



Government report on changes in the foreign and security policy environment



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Abstract

The report assesses the significance of changes in the security environment for Finland and Europe. It adds to the 2024 Government report on Finnish foreign and security policy.

The foreign and security policy environment is unpredictable and evolving rapidly. The transformation of the transatlantic relationship underscores the responsibility of Europeans for the continent. Russia's aggressive actions are a long-term threat. The war in Iran has extensive impacts, also for Europe. The world is increasingly defined by power, force and competition, often at the expense of the rules-based international system.

Uncertainties in the operating environment are expected to continue, but Finland is well prepared.

Finland invests in defence, resilience and a wide range of measures. Finland approaches the transatlantic relationship through its values, interests and strengths. Finland is building a stronger and more effective EU and a more European NATO. Finland promotes a just and lasting peace in Ukraine and emphasises the need to support Ukraine over the long term and respond to the persistent threat posed by Russia. Finland focuses on derisking and competitiveness. Finland defends international law and supports the multilateral system. Finland promotes stability and security in the Arctic region. The Nordic countries and other partners and allies are more significant than ever.

Keywords foreign and security policy, multilateralism, international relations, foreign policy

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Contents

1	Introduction	5
2	Operating environment for foreign and security policy	7
2.1	Europe in a difficult security situation	7
2.1.1	Russia as a long-term threat	7
2.1.2	Ukraine as the key security issue for Europe	8
2.1.3	The war in Iran	10
2.2	The transatlantic operating environment in transformation	11
2.2.1	Shifting US priorities	11
2.2.2	Towards a stronger EU and a more European NATO.....	13
2.2.3	Derisking in an era of interdependencies	15
2.2.4	Increasing importance of Nordic cooperation.....	16
2.2.5	Seeking stability and security in the Arctic region	17
2.3	The rules-based international system and partnerships as cornerstones of Finland's security.....	18
2.3.1	The rules-based international system under pressure from great power politics	18
2.3.2	Multilateral cooperation in flux	18
2.3.3	Strategic partnerships in an increasingly multipolar world.....	19
2.3.4	Finland bearing responsibility	20
3	Conclusions	22

1 Introduction

The Government submitted the Government report on Finnish foreign and security policy (VNS 3/2024 vp) to Parliament on 20 June 2024. The report contains a comprehensive assessment of the foreign and security policy environment and defines Finland's objectives and priorities for the upcoming years. The report encapsulates the direction of Finland's foreign and security policy as a militarily allied country.

Major changes have taken place in the time since the report was published. The most significant of these are the changes that have occurred in US foreign policy, the status of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and of peace efforts related to the war, the escalation in the Middle East following strikes by the United States and Israel against Iran and Iran's strikes against numerous countries in the region, and the rise of Arctic security to more prominence on the global political agenda. The world order is being increasingly defined by power and force as well as by great power competition. The significance of shared values is being put to the test as greater emphasis is being placed on the pursuit of immediate interests.

The transatlantic operating environment is in transformation. The United States is pursuing its national interests in a novel manner, and its policy is more strongly driven by transactionalism than before. US allies must respond to this based on their own interests and values. The United States, however, remains of great importance to Finland.

Wars and conflicts have global impacts. Europe's security environment remains unstable as Russia continues its war of aggression against Ukraine. The escalation of the situation in the Middle East impacts Europe's economy and security while also diverting global attention away from Russia's war of aggression. The geopolitical impacts will also be far-reaching. The responsibility of European states for the security of the continent will continue to grow in importance. In this evolving situation, it is more important than ever for Finland to uphold and strengthen the rules-based international order.

This report describes changes in the foreign and security policy environment, the impact they have on Finland, and Finland's scope for action. This report supplements the Government report on Finnish foreign and security policy published in 2024. This report does not cover all of the themes included in the 2024 report, though they remain of key importance to Finland's foreign and security policy.

Despite changes to the operating environment, the objectives of Finland's foreign and security policy remain unchanged and are guided by value-based realism. The main goal of Finland's foreign and security policy is to safeguard Finland's independence and territorial integrity, to avoid becoming involved in a military conflict, and to ensure the security and wellbeing of the people of Finland. Our policy is founded on democracy, the rule of law, human rights, equality and non-discrimination.

The operating environment is characterised by growing uncertainty, which can be expected to continue for the foreseeable future. Tensions in the security landscape are reflected in society in many ways. However, Finland is well prepared for times of uncertainty. Finland is a driven and impactful actor that seeks to maximise its influence and shape its environment to suit its interests and values.

The preparation of this report was led by the Minister for Foreign Affairs working closely with the Office of the President of the Republic of Finland, the Prime Minister's Office and with other ministries. The President of the Republic of Finland and the Ministerial Committee on Foreign and Security Policy have provided the political guidance for the work. The work has included dialogues with Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee, as well as consultations with civil society organisations.

Parliament will give a statement on this report.

2 Operating environment for foreign and security policy

2.1 Europe in a difficult security situation

2.1.1 Russia as a long-term threat

Finland is pursuing its foreign and security policy in an unstable and rapidly changing environment. The security situation is most significantly marked by Russia's aggressive and imperialistic actions as it seeks to restore its great power status and sphere of influence as well as expand its territory. Russia constitutes a long-term threat to Euro-Atlantic security.

Finland is not facing an immediate military threat, but it must be prepared for the use or threat of military force against it. Though the war of aggression in Ukraine is ongoing, Russia is continuing to develop and strengthen its armed forces with the aim of increasing its military strength, including in the vicinity of Finland's borders. This will likely intensify when the situation in Ukraine allows it.

Russia has increased its broad-spectrum efforts to exert influence in Europe. Cyber, hybrid and sabotage activities targeting critical infrastructure have been widely observed in Europe. The objective is to carry out such actions at a scale that is deniable or difficult to link to a state actor. Russia's hostile actions seek to test NATO's and the European Union's (EU) unity and ability to respond, influence decision making in European states, undermine support for Ukraine and destabilise the population's sense of security. Growing tensions and military presence as well as harmful actions by Russia have also become increasingly visible in the Baltic Sea region. The security situation in the Baltic Sea is being negatively impacted by continuous jamming of satellite positioning, airspace violations and risks related to the shadow fleet. Russia is more blatantly incorporating its nuclear deterrent into strategic communications in the pursuit of its goals.

A strong national defence capability as part of NATO's collective deterrence and defence is the foundation for Finland's security. Finland continues to prepare for a variety of scenarios both nationally and as part of NATO and the EU. Finland promotes societal resilience based on a comprehensive approach to security.

Diplomacy and intelligence are both increasingly important when forming a shared situational understanding and in proactive decision-making in foreign and security policy.

2.1.2 Ukraine as the key security issue for Europe

Russia's full-scale war of aggression against Ukraine has lasted over four years. Efforts to achieve peace have intensified, particularly as a result of US activity. The United States has sought to act as an intermediary to achieve a ceasefire and an end to the war. Finland underlines that Ukraine, as the country under attack, is the one to decide what kind of solution it is willing to accept. Matters concerning the European security order in general cannot be agreed on without Europe. It is important for Europe to prepare for discussions on the security order by achieving a strong shared position. Finland will work towards a just and lasting peace together with its partners and allies, particularly the EU, NATO, the Coalition of the Willing, which is a group of countries pledged to support Ukraine, and various smaller groups.

Ukraine's survival is a major security policy interest for all of Europe, and Finland calls for more equal burden sharing between states supporting Ukraine. Besides political support, Ukraine needs military, economic, humanitarian, technological and other material support to bolster its defence capability and negotiating position. Finland is proportionally one of Ukraine's largest supporters along with the other Nordic countries and the Baltic States. Most of the support Finland has provided is materiel and military training, but Ukraine has also rapidly become Finland's largest single development cooperation partner and recipient of humanitarian and civilian material assistance.

Ukraine has chosen a European and transatlantic future and has expressed its will to join the EU and NATO, which is a goal that Finland supports. Ukraine is committed to its EU path and, even in the midst of the war, has made progress with the concrete reforms required for membership. It remains important for Ukraine to continue taking steps to strengthen the rule of law and democratic institutions, combat corruption and reform its internal security sector and public administration. It is vital to carry on with and implement these reforms, first and foremost for the benefit of the people of Ukraine. Doing so will, in and of itself, strengthen the security and stability of Ukraine and all of Europe. Finland considers Ukraine's Western integration to be a key component of security policy for a lasting peace.

Finland is preparing for the possibility that Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine may continue for a long time or take new forms. Russia is keeping to its maximalist objectives and is conducting a war of attrition supported by a wartime economy. Russia has shown no genuine interest in peace. Finland emphasises the necessity to continue supporting Ukraine and increase pressure on Russia, particularly in the form of sanctions and tariffs. Sanctions weaken Russia's economy and limit its ability to develop and bolster its military power. It is also important to strengthen joint means of tackling Russia's shadow fleet to reduce Russia's energy revenues and mitigate the significant risks associated with the shadow fleet.

We must prepare for Russia posing a long-term threat even if the war in Ukraine comes to an end. It is important to keep the focus of allies and partners on this matter. An end or pause in the fighting will not guarantee that tensions will cease in Europe, nor will it remove Russia's long-term great power ambitions or efforts to deny Ukraine's sovereignty. From the perspective of Finland's and Europe's security interests, a bad peace deal would increase uncertainty, strain Western unity and require particular preparedness planning also from Finland. An end to the fighting would allow Russia to rearm. Pressure must continue to be put on Russia's wartime economy. Were peace negotiations to lead considerations on the lifting of some sanctions, a controlled and gradual approach would be required.

Russia's ambitions are not limited to Ukraine, but are aimed at changing the entire European security order. Engaging in dialogue for stability will only be possible after the end of the war. NATO alone decides on the development of the Alliance's deterrence and defence. Any lasting peace will require Europe and the entire Alliance to make long-term investments in deterrence. Ukraine's armed forces will play a particularly prominent role in creating deterrence and producing security for all of Europe. Finland underlines the need for continued support of Ukraine even after a possible ceasefire or peace treaty. Ukraine will also need strong defence industry capabilities to arm itself faster. Boosting European defence industry capabilities will play a key role in this, as will integration and deeper cooperation between the Ukrainian and EU defence industries.

If a state that initiated a war of aggression were to be allowed to benefit from its aggression, this would set a dangerous precedent and could encourage the illegal use of force elsewhere in the world. One of the key tenets of international law is that force cannot be used to acquire territory. Finland emphasises the responsibility of states for their violations of international law and the liability of states to compensate damage caused by such violations. Finland is participating in the establishment of a Special Tribunal for the crime of aggression and an International Claims Commission within the framework of the Council of Europe. During its war of

aggression, Russia has committed systematic and serious violations of international humanitarian law that also include criminal liability of individuals. Several initiatives have been launched to bring Russia and its representatives to justice.

Finland draws on Ukraine's military lessons learnt and experiences of societal resilience in emergency conditions. Finland also recognises the internal security risks posed by individuals who have received military training and combat experience in Russia's war of aggression and by the spread of organised crime and weapons, among other things.

During its war of aggression, Russia has remained largely isolated by the West and subject to extensive sanctions. The unity of European and other Western partners in isolating Russia has, with some exceptions, held, and the EU has been able to respond to Russia's actions. Finland assesses the future of its engagement with Russia, both on its own and together with its partners. At some point, the need to reopen political engagement will have to be considered. However, there is no going back to the old bilateral relationship. The proactive monitoring of Russia's internal development and foreign and security policy will continue to require sufficient Russia expertise both in Finland and in Europe.

Globally, Russia still has partners. However, Russia has been unable to provide previous levels of support to administrations friendly to it in Syria, Venezuela and Iran. China is supporting Russia politically, economically, technologically and logistically and is for its own part enabling Russia's war of aggression to serve its strategic great power objectives. However, this relationship has become increasingly imbalanced, with China being the significantly stronger country.

2.1.3 The war in Iran

The situation in Iran and more broadly in the Middle East has escalated rapidly following military strikes by the United States and Israel against Iran and Iran's strikes against several countries in the region and its closure of the Strait of Hormuz to traffic. Iran has carried out extensive strikes on Israel, and from the start of the war, it has also taken military action, for example against countries in the Persian Gulf, some of which sought to act as intermediaries prior to the escalation. Military action has also been observed more widely in the Middle East.

The war has created long-term and far-reaching uncertainty. It is having an extensive impact on the entire international system and will affect Europe in ways that are in part difficult to anticipate, particularly with respect to the economy

and also security. The war is drawing global attention away from Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, benefiting Russia through higher oil prices, tying up our allies' resources and threatening to weaken the focus on responding to the long-term threat posed by Russia. Higher energy prices are impacting the global economy through transport and logistics costs as well as general inflationary pressure. Globally, this crisis is also reflected in trade, supply chains, financial markets and food security. Freedom of navigation must be secured in order to maintain international trade, energy supplies and global security. If the situation continues, Europe will also have to take into account an elevated threat of terrorism and potential migratory pressure, among other issues.

Finland engages in dialogue with the countries of the region, closely coordinates its policies with its partners and allies and emphasises diplomacy, negotiations and international law as means of finding lasting solutions. The civilian population and civilian infrastructure must be protected in all situations.

2.2 The transatlantic operating environment in transformation

2.2.1 Shifting US priorities

The United States is a key ally for European security. This alliance is built on a long-term and multidimensional partnership. In many fields, Finland's cooperation with the United States is closer than ever. Finland's goal is to continue strengthening cooperation that promotes Finland's and Europe's foreign and security policy and economic interests over the long term.

However, the political change in the United States has put allies and partners in a new situation. The transatlantic environment is now marked by unpredictability, rapid changes and increasingly harsh rhetoric. The policies of the current US administration have accelerated a long-term development in which Europe and the strengthening of transatlantic relations are no longer among the United States' highest priorities. The America First approach is distinguished by transactionalism and the pursuit of national interests, for example in the form of economic protectionism. Even the closest of allies may not be exempt, as has been seen in the case of US demands regarding Greenland. The United States is also displaying a greater readiness to use military force. Furthermore, the current administration has shown eagerness to take a position on the internal politics of European nations. In the conduct of relations between states, the significance of direct personal relationships has become increasingly pronounced.

The national security and defence strategies published by the current administration place the United States' primary focus on domestic security and the Western hemisphere. They also emphasise the Indo-Pacific. Europe comes after these in the order of priorities. The United States has stressed that European states must bear the primary responsibility for the security of the continent, particularly with respect to conventional defence. This is Finland's long-standing goal, as well. This is not a new message from the US, but it takes on particular weight in the prevailing security environment. The United States is not withdrawing from Europe. It has expressed that it will continue providing more limited, but still critical, support and remains committed to NATO's extended nuclear deterrence.

Many recent developments reflect a more long-term transition. The United States is evaluating its allies based on what they have to offer. This underlines the need to communicate how alliances and cooperation in foreign and security policy and in economic issues benefit the US. It also highlights the importance of investing in Finland's and Europe's strengths and carefully weighing Finland's and Europe's overall interests. In its engagement with the US, Finland highlights its reliability as an ally, its strong defence capability and commitment to increasing defence spending, its expertise and location in the Arctic, its technological prowess, and robust commercial and economic cooperation. The countries enjoy close bilateral relations and closer political contacts and dialogue than ever before. Defence cooperation between Finland and the United States has been built over a sustained period and is based on mutual interests and bilateral agreements. Defence policy, military, materiel and defence industry cooperation are all close. Major defence procurements from the US create mutual benefits and contribute to closer cooperation. In line with its interests, Finland continues broad-ranging cooperation with the US on both the federal and state levels. Finland's solid relationship with the US allows for constructive discussions even on matters where positions differ.

In bilateral initiatives and cooperation, Finland assesses its overall foreign, security and defence policy and commercial and industrial policy interests, as well as potential impacts on the EU's unity and capability to act. Nordic cooperation is central in the transatlantic framework. Cooperation is also taking place, for example, in the framework of the trilateral Icebreaker Collaboration Effort (ICE Pact) between Finland, the US and Canada.

2.2.2 Towards a stronger EU and a more European NATO

One of Finland's long-standing goals has been for European countries to take on more responsibility for the security of the continent. This subject is high on the agenda in both NATO and the EU. At the NATO Summit held in The Hague in 2025, member countries committed to raising defence spending to five per cent of gross domestic product (3.5 per cent core defence spending and 1.5 per cent spending that supports defence and security) by 2035. From the perspective of Finnish and European security, it is of key importance that these commitments lead to an actual increase in defence capability in all member countries across shifting economic cycles and political priorities. The large European states will in future play an increasingly prominent role in implementing Europe's defence capability. Finland is strengthening bilateral cooperation with these states in the field of foreign and security policy. It is likely that the primary setting for the defence of Europe will continue to be on the eastern flank.

Bearing responsibility is about more than funding shares; it will require qualitative investments. A stronger role for Europe must support NATO's joint deterrence and defence. European states will be taking a stronger role in the conventional defence of the continent. This will take place gradually and require a sustained approach on both sides of the Atlantic. A key goal is to strengthen the capabilities and defence industries of European states. Greater responsibility of European states does not mean that the US would cease to have a major role in transatlantic security. The United States' commitment to defence arrangements in Europe both bilaterally and through NATO will remain important.

Finland is actively building a more European NATO and is contributing to the strength of NATO's deterrence and defence. At the same time, Finland's goal is to continue to keep the US committed to European security. Finland's own defence is strong, and NATO integration has progressed rapidly and according to plan. Finland is promoting the commercial use of Finnish expertise in defence and technology in NATO.

NATO's deterrence consists of conventional forces and capabilities, missile defence capabilities and nuclear weapons. The nuclear forces of the United States, including US nuclear weapons stationed in Europe, form the essential basis of NATO's nuclear deterrence. It is complemented and strengthened by the independent strategic nuclear forces of the United Kingdom and France. The fundamental purpose of NATO's nuclear deterrence is to preserve peace, to prevent coercion and to deter aggression. NATO is committed to arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation, but as long as nuclear weapons exist, it remains a nuclear alliance.

Finland is fully committed to NATO's deterrence and defence and participates in the work on NATO's nuclear deterrence. Finland does not intend to station nuclear weapons on its territory in peacetime. Finland is committed to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and its other international obligations, and therefore Finland will not become a nuclear weapons state. We consider an intensive dialogue with our close allies on nuclear weapons policy to be important. Finland stands ready to examine new forms of co-operation. Finland independently defines its stance on all matters related to nuclear deterrence.

Finland strengthens its security through both bilateral connections and arrangements among small groups. Finland is an active participant in various groups, such as the *Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF)*, which is a defence cooperation framework led by the United Kingdom, and in the Coalition of the Willing, a grouping of countries pledged to support Ukraine. Finland is systematically strengthening bilateral cooperation with major allies, such as Germany, France, the United Kingdom, Poland and Canada. Key partners outside of NATO are Australia, Japan and South Korea, in particular. These relationships will grow in importance as the significance of the Indo-Pacific increases.

The EU is Finland's most important community of values and security. It is also Finland's most important political and economic frame of reference and channel for foreign policy influence. The EU and NATO have roles that complement each other. Finland is seeking closer cooperation between NATO and the EU. The EU has taken significant steps in the fields of defence, security and societal preparedness that will also benefit NATO. During the current European Commission term, significant progress has been made and work on security and defence has been implemented with respect to defence readiness and the defence industry, for example. Developing interoperability and defence readiness, capability and resilience, as well as preparedness in line with comprehensive security require implementing national defence commitments and EU financial instruments. Also as a NATO member, Finland emphasises the importance of the EU's mutual assistance clause (Article 42(7) TEU) and solidarity clause (Article 222 TFEU).

Finland strives to deepen the EU's security and defence policy cooperation and also to develop the Union into a stronger global player. The EU must take stronger and more strategic action to promote its values and interests in the new geopolitical environment. All of the EU's actions seek to strengthen security and the economy. The EU also has many instruments at its disposal that involve real non-military power in today's world. These include trade policy, regulation and sanctions, and an important regional and thematic role in comprehensive security. Global multipolarisation offers the EU opportunities to demonstrate leadership.

The EU's influence also encompasses enlargement policy, which is an important instrument to strengthen the EU in a time of global change. The EU is seeking to speed up necessary reforms in Ukraine, Moldova and the Western Balkans. Finland advocates for a credible enlargement policy based on membership criteria, with special emphasis on the geopolitical significance of enlargement and the importance of democratic institutions and rule-of-law reforms.

The EU faces internal challenges. In particular, the EU's unity in foreign policy issues is under strain, but the EU has proven its ability to make decisions on difficult questions when necessary. The EU's ability to act is a major factor in our joint influence and security. Finland seeks to contribute to strengthening the EU's ability to act in foreign policy matters. Finland actively promotes and defends democracy in the EU and its neighbourhood, with an emphasis on the importance of democracy as a cornerstone of security.

2.2.3 Derisking in an era of interdependencies

Geostrategic competition and shifts in global politics are strongly reflected in the economy. The links between trade, commerce, technology and security are becoming more closely intertwined, and unpredictability is growing. These developments underline the need for a strong and effective EU.

The multilateral system is being undermined by an increasing number of states resorting to unilateral action. The United States is favouring tariffs and other trade policy instruments as tools for its foreign policy in an effort to reduce its trade deficit in goods, boost industrial production in the US and curb the growth of China's influence. The US is using tariff hikes and the threat of them to pursue its interests also in relation to its traditional allies, such as the EU and individual Member States. China, too, has used export control measures to strengthen its own negotiating position and has shown a readiness to use its position against Western countries, for example with respect to critical minerals.

Technological competition is also affecting the operating environment. Access to critical technologies and raw materials is becoming more clearly linked to global influence, competitiveness and strategic positioning as well as to the ability to safeguard one's own values and security interests. Both China and the United States are investing heavily in technological development and self-sufficiency. While the EU is also making similar investments, there is a risk that Finland and Europe will fall behind China and the US and that dependencies will increase.

Interdependencies are growing and impacting the development of international relations. This highlights the need for risk management and stronger competitiveness. Finland, too, must be prepared for the possibility of being a target of pressure. This requires reducing harmful dependencies, diversifying supply chains and developing strengths on the national and EU level and through a variety of partnerships. Finland is an open export economy and a technologically competitive and reliable country. This is a good foundation for diversifying and intensifying economic and technological partnerships. Cooperation with the business world will be increasingly important.

In the framework of the EU, Finland advocates for investing in strategic competitiveness, the development of trade relations and economic security. The EU must have the capability to respond to the instrumentalisation of economic dependencies, economic coercion and other serious threats to economic security. The EU must reduce and manage vulnerabilities that affect security and competitiveness. It is important to identify economic strengths and inverse dependencies with respect to key competitors and to invest in technological competitiveness, prioritising market-based solutions. Harmful dependencies exist for example within the information environment, and efforts should be made to reduce them and manage the risks related to them. Ensuring that EU citizens keep abreast of the ongoing economic and technological transition is a matter of security.

Cooperation with third countries and in a multilateral framework is an important tool for diversifying risk. The EU's recent trade agreements and security and defence partnerships represent significant progress by the EU in this regard.

2.2.4 Increasing importance of Nordic cooperation

Continued hostile actions by Russia, the transformation in the transatlantic operating environment and the need to diversify risks underscore the need to invest in alliances and a range of partnerships, which are complementary in nature. The Nordic countries' position as Finland's closest partners is clearer than ever. Nordic cooperation has intensified significantly and is a priority in all the Nordic countries. Progress has been made in fields of cooperation such as defence, comprehensive security, transport and infrastructure, and the Arctic region. The Nordic countries are progressing towards their goal of being the world's most integrated region. This is of heightened importance now that the countries are members of the same defensive alliance. The Nordic dimension is also central for responding to technological dependencies.

Sweden is Finland's closest individual partner. Many areas of this bilateral cooperation were solidified at the joint meeting of governments held in the autumn of 2024. Finland's and Sweden's accession to NATO has added a new dimension to cooperation. Sweden's role as the framework nation in NATO's *Forward Land Forces* (FLF) in Northern Finland is a concrete example of this deepening relationship.

NATO membership, the rapid development of preparedness as a new field of policy in the EU and the current security issues in the Baltic Sea Region have intensified Nordic-Baltic cooperation (NB8) in particular, and has made our relations with other allies in the Baltic Sea Region, namely Germany and Poland, closer.

2.2.5 Seeking stability and security in the Arctic region

The Arctic region is a key part of Finland's operating environment. Finland emphasises a wide view of the Arctic that accounts for the region's links to the Baltic Sea and the significance of Arctic land areas. Finland's Arctic Foreign and Security Policy (Publications of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs 2025:7) is a policy document by Minister for Foreign Affairs that highlights Finland's comprehensive objectives in the Arctic alongside security issues.

An increasing number of states have realised the significance of the region and are seeking to increase their presence there. The Arctic region is an inseparable component of both European security and the unity of the transatlantic region. With Finland and Sweden in NATO, the Arctic region and Baltic Sea form a unified geostrategic area. Finland promotes Arctic stability and security in cooperation with its allies and partners, emphasising the importance of respect for international law. Finland works actively with NATO's Arctic Allies, i.e. the Nordic countries, Canada and the United States, to ensure that NATO has a strong deterrence and defence in the Arctic region, particularly in response to the threat posed by Russia. The EU's work in promoting the stability, security and sustainable development of the Arctic region is important to Finland, and Finland works to promote the EU's Arctic policy. The value of Nordic cooperation is also strongly accentuated.

2.3 The rules-based international system and partnerships as cornerstones of Finland's security

2.3.1 The rules-based international system under pressure from great power politics

Finland's security and prosperity require a functioning rules-based international system and multilateral cooperation. It is essential to Finland that the global order is based on shared rules, not the principle of might makes right. Finland stands up for compliance with international law.

The rules-based international system, which was built under the United States' leadership after the Second World War, is under immense pressure. Some permanent members of the United Nations (UN) Security Council have shown deep disregard for the UN Charter. Multilateral cooperation is also being tested by a shift to more short-term international politics guided by an unveiled exchange of benefits. This negatively impacts the ability of the international community to respond to major global challenges.

Violations of international law are becoming more flagrant, but international law is also being invoked more than before. At the same time, modern society is increasingly dependent on international rules that create the foundation for trade, commerce, transport, communication and other interactions between states. Grave violations of international law committed in conflicts have tested the credibility of international institutions. However, the rules-based system in itself is not deemed void even if some states violate their obligations. The rules-based international system has never been perfect, but remains a vastly superior alternative to a world without rules. The entire international community has benefited from the stability and predictability provided by the system, but it is particularly vital to small and medium-sized states. The majority of the world's states stand firmly behind the system.

2.3.2 Multilateral cooperation in flux

Frameworks for multilateral cooperation in general and the United Nations in particular are under significant pressure to carry out reforms and find savings. Large funding cuts pose a challenge to UN's ability to act. In particular, development and humanitarian aid organisations have been forced to make drastic cuts to their activities and staff. Mounting pressures are evident in the fields of human rights and climate policy and in issues relating to the rights of women and girls. The United

States has withdrawn from numerous international organisations and agreements and is more selective about using multilateral cooperation to pursue its interests. However, this is not the first time the multilateral system has come under pressure. Throughout its history, the UN has experienced many kinds of crises and shown resilience. A large majority of member states stand firmly behind the system.

The changes in the operating environment provide a timely opportunity to reform and improve the effectiveness of international organisations. Finland is actively engaged in this process. The goal of the UN80 Initiative is to reform the UN system to make its activities and structures more efficient and effective. However, the credibility of the UN is most undermined by the inability of the Security Council to intervene in developments that threaten peace and stability. Finland is advocating for the Security Council to be reformed, for veto rights to be limited and for the number of permanent members to be increased. This would improve the Security Council's legitimacy, credibility and ability to act. Finland also supports expanding the General Assembly's mandate in matters relating to peace and security.

Finland defends the multilateral system and highlights the achievements of international organisations amidst growing global crises and tensions and the intensifying impact of climate change and long-term development challenges. In times of conflict, it is crucial to defend the obligations set by international humanitarian law. Multilateralism is especially important when responding to new developments, such as the rapid advancement of artificial intelligence, which is altering the operating environment by reshaping the structures of power, information and influence.

Finland supports the international courts and upholds their independence and impartiality as an essential part of the rules-based system.

Multilateral action is becoming fragmented and is increasingly shifting to a variety of formal and informal groupings. Finland assesses where its national interests can best be achieved while defending the rules-based system.

2.3.3 Strategic partnerships in an increasingly multipolar world

Building partnerships both nationally and through the EU is a security policy tool that Finland uses to strengthen its position. Finland looks for partners that are interested in maintaining the rules-based international system and provide an opportunity for Finland to pursue its national interests. Countries with shared values can also be found in regions where Finland has previously been less actively

engaged. On the other hand, global problems cannot be solved without also engaging with countries that do not share all the same values. In line with its values, Finland demonstrates openness to themes that are important to other countries and a willingness to participate in their initiatives or projects. Dialogue creates a foundation that makes it possible to gather support for Finland's priorities, such as support for Ukraine. Partnerships open the door to trade and commerce and, thus, to opportunities to diversify risks.

The importance of Asian and Pacific countries is growing strongly as economic production, technological innovation and political influence are gradually shifting to the region. Finland cooperates with China in a manner consistent with its own values and priorities. China is a major trading partner. It is important to seek to strengthen China's commitment to the rules-based international system despite views that may differ. Finland is developing cooperation with India, which is an important partner both bilaterally and when responding to global challenges. The EU-India trade agreement offers Finland a concrete tool to deepen bilateral relations and increase trade. Africa's political and economic weight has grown and the continent is playing a stronger role in international forums. Finland is seeking to respond to the continent's potential. Latin America and the Caribbean are important to Finland, with many of the countries in the region being like-minded partners in multilateral forums. In the Middle East, Finland has many partners and growing cooperation in the fields of commercial, economic and security policy.

The world is in the midst of a battle of narratives. China and Russia in particular are engaging in information influence activities to build a network of partners among developing countries. This is another reason why it is important for Finland to demonstrate its reliability and competence to its own partners. Partnerships aim to generate concrete benefits, and Finland must make clear what it can offer its partners. In this context, Finland can leverage the EU's global impact as well as work done through multilateral organisations. Features that make Finland an interesting partner include its diverse strengths, its internationally active public and private sector actors, and its civil society.

2.3.4 Finland bearing responsibility

Finland shoulders its responsibility to strengthen the rules-based international system. Finland strives to strengthen its profile and influence as an advocate for peace, security and sustainable development.

Finland will continue to seek significant positions of responsibility. In recent years, Finland has served as a member of the United Nations Human Rights Council (2022–2024) and Chair of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) (2025). Finland is a candidate for membership of the UN Security Council for 2029–2030. Membership would increase Finland’s opportunities to promote peace, contribute to conflict prevention and defend a world order based on the UN Charter and international law in a manner consistent with Finland’s national interests.

3 Conclusions

The priorities and objectives described in the Government report on Finnish foreign and security policy (2024) have stood the test of time and various drivers of change and will continue to steer Finland's course. Given the rapidly evolving situation, Finland is also focusing on the following priorities:

1. Finland is responding to the changing operating environment by continuing to focus on a wide selection of foreign and security policy tools and on the long-term development of its defence and resilience with an approach that encompasses every sector of society.
2. Finland is maintaining and developing wide-ranging contacts with the United States, which is a key ally with respect to the security of Finland and Europe. Finland approaches the transatlantic relationship through its own values and interests, leaning on Finland's strengths.
3. Finland is actively building a more European NATO and underlines the importance of the joint commitments the allies have made to defence spending and capability targets. Finland stresses the urgency of increasing defence spending in European states due to the threat posed by Russia and the uncertainty of the operating environment. Finland highlights the EU's growing role in security, defence and societal preparedness. The EU and NATO have roles that complement each other.
4. Finland promotes a just and lasting peace in Ukraine. Finland will continue to support Ukraine, even beyond a possible peace or a ceasefire, as well as in Ukraine's Western integration. Finland draws the attention of allies and partners to a more equal burden sharing.
5. Finland emphasises the need to respond to the long-term threat posed by Russia. Finland assesses the future of its engagement with Russia, also together with its partners.

6. Finland aims to reduce harmful dependencies by derisking and boosting competitiveness on multiple levels. Finland will leverage its strengths when taking foreign policy actions and building partnerships.
7. Finland strives to develop the EU into a more influential global actor. Finland advocates for the EU's investment in strategic competitiveness, the development of trade relations and economic security.
8. Finland stands up for compliance with international law and will use its influence to strengthen multilateralism. Finland is actively seeking global partnerships both bilaterally and in the framework of the EU.
9. Finland promotes Arctic stability and security in cooperation with its allies and partners and emphasises the importance of NATO's deterrence and defence in the region and the EU's role in Arctic issues.
10. Finland continues to invest in Nordic cooperation, which is becoming more and more important for Finland. Finland is actively working to strengthen bilateral cooperation in foreign and security policy with its most significant allies.



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