



Kaarle Nordenstreng

Professor Emeritus of Journalism and Mass Communication

HOW COME? WHY NOW?

FINLAND'S PATH TO NATO MEMBERSHIP

FinnFest USA webinar, June 18, 2022

Welcome to a guided tour through

- drastic changes in the mindset of the general public and politicians about Finland's geopolitical position and military alignment in 2022;
- long historical context of Finland's position in relation to Russia from the Great Northern War (1700-1721) to the post-Cold War era (1991-);
- contemporary Finnish positions on NATO with different arguments in favor and against membership.

The webinar talk with Q & A lasted for nearly one and a half hours; its recording is available at <https://finnfest.us/pages/videos>

This pdf is a print version of the webinar presentation in 30+ pages with short summary texts introducing the original slides.

Finland's official process in 2022 to join NATO

We shall begin with the steps by the Government and Parliament in May to apply for membership of NATO.

From there going backward to the Government's preparatory steps in April, including discussion with Sweden.

Noting the 24th of February, when Russia invaded Ukraine – a turning point in history, especially in Finland, with flashbacks to the Winter War (1939-40) and the Continuation War (1941-44).

A reminder of how very different the atmosphere in Finland still was in January is an interview with Prime Minister Marin by Reuters.

All the slides from 2022 include links to original sources.

Finland declares its interest to accede to NATO

Government Communications Department, Ministry for Foreign Affairs

17.5.2022 18.30 PRESS RELEASE



On Tuesday 17 May 2022, the President of the Republic of Finland decided, on the proposal of the Government, to notify the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) of Finland's interest to engage in talks on accession to NATO and appointed a

delegation to Finland's accession talks to be held with NATO and its member countries.

Source: vnk.fi

Finland's Parliament approves Nato application in historic vote

Following a 14-hour debate, the motion was passed by 188 votes to 8.



MPs debated the Nato issue in a marathon session on Monday. Image: Silja Viitala / Yle

YLE NEWS

17.5 • Updated 17.5



Finnish MPs on Tuesday approved the decision to apply for membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (Nato) in a vote of 188 in favour to 8 against.

Three MPs were marked as absent in the vote.

On Sunday, President **Sauli Niinistö** and Prime Minister **Sanna Marin** (SDP) announced that Finland will seek to join the Nato alliance. The issue then moved to Parliament for a lengthy debate that began on Monday and a subsequent vote.

Source: yle.fi

May 17, 2022
4:47 PM GMT+3
Last Updated a month ago

Europe

Finland's parliament votes yes to NATO

Reuters

2 minute read



1/4

The result of the Nato vote seen on the voting board during the plenary session at the Finnish parliament, as Finnish legislators have voted and decided that Finland will seek the NATO membership in Helsinki, Finland May 17, 2022. Lehtikuva/Antti Aimo-Koivisto via REUTERS



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HELSINKI, May 17 (Reuters) - Finland's parliament on Tuesday overwhelmingly approved a proposal to apply for membership of the NATO military alliance in a historic policy shift prompted by Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

President Sauli Niinisto and the government decided officially on Sunday that Finland would apply for membership but the decision was pending parliament's approval.

Source: [Reuters.com](https://www.reuters.com)

Government adopts report on NATO membership

Government Communications Department, Ministry for Foreign Affairs

15.5.2022 17.23 **PRESS RELEASE**



Following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, a fundamental change has taken place in the security and operating environment of Finland and Europe. On Sunday 15 May, the Government adopted the Report on Finland's Accession to the North Atlantic Treaty

Organization (NATO).

The Report describes the grounds for Finland's NATO membership. In the Report, the Government proposes that the President of the Republic of Finland decide,

Source: vnk.fi

Joint statement by the President of the Republic and Prime Minister of Finland on Finland's NATO membership

Government Communications Department, Office of the President of the Republic

12.5.2022 10.00 **PRESS RELEASE**



During this spring, an important discussion on Finland's possible NATO membership has taken place. Time has been needed to let Parliament and the whole society establish their stands on the matter. Time has been needed for close international

contacts with NATO and its member countries, as well as with Sweden. We have wanted to give the discussion the space it required.

Now that the moment of decision-making is near, we state our equal views, also for information to the parliamentary groups and parties. NATO membership would strengthen Finland's security. As a member of NATO, Finland would strengthen the entire defence alliance. Finland must apply for NATO membership without delay. We hope that the national steps still needed to make this decision will be taken rapidly within the next few days.

Source: valtioneuvosto.fi

Prime Minister Marin meets with Swedish Prime Minister in Stockholm

Government Communications Department

13.4.2022 17.12 **PRESS RELEASE**



Prime Minister Sanna Marin met with Swedish Prime Minister Magdalena Andersson in Stockholm on Wednesday 13 April. The prime ministers discussed how to strengthen the security of Finland and Sweden in the changed security environment. The security situation in Europe has changed fundamentally following Russia's attack on Ukraine.

In their discussions, the prime ministers highlighted the fact that Finland and Sweden share the same security environment and that the countries' security solutions affect one another. Both Finland and Sweden are now working to ensure the security of their citizens over the short and long term.

Prime Minister Marin told Prime Minister Andersson about the report on changes in the current security environment, which the Finnish Government submitted to Parliament on the day of the visit. The report includes an assessment of how Finland can strengthen its national defence capability and develop international defence cooperation with its partners, the closest of which is Sweden. The report also assesses the effects of possible NATO membership.

Source: vnk.fi

Government report on changes in the security environment



Avaa tiedosto

 VN_2022_20.pdf (330.7Kt)

Lataukset: 14506

[Tilaa verkkokaupasta](#)

Valtioneuvosto
13.04.2022

Julkaisun pysyvä osoite on
<http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-383-811-6>

Julkaisun muut kieliversiot:

Suomeksi
Svenska

Following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, a fundamental change has taken place in the security and operating environment of Finland and Europe. This Government report to Parliament assesses changes in the operating and security environment and the effects of the changed security situation on the economy, resilience, security of supply, internal security, cyber security, hybrid influence activities and critical infrastructure.

The report complements the Government Report on Finnish Foreign and Security Policy, Government Defence Report, Government Report on Internal Security, and Government Report on EU Policy. Maintaining national room to manoeuvre and freedom of choice remain integral parts of Finland's foreign, security and defence policy. Finland retains the option of joining a military alliance and applying for NATO membership. Finland conducts its human rights-based foreign and security policy consistently and emphasises the importance of the international rules-based order and compliance with international law.

Source: julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi

Venäjän hyökkäys

Hyökkäys alkoi monesta ilmansuunnasta

Venäjä on aloittanut hyökkäyksen Ukrainaan. Hyökkäys on alkanut useista suunnista. Ukrainan rajavartioston mukaan Venäjän joukkoja on tunkeutunut rajan yli Tšernihivin, Sumyn, Harkovan ja Luhanskin alueilla.



Kuva: Uutistoimistot, Harri Vähäkangas / Yle

TEEMU JUHOLA

24.2 • Päivitetty 24.2



Source: yle.fi

January 20, 2022
2:56 PM GMT+2
Last Updated 5 months
ago

[Europe](#)

Finland's PM says NATO membership is "very unlikely" in her current term

Reuters

2 minute read



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HELSINKI, Jan 19 (Reuters) - (This Jan. 19 story corrects headline and third paragraph to show Marin was talking about her current term of office)

Finland does not plan to join NATO in the near future but is ready to stand with its European allies and United States by imposing tough sanctions on Russia if it attacks Ukraine, Finland's Prime Minister Sanna Marin said on Wednesday.

Source: [Reuters.com](https://www.reuters.com)

Positions of parties and members of Parliament

In January 2022, the overwhelming majority of political parties and MPs supported Finland's traditional position of military non-alliance, adopted after World War II, confirmed in the Finno-Soviet Agreement of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance (1948). Although this "YYA" Treaty was revoked after the collapse of the Soviet Union (1991) and Finland joined the European Union (1995), the "Paasikivi-Kekkonen line" still endured.

Of the seven parliamentary parties only two (the conservative National Coalition Party and the liberal Swedish People's Party) advocated NATO membership, and as many as 138 MPs out of 200 were reluctant to join NATO.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine on February 24 changed the positions in days and weeks, leading to 188 MPs voting in May to join NATO. All non-socialist parties, the Social Democrats and the Left League were finally in favor, although the radical left had few against. Former President Halonen also turned in favor.

Surveying public opinion

Since 1996 the Advisory Board for Defence Information has measured Finland's public opinion concerning military alignment or non-alignment (see [this](#)). As shown in the following pages, until late 2021 a clear majority has supported non-alignment and a clear minority supported alignment, but in spring 2022 the positions were sharply reversed and support for NATO membership jumped from 25% to nearly 70%. The curve of support for NATO looks like a hockey stick.

Subsequent pages show detailed results from December 2021 to summer 2022, demonstrating how the turn occasioned by Russia's attack on Ukraine continued, also after the decision in May to seek NATO membership. This historically unforeseen change in Finnish public opinion can be called the "[NATO tsunami](#)".

It was initially assumed and advocated by President Niinistö that a referendum on NATO membership should be held, as was done with Finland's EU membership in 1994. However, this was soon forgotten as the results of various surveys consistently showed where public opinion was going and the political elite went along.

Figure 1A AMilitary alignment or non-alignment. "In your opinion, should Finland remain militarily non-aligned or should Finland aim to ally itself militarily?"

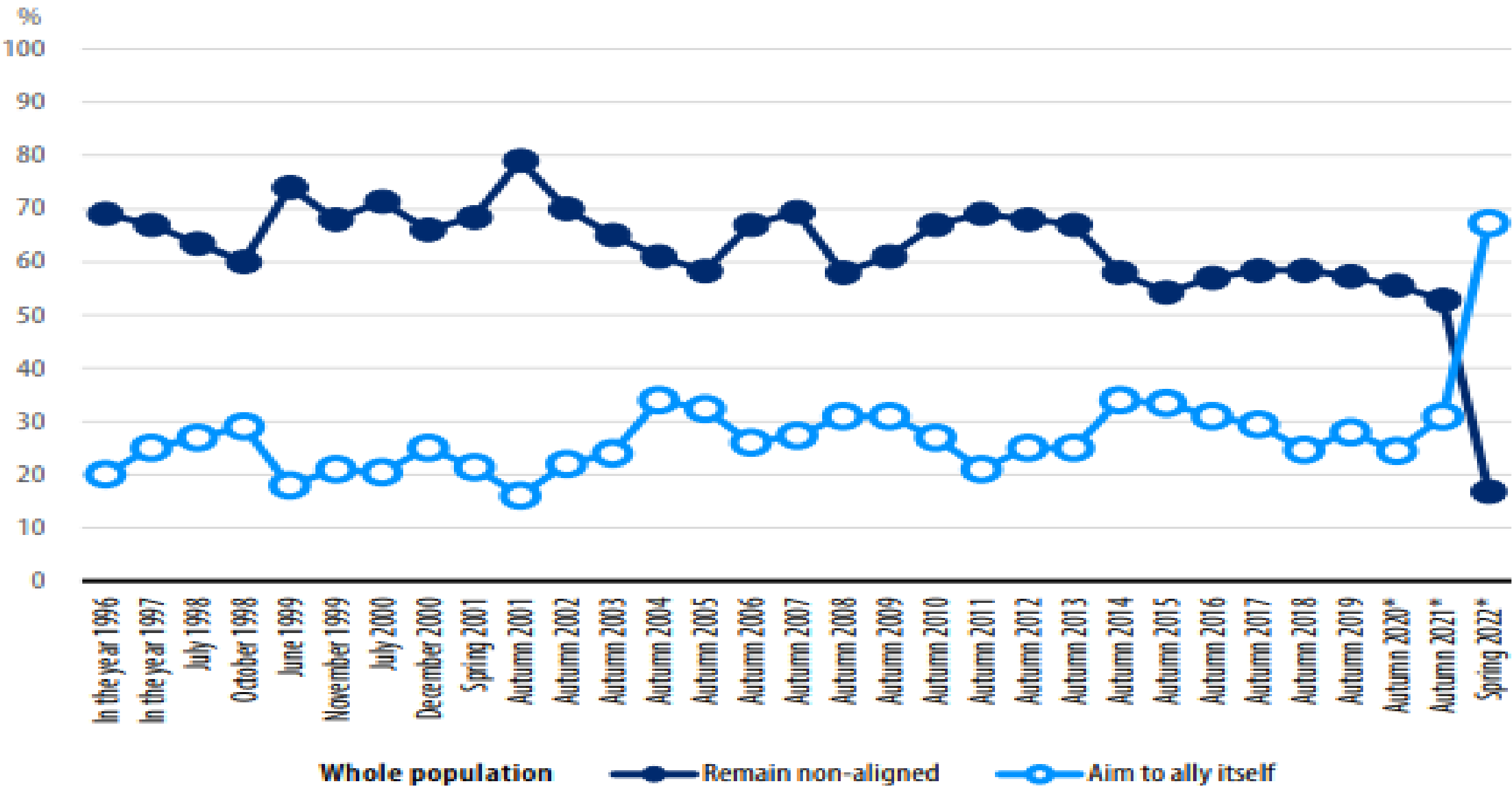
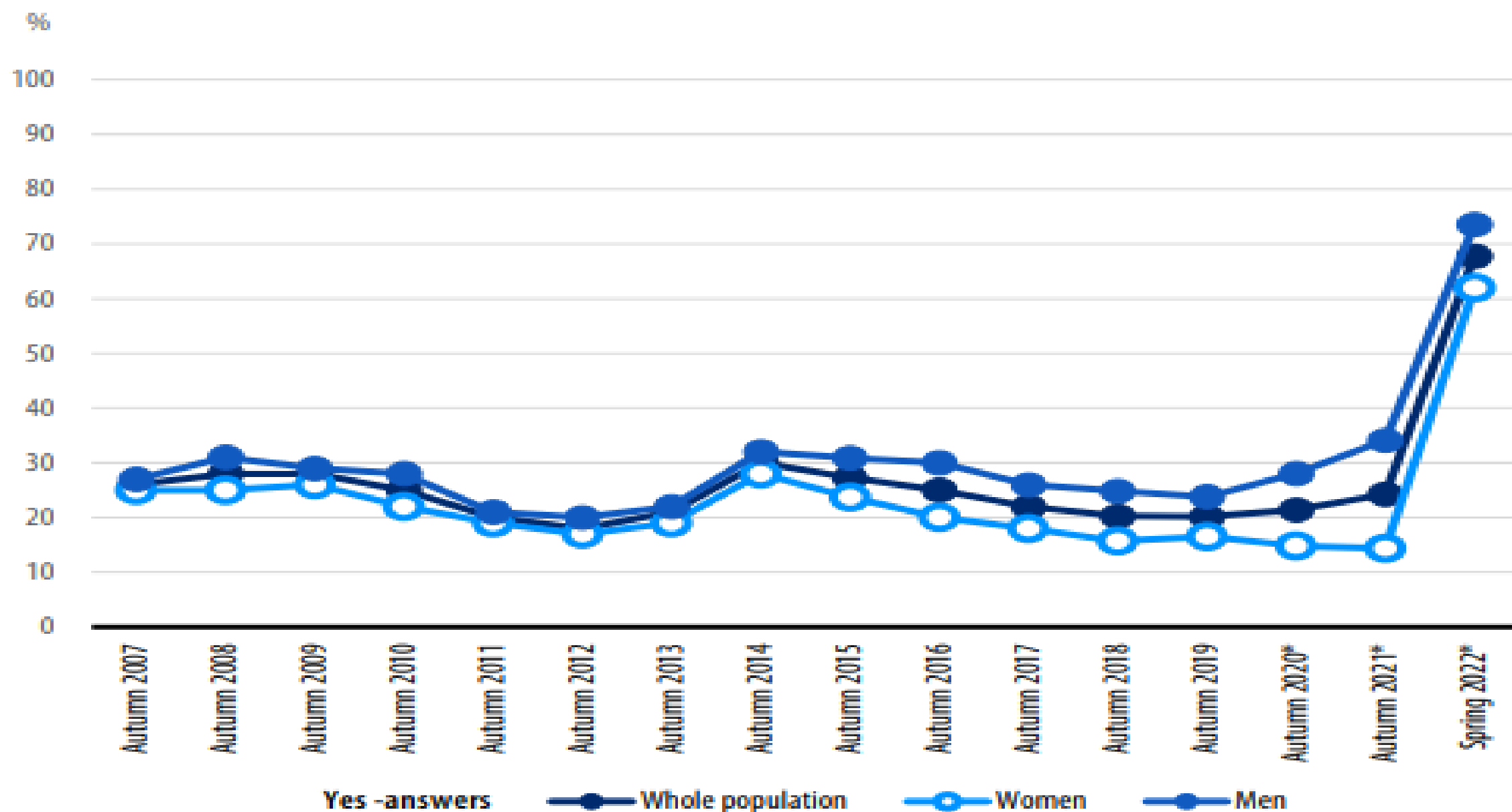
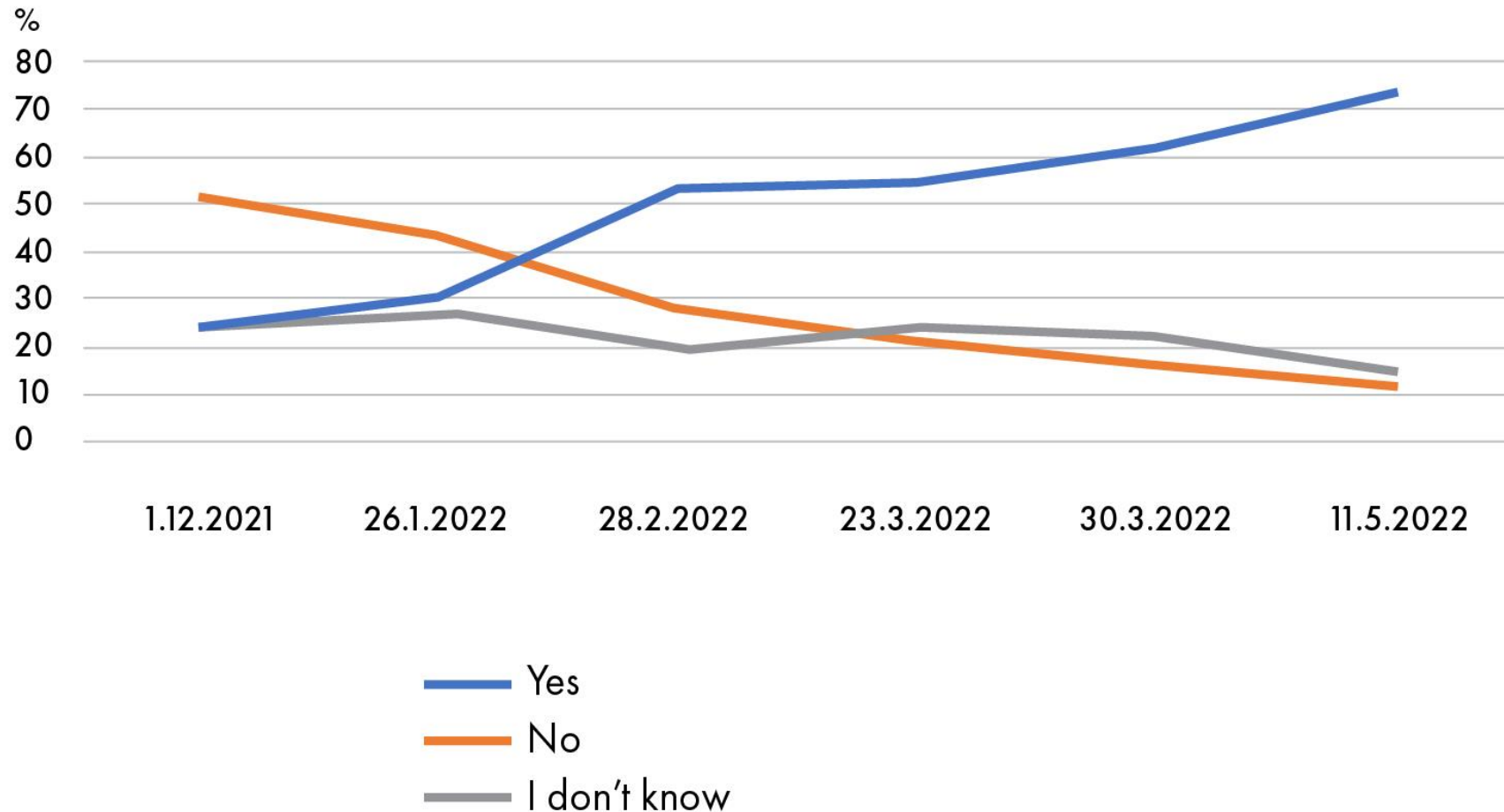


Figure 3A Nato membership. "In your opinion, should Finland seek membership in Nato?"



Finnish public opinion on joining NATO from December 2021 to May 2022

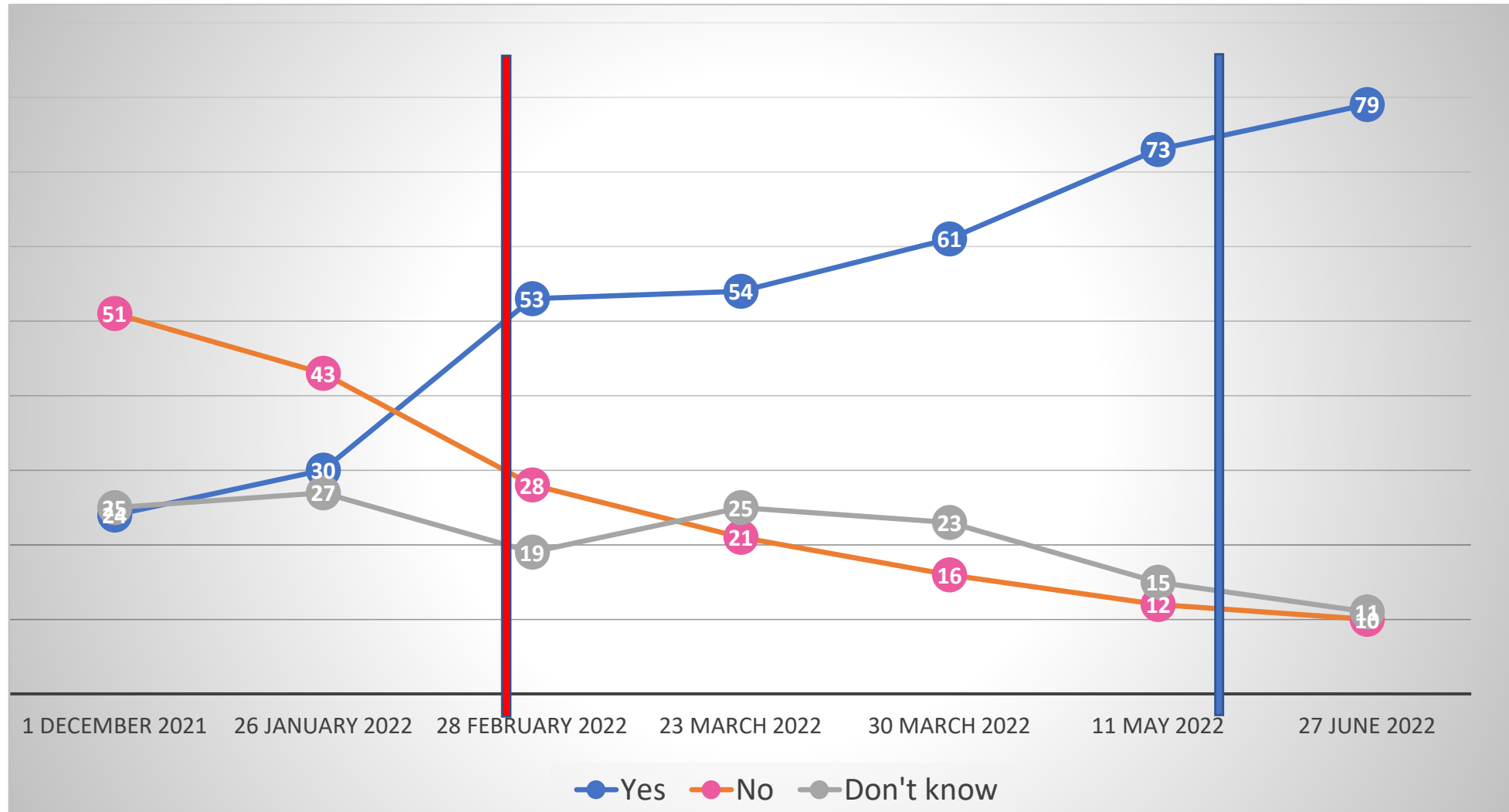


"In your opinion, should Finland seek membership in Nato?" (percentages)

According to Finland's two leading polling companies

Russia's attack
on Ukraine

Finland's application for
NATO membership

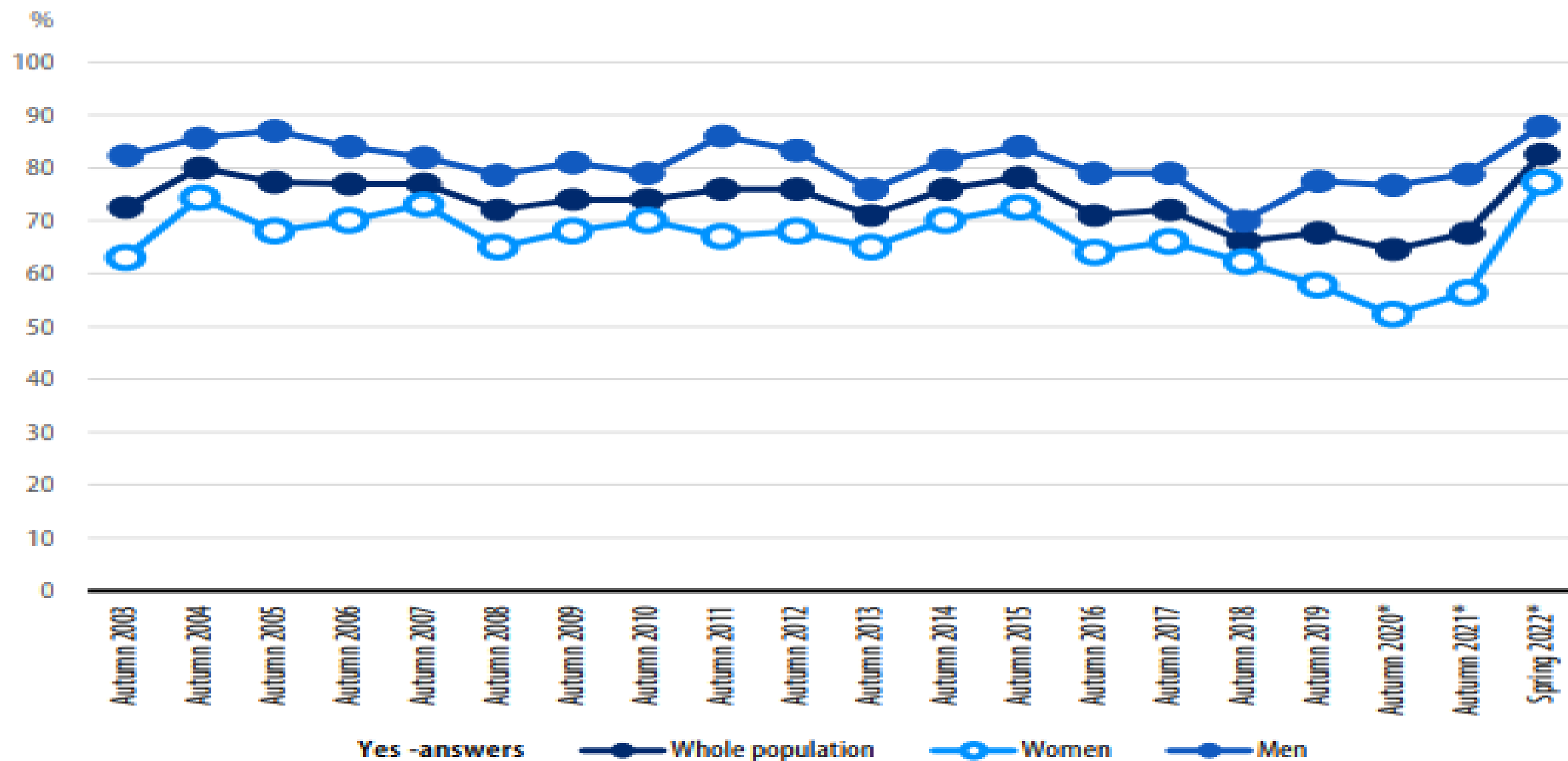


Finland's will to defend itself

The next page shows the results of an annual survey concerning the will of the Finnish people to militarily defend their country. The level of the popular will to defend has been decidedly high for as long as surveys have been conducted: well over 50%, even among the female population, which generally has been 10-20% less enthusiastic than men about national defence. The sudden rise after Russia's attack in February 2022 was therefore less dramatic than in the support for NATO membership – it is a clear upturn but does not resemble a hockey stick.

However, the data show that willingness to defend the country even if the outcome seemed uncertain had fallen among the whole population in 2018 to under 70% but that by 2022 it reached a record level of over 80%. Accordingly, the Russian aggression resulted in an increased willingness to defend the country – and a return to relative unanimity of the population, including women, of whom in 2020 only 50% were willing to defend while the figure for men was nearly 80%.

Figure 5A The will to defend the nation. "If Finland were attacked, should Finns, in your opinion, take up arms to defend themselves in all situations, even if the outcome seemed uncertain?"



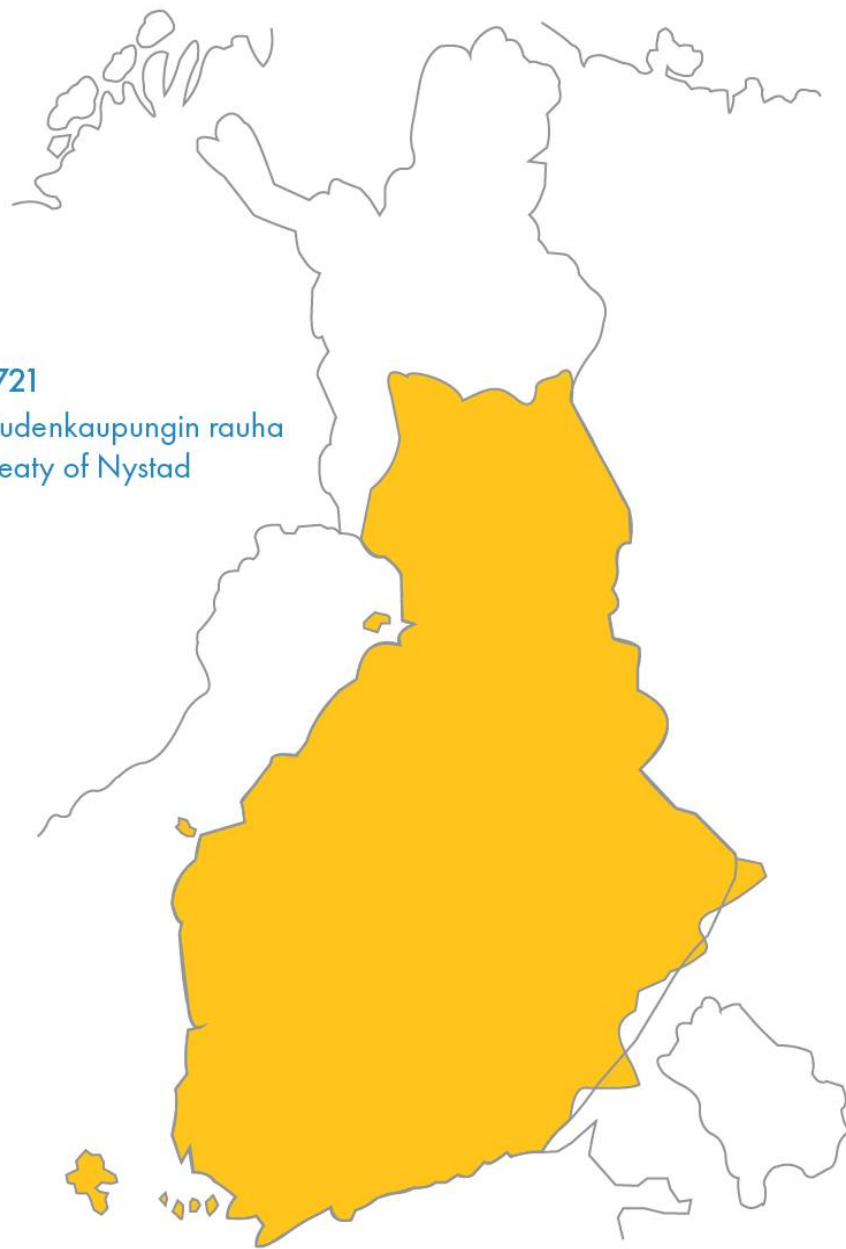
Three centuries between Sweden and Russia

Finland was first over 600 years as part of the Kingdom of Sweden, then over 100 years as a Grand Duchy of Czarist Russia, and since 1917 an independent state.

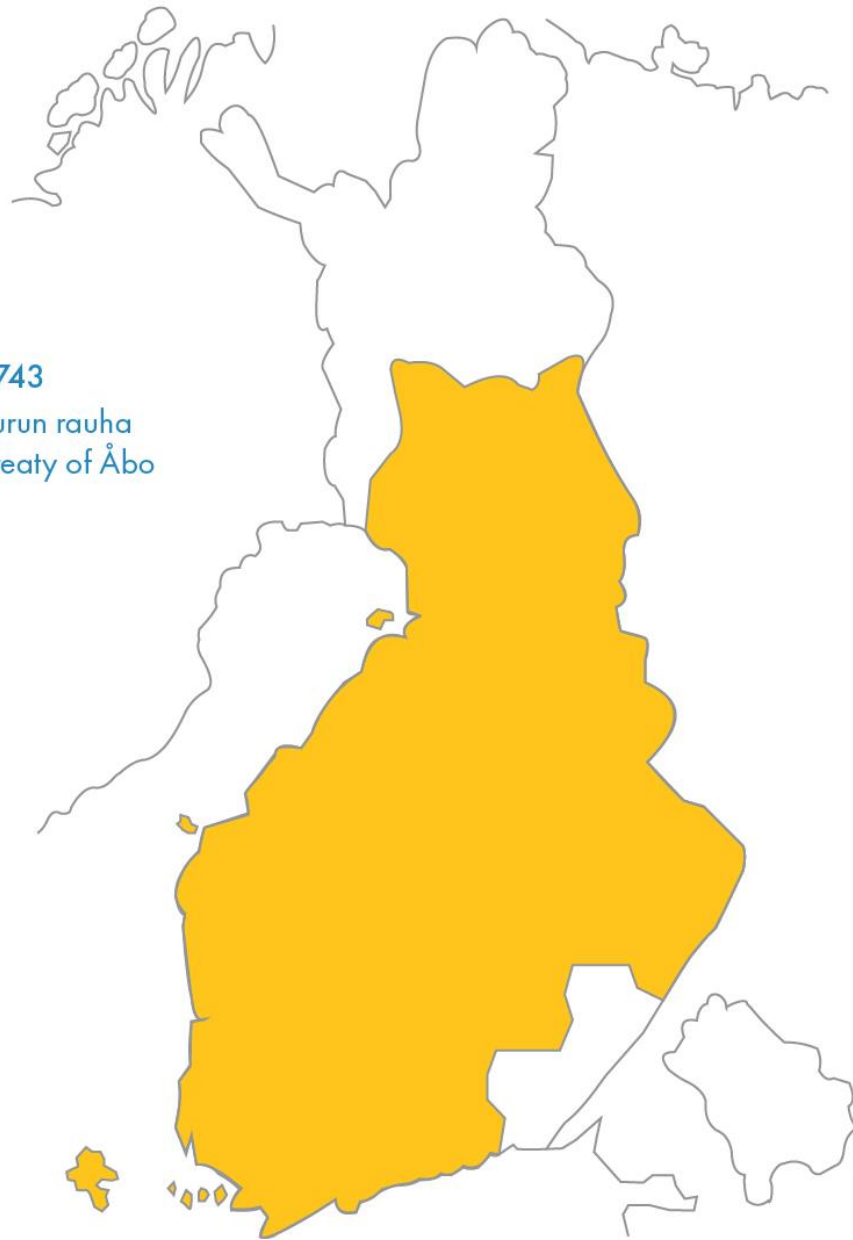
Let's see how the map of Finland changed after major wars and peace treaties:

- The Great Northern War 1700-21, including the Great Wrath in Finland, particularly in Ostrobothnia during its occupation by Russia since 1714, ending with the [Treaty of Nystad](#) (Uudenkaupungin rauha) in 1721.
- The Russo-Swedish War 1741-1743, leading to the annexation of Finland's south-eastern corner to Russia in the [Treaty of Åbo](#) (Turun rauha) in 1743.
- The Finnish War of 1808-09 with Sweden's defeat by Russia, whereby Finland became an autonomous part of Russia in the [Treaty of Fredrikshamn](#) (Haminan rauha) in 1809, with Viipuri and Käkisalme regions annexed to Finland in 1812.
- After independence, the [Treaty of Tartu](#) (Tartun rauha) in 1920 confirmed border with the USSR and the "Finnish Maiden" got her second arm in the Petsamo area with access to the Arctic Ocean and one of Europe's largest nickel mines.

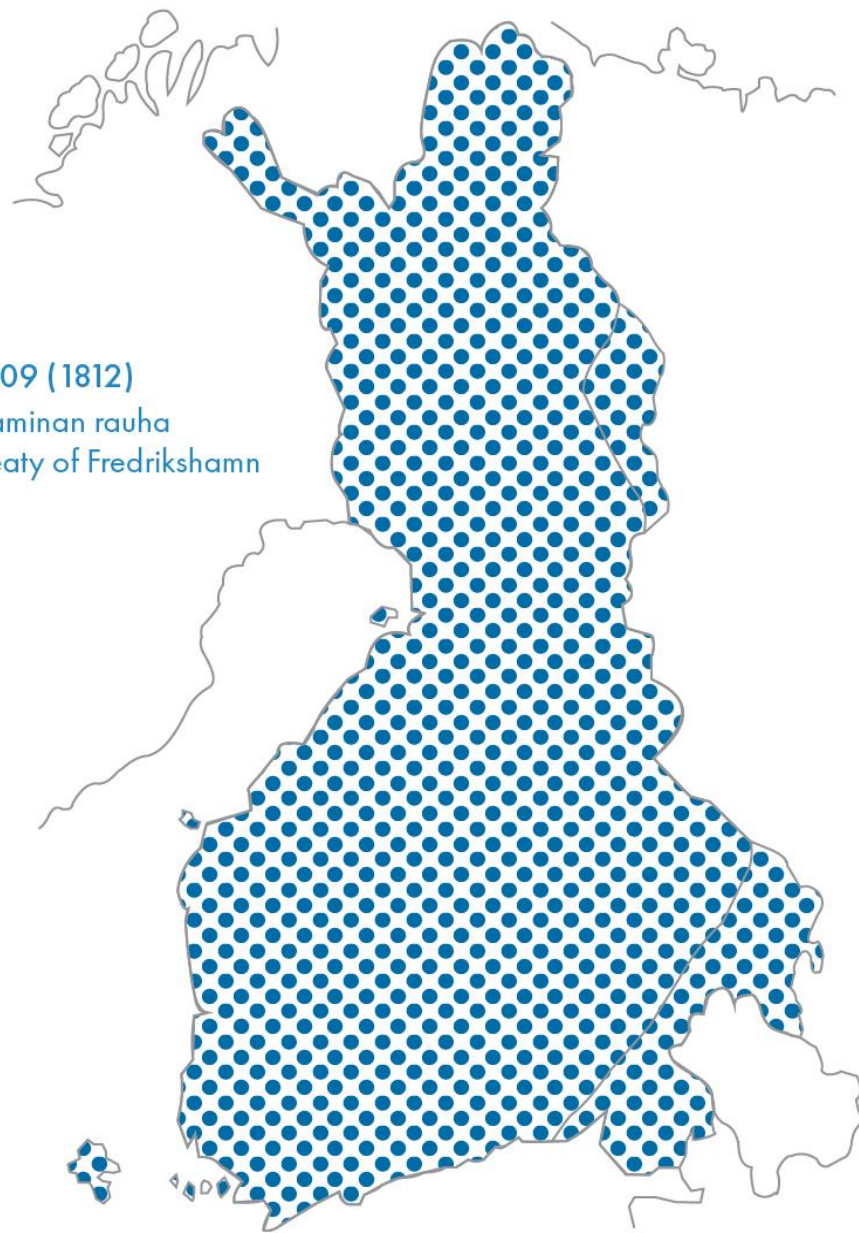
1721
Uudenkaupungin rauha
Treaty of Nystad



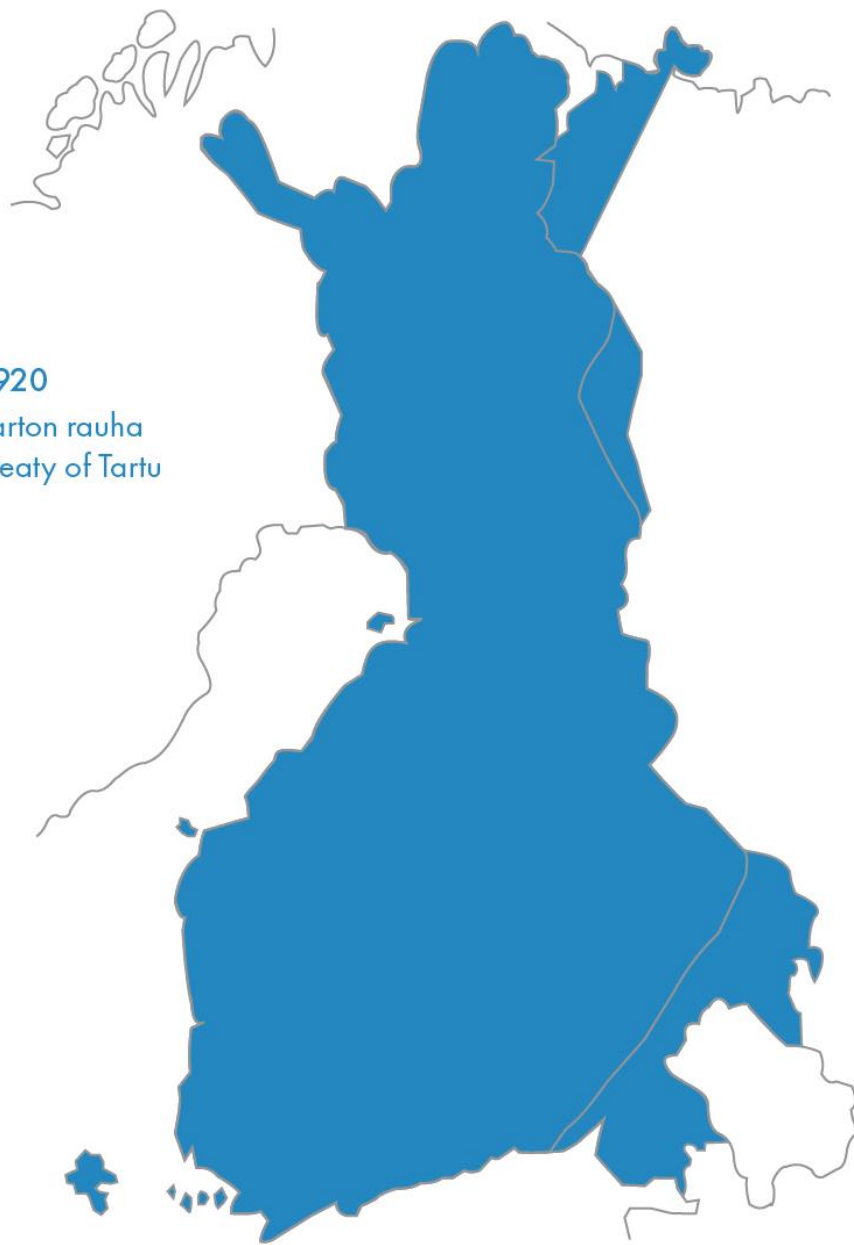
1743
Turun rauha
Treaty of Åbo



1809 (1812)
Haminan rauha
Treaty of Fredrikshamn



1920
Tartu rahu
Treaty of Tartu



Winter War 1939-40

The border of 1920 was next to the USSR's second largest city Leningrad, leading Stalin after the outbreak of World War II in 1939 to lay claim to Finnish territories on the Karelian Isthmus and islands in the Gulf of Finland. The Government of Finland refused and on November 30 the Soviet army invaded with 21 divisions along the 1,000-mile long border, also bombing Helsinki and other cities. Although greatly outnumbered in both men and machinery, but benefiting from freezing weather and guerilla tactics, Finland defended itself quite successfully.

After 105 days, on March 13, 1940, the [Moscow Peace Treaty](#) allowed Finland to remain independent but compelled it to cede to the USSR 9% of its territory, including the Karelian Isthmus. 400,000 Karelians – 13% of Finland's population – were evacuated to the rest of the country. As a result of the war 26,000 lives were lost in Finland, while the number of Soviet casualties was twice as high.

The 1940 Peace Treaty determined that the Hanko peninsula be leased to the Soviet Union as a military base (marked with a star on the map). The Soviets retreated from Hanko during the Continuation War at the end of 1941.

A map of Finland in 1940, showing the country's territory in blue. The map includes the main body of land, the Åland Islands to the southwest, and the Aland Islands to the south. The text "1940", "Moskovan rauhansopimus", and "Moscow Peace Treaty" is positioned to the left of the main landmass. A white star is located on the southern coast of the main landmass, near the Åland Islands.

1940
Moskovan rauhansopimus
Moscow Peace Treaty

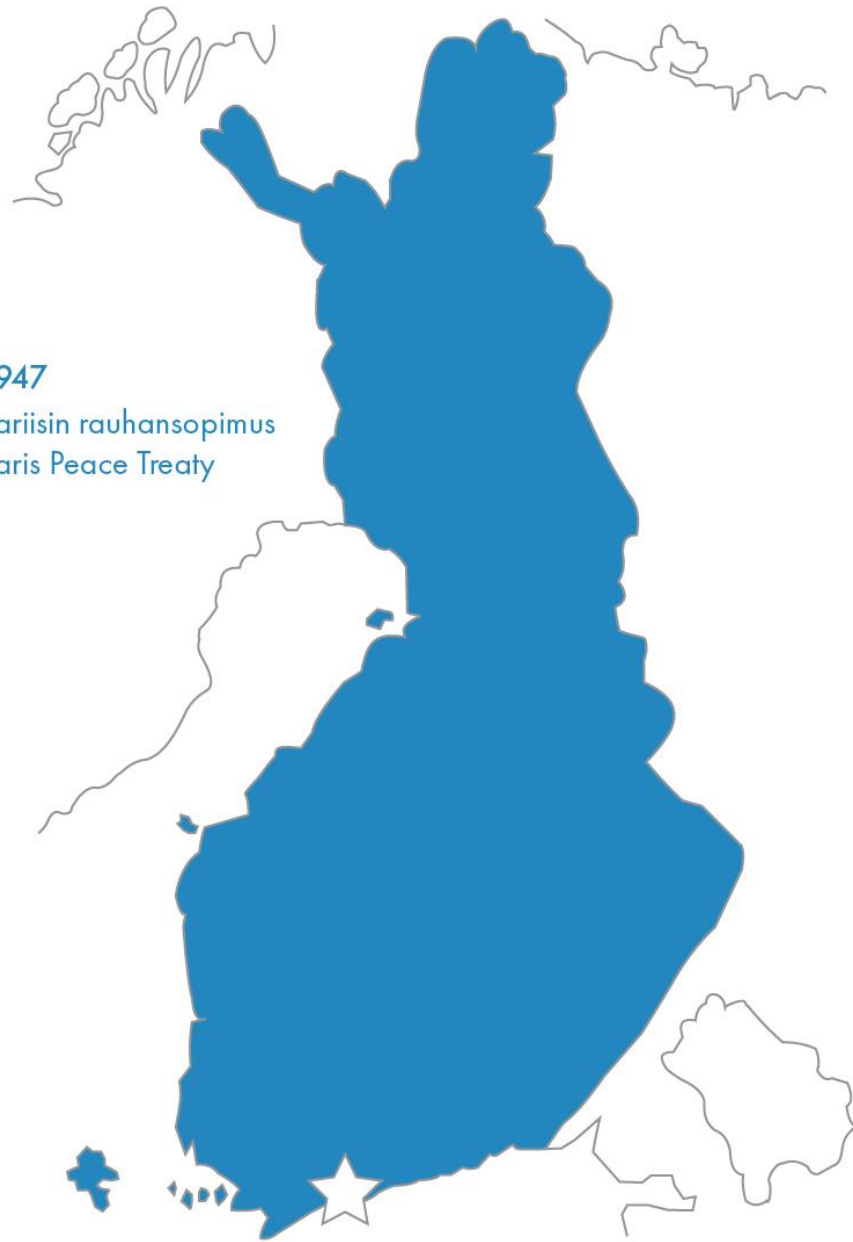
Continuation War 1941-44

The peace after the Moscow Treaty lasted formally for 15 months, but in late 1940 Finland's leadership already began to ally itself with Nazi Germany in the hope of regaining the ceded territories in Karelia and even to get deeper into East Karelia. The war began on June 25, 1941, while Germany was already at war with the USSR. It lasted for over three years, ending with a ceasefire on September 5, 1944, followed by the Moscow Armistice and confirmed in the [Paris Peace Treaty](#) of 1947.

The end result was the same loss of territories as in the Winter War plus the Petsamo area in the North. Finnish casualties included 63,000 soldiers and 1,000 civilians plus 160,000 wounded. Finland had to pay heavy war reparations and to punish the war-time political leadership. Moreover, Finland had to lease the Porkkala peninsula as a Soviet military base (marked with a star on the map), but in 1956 the USSR withdrew from it as a demonstration of detente.

Despite a heavy toll, Finland remained independent and avoided the fate of the Baltic countries, while its foreign policy made a U-turn from an anti-Soviet approach to a nominally friendly relationship with the Eastern neighbor.

1947
Pariisin rauhansopimus
Paris Peace Treaty



NATO positions based on history

It was such a long and vivid story of Finland's history that was the springboard to the NATO tsunami in spring 2022. History more than anything else explains the dramatic change in Finnish public opinion.

Sweden was less prepared to reorient itself from non-alignment to a new geopolitical reality with NATO including all the five Nordic countries, but Finland succeeded in pulling it along. NATO advocates in Sweden called Finland a wise big brother – quite a change from Sweden previously looking down on Finland.

The most recent wars are an integral part of the Finnish collective memory, fed by literature and films such as the *Unknown Soldier*. But beyond them a centuries-long history overshadows all we do and think. Actually, beginning the above review of history from 1700 was arbitrary; we could have started from the first border East of Finland from the Treaty of Nöteborg (Pähkinäsaaren rauha) between Sweden and the Novgorod Republic in 1323.

In conclusion, here are my seven positions in favor and against joining NATO.

Positions in favor of joining NATO

- Finland should sit at all international tables, after EU also NATO. (Ex-Pres Ahtisaari)
- Finland's geopolitical position should not be determined by big powers as in Tehran. (Ex-PM Aho)
- Finland's sovereignty cannot be limited by Russia's sphere of interest. (Pres Niinistö)
- Finland's security and operating environment is drastically changed after Russia's invasion of Ukraine. (Marin's government)
- Russia's invasion of Ukraine and its unpredictability have created a real threat to Finland. (General public)
- Only full membership will provide security under NATO's Article 5. (Advocates)
- Russia is fundamentally an insane nation, with criminal Putin only its latest manifestation, which is why the strongest possible protection is needed. (Hardliners)

Positions against joining NATO

Russia does not cause a real threat to Finland; there is a hysteria agitated by media.

NATO will create a new iron curtain between Russia and Europe, escalating tension on the Finnish-Russian border.

NATO membership will shrink Finland's international sphere of operation provided by military non-alignment.

Finland is militarily associated with NATO-USA-UK and also enjoys EU's political guarantees, thus already possessing a strong security deterrent against Russia.

Finland's own army is quite strong, including the recently bought F-35 fighter fleet.

NATO as a community of Western values is an illusion as lately shown by Turkey.

NATO represents militarism and the arms race, which should be reduced rather than increased as humanity faces an existential crisis of environment.

After all

NATO membership will not change everyday life in Finland.

Clashes of opinion will turn to dialogue.

Scholars have a lot of material for research.

Thank you!

<https://sites.tuni.fi/kaarle/>