

History of Finland

Based on Wikipedia

-Name and date-



Kuva 1: The flag of Finland



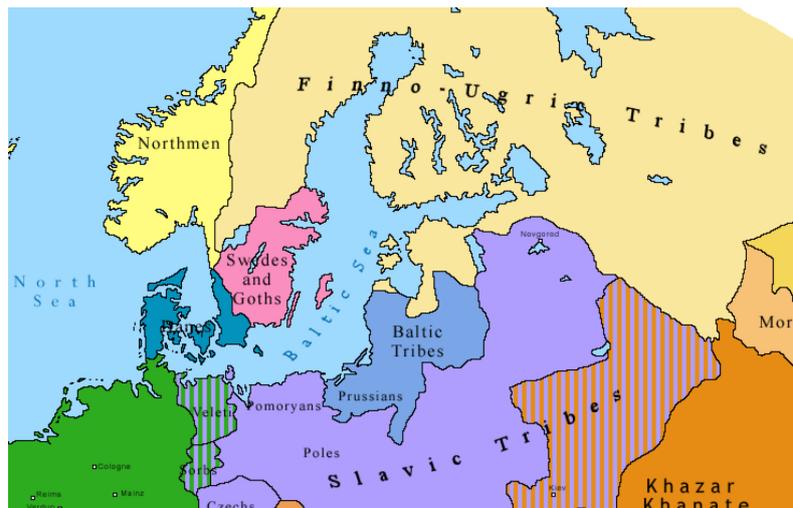
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Prehistory

According to archaeological evidence, the area now comprising Finland was settled at the latest around 8500 BCE during the Stone Age as the ice sheet of the last ice age receded. The artifacts the first settlers left behind present characteristics that are shared with those found in Estonia, Russia, and Norway. The earliest people were hunter-gatherers, using stone tools. The first pottery appeared in 5200 BCE, when the Comb Ceramic culture was introduced. The arrival of the Corded Ware culture in southern coastal Finland between 3000 and 2500 BCE may have coincided with the start of agriculture. Even with the introduction of agriculture, hunting and fishing continued to be important parts of the subsistence economy.

The Bronze Age (1500–500 BCE) and Iron Age (500 BCE–1200 CE) were characterised by extensive contacts with other cultures in the Fennoscandian and Baltic regions. There is no consensus on when Uralic languages and Indo-European languages were first spoken in the area of contemporary Finland. During the first millennium AD, early Finnish was spoken in agricultural settlements in southern Finland, whereas Sámi-speaking populations occupied most parts of the country. Although distantly related, the Sami are a different people that retained the hunter-gatherer lifestyle longer than the Finns. The Sami cultural identity and the Sami language have survived in Lapland, the northernmost province, but the Sami have been displaced or assimilated elsewhere.



The 12th and 13th centuries were violent time in the northern Baltic sea. Livonian crusade was ongoing and Finnish tribes such as Tavastians and Karelians were in frequent conflicts with Novgorod and with each other. Also during 12th and 13th centuries several crusades from the catholic realms of the Baltic sea were made against Finnish tribes. According to historical sources Danes made two crusades to Finland in 1191 and in 1202 and Swedes possibly the so called second crusade to Finland in 1249 against Tavastians and the third crusade to Finland in 1293 against Karelians. The so called first crusade to Finland possibly in 1155 is most likely unreal event. Also it is possible that Germans have made violent conversion of Finnish pagans in 13th century. According to a pappal letter in 1241 the king of Norway was also fighting against "nearby pagans" at that time.

Swedish era

In the 17th century, Swedish became the dominant language of the nobility, administration, and education; Finnish was chiefly a language for the peasantry, clergy, and local courts in predominantly Finnish-speaking areas.

During the Protestant Reformation, the Finns gradually converted to Lutheranism. In the 16th century, Mikael Agricola published the first written works in Finnish. The first university in Finland, The Royal Academy of Turku, was established in 1640. Finland suffered a severe famine in 1696–1697, during which about one third of the Finnish population died, and a devastating plague a few years later. In the 18th century, wars between Sweden and Russia twice led to the occupation of Finland by Russian forces, times known to the Finns as the Greater Wrath (1714–1721) and the Lesser Wrath (1742–1743). It is estimated that almost an entire generation of young men was lost during the Great Wrath, due namely to the destruction of homes and farms, and to the burning of Helsinki. By this time Finland was the predominant term for the whole area from the Gulf of Bothnia to the Russian border.

Two Russo-Swedish wars in twenty-five years served as reminders to the Finnish people of the precarious position between Sweden and Russia. An increasingly vocal elite in Finland soon determined that Finnish ties with Sweden were becoming too costly, and following Gustav III's War (1788–1790), the Finnish elite's desire to break with Sweden only heightened.

In the late eighteenth century a politically active portion of the Finnish nobility became convinced that, due to Sweden and Russia's repeated use of Finland as a battlefield, it would be in the country's best interests to seek autonomy. Even before the Russo-Swedish War of 1788–1790, there were conspiring Finns, among them Col G. M. Sprengporten, who had supported Gustav III's coup in 1772. Sprengporten fell out with the king and resigned his commission in 1777. In the following decade he tried to secure Russian support for an autonomous Finland, and later became an adviser to Catherine II. In the spirit of the notion of Adolf Ivar Arwidsson (1791–1858), "we are not Swedes, we do not want to become Russians, let us therefore be Finns", the Finnish national identity started to become established.

Notwithstanding the efforts of Finland's elite and nobility to break ties with Sweden, there was no genuine independence movement in Finland until the early twentieth century. As a matter of fact, at this time the Finnish peasantry was outraged by the actions of their elite and almost exclusively supported Gustav's actions against the conspirators. (The High Court of Turku condemned Sprengporten as a traitor c. 1793.)

Russian Empire era

On 29 March 1809, having been taken over by the armies of Alexander I of Russia in the Finnish War, Finland became an autonomous Grand Duchy in the Russian Empire until the end of 1917. In 1811, Alexander I incorporated Russian Vyborg province into the Grand Duchy of Finland. During the Russian era, the Finnish language began to gain recognition. From the 1860s onwards, a strong Finnish nationalist movement known as the Fennoman movement grew. Milestones included the publication of what would become Finland's national epic – the Kalevala – in 1835, and the Finnish language's achieving equal legal status with Swedish in 1892.

The Finnish famine of 1866–1868 killed 15% of the population, making it one of the worst famines in European history. The famine led the Russian Empire to ease financial regulations, and investment rose in following decades. Economic and political development was rapid. The GDP per capita was still half of that of the United States and a third of that of Britain.

In 1906, universal suffrage was adopted in the Grand Duchy of Finland. However, the relationship between the Grand Duchy and the Russian Empire soured when the Russian government made moves to restrict Finnish autonomy. For example, the universal suffrage was, in practice, virtually meaningless, since the tsar did not have to approve any of the laws adopted by the Finnish parliament. Desire for independence gained ground, first among radical liberals and socialists.

Civil war and early independence

After the 1917 February Revolution, the position of Finland as part of the Russian Empire was questioned, mainly by Social Democrats. Since the head of state was the tsar of Russia, it was not clear who the chief executive of Finland was after the revolution. The parliament, controlled by social democrats, passed the so-called Power Act to give the highest authority to parliament. This was rejected by the Russian Provisional Government which dissolved the parliament.

New elections were conducted, in which right-wing parties won a slim majority. Some social democrats refused to accept the result and still claimed that the dissolution of the parliament (and thus the ensuing elections) were extralegal. The two nearly equally powerful political blocs, the right-wing parties and the social democratic party, were highly antagonized.

White firing squad executing Red soldiers in Länkipohja, Längelmäki, in 1918. The October Revolution in Russia changed the geopolitical situation anew. Suddenly, the right-wing parties in Finland started to reconsider their decision to block the transfer of highest executive power from the Russian government to Finland, as the Bolsheviks took power in Russia. Rather than acknowledge the authority of the Power Law of a few months earlier, the right-wing government declared independence on 6 December 1917.

On 27 January 1918, the official opening shots of the war were fired in two simultaneous events. The government started to disarm the Russian forces in Pohjanmaa, and the Social Democratic Party staged a coup. The latter succeeded in controlling southern Finland and Helsinki, but the white government continued in exile from Vaasa. This sparked the brief but bitter civil war. The Whites, who were supported by Imperial Germany, prevailed over the Reds. After the war, tens of thousands of Reds and suspected sympathizers were interned in camps, where thousands died by execution or from malnutrition and disease. Deep social and political enmity was sown between the Reds and Whites and would last until the Winter War and beyond. The civil war and activist expeditions into Soviet Russia strained Eastern relations.

After a brief experimentation with monarchy, Finland became a presidential republic, with Kaarlo Juho Ståhlberg elected as its first president in 1919. The Finnish–Russian border was determined by the Treaty of Tartu in 1920, largely following the historic border but granting Pechenga (Finnish: Petsamo) and its Barents Sea harbour to Finland. Finnish democracy did not see any Soviet coup attempts and survived the anti-Communist Lapua Movement. The relationship between Finland and the Soviet Union was tense. Germany's relations with democratic Finland cooled also after the Nazis' rise to power. Army officers were trained in France, and relations to Western Europe and Sweden were strengthened.

In 1917, the population was 3 million. Credit-based land reform was enacted after the civil war, increasing the proportion of capital-owning population. About 70% of workers were occupied in agriculture and 10% in industry. The largest export markets were the United Kingdom and Germany.

World War II

Areas ceded by Finland to the Soviet Union after the Winter War from 1939 to 1940 and the Continuation War from 1941 to 1944. The Porkkala land lease was returned to Finland in 1956. Finland covered an area of approximately 385,000 km² (149,000 sq mi) before the handover. During World War II, Finland fought the Soviet Union twice: in the Winter War of 1939–1940 after the Soviet Union had attacked Finland; and in the Continuation War of 1941–1944, following Operation Barbarossa, during which Finland aligned with Germany following Germany's invasion of the Soviet Union. For 872 days, the German army, aided indirectly by Finnish forces, besieged Leningrad, the USSR's second largest city. After fighting a major Soviet offensive in June/July 1944 to a standstill, Finland reached an armistice with the Soviet Union. This was followed by the Lapland War of 1944–1945, when Finland fought against the retreating German forces in northern Finland.



The treaties signed in 1947 and 1948 with the Soviet Union included Finnish obligations, restraints, and reparations—as well as further Finnish territorial concessions in addition to those in the Moscow Peace Treaty of 1940. As a result of the two wars, Finland ceded most of Finnish Karelia, Salla, and Petsamo, which amounted to 10% of its land area and 20% of its industrial capacity, including the ports of Vyborg (Viipuri) and the ice-free Liinakhamari (Liinahamari). Almost the whole population, some 400,000 people, fled these areas. Finland was never occupied by Soviet forces and it retained its independence, but at the loss of about 93,000 soldiers.

Finland rejected Marshall aid, in apparent deference to Soviet desires. However, the United States provided secret development aid and helped the (non-Communist) Social Democratic Party in hopes of preserving Finland's independence. Establishing trade with the Western powers, such as the United Kingdom, and paying reparations to the Soviet Union produced a transformation of Finland from a primarily agrarian economy to an industrialised one. For example, the Valmet corporation was founded to create materials for war reparations, but, after the reparations had been paid off, Finland—which was poor in certain resources necessary for an industrialized nation (such as iron and oil)—continued to trade with the Soviet Union in the framework of bilateral trade.

Cold War

In 1950, 46% of Finnish workers worked in agriculture and a third lived in urban areas. The new jobs in manufacturing, services, and trade quickly attracted people to the towns. The average number of births per woman declined from a baby boom peak of 3.5 in 1947 to 1.5 in 1973. When baby-boomers entered the workforce, the economy did not generate jobs fast enough, and hundreds of thousands emigrated to the more industrialized Sweden, with emigration peaking in 1969 and 1970. The 1952 Summer Olympics brought international visitors. Finland took part in trade liberalization in the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade.

Officially claiming to be neutral, Finland lay in the grey zone between the Western countries and the Soviet Union. The YYA Treaty (Finno-Soviet Pact of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance) gave the Soviet Union some leverage in Finnish domestic politics. This was extensively exploited by president Urho Kekkonen against his opponents. He maintained an effective monopoly on Soviet relations from 1956 on, which was crucial for his continued popularity. In politics, there was a tendency of avoiding any policies and statements that could be interpreted as anti-Soviet. This phenomenon was given the name "Finlandization" by the German press.

Despite close relations with the Soviet Union, Finland remained a Western European market economy. Various industries benefited from trade privileges with the Soviets, which explains the widespread support that pro-Soviet policies enjoyed among business interests in Finland. Economic growth was rapid in the postwar era, and by 1975 Finland's GDP per capita was the 15th highest in the world. In the 1970s and 80s, Finland built one of the most extensive welfare states in the world. Finland negotiated with the EEC (a predecessor of the European Union) a treaty that mostly abolished customs duties towards the EEC starting from 1977, although Finland did not fully join. In 1981, president Urho Kekkonen's failing health forced him to retire after holding office for 25 years.

Finland reacted cautiously to the collapse of the Soviet Union, but swiftly began increasing integration with the West. On 21 September 1990, Finland unilaterally declared the Paris Peace Treaty obsolete, following the German reunification decision nine days earlier.

Recent history

Finland joined the European Union in 1995 and signed the Lisbon Treaty in 2007. Miscalculated macroeconomic decisions, a banking crisis, the collapse of its largest single trading partner (the Soviet Union), and a global economic downturn caused a deep early 1990s recession in Finland. The depression bottomed out in 1993, and Finland saw steady economic growth for more than ten years. Like other Nordic countries, Finland decentralised its economy since the late 1980s. Financial and product market regulation were loosened. Some state enterprises have been privatized and there have been some modest tax cuts. Finland joined the European Union in 1995, and the Eurozone in 1999. Much of the late 1990s economic growth was fueled by the phenomenal success of the mobile phone manufacturer Nokia, which held a unique position of representing 80% of the market capitalization of the Helsinki Stock Exchange.

The population is aging with the birth rate at 10.42 births per 1,000 population per year, or a fertility rate of 1.8. With a median age of 42.7 years, Finland is one of countries with most mature population; half of voters are estimated to be over 50 years old.

