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## The End of Spatialised Finlandisation?

### The Fate of Soviet Statues in Finland since 2022

Finland has an interesting and unique geopolitical position in northeastern Europe. Given its historical connections to both Scandinavia and Russia, this Nordic country has often been seen as a borderland between the East and the West<sup>1</sup>. This anomalous dynamic has been significant during several historical periods, such as the autonomous Grand Duchy of Finland<sup>2</sup>, World War II<sup>3</sup>, and the Cold War<sup>4</sup>. As a result of this background, Finland has also had a special relationship to the Russian and Soviet aspects of its cultural heritage. Finland was never a socialist country or a part of the Soviet Union. However, the Cold War period of Finlandisation has left its traces on Finnish heritage.

The year 2022 marked a notable shift in Finnish geopolitics. As a reaction to the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Finland abandoned its previous neutrality, as well as its traditionally close diplomatic relationship to Russia, and applied for NATO membership, which was granted in April 2023<sup>5</sup>. This political shift has also had cultural and societal implications, such as debates regarding public space and monuments.

In this article, I focus on the debates surrounding Russian and Soviet monuments in Finland in 2022. The fate of Soviet statues in Finland is naturally linked to recent political and cultural developments. While the heritage of Finlandisation has occasionally been discussed since the 1990s, the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine caused a new wave of debates, resulting in several statue removals<sup>6</sup>. This article provides a brief analysis of the public debates in Finland.

My first example is the World Peace Statue in Helsinki, a statue that was erected during the final years of the Soviet Union, in 1990, and removed in August 2022 (fig. 1). Secondly, I discuss the symbolic role of Vladimir Ilyich Lenin in Finnish public space and the changes that have occurred since 2022. As source material for my analysis, I have used Finnish news articles published by the Finnish Broadcasting Company

(Yleisradio), as well as news articles and opinion pieces published in the largest Finnish-language newspaper, *Helsingin Sanomat*. Additionally, discussions have taken place via various social media platforms, but these are not directly used in my article.

### Russian and Soviet Heritage in Finland: The Shifts in 2022

Despite not being a post-Soviet society, Finland has a long and complex relationship with its eastern neighbour. I will start with a brief overview of the context, introducing the two periods of Finnish history during which Russian and/or Soviet influence has left its mark in built heritage and monuments, first the Grand Duchy of Finland until 1917, and later the post-World War II era, especially the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance. The need to redefine and reassess Finland's relationship with Russia and Russianness has thus been present in various ways throughout the country's history. In terms of built heritage and monuments, two periods in particular have left visible marks of Russianness.

Between 1809 and 1917, the Grand Duchy of Finland was an autonomous part of the Russian Empire. It is noteworthy that, at this time, the position of the Grand Duchy was unique, as Finland was the only Russian-controlled area with such autonomy<sup>7</sup>. The construction of the capital, Helsinki, occurred during this period, and the imperial Russian influence is still visible in the architecture and in public memorials<sup>8</sup>. Perhaps the most notable example is Senate Square in Helsinki, in the middle of which a statue of the Russian Tsar Alexander II (by Walter Runeberg and Johannes Takanen, 1894)<sup>9</sup> is still located. Following Finnish independence in 1917, some elements linked to the period of the Grand Duchy were removed from public space. For example, several symbols of the Orthodox church were deemed unsuitable<sup>10</sup>. However, in

the statue removal debates of 2022, this period received little attention<sup>11</sup>.

In the divided Cold War dynamic, Finland was a curiosity in another sense: it was officially neutral and a member of neither NATO nor the Warsaw Pact. However, its sovereignty was *de facto* strongly influenced by the Soviet Union<sup>12</sup>. In 1948, following peace negotiations, Finland signed a “Treaty of Friendship”, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance (*Sopimus ystävydestä, yhteistoiminnasta ja keskinäisestä avunannosta*, the YYA Treaty) with the Soviet Union, and this treaty was valid until 1992<sup>13</sup>. During this period, the concept of Finlandisation was introduced, originally in a German-language discourse (*Finnlandisierung*), referring to the strong influence of the Soviet Union on Finnish politics and society<sup>14</sup>. Finlandisation was also reproduced spatially through “statue diplomacy”: Soviet statues were donated to Finland as gestures of friendship between twin cities, and places were named in Finland in honour of the Fenno-Soviet friendship<sup>15</sup>.

These statues and place names were to some extent controversial even before 2022<sup>16</sup>. That being said, the role of Soviet symbols in Finnish public space has come under special scrutiny since February 2022. The beginning of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine had several immediate effects on Finland. It is crucial to understand this shift in 2022 as a background motivator for the debates regarding Russian and Soviet elements in Finnish public space.

In terms of foreign policy, it made Finland reassess its geopolitical strategy and position. Since the 1990s, the option of joining NATO (*Nato-optio*) has been a point of discussion in Finland: however, the majority of Finns were sceptical of NATO membership<sup>17</sup>. Attitudes regarding a military alliance changed in 2022 and Finland ended up abandoning its previous foreign policy strategy. However, it should be noted that even the previous neutrality was a result of “geopolitical restraints”<sup>18</sup>. Therefore, the NATO application can be seen as a continuation of a “shelter-seeking process” with Western organisations<sup>19</sup> and as “the completion of Finland’s integration with the West”<sup>20</sup>.

In addition to the radical shift in foreign policy, the invasion affected Finns at a cultural and emotional level. The Finnish people have been very sympathetic

to Ukraine. At the beginning of the war, this was further strengthened by several parallels drawn between Finland and Ukraine. The war has been frequently compared to the Finnish Winter War (1939–1940), both in Finland and internationally<sup>21</sup>. In Finnish anti-war protests in early 2022, even much older connections were pointed out. The poem *Terve Ukraina* (Hail to Ukraine), written by the Finnish poet Eino Leino in 1917, was rediscovered for contemporary use<sup>22</sup>. Moreover, a version of Jean Sibelius’s *Finlandia* hymn, in this context renamed *Oi Ukraina*, was performed in front of the Russian embassy by the choir of the University of Helsinki<sup>23</sup>. This usage of works written by Finnish national romantic icons emotionally linked the war in Ukraine to the Finnish collective memory of the struggle for independence and its existence bordering Russia.

### Debating the World Peace Statue in Helsinki

Debates on statue removals in Finland have concentrated on a few key sites. My first example involves the World Peace Statue in Helsinki. Designed by Oleg Kiryukhin, it was donated by the city of Moscow to the city of Helsinki in 1989<sup>24</sup>, and was placed next to Hakaniemi Square (Hakaniemen tori) in central Helsinki. The choice of location was probably not coincidental, as Hakaniemi Square has traditionally been a left-coded, politicised space with a strong symbolic meaning in Finnish society. The market square is linked to the history of the Finnish workers’ movement, is a site of demonstrations and protests, and several labour unions and the Social Democratic Party have their headquarters there<sup>25</sup>. Arriving from the city centre, one crosses the Long Bridge (Pitkäsilta), a historically significant socio-economic barrier between the bourgeoisie of southern Helsinki and the working class in the district of Kallio or, politically speaking, between the right and the left.

The statue has a history as a contested monument. It was originally unveiled in January 1990. The first acts of vandalism took place in May 1991, when a group of students smeared the statue with tar and feathers<sup>26</sup>. In 2010, there was an attempt to blow up the statue using gas<sup>27</sup>. Additionally, in 2019, a local right-wing politician suggested that the statue should be relocated to Lenin Park in Helsinki<sup>28</sup>.



Fig. 1: The World Peace Statue in Helsinki by Oleg Kiryukhin (1989). Photo: Olga Juutistenaho, 2022.

In February 2022, the statue got a new symbolic role and meaning: it became a site of protests against the war. Citizens decorated it with Ukrainian flags, and soon after the beginning of the war, the graffiti “Maailman räyhää” appeared.<sup>29</sup> This unofficial renaming is a play of words in which the meaning of the original name is altered from “world peace” (*maailman rauha*) to “world aggression” (*maailman räyhä*).

In March 2022, the statue was a frequent topic of discussion in the leading local newspaper, *Helsingin Sanomat*, as several opinion pieces with varying viewpoints were published. A notable trend in these opinion pieces was that authors representing the general public view often supported the removal of the statue. The main arguments presented were the following: the statue belongs to the local scrapyard as an example of “Russian fake friendship” forced on Finns<sup>30</sup>; tearing down statues of oppressors should be an option<sup>31</sup>; and, more mildly, a new park should be established for such statues<sup>32</sup>.

In contrast to these opinions, academics and other authors – who could be described as experts –

presented more tolerant points of view. These authors claimed that “improving history to serve contemporary interests is the worst misuse of history”<sup>33</sup>, and that “statues can also reveal the mistakes of our history”<sup>34</sup>. This contrast between lay opinions opposing the remnants of Soviet influence, and the expert voices emphasising the role of the statues as symbols of their time can be identified in several Finnish statue debates in 2022.

While the fate of the statue was widely discussed in the media, decisions regarding its fate were made in the city administration. On 7 March 2022, *Helsingin Sanomat* published a news article stating that the statue was to be removed due to a current urban development project that required new construction work in the area. The removal, which had in fact been decided on before the Russian invasion of Ukraine, was supposed to be temporary. There was a plan to relocate the statue, which was a donation to the city of Helsinki and is therefore a part of the public art collection of the Helsinki Art Museum (HAM), after nearby construction work<sup>35</sup>. However, the editorial in *Helsingin Sanomat* published on 10 March, “The Statue is Leaving at the Most Suitable Time”, argued that there was no hurry with the re-positioning of the statue and asked whether a museum would be a more suitable place for this artwork<sup>36</sup>.

During the summer of 2022, several Finnish news outlets documented the developments regarding the statue<sup>37</sup>. The removal was even described as the end of an era<sup>38</sup>. After some technical difficulties due to the large size of the statue, the monument was removed using water transportation on 8 August<sup>39</sup>. Since then, the statue has been temporarily stored in an industrial area in Sipoo (a town east of Helsinki)<sup>40</sup>, its future unclear<sup>41</sup>.

### The Contested Role of Lenin in Finnish Public Space

In addition to the debate around the World Peace Statue in Helsinki, much attention was given to statues and place names commemorating Lenin. Before discussing the removal debates in 2022, it is important to understand the historical and socio-political context in which these statues were erected and the places named.



Fig. 2: Lenin Statue in Kotka by Matti Varik (1979). Photo: Mirkka Kallio (Kymenlaakso Museum), 2022.

The figure of Lenin had an important symbolic role during the period of Finlandisation: he was used as a politicised symbol of Fenno-Soviet friendship. This role is linked to the fact that Lenin lived in exile in Finland before the October Revolution<sup>42</sup>. It was during the exile in Finland that he met Stalin for the first time, in 1905<sup>43</sup>. Although the motives of his actions can be questioned, Lenin was also the first foreign head of state to acknowledge the independence of Finland, in 1917<sup>44</sup>. Due to these historical connections, Lenin was an obvious choice as a symbolic figure for propaganda during the Finlandisation era. A sort of personality cult around Lenin was reinforced by Finnish politicians, such as President Urho Kekkonen, to promote the ideology of “peaceful co-existence” with the Soviet Union<sup>45</sup>.

The symbolic role of Lenin in Fenno-Soviet relations was spatialised in a multitude of ways. Two Soviet-produced statues of him were given to Finnish cities: in 1977, a statue by the Russian sculptor Mikhail Anikushin was donated to Turku by Leningrad<sup>46</sup>, and in 1979 Kotka received a statue by the Estonian sculptor Matti Varik as a gift from Tallinn<sup>47</sup> (fig. 2). Moreover, in 1946, a Lenin Museum was established in Tampere, in the very building where Stalin and Lenin had first met<sup>48</sup>. In Helsinki, a park was named after Lenin in 1970 to honour the centenary of his birth<sup>49</sup>. Additionally, there are several smaller plaques and memorials located in other Finnish cities<sup>50</sup>.

The representations of Lenin in Finnish public space came under particularly serious scrutiny in 2022. Soon after the Russian full-scale invasion of

Ukraine started in February, the Lenin statues in Turku and Kotka were removed from public space<sup>51</sup>. In both cases, decisions on removals were based on political factors. In Turku, the decision was made by the mayor in April 2022, based on discussions among the public and in the media<sup>52</sup>. In Kotka, the decision was made by the local city council, and the removal was carried out in October 2022<sup>53</sup>. The case of Kotka was somewhat more complex as, in addition to the Soviet-donated statue, another monument from 1995 was removed at the same time: the statue by the Polish sculptor Krzysztof M. Bednarski, *The Missing Arm of Lenin* (*Leninin puuttuva käsivarsi*; fig. 3), which mocked the Soviet monument nearby<sup>54</sup>.

As in the debate surrounding the World Peace Statue, opinions on removing Lenin statues from Finnish public spaces were divided. The head of urban planning in Kotka responded to the political initiative to remove the statue by arguing that the past should be kept visible, even if it was painful<sup>55</sup>. Moreover, the local Kymenlaakso Museum (the owner of the statues by Varik and Bednarski) wished to keep them in the cityscape: it suggested that instead of removal, the statues should have been added to the collections of the Lenin Museum in Tampere<sup>56</sup>, which was not interested in acquiring the statues<sup>57</sup>. In Turku, the city's art collection is run by the Turku Museum Centre, which pointed out that, due to frequent acts of vandalism, removing the statue was a reasonable decision from a museological point of view as well<sup>58</sup>.

The expert opinions on removing the Lenin statues referred to their historical value as documents of the past, but also recognised that, unlike with more abstract statues, it would be quite difficult to give a new meaning to a Lenin statue<sup>59</sup>. Furthermore, the impact of removing statues was questioned: according to the analysis of the head of the Lenin Museum, the removals were a form of boycott carried out "without knowing what exactly to boycott"<sup>60</sup>.

In Helsinki, the most debated Lenin-related element was Lenin Park, in the district of Alppiharju. The park was originally named in 1970 to commemorate Lenin's centenary<sup>61</sup>. As in the case of the statues, some people had criticised the name and called for renaming the park even before February 2022<sup>62</sup>. A few days after Russia attacked Ukraine, renaming the park

was brought up again<sup>63</sup>. Here, too, there was a conflict between political and expert opinions: several linguists, historians and other researchers have opposed the renaming<sup>64</sup>, whereas political figures have supported it<sup>65</sup>. The discussion started in 2022 and reached a turning point in June 2023, when the city council of Helsinki voted in favour of renaming the park<sup>66</sup>.



Fig. 3: Krzysztof M. Bednarski, *The Missing Arm of Lenin* (1995), Kotka. Photo: Mirkka Kallio (Kymenlaakso Museum), 2022.

## Conclusions

Finland has traditionally been a nation balanced between the East and the West. The Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine led Finland to reposition itself politically, societally and culturally. The country's previous neutrality and diplomatic relations with Russia were replaced by NATO membership and a clear stand supporting Ukraine. This new role was also reflected in the way Russian and Soviet heritage was perceived and debated in Finland.

The monument debates of 2022 shed light on some key aspects of the Finnish politics of memory. Even though the discussions mainly took place at the local level in small parts of Finland and concentrated on a few specific elements, the common denominators that they share are indicative of wider processes. What are the shifts in attitudes in 2022, in the selecti-

veness of the removal debate, and in the varying views on how Finland should spatially approach its past and contested heritage?

Whereas many post-socialist societies debated and removed monuments immediately after the fall of the Soviet Union, Finland did not see fit to erase the spatialised elements of Finlandisation until 2022<sup>67</sup>. Many of the elements were widely accepted as evidence of the past<sup>68</sup>, and although there were several acts of vandalism and suggestions of removal or renaming<sup>69</sup>, these were marginal compared to the heated discussions of 2022. Some authors even presented the idea of removing statues as a foreign phenomenon and therefore un-Finnish<sup>70</sup>. In the removal and renaming debates, this viewpoint was present in the opinions of several academics, stating for instance that a liberal democracy should keep all historical layers visible<sup>71</sup>.

Furthermore, the Finnish monument removal debate was highly selective thematically. The focus was on the representations of Lenin, as well as on the World Peace Statue, presumably due to its central location and controversial name. Other Finlandised elements in public space, such as the Statue of Peace (by Essi Renvall, 1968; fig. 4)<sup>72</sup>, and the Monument for the Friendship of the Peoples (by Antti Neuvonen, 1983)<sup>73</sup>, both in Helsinki, were not discussed at all<sup>74</sup>: these are both Finnish-produced statues to commemorate the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance.

Moreover, monuments related to Finland's past as an autonomous part of the Russian Empire, such as the statue of Alexander II from the late 19th century<sup>75</sup>, have not caused strong reactions<sup>76</sup>. It is thus noteworthy that all of the removed monuments were in fact Soviet donations created by Soviet artists, while spatialisations of Finlandisation by Finnish artists, such as the statues by Renvall and Neuvonen, are still standing.

Most of the statues discussed belonged to local museums, and therefore local decision makers could decide on their fate. However, given the simultaneity of these discussions, their meaning at the national level cannot be disregarded. As Finland has cut its traditionally close diplomatic ties to Russia, there seems to be a need to redefine the country's relation-

ship with the past, including its contested and problematic elements. However, one could argue about whether this development really signifies a shift in attitude, or a new opportunity to express opinions.

One way or another, the debates showed that Finland is still defining ways to deal with its difficult or contested heritage. The opinions clearly differed on the basis of what type of relationship with the past was desired. While historians and other academics sought to keep the Soviet monuments as documents of the past, for many these were too recent and politically loaded. In the political climate of 2022, the arguments for removal presented by lay people and politicians dominated over the more cautious approach of academics.



Fig. 4: The Statue of Peace in Helsinki by Essi Renvall (1968). Photo: Olga Juutistenaho, 2023.

Indeed, these statue debates present a nation seeking to redefine its identity. One might go as far as to call the year 2022 the end of Finlandisation, with Finland applying for NATO membership and distancing itself from diplomatic ties with Russia. Despite not having any concrete impact on the war in Ukraine, statue removals have functioned as a symbolic political stand at the local level, something that the Finnish public have mostly supported. However, the removal decisions have been far from unanimous, as the debates surrounding the statues show. A new way of communicating the memory of Finlandisation spatially is still to be defined.

## Endnotes

1. See e.g. Risto Alapuro, "What Is Western and What Is Eastern in Finland?", in: *Thesis Eleven*, vol. 77, no. 1, 2004, p. 86, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0725513604042660>; Salla Jokela, "Building a Facade For Finland: Helsinki In Tourism Imagery", in: *Geographical Review*, vol. 101, no. 1, 2011, p. 55, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1931-0846.2011.00072.x>; Laura Kolbe, "An Eastern or a Western Capital City? The Spirit of Helsinki", in: *International Review of Sociology*, vol. 16, no. 2, 2006, pp. 329–346, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03906700600708964>.
2. See e.g. Alapuro 2004, *What Is Western...*, p. 86.
3. See e.g. Ville Kivimäki, "Between Defeat and Victory: Finnish Memory Culture of the Second World War", in: *Scandinavian Journal of History*, vol. 37, no. 4, 2012, p. 497, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03468755.2012.680178>.
4. See e.g. Jouni Häkli, "Mapping the Historical Sense of Finland", in: *Fennia: International Journal of Geography*, vol. 180, no. 1–2, 2002, p. 79.
5. "Finland and Nato", in: Finnish Government, 4.4.2023, <https://valtioneuvosto.fi/en/finland-and-nato> (last accessed 21.11.2023).
6. Cf. Pia Koivunen, "Venäjän hyökkäyssota ja neuvostomuistomerkkien poistot Suomessa 2022" [Russian war of aggression and the removals of Soviet monuments in Finland, 2022], in: *Ennen ja nyt*, vol. 23, no. 3, 2023, pp. 73–81, <https://doi.org/10.37449/ennenjanyt.129303>.
7. Alapuro 2004, *What Is Western...*, p. 86.
8. See e.g. Kolbe 2006, *An Eastern...*, pp. 332–333.
9. "Alexander II", in: HAM, s.a., <https://www.hamhelsinki.fi/en/sculptures/alexander-ii/> (last accessed 21.11.2023).
10. See e.g. Hanna Kemppi, *Kielletty kupoli, avattu alttari: venäläisyyden häivyttäminen Suomen ortodoksisesta kirkkoarkkitehtuurista 1918–1939* [Domes forbidden, altars exposed: Effacing Russianness from Orthodox church architecture in Finland, 1918–1939], Helsinki 2016.
11. See e.g. Minna Kaipainen, "Tässä on viimeinen Lenin-patsas Suomen katukuvassa – Venäjä-tutkija ihmettelee, miksi ne halutaan karrätä piiloon: 'En ymmärrä logiikkaa'" [This is the last Lenin statue in Finnish cityscape. A researcher specialised in Russia is wondering why these are desired to be removed: "I don't understand the logic"], in: *Yle Uutiset*, 11.5.2022, <https://yle.fi/a/3-12434662>; Juho Kankaanpää, "Lenin-patsaita boikotoidaan nyt, koska auton tankkaamista jättäminen olisi suomalaisille liian rajua, sanoo Lenin-museon johtaja" [Lenin statues are currently being boycotted, as failing to use Russian fuel for the cars would be too extreme for Finns, says the head of the Lenin Museum], in: *Helsingin Sanomat*, 5.5.2022, <https://www.hs.fi/kulttuuri/art-2000008782982.html> (all last accessed 21.11.2023).
12. See e.g. Christopher S. Browning, "Coming Home or Moving Home? 'Westernizing' Narratives in Finnish Foreign Policy and the Reinterpretation of Past Identities", in: *Cooperation and Conflict*, vol. 37, no. 1, 2002, pp. 47–72, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010836702037001691>; Sami Moisio, "Finlandisation versus Westernisation: Political Recognition and Finland's European Union Membership Debate", in: *National Identities*, vol. 10, no. 1, 2008, pp. 77–93, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14608940701819785>.
13. "17/1948. Asetus Suomen ja Sosialististen Neuvostotasavaltain Liiton välillä ystävyydestä, yhteistoiminnasta ja keskinäisestä avunannosta Moskovassa 6 päivänä huhtikuuta 1948 allekirjoitetun sopimuksen voimaansaattamisesta" [A decree to validate the treaty between Finland and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on friendship, cooperation, and mutual assistance, signed in Moscow on 6 April 1948], in: *FINLEX*, 6.4.1948, <https://www.finlex.fi/fi/sopimukset/sopsteksti/1948/19480017>; Sirpa Jegorow, "YYA-sopimus oli Suomelle välttämättömyys, josta tuli hyve" [For Finland, the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance was a necessity that became a virtue], in: *Yle*, 4.4.2018,

- [https://yle.fi/aihe/artikkeli/2018/04/04/yysopimus-oli-suomelle-valttamattomuus-josta-tuli-hyve; Moisiö 2008, Finlandisation..., p. 82 \(all last accessed 21.11.2023\).](https://yle.fi/aihe/artikkeli/2018/04/04/yysopimus-oli-suomelle-valttamattomuus-josta-tuli-hyve; Moisiö 2008, Finlandisation..., p. 82 (all last accessed 21.11.2023).)
14. See Tapio Juntunen, "Helsinki Syndrome: The Parachronistic Renaissance of Finlandization in International Politics", in: *New Perspectives*, vol. 25, no. 1, 2017, pp. 63–64; Moisiö 2008, *Finlandisation...*, pp. 81–85.
  15. See e.g. Kari Ahlberg, "Itävälystä oli tulla Neuvostoliiton irvokkaan propagandan näyteikkuna 1973 – Nyt 'ystävyyden' ajasta muistuttaa syrjäinen puisto Itä-Helsingissä" [In 1973 Itävälä was almost renamed as a form of grotesque Soviet propaganda. Nowadays, a remote park in eastern Helsinki reminds of the time of "friendship"], in: *Helsingin Sanomat*, 15.11.2020, <https://www.hs.fi/kaupunki/helsinki/art-2000007616390.html>; Jaakko Oleander-Turja, "Lenin-patsaat poistetaan Suomen katukuvasta – miksi muut Neuvostoliittoa ihailevat patsaat saavat jäädä?" [Lenin statues are being removed from Finnish cityscape: Why other statues idealising the Soviet Union are allowed to stay?], in: *Yle Uutiset*, 22.6.2022, <https://yle.fi/a/3-12504972> (all last accessed 21.11.2023).
  16. See e.g. Seija Aunila, "Maailmanrauha-patsas paljastettiin Helsingissä" [The World Peace Statue was unveiled in Helsinki], in: *Yle*, 10.5.2010, [Helsingin Sanomat, 27.11.2019, <https://www.hs.fi/kaupunki/art-2000006323174.html> \(all last accessed 21.11.2023\).](http://yle.fi/aihe/artikkeli/2010/05/10/maailmanrauha-patsas-paljastettiin-helsingissa; Valtteri Parikka, )
  17. See e.g. Minna Ålander, "Finland Wants to Use the 'NATO Option'", in: *Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP)*, 27.4.2022, <https://www.swp-berlin.org/en/publication/finland-wants-to-use-the-nato-option> (last accessed 21.11.2023).
  18. Baldur Thorhallsson and Thomas Stude Vidal, "Finland's NATO Membership: Continuous Shelter-seeking Strategy", in: *Scandinavian Political Studies*, vol. 46, issue 3, 2023, pp. 194–218, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9477.12257>.
  19. Ibid.
  20. Ålander 2022, *Finland Wants...*
  21. See e.g. Antti Heikinmatti, Tanja Heikkonen and Sanna Kähkönen, "Talvisodassa Suomi kampailla olemassaolostaan aivan kuin Ukraina nyt – liro Tuomiselle, 19, sankarihaudat ovat hiljaisen kunnioituksen paikka" [In the Winter War, Finland was fighting for its existence as Ukraine is doing now: For liro Tuominen, 19, the heroes' cemeteries are sites of quiet respect], in: *Yle Uutiset*, 13.3.2022, <https://yle.fi/a/3-12352445>; Sanna Kähkönen and Jarmo Nuotio, "Ensin oli hiljaista, sitten puhelin alkoi soida Suomussalmella – sota Ukrainassa sai sen naapurimaat kiinnostamaan Suomen historiasta" [Silence was interrupted by phone calls in Suomussalmi: The war in Ukraine got its neighbours interested in Finnish history], in: *Yle Uutiset*, 31.3.2022, <https://yle.fi/a/3-12380622>; Richard Milne, "War with Russia? Finland Has a Plan for That", in: *Financial Times*, 28.3.2022, [The Guardian, 22.4.2022, \[Helsingin Sanomat, 15.1.2023, <https://alasin-delivery.datadesk.hs.fi/51de5eb7-ae72-41da-b56a-1e352d3619c1/index.html> \\(all last accessed 21.11.2023\\).\]\(https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/22/how-finland-bunker-mania-made-sense; Sami Sillanpää, \)](https://www.ft.com/content/c5e376f9-7351-40d3-b058-1873b2ef1924; Pjotr Sauer, )
  22. See e.g. Kimmo Oksanen and Lasse Pyhtilä, "Yli 10 000 ihmistä osoitti lauantaina mieltään Ukrainan puolesta Helsingissä – Sotaa vastustavia mielenosoituksia järjestettiin lauantaina ympäri Suomen" ["On Saturday, over 10,000 demonstrated in Helsinki in support of Ukraine – Antiwar demonstrations were organised on Saturday all over Finland"], in: *Helsingin Sanomat*, 26.2.2022, <https://www.hs.fi/kaupunki/art-2000008644706.html> (last accessed 21.11.2023).
  23. Maija Aalto, "Ylioppilaskunnan laulajat tukivat Ukrainaa – Kuoro esitti Finlandian muutetuilla sanoilla 'Oi Ukraina' Venäjän suurlähetystön liepeillä" [The University of Helsinki Student Union Choir supported Ukraine, performing Finlandia with altered lyrics "Oh, Ukraine" in front of the Russian Embassy], in: *Helsingin Sanomat*, 1.3.2022, <https://www.hs.fi/kaupunki/art-2000008650454.html> (last accessed 21.11.2023).
  24. "Maailman Rauha / World Peace", in: HAM, s.a., <https://www.hamhelsinki.fi/en/sculptures/maailman-rauha-world-peace> (last accessed 21.11.2023).
  25. Ulpu Marjomaa and Marko Halonen, "Hakaniemi. Historia Helsinki" [Hakaniemi, History Helsinki], 19.10.2021, <https://historia.hel.fi/fi/alueet/keskinen/hakaniemi> (last accessed 21.11.2023).
  26. Aunila 2010, *Maailmanrauha-patsas...*
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Fig. 2, 3: Mirkka Kallio (Kymenlaakso Museum).

## Abstract

This article examines debates related to Soviet statues in Finland in 2022. The war in Ukraine marked a political and cultural shift in Finland, as the country abandoned its previous neutrality policy and joined NATO. In terms of public space, this development was reflected in debates on and removals of Soviet-donated statues erected during the Cold War. In

this article, discussions surrounding the World Peace Statue in Helsinki, and the Lenin statues in Turku and Kotka are used as examples. Standing at the centre of Finnish 2022 debates, opinions on these statues were divided: the public opinion was mainly in favour of removals, whereas several academics and other expert voices expressed scepticism. The debate was selective and focused on Soviet donations created by Soviet artists, while neglecting other Russian elements in Finnish public space. The removal of these statues is linked to the wider societal process of redefining the geopolitical position of Finland, functioning as a political stand in support of Ukraine, as well as symbolising a new era in the Finnish politics of memory. In many ways, the discussion can be seen as a belated reaction to the heritage of Finlandisation and the Cold War.

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