



## Survival Strategies of Small States: Comparative Analysis of Ukraine - Finland

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### ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article is to analyze the strategies of small states against a neighboring nuclear big power and to contribute to the literature by explaining the reasons for the difference in small-state strategies. The case of Finland, a small country that did not join NATO during the Cold War, is a sui generis case. "Finlandization" refers to the foreign policy of Finland as a small state to survive against the communist Soviet Union, which was a powerful geopolitical neighbor during the Cold War. NATO remains a key component of the security architecture even after the Cold War, and the majority of its members can be classified as small states. Finland, which was not a NATO member during the Cold War, abandoned Finlandization after the Russia-Ukraine War. Although the policy of neutrality in geopolitics is a valid strategy in peace and even in the Cold War, different parameters come to the fore in war. In this article, these issues are examined with the comparative case study method. In conclusion, Finland succeeded in joining NATO by abandoning the Finlandization model, but Ukraine could not enter NATO while losing land and heavy casualties.

**Keywords:** Finlandization, Small State, Russia-Ukraine War, Finland, NATO

**JEL Classification:** F50, F52, Z13

### Küçük Devletlerin Hayatta Kalma Stratejileri: Ukrayna-Finlandiya'nın Karşılaştırmalı Analizi

#### ÖZ

Bu makalenin amacı, küçük devletlerin komşu nükleer büyük bir güce karşı stratejilerini analiz etmek ve küçük devlet stratejilerindeki farklılığın nedenlerini açıklayarak literatüre katkı sağlamaktır. Soğuk Savaş sırasında NATO'ya katılmayan küçük bir devlet olan Finlandiya vakası nevi şahsına münhasır bir durumdur. "Finlandiyalaşma" terimi, Soğuk Savaş sırasında jeopolitik olarak güçlü bir komşu olan komünist Sovyetler Birliği'ne karşı hayatta kalmak için küçük bir devlet olarak Finlandiya'nın uyguladığı dış politika olarak anılmaktadır. NATO, Soğuk Savaş'tan sonra bile güvenlik mimarisinin kilit bir bileşeni olmaya devam etmektedir ve üyelerinin çoğunluğu küçük devletler olarak sınıflandırılabilir. Soğuk Savaş boyunca NATO üyesi olmayan Finlandiya'nın Rusya-Ukrayna Savaşı'ndan sonra Finlandiyalaşmayı terk ettiği sonucuna varılmıştır. Jeopolitikte tarafsızlık politikası barışta ve hatta Soğuk Savaş'ta geçerli bir strateji olmasına rağmen savaşta farklı parametreler öne çıkmaktadır. Bu makalede bu hususlar Ukrayna ve Finlandiya özelinde karşılaştırmalı vaka analizi metodu ile incelenmiştir. Sonuç olarak; Finlandiya, Finlandiyalaşmayı terk ederek NATO'ya katılmayı başarırken, Ukrayna toprak ve ağır can kayıplar vermesine rağmen NATO'ya giremedi.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Finlandiyalaşma, Küçük Devlet, Rusya-Ukrayna Savaşı, Finlandiya, NATO

**JEL Sınıflandırması:** F50, F52, Z13

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Ukraine went to war disaster and has not been a NATO member while Finland succeeded to become a NATO Alliance member. As an independent state, Finland avoided war by remaining neutral and not joining NATO as a neighbor to the former Soviet Union (one of the world's two largest powers in a bipolar international system) in the Cold War. Finland's policy has led to the emergence of "Finlandization" in international relations literature as a case study of the survival of small states against great powers. According to this term, while Finland decided by the interests of the Soviet Union, it also maintained good relations with the Western countries while keeping its neutral status without being a NATO member. In this regard, it is important to note that Finland joined the European Union (EU) in 1995. Whereas, Ukraine was affiliated with the Soviet Union during Cold War and declared independence in 1991 after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. After independence, Ukraine sought to maintain a balance between NATO and Russia. After this balance was neglected due to the rise of the possibility of Ukraine's EU and NATO memberships, and opposition popular movements against pro-Russian Ukrainian authorities called also "color revolutions", Russia annexed Crimea. As a result of this process, Ukraine had to enter into war with Russia, but so far Ukraine has not been able to become a member of either the EU or NATO. In contrast, Finland managed to leave its status as a neutral country and became a member of the NATO alliance. This article is unique because it covers these topics both comparatively and complementarily in the discipline of international relations studies. Carr, states that historical analysis is the study of causes and that the researcher constantly asks the question: "Why?" (Carr, 1990: 87) He also intends to elaborate the relationship between concepts/terms and observations (Adcock & Collier, 2001: 530). Based on the principles of agreement and difference developed by John Stuart Mill, the principle of controlled comparison seeks to select carefully aligned cases that are identical in all respects except one (George & Bennett, 2005).

When the Cold War ended, U.S. politicians declared one of the most fundamental ideas of geopolitics to be out of date. Hillary Clinton said that the U.S. did not recognize spheres of influence as in the Cold War. (Allison, 2020). According to Mearsheimer, the events that occurred while he was defending liberal values like democracy, economic integration, and the rule of law, by rejecting the premises of the realpolitik theory of the elites in Europe and the United States, confirm the significance of realism (Mearsheimer, 2014: 78). Although wars evoke the term "anarchy" in the neo-realist theory, small state dynamics are considered irrelevant to the explanation because the neo-realists focus on great powers. However, it is important to note that focusing only on the survival of large states and neglecting the survival of small states may result in an incomplete analysis.

It's no surprise that the case study has become the go-to research approach in the fields of psychology, sociology, politics, and other social sciences. In this article, it is discussed the security threats of Russia's two neighbors and compares their approaches with a comparative case study methodology. In this vein, two Russian neighboring countries, Ukraine and Finland, are analyzed through a comparative case study method.

The purpose of this article is to examine the models of success/failure of Ukraine and Finland in the light of small-state strategies against the neighboring nuclear great power after 2022 Russia-Ukraine War and to contribute to small-state strategies by elucidating the reasons behind success and failure in their policies. Did Ukraine and Finland (two neighboring states of Russia) decide their foreign policies based on the small-state theory? Why did NATO have different methods for dealing with Ukraine and Finland? Even though Finland favored the status of a neutral state, why did Ukraine initially declare that it was a neutral state and then abandon that status? Would there have been a Russia-Ukraine War if Ukraine maintained its neutral status? If Russia-Ukraine War did not happen would Finland have abandoned its neutral status

and joined NATO? These two countries are studied in this research article using the comparative case study methodology, and the aim is to reveal the relationship between the scope of small-state theory and the events experienced during the process.

The article is structured as follows: The first part reviews and analyzes the literature on small states and their theoretical background. The second part examines the Ukraine case from a geopolitical, historical, cultural, and post-Cold War perspective. The third part examines the relationship between Russia and NATO, Ukraine and NATO after the end of the Cold War. The fourth part discusses Finland, Finlandization and the relationship between Finland and NATO. The conclusion part discusses Finland's membership in NATO, de-Finlandization, the Russian model proposal in Ukraine, and the arguments for and against it.

## **2. THEORY**

The international system has undergone fundamental changes in the past fifteen years, with strong implications for small state foreign policy (Hey, 2003 :1). There is a dearth of comparative empirical research on the subject of small states in international relations literature (Hey, 2003 :5). The idea of size as a foreign policy factor has been gaining more attention in recent years, and one example is the renewed focus on foreign policy conduct of small states (East,1973:556). According to Simpson, "the study of small states" is attracting "unprecedented attention and interest in the scholarly world," largely due to the Cold War's end, and the formation of small states following the collapse of larger national structures (Simpson, 2006: 649). For small states, some foreign policies involve avoiding the use of force; avoiding policies that are likely to alienate powerful actors in the system; and a limited functional and geographical scope of foreign policy concerns (East,1973:557). A small state isn't able to fight a war against the big powers on a level playing field (Vandenbosch,1964:294). Security is more of a consumer than a producer to a small state (Vandenbosch,1964:301).

The term "small state" in international relations is a relative one. Small states have one or more of the following characteristics: a relatively small population, a relatively small area of land, a relatively low total GDP, and a relatively low military capability (East,1973:557). They are classified by Vital as being economically developed with a population of 10 to 15 million or being economically underdeveloped with a population of 20 to 30 million (David, 1967: 8). Jean Luc-Vellut divides states into large powers, medium powers and small powers, while defining a small power/state as having a population of 10-50 million and a GDP of 2-10 billion USD (Vellut, 1967: 254). Deutsch defines a small state that has a gross national product (GNP) less than one percent of the total GNP of the whole world (Baehr, 1975 :460). Other factors that can be used to determine whether a state is a small state include the strength of nearby states and the geographical proximity of great powers. Although Canada is a relatively small state compared to its neighbor USA, it is considered a middle-sized state in the international literature. Here, geopolitics, which tells us who our neighbors are, comes to the fore as a crucial variable. In this context, geo-strategies determine destiny. Russia's neighbor Ukraine's ambition for NATO Alliance membership, which resulted in a war, and its other neighbor Finland's membership in NATO after many years of non-alignment status, constituted the motivation for analyzing both countries in this article. The second factor is the social makeup of a country. Here, the sensitivities of empires and societies made up of different ethnic structures come to the fore. The third factor is ideological differences and fragmentation. This can lead to major internal conflicts because the elites and decision-makers have different foreign policy priorities.

Rothstein's definition of a small state involves the addition of a psychological element to the physical components of a state that acknowledges that it cannot achieve its security primarily through its own capabilities and thus must rely on the assistance of other states, alliances, and institutions

(Keohane, 1969:293). Hey claims that small states' policies can be researched without the need for a definition of small states despite the fact that much work has been done on it and efforts to explain them with many criteria (Hey, 2003:2). In another definition, small states are depicted as fragile states that cannot provide for their own security (Baldersheim & Keating, 2015:xii). To overcome this vulnerability, they either enter the military shelter of an external power or choose to remain neutral (Baldersheim & Keating, 2015:xii). In his classification of nations, Handel divided them into four categories: great powers, middle powers, weak states, and mini states (Handel, 2016: 7). Small states are weak states that don't fit into a power category (Handel, 2016: 11). He also argued that Finland was limited in both its international freedom and its domestic freedom after the Second World War as a weak state (Handel, 2016: 7). Historically, small states have been regarded as weak states, and in order to maintain their existence, they have adopted policies of neutrality as opposed to policies of complete independence or agreements to guard against aggression. Finland can be given as an example in this context (Goetschel, 2011:9). According to another definition, small states are considered as states that cannot pose a threat to their neighboring states in terms of security and foreign policy (Goetschel, 2011:13). When small countries try to use institutional cooperation to get more influence, they can lose their autonomy and end up with policies that are not in their best interest (Goetschel, 2011:17).

Small states typically adopt a neutral posture, rely on the protection of major powers, use diplomatic and economic external policies rather than military strategies, and participate in multilateral institutions when feasible (Hey, 2003: 5). The concept of "non-alignment" has often been used as a substitute for a comparative analysis of particular small state policies. However, participating in alliances and non-alignment are two fundamental small state strategies (Keohane, 1969:292). Even though the Melos declared that they would remain neutral in the face of the demands of the Greeks for submission, the Greeks did not accept their demands. Small states are often overlooked in neo-realist theory, which is based on the great power metaphor of "makes strong and yields little" in Melian Dialogue. The vast majority of the UN is composed of small states. Most of the available case studies in the field of international relations focus on great powers, and thus focus on a few samples of states. International relations would gain empirically by looking more closely at small states (Neumann & Gstöhl, 2004). The small state cases never became the "fashionable" approach that draws the attention of "the big shots" in the field. (Christmas-Møller, 1983: 39). The title of Morgenthau's best-known book, "Politics Among Nations" (1948), should be changed to "Politics Among Great Nations". Morgenthau argues that small states have always been dependent on a balance of power, such as in Belgium and the Balkans (before World War II), or on the dominance of a single protecting power (in the small states of South America and Portugal) or their lack of appeal to imperial ambitions (in Switzerland and Spain) (Morgenthau, 1948).

While neo-realism is primarily concerned with great powers, it also offers the possibility of working for small states. For example, Labs concludes that neo-realism theory is powerful also in predicting the behavior of weak states (Labs, 1992: 406). Acheson coined the term "vacuum of weaknesses," which he described as a death knell to autocracies that are obsessed with growth (Schweller, 1992: 263). In this context, the enlargement of NATO and Russia's attempts to strengthen the former superpower's leverage over its neighbors, creates a vacuum of weaknesses both in Ukraine and Finland. As two main strategies in realist theory, a small state can either join forces with the largest state in its region (bandwagoning) or join forces against it (balancing) (Snyder, 1997). Some researchers diversify these two fundamental strategies. Small states have adopted a variety of approaches, such as integration, non-interference, neutrality, protection by great powers, and interdependence in addition to bandwagoning and balancing (Kurecic, 2017: 280). Protection can be provided by a large state or by a military alliance. In this regard, NATO has acted as a security umbrella for many countries against the threat of the former Soviet Union. NATO was a key component of the security architecture, and the majority

of its members can be classified as small states based on most of the parameters used such as Denmark, Luxembourg, etc. (Kurecic, 2017: 284).

In particular, in cases where a weak state is very close to great power or geographically distant from potential allies, it will either bandwagon or choose to become neutral, because it would be meaningless and ineffective for a small state to withstand the pressures of a powerful neighbor. The case of Finland (a small country that did not join NATO during the cold war) is a sui generis case in point.

The main difference between a small state and a great power is that a small state controls a very small area of land and operates on a very small scale (Katzenstein, 2003: 10). Small states, on the other hand, can leverage this power either through a special relationship with a superpower or by working together with other small or middle powers (Long, 2017: 187). According to Long's definition of "derivative power", small states that lack significant material capabilities of their own can gain power by persuading larger states to take actions that enhance their interests (Long, 2017: 196). According to a study; weak states, in the face of a serious external threat and particularly in the context of internal pressures or internal political conflict, join forces with regional aggressors under a bandwagoning strategy (Carter, 2022). Despite the chaos in Ukraine, contrary to the findings of this study, Ukraine did not follow this approach with Russia.

There are also policies that small states adopt in their foreign policy, such as limiting their foreign policy to their immediate region, maintaining a neutrality policy, avoiding confrontation with large states, seeking security from large states through military cooperation, and choosing diplomacy over military action (Tür & Salık, 2017: 12). Strategic hedging is a term that is often used to describe a small state's strategy, particularly if it acts as a firewall between a hegemon and a counter-hegemon. Strategic hedging is when the small state combines its tactics to mitigate the risks and dangers of making a decision that would be unacceptable to either the hegemon or counter hegemon (Rafique, 2021: 21).

While the leadership of great powers conceptualizes national security of their state as the capability to project power, the leadership of small states regards national security as the capacity to effectively prevent foreign interventions in their nation (Efremova, 2019). Great powers tend to utilize their military, economic, and political might to ensure their national security and protect their interests. This is due to their often having the capability to intervene in global events. Great powers possess a wide range of military and diplomatic tools to play an effective role on the international stage, assist their allies, and safeguard their interests. On the other hand, small states typically approach their national security from a more limited perspective due to their constrained resources. Their primary concern is to prevent external interventions and preserve their sovereignty. As a result, small states often carefully manage their foreign relations, seek regional cooperation, and pursue support through international organizations.

Fox argues that these small states, often seen as weak players in world politics, avoided war by persuading large powers of the advantages of neutrality (Fox, 1959). Neutrality or non-alignment is a dangerous security policy for small states exposed to the threat of great power (Rothstein, 1968: 34). Rothstein suggests that small states should opt for multilateral or mixed alliances where possible for reasons of security and political leverage. Otherwise, they may opt for an ally with a superpower if they feel threatened, or a bilateral ally with another small nation if they feel secure (Rothstein, 1968: 177). Reiter proposed the "learning theory" to identify which small-state alliance choices were more effective. The learning theory states that small states learn from their alliance's successes and failures, so that they maintain their alliance or neutrality strategy when it works, and change their former alliance or neutrality strategy if it fails

(Reiter, 1996: 71). Finland's NATO membership by changing its neutrality status after the Ukraine War is an important case example in this context.

When studying small states, the cause-and-effect relationship is claimed to be mediated by systemic externalities rather than small state internal dynamics (Elman, 1995: 172). However, there are also counter-examples. One study found that the primary reasons for the breakdown of small-state alliances were "traumatic events" and "legitimacy crisis of power", as well as "regime change" and leader change (Atabay, 2020: 64). Ukraine's attempts to re-engage with Russia as part of its bid to join NATO in 2014, in the wake of protests against the Russian-backed government and the subsequent leadership change, can be seen as a case in this regard. According to Siverson and Starr (1994: 148), alliance change tends to be more likely to occur in countries that have experienced regime change than in those that have not. Since small states cannot guarantee their own security, they have three options; they can remain neutral, conclude a defense treaty with a strategic partner or superpower, or choose collective security (Coomonwealth Advisory Group, 1997:12).

Vulnerability is a combination of two elements: the degree of risk or danger and the capacity to overcome risks and threats and recover from their consequences (Coomonwealth Advisory Group, 1997:13). A small state also needs to take threats into account. A country's territorial integrity, social cohesion, foreign policy, economic and cultural factors, particularly the language of origin, or a combination thereof, may be a source of threat.

### **3. UKRAINE CASE STUDY**

Ukraine covers an area of 604,549 km<sup>2</sup> and has a population of approximately 44 million people. Ukraine's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was USD 160.5 billion in 2022 (The World Bank, 2023). According to Jean Luc-Vellut's small state criterion, even though Ukraine has a GDP of more than \$10 billion, it qualifies as a small state under the population criterion and a neighbor of a powerful state like Russia under the small state criterion. Ukraine had a land border of 2295 km and a sea border of 321 km with Russia in the Black Sea region before the start of the Russian-Ukrainian War. These borders illustrate the geopolitical significance of Ukraine for Russia.

There are many obstacles to Ukraine-NATO relations besides Ukraine's historical, demographic, political and economic ties with Russia, and the Sevastopol base in this country can be seen as a vital obstacle. In 1954, Khrushchev, the leader of the Soviet Union, transferred Crimea from Soviet Russia to Soviet Ukraine as a gesture of fraternal brotherhood on the eve of the thirtieth anniversary of the Pereiaslav Agreement. At that time, how would they respond if they told them that Soviet Union collapsed and Ukraine wanted to join NATO? Putin asked what Ukraine's NATO membership would bring to Crimea and Sevastopol. He also added that the presence of a NATO fleet in the city and the threat to the entire southern part of Russia was not an ephemeral thing, because Crimea always and forever belonged to Russia (Putin, 2014).

The Russian Federation immediately after the dissolution of the USSR; declared the "near vicinity" doctrine in 1993; gave strong indications that it will retain effective control over the former Soviet states. NATO's enlargement moves in 1999 and 2004 was perceived as a threat to the immediate environmental situation of the Russian Federation. As the Cold War wound down, NATO, as well as Russia and the successor states to the former Soviet Union, put in place various mechanisms to strengthen their ties. In 1991, Russia and Ukraine joined NATO's North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NOC) and in 1994, both countries joined its Partnership for Peace Programme (PFP). In 1997, when NATO's Permanent Joint Council (PJC) was formed, Ukraine signed the "Privileged Partnership Charter" with NATO. While Ukraine officially declared its wish to join NATO in 2002, it was only in 2008 that the NATO Bucharest

Summit agreed to Ukraine's request, though indirectly. This situation has been seen as an existential threat to Russia.

In 1997, a senior Russian official referred to the West's offer of membership to Ukraine as "Russian roulette" (Ciobanu, 1998: 13-14). Some academics have suggested that the US and its allies should abandon plans to turn Ukraine into a Westernized country because a "neutral buffer zone" status was a rational choice for it (Mearsheimer, 2014: 87).

After Romania and Bulgaria became members of NATO, in the statement published by the alliance following the 2008 Bucharest summit when Ukraine and Georgia declared that they would be delighted to join NATO, Russia felt that its throat had been cut out from the Black Sea. From this perspective, Russia's desire for a buffer with the West always makes sense. At the 2008 NATO summit in Budapest, Putin reacted to the announcement that Ukraine would join NATO in the future by issuing a statement saying that this was unacceptable because it posed a threat to Russia (Mearsheimer, 2014: 79). He said that NATO's 2008 decision concerning Ukrainian membership was considered an existential threat to its country's borders (Nye, 2022). Borders remind us of geopolitics. But it does not represent the whole strategic picture. Putin's desired end state used to restore the imperial Russia so that it would recreate a substantial part of it through a Slavic Union with Belarus and Ukraine. Putin and his fellows believed that imperial Russian World had to be restored (Stent, 2022). In this vein, he claimed that Ukraine was both historically and culturally an important part of Russia (Nagourney, Bilefsky & Pérez-Peña, 2023). For Putin, there should be a historical unity among Ukrainians, Belarusians, and Russians, so the three countries should share the same destiny. Contrary to Putin's argument, the Ukrainian identity is a West construction to weaken the Russian Federation as a part of the West's "anti-Russia project" (Mankoff, 2022).

In this regard, NATO's one-sided approach and the process of enlargement without taking Russia's sensitivities into account is, in fact, one of the first causes of the current war. In this context, the first of the primary causes of the present Russia-Ukraine War is NATO's unilateral attitude and the process of enlargement without taking Russia's sensitivities into account. Russia's National Security Strategy (NSD) of 2009 (Presidency of Russia, 2009) after the 2008 NATO summit, the NSD of 2015 (Presidency of Russia, 2015) published after the events of 2014 in Ukraine, and the 2021 NSD (Presidency of Russia, 2021) published a year before the events of the 2022 Ukrainian War are all examples of Russia's perception of the developing situation.

The 2009 and 2015 NSDs are defensive and reactive, whereas the 2021 NDS is aggressive and proactive. The definitions related to NATO in 2009 were applied similarly. The further enlargement of the NATO and its military infrastructure to the Russian borders posed a threat to Russia's national security. The need for relations based on parity with NATO was repeated. It was argued that Russia was seeking to be encircled in terms of political, economic, military, and information and that Russia's independent foreign policy was trying to be prevented by the US and its allies (Article 17 of the document reserved for Ukraine). NATO's integration process has raised tensions in Eurasia. The US-EU-backed coup in Ukraine has divided Ukraine and opened the door to armed conflict. An ultra-nationalist ideology in Ukraine poisoned the dialogue with Russia because it was accepted as an enemy.

Similar to the previous 2009 NSD, intelligence and other actions of foreign special services are listed as one of the main threats in the 2015 NSD. Other threats include international NGOs, financial and economic institutions, and activities aimed at weakening Russia's religious and moral values through "color revolutions.", ethnic and religious radical movements aimed at undermining Russia's territorial integrity and unity. At this point, we consider the events that began in Ukraine in 2013 to be mentioned. The mention of religion can also be seen as underlining the significance of the Orthodox Church which is, in fact, one of the pillars of

Russia's social structure. When viewed together with the break-up of the Ukrainian church from the Russian church, the subject becomes more significant. In the 2015 document, it was made clear that, due to Russia's supranational nature, external cultural and informational expansion will erode Russia's traditional Russian soul and moral values. In addition to the military concerns about NATO enlargement, there are also concerns about the impact on the autonomous states with distinct identities within the existing Russian Federation.

The cultural implications of territorial integrity were further heightened by the Ukrainian Parliament's decision to repeal its decision to recognize Russian and other official languages as official languages in multicultural regions. Russia used also to "protect Russians and Russian speakers" argument to legalize its military actions on Ukraine (Muzamildown, 2022). This argument shows us that Ukraine has been a multi-ethnic country different from Finland. Putin expressed that many Russians and Russian-speaking people lived in Ukraine, and Russia would always protect these people by all means (Putin, 2014). He also claimed that Russians and Ukrainians were a single whole and one people. He also stated that the people of Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus are the descendants of the Old Russia, which was one of the biggest states in Europe. After Russia officially embraced Christianity, this connection was further strengthened by a single religion, Orthodoxy. In the continuation of his speech, he said; Ukraine was named after the Old Russian word "okraina" (border), which dated back to 12th century, while the word "Ukraina" meant "those who secured the external borders" (Putin, 2021), which was an indirect indication that Putin saw Ukraine as Russia's external border.

Within the scope of the policies of small states, it is understood that the relations between the small state and neighboring great power, which is seen as a threat, should be handled in interaction and by taking many factors into consideration. Ukraine can be classified as a small state based on the definition of that states that cannot provide their own security are considered as small states, regardless of other definitions. Since small states cannot protect themselves, they have three choices; they can stay neutral, sign a defense agreement with a strategic regional power or superpower, or opt for collective security. When we look at Ukraine's policies, we can see that it started out as a neutral country, then moved toward NATO membership, which was declared to be an irreversible policy. When the government changed and there was a pro-Russia government, Ukraine abandoned its pro-NATO policy and declared its neutrality, but at the same time began to work closely with Russia (a regional power).

In November 2013, President Yanukovich refused to sign Ukraine-EU Association Agreement, which led to Euromaidan demonstrations in Kyiv. In February 2014, the Revolution of Dignity brought about a dramatic change in Ukraine. President Yanukovich was ousted by the Ukrainian Parliament's decision to impeach him on charges of abuse of power, and he fled to Russia. On 23 February 2014, pro-Russia demonstrations began in Crimea, followed by Russia's annexation of Crimea. The US and Ukraine denounced Russia for violating the Budapest Memorandum to recognise Ukraine's territorial integrity. In 2017, Ukraine's parliament passed a law re-establishing NATO membership as a strategic objective of the country's foreign and security policy. In 2019, the relevant constitutional amendment entered into force (NATO, 2023). On June 12, 2020, the North Atlantic Council (NAC) acknowledged Ukraine as an Enhanced Opportunity Partner (EOP) (NATO, 2020). Although Ukraine requested collective self-defense throughout the last war period, unfortunately it did not receive a positive response. Similarly, Ukraine expected actual and military support from NATO. However, NATO did not directly participate in the war. Ukraine applied for EU membership during this period, but this application was also rejected. Ukraine, which tried every way to find support from the international community and protect its territory, later appealed to the United Nations Security Council. However, this request remained inconclusive due to Russia's veto. These developments illustrate a situation in which Ukraine has not received the necessary backing and protection from the international community (Yumuşak, 2023: 180).

In fact, according to the Budapest Security Guarantees Agreement signed in 1994, in exchange for Ukraine's surrender of its nuclear weapons, Russia gave Ukraine its territorial integrity. There are territorial security threats, political security threats and social cohesion threats in Russia-Ukraine Case in addition to considerable vulnerabilities. For Finland these threats do not exist and Finland is not vulnerable in comparison with Ukraine even though they are both neighbor of Russia. While the core principles of the Finlandization model, such as remaining neutral and not joining NATO, were introduced during the Cold War by Finland, it is argued that this model is not appropriate for Ukraine (Kroeger, 2022).

#### **4. FINLAND CASE STUDY**

With a surface area of 338,454 km<sup>2</sup> and a population of 5.5 million, Finland's GDP amounted to USD 280,8 billion in 2022 (The World Bank, 2023). According to Vital's small state criterion, while Finland has a population below 10 million, it qualifies as a small state because it is a developed economy with a high GDP. The length of Finland's land border with Russia is 1340 km, due to the country's north-to-south length.

Finnish politics, historical culture, and religion are very different from that of Ukraine and principally influenced by the Western Swedish crown (Arter, 2023). Norway is a NATO member, and NATO membership application with Sweden is consistent for Finland from both geopolitically and historical and cultural values.

In World War II, Finland was at war with the Soviet Union twice, once at the beginning of the war and again in 1944, losing territory and maintaining a neutrality policy from the end of the war throughout the Cold War. Finlandization term has referred to Finland's foreign policy during the Cold War against the communist Soviet Union as a policy implemented by a small state which has to survive with a powerful neighbor geopolitically. The term was popularized in international relations literature in the late 1950s as a result of the deteriorating relations between the Soviet Union and the West, as well as the political internal divisions in Finland (Singleton, 1981: 270). It was argued that Finlandization caused an internal division led to a gradual erosion of democracy and freedom of the press (Salminen, 1999: 152).

Finlandization can be interpreted in two ways: as a strategy of proactively large power (Soviet/Russian) aimed at influencing the politics of the small neighboring state (Finland), limiting its freedom of action; and as preventative diplomacy practiced by the small state (Finland) aimed at anticipating an unfavorable reaction from the large power (Soviet Union / Russia) and thus preserving its sovereignty and independence (Arter, 2023). Finlandization had four variables; the first of which political geography might be assumed as destiny; and other two of which were written agreements such as treaty obligation, and constitutional prescription, in addition the last one party system dynamics required pro-Soviet confidants among politicians, business leaders and influential people (Arter, 2023).

French President Macron was presented "Finlandization" for Ukraine as "one model on the table" by Russian President Putin just before the war (The Economist, 2022). It is understood from the findings in an article that this model is tried to be implemented in Ukraine (Alkanalka, 2023: 68). Ukraine's "non-bloc status" was accepted by the Ukrainian Parliament and was written in Yanukovich's presidency term White Papers. Ukrainian President Yushchenko expressed that the cornerstone of Ukraine's security became NATO integration, and this policy was taken an "irreversible" development in his 2008 White Paper (Ministry of Defense of Ukraine, 2011: 3). But, pro-Russian President Yanukovich changed this "irreversible" process and stated that Ukraine's status became a neutral state (Ministry of Defense of Ukraine, 2011: 5). In the continuation of that policy, Ukraine's defense priority turned into strategic cooperation with Russia (Ministry of Defense of Ukraine, 2012: 56).

In Russia's NSDs of 2009, 2015, and 2021, the word Finland and hence Finland's NATO membership were not mentioned. As the Cold War ended, Finland began cooperating with NATO. Since 1994, Nordic Europeans have cooperated with NATO under the PfP (Partnership for Peace) Program. In 2014, Sweden and Finland achieved the status of Enhanced Opportunity Partners (EOPs) (Domisse, 2016: 2). At the 2014 NATO Wales Summit the Allies identified five countries as eligible for enhanced opportunities partnership for dialogue and cooperation, namely Australia, Finland, Georgia, Jordan, and Sweden.

Finnish People have not supported NATO membership, seventy per cent of Finns opposed NATO in 1996. Finnish foreign minister Stubb, shortly after Russia attacked Georgia, suggested becoming a NATO Alliance member, yet public opinion did not turn into action (Arter, 2023). Russian illegal annexation of Crimea forced Finland to become a NATO member. After the annexation of Crimea, Russia was defined "unpredictable neighbor" (Nyberg, 2016). The results of a poll conducted just four days after Russia's invasion of Ukraine showed for the first time that pro-NATO public opinion was fifty-three percent in favor and twenty-eight against (Arter, 2023).

Even though the Finnish General said that "never again alone" after 1939–1940 Finland-Russia War, being under the Russian sphere of influence geopolitically (Arter, 2023) and Soviet Union's power prevented Finland to become a NATO member. Smith argues that "Finlandization" turned into "Natoisation" with the Russia-Ukraine War (Smith, 2023).

A four-person delegation has been appointed by the Finnish government to assess the potential of Finland's accession to NATO following Russia's unlawful occupation and annexation of Crimea in 2014, as well as its military action against Ukraine's eastern regions (Mäkelä, 2016). The delegation presented four policy alternatives to the government; first one both Finland and Sweden remain outside the Alliance, second only Finland joins NATO, third only Sweden joins NATO, and forth one both countries join NATO. The Finnish Delegation assumed that the two outgoing governments would not take action before the general elections to be held in 2018 (Sweden) and 2019 (Finland) unless an extremely dramatic event broke out in the region. Following the Russia-Ukraine War, the prime ministers of Sweden, Magdalena Andersson, and Finland, Sanna Marin, are credited for starting their nations' NATO membership process. Finnish Prime Minister Marin announced that Finland's NATO membership was unlikely on 10 January 2022 (just before the Russia-Ukraine War) (Marin, 2022a). In March, Marin stated that Finnish party leaders concurred that Russia's invasion of Ukraine caused a major impact on the foreign policy landscape and they had to acknowledge that, but Finland would not make a snap decision regarding whether to submit an application to join NATO as a full member. (Marin, 2022b). After obtaining the necessary 50,000 signatures, a second citizens' initiative launched on February 21st calling for Finland to apply for membership in the NATO military alliance to be debated by MPs in Parliament gathered the required number of signatures presently having the backing of more than 76,000 individuals (YLE, 2022). According to Finnish President Sauli Niinistö, recent opinion polls indicating required popular public support showed a majority of people in favor of Finland joining NATO (Niinistö, 2022). NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg stated in April 2022 that inviting Finland to join NATO would be the deciding element in Finland's membership, so that Finland would receive political protection during the application and ratification process to join NATO (Stoltenberg, 2022). NATO leaders formally invited Finland and Sweden to join the alliance, a day after Turkey lifted its objections to their membership (Erlanger and Shear, 2022). NATO's unanimous formal invitation to NATO membership gave Finland a protective shield during the approval process, unlike Ukraine. Therefore, we can conclude that NATO also played a significant role in the success or failure of the Ukraine and Finland NATO membership processes.

Russia's Foreign Ministry stated that by abandoning its non-aligned status and becoming one of the small members of NATO, Finland made a historic mistake that would damage relations with Russia and its credibility as a stabilizing actor in the Baltic and Europe (Kauranen & Gray, 2023). Finland's decision to join NATO can be considered one of the biggest geopolitical implications of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. In contrast, Putin unexpectedly downplayed the importance of Finland's accession to NATO by expressing that Finland's participation did not pose an "immediate threat" against Russia (Haltiwanger, 2023).

## 5. CONCLUSION

This study focused on the security dimension of small states. As Ukraine and Finland were unable to guarantee their own security, their post-Cold War policies were examined in a comparative manner. The results of this analysis suggest that Ukraine has not received the necessary support and protection from the international community. It has been concluded that in addition to geopolitical factors and states' territorial integrity, internal dynamics such as and social cohesion are also effective in the policies of small states. In this context, whereas Ukraine, with its multilingualism and diverse ethnic structures, did not achieve NATO membership, Finland, with its social unity, quickly joined NATO, which is one of the important outcomes. It is therefore essential that small states that are unable to guarantee their social integrity adhere to neutral policies and consider the sensitivities of neighboring great powers.

Putin presented the "Finlandization" model for Ukraine as "one model on the table" to Macron just before the war. When small countries attempt to gain leverage through institutional cooperation, they may lose their sovereignty and adopt policies that are detrimental to their interests. The fact that Ukraine on the one hand follows a policy of remaining neutral, and on the other hand wants to enter NATO, is deemed worth examining in this article as a policy dilemma. Being a NATO member against a nuclear neighbor is not only limited to geopolitical and military power variables but also requires taking into account many religious, cultural, and social variables at the same time. Before these factors are not considered, official statements about possible NATO membership create the risk of war by creating the opposite effect. In the absence of an agreed-upon transition plan, unilateral statements of intent can be so dangerous that they can lead to war. While Russia shares many similarities in terms of history, culture, religion, and social conditions, it did not achieve the desired outcome in Ukraine and the Finlandization model did not work because Ukraine was unable to safeguard its sovereignty and territorial integrity. After all, it did not choose the neutrality policy. Neutrality in geopolitics as "Finlandization" might work at peace and even in the Cold War but not in war.

Ukraine is a special country for Russia, which emerged as a result of the dissolution of the former Soviet Union. Ukraine, different from Finland, has a Black Sea shore, shared historical and cultural codes with Russia, and Russia's Black Sea fleet. In the first decade of the 21st century, while Ukraine highlighted the importance of NATO membership in its white papers and declared that an irreversible process was underway, Finland maintained its Cold War-style neutrality policy. With the election of pro-Russian President Yanukovich irreversible process towards NATO membership reversed and Ukraine's neutral status was accepted by the Ukrainian Parliament. After Pro-Western opposition popular movements against pro-Russian Ukrainian authorities called also "color revolutions", Russia annexed Crimea due to the rise of the possibility of Ukraine's EU and NATO memberships. As a result of this process, Ukraine had to enter into war with Russia, but so far Ukraine has not been able to become a member of either the EU or NATO. In contrast, Finland managed to leave its status as a neutral country and succeeded to become a member of the NATO alliance. NATO's unanimous formal invitation to NATO membership gave Finland a protective shield during the approval process, unlike

Ukraine. It can therefore be concluded that NATO played a significant role in the success or failure of the membership processes of Ukraine and Finland.

Ukraine is considered by the Russians to be a symbolic state with ties to Russian culture and past (Kiev principality). In addition to its military nature, NATO's ideological makeup has caused Russia to view it as a threat to Russia's historical legacy, to the world's perception of different nations, and its multiethnic and religious sociological makeup. For Russia, this problem will remain not only with Ukraine and Georgia but also with its current borders and its social structure in terms of perception of threat. The only and most logical solution to this problem is through interactive processes based on equality, with mutual security guarantees. It's important to remember that Russia is, after all, a nuclear power, and it also knows how to gain benefits through the use of its military power with measurable and quantifiable risks in its region, as it is trying to do in Ukraine with a heavy dose of violence.

It can also be said that Russia lacks confidence because it is unable to present a new model in such a situation. Although military power and geopolitical problems have been resolved, albeit in a limited way; we can say that this struggle will continue future in this era where the struggle in economic, cultural, and informatics fields extends beyond borders and the interlinkages are growing. While the neutrality policy is the best option for small countries, the chances of joining a military alliance diminish significantly when war is threatened by neighbors and near vicinity states.

While Ukraine was unable to join NATO, it suffered heavy losses in terms of land and human life due to the War, Finland was able to join NATO by abandoning the strategy of Finlandization that it followed during the Cold War. In addition to significant weaknesses, there are territorial, political and social cohesion risks in the Russia-Ukraine Case. In the case of Finland, these risks do not exist. Finland is not at risk in comparison to Ukraine, despite being a neighbor of Russia.

Finland's NATO membership can be considered one of the biggest geopolitical implications of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The entry of Finland into NATO marks a significant development for the security of Finland, as well as a geopolitical sign of Russia's weakened and declining power. The transformation of Finland into a member of NATO has been accompanied by a traumatic external event, such as the Russian-Ukrainian War, as well as popular support after a lengthy process. Finland's lack of internal handicaps, such as Ukraine, has been one of the main facilitating reasons for its NATO membership. In war-making situations, freezing the process and postponing radical decisions like joining a military alliance is seen as a better approach. Additionally, the shared history and cultural values of the states that used to share the same domicile, the territorial shifts that are not considered problematic, and the intermingling of different ethnic groups, lead to more cautious and accommodating behavior if different military configurations are favored.

#### **Araştırma ve Yayın Etiği Beyanı**

Bu çalışma bilimsel araştırma ve yayın etiği kurallarına uygun olarak hazırlanmıştır.

#### **Yazarların Makaleye Katkı Oranları**

Yazar 1'in makaleye katkısı %50, Yazar 2'nin makaleye katkısı %50'dir.

#### **Çıkar Beyanı**

Yazarlar açısından ya da üçüncü taraflar açısından çalışmadan kaynaklı çıkar çatışması bulunmamaktadır

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