

# Finlandization, Neutrality, or Kekkosllovakia? Paasikivi–Kekkonen’s Line in Finnish Discourses 30 Years after the End of the Cold War

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## ABSTRACT

Although the Cold War ended thirty years ago, the Paasikivi–Kekkonen’s line, which characterized Finland’s foreign and domestic politics in the Cold War era, remains an essential element of various competing discourses in the country. This article is based on a study of the “Paasikivi–Kekkonen’s line” concept as a floating signifier frequently used in competing Finnish discourses, including those on the Finnish–Russian relations, on the Finnish foreign policy strategy, and on Finnish domestic politics. The discourse on the relations with Russia involves the proponents of continuing with the Paasikivi–Kekkonen’s line aiming at transforming Russia’s geographical proximity into an opportunity for Finland, and those who oppose this line on the grounds that in the Cold War era it resulted in a shameful “Finlandization” of the country. The Finnish discourse on the country’s foreign policy strategy involves those who argue in favor of continuing with the Paasikivi–Kekkonen’s line, of which the core was neutrality in the Cold War era and is non-alignment today, and those in favor of giving up with non-alignment to choose the NATO option. The article discovers that Sweden plays a critical role in this discourse than Russia. Finally, the Finnish discourse on the country’s domestic politics involves those in favor of continuing with the Paasikivi–Kekkonen’s line, of which the core is consensual politics, and those who support the transition to more transparent, albeit inevitably partisan politics.

## KEYWORDS

*Cold War, Finland, foreign policy, domestic politics, Paasikivi–Kekkonen’s line, floating signifiers, Finlandization*

## Paasikivi–Kekkonen’s line as a floating signifier in competing Finnish discourses

The Paasikivi–Kekkonen’s line received its name after two Presidents of Finland, J. Paasikivi (1870–1956), President in 1946–1956, and U. Kekkonen (1900–1986), President in 1956–1981. In Finland, this term is often used as a synonym to the Cold War. Although the Cold War ended thirty years ago, today many Finnish citizens, including influential politicians and journalists, refer to the Paasikivi–Kekkonen’s line not only when discussing the history of their country, but also to support their strongly normative and subjective statements concerning the policy choices facing Finland contemporarily. Some of them refer to the Paasikivi–Kekkonen’s line in the negative context, urging their fellow citizens to raise their voices in support of a particular policy to “avoid another Paasikivi–Kekkonen’s line.”<sup>1</sup> Others refer to it in the positive context, urging to “find a solution to a particular problem by means of following the Paasikivi–Kekkonen’s line.”<sup>2</sup>

This paper does not aim to compare the numbers of those in contemporary Finland who refer to the Paasikivi–Kekkonen’s line in positive and negative contexts. Moreover, I claim that it is impossible to find out which party constitutes the majority. The problem is that the Paasikivi–Kekkonen’s line is used differently in different competing discourses, by which I do not mean the Finnish dominant discourse and other marginal discourses on a particular matter. Neither do I mean to contrast the dominant Finnish discourse to the discourses on similar matters abroad. Instead, I study the discourses that are crystallizing in today’s Finland around different nodal points such as Finnish–Russian relations, foreign policy strategy and domestic politics.

Some Finnish citizens refer to the Paasikivi–Kekkonen’s line to demonstrate how good or bad particular aspects of Finnish–Russian relations are. They also do it to show the advantages and disadvantages of particular foreign policy options that Finland can either accept or reject, even when these options do not concern Russia directly. Finally, some Finns refer to the Paasikivi–Kekkonen’s line to demonstrate the benefits and weaknesses of particular Finland’s domestic policy options. Across all these discourses, the concept of the Paasikivi–Kekkonen’s line is applied in different meanings depending on what the person is speaking of, and which side of the contemporary Finnish political debates they identify themselves with. To demonstrate the variety of meanings this concept receives in different discourses, this article aims at studying it as a “floating signifier” in these discourses.<sup>3</sup>

In layman’s terms, a floating signifier is a sign, which can be easily recognized by the participants of a particular discourse, but which does not have a particular meaning for all of them. Instead, it “floats” in the discourse “waiting” for the supporters

- 1 Unto Hämäläinen, “Suomi on nyt luopunut Paasikiven-Kekkosen linjasta: Ukrainan kriisi pakotti Suomen valitsemaan puolensa idän ja lännen välillä (Finland Has Now Abandoned The Paasikivi-Kekkonen Line: The Ukraine Crisis Forced Finland To Choose Between East And West),” HS Kuukausiliite, 2014, accessed September 2, 2021, <https://www.hs.fi/kuukausiliite/art-2000002758556.html>; Lauri Nurmi, “Kekkosen luuranko sai Annika Saarikolta passituksen multiin - Venäjä-mielistely väistyy kepun johdosta (Kekkonen’s Skeleton got Annika Saarikko Sent to the Slammer - Russia-Mindedness Gives Way to Kepun Leadership),” Ilta-lehti, 2021, accessed September 2, 2021, <https://www.iltalehti.fi/politiikka/a/a3d6f727-00c5-4a49-8339-23730bd5033e>.
- 2 Juhana Aunesluoma, “EU: n ytimiin meneminen on suoraa jatkoa Koiviston ajattelulle ja Paasikiven-Kekkosen linjalle (Going to the Heart of the EU is a Direct Continuation of Koivisto’s Thinking and the Paasikivi-Kekkonen Line),” Helsingin Sanomat, accessed September 2, <https://www.hs.fi/paakirjoitukset/art-2000005317737.html>; Antti Kurvinen, “Suomen selviytyminen tarvitaan konsensusta (From the Readers: Consensus is Needed for Finland’s Survival),” Ilkka Pohjalainen, accessed September 2, 2021, <https://ilkkapohjalainen.fi/mielipide/yleisolta/lukijoilta-suomen-selviytymiseen-tarvitaan-konsensusta-1.13196245>.
- 3 See more: Laclau 1990, 28.

of different narratives within the discourse to “fill” it with a meaning in their own particular way. The term “floating signifier” can be related both to competing narratives within a particular discourse and to competing discourses. For example, one can distinguish at least two competing narratives within the Finnish discourse on Finnish–Russian relations, whose supporters may present Finland’s proximity to Russia as a threat or as an opportunity. Similarly, one can distinguish competing discourses on foreign policy and domestic politics, where the same events are discussed in very different ways. Scholars have applied the concept of “floating signifiers” to the discourse analysis of various issues in contemporary international relations, aiming at assessing their meanings to various communities and understanding among communities.<sup>1</sup>

The role the Paasikivi–Kekkonen’s line plays in the Finnish discourses on domestic and international politics provides a perfect example of how the meaning of a concept relates to its use, thus allowing to discussing it as a floating signifier. Since its declaration in the 1940s, the Paasikivi–Kekkonen’s line has never been formally articulated as a national security strategy or in any other format, receiving its meanings through its articulations in the discourse. The Finnish society started re-articulating the Paasikivi–Kekkonen’s line immediately after U. Kekkonen’s retirement in 1981. One can find an overview of the debates among Finnish historians on U. Kekkonen’s legacy, including the Paasikivi–Kekkonen’s line, which took place in 1980s, in J. Lavery’s historiographic article.<sup>2</sup> It also covers the debates that took place in the 1990s, after the collapse of the Soviet Union. While some Finnish historians, for example J. Suomi, evaluated U. Kekkonen’s legacy positively, others, like H. Rautkallio, viewed it from a negative perspective.

C. Browning referred to those debates as “historical revisionism,” which is, in his view, “politicized, serving as a way to justify an increasingly Western-oriented foreign policy.”<sup>3</sup> Participants of the Finnish domestic debate on the foreign policy choices that the country is facing contemporarily, including the choices concerning its relations with Russia and the future of the Finnish politics in general, frequently refer to the Paasikivi–Kekkonen’s line to support their arguments, sometimes publicly and via mass media. Mass media op-eds containing such references provided with an important part of the empirical evidence supporting the research behind this article.

This article analyzes how the term “Paasikivi–Kekkonen’s line” is used in the Finnish discourses in the second half of the 2010s. The conflict over Ukraine that broke out in 2014 between Russia and the European Union, of which Finland is a member state, forced the Finnish society to rethink its relations with Russia, its foreign policy as a whole and its politics in general once again. It was in 2014 that Finnish journalist U. Hämäläinen declared Finland had to finally reject the Paasikivi–Kekkonen line following the Ukrainian crisis.<sup>4</sup>

The subsequent debate among the Finnish elites contained frequent references to the Paasikivi–Kekkonen’s line, which provided the empirical data for this study. The results of the analysis allow to distinguish three Finnish discourses in the late 2010s

1 Hofferberth 2015; Pi Ferrer, Alasuutari 2019.

2 Lavery 2003.

3 Browning 2002, 47.

4 Unto Hämäläinen, “Suomi on nyt luopunut Paasikiven-Kekkosen linjasta: Ukrainan kriisi pakotti Suomen valitsemaan puolensa idän ja lännen välillä (Finland Has Now Abandoned The Paasikivi-Kekkonen Line: The Ukraine Crisis Forced Finland To Choose Between East And West),” HS Kuukausliite, 2014, accessed September 2, 2021, <https://www.hs.fi/kuukausiliite/art-2000002758556.html>.

where the Paasikivi-Kekkonen's line played the role of a floating signifier. The first one is the discourse on Finnish-Russian relations, in which participants present the Paasikivi-Kekkonen's line as the Finnish approach to Finnish-Soviet relations of the Cold War and a possible approach for contemporary Finland to its relations with Russia. The second one is the discourse on the Finnish foreign policy strategy, where Russia does not play the most important role, while participants present the Paasikivi-Kekkonen's line as the Finnish approach to international politics in general with neutrality (in the Cold War era) and non-alignment (today) as its main feature. The third one is the discourse on Finland's domestic politics. Its participants present the Paasikivi-Kekkonen's line as a consensus-based approach to both domestic politics and foreign policymaking. Structure-wise, this article covers the three mentioned discourses, among which the notion of the Paasikivi-Kekkonen's line floats.

### Paasikivi-Kekkonen's line in Finnish-Soviet / Finnish-Russian relations

The concept of "Finlandization" is often applied together with the concept of the Paasikivi-Kekkonen's line in the Finnish discourse on the country's relations with the Soviet Union in the Cold War and then with Russia. According to A. Paasi,<sup>1</sup> the concept of "Finlandization" has made Finland an "epitome of living geopolitics." It was brought into the Finnish discourse from abroad, but then made roots there. The Finnish discourse presents "Finlandization" as an element of a wider context of Finland as seen from abroad, thus making it extremely sensitive for the Finnish society. To emphasize the sensitivity of Finland's outer image for its citizens, I. Novikova analyzed the attempts the Finnish elite made in the early 20th century "to create in Western Europe a positive image of Finland as oppressed by the Russian Empire, but at the same time an unsubmitive young nation."<sup>2</sup>

Most often, the concept of "Finlandization" refers to the situations when a small country submits to its powerful neighbor while keeping nominal independence. G. Maude, who attempted to study the origins of the concept, concluded that an "essential feature of the Finlandization theory is that the Finnish experience is torn out of its context and thrown into a world of generalized experience."<sup>3</sup> The concept originated from West Germany, where F. Strauss of the Christian Democratic Union used it when criticizing the policies of W. Brandt of the Social Democratic Party (Federal Chancellor in 1969–1974), claiming that the result of W. Brant's policies would be "Finlandization" of West Germany. F. Strauss' rhetoric offended many people inside Finland, as well as many Finns living in Germany and in other Western countries. For example, *Vapaus* (Liberty), a Finnish-language self-declared "independent labor organ of Finnish Canadians," criticized the use of this "neologism" by German politicians and expressed concerns that some Finns might start using the term as well.<sup>4</sup>

The popularity of the "Finlandization" concept rose significantly in the West with the beginning of the *détente* in Soviet-American relations. *Détente* critics widely

1 Paasi 2008.

2 Новикова 2018, 142.

3 Maude 1982, 3.

4 "Suomi ja Saksan kysymys (Finland and the German Question)," *Vapaus*, October 26, 1971, accessed September 13, 2021, <https://newspapers.lib.sfu.ca/vapaus2500-34276/page-2>.

used the concept in their attempt to convince Western public that it would result in “Finlandization” of not only West Germany, but also some other Western countries, thus leading to the collapse of the Western sphere of interests. Writing about those critics, Finnish military officer K. Iskanius noticed:

“the introduction of the Finlandization concept probably was not intended to influence Finland’s policy, but to use it within the NATO as a means of stepping up defense preparations and combatting disintegration efforts... Finland’s position has been considered by some to be a dangerous example for the West of the fate that awaits those countries in the vicinity of the Soviet Union that were abandoning the Western bloc in pursuit of neutrality.”<sup>1</sup>

Both the *Vapaus* organ and K. Iskanius used the foreign loan word *finlandisointi* when writing about “Finlandization” in the Finnish language, not the native Finnish word *suomettuminen*. The existence of the two words in the Finnish language (*finlandisointi* and *suomettuminen*), both meaning “Finlandization,” is indicative of the perception of “Finlandization” in Finland in the context of the wider debate on the Paasikivi–Kekkonen’s line. One cannot help agreeing with W. Laqueur, who found that “the term ‘Finlandization’ [had] been offensive to most Finns” in the Cold War era.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, many Finnish citizens during the Cold War disagreed that their country had been “Finlandized.” They believed the term had arisen from an oversimplified Western perception of the nature of Finnish–Soviet relations and did not reflect the actual situation. These Finnish citizens tended to use the foreign loan word *finlandisointi* when referring to “Finlandization.” At the same time, the term resonated with the perceptions of another part of the Finnish population. J. Ridanpää demonstrates how Finnish movies of the Cold War era played “an operative role in the game” in which the politics of “Finlandization” was performed.<sup>3</sup>

As a result, by the end of the Cold War many Finnish citizens believed that their country had been “Finlandized.” They tended to use the native Finnish word *suomettuminen* when referring to “Finlandization,” and also used this word instead of *finlandisointi*, when cheering “the end of Finlandization” in the early 1990s.<sup>4</sup> Policymakers in the both German states, where the concept of “Finlandization” appeared, were considering “the end of Finlandization” in a similar manner in late 1980s.<sup>5</sup> Although “Finlandization” of Finland, if it had ever taken place, ended with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the concept itself remained an important part of the Finnish discourse on Finnish–Russian relations in the 1990s and at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The frequency of mentions of “Finlandization” in Finnish mass media intensified after 2014. For example, journalist L. Nurmi

1 Iskanius 1974, 62, 66.

2 Laqueur 1980, 3.

3 Ridanpää 2017.

4 Jukka Tarkka, “Suomettumisen loppu? (The End of Finlandisation?)” Suomen Kuvalehti, p. 95, April 1990, accessed September 28, 2021, <https://suomenkuvalehti.fi/nakoislehti/lue/17-1990-pdf/10-1796>.

5 Uutela 2020.

regretted that the politics of “Finlandization” had deeply rooted into Finnish schools thus making them the places promoting the idea that “although Russia has its own problems, the Finns now have no reason to react negatively to their big neighbor.”<sup>1</sup>

Even after 2014, there still were many supporters among Finnish foreign policymakers of the idea to continue the Paasikivi-Kekkonen’s line in Finnish–Russian relations. Journalist L. Halminen refers to the Paasikivi-Kekkonen’s line positively in the article where she claims that it is important “to detect Russia’s efforts to pose pressure” on Finland but warns that “it [could] also be detrimental to [Finland] if there are too many accusations [of Russian pressure] with too little evidence.”<sup>2</sup> Journalists M. Junkari and T. Nieminen distinguished three groups among members of Eduskunta, the Finnish parliament, in terms of their relation to Russia: “nationalists, left-wing political veterans and believers in the Paasikivi-Kekkonen’s line.”<sup>3</sup> While criticizing the third group, L. Nurmi equated the Paasikivi-Kekkonen’s line to Finlandization. In his article he wrote that “Kekkonen’s policy made Finland worse off than what Soviet pressure would have actually required”, and that “when applied to the present, the Paasikivi-Kekkonen’s line would mean that Finland would be threatened by re-Finlandization.”<sup>4</sup>

Thus, the Paasikivi-Kekkonen’s line remains an important element of the Finnish discourse on Finnish–Russian relations. Even after 2014, many Finnish citizens, including influential journalists and foreign policymakers, continued discussing the Paasikivi-Kekkonen’s line as a possible option that could be chosen while outlining Finnish policy towards Russia. For them following the Paasikivi-Kekkonen’s line means to act in a cooperative manner vis-à-vis Russia. Some of these journalists and foreign policymakers propose following the Paasikivi-Kekkonen’s line even in the contemporary international environment. Others oppose this policy choice and frequently apply the concept of “Finlandization” to support their argument. According to them, the Paasikivi-Kekkonen’s line in the Cold War era resulted in “Finlandization” of Finland and following this line today could result in “re-Finlandization” of the country. References to “Finlandization” makes their argument sound stronger in a situation when even those in Finland who perceive the Paasikivi-Kekkonen’s line positively, view “Finlandization” negatively.

### Paasikivi–Kekkonen’s Line as a Finnish Model of Foreign Policymaking

Finnish foreign policy in the Cold War era was not limited to the relations with the Soviet Union. Nor is it limited to the relations with Russia today. Similarly, many Finnish citizens do not perceive the Paasikivi-Kekkonen’s line as a Finnish strategy vis-à-vis the Soviet Union / Russia, but as a Finnish national security and foreign policy strategy

- 1 Lauri Nurmi, “Suomettuminen teki suomalaisista kouluista satujen levittäjiä – ja se näkyy yhä karulla tavalla arvokyselyssä (Finnification Turned Finnish Schools into Fairy-Tale Distributors – And it Still Shows in a Harsh Way in the Values Survey),” *Iltaalehti*, 2020, accessed September 2, 2021, <https://www.iltalehti.fi/politiikka/a/c7017aff-1ece-455f-ba4e-d8ae6ee1eade>.
- 2 Laura Halminen, “Kiihkein Venäjän Syytely Voi Olla Venäjälle Hyödyksi – Pelon Lietsona Voi Johtaa Meitä Harhaan (Fiercest Accusations Against Russia can be Beneficial for Russia – Fear-Mongering can Mislead us),” *Helsingin Sanomat*, accessed September 2, 2021, <https://www.hs.fi/paakirjoitukset/art-2000005371839.html>.
- 3 Markko Junkkari, and Tommi Nieminen, “Toiset kansanedustajat ymmärtävät Putinin Venäjää enemmän kuin toiset (Some MPs Understand Putin’s Russia More than Others),” *Helsingin Sanomat*, accessed September 2, 2021, <https://www.hs.fi/sunnuntai/art-2000005886907.html>.
- 4 Lauri Nurmi, “Kekkosen luuranko sai Annika Saarikolta passituksen multiin – Venäjä-mielistely väistyy kepun johdosta (Kekkonen’s Skeleton got Annika Saariko Sent to the Slammer – Russia-Mindedness Gives Way to Kepun Leadership),” *Iltaalehti*, 2021, accessed September 2, 2021, <https://www.iltalehti.fi/politiikka/a/a3d6f727-00c5-4a49-8339-23730bd5033e>.



in general, with neutrality being its vital element. In 1995, when Finland (together with Sweden) joined the European Union, its foreign and security policy strategy switched from neutrality to non-alignment. Today one cannot rule out the possibility of further “erosion, cessation of the policy of Nordic neutralism in the near future.”<sup>1</sup> However, this scenario does not appear to be the most probable one due to the “predominantly negative public opinion” of the NATO in both Finland and Sweden.<sup>2</sup> Even today, many Finnish citizens view neutrality and non-alignment as synonyms and believe that it is an attractive approach to organizing the country's relations with the rest of the world. It is important that in Finland, neutrality (or non-alignment) is the foreign policy option most often discussed separately from discussing its relations with Russia. The Finns do not choose neutrality (or non-alignment), because they expect it to improve the relations with Russia. Neither do they choose the NATO option, because they expect the NATO to protect them from the “Russian threat.”

While the Finns sometimes treat neutrality and non-alignment as synonyms, Finnish foreign policy observers outside Finland sometimes treat “Finlandization” and the Finnish model of foreign policymaking as synonyms. In most cases, those foreign observers who confuse the Finnish foreign policy model with “Finlandization,” perceive the Finnish model negatively. For example, when Russia significantly increased export duties on raw timber in 2006, which hit the Finnish forestry sector, Finland did not raise duties on imports from Russia, but responded with investing in the modernization of its forestry sector. This allowed it to reduce costs and thus minimize the losses from Russian duties. However, it also motivated a Polish observer to ask if such a response was the evidence of continuing “Finlandization” of Finland.<sup>3</sup> In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, scholars outside of Finland and Russia have frequently applied the concept of “Finlandization” to the relations between any small country and its powerful neighbor.

For example, B. Gilley wrote of “Finlandization” of Taiwan vis-à-vis the Chinese People's Republic.<sup>4</sup> K. Kivimäki wrote of “Finlandization” of most East Asian nations vis-à-vis China.<sup>5</sup> Some scholars have applied the concept of “Finlandization” to the relations between the United States and the small nations of the Western hemisphere, with S. McDonald's article on the U.S. policy towards the Caribbean nations in the Cold War era being a case in point.<sup>6</sup> In Finland, the opponents of the country's foreign policy orientation on the U.S. have applied the concept to the future Finnish-U.S. relations, which would, in their view, come true if Finland decided to rely on the U.S. in its foreign policy. For example, Finnish journalist P. Ervasti declared the arrival of “Finlandization 2.0” in his reaction to then-Finnish Foreign Minister T. Soini's speeches.<sup>7</sup> In 2016, Finland and the U.S. signed a Statement of Intent aimed at improving their military cooperation. In 2018, Finland, Sweden and the U.S. signed a similar trilateral document.<sup>8</sup>

1 Воронов 2018.

2 Килин 2017.

3 Warszawski 2016.

4 Gilley 2010.

5 Kivimäki 2015.

6 McDonald 1985.

7 Pekka Ervasti, “Yhdusvallat, rakkaani! (United Powers, my beloved!),” *Yle Uutiset*, accessed September 2, 2021, <https://yle.fi/uutiset/3-8870527>.

8 “Trilateral Statement of Intent,” the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Finland, accessed September 13, 2021, [https://www.defmin.fi/files/4231/Trilateral\\_Statement\\_of\\_Intent.pdf](https://www.defmin.fi/files/4231/Trilateral_Statement_of_Intent.pdf).

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, a consensus emerged among Russian scholars specializing in Russian–Finnish relations that the concept of “Finlandization,” which became popular in NATO countries during the *détente* in Soviet–U.S. relations, described the nature of Soviet–Finnish relations of that period inaccurately. N. Antjushina pointed out some economic benefits of the Agreement of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance signed by the Soviet Union and Finland in 1948.<sup>1</sup> N. Vezhlytseva claimed that unlike the countries of the Soviet bloc, such as Poland, Finland remained a sovereign nation, free to make its foreign policy choices, but then it voluntarily delegated part of its sovereignty to the European Union in 1995, when its foreign and security policy switched from neutrality to non-alignment.<sup>2</sup> However, N. Vezhlytseva confused the concept of “Finlandization,” which many Finnish citizens apply to the Cold-War era Finnish–Soviet relations, with the Finnish model of neutrality, which many Finns view as unconnected to Finnish–Soviet relations.

Although the concept of “Finlandization” is perceived negatively in most cases, some international relations experts outside of Finland and Russia, who confuse this concept with the Finnish model of neutrality, have applied it in the positive sense. For example, a year prior to the collapse of the Soviet Union, G. Questers suggested that “Finlandization” of the Baltic States would be a suitable compromise in case the three states secede from the Soviet Union as an outcome of Perestroika.<sup>3</sup> In the mid-2010s, some experts suggested that “Finlandization” of Ukraine would be a possible solution to the Ukrainian crisis, though Finnish researcher T. Juntunen criticized those suggestions as “based on parachronistic reasoning.”<sup>4</sup> From the dominant Finnish viewpoint, the concept of “Finlandization” means submission (no matter if true or imagined) of Finland to the Soviet Union or of any other small country to its powerful neighbor, while the Finnish model of neutrality was not connected to the relations between Finland and the Soviet Union.

According to J. Rainio-Niemi, “in Finland, neutrality was an overwhelmingly positive issue as such, something that from the outset was associated with Sweden, not the Soviet Union.”<sup>5</sup> Since the end of the Cold War, there have been at least three waves of the debate in Finland on its potential NATO membership: first after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, then after 2008, when one of Finland’s major political parties, the National Coalition (*Kansallinen Kokoomus*) declared NATO membership a part of its foreign policy platform, and finally after the conflict over Ukraine erupted between Russia and the EU in 2014. In all the three cases, most of Finland’s population rejected the NATO option, and the main argument was again about Sweden, not Russia. K. Khudoley and D. Lanko claimed that Finland identified itself as a Western European nation, while all countries that joined the NATO since Spain’s accession in 1982, were Eastern European nations.<sup>6</sup> If, however, any of currently non-aligned Western European nations, such as Switzerland, Austria, Ireland and especially Sweden declare their desire to join the NATO, it might shift public opinion in Finland in favor of the NATO option as well.

1 Антюшина 2017.

2 Везливцева 2020.

3 Questers 1990.

4 Juntunen 2017.

5 Rainio-Niemi 2014, 169.

6 Худолей, Ланко 2019.



Contemporary Finnish foreign policymakers and influential journalists frequently refer to the Paasikivi-Kekkonen's line when discussing the foreign policy options facing Finland unrelated to its future relations with Russia. For example, journalist J. Aunesluoma claimed that Finland's "movement into the core of the European Union is a direct continuation of [Finnish President in 1982–1994 Mauno] Koivisto's thinking and the Paasikivi-Kekkonen line."<sup>1</sup> Journalists S. Forss and P. Holopainen believed that in the mid-2010s Finland was facing three foreign policy options: the NATO, the Nordic Security Cooperation and the continuation of the Paasikivi-Kekkonen's line.<sup>2</sup> Journalist U. Hämäläinen, proponent of the NATO option, regretted that the option was not available to Finland, because NATO was not planning to expand in the short run.<sup>3</sup> According to journalist V. Sirén, Finland and the experience of the Paasikivi-Kekkonen's line could teach the rest of the world a "lesson of cooperation," which might save the world from the COVID-19 crisis and from more dangerous crises to come.<sup>4</sup>

Thus, the Paasikivi-Kekkonen's line is widely used in the Finnish discourse on the country's foreign policy, in which relations with Russia play a significant yet minor role. Most Finnish narratives on the Paasikivi-Kekkonen's line as a foreign policy strategy present neutrality as its core concept. Most Finnish citizens perceive NATO membership and the Paasikivi-Kekkonen's line as two foreign policy options that the country is facing today. While most Finns temporarily prefer following the Paasikivi-Kekkonen's line and thus rejecting the NATO option, a sound minority prefers rejecting the Paasikivi-Kekkonen's line to choose the NATO option. At the same time, many Finns perceive the existing Finnish-Swedish defense alliance, the Nordic Defense Alliance, which is currently being discussed by the five Nordic nations, and the deepening of European integration in the field of security and defense policy, as not contradicting with the Paasikivi-Kekkonen's line. In Finnish domestic debates concerning all those foreign policy choices, Russia does not play an important role, unlike Sweden and (to a smaller extent) other Nordic nations.

### **Paasikivi-Kekkonen's Line as a Finnish Consensus Model in Domestic Politics**

The notion of the Paasikivi-Kekkonen's line is not only an element of the Finnish discourses on the relations with the Soviet Union and Russia and on the country's foreign policy strategy in general, but it is also significant for the Finnish discourse on the country's domestic politics. Signifiers constituting national discourses on domestic political issues float into national discourses on foreign policy issues and back. The roles that the notion of the Paasikivi-Kekkonen's line plays in the Finnish discourses on the country's foreign policy and on its domestic politics provide yet another evidence of that.

1 Juhana Aunesluoma, "EU: n ytimiin meneminen on suoraa jatkoa Koiviston ajattelulle ja Paasikiven-Kekkosen linjalle (Going to the Heart of the EU is a Direct Continuation of Koivisto's Thinking and the Paasikivi-Kekkonen Line)," Helsingin Sanomat, accessed September 2, <https://www.hs.fi/paakirjoitukset/art-2000005317737.html>.

2 Stefan Forss, and Pekka Holopainen, "Turvallisuuspolitiikka on Kolmen Tien Risteyksessä (Security Policy is at the Crossroads of Three Roads)," Helsingin Sanomat, accessed September 2, 2021, <https://www.hs.fi/ mielipide/art-2000002821644.html>.

3 Unto Hämäläinen, "Onko meillä sittenkään NATO-optiota? (Do we have a NATO option after all?)," Helsingin Sanomat, 2016, accessed September 2, 2021, <https://www.hs.fi/blogi/perassahiihtaja/art-2000004877194.html>.

4 Vesa Sirén, "Kuinka maailma pelastuu (How to Save the World)," Helsingin Sanomat, accessed September 13, 2021, <https://www.hs.fi/ulkomaat/art-2000006540433.html>.

On the one hand, the notion of the Paasikivi-Kekkonen's line in contemporary Finnish discourse on the country's political history signifies active interference of the Soviet Union not only into Finnish foreign policy, thanks to which Finland could join the Nordic Council only after J. Stalin's death, but also into Finnish domestic politics, which manifested in multiple ways.

The USSR openly supported the Finnish People's Democratic League (FPDL), the coalition of political parties, of which the Communist Party of Finland was an integral part.<sup>1</sup> President J. Paasikivi, a representative of the conservative National Coalition Party, distanced himself from the FPDL, but U. Kekkonen, Prime Minister under President Paasikivi and later President himself, actively involved the FPDL in both foreign policy and home affairs decision-making. Thus, he allowed his political opponents to introduce the humorous term of "Kekkoslovakia" made of a combination of the names of Kekkonen and Czechoslovakia even before 1956 when U. Kekkonen was elected President for the first time.<sup>2</sup> The USSR also openly interfered in coalition-building in the Finnish parliament; probably the most famous example of such involvement is the "Night Frost" Crisis in Soviet-Finnish Relations of 1958.<sup>3</sup> During the "Note Crisis" of 1961, the USSR was involved in the Finnish presidential elections, thus securing another presidential term for U. Kekkonen.<sup>4</sup>

On the other hand, Finnish foreign policy of the Cold War-era rested on consensus at home. Finland's unique relations with the Soviet Union resulted from Soviet pressure and enjoyed the support of the vast left-leaning part of the Finnish population, who voted for Social Democrats and the FDPL. Equally extended right-leaning part of the Finnish population, who voted for the National Coalition Party and other so-called "bourgeois" political parties, favored Finland's closer relations with the West. However, even at times when leaders of the National Coalition Party, such as T. Junnila, clashed with U. Kekkonen over specific domestic issues, they simultaneously expressed support to the Paasikivi's line launched by a great leader of their party of the past.<sup>5</sup> Thus, the Paasikivi-Kekkonen's line in Finnish foreign policy enjoyed support from both left and right, although the right-leaning population more favored its neutrality aspect, while the left-leaning population more favored unique relations with the USSR. After U. Kekkonen became President, he presented himself as the leader capable of bridging the right-left divide in Finnish society.

In line with this presentation (and in connection with the active urbanization of Finland in the 1960s), in 1965, U. Kekkonen's political party, the Agrarian League, changed its name into the Centre Party (the Finnish Centre since 1988). Aiming to bridge the right-left divide in the Finnish society, U. Kekkonen contributed to the formation of the cults of two personalities (besides his own): V. Lenin and C. Mannerheim.<sup>6</sup> Many among the left-leaning population, who hated C. Mannerheim for his role in the Finnish Civil War of 1918, admired V. Lenin, who, in their view, "gave" independence to Finland

1 Плевако 2020.

2 Safari 1984, 149.

3 Tarkka, Tiitta 1987, 221–222.

4 Jussila et al. 1995, 254.

5 Jarmo Virmavirta, "Ulkopoliittinen yksimielisyys muuttuu kulissiksi (The Foreign Policy Consensus Becomes a Front)," *Turun Sanomat*, accessed September 28, 2021, <https://www.ts.fi/puheenvuorot/1074211605/Ulkopoliittinen+yksimielisyys+muuttuu+kulissiksi>.

6 Halmesvirta 2009.

in 1917. Similarly, many among the right-leaning population, who hated V. Lenin for Russian involvement in the Civil War, admired C. Mannerheim, who “saved” Finnish independence in 1918 and again during WWII. The co-existence of the two personality cults helped the left-leaning and the right-leaning segments of the Finnish population to find a consensus based on the ultimate value of Finnish independence, “given” by Lenin and “saved” by Mannerheim.

On that consensus rested the Finnish foreign policy of the Cold War era, which centered on the Paasikivi-Kekkonen’s line. Moreover, U. Kekkonen used that consensus to secure public support for his policies at home. Consequently, the notion of the Paasikivi-Kekkonen’s line in Finnish discourse also became a synonym of consensus politics at home. In this respect, “consensus politics” does not mean that there were no debates among political parties on domestic issues, such as economic policy. On the contrary, representatives of different political parties fiercely clashed when discussing the economy and other areas in Kekkonen’s times. U. Kekkonen himself actively participated in the debates, although he announced his opinion publicly only after major political parties reached a compromise on the issue in question. Notably, the consensus politics in Finland coincided with the fast economic growth of the 1950s–1970s.

As a result, U. Kekkonen, who presented himself as the leader capable of galvanizing national political consensus on foreign policy and domestic issues, evolved into “an almost mythical figure.”<sup>1</sup> While being President, U. Kekkonen discredited a few Finnish politicians, whom he excluded from consensus-building behind closed doors, such as V. Vennamo. However, after Kekkonen’s retirement, V. Vennamo failed to receive credits for his lifelong fight against U. Kekkonen’s “despotism.” Moreover, V. Vennamo’s fellow party members accused him of an “authoritarian leadership style,”<sup>2</sup> Finnish journalists classified him as a “populist” politician,<sup>3</sup> and the leader of extreme-right True Finns Party T. Soini declared that he was “inspired” by V. Vennamo.<sup>4</sup> Thus, after U. Kekkonen’s retirement, some historians asked if his rule in Finland was about “enlightened despotism or consensual democracy,”<sup>5</sup> but few dared to entirely discard the “consensus” option in the absence of credible opposition to Kekkonen’s “consensus.”

Contemporary Finnish domestic politics is more transparent than at U. Kekkonen’s times: today, some Finnish politicians tend to declare their beliefs on Twitter even before announcing it to representatives of other political parties at a session of parliament. Most Finnish citizens today support the constitutional reform of 1999, which transformed their country’s political system from a presidential into a parliamentary republic, resulting in greater openness of decision-making in politics. At the same time, some of them note that openness of decision-making inevitably transformed Finnish politics into partisan politics: today, Finnish Cabinets do not implement policies agreed by “consensus,” but

1 Lounasmeri, Kortti 2020.

2 Linna 1998.

3 Hatavara, Teräs 2016.

4 Unto Hämäläinen, “Populisti ja pelimies Soini kertoo, miten Vennamon opeilla pärjää lähiö-Suomessa (Populist and Gambler Soini Explains How to Make it in Suburban Finland with Vennamo’s Teachings),” *Helsingin Sanomat*, 2008, accessed September 2, 2021, <https://www.hs.fi/kulttuuri/art-2000004555339.html>.

5 Arter 1981.

they implement “Coalition” policies, “Centre” policies, or “Social Democratic” policies. These processes unfold amid declining public trust in traditional political parties, the growing popularity of extreme-right True Finns Party, and a long-lasting economic crisis, thanks to which the country’s per capita GDP has never reached the pre-crisis level since then 2008. Unsurprisingly, some Finnish politicians call for a return to Paasikivi-Kekkonen’s line-style politics when major political decisions were made by consensus.<sup>1</sup>

## Conclusions

The Paasikivi-Kekkonen’s line constituted the core of the Finnish politics, including foreign policymaking, in the Cold War era and is re-emerging as a concept used by politicians, influential journalists, and ordinary people who want to substantiate their arguments for or against certain policy options. Neither J. Paasikivi nor U. Kekkonen have articulated its basic principles. Thus, different speakers give different meanings to this concept, depending on their desire to argue for or against certain policy options. Most often, the Paasikivi-Kekkonen’s line is used in three contemporary Finnish discourses: the discourse on Finnish-Russian relations, the discourse on foreign policy strategy, and the discourse on the Finnish domestic politics.

Participants of the Finnish discourse on Finnish-Russian relations frequently link the concept of the Paasikivi-Kekkonen’s line with the concept of “Finlandization,” which has a negative meaning. Thus, some participants of the Finnish discourse argue against making foreign policy choices that they label as following the Paasikivi-Kekkonen’s line, because following it during the Cold War resulted in “Finlandization,” i.e. conceding national interests to Soviet pressure. Therefore, adopting this line today will again entail no other result than conceding national interests to the ambitions of contemporary Russian leaders. Other participants of this discourse, however, underline that the concept of “Finlandization” was created outside of Finland to be used in other cases than the case of Finland. They claim that “Finlandization” in Finland has never taken place and Finland, as well as the Soviet Union, actually benefited from the Paasikivi-Kekkonen’s line; so, following the same line contemporarily could help Finland benefit from its proximity to Russia.

Participants of the Finnish discourse on the country’s foreign policy strategy frequently link the concept of the Paasikivi-Kekkonen’s line with the concept of neutrality, which was in the core of the Finnish foreign policy strategy in the Cold War era. After the end of the Cold War, Finland switched from neutrality to non-alignment in connection with joining the European Union, but so far it has refrained from joining the NATO as well. Some participants of this discourse perceive Finland’s opposition to the NATO option as a continuation of the Paasikivi-Kekkonen’s line. Among them, some analysts support the continuation of the Paasikivi-Kekkonen’s line, while others reject it. When discussing pros and cons of the NATO option, the Finnish citizens do not pay much attention to the Russian factor as Sweden plays a much greater role in the debate. As long as Sweden remains non-aligned, Finland prefers to follow the suit.

1 Antti Kurvinen, “Suomen selviytyminen tarvitaan konsensusta (From the Readers: Consensus is Needed for Finland’s Survival),” Ilkka Pohjalainen, accessed September 2, 2021, <https://ilkkapohjalainen.fi/mielipide/yleisolta/lukijoilta-suomen-selviytymiseen-tarvitaan-konsensusta-1.13196245>.

Participants of the Finnish discourse on the country's domestic politics frequently link the concept of the Paasikivi-Kekkonen's line with the concept of political consensus. Under U. Kekkonen, consensus was characteristic of Finland's foreign policymaking as well as decision-making in domestic affairs. When unavoidable, heated debates among cabinet members, leaders of parliamentary factions and other influential politicians took place in private, while public cabinet meetings and parliamentary sessions were meant to announce the decisions made behind closed doors. After the decision was announced, influential politicians no longer questioned its reasonability, but for a handful of populist politicians excluded from top-level decision-making. In contemporary Finland, partisan politics has come to replace the consensus politics of the Cold War era. However, some Finnish citizens, including politicians and influential journalists, turn to the restoration of consensus politics, especially in times of crisis. When arguing for the restoration of consensus politics, they often refer to the Paasikivi-Kekkonen's line.

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# Финляндизация, нейтралитет или Кеккословакия? Линия Паасикиви–Кекконена в финских дискурсах через 30 лет после холодной войны

## АННОТАЦИЯ

Хотя холодная война закончилась тридцать лет назад, линия Паасикиви–Кекконена, которая характеризовала внешнюю и внутреннюю политику Финляндии в эпоху холодной войны, остается важным элементом различных конкурирующих дискурсов в стране. В статье автор исследует понятие «линия Паасикиви–Кекконена» в качестве пустого означающего, часто используемого в конкурирующих финских дискурсах, включая дискурсы финско-российских отношений, внешнеполитической стратегии и внутренней политики Финляндии. Дискурс выстраивания отношений с Россией формируют, с одной стороны, сторонники продолжения линии Паасикиви–Кекконена, пытающиеся использовать географическую близость России как возможность для Финляндии; с другой стороны, – те, кто выступает против продолжения этой линии и утверждают, что в эпоху холодной войны она привела к позорной «финляндизации» страны. В конструировании финского внешнеполитического дискурса участвуют те, кто выступает за продолжение линии Паасикиви–Кекконена, стержнем которой был нейтралитет в эпоху холодной войны и неприсоединение сегодня, с одной стороны, а с другой – те, кто выступает за отказ от политики неприсоединения и выбор в пользу членства в НАТО. В статье обнаруживается, что Швеция играет в этом дискурсе более важную роль, чем Россия. Наконец, финский внутриполитический дискурс включает тех, кто выступает за продолжение линии Паасикиви–Кекконена, ядром которой является консенсусная политика, и тех, кто поддерживает переход к более прозрачной, хотя и неизбежно более зависящей от партийного курса политике.

## КЛЮЧЕВЫЕ СЛОВА

*холодная война, Финляндия, внешняя политика, внутренняя политика, линия Паасикиви–Кекконена, пустые означающие, финляндизация*

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