

EVA RAPORTTI

“THE IDEA OF FINNISH FOREIGN POLICY”

SUMMARY

According to Risto E. J. Penttilä the grand idea of Finnish foreign policy is missing. We cannot decide whether we are an integral part of Europe and the West or a geopolitical anomaly. We are also unable to decide whether our foreign policy should be led by the president or the prime minister.

Finland has two decisions ahead of it which will determine the grand idea of Finnish foreign policy for a long time to come. Do we want to join NATO or not? Will foreign policy be led by the prime minister or the president?

According to Penttilä the present quasi-membership in NATO is not in Finland's best interests. We do not gain the benefits of being allied or non-allied. Finland's security policy cannot, according to Penttilä, be founded on EU security guarantees. It is not even clear whether the security guarantees apply to Finland, which applied and received an exemption together with other non-allied countries.

The dual leadership of the foreign policy nevertheless does not serve Finland's interests. Dual leadership makes carrying out effective foreign policy more difficult and is problematic from the perspective of parliamentarism. The Lisbon Agreement makes the continuation of dual leadership even more difficult – if not impossible.

The EVA Report “The Idea of Finnish Foreign Policy” maps out four different possible solutions. There are two basic alternatives: “the model student” and “the lone wolf”. While the model student alternative combines NATO and prime minister-driven foreign policies, “the lone wolf” alternative is marked by permanent military neutrality and returning power to the president. There are nevertheless also two other variations. In the “French model” NATO membership would be combined with a strong president. “Fragile Finland” would support military neutrality and a prime minister-driven foreign policy. According to Penttilä all four models are better than the present mixed model.

Penttilä himself leans towards the so-called model student alternative. According to this model Finland will reach the goals of its foreign policy best by operating constructively and in a long-term fashion inside key international organizations. This mainstream-based approach is also suitable for shifting foreign policy decision-making power over to the prime minister.