

SUMMARY: EU, FINLAND AND SWEDEN. MAYBE NATO IN THE FUTURE?

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FINLAND SNEAKING OUT IN SMALL STEPS

AFTER THE RUSSIAN Revolution in 1917 and the declaration of independence, Finland was considered by Moscow and many other European capitals to be a “threatened country”. By taking neutrality as its way of acting towards other countries and alliances, this was the simplest and most practical way to stay out of major conflicts. This was the pattern for 22 years until 1940. After being neutral during the Winter War Finland joined forces with the Germans to recapture the occupied lands. But in the summer of 1944 the Finnish political leadership had to admit that the war was lost even if the Red Army was still outside the borders created by the peace treaty after the Winter War in 1940. It was obvious that the Finns had to change their approach to defence and security policy. This led to a Finland which declared itself fully neutral, to keep the Soviets calm and on their own side of the long border.

During the critical years from 1944 to 1948, Finland was in Limbo. On maps describing the way in which the European political landscape had changed, Finland was pictured as something in between. All the other countries of the old *Cordon Sanitaire* from the First World War, were occupied or about to be occupied by the Soviet Union.

Finland’s position during the peace negotiations in Paris was further aggravated by the fact, that the U.S. was on the outside. The diplomatic ties had been severed during the last months of the war, but the U.S. had not been at war with Finland and was

therefore excluded from this part of the Paris negotiations. The “*percentage paper*”, negotiated between Generalissimus Josef Stalin and Prime Minister Winston Churchill in October 1944, showed that that Great Britain was primarily interested in the Balkans and in securing communication channels to the important Asian parts of the Commonwealth.

That left Finland, as an integral, but independent part of the Soviet sphere of influence. After the Czech crisis in 1948, the Cold War established a sort of stalemate, where the borders established between the European East and West were upheld, sometimes with military interventions (East Germany 1954, Hungary 1956 and Czechoslovakia 1968). To appease the leadership in Moscow, Finland signed the *Pact of Friendship and Support* in 1948. The neutrality line was fully adopted by the post-war president Paasikivi. The Finns even rejected Marshall-funding for rebuilding after the war, as it most likely would have irritated its Eastern friends.

The leeway for Finnish foreign policy was severely limited, which in its turn was reflected in a growing misunderstanding of the country’s political aims. In small steps, Finland tried to sneak out of the Soviet sphere of influence by joining the Nordic Council and the UN in 1955. Finland became an associate member of European Free Trade Association (EFTA) in 1961. The status was a way of appeasing Moscow.

The limited possibilities became apparent when, in the late 1960’s, Finland tried to establish a Nordic economic community (Nordek) together with the Nordic neighbours, which actually changed the tactical approach. From this moment onwards, Finland tried to use the Soviet initiative for a conference on European security cooperation as a vehicle to enlarge the realm of political movement.

This resulted in the Conference on Security and Coopera-

tion in Europe, held in Helsinki in 1975. The CSCE was thought of as framework for keeping the unruly ghosts of the Cold War at bay. With rules on human rights, the ideological battle moved away from the geopolitical sphere, which in a way helped Finland to take further initiatives resulting in full membership of EFTA in 1986.

The whole European framework changed, however, when the Soviet Union imploded starting with the coup in Moscow in August 1991. That led Finland's president Mauno Koivisto to declare the Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance from 1948 as null and void. Already in 1992 Finland applied of becoming a member in the EU.

SWEDISH WAY OF THINKING BEFORE 1995

FOR SWEDEN ON the other hand, 1812 is significant as that was, when the Swedes were at war as a nation the last time. This was the Anglo-Swedish war (1810–1812) between Sweden and the UK. This last war for Sweden is still remembered, which is interesting as it was a totally bloodless war, due to the fact that there was not a single battle between the two countries.

Sweden has enjoyed peace for more than two centuries. Its policy has been to uphold friendly relations with most of its neighbouring countries. Finland has served as buffer between Sweden and Russia and later with the Soviet Union. As it had no combat costs to pay, Sweden was able to rise rapidly in living standards and became industrialised. At the start of the First World War, it was easy for Sweden to declare neutrality and to stay out.

Sweden was quite quick to join the League of Nations and later also the UN. But these decisions were made after a long and complex debate on different political levels. The question was whether a neutral country like Sweden might jeopardise its

neutrality by working for a safer and more peaceful world. Sweden did join the UN, the Nordic Council and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA). The Swedish “realpolitik” prevailed until the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Noteworthy in this regard is that both Sweden and Finland have, in relation to their size, been very active in sending their armed forces on peace-keeping missions around the world even during the Cold War. This shows that Finland and Sweden have taken different steps in upholding their neutrality during the last century.

THE EU AS A SECURITY MEASURE?

NEITHER SWEDEN OR Finland could anticipate what kind of possibilities would open after August 22nd 1991. The fact that both countries decided quickly to apply to become members of the EU was a natural stage in a completely changed world.

Since 1995, two Nordic countries, Finland and Sweden, have been members of the EU, which in addition to Austria, Ireland, Cyprus and Malta, are non-aligned EU member states. There are many quite logical reasons for these countries to have an interest in how security and defence policies are discussed within the European Union.

The incentives for EU-membership for Finland and Sweden differed a lot, as Sweden mainly did it for economic reasons as it exported to the EU-countries. Finland, however, joined the EU mostly for security reasons. The great turbulence in Finland’s nearest geopolitical sphere between 1989 and 1991 made it evident that the political situation had drastically changed. Therefore, Finland had a completely different interest in developing cooperation in the EU on the level of defence and security policies, but without surrendering its non-alignment.

The powers of the larger EU members did aspire to turn the EU to one of the predecessors of the Western European Union (WEU) formed by the UK, France and Benelux in 1948. Together with NATO, it worked as a complement to maintaining the balance of powers in Cold War Europe. It is notable that the WEU, which was considered a defence alliance, consisted of ten member states. Finland and Sweden became observers after their accession to the EU in 1995.

This was considered a problem for the neutral Finland and Sweden, as they wanted to try to maintain their status as neutral states. Both countries wished to keep the CSDP as civilian as possible without any major military tasks. This resulted in a joint proposal to increase EU crisis management in 1997 in order to prevent the merger of the WEU and the EU by forming a EU safety and defence policy. However, after some opposition in the beginning from the larger member states, the tide turned and everybody thought that a more civilian profile would be a good idea. Nevertheless, crisis management tasks and conflict prevention lead to more military action through the list of Petersberg tasks of the WEU and the Treaty of Amsterdam, ratified in 1999. By this, the European Security and Defence Policy was formed. The Treaty of Lisbon was established in 2009 and in 2011 the WEU was abolished.

WHY IS IT THEN IMPORTANT TO DISCUSS THE POLICIES OF FINLAND AND SWEDEN?

BOTH FINLAND AND Sweden are to this day non-aligned but cannot be considered neutral. Notable is the fact that the treaty introduces the clauses of solidarity and mutual assistance, which have taken EU one step forward towards a defence union.

When looking at the historical aspects, the question arises of whether these two individual EU-member states' policies should be discussed on a general level within the European Union in Brussels and Strasbourg?

The discussion should especially focus on the interface between Finland, Sweden, EU and NATO. Some may regard this discussion to be irrelevant as the creation of the European Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) back in 1999 has given the framework so far. So, did even I for a very long time, but now we have a new situation after the agreement between the foreign secretaries and ministers of 23 EU-member countries when signing the Permanent Structure of Cooperation-agreement (PESCO).

Taking into account that these two small Nordic states had a great impact on the formulation of the CSDP and the Treaty of Lisbon, EU-member countries should start a discussion on where to go from here. The formulation of the CSDP has been considered one of the greatest successes of the EU in terms of security and defence policies. It is also important to remember creation of the CSDP in 1999 posed a challenge for both Finland and Sweden as they considered themselves neutral states.

Both Finland and Sweden have been very active participants and strong supporters, which has now been seen in formalising the PESCO-agreement. The Nordic states have adjusted their policies during the past 20-25 years, so the other EU-members should discuss the future of the two countries' policies. This is also because there is a noticeable interest in gathering as many EU-members as possible into the European and transatlantic security community. The significant difference between Finland and Sweden today is their view towards future NATO-membership, even though some changes have been noticed due to the new the security situation in Europe.

The military strategies of Finland and Sweden have also greatly differed from 1990 until recent years. Looking at the latest development in CSDP and EU-cooperation, Finland and Sweden must remember that even though they have taken massive steps forward, most of the EU member states are already full members in NATO and will not start to construct competing military structures. It is simply not in their interest and would not be financially viable. Although the EU is starting to create an important new defence and security policy, there is no signs that this would in any way replace NATO.

Therefore, the only way to have a stable and secure defence policy is future NATO-membership for both Finland and Sweden. This, however, requires thorough public discussion and courage from the members of the Finnish parliament to state their opinion. A referendum might at that point be feasible at least for some politicians. But the latest referendum experiences from the presidential elections in the US and Brexit gave a strong signal that forces that do not have the right to vote might get involved and try to influence the result. This should be avoided.