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## **“Masks off”- Why Finland joined NATO**

**A discourse analysis of Finnish NATO membership discourse during the Russian invasion of Ukraine**

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## Acknowledgements

Handing in this thesis concludes my academic journey for time being, making me a bit sentimental and even nostalgic. For what a journey it has been! Five years I spend enrolled in university, of which last two were here in Tromsø. These years have led me through countless adventures, introduced me to wonderful people, and shaped me as a person. If there is one thing I learned from last five years, it is that we can not make it alone in this world. It is thus time to say thanks.

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## Abstract

On May 17, 2022, Finland sent a membership application for NATO. This was a historic decision that will change the European security environment and relations in the High North. It was also a historically surprising turn of events, given Finland's long-lasting policy of neutrality, and the fact that in the autumn of 2021 only 26 percent of Finns supported the NATO membership.

This thesis aims to study the reasons behind the Finnish membership application and see how the Russian invasion of Ukraine has influenced Finnish NATO discourse and decision making. By answering these questions, the study shows why Finland joined NATO. To do this, a discourse analysis on Finnish mainstream NATO discourse was conducted. The study is based on news articles by the Finnish public radio, politician's speeches in the Parliament, and Government publications from the spring of 2022 and I used a thematic analysis to study them.

The study shows that the Russian invasion of Ukraine had a major role in Finland's decision to apply for NATO membership. It also identified the main arguments and themes in the discourse, as well as the style of the discourse. It shows that the discourse evolved throughout the spring to be more one-sided and pro-NATO and identifies the key reasons for that.

The day Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine the Finnish president Sauli Niinistö told the press that "Now the masks have been taken off, and only the cold face of war is visible", referring to Russia showing its true colors. On May 17, 2022, Finland answered the Russian aggression by also taking off its mask, revealing a Western NATO country.

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## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1. General overview of the study**

This study examines the Finnish discourse about joining the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) during the spring of 2022. Using thematic analysis of YLE news articles, politician's speeches in the Parliament, and Government reports, the study does a discourse analysis on Finnish mainstream NATO membership discourse. It analyzes the style of the discourse and showcases the arguments both for and against the membership. More specifically it looks at how the discourse was shaped and evolved by the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The study uses social constructivism as its theoretical framework, and it will relate to theory of narratives and international relations.

After the introduction I first go through historical and contextual background related to the Finnish NATO discourse. I explain how both the Finnish defense policies and NATO discourse has evolved throughout its independence, and how it's related to the war in Ukraine. Next, I elaborate on the study's theoretical framework and methods of the study. After that I present the results of the study, which is followed by analysis and discussion. Finally, I conclude the study's findings.

### **1.2. Statement of motivation and relevance to peace studies**

Finland joining NATO will not only change the country's long-lasting policy of neutrality, but it will also change the European security environment and the relations in the high north with The Russian president Vladimir Putin saying it will have serious "military-political consequences" (Roth, 2022). Political and military consequences of Finland's decision to join NATO links the study with peace studies.

According to Forsberg and Pesu (2017), public opinion plays a central role in post-Cold war foreign and security politics of Finland, actively shaping the country's decisions (p. 148). It is thus vital to analyze the public discourse to understand the reasons Finland applied for NATO membership. My motivation for this study was to thoroughly understand what the reasons were for Finland to join NATO, how the decision was made, how the discourse was surrounding the issue, and how Finnish foreign and security policy has evolved throughout its history and specifically after the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Doing a discourse analysis on



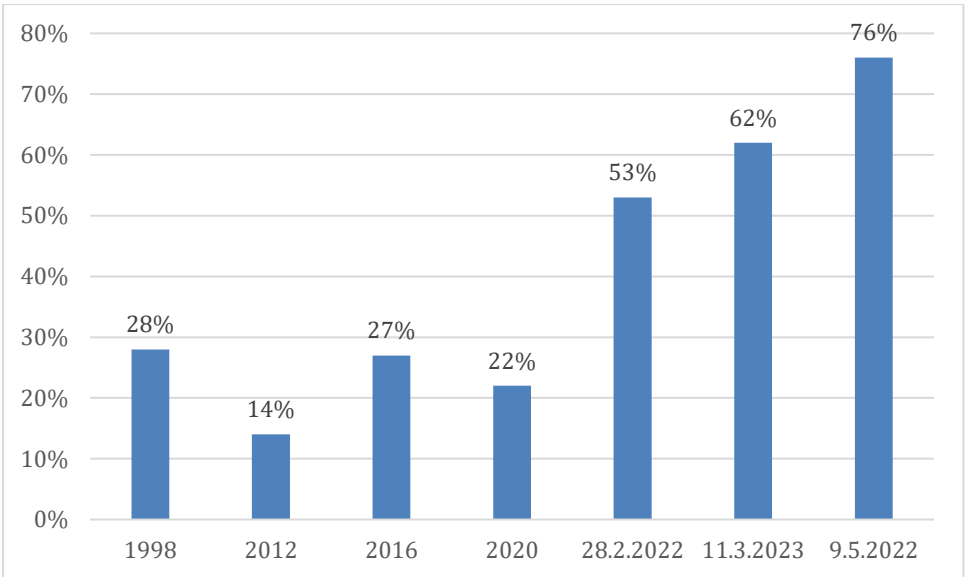
the mainstream NATO membership discourse gave answers to these questions. Furthermore, it demonstrates how discourse and national identity affects foreign policies of nations, again linking the thesis with peace studies.

**1.3. Research problem**

Finland applying for NATO membership in May 2022 represents a new shift in the country’s foreign policy, which begs the question: Why did Finland join NATO? According to popular opinion polls, the majority of people in Finland did not support NATO membership until 2022 (See Figure 1). As seen in figure 1, the support for Finland joining NATO has gotten considerably bigger since February 2022.

**Figure 1**

*NATO support in Finland from 1998 to 2022 (EVA, 2021; YLE, 2022.).*



Since Finland did not have the option to join NATO before the fall of the Soviet Union, there were no surveys being made before the 1990s. Clearly there was a big change in the support for joining NATO after Russia attacked Ukraine on February 24, 2022.

**1.4. Research question**

The main research question of the study is: *How has the discourse about Finland’s NATO membership evolved during the Russian invasion of Ukraine?* The underlying research questions are: *What are the main arguments for and against Finland applying for NATO*

*membership*, and: *What characterizes the NATO membership discourse in Finland?* By answering these questions, the study shows why Finland joined NATO, what was the discourse about, and how the Russian attack in Ukraine shaped that discourse. It also shows the style of the discourse, and relations between the state leadership and general public.

## **2. Historical and contextual background**

### **2.1. History of Finnish defense policy**

Having gained its independence from Russia in 1917, the Government of Finland saw possible Russian hostility as the biggest threat to its national security (Lavery, 2008, p. 108). Being a small country, Finland tried to look for allies to deter the Russian threat from other states bordering the Soviet Union, Scandinavia, and the League of Nations<sup>1</sup>. Despite these attempts to find allies, Finland ended up facing the Soviet attack alone during the Winter war of 1939-1940 (Lavery, 2008, p. 106-114).

What followed was the so called “The miracle of Winter war”: A nation that fought a civil war 21 years prior got together and repelled an invasion by a seemingly superior enemy. This war has affected the Finnish national identity more than any other event in the country's recent history (Jussila et al., 1996, p.172). While Finland managed to deter the Soviet invasion and remain independent, the Winter war ended with Finland having to give around 10 percent of its territories to the Soviet Union to reach a peace agreement. The war only increased the mistrust and fear of the Soviets in Finland, resulting in the country allying itself with Germany on their invasion of the Soviet Union. This war Finland fought alongside with Nazi-Germany from 1941 to 1944 is known as the Continuation war (Lavery, 2008, p. 122-125).

When it came clear that Germany was going to lose the war, Finland decided to pull out. To reach another peace treaty with the Soviet Union, Finland had to accept even heavier conditions than those after the Winter war. More territories were to be ceded at top of those given after the Winter war, resulting in the resettling of some 10 percent of the population.

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<sup>1</sup> League of Nations (1920-1946) was a predecessor to United Nations, an organization dedicated to maintain peace and security throughout the world (Tomuschat, 1995, p. 78).

Organizations deemed fascist by the Soviets were to be banned, and people perceived as war criminals trialed. 226.5 million dollars' worth of war reparations had to be paid, and the Germans stationed in northern Finland had to be fought out of the country, leading to the Lapland war <sup>2</sup>(Lavery, 2008, p. 129-136). After three wars from 1939 to 1945, around 90 000 Finns were killed and hundreds of thousands were left homeless (Nortio et al., 2022, p. 865). Despite its heavy losses, Finland remained independent, although still wary of its eastern neighbor.

In order to gain the Soviet's respect for its independence, Finland signed a Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance (FCMA or YYA treaty) with the Soviet Union in 1948. This treaty would cement Finland's status as an independent country, but it put a big emphasis on the friendly cooperation of the two countries. The FCMA made it practically impossible for Finland to join NATO during the Cold war period (Forsberg, 2018, p. 99-100).

The Cold war times started a period in Finnish foreign policy known as "Finlandization". This term is most often used to refer to a situation where a small country gives in to its powerful neighbor while retaining a nominal independence (Lanko, 2021, p. 142). In Finland the term refers to the political culture of de-agonizing the Soviet Union, following the foreign political doctrine of the country's leaders, namely President Urho Kekkonen. In practice Finlandization meant growing influence of the Soviet Union in Finnish domestic politics and self-censorship of politicians and the media: To pursue a significant career in politics one had to be loyal to the Soviet Union. Finlandization began in the 1960s, peaked in the 1970s and started to fade away in the 1980s. While it can be argued that Finlandization as foreign policy saved Finnish sovereignty, it is also necessary to acknowledge that the policy led to undermining Finnish democracy and the self-censorship of the 1970s went beyond what was necessary to de-agonize the Soviets (Forsberg & Pesu, 2017, p. 100-102).

After the Cold war ended and the Soviet Union fell in 1991, Finland renegotiated the FCMA treaty, abandoned the policy of neutrality and started looking west for its security solutions. Finland joined the European Union in 1995, and NATO partnership programs, such as

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<sup>2</sup> The Lapland war (September 1944-April 1945) was fought in Northern Finland (Lapland) when Finns pushed the German troops out of the country (Lavery, 2008, p. 129).

Partnership for Peace (PfP) in 1994 and the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC) in 1997. While Finland developed a partnership with NATO, and participated in NATO-led operations, membership was only discussed as a theoretical option, largely because it wasn't clear if NATO even wanted to expand (Forsberg, 2018, p. 103-104). But anyhow, during the 1990s, Finland took a huge leap westward, but remained out of NATO.

Why did not Finland apply for NATO membership by the 2000s like so many other European countries, such as Czech Republic, Poland, and the Baltic countries? First, it seems that the Finnish historical experiences, specifically being left alone in the Winter war reduced the trust in security guarantees provided by joining a military alliance. Just like in 1339, if Finland would face a war against Russia, the allies wouldn't necessarily be willing to help Finland, and on the other hand Finland could survive on its own (Forsberg & Vaahtoranta, 2007, p. 85). The popular opinion remained opposed to membership, with the war in Iraq peaking the opposition of joining (Lavery, 2008, p. 157). Also, Russia in the 2000s was seen as weak and un-threatening, and Finns felt that the EU, while not giving any hard security guarantees, still provided stability (Forsberg & Vaahtoranta, 2007, p. 85). Although Finland saw cooperation with NATO as an essential part of its security arrangements and welcomed alliance presence to its land, the Government officials feared that the enlargement of NATO might worsen the relationship with Russia (Forsberg & Vaahtoranta, 2007, p. 75-76).

Instead of applying for NATO membership, Finland adopted a vague policy called "the NATO-option" (Forsberg, 2018, p. 104). It meant that Finland would not apply for the full membership of NATO, but reserved an option to do so should the circumstances change. What these changes would have to be was never clearly stated and defining the policy better was overshadowed by other political matters (Forsberg, 2018, p. 104.). It wasn't until the Russian invasion of Ukraine that the "NATO-option" became a center of the political discourse in Finland.

## **2.2. Russian invasion of Ukraine**

On February 24, 2022, the world woke up to news of Russian troops advancing to Ukraine, artillery bombardment of Ukrainian cities, and missile attacks on Kiev. Putin had authorized a "special military operation", following a TV-speech he held three days earlier where he stated how Ukraine has a "puppet regime managed by foreign powers", and that Ukraine shares a

history with Russia (Aloisi & Daniel, 2022). The full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine had started, and since then people would see horrors of war, atrocities committed against civilians, counteractions from the West, economic warfare, temporal unity of EU, and Finland and Sweden applying for NATO membership. International relations have changed, and the world is seemingly moving back to the Cold war setting of rivaling great powers, proxy wars, and fear of nuclear annihilation.

The full-scale invasion starting on February 24 was not only the start of a war, but also a continuation of decades of conflict, red flags and warnings, not only between Russia and Ukraine, but more broadly between the Western powers and Russia. Dissolving the Soviet Union after the Cold war and the establishment of Ukraine was painful to Russia, not only because of its geographical, economic and strategic value, but also because of their historical and emotional connections. This ultimately led to Russia annexing Crimea by force in 2014, which further intensified the mistrust and tension between the Western countries and Russia (Michailova, 2022, p. 1675).

On December 17, 2021, following a set-up of large numbers of military units close to Ukrainian borders, Russia presented a set of security demands aimed at NATO, including a NATO pullback from eastern Europe and assurance that Ukraine will never join it. NATO rejected, stating that NATO has an open-door policy, and with rising tensions sent more troops to eastern Europe (Aloisi & Daniel, 2020). There are many interpretations about the conflict in Ukraine, but it seems that the final blow to Russia was NATO coming, in Russia's mind, too close to Ukraine and Russia (Michailoca 2022, p. 1675). This Russian interpretation of NATO enlargement contributed to the full-scale war being fought in Ukraine.

It is indeed vital to understand that the invasion of Ukraine by Russia is not only a war against Ukraine, but a war against the West in general (Michailova, 2022, p. 1676). In this war NATO is not just a bystander but an active participant, shaping the outcome of the conflict. Finland's decision to apply for NATO membership cannot be taken out of the context of this war either. On one hand Finland joining the alliance might further worsen the relations between the West and Russia, since it represents the NATO enlargement that Russia is worried about. On the other hand, and more importantly to this study, Russia attacking Ukraine has changed the security environment of Finland, affecting the popular opinion about NATO membership, and calling for the use of the "NATO-option" within the political elite.

As the US president Joe Biden said: “(Putin) wanted a Finlandization of NATO. He got a NATO-ization of Finland, instead.” (Haltiwanger, 2022).

### **2.3 History of Finnish NATO discourse**

Tuomas Forsberg and Matti Pesu (2017) explain how the role of public opinion in Finland’s foreign and security policy has changed throughout the country's independence, identifying three main phases. First, from independence to the aftermath of the second world war the public opinion did not play any role in the country's foreign policy. This is exemplified by the country's decisions to ally itself with Nazi-Germany, and later to build peace and friendly relations with the Soviet Union, decisions that were both made by a very small circle, not interested in the popular opinion. The reason why public opinion was not taken into account was simply that the leaders did not think it should, since they thought the people would not understand the complex political realities (Forsberg & Pesu, 2017, p. 151-153).

The second phase of public opinion's role in Finnish foreign and security policy happened during the years of the Cold war and Finlandization. The Government led by Kekkonen adopted a top-down approach to public opinion, actively shaping the opinions of the people. In practice this was done through self-censorship, marginalization of the alleged Anti-sovietism, and controlling the public media. Kekkonen personally supervised the mainstream media for not criticizing the Soviet Union, writing angry letters to the editors should they cross the line. This led to the media reporting in accordance with the Government policies, which in its part resulted in a staggering support for the leadership. The lowest approval rating the state leadership got during the presidency of Kekkonen was in 1978 when “only” 84 percent of the Finns thought the Finnish foreign policy was good. In 1971 the number was 96 percent, which tells its own tales about the stance of Finnish democracy at the time (Forsberg & Pesu, 2017, p. 155-158).

After the end of the Cold war the relationship between the public opinion and the state leadership took a U-turn, and a phase of bottom-up model started. In this phase the public opinion started to actively steer the foreign and security policy decisions of Finland, and the state leadership would act according to the popular opinion. This was exemplified by the referendum to join the EU: Should the people have voted not to join; Finland would not have joined the union although the president and prime minister strongly supported it. The reason

public opinion started to matter was multilayered. On one hand the external threat of Russia was largely seen as gone, and so was Kekkonen and his system. The media assumed a role as a watchdog of power and the discourse became more multifaceted. At the same time liberalism was becoming the leading political philosophy, and public opinion polls were conducted more frequently with politicians paying more attention to them (Forsberg & Pesu, 2017, p. 159-162).

Having a key role in the Finnish foreign and security policy, the public opinion has significantly influenced the country's decision not to join NATO (Forsberg & Pesu, 2017, p. 163). But what were the characteristics of the post-Cold war NATO membership discourse in Finland? Nortio et al. (2022) identify Finnish national identity as having a central role in the online NATO discourse in Finland. According to them, presenting Russia as a threatening cultural other has played and still plays a crucial role in Finnish nation-building and identity. Russia as a national other strengthens the image of Finland as a small and vulnerable nation between the West and Russia (Nortio et al, 2022, p. 864-868).

Those supporting the membership argued that joining NATO would cement Finland as being part of the West and offer protection from Russia, while others argued for maintaining good relations with Russia by not joining NATO. Both sides saw Russia by and large as the national other, a possible threat that needs to be reckoned with, they just had different approaches to maximizing Finnish national security (Nortio et al., 2022, p.868). Thus, the Finnish national identity as a small vulnerable Nordic country threatened by its culturally different eastern neighbor was an agreed starting point and central argument for both those wanting Finland to join NATO and those wanting to stay non-aligned. The Russian conflicts in Chechnya and Ukraine were compared to the Finnish-Russian wars, demonstrating the continuity of the Russian threat to Finland (Nortio et al. 2022, p. 872).

Christophe S. Browning (2002) agrees that Russia is generally perceived as a threat in Finland, claiming that in Finland “Russia and everything Russian is presented in an utmost negative light” (p. 57). He goes further to say that “Western identity in the form of NATO’s opposition to the expansionist East has become a catalyst in equating present-day Russia with the Soviet Union and thus legitimizing Finland’s membership of NATO and the EU as a way to move the Finnish-Russian relationship from bilateral to a multilateral level” (Browning,

2002, p. 57). In other words, Russia is often seen as expansionist, and as part of NATO, Finland would be part of the West and would not have to face Russia alone.

The number one argument for joining NATO according to Boldyreva et al. (2020) has been national security (p. 31). The argument goes that the main threat to Finland is Russia's imperial ambitions, and that even at the cost of some of its sovereignty, Finland should seek protection from a more powerful political player. Those not wanting to join NATO argued that NATO would want Finland to join only to get troops closer to Russia and get military specialists from Finland for its complicated missions, effectively making Finland part of the super-power rivalry. It was also argued that NATO is not reliable nor really interested in Finnish security, so the membership would not actually increase Finland's national security (Boldyreva et al., 2020, p. 32).

While the public opinion has remained against joining NATO until 2022 (as seen in Figure 1), there have been significant efforts made by the state to involve Finland in the alliance: Weapon systems of the army have been changed according to NATO standards, Finland has made large purchases of military equipment from USA, and the country has taken part in many joint military exercises (Boldyreva et al., 2020, p.32). Public opinion polls also show that most Finns would support NATO membership, should the country's leaders recommend that, while the leaders on the other hand follow the public opinion and act accordingly (Forsberg & Pesu, 2017, p. 165). It could be interpreted that the Finnish state has been long ready for NATO, but the public opinion has refrained from sending its application. Boldyreva et al. (2020) conclude that Finland will only join NATO if it feels a real threat (p.33). It has become clear that by May of 2022 many Finns felt the threat.

### **3 Theoretical framework.**

#### **3.1. General overview of theoretical framework**

I will use social constructivism as the main theoretical framework in this study. I will also discuss my findings related to theories on narrative and international relations. For discourse analysis, I will use the Foucauldian approach and understanding of discourse.

#### **3.2. Social constructivism**



There are many definitions of social constructivism, but this study will use the one of Jun Ayukawa. Ayukawa (2020) defines social constructivism as a theory that sees social phenomenon as something that is constructed through human interaction. He goes further to explain that “social constructivism proposes that humans use language to define situations and then act according to those definitions. It attempts to examine narratives and discourse in order to comprehend the meanings, interpretations and definitions of political conditions and social circumstances.” (Ayukawa, 2020, p. 1).

While traditional approaches to social studies see social issues caused by objective conditions, social constructivism rejects this idea of objectivity, seeing these conditions as continuation of human activities such as public perceptions and media coverage. To understand social issues, social constructivism studies these human activities (Ayukawa, 2020, p. 4-5). In the case of this study, this means rejecting the idea that Finland’s decision to apply for NATO membership was caused purely by objective issues and defense of the state’s self-interest, and rather focusing on how the discourse and narratives changed the public perceptions of NATO membership as well as decision making of the politicians.

Dale Copeland points out that “constructivism is inherently an argument about how the past shapes the way actors understand their present situation” (Copeland 2006, referred in Roberts, 2006, p. 705). It works well together with theory of narrative and international relations, which also emphasize how narratives and identities shape actions of individuals and states alike. More specifically social constructivism fits well to this study since I will try to explain how the opinions about NATO have changed through the discourse. It also fits the methodological framework of Foucauldian discourse analysis, where discourse is seen as something that shapes our understanding of subjects.

### **3.3. Narrative and international relations**

Theory on narrative and international relations argues that narratives create state identities, which then determine state interests and state action. Theory on narrative and identity does not exclude other theories: One can be a hardline realist, but also agree that identities can influence one's interests and actions (Hønneland, 2016, p. 170-174). In the case of this study, the theory on narrative and international relations points out that it is crucial to look at the

Finnish state identity and narratives that create it to make sense of the discourse and the reasons Finland joined NATO.

Narrative is most commonly defined as the practice of telling stories about connected sequences of human action (Roberts, 2006, p. 704). The aim of this storytelling is to enhance understanding, comprehension, and experience, in addition to explaining a particular action (Roberts, 2006, p. 705). Identity is how an actor understands themselves in relation to their surroundings (Correa, 1983, p. 10). Stories guide action, and experience is constructed through narrative; People construct identities by locating themselves or being located in stories, and they make sense of what has happened or is happening to them by trying to integrate these happenings to one or more narratives (Somers, 1994, p. 614).

Margaret Somers (1994) divides narratives into four different dimensions: ontological narratives, public narratives, metanarratives, and conceptual narratives. Ontological narratives mean the stories people use to make sense of and act in their lives. Public narratives are narratives that are part of cultural and institutional formations larger than individuals, such as stories of the American dream. Metanarrativity refers to the big masternarratives such as struggle between capitalism and communism, or nature and civility. Conceptual narratives are concepts and explanations that social researchers construct, such as social forces like institutional practices and market patterns (Somers, 1994, p. 617- 620). In this study I will be focusing on the public narratives in Finland. One example of these narratives is the story of Finland as a small Nordic country successfully defending itself against the aggressive Russia time after time throughout its history.

Somers (1994) goes further to claim that any actions of social actors can only be understood if the various ontological and public narratives in which actors are emplotted in are recognized. These narrative identities are composed by actors temporarily placed in culturally constructed stories composed of rules, practices, and institutions, as well as multiple plots of family, nation, or economic life. Narratives are not incorporated into self in a direct way but are rather mediated through social and political institutions and practices (Somers, 1994, p. 625). In the case of this study this means that a speech of a politician, an article by YLE, or a report by a government agency cannot be taken out of their cultural context. When analyzing the data, I interpreted the speakers as actors who are placed in culturally constructed stories.

To summarize, narratives, which are not often self-made, not only help people to understand the world, but reflect who they themselves are, thus constructing their identities. These narratives and identities guide actions of social actors, be it a person or a state. When you change the person to a state, it is easy to see how this theory on identity and narrative also fits international relations.

Foreign policy can be viewed as policy that is the result of state interest, which in turn is determined by narratively constructed identities. States' behavior towards other states can thus be explained by defense of not their self-interest, but self-identity. Just like identities of individuals, state identities are also fluid, but not constantly changing (Hønneland, 2016, p.10-14) The national identity is constructed simultaneously by constructing "us" through sameness, and "them" through differences (Nortio et al., 2022, p. 862). In the case of Finland this could mean constructing "us" through shared culture, language, and narratives, and "them" through focusing on the differences between Finland and Russia.

The theory on narrative and international relations fit well for this study. It gives valuable insight when looking at how the public narratives shape Finnish state identity and guide the country's foreign policy. Using this theory, it is easy to tie the post-Ukrainian war NATO discussion to larger public narratives and identities. As Somers, Roberts, and Hønneland point out, to understand social actors' actions, it is crucial to study their narratives, which also applies to Finland joining NATO.

### **3.4. Foucauldian discourse analysis**

Discourse analysis is a qualitative approach to textual analysis, which studies how meaning is produced through talk and text (Tonkiss, 2012, p. 478). There are many different approaches to discourse analysis and many definitions of discourse. This study is going to use the Foucauldian understanding of discourse.

Foucault saw discourse as something that shapes and produces the subjects it describes (Foucault, 1970, p. 180). Discourse is thus not simply acts of language or speech, but rather a way of constructing knowledge (Tonkiss, 2012, p. 478-479). Following Foucault's trail of thought, when for example studying the image of NATO in Finland, the question is not only how the image of NATO is being talked about in Finnish security discourse, but also how is the image of NATO being shaped by the discourse.

Foucault defines discourse as social practice, which is situated among the collective rather than individuals. Foucauldian discourse analysis focuses on broad political, ideological, or historical issues in relation to power and knowledge through discourse. According to Foucault, these macro-level discussions shape interactions of people and how they relate to society and themselves. Furthermore, Foucault sees discourse as being independent from humans and having its own agency through construction of objects: Discourse itself gives meaning to words and establishes the rules of what can and cannot be said (Foucault, 1970, p. 178; Sam, 2019, p. 335).

In other words, Foucauldian discourse analysis sees discourse as something that constructs and shapes social reality. It is also tightly related to power-relations: discourse gives legitimacy to some ideas and not for others (Sam, 2019, p. 336). The public discourse is in theory open for everyone. In practice though the chances of individuals affecting public discourse in modern society are very limited: The big media, the professionals, and the politicians set up the frame for public discourse (Rahkonen, 2006, p. 26). Following the constructivist theoretical framework and Foucault's notions of discourse, public media discourse is creating an idea of a common good, and shaping ideas of people, rather than just being a field for sharing and changing opinions.

By focusing on broad narratives and describing how they affect people's understanding of reality, Foucauldian discourse analysis adapts a "top-down" approach to discourse (Sam, 2019, p. 335). Because it focuses on construction of meaning of social action, using a lens of power relations, Foucauldian discourse analysis is a constructionist approach (Khan & MacEachen, 2021, p. 3). This makes it fit well with social constructivism.

## **4. Methods**

### **4.1. General overview of research design**

To answer this thesis' research questions, I will do a discourse analysis on Finnish mainstream NATO membership discourse. Discourse analysis sees language as a realm in which people's knowledge of the social world is being actively shaped, rather than just as a neutral medium for communication. It looks at texts as a place where social meanings, identities and facts are formed and reproduced (Tonkiss, 2012, p. 478). Following this idea, doing a textual analysis on the Finnish mainstream discourse is a good way to understand how

opinions about NATO membership in Finland have evolved and why Finland ended up applying for membership. The study will be conducted using the news article by the Finnish public radio (YLE), Politicians' speeches in the Parliament, as well as four Government publications from the spring of 2022 as data for the analysis. After doing a thematic analysis on the data, I will discuss the findings. I also created a timeline of the key events affecting the discourse presented in Figure 2. This was done to help the reader understand the evolution of the discourse.

## **4.2. Data collection**

Discourses can be studied in many ways, but I chose to study how they are presented in written sources in political speeches, Government documents and news articles. The reason why I chose speeches in the Finnish Parliament is because political discourse such as Parliamentary debates in this case can offer a great insight to the ongoing discussion and decision making in a democratic country. As Tonkiss (2012) puts it "political and policy discourse is an excellent example of the way that language helps to reproduce and reinforce social power and has an impact on how institutions and individuals are governed" (p. 484).

Media texts like news articles in this study are a good example of the discourse's ability to shape attitudes and help to establish dominant meanings (Tonkiss, 2012, p. 485). For this study, I chose the Finnish public radio YLE as source for the articles. Public service broadcasters play an important role in the media market in the Nordic countries and they are often praised for their accuracy and quality (Horsti, 2014, p. 5). According to YLE's own study in 2021, it reaches 94 percent of the Finns weekly, and 83 percent of Finns trust it (YLE, 2021). Given its big role in the media space of Finland and its ability to reach the people, YLE is a good representation of mainstream media discourse in Finland.

Screening of the political speeches was done with the search engine of Finnish Parliament. Speeches of members were chosen as type of documents; timeline was set from February 24 (Start of the full scale Russian attack on Ukraine) to May 17 (When Finland sent its membership applications) and NATO was the search word. Then all the speeches from February 24 to April 19 that were found with these settings were chosen, totaling 43 speeches. On April 20 the Parliament discussed the citizens' initiative to apply for NATO membership. Since there were so many speeches that analyzing them all would have been virtually

impossible given the scope of this thesis, only the opening speeches by the responsible ministers and group speeches by all of the political parties were chosen. Group speech is a speech by a party's representative outlining the opinions of that party. This added up to 13 speeches. From April 27 to May 12 all the speeches (17 of them) found were included.

On May 16 the parliament had once more discussion about the membership application. Following what was done with the discussions of April 20 only the opening speeches of responsible ministers and group speeches of all the parties were chosen. In total this was 13 speeches. After the screening of all the debates, there were 86 speeches by the members of the Finnish parliament.

For the YLE articles I used the search engine of YLE news with the same timeline as with the political speeches. The search word “Suomen NATO-jäsenyys” (Finland’s NATO membership) was used to find the articles. This added up to 221 articles.

While reading both the speeches and the articles, it turned out that there are four major articles the Government released during the spring that seemed to affect the discourse. First one was a Government report on changes in the security environment, a 49-page document stating how the security environment has changed and presenting future possibilities and thinking about pros and cons of the NATO membership (Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, 2022, p. 5). It was released on April 13. The second document is a 37-page report by the Defense committee favoring the membership, released on May 10 (Defense committee of Finland, p. 14-15). The third document is a report on the possible Finnish NATO membership, which ended up as endorsing joining NATO, released on May 15 (Finnish Government, p. 4). This was only 4 pages long. The fourth and final document is a 23-page report on thoughts of the foreign relations committee on both upper mentioned documents that was released on May 17. An overview of the number of documents studied, and the various types of documents, is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.**  
*Overview of types of and numbers of documents studied.*

Political speeches in Parliament > April 19	43
Group speeches April 20	13
Political speeches in Parliament < April 27	17

Group speeches May 16	13
YLE	221
Government reports	4
TOTAL	311

I downloaded and sorted the documents and then printed them and put them in different folders by the order of appearance. I used markers with different colors to collect codes and create themes. I had different folders for every month of news articles, with the exception of February and March being in one folder, making jumping to different dates easy. The political speeches went to one folder, and the Government documents fitted to another one. “Finding” the four Government documents during the analysis is a good example of how data-driven study lives and evolves throughout the process. A list of all documents studied is presented in Appendix A, B and C.

#### **4.3. Discourse analysis through thematic analysis**

This discourse analysis is done by identifying discourses according to Foucauldian discourse analysis, and then using thematic analysis to analyze them. In Foucauldian discourse analysis, one should choose samples of discourse that either constitute or problematize the object that is studied and show how the construction of the object varies over time (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2017, p. 10-11). For example, how does the way Russia is spoken about justify the Finnish NATO membership? As will be elaborated upon in the discussion, the way Russia was spoken about in Finnish NATO discourse varied greatly depending on who was speaking and when, from respected neighbor to an angry and unreliable bear. In short, I identified reasons for NATO application, whether for or against as discourses, and used thematic analysis to analyze them.

Braun and Clarke (2006) define thematic analysis as “a method for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 80). To identify discourses, I searched for phrases and topics that were mentioned many times and that reflect both the political views as well as the popular opinion. Braun and Clarke define 6 phases of thematic analysis, which are presented in Table 1.

*Phases of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 87.)*

**Table 2.**

*Phases of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 87.)*

Phase	Description of the process
1. Familiarizing yourself with your data	Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.
2. Generating initial codes	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
3. Searching for themes	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4. Reviewing themes	Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis.
5. Defining and naming themes	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme
6. Producing the report	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

When conducting a thematic analysis there are some choices researchers have to make related to the levels of details, the purpose of data gathering and the study's epistemology (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 81-82). First, I aimed at a more thorough explanation of the themes I identified, and I wanted detailed descriptions providing me with in-depth understanding of one particular theme or set of themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 83).



Secondly, I decided to use an inductive approach to identify themes within the data. In this “bottom up” approach the data has been collected specifically for the research and the process of coding occurs without the researcher trying to fit the data into a pre-existing theory of framework. Since it is data driven, the inductive approach also allows for the research question to evolve throughout the process. Theoretical approach tends to be more analytical driven, being more affected by the researcher’s theoretical or analytic interest (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 83-84). This study is driven rather by data than the researcher’s interests, so the inductive bottom-up way of turning qualitative data to quantitative with its flexibility provides a better approach for this study than deductive approach. Thirdly, regarding epistemology, I chose to use a semantic approach, incorporating the themes within the surface meaning of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 84).

After the screening of the data, all the data was printed and organized to folders in chronological order as discussed before. Following the description of phase one (Braun & Clarke, 2006), all the data was read through several times and notes were taken. This process greatly affected the formation of the codes that I created in the next phase.

The second phase of the analysis was to generate codes. Codes are labels that present a feature of the text that appear interesting (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 88). For example, in a speech in the Parliament on 20.4.2022 by foreign minister Haavisto he says that the “Goal of the international community is to call Russia and its representatives to account for its illegal war of aggression. War crimes as well as crimes against humanity must be investigated and those who are guilty need to be held responsible”. From this sentence I created two codes: “Russian disregard of international law”, and “Russian brutality/ war crimes in the war”.

In the third phase it was time to create themes. A theme is a pattern that tells something interesting or important about the data or the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 82). They are broader than codes, often consisting of many codes. In this phase the many codes were sorted into different potential themes using a mind map. For example, the upper mentioned codes of Russian disregard of international law and their brutality/war crimes in the war were, along with codes “Putin”, “Lack of trust in Russia”, “return of the Soviet Union”, “Russia being irrational actor”, and “Russia being the only threat to Finland”, all sorted under a theme “Russia as a threat”.

In the fifth phase the themes were further defined and refined to create a consistent set of themes. A detailed analysis was written of each theme, explaining what these themes tell and how they relate and fit to each other and into the overall narrative. The last phase, producing the report, was doing the final analysis and writing it up. Even though this is a semantic study, at the analysis level one must go “deeper” than just the surface of the data, asking questions such as “what does this theme mean and what are the assumptions underpinning it?” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 94). The final set of themes with their codes is presented in Table 3 in chapter 5.

#### **4.4. Limitations and problems**

Finland joining NATO is a current and contested topic, surrounded by heated conversation as the study shows. As a researcher, and a Finn affected by the country’s NATO decision I had to stay as objective as possible throughout the whole analysis. This study is however not about whether NATO membership is good or bad for Finland, but rather why Finland joined NATO and how was the discussion surrounding it, making the challenge of being objective considerably easier. Rather than jeopardizing objectivity, being Finnish strengthened the study, since I’m already familiar with Finnish society, media, and public discourse. Knowing the language is also essential for analyzing the discourse, and it opened possibilities for scientific books and articles that were written in Finnish.

This study does a discourse analysis on mainstream discussion, and excluding other discussion arenas, such as social media leaves out some narratives on the issue per se. And while most Finns still trust YLE, there has been rising mistrust in objectivity of the public radio, and concerns about the media manipulating the public opinion in Finland (Ojala, 2021, p. 2055). This study does not show the discussions that were happening through the grapevine, or social media, nor the discussions that could have been too controversial for public radio and politicians.

It is important to keep the upper mentioned limitations in mind when using this study to reflect what happened in the spring of 2022. However, for a mainstream discourse analysis the methods and sources of this study are more than adequate. For a more in-depth analysis of Finnish NATO discourse, one master thesis is not enough. This study does its part, and leaves room for others to elaborate on the topic.

## 5. Results

### 5.1. Review of the 11 themes identified in the thesis

I identified 11 themes in the discourse according to the thematic analysis. The themes are presented in Table 3 along with the codes they consist of. The table also indicates whether a theme was used for, against or both for and against the NATO membership. The themes are next explained further with references to the data, and I review all the codes identified within the themes. In the text the codes are written in italic. To help the reader find the references I put dates on citations of YLE articles and politicians' speeches. This was done because many politicians held different speeches throughout the spring, and many different articles were written by same journalists. A list of all the documents studies is presented in appendix A, B, and C. The members of the Parliament have the party they represent in abbreviations after their name. Parliamentary parties in Finland are summarized and explained in appendix D.

**Table 3.**

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Codes the theme consists of</b>	<b>Used for or against the NATO membership</b>
Russia as a threat	Lack of trust; Disregard of international law; Only threat to Finland; Brutality in the war; irrational actor; Putin; return of the USSR; Russia wants to create a sphere of interest	For
Security	Changes in security environment; NATO is the best option for safety; not being left alone; Deterrence, Nuclear umbrella; article 5; deterrence / Could lead to weakening of own national security	Both
Identity	History; Western values; comparing Ukraine to Finland; new iron curtain; nothing will change; if there would be a west vs. Russia conflict Finland couldn't stay out regardless; already part of the West; end of Finlandization / history; Ukraine and Finland can't be compared; neutrality; Could hurt Finland's role as conflict mediator; Just a pawn in west vs. Russia conflict	Both
NATO's image	Value base community; Defense alliance / History of NATO; Militarism; Not sending our boys to foreign wars; Trump; nuclear weapons; Turkey & Hungary	Both
Timing / Urgency	Changes in security environment; Using the "NATO-option"; time window; Russia busy in Ukraine; fast process; "Overnight" process; NATO would welcome Finland / Decision shouldn't be made in the middle of a crisis; "the gray time"; possible escalation	Both
Discourse	Good discourse; Vast support / One-sided discourse; Panic; Rush	Both
Other countries already in NATO	Comparing Finland to Estonia; Not to be left alone	For
Expertise of foreign policy leaders	Leaders are best aware of the situation; one should trust the leaders	For
Russian counteraction	Making Russia an enemy; Escalation; "Gray time"; Making Finland a target; Hybrid threats; Article 5 not a guarantee	Against
Economy	Foreign investors, Tourism / Costly membership; Russia controlling energy	Both
Sweden	Closest ally; Important to make decision together; Important to increase cooperation; shared history / Alliance with Sweden could be enough	Both

*Overview of the thesis' various themes, codes, and whether they're used for or against NATO membership.*

### 5.11. *Russia as a threat*

The first, and the most common theme identified in the discourse was Russia as a threat. As shown in chapter 2, the Russian threat to Finland's independence has been in the center of Finnish security policy for the entirety of its existence (Lavery, 2008, p, 108). In that sense, seeing Russia as a threat is nothing new, but the country's invasion of Ukraine has clearly enhanced the mistrust and fear of Russia, as shown by the codes elaborated on below.

One of the main changes in the Finnish-Russian relations after the war in Ukraine brought up in the discourse is the *lack of trust* in Russia. Prime minister Sanna Marin (Sdp) said in the Parliament on March 15 that “Trust in Russia has gone. It should be stated quite directly. Trust in Russia has gone as a result of Russia attacking Ukraine.” (Parliament, March 15.). This direct quote exemplifies well the general attitude towards Russia in the Finnish mainstream discussion after the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The mistrust in Russia can also be seen in many YLE articles. For example, on March 17 Yle wrote how “Finland is preparing (for hybrid threats) because Russia turned unreliable overnight and threats have to be reacted on now, not tomorrow” (Hakahuhta, March 17.). The Government report on changes in

The security environment released on April 13 also states that “In international relations trust in Russia has crumbled.” (Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, 2022, p. 13). I identified lack of trust as a code in Russia as a threat since trust is in the center of portraying someone as safe and feel secure.

The second code I identified in this theme was Russia's *disregard of international law*. International politics is based on rules and laws, so a country not honoring these will naturally lead that country to be seen as a threat. The May 10 Defense committee's report says “Russia has with its actions proven that it does not respect states sovereignty and territorial immunity and has with its actions violated the UN constitution as well as the European rule based security arrangements” (Defense committee of Finland, 2022, p. 2). Many politicians in the Parliament joined this statement, and YLE also widely reported on the issue.

Russia has been described as being a *brutal and irrational actor* that has an increased willingness to take risks. Foreign minister Pekka Haavisto (Vihr) said in the Parliament that

Russia has *increased its willingness to take risks* and loosened the talk on using unconventional weapons (Parliament, April 20). Member of the Parliament (MOP) Antti Lindtman (Sdp) graphically described Russian war crimes in Butcha, and other places, instances which were largely covered in YLE articles as well (Parliament, April 20). Much of the shock and hate towards Russia's actions were personified in *Putin*, with the Finnish Government specifying that the war was started by him, and MOP Harry Harkimo (Liik) saying “The Soviet Union collapsed, but Putin wants to return it to its greatness”, to give two examples (Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, 2022, p. 8; Parliament April 20).

The last but by no means the least code I identified was the idea that *Russia wants to set a sphere of influence*. Russia saw NATO's enlargement to the east as a security threat, which is often seen as the root cause for the current war in Ukraine (Michailoca 2022, p. 1675). It seems that Russia would want to have a sphere of influence around it as a buffer to protect it. Finland had been part of the Soviet sphere of influence throughout the Cold war, so it is no wonder that so many Finns got scared of Russia's actions (Malminen, 2022). MOP Antti Häkkinen (Kok) put it this way: “Putin has announced that his goal is to restore the Soviet Union's spheres of influence and build European security in a Russian position. This message must be taken seriously by every country neighboring Russia” (Liukkonen, February 25). The Government report on the changes in the security environment also stated that “Russia's long-standing foreign policy based on military force, and out-loud said goal of European security environment based on sphere of influence got a new dimension when it launched its attack in Ukraine.” (Ministry of foreign affairs, 2020, p. 4).

Even though politicians emphasized time after time that Finland would join NATO to maximize its own security, and the membership would not be directed against anyone, the discourse proves that the safety the NATO membership was hoped to bring was safety from Russia (Parliament, April 20; Toivonen, 2022). The narrative in mainstream discourse was that Russia has *again* proven to be an unreliable expansionist neighbor. Russia was seen as a threat that had to be reckoned with.

### **5.1.2. Security**

Seeing Russia largely as a threat to Finland, it is natural that Finns started to discuss ways to combat that threat and improve the country's security. The Ministry of foreign affairs put it bluntly: “The Ministry of foreign affairs agrees with the unambiguous starting point that this

change in our security environment is substantial and requires actions to enhance Finland's security (Ministry of foreign affairs, 2022, p.4).

The common narrative presented in the discourse was that Russia's actions have *changed the Finnish security environment*, which calls for improving security, and the best way to improve security is to join NATO (*NATO being the best option for safety*). This is exemplified well by the YLE article from April 13, saying that “The Government says Finnish security situation has changed radically (...) the best safety would be given by NATO membership” (Pilke, April 13). The members of Parliament said repeatedly how the security environment has changed *radically, unexpectedly, and irreversibly*. MOP Hanna Kosonen (Kesk) said: “It must be clear for all of us that in case of a war, we must *not be left alone*, and that our security situation has changed and that we need to make changes to our own security policies” (Parliament, March 15).

When a YLE reporter asked the president Sauli Niinistö whether joining NATO would give an efficient safety solution for Finland, he replied “There does not seem to be any more than that. It is the most efficient at least” (Hanhinen, March 26). The reason why NATO membership would be the “most efficient” security solution to Finland, would be according to Niinistö, and others, *deterrence* given by NATO's *article 5*. The defense minister Antti Kaikkonen (Kesk) told the Parliament that:

The biggest effect of Finland's NATO membership would be that Finland would be part of NATO's common defense, and within the safety guarantees of the article 5. More than anything this would mean stronger deterrence, and a significant increase in the preventive effect (Parliament, April 20).

The deterrence the membership would give was in big parts seen as a result of NATO's nuclear arsenal. As a member state, Finland would be under the “*nuclear umbrella*”. YLE wrote on April 2 that:

When acting against NATO, Russia would always have to count for the risk that conflict could escalate to the point where nuclear weapons would be used (...) Threatening Finland with nuclear weapons and other missiles would be considerably harder if Finland would be a member of NATO (Luotonen, April 2).

While the overwhelming majority of the security arguments were for membership, there were also arguments about NATO membership possibly weakening Finland's own national security. Russia's counteractions could have been seen as part of security, but since it was such a big topic, I made it into a separate theme. Weakening of one's own national security in this case refers to the weakening of the Finnish army when the responsibility of the defense is supposedly shifted to NATO. In his dissenting opinion to the report of the Defense committee MOP Markus Mustajärvi (Vas) wrote that:

The will to defend the country is exceptionally high in Finland. It would go down considerably if we join a military alliance. Now national defense is our business. With NATO membership it would be their business. It would also lead to the crumbling of the universal military service, which is the foundation of Finnish defense ability. (Finnish Defense committee, 2022, p. 23).

### **5.1.3. Identity**

The third theme I identified was identity. More specifically it refers to the Finnish national identity, which was used as an argument both for and against the NATO membership. Arguably the biggest code in identity is *history*, specifically related to the second world war. Throughout the spring there were a lot of memories of the Finnish-Russian wars exchanged in different outlets, and many comparisons were made between Ukraine's battle and Finland's Winter war. In many of their speeches, MOPs brought up the history of Finland, mainly the second world war, and the memories of the wars were also present in YLE articles. When people's opinions about NATO were asked by YLE on May 4 one interviewee said that "This would be totally different kind of security when we compare it to the events of 1939", and the journalist added later that "the bitter war memories from 1939 to 1945 still live in the eastern border" (Hyytinen, May 4).

Petteri Orpo, chairman of the National Coalition party, placed Finns on the historical narrative of fighting the Russian aggression by saying: "General Adolf Ehrnrooth is known to have said that the lesson of the Winter war was "never alone again". Now it is time for our generation to answer to him: Mr general, we will never be alone again!" (Parliament May 16). MOP Päivi Räsänen (Kd) combined the memories of the second world war, and *Finland's identity as a Western country* by quoting Finnish Marshal Mannerheim's speech of 1940: "We have a historical mission, which we will complete: Defense of Western civility, which has been our



heritage for centuries”. She continued by adding that “the same mission is relevant on this historical day”, concluding that Finland should join NATO (Parliament, May 16). Ville Tavio (Ps) also brought up Finland's identity as a Western democracy by saying “Finland will continue to stay as a free Western country through independence. (...) It can be concluded again that the Western freedom and multi-vocal democracy are by any measurement worth defending and the best state model to build peace” (Parliament, April 20).

*Western values* was another code in this theme, and Finland's own values link to the idea that NATO is a value-based defense-union of Western countries, making it a right place for Finland. These arguments will be looked at more thoroughly in the next theme of NATO's image. Another narrative that was present in the discourse was how there is a *new iron curtain*<sup>3</sup> rising, and Finland would have to choose sides. NATO would not only be suitable for its values, but many also argued how Finland is already cooperating with NATO, and *not a lot would change if it got the membership*. It was also argued that *if there would be a conflict between the West and Russia, Finland couldn't stay out regardless*.

In a YLE article published on February 28 titled “What would change in the daily life of the defense forces, if Finland became a NATO country?”, it is concluded that not a lot would change, since the army is already very much compatible with NATO standards, and NATO would not require Finland to send conscripts overseas, or accept NATO bases or nuclear weapons (Hallamaa & Rissanen, February 28).

Finland was also described as a small country that cannot stand alone: “A small country like Finland needs alliances. We need Nordic cooperation, a strong EU, and a working UN” said MOP Andres Adlercreutz (Rkp) (Parliament, April 20). Although being small, many people throughout the spring mentioned how Finland is a well-respected international partner that would be appreciated as a new NATO member state. “Finland is an active and respected partner in international defense cooperation. Our skills are valued, and we know how to act with international cooperations to increase our defense”, the defense minister Antti Kaikkonen (Kesk) told the Parliament (Parliament, March 15).

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<sup>3</sup> Iron curtain is a phrase introduced by the English prime minister Winston Churchill in 1946 to describe the division between Western powers and areas controlled by the Soviet Union in cold-war Europe (Churchill, 2009).

MOP Anders Adlercreutz (Rkp) was quoted in a YLE article saying that:

Finland is seen as part of the West. Finland is training with NATO and our systems are totally NATO compatible. We are part of all the essential NATO cooperations. We have in practice shown our intentions, but we don't have the security provided by article 5. In practice, the membership would be a very small step, but from a defense point of view, it would give us a considerable amount of extra security (Hara & Luotonen, March 3).

Later in the Parliament he concluded that "NATO membership is a natural, even obvious step." (Parliament, April 20). Experts interviewed in YLE articles throughout the spring also argued how joining NATO will be the *final blow to Finlandization*, one even calling it the "End of Kekkoslovakia"<sup>4</sup> (De Fresnes & Pilke, April 12; Nevalainen, May 16).

Earlier mentioned codes and quotes show that the narrative that was built in the Finnish mainstream discourse was that Finland throughout its history had faced and fought off the Russian aggression and is now facing yet another threat by the eastern neighbor. Finnish self-identity as a Western democracy and independent state is threatened by Russia, and now it must take actions to improve its security. This narrative paints Finland's identity as one of a small yet resourceful, respected country.

Finnish history and war traumas were also used for a less enthusiastic take about the membership. MOP Jussi Saramo (Vas) said:

We know our history and through our families and relatives we all have experiences about the war we don't want to repeat. It is natural to feel fear and anger in the face of atrocities. The decisions can't however be made only based on feelings, and there is no problem or risk-free solution. We must have courage to discuss everything and bring up even the negative sides of all the options (Parliament, April 20).

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<sup>4</sup> Kekkoslovakia comes from combining Kekkonen and Czechoslovakia. It is a word used to mockingly describe Finlandized Finland during the presidency of Kekkonen (Lanko, 2021, p. 148).

History was thus used both for and against the membership. Also, while many were comparing Ukraine's struggle to that of Finns in the Winter war, it was also pointed out several times that *Ukraine shouldn't be compared too much to Finland*, both historically and geopolitically, "Raik (leader of the Estonian foreign institute) would not equate Finland and Ukraine. Finland has integrated West better than Ukraine" wrote YLE on February 25, and "Finland does not face a military threat (...) Finland was never part of the Soviet Union. Finland is not a Slavic country unlike Belarus and Ukraine" said MOP Mustajärvi on March 1 (Tiihonen, March 1; Tolkki, February 255).

Finland's history as a *neutral country*, and the consequences for the country's image if abandoning that policy was used as an argument against the membership. MOP Markus Mustajärvi (Vas) wrote:

Finland's long lasting foreign and security policy has been based on peaceful foreign policy, military non-alliance, and international cooperation, in which UN and EU are essential. Joining NATO would connect Finland to a fundamentally different kind of politics, which is based on military power, nuclear defiance, and dividing the world especially regarding Russia and China (Defense committee of Finland, 2022, p. 21).

MOP Anna Kontula (Vas) said:

After the fall of the Soviet Union, it was thought that Finland was a neutral country that works as a *conflict mediator* and represents the world order based on human rights. Having this role wouldn't be believable anymore (after the membership) (Suikkanen, May 5).

Another argued effect of the membership was that Finland would become merely *a pawn on the game of the great powers*. The MOP Anu Turtiainen (Vkk) told the Parliament "NATO-lobbyists are trying to get Finland to join NATO fast, in other words to be a ball in the game of superpowers" (Parliament, March 15). Turtiainen also took a different approach to the Finnish identity as a Western and Nordic country than other members of the Parliament:

Many have a need to see Finland as part of the Scandinavian family, while Finland is in fact closest to Estonia when it comes to language and culture (...) This way (Finland joining NATO) the Nordic cooperation would continue as it has so far:

humiliating Finland and the Finns (Parliament, March 23).

As shown above, Finnish identity was used also against NATO membership, creating a contradicting narrative about Finland joining NATO. According to this narrative, a neutral Nordic state known for its peace meditating capabilities was blinded by its tragic history with Russia, resulting in Finland losing its neutrality. The narrative of Finland having to choose sides and join the fellow Western democracies to deter the well-known and experienced Russian threat was much more common, however.

#### ***5.1.4. NATO's Image***

Just like Finland's self-identity and image was used as an argument both for and against joining NATO, NATO's image was also a source of conflicting arguments. On one hand NATO was portrayed as a defense union based on Western values, while others saw NATO as a militaristic alliance based on nuclear weapons with shady countries in it. NATO's image plays a big role in narratives told on both sides of the debate, thus shaping Finland's decision to apply for membership.

Differing views on NATO across the political spectrum are summarized quite well in an YLE article titled "Russian attack mangled the parties' NATO arguments - the centrist party has been held by the legacy of Kekkonen, left wing by the American militarism" published on March 15. The article describes why the left wing has been critical of NATO citing the history of the 1960s peace movement and Vietnam war, and more recent events of war on terrorism and invasion of Iraq (*history of NATO and militarism*). "Forsberg (a professor of international politics) also says that "the image of NATO hasn't been very good. The left wing has viewed that NATO isn't contributing to global stability but might increase the hegemony of the United States." in the article. Regarding the hesitance of the centrist party the article describes the days of the Cold war and Finlandization and says, "The idea of non-alignment and staying clear of foreign conflicts has been strong" (Pilke, May 15) (*not sending our boys to foreign wars*).

The same article also describes the reasons why the right wing has been supporting the membership, saying that the coalition party wants to get close to the USA, because "the values and right-wing ideology represented by the US are closest to the coalition party in Finland". "It's not only about defense but also about being part of the Trans-Atlantic

community”, the article says. It also goes on to say that “SDP has to swallow NATO, if the threat of Putin is estimated big enough”, fitting the narrative of Russia's threat changing Finnish foreign policy (Pilke, May 15).

“Like other Western democracies, Finland has to apply for a full membership of the defense alliance NATO” said MOP Antti Häkkänen (Kok) in the Parliament, exemplifying the arguments that NATO is 1) a *defense alliance* and 2) a *value-based community* of Western democracies (Parliament, April 20). Häkkänen went on to say that “NATO was founded after the second world war as a safeguard of free democracies”, “Most of the EU-countries have already joined NATO”, and “Not a single NATO country has been attacked during the 70+ year history of the organization. NATO has succeeded in its mission of peace” (Parliament, April 20). The Foreign minister Haavisto (Vihr) also said that “After the Russian war of aggression, NATO’s role as a defense alliance has become even stronger” (Parliament, April 20).

The Government report on changes in the security environment also stated that “NATO is a defense alliance and transatlantic political community, whose main mission is to guarantee the security of its member states through political and military actions” (Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, 2022, p. 24). “It is the NATO countries that are closest to Finland when it comes to values”, said an expert in a YLE article released on April 23, regarding NATO’s values (Koivisto, April 23).

It is worth noting that in the discussions of Parliament, NATO had to be referred to as a *defense alliance* rather than *military* alliance, or the speaker would be heckled upon. MOP Saramos (Vas) group speech on April 20 is a good example:

According to the Government program we are a country not aligned to a military alliance, taking care of our own defense [From the group of The Finns party: Defense alliance! You need to use the right term!] I believe in the end everyone in this hall wants the same thing and this is why I wish this subject will get a genuine proceeding [Sanna Antikainen (Ps): NATO is a defense alliance! Could you even use the right terms?]]” (Parliament, April 20).

Insisting that NATO is a defense alliance, not a military alliance is peculiar, since NATO fits

the textbook definition of military alliance, and is commonly defined as such (Cambridge Dictionary, 2023; Haglund, 2023). NATO was referred to as a defense alliance in the Government documents as well.

NATO's history gave a darker side to the image of the organization in many arguments. Previously mentioned wars in Vietnam and Middle East were accompanied by bombings of Serbia, and the presidency of *Trump*. MOP Mustajärvi (Vas) said in his dissenting opinion to the report of the Defense committee that "If Trump would have been re-elected, the first thing he would have done would have been taking the US out of NATO. Could we speak of safety guarantees then?". And another citation:

The US has used different methods (...) to get through its own will in different events of world politics within NATO, not sparing the ugly ways. Good example is the bombing of Serbia, which NATO continued for 78 days, even though one member state did not approve of them. (Defense committee of Finland, 2022, p. 29).

YLE also wrote on April 2 that "According to Pesu (a senior researcher at foreign institute) there has been growing suspicion in NATO regarding how big sacrifices the US would be willing to make for Europeans. Suspicions arose especially during the presidency of Donald Trump" (Luotonen, April 2).

*Nuclear weapons* were also a big source of discourse. Security wise, it was by and large agreed upon that NATO's deterrence is based on nuclear weapons, which would mean that nuclear weapons bring security. Regarding NATO's image however, it seemed to be used as against joining NATO. MOP Saramo (Vas) said in the Parliament that

We have to think about our stance on nuclear weapons (...) nuclear weapons are a central part of NATO's deterrence. Until now, Finland has worked for disarmament and stopping the spread of nuclear weapons [MOP Ben Zyskowicz (Kok): As it will be in the future!]. The left alliance thinks nuclear disarmament has to be continued in the future as well. [Zyskowicz: Isn't Finland going to continue that in future?]. (Parliament, April 20)

MOP Johannes Yrttiaho (Vas) told YLE that "It is very likely that there would be NATO troops and nuclear weapons on Finnish soil (In case of Finland joining NATO)" (Viljanen,

May 5).

For obvious reasons nuclear weapons can have a negative connotation, so it is no wonder that an alliance that bases its power on them can stain its image because of that. YLE wrote that “Finns have to reevaluate their stance on nuclear weapons if Finland seeks for NATO membership” (Luotonen, April 2), Earlier YLE was cited saying that SDP might have to swallow NATO because of the threat of Putin. The narrative here seems to be that Finland that has been working for nuclear disarmament has to swallow the nuclear weapons for its safety.

In an article published on April 23, YLE wrote that besides Trump, *Turkey* and *Hungary* are used as an argument that Finland might end up with unpleasant company. “In Turkey the human rights situation is weak, and the country is waging a war against the Kurds in Syria and Iraq. In Hungary, Prime minister Viktor Orban is consolidating his power after being elected the fourth time, testing the strength of the rule of law”, the article says. (Koivisto, April 23). The issues Finland would face with Turkey ratifying its membership were warned by some, brushed off by others. MOP Yrittaho (Vas) said in the Parliament that “There is a special interest towards Turkey, whose repulsive attitude can be expected”, and brought up the human rights and democracy problems Turkey has (Parliament, March 29). On the other hand, it was reported many times how all NATO countries would welcome Finland with open arms, and that Turkey wouldn’t cause any issues. An YLE article on April 9 estimated that “Like Hungary, Turkey would probably not halt NATO’s expansion” (Husu & Kankkonen, April 9).

The speculation about Turkey's attitude got an answer on May 13 when President Erdogan stated that Turkey could not support memberships of Finland and Sweden, which President Niinistö described as surprising, since he had talked about the membership with Erdogan few days prior without any sense of reluctance (Parkkinen, May 13; Lindholm, May 15). Regardless, Turkey with its human rights violations and surprising behavior, combined with history of NATO, and mistrust of the US, all painted a darker image to NATO, even though the organization was mostly seen as the defense alliance of Western democracies described before.

Those using NATO’s image as a reason for Finland joining it, portrayed NATO as a purely

defense alliance for Western democracies. Following the Finnish state identity as a small Western democracy, it was then argued that NATO is a right place for Finland, not only for security reasons, but also because of its values. On the other side, the right place for Finland was seen to be outside the military-alliance that is de facto controlled by the US and bases its power on nuclear weapons. The narrative supporting NATO membership and NATO's image was more present in the discourse, and the theme of NATO's image got less space than security and Russian threat.

### ***5.1.5 Timing and urgency***

Timing and urgency were identified as themes since they were central arguments both for joining and not. In the arguments for the membership, timing and urgency were part of the identity and narrative: Fins know when to act and make hard decisions. On the other side, it was seen that the timing is not right, and the smartest thing to do would be staying neutral, at least for now.

Following the themes of Russia as a threat and security, this theme also stems from the idea that the Finnish security environment has drastically changed and needs actions to be improved. The Government report on changes in the security environment notes that the security environment of both Finland and Europe is more serious and harder to predict than any time after the Cold war and estimates that this change is long lasting (Ministry of foreign affairs of Finland, 2022, p. 10). Regarding the same document, foreign minister Haavisto gave a speech to the Parliament saying:

There has been a lot of talk about the so-called NATO-option of Finland (...) When the security situation changes, Finland will reconsider its safety arrangements. Are we now in a situation when this reconsidering should be used? This is a discussion the Parliament needs to have now. (...) There is no return to the old. (Parliament, April 20).

The narrative being constructed here is that *the changes in the security environment* led to Finland *using its "NATO-option"*. Another argument and part of this narrative was that there is a *time window* that needs to be used now, so decisions must be made fast.

“Not reacting could lead to narrowing of our movement space”, said MOP Lindtman (Sdp)



(Parliament, April 20). “If we don't use our carefully cherished NATO-option now, then when? How severe a crisis in Europe should we wait for?” asked the foreign minister Haavisto (Vihr) rhetorically (Parliament, May 16).

Urgency and a sense of rush was present in the discourse as well. MOP Harkimo (Liik) said on the very day the Russian invasion started that:

Time for applying for NATO membership is now. It is hard for me to see why we should wait [From the coalition party: Right!] and when would be a better time than now (...) Discussions do not help now, we need to proceed towards NATO membership.” (Parliament, February 24).

Later Harkimo rushed the Parliament many times to make the decision (Parliament, April 20; Parliament May 16). MOP Jussi Halla-aho (Ps) argued how it is not safe to assume that Finland does not face a threat since “Russian troops are now fighting in Ukraine, but they could be moved anywhere in a few days” (Tolkki, February 25). MOP Peter Östman (Kd) also said that “The ex-secretary general of NATO said that Finland and Sweden could be accepted as members overnight, but the window might close soon” (Parliament, March 15).

Another argument for applying as soon as possible was that since *Russia is busy in Ukraine*, they could not counteract Finland joining NATO. The United States NATO ambassador told the YLE news on May 5 that “the war in Ukraine is taking the attention of Russia”, and the same article had the secretary general of NATO Jens Stoltenberg warmly welcoming Finland, should it apply (Husu, May 5). So, there were two sometimes contradicting sides on the common narrative regarding Russia having troops in Ukraine. On one hand it was thought that Russia could move troops quickly to Finland hence posing an immediate threat to the country, while at the same time it was argued that Russia is busy in Ukraine and could not counteract Finland's NATO application. Both arguments led to the same conclusion: Finland must apply for the membership as soon as possible.

The process of becoming a NATO member was commonly described as *fast*, and there were even talks of an *overnight approval of Finnish membership*. “Stoltenberg has estimated earlier that the close partners Finland and Sweden could join fast. Ex-general secretary Anders Fogh Rasmussen has talked about 'round about one night'”, wrote YLE in late March (Luotonen,

March 26). As elaborated upon on the theme of NATO's image, it was presented in the discourse that NATO would *welcome Finland with open arms*, and no countries would stand in the way of Finland's membership.

While many were rushing the decision to be made from the get-go, in the early days of the crisis the leaders of the country calmed people down. "It is very understandable that many Finns also feel fear now. I want to emphasize though that the threat is not facing Finland as it is", said the president. Prime minister Marin (Sdp) also said that "Finland is not facing an immediate military threat. It is also clear that the discussion about NATO membership will become more diversified" (Tolkki, February 25). President also said on March 26 that "The door (to NATO) is open. There has been no indication that there would be a narrow window we need to go through now" (Hara, March 26).

However, on May 12 the President and Prime minister announced their support for the membership. According to them, Finland should apply for the membership "at the earliest opportunity" and "quickly" (Auvinen, May 15). If there was already a sense of urgency about the issue, this statement by the top leadership boosted the discussion, and it was followed by politicians and experts calling for fast moves. "Small (country) has to seize the opportunity", told the leader of the foreign institute Mika Aaltola to YLE on the same day (Suikkanen, May 12).

While many were rushing to get Finland to NATO, others were arguing that *it is not the right time now*. On February 27 chairman of the centrist party Annika Saarikko (Kesk) said that making a decision about NATO in the midst of a crisis is not "the smartest thing" (Mäntysalo et.al., February 27). The argument was that this kind of *decision should not be made in the middle of a crisis*. Some also argued that NATO should not want to expand in the middle of the war in Ukraine out of *fear of escalation*. Risks of escalation and the "gray time" were identified as codes in this theme but are elaborated on the theme of Russian counteraction.

Ex-leader of the foreign Ministry Jukka Juusti told YLE how "Finland could not become a member even if it wanted to - I do not think member states would even process the application" (Koskela, March 14). Regarding the "NATO-option", he said that "Finland has never had any option. With this kind of talk people have been given a false picture that Finland would get the membership any time. Finland can apply like any other country"

(Koskela, March 14). Juuska claimed not to be against NATO membership but was arguing that the timing is not right due to the risk of escalation, presenting a totally different narrative than most of the people in mainstream discussions.

Even though there were arguments made about the time for the NATO application not being right, there was a general sense in the mainstream discourse that a decision about the membership must be made carefully, but as fast as possible. According to the common narrative Europe was at war and it was time for Finland to choose sides and do it fast.

### ***5.1.6 Discourse***

The theme of the discourse refers to the arguments on how the discourse about the NATO membership in Finland was. Again, there were two sides to this theme. Some were celebrating good and calm discussion and emphasizing large support by the public, while others saw the decision as a result of fear fueled and rushed discussions.

When calming people down in the early days of the conflict, president Niinistö said “When the change is drastic, the head has to stay cool” (Hakarhuhta & Rummukainen, May 13). These words were quoted throughout the spring by politicians and media, emphasizing the importance of calm thinking and decision making regarding the NATO membership. MOP Saramo (vas) also called for calm and thorough discussion by saying:

Security of Finland is much too valuable to make shortsighted decisions in by rushing and collecting political loose points. In our analysis we have to take into account all the possible trajectories and their likelihood. Pre-locked positions fit this poorly (Parliament, April 20).

Many politicians *celebrated the discourse* Finns had throughout the spring and pointed out the *vast support for the membership*. “People have told their opinion”, declared MOP Harkimo (Liik) citing the popular opinion polls showing two out of three Finns supporting the membership (Parliament, March 15). Others were less happy about the level of the discussion though. “Vice-chairman of the Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee and former long-time foreign minister Erkki Tuomioja (Sdp) criticized such *one-sided thinking*. In Tuomioja's opinion, other options, for example the further deepening of cooperation with Sweden, were not even properly explored.” YLE wrote on May 13 (Hakahuhta & Rummukainen, May 13).

Three days later YLE published an article titled “According to the professor of political science, the NATO discussion has been one-sided, but democracy has been realized”. MOP Anna Kontula (Vas) says in the article that “there has been no room for this kind of (good, wide-ranging) discussion, when the decisions have been made more or less in *panic and rush*” (Kujansuu & Hinkula, May 16).

The discourse around the membership was mainly used as a justification for joining NATO, with politicians praising the quality of the discussions, and the message sent by the opinion polls. It was also used against joining, with claims of panic and fear leading to one-sided discourse. However, even some of those who criticized the discourse made clear that the process went according to democracy. Vast majority of the Finns wanted to join NATO, and that became present in the discourse that was dominated by pro-NATO opinions.

### ***5.1.7 Other countries already in***

It was often pointed out how many other European countries were already in NATO, and *Estonia in specific* was a common example. An YLE article released on March 9 describes how Poland, Czech republic, and Baltic countries were, like Finland, first part of NATO's partnership for peace program, but the war in Chechnya made them join the alliance. “As it was with Baltic countries and Poland in the 90s, Russian attack has sparked increased interest towards NATO in Finland”, the article goes on to say (Tikka, March 9). On March 7 YLE wrote that “Estonians are confused by (the Finnish) NATO dithering”, and “Estonians feel that a similar window to NATO has opened to Finland as it did to Estonia after the attempted soviet-coup in 1991” (Kooli, March 7). Other countries already in NATO, especially a close neighbor sometimes described as a brother-nation, play well with the idea of *not being left alone*: If most of the European democracies are already in NATO, why should not Finland be as well?

### ***5.1.8 Expertise of foreign policy leaders***

When YLE interviewed members of the Parliament about their NATO stance in early March many put their trust in the leadership of their superiors. Anne Kalmari (Kesk) said “If the president, the Government, and the Defense committee see it this way, I am ready for NATO, even though I used to be critical”, and “When the situation is acute, we have to trust the highest leaders of our country and their vision”, told Pirita Rantanen (Sdp) (Kaski, March 2).

The centrist party also declared to be ready for the NATO membership if the state leadership decides so: “If the state leadership thinks that the step and the time is right, I as the leader of the centrist party am ready to take the direction towards the defense alliance NATO”, said the chairman Saarikko (Kesk) on April 9 (Luotonen & Kinnunen, April 9). Saarikko had earlier said it is not a good idea to apply in the middle of the crisis.

Many put their trust on the state leadership, and the leaders seemed to know their position, and use it as well. On April 5 YLE wrote that “the serious messages of the state leadership are preparing Fins for a historic leap”. On April 4 President Niinistö summoned the leaders of the Parliamentary parties and released a statement saying, “We call everyone living in Finland to join the common work we do for our national security.” (Kinnunen, April 4). After the Government report about the changes in the security environment was released, it was reported that “the defense forces support the state leadership's NATO-reflections" (Kärki & Hiltunen, April 19).

It seems that there was a lot of trust for the state leadership, so much so that for some the support of the membership by the leaders was enough to get their support as well. The argument goes that *the leaders are best aware of the situation, and people should trust them.*

### ***5.1.9 Russian counteraction***

Although joining NATO was mainly seen as increasing Finland’s national security against Russia, Russian counteractions were also discussed extensively, and used as an argument for not applying for the membership. The Government report on changes in the security environment states that:

Should Finland apply for the membership of NATO, it should prepare for wide-ranging and hard-to-predict influence and risks, such as increased tension in the border. Finland is strengthening its preparedness for being the target of wide-ranging *hybrid means of influence*, as well as preventing influence and responding to it (Ministry of foreign affairs, 2022, p. 27).

To prevent the Russian counteraction some argued that Finland should remain out of NATO. MOP Mustajärvi (Vas) reasoned that Finland is not facing a military threat as it is, but *joining NATO would make Russia Finland's enemy*, and put Finland as a possible *target for first*

*strike* (Defense committee of Finland, 2022, p.33; Tiihonen, March 1.). MOP Turtianen (Vkk) told the Parliament that:

Finland has already messed up so badly that even if we do not accept the proposal of the Government and the President to submit a NATO application, we still have quite a lot of work to do just to restore relations with our neighbor to the east. By messing up, I mean the defiance of the president, the prime minister, the chairman of the foreign affairs committee and many others to Russia, and the fact that we have sent the people in Washington weapons to wage war against Russian-speaking Ukrainians and Russians in Ukraine does not make the situation any easier. The cost of this NATO blunder will be shocking, and the energy and food shortages that will soon drastically affect the lives of every Finn are just the beginning. (Parliament, May 16).

Some argued that NATO should not expand to avoid *escalation* of the war in Ukraine. Researcher Matti Pesu told YLE news on March 8 that:

I do not think NATO wants to expand on this very second, since there would be a risk of escalation (...) When the situation hopefully calms down, NATO might have an interest to show that the door is open. During an acute crisis Finland cannot make any fast movements (Pilke, March 8).

Besides escalation of the current conflict, the so-called *gray time*, a time when Finland has sent the NATO application but does not yet have the safety guarantees of the article 5 was brought up many times. Foreign minister Haavisto (Vihr) told the Parliament on April 20 that the Government is discussing preparations for the gray time, and YLE made many articles about possible Russian counteractions during that time (Parliament, April 20). The word “malice” was often used to describe the Russian actions in the gray time, and examples varied from mass migration to cyberattacks. When Niinistö and Marin announced their support for the membership, YLE wrote:

The so-called gray period started today. It refers to the time when the desire for NATO membership has been expressed, but the realization of membership still has to be waited for. Both Niinistö and Marin have previously warned that Russia may react to Finland's NATO project with large-scale malice. It is impossible to even imagine all

the vulnerabilities. Maybe the urges about quick processing are related to them.  
(Tikkala & Toivonen, May 15).

The security guarantees presented by the article 5 even after the “gray time” were questioned as well:

NATO’s safety guarantees are not any sort of automat that guarantee the help of other nations even in the event of a war or a crisis. The safety guarantees would be realized only in the situation when the leading NATO country US sees military intervention to be according to its own interests (Finnish Defense committee, 2022, p. 29).

While the possible Russian counteractions were used as an argument against joining NATO, the overwhelming sense in the discussion related to Russian counteraction was that Finland is prepared, and that other NATO countries would help Finland if needed even without hard safety guarantees. Leaders of both the defense forces and the border guard “assured that Finland is well prepared, should the security situation change in the eastern border” (Kärki & Hiltunen, April 19). During April YLE also reported that NATO’s Secretary General Stoltenberg has brought up the idea of safety guarantees for the gray time, and that the US and UK would aid Finland greatly even without signing guarantees (Koivisto & Kinnunen, April 14; Tikka, April 15).

#### ***5.1.10 Economy***

Economic effects of NATO membership were discussed and used both for and against the membership. It was often said that joining NATO would give better opportunities for *foreign investors*, since they might be scared of Russia. “In order to secure growth, attention has to be put to Finland’s attractiveness as an investment target. Security policy solutions can also contribute to this. And security policy solutions means NATO-solution in Finnish”, MOP Pauli Kiuru (Kok) told the Parliament (Parliament, April 7). MOP Heikki Autto (Kok) also brought up *tourism*:

I can for example give greetings from tourism entrepreneurs in Lapland, who have since the start of the war gotten concerned contacts from their clients and even cancellations, wondering if one can travel to Finland in this kind of situation.  
(Parliament, April 7).

According to these arguments, joining NATO would benefit Finland economically.

On the other side it was argued that *joining NATO is costly*, and Russian counteractions will do more harm than any Western investments could bring. The foreign relations committee estimated that the yearly extra costs created by NATO would be between 60 to 100 billion euros (Foreign relations committee of Finland, 2022, p. 13). It was also brought up how Russia could damage Finland by *controlling energy*. “The eastern neighbor can harm us by turning off the electricity or the gas pipeline at a dangerous moment”, MOP Hannu Hoskonen (Kesk) told the Parliament (Parliament, March 16).

Over all the comments made about NATO’s costs, or economic harm joining it might bring were not common. Economic reasons were used mainly to support the membership. Being next to Russia without NATO’s safety guarantees was seen as a threat for Finnish economy.

#### **5.1.11 Sweden**

Finland's Western neighbor, Sweden had a prominent role in discussion throughout the spring. Finland and Sweden ended up sending their applications for NATO memberships together, with Finland making the decision to apply first. In the mainstream discourse there was a sense that Finland is leading the way for both countries to join the alliance.

Both those supporting the membership, and those who wanted to remain out of it emphasized the importance of *making decisions together with Sweden* and *strengthening the cooperation*. The Government report on changes in the security environment stated that:

Sweden is Finland's *closest bilateral partner*. Russia's attack on Ukraine has further consolidated and emphasized the cooperation between Finland and Sweden also at an international level, and communication is active at all levels. Finland and Sweden have advanced during the last few years, as a rule, at the same pace in intensifying partnership cooperation with NATO. For the discussion on the European security order, Finland and Sweden have participated with largely uniform messages. Finland continues to deepen foreign and security policy and defense cooperation with Sweden (Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, 2022, p. 20).

Making decisions together with Sweden links up with the identity of Finland as a Nordic country *sharing a close history with Sweden*. It was often emphasized by Finnish politicians



how important it is to make the decision together with Sweden (Parliament April 20; Husu, April 7). Throughout the spring however it started to look more and more like Finland would choose to apply first and Sweden would be compliant to follow (Heikel, April 22). Finland leading the way for both countries also fits in the narrative of Finland getting rid of the shadows of Finlandization and knowing when to act.

In an YLE article published on March 1 a professor said that:

In Finland there is still fear that Sweden would pull off a surprise with its NATO-application, but it has become very unlikely. Now Finland is even looked at a little admiringly. Dagens Nyheter wrote that Finland is more pragmatic with the NATO-issue and can make a decision that Sweden has to follow. It does not quite fit Sweden's self-image, they have been a bit smuggy about this. (STT, March 1).

Finnish fears of Sweden pulling a surprise refers to 1990, when Sweden all of the sudden left their application to join the EU, even though they were supposed to do it together with Finland (STT, March 1). It looked like tables had turned for the NATO-process however: An YLE article titled “Sweden got worried about too fast NATO-speed (...)” wrote that “Finland has helped Sweden to patch up for the initial delays”, “Finnish help in pulling has not left unnoticed for anyone”, and “Some might have thought in Finland that let us give back some now (revenge for 1990). In Finland, however, the connection between Finland and Sweden has been wisely emphasized all along” (Heikel, April 22). It can be nice for Finns to feel like they lead the way to the “smuggy” neighbor who cannot make decisions.

For others, joining NATO together would increase the well desired cooperation between the countries, and for others *forming a defense alliance with Sweden could have been an adequate substitute for NATO*. MOP Erkki Tuomioja (Sdp) said that the Swedish Defense minister had brought this idea to him, but the Defense minister did not comment on it, and the idea was shrugged off by leaders of both of the countries (Kiviranta et.al, April 10). In Parliament this option was never seriously discussed, and it did not get a lot of media attention. Joining NATO was seen mostly as benefiting the cooperation of Finland and Sweden. After it became clear that Finland was applying for membership, even the critics of NATO, such as Tuomioja emphasized the importance of going together with Sweden (Suikkanen, May 5).

## 6. Analysis & Discussion

### 6.1. Style of discourse

The day Finland sent its NATO-application Prime minister Marin (Sdp) told the Parliament:

We have had a wide-ranging discussion in Finland throughout the spring about our security arrangements here in the Parliament, Government, parties, as well as with the president. I think I speak on behalf of many when I say that our commonly shared mission in all situations is the safety of Finnish independence, sovereignty, and the possibility for the Finnish people to live their lives in safety and peace [Zyskowicz (Kok) : Well said!] (Parliament, May 16).

Petteri Orpo (Kok) agreed with Marin and said:

I want to thank the Finnish people for making possible this historic decision and the state leadership for good performance in a changed situation. In this historical solution about national security there is no Government or opposition, this has been made together as a nation. We will not stagnate or freeze, but we will take our fate to our own hands and shape our own bright future as a nation. This is a message from the Finns to the world. (Parliament, May 16).

In their speeches Marin and Orpo emphasize how the decision to join NATO was done together with a common goal of increasing the security of Finland. They also point out how historical this decision was, and how important it was to make this decision. Marin also says that there has been a wide-ranging discussion throughout the spring, and Orpo thanked the Finnish people for making the decision possible, both thus emphasizing the role of the discourse. When analyzing the mainstream discourse, it does in fact come evident that there was a lot of discussion, sometimes even wide-ranged, but all in all the discourse was quite one-sided, which I will now discuss in more detail.

Historically in Finnish politics there has been a right wing / left wing division about the NATO membership with the coalition party being the only Parliamentary party actively supporting Finland joining NATO, and a small minority of Finns supporting the membership (Pilke, March 15). Throughout the spring 2022 the old division lines started to fade away

when more and more politicians from left-wing and centrist parties expressed their support for the membership. Quite soon there were few vocal people who stood up time after time for their opposition to NATO, and not a single party opposed the membership. Names that kept popping up include Erkki Tuomioja (Sdp), Ano Turtiainen (Vkk), and a few people from the left alliance, such as Markus Mustajärvi, Johannes Yrttiaho, and Anna Kontula.

MOP Ano Turtiainen deserves to be mentioned separately. His unorthodox arguments and expressed support of Russia led him to be sacked first from his party (Ps) and then from the Defense committee (Toivonen & Näveri, April 21). An example of his creative arguments was heard in the Parliament:

The pharmaceutical company Pfizer released the latest documents the other day, which show that the vaccines used in Finland destroy, among other things, the white blood cells of the vaccinated, and therefore the vaccinated are now susceptible to all kinds of diseases. I don't know if this has anything to do with the current large excess mortality, but I would like to ask the Government: is the NATO application meant to take Finland to war and thus divert attention from the crimes against humanity related to the above-mentioned issues? (Parliament, May 2).

Not to equate other opposing NATO to Turtiainen, but there could be an image left from the mainstream discourse that only few old communists and weird conspiracy theorists were against the membership. Although people opposing NATO did give consistent arguments, their voices were left largely either unheard or frauded upon.

As presented in the results chapter, the codes identified in the discourse were the arguments used about Finland's possible NATO membership. The arguments form 11 larger themes characterizing the discourse. The themes overlapped with each other, and while the arguments were not always consistent on either side, they created somewhat consistent narratives about Finland joining NATO. According to the mainstream narrative, *Russia as a threat* created a *security* problem for Finland. This led Finland whose *identity* is based on being a Western democracy that has a history of deterring Russian aggression joining NATO, an organization that has an *image of a defense alliance of Western democracies*. There was a time window that might close, so there was an *urgency* to make a decision. After a wide-ranged and thorough *discourse*, Finland decided to join *the other Western democracies already in NATO*.

*The foreign policy leaders* who were best aware of the situation were for the membership, and their expertise was valued. There was a threat of *Russian counteraction*, but Finland being a well-prepared country would surely deter that threat. NATO membership would also benefit the country's *economy*, and *Sweden* would take the way Finland showed hand in hand.

The counter narrative about Finnish NATO membership paints a different picture. *Russia was not a threat*, and didn't create a *security* problem for Finland, or *Russia was a threat* but the best way to maximize Finland's *security* was to have good relations with Russia. Either way Finland's *identity* as neutral Nordic conflict mediator could be jeopardized by joining NATO that has an *image* of a militaristic alliance of unpleasant company. The *timing* for NATO membership was not right in the middle of a crisis, and the *discussion* was fueled by fear and panic. Whatever *economic* benefits joining NATO could bring would be overshadowed by *Russian counteractions*. There was no need to join *the other countries in NATO*, since a Defense alliance with *Sweden* would have been enough, no matter what the *foreign policy leaders* thought. This narrative wasn't as nearly as popular as the pro-NATO one. Out of the 11 themes, 10 were used for the membership, and 8 against it.

Russia posing a security threat to Finland was the most often used theme, and it created a framework for the whole discourse. Russia was largely seen as a threat, which is in line with the history of Finnish foreign relations, and also other countries bordering Russia: Russia is largely viewed as a threat by its neighboring countries (Nortio et al., 2022, p. 864). Given the pre-existing wariness, it is no wonder that Finland started to re-evaluate its security arrangements after Russia started its full-scale attack in Ukraine. Russian invasion made the threat seem bigger than before and brought up memories from Finnish wars with Russia and heightened the Finnish national identity. It can be concluded that Russia's threat, whether real or imagined, was the biggest reason Finland joined NATO, and other arguments for joining followed that notion.

Historically, the national identity of Finland has played a central role in Finnish NATO membership discourse, and it seemed to have continued to do so after the Russian invasion of Ukraine (Nortio et al., 2022, p.868). The common narrative presented earlier makes joining NATO fit the Finnish state identity. This fits the theory of narrative and international relations: Narratives create state identities that determine state action (Hønneland, 2016, p. 13). In the common narrative Russia seemed more threatening, and different than ever after

the Cold war, showcased by the codes of Lack of trust, brutality in the war, and irrational actor. This fits the Finnish national identity that has in big parts been constructed by othering Russia (Nortio et al., 2022, p.864). On the other hand, the image of NATO was constructed to be that of a defense organization of Western democracies instead of military alliance with diverse member states. The common narrative also emphasized Finland's identity as a Western democracy, thus shaping both identities of Finland and NATO to justify Finland becoming a member.

Other arguments about Finland's NATO membership were also much in line with the discourse that happened before the Russian invasion of Ukraine. For example, the main argument for joining NATO has always been to increase security from Russia (Boldyreva et al, 2020, p. 31). The arguments against joining NATO were also by and large same as before February 24, with lack of trust in NATO, and the membership damaging the relations with Russia being common arguments both before and after the Russian invasion of Ukraine (Boldyreva et al., 2020, p. 32.). In spring of 2022 the arguments for joining NATO gained more popularity, and new argument about urgency was introduced, shifting the discourse to favouring the membership.

In the Parliament the members of the coalition party were emphasizing the acute need for extra safety NATO would bring and demanded the country to apply for the membership as soon as possible from the very start of the war (Parliament, February 24). Others were emphasizing proper discussions and thorough thinking, but the only few opposed. When the Parliament officially voted for the membership on March 3, 2023, only 7 out of 200 MOPs voted against joining NATO. Six of them were from the left alliance and one was the already mentioned Ano Turtiainen (Vkk) (Orjala, 2023).

The almost unanimous support, as well as the heckling of those who were against the membership and the insistence of calling NATO a defense organization elaborated in the results chapter show that the membership discourse in the Parliament was one-sided. When it comes to the YLE articles, the tone changed from rather wide-ranged deliberation to quite one-sided reporting as discussed below. The discussion being one-sided can be used to partially describe the characteristics of the discourse.

Following the social constructivist framework, it can be interpreted that the Finnish membership discourse was in parts shaped to be one-sided by the power-relations in the discourse. According to Foucauldian discourse analysis, discourse allows some ideas but denies others, and those who have power (big media, professionals, and politicians) give the framework for the public discourse (Rahkonen, 2006, p. 26; Sam, 2019, p. 336). During the membership discourse in Finland most of the experts, while unsure of the timing, were supporting joining NATO, parliament was almost unanimous about the membership, and tone of YLE articles changed to be pro-NATO after the Government report of April 13. The voices not supporting the membership were, especially after the Government report, mostly left outside of the framework of the discourse.

## **6.2 Evolution of the discourse**

In 2019 there were 10 YLE articles published that can be found in YLE's search engine with the search word "Suomen NATO-jäsenyys" (Finland's NATO membership). In 2020 there were 14 articles, and in 2021 the number was 15. When comparing these numbers to the 221 articles published between February 24 and May 17 in 2022, it is clear that the discourse around the Finnish NATO membership took a whole new level of quantity after the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

In the beginning of the crisis the state leadership calmed people down, and many politicians and experts alike were calling for serious discussions (Tolkki, February 24). President Niinistö brought up ideas of a "super-gallup" that could measure how many Finns support NATO membership, and referendum was also talked a bit about, but those ideas were shot down by experts and politicians alike (STT, March 29; Vironen & Liukkonen, March 18). Without referendum, the general discourse played a central role in guiding politicians in their decision to send Finland's application for NATO membership.

The Government report on changes in the security environment gave the discourse a new sense of urgency and certainty. Even though the document didn't directly call for NATO membership, it was largely interpreted as supporting Finland joining NATO (Auvinen, April 13). The day the report was released YLE wrote that "The reasoning in the Government report tells that Finland is on its way to NATO" (Luotonen, April 13). When the Parliament discussed the report, it gained almost unanimous praise and agreement from the parties.

“Christiandemocrats thank the Government for fast and at the same time thorough report”, said MOP Sari Essayah (Kd) (Parliament, April 20). MOP Saramo (Vas) gave the only critical party speech calling out the “lack of estimating the benefits, disadvantages and risks of different options” and saying that “the downsides of the membership have not been taken into account” (Parliament, April 20). It is worth noting that even Saramo did not directly oppose the membership and ended up voting for joining NATO.

After the Government report was released the tone of YLE articles changed from weighing pros and cons of joining NATO to explaining why NATO is the best option, and focusing more on the process itself and how Russia would counteract. It did still release opinions of NATO skeptics, but those opinions got a little attention and were mostly accompanied by contradicting, pro-NATO opinions. A good example of this is a long article titled “To NATO or not? 3 central arguments for the membership and against it” released on April 23. In the article, all of the three arguments against the membership are first presented, but then shot down by experts. For example, after presenting the argument that NATO membership would anger Russia, an expert is quoted saying that Russia is already unreliable and its forces are tied to Ukraine, so the argument does not work. The same formula went for the other arguments against the membership, while the arguments for the membership were not challenged in the article (Koivisto, April 23).

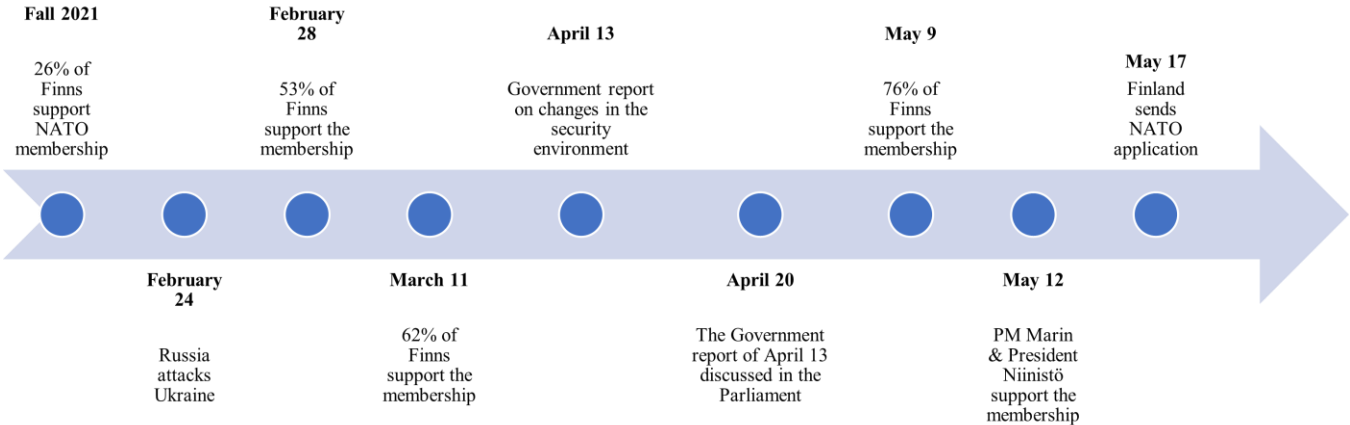
The prominent role the Government report of April 13 had in shaping the discourse fits the framework of social constructivism and Foucauldian discourse analysis, according to which actors with more power shape the discourse and social issues (Aykawa, 2020, p.4; Rahkonen, 2006, p. 26). In the case of Finnish NATO membership discourse, Government, clearly a powerful actor, shaped the mainstream discourse, shifting it to be more pro-NATO by releasing the report on changes in the security environment. It affected the framework of the discourse, leaving the ideas of non-alignment out of it, as is well exemplified by the upper mentioned YLE article about arguments for and against joining NATO.

Just a day before the Government report of April 13 YLE published a critical article about the NATO discourse titled “Did Finland become a country of one NATO-truth?” (De fresenes & Pilke, April 12). After the report these kinds of opinions were few and far between, answering the question of that article. NATO decision became synonyms with NATO application. When

the president and prime minister released their support for NATO, it was seen as expected, and as a seal to the process (Tikkala & Toivonen, May 12). Also, the language YLE used of Russia became at times harsher after the report. For example, regarding the gray zone they wrote that “Finland is not covered by the safety guarantees, but the unpredictable bear in the neighbor is annoyed” (Koivisto & Kinnunen, April 14). The discourse that properly started after Russia attacked Ukraine on February 24 evolved to be more one-sided throughout the spring, with the Government report of April 13 having a big impact on it. A timeline depicting the evolution of the discourse and key events affecting it is presented in Figure 2.

**Figure 2**

*Timeline of key events affecting the discourse and popular support for the NATO membership*



**6.3. Relationship of the state leadership and general public**

Petteri Orpo (Kok) thanked the Government and the president for good performance regarding the NATO process (Parliament, May 16). The state leadership's performance was at one hand to react to the discourse and popular opinion polls, and on the other hand to prepare the people for the upcoming change. In the early days of the crisis the state leadership was less enthusiastic about applying for NATO than many other politicians and people, taking the role of calming them. When it became clear that the vast majority of the people wanted the membership, and especially after the Government released its report on April 13, the leadership started to assume the role of preparing the country for the membership. So, at the same time discourse affected the state leadership and the state leadership affected the discourse.



Neither President Niinistö nor prime minister Marin told their opinions to the public before May 12. When they did, they emphasized how the application must be sent as soon as possible (Auvinen, May 12). There has been speculation in the media if Niinistö and Marin had their opinions fixed long before that or not (Hakahuhta & Rummukainen, May 12). Since the Finns tend to trust the state leaders when it comes to foreign policy, not telling their stance on the issue earlier was a good course of action for allowing the discussions and process to happen. Not telling their opinions earlier and then urging for a fast process also fits the mainstream narrative where the decision was properly weighed without rush, and when it was made, the country acted fast. In public discourse some have more voice than others (Rahkonen, 2006, p. 26). A good example of this is that in 2014, the majority of the Finns were against the NATO membership, but claimed to support it, if the country's leaders would recommend it (Forsberg & Pesu, 2017, p. 165). Given the Finns historical trust in their leadership which was also present in the discourse, it is likely that the Presidents and Prime ministers announcement of support for joining NATO affected the opinions of the general public.

The shift of tone in YLE's articles after the Government report about changes in the security environment was released can raise questions about the role and neutrality of state media. It seems that YLE's role changed from showing and giving room for discussion to preparing Finns for the NATO membership. Like the state leadership, YLE also has power and possibilities to affect the public opinion. The tone shift in YLE's articles fits the narrative of the common goal of increasing national security pursued by a united nation.

Whether it was the changes in the security environment presented by the Government document of April 13 or the public opinion that affected the tonal shift of the state leadership remains up for further research. However, previous research shows that public opinion plays a major role in Finnish foreign policy, and the public opinion shifted to supporting NATO before the Government or the president did as seen in Figure 2 (Forsberg & Pesu, 2017, p. 148). The relations between the general public and the state leadership were reciprocal, with both affecting each other and Russia's threat affecting both of them. It can however be said that the driving factor for Finland joining NATO was the public opinion in the country. This shows that the discussion can be partially described as grass-rooted with a bottom-up dynamic.

## 6.4 Answering the research questions

The analysis and discourse presented in this chapter give answers to the research questions of this study. The main research question of the study: *How has the discourse about Finland's NATO membership evolved during the Russian invasion of Ukraine?* can be answered by saying that the discourse properly started only after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and that the discourse evolved to be more one-sided throughout the spring, with the Government report on changes in the security environment playing a central role of shaping the discourse. The 11 themes identified in the discourse work as an answer to the underlying research question of *What are the main arguments for and against Finland applying for NATO membership?* With Russia as a threat being the main argument for the membership. To answer the underlying research question: *What characterizes the NATO membership discourse in Finland?* it can be stated that the discussion can be characterized as having a grass-rooted bottom-up dynamic and being one-sided.

## 7. Conclusion

Using a thematic analysis as its method, this study has done a discourse analysis of Finnish mainstream NATO discourse. Social constructivism has provided a theoretical framework for the study, and theory on narrative and international relations was used to analyze the findings and tie them to the historical and contextual background of Finnish defense policy and NATO discourse as well as the Russian invasion of Ukraine. It has used YLE articles, Parliamentary discussions, and Government documents for its data of analysis.

The study found that the serious discourse around the Finnish NATO membership started when Russia launched a full-scale attack in Ukraine on February 24, 2022. It resulted in the majority of the Finns seeing Russia as a threat to Finland, which led to a discussion to deter the Russian threat. The arguments about the membership can be divided into themes of Russia as threat, security, identity, NATO's image, timing and urgency, discourse, other countries already in NATO, Expertise of foreign policy leaders, Russian counteraction, economy, and Sweden. Russia as a threat was the most common theme, which set a framework for the discourse. The discourse was one-sided, with those objecting the membership getting little space for their opinions. Finland joined NATO almost unanimously to deter the threat Russia was perceived to have presented.

The discourse around Finnish NATO membership evolved from being quite one-sided to almost unanimous throughout the spring of 2022. The study found that the Government report on changes in the security environment released on April 13 changed the discourse by giving it a sense of urgency and certainty. After the report, joining NATO was largely seen as the best way to increase Finland's national security. The NATO solution discussed became synonymous with joining NATO.

The state leadership and the general public had reciprocal relations in the Finnish NATO discourse that evolved and changed throughout the spring of 2023. First it was the public opinion and discourse that affected the state leadership, and then the state leadership's opinion and discourse affected the public opinion. The role of the YLE also evolved throughout the discourse from presenting and giving room for discourse to explaining why and how Finland *will* join NATO. The study found that the public opinion affected the actions of the state leadership, making it the driving factor of Finland applying for NATO membership. Driving factor in the public opinion was the Russian threat to Finnish security, which was ultimately the reason Finland joined NATO.

The main goal of Finnish security and foreign policy has always been to remain independent, and it has always perceived Russia as its biggest, even existential threat. Thus, the biggest aim of Finnish security policy has been to deter the Russian threat. To do this, Finland has through its independence looked for allies, and aligned itself more with the Western powers. The aftermath of the second world war and the conditions of the Cold war prevented Finland from allying with the West, but after the fall of the Soviet Union, the country has taken considerable steps towards the West by joining the EU and partnership programs with NATO. Finland still refrained from joining NATO mainly as a result of lack of support by the general public.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 shocked the world and changed the international playfield seemingly for good. It is an ongoing conflict with unknown results, that happened because of decades of mistrust and conflict not only between Russia and Ukraine, but between Russia and the West. The question of NATO enlargement is at the core of the conflict, and as this study shows, the Russian invasion also started and guided the Finnish NATO discourse. Finland joining NATO is thus tied to the Russian invasion of Ukraine both in the way that it was a result of the conflict and in the way that it can have long

lasting effects in the relations between the West and Russia. Given the low popular support for the membership before February 2022, the fact that the discourse properly started after that, and Russian threat being the main theme in the discourse, it can be assumed that if Russia had not attacked Ukraine on February 24, Finland would have not join NATO.

The study presents multiple possibilities for future research. Comparing Finnish NATO discourse with the discourse in Sweden could prove fruitful in understanding the similarities and differences in these two Nordic countries. Studying how Russians living in Finland feel about Finland joining NATO could give valuable insight into NATO's image and the membership's effects in Finnish-Russian relations. The geopolitical results of Finland joining NATO were left untouched in this study and studying them in comparison to Finnish' wishes about membership could provide interesting results about the reality of being in NATO. Facts of many of the arguments by both sides in Finnish discourse are left to be seen and studied in the future.

Joining NATO was in line with the history of Finnish defense policy that has always had deterring Russian threat as its main objective. While the country has refrained from joining NATO after the Cold war because of the public opinion, it has prepared itself for the possible membership by making its military compatible with NATO and joining partnership programs with the alliance. Joining NATO is nevertheless a drastic change in Finnish politics, ending the decades long policy of focusing on friendly relations with its eastern neighbor, and cementing Finland as a Western country. If Putin took his mask off and revealed the cold face of war, Finland also took its mask off, and revealed a Western NATO country.

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## Appendix A

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- Kaski H. (2022, March 3). Moni keskisuomalainen kansanedustaja empii vielä Nato-kantaansa. *YLE*
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- Nevalainen, A. (2022, March 3). Ukrainan ja Venäjän tämänpäiväisistä neuvotteluista ei kannata odottaa liikoja, sanoo asiantuntija. *YLE*

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- Kinnunen, P. (2022, May 4). Eduskunnan talousvaliokunnan mielestä Natojäsenyys vahvistaisi sijoittajien luottamusta Suomeen. *YLE*
- Suikkanen, P. (2022, May 5). Vahvaa sotilaallista turvaa, riski sotilaallisiin konflikteihin – tunnetuilla kansanedustajilla vaihtelevia arvioita Suomesta Nato-maana. *YLE*
- Keränen, T. (2022, May 5). Nato-jäsenyys pienentäisi maariskiä ja hyödyttäisi suomalaisyrityksiä, arvioivat puolustusteollisuus ja elinkeinoelämä. *YLE*

Kinnunen, P. (2022, May 5). "Työ on enää loppusilausta vailla" – presidentti Niinistö keskusteli Suomen turvallisuusratkaisusta eduskunnan puhemiehistön ja puoluejohtajien kanssa. *YLE*

Kinnunen, P. (2022, May 5). Suomi toivoo Nato-mailta turvallisuustukea jäsenyyshakemuksen käsittelyajalle – sotaharjoitukset ja laivastovierailut tärkeä viesti. *YLE*

STT (2022, May 5). STT: USA, Saksa ja Ranska luvanneet Suomelle sotilaallista tukea jo Nato-prosessin aikana – Britannia lupasi aiemmin saman. *YLE*

Viljanen, M. (2022, May 5). Yle kysyi lounaissuomalaisilta kansanedustajilta kantaa Naton tukikohtiin – moni pitää asian pohdintaa ennenaikaisena. *YLE*

Husu, R. (2022, May 5). Yhdysvaltain Nato-suurlähettiläs Ylen haastattelussa: "Ukrainan sota vie Venäjän huomion" – Naton pääsihteerin Jens Stoltenbergin mukaan: "Suomen turvallisuudella on merkitystä". *YLE*

Kinnunen, P. (2022, May 6). Eduskunnan puhemies Matti Vanhanen: Kansanedustajien puhehalut ratkaisevat Nato-päätöksen ajankohdan. *YLE*

STT. (2022, May 6). Yhdysvallat sanoo voivansa turvata Suomen ja Ruotsin mahdolliset huolet Nato-hakuprosessin ajan. *YLE*

STT. (2022, May 6). Niinistö turvallisuusratkaisusta: Kyse on Suomen turvallisuuden varmistamisesta, eikä se ole muilta pois. *YLE*

STT. (2022, May 6). HS: Vasemmistoliiton sosiaali- ja terveysministeri Hanna Sarkkinen kannattaa Nato-jäsenyyttä. *YLE*

Saarikoski, J. (2022, May 6). Viron pääministeri Kaja Kallas: "Venäjän uhkauksia ja provokaatioita ei kannata pelästyä". *YLE*

Vaaherkumpu, S. & Kallunki, E. (2022, May 7). Suurlähettiläs Mikko Hautala: Suomi elää nyt vaaran vuosia, jokaisen tulee pitää katse pallossa. *YLE*

STT. (2022, May 7). Turkki luovii Ukrainan ja Venäjän välillä – asiantuntijat uskovat, että Nato-maalla olisi toiveita Suomelle mahdollisissa jäsenyysneuvotteluissa. *YLE*

- Mikkonen, E. (2022, May 8). Venäläinen sota-analyytikko ei usko maansa vastaavan sotilaallisesti Suomen Nato-jäsenyyteen, koska joukot tarvitaan Ukrainassa – katso video moskovalaisten ajatuksista Natosta. *YLE*
- Hevonoja, J. (2022, May 10). Orpo toivoo, ettei Suomessa koskaan ole ydinaseita, mutta toteaa Naton pelotteen kuitenkin perustuvan ydinaseeseen. *YLE*
- Luotonen, Anniina. (2022, May 10). Nato-hakemuksen jättäminen loppusuoralla – katso tästä, mitä lähipäivinä tapahtuu. *YLE*
- Lahti, P. (2022, May 10). Suomeen saapuu värikäs mahtivieras Nato päätöksen alla – pääministeri Boris Johnson muistetaan brexitistä ja näistä kohuista. *YLE*
- Tolkki, K. (2022, May 10). Keskustan Saarikko Ylelle: "Kannatan sitä, että Suomi jättää hakemuksensa Natoon, porukassa on parempi kuin yksin". *YLE*
- Leisti, T. (2022, May 10). Sodan ensihetket saivat Tuva Magnussenin, 19, levottomaksi – Nato-Norjan itärajalla rauha on säilynyt, mutta talous ja muu elämä kärsivät. *YLE*
- Nevalainen, A. (2022, May 10). Asiantuntija: Venäjä jatkaa arjen ja päättäjien häirintää, mutta ei voi enää muuttaa Suomen Nato päätöstä. *YLE*
- STT. (2022, May 10). Britannian pääministeri Boris Johnson vierailee huomenna Suomessa ja Ruotsissa – tapaa presidentti Niinistön. *YLE*
- Toivonen, T. (2022, May 10). Puolustusvaliokunta: Nato-jäsenyys Suomen turvallisuuden kannalta paras ratkaisu, ei erillisiä ehtoja liittoutumiselle. *YLE*
- Töyrylä, K., Näveri, A., STT. (2022, May 11). Boris Johnsonin vierailu poikii lehtitietojen mukaan lupauksia ja sopimuksia Suomelle ja Ruotsille. *YLE*
- Suikkanen, P. (2022, May 11). Tärkein turvatakuu on Suomen omat puolustusvoimat ja kumppaneiden turva-apu, sanoo ulkoministeri Haavisto. *YLE*
- Husu, R. (2022, May 11). Lähde Ylelle: Suomen Nato-jäsenhakemus käsiteltäisiin hyvin nopeasti – moni asia olisi lähinnä muodollisuus. *YLE*

- De Fresnes, T. (2022, May 11). Analyysi: Britannia ja Suomi allekirjoittivat väkevän sopimuksen, mutta aivan yhtä vahva viesti lähti Venäjän suuntaan. *YLE*
- Koskela, M. (2022, May 11). Ukrainan pakolaisten viesti suomalaisille: nyt on paras hetki liittyä Natoon, Venäjä ei kykene sitä estämään. *YLE*
- YLE (2022, May 12). Presidentti ja pääministeri kertoivat Nato-kantansa, näin kommentoivat suomalaiset Ylelle: "Ainoa vaihtoehto, kun on niin arvaamaton jullikka itänaapurissa". *YLE*
- Tikkala, H. & Toivonen, T. (2022, May 12). Puolueiden johtohenkilöt pitävät presidentin ja pääministerin myönteistä Nato-kantaa odotettuna – Riikka Purra: "Harmaa aika alkoi käytännössä nyt". *YLE*
- Kangas, L. (2022, May 12). Vasemmistoliiton Li Andersson: "Olen valmis hyväksymään Nato-jäsenyyden, vaikka näen myös riskejä". *YLE*
- Tammi, M. (2022, May 12). UPI:n johtava tutkija: Natossa Suomen on muodostettava näkemys asioihin, joihin se ei ole aiemmin ottanut kantaa. *YLE*
- Rantalainen, E. (2022, May 12). "Lämpimästi tervetuloa, Suomi" – näin maailmalla kommentoidaan Suomen ensiaskeleita kohti sotilasliitto Natoa. *YLE*
- Auvinen, P. (2022, May 12). Analyysi: Presidentin ja pääministerin Natolausunnossa herättää huomiota kiire ja hoputus. *YLE*
- Heiskanen, H. (2022, May 12). Analyysi: Suomen Nato-pyrkimys on Kremlille nolo käänne – Venäjän johto ei vielä kertonut vasta-aikeistaan. *YLE*
- Luotonen, A. (2022, May 12). Niinistö ja Marin kertovat tänään Nato-kantansa – pohjolasta erityistä vastuuta kantava Britannia vahvisti vielä eilen turvaverkkoa. *YLE*
- Luotonen, A. & Happonen, P. (2022, May 12). Suomi on presidentti Niinistön mukaan historiallisessa taitekohdassa – pääministeri ja presidentti kertoivat kannattavansa Nato-jäsenyyttä. *YLE*
- Vanninen, J. (2022, May 12). Tasavallan presidentti vieraana lauantain Ykkösaamussa – mitä haluat kysyä Sauli Niinistöltä?. *YLE*

- Stenroos, M. (2022, May 12). Pika-analyysi: 77 päivän tuuminnan jälkeen presidentti ja pääministeri toivovat Suomelta ripeitä askeleita kohti Natoa. *YLE*
- Suikkanen, P. (2022, May 12). Eduskunnan puhemies Vanhanen vahvistaa: Suomi hakee Naton jäseneksi – "Pitää viedä prosessi loppuun saakka". *YLE*
- Rigatelli, S. (2022, May 12). Arat paika. *YLE*
- Malminen, U. (2022, May 12). Näin sinä voit varautua mahdollisen Natojäsenyyden aiheuttamiin kyberuhkiin – listaamme kuusi tapaa. *YLE*
- Loukkola, P. (2022, May 12). Tasavallan presidentin ja pääministerin Nato-kanta ei yllättänyt Oulussa. *YLE*
- Kähkönen, S. & Takalo, J. (2022, May 12). Suomen historiallinen ratkaisu sotilaallisesta liittoutumisesta saa kainuulaiset puolelleen: "Näyttää tuo naapurivaltio tekevän mitä haluaa". *YLE*
- Palomaa, A. (2022, May 12). Puolustusalan yritys näkee kaupallisia mahdollisuuksia Natojäsenyydessä, mutta mittaluokkaa on vielä vaikea arvioida. *YLE*
- Orjala, A., Kantola, K., Kooli, R. (2022, May 13). Norja ei halua provosoida Venäjää, ydinaseet ja Nato-tukikohdat eivät puhuta virolaisia ja Tanskassa ihmetellään, eikö Suomi jo ole Natossa. *YLE*
- Hakauhta, A. & Rummukainen, A. (2022, May 13). Suuntana Nato. *YLE*
- Parkkinen, J. (2022, May 13). Asiantuntija uskoo, että Turkki pyrkii lypsämään Nato-mailta vastapalveluksia – "Nopea hakemuskäsittely ei ole välttämättä realismia". *YLE*
- YLE. (2022, May 13). Herätys: Näin Suomi kääntyi kannattamaan Natoa | Kiireetön ensihoito onnistuisi puhelimitse | The Rasmus jatkaa Euroviisujen finaaliin. *YLE*
- Haapnanen, M. (2022, May 13). Venäjän Nato-reaktiot ovat pidättyväisempiä kuin odotettiin, sanovat suomalaisasiantuntijat – "Tulevat päivät näyttävät, mitä Venäjä tekee". *YLE*
- Parkkinen, J. (2022, May 13). Ruotsi julkaisi turvallisuuspoliittisen raportin: Nato toisi turvaa. *YLE*



- STT-YLE. (2022, May 13). Niinistö keskusteli Bidenin kanssa ja aikoo soittaa Putinille. *YLE*
- Karismo, A. (2022, May 13). "Suomen Nato-jäsenyyden jälkeen voimme tehdä enemmän yhteisiä hankintoja", sanoo Ranskan EU-komissaari Thierry Breton Ylen haastattelussa. *YLE*
- Burtsoff, P. (2022, May 14). "Suomen Nato-jäsenyyden jälkeen voimme tehdä enemmän yhteisiä hankintoja", sanoo Ranskan EU-komissaari Thierry Breton Ylen haastattelussa. *YLE*
- Heiskanen, H. (2022, May 14). Analyysi: Venäjän mediassa Yhdysvallat marssittaa Suomea Natoon, Venäjä itse ei ole tehnyt mitään väärää. *YLE*
- Cremin, R. (2022, May 14). Perussuomalaisten Riikka Purra varoittaa "siirtolaisaseen" käytöstä Suomea vastaan. *YLE*
- Kinnunen, P. & Tikkala, H. (2022, May 14). SDP kannattaa Suomen Nato-jäsenyyttä: puoluevaltuusto päätti asiasta äänin 53–5, kaksi äänesti tyhjää – Marin: Nopea ratifiointi Suomen etu. *YLE*
- Lindholm, P. (2022, May 15). Kokosimme seitsemän nostoa historiallisesta Nato-päivästä: Näin valtiojohto sanoi Putinista, Erdoğanista ja Suomelle luvatusista tuista. *YLE*
- Burtsoff, P. (2022, May 15). Ulkomailla reagoitiin ilolla Suomen päätökseen hakea Nato-jäsenyyttä: Ovet ovat teille selkosen selällään. *YLE*
- Husu, R. (2022, May 15). Naton ulkoministerit keskustelivat Suomen ja Ruotsin jäsenaikeista – Pekka Haavisto: Muut maat ovat valmiita auttamaan "harmaana aikana". *YLE*
- Tolonen, L. (2022, May 15). Lue tästä sanasta sanaan Suomen historiallinen selonteko liittymisestä Natoon. *YLE*
- Luotonen, A. (2022, May 15). Analyysi: Naton jäsenenä Suomi voisi osallistua Baltian ja Islannin ilmavalvontaan – historiallinen päätös tuo mukanaan myös vastuun. *YLE*
- YLE. (2022, May 15). Herätys: Mitä turvaa Suomi saisi Natoon haun aikana? | Ukraina voitti Euroviisut | Ylisuurista ruoan hinnan korotuksista varoitus. *YLE*

- Heikel, K. (2022, May 15). Analyysi: Sosiaalidemokraattien myönteinen Nato-kanta päättää Ruotsin 200 vuotta kestäneen sotilaallisen liittoutumattomuuden. *YLE*
- Ortamo, S. (2022, May 15). Suomi on nyt alttiina Venäjän painostukselle – lue kuusi kysymystä ja vastausta vaarallisesta harmaasta ajasta. *YLE*
- Nevalainen, A. (2022, May 16). Mika Aaltola: Venäjä voi kiusata Suomen Natoprosessia, mutta enemmän hyötyä olisi "hunajakampanjasta". *YLE*
- Nurminen, J. (2022, May 16). Mika Aaltola: Venäjä voi kiusata Suomen Natoprosessia, mutta enemmän hyötyä olisi "hunajakampanjasta". *YLE*
- Crowley, K. (2022, May 16). Natoa vastustava Kiina keskustelee kiivaasti Suomen päätöksestä liittoutua. *YLE*
- Ikonen, T. (2022, May 16). Historioitsija: Nato-linjaus on Suomen historiassa YYA-sopimuksen ja EU-jäsenyyden tasoinen tapahtuma. *YLE*
- Pönttinen, P. & Tankkonen, T. (2022, May 16). Presidentti Erdoğan: Suomen ja Ruotsin edustajien ei kannata vaivautua matkustamaan Turkkiin hakemaan Nato-tukea. *YLE*
- Kujansuu, V. & Hinkula, V. (2022, May 16). Valtio-opin professorin mielestä Nato-keskustelu on ollut yksipuolista, mutta demokratia on toteutunut. *YLE*
- Kooli, R. (2022, May 16). Virossa alkaa maan historian laajin sotaharjoitus – Suomesta mukana 240 hengen osasto. *YLE*
- Ässämäki, A. & Roiha, M. (2022, May 16). Miten Nato-jäsenyys näkyisi Etelä-Savossa? – katso kolme vastausta. *YLE*
- Degerman, R. (2022, May 16). Nato-keskustelussa annettu laaja tuki Suomen Nato-jäsenyydelle. *YLE*
- Rautiainen, R. & Peltoperä, J. (2022, May 16). Lapissa odotukset Nato-jäsenyydestä myönteisiä – uusia investointeja, lisää turvallisuutta matkailuun ja varuskuntien vahvistamista. *YLE*
- Tillaeus, J. & Pesu, I. (2022, May 16). Lappeenrantalaiset iloitsevat Nato-hakemuksesta – professori uskoo, että jäsenyys alkoi saada piilokannatusta jo vuosia sitten. *YLE*

- Ortamo, S. (2022, May 16). Lappeenrantalaiset iloitsevat Nato-hakemuksesta – professori uskoo, että jäsenyys alkoi saada piilokannatusta jo vuosia sitten. *YLE*
- Konttinen, M. (2022, May 17). *Puolustusvoimain komentaja Timo Kivinen: Tilanne itärajalla on hyvin rauhallinen, Venäjän aktiviteetti vähäistä. YLE*
- Vuorela, A. & Seppälä, A. (2022, May 17). "Suomi solahtaa Natoon kuin telkkä pönttöön", sanoo Jyväskylän yliopiston tiedusteluanalyysin opettaja Martti J. Kari. *YLE*
- Rantalainen, E. & Orjala, A. (2022, May 17). Turkki uhkaa heittäytyä hankalaksi Suomen jäsenyyden hyväksymisessä – kokosimme yhteen kiistoja Turkin ja muiden Nato-maiden välillä. *YLE*
- Ässämäki, A. & Roiha, M. (2022, May 17). Miten Nato-jäsenyys näkyisi Keski-Suomessa? – katso kolme vastausta. *YLE*
- Kaki, H. (2022, May 17). Eduskunta ilmaisi kantansa Natoon selvin luvuin – näin keskisuomalaiset kansanedustajat äänestivät. *YLE*
- Bjuström, E. (2022, May 17). Eduskunta ilmaisi kantansa Natoon selvin luvuin – näin keskisuomalaiset kansanedustajat äänestivät. *YLE*

## Appendix B

Politicians' speeches in the Parliament used as data

All the speeches are retrieved from

<https://www.eduskunta.fi/FI/search/Sivut/advanced.aspx?k=#anchorDiv>

February 24, 2022

16.16 MOP Harry Harkimo (Liik)

16.17 Foreign minister Pekka Haavisto (Vihr)

16.53 Foreign minister Pekka Haavisto (vihr)

March 3, 2022

17.04 MOP Anu Turtainen (Vkk)

17.05 Foreign minister Pekka Haavisto (Vihr)

March 9, 2022

14.24 Prime minister Sanna Marin (Sdp)

14.29 Foreign minister Pekka Haavisto (Vihr)

March 10, 2022

17.56 MOP Ville Kaunisto (Kok)

March 15, 2022

14.06 Defense minister Antti Kaikkonen (Kesk)

14.07 MOP Heli Järvinen (Vihr)

14.19 MOP Peter Östman (Kd)

14.21 MOP Hussein al-Taei (Sdp)

14.24 MOP Hanna Kosonen (Kesk)

14.25 MOP Harry Harkimo (Liik)

14.31 MOP Ano Turtainen (Vkk)

14.41 Prime minister Sanna Marin (Sdp)

14.45 Defense minister Antti Kaikkonen (Kesk)

March 16, 2022

14.54 MOP Harry Harkimo (Liik)

15.05 MOP Ano Turtianen (Vkk)

17.21 MOP Hannu Hoskonen (Kesk)

17.43 MOP Tuomas Kettunen (Kesk)

March 17, 2022

16.37 MOP Antti Häkkänen (Kok)

16.38 Foreign minister Pekka Haavisto (Vihr)

16.41 MOP Ben Zyskowicz (Kok)

March 23, 2022

14.29 MOP Ville Kaunisto (Kok)

14.42 MOP Ano Turtianen (Vkk)

14.43 MOP Jani Mäkelä (Ps)

14.57 MOP Janne Sankelo (Kok)

15.08 MOP Vilhelm Junnila (Ps)

15.30 Foreign minister Pekka Haavisto (Vihr)

March 24, 2022

16.09 MOP Sami Savio (Ps)

16.31 MOP Sakari Puisto (Ps)

March 29, 2022

14.15 MOP Harry Harkimo (Liik)

14.16 Foreign minister Pekka Haavisto (Vihr)

14.21 MOP Sakari Puisto (Ps)

14.24 MOP Johannes Yrttiaho (Vas)

14.26 MOP Peter Östman (Kd)

14.40 MOP Pauli Kiuru (Kok)

April 7, 2022

17.09 MOP Pauli Kiuru (Kok)

17.41 MOP Johannes Yrttiaho (Vas)

17.49 MOP Outi Alanko-kahiluoto (Vihr)

17.51 MOP Johannes Yrttiaho (Vas)

17.54 MOP Heikki Autto (Kok)

April 19, 2022

18.26 Jukka Kopra (Kok)

April 20, 2022

14.11 Foreign minister Pekka Haavisto (vihr)

14.21 Mop Antti Lindtman (Sdp)

MOP Ville Tavio (Ps)

14.32 MOP Antti Häkkänen (Kok)

14.37 MOP Juha pylväs (Kesk)

14.43 MOP Atte harjanne (Vihr)

14.48 MOP Jussi Saramo (Vas)

14.54 MOP Anders Adlercreutz (Rkp)

14.59 MOP Sari Essayah (Kd)

15.05 MOP Harry Harkimo (liik)

15.11 Foreign minister Pekka Haavisto (Vihr)

15.15 Prime minister Sanna Marin (Sdp)

15.17 Defense minister Antti Kaikkonen (Kesk)

April 27, 2022

16.04 MOP Sebastian Tynkkynen (Ps)

May 3, 2022

16.28 MOP Jari Koskela (Ps)

May 4, 2022

14.52 Minister of finance Annika Saarikko (Kesk)

May 5, 2022

16.57 MOP Ano Turtiainen (Vkk)

May 11, 2022

17.13 MOP Ano Turtiainen (Vkk)

May 12, 2022

16.04 MOP Petri Huru (Ps)

16.29 MOP Ville Kaunisto (Kok)

16.30 Foreign minister Pekka Haavisto (Vihr)

16.31 MOP Ville Kaunisto (Kok)

16.33 Foreign minister Pekka Haavisto (Vihr)

16.34 MOP Petteri Orpo (Kok)

16.35 Foreign minister Pekka Haavisto (Vihr)

16.36 MOP Sari Tanus (Kd)

16.37 Defense minister Antti Kaikkonen (Kesk)

16.40 MOP Timo Heinonen (Kok)

16.42 MOP Kimmo Kiljunen (Sdp)

May 16, 2022

10.02 Prime minister Sanna Marin (Sdp)

10.10 MOP Mika Kari (Sdp)

10.15 MOP Riikka Purra (Ps)

10.20 MOP Petteri Orpo (Kok)

10.25 MOP Juha Pylväs (Kesk)

10.30 MOP Inka Hopsu (Vihr)

10.36 MOP Jussi Saramo (Vas)

10.42 MOP Andres Adlercreutz (Rkp)

10.47 MOP Päivi Räsänen (Kd)

10.53 MOP Harry Harkimo (Liik)

10.59 Foreign minister Pekka Haavisto (Vihr)

11.01 Defense minister Antti Kaikkonen (Kesk)

11.08 Ano Turtiainen (Vkk)



## Appendix C

### Government documents used as data

Defense committee of Finland. (2022). Ajankohtaisselonteko turvallisuusympäristön muutoksesta. [https://www.eduskunta.fi/FI/vaski/Lausunto/Sivut/PuVL\\_3+2022.aspx](https://www.eduskunta.fi/FI/vaski/Lausunto/Sivut/PuVL_3+2022.aspx)

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## Appendix D

### Finnish Parliamentary parties in 2022

**Table 4.**

*Finnish Parliamentary parties, their ideologies, abbreviations, and numbers of seats in Parliament in 2022 (Nordsieck, 2023; Pölkki, 2022)*

The party	Ideology	Seats in Parliament in 2022 (out of 200)	Abbreviation
Social democratic party (Suomen sosialidemokraattinen puolue)	Social democracy	40	Sdp
The Finns party (Perussuomalaiset)	National conservatism, Social conservatism	39	Ps
National coalition party (Kokoomus)	Liberal Conservatism	38	Kok
The Centre party (Keskusta)	Centrism, Agrarianism	31	Kesk
The Green party (Vihreät)	Green politics	20	Vihr
Left alliance (Vasemmistoliitto)	Democratic socialism, Ecosocialism	16	Vas
Swedish people's party (Suomen Ruotsalainen kansanpuolue)	Minority interests, Social liberalism	10	Rkp

The party	Ideology	Seats in Parliament in 2022 (out of 200)	Abbreviation
Christian democrats (kristillisdemokraatit)	Christian democracy, Social conservatism	5	Kd
Movement now (Liike Nyt)	Liberalism	1	Liik
Power belongs to the People (Valta kuuluu kansalle)	Anti-immigration, Russophilia	1	Vkk

