

THE APPROACH OF FINLAND TO RUSSIAN OCCUPATION OF UKRAINE: SECURITISATION OF THE PUTIN REGIME**Melih DİNÇER¹****Abstract**

The purpose of this article is to explain the approach of Finland to Russian occupation of Ukraine. Finnish foreign policy implemented between February 24 when Ukraine-Russia War began, and June 30, is analysed by using securitisation theory developed by the Copenhagen School. This study argues that Finland securitised the Putin regime. As a consequence of securitisation analysis, the article reached four results. First, Finnish Prime Minister Sanna Marin and President Sauli Niinistö see Russia under the Putin government as a military threat. Second, Prime Minister Sanna Marin and President Sauli Niinistö want to make Finland a member of NATO to strengthen defence capabilities of the country against Russia. Third, Finland securitised the Putin regime. Fourth, as a member of the European Union, Finland has applied collective EU sanctions on Russia, President Vladimir Putin and his close partners. By applying for NATO membership, Finland abandoned the policy of military neutrality that it has been implementing since the 20th century.

Keywords: Securitisation Theory, Finland, Ukraine-Russia War, the Putin Regime

RUSYA'NIN UKRAYNA'YI İŞGALİNE FİNLANDİYA'NIN YAKLAŞIMI: PUTİN REJİMİNİN GÜVENLİKLEŞTİRİLMESİ**Öz**

Bu makalenin amacı, Finlandiya'nın Rusya'nın Ukrayna'yı işgaline yaklaşımını açıklamaktır. Ukrayna-Rusya Savaşı'nın başladığı 24 Şubat ile 30 Haziran arasında uygulanan Finlandiya dış politikası, Kopenhag Okulu tarafından geliştirilen güvenikleştirme teorisi kullanılarak analiz edilmektedir. Bu çalışma Finlandiya'nın Putin rejimini güvenikleştirdiğini iddia etmektedir. Güvenikleştirme analizi sonucunda makale dört sonuca ulaşmıştır. Birincisi, Finlandiya Başbakanı Sanna Marin ve Devlet Başkanı Sauli Niinistö, Putin hükümeti altındaki Rusya'yı askeri bir tehdit olarak görmektedir. İkincisi, Başbakan Sanna Marin ve Cumhurbaşkanı Sauli Niinistö, ülkenin Rusya'ya karşı savunma yeteneklerini güçlendirmek için Finlandiya'yı NATO üyesi yapmak istemektedir. Üçüncüsü, Finlandiya Putin rejimini güvenikleştirmiştir. Dördüncüsü, Avrupa Birliği üyesi olan Finlandiya, Rusya, Devlet Başkanı Vladimir Putin ve yakın ortaklarına toplu olarak AB yaptırımlarını uygulamıştır. Finlandiya NATO üyeliğine başvurarak 20.yüzyıldan beri uyguladığı askeri tarafsızlık politikasını terk etmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Güvenikleştirme Teorisi, Finlandiya, Ukrayna-Rusya Savaşı, Putin Rejimi

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1. Introduction

Russian occupation of Ukraine, which started on the morning of February 24, caused security concerns and intense debates in Europe (Götz and Staun, 2022: 1-2). This occupation is a clear sign that the geopolitical balance in Europe has changed. Russia is trying to change the geopolitical balance in its favour. Many academics, who are expert in international relations, evaluated this war as an unjust occupation planned by Russia (Cafruny et al., 2022: 1). Russia under the Putin government is classified as unpredictable in its foreign policy by European leaders (Allin and Jones, 2022: 220). This situation necessitates strengthening European solidarity for the military defence. Some European countries made some changes in their defence policies. Among these, Finland is the country that has been experiencing the sharpest transformation. Finland abandoned its military neutrality and started to make formal attempts to become a NATO member (Dalsjö et al., 2022: 20).

Addressing the change in Finland's foreign policy with a theoretical approach will provide an opportunity to understand the security threats faced by the country. The aim of this article is to explain and analyse Finland's approach to Russian occupation of Ukraine. The securitisation theory developed by the Copenhagen School was preferred for analysis. The period from February 24 to June 30 was determined as the time to be studied for the research. This time period covers the time frame from the beginning of the war to the summit of NATO in which Finland's membership was discussed comprehensively. Since Finland's approach and steps towards NATO membership were experienced in this time period, the study should cover this time period. Within this period, Finland's foreign policy towards Russia is analysed. The article argues that Finland identified and securitised the Putin regime as an existential threat. This argument is a new contribution to the academic literature because there is no academic study, which comprehensively analyses the approach of Finland to Russian occupation of Ukraine. There is no academic study, which analyses Finnish approach with a scientific theory, in the academic literature.

This article reached four new conclusions in order to comprehensively explain foreign policy of Finland vis-à-vis Ukraine-Russia War. First, Finnish Prime Minister Sanna Marin and President Sauli Niinistö see Russia under the Putin government as a military threat. Second, Prime Minister Sanna Marin and President Sauli Niinistö want to make Finland a member of NATO to strengthen defence capabilities of the country against Russia. Third, Finland securitised the Putin regime. Prime Minister Sanna Marin and President Sauli Niinistö are the securitising actors. Ordinary Finns also have securitising tendencies. Fourth, as a member of the EU, Finland has collectively imposed the EU sanctions on Russia, President Vladimir Putin and his close partners.

In the following sections of the article, literature review, research questions and importance of study will be expressed. The method of the research and data collection will be explained. Afterwards, securitisation theory as a theoretical framework will be explained in detail. It will be explained that after Finland became independent from Russia in 1917, it followed a policy of neutrality throughout the Cold War. In the 20th century, Finland implemented its neutrality policy to establish good relations with the Soviet Union. In the analysis section of the article, how Finland approached Russian occupation of Ukraine will be expressed. In the conclusion part, the results will be explained and suggestions will be given about the researches that can be done in future studies.

2. Literature Review on Finnish Foreign Policy and Russia-Ukraine War, Research Questions and Importance of Study

In this section, the literature review, research questions and the importance of the study will be stated respectively. The literature review consists of two parts: Russia-Ukraine War and Finland-Russia relations.

2.1. Literature Review: Russia-Ukraine War

Since Ukraine-Russia War is a new subject, it will be necessary to wait a little for the publication of comprehensive studies. In fact, the Russia-Ukraine War has been going on since 2014. However, the total occupation of Ukraine is a new phenomenon. Russia had occupied Crimea in 2014. Now, it can be argued that the geopolitical balance in Europe will change after this invasion threat against the whole of Ukraine begins. Studies, which are analysing this war in the academic literature, can be classified under seven headings. The first of the issues discussed is about the negative effects of the war on public health and health systems in Ukraine and neighbouring countries. It is claimed that the war caused many deaths in Ukraine, and even genocide was committed by the Russians (McKee et al., 2022: 1). Apart from this, Poland, which is one of the neighbouring countries of Ukraine, opened its doors to Ukrainian refugees, causing concerns about the health system in the country. It is stated in the literature that 1.7 million people left Ukraine in the first 12 days of the Russian occupation (Kardas et al., 2022). It has been feared that those coming to Poland from Ukraine are likely to increase the Covid-19 cases in the country. In addition, it was stated that Poland has to host a large number of refugees and that the country will not be able to bear this huge burden alone, and it was explained that the help of European countries was necessary (Kardas et al., 2022: 1-2).

The second topic is about the effects of the war on the world economy (Boungou and Yatié, 2022: 2). According to the literature, a decrease in household consumption, economic uncertainty and a decrease in investments are expected due to high inflation, supply chain disruptions and increase in prices of wheat, natural gas and oil (Mbah and Wasum, 2022: 150-151). The third topic is the environment. The environmental issue is one of the most important issues for scientists today. Ecological security has become one of the main topics in relations between states. Especially after the Chernobyl explosion in 1986, the importance of the environment issue has been better understood by both states and international organisations (Eckersley, 2012: 466). In the academic studies, it is stated that Ukraine-Russia War will have negative effects on the environment. It is stated that besides the effects of war on economy, geopolitics and food security, it increases greenhouse gas emissions. It is a known fact that the conflicts around the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant can cause a huge environmental disaster. In addition, it is estimated that biodiversity in Ukraine will suffer as a result of the use of heavy weapons. Taking into account the pollution of water resources and the destruction of forests, the war will have devastating effects on the environment (Pereira et al., 2022: 2-6).

The fourth heading is press and media. El Houssine (2022: 83) tried to reveal the approaches of newspapers from different countries to the war by analysing their headlines in their news about Russia-Ukraine War. The author analysed a total of 12 headlines from The Daily Telegraph, the Guardian, the New York Times, Bangkok Post, the Sydney Morning Herald, El País, the Moscow Times and Al-Massae. The author claims that newspapers try to shape the public opinion that they address, and adopt the approach of international public opinion under the influence of the West. For example, it is stated in the newspapers that the war is

not between two states, but only an action requested by President Vladimir Putin. The author said that Putin is especially emphasised as a person, who desires to win the war against Ukrainians for his own cause, and that among the analysed newspapers, only the Moscow Times published a news article stating that Russia is carrying out a military operation in Ukraine in order to ensure its national security. According to the author, other newspapers adopted an approach based on criticism of President Putin (El Houssine, 2022).

Ciuriak (2022: 2-3) stated that social media is used effectively as a propaganda tool in Russia-Ukraine War. The author shared the experiences of both sides on social media and expressed that the two sides criticize each other fiercely (Ciuriak, 2022). Papanikos (2022: 15) explained how the Greek press approached Ukraine-Russia War. In the article, the author analysed the front pages of the newspapers, which are entitled Kathimerini, TA NEA and EFSYN. The main feature of these three newspapers is to reflect the general public opinion in Greece. In the research, the author concluded that all three newspapers unequivocally condemned the Russian occupation of Ukraine. Newspapers described the war as unacceptable (Papanikos, 2022).

The fifth title is on the justifications of the war, which can be expressed as *jus ad bellum*. Some research has been done in the literature on whether there are legitimate and justifiable reasons for Russia's attack on Ukraine. Green, Henderson and Ruys (2022: 27) argue that Russia has no justification for attacking Ukraine. They defined this military operation as a completely illegitimate use of force, an act of aggression and a violation of international law. The main reason for this is that the allegations made by Russia do not reflect the truth. Despite President Putin's statement that NATO enlargement is a national security threat to Russia and that Russia exercises its right of self-defence, Green, Henderson and Ruys (2022: 9) stated that the right of self-defence can only be realised in the event of an armed attack by citing the article 51 of the UN Charter. In addition to this, they explained that before the Russian military operations that started on February 24, such an attack was not carried out by NATO against Russia, and stated that the right of legitimate defence did not arise legally. The authors also claimed that any attack from Ukraine did not threaten Russia (Green et al., 2022: 13). The sixth title is the rapprochement between European countries and the USA because of the war. It is stated that Russia's military operation in Ukraine brought Western countries together, despite all their disagreements, and contributed to the development of cooperation opportunities against Russia in strong solidarity (Shurkin, 2022: 25).

The seventh topic is the NATO enlargement. Ukraine's membership was also discussed. Alberque and Schreer (2022: 69) stated that Finland and Sweden have to become members of NATO because Russia is a real military threat. However, the authors expressed that if the potential membership is realised, Finland and Sweden will end their military neutrality in foreign policy by being members of NATO, which is a collective security organisation. This is a particularly sharp change for Finnish foreign policy. Potential membership of Finland and Sweden will make the Arctic and the High North more open to effects of NATO. Membership of Finland and Sweden may reduce Russia's military operational capability in the Baltic Sea region (Alberque and Schreer, 2022). Minna and Michael (2022: 4) stated that after Moscow changed the balance in the High North, Finland and Sweden approached NATO to re-establish military balance against Russia. NATO membership is seen as an important option for Finland's defence.

2.2. Literature Review: Finnish Foreign Policy and Finland-Russia Relations

Studies analysing Russia-Finland relations in the academic literature can generally be divided into two groups: studies dealing with the Cold War period and studies analysing Russia-Finland relations since the 2000s. In studies analysing Finnish foreign policy during the Cold War, it is generally stated that Finland was trying to have good relations with its stronger neighbour, the Soviet Union. Finland has implemented a policy of complete neutrality throughout the Cold War. Since its independence from Russia in 1917, Finland has implemented a neutrality policy not to be a centre of competition between the Soviet Union and western countries. After the Second World War, the country freed itself from being a part of the competition between NATO, the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact (Padelford, 1938; Kuusisto, 1959; Törnngren, 1961; Faloon, 1982; Törnudd, 2005). Finland was occupied by the Soviet Union in the Second World War. This occupation had a significant impact on Finland's national identity formation. Independent and democratic Finnish identity is an important discourse produced against the Soviet Union.

Törnudd (2005: 44) analyses Finland's neutrality policy during the Cold War. It was not possible for Finland to join the western alliance after the Second World War. The country was paying war reparations to the Soviet Union in the 1940s and housed the Soviet Union's military base on its territory until 1956. Soviet suspicions about Finland increased during the Stalin era. This situation was closely related to Stalin's policy of security. During the reign of Juho Kusti Paasikivi, who was the President of Finland between 1946 and 1956, establishing good relations with the Soviet Union was the main pillar of Finnish foreign policy. This strategy paved the way for the emergence of the foreign policy approach known as the Paasikivi Line. As a requirement of establishing good relations, Finland had to approach the Soviet Union's security concerns positively. On April 6, 1948, the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance was signed between the Soviet Union and Finland (Törnudd, 2005: 44).

This treaty was the main instrument of cooperation and friendship between Finland and the Soviet Union until the 1990s. This treaty ensured that the Soviet Union was protected against possible attacks from Germany or Western countries. The treaty obligated Finland to defend against an attack, which may be targeted at the Soviet Union through Finnish territories (Faloon, 1982: 4). The Helsinki Declaration, which was signed in 1975, was an important indicator of Finland's neutrality in Europe. Finland maintained its neutrality policy until the end of the Cold War (Snyder, 2010: 67).

Mauno Koivisto, who was the President of Finland from 1982 to 1994, was the leader that led the country towards the European Union. He abandoned the isolation policy, thinking that Finland's isolation due to its neutrality policy would not be beneficial for the country's future. As the Chairman of the Central Bank of Finland for 14 years, Mauno Koivisto was known in the country as a prestigious economist. According to the news of *Nouvelliste* newspaper published on January 27, 1982, the newly elected President Mauno Koivisto stated that he will keep the country within the Western bloc. He also stated that good relations with the Soviet Union would be maintained (*Nouvelliste*, 1982: 20). In the new geopolitical environment that emerged towards the end of the Cold War, Finland wanted to redefine its place in Europe. Finland became a member of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) in 1986. Towards the end of the Cold War, European countries experienced significant political transformation. In 1989, the Berlin Wall

fell. In 1990, the unification of Germany took place. An important opportunity has arisen for European integration. The political environment has become conducive to this. In this environment, Finland turned its face to Europe. It joined the Council of Europe in 1989. Established in 1949, the Council of Europe is an international organization working to protect and promote human rights, ensure the rule of law and strengthen democracy in Europe. With this policy, Finland started to implement the policy of full integration with the European Union (Lavery, 2006: 155-156).

President Mauno Koivisto stated in the opening speech of the Parliament meeting on 7 February 1992 that Finland should become a member of the European Community (La Gruyère, 1992: 15). Finland became a member of the EU in 1995. It has become a part of the politically important union. With this membership, the policy of neutrality ended, but since it is not a member of any military collective security organisation, the policy of military non-alignment continued. The policy of neutrality has turned into the policy of military neutrality (Aunesluoma and Rainio-Niemi, 2016: 68).

Ojanen and Raunio (2018) state that Finland is a northern country in terms of geographical and political history, and they claim that Finland uses Nordicism as a foreign policy instrument. Finland tries to develop cooperation between northern countries for security (Ojanen and Raunio, 2018). The Nordic Defence Cooperation (NORDEF) is the main pillar of defence cooperation between Scandinavian countries. It consists of Finland, Denmark, Iceland, Norway and Sweden (NORDEF, 2022). This defence cooperation is based on Nordicism identity. Nordic countries are democracies and capitalist economies with high human development index. These are the fundamental features of Nordic countries.

Haukkala and Ojanen (2011) state that Finnish foreign policy can be analysed with Europeanization perspective. Finlandization was very beneficial for Finnish security during the Cold War. However, in the 2000s, Finland adopted European foreign policy perspective by integrating its system into the EU (Forsberg and Pesu, 2016). Finland abandoned its policy of Finlandization gradually by being a part of the European Union. There are studies in the literature that the Ukraine crisis has increased Finland's security needs. Russia's occupation of Crimea in 2014 was evaluated by Finland and European countries as hostile approach to European values (Atland, 2016).

There are important trade relations between Finland and Russia. In 2021, Finland's total good export is 68.8 billion Euros. It exported 3.7 billion Euros of this to Russia. This number corresponds to 5.4 per cent of total good export. Finland imported goods, which are worth 72.7 billion Euros. 8.6 billion Euros of this import came from Russia. This number corresponds to 11.9 per cent (Tulli, 2022).

This article is expected to be a pioneer in its field. The existing literature analyses how Finnish foreign policy is built on the concept of neutrality and how it affects its foreign relations. However, it does not develop a comprehensive approach with security theories and security perspectives. While the current literature addresses defence needs and collaborations, this article highlights the security concerns of Finnish politicians. In addition, this article does something that the literature does not, adding to the process of academic analysis that the Finnish people see Russia under Putin as a threat. It puts the Finnish people's approach in a theoretical perspective.

2.3. Research Questions and Importance of Study

In the light of the information mentioned above, there is no study in the literature that takes Finland as a case and explains in detail what kind of foreign policy it has followed since the beginning of Russian occupation with a theoretical analysis. Therefore, this article aims to fill this gap in the literature by asking the following questions.

- How did Finland approach Russian occupation of Ukraine?
- What kind of foreign policy did Prime Minister Sanna Marin and President Sauli Niinistö follow?
- Has Russia been perceived as a threat by Finnish key decision-makers?
- Do the Finnish people see Russia as a threat?
- What kind of security measure do Finnish decision-makers intend to take against Russia?
- Can Finnish foreign policy be explained with the securitisation theory vis-à-vis Russian occupation of Ukraine?

The above questions are the research questions of this article. The importance of this study for the academic literature is to analyse how Finland approached Russian occupation of Ukraine. Existing studies interpreted Finland's desire to become a member of NATO only as one of the consequences of the war. In addition, in the existing literature there are studies that refer to Finland's memory of the Soviet Union. After Finland gained its independence from Russia in 1917, it implemented a policy of complete neutrality until the 1990s. The main reason for this is that it does not want to have problems with the Soviet Union, which was very powerful militarily. Finland, which was occupied by the Soviet Union in the Second World War, signed a friendship treaty with the Soviet Union after the war ended. The neutrality policy developed by Juho Kusti Paasikivi, who was both prime minister and head of state in Finland, formed the basis of Finland's foreign policy in the Cold War. Finland became an EU member in 1995. Since this date, the policy of complete neutrality has turned into a policy of military neutrality (Faloon, 1982: 4; Maude, 1982; Quester, 1990). It is necessary to deal with the current foreign policy of Finland with theoretical analysis. The analysis of Finland's comprehensive foreign policy steps is highly significant for understanding the foreign policy of the northern countries against a great military power in times of crisis. Making this explanation with a security theory will enable us to understand what kind of security threat Finnish decision-makers perceived. With the securitisation theory, the policy followed by Finland, the measures it took, and the solution it found, were explained in this article. In addition, it has been revealed by the results of the survey conducted by Finnish Business and Policy Forum – EVA between 4 March and 15 March in 2022 that the Finnish people see Russia as a threat. It is expected that this article will contribute to the literature with the conclusion that it reached. Through securitisation theory, this article reveals what kind of security threat Finnish political decision-makers perceive, what kind of measures they take and whether the Finnish people feel the same threats.

3. Research Method and Data Collection

Finnish foreign policy implemented between February 24 when Ukraine-Russia War began, and June 30, is analysed by using the securitisation theory developed by the Copenhagen School. In the process of collecting information, the official statements of Prime Minister Sanna Marin and President Sauli Niinistö were analysed. Their statements were collected in order to see threats that they conceptualise. Official statements are taken from politicians' own official twitter

accounts, international news organizations and official government websites. Based on these sources, securitising actors, reference objects and existential threat are explained. Emergency measures and sanctions against Russia, which are written in the official website of the European Commission, are explained. The official website of the European Commission is used to see what kind of sanctions the EU countries are imposing on Russia and President Vladimir Putin. The analysis of information from the survey conducted by the Finnish Business and Policy Forum – EVA from March 4 to March 15, 2022 has proven that Finns view Russia as a major military threat. Thus, it is concluded that Finland securitised the Putin regime. A successful securitisation process was completed.

4. Theoretical Approach: Securitisation Theory

Securitisation theory was developed by the Copenhagen School (Açıkmeşe, 2008). The establishment of the Centre for Peace and Conflict Researches at the University of Copenhagen laid foundations of the Copenhagen School in 1985. Explaining non-military dimensions of security is one of the contributions of the school to International Relations literature (Açıkmeşe, 2011: 57). Securitisation theory was developed in 1998 by Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver and Jaap de Wilde, who are members of the Copenhagen School, in the book entitled *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*. The theory is widely used by scholars of International Relations to make foreign policy analysis (Kaunert and Wertman, 2020: 99; Sperling and Webber, 2016: 19).

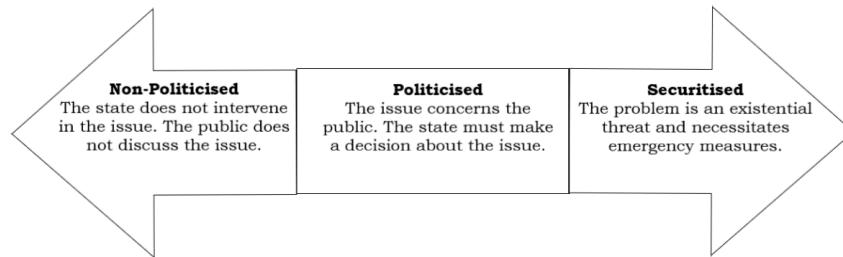
According to the securitisation theory, some issues are defined as security threats, which need to be solved first, through construction of new discourses. Securitisation theory is based on the speech act (Santos, 2018: 229). New threats are constructed through verbal communication and the acceptance of the threat by the audience is the basic condition for the successful completion of the securitisation process (Salter and Piché, 2011: 933). There are three important actors in the securitisation process: the securitising actor, the reference object and the audience. The securitising actor identifies the existential threat and states that it threatens or even has the capability to destroy the reference object. The position of the securitising actor is important. People, who have key positions such as the head of state, prime minister and leader of a political party, have a great power to influence the masses. The reference object is the object under existential threat. The audience is the masses that are expected to accept the securitising actor's claim. If a problem is securitised, it becomes the most important problem of political elites. In order to end existential threat, emergency measures are justified (Baysal, 2020: 5).

The existence of a real existential threat is not necessary. The securitising actor may present an issue as an existential threat. This is purely a matter of preference. Successful securitisation has three necessary steps: identification of the existential threat, taking emergency measures, and acceptance of the threat by the audience (Açıkmeşe, 2011: 61; Buzan et al., 1998: 24-26). For an issue to be securitised, the audience must accept the threat. Otherwise, only the securitising movement can be realised. In the rhetoric of securitisation, it is claimed that a major security problem threatens the state and society. It is stated that in order to survive, the existential threat must be removed (Buzan et al., 1998: 25-26).

Securitisation occurs in a three-stage cycle: politicised, non-politicised, and securitised. The state does not deal with a non-politicised issue and the public does not discuss it. A politicised issue requires government decision and resource allocation. The issues that are discussed by the public are politicised issues.

Securitisation can be seen as a further form of politicisation. The securitised object is defined as an existential threat. It is stated that emergency measures should be taken to overcome it. Governments deviate from normal path and a solution is sought for the problem by using extraordinary methods. States can place different issues at any point of this cycle at different times. Also, a securitised issue can then be desecuritised so that it is no longer a matter of daily politics (Buzan et al., 1998: 23-24). Existential threats are very dangerous for the existence of states, so they want to overcome them as soon as possible when they arise. This situation causes a deviation from the normal procedure. States take emergency measures and defend their core features against the existential threats. When an issue is desecuritised, it is no longer a problem of normal politics. An issue can take place at any point in this three-step process at any time. This is usually determined by political elites. Political elites identify threats. They use the resources of countries to eliminate threats. These threats are considered vital by politicians. For example, presenting the migration issue as a vital problem by far-right groups and some political parties in European countries is an example of securitisation. This type of discourse is demanded by all extreme right-wing groups. It also has the ability to influence government policies.

Figure 1: The Securitisation Cycle



Source: Nyman, 2013:51-62.

In securitisation theory, security is divided into five sectors: military, political, economic, environmental and societal. Thus, it is stated that security threats can come from different areas by going beyond the traditional military and political sector. The most important reference object in the military sector is the state. Governments are securitising actors. Solutions to existential threats are sought to guarantee the survival of the state. In the environmental sector, threats to the ecosystem and the planet arise. Human activities and natural disasters would cause these threats. There is a wide range of reference objects in the economic sector, from the state to global markets. Threats in this sector are usually economic crises. In the societal sector, threats arise against shared identities. In the political sector, there are non-military threats to state sovereignty. The media and politicians are securitising actors in the political sector (Nyman, 2013: 55-57). In addition to the sectors, there are facilitating conditions in the securitisation process. Communication with the masses and the security narrative, the position of the securitising actor and the nature of the threats are facilitating conditions. In the nature of threats, the destructiveness of threats can be classified among threat qualities (Buzan et al., 1998: 32-33). Existential threats can come from five different sectors as can be seen above. These types of threats are devastating threats that must be dealt with when they arise.

4.1. Relevance of the Theoretical Approach to the Case

Securitisation theory has the capacity to explain Finland's foreign policy towards Russia. There are basically two reasons to use this theory in this article. First, securitisation theory focuses on the existence of threats. Finnish politicians

perceived so many threats from Russia after the occupation. Against Russian threat, they put forward NATO membership as a solution in their foreign policy. The perceived threat and the proposed solution can be clearly seen in the discourses of Prime Minister Sanna Marin and President Sauli Niinistö. The Russian threat is tried to be balanced with NATO membership. The fact that Finnish foreign policy is affected by the Russian threat highlights the securitisation theory as a useful theoretical approach in this article. Second, the actions of Finnish politicians and the thoughts of the Finnish people reveal that Finland is securitising the Russian occupation of Ukraine. Prime Minister Sanna Marin and President Sauli Niinistö openly described Russia under President Vladimir Putin as a threat. This situation reveals that they see the Putin administration as a threat. In addition, there is a policy that Finland would not apply to Russia in normal times. Finland, as a part of the EU, imposes very heavy economic and political sanctions against Russia. Finnish people define Russia under Putin as a threat to both Finland and world peace. All these things reveal that Finland carried out a securitisation process. Finland's actions can be explained step by step by the securitisation theory developed by the Copenhagen School. This shows that the theory fits the case.

5. Historical Legacy of Finnish Foreign Policy: The Policy of Neutrality and Military Non-Alignment

The policy of neutrality for Finland is a historical legacy. It was meticulously implemented throughout the 20th century. After gaining independence from Russia in 1917, Finland implemented a policy of complete neutrality until the 1990s. During the Cold War, Finland limited Western influence in northern Europe so as not to contradict the interests of the Soviet Union. In the 1930s, Finland implemented a policy that emphasised regional cooperation in Scandinavia not to be affected by the politics of superpowers (Faloon, 1982: 3). In July 1936, Finland and other neutral small European states expressed their reservations about the working procedures and rules of the League of Nations (Morgenthau, 1939: 473). Doubts about the League of Nations were expressed. The insufficiency in bringing peace to the international politics was seen as the biggest problem of this organisation. On May 27, 1938, Finland, Norway, Denmark, Iceland and Sweden issued a declaration of neutrality (Padelford, 1938: 789). On the eve of the Second World War, Finland made the decision not to enter the war and remained neutral (Faloon, 1982: 3). This foreign policy approach also aimed to eliminate the security concerns of the Soviet Union against Western countries. Finland has a very long border with the Soviet Union. The potential increase of the influence of the West in the neighbouring country meant a threat to the Soviet Union.

With the outbreak of the Second World War, the geopolitical balance changed. Nazi Germany launched the military expedition to Poland. The Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact, which was signed between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union on August 23, 1939, defined Finland as a Soviet sphere of influence (Kowalsky, 2019: 86). In the geopolitical situation created by this pact, Finland was an open target for the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union occupied Finland. Winter War broke out between the two countries. The war started in 1939 and ended in 1940. Between 1941 and 1944, a second war was fought between Finland and Russia. The Soviet Union won the second war. The Moscow Armistice was signed. In the Second World War, Finland was very worn out as it fought a defensive war against the Soviet Union. After the war between the Soviet Union and Finland ended, as a result of changing geopolitical balance, the two states fought against Nazi Germany in the Lapland War until April 1945. The aim of the war was to expel the

Nazi soldiers from Finland. This was the most significant target of sending the soldiers of Finnish army to the front against Nazi Germany. At the end of the great bloody war, Finland was victorious at the front. After the Second World War, Finnish politicians acted by thinking that Finland should take account of the national security and interests of the Soviet Union in its foreign policy. Finland was like a buffer zone between the West and the Soviet Union. One of the most important leaders, who determined the foreign policy of Finland after the Second World War, was Juho Kusti Paasikivi. He has served as both prime minister and president and succeeded in paving the way for the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance, which was signed in 1948 with the Soviet Union. This treaty was the main instrument of cooperation and friendship between Finland and the Soviet Union until the 1990s. This treaty ensured that the Soviet Union was protected against possible attacks from Germany or Western countries. The treaty obligated Finland to defend against an attack, which may be targeted at the Soviet Union through Finnish territories (Faloon, 1982: 4).

Juho Kusti Paasikivi, who was the prime minister of Finland from 1944 to 1946 and served as the president of Finland from 1946 to 1956, created a new doctrine in Finland's relations with the Soviet Union. This doctrine is known for the policy of neutrality: the Paasikivi Doctrine or the Paasikivi Line (Hodgson, 1959: 145). According to this doctrine, Finland should not be caught in the power struggle between the West and the East. By cooperating with the Soviet Union, it will respect the security concerns of this great neighbour. Good relations must be established with the Soviet Union. Finland should accept the fact that the policy of neutrality is the most significant foreign policy instrument in order to ensure security vis-à-vis power competition between superpowers (Kuusisto, 1959: 37).

The neutrality policy, which was developed by Paasikivi, has been continued by Urho Kekkonen. In 1952, Kekkonen proposed the establishment of an alliance system between the Scandinavian countries based on the strategy of neutrality in foreign policy (Kirby, 1984: 185). With such an alliance, a possible military attack against the Soviet Union from the territories of Scandinavian countries, especially Finland, will be prevented. Kekkonen served as the President of Finland for nearly 26 years, from 1956 to 1982. During his presidency, the neutrality policy was institutionalised in foreign policy of Finland and good relations with the Soviets were protected. This foreign policy is explained with the concept of Finlandization. The concept of Finlandization means avoiding being a part of political and military organisations, establishing and maintaining good relations with the Soviet Union and implementing neutrality in foreign policy of Finland (Quester, 1990; Maude, 1982).

The signing of the Helsinki Declaration in Finland in 1975 was another consensus text that revealed the country's neutrality (Snyder, 2010: 67).² From the 1970s to the 1990s, the policy of neutrality was meticulously implemented by Finnish politicians. With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the change of geopolitical balance, the Cold War ended and Finland abandoned its neutrality policy. Finland became a member of the EU in 1995. It has become a part of the politically important union. With this membership, the policy of neutrality ended, but since it is not a member of any military collective security organisation, the policy of military non-alignment continued. The policy of neutrality has turned into the policy of military neutrality (Aunesluoma and Rainio-Niemi, 2016: 68).

² *The Helsinki Declaration, which was signed in 1975, was the pinnacle of the détente policy during the Cold War. It was the text devoted to the protection of state borders and the establishment of good and friendly relations between nation states. For detailed information please see. Bradley Lightbody, The Cold War, London: Routledge, 1999.*

Finnish Prime Minister Paavo Lipponen (Irish Times, 2002) stated that military neutrality is publicly supported in Finland. In addition, the Prime Minister said that Finland supports international security with United Nations peacekeeping operations. After the 2000s, Finland continued its policy of military non-alignment. Russia's military intervention in Georgia in 2008 and its annexation of Crimea in 2014 did not cause enough concern in Finland to change this policy. However, the occupation of Ukraine on February 24, 2022 has caused great concern in Finland and Finnish people. Finns began to see Russia under the Putin government as a real threat. Evren Çelik Wiltse (2022) states that Finland, like other Scandinavian countries, perceives a strong threat from Russia and therefore tries to strengthen its own defence. She says that Finland has a very long border with Russia, which is more than 1000 kilometres. According to her, the bad incident that happened to Ukraine increased security concerns of Scandinavian countries.

6. Analysis: Securitisation of the Putin Regime and Abandonment of Military Non-Alignment

In this section, it will be stated that Finland completed a successful securitisation process. The securitising actors, the existential threat, the reference objects, emergency measures and the acceptance of the existential threat by the Finnish people will be explained. Securitisation process will be analysed from a more comprehensive point of view. The sharp transformation in Finnish foreign policy will be explained. It will be stated that Finland securitised Russia under the Putin regime and declared its interest to become a member of NATO.

6.1. The Securitising Actors and Identification of the Existential Threat

Russian occupation of Ukraine greatly affected Finnish political elites. They immediately reacted to this occupation. Finnish Prime Minister Sanna Marin (Twitter, 2022a) immediately demonstrated how she approached Russian occupation of Ukraine. After the start of the occupation, she condemned the military operation of Russia in Ukraine by sharing a tweet at 08.19 on the morning of February 24. Prime Minister Sanna Marin stated that lives of civilians are under threat and that this attack is a clear violation of international law. She highlighted the importance of Finnish support for Ukraine (Twitter, 2022a). Finnish President Sauli Niinistö (Twitter, 2022b) made a similar statement. At 07.41 on the morning of February 24, he said in his tweet that he condemns Russia's military operation. He stated that this attack is not only carried out against Ukraine, but also an attack against the entire European security order (Twitter, 2022b). Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland Pekka Haavisto (Twitter, 2022c) said in his tweet at 09.15 on the morning of February 24 that Russian military action in Ukraine is an attack against European security order and a breach of international law (Twitter, 2022c). On the same day, Prime Minister Sanna Marin and President Sauli Niinistö held a joint press conference and condemned Russia's attack on Ukraine (President of the Republic of Finland, 2022a). As can be seen immediately after the occupation, according to Finnish politicians, this military operation is carried out against European security.

On February 24, Finnish President Sauli Niinistö and the Ministerial Committee on Foreign and Security Policy held a meeting to analyse the security situation of Finland and Europe following Russian occupation of Ukraine. The Ministerial Committee condemned Russia's military operations. It was declared that Finland supports Ukraine's independence, territorial integrity and sovereignty. Moreover, it was said that Finland will act as a part of the EU in the measures to be taken against Russia (Finnish Government, 2022a). On March 4,

Finnish President Sauli Niinistö went to Washington to meet with the United States President Joe Biden. It was discussed how to strengthen European and Finnish security (Twitter, 2022d). On March 7, Prime Minister Sanna Marin went to Tallinn, Estonia, to discuss the security issues of Finland and the Baltic states. She held a meeting with Kaja Kallas, who is the Prime Minister of Estonia. The two leaders reached the compromise that Putin should not win the war and that Ukraine should be supported. It was stated that the sanctions against Russia and Belarus should continue. They agreed that opportunities for bilateral cooperation on security should be developed between Finland and Estonia (Twitter, 2022e). On the same day, Finnish Prime Minister Sanna Marin and Norwegian Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Støre had a telephone conversation. They stated that Nordic countries should improve their security cooperation. They emphasised the urgent need for cooperation with NATO due to Russian occupation of Ukraine (Finnish Government, 2022b). In these meetings, it is seen that talks about security of Europe and Finland came to the fore. Finland's main purpose is to ensure its own security and European security against Russia.

On March 8, Finnish President Sauli Niinistö had a telephone conversation with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz. He conveyed his thanks for change of German security policy. He said that with the change of German security policy, Europe will become stronger (President of the Republic of Finland, 2022b). As can be seen, the President and the Prime Minister of Finland made intense diplomacy for European security and Finland's national security. It is clear that the most important agenda of Finnish political decision-makers is undoubtedly Russia's military operations in Ukraine and the security threat, which is coming from Russia directed by Putin's foreign policy choices. Finland, which is a member of the EU, securitised the Putin regime as a military threat.

On 14-15 March 2022, Finnish President Sauli Niinistö went to London and met with British Prime Minister Boris Johnson and the leaders of the Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF) in order to analyse security issues. He explained that cooperation under the Joint Expeditionary Force is highly significant for Finland's security (President of the Republic of Finland, 2022c). The Financial Times newspaper interviewed Finnish President Sauli Niinistö on March 20. In this interview, Finland's security and NATO membership were analysed. President Niinistö said that he is worried that the risk of war may increase in Europe. Also, he explained his main focus by saying *"our main headline is: Finnish security"*. From this interview, it is revealed that Finland should boost its security in order to avoid a potential Russian occupation (Milne, 2022). On March 23, Finnish Prime Minister Sanna Marin met with Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau in Brussels. Russian occupation of Ukraine, military threats, sanctions against Russia, defence cooperation, European security and Finland's relations with NATO were the main topics of the agenda. Prime Minister Sanna Marin emphasised importance of sanctions against Russia and President Putin. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, on the other hand, said that NATO increased its presence in Eastern Europe for security of the region. He also stated that with the occupation of Ukraine by Russia, the entire security environment of Europe changed (Finnish Government, 2022c). The point of agreement between the two leaders is that President Vladimir Putin's foreign policy threatens the security of European countries.

Prime Minister Sanna Marin attended the European Council meeting held on 24-25 March. Here, a meeting was held on the steps that can be taken for security of European countries against Russia under Putin's rule. In addition, it was stated that European countries should end their energy dependency on

Russia (Finnish Government, 2022d).³ On March 29, Prime Minister Sanna Marin had a video call with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg. She talked about new security parameters that emerged with Russia's occupation of Ukraine, and thanked him for open door policy implemented for potential cooperation opportunities between NATO and Finland. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg stated that NATO implements an open door policy towards Finland. Marin and Stoltenberg emphasised importance of the EU-NATO partnership for European security (Finnish Government, 2022e).

Finland has been practising intense diplomacy since Russian occupation of Ukraine. Many meetings were held with European countries and the US. On April 8, German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier arrived in Finland as part of an official visit. He met with President Niinistö and Prime Minister Marin, and discussed security problems of Finland and Europe against Russia. He also visited the Finnish parliament (Twitter, 2022f). Finland clearly sees Russia under Putin as a threat. That's why political elites of the country such as Prime Minister Sanna Marin and President Sauli Niinistö started to think about joining NATO, which is a collective security organisation. On April 13, Prime Minister Sanna Marin had an official meeting with Swedish Prime Minister Magdalena Andersson in Stockholm. It was confirmed by the two leaders that the security network in Europe is under threat after Russian occupation of Ukraine. It was discussed how Finland's security would be ensured. It was stated that both countries must guarantee their own security against Russia. Simultaneously, on the same day of this visit, the Finnish government sent a report to the parliament for evaluation of changes in the security environment of Finland. At the press conference, Prime Minister Sanna Marin stated that in the coming weeks, Finland will decide whether to join NATO or not (Finnish Government, 2022f). In the report mentioned above, it was declared that Russian occupation of Ukraine is a new security threat and that Finland should strengthen its security (Finnish Government, 2022g). The report was prepared under the direction of Finnish Foreign Minister Pekka Haavisto. The report states that after the occupation, the importance of NATO and solidarity between Sweden and Finland in Northern Europe increased (Finnish Government, 2022h: 25).

On 12 May, Prime Minister Sanna Marin and President Sauli Niinistö explained in a joint press statement that Finland should be a member of NATO for its security. They expressed that *"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"* (Finnish Government, 2022i). On 15 May, the Finnish government prepared a report for potential NATO membership. In the report, it is stated that the security environment for Europe and Finland changed after Russia occupied Ukraine. It is announced that European countries and their security commitments did not prevent this occupation. Thanks to NATO membership, Finland's military deterrence will be greater than it is now because NATO's Article 5 provides an important security guarantee for member states. According to the report, NATO membership will ensure Finland's security. It is emphasised that the defence architecture of Northern Europe could be planned within NATO. In the report, it is stated that the government will apply to NATO membership (Finnish Government, 2022j: 3-4). On 17 May, the President of Finland, on the suggestion

³ It is very difficult for the EU to end its energy dependency on Russia in the short term, because European countries are highly dependent on Russia in the field of energy. Energy constitutes 62 per cent of the European Union's total imports from Russia. For detailed information, please see, Eurostat. (2022). Energy represented 62% of EU imports from Russia. Access Address: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/en/web/products-eurostat-news/-/ddn-20220307-1>

of the government, informed NATO that Finland wants to hold talks to be member. A letter signed by Foreign Minister Pekka Haavisto will be sent to NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg in order to declare Finland’s intention of being member of NATO (Finnish Government, 2022k).

Considering the foreign policy of Prime Minister Sanna Marin and President Sauli Niinistö, it is clear that Russia under the Putin regime is seen as a threat by the two leaders. Therefore, Sanna Marin and Sauli Niinistö are the securitising actors. They defined Russia under the Putin regime as a threat against Finnish security. Sanna Marin and Sauli Niinistö decided that Finland should be a member of NATO in order to ensure its security against Russia. Since NATO is a collective security organisation, they think that it would be beneficial for Finland to balance Russia with NATO. If Finland is occupied by Russia, it can mobilize an effective military defence mechanism against Russia with its NATO allies. Finnish foreign policy revealed that NATO is seen as an important organisation for Northern European countries. The future of NATO has been questioned since the collapse of the Soviet Union (Buzan, 1999: 6). However, Russian occupation of Ukraine revived the importance of NATO for European powers and Northern European countries such as Finland and Sweden. Since the beginning of the occupation, Finland has implemented intense diplomacy and explained that Putin's foreign policy is a threat to the European security system and that measures should be taken against Russia.

Table 1: Securitisation of the Putin Regime

The Securitising Actors	Prime Minister Sanna Marin	President Sauli Niinistö
The Existential Threat	Russia under the Putin Regime	
The Reference Objects	European Security	Finland’s Security
Sector of Threat	Military Sector	
Proposal for Solution	NATO Membership	

As seen in the table above, Prime Minister Sanna Marin and President Sauli Niinistö are the securitising actors. They defined Russia under the Putin regime as an existential security threat. Two prominent issues in the foreign policy discourses of the two leaders are Finnish security and European security order, therefore the reference objects are European security and Finland’s security. Russia is currently seen as a military threat to both Finland and European countries. Consequently, the type of the existential threat is military. Against a major military threat such as Russia, Prime Minister Sanna Marin and President Sauli Niinistö decided to join NATO in order to establish a more effective security mechanism. This decision is their proposal for solution. Their decision is a sharp change in Finnish foreign policy. Finland is now striving to enter the NATO alliance against Russia by abandoning its former military neutrality.⁴

⁴ Since the unanimity of NATO members is required for a state to become a member of NATO, Finland and Sweden must be accepted by all states. However, unlike European countries, Turkey has determined some conditions for Finland and Sweden to become members of NATO (Gunter, 2022: 91). Turkey has determined as a prerequisite that these two states will stop supporting terrorism and terrorists and that Turkey's national security concerns are respected in this regard. Finland tried to persuade Turkey by applying intense diplomacy until the NATO summit in Madrid. A diplomatic delegation from Finland arrived in Ankara on 25 May. There was intense negotiation between Finnish and Turkish delegations. Negotiations resulted positively, Turkey and Finland reached an agreement. A memorandum of understanding was signed between Turkey, Sweden and Finland at the NATO summit held between 28 June and 30 June. In the text of the memorandum, there are some articles such as preventing terrorists from recruiting new members, not giving support to PYD, YPG and FETÖ, and full support to Turkey in the fight against PKK and other terrorist organisations. On the basis of information to be provided by Turkey, the extradition and deportation of terrorists will be carried out. Turkish officials stated that they will not give the necessary permission for NATO membership if Sweden and Finland don't keep their promises.

6.1.1. Discourse Analysis of Finnish Politicians

In this article, the theory of persuasion introduced by Aristotle in his book entitled *Rhetoric* was used to analyse discourses of Finnish politicians. According to Aristotle's theory of persuasion, a speaker can persuade his audience in three ways. The first is the speaker's position, character, and goodwill (Ethos). The audience can be influenced by the speeches of helpful and prudent people. The second is that the speaker can stir the emotions of the listeners (Pathos). People's emotions are activated and they form an emotional connection with the purpose of the speech. The third is to persuade the audience by saying phrases based on logical explanations and facts (Logos). The speaker tries to persuade the audience by establishing cause-effect relationships and making reasonable predictions (Aristoteles, 1995: 38; Charland, 2003: 72-73).

Looking at the official statements of Prime Minister Sanna Marin and President Sauli Niinistö, it can be seen that they are trying to make statements as helpful politicians who openly think about their country. They tried to present themselves as leaders with common sense towards the Finnish people. For example, on February 24, just after the occupation began, Prime Minister Sanna Marin said that the attack is a violation of international law and that civilians are in danger (Twitter, 2022a). With these messages, the prime minister wanted to show that she is a thoughtful, helpful and prudent person. She also wanted to activate people's feelings of compassion by expressing that the lives of civilians are in danger. Prime Minister Sanna Marin and President Sauli Niinistö stated on 12 May that NATO membership would increase Finland's security and said that Finland should become a NATO member (Finnish Government, 2022i). Finnish politicians use this expression to establish a cause-effect relationship and offer a logical inference about the future of Finland. They expressed a cause and effect relationship that Finland can be safe if it becomes a NATO member.

Table 2: Classification of Statements of Finnish Politicians According to the Persuasion Theory of Aristotle

Three Features	Descriptions	Finnish Politicians
Ethos	Social position, character, goodwill, common sense, helpful	Finnish politicians have emerged as leaders with good intentions. They tried to show that they think about the well-being of the Finnish people, considering some security concerns. They highlighted that Russian occupation of Ukraine is a clear violation of international law. They used their strong political positions to persuade the audience. In addition to these, they supported Ukrainian people and refugees with good intentions. This approach shows their goodwill and common sense.
Pathos	Emotions	Expressing that civilians are under threat, Finnish politicians try to revive the pity of the audience and they are worried that a similar situation would happen to the Finnish people. This allows the audience to establish an emotional connection with the Ukrainian people.
Logos	Cause-effect relations, predictions, facts	Finnish politicians say that if Finland becomes a member of NATO, it will be safe. This is a cause and effect relation.

On March 20, President Sauli Niinistö expressed that he is worried about the outbreak of a war in Europe and wanted to mobilize the concerns and feelings of the Finnish people. He said that his sole purpose is to ensure the security of Finland (Milne, 2022). Fear and anxiety of war cause the nation to come together under a single umbrella in domestic politics. People unite against a common threat. Thus, he wanted to show that he thinks about his people and country. The

president wanted to gather his people under a single political approach against Russia. The Finnish prime minister and the president wanted to present Russia under the Putin government as a threat, stating some security concerns such as Russian military threats against European security architecture.

6.2. Emergency Measures

One of the important steps of successful securitisation is to take emergency measures against the existential threat (Williams, 2003: 519). The emergency measures taken by Finland against Russia under the Putin regime can be divided into two groups. First, it imposes heavy sanctions on the Putin regime and, more broadly, Russia. Since Finland is a member of the EU, it applies these sanctions within the framework of the EU. Second, perhaps most significant, is the declaration of the willingness to start negotiations for membership in NATO. The desire for NATO membership shows that there is a sharp change in Finnish foreign policy and that the country defines Russia as a threat.

Heavy sanctions are imposed on the Putin regime and, more broadly, on Russia. Finland applies these sanctions as an EU country. Sanctions are imposed on more than 1100 individuals, including oligarchs, and approximately 100 entities. Russian President Vladimir Putin and Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov are also among those individuals sanctioned. Their properties were frozen. Furthermore, they are prohibited from traveling to the EU. Famous oligarch Roman Abramovich, who is the former owner of Chelsea football club, is also on the sanction list. Properties of approximately 100 entities were frozen. Heavy financial sanctions are imposed to stop Russia's industrial development and cut off the financing of the war. Perhaps the most important sanction was to stop the trade of Russian banks, including the Central Bank of Russia, within the borders of the EU. Buying and sale of securities issued by Russian banks are forbidden. Russian banks' properties in the EU were frozen. Russian banks were excluded from the SWIFT system which is the most dominant financial messaging system of the world. The sale and supply of aircraft parts and aircrafts to Russia are forbidden. The EU airspace is closed to all Russian planes, including private planes of oligarchs. Russian-flagged ships are prohibited from entering the EU ports. Russia's access to advanced technological material is restricted. Russian diplomats will no longer be able to travel within the EU without a visa. In order to show the effects of this war to the Russian elite, the export of luxury products of the EU to Russia was stopped (European Commission, 2022). Finland has become a part of this sanction regime as a member of the EU.

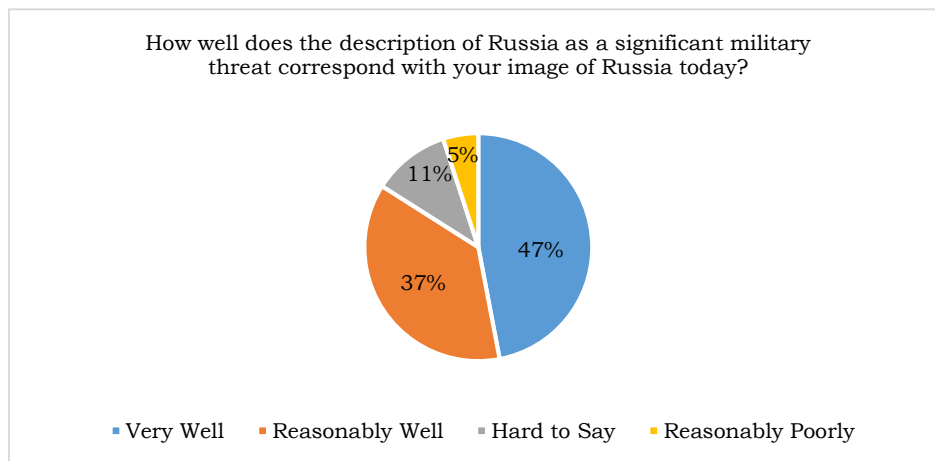
The most significant of the emergency measures taken is the decision to join NATO. Finnish politicians such as Prime Minister Sanna Marin and President Sauli Niinistö (Finnish Government, 2022i) think that NATO would increase Finnish defence capability against Russian military threat. NATO is a collective security organisation. Ensuring the security of European countries and prevention of battles in European territory are among its most important functions (Pick and Critchley, 1974: 44). The Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty says that an armed attack on one of the member states shall be deemed to have been committed against all members (Gordon, 2011: 89). NATO's collective security system can be seen as significant against a militarily strong country such as Russia. For the collective security system of NATO, Prime Minister Sanna Marin (CNBC, 2022) said that *"there is no other way to have security guarantees than under NATO's deterrence and common defence as guaranteed by NATO's Article 5"* at the joint press conference with Swedish Prime Minister Magdalena Andersson in Stockholm on 13 April. This statement clearly reveals that the Finnish political

elites see NATO membership as the only solution against President Putin’s foreign policy.

6.3. Acceptance of the Existential Threat by Audience

Acceptance of the existential threat by audience is the final step in successful securitisation (Wilkinson, 2007: 9). Russian occupation of Ukraine increased negative opinion about Russia among Finnish people. While 59 per cent of Finnish people identified Russia as a significant military threat in 2021, after the occupation of Ukraine on February 24, it is seen in the survey carried out between 4 March and 15 March in 2022 by Finnish Business and Policy Forum – EVA that 84 per cent of Finnish respondents identified Russia as a significant military threat (Pohjanpalo, 2022).⁵ Answers, which indicate choices of very well (47%) and reasonably well (37%), are equal to 84 per cent in total. This percentage clearly reveals that Russia is seen as a military threat. It can be seen in the figure below:

Figure 2: Finns See Russia as a Military Threat



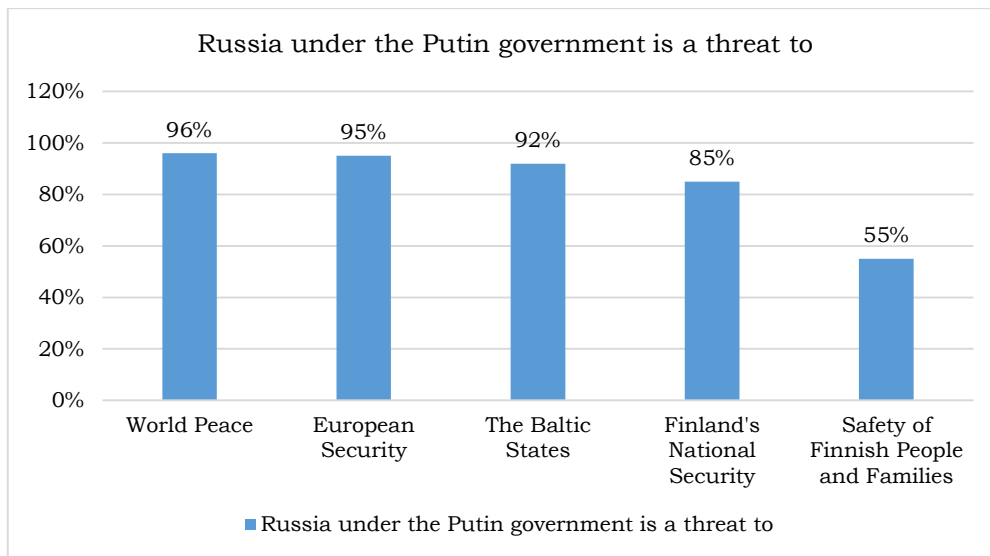
Source: Pohjanpalo, 2022.

The Russian military threat was more clearly expressed in the survey. Russia is seen as an unpredictable dictatorship threatening world peace by over 90 per cent of Finnish people (Finnish Business and Policy Forum – EVA, 2022). Finns openly view Russia under the Putin government as a threat to security of both Europe and Finland. Finns believe that President Putin's foreign policy is threatening. 96 per cent of Finns see Putin's Russia as a threat to world peace. 95 per cent of Finns define actions of Putin's Russia as a threat to European security. 92 per cent of Finns perceive Putin's Russia as a threat to the Baltic States. Russia under the Putin government has been clearly seen as a threat to security of European countries. Moreover, 85 per cent of Finns think that Putin's Russia is a threat to Finland's national security. In addition to this, Russian concern spread through Finnish people so much that 55 per cent of respondents identify Russia under Putin as a direct threat to their safety and that of their families (Finnish Business and Policy Forum – EVA, 2022).

⁵ The survey was conducted with 2.074 people. The error margin of the results is around 2-3 percentage. People aged 18-79 from all over Finland participated in the survey. The survey was conducted between March 4 and March 15, 2022. For detailed information, please see. Finnish Business and Policy Forum – EVA, Finns hold Russians in high regard but perceive Russia as a military threat. Access Address: <https://www.eva.fi/en/blog/2022/04/12/finns-hold-russians-in-high-regard-but-perceive-russia-as-a-military-threat/>

These rates show that Putin's foreign policy is clearly perceived as a threat by the Finns. Similar to the country's politicians, the Finnish people see Russia and Putin's foreign policy as a threat. This situation reveals that the last condition of securitisation has taken place. Finns see Russia under Putin's government as a threat to Finland's national security. In addition, perhaps the most interesting thing is that Finns see Russia as a threat to their own families. This shows how deeply they experienced the impact and anxiety of the war. In addition, the definition of Russia as a threat to world peace reveals the Finnish people's perception of Russia. Finns think that Russia is powerful enough to threaten the global order. It is very normal for a state, which can threaten the global order, to be capable of threatening a small and relatively weak Finland. Russia, which has a population of approximately 145 million, changed geopolitical balance in its favour after the occupation of Ukraine in Eastern Europe. European countries and people have experienced security concerns. Finland, its closest neighbour in Northern Europe, is one of the countries experiencing this great concern.

Figure 3: Finns See Putin’s Russia as a Threat to World Peace, European and Finnish Security



Source: Finnish Business and Policy Forum, 2022.

There are a few things that can be said about these percentages. First, Finland securitised the Putin regime. The securitisation process delivered the expected outcome because it can be seen from the survey data that the Finnish people accept the existential threat, which is the Putin regime. It is clear that Russia under the Putin government is seen by Finnish people as a threat to security of Finland. Second, Finns see the Putin regime not only as a threat to Finland, but also to the Baltic States and European countries. Third, it is seen that Russia under the Putin regime is perceived as a threat to world peace. If world peace is removed by aggressive foreign policies, international institutions such as the UN and the EU, which are highly significant for European diplomacy, may become ineffective in protecting borders of European countries. Destruction of the current international order may bring the war atmosphere of the past centuries to Europe again. Especially in such a case, NATO is the most significant collective security organisation for Europe. Furthermore, the survey data showed that Finns are concerned about safety of their lives and that of their families. The Finnish people clearly have security concerns. Field studies demonstrate this fact. In

Northern Europe, the geopolitical balance may change drastically in the near future.

7. The Changing Geopolitics in the Nordic Region of Europe

Stephen Walt (1987: 5) says that states are balancing against threats. Scandinavian countries such as Finland and Sweden started to have security concerns after the occupation of Ukraine by Russia on February 24. In particular, as seen in this study, both the public and politicians in Finland have begun to see Russia as a major military threat. This threat caused Finland to want to join NATO. There are two possible outcome of Swedish and Finnish NATO membership. The first potential outcome is the encirclement of Russia. Finnish politicians want to take advantage of NATO's deterrent power and want to balance Russia with NATO. As seen in the map below, if Finland and Sweden become NATO members, the Scandinavian region will also fall under the influence of NATO, just like the Baltic geography. This geopolitical change will lead to Russia being surrounded by NATO members.

Figure 4: The Map of the Nordic Region of Europe



Source: <https://www.nato.int/nato-on-the-map/#lat=65.51945129368599&lon=20.396882909862224&zoom=0&layer=1>

The second potential outcome will affect military power of the region. Russia is much stronger militarily than the neighbouring countries. This can also be seen in terms of military spending between Russia and its immediate neighbours. Russia has a strong army, a large number of soldiers, nuclear bombs and advanced military technology when compared with Scandinavian and Baltic states. Even Poland, which is close to the region and is a NATO member, does not have the military capability to fight against Russia. Looking at the military expenditures of the countries in the region, Russia's overwhelming superiority can be clearly seen. Russia spent \$65.9 billion in military spending in 2021. It is seen that the Baltic countries and Scandinavian countries make much less military expenditure when compared to Russia. These countries are also too weak in terms of population and military capability to compete with Russia in military field.

If Finland and Sweden become NATO members, this superiority of Russia can be balanced. Even if Russia will remain superior to the Scandinavian

countries, it would have to face the deterrent force of NATO members. This means that the Scandinavian region will be under the influence of NATO, just like the Baltic geography. Although Russia perceives NATO's expansion as a security threat, the sociological and democratic structure of the Scandinavian region will prevent the countries of the region from pursuing aggressive policies against Russia. These countries, which put more emphasis on human rights discourse in foreign policy, would not pursue an aggressive policy against Russia.

Table 3: Military Expenditures - 2021

Countries	Military Expenditures
Russia	65.9 Billion Dollars
Poland	13.7 Billion Dollars
Norway	8.2 Billion Dollars
Sweden	7.8 Billion Dollars
Finland	5.9 Billion Dollars
Denmark	5.3 Billion Dollars
Lithuania	1.2 Billion Dollars
Latvia	826 Million Dollars
Estonia	763 Million Dollars
Belarus	762 Million Dollars

Source: <https://milex.sipri.org/sipri>

In particular, the small size of these countries in terms of population and military power reduces the threat that they pose to Russia. NATO membership would ensure security against possible occupation for these small countries. Their membership will not pose a real military threat to Russia. Russian President Vladimir Putin made a statement in this direction. The President said that the NATO memberships of Finland and Sweden do not pose a threat to Russia (AA, 2022).

8. Conclusion

After Finland gained its independence from Russia in 1917, it implemented a policy of complete neutrality throughout the Cold War. During the 20th century, the policy of neutrality was the main foreign policy tool that ensured Finland's national security. Being a satellite of the USA and NATO near a militarily strong neighbour such as the Soviet Union is an approach that Finland did not prefer. As a requirement of this policy, it refrained from joining military and political organisations. Juho Kusti Paasikivi systematically developed Finland's policy of neutrality. Urho Kekkonen supported the continuation of this policy. The Finnish authorities thought that the security of their country could be ensured in this way. Thanks to neutrality, they were able to protect their borders in disputes between the East and the West. After the end of the Cold War, Finland had new policy opportunities in the new unipolar international system. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the unipolar world order under the impact of the USA became the main feature of international politics. In this political environment, Finland has chosen to get closer to the European Union. Finnish politicians desired to be an EU member and a part of the Western Europe rather than being an isolated northern European state. Finland became a member of the EU in 1995. This membership ended the policy of neutrality. The policy of complete neutrality turned into a policy of military neutrality.

Geographically, Ukraine's strategic and geopolitical importance is vital to both the European Union and Scandinavian countries. Ukraine is like a gateway to Europe from the north. The destruction of Ukraine and the loss of territory mean that Russia is changing the geopolitical balance in its favour in the north of

Europe. Since the 2010s, Russia's increasing political pressure on Ukraine has also been seen as a threat by Scandinavian countries. The annexation of Crimea by Russia in 2014 can be taken as the first warning. The total occupation of Ukraine on the morning of February 24 caused Finnish politicians to have security concerns. Therefore, Finnish politicians began to think that NATO membership would save Finland from experiencing what happened to Ukraine.

The security concern, which Finland is experiencing, is not unique to one country. European countries that are important in terms of military and economic power, such as Germany, France and the United Kingdom, have similar security concerns. For this reason, the European Union has completely isolated Russia from the capitalist liberal economy. As an EU member, Finland has participated in economic, political and social sanctions. Relations between Russia and the EU have weakened considerably. The administration of Vladimir Putin has begun to be defined as a dangerous regime.

As a consequence, Finland identified the Putin regime as a significant military threat. The main actors of the securitisation process are Prime Minister Sanna Marin and President Sauli Niinistö. Being a member of NATO is presented as a way to strengthen the national defence against Russia. The sanctions are imposed on Russia, President Vladimir Putin and his close circles as emergency measures. In addition to sanctions, Finland declared its interest to be a member of NATO, it is the main emergency measure of Finland against Russia. Furthermore, Finnish people also perceive Russia as a military threat.

Finnish Prime Minister Sanna Marin and President Sauli Niinistö see Russia under the Putin government as a military threat. They want to make Finland a member of NATO to strengthen the defence capabilities of the country against Russia. This choice is their solution to Russian military threat. Finland securitised the Putin regime. Prime Minister Sanna Marin and President Sauli Niinistö are the securitising actors. As a member of the EU, Finland has collectively imposed the EU sanctions on Russia, President Vladimir Putin and his close partners. In addition to key decision-makers such as the prime minister and the head of the state, 84 per cent of Finns identified Russia as a significant military threat. The successful securitisation process was realised between February 24 and June 30.

In future studies, it can be investigated how the United Kingdom and the United States approached Russian occupation of Ukraine. It can be analysed what kind of foreign policy the EU pursues as a single body and how the European countries separately react. In addition to these, it can be researched what kind of foreign policy the great powers of Asia such as the People's Republic of China and India follow. In particular, the approach of these countries can be explained by making good use of security and International Relations theories.

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