Summer Leppanen

HST 101 History Methods

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Finland, America, and the Cold War: I'll come up with a snappy title eventually.

The Cold War is a time that is often looked back upon as one of simplicity when it comes to the international relations of the United States. Communism, heralded by the Soviet Union, had to be contained at all costs. All the nations of the world were either stoically with the United States, already fallen to the Soviet Union's wiles, or were in a vulnerable position and had to be strongly protected from the Communist Threat. This divide was particularly stark in Europe, which, "[b]y late 1949, [...] was irreversibly divided, or so it seemed for four decades, into two hostile blocs that were preparing to face off against each other."[1] However, this simplistic view of Cold War Europe held several exceptions. Perhaps most notably Scandinavian/Nordic neutrality, and most especially the case of Finland[2].

Finland's neutrality was particularly notable due to its long border with the Soviet Union (see Fig. 1). Finland has a long, and complicated history with Russia. "After being annexed from Sweden in 1809 Finland was granted a special administrative system that left the Finns with their own senate and a unique institutional mechanism enabling the presentation of Finnish affairs

[1] Jussi Hanhimäki, "'Containment' in a borderland: The United States and Finland, 1948-49," Diplomatic History 18, no. 3 (Summer 1994): 353, Historical Abstracts with Full Text, EBSCOhost 9501124049.

[2]Finland's relationship and identity as a Scandinavian or Nordic nation has shifted significantly over time. During the Cold War, Finland identified strongly as Nordic as a way of remaining neutral but indicating a Westward connection without generating fear in the Soviet Union. For more see Christopher Browning and Marko Lehti, "Beyond East–West: Marginality and National Dignity in Finnish Identity Construction," *Nationalities Papers* 35, no. 4 (2007): 691-716.

directly to the tsar."[3] Following the Russian revolution, and Finnish independence in 1917, however, Finland became notably anti-Russian,[4] and sided with Germany during WWII against the Soviet Union. "Officially the Finnish Government laid it down as their own opinion that Finland became involved in a state of war due to the Russian air-raids which were launched during the first days after 22nd June [1941]."[5] However, Finland pulled out of the war in 1944, and the resulting Armistice agreement left Finland significantly weakened, including loss of territory (see Fig. 1), US$600,000,000 in reparations, and a 50% demobilisation of the Finnish Army within a month.[6] This might easily appear to be an indication of Soviet intention to seize control of Finland following the end of the war. Indeed, "[a]s early as 1944-45 the Soviets had suggested a defensive pact with the Finns, but [Finnish President] Paasikivi had averted a treaty by referring to the Moscow Armistice of September 1944, which prevented Finland from joining any military alliances before the official peace treaty was signed. The Paris Peace Treaty removed that block."[7] However, despite this reluctance on the part of Finland to enter into a direct treaty with the Soviet Union, "Finland was equally remarkable in that it became the only democratic country that pushed for friendly relations with the USSR."[8] Indeed, this is explicitly stated by the Finns in the negotiations of the 1944 armistice: "I wish to express the hope that the long-established good-neighbor relations between Finland and the Soviet Union will prevail."[9]

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[3]Browning, *Beyond East–West: Marginality and National Dignity in Finnish Identity Construction,* 697.

[4]Browning, "Beyond East–West: Marginality and National Dignity in Finnish Identity Construction," 699-700.

[5]Thede Palm and Georg Enckell. *The Finnish-Soviet Armistice Negotiations of 1944,* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1971), 13. It is also worth noting that Finland sided with Germany for their military strength, and the fact that much of the Finnish officer corp had had ties to the German Army dating back to the First World War, and not due to any sympathy with the Nazis. See Ibid, 15.

[6]Ibid, 51.

[7]Hanhimäki, "'Containment' in a borderland: The United States and Finland, 1948-49," 356.

[8]Ibid, 354.

[9]Palm, *The Finnish-Soviet Armistice Negotiations of 1944,* 95.

At first this was overlooked by the United States and the West, considering Finland's independence and democracy itself as enough of a victory. However, as the Cold War heated up, this attitude drastically changed. Nevertheless, fears that Finland, like other border states, would inevitably fall to Soviet control (while not entirely unfounded) were almost certainly exaggerated.

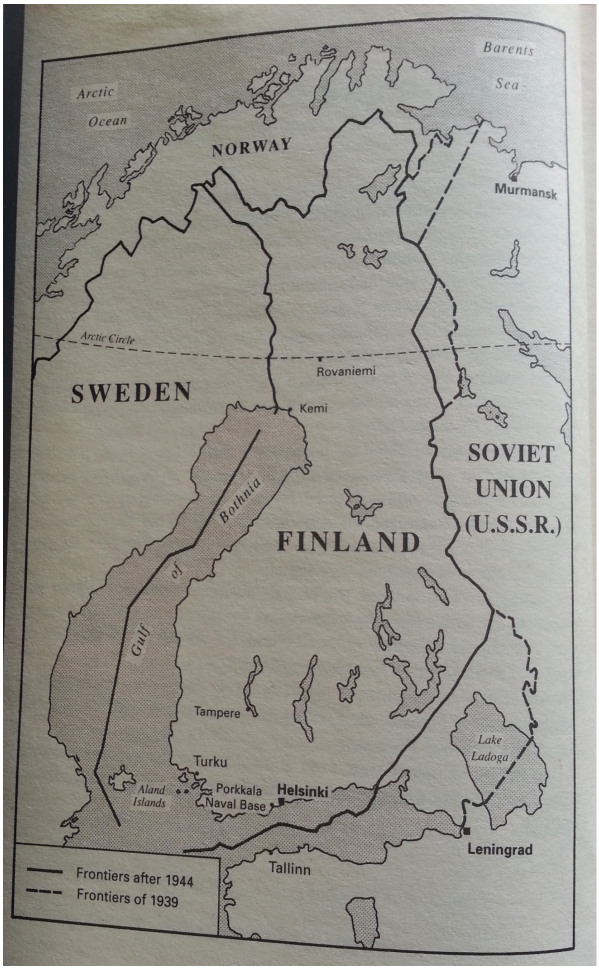

Fig. 1: Map of Finland[10]

[10]Risto E. J. Penttilä, *Finland's Search for Security through Defence, 1944-89,* (New York, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991), vii.

The United States believed from very early on that Finland would fall to the Soviet Union. In early years, Finland was viewed as a fighter, persevering against Soviet control. However, the Finno-Soviet Treaty of Friendship and Mutual Assistance (FCMA), signed on April 6th 1948 in Moscow sent a strong message to the United States. "The two American chiefs of missions closest to the events in Finland generally considered the Finnish Diet's ratification of the FCMA treaty on 23 April a clear step toward the final absorption of Finland into the soviet empire."[11] Even after the failure of the Finnish Communist party to seize power (an attempt that was *not* aided by the Soviets,[12] contrary to American belief[13]), the United States had little hope. "After the 1948 election, the dilemma that American policy makers faced was that although the Finns had 'contained' the expansion of Communist rule into their own country, Finland's geographic location seemed to give little hope for the continuation of such 'heresy.'"[14] "Although some American policymakers declared Finland a victor in the cold war after the critical spring of 1948 and maintained that the Finns had proven themselves worthy of American help by resisting the growth of communist influence, they became increasingly worried about this Nordic democracy by the mid-1950s."[15] This fear became near certainty over time, giving rise to the concept of Finlandization.

Finlandization is "a term purported to describe a process discernible in post-war Finnish-Soviet relations which incrementally has led to the loss of Finland's national autonomy,

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[11]Hanhimäki, "'Containment' in a borderland: The United States and Finland, 1948-49," 363.
[12]Ibid, 363-5.
[13]United States Central Intelligence Agency, Directorate of Intelligence, *"Finlandization" In Action: Helsinki's Experience With Moscow,* by Carolyn M Ekedahl, RSS No. 0059/72 (Freedom of Information Act, May 2007), 6.
[14]Ibid, 366.
[15]Jussi M. Hanhimäki, *Containing Coexistence: America, Russia, and the "Finnish Solution"* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1997), xv.

and which illustrates, by analogy, a danger posed to Western Europe much more broadly by the Soviet Union in a period of *détente.*"[16] The American government did recognize that Finland was technically neutral; a CIA report from 1972 states, "[...]Soviet entree into the Finnish system is fairly limited. Finland, with its multiparty, parliamentary system, is a far cry from the typical East European state dominated by a single party which in turn is closely monitored at several levels by the Soviet security, military, and party mechanisms."[17] However, Soviet influence was not to be underestimated. The report goes on in the following paragraph:

> But the considerable leverage which the Soviets do have within the Finnish system stems not from any direct controls within the country, but from the combined factors of the omnipresent threat of hostile Soviet reaction and of a more-or-less preconditioned Finnish state of mind. Since the war the Finns have become accustomed not to ask what the Soviets would do in a given instance, but to accept as inevitable a high level of Soviet influence.[18]

We see quite clearly the depth of Soviet infiltration into and control that the American government believed Finland had at this time; that it was essentially the norm by the early 1970s.

The American press was even more sensational about Finland's position under the Soviet Union. A Washington Post article from 1948 stated, "Even the nominal independence left to Finland is something that cannot be tolerated [by the Soviets]. As one country after another is ground under the Slav heel, the lesson for the free world is clear."[19] Another from 1959, while somewhat less dramatic, shows similar attitudes about the strength of Soviet influence: "There were suggestions that the Communists be brought into the government. The Communists argued

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[16]Roy Allison, *Finland's Relations with the Soviet Union*, (1944-84. New York, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985), 1.

[17]United States Central Intelligence Agency, *"Finlandization" In Action: Helsinki's Experience With Moscow,* iii.

[18]Ibid.

[19]"Helpless Finland," *Washington Post (1923-1954),* Mar 4, 1948, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times, 10.

that their presence was essential for good relations with Russia. President Kekkonen, an Agrarian, was said to have favored the inclusion of Communists in nonsensitive posts, thus reversing Finland's policy of the last decade."[20] Fig. 2, while from a slightly earlier time, also shows the widespread American belief that Finland was essentially at the mercy of the Soviet Union. Despite a less overt control over Finland than other nations, in the American view, Soviet influence was still very present, and Finland's eventual fall totally into the Soviet sphere was inevitable.

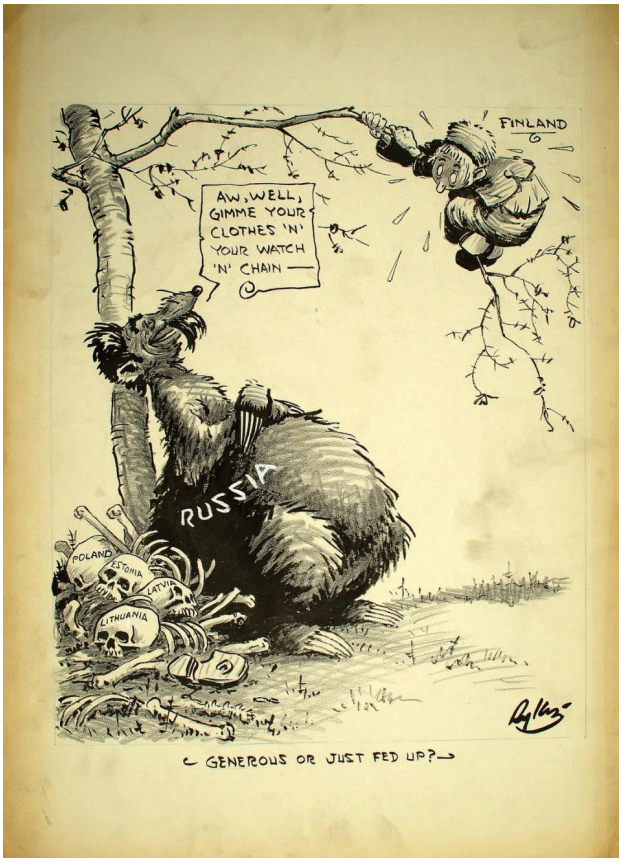

Fig. 2: Generous or just fed up?[21]

[20]Robert H. Estabrook, "Report on Finland: Freedom Is on a Leash," *Washington Post and Times Herald (1954-1959),* Apr 2, 1959, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times, A23.

[21] Charles Henry Sykes, *Generous or just fed up?* 194-?, Ink and crayon on coquille board, 53 cm. x 38 cm. Special Collections and Archives, James Branch Cabell Library, Virginia Commonwealth University. Available from: Flickr Commons, https://www.flickr.com/photos/vculibraries/7344984368/in/photolist-5F5aSu-cc3XXw-cc3uqj-bUFiDR-cc3Uf5-66nw7s-oeVVV3/

Even in more optimistic sources, there was an air of distrust in Finland's supposed neutrality. In a telegram to the United States Department of State, in regards to a meeting with the Finnish Chief of Foreign Office Political Section about a speech given by President Kekkonen advocating a Scandinavian nuclear-free zone, it is said, "Whether [the] speech represents nationalistic shrewdness on Kekkonen's part, or whether he [is] softening Scandinavia for what we perceive to be [a] 'Soviet charm offensive,' I do not pretend to know. But [I] believe it [is] wise at this juncture for us to accept Jakobson['s] explanation at face value, barring evidence [to the] contrary."[22] Despite the apparent trust of the Finns, there is still the acknowledgment that they *could* be lying to further Soviet interests. But this raises the question: what *were* Soviet interests in Finland, and did they match what the United States believed them to be?

Even during the Cold War, there were many critics of the Finlandization model. In a monograph published in 1978, it is pointed out that one doesn't need to know the specifics of Soviet policy to understand Soviet motivations in Finland.

> For at least a decade after 1945 the Soviet Union could have turned Finland into a satellite with little practical difficulty, but the political costs of subduing Finland would have been very high. The elimination of Finland as a neutral buffer in Scandinavia would have diminished Norwegian and Danish reluctance to allow NATO bases on their territory, and might have convinced Sweden that its security would be better served through military association with NATO. […] The Soviet Union desired to avoid such a development for fear it would be detrimental to the Soviet position in the Baltic and increase the risk of a major war at a time when its strategic inferiority was manifest.[23]

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[22]United States Department of State, Office of the Historian, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963 Volume XVI, Eastern Europe; Cyprus; Greece; Turkey, Document 241, Telegram From the Embassy in Finland to the Department of State*, May 30, 1963.

[23]Adam M. Garfinkle, "'Finlandization': A Map To A Metaphor," Monograph Number 24, (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Foreign Policy Research Institute, 1978), 23

This states that it was, in fact, fairly obvious that the Soviets would not attempt to infiltrate Finland too deeply. However, this explanation did leave room for more subversive methods of control, and thus necessitated a meticulous and cautious policy from both sides out of fear of escalation. For example, “[t]he Swedes were eager to develop their version of the Finnish argument and maintained that Sweden joining NATO would have an immediate impact on Finno-Soviet relations. It might even lead to the Soviets taking aggressive action against Finland some Swedish politicians argued.”[24] The Soviets indirectly confirmed this: “The Soviet media campaign was especially active in December 1948 and January 1949. Given that this coincided with the time when the Scandinavian talks of military cooperation reached their peak seems to suggest that the Soviets used it as a means to communicate to the West, and especially to the Scandinavians, through Finland.”[25] This meant that the United States (as well as the Soviets) felt the need to be especially cautious regarding Finland's position, however both sides also wanted to keep tabs on Finland, to be assured that the status quo remained. “Both engaged in intensive intelligence activities in Finland and in the bordering areas.”[26] For both the United States and the Soviets, these activities held a largely strategic concern. “Clearly, the narrowest area, the 'waist' of Finland, interested Americans. The Russians also let the Finns know that they were interested not in the southern part of the country but in the area where the distance between NATO and the Soviet Union was the shortest, namely, northern Finland.” However, special caution was taken

[24]Hanhimäki, *Containing Coexistence: America, Russia, and the "Finnish Solution,"* 64.
[25]Ibid, 66.
[26]Jukka Rislakki, “'Without Mercy'--U.S. Strategic Intelligence and Finland in the Cold War,” Journal of Military History &9, no.1 (Jan 2015): 131, America: History and Life with Full Text, EBSCOhost 100127217.

with these activities to make them discrete, especially on the part of the United States, who often trained and funded agents, rather than send in their own.[27]

In spite of the signals it sent to the United States, the FCMA treaty in fact suggested limited aims in Finland on the part of the Soviets. Article 6 of the FCMA treaty explicitly states the following: “The High Contracting Parties pledge themselves to observe the principal of the mutual respect of sovereignty and integrity and that of non-interference in the internal affairs of the other state.”[28] It is clear that the Soviets held a strong respect for Finland's independence, and the Finns would continue to use this treaty as a cornerstone and justification for their neutral foreign policy throughout the Cold War.[29] This interpretation of the FCMA treaty was endorsed by the Soviets,[30] likely due to the delicate position Finland held. Much like the United States, the Soviets fears the Finns falling into the sphere of the other side, and thus neutrality was preferable.

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[27]Ibid, 134. This was true of propaganda campaigns, as well as strategic-military campaigns. For more on examples of social intelligence projects, see Joni Krekola and Simo Mikkonen, "Backlash of the Free World: The US Presence at the World Youth Festival in Helsinki, 1962," *Scandinavian Journal of History* 36, no. 2 (2011): 230-247, and Toby C. Rider, "Political Warfare in Helsinki: American Covert Strategy and the Union of Free Eastern European Sportsmen," *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 30, no. 13 (2013): 1493-1502. Although these intelligence campaigns were not strictly directed at the Finns (especially in the case of the Olympic Games), there was undoubtedly an effect on Finland through them, and they illustrate an example of the necessity of discreteness in the role that the United States played in their attempts to affect Finnish affairs.

[28]Jussi M. Hanhimäki, “Appendix: The Treaty of Friendship and Mutual Assistance between the Republic of Finland and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics,” in *Containing Coexistence: America, Russia, and the "Finnish Solution"* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1997), 209.

[29]Hanhimäki, “Containment' in a borderland: The United States and Finland, 1948-49,” 361. The FCMA treaty also stated in Article 3, “The High Contracting Parties give assurance of their intention loyally to participate in all measures towards the maintenance of international peace and security in conformity with the aims and principles of the United Nations Organization,” and in Article 4, “not to conclude any alliance or join any coalition directed against the other High Contracting Power,” which are, in all likelihood the articles most utilized by the Finnish government to maintain their neutral stance. Jussi M. Hanhimäki, “Appendix…” 208.

[30]“Several Soviet legal scholars wrote in support of this interpretation in the late 1950s.” Penttilä, *Finland's Search for Security through Defence, 1944-89,* 81.

Finland's aim was essentially pure neutrality. "Finland's neutrality policy was understood as a way of isolating the country from the Cold War, to keep out of the international limelight and to send a message to the Soviet Union that they had no reason to worry about Finland."[31] Finland also often argued to the United States that they were independent. "President Kekkonen responded that Finland would continue this [neutral] policy regardless of whether tension in East-West relations lessened. Finland would maintain its independence in either event. In fact, Finland's determination was so solid that Finns were surprised when foreign statesmen sought reassurance on this point."[32] As might be expected, the American media was particularly disbelieving that Finland's "neutrality" was either real, or what they truly desired. A Washington Post article from 1961 summarizes Finland's position as follows: "In the peace treaty with Russia that followed World War II, Finland's freedom of action was barred from joining any Western grouping without Russian approval, and the Russians would never approve of Finland entering a Western political alliance with its military overtones. […] neutrality was perhaps the best deal that Finland could and can make."[33] It is clear that the American public (or at least the media) could not comprehend neutrality as anything less than a last resort against the Soviet menace. The American government saw Finnish neutrality as more of result of a disillusionment with the West following World War II. The 1972 CIA intelligence report on Finland states that, "[t]his view had a profound effect on Finnish thinking."[34] This, at least, held a certain degree of truth. "As early as 1943, future President Urho Kekkonen, then a member of parliament, stated that as

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[31]Browning, "Beyond East–West: Marginality and National Dignity in Finnish Identity Construction," 702.

[32]United States Department of State, Office of the Historian, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963 Volume XVI, Eastern Europe; Cyprus; Greece; Turkey, Document 244, Telegram From the Embassy in Finland to the Department of State,* Sept. 7, 1963.

[33]Bernard Nossiter, "East-West Tug Puts Finland in Quandary," *Washington Post, Times Herald (1959-1973),* Jun 25, 1961, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times K14.

[34]United States Central Intelligence Agency, *"Finlandization" In Action: Helsinki's Experience With Moscow,* 2.

a member of an anti-Soviet Western alliance Finland would always be an outpost which would be overrun in the event of conflict, but would be powerless to affect the questions of peace and war. He said that only a return to neutrality could ensure Finland's security after the war."[35] The report also goes on extensively about Kekkonen's personal relationship with Soviet leaders,[36] implying a certain distrust in the truth behind Finnish neutrality. One of the telegrams to the United States Department of State indicates an at least public acknowledgement of Finland's neutrality: "Vice President [Johnson] reaffirmed President Kennedy's explicit recognition of Finland's right to follow [its] policy of avoiding entangling alliances. He stated that [the] US wanted every country to be [as] free to chose its policy as in [the] US."[37] However, it is easy to see a second, anti-Soviet meaning in the language used in this reassurance.

Without sufficient primary material from the Finnish and Soviet perspectives, it is difficult to determine the exact nature of the truth behind American concerns without relying on secondary interpretations. The language barriers have largely necessitated that in this particular case. The secondary sources compiled for this case are fairly wide ranging in their topic and perspective, however most (although not all) seem to be fairly concurrent with the argument made here; that Finland was fairly independent, and at the very least much more so than the United States believed, and that the Soviet Union had limited aims in Finland during the Cold War.

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[35]Ibid.

[36]Ibid, 7-12.

[37]United States Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963 Volume XVI, Eastern Europe; Cyprus; Greece; Turkey, Document 244, Telegram From the Embassy in Finland to the Department of State.*

Another major challenge regarding the secondary sources used in this paper was the fact that most of the sources were written fairly close to the end of the Cold War. This topic has been studied very little with a significant historical retrospect on the Cold War, and the few sources I was able to find written within the past decade were not directly about Soviet-Finnish-American relations. Even early on it was relatively unstudied, as is explicitly stated at the start of a source from 1994: “Finland […] has received little attention from historians of American foreign policy, though the 'Finnish model' defied the 'logic' of the Cold War and Soviet behavior[...].”[38] As a result of this, many of the secondary sources used in this paper refer to many of the other sources used here. This, in turn, is likely part of the cause of the concurrence of thought throughout the sources used in this paper.

Nevertheless, the secondary sources seem to be fairly reasonable in their interpretations on the whole. Interpretations of the 1944 Armistice and the 1948 FCMA treaty clearly mirror what is actually written in those primary sources. This is also true in a mention of magnification or sensationalism of events in the American media. “As during the 1948 spring crisis and its aftermath, the CIA viewed Finland as a symbol of successful, and peaceful, containment. Nowhere was this more pronounced than in the American media.”[39]

It may be noted that the most useful secondary sources were the Hanhimäki sources. This is because they most directly discussed the topic of this paper. Most other sources focused more heavily or solely on Finno-Soviet relations, rather than on Finnish-American relations in the context of Finno-Soviet relations as the Hanhimäki sources did. Hanhimäki was also especially effective in his quotation of and references to primary sources, particularly those in Finnish that

[38]Hanhimäki, “Containment' in a borderland: The United States and Finland, 1948-49,” 353.
[39]Hanhimäki, “Containment' in a borderland: The United States and Finland, 1948-49,” 373.

an English speaker might not be able to use. It is important to recall that all quotes and references are inherently biased based on Hanhimäki's own perspective. Even so, the Cold War and Finnish-American foreign relations are his area of expertise, so he is likely the most knowledgable historian on the topic referenced in this paper.

It is important to study this topic largely because it is so neglected. It is especially overlooked outside of Finland (nearly all of my secondary sardines were written by Finnish authors). This is particularly significant considering the importance Finland held to the United States during the Cold War, and even more so due to its unique position as a neutral border state. Finland's exceptional nature during the Cold War makes it all the more vital that it be studied. Cases that stand apart from the norm of historical trends remind us of the complexity of history. Very little is simple, however humanity's desire to find order often leads to shunning and subsequent ignorance of details that defy simplicity. It is thus important, in the study of history, to pay attention to all facts, incidents, and examples.

The Cold War is often prone to simplification, because at the time (lived memory for many) fear seemed to necessitate a simplification of the conflict into Them vs. Us (as is often the case in times of war). However, it is the job of the historian to dissect the intricacies and exceptions behind that simplification. Finland is just such an example. As can be evidenced by sources from the time, Finland was not simple, even to the United States government, but it was often interpreted inaccurately out of a lack of understanding. It is perhaps best summed up by Finnish politician Ralf Törngren:

> To some, the existence of an independent neutral state, a Western democracy, next door to the Soviet Union, maintaining its freedom in friendship with, not in defiance of, its powerful neighbor, appears in itself to be a paradox. In any case, none of the conventional labels of international politics quite fits the position of

> Finland. As a result it is usually described as "exceptional." But an exception from what?[40]

Finland's uniqueness was an exception to the Cold War mentality, but it is important to consider it also within its own context, and this has been done fairly little.

What was Finland, then, in the context of the Cold War? To the Americans it was an outward exception to the way the Cold War world worked. But if it's exception as a neutral nation should disappear, it would mean the breaking of a delicate balance. Still, there was constant fear that it would break, or even belief that it inwardly had. However, this was based on a misinterpretation of Soviet intentions in Finland, and a distrust of Finnish friendship with the Soviet Union. Certainly there was influence in Finland, but it was not as strong as the Americans believed it to be. It is important that Finland during the Cold War be studied on its own terms, in order to truly understand it, but also in terms of both the American and the Soviet perspectives, in order that we might understand a little better the complexities of this time.

[40]Ralf Törngren, "The Neutrality of Finland," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 39, No. 4 (Jul., 1961), 601, Accessed April 16th, 2015, http://www.jstor.org/stable/20029514.

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