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Author(s): Paasonen, Jyri; Widlund, Joonas

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Jyri Paasonen, Associate Professor in Security Law, University of Vaasa
Joonas Widlund, Postdoctoral Researcher, University of Vaasa

The Legal Foundations of Finland’s Model of Comprehensive Security

1. Introduction

For centuries, Finland belonged to the Swedish realm and was involved in several conflicts between Sweden and Russia. As a consequence of repeated wars, Sweden gradually lost territories to Russia, and after the Finnish War in 1808–1809, Finland was annexed to the Russian Empire as an autonomous Grand Duchy. The collapse of imperial Russia during the 1917 Revolution enabled Finland to declare independence, which was followed by the Finnish Civil War in 1918, in which the Bolsheviks supported the Red faction. Finland’s security policy continued to be shaped by its eastern neighbour. During the Second World War, the Soviet Union attacked Finland, leading to the Winter War (1939–1940) and the Continuation War (1941–1944). Finland preserved its independence but had to cede territories, pay extensive war reparations, and later sign the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Assistance (1948), which bound Finland to a policy often described as “pro-Soviet neutrality.” After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Finland re-oriented its foreign policy, joined the European Union in 1995, and progressively deepened cooperation with Western institutions in response to Russia’s shifting security posture.¹

The war in Georgia in 2008 and especially the Russian invasion of Crimea in 2014 raised concerns about the security of Finland and other Russian neighbours. Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in 2022 was a decisive factor that changed Finland’s attitude towards military alliances. Finland formally joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) on 4 April 2023. The decision to join NATO was a historic and significant change of direction in Finnish security policy, as Finland had maintained military non-alignment until the post-Cold War period.

Finland has long developed its preparedness and societal security in accordance with the requirements imposed by its geographical location and proximity to Russia. Following Finland’s accession to NATO in 2023, international interest in the Finnish preparedness model, comprehensive security, has increased. The model is viewed as

¹ E.g. Olli Jussila – Seppo Hentilä – Jukka Nevakivi, *From Grand Duchy to a Modern State: A Political History of Finland since 1809*. Hurst & Co. 1999.

an example of broad-based security thinking, in which public authorities, the private sector, civil society organizations and citizens jointly safeguard the vital functions of society.

Although previous literature has addressed the historical development of comprehensive security, the focus has remained largely administrative and political. The legal dimension has received very little attention, even though legislation, legal obligations, soft-law instruments and institutional steering have been essential in shaping the concept, objectives and practical implementation of comprehensive security. This article examines comprehensive security explicitly from a legal perspective. Rather than merely identifying references to comprehensive security in legislation or policy documents, the analysis focuses on how legal and normative steering has contributed to the formation of the model, how comprehensive security is positioned within the Finnish legal system, and what kind of normative content and legal relevance can be attributed to it.

The aim of the article is to answer three interlinked research questions that structure the legal examination of comprehensive security:

1. How has comprehensive security developed in Finland from a legal and institutional perspective?
2. How is comprehensive security defined as a concept, and how does it relate to other concepts of preparedness and security within the legal and regulatory framework?
3. How has legal regulation shaped the content, implementation and normative role of comprehensive security?

Methodologically, the article is based on a doctrinal legal analysis with an emphasis on legal systematisation. It examines legislation, preparatory works, policy documents and other forms of normative steering in order to identify the legal structures, responsibilities and steering mechanisms underlying comprehensive security. The article begins by describing the development of comprehensive security, followed by an examination of the concept and the legislation governing it. The conclusions bring together the findings of the analysis and assess the role of legal regulation in shaping comprehensive security as a legally relevant normative framework.

2. Comprehensive security development in Finland

In the decades after the world wars, Finland's preparedness was developed toward a broader total national defence model. The earlier approach focused mainly on military defence, whereas total national defence expanded cooperation across the whole society.

In recent decades this model has further evolved into the concept of comprehensive security, which emphasises preparedness for both military and non-military threats. Through the approach it defined, Finland has developed and maintained the foundations of preparedness. Important early milestones in this development were, for example, the Civil Protection Act (438/1958) and the Act on Emergency Stockpiles (531/1958), which were enacted in 1958, and which were partly a response to society's need for broad-based preparedness.²

The Civil Protection Act introduced the Civil Protection Leader Courses (Teli Protection Courses), which were first held in 1959. On the basis of a joint proposal by the Civil Protection Association and the Defence Economic Planning Board, industry took the initiative to improve the protection preparedness of companies. In the same year, the Central Committee for Industry set up the Board for Industrial and Business Civil Protection (Teli Board). The remit of the Teli Board was extended from civil protection in emergency situations to the overall protection of businesses. In 1976, the Teli Board increasingly incorporated training in protection and safety in normal times into its training programme. These included courses in protection management, security and information protection. This gave rise to the concept of total security, which later became the basis for the comprehensive security model.³ The ability to take account of changes in the security environment was one of the most important aspects in the development towards the current comprehensive security approach. The emergency situations defined in 1977 were part of this development.⁴

On 17 December 2009, the Government appointed a committee (the Hallberg Committee) to prepare a comprehensive report on society's preparedness for security threats. The aim of the study was to assess the then existing model of comprehensive national defence, the strategy for safeguarding society's vital functions, the internal security programme and their content, organisation, leadership, responsibilities and implementation. On 22 December 2010, the Committee submitted its report on "Preparedness and Comprehensive Security" to the Council of State. According to the Committee, Finland's preparedness arrangements were working well at the time and did not require major changes, but the changing environment and threat picture highlighted the need to take a broader view of security. The starting point had to be the broadest possible approach to security, i.e. comprehensive security. The then model of total national defence was still considered to be a viable one.⁵

² Vesa Kyyrönen, *Kokonaisturvallisuus EU:ssa. Suomalaisen varautumisen malli Euroopan unionin varautumisen strategiatöissä*. Turvallisuuskomitea 2014, p. 10.

³ Jyri Paasonen, *Yksityisen turvallisuusalan historia*. Jyri & Laura Paasonen Oy 2021.

⁴ Hallberg Committee, *Varautuminen ja kokonaisturvallisuus -komiteamietintö*. Valtioneuvoston kanslian julkaisuja 21/2010, p. 22.

⁵ Hallberg Committee 2010, p. 30–32.

A few days before the Committee's report was handed over, the Council of State had adopted a decision in principle on a strategy for the security of society. Ensuring the security of society was considered to be one of the most important tasks of the State. National and international interdependence had increased as a result of globalisation and the development of specialisation. It was therefore considered necessary to consider and develop security in an increasingly comprehensive and intergovernmental way, taking into account all actors in society. Increasing attention was paid to the international dimension and to the wide range of actors involved in preparedness and crisis management. The role of industry and organisations as part of society's preparedness and crisis management was also highlighted. The understanding of comprehensive security as a support structure for Finnish competitiveness and well-being was the basis for cooperation between different actors, public authorities, business and NGOs.⁶

The first Social Security Strategy did not mention the term comprehensive security at all, but used the term total homeland defence. Nevertheless, it was the comprehensive security approach that was used in the CSS. The link between comprehensive security and the societal security strategy was strengthened and reinforced by the decision of principle on comprehensive security and the Government's report on security and defence policy. In the latter, the concept of global security is based on the concept of societal preparedness as defined in the societal security strategy. The change in the term has mainly been a normal development of practices in line with the development of society.⁷

At the Prime Minister's proposal, the Government decided at the Cabinet dinner on 14 December 2011 that a Government decision in principle on comprehensive security would be drawn up. The changing operating environment and threat landscape had created a need for a more holistic and comprehensive approach to security. On 5 December 2012, the Government adopted a decision in principle on comprehensive security. The purpose of the decision was to define the concept of comprehensive security and other related key concepts, and to specify the responsibilities of the administrative sectors in the areas of comprehensive security. The concept of 'comprehensive security' was introduced to describe the broad-based preparedness of society for different types of incidents and emergencies. The aim of the decision was to emphasise all aspects of the management of comprehensive security and their interrelationships and to create a more systematic approach to security management. The concept of comprehensive security was also intended to cover, as part of its scope, comprehensive national defence. The principles of preparedness for comprehensive national defence continued

⁶ YTS, Yhteiskunnan turvallisuusstrategiasta 16 päivänä joulukuuta 2010 annettu valtioneuvoston periaatepäätös. 16.12.2010.

⁷ Kyyrönen 2014, p. 12.

to describe the military and civilian activities to safeguard the sovereignty of the State and the livelihood and security of its citizens against external threats, whether state-caused or not. The introduction of the concept of comprehensive security was not considered to imply a change in the basis of the preparedness arrangements, nor the role of the Ministry of Defence in coordinating comprehensive land defence.⁸

In June 2016, the Government submitted a report to Parliament on foreign and security policy, which assessed Finland's foreign and security policy environment and set out Finland's foreign and security policy priorities and objectives. The report noted that the foreign and security policy environment in Finland's immediate neighbourhood and globally continues to undergo significant change. It also noted that the change in the environment had created new threats and instability. From a European perspective, the international security situation has deteriorated over the last few years. The Foreign and Security Policy Report 2020 states that common preparedness, planning, training and enforcement will be based on the principle of comprehensive security, where vital societal functions are provided through broad cooperation.⁹ The Foreign and Security Policy Report 2024 also highlights the role of strong will to defend the country as a foundation to comprehensive security and as a key component of societal resilience. Cyber policy and cyber defence are also important parts of comprehensive security.¹⁰ Their importance is likely to only increase as the significance of the cyberenvironment in everyday life continues to grow. The Government Defence Policy Report 2021 states, *inter alia*, that broad-based influence challenges society's crisis resilience, defence preparedness and the maintenance of defence capabilities.¹¹ Total defence is an important part of comprehensive security, as an armed conflict and war are certainly the most severe security threats that could face Finland. Still, comprehensive security covers a spectrum of functions, as the Government Defence Report 2024 presents. These functions include management of government affairs, international and EU activities, defence capability, internal security, economy, infrastructure and security of supply, services and the functional capacity of the population, and psychological resilience of the population.¹² The increased scale of functions requires an updated approach to comprehensive security and defence development.

On 20 May 2021, the Government submitted a report on Finland's internal security to Parliament. The report has been prepared until 2030 and its aim is to ensure that

⁸ VNpp, Valtioneuvoston periaatepäätös kokonaisturvallisuudesta. Annettu Helsingissä 5 päivänä joulukuuta 2012. 5.12.2012.

⁹ Foreign and Security Policy Report. Publications of the Finnish Government 2020:32, p. 35.

¹⁰ Foreign and Security Policy Report. Publications of the Finnish Government 2024:35, p. 26–28.

¹¹ Government Defence Report. Publications of the Finnish Government 2021:80, p. 16–17.

¹² Government Defence Report. Publications of the Ministry of Defence 2024:7, p. 81.

internal security continues to develop so that Finland will be a safer country for all people and groups of people in the future. Finland's internal security policy is primarily based on prevention. A sense of security is an important part of internal security and a strong experience of security also protects society from new types of security threats. Preparations for major internal security threats are made in cooperation between the authorities, business and the third sector, in line with the Finnish model of comprehensive security.

In a changed security environment, the importance of internal security has increased. According to the report, traditional threats remain, but they are changing as the global security environment becomes increasingly complex. At the same time, global developments and entirely new threats are challenging public authorities. For example, the sharing of distorted information is eroding social harmony. Polarisation and segregation are fuelling social unrest, which can reinforce, inter alia, gang activity, the appeal of violent extremism and the threat of terrorism. The report on internal security is the second of its kind, the first having been adopted in 2016. At that time, internal security was limited to actors within the Home Office. The report found that at the time, Finns' sense of security was still high by international standards, but that the change in the international security situation also affected Finland's internal security and that the change in the security environment had increased the sense of insecurity.

Finland's model of comprehensive security has been forced to evolve following Russia's war in Ukraine and Finland joining NATO in 2023.¹³ The renewed Security Strategy for Society was published in 2025. Alongside preparedness, the strategy places focus on response to disruptions and crises. The purpose of this response, in Finnish terminology *vaste*, is to minimise the effects of realised threats, enhance the recovery of the critical functions of society, and support preparedness. The response is built upon values that include democracy, rule of law, and openness, among others.¹⁴ These values help form a constitutional law connection to the democratic foundation of the Finnish state system and rule of law. As security is a collective interest that needs to be balanced with the core values of a democratic state, including the liberties protected by basic and human rights, a value-based foundation of comprehensive security is of vital importance.¹⁵

Compared to earlier, the new strategy emphasises the role of an individual citizen in the model of comprehensive security. The strategy recognizes that the skills, knowledge,

¹³ Markus Kari, Venäjän hyökkäyssodan vaikutukset kokonaisturvallisuusmalliimme. Defensor Legis 4,5/2023, 724–734, p. 732.

¹⁴ Security Committee, Security Strategy for Society. Publications of the Finnish Government 2025:3, p. 33–34.

¹⁵ Joonas Widlund, Kansallinen turvallisuus: vapauden ehto vai rajoitus? Oikeus 2/2020, 134–153, p. 142, 147–149.

and attitude of citizens plays a pivotal role in building societal resilience. The role of citizens includes both voluntary participation and activities as well as responsibilities, such as the national defence obligation, the duty to receive education, and tax liability. According to the strategy, Finland supports strengthening the European Union's geopolitical role. NATO cooperation reinforces the national model of comprehensive security. Besides the EU and NATO, Finland is also a member of the United Nations, the Council of Europe, the Nordic Council of Ministers, and the Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe (OSCE). This kind of active bilateral and multilateral international cooperation is important in protecting Finland's foreign and security policy interests on the global stage.¹⁶

In recent years, resilience has also become a stronger part of comprehensive security, with an increasing emphasis on resilience as a means and an end of security policy. As a security policy concept, resilience refers to the ability to withstand the effects of crises and the readiness to adapt to post-crisis and post-disaster conditions, and therefore has a clear role to play in comprehensive security. A resilient society requires both the promotion of and the ability of different actors to work together. From the outset, the concept of global security has been seen as encompassing preparedness, incident management and recovery. Of these, resilience is directly linked to the latter two phases. The promotion of resilience of the state, society and individuals, on the other hand, can be seen as an integral part of preparedness policy.¹⁷ The model of global security provides a ready-made and very useful framework for preparedness against climate change threats, but climate change as a topic area has not been fully adopted as part of the global security model, so the need has been felt to incorporate climate change more deeply into preparedness work.¹⁸

In the area of comprehensive security, the permanent coordination body for preparedness and, where necessary, the expert body for incidents, is the Security Committee, which started its work in February 2013. Its tasks are laid down in the Government Decree on the Security Committee (77/2013). The Security Committee is attached to the Ministry of Defence and meets on average once a month. Its task is to assist the Council of State and the ministries. The Security Committee acts as an expert body in various situations of social disturbance, where necessary. Previously known as the Security and Defence Committee (CSDP), it was decided to change its name in the context of the decision of principle on comprehensive security. The Security Committee will continue the work of the Security and Defence Committee

¹⁶ Security Committee 2025, p. 17–43.

¹⁷ Ari-Elmeri Hyvönen et al., *Kokonaisresilienssi ja turvallisuus: tasot, prosessit ja arviointi*. Valtioneuvoston selvitys- ja tutkimustoiminnan julkaisusarja 17/2019.

¹⁸ Emma Hakala et al., *Ilmastonmuutos ja Suomen turvallisuus: Uhat ja varautuminen kokonaisturvallisuuden toimintamallissa*. Valtioneuvoston selvitys- ja tutkimustoiminnan julkaisusarja 2021:52, p. 105.

in the field of comprehensive security and preparedness in Finland. The Committee is responsible for the security strategy of society, which coordinates the preparedness of the state, municipalities, organisations and business in different security situations. It also monitors and coordinates the implementation of the new cyber security strategy. The Committee will assist the Government and its ministries in the preparedness and coordination of preparedness for the management of comprehensive security. The aim is also to emphasise that in the management and command of incidents, the Council of State and the competent authorities should operate in accordance with normal organisation and procedures. The role of the Security Committee does not include the management and control of incidents and emergencies.¹⁹

The strength of the Finnish model of collective action for comprehensive security is that it covers all levels and actors in society. In addition to government, public authorities, business, provinces and municipalities, universities and research institutes, organisations, communities and individuals form a network of integrated security where information can be shared, common goals can be set and cooperation can be flexibly committed. According to this thinking, security actors are all those involved in security activities, whether managed or closely supporting them. Individual citizens also have an important role to play in self preparedness and in strengthening the resilience of society.²⁰

3. Comprehensive security as a concept

The decision on comprehensive security defines comprehensive security as a target state in which threats to the sovereignty of the state, the livelihood of the population and other vital functions of society are manageable. The vital functions of society are safeguarded through the joint action of public authorities, industry and organisations and citizens. Security activities include threat preparedness, incident and emergency management and recovery. The concept of comprehensive security is based on a broad concept of security, which includes all security issues where threats may cause significant harm or danger to Finland and its population. These include threats to critical infrastructure of the state, such as information and communication systems and services, logistics, the postal service, radio frequencies, and the production of necessary commodities.²¹ Comprehensive security describes the principles for safeguarding the vital functions of society as defined by the state administration.²² The definitions are in line with those set

¹⁹ Security Committee 2025; VNpp 2012.

²⁰ Security Committee 2025, p. 43–44.

²¹ GP 63/2022 vp. Hallituksen esitys eduskunnalle valmiuslain ja asevelvollisuuslain 79 §:n muuttamisesta, p. 13.

²² VNpp 2012.

out in the 2010 Social Security Strategy, although at that time the term comprehensive security had not been established.

Comprehensive security has evolved from its previous definitions to become primarily a collaborative model, where actors share and analyse security information and plan, train and act together. This collaborative model covers all relevant actors, from citizens to authorities. Cooperation is based on statutory tasks, cooperation agreements and a societal security strategy.²³ Thematically, the concept of comprehensive security is based on a broad concept of security.²⁴ Kyyrönen has argued that broad security, preparedness and coordination are all terms that largely define the national concept of comprehensive security.²⁵ Branders has argued that comprehensive security as an umbrella concept and phenomenon in security policy is ambiguous and, at least in the past, did not have a shared meaning, as it did not cover all security.²⁶ Concepts like comprehensive security that are rooted in politics are often ambiguous partly by design, as it allows certain flexibility to the use and defining of the concept to whoever is in power at a given time.²⁷ The definition of comprehensive security covers many different functions, but a few foundational pieces can be identified based on the policy reports. Total defence and security of supply can be regarded as such pieces, as can the resilience of society. Societal resilience is both a key requirement of the comprehensive security approach and something that comprehensive security aims to protect and support.²⁸ The core democratic values that comprehensive security is tethered to form the constitutional link to the concept. In a democracy, the collective security interests have to include the protection of the free democratic system as well as basic and human rights, making the security-liberty-balance a non-zero-sum calculation.²⁹

Currently, preparedness is implemented through the concept of comprehensive security, which has gradually replaced the former concept of comprehensive national defence. At the heart of comprehensive security is the implementation of preparedness through cross-sectoral and inter-agency cooperation. In preparing for and responding to emergencies, Finnish society safeguards specifically defined vital functions through

²³ Security Committee 2025, p. 12–14.

²⁴ VNS, Suomen turvallisuus- ja puolustuspolitiikka. Valtioneuvoston selonteko. Valtioneuvoston kanslian julkaisusarja 5/2012, p. 90; VNpp 2012, p. 7; Hallberg Committee 2010, p. 26.

²⁵ Kyyrönen 2014, p. 5–6.

²⁶ Minna Branders, Kokonainen turvallisuus? Kokonaisturvallisuuden poliittinen kelpoisuus ja hallinnollinen toteuttavuus. Tampereen yliopisto 2016, p. 205.

²⁷ Arnold Wolfers, National Security as an Ambiguous Symbol. *Political Science Quarterly* 67(4) 1952, 481–502; Joonas Widlund, Tiedustelu oikeusvaltiossa. Vaasan yliopisto 2024, p. 86, 137.

²⁸ Government Defence Report 2024, p. 81; Foreign and Security Policy Report 2024, p. 28–29.

²⁹ Widlund 2024, p. 137.

the joint action of authorities, business, organisations and citizens.³⁰ The Hallberg Committee Report; the Social Security Strategy; the Government's decision of principle on comprehensive security; the Government's Security and Defence Policy Report; and the Government Decree on the Security Committee are significant in the development of the term.³¹

In the context of comprehensive security, it is also terminologically appropriate to mention the concept of national security, which was added to Article 10 of the Constitution (731/1999) when the Intelligence Acts were drafted in 2019. Serious threats to national security are defined as activities that threaten the democratic order of the state and society, national defence, the life and health of a large number of people, or critical functions of society and the state, or national security of supply. The State administration and those responsible for the core functions of society must be able to carry out their tasks without external, purposeful interference. At the very least, international terrorism, radicalisation, CBRN threats related to weapons of mass destruction and various forms of activities that threaten international peace can be included under this heading. In addition to violence, serious threats to national security can take the form of various cyber attacks, which can be part of the tools of hybrid state influence and asymmetric warfare as well as non-state actors.³² When the legislation on civil intelligence was being prepared, the core of the mission of national security authorities was considered to be the prevention and countering of threats to national security and national interests.³³

The concept of national security is seen as having a clear political and legal dimension in Finland, and its development and the identification of its different dimensions are seen as important areas for development. A comprehensive development of the concept would probably also clarify its relationship with other security concepts, such as comprehensive security or societal security. Given the international framework of reference for the concept of national security, it would seem natural to place it at the centre of the conceptualisation of different security concepts.³⁴ The relationship between comprehensive security and national security can be outlined, for example, in such a way that comprehensive security is a systemic, dynamic phenomenon that also encompasses national security interests. In this sense, comprehensive security

³⁰ YTS 2010, pp. 3–4, 10; VNpp 2012, p. 11–14.

³¹ Kyyrönen 2014, p. 11.

³² GP 198/2017 vp. Hallituksen esitys eduskunnalle Suomen perustuslain 10 §:n muuttamisesta.; Mikael Lohse – Marko Viitanen, Johdatus tiedusteluun. Alma Talent 2019, p. 43–44.

³³ GP 202/2017 vp. Hallituksen esitys eduskunnalle siviilitiedustelua koskevaksi lainsäädännöksi, p. 6, 9–10.

³⁴ Joonas Widlund – Jyri Paasonen, Kansallisen turvallisuuden käsite: Oikeutta vai politiikkaa? Edilex 2021/44, p. 15–16.

can be seen as a function supporting national security, which both defines and creates conditions for maintaining national security.³⁵

4. Comprehensive security in legislation

The term “comprehensive security” is not used much in legal regulations in Finland. This is because, according to the decision of principle on comprehensive security, it is not intended as a legal concept that would create powers for authorities or other institutions.³⁶ This has also been referred to in the legislative drafting process, when the draft Act on the Government Situation Centre (300/2017) mentioned the comprehensive security of society in § 1. Based on the feedback received during the consultation round, this term was removed from the bill, as some commentators referred in their statements to the term “comprehensive security” in the Declaration of Principles.³⁷

According to Section 2(1) of the Government Decree on the Security Committee (77/2013), the Committee’s tasks are: 1) to assist in preparedness and coordination of preparedness for the management of comprehensive security; 2) to monitor and assess the impact of changes in Finland’s security and defence policy environment and society on comprehensive security arrangements; 3) to monitor the activities of different sectors and levels of government in maintaining and developing comprehensive security-related preparedness arrangements; 4) to coordinate, as necessary, broad and important issues relating to preparedness, such as the coordination of national preparedness and the development of forms of cooperation, operating models, research and training activities. According to paragraph 2, in order to fulfil its tasks, the Committee may issue opinions and take initiatives on matters relating to comprehensive security on issues concerning the coordination of broad and important aspects of preparedness.

Preparedness as part of comprehensive security is reflected in legislation, such as the Preparedness Act (1552/2011), the Rescue Act (379/2011) and other specific legislation on the obligation to prepare. The Preparedness Act sets out the competences of the Finnish authorities within the national government to ensure the safety of the population, their livelihood and the functioning of society in times of emergency. Preparedness legislation aims to ensure the safety and livelihood of the population and the functioning of society in emergency situations.³⁸ Exceptional circumstances are defined in Section 3 of the Emergency Preparedness Act: 1) an armed attack on Finland or an attack of comparable seriousness and its immediate aftermath; 2) a significant

³⁵ Harriet Lonka et al., *Kansallisen turvallisuuden vaikutusten arviointi. Valtioneuvoston selvitys- ja tutkimustoiminnan julkaisusarja 2020:28*, p. 36.

³⁶ VNpp 2012, p. 7.

³⁷ GP 261/2016 vp. Hallituksen esitys eduskunnalle laiksi valtioneuvoston tilannekeskuksesta, p. 17.

³⁸ GP 3/2008. Hallituksen esitys eduskunnalle valmiuslaiksi ja eräiksi siihen liittyviksi laeiksi, p. 5.

threat of an armed attack on Finland or an attack of comparable seriousness, the effects of which require the immediate use of the powers provided for in the Preparedness Act; 3) a particularly serious event or threat to the livelihood of the population or the economic basis of the country, as a result of which the functions essential to the functioning of society are substantially endangered; 4) a particularly serious major disaster and its immediate aftermath; and 5) a very widespread dangerous communicable disease with effects equivalent to a particularly serious major disaster. Section 12 of the Act lays down the obligation to be prepared. According to this provision, the Council of State, state administrative authorities, independent public-law institutions of the state, other state authorities and state enterprises, as well as municipalities, associations of municipalities and other associations of municipalities, must ensure the best possible performance of their tasks also in exceptional circumstances through contingency plans and advance preparations for activities in exceptional circumstances and other measures.

According to Section 1 of the Rescue Services Act (379/2011), the aim of the Act is to improve human safety and reduce accidents. The Act also aims to ensure that when an accident threatens or occurs, people are rescued, important functions are safeguarded and the consequences of the accident are effectively limited so that the damage to people, property and the environment is kept to a minimum. In addition, the Rescue Act lays down a number of preparedness obligations. The preparedness legislation also includes the Defence Status Act (1083/1991), which, according to Section 1, in order to safeguard national independence and maintain law and order, may be used to enhance the defence and strengthen the security of the State by establishing a state of defence in times of war against Finland and in the event of internal violent disturbances which seriously affect the maintenance of public order and are intended to subvert or alter the constitutional order of the State. According to Section 2 of the Act, the state of defence is established and extended by decree of the President of the Republic. The implementing decree must be immediately submitted to Parliament. The decree must be repealed if Parliament so decides. In addition, provisions on states of emergency have been laid down in certain areas.

Section 2 of the Government Situation Centre Act (300/2017) provides for the obligation to report a security incident. A ministry and an agency or institution within the administrative branch must notify the Government Situation Centre of any accident, incident, exceptional occurrence or other similar disturbance or threat of disturbance within its area of responsibility that, in the opinion of the authority, may be relevant for the purpose of establishing a situation picture (*safety event*).

The Act was enacted in response to changes in the internal security environment, the Government's desire to strengthen the comprehensive security approach and the need to maintain a cross-administrative situational picture. The situational picture is maintained by several different authorities in their own fields. Important authorities

for the development of the situational picture include the Police, the Defence Forces, the Border Guard, the Cyber Security Centre. The security situation is a general term for the state of security in society. For example, accidents, natural disasters, terrorism, cyber-attacks and other similar events have an impact on the security situation. For example, a significant increase in the number of asylum seekers can also have an impact on the security situation. The security event mentioned in the provision is therefore an event that may affect the security situation.³⁹

The horizontal and cross-sectoral nature of comprehensive security is currently reflected in government proposals in particular. An example of its horizontal nature is land ownership, which is one of the factors that contribute to the comprehensive security of the state. On 20 April 2017, the Ministry of Defence published a report on the comprehensive security of the State in the transfer of immovable property. The report was based on the memoranda commissioned by the Security Committee, which examined the ownership of land by foreigners from the perspective of comprehensive security, as well as the legislation on hybrid threats.⁴⁰ Comprehensive security is also reflected in the preparation of legislation on cooperation between authorities. Changes to the legislation on official assistance to the police by the Defence Forces and other official assistance have been justified by the cost-effective sharing of resources between different authorities in line with the model of comprehensive security.⁴¹ In addition, comprehensive security has been taken into account in the need for the state to support vitality throughout the country, strengthen centres of excellence and be an active actor and partner in different parts of Finland. The presence of the State in the regions contributes to comprehensive security and the feeling of security.⁴²

Several legislative reforms directly tied to comprehensive security are either ongoing or have been recently implanted. The CER-directive ((EU) 2022/2557) on the resilience of critical entities was implemented in the summer of 2025.⁴³ The preparations for the reformation of the Emergency Powers Act (1552/2011) are ongoing. This reform is based on the comprehensive security model, and it aims to update the Emergency

³⁹ GP 261/2016 vp, p. 5, 18 and 19.

⁴⁰ GP 253/2018 vp. Hallituksen esitys eduskunnalle kansallisen turvallisuuden huomioon ottamista alueiden käytössä ja kiinteistönomistuksissa koskevaksi lainsäädännöksi.

⁴¹ GP 106/2021 vp. Hallituksen esitys eduskunnalle laiksi Puolustusvoimien virka-avusta poliisille ja eräiksi muiksi virka-apua koskeviksi laeiksi.

⁴² GP 62/2021 vp. Hallituksen esitys eduskunnalle laiksi valtion palveluiden saatavuuden ja toimintojen sijoittamisen perusteista.

⁴³ GP 205/2024 vp. Hallituksen esitys eduskunnalle laiksi yhteiskunnan kriittisen infrastruktuurin suojaamisesta ja häiriönsietokyvyn parantamisesta ja eräiksi muiksi laeiksi.

Powers Act to better take into account asymmetric threats and hybrid activities.⁴⁴ A reformation of the security of supply legislation is also being planned.⁴⁵

5. Conclusions

The historical relationship between Finland and Russia has been complex and marked by shifting power relations, conflicts and geopolitical dependencies. These historical experiences have had a profound impact on Finnish society, governance structures and security thinking. From a legal and institutional perspective, they have also contributed to the gradual development of a comprehensive approach to preparedness and societal security. In this sense, comprehensive security does not emerge as a sudden policy innovation, but rather as the result of a long-term evolution in which legal regulation, administrative practices and institutional arrangements have adapted to perceived security needs.

Comprehensive security has become established in Finland both as a concept and as an overarching approach to safeguarding the vital functions of society. It is reflected in a wide range of reports, strategies and legislative materials. From a legal perspective, its significance lies not primarily in the frequent use of the term comprehensive security in statutory law, but in the way legislation allocates responsibilities, imposes preparedness-related obligations and enables coordination across administrative sectors. Although the concept itself is only sporadically mentioned in legislation, particularly in explanatory memoranda to government proposals, there exists a broad and coherent legal framework that supports the substantive content and objectives associated with comprehensive security.

At the level of the European Union, comprehensive security does not appear as a distinct legal concept in terminological terms. Nevertheless, Union strategies, regulatory initiatives and policy instruments increasingly reflect a broader and more holistic understanding of security, emphasising cross-sectoral risks and cooperation between Member States. Areas such as cybersecurity, the prevention of organised crime, the management of hybrid threats and the governance of migration illustrate this development. In addition, the case law of the European Court of Human Rights has afforded States a relatively wide margin of discretion in defining situations of general emergency, which underscores the continued relevance of national legal frameworks in shaping preparedness and crisis response.⁴⁶

From a legal systematisation perspective, comprehensive security operates at the intersection of binding legislation, soft-law instruments and institutional steering

⁴⁴ Ministry of Justice, Valmiuslain kokonaisuudesta valmisteleavan työryhmän asettaminen. Memo on establishing a working group to prepare the reform of the Emergency Powers Act. 29.9.2022.

⁴⁵ VN/25055/2023. Preparation of a government proposal for reform of security of supply legislation.

⁴⁶ E.g. *A and Others v. United Kingdom*, 3455/05, judgment of 19 February 2009.

mechanisms. In situations of severe disturbances and emergencies, authorities are required to act swiftly and effectively. This presupposes that sufficient powers, resources and coordination mechanisms are already in place under normal circumstances. The National Security Impact Assessment have highlighted shortcomings in existing governance structures, particularly in addressing complex and cross-sectoral threats. Responding to these challenges requires not only substantive legislative reforms, but also a more coherent and politically guided approach to security governance within the framework of the rule of law.⁴⁷

One of the recurring challenges in legislative projects related to comprehensive security in Finland has been the concentration of lawmaking responsibilities within individual ministries. Large-scale legislative reforms, such as those concerning preparedness legislation, require sustained cross-sectoral cooperation and long-term political commitment that extends beyond individual governmental terms. Moreover, effective implementation remains a central legal issue. For example, parliamentary scrutiny has drawn attention to the fragmented nature of cybersecurity governance in Finland, raising questions about coordination, expertise and the adequacy of existing management structures. From a legal perspective, these observations highlight the importance of system-level coherence rather than isolated sectoral solutions.⁴⁸

Taken together, the analysis demonstrates that Finland's model of comprehensive security constitutes a legally relevant normative framework rather than merely an administrative or strategic concept. Its effectiveness is grounded in a network-based governance model that combines public and private actors, sector-specific responsibilities and legally defined tasks and resources. At the same time, changes in the international security environment call for a continuous assessment of the adequacy of Finland's level of preparedness and legal self-sufficiency in critical areas. Legal regulation plays a central role in defining the limits, responsibilities and coordination mechanisms necessary for maintaining societal resilience.

The international context of preparedness and security of supply has changed significantly in recent years due to global crises and geopolitical developments. Nordic cooperation in this field has intensified, and the European Union is developing new mechanisms to strengthen crisis resilience, including strategic stockpiling arrangements. Finland is also enhancing its international civil protection capabilities within the framework of the EU Civil Protection Mechanism.

Finally, Finland's accession to NATO has further highlighted the importance of civilian preparedness and societal resilience as integral components of collective

⁴⁷ VN Report, Government Report on Finnish Foreign and Security Policy. Publications of the Finnish Government 2020:30.

⁴⁸ HaVL 14/2022 vp. Hallintovaliokunnan lausunto ajankohtaisseleonteosta turvallisuusympäristön muutoksesta (VNS 1/2022 vp), p. 12–13.

security. Participation in NATO's civilian preparedness activities supports national legal and institutional arrangements by providing comparative reference points and facilitating coordination. Russia's invasion of Ukraine has underscored not only the significance of national preparedness and self-sufficiency, but also the legal and institutional importance of international cooperation in safeguarding the vital functions of society. At the same time, these developments demonstrate the need for more systematic legal research into the legal foundations, normative structure and legal effects of comprehensive security, particularly in relation to international obligations, multi-level regulation and cross-sectoral security governance.