

# TTO BE OR TO BECOME 'EUROPEAN'? 'WESTERNIZING' NARRATIVES IN POST-COLD WAR FINLAND

*Elena Dragomir*

University of Helsinki, E-mail: elenadragomir78@yahoo.com

**Abstract:**

*The Finnish 'westernizing' narrative emphasizes Finland's 'westernness', i.e. the idea that Finland and Finns have always been western and part of the 'European family'. The recent past is not seen as an obstacle for this interpretation. Thus, according to this type of discourse, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, and 'liberated' from the constraints of the Cold War, Finland could finally 'return' to the West, to Europe, to its 'natural' origins. This article examines in short what might be called the post-Cold War narrative of Finnish westernness as it appears in the English language sources. It argues that the westernizing narrative is very important in justifying Finland's post-Cold War position in the international politics, especially its position in the European politics. The article is divided in two parts. The first one examines the narrative of the westernness of Finland, Finns or Finnish 'identity' as it appears in some scientific writings, press materials and political texts. Within this narrative an important element is the re-evaluation of Finland's international position during the Cold War. Therefore, the Finnish security 'solution' - by some called 'Nordic and neutral identity'<sup>1</sup> - is either criticized, attacked and characterized as an aberration and betrayal of the 'Finnish western identity', or accepted as the only possible 'instrument for pursuing national security interests' in those times. The second part of the article advances some explanations for this narrative and addresses questions such as: why was it developed, by whom, and how successful was it? The article shows how highly political is the (re)presentation of Finnish history*

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<sup>1</sup> Sami Moisio and Vilho Harle argue that the Finnish neutrality policy 'represents not identity or identity politics *per se* but rather a realistic foreign policy'. Sami Moisio and Vilho Harle, 'The Limits of Geopolitical Remote Sensing' *Eurasian Geography and Economics*, 47, No. 2 (2006): 208

*and how much its 'western character' is related to Finland's current political situation and goals in Europe. It also reveals how important the ideology is in backing a political choice.*

**Rezumat:**

*Discursul întoarcerii către Occident în Finlanda, subliniază ideea că Finlanda și finlandezii au fost dintotdeauna occidentali și parte a "familiei europene". Conform acestei interpretări, după colapsul Uniunii Sovietice și "eliberată" de constrângerile impuse de realitățile Războiului Rece, Finlanda a putut în sfârșit să se întoarcă spre vest, către Europa, către originile sale "naturale". Acest articol tratează pe scurt ceea ce s-ar putea numi discursul post-Război Rece al întoarcerii Finlandei către Occident, așa cum apare el în sursele de limbă engleză. Se susține ideea că acest discurs este un element foarte important în justificarea politicii internaționale pe care a dus-o Finlanda mai ales pe plan european după sfârșitul Războiului Rece. Articolul este structurat în două părți. Cea dintâi prezintă acest discurs așa cum apare el în texte științifice, declarații politice sau materiale de presă, arătând cum este (re)prezentată istoria Finlandei în acest proces. Iar cea de-a doua propune o serie de explicații privind cauzele dezvoltării acestui tip de discurs. Articolul arată cât de puternic sunt influențate de factorul politic scrierea și interpretarea istoriei finlandeze.*

**Keywords:** Finland, European Union, westernizing narratives, finlandization debate

## **Introduction**

Anywhere in the world, debates are predominantly for the domestic public. In Finland, as anywhere else, any type of debate takes place in the official/national languages - in this case Finnish and, to a minor extent, Swedish. The 'westernizing' narrative is in Finland present in historical or political writings, official documents, newspapers, journals, magazines, parliament minutes, seminar proceedings, TV interviews, political campaigns etc. Concerning the language of the debate, I assume that the importance and nature of the sources in the Finnish language differ to some extent from publications in the English language. The findings of this article are unfortunately limited by the low number of sources available in English on the topic of the 'westernizing' narrative in Finland. Nevertheless, four types of primary sources are used in this respect, hence all published in English: 1) articles and books written by Finnish scholars, 2) texts by Finnish present or former politicians or diplomats, 3) materials published by the government of Finland, and 4) other materials: press

comments, university students' papers etc. A fundamental problem in regard to this material is related to its representativeness. In other words, how representative is the material available in English for the 'westernizing' narrative in Finland? Although I limited my research to materials produced only by Finnish authors (scholars, politicians, journalists), another problem raises, namely the 'committed' quality that many of them have. Some are politically active scholars with strong personal ambitions. Others are very conservative historians. Some are politicians dedicated to certain political projects within which the argumentation is presented as 'facts', as hard evidence of the Finnish history or Finnish European/western 'identity'. Others are students brought up with this type of discourse. How much of their background can be known by a foreigner? How many of them were politically motivated? Are they consciously trying to construct through this discourse a new form of identity? Or they just believe that this identity exists by itself and now they have the conditions to express it. I cannot pretend that the article could exceed all these problems. Therefore, its limited purpose is only to present in short the narrative of Finnish westernness as it appears in the English language sources. One might ask why the question of the Finnish westernizing narrative, as it appears in the English language sources, needs to be addressed. The answer lies in two levels. Even though these sources do not offer a complete and accurate image of the westernizing narrative as it is in Finland, they still offer the image of how Finns (at the official state level at least) want to be seen by the non-Finns, by the European (English language) readers. On the other hand, the westernizing narrative is present not only in Finland, but – more or less – in the entire former Eastern Europe and an insight – however modest – in the Finnish case could be of interest for the study of this post-Cold War European phenomenon.

### ***1. What is the 'westernizing' narrative?***

The term westernizing narrative<sup>2</sup> describes in this paper a set of ideas and beliefs according to which Finland has always been *European* and *Western*, it always aspired to Europe and to the West, it has always been part of the 'European family' in terms of civilization, culture, values. Many contemporaries – scholars, historians, political scientists, economists, journalists, but also politicians – developed and/or accepted this line of interpretation. In the foreword of his 1999 book, *Europe's Northern Frontier: Perspectives on Finland's Western Identity*, Tuomas Lehtonen

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<sup>2</sup> I use interchangeably the terms 'westernizing narrative' and 'westernizing discourse' in this text.

wrote that Finland after the end of the Cold War 'has taken its natural place as part of western Europe to which is bound by centuries of history'.<sup>3</sup> O. Kivinen advances a similar idea. According to him, Finland had to enter the EU in order to defend its political identity and values, its shared European history and philosophical tradition. Thus, membership was fundamental since Finland's western values were not necessarily always evident for the West Europeans.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, J. Tarkka showed in 1994 that Finland had not only to join the EU, but to join the EU simultaneously with Austria and Sweden. Had it joined the EU later, with the former socialist European countries, it would have proved that it had been part of the socialist bloc.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, by timing its membership application correctly, Finland could prove that Finlandisation was based on false beliefs perpetrated by others and that the 'natural' tendency of the Finns was towards the West.<sup>6</sup>

This is also the official, state position in Finland. After the accession to the European Union, President Martti Ahtisaari claimed that by supporting the Western integration Finland rejoined the 'correct' family of nations.<sup>7</sup> According to the Finnish *Government Report on EU Policy* published in April 2009, the European 'membership [of Finland] has not only offered the means to promote Finland's agenda, but has also represented a fundamental choice based on a particular set of values. EU membership has firmly anchored Finland in the European community to which it naturally belongs in terms of its social and political systems, historical heritage and values'.<sup>8</sup> Another example is offered by Finland's president Tarja Halonen. In a speech held at the National Library of Estonia on September 9, 2003, Halonen made the following consideration: 'today our languages [Finnish and Estonian] bears traces of our history and cultural relations with other nations. Both Finnish and Estonian include plenty of loan words from European languages. These are a living reminder that both countries have always been part of Europe. Sometimes interaction has been quite intense.

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<sup>3</sup> Tuomas M.S. Lehtonen, *Europe's Northern Frontier: Perspectives on Finland's Western Identity* (Jyväskylä: PS Kustannus, 1999), 5

<sup>4</sup> O. Kivinen, *EU ei ole kurkkudirektiivi*, Helsinki: WSOY, 1994, 32-33, cited in Sami Moisio, 'Finlandisation versus westernisation: Political recognition and Finland's European Union membership debate', *National Identities*, Volume 10, Issue 1 (Routledge: 2008): 77-93

<sup>5</sup> J. Tarkka, 'Äänen paino' *Suomen Kuvalehti*, 36 (9 September 1994): 71

<sup>6</sup> Moisio, 2008, 77-93

<sup>7</sup> M. Ahtisaari, *Suomi. President Ahtisaari's Speech 7.9.1994*, 'Ulkopoliittisia lausuntoja ja asiakirjoja' (Helsinki: Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 1994): 97

<sup>8</sup> Government Report on EU Policy, Prime Minister's Office Publications, 20/2009, 9, available online on the website of the Finnish Government, <http://www.vnk.fi/julkaisukansio/2009/j16-eu-selonteko-j17-eu-redogorelse-j20-government-eu-report/pdf/en.pdf>, accessed (5of July 2009)

When our continent has gone through hard times, our links to Europe have also suffered'.<sup>9</sup>

Despite this official pro-West discourse, some considered neutrality a better option for post-Cold War Finland. Thus, during the 1990s, the debate concerning Finland's membership divided the Finnish society in two major groups, called 'traditionalists' and 'westernizers'. While the traditionalists emphasized neutrality, loyalty and nonalignment as the best way to guarantee the security of the Finnish state, the westernizers supported the idea of a political alliance with western countries. Westernizers emphasized the cultural difference and the threat posed by Russia as reasons to create political ties with the West. Their intention was to distance Finland from the neighboring country's culture and sphere of influence. For the westernizers, EU membership was a historical opportunity to return 'home', to the West, from the dark Russian East. While the East represented everything negative from the past, the westernisers portrayed the West as the sphere to which the 'Finnish nation' had belonged for the past 'one thousand years'. By refusing EU membership, the westernizers argued, Finland would drop off the political map of Europe and find itself once more in the 'wrong' reference group of states.<sup>10</sup> The westernizers were clearly supported by the national media. *Helsingin Sanomat*<sup>11</sup>, *Suomen Kuvalehti*<sup>12</sup> (Helsinki), *Aamulehti* (Tampere) and *Turun Sanomat* (Turku) were all in favor, and they became important players in the EU debate. The largest political parties - the Finnish Social Democratic Party, the National Coalition and the Finnish Centre - officially supported integration.

They all claimed Finland's 'natural' westernness. This implied or led to the necessity to revise past policies and histories. Scholars reviewed the main historical and political events of the state and/or nation, and many identified within them the elements of a 'natural path' towards Western Europe and the Finns' Western European origin and identity. The re-writing of history from this 'westernizing' perspective went so far that even the question of the racial origins of Finns has been revised by some to fit into the western paradigm. Thus, during the 1990s, many Finnish scholars played down Finland's genetic eastern origins. This question of how Finns

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<sup>9</sup> Speech by President of the Republic Tarja Halonen at the National Library of Estonia on 9 September 2003, available online on the website of the President of Finland, <http://www.tpk.fi/netcomm/news/ShowArticle.asp?intNWSAID=17322&intSubArtID=9815&intIGID=9&LAN=EN&contlan=&Thread=&intThreadPosition=0&intShowBack=1&strReturnURL2> (5th of July 2009)

<sup>10</sup> Moisio, 2008, 77-93

<sup>11</sup> See for instance, Max Jakobson, 'Välirauhasta kansanäänestykseen', *Helsingin Sanomat* (24 September 1994); O. Kivinen, 'Suomen valinta', *Helsingin Sanomat* (13 October 1994)

<sup>12</sup> See for instance, J. Tarkka, 'EU-punktit', *Suomen Kuvalehti*, 49 (11 December 1993): 111

should be understood in terms of genetics was always controversial. By the beginning of the 1990s, generally it was accepted the idea that genetically Finns were  $\frac{3}{4}$  western and  $\frac{1}{4}$  eastern or Uralians.<sup>13</sup> Pertti Anttonen analyzes the evolution of how Finns' genetic origin is presented by some Finnish scholars. According to him, 'the emphasis on the Westernness of the Finns is a recent phenomenon' related to Finland's European accession. Anttonen notes that in their 1962 edition of *A History of Finland*, Jutikkala and Pirinen considered that 'Finns are part of the East Baltic race and partially the Nordic race'. In the 1996 edition of the same book they stated that 'genetic research indicates that the genes carried by the Finnish population are  $\frac{3}{4}$  European [read western] and  $\frac{1}{4}$  Uralian or Siberian', while in the 2003 edition the idea that Finns are eastern was dropped altogether.<sup>14</sup>

Another scholar who considers that Finns are either hardly eastern or completely European is Aira Kemiläinen.<sup>15</sup> She criticizes the previous racial theories that placed Finns among the 'barbarian' Mongolian nations and tries in return to prove that Finns cannot be left out of the 'good', 'white', civilized European nations.<sup>16</sup> According to Eduard Dutton, Kemiläinen constructed in fact a myth of the Finnish westernness in genetic terms. Dutton also shows how the European idea has become especially significant since Finland joined the European Union in 1995. In his opinion, by developing the thesis (he calls it myth) of the Finnish Europeanness, Kemiläinen's book *Finns in the Shadow of the 'Aryans'* does not take into consideration the scientific evidence. Dutton identifies two reasons. On the one hand, there is the 'Finnish insecurity' of some 'about race and Europeanness' and their 'attempts to promote - regardless of the evidence - the idea that Finns are "European"'. On the other, there is the intention to promote in Europe the image Finland wants to have. Precisely because the book is in English, says Dutton, 'reflects how the author and her backers would like Finland to be perceived by the non-Finns'. In this regard, Dutton emphasizes that Aira Kemiläinen's book was published in 1998 by a substantially government-funded publisher, The Finnish Historical Society, and thus 'is likely to reflect the worldview of the elite that fund it'. The volume was re-published in 2000 by the Finnish Literature Society, a

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<sup>13</sup> See for instance, Eino Jutikkala, Kauko Pirinen, *A History of Finland* (Helsinki: WSOY, 1996), 21

<sup>14</sup> Pertti Anttonen, *Tradition through Modernity: Postmodernism and the Nation State in Folklore Scholarship* (Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 2005), 132

<sup>15</sup> See for instance Aira Kemiläinen, *Finns in the Shadow of "Aryans": Race Theories and Racism* (Helsinki: Finnish Historical Society, 1998); Aira Kemiläinen, *Finns in the Shadow of "Aryans": Race Theories and Racism* (Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 2000)

<sup>16</sup> Aira Kemiläinen, 1998, 58-59

government-funded organization run by established academics and is therefore very likely to reflect the cultural view favored by the Finnish establishment – a view that Finns are ‘Western’ – in its academic publishing.<sup>17</sup>

Although the revision of the genetic origin of Finns is spectacular, probably the most visible historical revision in the sense of the Finnish westernness is found in the reevaluation of Finland’s Cold War international stand. After decades of an Eastern oriented foreign and strategic policy, a natural question raised, precisely how European/western could Finland claim to be considering its (recent) past? How could the new West oriented policy be legitimized taking into consideration the way Finns saw themselves and their relation to the world by then?

Concerning Finland’s Cold War foreign policy, there are two revisionist discourses within the westernizing narrative. The first one considers – more or less implicitly – that Finland Cold War international stand did not represent a betrayal of the Finnish westernness, but rather a pragmatic solution that, according to some, also allowed Finland to be as western as possible. Scholars and politicians alike supported this view. Teija Tiilikainen is one of the scholars. In a 1996 article, Tiilikainen considered that Finland’s policy of concession with the Soviet Union was shaped by the two presidents Paasikivi and Kekkonen ‘with broad [internal] political support’. The author stressed that this policy ‘was legitimized by the legacy of Finland’s recent wartime experiences’ and that, despite the pro-Soviet orientation, Finland ‘never completely lacked a Western orientation’.<sup>18</sup> From this perspective, the Finnish Cold War policy was justified by the international context of the moment, especially by the geopolitical position of the state. Finland had to develop during those times ‘a cautious attitude towards the Western political and economic cooperation’ and a policy of neutrality designed to keep the country out of the eventual conflicts occurring between superpowers.<sup>19</sup>

Kari Möttölä, Sami Moisio, Vilho Harle and Tapani Paavonen are few of the scholars that represent this line of interpretation. According to Möttölä, ‘during the Cold War, the policy of neutrality – and military non-alliance

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<sup>17</sup> Eduard Dutton, ‘Battling to be “European”’: myth and the Finnish race debate’, *Antrocom*, Vol 4, no. 2, (2008): 171-179

<sup>18</sup> Teija Tiilikainen, ‘Finland and the European Union’ ed., Lee Miles, *The European Union and the Nordic countries* (London: Routledge, 1996), 117-118.

<sup>19</sup> Teija Tiilikainen, ‘The Finnish neutrality – Its new forms and future’ in ed. Laurent Goetschel, *Small states inside and outside the European Union. Interests and policies* (Boston, Mass.: Kluwer Acad. Publ. 1998), 169-172.

and non-involvement in great-power disputes, complemented by active international diplomacy and constructive cooperation with neighbors – served Finland effectively as an instrument for pursuing national security interests and promoting wider international causes'.<sup>20</sup> For Moisio and Harle 'the "between East and West" realistic foreign policy introduced by Kekkonen (and his predecessor J. K. Paasikivi) during the Cold War years' should be seen 'as a pragmatic assessment of the need for Finland to deal with the Soviet Union in realistic terms'.<sup>21</sup> For Tapani Paavonen, from the late 1950s onwards, 'Finland mainly observed the progress of [international] situation in order to join the general West European development at the moment when a concrete solution was at hand and the content of arrangements could be outlined'. He also argues that, for the Cold War period, Finnish 'organizations of the consensus society, representing the large majority of citizens, were generally supporters of Western integration'.<sup>22</sup>

Politicians also supported the thesis that Finland, despite its pro-Eastern policy, kept during the Cold War a Western orientation. For example, in 2002 Paavo Lipponen, the Prime Minister of Finland, considered that 'the accession of Finland to the European Union in 1995 was a logical and decisive step in Finland's long-standing policy of participation in European integration. Successive governments have pursued that policy with success since the time of the last war'.<sup>23</sup> Another example is given again by the President of the Republic, Tarja Halonen. In a lecture held at the University of Jyväskylä, on November 13, 2006, Halonen declared that during the Cold War 'our [Finnish] foreign and security policy has been successful. We managed to retain our independence and freedom of action in highly difficult circumstances'.<sup>24</sup> In a more recent speech held at the gala dinner hosted by the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg on November 24, 2008, President Tarja Halonen declared that 'Finland's accession to the European

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<sup>20</sup> Kari Möttölä, 'Finland, the European Union and NATO – Implications for Security and Defense', in ed. Erich Reiter, *Small states and alliances* (Heidelberg: Physica-Verl.2001), 115

<sup>21</sup> Sami Moisio and Vilho Harle 2006, 208

<sup>22</sup> Tapani Paavonen, 'The Period of Free Trade Integration in Finland's Relationship to Western Europe' (paper presented at *The XIV International Economic History Congress*, Helsinki, August 21-25, 2006)

<sup>23</sup> Paavo Lipponen, 'Foreword', to Tapio Raunio, Teija Tiilikainen, *Finland in the European Union* (London, Portland, Or: Frank Cass, 2003), ix

<sup>24</sup> Ahtisaari Lecture by President of the Republic Tarja Halonen at the University of Jyväskylä, 13 November 2006, available online on the website of the President of Finland, <http://www.presidentti.fi/netcomm/news/ShowArticle.aspintNWSAID=57157&intSubArtID=23628&intIGID=9&LAN=FI&contlan=&Thread=&intThreadPosition=0&intShowBack=1&strReturnURL2=>, (accessed 5th of July 2009)



Union in 1995 has deepened our bilateral [Finnish-Danish] relations. We have *also visibly* become members of the same family',<sup>25</sup> 'also visibly' meaning that until this moment Finland was a member of the European family, but, for different geopolitical reasons, this western character was less visible.

Former politicians were even more tempted than the present politicians to support this kind of interpretation. They needed to justify and legitimize a policy that became challengeable once the Cold War ended. Thereby, the former Finnish Minister for Foreign Trade, Jermu Laine, in a public debate held at the University of Helsinki in May 2005 on the phenomenon of finlandization, stated that 'the major goal' of the policy of that moment 'was to integrate Finland with the West, and to that end, it was necessary to be adaptable'.<sup>26</sup> Max Jakobson, a former Finnish diplomat, considered also that neutrality represented Finland's solution to avoid its involvement into superpower conflicts.<sup>27</sup> Both Laine and Jakobson were actively involved in the foreign policy of the state during the Cold War. How they present now the past policy is difficult to interpret. Are their statements expressions of what they believe? Or their claims are mainly meant to justify a questionable past political attitude that creates now a sentiment of guilt and therefore the necessity of a public justification? In my opinion, the statements of former politicians or diplomats express more than just – real or not – personal beliefs. They are also the expression of a social trend. As Henrik Larsen argues, actors and their beliefs cannot be in opposition to the world, to the 'reality', they rather adapt to the social beliefs that constitute a central framework.<sup>28</sup> Hence, their interpretation could be very well designed to justify a 'blamable' personal past attitude, or they could represent their 'real' current beliefs within the social trend of the moment. Or they could be both.

To summarize, this discourse considers that the neutrality policy and the position of being in between was therefore simply a strategic tool to

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<sup>25</sup> Speech by President of the Republic of Finland Tarja Halonen at the gala dinner hosted by the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg 24.11.2008, available online on the website of the President of Finland,

<http://www.presidentti.fi/netcomm/news/ShowArticle.asp?intNWSAID=71595&intSubArtID=28250&intToPrint=1&LAN=EN> (accessed 5th of July 2009)

<sup>26</sup> 'Finlandization continues to divide opinion in Finland', in Helsinki Sanomat, International edition, 18th of May 2005, available at

<http://www.hs.fi/english/article/Finlandization+continues+to+divide+opinion+in+Finland/1101979570478> (accessed 30th of June 2009)

<sup>27</sup> Max Jakobson, *Finland in the New Europe* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1998), 52

<sup>28</sup> Henrik Larsen, *Foreign Policy and Discourse Analysis: France, Britain and Europe* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), 10

keep the Soviet Union at a distance, whilst also facilitating the country's steady integration with the economic institutions of the west. But, as Christopher S. Browning showed, 'seeing neutrality this way, denies that Finland was ever really between East and West at all', and suggest that it 'was rather a western outpost fighting its own largely misunderstood battle against the East. The argument is then that, with the end of the Cold War, Finland geopolitical position has changed and Finland no longer needs to be so careful in its policy and it can instead adopt the "western" orientation that it always desired'.<sup>29</sup> According to this view, Finland's Cold War political elite should be praised and not criticized. The argument is that the political elite did not sell out the country to the Soviet Union, but managed to keep Finland as far West as possible and to avoid the most onerous of the Soviet advances.<sup>30</sup> The most discussed figure of the elite is of course the former president Urho Kekkonen.<sup>31</sup>

I mentioned two revisionist types of westernizing discourses. The second revisionist discourse within the westernizing narrative considers that the pro-Soviet Finnish policy represented a betrayal of the Finnish westernness. Thus, if the apologist narrative presents neutrality as having been a pragmatically and strategically deployed device of foreign policy grounded in Realpolitik<sup>32</sup>, the critical narrative on finlandization on the other hand uses very powerful adjectives and images to describe its 'real' negative dimension. Timo Vihavainen, in its *A nation on its stomach. A short history on finlandization*, published in 1991, depicted Cold War

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<sup>29</sup> Christopher S. Browning, 'From "east-west" to "new Europe-old Europe": the American challenge to Finnish identity', ed. David J. Smith, *The Baltic states and their regions: new Europe or old?* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005), 16-19

<sup>30</sup> Urho Kekkonen (Agrarian League, later Centre Party) has been a greatly discussed figure in Finnish society during the last decades. Public discussions on the president and the phases of his era have been analysed, criticised, supported and researched on the academic, political and popular levels of Finnish society. Tuuli Lähdesmäki, 'From personality cult figure to camp image - the case of President Urho Kekkonen', *Participations: Journal of audience and reception studies*, Volume 6, Issue 1 (May 2009): 56. An overview of the debates on Kekkonen's role can be seen in a series of articles for the journal *Books from Finland*. See, for instance, Risto Penttilä, 'King of the Castle', *Books From Finland*, No. 1 (1991); Risto Penttilä, 'Official Religions', *Books From Finland*, No. 1 (1992); Olli Kivinen, 'Cold War Perspectives', *Books From Finland*, No. 4 (1992); Simopekka Virkkula, 'Sins of the Fathers?', *Books From Finland*, No. 1 (1993); Jaakko Tapaninen, 'End of the Line', *Books From Finland*, No. 2 (1994).

<sup>31</sup> In Finnish historiography, the most influential proponent of Urho Kekkonen's politics has been his official biographer Juhani Suomi, who has written a massive eight-part work on Kekkonen's life.

<sup>32</sup> Christopher S. Browning 2005, 16-19

Finland as a nation grovelling on its stomach<sup>33</sup>, an image meant to express Finland's situation in its relations with the eastern 'master'. According to this type of interpretation, Finns made painful compromises that were often questionable. Hence, president Kekkonen sometimes used his good relations with the Kremlin as a stick with which to beat domestic opponents, many Finnish politicians fawned upon the Russians, and self-censorship restricted open debate about real conditions in the Soviet Union.<sup>34</sup> According to Browning, these critiques 'had the goal to 'liberate' the Finns from the perceived distasteful "legacy of the past" by exposing the past for "what it really was". Through their denunciations of the past, of the politics of Cold War Finland and the society which evolved around it, such critiques de-legitimize the continuation of past policies and are therefore an attempt to break out of post-war Finnish identities in favor of a reconstructed 'Western' identity for the nation.'<sup>35</sup>

Not only was the politic level of Finland's Cold War situation revised, but so was also the economic level. Thus, the westernizing narrative interprets the Cold War economic relations between Finland and different economic West European organisms as 'natural steps' intentionally oriented towards Finland's European integration. In these circumstances, the background of the Finnish European integration policy is identified by many deep into the 'Finnish' Cold War history. In this interpretation, the beginning of Finland's European integration lies in a series of actions that Finland took in its trade and foreign policy long before the 1990s. Many Finnish scholars consider that the chronology of the Finnish European integration contains moments such as Finland's 1955 Nordic Council membership, its associate membership to EFTA in 1961, its free trade agreement with the EC in 1973<sup>36</sup>, its full membership of EFTA in 1986 or its accession to the Council of Europe in 1989.<sup>37</sup> All these are seen as 'natural

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<sup>33</sup> Timo Vihavainen *Kansakunta rähmällään: Suomettumisen lyhyt historia* [A Nation on its Stomach: A Short History of Finlandization] (Keuruu: Otava, 1991), cited in David Arter, *Scandinavian politics today*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 289

<sup>34</sup> H. Rautkallio, *Laboratorio Suomi. Kekkonen ja KGB, 1944-1962*, Porvoo-Helsinki-Juva, 1996; T. Vihavainen, *Kansakunta rähmällään. Suomettumisen lyhyt historia*, Helsinki, 1991, cited in Kimmo Ahonen, 'Anticommunism in the United States in the 1950s: post-Cold War Interpretations', in *Culture, Democracy and Dictatorship* (Pisa University Press, 2006): 127 [http://www.cliohres.net/books/2/08\\_Ahonen.pdf](http://www.cliohres.net/books/2/08_Ahonen.pdf) (accessed 15<sup>th</sup> of July 2009)

<sup>35</sup> Christopher S. Browning, 'Coming Home or Moving Home? 'Westernizing' Narratives in Finnish Foreign Policy and the Reinterpretation of Past Identities', *Cooperation and Conflict: Journal of the Nordic International Studies Association*, Vol. 37/1 (2002): 48-49

<sup>36</sup> Teija Tiilikainen, 1996, 118

<sup>37</sup> Tapio Raunio, Teija Tiilikainen, 2003, 12-23. For a more detailed analysis on Cold War Finland's approaching of Western integration see Hanna Ojanen, 'If in 'Europe' then in its

steps' intentionally drown on the path to Finland's European integration. Tapani Paavonen is a leading figure of this line of interpretation. According to him, Finland's integration policies started during the 1950s at both levels, economic and politic, and continued up to the 1990s when Finland entered the European Union. 'Finland's membership in the European Union began in 1995 without any separate transitional period. In fact, Finland's transition to EU membership took place with a transitional period of about thirty five years. The implementation of the FINN-EFTA Agreement and the Free trade agreement with the EC formed the most essential elements of this transitional period', claims Paavonen. During the Cold War, he continues, 'Finland's international position in the strategic sphere of influence of the Soviet Union made participation in the *Western integration* especially delicate, since the Soviet Union opposed to western integration in general and Finland's Western commitments in particular'. But this did not make the western integration impossible since 'the most conspicuous characteristic feature of *the Finnish integration policies* was the connection to the country's international position in the Soviet sphere of influence'.<sup>38</sup>

A similar position is expressed in this regard by the official Finnish state circles too. For instance, the Internet portal of the Finnish presidency of the EU presents the chronology of Finland's European integration starting with the 1961 FINN-EFTA agreement.<sup>39</sup> The discourse of politicians and diplomats is built on comparable bases. Thus, for Paavonen, the Prime Minister of Finland, 'the accession of Finland to the European Union in 1995 was a logical and decisive step in Finland's long-standing policy of participation in the European integration. 'Successive governments have pursued that policy with success since the time of the last war'.<sup>40</sup> Finland's President Tarja Halonen made similar declarations. In a speech held in Budapest on June 27, 2009 at an event marking the fall of the Iron Curtain in Hungary, she declared that 'for Finland, the birth of a new Europe' after 1989 'meant reaching the goal, for which we had been working through the

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'core'?', eds. Wolfram Kaiser, Jürgen Elvert, *European Union enlargement. A comparative history* (London, New York: Routledge, 2004), 151-157

<sup>38</sup> Tapani Paavonen, 'The Period of Free Trade Integration in Finland's Relationship to Western Europe' (paper presented at *The XIV International Economic History Congress*, Helsinki, August 21-25, 2006)

<sup>39</sup> See, for instance, the portal of the Finnish presidency of the EU at [http://presidency.finland.fi/doc/eu/fin\\_3chro.htm](http://presidency.finland.fi/doc/eu/fin_3chro.htm) , ( accessed 1st of July 2009)

<sup>40</sup> Paavo Lipponen, 2003, ix.

Security and Cooperation in Europe process since the 1970's', namely 'the building of a new foundation for cooperation' in Europe.<sup>41</sup>

This Finnish interpretation was successful abroad and therefore generally accepted by both the international political or scientific communities. Therefore, Finland's Cold War economic relations with the Western Europe have been recognized, more or less implicitly, either as intentionally steps towards Finland's European integration, or as the expression of Finland's clear intention to reach that goal.<sup>42</sup> I will give just two examples, one from each community. Firstly, on November 4, 1992 the European Commission, delivering a reasoned opinion on Finland's application for accession to the European Communities, considered that through the Cold-War economic relations with the EEC 'Finland has already established a high level of integration with the Community'.<sup>43</sup> Secondly, for Hans Slomp, among the Nordic countries, 'only Finland wholeheartedly joined the European Union as an expression of its belonging to Europe'.<sup>44</sup>

In my opinion, Finland's economic cooperation with the west-European institutions cannot be considered 'natural steps' towards the European integration. The reasons behind these agreements were indeed economic and political, but to argue now that Finland wanted then and acted then for European integration is difficult to prove since no one could have anticipated the evolution of the world situation. The decision of European integration was taken at the beginning of the 1990s and not earlier. Only after the end of the Cold War, and after the economic depression in the early 1990s, Finland began to undertake the first steps on the road to EU-membership. There was a wide spread consensus among the Finnish political elite that Finland had, under any circumstances, to become a member of the EU. Consequently Finland became the most pro-integration country of the Nordic Member States, even though voters were not as

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<sup>41</sup> *Speech by President of the Republic Tarja Halonen at an event marking the fall of the Iron Curtain in Hungary in Budapest on 27 June 2009*, <http://www.presidentti.fi/netcomm/news/showarticle.asp?intNWSAID=72741&intSubArtID=28557>, (accessed 5<sup>th</sup> of July 2009).

<sup>42</sup> See for instance, David Phinnemore, Lee McGowan, *A dictionary of the European Union*, (Europa Publications, 2002), 204; or *European Union encyclopedia and directory* (Europa Publications, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 1999), 67.

<sup>43</sup> *The challenge of enlargement. Commission opinion on Finland's application for membership (4<sup>th</sup> of November 1992)*, *Bulletin of the European Communities*, No (supplement) 6 (1992): 7-26

<sup>44</sup> Hans Slomp, *European politics into the twenty-first century: integration and division* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2000), 158

supportive of EU integration as the political elite.<sup>45</sup> To consider that the process of Finland's integration started during the Cold War is just an exaggeration and an interpretation. The explanation of this type of reasoning lies within the westernizing narrative again. The Finnish economic cooperation with the western European organisms during the Cold War is used as an argument that Finland was always 'western'. Therefore, the practical expression of the Finland's westernness is found in its desire to become member of the European institutions. 'Joining the EU', considers Pekka Korhonen, 'was an attempt to move Finland closer to Central Europe'.<sup>46</sup> This means that the desire to 'join the west' is one of the causes of the European integration and not the other way around. However, in my opinion, the European membership led to the development of the westernizing discourse. There was no naturally born Finnish western identity that needed to come back home after the end of the Cold War, using, among other instruments, the means of the EU accession. As Browning wrote, 'such (re)presentations of Finnish history are highly political. This is because the stories we tell of a society's past not only condition what we think of ourselves now, but also point to directions for future development, by shaping what relations and actions with others are acceptable to us'.<sup>47</sup> For Finns this meant to push Finland further into integration with Western institutions, membership of which had been previously denied by the Soviets' categorization of them as anti-Communist.<sup>48</sup>

In my opinion, the westernizing narrative was initially designed to justify and legitimize both the political decision of choosing the European integration as a solution for the security question,<sup>49</sup> and the former Cold

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<sup>45</sup> Tapio Raunio, 'The Parliament of Finland: A Model Case for Effective Scrutiny?', eds. Maurer, Andreas and Wessels, Wolfgang, *National Parliaments on their ways to Europe: Losers of Latecomers?* (Baden-Baden: Schriften des Zentrums für Europäische Integrationsforschung (ZEI), Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, Bd. 44), 173-198

<sup>46</sup> Pekka Korhonen, 'Regional Boundaries: Europe and Asia', eds.. Anckar and L. Nilsson, *Politics and Geography: Contribution to an Interface*, (Mid-Sweden University Press, 1997), 255

<sup>47</sup> Christopher S. Browning, 2002, 48

<sup>48</sup> Ibid. 55

<sup>49</sup> The security reasons for EU accession were usually not said out loud, because the Eastern neighbor still had to be considered. Therefore, this justification did not have only a domestic destination. It had also a foreign policy dimension and an ideological dimension. It moved the stressed of the Finnish European Union accession from the security issues to a higher ideological level. Finland wanted and had to become 'more European and western' not for security reasons mainly, but for ideological reasons. Finland has always been part of Europe. Its culture, history, values, beliefs, norms etc. have always been and still are Western.

War policy. It was also a way of dealing with the shameful past. Rapidly, this type of discourse became successful and very rapidly the Finnish 'identity' gained the characteristic of 'its belonging to the West and to Europe'. One of the best ways of measuring the success of this narrative is probably an analysis of the way students in schools and universities write on this topic. Their writings generally stress the idea that Finland is 'a true European country', which always had a western dimension. However, the historical circumstances, the geopolitical situation and the interests of the great powers stopped it from showing its 'real western nature'. Annukka Kataja, for instance, in her BA thesis in 2001 wrote: 'The location of Finland has been peripheral in the world and European framework. The position of Finland in this framework has been changing over time. It has been a country that has once in the history left Europe and joined East (1809), and later on returned back to Europe. In this light it may better be understood why Finland has had to perform better than average to prove that it *really is a European country*'.<sup>50</sup> Kataja also considers that Finland's Cold War security strategy – neutrality and 'finlandization' – was the only possible choice that could allow Finland to keep friendly relations with the Eastern neighbor USSR, without forgetting the West. After the collapse of USSR in 1991 and Finland accession to EU, 'the identity problem of Finland was solved: it became truly part of Europe, part of the Western world without [having] to prove that to anybody'.<sup>51</sup> I cannot say that students like Kataja want to justify or prove Finland's 'Europeanness', but I can agree that they really believe in it. In less than one decade, the social and political trend as well as the westernizing narrative constructed this 'real' belief, both in Finland and abroad.

## ***2. The reasoning behind the 'westernizing' narrative***

The end of the Cold War and the fall of the Soviet Union allowed Finland to move towards European integration through the EU while preserving its own independent defense posture. Finland's reasons for moving towards the EU have been identified on two levels, economics and

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<sup>50</sup> Annukka Kataja, *NORTHERN DIMENSION: as a Strategy for a Small Nation State Finland to Survive* (BA-thesis, Tartu University, Department of Political Science, Tartu, 2001), 13-14

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 55. To some the impossibility to state openly its western and European nature during the Cold War was an 'identity problem'. The Finnish dilemma was that Finland was European and western, it wanted to state its west-European place, but the geopolitical situation forced it to keep a close relation with the East, even though it was not 'eastern'. For others the neutrality policy should not be seen 'as a challenge to national identity politics', because 'political realism as represented by statesmen like Kekkonen is not about identity but power'. Sami Moisio and Vilho Harle, 2008

security<sup>52</sup>; in its 'new' economic vulnerability to trends in the European economy<sup>53</sup>, and its determination that the security challenges of the post-Cold War world no longer included the Cold War threat of military invasion. Rather now the dangers involved the risk of a collapse of Russia's social or political infrastructure which could then confront Helsinki with challenges that it could not meet alone. Therefore, Finland needed to find ways of associating with other states to meet those nonmilitary challenges and, at the same time, terminate its erstwhile political isolation by participating in European integration. It chose the EU over the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)<sup>54</sup> because the expansion of NATO to its border would have alarmed Moscow and because Helsinki viewed the threats to Europe as being essentially nonmilitary, and thus outside NATO's mandate or purview.<sup>55</sup>

This major official reorientation of the foreign policy of the state – which is explained by economic and security considerations mainly – has been accompanied by a new ideology and by a new propaganda. The terms 'ideology' is used here as defining a system of ideas, beliefs, fundamental commitments, and values about social reality. Ideology is both a system of meanings that justifies the vested interests of existing or contending groups in society and a set of knowledge and beliefs that provides meaning and

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<sup>52</sup> 'For a country in the position of Finland, Union membership offers – also without military alliance – significant added security which we must actively exploit' said the Undersecretary of State in the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Jaako Blomberg, in a speech in Kuopio, Finland, September 28, 1994, cited in Christine Ingebritsen, *Nordic States and European unity*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000, 100; See, for instance, also the Speech given by President Martti Ahtisaari, in Tampere, September 24, 1994, available at <http://www.ena.lu>, (accessed 25<sup>th</sup> of June 2009)

<sup>53</sup> As Finland emerged from the Cold War, it found itself exposed to severe economic dislocations, if not crises, that pressured it further towards integration.

<sup>54</sup> Nevertheless, Finland started its cooperation with NATO in the early 1990s. It joined the North Atlantic Cooperation Council, NACC, as an observer in 1992. It has participated in the NATO Partnership for Peace Programme ever since the programme was launched in 1994. It joined the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council, EAPC, which replaced the NACC when it was founded in 1997 etc. See, for instance, Antti Sierla, *Effects of Finland's possible NATO membership*, December 2007, 21-23 available on the website of the Finnish Mission to NATO at <http://www.finlandnato.org/public/download.aspx?ID=26424&GUID={DE78551A-B95A-471B-9018-1469DA535ED9}> (accessed on 2<sup>nd</sup> of July 2009)

<sup>55</sup> Stephen J. Blank, *Finnish security and European security policy*, September 27, 1996, Strategic Studies Institute (SSI, U.S. Army War College), v-5, available at <http://carlisle-www.army.mil/usassi/> (accessed 1<sup>st</sup> of June 2009); See also Alpo Rusi, *Security Expectation of EU Applicant Countries: Austria, Finland, Norway, and Sweden* (Paper Presented to the 35<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention of the International Studies Association, Washington, DC, March 28-April 1, 1994), 2-21



enables people in their everyday lives to make sense of their social reality.<sup>56</sup> If ideology is understood as a set of ideas, beliefs, values, then the westernizing narrative is just one of the expressions of this ideology. The term propaganda does not have in this context a negative sense. Propaganda is here, as defined by Jowett and O'Donnell, 'a deliberate, systematic attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate cognitions, and direct behavior to achieve a response that furthers the desires intent of the propagandist'.<sup>57</sup> If applied this definition, the westernizing narrative is also an instrument of propaganda, not only an expression of an ideology.<sup>58</sup> Ideology and propaganda are related. According to Jowett and O'Donnell, in political science, propaganda is the ideology of the practitioner.

Was the westernizing discourse elaborated intentionally in order to justify the pro-West-European political orientation of the state or was it 'only' the expression of what people believed in? Was the westernizing narrative an instrument built up and used to reach a certain political goal or is it the objective description of 'reality'? In my opinion, its initial purpose was to give ideological support to the security and economic-based decisions and to persuade people of the rightness of these decisions<sup>59</sup>, and ended (or will end) as being what people believe in. It wanted to justify and legitimize the pro-Europe political orientation to a superior level, not in terms of state politics, but in terms of civilization, culture, morality, to justify it not only for the domestic public, but mainly for the European public and European officials. As Max Jakobson has put it, those who voted 'yes' for Finland's European integration did so, for the most part, because membership was seen 'to affirm Finland's Western identity',<sup>60</sup> not only internally, but mostly externally.

Emphasizing publicly the economic and security reasons of Finland's European integration would have presented a series of disadvantages: would have negatively affected Finland's relation with its still very powerful and very suspicious Eastern neighbor; would have showed its

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<sup>56</sup> Yoshiko Nozaki, Michael W. Apple, 'Ideology and curriculum', eds. David L. Levinson, Peter W. Cookson Jr., Alan R. Sadovnik, *Education and sociology* (New York, London: Routledge, 2002), 381

<sup>57</sup> Garth S. Jowett, Victoria O'Donnell, *Propaganda and persuasion*, (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2006, 4<sup>th</sup> edition), 1-10

<sup>58</sup> Ideology and propaganda are related. According to Jowett and O'Donnell, in political science, propaganda is to some extent the ideology of the practitioner. 'To examine propaganda in the light of political science is to analyze the ideologies of the practitioners', Garth S. Jowett, Victoria O'Donnell 2006, 1-2

<sup>59</sup> The westernizing narrative appeared during the time when the pro-European projects were developed.

<sup>60</sup> Max Jakobson, 1998, 111

economic and security weakness in its relations with Western Europe, therefore its need to find 'protection' and guaranties in Western Europe – and that would have meant to keep a position of inferiority and subordination in the European politics; and finally would have created confusion within the Finnish masses. The Finns had been told that their state security could be guaranteed only by a pro-Eastern policy and that this policy secured their economic interests, too. Now the same security reasons ask for a pro-Western policy. The state politics discourse cannot be so drastically changed overnight without the backing of an ideological explanation. Not if the politician wants to keep its credibility. Thus, the association with Europe was presented as more than an economic or security-type based relation. It became a question of civilization, culture, identity, values, even morality.

Why did the westernizing narrative continue to develop after the accession process was completed and Finland became member of the European Union? It had not only the role to explain one particular political stand, but also the role to give a meaning to the new social reality. This narrative had not only the role of supporting domestically the political goal of the European integration. It has also the role of supporting Finland's moral right to participate in the European politics in terms of equality with any other European state. It was also an instrument of gaining the recognition of Finland's 'rights' in European politics. Tarja Väyrynen has a similar opinion considering that, by claiming that it always belonged to the 'Western European family', Finland could depict itself as a moral actor in world politics.<sup>61</sup> Finland used so well abroad this westernizing discourse – corroborated with its political actions – that now Finland is one of the most appreciated, respected and trusted state in the European politics. It has the prestige, reputation and credibility that not many states have. Tapio Raunio and Matti Wiberg consider that Finland's 'European commitment was primarily driven by the need to secure a place among the western European countries and to influence EU decisions in order to protect national economic and political interests'.<sup>62</sup> The westernizing narrative just supported ideologically (at the level of ideas) this goal.

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<sup>61</sup> Tarja Väyrynen, 'The higher cause of peace: what could and should the Nordic countries contribute to the development of conflict mediation in the EU context?' Alison J.K. Bailes, Gunilla Herolf, Bengt Sundelius, *The Nordic countries and the European security and defence policy* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, Solna: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2006), 230

<sup>62</sup> Tapio Raunio and Matti Wiberg, *Strengthened parliamentary accountability: the impact of the EU on Finnish politics* (paper presented in the Conference *The European Union Enlargement to the Nordic countries: impacts and perceptions*, organized by CERI in Paris January 2001).

On the other hand, by entering the European institutions Finland and Finns became Europeans *de jure*, but to become Europeans *de facto* they needed to go through a transitional period, they needed to be not only institutionally, but especially ideologically 'Europeanized'. Finland's place in the world changed dramatically and rapidly after 1991. But what people think about the world, how people see the world and their relation to that world cannot change that rapidly and by itself. The process was only half a way. They became 'Europeans' and 'westerners' institutionally, in terms of state politics, economy and security. The next step was to start to develop the belief that they were 'Europeans' and 'westerners', to see themselves as such. This Europeanization<sup>63</sup> in terms of values and beliefs had to be made from inside, by the Finns, and I believe that this was one of the explanations of the continuation of the westernizing narratives after 1995.

### **Conclusions**

The way Finns defined Finland's relation to Europe and to the West was always a part of the foreign policy, which in turn was subordinated to the security policy and linked to the geopolitical position of the state. Browning analyzing the historical debates as to where Finland was located between East and West over time showed how the dominant narratives of Finnish 'identity' explicitly constructed the Finnish 'identity' whether 'as an outpost of the West' against the Soviet Union (during the interwar period, during the Second World War) or as being close to Russia (during the Grand Duchy period, during the Cold War). After the end of the Second World War there was chosen a third position, and Finland's 'identity' was defined in terms of its relation to Europe as in between, as being neither Eastern, nor Western, despite the emphasis on the friendly relations with the Soviet Union. After the end of the Cold War, the Western dimension of the Finnish 'identity' was again stressed<sup>64</sup>, both domestically and externally. The Finnish westernizing discourse affirms the Finnish western 'identity' and its belonging to the 'European family'. It considers that Finland has always been *European* and *Western*, it always aspired to Europe and to the West, it has always been part of the 'European family' in terms of civilization, culture, values etc. The claim of Finland's 'natural'

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<sup>63</sup> The term 'Europeanization' is usually defined as a process in which states (Central and Eastern European states) adopt EU rules, a process that can be EU driven or domestically driven. See, for instance, Frank Schimmelfennig, *The Europeanization of Central and Eastern Europe* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005), 7-14. For a detailed discussion, see further Kevin Featherstone, *The politics of Europeanization* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003)

<sup>64</sup> Christopher S. Browning 2005, 14-19

westernness has implied the necessity to revise past policies and histories, especially Cold War policies.

The westernizing narrative is related to Finland's accession to EU and is headed not only towards the Finnish population, but also towards the foreign European population and official European levels. At the European level, politically or scholarly, the claims of this narrative are generally accepted, and Finland is considered western and European as it wants to be considered. The westernizing narrative is very important in justifying Finland's post-Cold War position in the international politics, especially its position in the European politics. The article shows how highly political is the (re)presentation of Finnish history and how much its 'western character' is related with Finland's current political situation and goals in Europe. It also reveals how important the ideology is in backing the political choice.