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Glenn R. Gassen  
Heinrich-Heine-Universität Düsseldorf

# GETTING ALONG WITH GULLIVER

A REVIEW OF FINNISH-GERMAN  
RELATIONS



ULKOPOLIITTINEN INSTITUUTTI  
UTRIKESPOLITISKA INSTITUTET  
THE FINNISH INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

The Finnish Institute of International Affairs  
Kruunuvuorenkatu 4  
FI-00160 Helsinki  
tel. +358 206 111 700  
fax. +358 206 111 799  
<http://www.upi-fia.fi/>

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Glenn R. Gassen

## GETTING ALONG WITH GULLIVER: A REVIEW OF FINNISH–GERMAN RELATIONS

### **1 Introduction\***

Since Paavo Lipponen left the Prime Minister's Office in 2003, Finland's relationship with Germany seems to have grown more distant. While Lipponen had a markedly pro-German attitude, the present government has adopted a more sober and pragmatic approach. But does this change in rhetoric indicate a different approach? A decade ago, it seemed self-evident that for Finland, Germany was considered "as an important – if not the most important – partner in Europe."<sup>1</sup> But what importance does Germany hold for Finland today?

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\*This paper is based on the author's Master's thesis submitted to the *Heinrich-Heine-Universität Düsseldorf*. In October 2009, a revised version was published as a working paper for the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP)

<sup>1</sup> Forsberg, Tuomas: A friend in need or a friend indeed? Finnish perceptions of Germany's role in the EU and Europe. UPI Working Paper, 24/2000. p. 20

This paper investigates the present state of Finnish-German relations. Has Germany become one out of Finland's many partners in Europe, or does it still play a special role for Finland? Does Finnish foreign policy provide sufficient attention to Germany, or is it in need of reorientation? In order to address these questions, this paper assesses the mutual and conflicting interests of the two countries in different foreign policy fields. Over time, purely bilateral issues have lost much of their significance. Rather, bilateral relations are now being conducted within the multilateral institutional framework that dominates the foreign policies of both countries. Most of the time, the EU is the major stage on which both countries interact. But when it comes to broader issues of European security, other international institutions, including NATO and the OSCE, also play an important role. This paper evaluates Finnish-German relations in this context, looking at five major policy fields.

In addition, the paper will revisit the fundamental assumptions on which Finnish-German relations are often based. On first sight, Germany is the biggest EU member, while Finland is – in the words of Foreign Minister Stubb – a “smallish country [...] not exactly in the geographic core of the European Union.”<sup>2</sup> One might assume that Finnish-German relations are strongly affected by this asymmetry. To evaluate this claim, the paper will focus on mutual perceptions in order to go beyond a more traditional approach. Here, a series of in-depth interviews with German and Finnish foreign policy experts serves as a source for examples.<sup>3</sup> It is hoped that this approach will provide a deeper insight into bilateral relations that goes beyond the common dichotomy of small versus big. To this end, the paper shows what Germans think about Finland, which role they give to the country and what they expect from it. This also provides a valuable reference point for the Finnish perspective and for Finland's role within its evolving relationship with the European Gulliver.

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<sup>2</sup> Stubb, Alexander: On becoming Finland's foreign minister. In: *Blue Wings*, May 2008. p. 32.

<sup>3</sup> The starting point for the selection of interview partners was their relevance for bilateral relations as well as their expert knowledge. At the same time, it was necessary for the group of interview partners to cover as wide a range of actors, perspectives and policy fields as possible. In all, 17 interviews with nine Finnish and eight German interviewees were conducted. Several background discussions provided additional insights and opinions. The interviews were guided in format, but the discussions were open in nature. They took place primarily at the workplace of the person concerned and in a private setting. Most interviews lasted between 45 and 60 minutes. Apart from one which was recorded in handwriting, all were recorded with a voice recorder and then transcribed. The limitations regarding generalisation and objectivity have been considered in the analysis of the interviews.

## 2 Finland through German Eyes

The public perception of Finland in Germany is often based on rather intuitive opinions and general assumptions. Historic ties are familiar only to those with personal interests in the country.<sup>4</sup> Nokia and the PISA survey are probably the two names that spring to mind when Finland is mentioned. As these are usually positively connoted, any lack of knowledge need not necessarily be construed as negative.<sup>5</sup> However, a narrow image such as this can easily become disadvantageous. In 2008, Nokia announced the closure of a production plant in Germany. Since then, the Finnish company has been severely criticized and the whole debate has spilled over to Finland.<sup>6</sup> In contrast, the current case of Opel in the context of the General Motors' crisis cast hardly any aspersions on America's image, because there are fewer associations with GM.

However, German foreign policymakers have focused on very positive features of Finland. In particular, Finnish achievements in terms of innovation and education are highly respected and regarded as a model case for Europe and Germany.<sup>7</sup> By the same token, Finland is rightly acknowledged for its ability to enrich other European countries.<sup>8</sup> A German senior politician remarked: "*Finnland ist es gelungen, aus einem eher landwirtschaftlich geprägten Staat zu einem Technologiestandort zu werden. Und die Unterstützung Estlands zeigt, dass Finnland etwas weiterzugeben hat.*"<sup>9</sup>

Finnish EU policy is highly appreciated and often regarded as setting a positive example for the new member states. In the words of a German government representative: "[...] *es kann kleinen und gerade auch jungen Ländern, dazu gehört Finnland nicht so sehr, Mut machen, ihre Rolle*

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<sup>4</sup> On common history and its meaning today: Gassen, Glenn R.: Big and Small in Europe – Functions of the German-Finnish Relations within the European Union. SWP Working Paper, October 2009. pp. 5-14.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Interview with Petri Hakkarainen, Second Secretary at the Finnish Embassy in Berlin, 5<sup>th</sup> June 2008.

<sup>6</sup> The issue did not hinder the bilateral relations directly. Nokia and the State Government of North Rhine-Westphalia were the main actors. The Finnish Embassy in Berlin received a handful of anti-Finnish messages, however. Cf. Interview with Petri Hakkarainen.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Bundesregierung: Deutschland und Finnland arbeiten an Europas Zukunft. 09.05.06. <http://www.bundeskanzlerin.de/Content/DE/Artikel/2001-2006/2006/05/2006-05-09-deutschland-und-finnland-arbeiten-an-europas-zukunft.layoutVariant=Druckansicht.html> (25.08.09).

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Interview with Hans-Dietrich Genscher, FDP, Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs ret., 10<sup>th</sup> June 2008 in Wachtberg-Pech.

<sup>9</sup> Interview with Kurt Bodewig, SPD, Vice-Chairman of the Committee on the Affairs of the European Union of the German Parliament 2002-2009, 18<sup>th</sup> June 2008 in Berlin: "Finland has succeeded in transforming itself from an agricultural country into a high-tech one. The support given to Estonia shows that Finland has something to pass on as well." (Author's translation.)

*selbstbewusst, aber auch europagerecht zu spielen.*”<sup>10</sup> It is worth underlining that Finland is not regarded as a young member state, even though it joined the EU just 15 years ago. Due to its active, self-confident, and skilful policy, Finland enjoys the reputation of an ‘old’ member state. In that sense, German policymakers regard Finland as a member state which can exert influence on its surrounding region, which embraces some new member states.<sup>11</sup> In short, Finland is perceived as a small and peripheral state, but one with invaluable characteristics.

Another factor influencing the perception of Finland is the German foreign policy tradition, which affords small states special appreciation and respect.<sup>12</sup> The main parties adopt a traditional policy line towards small states that always tries to ensure that they do not end up feeling left out in the cold.<sup>13</sup> As a former member of the Federal Government pointed out: *“Es liegt immer daran, dass die Großen sich durchaus ihrer Größe bewusst sein sollten [...] dass sie den Kleineren nicht den Eindruck vermitteln, sie hätten nichts zu sagen, sondern dass man sie respektiert, sie einbezieht in die Entscheidungen.”*<sup>14</sup> In actual fact, Foreign Minister Westerwelle’s liberal FDP party regards the inclusion of the interests of the small and medium-sized countries as one of the ‘hallmarks’<sup>15</sup> of its European policy.

In general, Finland is regarded as a reliable, loyal, inspiring, and constructive partner. As part of a stable and prospering region, its ‘anchor function’<sup>16</sup> is regarded as important for the whole of Europe. However, due to its low profile in daily politics, it is not among Germany’s priority partners. Finnish affairs are simply not that consistently important for German foreign policy actors.<sup>17</sup> A Federal Foreign Office official put it this way: *“Wir haben nicht den Fokus wie vielleicht Schweden oder Finnland auf eine ganz konkrete Region. Wir haben die deutsch-französische Zusammenarbeit. Das ist wichtig.”*<sup>18</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Interview with Thomas Kossendey: “This can encourage small countries like Finland, but in particular those which are also young members, to play their role in a self-confident manner, but at the same time in accordance with the European way of doing things.” (Author’s translation.)

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Interview with a Federal Foreign Office official.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Interview with Hans-Dietrich Genscher.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Interview with Thomas Kossendey.

<sup>14</sup> Interview with Franz Thönnies, SPD, Chairman of the German-Nordic Parliamentary Friendship Group/Parliamentary State Secretary in the Federal Ministry for Labour and Social Affairs 2005-2009, 25<sup>th</sup> June 2008 in Berlin: “Of course large countries should always be aware of their size [...] so that they do not give smaller countries the impression that their word doesn’t count, but rather that they are respected and included in the decision-making process.” (Author’s translation.)

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Die Mitte stärken. Deutschlandprogramm 2009. Programm der Freien Demokratischen Partei zur Bundestagswahl 2009. [http://www.deutschlandprogramm.de/files/653/Deutschlandprogramm09\\_Endfassung.PDF](http://www.deutschlandprogramm.de/files/653/Deutschlandprogramm09_Endfassung.PDF) (20.10.09). pp. 70-71.

<sup>16</sup> Interview with a German Embassy official, 8<sup>th</sup> May 2008 in Helsinki.

<sup>17</sup> E.g. Schmidt, Helmut: *Außer Dienst. Eine Bilanz*. Munich, 2008. p. 28.

<sup>18</sup> Interview with a Federal Foreign Office official, 13<sup>th</sup> June 2008 in Berlin: “We do not place the focus on one concrete region in the way that Sweden or Finland do perhaps. For us, what counts is the German-French fellowship. That is what matters.” (Author’s translation.)



But nonetheless, Finland is highly respected in German foreign policy circles due to its historical, political and economic achievements. In relation to its size, Finland has a prominent and excellent reputation, which Hans-Dietrich Genscher, Federal Foreign Minister from 1974 to 1992, referred to as “*Bewunderung für ein kleines Volk*”.<sup>19</sup>

### 3 Finland and Germany on Major Policy Fields

#### 3.1 Russia

Finland and Germany maintain a distinctly intensive relationship with Russia and duly promote its cooperation with the EU and the group of Western states. In the early 1990s, the Federal government supported Russia’s participation in the then G7, and later its accession to the Council of Europe. Moreover, it worked on the first Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) between the EU and Russia during the very critical time of the First Chechen War. Later, it was Finland which initiated the Northern Dimension as a regional tool of cooperation between Russia, the EU and other third countries. Furthermore, both states started right after the collapse of the Soviet Union to assist the new Russia by bilateral means as well.<sup>20</sup> They share the basic view that the better off Russia is, the better it is for Europe and themselves. In that respect, Finland and Germany are pragmatic and open-minded. Former Foreign Minister Genscher emphasized that Russia’s social prosperity is definitely to Europe’s advantage.<sup>21</sup> Germany’s government believes that only through intensive cooperation with Russia it will be able to support and influence the difficult process of transformation.<sup>22</sup> That opinion is not shared by many other EU states, however. A Finnish senior researcher pointed out: “It is Finland and Germany then who share the

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<sup>19</sup> Interview with Hans-Dietrich Genscher: “Admiration for a small nation.” (Author’s translation.)

<sup>20</sup> So Germany soon became Russia’s biggest creditor. Cf. Stent, Angela: *Russland*. In: Schmidt, Siegmund/Hellmann, Gunther/Wolf, Reinhard (Ed.): *Handbuch zur deutschen Außenpolitik*. Wiesbaden, 2007. pp. 436-454 (438-443). Finland made efforts on a smaller scale, of course, but with concrete projects related to the common border. Cf. Bastian, Katrin: *Die Europäische Union und Russland. Multilaterale und bilaterale Dimensionen in der europäischen Außenpolitik*. Wiesbaden, 2006. pp. 243-250.

<sup>21</sup> Interview with Hans-Dietrich Genscher.

<sup>22</sup> E.g. Federal Foreign Office: “Towards a new EU Ostpolitik? – Russia, Eastern Europe and Central Asia” – speech by Minister of State Erler at Georgetown University in Washington. 07.02.07. <http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/diplo/en/Infoservice/Presse/Rede/2007/070207-Erler-EUOstpolitik.html> (08.01.09).

same views on Russia. [...] We have a common interest there. And we are alone in this respect in the European Union.”<sup>23</sup>

Finnish representatives appreciated that Germany’s approach “means deep, concrete, practical things instead of big speeches”.<sup>24</sup> Historically, Germany has been a partner in the modernization of Russia.<sup>25</sup> Now it is destined to play that role again. In 2008, German Foreign Minister Steinmeier was the first Western statesman to meet the new Russian President, Dmitry Medvedev, during a one-week tour of the country. Steinmeier gave an important speech in Yekaterinburg, in which he proposed a German-Russian partnership for modernization, while underlining that Russia is an indispensable partner for Germany and Europe. From the Finnish point of view, this has not been in question at all. On the contrary, as a senior Member of Parliament explained, “if you help Russia to become a kind of welfare society with good business and investment [...] in that sense the more contacts we have with Russia, and Germany with Russia, the better.”<sup>26</sup> When President Medvedev’s modernization efforts take shape and Russia enters the World Trade Organization (WTO) some day, German and Finnish technology and investment will be more important than ever. It is worth noting that the *Ost-Ausschuss der Deutschen Wirtschaft* and the East Office of Finnish Industries, which was based on the model established by its German counterpart,<sup>27</sup> maintain extensive contact with the Russian political leadership and are, in effect, the only institutions of their kind in Europe.

In practice, Finland and Germany were very supportive in giving the European Commission a mandate for negotiations on a new Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA). After the Finnish EU presidency in 2006, the subsequent German chairmanship tried to launch negotiations, but failed due to Poland’s veto, supported by Lithuania.<sup>28</sup> The Federal Government promoted a more constructive approach and called for ‘proposals instead of allegations’.<sup>29</sup> Germany greatly appreciated Finland’s support in initiating negotiations on a new PCA with Russia,<sup>30</sup> which was then decided in mid 2008. The opportunities that might be opened up by a new PCA are strongly

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<sup>23</sup> Interview with Esko Antola, Jean Monnet Professor at the University of Turku /Director of the Centrum Balticum, 26<sup>th</sup> May 2008 in Turku.

<sup>24</sup> Interview with Juha Korkeaoja, KESK, Chairman of the Defence Committee of the Finnish Parliament, 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2008 in Helsinki.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Deutscher Bundestag: Staatsgäste: Rede von Wladimir Putin. 25.09.01. [http://www.bundestag.de/geschichte/gastredner/putin/putin\\_wort.html](http://www.bundestag.de/geschichte/gastredner/putin/putin_wort.html) (20.11.09).

<sup>26</sup> Interview with Pertti Salolainen, KOK, Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Finnish Parliament, 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2008 in Helsinki.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Presentation of Simon-Erik Ollus, Advisor and Economist of the East Office of Finnish Industries, at EVA Junior Fellows Seminar, 27/28 August 2009.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Pavilionis, Žygimantas: Lithuanian Position regarding the EU Mandate on Negotiations with Russia: Seeking a New Quality of EU-Russian Relations. In: Lithuanian Foreign Policy Review, No. 21, 2008. pp. 174-181.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Die Zeit: Krisengespräch in Moskau. 14.05.07. <http://www.zeit.de/online/2007/20/steinmeier-russland> (11.10.08).

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Interview with a Federal Foreign Office official.

supported by the Federal Government, not least a free trade agreement, a revised visa regime and an energy partnership. As Chancellor Merkel pointed out: “We want to establish as close and reliable a partnership with [Russia] as possible.”<sup>31</sup> The negotiation process has not proceeded well to date, however, and the outcome is still pending. Russia’s accession to the WTO is a precondition for an EU-Russia free-trade agreement. On the occasion of the recent EU-Russia Summit in Stockholm in late 2009, the German economy emphasized that its major goal is a free-trade agreement between the EU and Russia.<sup>32</sup> The Finnish economy certainly aspires to the same.

The issue of the Nord Stream pipeline stands as another practical example of this common policy line. It is a little-known fact – particularly in Germany – that the project was originally conceived by Finland. The country put it on the map of transeuropean networks and “there was a Finnish stake in the company that made the original plan for the pipeline”<sup>33</sup>, explained a former advisor to Prime Minister Lipponen. When Germany and Russia agreed on its implementation in 2005, it received rather negative feedback from Poland and the Baltic states.<sup>34</sup> Finland was the principal advocate for the pipeline, and the present government has tried to point out that it is a purely environmental matter. From the German point of view, it might be particularly beneficial for Finland to defuse tension over the matter, presenting economic and ecological arguments from a more objective perspective.<sup>35</sup> In mid 2008, Paavo Lipponen, who favoured the issue when he was head of government, agreed to serve as an advisor for Nord Stream to promote the implementation of the project.<sup>36</sup> However, Finland must be cautious in the way it supports an issue that involves Germany and Russia as it could be accused of being influenced by these parties. Right after former Prime Minister Lipponen took up his post with Nord Stream, the Estonian daily newspaper *Postimees* called Finland “Pipestan”<sup>37</sup>, even though he was acting as a private individual. In that respect, it was understandable that Foreign Minister Stubb recently criticized Germany and Russia for their

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<sup>31</sup> Federal Government: Address by Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel at the opening ceremony of the 54<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of the Atlantic Treaty Association. 10.11.08. <http://www.bundesregierung.de/Content/EN/Reden/2008/11/2008-11-10-rede-merkel-dt-atlantische-gesellschaft,layoutVariant=Druckansicht.html> (06.08.09).

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Ost-Ausschuss der Deutschen Wirtschaft: Neustart für EU-Russland-Beziehungen. 17.11.09. <http://www.ost-ausschuss.de/neustart-f-r-beziehungen-zwischen-der-eu-und-russland-ost-ausschuss-gipfel-stockholm-muss-weg-f-r> (24.11.09).

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Interview with Jari Luoto, State Secretary in the Government Secretariat for EU Affairs of Finland 2006-2008, 28<sup>th</sup> May 2008 in Helsinki.

<sup>34</sup> Then Minister of Defence, Radek Sikorski, compared it to the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. Cf. Miodek, Marcin: “Das ist ein neuer Ribbentrop-Molotov-Pakt!” Eine historische Analogie in der polnischen Energiedebatte. In: Osteuropa, 7-8/2009, pp. 295-305.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Interview with Esko Antola; Interview with Kurt Bodewig.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Helsingin Sanomat (International Edition): Ex-PM Paavo Lipponen to serve as adviser to gas pipeline builder. 15.08.08. <http://www.hs.fi/english/print/1135238642998> (12.01.09).

<sup>37</sup> Quoted in: Helsinki Times: Estonians vent anger at Finland’s Lipponen over Nord Stream. 15.08.08. <http://www.helsinkitimes.fi> (14.01.09).

communication about the project, which omitted to consult other Baltic Sea countries at an early stage.<sup>38</sup>

German and Finnish reactions to Russia's proposal for a renewed European security architecture show once again the mutual aspiration for dialogue. After the 2008 OSCE conference in Helsinki, Foreign Minister Steinmeier expressed his belief that there are new prospects, also due to the new American administration, for a new European security agreement.<sup>39</sup> Steinmeier pointed to the OSCE as the right forum for that purpose and advocated the reconvening of the NATO-Russia Council as soon as possible. During the Georgia-Russia War in August 2008, when many commentators foresaw a new East-West conflict, Germany, OSCE chairman Finland and France, which held the EU presidency, were the main European diplomacy actors and consequently important mediators.

The present Federal Government reaffirmed Germany's pledge to strengthen efforts for mutual understanding and a European security architecture within the OSCE.<sup>40</sup> Medvedev's Helsinki visit in 2009 made it clear that Finland's contribution to solving the future security tasks would be warmly welcomed.<sup>41</sup> Finland and Germany are in a good position to give this process the necessary momentum due to their mediating role in the relationship between Russia and the Western states. The re-launch of the military cooperation between NATO and Russia as well as the conclusion reached by OSCE foreign ministers to propel the European security dialogue forward and to discuss a concrete proposal for a structured dialogue at the Athens Ministerial Meeting in late 2009 was a "first courageous step"<sup>42</sup> in the right direction that must be continued. Finnish assistance in renewing the Helsinki Spirit – even if it has now been dubbed the "Corfu Process" – will probably be appreciated by Germany.<sup>43</sup> Yet, the outcome of this process is far from certain. It could end up merely as a series of nice conversations.<sup>44</sup> During the 2008 OSCE Ministerial Meeting in Helsinki, Finland, in its role as chair, had already tried to achieve a "forward-looking political declaration to be agreed

<sup>38</sup> Cf. YLE: Foreign Minister Critical of Russian-German Pipeline Plan. 02.09.09. <http://en.yle.mobi/news/ns-yduu-3-970835> (26.11.09).

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Federal Foreign Office: "Building partnership – for a renewed security policy in the twenty-first century" – by Frank-Walter Steinmeier. 04.12.08. <http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/diplo/en/Infoservice/Presse/Interview/2008/081204-BM-OSZE.html> (10.01.09).

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Auswärtiges Amt: OSZE einigt sich auf umfassenden Sicherheitsdialog. 03.12.09. <http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/diplo/de/Aussenpolitik/InternatOrgane/OSZE/091201-OSZEathen.html> (18.02.10).

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Helsingin Sanomat (International Edition): President Medvedev promotes new security pact in Helsinki. 21.04.09. <http://www.hs.fi/english/print/1135245337972> (05.08.09).

<sup>42</sup> Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe: Intervention by Federal Foreign Minister Dr Frank-Walter Steinmeier at the Ministers' Working Dinner. Corfu, 27 June 2009. [http://www.osce.org/documents/cio/2009/06/38549\\_en.pdf](http://www.osce.org/documents/cio/2009/06/38549_en.pdf) (20.11.09).

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Helsingin Sanomat (International Edition): Finland considers organising OSCE summit next year. 03.06.09. <http://www.hs.fi/english/print/1135246456542> (05.08.09).

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Richter, Solveig/Schmitz, Andrea: Sicherheitsdialog oder Talkshop? Der Korfu-Prozess der OSZE unter kasachischem Vorsitz. SWP-Aktuell, 15/2010.

on by all 56 member states.”<sup>45</sup> Now it is in Finland’s and Germany’s interests for the process following the Corfu Ministerial Meeting to yield a substantial result.<sup>46</sup> After Russia’s draft of a European security treaty was published prior to the Athens OSCE Ministerial Meeting,<sup>47</sup> there is now a concrete proposal on which Foreign Minister Westerwelle wants “a substantive discussion.”<sup>48</sup>

German foreign policy actors see Finland in a key position in terms of Russia. Willy Brandt himself underlined the Finnish role in German Eastern policy before he launched his *Neue Ostpolitik*, and he rightly valued the Finnish opinion.<sup>49</sup> Former Foreign Minister Genscher appreciated that Finnish leaders had navigated their country with great accountability through the uncertainties of the Cold War and asserted that they performed “*hohe Staatskunst*”.<sup>50</sup> Genscher also underlined how inappropriate and unfair the term *Finnlandisierung* was.<sup>51</sup> Finland displayed brilliant diplomacy throughout its Cold War relationship with Russia, earning the respect of German representatives in the process. Today, Germans are still aware of Finland’s relationship to Russia. A senior parliamentarian explained: “*Finnland [ist] ein sensibler Sensor, was die Auswirkungen russischer Politik auf Europa angeht und auch umgekehrt. Ich glaube, dieses wichtige Wissen darum, um Koexistenz, ist besonders in der heutigen Situation wieder besonders nachgefragt.*”<sup>52</sup> In this respect, Finland’s Russian know-how is justifiably appreciated. German representatives assign Finland a special role due to its proximity – as a link to Russia. A member of the Federal Government pointed out: “*Und wenn wir in Europa langfristig weiter erfolgreich [...] Sicherheitspolitik machen wollen, ist ein guter Kontakt, auch ein Verstehen dieser Länder am Rande Europas außergewöhnlich wichtig. Von daher hat Finnland eine ganz extrem wichtige Position, sozusagen als Verbindungsstück [...] zu Russland. Das kann kein anderer leisten an dieser*

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<sup>45</sup> Cf. Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe: European security, Georgia top agenda of Helsinki Ministerial Council, says OSCE Chairman-in-Office. 03.12.08. <http://www.osce.org/item/35269.html>.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland: Speech by Secretary of State Pertti Torstila on OSCE and European Security, in Finland Government Report on Security and Defence Policy 2009. 17.09.09. <http://formin.finland.fi/Public/Print.aspx?contentid=171045&nodeid=32278&culture=en-US&contentlan=2> (24.11.09).

<sup>47</sup> See President of Russia: European Security Treaty. 29.11.09. <http://eng.kremlin.ru/text/docs/2009/11/223072.shtml> (30.11.09).

<sup>48</sup> Auswärtiges Amt: Speech by Federal Minister Westerwelle at the 46<sup>th</sup> Munich Conference on Security Policy. 06.02.10. <http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/diplo/en/Infoservice/Presse/Reden/2010/100206-bm-muenchen.html> (18.02.10).

<sup>49</sup> Cf. Brandt über Interesse an verstärkten Beziehungen zu Skandinavien; Besuche in Finnland, Norwegen, Schweden. 27.06.67. In: Archiv der Gegenwart, volume XXXVII, pp. 13255-13256; Brandt, Willy: Erinnerungen. Frankfurt am Main, 1989. p. 433/437.

<sup>50</sup> Genscher, Hans-Dietrich: Erinnerungen. Berlin, 1995. p. 308; Interview with Hans-Dietrich Genscher.

<sup>51</sup> It must be underlined here that the term was above all used as a domestic political weapon against the Brandt government. It is no longer used today, and has something of a historical quality about it.

<sup>52</sup> Interview with Kurt Bodewig: “Finland is a finely-tuned sensor regarding the effects of Russian policy on Europe, and vice versa. I believe this valuable knowledge about coexistence is particularly required in the current situation.” (Author’s translation.)

*wichtigen Stelle.*<sup>53</sup> Therefore, Finland is perceived as an important and, due to their similar policies, natural partner for Germany.<sup>54</sup> Furthermore, from a German perspective it is interesting that Finland does not fit the big state mould and consequently has influence in the Baltic Sea region in particular. For example, when Foreign Minister Stubb recently gave the opening address for a debate on Russia at a recent EU Ministers' Council, it would have been viewed quite differently if a German had done so.<sup>55</sup>

On both a political and an administrative level, Finland and Germany maintain intensive contact over Russia, with President Halonen and Chancellor Merkel enjoying particularly close relations.<sup>56</sup> Germany is without a doubt interested in Finland's expertise on Russia. The German Embassy monitors the Finnish Russia policy on a regular basis and its reports are duly valued in the Federal Foreign Office.<sup>57</sup> It is particularly appreciated that Finland is a rather non-dogmatic dialogue partner with valuable assessments of Russian domestic and foreign policy. Finland's foreign ministry sends its most senior diplomats to Berlin and knows that their ambassadors' knowledge is of interest to Germany.<sup>58</sup> In fact, most of the recent Finnish Ambassadors to Germany have come directly from Moscow, and it seems as if Finland performs a kind of 'advisory function' with regard to Russia. As a Federal Foreign Office official remarked: "[...], *das weiß man hier im Haus, dass man mit Finnland einen sehr kompetenten Gesprächspartner hat.*"<sup>59</sup>

### 3.2 European Integration

Finland and Germany belong to the group of states which welcome deeper integration and a stronger EU in international affairs. After its accession in 1995, Finland orientated itself towards other small states which were more experienced in the political processes within the EC/EU, particularly the Benelux countries.<sup>60</sup> Germany prioritized its special relationship with France and acted in close coordination with its western neighbour. At the first

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<sup>53</sup> Interview with Thomas Kossendey: "If we in Europe want to make successful security policy in the future, it's extremely important to have good contact like this, as well as an understanding of those countries on the rim of Europe. Therefore, Finland has an extremely important position as a link to Russia. No other country can perform such a role." (Author's translation.)

<sup>54</sup> Cf. Interview with Rainer Arnold, Speaker for Defence Policy of the SPD Parliamentary Group, 19<sup>th</sup> June 2008 in Berlin; Interview with a Federal Foreign Office official.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland: Broad discussion on Russia, Finland leads the way. 18.11.09.

<http://www.formin.fi/public/default.aspx?contentid=180625&nodeid=15145&contentlan=2&culture=en-US> (21.11.09).

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Interview with a German Embassy official in Helsinki.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. *ibid*; Interview with a Federal Foreign Office official.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. Interview with a German Embassy official in Helsinki; Interview with Petri Hakkarainen.

<sup>59</sup> Interview with a Federal Foreign Office official: "We are well aware here that Finland is a very competent dialogue partner." (Author's translation.)

<sup>60</sup> Interview with Esko Antola.

Intergovernmental Conference (IGC) with Finnish participation preparing the Treaty of Amsterdam in 1996, Germany favoured a community solution, and therefore came close to the Finnish position, which emphasized the interests of small states in equality, strong institutions and clear rules. At the same time, the Finnish government underlined the fact that “the Union’s fundamental character as an association of states should be preserved.”<sup>61</sup> It subsequently became clear that the finality of Europe meant different things to Finland and Germany. As a senior EU researcher commented: “[...] Finland stresses strong institutions, but not in a federalist sense. [...] That is a difference. We have no aspirations to go further. Germany has this long-term vision of Europe, we do not.”<sup>62</sup> From the Finnish point of view, strong institutions, primarily the Commission and the Parliament, imply limiting the influence of the big states and strengthening the enforcement of common rules. Germany has the same starting point by and large, but is willing to go much further in integration, as the epithet “United States of Europe”<sup>63</sup> does not faze most German politicians. European integration is the solution to Germany’s major foreign policy challenge – managing its central position and getting along with its neighbours.<sup>64</sup>

This difference between Finland and Germany did not necessarily cause any major rifts, however, because on the one hand Finland was willing to support the progress of the EU and on the other hand, Germany respected the principle of equality. In the first years of membership, Finland exercised an impressively active and supportive role for the political union. The first major decision in favour of being in the ‘core’ of the EU was joining the European single currency. The Euro was a major project of then Chancellor Helmut Kohl and the Euro group has been considered to be the core group of Europe.<sup>65</sup> Economic reasons aside, Finnish motivations regarding security and influence have been relevant. The single currency would strengthen solidarity and Finland would be at the table where decisions were taken.<sup>66</sup> The government of Prime Minister Lipponen positioned Finland visibly as a pro-integrationist member state. Lipponen strongly supported the Euro in contrast to his Nordic counterparts and defended the government’s decision

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<sup>61</sup> Cf. Finland’s points of departure and objectives at the 1996 Intergovernmental Conference. Report to the Parliament by the Council of State, 27.02.96.

<sup>62</sup> Interview with Esko Antola.

<sup>63</sup> No German interviewee rejected the assumption that the goal of German European policy is the creation of the United States of Europe.

<sup>64</sup> Cf. von Weizsäcker, Richard: Meilenstein Maastricht. In: Bulletin des Presse- und Informationsamtes der Bundesregierung, 15.04.92, Nr. 42, pp. 385-386 (385).

<sup>65</sup> Cf. Schäuble, Wolfgang/Lamers, Karl: Überlegungen zur europäischen Politik. 01.09.94. <http://www.cducsu.de/upload/schaeublelamers94.pdf> (11.10.08).

<sup>66</sup> Cf. Antola, Esko: From the European Rim to the Core: The European Policy of Finland in the 1990’s. In: Finnish Institute of International Affairs: Northern Dimensions. Yearbook 1999. Helsinki, 1999. pp. 5-13.

against domestic criticism.<sup>67</sup> Since then, support for the single currency improved remarkably well, but the public opinion in Finland remained reserved on European issues.<sup>68</sup> The Lipponen government established the image of a small, but active and pro-integrationist EU member.<sup>69</sup>

In the European Convention, the differences between large and small states became more apparent. From the Finnish point of view, the initial proposal by Gerhard Schröder and Jacques Chirac violated the community principle in a number of aspects.<sup>70</sup> According to the Franco-German plan, the President of the Commission's position would have been strengthened with far-reaching powers, making him more than *primus inter pares*.<sup>71</sup> He or she would have been legitimated by the Parliament, assuming responsibility for the general policy and more independence in composing the Commission. Finland did not insist on 'one commissioner per member state', but maintained that the principle of collegiality within the Commission should not be touched. The Franco-German proposal also advocated that the European Council should elect a chairperson by qualified majority voting for two and a half years. A European foreign minister, appointed by the European Council by qualified majority voting, was meant to chair the Council on external relations and defence, and strengthen coherence in the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). The Finnish position was at odds with this because the issue of rotating presidencies has been particularly sensitive for Finland. A 2003 government report stated that "rotation has been the best guarantee of the equality of member states, something that is important to small member states like Finland."<sup>72</sup> Finland rejected, particularly, the office of an elected president of the EU. The 2003 report concretely stated: "Most recently the President of France and the Federal Chancellor of Germany have published such a proposal. [...] The proposal for a Union President contains a fresh derogation from the community model in favour of the hegemony of the large member states."<sup>73</sup> Finland and other small states feared that the bigger member states could easily influence these offices, as well as the Commission President, and consequently dominate the EU.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. Zänker, Alfred: Finnland strebt größere Eigenständigkeit an. In: Die Welt, 04.11.07. [http://www.welt.de/print-welt/article643828/Finnland\\_strebt\\_groessere\\_Eigenstaendigkeit\\_an.html](http://www.welt.de/print-welt/article643828/Finnland_strebt_groessere_Eigenstaendigkeit_an.html) (17.03.09).

<sup>68</sup> Cf. Gassen, Glenn R./Maurer, Andreas: Von der Peripherie ins Zentrum. Perspektiven finnischer Europapolitik – für Europa und Deutschland. SWP-Diskussionspapier, December 2006. pp. 14-16.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. Gawrich, Andrea: Finnland – Musterknabe in der EU? In: Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte, B 47/2004, 15.11.04. pp. 16-21 (20-21).

<sup>70</sup> Cf. Report of the Council of State on Finland's positions concerning the future of Europe and issues arisen during the Convention. 27.01.03.

<http://register.consilium.eu.int/pdf/de/03/cv00/cv00509de03.pdf> (07.09.09). p. 6.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. Deutsch-französischer Beitrag zum Europäischen Konvent über die institutionelle Architektur der Union. Berlin/Paris, 15.01.03. <http://www.ena.lu> (07.09.09).

<sup>72</sup> Report of the Council of State on Finland's positions concerning the future of Europe and issues arisen during the Convention. 27.01.03.

<http://register.consilium.eu.int/pdf/de/03/cv00/cv00509de03.pdf> (12.03.09).

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.



Whereas the German Chancellor traditionally sided with the French President, Finland joined a summit of small states in order to signal that it felt disregarded.<sup>74</sup> The Prime Minister's delegate to the Convention explained that there had been real suspicion that the German European policy might have changed: "We went through a phase of thinking that we had lost you. [...] we noticed that the constellation of big and small was a difficult one."<sup>75</sup> In a similar vein a senior government official stated: "At that time we did have different views and we felt that Germany did not listen as much as it had done before to the interests of the small and medium-sized countries."<sup>76</sup> Finally, both states agreed on the compromise that was achieved at the 2003/2004 Intergovernmental Conference. To this end, it was particularly important for mutual understanding that Finland and Germany adopted the same starting point concerning the role of the EU Parliament, the Commission and the Court of Justice, and thereby supported the communitarian method of decision-making, which counters the power politics of big states.<sup>77</sup>

From a German perspective, it came as a welcome relief that Finland did not block the whole proceedings, but maintained a constructive approach during the reform process: "*Es war ein Anliegen der Kleineren, ein stärkeres Gewicht zu bekommen. [...] Sie haben Interessen wahrgenommen, aber haben das nicht destruktiv gemacht. Das muss ich deutlich sagen, die Finnen haben immer versucht den Prozess weiter laufen zu lassen.*"<sup>78</sup> A senior Member of the Parliament (MP) explained that small states could make important contributions to Europe and should not see a complete standstill as their only option: "[...] *es ist wichtig, dass man eigene Vorschläge macht. Nicht wir blockieren, wie wir das bei Irland und Dänemark an zwei Stellen erlebt haben. Ich denke, Finnland ist da anders. Und das ist hilfreich.*"<sup>79</sup>

In general, Finland is regarded as a member state which can contribute to Europe's prosperity and stability. Hans-Dietrich Genscher stressed that Finland has always belonged to Europe and that the Federal Government always strongly supported the country's accession.<sup>80</sup> In the early 1990s, it was Germany that promoted Finnish EU membership decisively. Finnish EU policy is appreciated, as it has supported the development of the Union. One

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<sup>74</sup> Cf. Middel, Andreas: Die "sieben Zwerge" der EU fühlen sich übergangen. In: Die Welt, 14.03.03. [http://www.welt.de/print-welt/article475472/Die\\_sieben\\_Zwerge\\_der\\_EU\\_fuehlen\\_sich\\_uebergangen.html](http://www.welt.de/print-welt/article475472/Die_sieben_Zwerge_der_EU_fuehlen_sich_uebergangen.html) (20.03.09).

<sup>75</sup> Interview with Teija Tiilikainen.

<sup>76</sup> Interview with Jari Luoto.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. Interview with Teija Tiilikainen.

<sup>78</sup> Interview with Kurt Bodewig: "The smaller countries were intent upon having more of a say in things. [...] They have safeguarded their interests, but not in a destructive manner. I must emphasize that the Finns have always tried to keep the process going." (Author's translation.)

<sup>79</sup> Interview with Axel Schäfer, Speaker for European Policy of the SPD Parliamentary Group, 26<sup>th</sup> June 2008 in Berlin: "[...] it is important to put forward one's own proposals. One shouldn't block things as we have seen Ireland and Denmark do twice before. I think Finland acts differently, and that is helpful." (Author's translation.)

<sup>80</sup> Cf. Interview with Hans-Dietrich Genscher.

German representative put it this way: “*Finnland ist ein Land, das sich doch sehr überzeugend auf die Integration eingelassen hat.*”<sup>81</sup> Another one stressed that the common view of Europe makes the proportion of big and small countries irrelevant, and that Finland saw the philosophy of a common Europe as an opportunity.<sup>82</sup> It has to be said, however, that the relationship is certainly not always conflict-free, as was particularly evident during the European Convention and the subsequent negotiations.

After the failure of the Constitutional Treaty in 2005, Finland and Germany were tasked with re-launching the reform process. They ultimately succeeded, but in a way that provided further insights into their relationship. During the Finnish EU presidency in 2006, bilateral talks were held on the future perspectives of the Constitutional Treaty and the results were handed over to Germany. Moreover, Finland and Estonia gave a visible signal by ratifying the treaty in 2006, when no other state would continue the ratification process.<sup>83</sup> The subsequent German presidency then achieved a breakthrough with a mandate for an IGC during the Portuguese presidency, which then became the Treaty of Lisbon. Finnish foreign policymakers were satisfied with the part played by Finland and they praised Angela Merkel’s performance. But even before the Finnish presidency got underway, the German government was paying close attention to what Finland was doing.<sup>84</sup> A Finnish researcher, who monitored the presidencies closely, was very direct when he said: “So the Germans wanted to have the big issues like the Intergovernmental Conference and warned Finland not to be too active because it was a German issue. [...] This was an interesting situation, Germany warned us, told us, not to be too active in the IGC issue because it was reserved for them.”<sup>85</sup>

From the German point of view, it was clear that Finland was not able to initiate the necessary revitalization of the reform process, and Germany did so at the request of the European Council.<sup>86</sup> As a German senior politician explained: “*Es war eine vorbereitende Arbeit. Die Finnen haben das Thema auf der Tagesordnung gehabt, aber nicht in der Intensität Deutschlands. Ich glaube, das ging auch nicht. Um ein solches großes Rad zu drehen, braucht man ein anderes Gewicht im europäischen Konzert als dies ein Land mit Randlage auch haben kann.*”<sup>87</sup> Due to Finland’s modest, pragmatic approach, the German leadership aspiration did not cause conflict. However,

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<sup>81</sup> Interview with Axel Schäfer: “Finland is a country that has engaged in integration very convincingly.” (Author’s translation.)

<sup>82</sup> Cf. Interview with Kurt Bodewig.

<sup>83</sup> Cf. Kietz, Daniela/Maurer, Andreas: Integrationsmotor Estland. SWP-Aktuell, 11/2006.

<sup>84</sup> Cf. Interview with Jari Luoto.

<sup>85</sup> Interview with Esko Antola.

<sup>86</sup> Interview with Axel Schäfer.

<sup>87</sup> Interview with Kurt Bodewig: “It was preparatory work. The Finns had the topic on their agenda, but they didn’t emphasize it as much as Germany did. I don’t think that would have been possible either. In order to turn such a big wheel, one has to be a stronger player in the European concert than a country in a peripheral position can be.” (Author’s translation.)

these developments reveal that Finland is sometimes regarded merely as a small state on the rim of the continent, particularly when an issue becomes of paramount importance.

The conflict over the new EU president came to the forefront as soon as the time to implement the Lisbon Treaty drew closer. In early 2008, the speculation about candidates for the position of the new President of the European Council made it clear that the smaller states have no interest in a strong President.<sup>88</sup> Prime Minister Vanhanen framed it this way: “[...] he or she is really the chair of the European Council, not the President of Europe.”<sup>89</sup> Tony Blair was promoted as a strong candidate, who would be greeted with open arms in Beijing, Washington and Moscow. Britain and France originally supported Blair’s candidacy, but the German government under Angela Merkel did not exhibit much enthusiasm for a strong solution and considered that the Union’s external representation must be based on consensus.<sup>90</sup> In the very decisive meetings of the large member states, Chancellor Merkel gave no support for Blair’s aspiration to become the first permanent EU President, thereby pushing through Hermann Van Rompuy, who was the community solution.<sup>91</sup>

A coming issue, which points to the differences regarding the finality of the EU, will certainly be Turkish accession to the EU. Turkey’s aspiration to become an EU member has long been supported by Finland, whereas a Conservative-led German government is unlikely to welcome Turkish accession. Ideological thinking aside, a major reason for the German position on this question is also that Turkey will probably not support a supranational EU and the political geography of the Union would change to the disadvantage of Germany and France, which got used to be the ‘motor’ of the Union. Finland on the other hand might profit as the big states’ disagreement usually works to the small states’ advantage.

In the future, Germany’s approach towards the smaller member states will be crucial for the development of the EU. A Finnish MP emphasized: “Germany’s role has been, and will be, crucial for the future of Europe.”<sup>92</sup> Germany is perceived as more predictable and accessible than other big member states.<sup>93</sup> Another senior politician expressed this wish: “[...] we noticed that Angela Merkel had a positive role, and we would really

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<sup>88</sup> Cf. *The Economist*: The other presidential race. 17.04.08.

[http://www.economist.com/world/europe/displaystory.cfm?story\\_id=11049338](http://www.economist.com/world/europe/displaystory.cfm?story_id=11049338) (21.03.09).

<sup>89</sup> Quoted in: Charter, David/Coates, Sam/Watson, Rory: Tony Blair’s chances of EU presidency fade amid calls for a chairman not a chief. In: *The Times*, 30.10.09.

<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/europe/article6896136.ece> (27.11.09).

<sup>90</sup> Cf. *The Economist*: Unwelcome, President Blair. 30.07.09.

[http://www.economist.com/world/europe/displaystory.cfm?story\\_id=14121724](http://www.economist.com/world/europe/displaystory.cfm?story_id=14121724) (12.08.09).

<sup>91</sup> Cf. Gammerlin, Cerstin: Doppelspitze für Europa. Wie Van Rompuy und Ashton Ratspräsident und Außenministerin der EU wurden. In: *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 20.11.09.

<sup>92</sup> Interview with Antti Kaikkonen, Vice-Chairman of the Grand Committee of the Finnish Parliament, 27<sup>th</sup> May 2008 in Helsinki.

<sup>93</sup> Cf. *ibid*; Interview with Petri Hakkarainen; Interview with Pertti Salolainen.

appreciate it if Germany assumed stronger leadership in some issues in the European Union, to add some more common sense to the whole thing. Germany has a special responsibility. We want a strong Germany to lead the European Union along the right path.”<sup>94</sup>

### 3.3 Security and Defence Policy

After the Cold War, military relations began to normalize when Finland left legal obligations which resulted from World War II and restricted the country in maintaining military contacts with Germany. In 1993, a Finnish government representative made these comments in the NATO Review: “By nullifying these limitations on its sovereignty, Finland, as a co-belligerent of Germany, closed the book, for its part, on the Second World War.”<sup>95</sup> Since then, German and Finnish troops have been jointly engaged in a series of NATO missions – IFOR, SFOR, KFOR and ISAF. Today, military-political contacts are relatively close and both countries frequently exchange ideas on security issues.<sup>96</sup> In addition to the Nordic countries, Germany ranks as one of Finland’s prioritized partners. As a consequence, Finland joined a German-Dutch EU Battle Group. A former senior government official explained: “Germany is a very reliable partner for Finland. [...] So the country has long been a natural cooperation partner for our peacekeepers. [...] This was a well-reasoned decision.”<sup>97</sup>

Finnish representatives appreciate Germany’s efforts to find compromises in the development of the ESDP, and enhance the comprehensive foreign and security policy instruments. Moreover, it has made good sense to seek out a larger state as its partner, and one with capabilities and influence in NATO and the ESDP. Finnish military history might also have a part to play in this respect.<sup>98</sup> The *Jäger* movement, which assembled Finns fighting in the German imperial army during World War I, and German assistance in the early days of the Finnish armed forces, are still well remembered in Finland.<sup>99</sup> From a German perspective, it is noteworthy that Finns seek German assistance in foreign missions.<sup>100</sup>

Both states have been resolute in their support for the development of the ESDP. When it comes to the relationship between the EU and NATO, Finland and Germany have been pragmatic. German representatives do not

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<sup>94</sup> Interview with Pertti Salolainen.

<sup>95</sup> Blomberg, Jaakko: Finland’s Evolving Security Policy. In: NATO Review (Web Edition), no. 1, Feb. 1993, vol. 41, pp. 12-16. <http://www.nato.int/docu/review/1993/9301-3.htm> (30.01.09).

<sup>96</sup> Cf. Interview with Thomas Kossendey; Interview with a German Embassy official in Helsinki; Interview with a Federal Foreign Office official.

<sup>97</sup> Interview with Teija Tiilikainen.

<sup>98</sup> Interview with a German Embassy official in Helsinki.

<sup>99</sup> Cf. Finnish Defence Forces: History of the Defence Forces. Germans leading the armed forces. 19.08.08. [http://www.mil.fi/perustieto/esittely/historia/index\\_4\\_en.dsp](http://www.mil.fi/perustieto/esittely/historia/index_4_en.dsp) (02.02.09).

<sup>100</sup> Meeting at the German Army Office, 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2008 in Cologne.

regard Finland's position outside NATO as a problem. A German government representative mentioned that Finland's military non-alignment status has caused few difficulties due to its open and active policy.<sup>101</sup> Of course, Article 5 of the NATO Treaty, calling for mutual assistance in case of an attack, would make a difference, but he appreciated Finland's contribution to EU and NATO missions. Referring to the ESDP, one German senior defence politician noted: *"Ich glaube nicht, dass die Neutralität Finnlands ein Problem für die ESVP ist. [...] Das hat nichts mehr mit dem praktischen Vorgehen der Finnen zu tun."*<sup>102</sup> Another source put it this way: *"Die ESVP ist für mich kein Dogma, sondern es wird durch die Praxis ausgelebt. [...] Das ist etwas, das konkret wächst. Und da wird Finnland sich mit Sicherheit einbringen."*<sup>103</sup>

Asked about the German position on an eventual Finnish request for NATO membership, with reference to the NATO Summit in Bucharest in 2008 and the German opposition to a quick integration of Georgia and Ukraine, German representatives did not reply unanimously. One German representative said: *"Was Finnland angeht, wäre es durchaus eine Frage des russischen Interesses, aber diese innenpolitischen Probleme [wie in Georgien und der Ukraine] sehe ich nicht in dem Maße. [...] Das wird sich dann zu entscheiden haben, aber ich glaube schon, dass Länder, die durch ihre Mitgliedschaft die Sicherheit Europas erhöhen können, nicht vor der Tür gelassen werden."*<sup>104</sup> Another one was more decisive: *"Da gibt es überhaupt keine Diskussion. [...] wenn die Finnen dies wollen, sind die Türen meilenweit offen, aus deutscher Sicht."*<sup>105</sup> Germany would consider the overall situation, but a Finnish application was likely to be welcomed.

The consequences of a military threat to Finland are regarded in a similar manner. A representative of the Federal Government underlined Germany's commitment: *"Wir wären natürlich nicht nur willens, sondern auch in der Verpflichtung, Hilfe zu geben. [...] Und wir würden es auch tun. Obwohl das natürlich eine relativ theoretische Geschichte ist. [...] Aber ich glaube schon, dass die Finnen darauf vertrauen könnten, dass die Deutschen an*

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<sup>101</sup> Cf. Interview with Thomas Kossendey.

<sup>102</sup> Interview with Rainer Arnold: "I do not think that Finland's neutrality is a problem for the ESDP. [...] That no longer has anything to do with the way the Finns conduct themselves in practical terms." (Author's translation.)

<sup>103</sup> Interview with Kurt Bodewig: "For me, the ESDP is not a dogma, but it is all about practice. [...] It is something that develops concretely. And Finland will certainly contribute to it." (Author's translation.)

<sup>104</sup> Interview with Thomas Kossendey: "When it comes to Finland, it would indeed be of interest to Russia, but I do not envisage domestic policy problems developing to the extent they did in Georgia and Ukraine [...] That will have to be decided when the time comes, but I think that countries which can enhance the security of Europe with their membership will not be left out in the cold." (Author's translation.)

<sup>105</sup> Interview with Rainer Arnold: "There is no question about it. [...] if that is what the Finns want, the doors are wide open, from the German perspective." (Author's translation.)

*ihrer Seite wären.*<sup>106</sup> Another senior defence politician said: *“Ich denke, dass Finnland behandelt würde wie ein NATO-Mitglied. Die Bindungen sind so eng und auch die geostrategischen Interessen der NATO insgesamt sind dort so ausgeprägt, dass die NATO nicht zuschauen würde, wenn Finnland um Hilfe ersucht.”*<sup>107</sup> That would imply nothing less than Germany assisting Finland in the event of a military threat, even though the country is not a member of NATO.

A difference between the two countries lies in the area of binding military alignment. Germany would like to make the EU a European pillar of common defence within the North Atlantic Alliance. Since the rearmament of West-Germany in the 1950s, the Federal Government has been in favour of more European cooperation on defence issues. Today Chancellor Merkel regards a European army as a potential long term goal: *“Wir müssen einer gemeinsamen europäischen Armee näher kommen.”*<sup>108</sup> The Social Democrats are even more assertive in their wording: *“Nationale Armeen werden in einer immer stärker supranationalen EU mehr und mehr zu Relikten des vergangenen Jahrhunderts.”*<sup>109</sup> Unilateral action plays absolutely no role in German considerations.<sup>110</sup> Therefore, a more united European defence would further strengthen the country’s military and political integration.

But a European army does not necessarily mean having no more national armed forces. Ultimately, the TCE, then the Treaty of Lisbon, would enable permanent structured cooperation, which was initially suggested in a German-French proposal.<sup>111</sup> Although a group of willing states could hardly exclude other members, acting autonomously under an EU label could seriously threaten the unity of the EU. A German government member stated that conflict situations in which some countries feel non-consulted or ignored must be avoided, and pointed out that Lisbon has to be practised in reality: *“Aber wichtig wird auch in Zukunft sein, dass [...] das eine Gemeinschaftsaktion ist. Wenn die Kleinen sich lediglich als Vasallen der*

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<sup>106</sup> Interview with Thomas Kossendey: “We would naturally not just be willing, but also compelled to provide assistance. And of course we would do that. Even though that is clearly a relatively theoretical issue. [...] But I think that the Finns could count on the Germans being on their side.” (Author’s translation.)

<sup>107</sup> Interview with Rainer Arnold: “I think that Finland would be treated like a NATO member. The linkages are so tight and the geostrategic interests of NATO are by and large so obvious that NATO would not remain a mere bystander if Finland requested help.” (Author’s translation.)

<sup>108</sup> Quoted in: Sturm, Daniel Friedich: Merkel will “gemeinsame europäische Armee”. In: Die Welt, 23.03.07.

[http://www.welt.de/politik/article774093/Merkel\\_will\\_gemeinsame\\_europaeische\\_Armee.html](http://www.welt.de/politik/article774093/Merkel_will_gemeinsame_europaeische_Armee.html) (04.09.09): “We must make progress towards creating a European army.” (Author’s translation.)

<sup>109</sup> Positionspapier der Arbeitsgruppen Sicherheitsfragen und Angelegenheiten der Europäischen Union. „Auf dem Weg zu einer Europäischen Armee“. 27.03.07.

[http://www.spdfraktion.de/cnt/rs/rs\\_datei/0,,8136,00.pdf](http://www.spdfraktion.de/cnt/rs/rs_datei/0,,8136,00.pdf) (04.09.09). p. 2: “National armies will, in an ever stronger supranational EU, become more and more a relic of the past century.” (Author’s translation.)

<sup>110</sup> Interview with Rainer Arnold; Interview with Thomas Kossendey.

<sup>111</sup> See Propositions conjointes franco-allemandes pour la Convention européenne dans le domaine de la politique européenne de sécurité et de défense (22 novembre 2002). <http://www.deutschland-frankreich.diplo.de/Propositions-conjointes-franco,096.html> (22.09.09).

*Großen empfinden, dann wird das eine schwierige Sache in Europa werden. Dann wird Europa auseinander brechen. Zumindest was die Gemeinsamkeit solcher Aktionen angeht, das kann nicht in unserem Interesse sein.*<sup>112</sup> Other sources agreed that smaller states should not be left behind; it would split Europe, thereby weakening the EU's image.<sup>113</sup> Finland opposed the idea of a hard-core within the ESDP, which might have excluded non-NATO countries, but it always supported further efforts to strengthen a European security policy.<sup>114</sup> Public opinion asserts that the EU has a positive effect on Finnish security, while NATO membership is still opposed by a stable majority.<sup>115</sup> Therefore, permanent structured cooperation presents new opportunities in the first instance and a European army is likely to mean setting up multilateral military units, as explicitly stated in the Treaty of Lisbon,<sup>116</sup> but not creating one European army with a binding military alliance.

For Germany, Finland is one partner among many in military cooperation, and Germany certainly prioritizes France in this respect. However, the Germans recognize Finland as a valuable partner. As one representative of the Federal Ministry of Defence pointed out: *“Überall wo wir mit den Finnen zu tun hatten, ging es präzise, klar, ordentlich und gut voran. Da kann man nichts Negatives sagen.”*<sup>117</sup> Another senior MP was of the same opinion: *“Dort wo deutsche Soldaten mit finnischen zusammenarbeiten sind die Erfahrungen extrem positiv. Finnen sind sprachgewandt, können alle Englisch, auch runter zu den Mannschaftsdienstgraden. Sie haben eine militärische Kultur, die unseren Prinzipien der inneren Führung nicht so ganz fremd ist. Insofern ist diese Zusammenarbeit absolut positiv.”*<sup>118</sup> These statements have also been corroborated during personal discussions with German officers, who have been on missions with Finnish soldiers in Kosovo and Afghanistan.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Interview with Thomas Kossendey: “It is important for this creation process to remain a joint endeavour in the future as well. If the small countries perceive themselves as being vassals of the big ones, it will be a difficult matter in Europe. It would tear Europe apart. At least when it comes to joint actions, this cannot be in our interests.” (Author's translation.)

<sup>113</sup> Interview with Rainer Arnold.

<sup>114</sup> Cf. Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland: Foreign Minister Tuomioja: Finland does not support European defence union. Press Release, 30.04.03. <http://formin.finland.fi/Public/Print.aspx?contentid=59264&nodeid=34646&culture=en-US&contentlan=2> (30.01.09).

<sup>115</sup> Cf. Ministry of Defence of Finland: Finns' opinions on foreign and security policy, defence and security issues. The ABDI Survey 2009. [http://www.defmin.fi/files/1516/The\\_ABDI\\_Survey\\_2009\\_pictures.pdf](http://www.defmin.fi/files/1516/The_ABDI_Survey_2009_pictures.pdf) (01.03.10).

<sup>116</sup> Cf. Official Journal of the European Union: Protocol (No 10) on Permanent Structured Cooperation established by Article 42 of the Treaty on European Union. 09.05.2008.

<sup>117</sup> Interview with Thomas Kossendey: “In all our dealings with the Finns, things have proceeded in a precise, clear, orderly and proper way. I don't have anything negative to say.” (Author's translation.)

<sup>118</sup> Interview with Rainer Arnold: “Whenever German and Finnish soldiers work together, experiences are extremely positive. Finnish soldiers are used to speaking foreign languages, and they all speak English, even in the lower ranks. They have a military culture which is not that different from our *Principle of internal governance*. In this respect, this cooperation is absolutely positive.” (Author's translation.)

<sup>119</sup> Meeting at the German Army Office.

In particular, Finland's experiences in UN missions had an impact on German expert opinions, and have been regarded as an important supplement to the ESDP. A government member mentioned: *“Es gibt in der Tat wenige Länder, die so intensive und vielfältige Erfahrungen gemacht haben, wie die Finnen. Die Finnen haben auch aufgrund ihrer Mittlerrolle [...] zwischen Ost und West, Stichwort Helsinki, auch einen ganz besonderen Vertrauensvorsprung bei vielen Ländern. Und wir wären gut beraten, das auch im europäischen Sinne zu nutzen.”*<sup>120</sup> A senior parliamentarian pointed to Finland's international engagement as one of its main characteristics: *“Das eine ist, dass Finnland mit der Neutralität, aber trotzdem mit internationalem militärischem Engagement, ein wichtiges Zeichen setzt [...]. Das schafft mit diesem Label der Neutralität noch ein zusätzliches Gewicht für die Wichtigkeit im Kosovo oder in anderen Bereichen.”*<sup>121</sup> Consequently, Finland is regarded as a member which can make a special contribution to the ESDP's reputation. Moreover its active, strong and intensive commitment is regarded as an example for other small member states.<sup>122</sup>

German representatives emphasized that Finland could contribute to the ESDP, in the first instance through its experience and reputation. Yet realistic views were also presented on the military front. A representative of the Federal Government mentioned that it is important to include small states in the equation and that there could even be some leading tasks for them, but due to the military infrastructure, the large states must remain centre stage.<sup>123</sup> As a senior MP stated: *“[...] wenn da mal 10, 20 Soldaten mit dabei sind, ist das für den Einsatz nicht besonders relevant. Dann liegt die Bedeutung wirklich im politischen Signal, das aber trotzdem wichtig ist für uns.”*<sup>124</sup> From a German perspective, Finland should develop some niche capabilities and enhance cooperation with its Baltic and Nordic neighbours.<sup>125</sup> Therefore, the Stoltenberg Report<sup>126</sup> on Nordic foreign and security policy, which was drafted in early 2009, is likely to be welcomed in Berlin as well.

<sup>120</sup> Interview with Thomas Kossendey: “Indeed, there are few countries that have had as many demanding and varied experiences as Finland. Many countries trust Finland, due to the country's mediating role [...] between East and West – the key word being Helsinki here. We would be well advised to take advantage of this feature in the European context as well.” (Author's translation.)

<sup>121</sup> Interview with Kurt Bodewig: “Finland's neutrality sends out an important signal even through its international military engagement [...]. This, under the label of neutrality, gives added value to the Finnish contribution in Kosovo or other areas.” (Author's translation.)

<sup>122</sup> Cf. Interview with Thomas Kossendey.

<sup>123</sup> Interview with Thomas Kossendey.

<sup>124</sup> Interview with Rainer Arnold: “[...] when 10 or 20 soldiers participate, it is not particularly relevant for the mission. Then the meaning really lies in the political signal, which is nonetheless important for us.” (Author's translation.)

<sup>125</sup> Cf. Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> In June 2008, the Nordic foreign ministers assigned Thorvald Stoltenberg, formerly defence and foreign minister and ambassador of Norway, to report on how Nordic cooperation on foreign and security policy could be developed in the future. Stoltenberg delivered his report in February 2009. Cf. Stoltenberg, Thorvald: Nordic Cooperation on Foreign and Security Policy. Proposals presented to the extraordinary meeting of Nordic foreign ministers in Oslo on 9 February 2009. <http://www.regjeringen.no/upload/UD/Vedlegg/nordicreport.pdf> (21.11.09).



In terms of concrete cooperation, Germany welcomes Finland because of its experience and noteworthy efforts in crisis management. Finland is regarded as a partner who uses all the instruments at its disposal and prefers not to employ military means. The USA and Britain have repeatedly criticized the Federal government for not sending its troops to southern Afghanistan and for being reluctant to use military force. Therefore, it is important for Germany to gain political support for its approach. Prior to the London Conference on Afghanistan, Foreign Minister Westerwelle and Foreign Minister Stubb demonstrated their very agreement on the future strategy.<sup>127</sup> As a senior defence politician mentioned: *“Ich denke, dass der Ansatz, den ganzen Baukasten der Mittel zu haben, bei den Finnen auch politisch sehr stark gesehen wird. Also Militär als letztes Mittel, aber die anderen Dinge der Prävention, der fairen wirtschaftlichen Bedingungen, der Diplomatie [...]”*<sup>128</sup> One member of the government put it this way: *“[...] man muss auch aufpassen, ob man von den Philosophien zusammenpasst. Da passt nicht jeder mit jedem zusammen. Wie unterschiedlich man Dinge angehen kann, sieht man in Afghanistan.”*<sup>129</sup> It should be noted that it is no accident that Finnish troops are also deployed in the northern, German sector of Afghanistan. Cooperation with Germany is essential for the Finnish ISAF engagement. In the current debate, the German activities, which are increasingly leaning towards a proactive approach, must be considered as they will have a direct consequence for Finnish troops.

Moreover, there are also possibilities for future cooperation between Finland and Germany. German air transport capabilities could be used by Finnish forces in Afghanistan. In return, Finland could contribute NH 90 helicopters, whose maintenance is very cost-intensive. Germany is aware of Finland's capabilities and is duly interested in efficient teamwork. Additionally, the *Bundeswehr* still has a couple of equipment deficits, particularly helicopters and light-armoured vehicles.<sup>130</sup> Hence, the Finnish influence on military-political decisions would probably increase if it concentrated on those assets which are in high demand.

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<sup>127</sup> Cf. Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland: Press Conference by Minister Stubb and Germany's Foreign Minister Westerwelle. Webcast, 12.11.09.

[http://qsb.webcast.fi/f/formin/formin\\_20091211\\_Westerwellen/](http://qsb.webcast.fi/f/formin/formin_20091211_Westerwellen/) (14.12.09).

<sup>128</sup> Interview with Rainer Arnold: “I think that the approach of having the whole tool box of instruments will also be seen as a political strength for the Finns. So military force is a last resort when there are also other measures like prevention, fair economic conditions, diplomacy.” (Author's translation.)

<sup>129</sup> Interview with Thomas Kossendey: “[...] one must ensure that philosophies harmonize. Not everyone harmonizes with everyone. Afghanistan stands as a good example of how differently one can approach things.” (Author's translation.)

<sup>130</sup> Lack of equipment is an ongoing problem. The Cold War strategy of territorial defence, with its emphasis on heavy armoured units, is still affecting abilities in current missions, which require light and mobile units. Cf. *Der Tagesspiegel*: Mängelliste der Bundeswehr. 18.09.09.

<http://www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/international/afghanistan/Bundeswehr;art15872,2902219> (20.10.09).

### 3.4 Baltic Sea Region

By and large, both states share the same opinion about the region. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, a revitalized exchange between the bordering states was in the interests of both Finland and Germany. Therefore, both countries made efforts to establish dialogue and cooperation,<sup>131</sup> and in terms of practical issues little disagreement has emerged. In the preparation of the EU Baltic Sea Strategy, both countries highlighted the need for efforts to strengthen environmental protection and economic competitiveness, to improve transport infrastructure and maritime security, and to enhance the functioning of the internal EU market and the cohesion around the Baltic Sea.<sup>132</sup> Both want effective implementation of adopted agreements, supported by EU action, instead of new structures. Getting Russia and other third states involved is an important common goal. In mid 2009, the Commission released its draft on the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. The Swedish EU presidency prioritized the issue for the period of its chairmanship, and the strategy was duly adopted at the end of 2009. Serious doubts have been raised, however, over whether the project can attract sufficient funding, leadership or focus.<sup>133</sup> In order to give the Baltic Sea Strategy Europe-wide attention, German support would have been decisive. The EU Baltic Sea Strategy was discussed in the German *Bundestag* and the coalition groups demanded an active stance from the Federal Government.<sup>134</sup> Chancellor Merkel had previously expressed her support for the strategy and affirmed her belief in the prosperity of the region.<sup>135</sup> Nonetheless, the approval of the first EU Baltic Sea Strategy was largely overshadowed by the Czech ratification of the Lisbon Treaty, personnel discussions and the debate on the EU position on climate targets.<sup>136</sup> Additionally, German attention was focused on the new government and Foreign Minister Westerwelle's first EU summit.<sup>137</sup>

<sup>131</sup> Germany, in cooperation with Denmark, launched the Council of Baltic Sea States in 1992. Finland initiated a structured regional dialogue with the Kotka conference in 1990 and set up the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference (BSPC) in Helsinki in 1991.

<sup>132</sup> Cf. Preparation of the EU's Baltic Sea Strategy: Finland's objectives for the priorities of the Strategy. Finnish Non-Paper, 25.02.08. <http://www.euroregionbaltic.eu/downloads/file87.pdf> (28.03.09); Preparing an EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region – A Contribution from Germany. 25.09.08. [http://www.strategia-baltyk.ukie.gov.pl/WWW/baltyk.nsf/47E191BD12F38121C12574EA00502416/\\$FILE/Germany.pdf?open](http://www.strategia-baltyk.ukie.gov.pl/WWW/baltyk.nsf/47E191BD12F38121C12574EA00502416/$FILE/Germany.pdf?open) (28.03.09).

<sup>133</sup> Cf. Helsingin Sanomat (International Edition): Commission steps back from EU Baltic Sea strategy. 17.09.09. <http://www.hs.fi/english/print/1135249394396> (21.09.09).

<sup>134</sup> Cf. Deutscher Bundestag: Ostseestrategie voranbringen und unterstützen. Drucksache 16/13171, 27.05.09. <http://dip21.bundestag.de/dip21/btd/16/131/1613171.pdf> (21.11.09).

<sup>135</sup> Cf. Rede von Bundeskanzlerin Dr. Angela Merkel auf der sechsten Nationalen Maritimen Konferenz am 30. März 2009 in Rostock. In: Bulletin der Bundesregierung, Nr. 43-2 vom 30. März 2009. [http://www.bundesregierung.de/nn\\_1514/Content/DE/Bulletin/2009/03/43-2-bk-maritime-konferenz.html](http://www.bundesregierung.de/nn_1514/Content/DE/Bulletin/2009/03/43-2-bk-maritime-konferenz.html) (21.11.09).

<sup>136</sup> Cf. Council of the European Union: Brussels European Council 29/30 October 2009. Presidency Conclusions.

<sup>137</sup> Cf. Volkery, Carsten: Westerwelle schnuppert auf der Weltbühne. In: Spiegel Online, 30.10.09. <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/ausland/0,1518,658407,00.html> (21.11.09).

Although Finland and Germany basically share the same positions on Baltic Sea issues, a marked asymmetry is evident. For Germany, it is just one neighbourhood among many. The present situation is acknowledged, but it simply does not command the same urgency. What is more, the issue is processed at different levels. In Finland, the Baltic Sea cooperation is a matter for the President and the Prime Minister.<sup>138</sup> In Germany, the Baltic Sea is relegated to a matter for the Foreign Minister at best.<sup>139</sup> At the last summit of the Council of Baltic Sea States (CBSS), Germany and Russia were the only countries not represented by the head of government, but by the foreign ministers. The recent Baltic Sea Action Summit in Helsinki has even been attended by the Federal Minister of Agriculture.

From the Finnish perspective, Germany is clearly one of the most important Baltic Sea states. A senior researcher on the Baltic Sea region underlined this when he said: “You cannot envisage the Baltic Sea region as a European region without the commitment of Germany.”<sup>140</sup> Moreover, German leadership in the Baltic Sea region would even appear to be welcomed from the Finnish perspective. A Finnish MP put it: “It would be good because Germany is the largest country. And the Baltic Sea region needs some leadership right now because there are a lot of different ideas and emotions and too little concrete work.”<sup>141</sup>

But despite Germany’s potential role, its interest in the region is perceived as being slight. As one Finnish researcher forthrightly asked: “How can we get Germany to see the light when it comes to the Baltic Sea?”<sup>142</sup> A government representative put it this way: “[...] we would like to attract more German attention, at the governmental level as well, to the issues and concerns of the Baltic Sea region.”<sup>143</sup> The Finnish call for more German commitment basically has three aspects. First, Germany’s own weight is of decisive importance. Second, German support is necessary in order to get the region’s big players, Russia and Poland, onboard. Third, without Germany, the EU would probably pay scant attention to the Baltic Sea region. If the Baltic Sea case is to be advanced, Finland needs partners. As a senior government official said: “Here I would like to stress the role played by size. The more Germany leads by example and shows interest towards the region, the more

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<sup>138</sup> So they addressed the Baltic Sea countries in January 2008 with a joint letter calling for more commitment. Cf. Office of the President of the Republic of Finland: President Halonen and Prime Minister Vanhanen’s letter to the heads of state and heads of government of the countries bordering the Baltic Sea. 01.01.08.

[http://www.presidentti.fi/netcomm/news/ShowArticle.asp?intNWSAID=67522&intSubArtID=27109&intIGID=9&LAN=FI&contlan=&Thread=&intThreadPosition=0&intShowBack=1&strReturnURL=2= \(22.09.09\).](http://www.presidentti.fi/netcomm/news/ShowArticle.asp?intNWSAID=67522&intSubArtID=27109&intIGID=9&LAN=FI&contlan=&Thread=&intThreadPosition=0&intShowBack=1&strReturnURL=2= (22.09.09).)

<sup>139</sup> Cf. Saldik, Heribert: *Deutsche Außenpolitik in der Ostseeregion. Global Governance auf subnationaler Ebene.* Frankfurt, 2004. pp. 64-65.

<sup>140</sup> Interview with Esko Antola.

<sup>141</sup> Interview with Antti Kaikkonen.

<sup>142</sup> Interview with Esko Antola.

<sup>143</sup> Interview with Teija Tiilikainen.

likely we are to gain attention from other countries. If Germany does not pay attention to the concerns and challenges of the Baltic Sea region, others won't either."<sup>144</sup>

In short, Finland is seeking German commitment to the Baltic Sea issues. This is a critical factor in the bilateral relationship, although the Finns understand that Germany does not attach the same importance to the region. As a staff member of the Finnish Embassy in Berlin commented: "*Da kommt man wieder dazu, dass Deutschland ein großes Land ist. In dem Sinne ist die Ostsee nur ein Thema von vielen. Das versteht man auch von der finnischen Seite. Trotzdem wäre es für uns wichtig, dass das etwas höher eingestuft wäre.*"<sup>145</sup>

However, the Finns have witnessed some critical occasions when Germany has used its influence. One Finnish MP explained Germany's role as the following: "For instance [...] when President Sarkozy came up with the idea of a new Euro-Mediterranean Union and suggested that only a part of the EU members would be onboard together with all the neighbouring countries around the Mediterranean. So it was thanks to Merkel and Germany, [...] that Sarkozy somehow got the point that if the EU is going to do something, it is going to do it as a whole."<sup>146</sup> In the context of the rivalry between regions for the EU's attention, the Finns seemed to be pleased that Germany had safeguarded the Baltic Sea region's interest towards the rest of the Union. A Finnish government official asserted that the German Chancellor is aware of the region's importance, but pointed out, "that is an issue where Finland is constantly trying to influence countries like Germany, and Poland for that matter, [...]"<sup>147</sup>

From the German perspective, Finland plays an outstanding role as a partner in the region. Indeed, Hans-Dietrich Genscher emphasized that Germany's interest in Finland is mainly due to its role in the Baltic Sea region.<sup>148</sup> In the future, with growing integration of the region, Finland will probably become even more important. A German senior MP stated that the traditionally positive relations between Finland and Germany have particular significance,<sup>149</sup> while a Federal Foreign Office official put it this way: "*Finnland hat eine ganz wichtige Rolle als Partner in der Ostsee, weil Finnland in den vergangenen Jahren sehr viele Ostseekooperationsprojekte angestoßen hat. [...] gerade die Nördliche Dimension der EU oder die Umweltzusammenarbeit, die Helsinki Kommission, das sind finnische*

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<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> Interview with Petri Hakkarainen: "We always come back to the same issue – Germany is a big country. So the Baltic Sea is just one topic among many. The Finns understand that. Nonetheless, it would be important for us if the issue were ranked more highly." (Author's translation.)

<sup>146</sup> Interview with Eero Akaan-Penttilä.

<sup>147</sup> Interview with Jari Luoto.

<sup>148</sup> Interview with Hans-Dietrich Genscher.

<sup>149</sup> Interview with Kurt Bodewig.

*Initiativen, wo Finnland sehr viel Werbung gemacht hat und sehr daran interessiert ist, alle Ostseeanrainer und darüber hinaus mit einzubeziehen.*<sup>150</sup> Referring to Finland's engagement in environmental protection, a former member of the Federal Government asserted: *“Die Finnen sind da ein starker Motor, die natürlich ein Interesse daran haben, ein saubereres Meer vor der Haustür zu haben.”*<sup>151</sup> Moreover, the country's role regarding Russia is rightly valued: *“Und wenn man die Ostseepolitik, die zu einem großen Teil die Politik der Nördlichen Dimension beinhaltet, betrachtet, dann ist Finnland ein wichtiges Land, das die Integration von Russland in die Politik der Nördlichen Dimension auch ermöglicht.”*<sup>152</sup> Finnish initiatives coupled with the country's active role have clearly made a lasting impression. As another senior MP noted: *“Gerade die Nördliche Dimension hat noch einmal gezeigt, wie intelligent, auch von der Struktur her, ein kleines Land Politik bestimmen kann. Die gesamte Ostseekooperation wäre ohne Finnland in dieser Art und Weise nicht zustande gekommen.”*<sup>153</sup>

Nonetheless, the Baltic Sea region remains a low priority issue in German foreign policy for the time being. Calls for more German commitment and criticism that Germany might be dragging its feet or even slowing down regional cooperation have surfaced several times in the past.<sup>154</sup> A case in point was the lack of interest displayed in the CBSS by the former German foreign ministers Klaus Kinkel and Joschka Fischer.<sup>155</sup> Even a minister of a northern German state was prompted to voice his complaints in an article for a weekly magazine: *“Der Ostseeraum gehört zu den Zukunftsregionen Europas. Ob alle Deutschen das mit der nötigen Klarheit sehen, bezweifle ich. Die norddeutschen Bundesländer, allen voran Schleswig-Holstein, fühlen sich häufig genug wie Rufer in der Wüste.”*<sup>156</sup> Expectations for change

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<sup>150</sup> Interview with a Federal Foreign Office official: “Finland plays a very important role as a partner in the Baltic Sea because the country has initiated many Baltic Sea cooperation projects in the past. [...] particularly the Northern Dimension of the EU, or the environmental cooperation, the Helsinki Commission – these are all Finnish initiatives, which Finland made a lot of effort to promote and is keen to get all the Baltic Sea countries and beyond involved in.” (Author's translation.)

<sup>151</sup> Interview with Franz Thönnies: “The Finns are a strong driving force in that respect, who naturally have an interest in having a cleaner sea outside their door.” (Author's translation.)

<sup>152</sup> Ibid: “And when you examine Baltic Sea politics, which in large part includes the policy of the Northern Dimension, then Finland is an important country that can also enable the integration of Russia into this policy.” (Author's translation.)

<sup>153</sup> Interview with Axel Schäfer: “The Northern Dimension is a good example of the way in which a small country can determine politics by introducing a new structure. The whole Baltic Sea cooperation would not exist in its present form were it not for Finland's efforts.” (Author's translation.)

<sup>154</sup> Interview with a Federal Foreign Office official; Schultheiß, Wolfgang: *Wie weit liegt Bonn von der Ostsee entfernt? Der Stellenwert Nordeuropas und des Ostseerates im Rahmen deutscher Außenpolitik.* In: Wellmann, Christian (Ed.): *Kooperation und Konflikt in der Ostseeregion.* Kiel, 1999, pp. 23-34 (29).

<sup>155</sup> Cf. Saldik, 2004, pp. 64-65.

<sup>156</sup> Walter, Gerd: *Der Ostseeregion gehört die Zukunft.* In: FOCUS, Nr. 32, 1999. [http://www.focus.de/politik/deutschland/standpunkt-der-ostseeregion-gehört-die-zukunft\\_aid\\_180601.html](http://www.focus.de/politik/deutschland/standpunkt-der-ostseeregion-gehört-die-zukunft_aid_180601.html) (12.02.09): “The Baltic Sea region is one of the regions of the future in

after the transfer of the capital from Bonn to Berlin have not been fulfilled either. Germany's political culture remained more or less as it was before, and the Baltic Sea did not garner attention just because the water is closer to the Brandenburg Gate.

Confronted with Finnish expectations for more commitment, German representatives had a different perspective on the issue. One MP referred to the German contribution in the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference (BSPC).<sup>157</sup> Another one mentioned the importance of Germany's advancing cooperation in the decisive moments and pointed to the Baltic Sea pipeline that would bring Europe and Russia closer to each other.<sup>158</sup> German representatives mentioned that substantive contributions are more important than whether the Chancellor has participated in a CBSS Summit or not. Moreover, they referred to the influence that Steinmeier wielded as Foreign Minister and Vice-Chancellor.<sup>159</sup> A senior MP responded to the Finnish calls for more commitment by summarizing: "[...] *Vielleicht sind die Erwartungen höher in diesem Bereich als Deutschland sie auch erfüllen kann. Wir haben als großer Staat in der globalen Wahrnehmung auch andere Aufgaben.*"<sup>160</sup> A former member of the Federal Government explained that Germany does not aspire to leadership, but rather, equal partnership in the region: "*Es ist notwendig, als gleichberechtigte Partner aufzutreten. Diese Frage der gleichberechtigten Partner wird von den kleineren Ländern auch sehr sensibel gesehen, so dass es sich verbietet, eine Führungsrolle zu übernehmen, weil die Würde mit Sicherheit dazu beitragen, dass sofort wieder Skepsis aufkäme und eine gute Vertrauensbasis, die jetzt da ist, ins Wanken geriete.*"<sup>161</sup> Germany is not willing to jeopardize relations with the smaller Baltic Sea states, particularly those who have suffered at the hand of German aggression in the past. German aspirations for a regional leader role could severely threaten relations with Poland, for example.

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Europe. I doubt whether every German realizes this. The Northern German states, especially Schleswig-Holstein, often feel like voices in the wilderness." (Author's translation.)

<sup>157</sup> Interview with Kurt Bodewig.

<sup>158</sup> Interview with Franz Thönnies.

<sup>159</sup> Indeed, Foreign Minister Steinmeier has put emphasis on Baltic Sea policy as he joined the Ministerial Meeting in 2007 and participated in the CBSS Summits in 2006 and 2008.

<sup>160</sup> Interview with Kurt Bodewig: "Maybe expectations are higher in this connection than Germany can fulfil. We also have other tasks as a big state when we look at the world as a whole." (Author's translation.)

<sup>161</sup> Interview with Franz Thönnies: "It is necessary to act as equal partners. This issue of equal partnership is a sensitive one for small countries, so it is forbidden to assume a leadership role because it would certainly give rise to scepticism, and shake the very foundation of trust which has been established." (Author's translation.)

### 3.5 Common Agricultural Policy

Agriculture has a fundamentally different political meaning for Finland and Germany. When the Common Agricultural Policy was established in the early 1960s, it functioned as a form of compensation to France for accepting the Common Market.<sup>162</sup> Previously, the Federal Government used to grant customs concessions to countries that imported German manufactured goods, and subsidized its relatively small agricultural sector with national measures. The importance of the CAP can be attributed in part to further integration, as it became the first genuine common policy. Today, German agriculture makes up just a tiny percentage of national GDP and a little bit more than twelve per cent of the Union's agricultural production, which is quite low compared to its land mass.<sup>163</sup> French agriculture, on the other hand, accounts for one fifth of agricultural production in the EU. Nonetheless, agriculture in eastern Germany has some special needs which carry some political weight due to the region's economic weakness. For Finland, agriculture also amounts to no significantly high percentage, but it has a much more important political meaning, not least because *Keskusta* (Centre), the party which has notched up the most years in government, was *Maalaisliitto* (the Agrarian League) until the 1960s. This factor really came to the fore when Finland joined the Union. The issue of farm subsidies for southern Finland almost derailed the country's accession plans. It was due to the efforts of German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel that a special agreement entered the Finnish accession treaty – known as Article 141.<sup>164</sup> It rules that “the Commission may authorize Finland [...] to grant national aids”<sup>165</sup> to agricultural producers in the southern part of the country, which is not covered by an EU provision on extreme climate zones.

In the negotiations on the financial perspective for 2007-2013, Germany made it clear that it falls somewhere between the two extreme CAP positions adopted by the UK and France respectively. The former would prefer to reduce subsidies as much as possible, while the latter is determined to keep things the way they are. Finland consequently has more in common with France in this regard. But the French government, for its part, would care little about Finland should the country not show support for its position. When the 141 clause was about to expire in line with the European Commission's plans, it was Germany that the Finnish government turned to in order to rally support for its cause. A good link to Paris would certainly be

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<sup>162</sup> Cf. Clemens, Gabriele/Reinfeldt, Alexander/Wille, Gerhard: *Geschichte der europäischen Integration*. Paderborn, 2008. pp. 147-152.

<sup>163</sup> Cf. European Commission: *The Common Agricultural Policy Explained*. [http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/publi/capexplained/cap\\_de.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/publi/capexplained/cap_de.pdf) (25.08.09).

<sup>164</sup> Interview with Esko Antola; Interview with Pertti Salolainen; Interview with Petri Hakkarainen.

<sup>165</sup> Official Journal of the European Union: Act concerning the conditions of accession of the Kingdom of Norway, the Republic of Austria, the Republic of Finland and the Kingdom of Sweden and the adjustments to the Treaties on which the European Union is founded. 29.08.94. <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/en/treaties/dat/11994N/htm/11994N.html#0021010008> (21.11.09).

plausible in order to strengthen the position at that extreme, but that will not lead to a solution. It is Germany which plays a decisive role in this connection. As a former Finnish Minister of Agriculture explained: “Germany has a really good opportunity to bring all the Europeans together, more than any other member country. [...] In a way, it is exactly the same situation in the agricultural policy.”<sup>166</sup> Incidentally, Finland has an advantage when it comes to approaching Germany, as Finns and Germans sit next to each other in Council meetings due to the sequence of chairmanships. This is something which has not escaped the attention of a former Finnish minister, who commented that “it is good to have a German minister close by.”<sup>167</sup> The Federal Minister of Agriculture for her part announced recently that she “intends to lead and coordinate the dialogue on the future of the CAP.”<sup>168</sup>

More recently, agriculture has started to be associated with Finland in German minds, not least because of the 141 issue and the reform of the sugar sector. Prior to that, Finland had not featured much in the news. To quote one Federal Foreign Office official: “*Da ist hier erstmal klar geworden, Finnland ist nicht nur Nokia und Pisa, sondern für Finnland ist auch Agrar- und Forstwirtschaft extrem wichtig.*”<sup>169</sup> On the other hand, Finland has been characterized as a country that is sometimes too passive. The sugar market reform in its initial form would have essentially resulted in the demise of Finnish sugar production, yet the Finns procrastinated when it came to explaining their country’s position. The prevailing feeling therefore is that the Finns should be more proactive in promoting their interests. As the Federal Foreign Office official went on to say: “*Die Finnen sind vielleicht etwas zurückhaltender im Vortragen eigener Positionen. Und das gepaart damit, dass sie ein kleiner Staat mit Randlage sind, fallen sie oft aus der Betrachtung raus.*”<sup>170</sup> Even though Prime Minister Vanhanen praised Finnish lobbying as “subtle but efficient”<sup>171</sup>, it is worth adding that subtlety should not be taken too far.

After the hard-fought compromise on the EU budget for 2007-2013, it became evident that the current system of financial frameworks will be hard to maintain in the future. The Federal Government’s central concept in

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<sup>166</sup> Interview with Juha Korkea-aho.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

<sup>168</sup> Cf. Federal Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection: The future of the Common Agricultural Policy. Aigner: I will lead the dialogue. 16.02.10. [http://www.bmelv.de/cIn\\_172/SharedDocs/Standardartikel/EN/International/EU-Agricultural-Policy/Common-Agricultural-Policy.html](http://www.bmelv.de/cIn_172/SharedDocs/Standardartikel/EN/International/EU-Agricultural-Policy/Common-Agricultural-Policy.html) (01.03.10).

<sup>169</sup> Interview with a Federal Foreign Office official: “Then it became clear for the first time that Finland is not merely Nokia and Pisa. Agriculture and forestry are also extremely important for the country.” (Author’s translation.)

<sup>170</sup> Ibid: “The Finns are perhaps a bit hesitant in putting forward their own positions. And that, coupled with being a small, peripheral state, means that they are often left out of the equation.” (Author’s translation.)

<sup>171</sup> Finnish Government: Prime Minister Matti Vanhanen at the seminar on the vision for Finland’s EU policy in the 2010s. Finlandia Hall, 2 February 2009. <http://www.valtioneuvosto.fi/ajankohtaista/puheet/puhe/en.jsp.print?oid=252948> (15.08.09).



reforming the EU budget gives added value to Europe. Although the concept has not been concretely defined, it basically entails a shift towards common challenges and more future-orientated spending,<sup>172</sup> which would, in turn, inevitably challenge the current CAP. Moreover, Germany, as the biggest net contributor to the EU budget, has a vested interest in minimizing the costs of the CAP. The brakes have already been put on expenditure, as decided by the European Council in 2002. France will certainly concur with the idea that the CAP cannot be continued after 2013 in its present form, and might even be tempted to sacrifice it in order to get rid of the UK rebate.<sup>173</sup> President Sarkozy has already outlined future perspectives for the CAP, particularly in its environmental and social aspects, and agreed with Chancellor Merkel that the common policy must be modernized and made more efficient.<sup>174</sup> The debate on the EU budget after 2013 will start no earlier than 2011, but a couple of states have already indicated their positions. During the Czech presidency, the EU ministers of agriculture discussed the future of the CAP, confirming their readiness to negotiate on the future of direct payments.

Finland's position on the CAP after 2013, which has been drafted relatively early, is that the two-pillar structure and the overall level should be maintained, and transfers from the first to the second pillar should be on a permanent basis. The first pillar of direct payments should be implemented according to the single payment scheme, fully funded by the EU, while the second pillar should provide co-funded rural development support. The Finnish Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry emphasized that when reforming the natural handicap payments, the level of payments should be connected to the basis of the natural handicap without stipulating any limit to the support. Therefore, the country's special needs arising from its Nordic and Arctic climate must also be taken into account in the future. Furthermore, agri-environmental payments should be targeted more efficiently.<sup>175</sup> Prime Minister Matti Vanhanen defined Finland's long-term goal as follows: "to have the whole of Finland covered by a single subsidy system, the one now in use in the northern part of the country."<sup>176</sup> That implies nothing short of making article 141 no longer the exception, but the rule.

The Federal Government has not yet outlined its positions precisely. However, the German Minister of Agriculture stated at Brno that direct

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<sup>172</sup> Cf. Becker, Peter: Germany. In: Szemlér, Tamás/Eriksson, Jonas (Ed.): *The EU Budget Review: Mapping the Positions of Member States*. SIEPS-Report, 2/2008. pp. 58-65.

<sup>173</sup> Cf. Somai, Miklós: France. In: *Ibid.* pp. 66-74.

<sup>174</sup> Cf. *ibid.*; Bundesregierung: Bundeskanzlerin Angela Merkel und der französische Präsident Nicolas Sarkozy sprechen sich für ein starkes Europa aus. 31.05.09. [http://www.bundesregierung.de/nn\\_774/Content/DE/Namensbeitrag/2009/2009-05-31-merkel-sarkozy.html](http://www.bundesregierung.de/nn_774/Content/DE/Namensbeitrag/2009/2009-05-31-merkel-sarkozy.html) (15.08.09).

<sup>175</sup> Cf. Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry: *Common Agricultural Policy needed also in the future*. Press Release, 20.05.09. <http://www.mmm.fi/en/tulostus.html> (13.08.09).

<sup>176</sup> Finnish Government: Prime Minister Matti Vanhanen at the seminar on the vision for Finland's EU policy in the 2010s. Finlandia Hall, 2 February 2009.

payments should remain the most important element in the CAP, referring to high standards and the importance of common welfare.<sup>177</sup> The harmonization of payments would not be appropriate and regional conditions must be taken into account. The Federal Minister predicted that the second pillar of the CAP will be expanded and the CAP will have to cope with more demanding tasks like environmental and climate issues. In any event, such changes will only occur gradually. Although the Ministry of Agriculture is no doubt determined to safeguard the farmers' interests, the Federal Government will have to make an overall deal with the other member states. In this way, the CAP will also be validated against the concept of European added value, and it has to be kept in mind that Germany is less in favour of the status quo than Finland. Co-financing in the first pillar might be one proposition. Nevertheless, the Federal Government has a keen interest in ensuring that regional conditions and needs are considered when making any reform. These considerations are probably the most critical factor from the Finnish point of view. Germany, for its part, must consider its East German agriculture, which also has special needs due to the size of its farms. Attempts to introduce an upper limit for payments to a single receiver have been repeatedly rejected.

The Finnish government's approach to the future debate on the EU's budget is supportive in terms of the German concept of European added value. At a seminar on the vision for Finland's EU policy in the 2010s, Prime Minister Vanhanen opposed the simple argumentation of net contribution, stating: "The whole is greater than the sum of its parts. I believe that we must take an unbiased look at the EU's major expenditure items, such as agricultural policy, structural policy and regional policy."<sup>178</sup> At the same event, Foreign Minister Stubb even went as far as to say: "The Union's funding must be redirected so that it yields additional growth. I don't understand why this fact can't be said out loud. It doesn't mean that the Union's agricultural and regional policies should be dismantled. It means that these policies must be revised."<sup>179</sup> At this juncture, it should be remembered that the next general election in Finland is in early 2011, when the decisive negotiations will get underway.

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<sup>177</sup> Cf. Bundesministerium für Ernährung, Landwirtschaft und Verbraucherschutz: Aigner beim Informellen Agrarministertreffen in Brunn: Direktzahlungen auch nach 2013 erforderlich. Pressemitteilung 109, 02.06.09.  
[http://www.bmelv.de/cln\\_102/SharedDocs/Pressemitteilungen/2009/109-Informelles-Agrarministertreffen-Bruenn.html](http://www.bmelv.de/cln_102/SharedDocs/Pressemitteilungen/2009/109-Informelles-Agrarministertreffen-Bruenn.html) (14.08.09).

<sup>178</sup> Finnish Government: Prime Minister Matti Vanhanen at the seminar on the vision for Finland's EU policy in the 2010s. Finlandia Hall, 2 February 2009.

<sup>179</sup> Finnish Government: Foreign Minister Stubb's Ten Theses on Europe. 05.02.09.  
<http://www.valtioneuvosto.fi/ajankohtaista/puheet/puhe/en.jsp.print?oid=252990> (15.08.09).

## 4 Conclusions

After the previous considerations one might wonder why Germany does not have a more prominent place on Finland's foreign policy agenda. Both share major common interests and – perhaps more importantly – in most of the examined policy fields they are natural partners. There are few alternatives to Germany when it comes to engaging with Russia, safeguarding small states' interests in European integration, the construction of a pragmatic and multi-dimensional European security policy, the sustainable development of the Baltic Sea Region, or a common agriculture policy that takes into account national sensitivities.

But Germany is not only an ideal partner because both countries share common concerns. On many of these key issues, Germany occupies a pivotal role within the EU. For Finland, German support on several of these issues is indeed of vital importance. All of this makes it surprising that Germany is not more visible in Finnish foreign policy today. Of course, when it comes to global politics, other countries might have a bigger impact and perhaps English and Chinese affairs are more important in the short-run. But Finland's geography, as well as its political and economic needs point it towards Germany. As a result, Finnish-German relations will remain of vital importance in the foreseeable future. In fact, Germany's role is likely to further increase, given the EU's increased size and a visible trend towards more intergovernmentalism. How else will Finland get its voice heard within a bigger Union?

Overall, a solid base for the development of bilateral relations exists. Foreign policy actors in Berlin appreciate Finnish strengths and regard Finland as more than just a small country. From a German point of view, Finland has an important contribution to make in the EU. It is regarded as a unique bridge builder to Russia, a model for small states in the EU, an important partner within Europe's Common Security and Defense Policy, and as an active and constructive Baltic Sea country. Particularly on Russia, Finland can self-confidently claim an 'advisory function' to Germany. Finland cannot change its size and its quantitative contributions are often less significant to Germany; but through its qualities it can exert much greater influence. This fact should encourage Finland to play a more active role in Berlin.

Despite its strengths, there is a tendency within Germany to perceive Finland as a small and peripheral country. That certainly does not play to the advantage of Finland. Some problems also derive from the fact that Germany does not give much attention to those issues that are a high priority for Finland – the Baltic Sea for example. However, this should only encourage Finland to engage Germany more actively. During the 1990s, Finland was

close to Germany and to the centre of European politics. Prime Minister Vanhanen recently commented on Finnish EU policy that “there is no influence from the margins.”<sup>180</sup> But where is Finland today? In many ways, being close to the center for Finland requires being close to Germany. A greater emphasis on Finnish-German relations would provide Finland with more influence in Berlin and consequently more visibility in Europe. One practical example is that Germans, like most others, appreciate it when a foreign representative speaks their language. In that respect Foreign Minister Stubb can be lauded for giving a recent interview in German.<sup>181</sup>

Of course, Finland should not equate closeness to Germany with a leader-follower-relationship. Speaking German does not mean to repeat what the Germans say. Instead Finland should always remain critical and articulate its own point of view. In Berlin, Finland’s position and advice is held in high esteem and German policy-makers acknowledge that Finland plays its ‘small’ role in a constructive way. Germany is also a more obvious partner for Finland than some of the other large EU member states, and not just because both countries sit next to each other in EU meetings. Europe’s largest country has good reasons to be concerned about small states’ interests and, therefore, values Finland in particular. Germany, moreover, knows how it feels to be small. On the global stage, for example, Germany still does not exercise much influence. All of this suggests that Finland and Germany could be a model for relations between small and big states in Europe. But Finland needs to be certain about what kind of role it wants to play in this relationship in the future.

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<sup>180</sup> Quoted in: Helsingin Sanomat (International Edition): PM calls for clarity in EU policy. 03.02.09. <http://www.hs.fi/english/print/1135243249114> (27.02.10).

<sup>181</sup> Cf. Deutschlandfunk: Stubb: EU geht mit einer führenden Rolle nach Kopenhagen. 31.10.09. [http://www.dradio.de/dlf/sendungen/interview\\_dlf/1061523/](http://www.dradio.de/dlf/sendungen/interview_dlf/1061523/) (21.11.09).