

## **Finland**

Rice

Politics of Finland takes place in a framework of a constitutional republic (U.S. Department of State ). Some scholars (e.g., Lijphart 1999, 121; Shugart and Carey 1993, 5; Stepan and Skach 1993, 5) classify the political system of Finland as a “semi-presidential” (or mixed) system that has both a popularly elected president and a parliamentary prime minister. Lijphart (1999, 122) mentions that the Finnish semi-presidential system is the most difficult case to classify the type of democracies by asking the question of who is the real head of government: the president or the prime minister? The Constitution Act of 1919 formed the basis for the system of government. The division of power among legislative, executive, and judicial branches is only partial and the resulting overlapping of competencies ensures that authorities act according to Constitution (U.S. Library of Congress). While the President of Finland is the head of state, the Prime Minister of Finland is the head of government.

Accordingly, although Finland has primarily a parliamentary system and the main executive power lies in the cabinet (i.e., the Finnish Council of State) headed by the prime minister, the president has also some notable power. In particular, foreign policy and matters concerning national security are led by the president, in co-operation with the cabinet. Given the special role in foreign affairs pertaining to the president, we code the president as the effective leader of Finland, consistent with Goemans et al. (2009). The president is elected directly by the people of Finland (or electoral college) for a term of six years.

More than a century of Russian rule in Finland ended in 1917. On December 6, 1917, shortly after the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, Finland declared its independence. However, it experienced no easy transition to independence, but rather endured a bloody civil war between leftist Reds and rightist Whites along the lines of social class in 1918. Finally, a leftist takeover was averted and Finland’s independence was secured (U.S. Library of Congress ). On July 17, 1919, the parliament adopted a constitution that established a republican form of government. The Finnish Republic was established on July 25, 1919, when the first president of Finland was elected (U.S. Library of Congress).

During the civil war between leftist Reds and rightist Whites, which concerned control and leadership of Finland after the independence from Russia, Carl Gustav Mannerheim was appointed to be the military chief of the Whites. Defeating an attempt by Reds supported by Bolshevik forces, Mannerheim became Finland’s regent on December 12, 1918. Mannerheim was an interim leader and was defeated by Kaarlo J. Stahlberg in the election for the Finland’s first president. Stahlberg, who had been primary author of the Constitution, took office on July 25, 1919. Stahlberg was a member of the newly formed National Progressive Party (ED: Kansallinen Edistyspuolue). To determine whether this is a SOLS change Stahlberg’s SOLS needs to be compared to the last regular leader’s. The leader prior to Mannerheim was Svinhufvud. Svinhufvud was approved as leader by the parliament of the newly independent

Finland in 1917. Civil war broke out shortly thereafter and Svinhufvud) was voted provisional leader on May 18, 1918. Because he can be considered the regular leader of Finland for a short period after independence (Prakke and Kortmann 2004: 188, Upton 1980: 177), we compare Stahlberg's SOLS to Svinhufvud's. Stahlberg's SOLS was the ED, while Svinhufvud he belonged to the National Coalition Party (see Finish Parliament HP). This is a SOLS change.<sup>1</sup>

Stahlberg did not seek re-election in 1925, finding his difficult term of office a great strain, and retired from office on March 1, 1925. Lauri Relander, a member of Agrarian Party (ML: Maalaisliitto), was elected as president and took office on March 1, 1925 (SOLS change). He completed his term of office and stepped down on March 2, 1931.

Rehr E. Svinhufud, a member of the conservative National Coalition (Kansallinen Kokoomus – KOK), took office March 1, 1931 (SOLS change). During his term of office, he banned the Community Party. In the presidential election of 1937, because the Social Democrats and the Agrarian party voted against him, Svinhufud was defeated.

Kyösti Kallio, a member of the ML (Agrarian Party), replaced Svinhufud as president on March 1, 1937 (a SOLS change) with the votes of the centrist Agrarian, Progressive and social democratic coalition which wanted to ensure that President Svinhufvud would not be re-elected. Kallio took a role of a parliamentary president and avoided use of his personal power.<sup>2</sup> The Soviet Union invaded Finland in November 1939 and after several months the government was forced to sign a peace treaty that ceded parts of its territory to the Soviet Union. Kallio's health failed and he announced his resignation on December 19, 1940.

Risto Heikki Ryti, a member of the ED (National Progressive Party), was selected by the electoral college to succeed Kallio to the presidency on December 19, 1940 (a SOLS change). Ryti had served as acting president as Kallio's health declined. The government entered into negotiations with Nazi Germany and entered World War II as a co-belligerent against the Soviet Union in June 1941.

Carl Gustav Mannerheim, who had been Commander-in-Chief of the armed force since November 1939 when Finland was at war with the Soviet Union during the WWII, became president on August 4, 1944, following the resignation of pro-German president Risto Ryti (a SOLS change). Due to the difficult conditions, general elections could not be held and the parliament elected Mannerheim as president by means of a special law.<sup>3</sup> Mannerheim remained

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<sup>1</sup> Although they belonged to a same party (the Young Finns Party) around the time of country's independence (before Stahlberg became PM), they later belonged to the different parties, which originated from the Young Finns Party (i.e., Svinhufvud belonged to the National Coalition Party and Stahlberg belonged to the National Progressive Party). See Finish Parliament HP.

<sup>2</sup> Lentz III 1999, 158.

<sup>3</sup> Jagerskiöld 1986, 175.

president following elections in March 1945.<sup>4</sup> He resigned from office on March 4, 1946 for health reasons. We code Mannerheim's SOLS as non-party. Although Mannerheim was a Marshal, his government should not be considered military.

Upon Mannerheim's resignation, Juho Kusti Paasikivi of the Kansallinen Kokoomus (KOK) party became the new president.<sup>5</sup>

Paasikivi would remain as Finnish president until 1956 when, upon his death, he was replaced by Urho Kaleva Kekkonen of the Maalaisliitto/Suomen Keskusta ML/KESK party on March 1, 1956.<sup>6</sup> We code a major SOLS change for this date since both politicians were not of the same political party and Finland, while a mixed system, is coded according to the rules of a presidential democracy.

When Kekkonen resigned as a result of failing health, he was replaced by Mauno Henrik Koivisto of the Suomen Sosialidemokraattinen Puolue (SDP) on September 11, 1981. We code a major SOLS change for 1981. While initially Koivisto became president in an acting capacity when his predecessor resigned, he served in an acting role only for a few months and was elected regular president the following year. Koivisto was of a different party than his predecessor so we code a major SOLS change for September 11, 1981.

Koivisto would remain president until being succeeded by Martti Oiva Kalevi Ahtisaari of the SDP party in 1994. Since Ahtisaari and Koivisto were of the same political party, we code no major SOLS change for the March 1, 1994 leadership transition. In 2000, Ahtisaari was replaced by Tarja Kaarina Halonen also of the SDP party, so we likewise code no major SOLS change for this date. Halonen remains the Finnish president through the end of this project's temporal domain; therefore, we code no more SOLS changes.

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<sup>4</sup> "Carl Gustaf Mannerheim"; "Baron Carl Gustav (Emil) Mannerheim (1867-1951)"

<sup>5</sup> "Juho Kusti Paasikivi"

<sup>6</sup> "Urho Kaleva Kekkonen"; Cahoon 2010

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