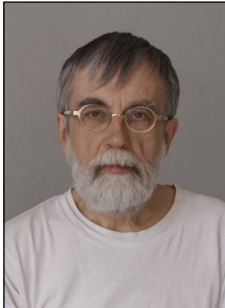


Finland's Irrational Choice

The results of «Elite Capture»

by Olli Tammilehto*



(CH-S) Numerous irrational strategic decisions in Europe are the result of decades of "Elite Capture" by the US – according to Finnish author Olli Tammilehto.

A striking example is Finland's 58-year-old President, Alexander Stubb. He previously served as Finland's Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, as well as Vice-President of the European Investment Bank in Luxembourg. Tammilehto's article also turns the spotlight on members of the ruling elites in other countries.

Olli Tammilehto.
(Picture <https://x.com/OTammilehto>)

States are generally thought to pursue their own security and economic interests. However, in recent years, several European countries have made decisions that are clearly against their own interests but promote US interests. For example, Finland has concluded a so-called *Defense Cooperation Agreement* (DCA) with the United States. According to the agreement, the US gets access to 15 existing Finnish military bases and can build its own bases inside them. One of them will be in Lapland, close to Russia's main nuclear submarine base.

By making Finland the first target of Russian missiles and increasing tensions between the two nuclear powers, the DCA endangers Finland's security. Instead, the agreement promotes the long-term aspirations of the US administration, or deep state, which is independent of presidential changes. These include preventing the rise of rival great powers and related attempts to encircle, destabilize and weaken Russia.¹

* Olli Tammilehto is a writer and independent researcher.

Pascal Lottaz is a (Swiss) academic in Japan, Associate Professor at Kyoto University, working on neutrality in IR. He also runs the YouTube show "Neutrality Studies", where he explores world politics with various guests.



The US will be granted access to 15 existing Finnish military bases. One of these is located near the most important Russian nuclear submarine base. This poses a further threat to Finland's security. (Map Wikipedia)

Germany and many other European countries have switched from Russian natural gas to much more expensive US natural gas, which has led to economic hardship in Europe but big profits in the US. Recently, the European NATO countries decided to raise their military spending to 5 per cent of their GDP. Since these countries do not have large arms manufacturing capacities, this decision is a goldmine for the US military-industrial complex. At the same time, it increases the likelihood of a military confrontation between the US and Russia. Unless the war escalates into a full-scale nuclear war, it would not be fought in North America but in Europe.

«Elite Capture»

Why do our continent's leaders behave in such strange ways? In a recent article, "Elite Capture & European Self-Destruction: The Hidden Architecture of Transatlantic Hegemony", *Nel Bonilla*² highlights how the German political elite has been made to identify with US interests instead of those of their own country. Organizations such as the Atlantik-Brücke, the *Atlantic Institute*, the *German Marshall Fund* and the *Fulbright Program* have been essential in this work.

They have trained German leaders and created a certain way of producing information, a system of selecting leaders and an elite network. A dominant mindset has emerged that

sets strict limits on political imagination. Pro-US sentiment has been driven into the elite's spine, as it were. The US mentality instilled in the elite is reinforced and a common strategy outlined every year at many international meetings such as the *Munich Security Conference* and the *Bilderberg Meetings*.

The United States has practiced such elite capture around the world. It is an essential part of the social technology that promotes US power. And the exercise of this kind of power is old. *Robert Lansing*, who had served as President *Woodrow Wilson's* Secretary of State, stated as early as 1924 in a letter attributed to him:

"We must open the doors of our universities to young, ambitious Mexicans and make the effort to educate them in the American way of life, in our values, and in respect for the leadership of the United States. Mexico will need competent administrators, and over time, these young people will come to occupy important positions and will eventually take possession of the presidency itself. And without the United States having to spend a single cent or fire a single shot, they will do what we want, and do it better and more radically than we ourselves could have done."³

In addition to universities, foreign elites, or those aspiring to join them, have been immersed in American "values" through various courses and visitor programs. One such program is the US State Department's *International Visitor Leadership Program* (IVLP). Hundreds of people who have gone through it have later reached the position of prime minister or president in their own countries. From Finland, this group includes President *Sauli Niinistö*, President *Tarja Halonen* and all the prime ministers between 1987 and 2014 with one exception.⁴

Alexander Stubb

One particular Finnish leader who entered the political scene thoroughly steeped in "American values" is *Alexander Stubb*. He himself talks about this process extensively in his autobiographical interview book "Alex".⁵

Stubb was an exchange student in the USA during high school and studied social sciences at a US university. He admits that his way of thinking became more American there. Later, Stubb studied at the *College of Europe* in Bruges, which required French. There he became friends with an American named *Valerie Plame*. She always passed her exams, even though she did

not speak French very well. Plame kept in touch with Stubb long after her studies. In 2003, it was revealed that Plame was a CIA agent.⁶

Five years later, Stubb was the Foreign minister of nonaligned Finland and participated in the armistice and peace negotiations for the Georgian War. Apparently, he actually represented the United States in the negotiations, as US Secretary of State *Condoleezza Rice* was in constant contact with Stubb – even while he was running the Helsinki City Marathon.⁷

The Soviet Union had similar efforts to infuse the candidates for political leadership positions with its own "values". However, they were very modest compared to the US efforts and were mainly limited to members of communist parties. Yet, young leaders from almost all Finnish parties were invited to visit the USSR, but the function of visits was probably mainly to separate the wheat from the chaff: who were ready to repeat regardless of the situation the "NATO liturgy" of that time, i.e. the flattery of the Soviets, and who were not.

In 1977, I managed to get to such a visit, even though I did not belong to any political youth organization. Our delegation was cultivating friendships at a student labour camp that was building a giant cowshed in the Tula region without tools larger than shovels. Two Social Democrats and I were singled out like chaff when we dared to ask why our stay at the camp had suddenly been extended by a week. The leader of the delegation, *Marjo Hirsimäki* from the *Centre Party*, the leader of our subgroup from the *National Coalition Party* (main right-wing party to which Stubb belonged before his presidency), and many other Finns in the camp deeply resented our bad behaviour. They proved to be such good friends of the Soviets. Hirsimäki distinguished himself in this matter, because he went to the Soviet embassy in Helsinki to apologize for our inappropriate questions.

If the Soviet Union had not collapsed, its skills in integrating Finnish politicians would likely have improved. Then young men like Stubb, aspiring to a career in leadership, would have been immersed in a completely different set of "values".

Source: https://pascallottaz.substack.com/p/finland-and-the-results-of-elite?r=2xj6oj&utm_medium=ios&triedRedirect=true, 13 July 2026

¹ See, for example, U.S. Department of Defense, 2022 *National Defense Strategy* (Washington, DC: U.S. Govern-

ment, 2022), <https://media.defense.gov/2022/Oct/27/2003103845/-1/-1/1/2022-NATIONAL-DEFENSE-STRATEGY-NPR-MDR.PDF>; James Dobbins et al., *Overextending and Unbalancing Russia: Assessing the Impact of Cost-Imposing Options* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2019), https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_briefs/RB10014.html

² Nel Bonilla, "Elite Capture & European Self-Destruction: The Hidden Architecture of Transatlantic Hegemony," *Worldlines*, June 29, 2025, <https://themindness.substack.com/p/elite-capture-and-european-self-destruction>

³ "1924 Carta de Robert Lansing", *Memoria Política de*

México, 2024, <https://www.memoriapoliticademexico.org/Textos/6Revolucion/1924CRL.html>

⁴ Wikipedia, s.v. "International Visitor Leadership Program," last modified June 12, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=International_Visitor_Leadership_Program&oldid=1295203891

⁵ Alexander Stubb and Karo Hämäläinen, *Alex* (Helsinki: Otava, 2017).

⁶ Stubb and Hämäläinen, *Alex*, p. 60.

⁷ Stubb and Hämäläinen, *Alex*, p. 139.