

**CHARLES UNIVERSITY**

**FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**

Institute of Political Studies

Department of Security Studies



**Master's Thesis**

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**Analysis of the impact of Russia's armed  
actions on Finland's security:  
towards NATO membership**

Master's Thesis

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Study programme: Security Studies

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Year of the defence: 2024

## **Declaration**

1. I hereby declare that I have compiled this thesis using the listed literature and resources only.
2. I hereby declare that my thesis has not been used to gain any other academic title.
3. I fully agree to my work being used for study and scientific purposes.

In Prague on April 29, 2024

Eliška Křížová

## References

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## **Abstract**

This diploma thesis focuses on Finland's assessment of the Russian Federation as a possible threat to its security in the context of Russian armed actions – war in Georgia, annexation of Crimea and a conflict in eastern Ukraine, and the full-scale invasion of Ukraine from 2022. The aim of this thesis is to investigate Finland's shift from military non-alignment to balancing behaviour in the form of application for NATO membership after the start of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. In addition to rigorous overview of the balance of threat theory, its critiques and refinements including operationalisation of threat dimensions, the thesis includes a section devoted to the evolution of Finnish security. Special attention is paid to the history of Finno-Soviet relations during the Second World War and the Cold War, which influenced Finland's security and defence policy for decades to come, especially in regard to NATO membership, which was for a long time seen as unlikely. The analysis of Finland's security is written with an emphasis on variables of balance of threat theory and their role in Finnish security assessment of the potential threat from the Russian Federation throughout the years after war in Georgia to the full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Given Finland's recent accession to NATO, this thesis offers a new perspective on Finnish balancing behaviour.

## **Abstrakt**

Tato diplomová práce se zaměřuje na finské hodnocení Ruské federace jakožto možné hrozby pro bezpečnost Finska v kontextu ruských ozbrojených akcí – války v Gruzii, anexe Krymu a konfliktu na východní Ukrajině, a plnohodnotné invaze Ukrajiny z roku 2022. Cílem této diplomové práce je prozkoumat posun Finska od absence členství ve vojenské alianci k vyvažujícímu chování ve formě podání žádosti o členství v NATO po zahájení plnohodnotné ruské invaze Ukrajiny v roce 2022. Kromě detailního přehledu teorie rovnováhy hrozeb, jejích kritik a přepracování včetně operacionalizace dimenzí hrozeb, práce obsahuje část věnovanou vývoji finské bezpečnosti. Zvláštní pozornost je věnována historii finsko-sovětských vztahů během druhé světové války a studené války, jež ovlivnily finskou bezpečnostní a obrannou politiku na další desetiletí, zejména s ohledem na členství v NATO, které bylo dlouhou dobu považováno za nepravděpodobné. Analýza finské bezpečnosti je napsána s důrazem na jednotlivé proměnné teorie rovnováhy hrozeb

a na jejich roli ve finském hodnocení potenciální bezpečnostní hrozby v podobě Ruské federace v období od války v Gruzii až po plnohodnotnou invazi Ukrajiny. Vzhledem k nedávnému vstupu Finska do NATO nabízí tato práce nový pohled na finské vyvažující chování.

## **Keywords**

**balance of threat, Finland, North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, Russia, security threat**

## **Klíčová slova**

**rovnováha hrozeb, Finsko, Severoatlantická aliance, Rusko, bezpečnostní hrozba**

## **Název práce**

**Analýza dopadu ruských ozbrojených akcí na bezpečnost Finska: směrem ke členství v NATO**

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## **List of abbreviations used**

ABDI - the Advisory Board for Defence Information, a permanent parliamentary committee operating under the Finnish Ministry of Defence

EU - European Union

FIN - Finland

GDP - Gross Domestic Product

GNI - Gross National Income

GNP - Gross National Product

NATO - North Atlantic Treaty Organisation

OECD - Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

PPP - Purchasing Power Parity

RUS - Russia, Russian Federation

U.S. - United States of America

USD - United States dollar

# Introduction

The aim of this work is to examine the shift from military non-alignment to balancing behaviour of Finland. In other words, how have the Russian offensive intentions, in the form of armed actions – war in Georgia, annexation of Crimea and a conflict in eastern Ukraine and full-scale invasion of Ukraine, translated into Finland’s security and defence policy. During the Cold War, Finland was officially a neutral state that was neither a member of NATO, nor of the Warsaw Pact. This was a constant until May 18, 2022, when Finland and Sweden handed in official letters of application to join NATO.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, these countries which based their defence and security policy on military non-alignment decided to reconsider their stance on joining of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, and thus resorted to balancing behaviour. As of today, both have already joined NATO.<sup>2</sup>

Even though Finland was preventing itself from becoming fully partisan in terms of being a member of security organisation, it has taken steps to secure its sovereignty through cooperation structures. However, Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 led Finland to change its non-membership status. This means the level of threat from the Russian Federation was a focal point that shaped its foreign, and ultimately security and defence policy. To fully comprehend the pivot, it is necessary to examine how did Finland assess the threat from the Russian Federation to Finland on the background of war in Georgia, annexation of Crimea and a conflict in eastern Ukraine, and the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, because Russian willingness to use military force in order to secure its spheres of interest was evident before 2022. However, prior to 2022, Finland did not choose to apply for NATO membership. This means there was an evolution of the possible threatening factors to Finnish security.

In order to analyse Finland’s decision to join NATO, I have decided to use Stephen Walt’s balance of threat theory,<sup>3</sup> which argues that states are not balancing actors with the largest power,

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<sup>1</sup> NATO, 2022. Finland and Sweden submit applications to join NATO. *NATO*. Online. 18 May 2022. Available from: [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news\\_195468.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_195468.htm) [Accessed 3 January 2024].

<sup>2</sup> NATO, [no date]. NATO member countries. *NATO*. Online. Available from: [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_52044.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_52044.htm) [Accessed 22 April 2024].

<sup>3</sup> Walt, S., 1985.

but states which pose the greatest danger to their security. Walt's work is in this regard very useful because it offers researchers components on which basis states decide whether to balance against potential adversary, or not, through joining an alliance. The theory's threat dimensions, which are aggregate power, offensive capabilities, geographic proximity of the threatening state and its offensive intentions, are useful because by monitoring these variables, it is possible to observe what stimuli the threatened state reacts to. It is especially enriching in the case of Finland, which shares a very long border with Russia, that actively opposes eastward NATO enlargement.

The balance of threat's dimension of offensive intentions is a variable adding explanatory power, because according to Walt, states resort to balancing behaviour if they feel threatening state's intentions cannot be altered. This puts into perspective Finland's decision to not apply for NATO membership despite Russian armed actions in Georgia, Crimea and eastern Ukraine prior to the full-scale invasion in 2022. Moreover, Finland decided to submit NATO application only after the start of invasion, despite the fact that in 2021, there were already indications the Russian Federation was preparing some form of attack against Ukraine.

The thesis is structured into five chapters. First chapter provides a review of literature regarding Finland's history, which impacted its position towards NATO membership and balance of threat theory. Second chapter focuses on the balance of threat and its critique. Given the fact that balance of threat evolved from the balance of power, this theory will be also mentioned. Third chapter focuses on methodological framework, which is essential to the analysis, because as it will be seen in the second chapter, Stephen Walt's variables need to be specified and operationalised. Fourth chapter provides a historical excursion into Finnish military non-alliance posture, which was heavily impacted by the relations with the Soviet Union. The last chapter is the core of the thesis, because it analyses which variables did Finland assess as threatening regarding the Russian Federation.

# 1. Literature review

This thesis utilises several types of sources. In the theoretical framework, I focused on the balance of threat theory by Stephen Walt, which is an essential component of the thesis. The main works that I used were his essay “*Alliance Formation and the Balance of World Power*” from 1985 and his book “*The Origins of Alliances*” first published in 1987, in which he further develops the balance of threat concept. Both works are an essential part of the thesis, because they provide an explanation of balancing behaviour. Furthermore, they present factors influencing state’s reaction to changes in security environment, which help me with conducting a more precise analysis. Given the fact that balance of threat refines the balance of power theory, I also included Kenneth Waltz’s “*Theory of International Politics*” from 1979 to see another perspective of balancing behaviour of states.

Because Stephen Walt’s conceptualisation of the four dimensions of threat is rather vague, even though enriching, I focused on possible critiques of Walt’s theory so that I would be able to see limitations of balance of threat. This would allow me to refine Walt’s work and build on it my methodological and empirical part of the thesis. Walt’s balance of threat theory was criticised and commented on by several authors. First is Robert G. Kaufman, who published “*To Balance or To Bandwagon? Alignment Decisions in 1930s Europe*” in 1992. Kaufman’s work showed an important limitation of Walt’s theory. Kaufman argues that states have more options other than to balance or bandwagon. This limitation was also addressed in Eric Labs’s article “*Do Weak States Bandwagon?*” published in 1992, who argued that there exist more options such as nonalignment.

These critiques were especially relevant in case of post-Cold War Finland, which was not balancing Russia by being a member of NATO until the full-scale invasion of Ukraine. At the same time, it could not be said that Finland was bandwagoning with the Russian Federation. Therefore, Walt’s alliance behaviour dichotomy needed to be refined. Another work was important to my understanding on balance of threat behaviour. Article “*Balancing What? Threat Perception and Alliance Choice in the Gulf*” from 2003 by F. Gregory Gause, III. was enriching, because it showed that greater offensive capabilities are not automatically seen as a sole factor against which to balance by joining an alliance.

For purposes of understanding Finland's preference to not be a member of NATO, several books and article were used in the thesis. These were Eino Jutikkala and Kauko Pirinen's book "*A History of Finland*" in Czech translation. Another source was a book by Roy Allison called "*FINLAND'S RELATIONS WITH THE SOVIET UNION, 1944-84*" from 1985. Article "*The Myth of 'Finlandisation'*" by Fred Singleton was essential because it provided information regarding constraints posed by the Soviet Union to Finland's security. For the purpose of the thesis, it was important to include how did Finland leave Cold War arrangements with the Soviets. In this regard, Suvi Kansikas's article called "*Dismantling the Soviet Security System. Soviet-Finnish Negotiations on Ending Their Friendship Agreement, 1989-91.*" from 2019 was used in the chapter on evolution of Finnish security. Reasons why Finland did not become NATO member after the end of the Cold War were illuminated in the Laura C. Ferreira-Pereira's article "*Inside the Fence but Outside the Walls: Austria, Finland and Sweden in the Post-Cold War Security Architecture.*"

## 2. Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework of the thesis stems from realist thought, more precisely from neorealism or structural realism. Balance of power theory has its roots in a classical concept of realism, which explains states' behaviour in a world of perpetual state of insecurity, and consequently in a space in which countries aim at gaining the most power.<sup>4</sup> This theory is highly debated and researched topic of international relations and security, therefore, many authors discussed it and provided modifications. One of them is the balance of threat theory, which further expands the idea of balance of power by adding more dimensions that are considered. The main ideas and starting points of neorealism, or structural realism, was first outlined by Kenneth Waltz in his book "*Theory of International Politics*" first published in 1979. Waltz's ideas are based on a realistic description of the international self-help system prevailing between states, which has an anarchic nature.

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<sup>4</sup> The power in the balance of power concept is usually understood as a possession of military capabilities.

## 2.1 Balance of power

As Kenneth Waltz contended in his book, states exist in an international system which has an anarchical nature and is full of violence. The states' integration is prevented by the structure of international politics which restricts their cooperation. In an anarchic self-help system, each of the states allocates a portion of its resources on defending itself against external threats rather than on prioritising own welfare. Their cooperation is hindered by the state of insecurity, or at the very least, the uncertainty surrounding each other's future plans and deeds. Therefore, units or states in any anarchic system fear for own survival, which ultimately shapes their actions.<sup>5</sup> Such system operates on the principle that those states which fail to help themselves or do so less effectively than others, risk exposure to dangers. The fear of these consequences motivates states to pursue actions aimed at creating balances of power. For this system to work, it is necessary that there are at least some states which are invested in preserving their political identities. Not every state necessarily seeks to increase its power continuously. However, attempts to break out from the competitive environment are complicated by the possibility that some governments may use force to weaken or eliminate others. Two circumstances lead to the emergence of balance-of-power politics. It is the anarchy, or the absence of a central authority in the international system, and state's motivation to survive.<sup>6</sup>

The available means used by states to balance can be categorised into two categories. First is internal balancing, which includes attempts to increase economic capabilities or military strength. This is directed towards improvement of state's own capabilities. Second way, in which state uses capabilities to improve its security, is external balancing involving enlargement and strengthening of own alliance or shrinking and weakening of an opposing one. Such use of available means targets state's cooperation with other actors in the system.<sup>7</sup> As it can be seen, according to Waltz, in some instances, states decide to create alliances. This happens when weaker states feel the need to counterbalance against stronger states. They do so with the objective to

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<sup>5</sup> WALTZ, Kenneth, 1979. *Theory of international politics*. Reading/Mass.: Addison-Wesley. pp. 104–105. Addison-Wesley series in political science. ISBN 978-0-201-08349-1.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 118, 121.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 118.

achieve a balance of power in an anarchic system through balancing. What distinguishes Waltz's balance of power from classical realists is the idea that states do not aim to maximise their power. States' main goal in the anarchic system is to secure security - its own and that of the system as a whole. This explains, why they join weaker states against the strong ones. If states were to maximise their own power in all cases, they would join the stronger side in order to benefit from the partnership.<sup>8</sup>

## 2.2 Balance of threat

Under the neorealist school of International Relations, Waltz's debate on the balance of power was subsequently followed up by American political scientist Stephen M. Walt and his balance of threat concept, which was first introduced in the 1980s - particularly in his essay "*Alliance Formation and the Balance of World Power*" from 1985 and his book "*The Origins of Alliances*" first published in 1987, which further develops the balance of threat concept. Because Walt's concept is key to my further work, I will devote the most space to it in this chapter.

Waltz's theory stated that states in the international system tend to form balances of power. However, if balance is the goal, why some alliances grow both larger and stronger over time, and thus create a disbalance? Other question he asked in book "*The Origins of Alliances*" first published in 1987 was: "*Furthermore, how might we explain the fact that for the past three decades the United States and its allies have controlled a combined gross national product roughly three times that of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact while spending more each year on defence?*"<sup>9</sup> The Soviet response to this situation can be explained by the balance of power – the Soviet Union tried to compensate for its weak allies by allocating a larger GNP percentage to military expenditure. However, as Walt notes, the balance of power is not able to respond to question why states chose to ally itself with more powerful United States, instead of joining the Soviet Union, if the reason to be in alliance was to create a balance. Moreover, Walt considered Waltz's balance of power as focusing primarily on behaviour of great powers, thus leaving a puzzle how can we explain lesser

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., pp.126-127.

<sup>9</sup> WALT, Stephen, 2013. *The Origins of Alliances*. Online. Cornell University Press. p. X. ISBN 978-0-8014-6999-2. [Accessed 6 March 2024].

states and their position towards alliance. In other words, whether the lesser states balance, and if yes than against whom. In addition, Walt also wanted to explore if other factors apart from those directly related to national power could be included in the statesmen decision-making processes when deciding with whom to form an alliance.<sup>10</sup>

Walt's balance of threat aims to provide a better explanation of alliance formation than balance of power. The main premise of both Walt and Waltz is the same – states exist in an anarchic international system, in which they form alliances with the goal to survive. However, Walt reformulated balance of power by stating power is only one aspect, although an important one, influencing states' calculations, whether to join an alliance or not. Walt considers balance of threat to be a guiding principle in the international system, instead of balance of power.<sup>11</sup> The balance of power's classical interpretation notes, that states have two options how to deal with the rising power – either by balancing, or by bandwagoning. Balancing means that weaker country forms alliance with those that do not have sufficient resources to ensure its security against potential hegemon. On the contrary, bandwagoning happens when a weak country not being able to provide itself with security decides to join alliance with the emerging powerful country, which is challenging the status quo. According to Waltz, balancing behaviour is caused by the system, not bandwagoning, because states are more concerned with preserving their places in the system than they are with power maximalisation.<sup>12</sup> States tend to balance rather than bandwagon because bandwagoning is risky. Joining the threatening state gives it even more resources than it already has, and there is no guarantee that the threatening state will not attack its allies in the future.<sup>13</sup>

Stephen Walt, however, stipulates that states are drawn to strength. The likelihood of others siding with a state increases with its power and the clearer demonstration of that power, which is in stark contrast with the balance of power theory. On the other hand, he also claims that if the position of that state declines, it is more likely that this will lead its allies to choose neutrality, or even join the side of another stronger actor, in the worst scenario. According to Walt, there exist

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., pp. IX–X.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> WALTZ, K., 1979, pp. 126–127.

<sup>13</sup> WALT, S., 2013, p. 29.



two reasons for such a behaviour. First, bandwagoning may be an appeasement strategy. The bandwagoning state may believe that by siding with a dominant alliance or state, the attack on itself would be deflected on someone else. Second, because states aim to maximise their power, they would bandwagon with a side to split the spoils of victory during a war. Based on these motives, we can distinguish two types of bandwagoning – defensive as an appeasement to protect its independence, and offensive with the purpose to gain benefits such as territory.<sup>14</sup> As already stated, Walt agrees with Waltz that power is an important factor for alliance formation, however, he argues: *“It is more accurate to say that states tend to ally with or against the foreign power that poses the greatest threat.”*<sup>15</sup> A historical example of balancing against a threat mentioned by Walt is the formation of anti-German coalitions during World War I. and World War II. The states had a greater superiority of total resources, but they had decided to join alliances to fight against aggressive behaviour of Germany.<sup>16</sup>

### **Factors affecting the level of threat**

As a reformulation of balance of power theory, balance of threat considers power as one of the threat sources. However, given the fact it is more accurate to view balancing and bandwagoning as responses to threat, Walt notes that apart from power, there exist more factors important to be considered which are affecting the level of threat that states may pose to others. Among those are: aggregate power, geographic proximity, offensive power, and offensive intentions. He describes the functioning of the influence of each considered variable, assuming that everything else is equal. It is not possible to predict which of these variables will be the most significant for statesmen when assessing possible threat in a particular situation, nevertheless, all of them are likely to play a role in statesmen’s decision-making.<sup>17</sup>

In addition to the four variables mentioned above, with which my work focuses on, Walt describes other variables such as financial and military aid, ideology, and transnational

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., pp. 20–21.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>17</sup> WALT, S., 2013, pp. 22–26.

penetration.<sup>18</sup> He states alliance formation is more influenced by external challenges than by ideological cohesion. Foreign aid and penetration have proven insufficient as explanations for alliance formation. While both have been observed as predictable outcomes of political alignment, neither has emerged as a significant causal factor.<sup>19</sup> For these reasons, I will not discuss them further in my text, nor will I use them in my analytical part of research. In addition, a discussion about possible additional influential factors regarding alliance behaviour would exceed the scope of this work and is not the main objective of my thesis. My work focuses only on the four sources of threat: aggregate power, geographic proximity, offensive power, and offensive intentions.

### **1. Aggregate power**

The first variable affecting threat perception that Walt addresses is aggregate power. This variable works on the premise that the greater total resources such as population, technological abilities, industrial and military capabilities a given state has, the greater the threat it can pose to other states. As a historical example mentioned by Walt, the American Grand Strategy defined by George Kennan and Walter Lippmann is given - the United States was supposed to prevent the accumulation of larger total industrial resources by a state which would be capable enough to do so. In practice, it was about preventing the accumulation of industrial resources of Eurasia.<sup>20</sup> In other words, the possible acquisition of a greater number of resources by one actor would lead to an increased perception of the threat and subsequent balancing – a formation of alliance with the weaker state. Accumulation of the aggregate power by some country is thus according to Walt a reason great enough to balance.<sup>21</sup> However, as stated above, actors of the anarchic international system are attracted by the power. Consequently, power can not only be perceived as a threat but in a positive light, because powerful state can reward its allies. Therefore, a state's aggregate power may be sufficient motivation for bandwagoning as well.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., pp. 33–49.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., pp. 266–268.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., pp. 22–23.

<sup>21</sup> WALT, Stephen M., 1985. Alliance Formation and the Balance of World Power. *International Security*. 1985. Vol. 9, no. 4, pp. 8–10. DOI [10.2307/2538540](https://doi.org/10.2307/2538540).

<sup>22</sup> WALT, S., 2013, pp. 22–23.

## 2. Geographic proximity

Second variable of balance of threat relates to the geographical location of the state posing potential threat. It is argued that the distance limits the ability to project power, therefore, nearby states have a greater ability to pose a greater threat than distant ones. In other words, the greater the geographic proximity between states, the greater the possible threat perception.<sup>23</sup> Even though the 21st century has provided states with technologies enabling waging conflict at greater distance, including cyber actions, the physical distance still plays a crucial role. As with aggregate power, threats in a proximity can lead other actors to balance or bandwagon. In case the threat leads actors to balancing, alliances are the likely result. Walt cites as an example of balancing due to geographical proximity the behaviour of the Soviet Union and Vietnam against China and Cambodia in the 1970s.<sup>24</sup> Conversely, when close threat leads actors to bandwagon, a sphere of influence is established. Especially in case of small states which share border with a great power, the possibility to choose bandwagoning rather than balancing is likely, because they consider themselves as not capable to uphold its security, especially if the potential threatening state has demonstrated the ability to enforce compliance.<sup>25</sup> According to Walt, "*Finland, whose name has undeservedly become synonymous with bandwagoning,*"<sup>26</sup> decided to do so only after suffering two defeats at the hands of the Soviet Union in a five-year span.

## 3. Offensive capabilities

Apart from aggregate power and geographic proximity, Stephen Walt argues offensive capabilities are also a factor shaping statesmen's decision whether their state should join or form an alliance in face of a potential adversary. The ability to project threat rests upon, among other factors such as the already mentioned geographic proximity, its offensive capabilities. Walt defines offensive power as "*the capacity to threaten the territorial integrity or sovereignty of another state at an acceptable cost.*"<sup>27</sup> He argues that states which have larger offensive

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<sup>23</sup> WALT, S., 1985, pp. 10-11.

<sup>24</sup> WALT, S., 2013, pp. 23-24.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 24.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

capabilities pose a greater danger than those only being able to defend themselves or have minimal military capabilities.<sup>28</sup> Offensive capabilities are connected to geographic proximity. Naturally, states that are situated adjacent to one another can threaten one another more easily, nevertheless, these two variables are not to be confused. According to Walt, the distinction between them lies in the fact that there is a range of other factors modifying balance between offensive and defensive capabilities not influenced by geographic closeness of the potential threat.<sup>29</sup> The offensive prowess is also linked to aggregate power. As already stated, the development of skilled military personnel, the production of advanced weapons, and the efficient administration of complex military systems are all made possible by a strong economy. Moreover, the ability to easily transform aggregate power into offensive by assembling massive, mobile military forces determines the offensive or defensive advantage over the potential threat.<sup>30</sup>

As in the case of two previous variables, states can react either by balancing or by bandwagoning. Balancing is expected when the immediate threat has great offensive capabilities. The mentioned example is when the United Kingdom saw Germany's growing naval power as a potential offensive threat. As a result, the United Kingdom reacted by forming an alliance with France and Russia while boosting up its own naval power. On the other hand, bandwagoning is more likely when the vulnerable state is adjacent to another possessing significant offensive capabilities, while lacking allies able to provide a rapid assistance, as they see no other option to preserve survival.<sup>31</sup> However, even in this case, the state can rather mobilise its own resources than bandwagon.<sup>32</sup> Walt suggests that Finland's bandwagoning with the Soviet Union after the Second World War was invigorated by previous Finnish balancing alliance with Nazi Germany, which alienated potential allies. Bandwagoning with the Soviet Union was thus seen as the only viable option.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> WALT, S., 1985, p.11.

<sup>29</sup> WALT, S., 2013, pp. 24-25.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 30.

<sup>33</sup> WALT, S., 1985, pp. 17–18.

#### **4. Offensive intentions**

Last generally valid variable, which according to Walt constitutes a threat, is the offensive intentions. This variable provides an additional aspect to be considered, and thus refines the balance of power theory in combination with the aforementioned variables. The offensive intentions factor focuses on perception of the concrete state's intentions. If a country is seen as hostile, other states may decide to balance against it. This can happen even if the country does not have larger capabilities. Very aggressive states with less offensive power can still be very dangerous, and thus likely to be counterbalanced by joining an alliance.<sup>34</sup> Walt provides an example of Germany under the Bismarck's successors whose aspirations to expand were worrying to the other European nations. The Eyre Crowe's 1907 memorandum demonstrated the power of perceptions, as it showed the United Kingdom would only fight Germany if it were belligerent and expansionist, and not in case of defensive intentions. Other states are unlikely to bandwagon when one is perceived as being intransigently belligerent. A susceptible state, even in alliance, is likely to become a victim if the aggressor's goals cannot be altered. Therefore, joining the alliance is seen as probably the only possibility how try to preserve its survival.<sup>35</sup>

#### **Factors increasing likelihood to bandwagon**

Despite the generally low level of tendency towards bandwagoning, there exist three factors which increase the bandwagoning chances. Firstly, weak states are more prone to pressure and their small capabilities are not expected to be of great significance, if this country would ally with or against the threatening state. Were rapid conquest happened, the state might choose to rather ally itself with the more threatening partner. Moreover, weak states are more inclined to be sensitive to geographic proximity.<sup>36</sup> Secondly, tendency to bandwagon is increased when potential allies are unavailable. Lastly, decisions to balance or bandwagon depend on the circumstances surrounding alliance choices. In a situation of a clear result, some states may be inclined to join the winning

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., pp.12-13.

<sup>35</sup> WALT, S., 2013, pp. 25–26.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., pp. 29–30.

side. Balancing behaviour is likely in peacetime or in the early stages of a war because states are trying to defeat or deter the state posing a threat.<sup>37</sup>

### **Summary of balance of threat**

Above in the text, I have summarised Walt's balance of threat and its evolution from balance of power. In a greater detail, four main variables influencing the perception of threat in the international system were analysed. The main premise is that threat, not power is the decisive factor when states consider whether to join an alliance or not. Every of the four variables can result wither in balancing or bandwagoning with the perceived threat, however, it all depends on the degree of representation of each of the main variables, or on other influencing variables. For better clarity, I have created a table with the individual variables and possible results (see Table 1).

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., pp. 30–32.

Table 1: Stephen Walt's balance of threat (Stephen Walt, 1985, table by the author)

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Degree of variable and circumstances</b>	<b>Likely reaction</b>
<i>Aggregate power</i>	greater total resources posing a threat endangering survival	<i>balancing</i>
	greater total resources and expectation of reward	<i>bandwagoning</i>
<i>Geographic proximity</i>	potential threat in vicinity but not shared borders	<i>balancing</i>
	typically a smaller state that shares a border with a potential threat	<i>bandwagoning</i>
<i>Offensive capabilities</i>	large offensive capabilities	<i>balancing</i>
	large offensive capabilities, shared borders, and lack of allies	<i>bandwagoning</i>
<i>Offensive intentions</i>	state seen as belligerent and expansionist, aggressor's goals cannot be altered	<i>balancing</i>
	state with rather defensive intentions preserving status quo	<i>bandwagoning</i>

### **Critique, refinements and application of Walt's balance of threat**

Several authors have criticised Stephen Walt's different aspects of the balance of threat or its roots. Among those is Robert G. Kaufman, who published "*To Balance or To Bandwagon?*" *Alignment Decisions in 1930s Europe*" in 1992. The article reexamines alignment decisions during the 1933-1941 period in response to the Nazi threat, thereby challenging both Walt's neorealist concept of alliances and his policy recommendations. Two points are pertinent for the balance of

the threat's applicability. Firstly, he expresses view that Walt's neorealist structural thinking is not sufficient because alliance behaviour is influenced not only by the international system but also by the perspectives of individual statesmen, internal state dynamics, and ideological stances. He argues that these factors, such as whether a concrete state was democratic, had a much greater effect on the content, effectiveness, and timing of alignment behaviour than Walt's concept predicts.<sup>38</sup> Secondly, Kaufman does not agree with Walt's dichotomy between balancing and bandwagoning. On the example of states' responses to Nazi threat, he affirms they did have other options such as appeasement, neutrality, or improvement of relations with a third power without formation of an alliance. In addition, he posits the problem is not only whether states choose to balance or bandwagon, but when and how effectively. Kaufman notes Walt's account of diplomacy during the 1930s underestimates the cost and risk associated with delaying a response to a threat.<sup>39</sup>

These raised concerns were addressed in Walt's direct response "*Alliances, Threats, and U.S. Grand Strategy: A Reply to Kaufman and Labs*" published in 1992. He argues that Kaufman's statement that he underestimates other factors other than the main ones, that is aggregate power, geographic proximity, offensive capabilities and offensive intentions, is misinterpreted, because he underlined how some ideologies, like Marxism-Leninism, frequently caused conflict.<sup>40</sup> Walt states domestic politics affected the timing and rate of rearmament and influenced the specific priorities that each state adopted during the interwar period.<sup>41</sup> Nevertheless, according to Walt, we should not assume that domestic politics were the decisive factor shaping any states' approach towards Nazi Germany. The main difficulties facing the European powers were strategic and resulted from a multitude of threats, a lack of clear intent, and unfavourable geographic conditions.<sup>42</sup> Apart from response to Kaufman, Walt also reacted to Eric Labs's article "*Do Weak States Bandwagon?*" focusing on behaviour of weak states in confrontation with a Great Power published in 1992. Labs suggests weak states have more policy preferences than only bandwagoning or balancing.

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<sup>38</sup> KAUFMAN, Robert G., 1992. "To Balance or To Bandwagon?" Alignment Decisions in 1930s Europe. *Security Studies*. March 1992. Vol. 1, no. 3, p. 419-420. DOI [10.1080/09636419209347477](https://doi.org/10.1080/09636419209347477).

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., pp. 419-420.

<sup>40</sup> WALT, Stephen, 1992. *Alliances, Threats, and U.S. Grand Strategy: A Reply to Kaufmann and Labs*. *Security Studies*. March 1992. Vol. 1, no. 3, p. 450. DOI [10.1080/09636419209347478](https://doi.org/10.1080/09636419209347478).

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 461.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 462.



According to him, these options exist: nonalignment, bandwagoning, balance and not fight, weak states alliance, balance and fight, and fight alone.<sup>43</sup> His classification of various responses Walt considers to be insightful and offers a more detailed description of the choices accessible to weaker states encountering an external threat.<sup>44</sup>

Another scholar, F. Gregory Gause, III. in his article “*Balancing What? Threat Perception and Alliance Choice in the Gulf*” from 2003 analysed the alliance choices made by Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Syria regarding conflicts in the Arabian/Persian Gulf area during the period 1971–1991. He states that while Walt prioritises threat over power, he includes measures of power such as aggregate power, offensive capabilities, and geographic proximity under his definition of threat, regardless of their connection to intentions. However, according to Gause, he fails to offer clear instructions on how to translate aggressive intentions into operational terms. Moreover, Walt is criticised for his lack of guidance on how states should prioritise between the four factors of threat.<sup>45</sup> He contends that Walt’s failure to provide guidance on how states discern which type of threat is most dangerous becomes problematic in a multipolar setting. In such a scenario, there may exist various types of threats originating from different states. Were there three states, it becomes challenging to ascertain whether the first state is engaging in balancing with the second one against offensive intentions of the third, or whether it is bandwagoning with the third one against the second state possessing greater aggregate power.<sup>46</sup>

In his work, Gause compared aggregate power of states based on the combination of size of armed forces, military spending, arms imports, numbers of tanks, combat aircrafts and artillery together with geographic proximity of forces. Coding of aggressive or offensive intentions was set as follows: “*public attempts by one state to destabilize another state’s ruling regime through propaganda, or support by one state for domestic or exile political groups opposed to another*

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<sup>43</sup> LABS, Eric J., 1992. Do Weak States Bandwagon? *Security Studies*. March 1992. Vol. 1, no. 3, p. 389–391. DOI [10.1080/09636419209347476](https://doi.org/10.1080/09636419209347476).

<sup>44</sup> WALT, S., 1992, p. 473.

<sup>45</sup> GAUSE, F., 2003. Balancing What? Threat Perception and Alliance Choice in the Gulf. *Security Studies*. 30 December 2003. Vol. 13, no. 2, p. 280. DOI [10.1080/09636410490521271](https://doi.org/10.1080/09636410490521271).

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 280-281.

*state's ruling regime*".<sup>47</sup> Gause observed nearly three-quarters of all alignment choices made in the Gulf throughout the designated period were taken to balance against threats stemming from aggressive intentions. The state in question chose to balance against the threat of offensive intentions in each of the six cases when the source of the aggregate military power threat and the threat originating from aggressive intentions were different. In seven of the nine cases where a state threatened another with both offensive intent and military force, it ended up balancing against that state. Gause cited only one evident example of bandwagoning with the potential for aggressiveness, which was Syria's choice to pursue peace with Iraq in 1978–1979.<sup>48</sup>

Gause's findings in particular hold importance to international relations theories concerning alliance behaviour because even in this region marked by frequent interstate conflict, where balancing against capabilities should be most perceivable, statesmen do not see military capabilities alone as inherently threatening.<sup>49</sup> Moreover, Gause's approach has shown Walt's balance of threat requires breakdown, especially in contexts where states confront numerous threats, in order to determine the true factors behind alliance decisions. Walt describes the functioning of the influence of each considered variable, assuming that everything else is equal, which is hardly the case in real life. Gause disaggregation of variables shows that it is possible to know the root cause of alliance decisions even when the influencing factors are not equal. However, his article did not present a clear operationalisation of the offensive power dimension.

Many recent works on alliance formation support the claims of balance of threat, despite some criticism regarding various aspects of the concept or its foundations. For instance, previously mentioned Eric Labs observed that balancing theories appear to have greater explanatory capacity than anticipated. In particular, the balance of threat is useful in predicting the behaviour of weak states during great power conflicts.<sup>50</sup> Other author who considers balance of threat useful is for example David Priess in his article "*Balance-of-threat theory and the genesis of the gulf cooperation council: An interpretative case study*" from 1996. A commonly cited issue is that the

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<sup>47</sup> GAUSE, F., 2003, pp. 287-288.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 302.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., p. 303.

<sup>50</sup> LABS, Eric J., 1992, p. 406.

four dimensions of threat are often closely related, posing challenges for assessing their individual impact on alliance choices. This complicates the application of balance of threat theory in precise empirical testing. Despite this, Priess does not provide any clear operationalisation. His work mostly focuses on description of offensive intentions and offensive capabilities. It, however, fails to state what he considers to be aggregate power. Geographic proximity is often briefly mentioned in relation to attacks on the states in question.<sup>51</sup>

The only clear comparison of states in the Gulf comprises of approximate area in km<sup>2</sup>, population, as well as Shi'a as % of population as a possible source of threat to Gulf states from Iran, GDP in USD, total military manpower and potential military manpower (males aged 15-49 fit for military service).<sup>52</sup> However, Priess does not note whether he considers these data as operationalised variables of balance of threat. Due to this, it is very difficult to understand on what basis were the states making decisions. In other words, how does footing of one state in the Gulf compare with others in relation to threat assessment. Even though the four aspects creating threat are interlinked, there should at least be some attempt to operationalise them.

As it can be seen, the balance of threat theory needs to be refined in order to be applicable on the case of Finland. Firstly, I agree with Robert G. Kaufman's and Eric Labs's critique regarding Walt's dichotomy of states' behaviour. States in the 21st century are not restricted by two blocks, such as was the Western and Soviet during the Cold War period, and, therefore, have more options how to behave when interacting with others. In case of present day Finland, the state could have remained militarily non-allied. In my research, I approached Finland's position in such a way that it would either remain not being a member of NATO, or in the lexicon of this work "militarily non-allied", or it would decide to balance Russia by joining NATO. Secondly, as David Priess said, the threat dimensions are difficult to operationalise and separate from each other. I attempted to provide a more explicit operationalisation of variables allowing me to better differentiate between each dimension of threat. Regarding balance of threat's aggregate power and military capabilities, I separated them by putting size of armed forces as a component of offensive capabilities and not

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<sup>51</sup> PRIESS, David, 1996. Balance-of-threat theory and the genesis of the gulf cooperation council: An interpretative case study. *Security Studies*. June 1996. Vol. 5, no. 4, p. 158, 168. DOI [10.1080/09636419608429291](https://doi.org/10.1080/09636419608429291).

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 154.

including defence budget in the aggregate power. Regarding geographic proximity and offensive capabilities, I put events such as Russian violations of Finnish airspace or Russian military exercises under the geographic proximity dimension, and not offensive intentions, even though it could be argued that they have an offensive undertone. It is because such events are not a true act of offensive intentions, but rather a threatening tool. The offensive intentions in my diploma thesis are defined as war in Georgia, annexation of Crimea and conflict in eastern Ukraine, and full-scale invasion of Ukraine. These events show the very intent to engage in a conflict. Even though I tried to provide a clearer distinction between the respective threat dimensions, they are naturally still interconnected to some extent, such as geographic proximity and offensive capabilities, which is the integral limitation of the balance of threat theory.

### **3. Methodological framework**

#### **3.1 Research question**

I formulated my research question as follows: *“What led Finland to balance the threat from Russian Federation with the application for NATO membership?”* My hypothesis is that for Finland, the main factor when deciding to apply for NATO membership was Russia’s willingness to resort to aggressive foreign policy through armed actions. I also formulated a subquestion: *“How has the Finnish security environment evolved between 2009 and 2021 in Finnish strategic documents?”*

#### **3.2 Data selection and methodology**

The thesis applies a mixed-method of both qualitative and quantitative research, because it includes description and analysis of quantitative data and content analysis of qualitative data. However, the qualitative approach prevails, because its application on the phenomenon of threats allows for understanding of the context of the data. Given the fact that Finland’s accession to NATO is still a recent event, the academic resources are limited. Moreover, the thesis uses balance of threat theory, which focuses on multiple researchable dimensions that are not precisely defined.

For this reason, upon rigorous research, the thesis is mainly empirical with the use of theoretical framework of balance of threat.

Finno-Russian security and defence policy relations will be researched based on four dimensions of balance of threat concept in the time span from 2009 to 2022. The concept was selected because it allows to see what factors could trigger a balancing behaviour in the form of joining military alliance. For the analysis, the Finnish Security and Defence Policy Reports and Government's Defence Policy reports were selected as the main source of information, because they provide me with an official Government's position and views regarding its security, as well as different factors guiding policy of military non-alignment. Furthermore, they also state the principles and objectives for Finland's security and defence policy, and thus comment on NATO membership as well. Given the fact that the latest Government's Defence Policy report was published in September 2021. Other relevant sources were used to bridge the gap between the report and the start of war in Ukraine in 2022, after which Finland decided to apply for NATO membership.

### **Operationalisation of balance of threat dimensions**

In this section, I will provide my operationalisation of Walt's balance of threat dimensions, because Walt does not clearly define on which basis to analyse data, which, as stated in the balance of threat's critique section is a natural limitation of this theory. Because aggregate power in Walt's operationalisation includes the most components that for the purposes of my analysis need them most refinements, I will dedicate the largest space to this dimension. However, each dimension is operationalised.

#### **Aggregate power**

As stated in the balance of threat subchapter, I decided to refine Walt's operationalisation by separating military and economic resources of state. In other words, I put size of armed forces as a component of offensive capabilities. Furthermore, to provide more validity, aggregate power should include more economic indicators. In particular, the focus should be on labour productivity, Gross National Income (GNI), as used in Walt's operationalisation of power measurement of

states,<sup>53</sup> and Gross Domestic Product (GDP) as both GNI and GDP are the most used indicators of economic strength. To provide another perspective, GDP per capita is also useful because it helps to account for possible bias in the meaning of population size.

Firstly, under the aggregate power, I focus on economic factors such as labour productivity, which is a crucial source of economic growth and competitiveness. In particular, I will compare Russia and Finland based on labour productivity, because it belongs to one of the most widely used measures of productivity according to the OECD<sup>54</sup> and because it serves as a crucial economic measure tied to a nation's economic growth, competitiveness and living standards enabling analysts to evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of human capital in the production process for a particular social and economic environment.<sup>55</sup> Furthermore, other economic indicators such as Gross National Income (GNI), formerly Gross National Product, and Gross Domestic Product (GDP) will be considered. Regarding GDP as one of the most commonly used key indicator of a nation's capabilities, it has its limitations. GDP is considered fungible, as it can be converted into various resources, including military capacity. However, GDP fails to deduct costs, counting production costs as output and not distinguishing between productive and wasteful spending. Consequently, large, populous nations contribute significantly to economic activity solely through them having large populations.<sup>56</sup> Additionally, GDP does not account for welfare costs, and security spending is treated the same as other economic activities such as innovation. Moreover, GDP tends to rise during war mobilisation,<sup>57</sup> although military investments may sometimes yield economic benefits.

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<sup>53</sup> WALT, S., 1985, p. 34.

<sup>54</sup> OECD, 2021. OECD Compendium of Productivity Indicators. Online. 12 July 2021. Available from: [https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/industry-and-services/oecd-compendium-of-productivity-indicators\\_f25cdb25-en](https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/industry-and-services/oecd-compendium-of-productivity-indicators_f25cdb25-en) [Accessed 27 April 2024].

<sup>55</sup> Statistics on labour productivity, [no date]. *ILOSTAT*. Online. Available from: <https://ilostat.ilo.org/topics/labour-productivity/> [Accessed 27 April 2024].

<sup>56</sup> BECKLEY, Michael, 2018. The Power of Nations: Measuring What Matters. *International Security*. 1 November 2018. Vol. 43, no. 2, pp. 15–17. DOI [10.1162/isec\\_a\\_00328](https://doi.org/10.1162/isec_a_00328).

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

I will also include GDP per capita, which economists employ as a gauge of economic development, as wealthier nations are generally more efficient than their less affluent counterparts. Countries with higher GDP per capita tend to demonstrate greater efficiency in combat. This is caused by the fact that a robust economy the training of proficient military personnel or the production of advanced weapons.<sup>58</sup> GNI is included because this thesis aims to remain as close as possible to Walt's operationalisation, as in his work "*Alliance Formation and the Balance of Power*," he compared the USSR and the US alliance systems based on the following items: population, Gross National Product, size of armed forces and a defence expenditure.<sup>59</sup> Secondly, in terms of aggregate power, the size of population and predictions of its development will be considered. This indicator is included, because the population size indicates possibilities how many people can be mobilised in times of crisis. In addition, population influences available workforce, and thus consequently the strength or stability of the economy. In essence, the state of the population can tell us useful information related to the security and aggregate power of the state.

### **Geographic proximity**

Walt's geographic proximity is based on whether a state shares border with a potential adversary. This is rather simplistic for the purposes of the thesis, because Finland is bordering the Russian Federation, and thus should have bandwagoned, which is not true. Finland did not join Russian-led alliance. Therefore, it will be more interesting to understand geographic proximity in terms of increasing closeness of Russian military assets as well as short-time breaches of sovereignty serving as intimidating tool. Geographic proximity is assessed through developments in Finnish vicinity, which show how Russia was increasing its presence along the border with Finland. Among those are so-called incidents in the vicinity, such as violations of Finnish airspace, developments regarding Russian military bases and Russian military exercises. This threat variable serves the purpose of providing context, because, on the contrary to aggregate power for example, it is hardly quantifiable. In this case, balance of threat theory has its limitations.

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<sup>58</sup> BECKLEY, Michael, 2018, p. 18.

<sup>59</sup> WALT, S., 1985, pp. 34–35.

## **Offensive capabilities**

Offensive capabilities will be measured based on number of personnel and selected equipment, mainly in the form of missile systems. The main sources of information are from the *Military Balance* journal and the *GlobalFirepower Index*, which provides comparison of states' military capabilities. Analysis of complete inventory of military equipment would require in-depth analysis that is beyond the goal of the thesis. Despite this, quantitative approach was used in the works of Stephen Walt, F. Gregory Gause, III. and it still holds explanatory power. In an event of attack, quantitative advantage of the attacker may be decisive because the victim of the attack might be able to only use its capabilities before other states decide to help by sending more military equipment.

## **Offensive intentions**

The last dimension of threat, the Russian offensive intentions, will be assessed based on armed actions that it has conducted. In my thesis, these are: war in Georgia in 2008, where Russia sent its army across the border, annexation of Crimea and conflict in eastern Ukraine from 2014 and full-scale invasion of Ukraine from 2022. These armed actions were selected because they happened in Europe and because Russia was the state that sent its troops across the border to these above-mentioned states. Finland's perception of offensive intentions is considered through analysis of its Government's Security and Defence Policy Reports as well as other relevant sources of information such as statements of Finnish government officials. Method used is the interpretative content analysis, which enables the research to see complexities of the researched topic in the context, because it does not rely on frequency-count approach, that would be superficial.<sup>60</sup>

I have decided to search words "*Russia*", "*Kremlin*", "*Russian Federation*" and "*threat*". These words can provide me with data regarding Russian offensive intentions, in particular armed actions. Because I want to see how Russian offensive intentions shaped Finland's security and

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<sup>60</sup> DRISKO, James and MASCHI, Tina, 2015. Introduction. In: *Content Analysis*. Online. Oxford University Press. pp. 1–3. ISBN 978-0-19-021549-1. DOI: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780190215491.001.0001



defence policy in relation to recent submission of application to join NATO, Finnish non-alignment policy will be also searched base on search for words “*non-allied*”, “*non-alignment*”, “*NATO*”, “*North Atlantic Treaty Organization*“ as well as “*North Atlantic Treaty Organisation*“ in case it is written in British English.

### **Context of the threat perception**

As stated above, the threat dimensions are naturally interlinked. For this reason, the content of Finnish Security and Defence Policy and the Government’s Defence reports will, apart from providing the data core for offensive intentions variable, also serve as an overall framework for development of Finnish threat perception vis-à-vis Russian Federation. In addition to this, news articles, mainly from Yle, Finland’s national public broadcasting company, will be used, because they include statements of Finnish political figures as well as provide information what was resonating in Finnish information sphere.

## **4. Evolution of Finnish security**

In this chapter, I will provide an overview of evolution of Finnish security. Firstly, despite the fact that Walt’s balance of threat does not consider history in states’ assessments of threat, it is an integral part of Finland’s security and policy considerations. The remnants of historical experience have been present even after the Cold War, such as in the case of Finnish reluctance to fully commit to military alliance membership or in the organisation of its armed forces. It is therefore necessary to explain on which foundations this status had been built. For this reason, history of Finno-Russian relations prior to the fall of the Soviet Union will be included.

### **4.1 From 1939 to 1956**

On 30th of November in 1939, Winter War with the USSR upon the pretext of a border incident provoked by the Soviet Union.<sup>61</sup> The formal reason for the start of the war was the cannon shots allegedly fired from the Finnish side. Before Finns could think about giving up without

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<sup>61</sup> The incident is known as “the shelling of Mainila” or “*Mainila provocation*”.

a fight, a puppet government under the exiled Finnish Communist Otto V. Kuusinen in Terijoki was formed. Unexpectedly successful Finnish military resistance, and the fact that Finland was that strategically significant, led Soviet leaders to sign a peace treaty with Finland on 13th of March 1940. Finland lost the Karelian isthmus, border territory to the north and the entire province of Viipuri after more than 3 months of unaided combat. Furthermore, the Soviets obliged Finland to lease them the Hanko Peninsula for the next 30 years for the purpose of Soviet military base.<sup>62, 63</sup>

The Winter War lasted until March 1940 when Finland signed the forced Moscow Treaty. Apart from territorial succession and reparations, both parties agreed to not ally themselves with and to not participate in coalition targeted against the other.<sup>64</sup> After the conclusion of the Moscow peace, the discussion on the matter of close cooperation between Finland and Sweden was revived. Unfortunately, however, Sweden was willing to provide less military aid than during the Winter War. The search for partners was further complicated by German occupation of Norway and Denmark. The annexation and subsequent forced integration of the Baltic republics into the Soviet Union was a shock for Finland. Although the country was preparing for the next war such as by extending conscription time from 1 to 2 years, fortifying the borders, or buying military equipment, and was thus better equipped than before the Winter War, it was not self-assessed as strong enough.<sup>65</sup> In this increasingly pressing climate, contact with Germany was inevitable. In August 1940, Finnish leaders agreed to allow a secret transit of German troops through Finland from German Baltic ports to Norway. Sweden, sensitive to its neutrality, gave consent to a similar agreement. At that time, the Soviet Union was seeking an approval to transport its troops to Hanko Peninsula.<sup>66</sup>

Progressively, Finland was being more closely connected with Germany, however, the first political contact occurred in May, when Finland was officially offered military aid. The situation

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<sup>62</sup> JUTIKKALA, Eino and PIRINEN, Kauko, 2006, pp. 250–255. *Dějiny Finska*. Praha: NLN, s.r.o., Nakladatelství Lidové Noviny. ISBN 80-7106-406-8.

<sup>63</sup> ALLISON, Roy, 1985, pp. 7-8. *FINLAND'S RELATIONS WITH THE SOVIET UNION, 1944-84*. Online. 1. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK. ISBN 978-1-349-17770-7. [Accessed 8 January 2024].

<sup>64</sup> SINGLETON, Fred, 1981. The Myth of 'Finlandisation.' *International Affairs*. 1981. Vol. 57, no. 2, pp. 270–281. DOI [10.2307/2619164](https://doi.org/10.2307/2619164).

<sup>65</sup> JUTIKKALA, E. and PIRINEN, K., 2006, pp. 255-256.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

with the Soviet relationship was definitively clarified on June 25 in 1941, when the Finnish parliament declared a state of war with the Soviet Union, which started the conflict known as the Continuation War started, in reference to events began with the Winter War.<sup>67</sup> The Finns declared war, also known as the Continuation War, on the USSR as a co-belligerent of Germany on June 25 in 1941. The alliance was not born based on Nazi ideology, but on need for ally against its enemy. On the contrary to the Soviet Union, Germany had never interfered in Finland's internal affairs before or during the war.<sup>68</sup> Nevertheless, as Germany began to lose, Finland shifted towards politics of good neighbourliness, which was perceived to be the only solution for the preservation of the freedom and independence. On the internal politics level, the year 1944 was significant for Communists who returned to Finnish political life after being made illegal in 1930. The Communists, under the left-wing socialist alliance called "*Finnish People's Democratic League*", formed with the Agrarians and the Social Democrats Finnish Governments until 1948.<sup>69</sup>

Meanwhile on the military side of Finland's politics, the country was resisting Soviet attacks while the Red Army was unsuccessful in meeting their objectives on the Finnish front despite heavy losses. In this climate, Paasikivi led the first round of peace talks in March 1944, but they were unsuccessful. At that time, President Ryti assured Ribbentrop that Finland would not pursue a separate peace agreement without Germany. In August 1944, Mannerheim succeeded Ryti as president. Since he did not feel responsible to uphold to his predecessor's assurance, he started to analyse possible ways to sign a peace treaty.<sup>70,71</sup> In September 1944, the Armistice was signed. The conditions of the agreement were several. The USSR required a rapid demobilisation of the Finnish army of 550,000 men plus 200,000 women. The country was also required to open its airports and naval facilities to the Allied, although exclusively Soviet, Forces. Finland was obliged to lease the naval base of Porkkala located only 30 km west of Helsinki to the Soviets. Among the many conditions, Finland was also compelled to drive 200,000 German troops from Northern

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid., pp. 258-259.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., pp. 256-258.

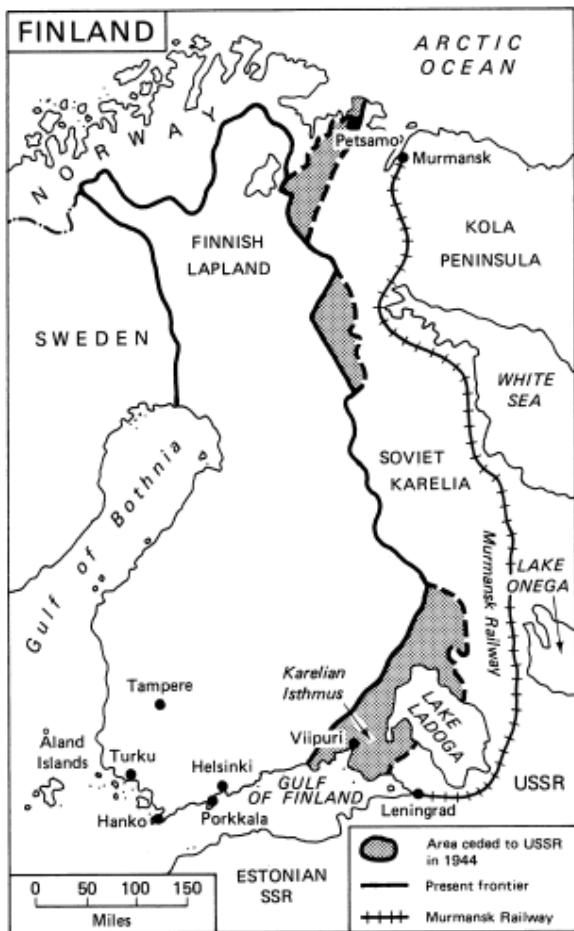
<sup>69</sup> SINGLETON, F., 1981, pp. 275, 279.

<sup>70</sup> JUTIKKALA, E. and PIRINEN, K., 2006, p. 261.

<sup>71</sup> SINGLETON, F., 1981, p. 278.

Finland and to also recompensate the Soviet Union with 300,000,000 USD, to be paid over 6 years in commodities.<sup>72</sup> For territorial cessions, see Map A.

Map A: Finnish cessions to USSR in 1944 – “present frontier” as of 1985 (Allison, R., 1985, p. IX)



However, the Finnish-Soviet relations were fully defined a year later in 1948 when the USSR suggested treaty of mutual assistance including military clauses. The Agreement of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance, also called the Friendship Treaty consequently laid a foundation for their relations, characterised by Finnish non-alignment, until 1990. In the Friendship Treaty, Finland expressed its desire to stay outside the Great Powers’ competing

<sup>72</sup> Finland -- Soviet Union: Armistice, 1945. *The American Journal of International Law*. Vol. 39, no. 2, pp. 85–88. DOI [10.2307/2213974](https://doi.org/10.2307/2213974).

interests.<sup>73</sup> Stephen Walt states that such behaviour was influenced by the lack of potential allies, which he links to the Finnish de facto alliance with Nazi Germany, consequently steering the country towards the USSR.<sup>74</sup>

## 4.2 From the 2nd half of 20<sup>th</sup> century to the dissolution of the USSR

Finnish policy, so-called “*Paasikivi-Kekkonen line*”, of the second half of the 20th century was highly influenced by Juho K. Paasikivi, president from 1946 to 1956 and prime minister from 1944 to 1946, and his successor, Agrarian Party leader Urho Kekkonen, who served as Prime Minister five times between 1950 and 1956 and as president from 1956 to 1981. Kekkonen’s anti-Russian stance changed during the Continuation War, but he had been promoting a more moderate course of action since 1937. The Paasikivi-Kekkonen line’s logic was based on the presumption that security was the Soviet Union’s top priority regarding Finland, and that occupation or satellite status was not necessary to prove the Soviets that any hostilities coming from or passing through Finnish territory would be stopped. This would made the assumption that the Soviet Union would collaborate, and as part of this cooperation, Finland would be in return granted freedom of choice in managing its internal affairs and those parts of its external ties that did not affect the Soviet Union's strategic interests.<sup>75</sup>

Kekkonen’s domestic and foreign policy was greatly influenced by the belief that communism would be the political mainstream of the future and that the Soviet Union’s position as a superpower would be strengthened. In the autumn of 1961, in connection with the deteriorating international situation, including the construction of the Berlin wall, the Soviet Union demanded Finland through a note to start military negotiations on the basis of the signed Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance. The basis for this note was the Soviets’ concern about the growing military and economic influence of West Germany in Scandinavia. It should be noted that the reason for sending the note was not the alleged change in Finnish foreign policy, but the Soviet reaction to Germany’s cooperation with the Scandinavian states. Kekkonen succeeded in his

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<sup>73</sup> SINGLETON, F., 1981, pp. 270-281.

<sup>74</sup> WALT, S., 1985, pp.17-18.

<sup>75</sup> KUUSISTO, Allan A., 1959. The Paasikivi Line in Finland’s Foreign Policy. *The Western Political Quarterly*. March 1959. Vol. 12, no. 1, p. 37. DOI [10.2307/444190](https://doi.org/10.2307/444190).

personal meeting with Khrushchev by appealing to the calming of public opinion throughout Scandinavia and reducing the necessity for military preparations by stopping to insist on the military consultations. Kekkonen also argued that the Soviet Union would set an example of peaceful coexistence by withdrawing the proposal of consultations. The meeting was concluded with Khrushchev suggesting that if the situation were to grow worse the USSR and Finland would arrange to contact each other.<sup>76</sup>

During Leonid Brezhnev's rule, the Soviets refused to accept Finnish neutrality. The Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance was renewed in 1970, but the introductory part was not highlighted. This was one of various events which influenced the strained relations between Finland and the Soviet Union in the 1970s. The United Nations held elections to choose a new Secretary-General in 1971. The Finnish candidate Max Jakobson in the narrow selection was vetoed by the USSR. Furthermore, in 1978, President Kekkonen was exposed to a Soviet proposal for a joint military exercise. However, he was successful and managed to decline the proposal. President Kekkonen's request for the change of the Soviet ambassador, who attempted to interfere in the internal affairs of Finnish communists, showcased Finland's successful efforts in maintaining its neutrality.<sup>77</sup>

### **4.3 The end of Cold War and 1990s**

The change of leadership of the Soviet communist party to Mikhail Gorbachev as the leader of the Soviet communist party in 1985 brought about significant shifts in the Soviet foreign policy doctrine, ultimately leading to the conclusion of the Cold War. By renouncing the use of force to maintain control over the Soviet bloc, the Soviet Union diminished its influence over neighbouring countries. This change created a newfound freedom of action for the Warsaw Pact allies, who swiftly recognised the expanded opportunities available to them. Consequently, they embarked on extensive transformations following the revolutions of 1989 such as the conduction of multiparty

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<sup>76</sup> ALLISON, R., 1985, pp. 43–50.

<sup>77</sup> JUTIKKALA, E. and PIRINEN, K., 2006, pp. 269–271.

elections or introduction of market economy.<sup>78</sup> In October 1989, Gorbachev underwent his first visit to Finland. The visit was significant because despite the Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance was still considered relevant in Finno-Soviet relations, the main result was Gorbachev's approval of Finnish neutrality – Finland was described as a Nordic, neutral country. Moreover, he emphasised that Finland had the autonomy to determine important foreign policy matters on its own, including its integration strategy.<sup>79</sup>

The reunification of Germany had implications for Finland's security. The subsequent negotiation format known as "2+4" proved to be a point of discussion in Finland. Despite being independent, on the contrary to neighbouring Baltic states, it had still been attached to the Soviet Union through the treaties. The country started to realise that after Germany's reunification process, Finland would become the last country with restricted sovereignty by post-war settlement agreements.<sup>80</sup> In 1990, Finnish foreign policymakers engaged in discussions with their Soviet counterparts regarding the continuation of the Friendship Treaty. Several high-ranking USSR representatives assured the Finns that the unification of Germany did not alter the Soviet policy, and thus the Treaty modification was not necessary. Officially, both sides declared their support for the Treaty's continuity, however, key Finnish officials began analysing Finland's possibilities to change this situation. The Finnish foreign ministry assessed the latest developments in Soviet neighbourhood policy and the status of similar treaties, which the Soviet Union had signed with its neighbouring countries.<sup>81</sup>

The results revealed that the Friendship treaties were renegotiated to align with the newly established geopolitical circumstances – parts in which the Federal Republic of Germany was considered to be a possible aggressor had been removed from all new Friendship treaties apart from that signed between the USSR and Poland. Even more so, Soviets were willing to renegotiate such treaties. During the time when negotiations regarding Germany's future unfolded, the Finnish

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<sup>78</sup> KANSIKAS, Suvi, 2019. Dismantling the Soviet Security System. Soviet–Finnish Negotiations on Ending Their Friendship Agreement, 1989–91. *The International History Review*. 2 January 2019. Vol. 41, no. 1, p. 88. DOI [10.1080/07075332.2017.1398177](https://doi.org/10.1080/07075332.2017.1398177).

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., pp. 88-89.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., p. 90.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., p. 90.

leadership responded with the so-called Operation PAX – a process of re-interpretation of the treaties restricting Finland’s sovereignty - reference of Germany as a threat in the Paris Peace Treaty from 1947, and as a last-minute addition also the Friendship Treaty of 1948.<sup>82</sup> The first great step towards limitations of sovereignty was the unilateral declaration by the Government of Finland that the provisions of the Paris Peace Treaty signed in 1947 limiting Finland’s sovereignty were no longer valid on September 21 in 1990. At the same time, the Friendship Treaty underwent reinterpretation, with President Koivisto stating to the government meeting’s protocol that the references to Germany in the treaty were outdated.<sup>83</sup>

In January 1992, this treaty was replaced by a new one, which no longer contained passages binding on military cooperation. In the same year, Finland became a member of the European Free Trade Association.<sup>84</sup> In 1992, Finland also submitted its application for membership in the European Communities, later transformed into the European Union. Finland carefully deliberated on the implications of the membership for its security and foreign policy. The consensus leaned towards the belief that it would likely enhance the nation’s security and global standing. Being at the centre of the European Union would be beneficial for Finland’s international influence maximalisation. Discussions on potential NATO membership faded on the background of the European Union’s admission process. The military threats following the end of the Cold War were diminished. Instead, the collapse of the Soviet Union provided strong impetus for Finland to align itself with the EU.<sup>85,86</sup> On October 16 in 1994, a consultative referendum on accession to the European Union was held. A majority totalling 56.9% voters voted in favour of Finland’s EU membership, on the contrary to 43.1% who voted against. The turnout for Finnish citizens living in Finland was 74%, therefore, in favour of Finnish accession was majority of Finland. Despite the

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid., pp. 90-91.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> JUTIKKALA, E. and PIRINEN, K., 2006, p. 274.

<sup>85</sup> FERREIRA-PEREIRA, Laura C., 2006. Inside the Fence but Outside the Walls: Austria, Finland and Sweden in the Post-Cold War Security Architecture. *Cooperation and Conflict*. March 2006. Vol. 41, no. 1, pp. 102–104. DOI [10.1177/0010836706060938](https://doi.org/10.1177/0010836706060938).

<sup>86</sup> Centennial Story of Finland Part 9: End of Cold War – Europe Whole and Free 1987–1997, [no date]. *Finland abroad: United States of America*. Online. Available from: [https://finlandabroad.fi/web/usa/current-affairs/-/asset\\_publisher/h5w4iTUJhNne/content/centennial-story-of-finland-part-9-end-of-cold-war-europe-whole-and-free-1987-1997/384951](https://finlandabroad.fi/web/usa/current-affairs/-/asset_publisher/h5w4iTUJhNne/content/centennial-story-of-finland-part-9-end-of-cold-war-europe-whole-and-free-1987-1997/384951) [Accessed 31 March 2024].



fact the referendum was not legally binding on Parliament, Parliament approved the Accession Treaty in accordance with the referendum's result.<sup>87</sup> As a result, Finland became a member of the European Union in January 1995 together with Austria and Sweden.<sup>88</sup> By joining the European Union, Finland de facto stopped being neutral, because it integrated itself into the Western structures. In the 1990s, Finland's security and defence policy headed towards greater integration. It became an observer in the now dissolved Western European Union and participant in NATO's Partnership for Peace programme and Planning and Review Process. These actions of involvement were linked to the evolution of global security environment, where major conflict in Europe was not anticipated, while environmental and economic issues were seen as new challenges to security requiring global participation. In this regard, by this integration, Finland showed that it wanted to participate in the maintenance of international security.<sup>89</sup>

## 5. Analysis of Finland's security

In this main part of the thesis, I will analyse evolution of Finnish security in relation to perception of Russian threat on the basis of Stephen Walt's four threat dimensions.

### 5.1 Aggregate power

#### 5.1.1 Population

By population size, Russia surmounts Finland by approximately 140 million people. This difference was consistent every year in the researched period ranging from 2000 to 2020, as the latest OECD data available at that time (see Graph 1). Therefore, the Russian Federation is potentially able to recruit considerably higher number of conscripts. However, it needs to be said that there is expected a negative trend of population decline, which will have an impact on the recruitment process were the trend continue. When we look at the probabilistic projections of Finland's and the Russian Federation's population development (see Graph 2 and 3), it is clear that

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<sup>87</sup> *Finland's EU referendum*, 1995, p. 17. Online. Tilastokeskus. SVT: Suomen virallinen tilasto.Vaalit 1995:2 Finlands officiella statistik.Val. Available from: <http://www.doria.fi/handle/10024/119898>

<sup>88</sup> EU enlargement - European Union, [no date]. Online. Available from: [https://european-union.europa.eu/principles-countries-history/eu-enlargement\\_en](https://european-union.europa.eu/principles-countries-history/eu-enlargement_en) [Accessed 1 April 2024].

<sup>89</sup> FERREIRA-PEREIRA, Laura C., 2006, pp. 107-109.

both countries need to consider such decline in their future military capabilities and economic plans. Finland is expected to lose approximately 9.1% of population in the period from 2020 to 2100.<sup>90</sup> Projections indicate that population growth will continue until 2033, leading to a population of 5.6 million. However, after reaching this peak, the population is expected to enter a decline, and by the 2050s, it is projected to be lower than the current population level.<sup>91</sup>

The Russian Federation's probabilistic projection of population development shows that the country faces even greater challenge than Finland, because in the period from 2020 to 2100, the total population could decrease by 22.9%.<sup>92</sup> Between 2013 and 2015, the Russian Federation experienced a modest three-year period of positive population growth. However, this trend took a sharp negative turn in 2017 and 2018, as illustrated in Graph 4.<sup>93</sup> Notably, 2017 marked the most unfavourable population development in a decade, with the birth rate declining by approximately 10%, while the number of deaths surpassed births by 136,000. The decline in the birth rate can be attributed to the historically small age cohorts born in the late 1990s and early 2000s, who are reaching childbearing age.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> The calculation was made based on the figures from: *Finland: Total population (2022) World Population Prospects - Population Division - United Nations*. United Nations, DESA, Population Division. Available at: <https://population.un.org/wpp/Graphs/Probabilistic/POP/TOT/246> [Accessed: 25 July 2023] and OECD, Population (indicator). DOI: 10.1787/d434f82b-en [Accessed on 20 July 2023].

For the year 2020, the number of 5,500,000 persons (rounded to hundreds of thousands) was used in the calculation. For 2100, the median number of persons used in the calculation, was estimated to be 5,000,000.

<sup>91</sup> *Statistics Finland: Falling birth rates cannot maintain population (2021) Yle*. Available at: <https://yle.fi/a/3-12122258> [Accessed: 26 July 2023].

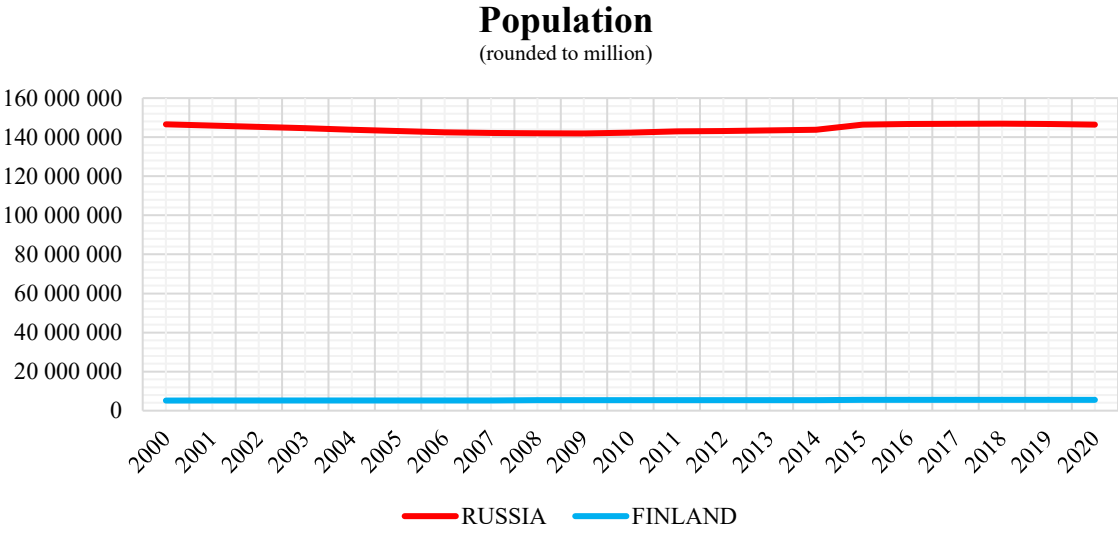
<sup>92</sup> The calculation was made based on the figures from: *Russian Federation: Total population (2022) World Population Prospects - Population Division - United Nations*. United Nations, DESA, Population Division. Available at: <https://population.un.org/wpp/Graphs/Probabilistic/POP/TOT/643> [Accessed: 25 July 2023] and OECD, Population (indicator). DOI: 10.1787/d434f82b-en [Accessed on 20 July 2023].

For year 2020, the number of 146,500,000 persons (rounded to hundreds of thousands) was used in the calculation. For 2100, the median number of persons used in the calculation, was estimated to be 113,000,000.

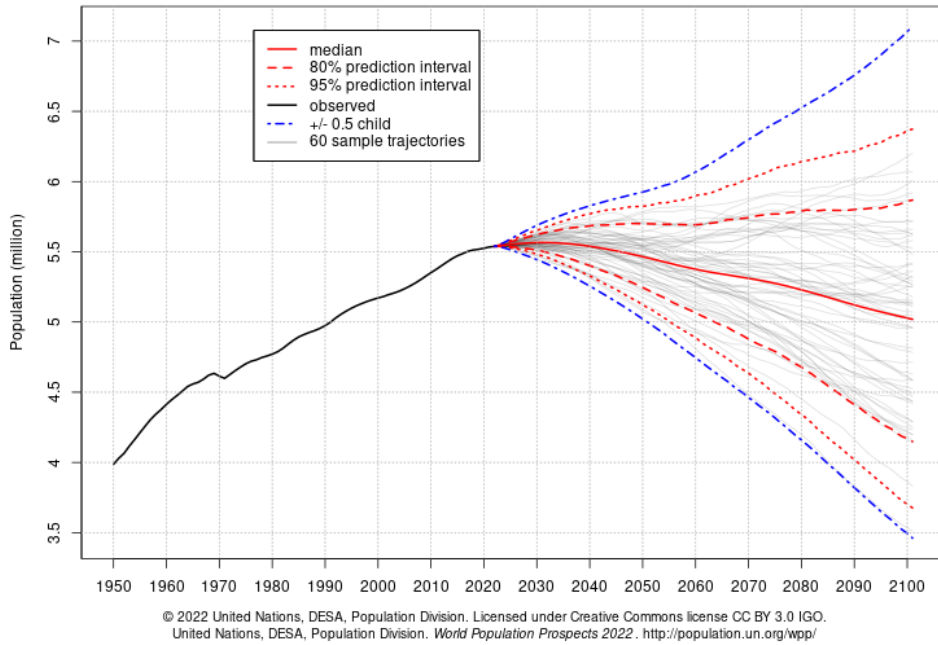
<sup>93</sup> *Russia of Power*, 2019, p. 131. Online. Helsinki, Finland: Ministry of Defence. ISBN 978-951-663-066-6. Available from: <http://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/handle/10024/161710>

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

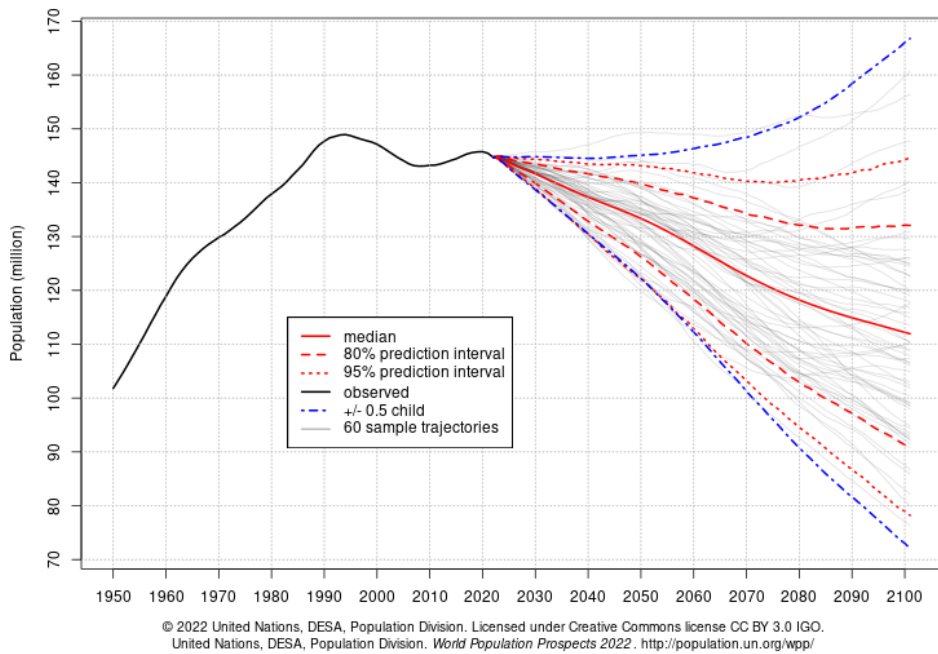
Graph 1: Population size of Finland and Russia. (OECD, chart by the author)



Graph 2: Probabilistic projection of Finland's total population (image source: United Nations, DESA, Population Division, 2022)

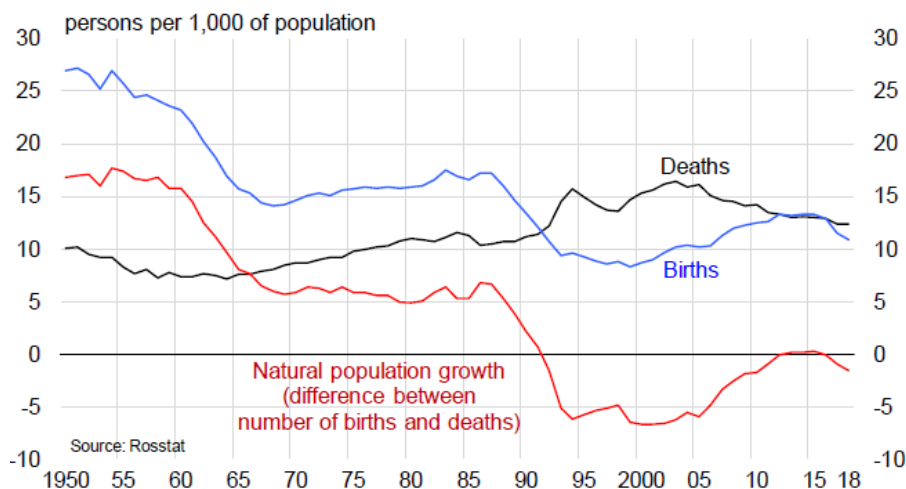


Graph 3: Probabilistic projection of Russia's total population (image source: United Nations, DESA, Population Division, 2022)



In “*Russia of Power*” Finnish Ministerial Report from 2019, it was stated that in 2000s, demographic crisis being a threat to Russia’s great power status was discussed. Russian healthy population growth could have a positive impact on Finland’s security. The growth could improve Russian self-esteem related to great power status and provide calmer political environment. However, the forecasts predicted another populational decrease,<sup>95</sup> which could, therefore, consequently increase political tensions, and thus have negative affect on Finnish security. Such concerns regarding Russian population’s decline and its connection to its perception of diminishing power status are supported by the fact President Putin recognised it to be a pertinent problem that would make the Russian Federation “*an enfeebled nation*”.<sup>96</sup>

Graph 4: Natural population growth in Russia in 1950-2018. (image by: Vesa Korhonen, *Russia of Power*, 2019, p. 132)



<sup>95</sup> Ministry of Defence, 2019. *Russia of Power*, p. 131.

<sup>96</sup> RUSSIA, Team of the Official Website of the President of, 2000. Annual Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation. *President of Russia*. Online. July 8, 2000. Available from: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/21480> [Accessed 28 April 2024].

The demographic issue has been addressed by both countries in the past. In fact, it is considered to be a problem related to national security. In Finland's Security and Defence Policy 2009 report, the issues related to the aging of population are addressed. The declining labour supply resulting from an aging population has a negative economic prospect in the medium term. To bolster nationwide employment and enhance public finances in the long run, it becomes crucial for Finland to maintain a sustainable level of economic growth and expertise, which are invaluable for the country's competitiveness.<sup>97</sup> The report notes that:

*"The ageing of the population is a problem for competitiveness and the economic dependency ratio. Finland has a growing need for labour migrants. It is a challenge to the state to retain its attractiveness as an employer as the workforce continues to age. The Defence Forces, too, will have to compete more and more in order to recruit skilled personnel. Diminishing annual conscript intakes will result in smaller wartime troop strengths as early as the 2010s."*<sup>98</sup>

The Russian Federation has also addressed the negative demographic trend several times in the past. For example, President Putin in his Annual Address to the Federal Assembly in 2000 expressed his concerns:

*"We, the citizens of Russia, are becoming fewer and fewer with each passing year. For several years now, the population has dropped by an average of 750 000 people every year. And if we are to believe the predictions, and these predictions are based on real work, the real work of people who understand this and have devoted their entire lives to this, in 15 years, the number of Russian citizens may drop by 22 million. I would ask you to think this figure over: it is one seventh of the country's population. If the current tendency continues, the survival of the nation will be threatened. We really do face the threat of becoming an enfeebled nation. Today the demographic situation is one of the most alarming that the country faces."*<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> 13/2009: *Finnish Security and Defence Policy 2009. Government Report*, 2009. pp. 61-62. Online. Helsinki, Finland: Prime Minister's Office. Prime Minister's Office Publications. Available from: [https://vnk.fi/documents/10616/622958/J1309\\_Finnish+Security+and+Defence+Policy+2009.pdf/17e932c1-64ce-492a-b4b6-c0cc79848259/J1309\\_Finnish+Security+and+Defence+Policy+2009.pdf?version=1.0&t=142245522000](https://vnk.fi/documents/10616/622958/J1309_Finnish+Security+and+Defence+Policy+2009.pdf/17e932c1-64ce-492a-b4b6-c0cc79848259/J1309_Finnish+Security+and+Defence+Policy+2009.pdf?version=1.0&t=142245522000)

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 62-63.

<sup>99</sup> RUSSIA, Team of the Official Website of the President of, 2000, July 8, 2000.

Therefore, it can be seen that both Finland and Russia consider decrease in population to be a great risk to their countries. In terms of population size, Finland recognises the Russian Federation perceives its demographic decline to be a threat to the great power status and political confidence.

### **5.1.2 Economic indicators**

Since the aggregate power includes country's total assets, economic indicators will be examined in this research as well. In particular, the focus will be on labour productivity, gross national income (GNI), sometimes called Gross National Product (GNP) as used in Walt's work, and gross domestic product (GDP) as both GNI and GDP are the most used indicators of economic strength. In order to provide another perspective, GDP per capita will be also assessed.

#### **Labour productivity**

Finland and the Russian Federation are not only different in its population size but also in terms of their economic situation. For a more perfect comparison of absolute labour effectiveness, I will include in my overview the purchasing power parity (PPP), which takes different costs of goods into account. As it can be seen in Table 2, when measured as GDP per hour worked in PPP terms, in every year from 2012 to 2019 of the OECD's monitoring of the labour productivity Finland's labour productivity levels exceeded the one of the Russian Federation's by more than two times each year. Since 2012, Finland has shown a regular growth of productivity from 58.5 USD to 61.6 USD without any major decrease. In the same period from 2012 to 2019, Russian Federation's productivity has grown from 24.7 USD to 26.4 USD. During the monitored period Finland's productivity levels have increased by 5.29%, whereas Russian have grown by 6.88%. Even though Russian Federation's labour productivity levels have also increased, the amount of GDP per hour worked remained significantly lower. The large gap between these states shows that Russian Federation's economy is not able to generate as much GDP per hour worked as Finland by a large margin. Therefore, it can be inferred Finland has a more efficient labour productivity than Russia, and is, therefore, in an advantageous position.

Table 2: Labour productivity levels, total economy of Finland and Russia (OECD, table created by the author)

GDP per hour worked, US dollar constant prices, 2015 PPPs		
year/country	Finland	Russian Federation
2012	58.5	24.7
2013	58.7	25.3
2014	58.9	25.3
2015	59.3	24.6
2016	60.7	24.7
2017	62.3	25.1
2018	61.7	25.8
2019	61.6	26.4

## Gross National Income

For the second indicator of aggregate power, gross national income, the World Bank provides this definition: “*the sum of value added by all resident producers plus any product taxes (less subsidies) not included in the valuation of output plus net receipts of primary income (compensation of employees and property income) from abroad.*”<sup>100</sup> In other words, GNI measures the size of a nation’s economy. The difference between GNI and GDP is that GNI is the monetary value of all services and goods produced by the residents of the country. GDP, on the other hand, reflects the output generated within a nation’s borders, regardless of whether it comes from domestic or foreign sources.<sup>101</sup>

When we compare Finnish and Russian size of economy through GNI, we get a result in favour of the Russian Federation’s economic strength (see Graph 5). However, this measurement is skewed by the number of total population, in which case, Russia is in a naturally favourable

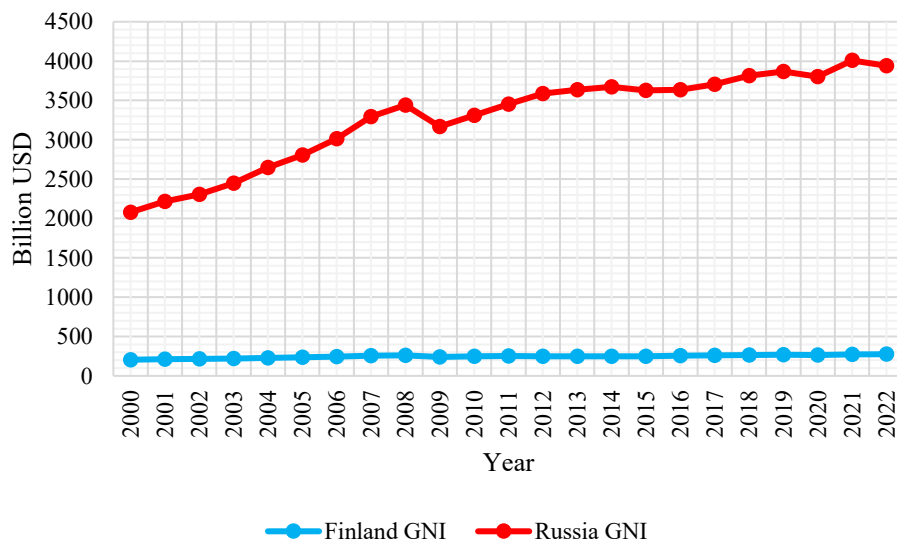
<sup>100</sup> Glossary | DataBank, [no date]. Online. Available from: <https://databank.worldbank.org/metadataglossary/world-development-indicators/series/NY.GNP.MKTP.KD.ZG> [Accessed 27 April 2024].

<sup>101</sup> BREZINA, Corona, 2012, p. 12. *Understanding the gross domestic product and the gross national product*. New York, NY: Rosen Pub. Real world economics. ISBN 978-1-4488-5569-8.



position. The more the residents, the greater the economic output because higher number of citizens generates higher spending. However, it does not differentiate if the spending is productive or wasteful. Size of Finnish economy ranged between 205 and 275 billion of USD at constant 2017 international USD with PPP conversion, whereas Russian economy ranged between 2,080 and 4,008 billion of USD after the PPP conversion. Therefore, Russia had at least 10 times larger economy than Finland throughout the selected period. By the logic of Walt's use of GNI as indicator of aggregate power, it can be said, that in all the years of publication of Finnish Security and Defence Policy reports and Government's Defence reports, the Russian Federation could be viewed as a potential threat by the mere size of the economy. However, this part of aggregate power is not enough for country to balance its potential adversary, because if it were true, Finland would have joined NATO many years earlier.

Graph 5: GNI, PPP (constant 2017 international USD) - Russian Federation, Finland (World Bank, graph by the author)



### GDP and GDP per capita

Finnish and Russian economies' strength is also assessed through traditional GDP indicator. While GDP holds a prominent status as economic indicator, it falls short in assessing the overall well-being of societies and offers only a limited glimpse into the material living standards of individuals. Nations calculate their GDP in their respective currencies, necessitating a conversion

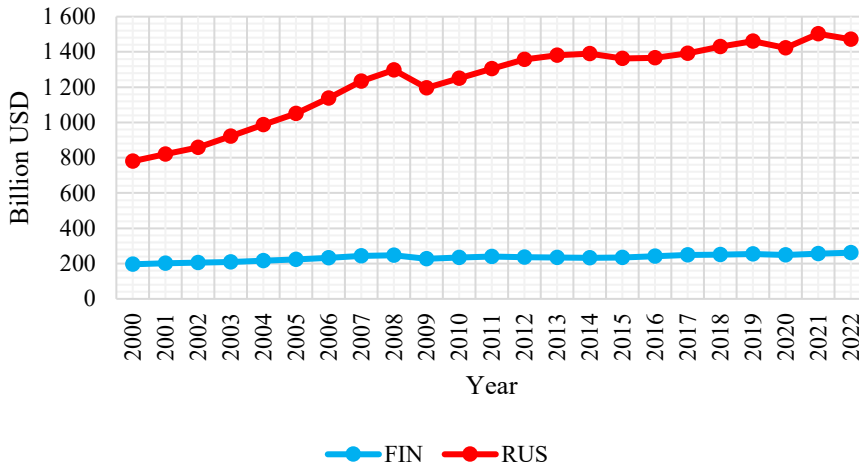
for cross-country comparisons. Frequently, this conversion relies on prevailing exchange rates, yet such methods can generate misleading comparisons regarding the actual quantities of final goods and services within GDP. A superior approach involves employing Purchasing Power Parities (PPPs). PPPs function as currency converters that account for variations in price levels across countries, enabling an international assessment of GDP volumes and the scale of economies.<sup>102,103</sup> Therefore, for the purpose of the analysis, PPP conversion is used.

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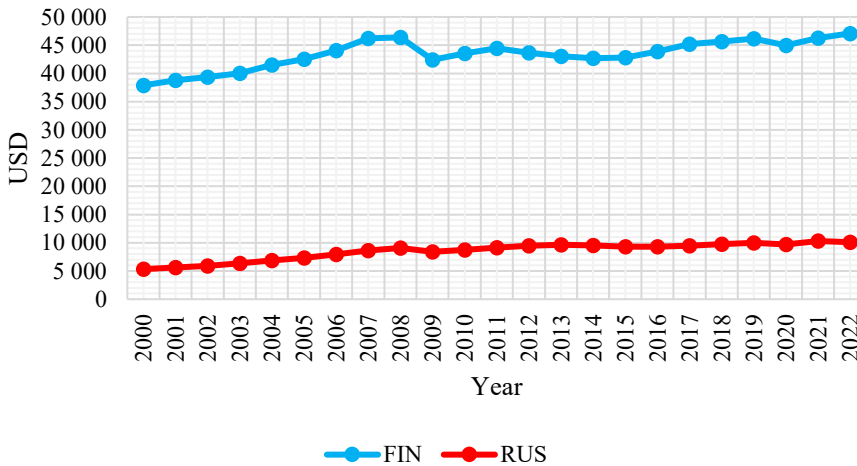
<sup>102</sup> GDP and spending - Gross domestic product (GDP) - OECD Data, [no date]. *OECD*. Online. [Accessed 20 September 2023]. Available from: <http://data.oecd.org/gdp/gross-domestic-product-gdp.htm>.

<sup>103</sup> OECD, [no date]. Purchasing Power Parities - Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) - OECD. . Online. Available from: <https://www.oecd.org/sdd/prices-ppp/purchasingpowerparities-frequentlyaskedquestionsfaqs.htm> [Accessed 27 April 2024].

Graph 6: GDP (constant 2015 USD) - Russian Federation, Finland (World Bank, graph by the author)



Graph 7: GDP per capita (constant 2015 USD) - Russian Federation, Finland (World Bank, graph by the author)



As it can be seen in Graph 6, the aggregate power assessed according to GDP indicator of the Russian Federation was always larger than that of Finland in the selected period from 2000 to 2022. In 2000, Finland’s total GDP converted with the use of PPP was 206.5 billion of USD, while Russian Federation’s amounted to 2.14 trillion of USD. In year 2004, Russian GDP of 2.7 trillion USD was 10.3 times higher than Finnish GDP of 228.6 billion USD. The Finnish Security and Defence Policy 2009 report reflected Russian armed actions in the war in Georgia. Despite the fact the Russian Federation’s economic power measured in GDP was 13.7 times higher, it was not

considered as a threatening factor to Finnish security. The same can be said about following years of publication of the Finnish Security and Defence Policy 2012 report and Government' Defence reports 2017 and 2021. In 2012, Finland had already worked with data regarding the war in Georgia. During year 2012, Russian economic power was 14.9 times higher than Finnish, however, Finland did not acknowledge such disparity in its Finnish Security and Defence Policy report. After the Russian annexation of Crimea and the start of conflict in eastern Ukraine, Finland did not decide to apply for NATO membership, therefore, it can be said that regarding the GDP indicator, Finland did not evaluate Russian economy 14.5 times higher in 2017 and 15.2 times higher in 2021 than that of Finland to be a stimulus to change security and defence policy.

Regarding GDP per capita, different outlook is presented. Finnish GDP per capita reveals it is a high-income country, which surpasses the Russian Federation, an upper middle-income country, significantly every year of the selected period from 2000 to 2022 (see Graph 7). Finnish lowest GDP per capita equalled to 37,884 USD in 2000, whereas Russian accounted to 5,324 USD in 2000, which is 7.12 times smaller. On average, Finnish economy was able to generate 5.1 times more USD than Russia. It can be thus Russian said that its economy is less efficient, which is supported by the data in previous section on labour productivity. Regarding GDP per capita indicator, Finland's economic strength is 5.1 times greater than that of Russia, which according to the logic of this criterion should not pose an economic threat to Finland.

### **Summary of aggregate power**

By the logic of balance of threat, the greater total resources such as population, the greater the threat it can pose to other states. During the observed period ranging from 2000 to 2020, Russian population size was surpassing that of Finland every year. Russia surmounts Finland by approximately 140 million people. This difference was consistent every year in the researched period. Given the fact the Russian Federation's population size highly surpasses that of Finland, Finland should view population as a factor contributing to increased threat perception, and potentially induce balancing against Russia, because population contributes to economic prospects as well as potential mobilisation strength in times of crisis. Finnish perception of Russian population size was different than expected based on the mere numbers. Even though both Finland

and the Russian Federation populations' life expectancies are increasing, prospects predict a decline in population. On the contrary to the aggregate power as a threat component of Walt's balance of threat, Finland believed Russian healthy population growth could have a positive impact on Finland's security, because it could improve Russian self-esteem related to great power status and provide calmer political environment. The case of Finland's examination of demographic situation provides a new possible researchable element of Walt's balance of threat concept, because, as observed, the shifts in material power can be interpreted differently. Based on this, it can be said that the numbers of population size were not a component of aggregate power great enough to induce balancing behaviour.

The GNI and GDP values in favour of Russia, despite Finland's more efficient economic performance, see points labour productivity and GDP per capita, show that Russia had greater aggregate power, including the population factor. Taking this information into consideration, it can be judged that Russian favourable aggregate power was not the main factor for Finnish threat balancing, rather it was seen as a source of benefits. It was not thus an important factor, through which Finland would reassess its policy of military non-alignment.

## 5.2 Geographic proximity

In Walt's theory, aggregate power is complemented by proximate power because material capabilities can only be assessed in the context of the geographical situation – through the geographical proximity of the potential adversary. Finland shares 1309 kilometres with the Russian Federation accounting up for more than half of length of total kilometres of Finnish borders.<sup>104</sup> Walt argues that geographical proximity means that countries which are close to each other have a potential to pose a greater danger than those more far away.<sup>105</sup> However, Finland was bordering Russia for several decades without applying for NATO membership. As stated in the methodological section, it is more interesting to observe military activities along Finno-Russian border to see if the Russian increasing military presence in Finnish neighbouring areas constituted

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<sup>104</sup> Finland, 2024. *The World Factbook*. Online. Central Intelligence Agency. Available from: <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/finland/#geography> [Accessed 27 April 2024].

<sup>105</sup> WALT, S., 2013, pp. 23-24.

a threat component, which led to the submission of NATO application. The increasing geographical closeness of a potential adversary could be impetus strong enough to balance. If there was an increasing geographic proximity of the Russian Federation, Finland's likely response could be to balance by joining an alliance.

### **5.2.1 Incidents in Finnish vicinity**

Finland has witnessed several violations of its sovereignty by the Russian military - violations of Finnish airspace. In 2005, new rules were introduced by the Foreign and Security Policy Committee, involving public disclosure of proven airspace intrusions by the Defence Ministry, Foreign Ministry, and Interior Ministry/Border Guards aiming to reduce such incidents. Despite early success of the new rules, Finland witnessed an unprecedented surge in airspace violations by Russian aircraft as the effectiveness of publicising violations appears to have waned over the years. The skies over Finland were experiencing a notable increase in Russian unannounced flights,<sup>106,107</sup> especially in 2014, marking a departure from the trend observed since the country initiated the practice of new rules. Initially, Russia ceased violating Finnish airspace, but data showed a resurgence, with firmer language from top Finnish officials. While weather conditions may contribute to unintentional violations, Russia's responses have become sharper over time, with varying degrees of acknowledgment or apology,<sup>108</sup> which can be assumed as the Russian way of intimidation.

In August of 2014, approximately half a year after the annexation of Crimea, a Russian An-72 transport aircraft breached Finnish territory, marking the third such incident within a week and at least the fifth in recent months. The brief incursion occurred over the Gulf of Finland without penetrating deep into Finnish territory. Finnish Defence Minister Carl Haglund expressed serious concern, deeming the repeated airspace violations regrettable and highlighted the deliberate nature

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<sup>106</sup> Finnish Defence Force lists ten years of airspace violations, 2014. *Yle*. Online. [Accessed 26 November 2023]. Available from: <https://yle.fi/a/3-7442575>

<sup>107</sup> Incursions also involve aircraft Belgium, France, Norway, Sweden and the US to name a few.

<sup>108</sup> Finnish Defence Force lists ten years of airspace violations, 2014. *Yle*. Online. [Accessed 26 November 2023]. Available from: <https://yle.fi/a/3-7442575>

of the repeated airspace violations.<sup>109</sup> These incidents took place amid escalated tensions along the border between Russia and Ukraine, occurring just days prior to the planned visit of U.S. President Barack Obama to Estonia. Additionally, they transpired shortly before a NATO summit in Wales, where Finland was to sign an agreement on enhanced ties with the alliance known as the Partnership Interoperability Initiative. This initiative aims to uphold and strengthen the extensive connections forged between NATO and partner forces through years of collaborative operations. During the Wales summit, Finland was conferred an “*Enhanced Opportunities Partner*” status, solidifying a more customised relationship to support and enhance its contributions to NATO missions and operations.<sup>110, 111</sup> Moreover, on October 6, 2016, two airspace violations by Russian military aircrafts were detected. What is significant is that according to findings, they could not be explained by aviation traffic or poor weather conditions. Coincidentally, the fighter jets entered Finnish airspace on the day when Finland signed a defence cooperation agreement with the United States.<sup>112</sup> Another airspace-related incident happened in 2018 when large-scale GPS signals over northern Finland were disrupted during the largest NATO exercise in decades, in which Finland as well as Sweden participated.<sup>113,114</sup>

### 5.2.2 Military bases

What also needs to be considered are the Russian military deployment positions. Stephen Walt’s perception of geographic proximity of enemy was based on the premise that the ability to project power declines with distance, and that states which are nearby pose a greater threat than those that are far away.<sup>115</sup> A nation’s commitment to its interests in a particular area is demonstrated

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<sup>109</sup> Third Russian airspace violation in a week; Finland steps up air surveillance, 2014. *Yle*. Online. [Accessed 23 November 2023]. Available from: <https://yle.fi/a/3-7438235>

<sup>110</sup> NATO. Partnership Interoperability Initiative. *NATO*. Online. [Accessed 23 November 2023]. Available from: [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_132726.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_132726.htm)

<sup>111</sup> Finnish foreign minister: Russian incursion ‘no accident,’ 2014. *Yle*. Online. [Accessed 23 November 2023]. Available from: <https://yle.fi/a/3-7439303>

<sup>112</sup> Border guard report confirms Russian airspace violations, 2016. *Yle*. Online. Available from: <https://yle.fi/a/3-9226021> [Accessed 27 April 2024].

<sup>113</sup> Finnish PM: Russia possibly behind GPS jamming, 2018. *Yle*. Online. [Accessed 26 November 2023]. Available from: <https://yle.fi/a/3-10502854>

<sup>114</sup> Nato jets over Finnish Lapland as Rovaniemi hosts major military exercise, 2018. *Yle*. Online. Available from: <https://yle.fi/a/3-10485100> [Accessed 27 April 2024].

<sup>115</sup> WALT, S., 1985, p. 10.

by the tangible and visible presence of military forces stationed in specific locations. Firstly, the mere act of being present can be a foreshadow of potential aggressive behaviour. Secondly, a nation's regional influence is impacted by its military installations and deployments within its borders. It enables a country to take an active role in matters pertaining to regional security.

Russia has been developing Arctic military capacities of all its military services including reopening and modernising military bases in the Arctic region,<sup>116</sup> which has not been happening without Finland's notice as the developments were mentioned in the Government's Finnish Security and Defence Policy 2012 report.<sup>117</sup> Russia established an arctic brigade by merging two motorized infantry brigades in early 2015. These are the 200th Separate Motor-rifle Brigade in Pechenga and the 80th Separate Motor-rifle Brigade in Alakurtti, both under the 14th Army Corps. It was stated that the 200th Brigade, located at the Sputnik base in Pechenga, near the Norwegian border and 65 km from Finland, operates as a versatile mobile unit with heavy equipment. It employs UAVs for basic intelligence and surveillance. The 80th Brigade, deployed near Alakurtti, south of Murmansk and 60 km from the Finnish border, was formed in January 2015 for Arctic operations.<sup>118</sup>

In January 2015, Yle, Finland's national public broadcasting company, reported that by reopening an abandoned military facility in the city of Alakurtti on the Kola Peninsula, Russia had strengthened its military presence in the Arctic region. Not far from the Finnish border city of Salla in Lapland, the task entails the Russian Armed Forces deploying to hitherto unoccupied military installations in the Arctic.<sup>119</sup> However, defence specialist Lieutenant Colonel Pentti Forsström, from Finland's National Defence University, specialists at that time contended that there was no threat associated with this development. He underlined that assistance for operations

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<sup>116</sup> 1/2013: *Finnish Security and Defence Policy 2012. Government Report*, 2013, pp.74-75. Online. Helsinki, Finland: Prime Minister's Office. Prime Minister's Office Publications. Available from: [https://vm.fi/documents/10616/1093242/J0113\\_FinnishSecurity\\_net.pdf/f7d0b3db-f566-4d32-af19-68a7064e24ee/J0113\\_FinnishSecurity\\_net.pdf?version=1.0&t=1421654538000](https://vm.fi/documents/10616/1093242/J0113_FinnishSecurity_net.pdf/f7d0b3db-f566-4d32-af19-68a7064e24ee/J0113_FinnishSecurity_net.pdf?version=1.0&t=1421654538000)

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 74-75.

<sup>118</sup> BOULÈGUE, Mathieu, 2019, pp. 16-18. *Russia's Military Posture in the Arctic Managing Hard Power in a 'Low Tension' Environment*. Online. Research Paper. Chatham House, The Royal Institute of International Affairs. Available from: [https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/2019-06-28-Russia-Military-Arctic\\_0.pdf](https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/2019-06-28-Russia-Military-Arctic_0.pdf)

<sup>119</sup> Russia moves first troops to Arctic base near Finnish border, 2015. *Yle*. Online. Available from: <https://yle.fi/a/3-7736771> [Accessed 15 December 2023].



in the north and training were the main reasons for the activity in Alakurtti. The Russian activity appeared to be related to a statement made two years earlier on the creation of new special Arctic brigades with the intention of increasing the Russian presence in the resource-rich Arctic region.<sup>120</sup> It has been anticipated that the maritime passage north of Murmansk, which is an essential shipping route between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, would become increasingly significant strategically. In this case, land protection is the responsibility of the formed Arctic brigade, which is stationed near the Finnish border near Alakurtti.<sup>121</sup>

A new air defence missile regiment was established in the Novaya Zemlya in late 2015 and rearmed with the S-400 SAM system in 2019.<sup>122</sup> Finland recognised Russia was retaining considerable conventional warfighting capabilities in the neighbouring areas and increased its military abilities over the past few years in Government's Defence 2021 report,<sup>123</sup> therefore, this factor was contributing to increasing tensions from Russia, however, it did not lead Finland to apply for NATO membership, because such developments were happening throughout the years but without change in non-military allied status.

### 5.2.3 Russian military exercises

Even though military exercises are conducted for multiple reasons, they have also a coercive purpose. They are seen as the Russian Federation's way to threaten its neighbours, particularly the Baltic States. Russia utilised these drills to concentrate force and exert pressure on its neighbours multiple times.<sup>124</sup> Every one to four years, Russian Armed formations, and units from other "power ministries" perform extensive strategic military drills - Kavkaz ("Caucasus"), Tsentr ("Centre"), Vostok ("East") and Zapad ("West") that rotate through various regions of Russia. Following one military exercise, known as Kavkaz 2008, soldiers did not return to their home bases in the

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<sup>120</sup> Russia to move 3,000 soldiers to Finnish border, 2014. *Yle*. Online. Available from: <https://yle.fi/a/3-7140350> [Accessed 15 December 2023].

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>122</sup> KJELLÉN, Jonas, 2022. The Russian Northern Fleet and the (Re)militarisation of the Arctic. *Arctic Review on Law and Politics*. 9 March 2022. Vol. 13, pp. 34–52. DOI [10.23865/arctic.v13.3338](https://doi.org/10.23865/arctic.v13.3338).

<sup>123</sup> *Government's Defence Report*, 2021. pp. 14-15. Online. Helsinki, Finland: Finnish Government. Publications of the Finnish Government. ISBN 978-952-383-852-9. Available from: <http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-383-852-9>

<sup>124</sup> Chapter Five: Russia and Eurasia, 2018. *The Military Balance*. Vol. 118, no. 1, pp. 170–171. DOI [10.1080/04597222.2018.1416981](https://doi.org/10.1080/04597222.2018.1416981).

Northern Caucasus Military District; instead, in August 2008, they fought against Georgia.<sup>125,126</sup> The drills were also again utilised prior to the occupation of Crimea and a full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022.<sup>127, 128</sup> Another purpose of these exercises is to demonstrate that Russia has the abilities to secure its interests, and that if anyone were to interfere against them, it would come with significant consequences, so serving as a deterrent to NATO eastward expansion.<sup>129</sup> In other words, Russia uses military exercises to show it has the ability to assert own interests by force if necessary.

As noted in Finnish Security and Defence Policy 2009 report, Russia was conducting significantly more military exercises in comparison with a hiatus in 1990s.<sup>130</sup> According to 2018 Military Balance issue, the Russian armed forces undertaken exercises during the last decade had grown considerably in both size and sophistication since 2010.<sup>131</sup> The events in Ukraine and Crimea, according to the Commander of the Finnish Defence Forces Jarmo Lindberg's statement made in 2015, had altered the country's operating environment. Russia had increased the scope of its training exercises, which were reported to include extensive war simulations. According to Lindberg, there had also been a surge in activity overall near Finland. Considering this, he stated Finland must thus reevaluate its readiness.<sup>132</sup> There have been multiple exercises in Finland's vicinity. In 2009, the Russian Armed Forces conducted three exercises spanning three months. The training took place in various locations, such as north-west Russia (Ladoga-2009), the North

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<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> KIIANLINNA, Lauri, INKINEN, Pertti, HULT, Heikki, FORSS, Stefan and MAANPUOLUSTUSKORKEAKOULU (eds.), 2013, p. 93. *The development of Russian military policy and Finland*. Helsinki: Maanpuolustuskorkeakoulu. Julkaisusarja 2 Tutkimusselosteita, No. 49. ISBN 978-951-25-2442-6. Available from: <http://www.doria.fi/handle/10024/88963>

<sup>127</sup> Russia's biggest war game in Europe since the cold war alarms NATO, 2017. *The Economist*. Online. Available from: <https://www.economist.com/europe/2017/08/10/russias-biggest-war-game-in-europe-since-the-cold-war-alarms-nato> [Accessed 28 December 2023].

<sup>128</sup> KRAMER, Andrew E., 2021. Russian Troop Movements and Talk of Intervention Cause Jitters in Ukraine. *The New York Times*. Online. 9 April 2021. Available from: <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/09/world/europe/russia-ukraine-war-troops-intervention.html> [Accessed 28 December 2023].

<sup>129</sup> Chapter Five: Russia and Eurasia, 2018. *The Military Balance*. Vol. 118, no. 1, pp. 170–171.

<sup>130</sup> *Finnish Security and Defence Policy 2009. Government Report*, 2009. p. 43.

<sup>131</sup> Chapter Five: Russia and Eurasia, 2018. *The Military Balance*. Vol. 118, no. 1, pp. 170–171.

<sup>132</sup> Defence Chief: Russia not an acute threat, 2015. *Yle*. Online. Available from: <https://yle.fi/a/3-7923190> [Accessed 29 December 2023].

Caucasus (Kavkaz-2009), and lastly Belarus and the Baltic Sea (Zapad-2009). In total, around 28,000 soldiers took part in these exercises.<sup>133</sup>

Especially pertinent to Finland were Ladoga-2009 and Zapad-2009. Approximately 7,400 Russian soldiers had participated in Ladoga-2009 exercise.<sup>134</sup> A bigger joint-exercise Zapad-2009 began with participation of around 13,000 Russian and Belarusian troops. The Zapad-2009 stood out as the largest exercise since the collapse of the Soviet Union at that time.<sup>135</sup> Over 40 helicopters and about 60 Russian and Belarusian military planes took part in Zapad-2009. Moreover, for the first time in 15 years, a naval anti-ship cruise missile P-700 Granit, whose maximum range is reported to be approximately 550 km, was fired during the marine portion of the drills.<sup>136</sup>

In 2012, military exercise Kavkaz-2012 was held. In addition to these drills, the so-called joint inter-service staff exercise was held in the Murmansk Oblast in the Kola Peninsula region. Air Defence Command, the First Air Force, the Northern Fleet, and a motor rifle brigade participated in this exercise. In total, 30 aircraft, 20 ships and submarines, and 7,000 servicemen were involved in the drills.<sup>137</sup> Another joint strategic exercise Zapad-2013 between Belarus and Russia took place in 2013 in the Russian Western Military District, the Baltic Sea, western Belarus, and Kaliningrad. A portion of the activities was conducted in the airspace near the Kola Peninsula. There were officially 2,520 in Belarus and about 9,400 Russian servicemen on Russian soil. However, the real estimate highly exceeded this number. It was reported that between 70,000 and 90,000 personnel actually participated in Zapad-2013. In the military drills, 10 naval vessels of the Baltic Fleet and 40 aircraft and helicopters were used.<sup>138, 139</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> NORBERG, Johan, 2015, p. 11. FOI-R--4128--SE: *Training to Fight – Russia’s Major Military Exercises 2011–2014*. Online. FOI - Swedish Defence Research Agency. Available from: <https://www.foi.se/rest-api/report/FOI-R--4128--SE>

<sup>134</sup> KIIANLINNA, L., INKINEN, P., HULT, H., FORSS, S. and MAANPUOLUSTUSKORKEAKOULU (eds.), 2013, pp. 93-94.

<sup>135</sup> NORBERG, J., 2015, p. 11.

<sup>136</sup> KIIANLINNA, L., INKINEN, P., HULT, H., FORSS, S. and MAANPUOLUSTUSKORKEAKOULU (eds.), 2013, p. 94.

<sup>137</sup> NORBERG, J., 2015, p. 33.

<sup>138</sup> NORBERG, J., 2015, p. 34.

<sup>139</sup> JÄRVENPÄÄ, Pauli, 2014. *Zapad-2013 - A View From Helsinki*, pp. 1, 4. Online. Washington, DC, USA: The Jamestown Foundation. Available from: [https://jamestown.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Zapad\\_2013\\_View\\_From\\_Helsinki\\_-\\_Full.pdf](https://jamestown.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Zapad_2013_View_From_Helsinki_-_Full.pdf)

According to Pauli Järvenpää, a former Finnish diplomat and a senior government official, the official scenario of Zapad-2013 was that the troops of the Baltic states, reinforced by other NATO forces, were the ones pushing toward Belarus and Kaliningrad.<sup>140</sup> In 2013, the Northern Fleet's naval and coastal defence formations were involved in what was arguably the most important concurrent exercise with Zapad-2013. It had 2,500 soldiers, 20 aircraft and helicopters, roughly 30 ships, and Russia's only aircraft carrier. Participating in the military exercises were most of the Navy's nuclear missile submarines. Russia's decision to activate the Northern Fleet during Zapad-2013 most likely mirrored a larger scenario in which it was getting ready for an escalation with nuclear weapons.<sup>141</sup>

A military exercise that did not escape Finnish attention took place in March 2015 on the Kola Peninsula near border of Finland, which included troops deployed in Alakurtti base that was reopened in January that year. In advance of drills on the Kola Peninsula, President Vladimir Putin issued an order bringing the Arctic troops up to full combat preparedness. Along with 110 aircraft and helicopters, the exercises involved 38,000 soldiers, 41 warships and 15 submarines. The drills took place while Finland was testing new NH90 helicopters in Lapland and Norway was conducting its own military drills with some 5,000 troops in the northern Finnmark region.<sup>142</sup> Highly discussed exercise was Zapad-2017 during which an Iskander system was deployed to Pechenga in the Murmansk Oblast, near the Finnish and Norwegian borders.<sup>143</sup> The indicated number of Belarusian and Russian forces involved varies, ranging from 12,700, as reported by the Russian Ministry of Defence, to 100,000 with 45,000 as being probably the most accurate.<sup>144,145,146</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>141</sup> NORBERG, J., 2015, pp. 37-38.

<sup>142</sup> Russian troops near Finnish border placed on combat readiness, 2015. *Yle*. Online. Available from: <https://yle.fi/a/3-7871824> [Accessed 31 December 2023].

<sup>143</sup> Ministry of Defence, 2019. *Russia of Power*, p. 67.

<sup>144</sup> FOI-R--4627--SE: *Training for War – What Military Exercises 2009-2017 Say About the Fighting Power of Russia's Armed Forces*, 2018, p. 74. Online. FOI - Swedish Defence Research Agency. Available from: <https://www.foi.se/rest-api/report/FOI-R-4627-SE>

<sup>145</sup> Thursday's papers: Russia invites Finland to visit war games, Transport Ministry's electric car cash, Alko's odd pricing schemes, 2017. *Yle*. Online. Available from: <https://yle.fi/a/3-9807786> [Accessed 1 January 2024].

<sup>146</sup> ERR, By Michael Kofman, 2017. Michael Kofman: What actually happened during Zapad 2017. *ERR*. Online. 23 December 2017. Available from: <https://news.err.ee/650543/michael-kofman-what-actually-happened-during-zapad-2017> [Accessed 1 January 2024].

Despite the extensive military exercise, Jussi Niinistö, the Minister of Defence of Finland, gave Yle, Finland's national public broadcasting company, his assessment of the Russian exercises, calling them a propaganda operation that had been slightly successful due to large media attention. Niinistö described it as an information warfare tactic, pointing out that Western countries had heavily publicised the drills, succumbing to the strategic goals of information warfare.<sup>147</sup>

According to Defence Minister Shoigu, Russia had no plans to abandon its blue-water presence. A mixed group of expeditionary forces from several Russian naval units participated in the inaugural Ocean Shield drills in the Mediterranean Sea in 2018<sup>148</sup> and 2019 saw a replay of it in the Baltic, after which soldiers were unexpectedly sent into the Norwegian Sea, where they launched military drills consisting of about 30 ships and submarines from Baltic Fleet, the Black Sea Fleet and the Northern Fleet. Norway's Defence Chief Haakon Bruun-Hansen said the objective of the exercise was to block NATO's access to the Baltic Sea, North Sea and the Norwegian Sea.<sup>149</sup> Reportedly, 10,634 military troops, 20 support vessels, 49 warships and 58 aircraft participated in the Ocean Shield 2019 drills. This was a significant increase in comparison with Ocean Shield 2018, in which there were 26 navy ships and vessels, including 2 submarines, and 34 aircraft, signifying the military importance of the Baltic Sea to the Russian Federation.<sup>150</sup> With only 30 warships taking part, the Ocean Shield 2020 exercise, last before Finland's accession to NATO, was smaller than previous years' but was designed on an offensive scenario, in which Russia utilised Kaliningrad as a forward base for initiating offensive maritime operations.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> Finnish Defence Minister: "Western countries have taken the bait" over Russia's Zapad exercises, 2017. *Yle*. Online. Available from: <https://yle.fi/a/3-9825937> [Accessed 1 January 2024].

<sup>148</sup> Chapter Five: Russia and Eurasia, 2020. *The Military Balance*. Vol. 120, no. 1, p. 176. DOI 10.1080/04597222.2020.1707966.

<sup>149</sup> STAALESEN, Atle, 2019. 30 Russian naval vessels stage show of force near coast of Norway. *The Independent Barents Observer*. Online. 15 August 2019. Available from: <https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/security/2019/08/30-russian-naval-vessels-stage-show-force-coast-norway> [Accessed 1 January 2024].

<sup>150</sup> MCDERMOTT, Roger, 2019. Russia Rehearses Multi-Platform Warfare in the Baltic Sea. *Jamestown*. Online. 6 August 2019. Available from: <https://jamestown.org/program/russia-rehearses-multi-platform-warfare-in-the-baltic-sea/> [Accessed 1 January 2024].

<sup>151</sup> VAN LOKEREN, Frederik, 2020. Ocean Shield 2020 - After action report. *Russian Fleet Analysis*. Online. 24 August 2020. Available from: <https://russianfleetanalysis.blogspot.com/2020/08/ocean-shield-2020-after-action-report.html> [Accessed 1 January 2024].

The latest Russian military exercise concerning the timeframe of this study was Zapad-2021 involving the Western Military District, Baltic Sea, and Arctic Sea. Scenario during the initial part of the exercise was that three imaginary states – likely representing the Baltic States, Poland, and a Scandinavian state carried out an offensive.<sup>152</sup> According to the Russian Ministry of Defence, that year’s exercise did significantly surpass Zapad-2017, with approximately 200,000 servicemen, over 80 aircraft and helicopters, more than 290 tanks, and up to 15 ships reportedly involved.<sup>153</sup> However, during this exercise, Russia appeared to amplify the number of engaged troops and equipment rather than downplay it to comply with the threshold of 13,000 participants<sup>154</sup> outlined in the 2011 “*Vienna Document on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures*” as it did for example during the Zapad-2017. Beyond this threshold, all activities are expected to be subject to observation by other signatories of the document.<sup>155</sup> In this regard, the Russian Federation officially proclaimed to violate the Vienna Document. Finnish Government’s Defence 2021 report noted the conduct of Russian exercises and ability to deploy its military capabilities quickly and surprisingly had improved.<sup>156</sup>

### **Summary of geographic proximity**

Walt’s balance of threat theory assumes that geographic proximity of potential adversary can be reason great enough to induce balancing behaviour against threat. In Finland’s case, the Russian Federation was increasing its military presence in Finnish neighbourhood throughout the last two decades. It was reopening military bases and deploying military capabilities along Finnish border and it was violating Finnish airspace, which was perceived as Russian way of intimidation in Finland. Moreover, the Russian Federation was conducting large-scale military exercises,

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<sup>152</sup> CLARK, Mason and BARROS, George, 2021. Russia’s Zapad-2021 Exercise. *Institute for the Study of War*. Online. 17 September 2021. Available from: <http://dev-isw.bivings.com/> [Accessed 1 January 2024].

<sup>153</sup> The joint strategic exercise Zapad-2021 has started in the armed forces of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus: Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation, [no date]. *Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation*. Online. Available from: [https://eng.mil.ru/en/news\\_page/country/more.htm?id=12383181@egNews](https://eng.mil.ru/en/news_page/country/more.htm?id=12383181@egNews) [Accessed 15 April 2024].

<sup>154</sup> HURT, Martin, 2021. Is Zapad 2021 Any Different from Zapad 2017? *ICDS - International Centre for Defence and Security*. Online. 14 September 2021. Available from: <https://icds.ce/en/is-zapad-2021-any-different-from-zapad-2017/> [Accessed 1 January 2024].

<sup>155</sup> Vienna Document on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures. Online. 22 December 2011. *Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe*. Subparagraph 47.4. Available from: <https://www.osce.org/fsc/86597>

<sup>156</sup> *Government’s Defence Report*, 2021, p. 15.

including offensive scenario probably targeted against NATO and its partners, close to Finland and strategic regions of Arctic and the Baltic Sea. These events resonated in Finnish public sphere, however, they were seen as not posing a serious threat, but rather as attempts to intimidate.

Given the fact that geographic proximity is closely related to offensive capabilities, it cannot be directly said that increasing Russian geographic proximity affected possible Finnish readjustment of military non-alignment. However, it created atmosphere of increasing tensions between Russia and Finland because it became evident Russia was in most cases increasing its presence in order to show dominance. Despite the original logic of Stephen Walt's balance of threat theory that if a state borders with potential adversary, its likely reaction is to bandwagon, Finland did not join any Russian alliance. In fact, it could be argued the geographic proximity of Russia was contributing to Finland's military non-alignment, because as it could be seen on the example of large-scale exercises, the Russian Federation was capable of large deployment of its troops. Moreover, Russian activities, such as the mentioned airspace violations or GPS jamming were a response to Finnish growing closeness and cooperation with NATO, against which Russia opposed.

## 5.3 Offensive capabilities

As Walt's balance of threat notes, the offensive capabilities of potential adversary, when great enough, can induce balancing behaviour of state. As Finnish Security and Defence Policy 2004 report, Russia was described as the most important military power in Finland's neighbouring areas.<sup>157</sup> In this regard, greater offensive capabilities have a potential to be the main source of threat. In this subchapter, I will focus on the comparison of the total military capacities of Finland and the Russian Federation. Firstly, I will compare total armed forces. Secondly, I will provide an overview of military equipment of both states. Thirdly, Finnish assessment of own and Russian offensive capabilities will be provided. The aim is to see how Finnish offensive power compares to that of Russia, and if Finland perceives the disbalance negatively to that extent to influence policy of military non-alignment.

### 5.3.1 Armed forces

Given the population size, a discrepancy amongst Russian and Finnish forces has always been significant in total numbers. The Finnish military as such has long built its defence on reservists, which is based on historical experience from the Winter War and the Continuation War against the Soviet Union, where Finland was able to secure its existence, albeit at great costs. According to the Finnish Constitution, every Finnish citizen is obliged to participate in national defence. Every male citizen aged 18-60 is liable for military service, and women can apply for military service on a voluntary basis. Those eligible for military duty must serve in the military, either armed or unarmed, or in the civil service.<sup>158</sup> Compulsory military service lasts for 165, 255 or 347 days, depending on the position.<sup>159,160</sup> After the completion of the training, conscripts are discharged from the military into the reserve and they stay there until they are 50 years old, while

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<sup>157</sup> 18/2004: *Finnish Security and Defence Policy 2004; Government report to Parliament 24 September 2004*, 2004, p. 70. Online. Helsinki, Finland: Prime Minister's Office. Prime Minister's Office Publications. Available from: [https://www.defmin.fi/files/311/2574\\_2160\\_English\\_White\\_paper\\_2004\\_1\\_.pdf](https://www.defmin.fi/files/311/2574_2160_English_White_paper_2004_1_.pdf)

<sup>158</sup> Finnish conscription system, [no date]. *Puolustusvoimat*. Online. Available from: <https://puolustusvoimat.fi/en/finnish-conscription-system> [Accessed 9 April 2024].

<sup>159</sup> Finnish conscription system, *Puolustusvoimat*.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.* Conscripts who receive training for rank-and-file duties serve for 165 days, while those who are trained for rank-and-file duties requiring special skills and those enrolled in the unarmed service serve for 255 days. Conscripts who are to become officers, non-commissioned officers, or are trained for the most difficult special tasks within the ranks serve for 347 as well as those completing civil service.



officers and non-commissioned officers stay until being 60 years old. Moreover, each male aged from 18 to 60 belongs to the auxiliary reserve.<sup>161</sup> Reservists take part in refresher exercises every year. Throughout years 2005, 2010, 2015 and 2020, numbers of participants varied from 35,000 as of 2005,<sup>162</sup> to 25,000 participants as of 2010 and 2015<sup>163,164</sup> and to 18,000 as of 2020.<sup>165</sup> As has regular military, reservist system has been reduced in size impacting possible mobilisation strength, which has fallen from approximately 300,000 in 2010<sup>166</sup> to 285,000 in 2022.<sup>167</sup>

In comparison to Finland, the Russian Federation has greater manpower resources than Finland. If we look at the Russian Federation's total armed forces, see Table 3, we can observe that the number of Russian soldiers significantly exceeded the number of soldiers of Finland throughout the last two decades. According to the Military Balance journal, while Russia had approximately 1,046,000 soldiers (+2,000,000 reservists)<sup>168</sup> in 2010, Finland had 22,250 soldiers (+350,000 reservists).<sup>169</sup> The quantitative gap between Finnish and Russian troops had remained similar throughout the last two decades. In Table 3, we can observe the relative strength of Russian total armed forces in comparison to Finnish forces was significantly higher. It ranged from being 35.95 to 37.82 times larger total armed forces without paramilitary than Finland. Before the start of war in Ukraine in 2022, the Military Balance journal had estimated the Russian Federation had at its disposal 900,000 troops as of November 2021.<sup>170</sup>

Different perspective is shown when we consider Finnish mobilisation strength, see Table 4, which provides a more likely comparison. In the event of potential war, Finland would naturally

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<sup>161</sup> Finnish conscription system, *Puolustusvoimat*.

<sup>162</sup> Europe: Non-Nato, 2005. *The Military Balance*. Vol. 105, no. 1, p. 118. DOI [10.1080/04597220500387613](https://doi.org/10.1080/04597220500387613).

<sup>163</sup> Chapter Three: Europe, 2010. *The Military Balance*. Vol. 110, no. 1, p. 182. DOI [10.1080/04597220903545825](https://doi.org/10.1080/04597220903545825).

<sup>164</sup> Chapter Four: Europe, 2015. *The Military Balance*. Vol. 115, no. 1, p. 88. DOI [10.1080/04597222.2015.996348](https://doi.org/10.1080/04597222.2015.996348).

<sup>165</sup> Chapter Four: Europe, 2020. *The Military Balance*. Vol. 120, no. 1, p. 101.

DOI [10.1080/04597222.2020.1707964](https://doi.org/10.1080/04597222.2020.1707964).

<sup>166</sup> Chapter Three: Europe, 2010. *The Military Balance*. Vol. 110, no. 1, p. 182.

<sup>167</sup> Chapter Four: Europe: Regional trends in 2021 64; Regional defence policy and economics 66; Spain: defence policy and economics 76; United Kingdom: defence policy 79; Arms procurements and deliveries 83; Armed forces data section 86, 2022. *The Military Balance*. Vol. 122, no. 1, p. 102. DOI [10.1080/04597222.2022.2022929](https://doi.org/10.1080/04597222.2022.2022929).

<sup>168</sup> Chapter Five: Russia, 2011. *The Military Balance*. Vol. 111, no. 1, p. 183. DOI [10.1080/04597222.2011.559836](https://doi.org/10.1080/04597222.2011.559836).

<sup>169</sup> Chapter Four: Europe, 2011. *The Military Balance*. Vol. 111, no. 1, p. 103. DOI [10.1080/04597222.2011.559835](https://doi.org/10.1080/04597222.2011.559835).

<sup>170</sup> Chapter Five: Russia and Eurasia: Regional trends in 2021 164; Russia: defence policy and economics 166; Armenia: defence policy and economics 175; Arms procurements and deliveries 178; Armed forces data section 181, 2022. *The Military Balance*. Vol. 122, no. 1, p. 193. DOI [10.1080/04597222.2022.2022930](https://doi.org/10.1080/04597222.2022.2022930).

mobilise its reservists as well. Russian quantitative superiority would be less prevalent, however, still significant in case of a war with Finland. For times of crisis, Finland, as a militarily non-aligned nation, was building its defence capabilities against military threats without external support as stated in official Finnish Security and Defence Policy in 2012.<sup>171</sup> This along with the potentially mobilised wartime strength reflects the traditional involvement of the whole society in defence of Finland. According to surveys, see Graph 8, in response to the question, “*If Finland is attacked, do you think Finns should arm and defend themselves in all situations, even if the outcome seems uncertain*”, over 70% of respondents replied “yes” in the period from 2000 to spring of 2022. The only exceptions were years 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021. Regardless of quality of Finnish training, such an enormous quantitative Russian superiority could be a reason great enough to induce Finnish balancing behaviour.

*Table 3: Total armed forces without paramilitary and reservists (Military Balance, 2005, pp. 118, 158; Military Balance, 2011, pp. 103, 183; Military Balance, 2016, pp. 92, 189; Military Balance, 2021, pp. 99, 191; table by the author)*

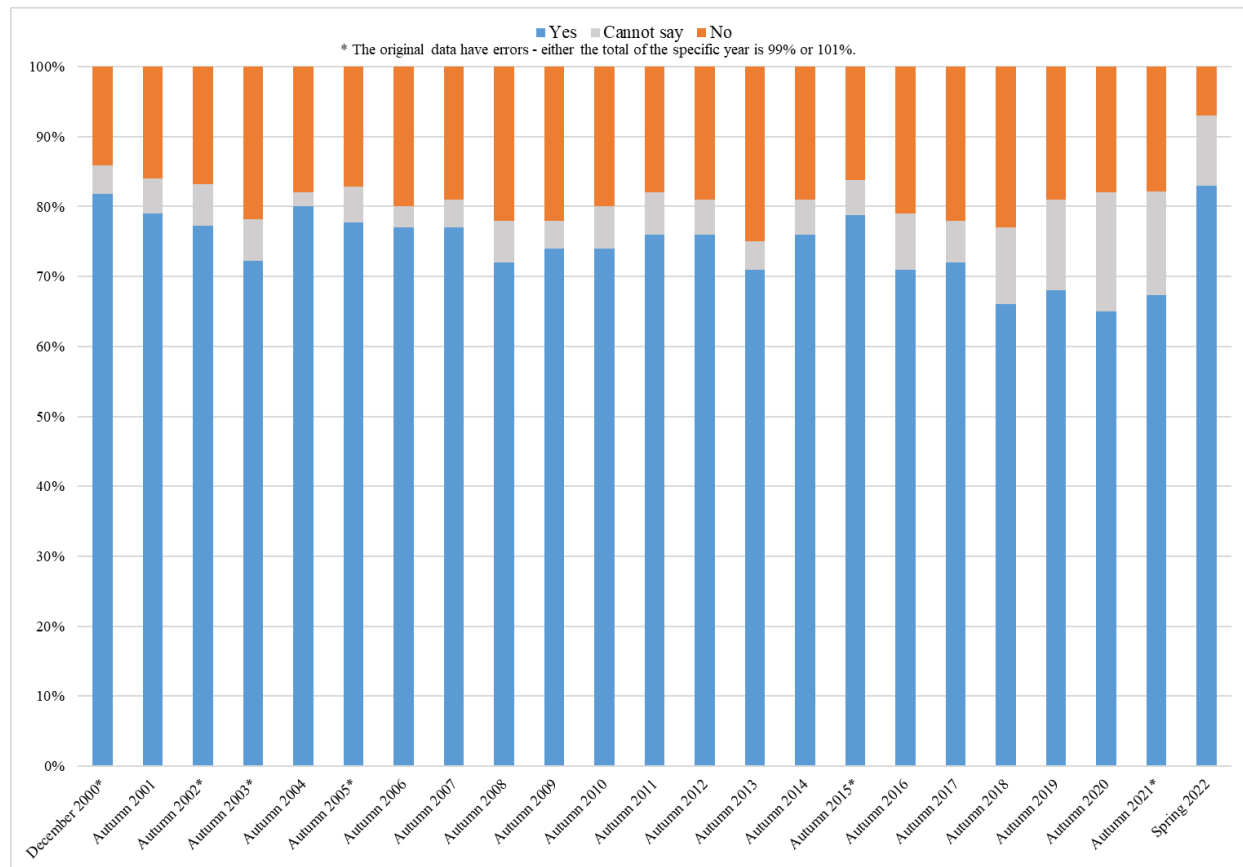
<b>Year</b>	<b>Russia</b>	<b>Finland</b>	<b>Relative strength (RUS/FIN)</b>
2005	1 037 000	28 300	36.64
2010	1 046 000	22 250	47.01
2015	798 000	22 200	35.95
2020	900 000	23 800	37.82

*Table 4: Russian total armed forces without paramilitary and reservists and Finnish mobilisation strength (Military Balance, 2005, pp. 118, 158; Military Balance, 2011, pp. 103, 183; Military Balance, 2016, pp. 92, 189; Military Balance, 2021, pp. 100, 191; table by the author)*

<b>Year</b>	<b>Russia</b>	<b>Finland</b>	<b>Relative strength (RUS/FIN)</b>
2005	1 037 000	237 000	4.38
2010	1 046 000	350 000	2.99
2015	798 000	285 000	2.8
2020	900 000	285 000	3.16

<sup>171</sup> *Finnish Security and Defence Policy 2012. Government Report, 2013. p. 99.*

Graph 8: Responses to question: “If Finland were attacked, should Finns, in your opinion, take up arms to defend themselves in all situations, even if the outcome seemed uncertain?” (The Advisory Board for Defence Information ABDI, p. 29, 2022, graph by the author)



### 5.3.2 Equipment

The superiority of Russia is also evident in the case of military equipment. Analytical server *Global Firepower* provides a detailed summary of military capabilities, excluding nuclear arsenal. As it can be seen in Table 5, Russia had a favourable capability in all the categories except patrol craft in 2011.<sup>172</sup> In the majority of inventory, the Russian Federation had a significant advantage over Finland ranging from air force, land force including tanks, armoured personnel carriers (APCs) and infantry fighting vehicles (IFVs) to self-propelled guns (SPGs) and multiple launch rocket projectors (MLRs) to name a few, to naval force. In 2015 and 2020, see Table 6 and Table

<sup>172</sup> That year, Global Firepower Index started including Finland in its analysis.

7, Russian significant quantitative advantage continued. Despite what may seem, Finland had one of the biggest artillery forces in Europe.<sup>173</sup>

In terms of other strengths of Russia, as of 2021, the Russian Federation had the widest inventory of ballistic and cruise missiles in the world and maintained position of major power in the development of variety of missiles ranging from anti-access/area denial to launch of strategic nuclear weapons across continents.<sup>174</sup> Finland was in less disadvantageous positions in numbers of available mine warfare craft, which includes minesweepers or minelayers, and total fleet strength, which reflects military doctrine of territorial defence whose aim is “to engage the aggressor at the border and prevent him from reaching strategically vital areas and targets, and to frustrate his ambitions to paralyse functions vital to Finnish society.”<sup>175</sup> The mine warfare craft capability such as minelayers is essential for protecting Finnish shoreline because of the nature of the coast and the Gulf of Finland. The Gulf of Finland’s average depth is only 38 meters and 12 km wide at its narrowest point. Moreover, 1,250 km long coast is divided by many islands, rocks and shallows,<sup>176,177</sup> where Russian superiority of aircraft carriers would be of little use.

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<sup>173</sup> LUCAS, Edward, 2012. Finland tones up its security muscles. *POLITICO*. Online. 19 September 2012. Available from: <https://www.politico.eu/article/finland-tones-up-its-security-muscles/> [Accessed 15 April 2024].

<sup>174</sup> Missiles of Russia | Missile Threat, 2021. *CSIS*. Online. [Accessed 15 April 2024]. Available from: <https://missilethreat.csis.org/country/russia/>

<sup>175</sup> *Finnish Security and Defence Policy 2009. Government Report*, 2009, pp. 110, 136.

<sup>176</sup> JOHN, Radek, 2019. Nové finské korvety Pohjanmaa a historie střetu s Ruskem. *Armádní noviny*. Online. 25 September 2019. Available from: [https://www.armadninoviny.cz/nove-finske-korvety-pohjanmaa-baltske-more.html?hledat=Finsko&fbclid=IwAR1M0EytZnBTRxRT-iV\\_wBElyViATo00zo5bloJmGb\\_ilamncQ65bwR2okk\\_aem\\_ASeNYXVkl5c59Y899NmFilsSeneMzqjTmWM9J8ZnQQkNAvn4H\\_Yok5vE8Wdbt6Dee3Bq2WB\\_FkaPSz9RSoop9oWC](https://www.armadninoviny.cz/nove-finske-korvety-pohjanmaa-baltske-more.html?hledat=Finsko&fbclid=IwAR1M0EytZnBTRxRT-iV_wBElyViATo00zo5bloJmGb_ilamncQ65bwR2okk_aem_ASeNYXVkl5c59Y899NmFilsSeneMzqjTmWM9J8ZnQQkNAvn4H_Yok5vE8Wdbt6Dee3Bq2WB_FkaPSz9RSoop9oWC) [Accessed 14 April 2024].

<sup>177</sup> TOREMANS, Guy, 2020. The Finnish Navy – ‘Leaner and Meaner’ - European Security & Defence. *European Security & Defence*. Online. 14 February 2020. Available from: <https://euro-sd.com/2020/02/articles/16171/the-finnish-navy-leaner-and-meaner/> [Accessed 14 April 2024].

Table 5: Comparison of military equipment of Finland and Russia as of 2011 (Global Firepower, 2011, table by the author)

	Finland	Russia	Relative advantage (FIN/RUS)
<b>Air force</b>			
Total aircraft	256	2 749	0.09 ***
Helicopters	47	588	0.08 ***
<b>Land force</b>			
Tanks	100	22 950	0.00 ***
APCs / IFVs	1 233	24 900	0.05 ***
Towed Artillery	684	12 765	0.05 ***
SPGs	90	6 000	0.02 ***
MLRSs	58	4 500	0.01 ***
Mortars	2 058	6 600	0.31 ***
AT Weapons	2 348	14 000	0.17 ***
AA Weapons	445	4 644	0.10 ***
Logistical Vehicles	2 043	12 000	0.17 ***
<b>Naval force</b>			
Fleet strength <sup>a</sup>	178	233	0.76 **
Aircraft Carriers	0	1	0.00 ***
Destroyers	0	14	0.00 ***
Submarines	0	48	0.00 ***
Frigates	0	5	0.00 ***
Patrol Craft	98	60	1.63 *
Mine Warfare Craft	19	34	0.56 **
Amphibious Assault Craft	5	23	0.22 ***
a) Navy ship vessels of all forms including logistical types.			
Advantage of FIN (coef.>1)*, advantage of RUS (coef.=0.5-1)**, significant advantage of RUS (coef.<0.5)***			

Table 6: Comparison of military equipment of Finland and Russia as of 2015 (Global Firepower, 2015, table by the author)

	Finland	Russia	Relative advantage (FIN/RUS)
<b>Air force</b>			
Total aircraft	151	3 429	0.04 ***
Fighters/Interceptors	54	769	0.07 ***
Fixed-Wing Attack Aircraft	54	1 305	0.04 ***
Transport Aircraft	28	1 083	0.03 ***
Helicopters	23	1 120	0.02 ***
Attack helicopters	0	462	0.00 ***
<b>Land force</b>			
Tanks	250	15 398	0.02 ***
AFVs (APCs and IFVs)	1 370	31 298	0.04 ***
Towed Artillery	871	4 625	0.19 ***
SPGs	90	5 972	0.02 ***
MLRSs	58	3 793	0.02 ***
<b>Naval force</b>			
Fleet strength <sup>a</sup>	178	352	0.51 **
Aircraft Carriers	0	1	0.00 ***
Corvettes	0	74	0.00 ***
Destroyers	0	12	0.00 ***
Submarines	0	55	0.00 ***
Frigates	0	4	0.00 ***
Patrol Craft	8	65	0.12 ***
Mine Warfare Craft	19	34	0.56 **
a) Battle force ships including auxiliary vessels.			
Advantage of FIN (coef.>1)*, advantage of RUS (coef.=0.5-1)**, significant advantage of RUS (coef.<0.5)***			

Table 7: Comparison of military equipment of Finland and Russia as of 2020 (Global Firepower, 2020, table by the author)

	Finland	Russia	Relative advantage (FIN/RUS)
<b>Air force</b>			
Total aircraft	194	4 163	0.05 ***
Total helicopters	127	1 522	0.08 ***
Combat aircraft	55	873	0.06 ***
Dedicated attack	0	742	0.00 ***
Transport aircraft	11	424	0.03 ***
Special-mission aircraft (such as patrol aircraft)	1	127	0.01 ***
Attack helicopters	0	531	0.00 ***
<b>Land power</b>			
Tanks	200	12 950	0.02 ***
Armoured vehicles	2 050	27 038	0.08 ***
Self-propelled artillery	100	6 083	0.02 ***
Field artillery	627	4 465	0.14 ***
Rocket projectors	75	3 860	0.02 ***
<b>Naval force</b>			
Fleet strength	246	603	0.41 ***
Aircraft carriers	0	1	0.00 ***
Submarines	0	62	0.00 ***
Destroyers	0	16	0.00 ***
Frigates	0	10	0.00 ***
Corvettes	0	79	0.00 ***
Coastal patrol	8	41	0.20 ***
Mine Warfare	18	48	0.38 ***
Advantage of FIN (coef.>1)*, advantage of RUS (coef.=0.5-1)**, significant advantage of RUS (coef.<0.5)***			

## Selected equipment deployment

The installation of the nuclear-capable Iskander-M ballistic missile system, which has a missile brigade stationed at Luga was a noteworthy expansion of military might.<sup>178</sup> As part of Russia's military doctrine, the Iskander-M missiles, which have replaced the outdated Tochka U tactical missiles,<sup>179</sup> possessing an official maximum range of 500 km<sup>180,181</sup> are capable of reaching a considerable area of Finland as well as the Baltic States.<sup>182</sup> Another great development was the stationing of Iskander missile in Kaliningrad. Russia has frequently stationed Iskander-M in Kaliningrad such as in 2013 and 2016, for example. Russia has had the Iskander-M permanently stationed at Kaliningrad since 2018.<sup>183,184,185</sup> Even though the missile system is not able to reach Finland, it would cause a crisis in the Baltics, which would also have an impact on Finland.

Apart from Iskander, Russian missile arsenal includes a variety of types – from short-range ballistic missiles, land-attack cruise missiles to submarine-launched ballistic missiles or intercontinental ballistic missiles able to carry nuclear weapons. Thus, the operational range can

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<sup>178</sup> KIIANLINNA, L., INKINEN, P., HULT, H., FORSS, S. and MAANPUOLUSTUSKORKEAKOULU (eds.), 2013, pp. 46-47.

<sup>179</sup> Tochka U, other names - OTR-21B or Scarab B, has official range to 120 km. OTR-21 Tochka (SS-21), 2022. *Missile Threat*. Online. Available from: <https://missilethreat.csis.org/missile/ss-21/> [Accessed 17 December 2023].

<sup>180</sup> 9K720 Iskander (SS-26), 2021. *Missile Threat*. Online. Available from: <https://missilethreat.csis.org/missile/ss-26-2/> [Accessed 17 December 2023].

<sup>181</sup> Needless to say, it is suggested that Iskander-M ballistic missile system has a range of over 500 km, which would violate the INF Treaty. Some sources claim Iskander is able to reach up to 700 km or even 700 km.

DALSJÖ, Robert, BERGLUND, Christofer and JONSSON, Michael, 2019, p. 37. FOI-R--4651--SE: *Bursting the Bubble. Russian A2/AD in the Baltic Sea Region: Capabilities, Countermeasures, and Implications*. Online. FOI - Swedish Defence Research Agency. Available from: <https://www.foi.se/rest-api/report/FOI-R--4651--SE> Lithuanian President slams “aggressive” Russian moves, Finland aims to “calm tensions,” 2016. *Yle*. Online. Available from: <https://yle.fi/a/3-9237864> [Accessed 26 December 2023].

<sup>182</sup> KIIANLINNA, L., INKINEN, P., HULT, H., FORSS, S. and MAANPUOLUSTUSKORKEAKOULU (eds.), 2013, pp-46-47.

<sup>183</sup> ROTH, Andrew, 2013. Deployment of Missiles Is Confirmed by Russia. *The New York Times*. Online. 16 December 2013. Available from: <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/12/17/world/europe/russia-deploys-missiles-in-western-region.html> [Accessed 26 December 2023].

<sup>184</sup> Russia deploys Iskander nuclear-capable missiles to Kaliningrad, 2018. *Reuters*. Online. Available from: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-russia-nato-missiles/russia-deploys-iskander-nuclear-capable-missiles-to-kaliningrad-ria-idUSKBN1FP21Y/> [Accessed 26 December 2023].

<sup>185</sup> Russia deploys nuclear-capable missiles in Kaliningrad, 2016. *BBC News*. Online. Available from: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-37597075> [Accessed 27 April 2024].



be up to 16,000 km (the R-36, in NATO code SS-18 “Satan”),<sup>186</sup> and is potentially able to include Finland. There were apparently two S-400 anti-aircraft missile systems stationed nearer the Finnish border in 2016. Defence Minister Jussi Niinistö claimed that since Russia had previously stated that it was stationing S-400 anti-aircraft missiles, for example, in the Kola Peninsula, there was nothing unique about the activity.<sup>187</sup> He asserted this was typical procedure because Russia was upgrading its antiquated S-300 rockets with these systems. Still, the minister admitted that the reporting came as a bit of a surprise. He mentioned an article from The Moscow Times that had a passage from Putin’s July speech in which he warned Finnish President Sauli Niinistö of the potential consequences if Finland chose to join NATO.<sup>188</sup>

Regarding Russian military presence in Arctic, Rogachevo Airbase, in January 2021 the Russian Federation deployed supersonic MiG-31BM long-range aircraft capable of destroying air and ground targets. Apart from these interceptors, Russia already housed an S-400 missile defence system, which when combined extended its anti-access/area-denial capabilities in the region, Finland included.<sup>189</sup>

### **5.3.3 Finnish assessment of own and Russian offensive capabilities**

There are two dimensions to Finnish perception of offensive capabilities, be it its own or those of Russia. Finland had perceived its capabilities to be a sufficient deterrent force against possible attack. Even though its military capabilities were not in the majority cases quantitatively superior to those of Russia, Finland had seen itself as capable of defending its territory. In 2008, after Russian war in Georgia, the Prime Minister said he saw no reason why Finland should be concerned of its security, because it had taken measures to ensure its ability to defend the area.<sup>190</sup>

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<sup>186</sup> Missiles of Russia | Missile Threat, 2021. *CSIS*. Online. [Accessed 5 December 2023]. Available from: <https://missilethreat.csis.org/country/russia/>

<sup>187</sup> Russia moves missiles to Finnish border, 2016. *Yle*. Online. Available from: <https://yle.fi/a/3-9186533> [Accessed 26 December 2023].

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>189</sup> FUNAIOLE, Matthew P., JR, Joseph S. Bermudez and WALL, Colin, 2021. Russia’s Northern Fleet Deploys Long-Range Interceptors to Remote Arctic Base. Online. 14 April 2021. Available from: <https://www.csis.org/analysis/russias-northern-fleet-deploys-long-range-interceptors-remote-arctic-base> [Accessed 26 December 2023].

<sup>190</sup> Vanhanen: Finland to Rethink Security Following Crisis in Georgia, 2008. *Yle*. Online. Available from: <https://yle.fi/a/3-5848440> [Accessed 15 April 2024].

Its national defence was described as credible.<sup>191</sup> Moreover, Finnish Security and Defence Report noted Russia's participation in the Georgian crisis highlighted, despite rapid deployment capabilities of its army, navy, and air force and operational preparedness, some shortcomings for example in Russia's command and control infrastructure.<sup>192</sup> In 2017, the situation changed. The Finnish Army's capabilities were labelled as satisfactory, while Navy's and Air Force's capabilities were evaluated as being good. However, Russian military's involvements in Ukraine, as well as in Syria, have shown that its capabilities to deploy coordinated military force over the border increased, while Russia retained ability to manage a major military crisis.<sup>193</sup>

In 2021, Government's Defence report, the assessment of level of own military capabilities showed shortcomings in relation to growing threats. The armed forces capabilities and readiness was improved from previous years for example by improving their mobilisation, education and training, as well as through establishing high readiness units and rapid reaction units. Moreover, level of readiness for the operating environment of Finnish Air Force and ground-based air defence was deemed sufficient while the Navy's capabilities were labelled as improved or maintained.<sup>194</sup> Despite this assessment indicating readiness of Finnish forces, future maintenance of such levels of capabilities by modernisations was not certain due to limited financial resources. Complications stemming from impossibility to modernise would eventually hinder sufficient capabilities for a longer crisis or war.<sup>195</sup> According to Finland, Russia had shown continued proficiency in managing its armed actions as shown by annexation of Crimea and continuation of conflict in eastern Ukraine. Those conflicts revealed to Finland that longer conflicts were used by Russia to accomplish intended foreign policy objectives, among other methods.<sup>196</sup>

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<sup>191</sup> *Finnish Security and Defence Policy 2009. Government Report*, 2009, p.81.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*, p.18.

<sup>193</sup> *Government's Defence Report*, 2017, pp. 8, 12. Online. Helsinki, Finland: Prime Ministers's Office. Prime Minister's Office Publications, 7/2017. ISBN 978-952-287-374-3. Available from: <http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-287-374-3>

<sup>194</sup> *Government's Defence Report*, 2021. pp. 21-22.

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 21-24.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

### **Summary of offensive capabilities**

During the last 20 years, in the vast majority of cases, objectively, military capabilities were quantitatively in favour of Russia. Finland and the Russian Federation, Although the Finnish Defence Forces have long maintained a large and capable reserve force through compulsory military service and regular exercises capable of mobilising a considerable force in the event of war given the population's willingness to defend country regardless of the possible outcome, the Russian army had more capacity at its disposal. This disparity is also significant when comparing the military equipment of these states. The Russian offensive superiority was consistent throughout the last 20 years. However, Finnish perception of both Russian and its own forces varied. Formerly, despite quantitative prowess, Russian use of force in Georgia, even though assessed as capable of deploying troops rapidly and having operational preparedness, underscored shortcomings such as in command-and-control infrastructure. At the same time, Finland perceived itself as able to defend its territory, and that in relation to Russian performance in Georgia, there was no need to be worried about its security.

However, in 2017, the perception of capabilities in Finland changed. The Finnish Defence Forces' branches were evaluated as being in good or satisfactory level. At that time, the Russian military capabilities were, as opposed to previous years, improved and the ability to strike abroad increased. Russia, against the background of armed actions in Syria and Ukraine, illustrated ability to manage a major military crisis. In 2021, Government's Defence report, the assessment of level of own military capabilities showed shortcomings in relation to growing threats. Even though the Finnish armed forces improved its capabilities and readiness at that time, future maintenance of such levels of capabilities by modernisations was not certain, which would negatively impact Finnish defence especially if involved in a longer military conflict, which was assessed as used method, in which Russia was proficient to manage, as seen in continuing conflict in Easter Ukraine. In sum, it can therefore be concluded that Russian offensive capabilities were an important factor when assessing possible source of threat. However, without context of deployment, they were not sufficient to rethink policy of militarily non-allied country.

## 5.4 Offensive intentions

According to Walt, threat from offensive intentions can be reason for balancing by joining alliance against a potential adversary, even though the country does not possess a great number of capabilities. That means intentions do matter when considering balancing behaviour. If a state is perceived as being belligerent, joining the alliance is seen as probably the only possibility how try to preserve its survival.<sup>197</sup> In this section, I will examine perception of Russian foreign policy in the context of Finnish security and defence policy mentioned in strategic documents – Finnish Security and Defence Policy reports and Government’s Defence Policy reports. Given the fact the Government Defence Policy report was not issued after the start of full-scale war in Ukraine, I will include relevant sources such as statements from Finnish politicians. The aim is to see if Russia was seen as threat after aggressive foreign policy manifested through armed actions, in other words after offensive intentions. Furthermore, I will analyse how has the Finnish security environment evolved between 2009 and 2021 in Finnish strategic documents, i.e. Finnish Security and Defence Policy reports and Government’s Defence Policy reports.

### 5.4.1 From war in Georgia to 2014

The war in Georgia marked Russia’s first mass deployment of its troops outside its territory. In contrast with offensive intentions in the next subchapters, war in Georgia from 2008 is more complex, because it is still debatable whose actions started it. Both parties of the conflict involved expectedly accuse each other of starting the war. The international response to this conflict reflected the complexities. The European Union issued lengthy multinational investigation, whose findings were compiled into around 700 pages long report by the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia published in 2009. On night between August 7 and August 8 of 2008, capital of separatist’s South Ossetia, Tskhinvali, was shelled by Georgian forces to regain control over the territory.<sup>198</sup> In the EU report, it was stated that:

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<sup>197</sup> WALT, S., 2013, pp. 25–26.

<sup>198</sup> KUCERA, Joshua, 2023. August 7 Or 8? Why The Date Georgia Marks Its 2008 War With Russia Is So Controversial. *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*. Online. 7 August 2023. Available from: <https://www.rferl.org/a/georgia-war-russia-start-controversy/32537938.html> [Accessed 23 April 2024].

*“The shelling of Tskhinvali by the Georgian armed forces during the night of 7 to 8 August 2008 marked the beginning of the large-scale armed conflict in Georgia, yet it was only the culminating point of a long period of increasing tensions, provocations and incidents.”*<sup>199</sup>

Georgian president Saakashvili had said the country was responding to an invasion by Russian forces when it attacked South Ossetia,<sup>200</sup> however, the report stated the Mission was not in a position to consider Georgian claim as sufficiently substantiated, and that attack against Russian peacekeeping forces was illegal.<sup>201</sup> Despite this, it was found there was a Russian military build-up prior to the eruption of the war.<sup>202</sup> Moreover, even though the initial military response to protect Russian peacekeepers was considered as legal, the subsequent Russian response, where its forces crossed *“far beyond the administrative boundary of South Ossetia”*,<sup>203</sup> was against international law. The conflict ended with the Six-Point Agreement, which was signed by both Georgia and Russia. The Russian Federation, however, continued to have its military capabilities in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which violated international law and commitments as stated in the agreement.<sup>204</sup> Furthermore, at the end of August 2008, the Russian Federation recognised South Ossetia and Abkhazia as independent.<sup>205</sup>

In response to war in Georgia, Finnish president Halonen condemned the use of violence to resolve the conflict,<sup>206</sup> however, this was a rather mild response. According to survey for Yle, the

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<sup>199</sup> *Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia*, 2009. p 11. Online. Available from: [https://www.echr.coe.int/d/hudoc\\_38263\\_08\\_annexes\\_eng](https://www.echr.coe.int/d/hudoc_38263_08_annexes_eng) [Accessed 23 April 2024].

<sup>200</sup> HERITAGE, Timothy, 2009. Georgia started war with Russia: EU-backed report. *Reuters*. Online. 30 September 2009. Available from: <https://www.reuters.com/article/idUSTRE58T4MO/> [Accessed 23 April 2024].

<sup>201</sup> *Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia*, 2009, pp 20, 23.

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*, p 20.

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 23-24.

<sup>204</sup> Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the EU on the 10 years anniversary of the conflict between Russia and Georgia, 2018. Online. Available from: [https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2018/08/07/declaration-by-the-high-representative-on-behalf-of-the-eu-on-the-10-years-anniversary-of-the-conflict-between-russia-and-georgia/?fbclid=IwZXh0bgNhZW0CMTAAR1dW95HT7f4GbZrOs4yl6lBFSXhXGgE6iTOAxIzUQq1o19Ti8ZPmPu94eQ\\_aem\\_AeKglWuKlgKiwAIwBTx21QSTqOT9rwtSaWa32CM5b8lYbN\\_R8HEVP3cDfalXWDnBLqtsQ9RX4P9aclKruE5926Ue](https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2018/08/07/declaration-by-the-high-representative-on-behalf-of-the-eu-on-the-10-years-anniversary-of-the-conflict-between-russia-and-georgia/?fbclid=IwZXh0bgNhZW0CMTAAR1dW95HT7f4GbZrOs4yl6lBFSXhXGgE6iTOAxIzUQq1o19Ti8ZPmPu94eQ_aem_AeKglWuKlgKiwAIwBTx21QSTqOT9rwtSaWa32CM5b8lYbN_R8HEVP3cDfalXWDnBLqtsQ9RX4P9aclKruE5926Ue) [Accessed 24 April 2024].

<sup>205</sup> LEVY, Clifford J., 2008. Russia Backs Independence of Georgian Enclaves. *The New York Times*. Online. 26 August 2008. Available from: <https://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/27/world/europe/27russia.html> [Accessed 24 April 2024].

<sup>206</sup> President Halonen: Finland Condemns Russia's Actions In Georgia, 2008. *Yle*. Online. Available from: <https://yle.fi/a/3-5850491> [Accessed 24 April 2024].

majority view of Finnish population at that time was that war in Georgia would not have an impact on Finland's security. A 60% of respondents thought the war would have zero security consequences for Finland, whereas nearly one-third considered the conflict to have a harmful effect on Finland's security.<sup>207</sup> The complex course of the conflict, as reflected in the Fact-Finding Mission's conclusions, was also mirrored in the survey for Yle, because despite 38% of respondents, which considered the Russian Federation to be more responsible for the conflict, 28% of respondents saw both parties to be responsible for the situation, while 10% thought Georgia was guilty for the conflict. Nevertheless, a quarter of respondents remained neutral.<sup>208</sup> In autumn 2008 and autumn 2009, 60% and 62% of respondents of the survey for the ABDI responded negatively to question whether Finland should seek NATO membership.<sup>209</sup> In this regard, it can be inferred Finnish population did not see war in Georgia as an important threatening factor to its security which would have to be solved by joining NATO.

Regarding, Finnish strategic documents, war in Georgia was viewed as an event, in which Russia proved it had ability to assert its interests by force. The Finnish Security and Defence Policy report published in 2009 reflected the war in Georgia as an example of Russia's willingness to resort to the use of force to protect its interests, which was to prevent Georgia from becoming a NATO member.<sup>210</sup> Russia as such was in 2009 viewed as a state seeking to restore great-power status.<sup>211</sup> Indeed, at NATO Bucharest Summit held in April 2008, the Alliance stated that Georgia, as well as Ukraine, would in the future become NATO members,<sup>212</sup> against which Russia's ambassador to NATO, Dmitry Rogozin, warned.<sup>213</sup> Finland considered its security environment to

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<sup>207</sup> Finns Mostly Unfazed by Conflict in Georgia, 2008. *Yle*. Online. Available from: <https://yle.fi/a/3-5848365> [Accessed 25 April 2024].

<sup>208</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>209</sup> 2022:3: *Finns' opinions on foreign and security policy, national defence and security*, 2022. p. 27.

<sup>210</sup> *Finnish Security and Defence Policy 2009. Government Report*, 2009, pp. 40, 66.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 40.

<sup>212</sup> NATO, 2008. Bucharest Summit Declaration issued by NATO Heads of State and Government (2008). *NATO*. Online. 3 April 2008. Available from: [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_8443.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_8443.htm) [Accessed 24 April 2024].

<sup>213</sup> LOWE, Christian, 2008. Russia warns against Georgia NATO membership. *Reuters*. Online. 11 March 2008. Available from: <https://www.reuters.com/article/idUSL11851786/> [Accessed 24 April 2024].

be stable,<sup>214</sup> however, the Russian involvement in Georgia showed that conflicts in Europe were still possible, the security environment was in Finnish vicinity might change and may include armed aggression, even though the probability was low.<sup>215,216</sup> If conflict were to happen, it was expected it would not be of a large-scale nature.<sup>217</sup> Finland at that time maintained its status of militarily non-allied country as stated in both Finnish Security and Defence 2009 and 2012 reports,<sup>218,219</sup> however, it maintained option of NATO membership.<sup>220,221</sup>

The war in Georgia from 2008 was not at that time viewed as threatening to European security. One of these reasons was that both Georgia and the Russian Federation were to some extent seen as responsible for the conflict. Moreover, it was a first Russian deployment of its armed forces across the border in such a scenario, where Russia aimed to secure its interests by military means. Finnish public did not see the war as threatening to Finnish security. However, Finland's strategic documents viewed the conflict as an example that the Russian Federation was willing to use military force against eastern NATO enlargement. For Finland, at that time, NATO membership was not seen as necessary, because the probability of conflict against Finland was considered to be low.

#### **5.4.2 From 2014 to 2021**

Annexation of Crimea and a conflict in eastern Ukraine was a second act of Russian offensive intentions. According to Stephen Walt's balance of threat theory, a state would resort to balancing behaviour if the potential adversary's offensive intentions could not be changed.<sup>222</sup> On the contrary to war in Georgia, annexation of Crimea and a conflict in eastern Ukraine were perceived to be more serious in the sense of Russian aggressive foreign policy. The referendum on

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<sup>214</sup> *Finnish Security and Defence Policy 2012. Government Report*, 2013, p. 14.

<sup>215</sup> *Finnish Security and Defence Policy 2009. Government Report*, 2009, p. 66.

<sup>216</sup> *Finnish Security and Defence Policy 2012. Government Report*, 2013, p. 14.

<sup>217</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>218</sup> *Finnish Security and Defence Policy 2009. Government Report*, 2009, p. 69.

<sup>219</sup> *Finnish Security and Defence Policy 2012. Government Report*, 2013, p. 99.

<sup>220</sup> *Finnish Security and Defence Policy 2009. Government Report*, 2009, p. 81.

<sup>221</sup> *Finnish Security and Defence Policy 2012. Government Report*, 2013, p. 78.

<sup>222</sup> WALT, S., 2013, pp. 25–26.

secession in Crimea was declared to be illegal by Finland.<sup>223</sup> In autumn 2014, 30% of respondents of the survey for the ABDI responded positively to question whether Finland should seek NATO membership, on the contrary to 21% from autumn 2013.<sup>224</sup> In this regard, it can be inferred Finnish population did indeed consider the level of Russian threat to Finnish security to increase, however, the situation at that time was not seen as grave enough to apply for NATO membership.

Regarding Finnish strategic documents, in both events, annexation of Crimea as well the maintenance of the conflict in the eastern Ukraine, Russia was stated as the responsible party in Government's Defence report.<sup>225</sup> Finnish security environment changed due to these conflicts,<sup>226</sup> which were shown to be a continuation of Russian foreign policy that had grown in aggressiveness, and was a confirmation the threshold for the use of force had been lowered,<sup>227,228</sup> and that the security environment was unpredictable.<sup>229</sup> This was a departure from previous less tense international environment during war in Georgia. The level of threat had risen because in both Government's Defence reports published in this post-Crimean period before full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the use or threat of military aggression against Finland could not be ruled out in the future.<sup>230,231</sup> In terms of Finland's position on the political map of Europe, the country as a member of the European Union would not have the option not to be excluded in case of conflict in Europe's neighbourhood or even in Europe as such.<sup>232</sup> For Finland, the option to apply for NATO membership, as a part of having a manoeuvring space, was a fundamental pillar of its foreign, security and defence policy.<sup>233</sup>

Still, despite the heightened tensions in Finland's security environment, which increased feeling of insecurity, Finland did not apply for NATO membership. It can be assumed that Finland

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<sup>223</sup> Finland condemns "illegal" Crimean vote, 2014. *Yle*. Online. Available from: <https://yle.fi/a/3-7139490> [Accessed 26 April 2024].

<sup>224</sup> 2022:3: *Finns' opinions on foreign and security policy, national defence and security*, 2022, p. 27.

<sup>225</sup> *Government's Defence Report*, 2021, p. 15.

<sup>226</sup> *Government's Defence Report*, 2017, p. 8.

<sup>227</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>228</sup> *Government's Defence Report*, 2021, p. 15.

<sup>229</sup> *Government's Defence Report*, 2021, p. 17.

<sup>230</sup> *Government's Defence Report*, 2017, p. 10.

<sup>231</sup> *Government's Defence Report*, 2021, p. 8.

<sup>232</sup> *Government's Defence Report*, 2021, p. 11.

<sup>233</sup> *Government's Defence Report*, 2021, p. 43.



wanted to refrain from joining NATO because it could be seen as a hostile action in the Russian Federation given the previous experience with Georgia and pro-Western leaning of Ukraine before the annexation of Crimea and a conflict in eastern Ukraine. Moreover, Finland was increasing its deterrence capabilities against potential military aggression through multilateral cooperation agreements,<sup>234</sup> which were seen as favourable foreign policy tool to NATO membership. Even the agreements, seen as growing cooperation with NATO, lead to a negative response from Russian Defence Minister Shoigu who said the Russian Federation would react if Finland and Sweden joined the Alliance.<sup>235</sup>

### 5.4.3 Full-scale invasion of Ukraine

Towards the end of 2021, news that Russian troops were significantly increasing its presence along the Russo-Ukrainian border were emerging.<sup>236</sup> The tensions were raising, however, in December of 2021, White House national security advisor Jake Sullivan stated that the invasion of Ukraine was not certain.<sup>237</sup> That month, Russia demanded legally binding guarantees Ukraine would not become a NATO member, among others,<sup>238</sup> which were not accepted.<sup>239</sup> Such an assessment of situation lasted till days prior to the full-scale invasion, when president Joe Biden said at the press conference on February 18, 2022, that it was believed the Russian Federation wanted to attack Ukraine in the coming days.<sup>240</sup> In January 2022, Finnish Prime Minister said to

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<sup>234</sup> International conventions, [no date]. *Puolustusministeriö*. Online. Available from: [https://www.defmin.fi/en/areas\\_of\\_expertise/international\\_defence\\_cooperation/international\\_conventions](https://www.defmin.fi/en/areas_of_expertise/international_defence_cooperation/international_conventions) [Accessed 26 April 2024].

<sup>235</sup> Russia threatens counter-measures if Finland and Sweden join Nato, 2018. *Yle*. Online. Available from: <https://yle.fi/a/3-10321784> [Accessed 26 April 2024].

<sup>236</sup> Russia-Ukraine border: Nato warning over military build-up, 2021. *BBC News*. Online. Available from: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-59288181> [Accessed 26 April 2024].

<sup>237</sup> White House's Sullivan says US prepared for dialogue with Russia, 2021. *Reuters*. Online. Available from: <https://www.reuters.com/world/white-houses-sullivan-says-us-prepared-dialogue-with-russia-2021-12-17/> [Accessed 26 April 2024].

<sup>238</sup> Russia Ukraine: Moscow lists demands for defusing Ukraine tensions, 2021. *BBC News*. Online. Available from: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-59696450> [Accessed 26 April 2024].

<sup>239</sup> KRAMER, Andrew E. and ERLANGER, Steven, 2021. Russia Lays Out Demands for a Sweeping New Security Deal With NATO. *The New York Times*. Online. 17 December 2021. Available from: <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/12/17/world/europe/russia-nato-security-deal.html> [Accessed 26 April 2024].

<sup>240</sup> HOUSE, The White, 2022. Remarks by President Biden Providing an Update on Russia and Ukraine. *The White House*. Online. 18 February 2022. Available from: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2022/02/18/remarks-by-president-biden-providing-an-update-on-russia-and-ukraine-2/> [Accessed 26 April 2024].

Reuters that during her current term in office, it would be very unlikely for Finland to join NATO.<sup>241</sup> Before the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, multiple high-level diplomatic talks were held with the Russian Federation in order to prevent new conflict.<sup>242</sup> Despite these efforts, on February 21, 2022, president Putin recognised independence of Ukraine's separatist regions the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic and the Lugansk People's Republic,<sup>243</sup> and subsequently ordered Russian forces to enter these separatist regions for the so-called peacekeeping mission.<sup>244</sup> As a response, Western states imposed sanctions and Germany decided to stop certification process of Nord Stream 2 pipeline.<sup>245</sup> However, the full-scale invasion erupted on February 24 in 2022.<sup>246</sup>

After the start of full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the surveys had shown that for the first time, a majority of Finnish population was in favour of Finland's NATO membership. According to data gathered between February 23 and February 25, survey for Yle revealed that 53% of respondents would support Finnish accession to NATO, which was a historical turn of opinion.<sup>247</sup> Later survey for Yle showed Finland's support for NATO membership had gradually increased since February 2022 from the reported 53% in February to 76% in May 2022 before Finland made the final decision to apply for the membership.<sup>248</sup> According to the results of the ABDI survey, in the spring of 2021, 68% of respondents said that the country should strive to join NATO.<sup>249</sup> Finally,

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<sup>241</sup> Finland's PM says NATO membership is "very unlikely" in her current term, 2022. *Reuters*. Online. Available from: <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/finlands-pm-says-nato-membership-is-very-unlikely-her-watch-2022-01-19/> [Accessed 26 April 2024].

<sup>242</sup> FORGEY, Quint, 2022. Blinken: U.S.-Russia to continue talks on Ukraine crisis. *POLITICO*. Online. 21 January 2022. Available from: <https://www.politico.com/news/2022/01/21/blinken-us-russia-talks-ukraine-527569> [Accessed 26 April 2024].

<sup>243</sup> Address by the President of the Russian Federation, 2022. *President of Russia*. Online. Available from: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/67828> [Accessed 26 April 2024].

<sup>244</sup> Putin orders Russian forces to "perform peacekeeping functions" in eastern Ukraine's breakaway regions, 2022. *Reuters*. Online. Available from: <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/putin-orders-russian-peacekeepers-eastern-ukraines-two-breakaway-regions-2022-02-21/> [Accessed 26 April 2024].

<sup>245</sup> BASHIR, Tara John, Tamara Qiblawi, Nada, 2022. Western nations impose sanctions and cut off key pipeline with Russia. *CNN*. Online. 23 February 2022. Available from: <https://www.cnn.com/2022/02/22/europe/russia-ukraine-tensions-tuesday-intl/index.html> [Accessed 26 April 2024].

<sup>246</sup> Ukraine conflict: Russian forces attack from three sides, 2022. *BBC News*. Online. Available from: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-60503037> [Accessed 26 April 2024].

<sup>247</sup> For first time, Yle poll shows majority support for Finnish Nato application, 2022. *Yle*. Online. Available from: <https://yle.fi/a/3-12337202> [Accessed 26 April 2024].

<sup>248</sup> Yle poll: Support for Nato membership soars to 76%, 2022. *Yle*. Online. Available from: <https://yle.fi/a/3-12437506> [Accessed 26 April 2024].

<sup>249</sup> 2022:3: *Finns' opinions on foreign and security policy, national defence and security*, 2022. p. 27.

on May 15, President Sauli Niinistö and Prime Minister Sanna Marin announced Finland would submit application to NATO.<sup>250</sup> This decision was finally approved in the Finnish Parliament by an overwhelming majority of 188 votes in favour to 8 against.<sup>251</sup> Finally, on May 18, 2022, Finland and Sweden submitted their NATO applications.<sup>252</sup>

As it can be seen, the security situation in Europe had been gradually leading towards another conflict. The large military build-up along the Ukrainian border was an indication of possible Russian attack. Despite the tensions, Finland's Prime Minister did not see application to NATO as likely in her term in office, which was stated in January 2022, when diplomatic consultations with Russia to de-escalate potential conflict were already ongoing. It can be inferred that Finland's strong tradition of not being a member of military alliance was essential security pillar, hence it preferred to sign defence agreements as part of deterrence efforts than become a NATO member. However, for deterrence to work, the potential adversary must see the deterrence efforts of possible target as considerably high. According to the logic of balance of threat theory, if the potential adversary's offensive intentions cannot be altered, the likely scenario is the state would decide to balance against the threat because it would have a higher chance to survive as a part of alliance. This was Finland's case, even though it was unlikely Russia would have enough military capabilities to start another attack simultaneously with the war in Ukraine, the probability that the Russian Federation would not hesitate to act militarily in case Finland's potential decision to join NATO could not be ruled out in the future, given the previous experience when Russia showed willingness and capabilities to prevent other states from joining the Alliance. It can be assumed that the shock of such a large-scale attack on sovereign country lead Finland to assess Russian offensive intentions as threatening to Finnish security to the extent that NATO membership was seen as the best form of deterrence against potential future attack.

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<sup>250</sup> It's official: Finland to apply for Nato membership, 2022. *Yle*. Online. Available from: <https://yle.fi/a/3-12446441> [Accessed 26 April 2024].

<sup>251</sup> Finland's Parliament approves Nato application in historic vote, 2022. *Yle*. Online. Available from: <https://yle.fi/a/3-12449487> [Accessed 26 April 2024].

<sup>252</sup> NATO, 2022. Finland and Sweden submit applications to join NATO. *NATO*. Online. 18 May 2022. Available from: [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news\\_195468.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_195468.htm) [Accessed 3 January 2024].

### **Summary of offensive intentions**

According to Walt's balance of threat theory, if a potential adversary's offensive intentions cannot be changed, the threatened state's most likely reaction is to balance by joining alliance. As it could be seen on the evolution of Finnish perception of Russian armed actions in the form of war in Georgia, annexation of Crimea with conflict in eastern Ukraine and the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, such events influenced Finnish security environment, and ultimately led Finland to balance the Russian Federation through NATO application. In the period from war in Georgia to the Crimean annexation and eastern Ukraine conflict, Finland had a rather reserved reaction. Even though it called for the peaceful resolution of the conflict, it did not aim to join the Alliance. This was partially because the international response to the war was that both Georgia and the Russian Federation were partially responsible for the conflict. Secondly, what might also played a role was that Finland did not want to escalate the situation by applying for NATO membership, because it was evident Russia was willing to use military force in order to stop eastward enlargement, hence it preferred to stay out of the Alliance. During this period, despite the vicinity of Finland being stable and the threat of military aggression was low, the possibility could not be ruled out in the future.

With this first experience of Russian aggressive foreign policy, the annexation of Crimea and a conflict in eastern Ukraine were pivotal events that confirmed Russian offensive intentions were present, and that Russia continued to use military force to secure its foreign policy interests. At that time, Finland decided to increase its deterrence by signing defence agreements, however, without security guarantees such as those in Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty. The events of 2014 showed the threshold for the use of force was lowered and the security environment of Finland became unpredictable and unstable. However, Finland still wanted to preserve its military non-alignment, because the country was not under immediate military threat. The full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 was a worldwide shock. Despite diplomatic efforts to prevent the Russian attack, Russian offensive intentions could not be altered, which according to the logic of balance of threat was a reason great enough to balance by joining alliance, which was indeed

the case of Finland. It showed that the best deterrence would be provided by NATO membership.

For the development of Russian offensive intentions in the strategic documents, see Table F.

*Table F: Main findings of the content analysis of Finnish Security and Defence Policy reports and Government's Defence reports (author's own analysis)*

<b>Document</b>	<b>Possibility of armed aggression</b>	<b>Armed actions initiated by Russia</b>	<b>Finnish stance on NATO membership</b>
Finnish Security and Defence Policy report 2009	armed aggression or the threat thereof in Finnish vicinity cannot be excluded	war in Georgia	maintenance of status of militarily non-allied country, mentioned option of applying for NATO membership
Finnish Security and Defence Policy report 2012	threat of large-scale armed aggression low, but cannot be ruled out	not stated	maintenance of militarily non-aligned country, but mentioned option of applying for NATO membership
Government's Defence Report 2017	no immediate military threat, but use or threat of military force against Finland in the future cannot be excluded	occupation of Crimea and the conflict in eastern Ukraine	maintenance of militarily non-aligned country, but mentioned option of applying for NATO membership
Government's Defence Report 2021	no immediate military threat, but Finland must be prepared for the use or the threat of use of military force	occupation of Crimea and the conflict in eastern Ukraine, Georgia	maintenance of militarily non-aligned country, but mentioned option of applying for NATO membership

## Conclusion

This diploma thesis was devoted to Finland's assessment of the Russian Federation as a possible threat to its security. The aim of this thesis was to investigate Finland's shift from military non-alignment to balancing behaviour in the form of applying for NATO membership a few months after the start of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. This was to be achieved by evaluating whether Russian armed actions were a major factor in Finland's decision to withdraw from the security and foreign policy of military non-alignment by joining NATO with the use of Stephen Walt's balance of threat theory. Due to the asymmetry between Finland and Russia, the Russian Federation could be assessed as a state representing a threat that would lead to a decision to join a military alliance. However, this happened only after the unprecedented invasion of Ukraine. In connection with this goal, the following research question was formulated at the beginning of the thesis: *“What led Finland to balance the threat from Russian Federation with the application for NATO membership?”* The following subquestion was also formulated: *“How has the Finnish security environment evolved between 2009 and 2021 in Finnish strategic documents?”*

It was found that Russia's greater aggregate power in the form of a stronger economy and a larger population did not influence the decision to join NATO, although in this dimension, the Russian Federation was always stronger in the observed period. In the context of Russia, moreover, a potentially good demographic situation would be even perceived positively in regards to Finnish security. Therefore, aggregate power did not lead Finland to balance against the Russian Federation. As far as geographical proximity was concerned, it was observed that the increase in Russian proximity to Finland, whether by opening military bases near its borders, violating Finnish airspace, or deploying missile systems, could not be evaluated with certainty as a factor influencing the perception of Russian threat. In this direction, the concept of threat balancing was limiting, as geographical proximity is very much linked to offensive capabilities. However, it can be said that the increasing geographic proximity created a more tense security environment for Finland.

In terms of offensive capabilities, Finland had quantitatively less offensive capabilities than the Russian Federation. However, in this regard, it was important how the country perceived its

own and Russian capabilities. Despite Russia's military conflict with Georgia, Finland considered its capabilities sufficient. At the same time, it was observed that the Russian army had its shortcomings. In 2017, Finland rated its military capabilities as good, but the perception of Russia's offensive capabilities changed. The experience of the Russian army from the conflicts in Ukraine, but also in Syria, showed that Russia was capable of conducting a major military conflict and that it had the ability to send its military forces beyond its borders. In 2021, Finland already considered its military capabilities sufficient again, but it was not certain that such a level of capabilities would be possible in the future. Thus, they observed a possible decrease in defensive capabilities on their side, especially in the event of a protracted conflict, which was a method of aggressive foreign policy in which, according to Finland, Russia proved to be very successful. As can be seen, offensive capabilities are a factor that influenced the assessment of Russia as a possible threat. But it was not the main factor, because in that case Finland would apply to join NATO earlier than after the start of a full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

After analysis of the strategic documents, it was observed that the perception of a possibility of military conflict near Finland had changed after war in Georgia. The conflict was marked as less likely, but not impossible. A more fundamental change of the perception of Finnish security was brought about by the annexation of Crimea and the conflict in eastern Ukraine when a possible future military conflict directed at Finland could no longer be ruled out. The Government's Defence 2021 report admitted that the country was not under threat of attack, but it was evaluated that the country must be prepared against the threat of a military conflict or conflict as such.

Even though at the turn of 2021/2022 news began to spread about the possible launch of an attack on Ukraine, only a month before its launch, the Finnish Prime Minister expressed that it was unlikely that the country would join NATO. This was reassessed only after the start of the war in Ukraine. It is evident that Russia's offensive intentions in the form of armed actions were a crucial factor in evaluation of the Russian Federation as a threat. It must be said that the invasion of Ukraine in 2022 caused an international shock of an unprecedented scale. Attack in 2022 confirmed that the Russian Federation's offensive intentions could not be changed despite diplomatic efforts. According to the logic of the balance of threats theory, the likely response of the state would be

balancing. This was indeed the case of Finland, which decided to join NATO after the Russian invasion.

My hypothesis that for Finland, the main factor when deciding to apply for NATO membership was Russia's willingness to resort to aggressive foreign policy through armed actions was confirmed. However, additional factor of Finland's perception of its offensive capabilities in relation to the Russian Federation was found as also being important in Finland's considerations. Russia proved to be able to wage a longer military conflicts outside its borders. The subquestion was also answered. In the period from 2009 to 2021, Finish security environment evolved from being stable with low threat of military aggression, to unpredictable and unstable after annexation of Crimea and a conflict in eastern Ukraine.



## Závěr

Tato diplomová práce se věnovala finskému hodnocení Ruské federace jako možné hrozby pro svoji bezpečnost. Cílem práce bylo prozkoumat posun Finska od absence členství v NATO k vyvažujícímu chování v podobě žádosti o členství v NATO několik měsíců po zahájení ruské plnohodnotné invaze na Ukrajinu v roce 2022. Toho mělo být dosaženo vyhodnocením, zda byly ruské ozbrojené akce hlavním faktorem ve finském rozhodnutí opustit bezpečnostní a zahraniční politiku absence členství ve vojenské alianci vstupem do NATO s využitím teorie rovnováhy hrozeb Stephena Walta. Vzhledem k asymetrii mezi Finskem a Ruskem mohla být Ruská federace hodnocena jako stát představující hrozbu, která by vedla k rozhodnutí vstoupit do vojenské aliance. Stalo se tak však až po bezprecedentní invazi na Ukrajinu. V souvislosti s tímto cílem byla na začátku práce formulována výzkumná otázka: *„Co vedlo Finsko k vyvážení hrozby ze strany Ruské federace žádostí o členství v NATO?“* Dále byla také formulována podotázka: *„Jak se vyvíjelo finské bezpečnostní prostředí v letech 2009 až 2021 ve finských strategických dokumentech?“*

Bylo zjištěno, že větší agregovaná síla Ruska v podobě silnější ekonomiky a větší populace neovlivnila rozhodnutí vstoupit do NATO, i když v této dimenzi byla Ruská federace ve sledovaném období vždy silnější. V kontextu Ruska by navíc byla dobrá demografická situace pro finskou bezpečnost vnímána dokonce pozitivně. Agregovaná moc proto Finsko nevedla k balancování proti Ruské federaci. Pokud jde o geografickou blízkost, bylo pozorováno, že nárůst ruské blízkosti k Finsku, ať už otevřením vojenských základen poblíž jeho hranic, narušováním finského vzdušného prostoru nebo rozmístěním raketových systémů nelze s jistotou vyhodnotit jako faktor ovlivňující vnímání ruské hrozby. V tomto směru byl koncept vyvažování hrozeb limitující, neboť geografická blízkost je velmi spjata s útočnými schopnostmi. Lze však říci, že rostoucí geografická blízkost vytvořila pro Finsko napjatější bezpečnostní prostředí.

Z hlediska útočných schopností mělo Finsko kvantitativně menší schopnosti než Ruská federace. V tomto ohledu však bylo důležité, jak země vnímala schopnosti nejen ruské ale také své. Navzdory ruskému vojenskému konfliktu s Gruzíí považovalo Finsko své schopnosti

za dostatečné. Zároveň bylo tehdy pozorováno, že na pozadí konfliktu v Gruzii ukázala ruská armáda určité nedostatky. V roce 2017 Finsko ohodnotilo své vojenské schopnosti opět jako dobré, ale vnímání ofenzivních schopností Ruska se změnilo. Zkušenosti ruské armády z konfliktů na Ukrajině, ale i v Sýrii ukázaly, že Ruská federace schopna vést velký vojenský konflikt, a že má schopnost vyslat své vojenské síly za své hranice. Finsko v roce 2021 považovalo své vojenské schopnosti opět za dostatečné, ale nebylo již jisté, zda bude schopno jejich úroveň udržet i v budoucnosti. Pozorovalo tak na své straně možný pokles obranných schopností, zejména v případě vleklého konfliktu, jež je metoda, ve které se Rusko podle Finska ukázalo jako velmi úspěšné. Jak je vidět, útočné schopnosti jsou faktorem, který ovlivnil hodnocení Ruska jako možné hrozby. Nejednalo se však hlavní faktor, protože v takovém případě by Finsko požádalo o vstup do NATO dříve než po zahájení úplné invaze na Ukrajinu v roce 2022.

Po analýze strategických dokumentů bylo zjištěno, že vnímání možnosti vojenského konfliktu u Finska se po válce v Gruzii změnilo. Konflikt byl označen jako méně pravděpodobný, ale ne nemožný. Zásadnější změnu ve vnímání finské bezpečnosti přinesla anexe Krymu a konflikt na východní Ukrajině, kdy již nebylo možné vyloučit možný budoucí vojenský konflikt mířený proti Finsku. Ve vládní zprávě z roku 2021 bylo připuštěno, že zemi nehrozí útok. Zároveň v ní ale stálo, že země musí být připravena na hrozbu vojenského konfliktu a na útok samotný.

I když se na přelomu let 2021/2022 začaly šířit zprávy o možném zahájení útoku na Ukrajinu, jen měsíc před jeho zahájením se finská premiérka vyjádřila, že vstup země do NATO je nepravděpodobný. Toto bylo přehodnoceno až po začátku války na Ukrajině. Je evidentní, že útočné záměry Ruska v podobě ozbrojených akcí byly zásadním faktorem při hodnocení Ruské federace jako hrozby. Je třeba říci, že invaze na Ukrajinu v roce 2022 vyvolala mezinárodní šok, kdy Rusko zahájilo ozbrojenou akci nebyvalého rozsahu. Útok v roce 2022 potvrdil, že útočné záměry Ruské federace nelze změnit navzdory vynaloženému diplomatickému úsilí. Dle logiky teorie rovnováhy hrozeb by pravděpodobnou reakcí státu bylo balancování. Toto byl skutečně případ Finska, které se po ruské invazi rozhodlo vstupit do NATO.

Moje hypotéza, že byla pro Finsko hlavním faktorem při rozhodování ucházet se o členství v NATO ochota Ruska uchýlit se k agresivní zahraniční politice prostřednictvím ozbrojených akcí se potvrdila. V úvahách Finska byl shledán jako důležitý i další faktor - vnímání ofenzivních schopností Finska ve vztahu k Ruské federaci. Rusko totiž prokázalo schopnost vést dlouhé vojenské konflikty mimo své hranice. Došlo i k zodpovězení podotázky. V období 2009 až 2021 se finské bezpečnostní prostředí vyvinulo ze stabilního s nízkou hrozbou vojenské agrese na nepředvídatelné a nestabilní po anexi Krymu a konfliktu na východní Ukrajině.

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