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On How the Soviet-Finnish War Led Finland to Falls Towards Germany

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Abstract: The Winter War between Soviet Union and Finland, as a pivotal conflict on the eve of the Second World War, not only directly affected Finland's national security and territorial integrity but also had a profound impact on Finland's development trajectory in the post-war period. The Continuation War, as the direct aftermath of the Winter War between Soviet Union and Finland, specifically refers to the conflict that erupted again between Finland and the Soviet Union from 1941 to 1944, with Finland aiming to regain the territories lost during the Winter War. The focus of this paper is how the Soviet-Finnish war led Finland to lean toward Germany. To examine the issue, we unfold our argumentation from nationalistic, geopolitical and economic perspectives under the discourse system of national romanticism and modern geopolitics. From this research, we show that the Soviet-Finnish war on the eve of World War II and the Continuation War in Finland have greatly influenced Finland's post-war development future, playing an important role in the study of the nation-state in the Nordic region and its national consciousness as well as policies since modern times.

Keywords: Finland, the Soviet-Finnish War, national romanticism, Continuation War.

1. Introduction

As it stands, there have been many research precedents in the academic community for the Winter War and the Continuation War in Finland, but in this area, they tend to be based on two historical events themselves— the tactics of Finland in the Soviet-Finnish War and the impact of these two wars on the Soviet Union. There is not much research aimed at exploring the connection between these two historical events. That is to say, although the two historical events are related, the academic community now lacks systematic research on what this connection is, which is also the purpose of our research. We will address this issue on three levels: national, economic, and political diplomacy.

2. National perspective

From a national perspective, the Soviet-Finnish War led to a further awakening of Finnish national consciousness, which influenced the decision to cooperate militarily with Germany. There are two reasons for this: the first is the national romanticism factors, mainly reflected in the Karelia problem; the second was the prevalence of Greater Finnism in Finland after the war.

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Finland became independent on 6 December 1917 and the Republic of Finland was established in 1919. As a country with a long history, Finland later became part of Sweden and the Grand Duchy of Russia. During this period, cultures from Eastern and Western Europe and Finland's own national culture merged. At the same time, Finland's vast forest resources were exploited, and its domestic industry and commerce developed initially. The Finns at this time, like their ancestors who lived far from the cities a long time ago, were far from the cultural centres of Europe, yet maintained certain contacts and connections. With the arrival of the European National Spring in the 18th and 19th centuries, the national consciousness of many countries in Central and Eastern Europe awakened. As a relatively remote northern European country, Finland is not affected by countries directly affected by it. But Finland's national consciousness was waking up. For example, the Finnish physician Elias Lönnrot (1802-1884) collected a large number of folk songs into a complete epic. When first published in 1835, the epic became a source of Finnish literature and art, and Kalevala is credited with inspiring nationalism and the independence of Finland from Russia. The Soviet Union "demanded that the borderline between Finland and Russia should be moved 16 miles behind the Karelia isthmus to create a buffer zone in the Leningrad province" in 1917, citing concerns of a potential German attack [1], which directly led to the burst of the Winter War in 1939.

As George L. Mosse writes in *The Culture of Western Europe*, the emergence of a nation's national consciousness is largely influenced by its history [2], and Finland is a prime example of that. From a regional ethnic tradition and cultural perspective, although Finland has long been a Grand Duchy of Russia, it has a strong tendency toward independence. In terms of religion, unlike the Russian Orthodox Church, which is widespread, the Finns recognise the Lutheran faith. On a cultural level, they are native speakers of either Finnish or Swedish, with Finnish becoming the second official language alongside Swedish. The cultural ties between Finland and Russia are fragile. Finland had scholarly, technological, and religious exchanges with Germany and Scandinavia in the Second World War, as documented by Olli Vehviläinen in his book Finland in the Second World War. Furthermore, Finland has its own parliament, currency, railroads, and armed forces [3]. Finland has long considered Russia a trading partner. After Nikolai Bobrikov was appointed Governor-General of Finland, he began implementing an integration policy. There is little doubt that the Tsarist Russian government's policies prevented Finland and the empire from becoming closer. The outcome was that the Finnish people, who had been obedient Tsarist subjects at the time, rebelled against the Russianising efforts.

Under the persecution of Tsarist Russia in the second half of the 1800s, Finland's national consciousness and national romanticism were awakening, and the trend for independence and liberation was growing. It is against this background that Sibelius wrote a large number of excellent works rich in Finnish national characteristics. As the most well-known example of this, consider Sibelius's Finlandia, which he wrote for the Finnish Press Pension Celebration of 1899, a barely disguised protest intended to defend the independence of the Finnish press, which was primarily under the influence of tsarist Russia. By the end of the 19th century, a revival of romanticism further reinforced national cultural and ethnic views [4]. This set of nationalistic musical tableaux was what Sibelius contributed to the three-day pageant.

Sibelius is undoubtedly a good microcosm of the development of Finnish national romanticism, and when he studied in Germany in his early years, his freedom of expression was restricted, and the tune became Germanic. He nevertheless placed a high value on classicism because his ideas were so dissimilar from those of German composers such as Wagner. When he employed his own means to convey his ideas, he "attains in his program music to the poetic vision glimpsed by the German master Richard Strauss in *"Tod und Verklaerung"* and *"Also Sprach Zarathustra"* [5]. Also, a composer skilled at composing music for opera, Wagner's theatrical style was drawn from the mythological tradition, with ancient heroic figures at its core, and depicted in an abstract, detached form, as Mosse

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says in his writings, "Goethe's Faust (1808) was driven forward by his insatiable passions, by his "love for life." What a contrast between him and the pedant Wagner who lived 49 The Nineteenth Century, 1815-1870 by a system of knowledge [6]. Sibelius, on the other hand, writes about the lives of ordinary Finns, such as the Finnish epic *Kalevala*. More profound than Wagner, is the intense nationality of Sibelius's music. This music played an important role in every Finnish national war that followed. For example, in 1941, the Finnish defended against Soviet explosives by playing the same polka song over and over again in a similarly creative fashion [7].

In addition to the background music of a series of Finnish ethnical operas, the Karelia Suite is also one of Sibelius's masterpieces. The Karelian Suite, Op.11, was published in 1906. The whole suite has a strong tendency toward folk nationalism, whether it is the reverberating melodic lines in a softball interlude that serve as the centrepiece of the arrangement, the vibrant, unconventional rhythmic movements in a march, or the brisk and pleasant folk song elements. They also directly reflect the above-mentioned creative characteristics of Sibelius. Sibelius composed the Karelia Suite in 1893 to commemorate the glorious history of the Karelia region. In fact, the question of the ownership of the Karelia region is inescapable. East Karelia has been a part of Russia since 1323. In 1721, Peter the Great also obtained Western Karelia from Sweden by treaty. After Russia gained suzerainty over the whole of Finland in the 19th century, the region was reunified with the Grand Duchy of Finland. This is why both Finland and Russia insist that Karelia is part of the country, because it did belong to both countries at the same time. After the October Revolution in Russia and the independence of Finland, in the face of territorial disputes, Soviet Russia, Finland, Estonia and other Baltic countries signed *the Treaty of Tartu* in 1920. The treaty stipulates that East Karelia will be kept in the hands of Soviet Russia and West Karelia will be returned to Finland. East Karelia, which was annexed to Soviet Russia according to the Peace Treaty of Moscow, is of great national and cultural significance to Finland [8]. In fact, it was unifying Russian Karelia with Finland that one of the Finnish government's goals, "The area has never belonged to Finland, and the people there are religiously Russian Orthodox" [9]. However, most of them speak Finnish or a closely related language, from where traditional Finnish folk culture is better preserved than native Finland, from which much of *Kalevala* is collected. Finns' interest in East Karelia, as they say, sprouted with the development of nation-building ideals. This national romanticism was initially cultural in nature, but then became political, expressed as a political tendency to occupy and rule the Karelian region under the pretext of defending the local Finnish ethnic population and Finnish culture. As stated in the "Scabbard Manifesto" that General Mannerheim, the White Guard commander, wrote in February 1818 during the Finnish Civil War: *"We are strong enough to preserve our freedom and defend our brothers in White Sea Karelia…Before the last soldier of Lenin is driven not only from Finland, but from White Sea Karelia as well".*[10]

If all the above parts are the accumulated grudges of Russia and Finland, then the Soviet-Finnish War is undoubtedly the trigger for the rapid intensification of all these contradictions. After the Soviet Union invaded Finland, in the rapid expansion of Finnish nationalism, Finns with different faiths put down their differences in beliefs and chose to fight for their nation-state together, which objectively caused the formation of a united front in Finland. Kuopio, the Finnish city, was once famous for its strong communist atmosphere. But at this time, the local police were surprised to find that *"The will to defend the country and loyalty to the government have even gained a firm foothold in front of the communists"* [11]. At this point, Tuominen, the General Secretary of the Finnish Communist Party, joined the Finnish Social Democratic Party instead of accepting Moscow's offer to establish a puppet government. In a letter to the Comintern, he mentioned that recent events, especially the Soviet attack on Finland, were completely "unjust and cruel", which *"forced him to give up his candidacy for alternate members of the Executive Committee of the Communist International and the Bureau of the Executive Committee"* [12]. It can be seen that Finland's long tradition of strong independence, the

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failure of Russia's long-term attempts to assimilate Finland, and the increasing national romanticism in Finland since the 20th century all enhanced Finland's centrifugal power in the 20th Century. These seemingly unrelated factors were fundamental to the growing popularity of Greater Finnism that followed and Finland's response to related ethnic policies.

The Greater Finland Movement also contributed to Finland's fall to Germany after its defeat in the Finnish-Soviet War. It was a subclass of Pan-Finnicism, an irredentist and nationalist ideology that emphasized Finland's territorial expansion. The idea is that the future state will encompass all of the historical areas of the Finns and Karelians, which includes the present-day territory of Finland and the former Soviet autonomous regions of Murmansk, Leningrad, Estonia, and Karelia. They intend to build a country there without "the un-national minority (such as Russian)". In the continuation of the war, when Finland re-occupied the Karelian region, everything it did there illustrates exactly this point. In Finland, people from Russia and Karelia were treated differently. The Russian-speaking minority in the nation was divided into two groups based on their ethnic backgrounds: those from Karelia, referred to as "the national minority," and those from Russia, referred to as "the un-national minority". Concentration camps were used to house the Russian minority so that their elimination would be easier. Of the 24,000 civilians in East Karelia, most of them Russians, were imprisoned in concentration camps, killing 4,361, a death rate of 18.2% [13]. In addition, on December 11, 1941, the Finnish Ministry of Education founded the Scientific Committee of East Karelia to direct research in the region. They prepared international legal justifications for Finland's claim to East Karelia. Finland did not dare to enter a war with the Soviet Union, which possessed significantly more soldiers and resources than it did. Working with Germany, Finland gets needed food and advanced weapons. Germany provided it with substantial military assistance, including Moxinnagan, Mauser 98K and other firearms, as well as Stuka bombers, BF109 fighters and JU88 bombers. Also, Finnish soldiers 's uniforms and helmets were also made in Germany. Finland also dared to refuse Soviet requests for nickel concessions and mining rights at the height of the Bezamo nickel crisis in 1941 with the help of Germany [14]. This provides a realistic guarantee for not only reclaiming the occupied territory, but also realising the dream of the Great Finland Movement. Therefore, even in the face of the world anti-fascist trend, which has been criticised by many countries, Finland is determined to act against it [15].

Therefore, on the national level, Finland's long-standing national romanticism erupted after the Finnish-Soviet War, triggering the expansion of nationalism. Although this did not directly lead Finland to gravitate towards Germany, it was directly related to Germany. Germany's help to Finland to restore its original territory and even realise the Great Finland Movement since the 19th century made Finland turn to Germany. There are also economic and political reasons for Finland's leaning towards Germany, which will be analysed below.

3. Economic perspective

The Winter War (1939-1940), between Finland and the Soviet Union precipitated profound economic tribulations for Finland, markedly influencing its strategic realignment towards Nazi during World War II. This conflict left Finland's economy in shambles and geopolitically isolated, compelling it to seek alliances that could facilitate economic recovery and security. The impetus behind this pivotal shift was primarily rooted in the imperative for economic reconstruction. Additionally, the exchange of critical resources, enhanced trade opportunities, and significant economic pressures from the Soviet Union were instrumental in reconstructing Finland's economic landscape, thereby serving as catalysts for its collaboration with Germany.

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3.1. Economic reconstruction

Domestic economic reconstruction after the Winter War was one of the major economic reasons for Finland becoming 'an ally of Hitlerite Germany.' [16] This was because rapid economic reconstruction was required following the harsh war reparations and severe damage through the war, which made Finland economically dependent on Germany. During the Winter War and the Continuation War, approximately 400,000 Finns (12% of the population) were displaced from Karelia [17], requiring resettlement and imposing a significant economic burden. The loss in population severely influenced the country's labour force and its productive efficiency, causing catastrophic damage to Finland's economy. Meanwhile, extensive bombing and shelling destroyed cities, factories, and infrastructure, causing substantial economic disruption [18]. Consequently, Finland's industrial output was severely affected, with significant losses in timber, mining, and other key sectors.

The post-war compensation also posted significant challenges to economic rebuilding. The Treaty of Moscow signed on 12 March 1940, imposed harsh terms on Finland and ended the Winter War. For instance, the reparations, worth US$300,000,000 in 1938, were equivalent to US$6.49 billion in 2023 [19]. At the same time, Finland ceded nine per cent of its land, including its second-largest city, Viipuri, which was crucial to Finland's economy. These territorial concessions and harsh compensations, which even exceeded Soviet pre-war demands, left Finland in dire need of external financial assistance and economic support.

Germany, at this time, emerged as a willing partner. This was due to Nazi Germany's strategic interest in Finland's resources and geographical position, which made it eager to offer economic aid. For example, Germany provided substantial financial aid to Finland, including loans and economic subsidies to help stabilise the Finnish economy. German companies also invested in Finnish industries, particularly in sectors critical for both war efforts and peacetime recovery, such as manufacturing, mining, and infrastructure development [20]. These investments helped revive the Finnish economy by boosting industrial output and employment. Consequently, as this aid was crucial for the immediate post-war recovery and reconstruction efforts, Finland, the only democracy, fought alongside the Axis powers in mainland Europe during the rest of the Second World War. As a result, one economic reason for Finland's cooperation with Germany after the Winter War was due to the ambition of domestic economic reconstruction.

3.2. Resource exchange and trade opportunity

From an economic perspective, resource exchange, a mutually beneficial process of exchange of goods and services between nations, was also vital in stabilising Finland's market. Until the 1930s, the Finnish economy was predominantly agrarian and enjoyed an export boom, which improved its balance of trade [21]. However, after the Winter War, Finland found itself economically weakened, isolated, and with diminished foreign exports to Western countries. By contrast, Finland relied on military imports to maintain its military expenditures. During the years 1939 to 1944, Finland sourced about half of its military supplies from abroad. The highest levels of arms acquisitions occurred in 1940 and 1944 when imports accounted for 62% and 57% of total purchases, respectively [22]. To improve the balance of trade, resource exchange was essential for Finland, which also helped maintain associations with other European countries. In this context, the trade relationship with Germany was a crucial opportunity for both countries, as the German war effort required vast amounts of raw materials, and Finland was in a position to supply these resources, creating a mutually beneficial economic relationship.

Despite its unidealistic relationship with the Allies, Finland's rich natural resources, particularly timber, nickel, and other minerals, were highly valuable to Nazi Germany's war machine. In 1939, Finnish nickel became useful to the Germans as they lacked their own nickel deposits. Later, the

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Germans obtained molybdenum and platinum metals from Finnish mines [23]. Molybdenum was vital for steel alloys used in manufacturing war materials such as armour plating and artillery, as it could increase the strength and hardness of steel, making it essential for producing durable military hardware capable of withstanding combat conditions [24]. At the same time, platinum and its group metals were vital for various military applications, including the manufacture of electrical contacts and electrodes, and in the production of high-quality glass for optical instruments used in the war, such as binoculars and periscopes. Additionally, platinum was used as a catalyst in the production of nitric acid, a critical component of explosives [25]. Therefore, Finland supplied the necessary raw materials to sustain German military equipment and continue the war. In return, Germany exported military technology, including expertise and materials for submarine construction [26]. This collaboration allowed Finland to develop and produce submarines, essential for their naval defence.

This exchange was not only instrumental in keeping the Finnish economy afloat during the war years, but also led to the alliance with Germany by ensuring Finland's lucrative market for its exports. As a result, Germany became Finland's primary trading partner during this period. The trade with Germany helped mitigate the isolation Finland faced after the Winter War, obtained the goods and technology needed to modernise its economy, and supported its war efforts against the Soviet Union [27]. Most importantly, this trade opportunity guaranteed demand for Finnish products, providing a reliable source of income for Finnish industries and stabilising the economy. Consequently, the resource exchange during the trade was a vital economic reason for Finland's cooperation with Germany after the Winter War.

3.3. Pressure under the Soviet Union

If economic reconstruction after the war was the fundamental reason for Finland's cooperation with Germany, the economic pressure from the Soviet Union acted as the catalyst that further sped up the progress of its alliance movement. This was because the Soviet Union exerted an economic blockade on Finland's engagement in international trade with other nations and imposed economic pressure indirectly by supporting communist elements within Finland. As mentioned before, the Soviet Union's demands for reparations and territory pushed Finland to seek alternative sources of support to maintain its economic stability [28]. Before the Winter War, Finland's economy was significantly intertwined with the Soviet Union, particularly regarding the importation of essential commodities like raw materials and fuel [29]. For instance, Finland depended heavily on Soviet oil and coal, which were vital for heating, transportation, and industrial processes. The Soviet Union was indeed aware of this dependency and often utilised it as a strategic leverage tool. It also aimed to influence Finnish policy decisions to align more closely with Soviet geopolitical interests by threatening to cut off these crucial supplies [30]. This unstable dependency had a vulnerable impact on the Finnish industry and energy sector, and this type of economic constraint was especially effective given Finland's limited alternatives for these essential goods, making Finnish policymakers highly sensitive to Soviet demands. Under these circumstances, Germany, as one of Finland's few cooperating partners, was able to supply Finland with raw materials that were otherwise monopolised by the Soviet Union. This strategic capability was why, under the pressure of Soviet sanctions, Finland established a trade partnership with Germany.

Meanwhile, the Soviet Union imposed significant economic pressure through its manipulation of communist elements in Finland, profoundly influencing Finland's decision to cooperate economically with Germany after the Winter War. Political stability is crucial for economic stability, and when under threat, the Finnish government was less likely to maintain the environment necessary for economic stability [31]. During the Winter War, the Soviet Union provided substantial support to the Finnish Communist Party (SKP), which was then operating in exile mainly from the Soviet Union, due to its illegal status in Finland. This support included financial aid, training, and propaganda

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resources aimed at fostering a revolutionary spirit against the Finnish capitalist state. Legalised in 1944, the SKP was instrumental in disseminating Soviet propaganda and attempting to organise strikes and demonstrations that could destabilise Finland internally [32]. The threat of a communist takeover could deter foreign investment and complicate international economic alliances. For Finland, already economically weakened by the Winter War, maintaining foreign confidence was essential for recovery and growth. Aligning with Germany, a nation then opposed to communism, helped assure potential and existing non-communist economic partners that Finland would remain a capitalist economy [1].

Despite the end of the War, trade opportunities and pressure from the Soviet Union all facilitated the cooperative relationship between Finland and Germany. These reasons served merely as a foundation for economic reconstruction, since both trade and the alleviation of Soviet economic pressure could promote economic development, further prompting Finland to rely on Germany as its economic partner during World War II. As a result, economic reconstruction was the most crucial economic factor for Finland's cooperation with Germany After the Winter War.

4. Political concerns

The Soviet-Finnish War (the Winter War) of 1939-1940 left a lasting bitter political aftertaste for Finland, including everything to do with an alliance with Nazi Germany during World War II [1]. This paper is going to analyse and evaluate the political reasons behind this strategic shift: military support, political pragmatism, and geopolitical tactics.

4.1. Need for military support

The end of the Winter War did not bring the security Finland long expected, and the Moscow Peace Treaty signed in March 1940 ended the conflict leaving Finland with major territorial concessions and a weakened defence position [33].

The war also highlighted Finland's diplomatic isolation [34]. Despite its courageous resistance against the Soviet invasion, the Finnish people received little direct military assistance during the war. The Western Allies, mainly Britain and France, were busy with the looming confrontation with Nazi Germany and thus provided limited support to Finland [35]. The League of Nations' condemnation of Soviet aggression and the expulsion of the Soviet Union did not change the pattern of power, and Finland was left on its own. The country soon realised that it needed a military ally, strong enough and antagonistic to the Soviet Union to deter future Soviet invasions [36].

The Finnish leadership, President Risto Ryti and Foreign Minister Väinö Tanner, understood that without solid military support, the country would be unimaginably vulnerable to Soviet attack and ultimately become a nameless victim to the Soviet Union's expansionism ambitions [34]. Thus, the immediate consequence of the Winter War was a frantic search for allies, as Finland's political leadership was acutely aware of the country's need to strike a balance between the two dominant powers in Europe.

As the geopolitical landscape of Europe evolved, Finland had increasingly fewer options for military support. Finland was first put in a precarious situation by the August 1939 Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, a non-aggression pact between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union, as it was encircled by two strong neighbours [37]. However, the subsequent breakdown of this alliance and the growing tensions between Germany and the Soviet Union provided an opportunity for Finland—recognising the limitations of Western support, the Finnish government turned its attention to Germany.

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4.2. Political pragmatism

Finland's alliance with Germany was a realpolitik strategy based on common interests [34]. Unlike the Allies, Nazi Germany had both the military capability and the geopolitical interest to challenge Soviet expansionism in Eastern Europe. Furthermore, Germany's strategic interests were aligned with Finland's need for security [37]. The planned Operation Barbarossa invasion of the Soviet Union by Germany made Finland's geographic location vitally significant [35]. Control of Finnish territory provided Germany with a key northern front against the Soviet Union, making Finland an attractive ally [35].

The Finns were not particularly pro-Nazi, but pro-German - whether they supported the Kaiser, the Nazis or the German Chancellor, the result was the same [38]. It was a political strategy of "the enemy of my enemy is my friend" [39]. In addition, for the same reason, Finland's potential allies in the West, especially Britain and France, were more inclined to join forces with the Soviet Union against Nazi Germany [39]. Therefore, it was clear that the closest superpower willing and able to help Finland was Nazi Germany, which became Finland's best choice for an alliance [37].

On the other hand, domestically, Finnish political pragmatism was also influenced by the need to maintain unity and stability [36]. The political landscape within Finland was complex, with pro-German nationalists, factions favouring continued neutrality, and even socialists [36]. The pragmatic stance of the leadership aimed to unite these groups under the common goal of national security and survival [40]. The Soviet invasion, however, provided the Finnish government with an excellent opportunity to do so, and in the face of severe external pressures, these internal divisions were forced to unite under the pressure of war to act in the national interest [36].

Finnish political pragmatism was also reflected in diplomatic flexibility. Finnish leaders demonstrated a deep understanding of realpolitik, adapting their foreign policy to the changing international environment. Finland's participation in the Continuation War (1941-1944) with Germany was a clear manifestation of this pragmatism [1]. Furthermore, Finland's pragmatist diplomacy was demonstrated in its attempts to negotiate a separate peace with the Soviet Union after the odds had changed for Germany and the Allied side was steadily winning the upper hand [38]. By the summer of 1944, as Soviet forces advanced, Finland sought to extricate itself from the conflict, demonstrating a willingness to change the object of its alliance as the situation changed [41]. Finland's involvement in the war came to an end with the signing of the Moscow Armistice in September 1944, which also marked a return to a more neutral stance and allowed Finland to protect itself from the games and conflicts between the great powers [40].

Finland received the military assistance it needed from wise diplomatic decisions to recover some of the lost territory of the Winter War, while allowing Finland to gain temporary security against Soviet expansion [42]. These benefits came at a high price, and the alliance with Germany drew Finland deeper into the conflict, ultimately leading to further devastation and the eventual occupation of parts of the country by Soviet forces. At the war's end, Finland was forced to cede more territory to the Soviet Union than it had initially lost in the Winter War, and it had to pay huge reparations [43]. However, Finland's alliance with Germany could not be considered unproductive, as the cost of non-alignment was perhaps even higher.

4.3. Geopolitical strategy

Finland's geographical position made it a country of great strategic importance during the Second World War. It shared a lengthy border with the Soviet Union, which was located in northern Europe. The Soviets saw Finland's conquest as a way to give their fleet free passage to the Baltic Sea [44]. For Germany, on the other hand, control of Finnish territory would provide Germany with a northern

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front against the Soviet Union, which was crucial to their military operations on the Eastern Front [45].

Operation Barbarossa was a key factor in Finland's alliance with Germany [37]. Finland's geopolitical value gave Finland an advantage in negotiations with Germany, allowing it to receive military and economic assistance while maintaining a degree of autonomy [46]. For Finland, the invasion was planned as an opportunity not only to regain territory lost during the Winter War, but also to ensure its long-term security [35]. Finland's alliance with Germany was not only a reaction to Soviet aggression, but also a calculated move to enhance its strategic position in the wider European conflict [47-48].

The Winter War fundamentally altered Finland's geopolitical considerations, forcing it to abandon its policy of neutrality and seek an alliance with Germany [47]. This alliance was intended to counterbalance the Soviet threat, overcome strategic isolation, and secure Finland's territorial and national interests in the rapidly changing European landscape. From a geopolitical perspective, Finland's alliance with Germany was a pragmatic response to the existential challenges posed by the Winter War and the Second World War.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, a complex interaction of political, economic, and national elements led to Finland's collaboration with Nazi Germany during World War II. At the national level, Finland's long-standing national romanticism and the goal of regaining lost territory were important motivations. While nationalism did not directly push Finland towards Germany, the historical link with German assistance in recovering territory played an important role.

Economically, the need to rebuild after the Winter War, combined with trade opportunities and freedom from Soviet economic pressures, cemented Finland's dependence on Germany as an important partner. This economic relationship was crucial to Finland's recovery and laid the foundation for subsequent cooperation.

Politically, the Winter War was a turning point for Finland, exposing its military weaknesses and emphasising the need for a strong ally to deter further Soviet aggression. The alliance with Germany was not motivated by ideological alliance but by pragmatic considerations. It enabled Finland to obtain military assistance and regain some of its lost territories. Although Finland ultimately paid a high price - further destruction and territorial losses to the Soviet Union - the alliance with Germany was a strategic necessity for survival in a volatile geopolitical environment.

Finland's experience during the Second World War provides a valuable case study of small states coping with complex power dynamics in a global conflict. It shows that pragmatic alliances can offer a path to survival for non-superpowers, even at a high cost. Finland's alliance with Nazi Germany was ultimately a product of its geopolitical realities.

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Tianle Xu and Wantong Xie contributed equally to this work and should be considered co-first authors.

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