool to safeguard sovereignty and security. This approach enabled Finland to foster diplomatic ties, engage in global economic integration, and navigate the constraints imposed by its geographical proximity to the Soviet Union and later Russia (Xie, 2022; Suchoples, 2023).

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 served as a pivotal moment, prompting Finland to reassess its security posture. The geopolitical shockwave triggered a dramatic shift in Finnish public opinion regarding NATO membership which was referred in section 2.1.3 Recent Shifts and Influences. These shifts underscore Finland's alignment with the liberal institutionalist perspective, which prioritizes multilateral cooperation and institutional frameworks in addressing security threats.

In response to mounting security threats, Finnish leaders, including Prime Minister Sanna Marin and President Sauli Niinistö, spearheaded the country's NATO application, marking a decisive shift in national security strategy. The move garnered a broad political consensus, with backing from all major parties, including the populist Radical Right. This decision reflects Finland's proactive approach to strengthening its defense posture amid growing concerns over Russian military threats (Dinçer, 2022; Lahti & Palonen, 2023).

Finland's political consensus on NATO accession was reinforced by its increasing integration into regional security frameworks. As the Nordic-Baltic Leaders emphasized: "We are engaging with Ukraine, the United States and all our NATO Allies and EU partners on how to achieve peace through strength. We fully commit to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine. Ukraine should be given strong security guarantees" (Nordic-Baltic Leaders, 2025). This statement reflects Finland's growing role in multilateral security cooperation, particularly within the NATO framework.

Attempts by Russia to assert influence over the Baltic Sea region have consistently shaped Finland's security posture, reinforcing the rationale for NATO membership (Suchoples, 2023; Skorzewska-Amberg, 2023). The decision to formally join NATO not only provided Finland with direct security assurances but also marked a strategic recalibration of its broader foreign policy approach. As a result, Finland's defense budget has been expanded, and new laws have been introduced to counter Russian hybrid threats, signaling a shift toward a more proactive security doctrine.

Finland's joint NATO application with Sweden further emphasized its deepening regional cooperation and commitment to Euro-Atlantic security structures. The broader implications of this shift extend beyond defense, shaping Finland's diplomatic engagements, EU policies, and regional partnerships.

At the same time, Finland's NATO membership has raised strategic questions about its future engagement with Russia. While Finland has maintained diplomatic channels, its policy has shifted towards deterrence, aligning more closely with NATO's collective security framework. This adjustment reflects Finland's strategic

recognition that neutrality, in its historical form, is no longer a viable option in an era of heightened geopolitical tensions (Lahti & Palonen, 2023).

This strategic realignment also reflects broader shifts in Finland's foreign policy, including an enhanced focus on resilience against hybrid threats and cyber warfare. The Finnish government has taken legislative measures to counter Russian disinformation campaigns, secure critical infrastructure, and strengthen intelligence cooperation with NATO allies. These efforts are integral to Finland's evolving defense strategy, ensuring that its NATO membership translates into tangible security benefits.

Overall, Finland's transformation from neutrality to NATO membership represents a landmark shift in its security policy, shaped by both historical legacies and contemporary geopolitical challenges. This transition exemplifies the liberal institutionalist assertion that small states benefit from multilateral security arrangements, as they provide stability, predictability, and enhanced defense capabilities. As Finland integrates further into NATO structures, its role within the alliance will continue to evolve, reflecting broader trends in European security dynamics.

2.2.3 Conclusion

Finland's shift from neutrality to NATO membership represents a fundamental transformation in its security policy, driven by both historical legacies and contemporary geopolitical challenges. While neutrality served as a pragmatic survival strategy during the Cold War, its viability diminished in the face of Russia's increasingly aggressive foreign policy. Finland's decision to join NATO was not merely a reaction to external threats but a strategic realignment reflecting its long-

term commitment to multilateral security frameworks (Zimmermanová et al., 2020; Forsberg & Pesu, 2016).

Analyzing Finland's neutrality policy through a liberal institutionalist lens highlights the role of international institutions in enhancing stability and security for small states. Finland's NATO accession exemplifies how multilateral defense structures provide credible security guarantees, reinforcing institutional cooperation over isolated national defense efforts (Keohane, 1984; Doyle, 2019; Zimmermanová et al., 2020). This transition also underscores the broader liberal assertion that democracies benefit from collaborative security arrangements rather than unilateral strategies (Suchoples, 2023).

Furthermore, Finland's NATO membership reflects a broader trend among small states seeking institutional security in response to geopolitical volatility. The overwhelming public support for NATO accession highlights the intersection between domestic consensus and foreign policy shifts, reinforcing the liberal institutionalist argument that democratic states actively engage in multilateral cooperation when faced with shared threats (Yle, 2022; Dinçer, 2022). The integration into NATO structures allows Finland to contribute to collective security while maintaining its established foreign policy principles of democratic governance and international cooperation (Finnish Parliament, 2024c).

This transition also raises important questions regarding Finland's evolving role in regional and global security. While Finland remains committed to diplomatic engagement, its new position within NATO necessitates a recalibrated approach to Russia, reflecting a shift from neutrality to deterrence-based security policy (Forsberg & Pesu, 2016; Xie, 2022). Additionally, Finland's experience underscores the limitations of neutrality in an era defined by hybrid warfare, economic

interdependencies, and complex geopolitical alignments (Zimmermanová et al., 2020).

Finland's strategic transformation provides a compelling case study of how small states navigate evolving security challenges through institutional alignment. As Finland deepens its integration into NATO, further research should explore how its role within the alliance evolves, particularly in shaping Nordic-Baltic security strategies and contributing to NATO's broader institutional framework (Romanov, 2020; Korunova, 2020). This shift highlights the enduring relevance of liberal institutionalism in explaining state behavior in modern security environments.

2.3 Multilateralism and Finnish foreign policy

Multilateralism, as a key tenet of liberal internationalism, facilitates cooperation through institutions to address shared challenges. Multilateralism fosters international cooperation among states, underpinning the Western liberal order established post-WWII. For Finland, multilateralism has not only shaped its foreign policy but has been a strategic necessity, allowing it to institutionalize security and diplomacy rather than rely on traditional power politics. This system has historically functioned as a stabilizing mechanism, reducing the likelihood of conflict through structured international engagement. Multilateralism in international relations is a fundamental principle that encourages international cooperation among three or more states, involving a triangular relationship that goes beyond the nature of cooperation or the regulatory frameworks that govern it (Maull, 2022; Gruszczynski et al., 2022). It is crucial to the Western liberal international order established after World War II. For Finland, multilateralism has been a consistent pillar of its foreign policy, shaping its engagements with global institutions and responses to regional challenges.

This concept has undergone substantial changes in recent years due to the emergence of geostrategic competition between the United States and China. Rivalries have added new intricacies to multilateralism, involving the handling of superpower tensions, the function of international organizations in promoting collaboration, and the fundamental legitimacy of these institutions (Woods, 2023; Toropygin, 2023). [In this shifting environment, smaller states such as Finland must adapt their multilateral strategies to preserve national security while maintaining international credibility.]

Surdej (2020) created a conceptual framework to explore how multilateralism and international governmental organizations (IGOs) interact, emphasizing the need to match global policy challenges with the mandates and capabilities of these organizations to enhance multilateral cooperation. Toropygin (2023) examined the complexities of multilateralism, multipolarity, and multi-vector foreign strategies in the post-Soviet region, highlighting the varied interpretations and subtle connections between these terms. Schechter (2011) enhances discussion by analyzing how multilateralism has evolved and adjusted to the shifting dynamics of international relations, especially in relation to non-state actors and the interaction between bilateral and multilateral diplomacy beyond formal intergovernmental organizations.

Chifu (2021), Zakharov (2022), and Raghavan (2023) explore different interpretations and practical uses of multilateralism in today's geopolitical environment. Chifu (2021) examines the global governance debate and the influence of major powers on shaping multilateralism, whereas Zakharov (2022) explores the obstacles of global governance and the crucial involvement of international organizations like the UN and WHO. Raghavan (2023) discusses the cyclical pattern

of multilateralism in international organizations, emphasizing the changing interpretation of this notion across various academic fields.

The literature presents several viewpoints on multilateralism, highlighting its crucial role in tackling global issues and promoting international collaboration. However, existing research does not fully address how Finland operationalizes its liberal commitments within multilateral institutions, particularly its role in NATO and the EU. While the theoretical aspects of multilateralism are well-explored, the practical application of Finnish multilateralism, especially in security frameworks, remains underdeveloped. This section examines Finland's historical and contemporary approach to multilateralism, evaluating its evolving security strategy and institutional alignments.

2.3.1 History and evolution of Finland's multilateralism policy

Finland has actively participated in several global organizations, including UNESCO, Nordic cooperation, and the OECD, highlighting its long-standing commitment to multilateralism and international collaboration. This engagement reflects both strategic necessity and an adherence to liberal internationalist principles, where multilateral cooperation is viewed as essential for small states to navigate global uncertainties (Barrett, 2022).

As Finland's Foreign Minister and OSCE Chairperson-in-Office Valtonen emphasized: "The Helsinki Final Act was a turning point for European security. As a result, thirty-five states across the Cold War divide committed to following shared principles that laid the foundation for the European security architecture" (Valtonen, 2025b). This historical commitment to multilateral agreements remains a

fundamental pillar of Finland's foreign policy, reinforcing its later integration into Western security institutions, including NATO.

Finland's increasing alignment with the EU and NATO demonstrates how multilateralism has evolved as a core pillar of its foreign policy, integrating security, economic, and normative goals into a coherent framework (Barrett, 2022). During the Cold War, Finland's multilateral engagement was shaped by a pragmatic balancing act between the East and the West. While maintaining neutrality, it fostered international cultural connections to strengthen its diplomatic positioning and modernize its society (Aaltola, 2011). This approach reflected flexibility in adapting to geopolitical constraints, ensuring Finland's sovereignty while maintaining economic and diplomatic ties with both Western and Eastern blocs (Ojanen & Raunio, 2018). NATO membership does not represent a break from Finland's past but rather a continuation of its long-standing strategy of embedding security within institutional cooperation rather than unilateral defense policies.

Beyond security concerns, Finland has also played an active role in human rights advocacy and social policy initiatives on the global stage. Finland's participation in the Government Plan for Analysis, Assessment, and Research signals a strategic commitment to addressing contemporary international challenges, such as climate change, migration, and evolving security dynamics (Björk et al., 2019). Finland continues to adjust its human rights policies in response to global political shifts, demonstrating its support for international norms and values despite ongoing debates about state sovereignty and multilateral governance.

Additionally, Finland's education system has reinforced its global engagement approach, highlighting its role in promoting knowledge-based diplomacy and sustainable development. As Franco (2019) notes, Finland's emphasis

on education strengthens its international responsibility, underscoring its liberal values of cooperative governance and societal progress. This philosophical foundation aligns with Finland's broader foreign policy strategy, emphasizing its active role in multilateral frameworks for both security and normative purposes.

Through its commitment to multilateralism, international cooperation, and global social initiatives, Finland has demonstrated a principled foreign policy approach. Its dedication to peace, security, and international stability is evident in its participation in institutions that uphold equality, mutual respect, and shared responsibility (Björk et al., 2019; Franco, 2019). Finland's trajectory illustrates how small states can leverage multilateral frameworks to enhance their influence and promote liberal internationalist principles on the global stage.

2.3.2 Recent shifts and challenges

Finland's foreign policy approach to multilateralism has evolved in response to geopolitical transformations, economic shifts, and security imperatives. As a small state, Finland has historically relied on multilateral frameworks to enhance its strategic position, ensuring stability, security, and normative influence within the global order. However, contemporary geopolitical developments, United Kingdom's decision to leave the EU, Russia's increasing assertiveness, and global governance challenges, have necessitated adjustments in Finland's approach to multilateral engagement (Jokela, 2022).

One of the most significant developments in recent years has been the UK's departure from the EU, which has had major political and security consequences for Finland. Brexit has reshaped the EU's geopolitical landscape, affecting both Finland's role within the EU and broader European security coordination (Etzold &

Tokarski, 2015). In response, Finland has sought to reinforce its position within EU decision-making processes, advocating for greater policy coherence in security and defense affairs. This shift reflects Finland's liberal internationalist commitment to institutional engagement, ensuring that regional governance mechanisms remain robust and adaptable to emerging challenges.

At the same time, Finland's proximity to Russia necessitates a delicate balance between security considerations and economic interactions. Historically, Finland has maintained strong economic ties with Russia, while simultaneously aligning itself with European security structures to mitigate risks (Raunio, 2021). However, Russia's invasion of Ukraine marked a turning point in Finland's multilateral strategy, catalyzing a fundamental re-evaluation of its security doctrine. The war in Ukraine reinforced the limitations of non-alignment, prompting Finland to pursue stronger institutional security guarantees through NATO membership while maintaining its broader commitment to EU-led security initiatives.

Beyond security concerns, Finland has also faced challenges within the international human rights system, particularly considering global political shifts, migration trends, and emerging technologies. Finland has traditionally positioned itself as a leader in human rights advocacy, integrating liberal internationalist values into its foreign policy approach. However, recent global trends indicate a growing emphasis on state sovereignty over multilateral governance, creating tensions within international institutions. Björk et al. (2019) emphasize the need for continuous evaluation of how international human rights frameworks adapt to shifting political realities, particularly in an era where multilateral institutions face mounting scrutiny. For Finland, these developments necessitate strategic engagement within global institutions to protect liberal norms and uphold international legal commitments.

Domestically, as mentioned in previous sections, Finland's multilateralism policy is reinforced by a broad political consensus. Across the Finnish political spectrum, there is widespread support for multilateral frameworks as essential mechanisms for addressing contemporary challenges. The stability of Finland's foreign policy direction, regardless of electoral shifts, underscores the country's commitment to institutional engagement, rule-based governance, and collective security frameworks (OECD, 2023).

Finland's strategic realignment within NATO, alongside its continued participation in EU and Nordic security mechanisms, illustrates its pragmatic but principled approach to multilateralism. This move enhances NATO's normative agenda by strengthening its democratic composition and reinforcing collective security as a mechanism for upholding liberal governance standards. As a small state, Finland has long understood the importance of institutional alliances in mitigating external security risks while maintaining a strong international voice on normative issues such as human rights, democracy, and global governance.

By reinforcing institutional resilience within multilateral frameworks, Finland's approach remains consistent with liberal internationalist principles, ensuring that cooperative mechanisms remain viable tools for navigating complex global security and governance challenges.

2.3.3 Gaps in literature

Despite extensive research on Finland's engagement with multilateralism, several gaps remain in understanding how Finland operationalizes its commitments within evolving institutional frameworks. Existing studies have extensively examined Finland's diplomatic strategy within the EU, the UN, and Nordic

cooperation; however, there is limited scholarly exploration of how Finland's norm advocacy and public diplomacy contribute to shaping its international image, particularly in the context of NATO and the UN Human Rights Council (Barrett, 2022; Tuominen, 2022). As Minister of Foreign Affairs Valtonen emphasized;

“It is our collective duty to ensure that the OSCE survives not only to its 50th anniversary but also beyond” (Valtonen, 2025a).

This highlights the importance of continued research into Finland's role in shaping multilateral institutions and how it strategically positions itself within them. Future research could assess Finland's long-term strategy in leveraging multilateral platforms to amplify its influence in global norm-setting. Finland's transition from neutrality to NATO provides an opportunity to evaluate how small liberal states influence institutional governance within military alliances, promoting democratic values and rule-based security principles.”

Additionally, Finland's shifting security policy following NATO accession has been studied in military terms, yet its deeper institutional and normative adaptation within NATO's governance structures remains insufficiently examined (Raunio, 2021; Tuominen, 2022). Questions remain about how Finland integrates its multilateralist foreign policy tradition within the Alliance while balancing its security concerns in the Arctic, Baltic, and Nordic regions.

Another underexplored area is Finland's historical foreign policy under President Martti Ahtisaari (1994–2000), particularly on its approach toward Russia (Romanov, 2020). While his presidency shaped Finland's post-Cold War multilateral trajectory, little research has assessed how his diplomatic strategies influence Finland's contemporary foreign policy decisions. A deeper cognitive analysis of Ahtisaari's influence on Finland's relations with Russia and its institutional

adaptation to Western frameworks could provide fresh insights into Finland's evolving role in the liberal international order.

Moreover, while Finland's political response to the war in Ukraine has been examined, there is little focus on the intersection of populist politics, the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) opposition, and pro-Putin sentiments within Finnish domestic debates. Research is needed on how emerging populist narratives shape Finland's foreign policy discourse and impact its multilateral engagements. Similarly, the securitization of the Putin regime and Finland's expanded defense policies, including increased defense spending and legal responses to hybrid threats, require further scrutiny, particularly regarding their impact on Finland's role in NATO and the EU.

Furthermore, Finland's approach to migration within its broader foreign policy remains an under-researched area. While Finland has traditionally emphasized human rights-based foreign policy, its handling of deportation cases among foreign-born migrant laborers offers an avenue for studying how domestic policies influence Finland's global human rights advocacy. Examining these cases within Finland's broader multilateral engagements could provide a deeper understanding of its policy contradictions.

Lastly, while Finland's transition from military non-alignment to NATO membership has been widely discussed, there is insufficient research on how liberal principles shape Finland's evolving security strategy within NATO. Further research is needed to assess whether Finland's NATO membership enhances or constrains its commitment to liberal multilateralism and how this realignment influences Nordic-Baltic regional security dynamics.

By addressing these gaps, future research can contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of Finland's evolving multilateral strategy, its integration into NATO, and its broader role within the liberal international order.

2.3.4 Comparative insights on institutional adaptation

Beyond Finland, the broader literature on liberal institutionalism highlights how states strategically align with multilateral frameworks to enhance stability and security. In post-conflict contexts, liberal peacebuilding models emphasize the role of international institutions in facilitating governance transitions. While Finland's case differs from post-conflict state-building, similar dynamics apply: institutional alignment is often a deliberate strategic choice rather than an ideological inevitability (Debebe, 2019; Simmons & Goemans, 2021).

In regions such as Africa and Asia, liberal frameworks have required adaptation to local realities, demonstrating that multilateral engagement is context-dependent rather than uniform (Debebe, 2019). Finland's transition from neutrality to NATO similarly reflects a pragmatic recalibration rather than a mere ideological shift, reinforcing the broader argument that small states use institutional frameworks to navigate security dilemmas while maintaining strategic autonomy (Simmons & Goemans, 2021).

These insights reinforce the need for further research on Finland's role within NATO, not just in terms of security alignment, but also in its contributions to institutional governance and norm-setting within the alliance. Comparative studies on how small liberal states navigate institutional commitments could offer valuable perspectives on the evolving role of Finland in the Nordic-Baltic security complex.

2.3.5 Conclusion

Finland's engagement with multilateralism has been a defining feature of its foreign policy, reflecting a long-standing commitment to institutional cooperation, collective security, and global norm advocacy. Through its participation in the EU, UN, OECD, and Nordic cooperation, Finland has leveraged multilateralism to strengthen its diplomatic standing and security frameworks. This approach aligns with liberal internationalism, which underscores the role of institutions in mitigating conflicts, promoting cooperation, and upholding democratic norms.

The literature highlights Finland's strategic adaptation to multilateral structures, from its Cold War neutrality to its evolving role within NATO and the EU. However, critical gaps remain in understanding how Finland operationalizes its liberal commitments within these frameworks. The shift from military non-alignment to NATO integration requires further exploration, particularly regarding Finland's institutional adaptation within NATO governance and its broader impact on Nordic-Baltic security. Additionally, Finland's approach to norm-setting, human rights diplomacy, and securitization policies in response to geopolitical shifts remains an underdeveloped area of research.

Moreover, Finland's handling of domestic challenges, such as migration policies and the rise of populist narratives, merits deeper examination in relation to its foreign policy identity and multilateral engagements. Understanding the extent to which Finland's liberal commitments are upheld or challenged within evolving security frameworks will be crucial in evaluating its future role in the international order.

By embedding its foreign policy within multilateral structures, Finland serves as a case study of how small states can effectively navigate global challenges through

institutional collaboration. Future research should investigate Finland's long-term influence within NATO and the EU, particularly its ability to promote democratic norms, sustain multilateral cooperation, and balance security concerns with its broader liberal agenda.

This chapter underscores Finland's strategic realignment within multilateral institutions while highlighting areas that warrant further scholarly attention. A more comprehensive understanding of Finland's role in the liberal international order will provide valuable insights into how small states balance institutional commitments, national security, and normative foreign policy goals.

CHAPTER 3

THE WAR IN UKRAINE

This chapter examines how the war in Ukraine has reinforced Finland's long-standing institutional security alignment, leading to NATO accession. Rather than being a reactionary shift driven solely by security concerns, Finland's response is embedded within a broader liberal internationalist framework that prioritizes multilateral engagement over unilateral deterrence. The war has reshaped the European security order, directly influencing Finland's decision to abandon neutrality in favor of institutionalized collective defense through NATO. The conflict highlights the interplay between regional power struggles and global alliances, serving as a critical juncture for the liberal international order, which seeks to counter authoritarian aggression through multilateral engagement.

The conflict has been driven by Ukraine's pursuit of European integration and security guarantees, particularly through closer cooperation with NATO, which Russia perceives as a threat to its sphere of influence. This conflict has gone beyond just a disagreement between two parties and has become part of a larger competition between major powers (Qaisrani et al., 2023). For Finland, this war underscored the vulnerabilities of remaining outside collective defense structures, reinforcing the necessity of formal institutional alignment through NATO.

The situation has caused a massive humanitarian crisis, resulting in large-scale displacement and significant collateral damage. It has also led to a reassessment of international relations systems (Papadakis & Spyrou, 2022). Beyond the immediate humanitarian crisis, Finland's policy response has aligned with its broader

commitment to multilateralism, particularly in supporting European security frameworks designed to address displacement and humanitarian aid.

The conflict has both immediate and long-term consequences that are complex and have multiple aspects. It affects regional security dynamics by increasing tensions at the borders and causing casualties. Additionally, it leads to the formation of new military-political alliances (Sohal et al., 2022; Nechayeva-Yuriichuk, 2022). Moreover, the war emphasized the need for innovative security measures to address the increasing military and political tension, as well as the emergence of new influential entities in Eastern Europe (Kikste, 2022). The altering of geopolitical dynamics is further demonstrated by the rise and strengthening of regional geopolitical initiatives that seek to enhance security and promote economic cooperation in Central-Eastern Europe (Nechayeva-Yuriichuk, 2022).

Furthermore, the conflict had a substantial impact on global and European security structures, posing challenges to established norms and requiring the creation of new security frameworks to effectively address the intricate nature of contemporary military and political disputes (Deyermond, 2022). The war in Ukraine had a significant effect on the economy, causing major interruptions to supply chains, travel, and a sharp increase in energy prices. This has further complicated the efforts to recover economically from the COVID-19 pandemic in OECD regions (OECD, 2022).

This research seeks to outline the complex network of geopolitical, economic, and security consequences arising from the war in Ukraine, emphasizing the significant transformations it has caused within the European and global frameworks. The ongoing conflict's effects on the geopolitical landscape of Eastern Europe and

regional security dynamics are important subjects for ongoing research and policy development.

3.1 The war in Ukraine: Background and causes

The key historical, political, economic, and cultural factors that led to the war in Ukraine are deeply intertwined. Russia's expansionist policies and historical dominance over Ukraine have shaped the region's socio-political landscape for centuries, leaving a legacy of contested identity and geopolitical tension (Trymbach, 2022).

The conflict's origins are rooted in colonial legacies, Ukraine's historical struggle for sovereignty, and stark regional divisions between eastern and western Ukraine (Karácsonyi et al., 2014; Możgin, 2022). The Soviet Union's policies further entrenched these divisions, marginalizing Ukrainian cultural and political identities while fostering economic dependence on Moscow. The legacy of Soviet-era governance not only contributed to economic disparities but also reinforced political and linguistic cleavages, which have played a significant role in shaping Ukraine's geopolitical trajectory.

These internal divisions have been geopolitically instrumentalized, with Russia leveraging linguistic and ethnic differences to justify aggression under the pretext of protecting Russian-speaking populations. Electoral patterns and political affiliations have historically reflected this divide, with pro-Western, Ukrainian-speaking regions in the west contrasting sharply with pro-Russian, Russian-speaking regions in the east. The 2013-2014 Euromaidan protests further exposed these divisions, as western regions supported closer integration with the EU, while eastern

regions remained oriented toward economic and political ties with Russia (Karácsonyi et al., 2014).

Karácsonyi et al. (2014) describe Ukraine as a nation deeply divided along historical and geopolitical lines, with its instability stemming as much from regional political fragmentation as from external pressures. While historical tensions and cultural differences persist, political cohesion remains a major challenge, with external actors, particularly Russia, exploiting internal fractures to exert influence. Some scholars propose that greater regional autonomy, rather than forced centralization, could mitigate these tensions and contribute to a more stable Ukraine. These perspectives highlight how Ukraine's complex historical ties with Russia have shaped its foreign policy orientation and contributed to the current conflict.

The establishment of Ukrainian statehood is politically driven by the historical legacy of the Kyiv state and periods of foreign control, leading to a continuous pursuit of sovereignty (Markhulia, 2022). Russia's annexation of Crimea and invasion of Donbas have intensified tensions, underscoring the ongoing political conflict over independence and territorial integrity (Markhulia, 2022; Možgin, 2022). Parliamentary debates in March 2024 highlighted Russia's annexation of Crimea and the invasion of Donbas as key factors undermining regional security and necessitating NATO membership discussions (Finnish Parliament, 2024b).

Ukraine's strategic position as a key transit country for Russian energy exports has heightened its geopolitical importance, particularly in the context of Russo-European relations (Berezina & Pomaz, 2022). The war has intensified energy security concerns, prompting the EU to accelerate efforts to diversify energy supplies and reduce reliance on Russian gas. Western sanctions have significantly disrupted

Russian energy revenues, reshaped regional economic dynamics and reinforced Ukraine's role as a focal point in the broader struggle over European energy security.

The assertion of a distinct Ukrainian national identity has been a central factor in the geopolitical tensions leading up to the war. Ukraine's historical struggle for cultural and political autonomy has been shaped by efforts to resist Russian influence while fostering closer integration with European democratic norms. Since 2014, Ukraine's national identity has increasingly aligned with pro-Western values, a shift that has been met with strong resistance from Russia, which frames Ukraine's Western orientation as a direct threat to its own sphere of influence (Možgin, 2022). In response to the ongoing war, Ukraine has further solidified its national identity through language policies, decommunization efforts, and a stronger emphasis on historical narratives that distance itself from Russian cultural dominance.

The war in Ukraine was caused by a combination of historical, political, economic, and cultural factors. These factors were influenced by a long-standing desire for national identity and sovereignty and were made worse by current geopolitical forces. Hence, the ongoing conflict might be interpreted as the last result of a long-lasting fight for self-governance in the face of Russian territorial expansion and attempts to assimilate the culture (Vushko, 2017; Himka, 2015). While later, President Niinistö also emphasized in his April 2023 speech that Finland's strategic realignment, including NATO accession, reflects an effort to counteract Russian aggression and preserve sovereignty (Niinistö, 2023).

Through the lens of these comprehensive analyses, it becomes evident that the war in Ukraine is a complex phenomenon rooted in a deep historical, cultural, and political context. The multi-dimensional factors contributing to the conflict encompass colonial legacies, socio-economic disparities, cultural identity struggles,

and the geopolitical ambitions of neighboring powers. These elements have collectively shaped the trajectory of Ukraine's quest for sovereignty and its tumultuous relationship with Russia, culminating in the ongoing conflict. This historical perspective provides a foundation for understanding how deeply entrenched cultural, political, and economic factors continue to drive the conflict and challenge efforts toward resolution.

3.2 Geopolitical, economic, and humanitarian implications

The war in Ukraine had profound economic implications, disrupted supply chains and accelerated Finland's policy shift toward energy independence and deeper integration with European economic security frameworks. The conflict has forced European states, including Finland, to reassess economic dependencies, particularly on Russian energy, while accelerating diversification efforts (Sheth & Usley, 2023; Žuk, 2023). The war has severely impacted the global availability and cost of essential commodities such as wheat and oil, with disruptions in transportation networks leading to higher logistical costs and food insecurity in multiple nations (Freedman, 2023). These economic shocks have reinforced the need for stronger energy security policies across Europe. Finland's economic strategy demonstrates a commitment to the liberal internationalist framework, prioritizing institutional economic coordination with the EU over unilateral economic policies.

Finland's sanctions regime against Russia aligns closely with the EU's broader framework, reflecting its commitment to liberal internationalism and institutional compliance. Finland has fully implemented the 15th sanctions package, targeting individuals and entities that support Russia's military, political, and economic structures. This includes restrictions on business operations, an expanded

export ban, and measures against the so-called shadow fleet circumventing the oil price cap. The EU has also introduced a hybrid sanctions regime, listing individuals involved in Russia's destabilization efforts in Member States and third countries. By adhering to these sanctions, Finland reinforces its alignment with Western security institutions and upholds the liberal internationalist principle of collective action against violations of international norms (Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 2024c).

The energy sector, a cornerstone of the European economy, has been profoundly affected by the conflict. The conflict has heightened global energy insecurity, driving oil and gas prices up and prompting European nations to reevaluate their energy policies and reduce reliance on Russian exports. Finland's efforts to align with EU-wide sanctions demonstrate a strategic commitment to reducing reliance on Russian energy while promoting renewable energy as a long-term solution to regional vulnerabilities. European nations, notably dependent on Russian energy, have experienced the full force of these events, which have had a significant impact on Europe's economy. Russia has been entirely cut off from the world financial system due to the implementation of SWIFT sanctions for the first time in this battle. This has resulted in a significant change in the global economic and financial situation (Zheng, 2023).

Finland's indefinite closure of its eastern border with Russia underscores the war's direct impact on regional security. This decision, backed by legislative extensions of the Border Security Act, reflects Finland's response to rising tensions and its effort to enhance national security amid escalating geopolitical uncertainties (Reuters, 2024; Finnish Government, 2023a).

The war has caused a severe humanitarian crisis across Eastern and Northern Europe, with far-reaching socio-economic consequences. Some governments have

linked the conflict to internal policy shifts, resulting in adjustments to social standards and welfare programs (Žuk, 2023). The crisis also tests liberal principles of human rights and international solidarity, as global institutions struggle to coordinate humanitarian efforts and manage the widespread displacement of civilians.

The economic and humanitarian consequences of the war highlight the interconnected nature of security, economic stability, and human displacement. Addressing both the immediate and long-term disruptions, from supply chain instability to rising inflation and refugee crises, requires a coordinated international approach. This case underscores the need for robust institutional preparedness to mitigate future geopolitical shocks that could similarly impact economic systems and societal well-being.

3.3 Finland's strategic response

In response to the War in Ukraine, Finland has adopted a comprehensive strategy encompassing diplomatic, economic, and military measures, firmly rooted in liberal principles of multilateralism and collective security. Finland has firmly recognized the need to enhance security and defense, characterizing Russia under Putin's leadership as a significant military threat. This shift has led to a fundamental re-evaluation of Finland's traditional neutrality, culminating in its decision to pursue NATO membership to reinforce its defense capabilities (Dinçer, 2022; Lahti & Palonen, 2023).

This decision reflects Finland's alignment with multilateral security frameworks, underscoring its commitment to collective defense as a counterbalance to authoritarian threats. Finnish parliamentary sessions emphasized that NATO membership not only enhances collective security but also aligns Finland with

multilateral frameworks designed to counter hybrid threats (Finnish Parliament, 2024c).

As discussed in previous section, a crucial aspect of Finland's strategic response has been the closure of its eastern border with Russia, a historic policy shift aimed at enhancing national security. In parallel, Finland has extended the Border Security Act indefinitely, ensuring a legal framework to counter hybrid threats. These preventative security measures, while defensive in nature, align with Finland's commitment to multilateral security cooperation within liberal institutions (Finnish Government, 2023b).

From an economic perspective, the war has influenced Finland's perspective, even though the country has minimal direct involvement with Russia. Finland successfully managed economic difficulties caused by the Global Financial Crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic by implementing structural reforms and budgetary policies that helped reduce the negative impacts. This adaptability underscores Finland's pragmatic approach to navigating economic vulnerabilities, demonstrating the intersection of liberal economic principles and strategic resilience. The situation in Ukraine has led to economic uncertainty, causing Finland to modify its economic plans to maintain resilience during geopolitical difficulties (IMF Finland, 2023).

Finland has significantly increased its defense budget and introduced new legislation to counter Russian hybrid threats. These measures are part of a broader effort to enhance military readiness and integrate collective defense within both EU and NATO security frameworks. The 2023 shift in Finnish defense policy reflects an effort to embed national defense within a multilateral security structure (Dinger, 2022). Moreover, the Defence Cooperation Agreement with the US, debated in

March 2024, reinforces Finland's commitment to transatlantic security cooperation and regional defense integration (Finnish Parliament, 2024e).

Beyond its own security realignment, Finland has played an active role in supporting Ukraine's defense. The Finnish government has provided military assistance exceeding €EUR 3.1 billion, including arms deliveries, training support, and logistical aid. Diplomatically, Finland has been a vocal advocate for sustained European and NATO support to Ukraine, emphasizing the conflict's broader implications for European stability (Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 2024a). This proactive approach not only reinforces Finland's commitment to multilateralism but also aligns with its strategic goal of strengthening regional deterrence against further Russian aggression.

The consequences of these strategic shifts have been significant. Finland's bid for NATO membership, backed by a consensus spanning the whole political spectrum, represents a significant change in foreign policy and a dedication to forging stronger ties with Western security organizations. Moreover, Finland's strong position on regional security and cooperation is highlighted by its involvement in implementing EU sanctions on Russia and strengthening defense capabilities in the Arctic, Baltic, and Nordic regions (Government of Finland, 2023; Kurbet, 2022). Its strategic focus on the Arctic and Baltic regions exemplifies Finland's commitment to safeguarding regional stability while leveraging multilateral partnerships to address shared security concerns.

Finland's strategic adaptations reflect its response to the intricate and changing security situation in Europe. These adaptations demonstrate a dedication to protecting national sovereignty, improving military readiness, and promoting regional stability in the face of challenges arising from the war in Ukraine.

3.4 Conclusion

Finland's response to the War in Ukraine demonstrates the enduring relevance of the liberal international order, highlighting how multilateral institutions provide the most sustainable framework for managing security crises. Rather than pursuing unilateral military buildup, Finland's strategic realignment reflects a deliberate institutional choice to embed national defense within a cooperative security framework. This conflict illustrates the need to reinforce global alliances and institutions to counter rising authoritarianism and safeguard democratic values.

From a liberal internationalist perspective, this battle highlights the crucial importance of international cooperation, adherence to the rule of law, and the collective response of the global community to acts of aggression.

War underscores the growing importance of international institutions and alliances. The crisis in Ukraine highlights the need for a strong and cohesive global structure that can effectively prevent acts of aggression and foster peaceful relations. NATO and the EU's reinforced security cooperation exemplify liberalism's emphasis on stability through institutional engagement. Finland's strategic pivot toward NATO membership underscores the role of multilateral alliances in countering security threats and upholding democratic values. These efforts not only strengthen the defense capabilities of countries like Finland but also highlight the need of multilateralism in dealing with security concerns.

Finland has actively aligned with the EU's collective response to Russia's invasion, implementing the full scope of sanctions targeting Russian financial institutions, energy exports, and military-linked industries. The Finnish government has also prioritized reducing dependency on Russian energy, accelerating investment

in alternative sources and regional energy cooperation. These economic measures further underscore Finland's broader commitment to institutional multilateralism, reinforcing its integration within the EU and NATO's collective security framework.

Furthermore, the economic consequences of the conflict, which impact worldwide supply chains and energy markets, demonstrate the interdependent nature of our globalized society. Liberalism promotes a global economy that is open and interconnected, allowing states to gain advantages through reciprocal trade and collaboration. The economic shocks of the war have forced liberal economies to reassess their resilience strategies, prompting a shift in policy toward greater diversification and security-driven economic planning. Enhancing international economic institutions and agreements can alleviate the consequences of such conflicts, guaranteeing that the global market continues to be a catalyst for wealth and peace. Similarly, a unified humanitarian response rooted in liberal ideals of human dignity and solidarity is essential for addressing the displacement crisis and rebuilding affected communities.

Moreover, war has led to a humanitarian catastrophe that requires a response based on liberal principles. The preservation of civilians and the defense of human rights are fundamental to the liberal perspective on international relations. The international community's endeavors to aid Ukrainian refugees and enforce sanctions on the aggressor highlight the dedication to defend these principles. The liberal order demonstrates its commitment to human dignity and the rule of law through these measures.

The war in Ukraine underscored the limitations of neutrality for small states like Finland, reinforcing the necessity of institutionalized security guarantees over unilateral deterrence. While Finland had already been deepening its cooperation with

NATO since 2014, the full-scale invasion in 2022 demonstrated that remaining outside a formal alliance structure exposed critical vulnerabilities. The conflict revealed how multilateral defense mechanisms provide both strategic predictability and operational resilience in the face of aggression. As a result, Finland's accession to NATO was not merely a reaction to immediate threats but a deliberate long-term alignment with institutional security frameworks, ensuring both national defense and regional stability within a collective system.

Finland's strategic response to the war in Ukraine illustrates liberal internationalism's relevance in contemporary geopolitics, where institutional collaboration, as a node to liberal institutionalism as a subset of liberal internationalism, offers a sustainable approach to security challenges, contrasting with the self-help focus of realism. The liberal framework remains central in shaping state responses to geopolitical crises, reinforcing the importance of institutional cooperation, economic interdependence, and collective security in an evolving global landscape. The insights gained from the War in Ukraine will have a significant impact on the future of liberal internationalism, emphasizing its ongoing importance in a quickly evolving world.

CHAPTER 4

THE END OF FINNISH NEUTRALITY

This chapter situates Finland's policy changes within a liberal internationalist framework, demonstrating how institutional cooperation and collective security have gradually replaced unilateral neutrality.

This part explores the complex development of Finland's neutrality policy, starting from its establishment in the 20th century's intricate geopolitical landscape, to its changes in the post-Cold War period, and its current challenges considering the war in Ukraine. The transformation of Finnish neutrality reflects a strategic realignment rather than a reactionary shift. Finland's shift away from neutrality reflects a long-term institutional commitment to collective security rather than a short-term response to Russian aggression. This transition, best understood through liberal internationalism, which highlights the strategic importance of embedding national security within multilateral institutions rather than relying on traditional power-balancing mechanisms.

This chapter aims to clarify the complex nature of Finnish neutrality and its importance in the wider discussion of international relations and security policy by thoroughly analyzing historical examples, strategic choices, and the influence of liberal values. Moreover, this chapter bridges the previous discussion on NATO membership and Finland's evolving multilateral strategies, providing a cohesive narrative of its strategic realignment.

4.1 Finland's historical policy of neutrality

Finland's policy of neutrality has historically been a strategic response shaped by both realist survival considerations and liberal commitments to sovereignty, democracy, and multilateral engagement. This approach was not passive but a calculated policy, widely supported by the Finnish public and reinforced through political consensus and institutional commitment.

Finland's neutrality was not merely a reaction to geopolitical constraints but a deliberate strategy to navigate between great powers, ensuring its security while maintaining diplomatic flexibility (Xie, 2022; Aunesluoma & Rainio-Niemi, 2016; Uutela, 2020). It was a strategic approach designed to balance its security needs within a constrained geopolitical environment. However, as institutional security frameworks evolved, neutrality became less viable in ensuring long-term stability.

Parliamentary records highlight Finland's delicate balancing act, maintaining independence while accommodating Soviet security concerns and fostering stronger ties with the West (Finnish Parliament, 2024a). This positioning enabled Finland to engage with both power blocs, serving as a diplomatic bridge in Cold War politics. Finland's foreign policy gradually evolved from traditional neutrality to a model of security cooperation. EU membership in 1995 marked a turning point, illustrating a shift toward institutional alignment. The decision to pursue NATO membership was the culmination of this trajectory rather than an abrupt departure from past policies.

4.1.1 Neutrality during the Cold War

During the Cold War, Finland's neutrality was both a necessity and a strategy, carefully crafted to preserve sovereignty while avoiding direct confrontation with either the Soviet Union or the Western bloc.

Finland successfully navigated immense pressure from the Soviet Union, particularly under the 1948 Agreement of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance, which required Finland to ensure that its territory would not be used for attacks against the Soviet Union^F. This agreement placed clear constraints on Finland's strategic autonomy, yet it allowed Finland to maintain independence through diplomatic and economic pragmatism (Forsberg & Pesu, 2016).

Neutrality during this period was not a passive policy but a calibrated survival mechanism, often described as "Finlandization," a term referring to Finland's ability to engage with the West economically while accommodating Soviet security concerns (Forster, 2016; Xie, 2022). Despite criticisms that Finlandization limited Finland's foreign policy flexibility, this approach enabled the country to integrate into global economic networks and maintain a degree of strategic autonomy (Xie, 2022).

Parliamentary records from the era underscore the delicate balancing act required of Finnish policymakers, who sought to secure economic stability while avoiding alignment with either superpower. Neutrality became a core element of Finland's foreign policy identity, allowing it to serve as a diplomatic bridge between East and West. This approach ensured Finland's security, economic prosperity, and strategic maneuverability, even as it remained geographically exposed to Cold War tensions (Lottaz, 2022).

4.1.2 Neutrality in the Post-Soviet Era

The dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 marked a critical turning point for Finland's neutrality policy. No longer bound by the direct threat posed by the Soviet Union, Finland reassessed its foreign policy to reflect broader European geopolitical

shifts. This period saw a gradual evolution rather than an abrupt departure from neutrality, as Finland sought to balance its historical non-alignment with new security realities.

A key moment in this transition was Finland's accession to the European Union in 1995, which represented a clear departure from Cold War-era strict neutrality. By joining the EU, Finland signaled its commitment to multilateral cooperation while still refraining from formal military alliances. Neutrality was thus redefined as non-alignment, with a strategic focus on European integration rather than security isolation (Suchoples, 2023; Eliasson, 2004).

While Finland formally maintained neutrality, its increasing security engagement with the EU and NATO illustrated a shift toward institutional security. Liberal institutionalism best explains this transition, as Finland sought to integrate its national security strategy within broader European frameworks rather than relying solely on national deterrence. The Cold War experience had demonstrated that neutrality, while ensuring stability, also exposed Finland to vulnerabilities in unilateral security arrangements. This historical pragmatism informed Finland's eventual decision to align with NATO, emphasizing the need for institutional cooperation to address contemporary security challenges (Akbar & Fadiyah, 2024; Lundqvist, 2023).

The post-Soviet era also marked the beginning of Finland's deeper involvement in European security structures. Participation in the European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP) reflected Finland's growing recognition that cooperative security frameworks offered practical benefits, even as it maintained non-alignment within the EU. This policy of strategic adaptability allowed Finland to engage in

European security mechanisms without directly committing to military alliances (Enos-Attali, 2021).

Finland's security posture evolved further in the early 2000s, as it increasingly emphasized multilateralism in its foreign policy. However, the annexation of Crimea in 2014 reignited intense debates about Finland's security vulnerabilities. Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 marked a turning point in Finnish security policy, reinforcing the limits of neutrality in modern security environments. Rather than resorting to unilateral security measures, Finland increasingly aligned with multilateral frameworks, a shift best understood through liberal institutionalism. These discussions underscored a growing recognition that traditional neutrality may no longer suffice in addressing modern security threats, particularly given Russia's renewed assertiveness in the region (Gorobets & Martynov, 2022; Lanko, 2021; Aunesluoma & Rainio-Niemi, 2016; Hellman, 2010; Heikka, 2005).

4.1.3 Legislative and policy shifts in response to contemporary challenges

The ongoing war in Ukraine, which began in 2022, prompted Finland to reassess the viability of its neutrality policy. While Finland had maintained a careful balance between security cooperation and non-alignment, Russia's actions led to a fundamental shift in security priorities. The perception that neutrality alone could no longer guarantee national security became widely accepted, both in political discourse and public opinion.

In response, Finland enacted legislative and policy measures aimed at strengthening its security infrastructure. Notably, the indefinite closure of Finland's eastern border with Russia and the extension of the Border Security Act underscored

a decisive move away from traditional neutrality (Finnish Government, 2023b; Reuters, 2024). These actions reflected a shift toward proactive security policies, emphasizing preparedness and resilience in response to hybrid threats and regional instability.

Public opinion and political consensus also played a pivotal role in this transition. The broad cross-party political support for NATO membership further reflected a fundamental shift in Finland's security doctrine. This issue was discussed in more detail in section 2.1.3 Recent Shifts and Influences.

Parliamentary debates during this period reinforced this shift, with lawmakers consistently stressing the need to align Finland's security policies with public sentiment and external security challenges. Finland's new security posture reflects a strategic adaptation to the evolving geopolitical landscape, demonstrating a departure from past policies of strict neutrality toward multilateral defense engagement.

4.2 The evolution of Finnish neutrality

The transition of Finland's neutrality into a foreign policy that emphasizes alignment reflects a deliberate adaptation to changing geopolitical realities. Finland's historical relationship with Russia has necessitated a careful balance between safeguarding its independence and ensuring regional security. The dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 marked a pivotal moment in Finland's foreign policy, prompting a reassessment of its neutrality in favor of non-alignment, a stance that aligned with broader European geopolitical transformations (Suchoples, 2023).

During this transition, liberal internationalism became an increasingly influential framework, shaping Finland's approach to multilateral security cooperation while preserving its strategic autonomy. This shift underscores the

progressive integration of Finland into Western institutional frameworks, balancing the pragmatic concerns of security policy with the liberal principles of international cooperation.

4.2.1 Integration into the European Union and reevaluation of neutrality

Finland's accession to the European Union in 1995 signified a crucial step away from strict neutrality and toward deeper institutional cooperation. While Finland remained militarily non-aligned, EU membership fundamentally altered its foreign policy outlook by embedding it within a broader framework of European political and economic integration. Unlike during the Cold War, when neutrality was a pragmatic necessity dictated by Finland's geopolitical position, EU accession reflected a deliberate choice to align with Western institutions while maintaining formal military non-alignment.

This shift was not merely economic but also strategic. The EU's evolving role in security cooperation, through mechanisms such as the Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP), provided Finland with new avenues to engage in collective security efforts without direct military commitments. Finland participated actively in EU-led crisis management operations and supported the development of joint defense initiatives, gradually reducing its reliance on neutrality as a security doctrine.

However, the reevaluation of neutrality gained urgency following Russia's 2008 war in Georgia and, more decisively, the 2014 annexation of Crimea. These events underscored the vulnerabilities of states outside formal security alliances and reignited debates in Finland about the sufficiency of non-alignment in an increasingly unpredictable security environment. While Finland continued to expand

its NATO cooperation through initiatives such as Enhanced Opportunity Partnership (EOP), formal membership remained politically sensitive.

By 2022, Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine forced Finland to abandon its traditional policy of non-alignment entirely. This final break from neutrality was not a sudden reaction but the culmination of three decades of progressive integration into Western security frameworks. Finland's NATO accession reflected not only immediate security concerns but also a broader transformation in its foreign policy doctrine, one that emphasized institutional security guarantees over unilateral deterrence, reinforcing its long-standing commitment to multilateral cooperation.

4.2.2 Analysis of public opinion and defensive strategies

Public support for NATO surged in response to the 2022 invasion, reinforcing Finland's liberal institutionalist commitment to aligning foreign policy with democratic consensus. Unlike realist arguments that emphasize elite-driven security decisions, Finland's shift reflects the role of public opinion in shaping policy within a democratic governance framework. This watershed moment led to a collective reassessment of national security needs, resulting in unprecedented public support for NATO accession, which was addressed in more detail in section 2.1.3 Recent Shifts and Influences.

While public support for NATO surged after the war in Ukraine, Finland's political landscape had already been shifting toward stronger Western security ties. The decision to seek full NATO membership was enabled by this pre-existing trend, which the war accelerated rather than created. This broad-based agreement reflects the alignment of societal preferences with policy decisions, reinforcing the liberalist view that democratic governance is responsive to public opinion.

Parliamentary debates during this period reinforced the legitimacy of Finland's NATO bid, as policymakers emphasized the alignment of public sentiment with national security priorities. Legislative initiatives aimed at modernizing Finland's defense infrastructure further demonstrated the government's commitment to strengthening territorial defense and hybrid warfare preparedness (Finnish Parliament, 2024d).

According to Forsberg (2023), the political consensus in Finland reflects a national commitment to collective security, driven by public awareness of evolving security threats. Xia et al. (2022) further emphasize the role of public opinion in legitimizing strategic decision-making, arguing that strong societal support was a key factor in Finland's rapid shift away from neutrality.

In response to these security concerns, Finland increased its defense budget, prioritizing investments in advanced air defense systems, cybersecurity, and military modernization efforts. This comprehensive approach to national security reflects Finland's broader strategy of adaptability, ensuring resilience in the face of hybrid and conventional threats.

These developments demonstrate the interplay between democratic values, public opinion, and policymaking, highlighting the critical role of citizen support in shaping Finland's strategic decisions during a period of unprecedented geopolitical uncertainty.

4.2.3 Ramifications for the structure of regional security

Finland's accession to NATO is expected to have far-reaching implications for regional security, reinforcing the alliance's capacity to coordinate defense strategies and deterrence measures in the Arctic, Baltic, and Nordic regions. This shift

enhances NATO's strategic depth, allowing for better military coordination and rapid response capabilities in a historically contested zone.

The incorporation of Finland's highly capable military forces strengthens the alliance's deterrence posture, particularly in the Baltic Sea and Arctic regions, where tensions with Russia have escalated. Finland's territorial defense model, characterized by a well-trained conscription system and advanced defense technology, offers NATO a strategic advantage in the northern European theater.

As NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte emphasized: "Finland has highly capable military forces and innovative capabilities. You are investing more than 2% of GDP in defence. I welcome that you will host a new NATO battlegroup, to deter any aggression. And a new headquarters to lead NATO land operations in the region. All these efforts enhance our defences along the eastern flank and in the High North" (Rutte, 2024a). This underscores Finland's role in strengthening NATO's overall deterrence posture and operational readiness, particularly in northern Europe, where the alliance seeks to counter emerging security challenges, emphasizing multilateralism and collective defense mechanisms as central pillars of stability.

4.2.4 Conclusion

The transformation of Finland's neutrality policy reflects a broader strategic adaptation rather than an abrupt shift in response to external threats. Over time, Finland transitioned from a Cold War-era survival strategy to a foreign policy rooted in multilateral cooperation, culminating in its NATO accession. This evolution was shaped by historical experiences, geopolitical changes, and the recognition that neutrality, while once a viable policy, could no longer guarantee security in an increasingly volatile international landscape.

Liberal internationalism provides the best framework for understanding Finland's strategic realignment. Rather than pursuing isolationist neutrality or unilateral military buildup, Finland chose to integrate itself into institutions that emphasize collective security, shared governance, and rule-based international order. This approach aligns with Finland's broader diplomatic identity, which prioritizes predictability, institutional stability, and cooperative defense mechanisms over the uncertainties of non-alignment.

Moreover, Finland's transition reinforces a critical lesson in contemporary security policy: small states facing existential security challenges cannot rely solely on neutrality in a system dominated by major powers. Ukraine war served as a stark reminder that institutionalized security guarantees, rather than ad hoc balancing, offer the most sustainable framework for national defense. By embedding itself within NATO's security architecture, Finland not only strengthened its national security but also contributed to the broader stability of Northern Europe, the Arctic, and the Baltic region.

This shift away from neutrality does not mark the abandonment of Finland's diplomatic traditions but rather their adaptation to modern security realities. By integrating into Western security institutions, Finland has reaffirmed its long-standing commitment to multilateralism, democracy, and rule-based international cooperation, ensuring its strategic interests remain safeguarded in an increasingly unpredictable world.

4.3 The impact of the war in Ukraine on Finnish neutrality

Finland's reconsideration of its neutrality in response to the War in Ukraine is heavily influenced by liberal internationalism, as mentioned in detail previously,

which underscores the role of international institutions, rule-based order, and collective security in managing geopolitical challenges. The then Finnish government, led by Prime Minister Sanna Marin and President Niinistö, identified Russia's actions as a clear security threat, prompting an accelerated shift toward NATO as a strategic safeguard (Dinçer, 2022; Lahti & Palonen, 2023).

Prior to 2022, Finland pursued a carefully balanced strategy, maintaining non-membership in NATO while fostering strong defense cooperation with the alliance. This pragmatic approach aimed to mitigate Russian hostilities while ensuring Finland's security (Suchoples, 2023; Zimmermanová, Kříž, & Doležalová, 2020). The full-scale invasion of Ukraine underscored the limitations of this model, prompting Finland to transition from informal cooperation to formal institutional membership, in line with liberal institutionalist principles.

The historical context of Finland-Russia relations, rooted in centuries of strategic competition in the Baltic region, remained a key factor in this transition. Finland's foreign policy decisions have long been shaped by Russia's regional ambitions, from the Tsarist era to Soviet influence, and now Russia's contemporary military assertiveness. The 2022 invasion of Ukraine prompted Finnish policymakers to reassess national security priorities, culminating in Finland and Sweden's joint NATO application (Suchoples, 2023).

Despite this transformation, Finland's security culture and strategic self-perception remain firmly anchored in the liberal international order. This shift reflects a strong commitment to principles of sovereignty, rule of law, and institutional cooperation, which have influenced Finland's decision to abandon neutrality in favor of a rules-based security alliance (Enos-Attali, 2021).

Finland's response to Ukraine war has extended beyond military alignment to broader humanitarian and economic initiatives. In December 2024, the Finnish government announced an increase in humanitarian aid, prioritizing support for Ukraine (Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 2024b). This aligns with liberal values of international solidarity and highlights Finland's engagement in multilateral efforts to address global crises.

Additionally, Finland's indefinite closure of its eastern border with Russia reflects a firm stance on sovereignty and national security, emphasizing the country's strategic realignment in response to Russian aggression (Reuters, 2024; Finnish Government, 2023b). Since 2022, Finland has provided EUR 3.1 billion in economic, humanitarian, and defense support to Ukraine, further reinforcing its commitment to multilateralism and collective security (Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 2024a).

4.4 Conclusion

Finland's shift from neutrality to NATO membership marks a decisive transformation in its security policy, but rather than an abrupt reaction, it reflects a long-term trajectory toward institutional security alignment. The war in Ukraine served as the final catalyst, reinforcing the vulnerabilities of military non-alignment and accelerating an already evolving policy. However, Finland's NATO accession is not just a response to Russian aggression; it is the culmination of a strategic re-evaluation that has unfolded over decades, shaped by historical experiences, geopolitical realities, and deepening institutional ties with the West.

This transition is best understood through liberal institutionalism, which highlights the role of multilateral cooperation, institutional security guarantees, and

democratic consensus in shaping state behavior. While realism explains the immediate security concerns that drove Finland to seek NATO protection, it fails to fully account for the broader institutional and normative dimensions that influenced this shift. Finland had already been integrating into Western security frameworks, strengthening EU defense ties, and expanding NATO cooperation well before 2022. The war only solidified the necessity of formalizing this alignment through full membership.

Moreover, Finland's NATO accession does not represent a rejection of its historical foreign policy principles but rather their adaptation to modern security challenges. While neutrality allowed Finland to maintain sovereignty during the Cold War, the evolving nature of global security threats, particularly hybrid warfare and territorial aggression, demonstrated the limitations of non-alignment. By joining NATO, Finland preserves its strategic autonomy within a rules-based security framework, ensuring both national defense and regional stability.

Finland's realignment also underscores a broader lesson for small states in global security dynamics: in a world shaped by power competition and shifting alliances, institutionalized security frameworks offer stronger protection than independent deterrence. NATO membership not only enhances Finland's defense posture but also reinforces the stability of the Nordic-Baltic region, contributing to the alliance's broader strategic depth.

The end of Finnish neutrality symbolizes a recalibration rather than a rupture. Finland has not abandoned its commitment to multilateralism, diplomacy, and rule-based security, it has reinforced these principles by embedding itself within NATO's collective defense structure. This shift exemplifies the adaptability of small states in managing geopolitical uncertainty, demonstrating that while security policies must

evolve, the core values of sovereignty, cooperation, and strategic foresight remain constants in Finland's foreign policy approach.



CHAPTER 5

MULTILATERALISM AND FINLAND

This chapter analyzes Finland's participation in multilateral institutions, highlighting the guiding principles, strategic evolution, and influence of this engagement on global diplomacy and security. The shift from historical neutrality to active participation in international institutions demonstrates Finland's adaptability and commitment to human rights, regional security, and institutional cooperation. Finland's foreign policy transition from neutrality to active multilateral engagement reflects a strategic commitment to liberal internationalism.

5.1 The role of multilateralism in Finnish foreign policy

Finland's foreign policy evolution demonstrates its growing commitment to multilateralism as a means of enhancing security and stability. While its historical neutrality was shaped by Cold War pragmatism, post-Cold War integration into European security structures signaled a shift toward a rule-based security approach, consistent with liberal internationalism.

Finland's historical neutrality shaped its approach to multilateralism, particularly during the Cold War, where neutrality was a pragmatic survival strategy amidst great power tensions. In the post-Soviet era, this tradition evolved into an active multilateral strategy, culminating in Finland's NATO accession alongside Sweden. This shift underscores how historical experiences of neutrality have shaped Finland's adaptive approach to contemporary security needs, prioritizing regional cooperation and collective security frameworks (Lundqvist, 2023; Uutela, 2019).

While Finland's foreign policy was shaped by the Paasikivi-Kekkonen doctrine, named after Presidents Juho Kusti Paasikivi (in office 1946-1956) and Urho Kekkonen (in office 1956-1981), emphasizing neutrality, pragmatic diplomacy, and accommodation of Soviet security concerns to avoid conflict and maintain Finland's independence, the post-Cold War era witnessed a gradual shift toward deeper institutional engagement (Kuusisto, 1959). This transition aligns with liberal internationalist principles, prioritizing security through multilateral cooperation rather than independent deterrence.

5.1.1 Historical context and strategic evolution

Finnish foreign policy is shaped by a complex interplay of neutrality, strategic partnerships, and integration into European structures. As discussed in Chapter 4, Finland's neutrality during the Cold War was a pragmatic strategy (driven by the Paasikivi-Kekkonen doctrine), which ensured sovereignty while managing Soviet geopolitical constraints. However, even within this framework, Finland sought avenues for multilateral engagement, particularly through the UN, the OSCE, and the Nordic Council.

With the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Finland intensified its participation in multilateral frameworks, embedding itself in the EU and NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP) while retaining formal non-alignment. Finland's EU accession in 1995 marked a turning point, embedding the country in a broader security and economic framework while maintaining military non-alignment. This transition is detailed in Section 4.2.1, which explores Finland's gradual security realignment before NATO accession.

The war in Ukraine in 2022 accelerated this long-term transition, exposing the limitations of non-alignment in contemporary security dynamics. Finland's NATO accession in 2023, analyzed in Section 4.3, was not a reactionary shift but the culmination of decades of strategic adaptation. As discussed in Section 4.3, Finland's NATO accession was the culmination of long-standing institutional engagement rather than a sudden shift. Its deeper commitment to NATO reflects a broader pattern of multilateral security cooperation.

5.1.2 Engagement with NATO and liberal internationalism

Finland and Sweden's NATO accession reflects a shift from non-alignment to deeper institutional integration within rule-based security frameworks. Rather than being a purely security-driven response, NATO membership aligns with Finland's broader commitment to multilateral defense cooperation, reinforcing its role in the Euro-Atlantic security order. Finland's foreign and security policy, founded on human rights principles, aligns with broader multilateral frameworks such as the Paris Agreement and Sustainable Development Goals (OECD, 2022a).

As Minister of Defence Antti Häkkinen stated: "Our proposal promotes the implementation of NATO's collective defence. We will add the collective defence of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization as a statutory duty of the Finnish Defence Forces" (Häkkinen, 2025).

This legislative shift underscores Finland's commitment to integrating its national defense within a multilateral security structure, ensuring that its security policies align with collective decision-making mechanisms rather than unilateral military expansion. This underscores Finland's full integration into NATO's security structure, reinforcing its commitment to allied defense cooperation.

The launch of NATO's 'Baltic Sentry' initiative, with Finland playing an integral role, exemplifies Finland's active contributions to multilateral security and its commitment to the liberalist principles of regional stability through institutional cooperation (NATO, 2024a).

5.1.3 Global human rights promotion

Finland's candidacy for the UN Human Rights Council (2022-2024) highlights its role in global norm-setting and advocacy for human rights (Tuominen, 2022). The country's bilateral defense accords with Sweden reinforce a broader regional security strategy based on liberal democratic values (Raunio, 2021).

5.1.4 Economic integration and security

Finland's active participation in European economic institutions demonstrates a pragmatic foreign policy approach, leveraging economic interdependence as a stabilizing force in international relations (Korhonen, 2003; Raunio, 2016, 2021).

5.1.5 Conclusion

Finland's multilateral trajectory reflects a deep commitment to liberal internationalism. The country's shift from neutrality to active institutional engagement highlights its recognition that security, economic resilience, and democratic governance are best safeguarded through multilateral cooperation.

5.2 The impact of the war in Ukraine on Finnish multilateralism

The war in Ukraine reinforced Finland's commitment to multilateral security, accelerating a trajectory that had already been evolving over decades. Rather than causing a fundamental shift, the conflict highlighted the necessity of deeper institutional integration to ensure long-term stability. This section discusses the impact of the conflict on Finnish multilateralism, focusing on the transition from military non-alignment to active involvement with NATO, the social, political, and economic consequences, and the wider effects on Finland's position in the global order.

5.2.1 Finland's pivot to NATO

Finland has made substantial changes to its foreign policy, particularly in relation to NATO membership, due to the increasing risks from the war in Ukraine. This change signifies a reversal from its traditional stance of military neutrality, garnering unanimous political backing, even from the populist Radical Right Finns Party. The consensus emphasizes Finland's commitment to enhancing its security within the Euro-Atlantic framework, in line with the Nordic nations' approach to tackling challenges to the international rule-based order (Lahti & Palonen, 2023; Brommesson et al., 2023).

Nokkala (2023) and Arter (2022) analyze Finland's strategic decision-making process and the psychological elements that impact this shift. The resurgence of the collective memory of Soviet aggression has influenced popular opinion and political determination towards NATO membership, symbolically marking the end of the "Finlandisation" era. While also President Alexander Stubb, in the Helsinki Security Forum 2024, highlighted the significance of NATO's deterrence capacity in

Finland's new foreign policy paradigm (Stubb, 2024a). Finland's detailed government report on NATO contributions further highlights its commitment to collective peacetime missions. These efforts, rooted in liberal values, aim to strengthen NATO's capacity to address global challenges collectively (Ministry of Defence, 2024).

The Helsinki NATO Summit in January 2025 underscored Finland's growing leadership role in NATO's regional strategy, with a focus on strengthening security in the Baltic Sea. The agreement to increase NATO's presence in the Baltic aligns with Finland's commitment to multilateral defense frameworks, addressing hybrid threats and ensuring the protection of critical infrastructure (Yle, 2025a). This initiative demonstrates the importance of Finland's strategic location and its proactive measures to bolster regional stability. Finland's efforts highlight the liberal internationalist principle of collective security through institutional collaboration, displaying how NATO members work collectively to address shared threats (NATO SHAPE, 2025).

5.2.2 Reevaluation of Finland's liberalist perspective

The war has triggered a strategic shift and revealed inconsistencies in the liberal international system, prompting Finland to review its economic interdependencies and public discussions. Kratinová (2016) and Dinçer (2022) highlight the significant change in public opinion and political agreement toward NATO, influenced by the perceived threats posed by the Putin government and the acknowledgment of economic interdependence as a possible cause of conflict (Mulligan, 2022).

Finland is experiencing economic issues due to the war, even though it has limited direct contact with Russia. This situation is putting the nation's resilience and

adaptation methods to the test in a changing geopolitical landscape. The change in public opinion and social media discussions about NATO shows how external challenges can bring society together, even after having differences in the past (Xia et al., 2022). Finland's pivot to NATO validates liberalism's emphasis on collective security, but the war has also revealed the limits of economic interdependence as a deterrent against aggression. This tension between economic integration and security is further explored in Section 5.3, which discusses Finland's economic policies within the EU's broader multilateral framework.

5.2.3 Conclusion

Finland's multilateral realignment underscores liberalism's emphasis on institutional cooperation, reinforcing the role of alliances in addressing security crises. Finland is facing a crucial moment due to the war in Ukraine, which is prompting a reassessment of its foreign policy, economic prospects, and social unity. Finland's international stance has significantly changed due to the alignment of views on NATO and the widespread agreement on improving defense capability. The research by scholars such as Kratinová (2016), Dinçer (2022), Mulligan (2022), and the IMF (2023) highlights the significant impact of the war on global dynamics. It stresses the necessity for adjusting national and international policies due to economic interdependence, security issues, and geopolitical conflicts.

5.3 Finland's engagement in multilateral organizations

Finland's commitment to multilateralism extends beyond NATO, encompassing its active role in the OSCE, the EU, and other international frameworks. This approach underscores Finland's broader security policy, emphasizing collaboration and adherence to shared democratic norms.

As Minister for Foreign Affairs Valtonen stated: "The OSCE has a central role in guaranteeing the European security architecture, and NATO is committed to its principles. A just and lasting peace in Ukraine will only be possible if Ukraine has a strong negotiating position. That is why we will continue to support Ukraine in various ways both within the OSCE and NATO" (Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, 2025). This highlights Finland's role in reinforcing multilateral institutions to address European security challenges and provide continued assistance to Ukraine. Finland's strong involvement in multilateral institutions demonstrates its firm dedication to liberal internationalist ideas, especially seen in its foreign policy after moving away from neutrality.

5.3.1 Human rights and global security

Finland's foreign policy is centered around a strong dedication to human rights, demonstrated by its pursuit of a position on the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) for the year 2022-2024. Finland aims to enhance its position in the Nordic region by promoting norms and engaging in UN campaigns, highlighting its commitment to moral leadership and responsible behavior in the global community (Tuominen, 2022). Finland's candidacy for a UN Human Rights Council seat further underscores its dedication to global norm advocacy and multilateral diplomacy (Finnish Parliament, 2024).

Finland channels substantial support to Ukraine through multilateral organizations such as the World Bank Group. This includes strengthening essential public services, repairing critical infrastructure, and facilitating Ukraine's recovery and reconstruction (Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 2024a). In December 2023, Finland unveiled a comprehensive national plan to support Ukraine's reconstruction. The plan prioritizes conditions favorable for Finnish businesses in rebuilding efforts, reflecting a pragmatic approach to multilateralism and liberal principles of economic cooperation (Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 2023a).

Finland has transitioned from a neutral position, especially during the Cold War, to actively participating in military crisis management under the EU and NATO's guidance. Finland's shift highlights its changing identity to better match international norms and its dedication to promoting worldwide peace and stability.

5.3.2 Cultural diplomacy and international cooperation

Finland's foreign involvement has included cultural diplomacy since it joined the UNESCO charter in 1956. Finland's sustained efforts in multilateral cultural cooperation, from Nordic cooperation to OECD membership, illustrate its strategy of leveraging cultural diplomacy to advance foreign policy objectives and enhance its global image. Finland's dedication to educational and cultural progress reflects its alignment with liberal values, as highlighted by Barrett (2022). Finland's leadership in the Helsinki Security Forum also exemplifies its role in shaping multilateral dialogues on Nordic and Baltic security (Stubb, 2024a).

5.3.3 Adapting to contemporary challenges: The case of Ukraine

Finland's liberal approach has significantly changed in response to foreign events, particularly Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. At this crucial point, Finland decided to review its military neutrality stance, resulting in a collaborative request for NATO membership with Sweden. Finland's recent change in policy, moving away from Finlandisation, demonstrates its active role in enhancing regional and global security frameworks (Arter, 2022; Lahti & Palonen, 2023).

In 2023, Finland allocated EUR 1,452 million as official development assistance (ODA), with Ukraine receiving the largest share. This highlights Finland's prioritization of supporting nations in crisis and fostering stability through multilateral cooperation (Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 2023).

5.3.4 Leveraging historical experience for contemporary challenges

Finland's historical ability to balance strategic autonomy with institutional cooperation offers insights into how small states can navigate post-conflict recovery within a multilateral framework. This path highlights the possibility of significant development through purposeful investments in education, economic variety, and institutional openness (Kurbet, 2022). Finland's approach of maintaining neutrality while actively participating in multilateral organizations is seen as a model for tackling current geopolitical challenges.

At the Helsinki NATO Summit, leaders of eight Baltic coastal states highlighted Finland's role in coordinating regional efforts to counter hybrid threats and protect critical infrastructure, such as undersea cables damaged in recent incidents (Yle, 2025b). Finland's leadership in these discussions illustrates its ability to translate its NATO commitments into actionable strategies for regional stability.

This proactive engagement emphasizes Finland's evolving identity as a key player in the Euro-Atlantic security landscape, underpinned by liberal ideals of multilateralism and cooperation.

Finland's involvement in multilateral organizations demonstrates its steadfast dedication to liberal values, international collaboration, and the pursuit of shared objectives. Finland actively participates in establishing a stable and cooperative international order by advocating for human rights, cultural diplomacy, and contributing to global security. This is guided by the ideals of liberalism and a strong belief in the value of multilateralism.

Also, the alignment between public opinion and policy choices during Finland's NATO accession demonstrates the democratic foundation of its multilateral strategy. The overwhelming support among Finnish citizens for NATO membership illustrates a shared commitment to collective defense and institutional collaboration, hallmarks of liberal internationalism. This domestic backing not only strengthened Finland's negotiation position but also reinforced its credibility as a reliable multilateral partner.

5.4 Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted Finland's deepening role in multilateral security frameworks, illustrating how its NATO accession fits within a broader commitment to institutional cooperation beyond military alliances. As analyzed in Chapter 4, Finland's foreign policy trajectory has long reflected an incremental shift toward deeper integration with Western institutions. NATO membership, while accelerated by the war in Ukraine, aligns with this broader pattern of strategic adaptation rather than abrupt policy change. Throughout this thesis, it has been demonstrated that Finland's liberal internationalist approach has shaped its security policies, favoring institutional cooperation over unilateral deterrence. As previously discussed in Section 5.1, Finland's multilateral commitments within NATO, the EU, and OSCE have strengthened both its own security and the broader Euro-Atlantic security order. Rather than marking a departure from its traditional diplomatic principles, NATO accession reinforces Finland's long-standing strategic identity as a rules-based and cooperative actor in global security affairs.

Finland's strategic adaptation reflects the ability of small states to maximize security and influence through institutional partnerships, rather than relying solely on military alliances. This principle remains central to its broader foreign policy, as discussed in earlier chapters. Finland's shift to NATO membership exemplifies the enduring relevance of multilateralism in an era of geopolitical uncertainty. By integrating into NATO while maintaining engagement in the EU, OSCE, and UN initiatives, Finland ensures long-term security through institutional cooperation, reaffirming its strategic autonomy within a multilateral framework.

CHAPTER 6

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

6.1 The impact of the war in Ukraine on Finnish foreign policy

The war in Ukraine accelerated Finland's long-standing trajectory toward institutional security cooperation, reinforcing its transition from neutrality to multilateral engagement. Rather than being a reactive shift, Finland's NATO membership aligns with its broader historical commitment to rule-based security structures. This transformation is not merely a response to external security shifts but a deliberate institutional alignment within the liberal internationalist framework, prioritizing multilateral cooperation and structured defense commitments over unilateral balancing.

This shift underscores Finland's ability to adapt to evolving geopolitical tensions while reinforcing its commitment to international norms and values, aligning with the liberal internationalist framework that prioritizes multilateral cooperation and collective security. This strategic move, while responding to immediate security concerns, also strengthens Finland's long-standing commitment to liberal values, particularly through its embrace of multilateral institutions like NATO, which promotes not only defense but democratic governance and human rights.

Finland's integration into NATO reflects its broader multilateral security strategy, complementing its role in the EU and OSCE. It reinforces Finland's commitment to institutional security rather than unilateral deterrence. According to a government report submitted to Parliament, Finland has contributed to peacetime operations that reinforce regional security and NATO's deterrence strategies

(Government of Finland, 2023). These actions demonstrate Finland's commitment to its role in NATO and its readiness to support collective defense measures. The work of Michalski et al. (2024) further reinforces this perspective by highlighting the broader geopolitical pressures that have prompted small liberal states to transition from neutrality to active alliance-building. For Finland, NATO membership represents not just a security strategy but also a redefinition of its international identity to align with Western liberal norms. This analysis aims to examine how liberalism interprets an important shift, investigating the effects on Finland's participation in international cooperation and its role in regional and global security. It will focus on historical development, strategic reorientation, and liberal principles guiding its foreign policy evolution.

While realism provides a short-term security-based rationale, Finland's decision is better understood as a long-term institutional strategy within the liberal internationalist framework. The accession to NATO was not merely about immediate threat balancing but about embedding itself within structured multilateral cooperation, reinforcing collective security and institutional decision-making over temporary strategic maneuvering.

6.1.1 Historical stance and strategic realignment

Historically, Finland's neutrality was a strategic adaptation to geopolitical realities, balancing security needs while gradually integrating into multilateral frameworks. The decision to join NATO represents the culmination of this institutional alignment rather than a departure from past policies. The war in Ukraine has required a rigorous evaluation of this approach, resulting to Finland's landmark decision to join NATO in April 2023. This transformation, surpassing mere reaction to geopolitical forces,

demonstrates a strategic choice for increased security and unity within a rapidly developing international framework. Finland's integration into NATO represents a continuation of its evolving institutional security commitments rather than a departure from past policy, reinforcing its long-standing preference for structured multilateral cooperation.

6.1.2 Liberalism internationalism as a guiding principle

At the core of Finland's foreign policy transformation is its unwavering commitment to liberalism. It is deeply rooted in liberal ideals, which emphasize the interdependence of states, the importance of international norms, and the collective responsibility to uphold democratic governance and human rights in addressing global challenges. Finland's accession to NATO embodies this ideological alignment, reflecting a dedication not only to safeguarding its independence and stability but also to contributing to the democratic values and collective security that are central to liberal internationalism.

Finland's decision to join NATO reflects a deliberate institutional realignment within the liberal internationalist framework, emphasizing structured security cooperation over unilateral defense strategies. While NATO membership is a crucial element of this shift, Finland's broader foreign policy remains anchored in multilateralism, including active engagement in the EU and OSCE. Following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, political narratives evolved to redefine Finland as an integral member of Western security institutions (Wendt, 1999; Katzenstein, 1996).

While realist interpretations emphasize Finland's response to immediate security threats, they fail to account for the broader institutional shift underlying Finland's foreign policy. While constructivism helps explain Finland's evolving self-

perception within international institutions, liberal internationalism remains the dominant framework. Finland's NATO accession is rooted in structured multilateralism and rule-based security cooperation, which provide a more predictable and sustainable foundation for its long-term security strategy. From a constructivist perspective, Finland's shift represents more than just a security-driven decision, it reflects an identity transformation from a neutral actor to an active proponent of Western security norms. This normative shift in national discourse, particularly following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, redefined NATO membership as a logical extension of Finland's identity as a European liberal democracy (Wendt, 1999; Katzenstein, 1996). Together, these theories enrich our understanding of how Finland's liberal alignment transcends traditional security imperatives.

6.1.3 Implications for Finland and beyond

Finland's foreign policy shift has significant consequences, altering its position in global affairs and influencing European security and multilateral cooperation. Finland's shift from neutrality to NATO membership demonstrates how small states leverage multilateral institutions to achieve security through structured cooperation rather than reliance on individual balancing strategies (Ojanen & Väisänen, 2023). This change demonstrates how small states may manage modern international relations and highlights the guidance offered by liberal values for maintaining a balance between national security and global stability.

Democratic legitimacy has played a central role in Finland's transition to NATO membership. Public support for NATO surged following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, reinforcing the legitimacy of institutional alignment within democratic governance structures. This public endorsement underscores the liberal

internationalist argument that democratic legitimacy is essential in shaping small-state security policies. Unlike realist perspectives that emphasize state-led security decisions, Finland's transition to NATO reflects a bottom-up legitimacy process where public opinion played a decisive role. The overwhelming public support reinforced Finland's commitment to multilateral cooperation, demonstrating how democratic values influence institutional security choices. Polling data revealed a dramatic shift in public sentiment following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, as mentioned in Section 2.1.3 Recent shifts and influences. This surge reflected a broad societal consensus on the need to strengthen Finland's security framework within a collective defense structure. The shift highlights how democratic values, particularly responsiveness to public opinion, underpin Finland's strategic choices. The evolving public narrative legitimized the government's decision to pursue NATO membership, demonstrating the interplay between citizen preferences and foreign policy in a liberal democratic context.

6.1.4 Authoritarian challenges to Finland's liberal framework

As underscored by de Robertis and Tkachenko (2020), Russia and China have articulated alternative governance models that explicitly challenge the post-Cold War liberal order. This tension becomes acute for Finland, whose democratic norms and pro-EU stance place it squarely in the liberal institutionalist camp (Orpo, 2018). While Finland has resolved its historical doubts about joining Western defense structures, the continuing threat environment, amplified by the war in Ukraine, reminds policymakers that illiberal states can reject or strategically manipulate liberal institutions (Lake, 2020).

Consequently, while realism explains Finland's immediate response to external threats, Liberal Internationalism provides a more comprehensive framework by positioning NATO membership as part of a structured, rule-based order that reinforces democratic governance (Keohane, 2012; Simmons & Goemans, 2021). Realism highlights the immediate security imperative in response to Russian aggression, whereas liberal institutionalism explains how Helsinki recognized the multilateral frameworks of NATO and the EU as the most reliable sources of collective defense (Ramli & Idris, 2022). Liberal internationalism better accounts for Finland's structured approach to multilateral security cooperation, reinforcing its commitment to a rule-based international order. This dual perspective aligns with Simmons and Goemans's (2021) argument that states often hold onto sovereignty-based identities (i.e., a robust sense of territorial defense) even as they adopt universal liberal norms to bolster their international position. Finland, therefore, exemplifies a state that navigates both perspectives, leveraging liberal institutions to mitigate existential threats while asserting its sovereignty in a challenging regional landscape.

6.1.5 Addressing gaps and future directions

Finland's strategic reorientation requires more investigation, especially in the areas of public diplomacy, the impact of populist political dynamics, and strategies for countering hybrid threats. Examining these underappreciated facets of Finland's change in foreign policy provides a wealth of opportunities to understand its broader importance. To properly comprehend Finland's approach to addressing contemporary geopolitical concerns, which demonstrates a careful balance between traditional values and contemporary security requirements, these gaps must be filled.

Future research should examine Finland's role in NATO's evolving security framework, particularly in countering hybrid threats and cyberwarfare. These areas have become central to multilateral defense strategies in both NATO and the EU, with Finland contributing actively to regional cybersecurity initiatives and information warfare countermeasures. Understanding how Finland integrates these challenges into its multilateral security policies will be crucial for assessing the long-term evolution of its foreign policy.

6.1.6 Conclusion

Finland's shift from neutrality to active international engagement in response to the War in Ukraine represents a significant realignment of its foreign policy, guided by liberal principles of multilateralism and collective security. This transformation reflects not only a reaction to immediate security threats but also a broader affirmation of Finland's commitment to fostering a stable and cooperative international order. By prioritizing democratic governance, human rights, and multilateral cooperation through NATO membership and other global initiatives, Finland exemplifies the adaptability of small states in navigating complex geopolitical challenges. This transition underscores the enduring relevance of liberal internationalism in addressing contemporary global issues while highlighting Finland's strategic role as a model for balancing national security and global stability.

6.2 The implications for Finland's security and defense

The War in Ukraine has accelerated a pre-existing shift in Finnish foreign policy, reinforcing its trajectory towards structured multilateral security commitments.

While the security climate in Europe has undoubtedly worsened, Finland's military recalibration reflects its institutional commitment to collective defense, ensuring security through alliance-building rather than unilateral military expansion (Forsberg, 2018).

Finland's intention to join NATO in April 2023 marks a substantial shift from its traditionally neutral position, reflecting a strategic change. Since joining NATO, Finland has increased its defense spending to 2.41% of its GDP, aligning with liberal institutionalist commitments to alliance-based deterrence and burden-sharing (Yle, 2023). This aligns with NATO's principles of cooperative security rather than a purely threat-driven realist reaction. This budget increase is directed toward significant acquisitions, such as 64 F-35A fighter jets, which are expected to bolster Finland's air capabilities and NATO interoperability between 2026 and 2030 (Yle, 2023). These investments underline Finland's alignment with NATO's standards and its dedication to strengthening collective security frameworks. This shift aligns with Liberal Internationalist principles, which argue that security is most effectively maintained through cooperative institutional engagement rather than independent military buildups (Keohane, 2012).

Finland's commitment to NATO is further demonstrated through its participation in missions such as the Icelandic Air Policing operation, where the Finnish Air Force plays a critical role in maintaining regional security (NATO Allied Command, 2025). This operational involvement signifies Finland's transition from neutrality to active contribution, reinforcing NATO's collective security framework

while enhancing Finland's military capabilities and interoperability with allied forces.

Finland's decision to join NATO was shaped not only by the war in Ukraine but also by broader concerns about transatlantic security and shifting global power dynamics. While Russian aggression was a key factor, uncertainties surrounding future US foreign policy also played a role. As former Prime Minister Sanna Marin explained,

“At the time, I thought that one of the reasons for the importance of decision-making during my time as prime minister was the idea of what would happen if leaders like Vladimir Putin and Trump were in power on both sides of the Atlantic” (Yle, 2025).

Marin's statement underscores liberal institutionalist concerns about the durability of security guarantees and reinforces Finland's decision to embed itself within NATO's structured multilateral framework rather than relying on bilateral agreements. Marin's remarks highlight Finland's pragmatic approach, acknowledging that security guarantees must be robust regardless of political changes in key allied nations.

6.2.1 Strategic recalibration in response to geopolitical shifts

From Neutrality to NATO Membership: Finland joining NATO signifies a strategic alignment with Western defense institutions, marking a significant shift from the age of 'Finlandisation' to a system of collective security. This alignment, guided by liberal values, signifies a shift towards a more active involvement in global security matters, focusing on democracy, human rights, and a liberal worldwide structure. Finland's integration into NATO also facilitates access to advanced military

coordination mechanisms, reinforcing its preparedness against hybrid and conventional threats.

Liberal Principles Guiding Defense Policy: The change indicates a shift towards more involvement in multilateral activities, based on a dedication to liberal internationalism. Finland's intention is to improve security and military capabilities within a cooperative, democratic government framework, associating closely with alliances that promote collective security.

6.2.2 Enhancing security and defense through multilateral engagement

Contribution to Collective Security: Finland's decision to join NATO is driven by its goal to protect its independence and stability while also playing a role in enhancing the alliance's collective security and democratic principles. Finland's decision to make this move is a proactive response to the war in Ukraine and Russia's aggressive behavior. It highlights Finland's dedication to addressing modern security concerns through a multilateral strategy.

Impact on European Security Landscape: Finland's strategic choice highlights the crucial role of multilateralism in promoting security and stability in Europe.

Finland's complete political backing for NATO membership demonstrates a national agreement on the importance of enhancing security measures, highlighting the influential role that tiny states such as Finland have in forging global cooperation and fostering worldwide stability.

While Finland's accession to NATO was widely supported, some domestic critics have expressed concerns that deeper integration into Western military structures might provoke further tensions with Russia, highlighting the delicate balance Finland continues to manage between security needs and geopolitical

realities. However, Public trust in NATO's multilateral framework continued to grow, with 82% of Finns supporting membership by December 2023 (Yle, 2023a). This sustained support reflects Finland's integration into the liberal international order, prioritizing collective security and institutional collaboration. The 2024 NATO Pre-Summit polling further highlights this alignment, as 70% of respondents across NATO member states supported continued membership in the alliance (NATO, 2024). These findings demonstrate how Finnish society embraces the liberal ideals of cooperation, shared governance, and collective defense, reinforcing the state's strategic choices within multilateral frameworks.

6.2.3 Future directions and research opportunities

Addressing Public Diplomacy and Hybrid Threats: The identified gaps in literature, especially regarding Finland's approach to public diplomacy and strategies to counter hybrid threats, present opportunities for further exploration. These areas are pivotal in understanding how Finland's strategic reorientation impacts its foreign policy priorities and security strategies.

Examining the wider effects of Finland's shift on its diplomatic ties, especially with Russia, and its involvement in global issues like climate change and international development is crucial for a thorough grasp of the foreign policy landscape after Ukraine conflict.

Furthermore, as emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence redefine warfare, exploring Finland's role in adapting these technologies within NATO's framework presents a promising area for future research.

6.2.4 Conclusion

Finland's decision to recalibrate its defense strategy, culminating in its NATO membership, underscores the nation's strategic response to emerging security challenges. Rooted in liberal ideals, this shift highlights Finland's commitment to collective defense and democratic governance within multilateral frameworks. While addressing immediate security threats posed by Russian aggression, Finland's transition also enhances its regional and global influence, demonstrating the importance of collaboration in achieving long-term security and stability. By aligning its defense policy with liberal internationalism, Finland sets an example of how states can proactively address modern security threats while reinforcing their commitment to shared governance and human rights.

6.3 The implications for Finland's multilateralism

Following the War in Ukraine, Finland's transition from a traditionally neutral position to a more assertive participation in international security frameworks represents a notable change in its approach to multilateralism. Michalski et al. (2024) emphasize that small states like Finland often face dilemmas between autonomy and integration, particularly when multilateral institutions are weakened. By joining NATO, Finland has navigated this tension, leveraging institutional collaboration to address external threats while redefining its role in a shifting international order. Finland's strategic adjustment, strongly guided by liberal principles, underscores its dedication to democracy, human rights, and international collaboration. Finland actively engages in multilateral organizations and strengthens ties, particularly with NATO, to address global concerns and promote international peace and stability.

This section examines how Finland's participation in multilateralism, based on liberal values, influences global governance and international cooperation.

6.3.1 Embracing multilateral engagement

Strategic Shift towards NATO Membership: Finland's decision to join NATO is widely supported across the political spectrum, indicating a strong national agreement on bolstering security measures to counter external dangers, especially those posed by Russia's assertive behavior. This pivot indicates Finland's support for Western security mechanisms and emphasizes a joint endeavor to maintain the international rule-based order.

Finland's contributions to NATO's regional initiatives illustrate its role in enhancing stability across the Nordic and Baltic regions. As part of its first year in NATO, Finland has prioritized reinforcing its strategic capabilities, aligning national defense efforts with broader alliance goals (Wilson Center, 2023).

In addition to NATO, Finland remains actively engaged in European Union security mechanisms, particularly through the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). As stated by the Finnish Defence Forces:

“Finland's objectives

Finland's priorities within the Common Security and Defence Policy are, among others, the development of rapid reaction forces and making capability cooperation more effective. Capability cooperation helps to reduce redundant and inefficient defence materiel procurements. The EU can also improve security of supply by harmonising its defence industry markets.

Finland is committed to putting into effect the Common Security and Defence Policy. Finland has participated in all the EU crisis management operations. The

Finnish Defence Forces also take part in European Defence Agency projects.”

(Finnish Defence Forces, n.d.).

This highlights Finland’s dual-track approach to security, leveraging both NATO’s collective defense framework and the EU’s security mechanisms to enhance its regional and international security commitments. The CSDP allows Finland to strengthen its defense industry cooperation, crisis management capabilities, and rapid response forces, complementing its NATO alignment while maintaining a strong presence in EU-led initiatives.

Liberal Values Driving Policy Realignment:

Finland’s participation in many multinational initiatives, like its candidacy for a position on the UN Human Rights Council, demonstrates its commitment to liberal principles. Moreover, Finland’s proactive stance on climate diplomacy within multilateral frameworks reinforces its leadership in addressing global environmental challenges alongside security concerns. This strategy combines liberal internationalism values with strategic regional security considerations, showing dedication to promoting human rights, democratic government, and environmental sustainability.

6.3.2 Multilateralism in addressing global challenges

Economic and Strategic Challenges:

The conflict in Ukraine has highlighted the interdependence of worldwide security and economic stability, leading Finland to review its strategies in international organizations. As Brady and Thorhallsson (2021) emphasize, small states like Finland often seek ‘shelter’ within multilateral frameworks to mitigate resource constraints and address security vulnerabilities. NATO membership illustrates this

strategy, allowing Finland to strengthen its security posture while reaffirming its commitment to multilateralism and shared values. Finland's strategic choices, such as joining NATO and improving defense capabilities, demonstrate a dedication to liberal values and the ideals of international collaboration and collective security.

Influence on Global Governance:

Finland's shift from military neutrality to active participation in NATO represents a crucial turning point in its foreign policy. At the same time, as Michalski et al. (2024) argue, Finland's NATO alignment reflects a deeper identity-driven transformation, where its role conception as a Western liberal democracy aligns with NATO's normative commitments. Finland's proactive contributions to NATO, such as in Arctic security and democratic governance initiatives, further illustrate its active role in shaping multilateral norms and regional stability.

Finland's evolving foreign policy reflects a pragmatic stance that balances historic values with modern security issues, influenced by liberal internationalism. Brady and Thorhallsson (2021) argue that small states often seek 'shelter' through multilateral institutions, leveraging alliances to enhance their stability and influence. Finland's NATO alignment exemplifies this strategy, ensuring security and contributing to global governance frameworks. This approach reinforces the liberal principle that institutional collaboration is essential for addressing complex global challenges.

While realism explains Finland's response to immediate security threats, such as Russian aggression, constructivism highlights the normative and identity-based drivers of its foreign policy decisions. Together, these perspectives reinforce liberalism's core tenet that multilateral institutions are essential for addressing global challenges. Finland's NATO membership exemplifies how small states can leverage

institutional collaboration to enhance security, promote collective governance, and reaffirm their normative commitments to the liberal international order.

6.3.3 Future directions and research opportunities

Reassessing Finland's Role in Multilateralism: The trend towards multilateral participation provides insights into international cooperation dynamics and the influence of minor states on global governance. Finland's engagement and dedication to liberal democratic principles highlight its impact on fostering stability, peace, and collaboration on a global scale.

Exploring how Finland can influence the EU's multilateral agenda, particularly in forging stronger ties between NATO and EU policies, presents a rich area for academic inquiry.

Exploring the Impact of Liberal Internationalism: Identified gaps in the literature, especially in the areas of cultural diplomacy and security policy development, offer potential for additional research. Studying Finland's implementation of liberal ideals in its foreign policy can offer a more profound understanding of how tiny nations participate in and gain advantages from multilateral collaboration.

6.3.4 Conclusion

Finland's embrace of multilateralism following the War in Ukraine signals a decisive shift from neutrality to active participation in global security initiatives. By joining NATO and reinforcing its role in international organizations, Finland has solidified its commitment to liberal internationalism, emphasizing democracy, human rights,

and cooperative security frameworks. This transition highlights Finland's strategic adaptability and its capacity to contribute meaningfully to global governance.

The analysis highlights that Finland's alignment with NATO not only enhances its security but also reaffirms liberalism's relevance in addressing collective challenges, underscoring the transformative potential of multilateral frameworks. As a small state, Finland's experience underscores the significance of multilateral collaboration in addressing global challenges, demonstrating that adherence to liberal principles remains a powerful tool in navigating an increasingly volatile international landscape. In the meantime, polling data analyzed in this thesis demonstrates that Finland's public opinion played a significant role in shaping its transition to NATO membership. The overwhelming support among Finnish citizens reflects not only a reaction to immediate security concerns but also a deep-rooted trust in the liberal international order. This alignment between societal values and state behavior reinforces the liberal internationalist argument that public consensus is integral to the success of multilateral collaborations.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

7.1 Key findings

This study reinforces the argument that small states, when embedded in multilateral institutions, can exert greater influence on international norms and security policies. Finland's accession was not merely a response to Russian aggression but a deliberate institutional alignment that reflects its long-term commitment to rule-based multilateral security, collective defense, and democratic governance. This supports the liberal internationalist argument that institutional collaboration enhances security more effectively than unilateral military expansion. While external pressures accelerated Finland's decision, this shift reflects a long-term commitment to rule-based multilateral security, collective defense, and democratic governance.

The findings indicate that Finland's transition was not purely security-driven but deeply embedded in its broader foreign policy trajectory, where institutional cooperation has played a central role in shaping national strategy. By integrating Liberal Internationalism with complementary insights from Realism and Constructivism, this study highlights Finland's ability to navigate modern security challenges while reinforcing global norms and institutional commitments.

Furthermore, this thesis advances the understanding of small-state foreign policy by demonstrating how Finland operationalizes liberal principles through its NATO alignment, contributing to broader debates on multilateralism in contemporary security environments. This supports the Liberal Internationalist argument that institutional collaboration enhances security more effectively than unilateral military expansion (Keohane, 2012).

Finland's participation in NATO extends beyond securing national defense; it contributes to shaping alliance priorities in Arctic security, regional deterrence strategies, and emerging hybrid threats. This highlights how small states can play an active role in global security governance, reinforcing the liberal internationalist perspective that institutional engagement provides a means of influence beyond mere security guarantees.

As Michalski et al. (2024) suggest, Finland's shift from neutrality represents a recalibration of its national role conception, driven by public and elite consensus and a broader alignment with Western liberal norms. This research reinforces the notion that small states can leverage multilateral institutions not just as security shields but as instruments for shaping international order.

7.2 Implications

The findings of this study hold significant implications for understanding small-state strategies in multilateral security environments:

Reaffirmation of Liberal Internationalism:

Finland's NATO accession reinforces the relevance of liberal internationalism as a guiding framework for small-state security policy. By prioritizing institutional engagement and rule-based defense commitments, Finland demonstrates that small states can enhance their security and diplomatic influence by embedding themselves in structured multilateral frameworks (Ojanen & Väisänen, 2023). This decision not only strengthens NATO's collective defense posture but also underscores how liberal values contribute to global stability in times of geopolitical uncertainty.

Challenging Realist Assumptions about Small-State Security:

The case of Finland challenges traditional Realist assumptions that small states primarily engage in power balancing for security. Instead, Finland's transition suggests that institutional commitments can serve as a long-term strategic alternative to military deterrence alone (Forsberg, 2018). This implies that the viability of neutrality is shrinking in an increasingly contested global order.

A Model for Small-State Security Strategies:

Finland's experience offers a blueprint for other small states navigating regional instability and seeking institutional security guarantees. Its participation in Arctic security initiatives, NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence, and transatlantic security structures illustrates how small states can influence multilateral agendas while maintaining agency in global governance.

7.3 Contributions to theoretical debates

This thesis makes several contributions to International Relations theory, particularly in refining the role of liberal internationalism and its interplay with realism and constructivism:

- Liberal internationalism not only explains Finland's accession but also provides a framework for analyzing its future engagement in NATO's decision-making processes. By embedding itself within NATO's institutional structures, Finland ensures its long-term influence on transatlantic security policies, demonstrating the durability of institutional multilateralism over short-term balancing strategies.
- Realism, particularly Walt's BoT theory, helps explain Finland's immediate response to Russia's aggression. However, Realism alone does not fully capture why

Finland opted for institutional security rather than a more traditional military buildup.

- Constructivism provides insight into Finland's identity transformation, explaining how national discourse shifted away from neutrality toward a more active Western security identity (Wendt, 1999; Katzenstein, 1996).

This study, therefore, demonstrates that small-state security strategies are not purely reactionary but are deeply embedded in evolving institutional commitments and identity transformations.

Moreover, this thesis contributes to small-state studies by highlighting how Finland's transition to NATO membership highlights:

- The role of domestic political consensus and public opinion in driving security realignments.
- The increasing difficulty of maintaining neutrality in a world characterized by institutional entanglement and collective defense mechanisms.

These contributions reinforce the resilience of Liberal Internationalism as an explanatory framework, showing that institutional alignment remains a dominant strategy for small states facing security dilemmas.

7.4 Limitations and future research directions

While this study provides a comprehensive analysis of Finland's NATO accession, several limitations should be acknowledged:

Case-Specific Focus:

Finland's transition is particular to its historical and geopolitical context, particularly its EU membership and Nordic security ties. Future research should explore how

other non-NATO small states (e.g., Ireland, Switzerland) manage their security strategies.

Future research should explore whether similar institutional security alignments could be applicable to other small states like Ireland or Switzerland, particularly in the context of shifting European security dynamics. While Finland's case is unique in its historical context, its approach to institutional alignment could provide valuable insights into how other non-NATO small states navigate multilateral security frameworks.

Long-Term Integration Uncertainty:

This study captures Finland's moment of accession, but further research should analyze its long-term integration within NATO, particularly regarding burden-sharing, military cooperation, and regional strategic influence.

Evolving Public Opinion:

Public sentiment toward NATO membership may shift over time due to changing security conditions and geopolitical shifts. Future studies could examine how public trust in institutional security frameworks evolves over a decade.

7.5 Revisiting Finland's choice considering global shifts

Finland's transition to NATO must be understood within the broader debate on the future of the Liberal International Order (LIO). While some scholars argue that the LIO is weakening or becoming more fragmented (Lake, 2020), Finland's accession signals that institutional security commitments remain a viable strategy for small states.

However, critiques by Debebe (2019) and Bátora (2021) suggest that liberal institutionalism is not universally applicable, especially where domestic politics or

power asymmetries limit small-state agency. Finland's case demonstrates that while institutional alignment is effective, it requires careful sovereignty management and strategic foresight to prevent over-dependence on alliances. As some critiques suggest that liberal internationalism may be weakening due to great power competition, Finland's accession to NATO highlights the continued relevance of institutional security arrangements in ensuring small-state stability. This suggests that while the liberal order is evolving, it remains the most viable framework for small states navigating an uncertain global landscape. Finland's decision reaffirms the utility of liberal internationalism in a world of emerging multipolarity and shifting global power dynamics.

7.6 Final reflections

Finland's historic transition from neutrality to NATO membership is both a strategic necessity and a reaffirmation of multilateral commitments. It demonstrates that:

- Institutional security cooperation remains a dominant small-state strategy.
- Liberal internationalism is resilient, even amid global power shifts.
- Small states can actively shape security institutions rather than just reacting to threats.

Beyond its immediate security implications, Finland's NATO accession sets a precedent for small-state diplomacy, reinforcing the notion that multilateral engagement is a long-term investment in stability, influence, and strategic adaptability.

This study contributes to small-state security literature and reinforces the strategic relevance of alliances in an increasingly contested global order. Finland's NATO accession reinforces the resilience of liberal institutionalism in small-state

security strategies, demonstrating how multilateral engagement, rather than mere threat balancing, shapes contemporary alliance formations.

Finland's NATO membership is not just about deterrence; it is about embedding itself in a rules-based, collective security framework. This reaffirms the power of multilateral institutions in ensuring small-state sovereignty, making Finland a model case of institutional security realignment in contemporary international relations.

The shift in public opinion was not just a reaction to threat but a defining feature of Finland's NATO decision. In 2014, only 26% supported membership, yet by May 2022, support had risen to 76 percent. This rapid change gave democratic legitimacy to a strategic realignment already rooted in institutional trust and Western alignment. Liberal internationalism explains this outcome more fully than realism or constructivism, as it captures how domestic values and public consensus guided a long-term foreign policy choice.

The war in Ukraine serves as a powerful reminder of the difficulties confronting the free international system. However, it also presents a chance to reassert our dedication to the ideas that have influenced the creation of a more peaceful, affluent, and fair world. Through utilizing the advantages of global collaboration, upholding democratic principles, embracing economic interconnectedness, and giving priority to humanitarian issues, we may effectively manage the intricacies of modern geopolitics.

REFERENCES

- Aaltola, M. (2011). Agile small state agency: Heuristic plays and flexible national identity markers in Finnish foreign policy. *Nationalities Papers*, 39(2), 257-276. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00905992.2010.549469>
- Akbar, Y. M., & Fadiyah, D. (2024). Finland's strategic shift: A new chapter with NATO membership. *Intermestic*, 8(2). <https://doi.org/10.24198/intermestic.v8n2.10>
- Alberque, W., & Schreer, B. (2022). *Finland, Sweden and NATO Membership. Survival*, 64(3), 67-72. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00396338.2022.2078046>
- Anisimovych-Shevchuk, O., & Troian, V. (2022). Public diplomacy of the Finland Republic and features of its implementation in Ukraine. *Language, Culture, Politics*, 1, 231-246. <https://doi.org/10.54515/lcp.2022.1.231-246>
- Arter, D. (2022). From Finlandisation and post-Finlandisation to the end of Finlandisation? Finland's road to a NATO application. *European Security*, 32, 171-189. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09662839.2022.2113062>
- Aunesluoma, J., & Rainio-Niemi, J. (2016). Neutrality as Identity?: Finland's quest for Security in the Cold War. *Journal of Cold War Studies*, 18 (4), 51-78. https://doi.org/10.1162/JCWS_A_00680
- Bakker, F. E. (2020). The microfoundations of normative democratic peace theory. Experiments in the US, Russia and China. *Political Research Exchange*, 2(1), 1753084. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2474736X.2020.1753084>
- Barrett, J. (2022). Participating in Multilateral Cultural Cooperation. In *Cultural Diplomacy in Europe* (pp. 199-232). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-12205-7_5
- Bátora, J. (2021). States, interstitial organizations and the prospects for liberal international order. *International Affairs*, 97(5), 1433–1450. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iiab108>
- Berezina, L. & Pomaz, O. (2022), “Socio-cultural factors of formation of the modern socio-economic system of Ukraine”, *Agrosvit- Azpocvim*, 1, pp. 13–19. <https://doi.org/10.32702/2306-6792.2022.1.13>
- Björk, A., Paavola, J.-M., Strik, T., Tanhua, I., & Vainio, A. (2019). Finland in the International Human Rights System. *Prime Minister's Office*. https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/161754/VNTEAS_50_2019_Finland_in_Human_Rights_System.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y&gsid=6d7b6e99-3bcd-45fd-a921-0475d6d05b76

- Brady, A. M., & Thorhallsson, B. (2021). Small states and the turning point in global politics. In A. M. Brady & B. Thorhallsson (Eds.), *Small states and the new security environment* (Vol. 7, pp. 1–23). Springer, Cham.
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-51529-4_1
- Brommesson, D., Ekengren, A. M., & Michalski, A. (2023). From variation to convergence in turbulent times – foreign and security policy choices among the Nordics 2014–2023. *European Security*.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09662839.2023.2221185>
- Chifu, I. (2021). Multilateralism, democracy, concert of powers: Russia’s red lines. *Bulletin of “Carol I” National Defence University*, 10(2), 19–26.
<https://doi.org/10.53477/2284-9378-21-02>
- Chorny, V. (2019). Experience of Finland during the Winter War of 1939-1940: conclusions for Ukraine. *Journal*, 9(3), 37–55.
<https://paperssds.eu/index.php/JSPSDS/article/download/118/100>
- Clausnitzer, J. (2022, March 3). Opinion development on Finland joining NATO 2014-2022. *Statista*. Retrieved from
<https://www.statista.com/statistics/1293557/opinion-development-on-joining-nato-finland/#statisticContainer>
- Clerc, L. (2023). Defining Finland’s cultural diplomacy from postwar to Cold War. In L. Clerc (Ed.), *Cultural Diplomacy in Cold War Finland: Identity, Geopolitics and the Welfare State* (pp. 29-85). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-12205-7_2 Retrieved from
https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007/978-3-031-12205-7_6.pdf
- Clerc, L. (2023). The Finnish state and international cultural relations, 1945–1975. In: *Cultural Diplomacy in Cold War Finland*. Palgrave Macmillan Series in Global Public Diplomacy. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham.
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-12205-7_6
- Collier, D. (2011). Understanding process tracing. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 44(4), 823-830. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049096511001429>
- Cortell, A. P., & Davis, J. W. (2005). When norms clash: International norms, domestic practices, and Japan’s internalisation of the GATT/WTO. *Review of International Studies*, 31(1), 3-25.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210505006273>
- Cusack, T. R., & Stoll, R. J. (1994). Collective security and state survival in the interstate system. *International Studies Quarterly*, 38(1), 33-59.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/2600871>
- De Robertis, A. G., & Tkachenko, S. L. (2020). The crisis of the “liberal international order” and the challenges from China and Russia. *Vestnik of Saint Petersburg University. International Relations*, 13(4), 465–477.
<https://doi.org/10.21638/spbu06.2020.403>

- Debebe, Y. (2019). A critique of the application of liberal peace theory in post-conflict peacebuilding: Cases from African experience. *Ethiopian Renaissance Journal of Social Sciences and the Humanities*, 6(1), 1-13.
- Deyermond, R. (2022). Security, history and the boundaries of European identity after Russia's invasion of Ukraine. *New Perspectives*, 30(3), 230-235. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2336825X221117493>
- Dinçer, M. (2022). Rusya'nın Ukrayna'yı işgaline Finlandiya'nın yaklaşımı: Putin rejiminin güvenlikleştirilmesi. *Uluslararası Ekonomi, İşletme ve Politika Dergisi*. <https://doi.org/10.29216/ueip.1144817>. Retrieved from <https://dergipark.org.tr/en/download/article-file/2542206>
- Doyle, M. W. (2019). Liberal institutions and international ethics. In *Political Realism and International Morality* (185-211). <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429302299-15>
- Dunne, T. (2009). Liberalism, international terrorism, and democratic wars. *International Relations*, 23(1), 107–114. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0047117808100615>
- Eliasson, J. (2004). Traditions, identity, and security: The legacy of neutrality in Finnish and Swedish security policies in light of European integration. *European Integration Online Papers (EIoP)*, 8. Retrieved from http://aei.pitt.edu/7171/1/European_Integration_Papers_Online_Johan_Eliasson_manuscript.pdf
- Enos-Attali, S. (2021). La Finlande et la Suède, des pays non-alliés? Cultures et politiques de sécurité à l'épreuve des tensions régionales dans l'espace baltique. *Connexe*, 6, 155-177. <https://oap.unige.ch/journals/connexe/article/download/343/262> <https://doi.org/10.5077/JOURNALS/CONNEXE.2020.E343>
- Etzold, T., & Tokarski, P. (2015). New Centre-Right government in Finland: Economic and European challenges and perspectives. *SWP Comment*, 35/2015. Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik -SWP- Deutsches Institut für Internationale Politik und Sicherheit. <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-437664>
- EVA. (2022, March). 60% back Finland joining NATO. Retrieved from Finnish Broadcasting Company - Yle <https://yle.fi/a/3-12369943>
- EVA. (2022, November). Positive attitudes toward NATO rise. Retrieved from Finnish Broadcasting Company - Yle <https://yle.fi/a/74-20066206>
- Finnish Defence Forces. (2024, February 6). Finnish Defence Forces to exercise defending NATO northern region together with allies. Retrieved from <https://puolustusvoimat.fi/en/-/finnish-defence-forces-to-exercise-defending-nato-northern-region-together-with-allies>

- Finnish Defence Forces. (n.d.). Finland's objectives. The EU's common security and defence policy. Retrieved March 3, 2025, from <https://puolustusvoimat.fi/en/international-activities/the-eus-common-security-and-defence-policy>
- Finnish Government (2023a). Finland's entire eastern border to be closed. Retrieved from <https://valtioneuvosto.fi/en/-/1410869/finland-s-entire-eastern-border-to-be-closed>
- Finnish Government (2023b). Finnish government prepares to extend validity of Border Security Act. Retrieved from <https://valtioneuvosto.fi/en/-/1410869/finnish-government-prepares-to-extend-validity-of-border-security-act>
- Finnish Institute of International Affairs (FIIA). (2022, July). A policy agenda for Finland's entry into NATO: From 'one for one' to 'one for all.' *FIIA Briefing Paper*. Retrieved from <https://fiia.fi/en/publication/a-policy-agenda-for-finlands-entry-into-nato?read>
- Finnish Institute of International Affairs (FIIA). (2024). Becoming allies: Finland and Norway after Russia's invasion of Ukraine. *Nordic Review of International Studies*, 2(3), 7–23. <https://fiia.fi/julkaisu/becoming-allies-finland-and-norway-after-russias-invasion-of-ukraine>
- Finnish Institute of International Affairs (FIIA). (2024). Finland's partnerships as a NATO member: Prospects for defence cooperation in a multilateral framework. *FIIA Briefing Paper*. Retrieved from <https://fiia.fi/julkaisu/finlands-partnerships-as-a-nato-member>
- Finnish Institute of International Affairs (FIIA). (2024). NATO's nuclear deterrence and Finland. *FIIA Briefing Paper*. Retrieved from <https://fiia.fi/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/naton-ydinasepelote-ja-suomi.pdf>
- Finnish Parliament. (2024, March 1). *Parliament debated Finland's candidacy for UN Human Rights Council*. Retrieved from <https://www.eduskunta.fi/EN>
- Finnish Parliament. (2024a). *Government Report on Finnish Foreign and Security Policy in referral debate*. Retrieved from <https://www.eduskunta.fi/EN/tiedotteet/Pages/Government-Report-on-Finnish-Foreign-and-Security-Policy-in-referral-debate.aspx>
- Finnish Parliament. (2024b, March 1). *Parliament debated the government proposal on Finland's accession to NATO*. Retrieved from <https://www.eduskunta.fi/EN/tiedotteet/Pages/Parliament-debated-the-government-proposal-on-Finlands-accession-to-NATO.aspx>
- Finnish Parliament. (2024c). *Government Report on Finnish Foreign and Security Policy in referral debate*. Retrieved from <https://www.eduskunta.fi>, https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/165723/VN_2024_35.pdf?sequence=1

- Finnish Parliament. (2024c, March 1). *Eduskunta hyväksyi Suomen liittymisen Natoon* [Parliament approved Finland's NATO membership]. Retrieved from <https://www.eduskunta.fi/FI/tiedotteet/Sivut/eduskunta-hyvaksyi-suomen-liittymisen-natoon.aspx>
- Finnish Parliament. (2024d, March 1). *Government Report on Finnish Foreign and Security Policy*. Retrieved from https://www.eduskunta.fi/ENhttps://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/165723/VN_2024_35.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y
- Finnish Parliament. (2024e). *Defence Cooperation Agreement with the US in preliminary debate*. Retrieved from <https://www.eduskunta.fi/EN/tiedotteet/Pages/Defence-Cooperation-Agreement-with-the-US-in-preliminary-debate.aspx>
- Forsberg, T. (2018). Finland and NATO: Strategic choices and identity conceptions. In A. Cottey (Ed.), *The European Neutrals and NATO* (pp. 105–126). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-59524-9_5
- Forsberg, T. (2023). Finland and Sweden's Road to NATO. *Current history: A Journal of contemporary World Affairs*, 122 (842), 89-94. <https://doi.org/10.1525/curh.2023.122.842.89>
- Forsberg, T., & Pesu, M. (2016). The “Finlandisation” of Finland: the ideal type, the historical model, and the lessons learnt. *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, 27 (3), 473-495. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09592296.2016.1196069>
- Forster, K. (2016). Finland's Foreign Policy 1940-1941: An Ongoing historiographic controversy. *Scandinavian Studies*, 51(2), 109–123. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40917883>
- Franco, A. (2019). Not all finns think alike: Varying views of assessment in Finland. *International Education Studies*, 13(1), 1-10. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1239490.pdf>
- Freedman, A. (2023). Ukraine food crisis: Understanding the impacts of War on the global supply chain and applying to future events. *Systems and Information Engineering Design Symposium*, 149-153. <https://doi.org/10.1109/SIEDS58326.2023.10137902>
- Garaee, H., & Moradi, J. (2016). The comparison of the position of human rights in liberalism theory and english school of international relations. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 7, 371-371. <https://doi.org/10.5901/MJSS.2016.V7N3S3P371>
- George, A. L. (1979). Case studies and theory development: The method of structured, focused comparison. In P. G. Lauren (Ed.), *Diplomacy: New approaches in history, theory, and policy* (pp. 43–68). The Free Press.
- Gorobets, I., & Martinov, A. (2022). The entry of Sweden and Finland into NATO as a consequence of the crisis of regional and global security systems. *Konsensus*, 3, 72-82. <https://doi.org/10.31110/consensus/2022-03/072-082>

- Government of Finland. (2023). *Government report on Finland's contribution to NATO's collective peacetime missions submitted to Parliament*. Retrieved from <https://valtioneuvosto.fi/en/-/government-report-on-finland-s-contribution-to-nato-s-collective-peacetime-missions-submitted-to-parliament>
- Gruszczynski, L., Menkes, M., Bilkova, V., & Farah, P. (Eds.). (2022). *The crisis of multilateral legal order: Causes, dynamics and implications* (1st ed.). Routledge. Conclusion. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003312857>
- Heikka, H. (2005). Republican realism: Finnish strategic culture in historical perspective. *Cooperation and Conflict*, 40(1), 91-119. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010836705049736>
- Hellman, H. (2010). Liberal turn in media policy: the case of Finland's digital television. *International Journal of Digital Television*, 1(2), 193-213. https://doi.org/10.1386/jdtv.1.2.193_1
- Ikenberry, G. J. (2018). The end of liberal international order?, *International Affairs*, 94 (1) January 2018, Pages 7–23, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iix241>
- IMF Finland. (2023). *International Monetary Fund - IMF Country Report*, (061), 1-1. <https://www.elibrary.imf.org/downloadpdf/journals/002/2023/061/002.2023.issue-061-en.xml> <https://doi.org/10.5089/9798400231155.002>
- Jokela, J. (2022). Finland's responses to Brexit: Seeking shelter while hedging against changing risks. *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, pp. 1-14. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14782804.2022.2117685>
- Karácsonyi, D., Kocsis, K., Kovály, K., Molnár, J., & Póti, L. (2014). East-West dichotomy and political conflict in Ukraine - Was Huntington right? *Hungarian Geographical Bulletin*, 63(2), 99-134. <https://doi.org/10.15201/HUNGEOBULL.63.2.1>
- Katzenstein, P. J. (1996). *The culture of national security: Norms and identity in world politics*. Columbia University Press.
- Keohane, R. O. (1984). *After hegemony: Cooperation and discord in the world political economy*. Princeton University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400820266>
- Keohane, R. O. (2012). Twenty years of institutional liberalism. *International Relations*, 26(2), 125-138. DOI: 10.1177/0047117812438451
- Keohane, R. O., & Martin, L. L. (1995). The promise of institutionalist theory: Response to John Mearsheimer. *International Security*, 19(3), 39-51. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2539214>
- Keohane, R. O., & Nye, J. S. (1977). *Power and interdependence: World politics in transition*. Little, Brown.

- Kikste, K. (2022). Features of the formation of a regional security system in Eastern Europe. *Access*, 3(3), 253-263. Retrieved from https://journal.access-bg.org/journalfiles/journal/issue-3-3-2022/features_of_the_formation_of_a_regional_security_system_in_eastern_europe.pdf
- Korhonen, T. (2003). Finnish monetary and foreign exchange policy on the way towards the Euro 1. *Czech Journal of Economics and Finance*, 53, 430-448. https://journal.fsv.cuni.cz/storage/949_05_430-448.pdf
- Korunova, E.V. (2020). Neutrality or participation? The Second World War and the evolution of foreign policy concepts of the Scandinavian countries. *Vestnik Moskovskogo universiteta. Series XXV. International Relations and World Politics*. 12(3):222-256. <https://doi.org/10.48015/2076-7404-2020-12-3-222-256>
- Koskimaa, V., & Raunio, T. (2024). Effective and democratic policymaking during a major crisis: An in-depth analysis of Finland's decision to apply for NATO membership after Russia attacked Ukraine. *Journal of European Public Policy*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2024.2324013>
- Kratinová, D. (2016). Changing public opinion in Finland on NATO membership in the context of the Ukrainian crisis [Master's thesis]. <https://dspace.cuni.cz/bitstream/handle/20.500.11956/31172/120229649.pdf>
- Kurbet, O. (2022). Winning the war for independence, building a developed economy and a welfare state: Positive experience of Finland for Ukraine. *İstoriâ Narodnogo Gospodarstva ta Ekonomičnoi Dumki Ukraïni*, 55, pp. 142-160. <https://doi.org/10.15407/ingedu2022.55.142>
- Kuusisto, A. A. (1959). The Paasikivi Line in Finland's foreign policy. *Political Research Quarterly*, 12(1), 37-49. <https://doi.org/10.1177/106591295901200103>
- Lahti, Y., & Palonen, E. (2023). The impact of the Russia–Ukraine war on right-wing populism in Finland. <https://www.populismstudies.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Download-Report-on-Finland.pdf>. <https://doi.org/10.55271/rp0018>
- Lake, D. A. (2020). Whither the liberal international order? Authority, hierarchy, and institutional change. *Ethics & International Affairs*, 34(4), 461–471. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0892679420000611>
- Lanko, D. A. (2021). Finlandization, neutrality or KekkoSlovakia? The Paasikivi-Kekkonen Line in Finnish Discourses 30 Years After the Cold War. *Journal of International Analytics*, 12(3), 139-153. <http://dx.doi.org/10.46272/2587-8476-2021-12-3-139-153>
- Lottaz, P. (2022). *The Politics and Diplomacy of Neutrality*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/obo/9780199743292-0307>

- Lundqvist, S. (2023). A Convincing Finnish Move: Implications for State Identity of Persuading Sweden to Jointly Bid for NATO Membership. *Studia Europejskie*, 26(4), 73-110. <https://doi.org/10.33067/se.4.2022.3>
- Markhulia, G. (2022). Geohistory and geopolitics around the war in Ukraine. *International Scientific Journal” The Caucasus and the World,”* (25). Doi. 10.52340/ISJ.2022.25.09 Retrieved from <https://journals.4science.ge/index.php/journal/article/download/1502/1526>
- Maull, H. W. (2022). Multilateralism: Contested concept, elusive practice. In J. Rüländ & A. Carrapatoso (Eds.), *Handbook on Global Governance and Regionalism* (pp. 102–117). Edward Elgar Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781800377561.00017>
- Mearsheimer, J. J. (2017). The false promise of international institutions. In *International organization* (pp. 237-282). Routledge.
- Michalski, A., Brommesson, D., & Ekengren, A. M. (2024). Small states and the dilemma of geopolitics: Role change in Finland and Sweden. *International Affairs*, 100(1), 139–157. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iia244>
- Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland. (2023). Finland’s development cooperation funding to Ukraine. Retrieved from https://um.fi/current-affairs/-/asset_publisher/gc654PySnjTX/content/suomen-tuki-ukrainalle-jatkui-myos-kehitysyhteistyorahoituksella-vuonna-2023
- Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland. (2023a). Finland’s national plan for Ukraine’s reconstruction. Retrieved from https://um.fi/current-affairs/-/asset_publisher/gc654PySnjTX/content/suomalainen-yhteiskunta-tukee-laaja-alaisesti-ukrainan-jalleenrakentamista
- Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland. (2024a). Finland’s support to Ukraine. Retrieved from <https://um.fi/finland-s-support-to-ukraine>
- Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland. (2024b). Finland provides additional humanitarian aid to rapidly worsening crises. Retrieved from https://um.fi/current-affairs/-/asset_publisher/gc654PySnjTX/content/suomelta-humanitaarista-apua-nopeasti-paheneviin-kriiseihin
- Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland. (2025, February 4). Foreign Minister Valtonen to address EU Ambassadors’ Conference and North Atlantic Council. Finland Abroad. https://finlandabroad.fi/web/unesco/foreign-ministry-s-press-releases/-/asset_publisher/kyaK4Ry9kbQ0/content/ulkoministeri-valtonen-puhuu-eu-n-suurlahettilaspaivilla-ja-naton-neuvostolle/35732
- Ministry for Foreign Affairs. (2024c, December 18). EU’s 15th sanctions package and hybrid sanctions regime target parties serving Russia’s interests. Finnish Government. <https://valtioneuvosto.fi/en/-/eu-s-15th-sanctions-package-and-hybrid-sanctions-regime-target-parties-serving-russia-s-interests>

- Ministry of Defence (2025, February 20). Collective defence of North Atlantic Treaty Organization to become statutory duty of Finnish Defence Forces. https://www.defmin.fi/en/topical/press_releases_and_news/collective_defence_of_north_atlantic_treaty_organization_to_become_statutory_duty_of_finnish_defence_forces.14852.news#a7ce67b9
- Ministry of Defence. (2023). Finland's membership in NATO. Retrieved from https://www.defmin.fi/en/areas_of_expertise/finland_s_membership_in_nato#63ea3e21
- Ministry of Defence. (2024, October 24). *Government report on Finland's contribution to NATO's collective peacetime missions submitted to Parliament*. Valtioneuvosto. Retrieved from <https://valtioneuvosto.fi/en/-/government-report-on-finland-s-contribution-to-nato-s-collective-peacetime-missions-submitted-to-parliament>
- Moravcsik, A. (2012). Interdisciplinary Perspectives on International Law and International Relations: Liberal Theories of International Law. In *Interdisciplinary Perspectives on International Law and International Relations: The State of the Art*, (pp. 83-118). <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139107310.006>
- Możgin, W. (2022). Wojna kulturowa między Rosją a Ukrainą. Sposób na osłabienie rosyjskiego kulturowego imperializmu. *Politeja*, 19, 3(78), (pp. 17-33). <https://doi.org/10.12797/politeja.19.2022.78.02>
- Mulligan, W. (2022). Erosions, Ruptures, and the Ending of International Orders: Putin's Invasion of Ukraine in Historical Perspective. *Society*, 59 (3), 259-267. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12115-022-00715-x>
<https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007/s12115-022-00715-x.pdf>
- NATO Allied Command. (2025). Finnish Air Force to take on NATO Icelandic Air Policing mission. NATO Allied Command. Retrieved from <https://ac.nato.int/archive/2025-2/finnish-air-force-to-take-on-nato-icelandic-air-policing-mission>
- NATO SHAPE. (2025). Baltic Sentry to enhance NATO's presence in the Baltic Sea. NATO SHAPE. Retrieved from <https://shape.nato.int/news-releases/baltic-sentry-to-enhance-natos-presence-in-the-baltic-sea>
- NATO. (2023). *Relations with Finland*. Retrieved from https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_49594.htm?selectedLocale=us
- NATO. (2024). Pre-Summit polling results. Retrieved from https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2024/7/pdf/240705-pre-summit-polling-results-en.pdf
- NATO. (2024a). *NATO launches 'Baltic Sentry' to increase critical infrastructure security*. Retrieved from https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_232122.htm?selectedLocale=en

- Nechayeva-Yuriichuk, N. (2022). Security dimensions of geopolitical initiatives in the Central and Eastern Europe region. *Mediaforum*, 11, 141-161. <https://doi.org/10.31861/mediaforum.2022.11.141-161>
- Niinistö, S. (2023, April 4). *Statement by President of the Republic of Finland Sauli Niinistö on Finland's NATO membership*. Retrieved from <https://www.presidentti.fi/en/press-release/statement-by-president-of-the-republic-of-finland-sauli-niinisto-on-finlands-nato-membership/>
- Niinistö, S. (2024, March 1). *Speech by President of the Republic of Finland Sauli Niinistö in Parliament*. Retrieved from <https://www.eduskunta.fi/EN/tiedotteet/Pages/Speech-by-President-of-the-Republic-of-Finland-Sauli-Niinisto-in-Parliament-on-1-March-2024.aspx>
- Nokkala, A. (2023). It Is About Protection. Defence in Finland's Steps to NATO. *Studia Europejskie*, 26(4), 39-72. <https://doi.org/10.33067/se.4.2022.2>
- Nordic-Baltic Leaders. (2025, February 14). Nordic-Baltic Leaders' statement on Ukraine. Government of Finland. Retrieved from <https://www.presidentti.fi/en/nordic-baltic-leaders-statement-denmark-estonia-finland-iceland-latvia-lithuania-norway-sweden/>
- OECD. (2022). In *Intégration de l'action climatique et environnementale dans les activités de coopération pour le développement: Suivi des engagements souscrits par les membres du CAD lors de la Réunion à haut niveau de 2020*. OECD Publishing, Paris. <https://doi.org/10.1787/c94a35d8-fr>
- OECD. (2022a). *Regional Development Papers*. The implications for OECD regions of the war in Ukraine. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. <https://doi.org/10.1787/8e0fcb83-en>
- OECD. (2023). *OECD Economic Surveys: Finland 2023*. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. <https://doi.org/10.1787/19990545>
- Ojanen, H. & Raunio, T. (2018). Re-Assessing Finland's integration policy: The end of domestic consensus?. In: Stegmann McCallion, M., Brianson, A. (eds) *Nordic States and European Integration*. Palgrave Studies in European Union Politics. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-57562-9_3
- Ojanen, H., & Väisänen, A. (2023). Finnish and Swedish NATO membership: What does it hold for the Arctic?. In *Defending NATO's Northern Flank* (pp. 225-249). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003343905>
- Orpo, P. (2018). International challenges and opportunities: Putting the EU's positions into words. *European View*, 17(2), 136-144. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1781685818813763>
- Papadakis, K. A., & Spyrakou, V. (2022). The influence and implications of the Ukrainian crisis on European regional security. *HAPsc Policy Briefs Series*, 3(2), 166-174. <https://doi.org/10.12681/hapscpbs.33798>

- Pesu, M., & Iso-Markku, T. (2024). Insufficiency of informal alignment: Why did Finland choose formal NATO membership? *International Affairs*, 100(2), 569–588. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iaae006>
- Qaisrani, I. H., Qazi, B. H., & Abbas, H. (2023). A geopolitical war in Europe: Russia's invasion of Ukraine and its implications. *Journal of European Studies*, 39(1), 1-1. <https://asce-uok.edu.pk/journal/index.php/JES/article/download/285/220>
- Raghavan, P. S. (2023). The retreat of multilateralism. *National Security*, 6(2), 105-113.
- Ramli, M. F., & Idris, H. (2022). Liberal institutionalism theory approach in ASEAN's security cooperation through regionalism. *Akademika*, 92(1), 73–86.
- Raunio, T. (2016). Refusing to be Sidelined: The engagement of the Finnish Eduskunta in foreign affairs. *Scandinavian Political Studies*, 39(4), 312-332. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9477.12071>
- Raunio, T. (2021). Finnish foreign policy: Pragmatic adjustment to a changing world order. In: Joly, J.K., Haesebrouck, T. (eds) *Foreign Policy Change in Europe Since 1991*. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham., 99-125. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-68218-7_5
- Reuters. (2024, April 4). Finland extends Russia border closing indefinitely. Retrieved from <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/finland-extends-russia-border-closing-indefinitely-2024-04-04>
- Romanov, D.G. (2020). Finland's policy towards the Russian Federation under President M. Ahtisaari (1994–2000): An Attempt at Cognitive Analysis. *Vestnik Moskovskogo universiteta. Series XXV. International Relations and World Politics*. 12(4):171-200. <https://doi.org/10.48015/2076-7404-2020-12-4-171-200>
- Ruggie, J. G. (1992). Multilateralism: The anatomy of an institution. *International Organization*, 46(3), 561–598. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818300027831>
- Rutte, M. (2024, October 8). Secretary General thanks President of Finland for contributions to NATO and Ukraine. NATO. Retrieved from https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_229321.htm
- Rutte, M. (2024a, October 8). Joint press conference by NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte with the President of Finland, Alexander Stubb. NATO. https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_229149.htm
- Schechter, M. G. (2011). Systemic change, international organizations, and the evolution of multilateralism. In *The New Dynamics of Multilateralism* (1st ed., pp. 19). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429496196-3>

- Sheth, J. N., & Uslay, C. (2023). The geopolitics of supply chains: Assessing the consequences of the Russo-Ukrainian war for B2B relationships. *Journal of Business Research*, 166, 114120. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2023.114120>
- Simmons, B. A., & Goemans, H. E. (2021). Built on borders: Tensions with the institution liberalism (thought it) left behind. *International Organization*, 75(2), 387–410.
- Skorzewska-Amberg, M. (2023). Russia's aggression on Ukraine as a catalyst for change of Sweden's neutrality policy in armed conflicts and the country's accession to NATO. *Ekspert: Paradigmi Ūrindičnih Nauk Ĩ Deržavnogo Upravlinnâ*, 5(23), 9-22. <https://journals.maup.com.ua/index.php/expert/article/download/2368/2844>
- Sohal, K., Islam, M. M., Zikovic, I. T., & Mansour, H. A. (2022). Food inflation and geopolitical risks: Analyzing European regions amid the Russia-Ukraine war. *British Food Journal*, 125(7), 2368-2391. <https://doi.org/10.1108/bfj-09-2022-0793>
- Sterling-Folker, J. (1997). Realist environment, liberal process, and domestic-level variables. *International Studies Quarterly*, 41(1), 1-25. <https://doi.org/10.1111/0020-8833.00031>
- Stubb, A. (2024, August 27). Speech at the Annual Meeting of Heads of Mission. Retrieved from <https://www.presidentti.fi/en/speech-by-president-of-the-republic-of-finland-alexander-stubb-at-the-annual-meeting-of-heads-of-mission-in-helsinki-on-27-august-2024/>
- Stubb, A. (2024, May 16). *Speech at the Annual Dinner for the Diplomatic Corps*. Retrieved from <https://www.presidentti.fi/en/speech-by-president-of-the-republic-of-finland-alexander-stubb-at-the-annual-dinner-for-the-diplomatic-corps-at-the-presidential-palace-in-helsinki-on-16-may-2024/>
- Stubb, A. (2024a, August 27). Speech by President of the Republic of Finland Alexander Stubb at the Helsinki Security Forum. Retrieved from <https://www.presidentti.fi/en/speech-by-president-of-the-republic-of-finland-alexander-stubb-at-the-annual-meeting-of-heads-of-mission-in-helsinki-on-27-august-2024/>
- Stubb, A. (2025, January 1). New Year's Speech by President of the Republic of Finland. Retrieved from <https://www.presidentti.fi/en/new-years-speech-by-president-of-the-republic-of-finland-alexander-stubb-on-1-january-2025/>
- Stubb, A. (2025a, February 3). Speech by President of the Republic of Finland Alexander Stubb at the Security Committee's anniversary event in Helsinki. Government of Finland. Retrieved from <https://www.presidentti.fi/en/speech-by-president-of-the-republic-of-finland-alexander-stubb-at-the-security-committees-anniversary-event-in-helsinki-on-3-february-2025/>

- Stubb, A. (2025b, February 5). Speech by President of the Republic of Finland Alexander Stubb at the opening of Parliament. Government of Finland. Retrieved from <https://www.presidentti.fi/en/speech-by-president-of-the-republic-of-finland-alexander-stubb-at-the-opening-of-parliament-on-5-february-2025/>
- Su, H. (2023). A systematic review: Revisiting neoliberal institutionalism in the modern context with political philosophy considerations. *Advances in Economics, Management and Political Sciences*, 7, 91-104. <https://doi.org/10.54254/2754-1169/7/20230219>
- Suchoples, J. (2023). In the shadow of the Eastern Neighbour. Finland in the security policy of Russia and the Soviet Union from Peter the Great to contemporary times. *Studia Europejskie*, 26(4), 9-38. <https://doi.org/10.33067/se.4.2022.1> Retrieved from Studia_Europ_4_C.indd (journalse.com)
- Surdej, A. (2020). Multilateralism and international governmental organizations: Principles and instruments. *Transforming Government: People, Process and Policy*, 14(3), 337-350. <https://doi.org/10.1108/TG-11-2019-0107>
- Taliaferro, J. W., Lobell, S. E., & Ripsman, N. M. (2009). Introduction: Neoclassical realism, the state, and foreign policy. In *Neoclassical realism, the state, and foreign policy*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511811869.001>
- Tesón, F. R. (2011). The liberal constitution and foreign affairs. *Social Philosophy & Policy*, 28 (1), 115-149. Retrieved from <https://www.cambridge.org/core/services/aop-cambridge-core/content/view/S0265052510000075>
- Thorhallsson, B., & Stude Vidal, T. (2023). Finland's NATO membership: Continuous shelter-seeking strategy. *Scandinavian Political Studies*, 46, 194–218. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9477.12257>
- Toropygin, A. (2023). Modern theoretical and practical approaches to multilateralism in international relations: The EAEU Case. *Evrasijskaâ integraciâ: èkonomika, pravo, politika*, 17(2), 169-180. <https://www.eijournal.ru/jour/article/download/1161/508>
- Trymbach, S. (2022). Colonial heritage of Russia in Ukrainian cinematograph: Problems of overcoming. *Народна творчість та етнологія*, 4, 7-16. <https://doi.org/10.15407/nte2022.04.007>
- Tuominen, H. (2022). Finland's Status-updating through the UN Human Rights Council Campaign. *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy*, 17(2), 306-330. <https://doi.org/10.1163/1871191x-bja10103>
- Uutela, M. (2020). 'The End of Finlandization.' Finland's foreign policy in the Eyes of the Two German States 1985–1990. *International History Review*, 42(2), 410-423. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07075332.2019.1577286>

- Valtonen, E. (2025, February 13). Conference press release: Foreign Minister Valtonen to attend Munich Security Conference. Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland. Retrieved from https://um.fi/current-affairs/-/asset_publisher/gc654PySnjTX/content/ulkoministeri-elina-valtonen-osallistuu-m%C3%BCnchenin-turvallisuuskonferenssiin
- Valtonen, E. (2025a, January 23). Statement by H.E. Elina Valtonen, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland, Permanent Council of the OSCE, January 23, 2025. Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland. Retrieved from https://um.fi/speeches/-/asset_publisher/up7ecZeXFRAS/content/statement-by-h.e.-elina-valtonen-minister-for-foreign-affairs-if-finland-permanent-council-of-the-osce-january-23-2025-1/35732
- Valtonen, E. (2025b, January 29). Statement by Elina Valtonen, Chairperson-in-Office of the OSCE, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland, Permanent Council of the OSCE, January 23, 2025. Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland. Retrieved from https://um.fi/speeches/-/asset_publisher/up7ecZeXFRAS/content/statement-by-h.e.-elina-valtonen-minister-for-foreign-affairs-if-finland-permanent-council-of-the-osce-january-23-2025-1/35732
- Van Ommen, A. L. (2016). The Finnish freedom of speech: An illusion? [Master's Thesis, Erasmus University Rotterdam]. <https://thesis.eur.nl/pub/35071/Ommen.pdf>
- Vushko, I. (2017). Historians at war: History, politics, and memory in Ukraine. *Contemporary European History*, 27(1), 112-124. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0960777317000431>
- Walt, S. M. (1985). Alliance formation and the balance of world power. *International Security*, 9(4), 3–43. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2538540>
- Walt, S. M. (1990). The origins of alliance. Cornell University Press.
- Walt, S. M. (2022, May 18). *What are Sweden and Finland thinking?* Foreign Policy. Retrieved from <https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/05/18/nato-sweden-finland-russia-balance-threat/>
- Wendt, A. (1999). Social theory of international politics. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511612183.004>
- Wilson Center. (2023). *Finland's remarkable first year in NATO*. Retrieved from <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/finlands-remarkable-first-year-nato>
- Woods, N. (2023). Multilateralism in the Twenty-First Century. *Global Perspectives*, 4(1). <https://doi.org/10.1525/gp.2023.68310>
- Wu, C. (2014). Taking interests and international conflict more seriously (Doctoral dissertation). University of South Carolina. Retrieved from <https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/etd/2744>

- Xia, Y., Gronow, A., Malkamäki, A., Ylä-Anttila, T., Keller, B., & Kivelä, M. (2022). The Russian invasion of Ukraine selectively depolarized the Finnish NATO discussion. Retrieved from <https://arxiv.org/pdf/2212.07861.pdf>
- Xie, L. (2022). Adaptation of a small power to international tensions: The case of Finland. *Pioneers in Arts, Humanities, Science, Engineering, Practice*, 93-113. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-13627-6_4
- Yin, R. K. (2003). *Case study research: Design and methods* (3rd ed.). Sage Publications.
- Yle. (2022, February). Finnish Broadcasting Company. Poll: 53% of Finns back NATO membership. Retrieved from <https://yle.fi/a/3-12337202>
- Yle. (2022b, May). Finnish Broadcasting Company. Poll: 76% of Finns support joining NATO. Retrieved from <https://yle.fi/a/3-12437506>
- Yle. (2023). Finnish Broadcasting Company. *Finland ranks among NATO's top defense spenders*. Retrieved from <https://yle.fi/a/74-20098630>
- Yle. (2023a, December). Finnish Broadcasting Company. *Poll: Backing for NATO remains high in Finland*. Retrieved from <https://yle.fi/a/74-20066206>
- Yle. (2025, February 21). *Sanna Marin: Trump's fear accelerated Finland's decision to join NATO*. Yle News. Retrieved from <https://yle.fi/a/74-20145321>
- Yle. (2025a). *Finnish Broadcasting Company. Baltic Sea security — 10 main points from the Helsinki Nato summit*. Yle News. Retrieved from <https://yle.fi/a/74-20136894>
- Yle. (2025b). Finnish Broadcasting Company. *Nato announces stepped-up Baltic presence at Helsinki meeting*. Yle News. Retrieved from <https://yle.fi/a/74-20136779>
- Zakharov, T.V. (2022). Multilateralism in international relations, international organisations and challenges of global governing. *Social Sciences and Humanities. Domestic and foreign literature*, (4), 205-214. <https://doi.org/10.31249/rgpravo/2022.04.17>
- Zheng, J. (2023). The Impact of Russia's Invasion of Ukraine on the Global Economy. *Frontiers in Business, Economics and Management*, 9 (3), 5-6. <https://doi.org/10.54097/fbem.v9i3.9426>
- Zimmermanová, L., Kříž, Z., & Doleželová, E. (2020). Thinking of Russia: Finnish Neutrality after the Cold War and the Influence of Russian Neighborhood on Finnish Cooperation with NATO. *Central European Journal of International and Security Studies*, 14(1), 9–30. <https://doi.org/10.51870/cejiss.a140101>
- Žuk, P. (2023). The war in Ukraine: Consequences for the economy, labour class and equitable development in Europe and beyond. *Economic and Labour Relations Review*, 1-14. <https://doi.org/10.1017/elr.2023.18>