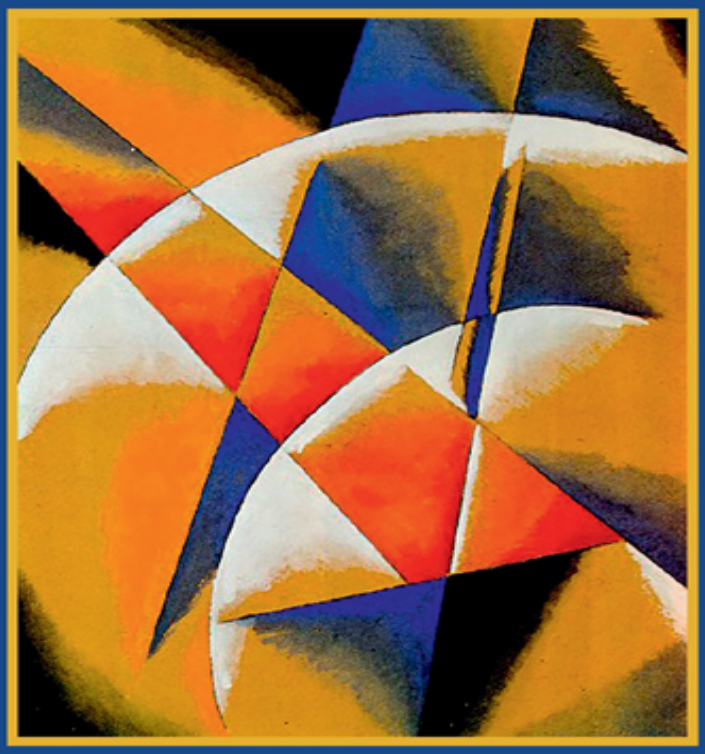
Lauri Karvonen, Heikki Paloheimo & Tapio Raunio (eds)

The Changing Balance of Political Power in Finland



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Contents

Preface

The past three and a half decades have witnessed a major transformation of the political landscape in Finland. Like everywhere in the democratic West these changes have pertained to the economic and social underpinnings of the political process as well as to the concrete substance of government policy. Unlike most comparable countries, however, the transformation of Finnish politics has also been a matter of major institutional change. In fact, as this book argues at length, the basic regime type of the Finnish political system has changed.

Despite the magnitude of change, there is still little in the way of a comprehensive analysis of power relations in modern Finnish politics. The present volume attempts to fill part of that void. The book is the result of the research project 'Political Power in Finland: An Analysis of Central Government Institutions and Actors' financed by the Academy of Finland in 2011–2014. Ten scholars representing the University of Tampere, Åbo Akademi and University of Turku collaborated in this undertaking.

We are happy to acknowledge the importance of our steering committee of senior political scientists: professors Dag Anckar, Anne Kovalainen, Jaakko Nousiainen and Hannu Nurmi, and docent Seppo Tiihonen. Their advice has left a profound mark on our research, and their comments on our manuscripts have been invaluable.

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Introduction: Finland 1970–2015 – A Transformed Political Landscape

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The political systems of democratic countries are remarkably stable. Even when societies experience significant structural change, the impact of such socio-economic transformation is mainly limited to the party system. Constitutional change regarding political institutions is much less frequent and is often linked to democratization or major domestic crisis as in Central and Eastern Europe. The more affluent 'Western' European countries, on the other hand, display considerable constitutional rigidity. Societies may change, but political systems do not. (Strøm *et al*. 2003)

Finland is a noteworthy exception to this rule. Indeed, Finland is a rare example of a democratic country that has experienced major constitutional reform peacefully without domestic conflict. International literature has traditionally categorized the Finnish political system as semi-presidential, with the executive functions divided between an elected president and a cabinet that is accountable to the parliament. However, recent constitutional reforms have radically transformed Finnish politics. The new constitution, which entered into force in 2000[1], completed a period of far-reaching constitutional change that curtailed presidential powers and brought the Finnish political system closer to a normal parliamentary democracy. The president is today almost completely excluded from the policy process in domestic matters; leadership by presidents has been

replaced with leadership by strong majority governments. In contrast to most democratic countries, the Finnish political system has arguably also become less subject to external constraints. The end of the Cold War removed the shadow of the Soviet Union from Finnish policy-making, but particularly through European Union (EU) membership Finland has become much more involved in global and regional integration.

Drawing on unique and comprehensive longitudinal data, this book analyses the distribution of political power in Finland since the 1970s. The objective of the volume is not simply to extrapolate change within and between governing institutions and political parties, but also to understand the causal mechanisms explaining this significant period of constitutional and political reform. After outlining the constitutional reform itself, this introductory chapter contextualizes our period of analysis, providing a necessarily brief but important overview of the socio-economic and geopolitical changes that have impacted on the distribution of power subjected to more detailed investigation in the subsequent chapters.

Constitutional reform

Finland is frequently categorized as a semi-presidential regime, with the executive functions divided between an elected president and a government accountable to parliament (*the Eduskunta*). In fact, Finland was by a wide margin the oldest semi-presidential country in Europe, with the semi-presidential form of government adopted in 1919, two years after the country achieved independence. Until 1982, the president was elected by an electoral college of 300 members (301 in 1982), who were elected by the same proportional system as MPS. A new direct-election system for

choosing the president was first used in 1994.[2] If a candidate receives more than half of the votes, he or she is elected president. If none of the candidates receives the majority of the votes, a new election is held on the third Sunday after the first election. In the second round, the two persons who received the most votes in the first round run against each other. The candidate who receives the majority of vote is then elected president.

Under the old constitution, the president was recognised as the supreme executive power. For example, Duverger (1980) ranked Finland highest among the West European semi-presidential systems in terms of the formal powers of the head of state and second only to France with respect to the actual exercise of presidential power. The peak of presidential powers was reached during the reign of President Kekkonen, who made full use of his powers and arguably even overstepped the constitutional prerogatives of the presidency. During the Cold War, the balance between cabinet and president was therefore strongly in favour of the president until the constitutional reforms of the 1990s, which were in part a response to the excesses of the Kekkonen era. A period of parliamentarization started in 1982, when President Mauno Koivisto took office after a quarter of a century of politics dominated by Kekkonen. President Koivisto and the political elite in general favoured strengthening parliamentarism and curtailing the powers of the president. Table 1 summarizes the development of presidential powers during Finland's independence, illustrating the fundamental changes that have taken place after the Kekkonen era and particularly in the post-Cold War context of European integration.

These constitutional and political changes are dealt with in considerable detail in the subsequent chapters of this volume, and hence it is sufficient to pay attention here to the comprehensive sweep of the reforms. In government

formation the role of the president is now limited to formally appointing the prime minister and the cabinet chosen by parliament; moreover, the president cannot force the government to resign. Governments are thus now accountable to the Eduskunta and not to the president, as effectively was the case before. The president has only an ineffective delaying power in legislation, and even the appointment powers of the president have been drastically reduced. Overall, the president is almost completely excluded from the policy process in domestic matters. Turning to external relations, the government is responsible for EU affairs while foreign policy leadership is shared between the president and the government. Foreign and defence policy excluded, Finland is now effectively a parliamentary regime. Presidential leadership has been replaced by leadership by strong majority cabinets, which have ruled without much effective opposition since the early 1980s. (Hallberg *et al*. 2009; Jyränki & Nousiainen 2006; Nousiainen 2001; Paloheimo 2001, 2003; Raunio 2011).

Table 1. Powers of parliament, government and president in the Finnish constitution in four time periods

Duty	Division of power according to the constitution			
	Old constitution 1919–1980	Old constitution late 1990s	New constitution from 2000 on	New constitution from 2012 on
General authority in executiv	president	president	government	government

e decision-making				
Government formation	president has autonomous power	president, after hearing parliamentary party groups	parliament, president’s role purely formal	parliament, president’s role purely formal
Government resignation	parliament, or prime minister, or president indirectly by dissolving parliament	parliament, or prime minister	parliament, or prime minister	parliament or prime minister
Dissolution of parliament and calling of new elections	president	president upon initiative by prime minister	president upon initiative by prime minister	president upon initiative by prime minister
Government bills	president may alter	president may alter	president’s power basical	president’s power basically eliminated

			ly elimin ated	
Legislation: power of veto	president may postpone bills beyond next election	president may postpone until next legislative session	parliament may immediately override veto	president has no veto power, in case of disagreement parliament decides
Legislative decrees	president and government	president and government	government	government
Leadership in foreign policy	president	president	president in co-operation with government	president in co-operation with government; conflicts between president and government decided by parliament
Leadership in foreign policy: decision		government	government; no clear norms	government; prime minister represents Finland at

decisions to be made in the EU			norms on Finnish representation at EU summits	Finland at EU summits
Commander-in-chief of armed forces	president	president	president	president
Appointment of senior civil servants	president appoints a considerable portion of senior civil servants; other civil servants appointed by government or by ministries	number of senior civil servants appointed by president reduced	president appoints only a very limited group of top civil servants	president's power to appoint top civil servants limited further

Source: The Constitution Act of Finland (Act 94/1919) with later amendments.

The transformation of the Finnish polity has also conceptual repercussions. We argue that it simply does not make sense to classify or treat Finland as a semi-presidential country. The concept of semi-presidentialism was first used by Maurice Duverger in the 1970s, who also formulated the 'classic' or 'original' definition of such regimes: 'A political regime is considered as semi-presidential if the constitution which established it combines three elements: (1) the president of the republic is elected by universal suffrage; (2) he possesses quite considerable powers; (3) he has opposite him, however, a prime minister and ministers who possess executive and governmental power and can stay in office only if the parliament does not show its opposition to them.' (Duverger 1980: 166) Duverger's definition has not been universally endorsed by other scholars, with most of the criticism concerning his claim that the president should possess 'quite considerable powers'. After all, it can be inherently difficult to judge what constitutes such powers and where to draw the line between considerable and inconsiderable powers. The situation is made worse by the often blatant discrepancy between the text of the constitution and the actual real-world role of the presidents. It is evident that national political culture or established patterns impact on how constitutions work in practice. Different holders of the same office may also decide to make fuller use of their powers, depending for example on party-political constellations or on the state of societal affairs in the country – as indeed was the case in Finland for much of the 20st century.

According to Elgie (1999: 13), a 'semi-presidential regime may be defined as the situation where a popularly elected fixed-term president exists alongside a prime minister and cabinet who are responsible to parliament'. This has become the standard definition of semi-presidentialism, utilized by basically all recent studies (Schleiter & Morgan-Jones 2009: 875). When compared with the Duvergerian

approach, it is easy to appreciate the simplicity of Elgie's constitution-based definition, for it makes the recognition of semi-presidential regimes a clearly more straightforward process. However, the definition at the same time runs the risk of conceptual stretching. Currently the universe of semi-presidential countries contains a very heterogeneous mix of countries, and even the European ones display considerable variation from the more president-led polity of France to cases where the role of the president is essentially symbolic or ceremonial (such as Ireland and Slovenia) (Elgie & Moestrup 2008; Elgie 2011). While scholars have responded to this heterogeneity by focussing on sub-categories of semi-presidentialism, we feel that it is both theoretically and empirically inaccurate to label Finland as a semi-presidential regime. Constitutionally and politically Finland is essentially a parliamentary democracy with a government that is accountable to the parliament and a directly-elected president. We shall return to this conceptual discussion in the concluding chapter of the volume.

Structural transformation

Political organization and the distribution of power reflect the character of the economic foundations on which a society rests. How the means of livelihood and the economic resources emanating from them are distributed among major population segments largely determines the nature of political conflict and party formation. In Finland, as in much of Western Europe, politics has long been marked by the important role of conflicts based on socioeconomic structure (Mair 1997; Oskarson 2005).

What sets Finland apart in a West European comparison is the prolonged predominance of the primary sector (agriculture and forestry) in the economy. When Finland in

1939 entered the Second World War it was still and overwhelmingly rural society. After the war, however, the structure of the Finnish economy changed rapidly. Markets for pulp and paper industry boomed, and war reparations to the Soviet Union made it necessary to expand the share of the metal industry in Finland's industrial output. In 1930 only 15 per cent of the labour force was employed in the secondary (industrial) sector of the economy. In 1960 the figure was 30.5 per cent. However, the secondary sector of the economy never became as important in Finland as in Britain, Germany or many other West European states. From the 1970s on, Finland rapidly became a post-industrial society where the tertiary sector of the economy (private and public services) engaged more than half of the labour force. In 2011, about 74 per cent of the Finnish labour force was employed in the tertiary sector (Table 2).

A closer comparison between Finland and the rest of Western Europe[3] since 1920 indicates that Finland is an extreme case in several respects. The predominance of the primary sector during much of the period, the lateness of socioeconomic transformation and the rapidity of the change once it got under way are striking features of the Finnish trajectory (Kangas & Saloniemi 2013: 29). Not a single one of the countries in the comparison group can match the Finnish development; in fact none of them comes anywhere near Finland in these respects. The share of the workforce employed in the primary sector fell by roughly 64 percentage points in Finland between 1920 and 2011. The corresponding figure for the comparison group was less than 30. Tertiary employment rose by more than 55 points in Finland during the same period, as compared to an average growth by less than 40 points in the ten other countries. In Finland, industry was never the largest sector in terms of employment, while this was the case in the comparison group in both the 1950s and 1960s. With a minor

simplification, one may argue that Finland went from a preindustrial directly to a postindustrial social structure. The lion’s share of this structural transformation took place between the Second World War and 1980. Elsewhere in Western Europe, the corresponding process had started much earlier and proceeded much more smoothly over an extended period of time.

Table 2. Economically active population in Finland 1920–2014 by sector

Year	*Primary*	*Secondary*	*Tertiary*
1920	68.8	12.8	18.3
1930	64.6	14.7	20.7
1950	45.9	27.7	26.3
1960	35.5	31.5	33.1
1970	20.3	34.3	45.5
1980	12.6	33.4	54.1
1990	8.5	28.3	63.2
2000	5.7	26.9	67.4
2014	4.5	22.4	73.1

Source: International Historical Statistics, Europe 1750–2005, 147–170, and Statistics Finland.

From conflict to consensus

In the first four decades of its existence as an independent state, Finland experienced a civil war, a heated linguistic strife, a strong right-wing extremist movement, two periods of war against the Soviet Union, and a painful settlement after World War II. It is no wonder that the level of conflict in

domestic politics was high. Multiple and deep trenches separated the various political and organizational ‘camps’. Not least, there was a deep division between social democratic and communist-controlled unions in the labour movement.

All of this is clearly visible in both parliamentary politics and labour market relations in the first postwar decades. Stable governments were extremely difficult to form; during a prolonged period, the average duration of a Finnish cabinet was less than a year. At the same time, numerous industrial disputes characterized the labour relations field.

The shift from conflict to consensus took place through three interrelated processes, partly parallel, partly consecutive. In each of these fields, the change was astonishingly rapid given the previous level of conflict. First, the pattern of labour market contracts changed as of 1968. That year, the first comprehensive Incomes Policy Agreement was concluded between the central organizations of labour and employers and the government. This was to be the first of a dozen such agreements in the 1970s and 1980s (Kyntäjä 1993: 128–129). The core of these agreements concerned industrial wages. However, thanks to the active role of the government, important legislative reforms supported the agreements: ’Employer and employee organizations bargained over wages while the government tried to promote agreements by using sticks and carrots’ (Kangas & Saloniemi 2013: 17). Many social policy reforms came about thanks to incomes policy agreements. As a result of this development, Finland has for decades belonged to the Scandinavian model of highly coordinated wage bargaining. Although somewhat attenuated in recent years, important elements of this model still persist in Finland as well as among its Scandinavian neighbours (Calmfors 2014: 24).

Several factors help explain this change in wage agreement policies. Between 1969 and 1974, the labour

union movement overcame its organizational split. Prior to this, separate organizations led by communists and social democrats operated in the labour relations field, thus complicating negotiations and maintaining a high level of unrest and conflict. For the employers, the incomes policy agreements were a way to enhance continuity and predictability in the labour market. Many of them also believed that comprehensive agreements would favour the reformist social democratic element among the unions.

A second area where Finland went from conflict to consensus was industrial relations. As long as the labour union movement remained organizationally split and parliamentary politics divisive and unstable, the Finnish labour market was characterized by frequent and often large work stoppages. With the establishment of a pattern of comprehensive incomes policy agreements and the growing political consensus, the high level of industrial disputes was also replaced with a more conciliatory style of conflict resolution. Some data may be used to illustrate this change. The average annual number of workdays lost due to industrial disputes was (in thousands of days) 1322 in the 1950s. In the 1970s the corresponding figure was still 1051, but in the 1980s as low as 316. During the first nine years of the 2000s it was down to 152 (International Historical Statistics, 186–7; http://laborsta.ilo.org/). These figures bear witness of a shift from a pattern of industrial relations where manifest conflict is the overarching principle to the consensual culture typical of most of Northern Europe.

Finally, a marked change in cabinet stability took place as of about 1980. Up until then, cabinets frequently resigned after about a year. Outright cabinet crises were common, and many cabinets did not represent a parliamentary majority. Caretaker cabinets were frequently resorted to due to problems of forming political coalitions. All of this changed after the 1970s. From there on, stable majority coalitions have been the norm (for details, see chapters by

Isaksson, Paloheimo and Karvonen). Clearly, the changes in the labour market helped usher in a more general transition to consensual politics in Finland.

External change

For centuries, Finland has been a ‘borderland’ in between east and west, as a part of Sweden, as part of Russia, and then from 1917 on, as an independent state trying to find its position between east and west (Tiilikainen 1998; Alapuro 2004). Between 1939 and 1944, Finland fought two wars against the Soviet Union: the Winter War (1939–40) and the Continuation War (1941–44), and in accordance with the armistice agreement with the Soviet Union, was engaged in battle against German forces in Lapland in 1944–45. As a result of the peace settlement, Finland was forced to concede a significant amount of its territory, mainly from the Karelia region, to her eastern neighbour. The war led also to close economic and political ties with the Soviet Union, consolidated in the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance (FCMA) signed in 1948. The FCMA treaty constituted limitations to Finnish armed forces, and prohibited military cooperation with any country hostile to the Soviet Union.

The Cold War entailed a delicate balancing act, with priority to good relations with the Soviet Union reconciled with democratic political institutions at home and integration into markets in the West. Finnish integration policy vis-à-vis the West was launched in the 1950s with the purpose to counterbalance the special relationship with Moscow and to give Finland more international room of manoeuvre while still maintaining good relations with the Soviet Union. While the direct interference of the Soviet leadership in Finnish politics has often been exaggerated,

the Finnish political elite nevertheless was always forced to anticipate the reactions from Moscow, and this set firm limits to Finland's cooperation with Western European and Nordic countries. Due to these constraints Finland was a latecomer in joining several international organizations. Finland joined the Nordic Council in 1955 three years after the organisation was established and with the reservation that its membership would not include security policy matters or relations between the superpowers. Finland joined the United Nations in 1955, became in 1961 an associate member of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) and signed a free trade agreement with the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1973. Finland became a full member of EFTA in 1986 and joined the Council of Europe as late as in 1989.

Another tenet that grew out of Finnish history was that of a small state, and by the early 1990s the Finns had become used to living in a world where state sovereignty and national security formed the uncontested starting points for political life. Finnish foreign policy was very much driven by the policy of neutrality, and this culminated in 1975 when Finland hosted the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE). From the mid-1960s at least until the mid-1980s, this foreign policy line enjoyed virtual unanimous political and public approval. During the long reign of President Urho Kekkonen (1956–1981) foreign policy was personally identified with the president, who was more or less visibly supported by political elites within the Soviet Union. Political debate and contestation on foreign policy were rare during this era of 'compulsory consensus' that placed a premium on maintaining amicable relations with the Soviet Union (Arter 1987).

When the Cold War had ended and the Soviet Union collapsed, Finland wasted no time in seizing the opportunity to become fully engaged in European integration. While joining the European Community (EC) was not on the

political agenda during the Cold War, Finnish industry, especially the influential wood processing sector, had expressed its preferences by investing heavily in Western Europe (Väyrynen 1993). Finland applied for membership in the European Economic Area (EEA) in 1990 and joined it in 1994. Application for EC membership followed suit in March 1992. Finland joined the EU from the beginning of 1995, following a membership referendum held in October 1994 in which 57 per cent voted in favour of entering the Union. (Pesonen 1994; Arter 1995; Jenssen *et al*. 1998) While the pro-EU camp argued that by joining the Union Finland would merely be maintaining or consolidating its place among west European countries, there is little doubt that especially among foreign observers the 'western' identity of Finland had been far less clear. Indeed, the significance of EU membership for Finland should not be underestimated, for it clearly constituted a key element in the 'process of wholesale reidentification on the international stage.' (Arter 2000: 691)

Finland's integration policy can be characterized as flexible and constructive. Successive governments have constantly underlined the importance of being present where decisions that concern Finland are taken. According to the political elite, national interests can be best pursued through active and constructive participation in EU decision-making. Underlying this stance is a conviction that strong and efficient European institutions and common rules can best protect the rights and interests of smaller member states, as intergovernmental processes tend to favour the larger member states. Pragmatism and adaptability are the leading qualities of national EU policy, behavioural traits obviously influenced by the Cold War experiences. Finnish integration policy stands thus in quite striking contrast to the EU policies of Denmark and Sweden (and of course Norway and Iceland), both of which have been far less supportive of further integration. Finland is also the only

Nordic country that belongs to the Eurozone, with the single currency adopted without much political contestation. The policy of neutrality or military non-alignment has been compromised, or even abandoned altogether, as Finland has played an active part in the further development of the foreign and security policy of the EU. And even though foreign and security policy are now subject to broader domestic debate, largely the same logic continues to guide decision-making in foreign policy and EU issues, with emphasis on achieving national unity and avoiding public cleavages. (Raunio & Tiilikainen 2003)[4]

Patterns of party politics

In a West European comparison, the following features that are in many ways strongly intertwined appear characteristic of the Finnish party system:

1. *The high degree of party system fragmentation and the large number of parties that gain parliamentary representation*. The largest party normally wins a maximum of one-fourth of the seats in parliament.

2. *The absence of a party that is decisively larger than its main competitors*. No party has been able to establish itself even as *primus inter pares* among the largest parties. In recent decades, the social democrats, the conservatives (National Coalition) and the Centre Party have pursued a close contest for this position. Up until the mid-1970s, the communist-dominated Finnish People's Democratic Union (FPDU) also belonged to the category of the largest parties. The 2011 'earthquake election' created a new pattern whereby all the three largest parties were challenged by the landslide won by

the populist The Finns Party. The 2015 election repeated this pattern. As a result, the Finnish party system is even more fragmented than previously, with four rather than three parties of a relatively equal size, along with another four minor parties represented in parliament.

3. *The increased weakness of the parties on the left*. A unique election in 1966 resulted in a parliamentary majority for the left. Since then, the electoral and parliamentary strength of the left has been in steady decline. In 2007, the combined strength of the two left parties (the Social Democrats and the Left Alliance) sank below one-third for the first time; the 2011 and 2015 elections continued this declining trend. As early as the 1980s, however, the left was down to around forty per cent of the seats in parliament. A left wing government has not been a numerically viable option for a very long time.

4. *The strength of the Centre Party that is historically an agrarian party*. The Finnish Centre Party, until 1965 the Agrarian Union, is a rare case of the survival of basically agrarian politics in a post-industrial society. Aided by the lateness of the urbanization process in Finland and supported by a strong organizational network, the Centre Party has displayed considerable strength despite the decline of similar parties in most of Western Europe (Kangas & Saloniemi 2013).

5. *Recurrent waves of populist protest*. In the 1970s and early 1980s, the populist Rural Party won a couple of spectacular victories. Its successor, The Finns Party, lifted the electoral support of populism to an all-time high in 2011. Populist electoral success has several times coincided with a poor showing for the Centre

Party. In 2015, however, both these parties emerged victorious.

Table 3. Proportion of votes cast for different parties in Parliamentary elections in 1945–2011 (per cent)

	Socdem	*Cent*	*Cons*	*Left P*	*Green*	*Swe*	*Christ*	*Pop*	*Lib*	*Others*
1945	25.1	21.3	15.0	23.5	–	7.9	–	–	5.2	2.0
1948	26.3	24.2	17.1	20.0	–	7.3	–	–	3.9	1.2
1951	26.5	23.2	14.6	21.6	–	7.3	–	–	5.7	1.1
1954	26.2	24.1	12.6	21.6	–	6.8	–	–	7.9	0.6
1958	23.2	23.1	15.3	23.2	–	6.5	–	–	5.9	2.8
1962	19.5	23.0	15.0	22.0	–	6.1	–	2.2	6.3	5.9
1966	27.2	21.2	13.8	21.1	–	5.7	0.5	1.0	6.5	2.9

1970	23.4	17.1	18.0	16.6	–	5.3	1.1	10.5	6.0	2.0
1972	25.8	16.4	17.6	17.0	–	5.1	2.5	9.2	5.2	1.2
1975	24.9	17.6	18.4	18.9	–	4.7	3.3	3.6	4.3	4.3
1979	23.9	17.3	21.7	17.9	–	4.3	4.8	4.6	3.7	1.8
1983	26.7	17.6	22.1	13.5	1.4	4.9	3.0	9.7	–	1.1
1987	24.1	17.6	23.1	13.6	4.0	5.6	2.6	6.3	1.0	2.1
1991	22.1	24.8	19.3	10.1	6.8	5.5	3.1	4.8	0.8	2.7
1995	28.3	19.8	17.9	11.2	6.5	5.1	3.0	1.3	0.6	6.3
1999	22.9	22.4	21.0	10.9	7.3	5.1	4.2	1.0	0.2	5.0
2003	24.5	24.7	18.6	9.9	8.0	4.6	5.3	1.6	0.3	2.5
2007	21.4	23.1	22.3	8.8	8.5	4.6	4.9	4	0	2

7	4	1	3					.1	.1	.2
2011	19.1	15.8	20.4	8.1	7.3	4.3	4.0	19.1	–	1.9
2015	16.5	21.1	18.2	7.1	8.5	4.9	3.5	17.7	−	2.5
Average for 1991–2015	22.1	21.7	19.7	9.4	7.6	4.9	4.0	7.1	0.3	3.3

Party abbreviations

Soc dem	*Social Democratic Party*
Cent	*From 1907 to 1965 Agrarian Union, thereafter the Center Party*
Cons	*National Coalition*
Left P	*From 1945 to 1990 Finnish People's Democratic Union (FPDU), from 1991 on Left Alliance (LA)*
Green	*Green League*
Swe	*Swedish People's Party in Finland*
Christ	*From 1966 to 2002 Finnish Christian League, thereafter Finnish Christian Democrats*
Pop	*From 1958 to 1966 Small farmers' Party, from 1966 to 1995 Finnish Rural Party, thereafter*

	The Finns Party
Lib	*From 1918 to 1950 National Progressive Party, from 1951 to 1965 Finnish People's Party, from 1965 to 1983 Liberal People's Party. In the parliamentary election of 1983 the Liberal People's Party was a member organization of the Center Party. From 1987 to 2002 Liberal People's Party, thereafter the Liberals*

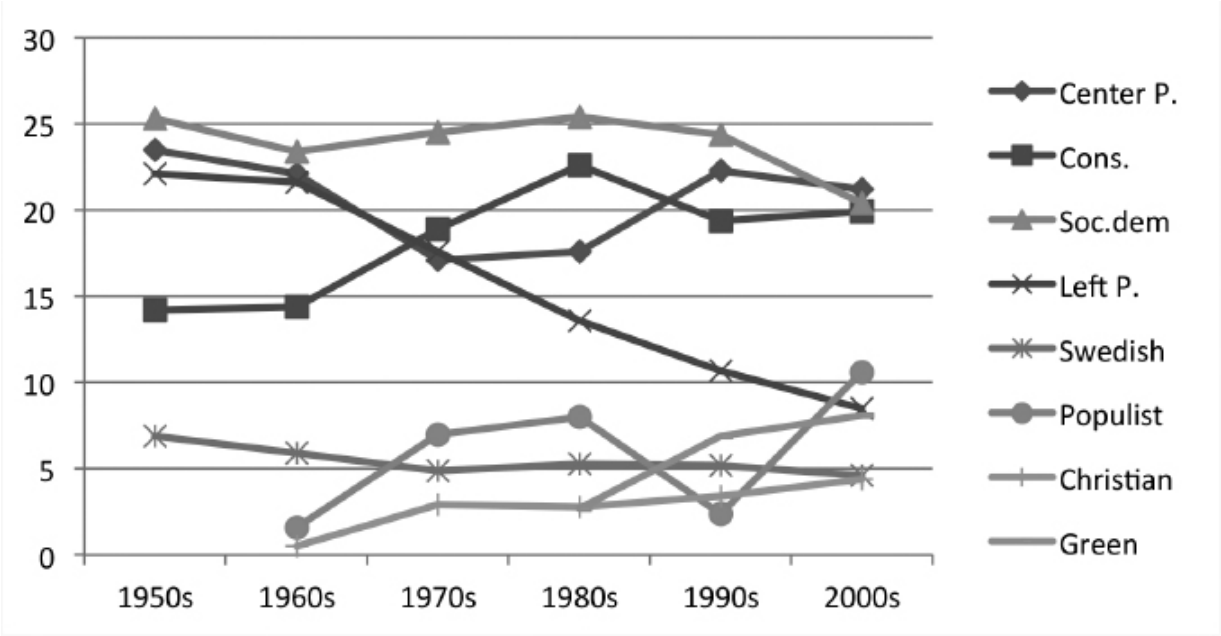

Figure 1. Support for eight party families 1950–2015; average vote shares (per cent) for each decade.

Source: Electoral statistics.

Important portions of the patterns of party politics are explicable in terms of structural change. The rapid economic transformation described above was connected with a marked decline in the number of rural population, and a drop in the number of small farms. This development had clear political consequences. Support for communism and left-wing socialism was strong among small farmers. From the 1940s to the 1960s, small farmers and their families formed a majority of the rural population. The 1960s was a

decade of the ‘great migration’. Along with the rapid economic transformation, small farms were merged into bigger ones, and the rural overpopulation, mainly younger generations, moved from rural to urban areas. As a result rural support for communism and left-wing socialism declined, while populism thrived on the rootlessness of those groups whose lives had been transformed by the decline of farming and the rapid process of urbanization. Along with urbanization and the expansion of the tertiary sector, support for conservative party increased. Remarkably, however, the Centre Party has been largely successful in the face of this social transformation. Although it has at times been challenged electorally by the populists, it has, over the long haul, retained its position to a much higher extent than might have been expected.

The decline of the extreme left must, of course, also be seen against the backdrop of the international collapse of communism. The FPDU had in many ways depended on Soviet backing; with bankruptcy of Soviet communism, the electoral support of the extreme left in Finland dwindled rapidly.

About this book

The subsequent chapters of this book examine what the changes described above have meant from the point of view of political *power*. The scope of the analysis is broad, but the majority of the chapters deal with traditional core aspects of political analysis: government institutions, parties, political leaders and representatives. The project is guided by the notion that while not all power is political in nature and while all political power cannot be studied through institutions and actors immediately connected to these institutions, the structures of government remain a central

arena for the use of political power. If and when institutions change, the conditions for political power are altered. One overarching objective is to track changes in Finnish government institutions that may have altered political power relations and the conditions for actors connected with these institutions.

While stressing the importance of institutional relations, however, the project has the ambition of looking beyond this perspective as well. Important aspects of political power defy institutional categorizations, and they must be studied from alternative perspectives. In order to present a more comprehensive analysis of political power in Finland the book therefore also examines phenomena such as political and social elites, citizen activism and gender relations. In all these respects, the case Finland offers interesting observations and developments without which the picture would remain incomplete.

The constitutional change described at the beginning of this introduction has placed the parliament at the center stage in the Finnish political system. It is therefore natural that the first substantive chapter of this book focuses on the position of the *Eduskunta. Guy-Erik Isaksson* shows that the changes have altered the parliament's position vis-à-vis the executive sphere. While the constitutional reform has underlined the central role of parliament, the predominance of stable surplus governments has strengthened the de facto influence of the cabinet sphere. Internally, parliament has changed relatively little, although the influx of EU matters has shifted the balance among parliamentary committees and tended to crowd the parliamentary agenda.

Heikki Paloheimo's chapter on the executive provides an account for the shift from semi-presidentialism to parliamentary rule. He analyses the division of power between government and president and government and parliament. On the behavioral side, he notes the paradox that presidential elections have continued to mobilize voters

better than parliamentary elections, despite the much greater political importance of the latter. By the same token, there is a considerable amount of nostalgia among Finnish citizens for the earlier, president-centred system of government.

The next two chapters by *Lauri Karvonen* and *Vesa Koskimaa*, respectively, focus on political parties. Karvonen examines the influence of political parties over time concerning cabinet formation and central government budgets. Parties today have a much more influential role in government formation than in the 1970s. As for the budgetary process, the picture is less clear cut; on the whole, political parties have at least not lost power over time. Koskimaa looks at parties as organizations. In tune with comparative research on party organizations, he finds that the role of the 'party in public office' has been accentuated in terms of organizational resources as compared with the party organization at large. This, however, need not reflect a definite shift in power relations; rather, a combination of technological advances and a stronger focus on publicity and the electoral process has created shared interests throughout party organizations.

Among the institutional features that sets Finland apart from most comparable countries is the open-list proportional system used in elections. The system creates strong incentives for individual electioneering. Åsa von Schoultz examines the individual attributes that help candidates pass 'the needle's eye' to political positions. Besides incumbency and political experience, celebrity status and gender may be of importance in rather an intriguing manner.

In the Finnish debate, it is commonplace to underline the strong position of the central government bureaucracy vis-à-vis the political sphere. *Eero Murto* examines this notion both longitudinally and with the aid of a survey gauging the views of politicians and civil servants concerning power relations in Finnish central government. Overall, the