

THE ART OF THE POSSIBLE ON THE PERIPHERY**J.K. Paasikivi and Urho Kekkonen in the Realpolitik tradition***Kari Palonen***POLITICIANS ON POLITICS**

An important source for conceptual history are politicians' writings on the concept of politics. If they are understood neither as 'great theoreticians' of the concept nor as mere puppets through whom ordinary usage 'speaks', a special lecture on their texts is called for. For politicians the concepts of politics are a part of their political activity, and as such they may transcend both strong conceptual traditions and the naive everyday use of the words in question.

In other words, to understand the politician's view on politics a contextualizing lecture is demanded. It is futile to expect in their texts the kind of context-transcending ideas constitutive for the sophisticated conceptions of politics (of a Max Weber or of a Hannah Arendt, for example). In a lecture which carefully tries to avoid staircase wisdom and to face the problem situation as it appeared to the actor himself, we can hope to show in what respect the use of the 'politics vocabulary' of a politician acting in a specific situation differs from the ordinary usage of his contemporaries as well as what modifications he introduces into a conceptual tradition.

For the conceptual history of politics the use of political vocabulary and the conceptions of politics held by politicians are an important 'mediating' link between the purely conceptional and lexicological levels, coming closer to politics as action than either of these. Conceptual changes are to a great extent produced by unintended shifts, by misunderstandings in the reception of some view and by other unnoticed and contingent transformations. Politicians' texts may also be used as sources for initially harmless but far-reaching conceptual changes later to emerge also at the level of sophisticated conceptions or at that of everyday language.

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For the contextualizing interpretation we can make use of some 'mediating instances' which transform the 'contextual distance' compared with 'natural' distances in time and place.¹ As such instances we may mention e.g. the relations between intellectual traditions, political generations as well as those between centres and peripheries. When a concept is transferred from its original contextual index, it tends both to maintain its 'original colour' and to be subject to changes other than those intended. By systematically noting these tendencies and mediating instances, conceptual changes can be made intelligible and even their value and significance appraised.

This essay is directed both towards the conceptual history of the *Realpolitik* tradition and towards a systematic use of mediating instances, above all the centre-periphery-relation, as a heuristic means of interpreting politicians' concepts of politics. In so doing the essay also aims to contribute to the history of Paasikivi's and Kekkonen's thinking as well as to indicate some less visible background assumptions common also to 'minor' Finnish politicians since 1944, precisely the era dominated by Paasikivi and Kekkonen.²

THE POLITICS OF *REALPOLITIK*³

The German word *Realpolitik* in an English text does not mean 'real' or 'realistic' politics, but politics that refers to the origins of the term. It cannot be properly understood without bearing in mind the contextual index of Germany after the failed revolution of 1848. *Realpolitik* is understood as a general title of a policy linked to the building and consolidation of the German Empire, to which certain other well-known terms and slogans are closely connected: *Staatsräson*, *Primat der Aussenpolitik* as well as *Politik ist eine Kunst des Möglichen*.

When speaking of a *Realpolitik* tradition I mean here no definite doctrine but rather a cluster of ideas around these slogans and their original context. To speak today of *Realpolitik* as a tradition is an ex post construction, which could be relativized by a closer look at those texts held to be constitutive for the tradition. I will briefly take up the contributions of four authors to the conceptual history of politics: these authors can together be counted as 'representative' for the tradition. They are L.A. von Rochau (1810–1873), Otto von Bismarck (1815–1898), Heinrich von Treitschke (1832–1896) and Friedrich Meinecke (1862–1954).

The term *Realpolitik* was invented by Rochau in his at first anonymous *Grundsätze der Realpolitik* (1853). Rochau was a disappointed liberal who

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from the failure of the 1848 revolution drew the conclusion that the liberals should denounce the over-ambitious programs of change. The primary target was to oppose normative demands in the name of realizability: revolution, for example, was not a realistic policy (Rochau 1853, 148).

A closer look shows in Rochau's anti-normatism two different aspects of interpreting what is 'real'. The more obvious one is a naturalist contention that there are 'laws' analogous to those of physics even in politics: in both realms he sees 'forces' (*Kräfte*) and their 'laws' (ibid., 25–37), in the second volume of 1869 he even refers to biological laws (Rochau 1869, 207–220). In another sense Rochau's *Realpolitik* is directed against both normativism and naturalism based on a regularity thinking, to which *Realpolitik* opposes the assessment of possibilities, thus emphasizing singular judgments and acts in politics.

When Rochau aims at reducing over-bold policy demands to a 'realistic' scale, his paradigm of politics is domestic politics. The turn of *Realpolitik* primacy of the foreign policy is obvious in the case of Bismarck, 'the white revolutionary'. He is an exemplary advocate of basing oneself on foreign policy in his whole thinking about politics. We are also accustomed to attribute to Bismarck – not wholly correctly (cf. Gall 1980, 753) – the *Politik ist eine Kunst des Möglichen* -slogan.

Although Bismarck was no political theorist, his views on politics are not reducible to these ex post -slogans. 'The art of the possible' -formula hints at Bismarck's antinormativism: his attacks on 'principles', his 'opportunism' or 'relativism' has been compared to a game theoretical view of politics (cf. Lösener 1962, 132; Gall 1980, 354). For political judgment, where no general rules or absolute criteria exist, Bismarck offers the specific faculty of 'eye measure' (*Augenmass*). This faculty links his conception of politics to a romantic version of naturalism, which assumes that like a gardener and other 'artists' also the politician has specific natural 'talents' for his activity (cf. Gall 1980, 710–711).

Heinrich v. Treitschke has the reputation of being as it were Bismarck's 'court historian'. His version of *Realpolitik* contains, however, a different perspective on politics. He, too, bases himself on *Primat der Aussenpolitik* and appeals to 'natural talents' in the 'art' of politics. But the assessment of possibilities and the use of opportunities is alien to him. Compared with Rochau's rather moderate distinction between individual and state morality (Rochau 1869, 211–217) Treitschke advocates a state worship culminating in overcoming the Kantian (cf. 1795) opposition between normative and teleological or 'ethical and political' considerations by 'moralizing' the teleology of the *Staatsräson* into a specific morality above the morality of

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individuals (Treitschke 1897, 105).

After the end of the Golden Age of *Realpolitik* the historian Friedrich Meinecke in his famous *Die Idee der Staatsräson in der neueren Geschichte* (1924) both summarizes the history of the *Staatsräson* doctrine and gives to it a personal re-interpretation. He still works within the Kantian pairs of opposites normative vs. teleological and ethical vs. political. Contrary to Treitschke he rejects the state morality and seeks to include – with a bridge metaphor – an ethical component in the *Staatsräson* itself (esp. Meinecke 1924, 5).

Another novelty in Meinecke's work is the singularization of *Staatsräson* into a 'policy-ideal' for single states: »Es gibt für jeden Staat in jedem Augenblick eine ideale Linie des Handelns, eine ideale Staatsräson.« (ibid., 1). This policy doctrine of *Staatsräson* is combined with the idea that there are always several policy alternatives present and with the assumption that it is always possible to choose 'the best' among them. In this sense Meinecke both belongs to the 'art of the possible' tradition and introduces a kind of normativism within it.

A more detailed interpretation of the *Realpolitik* tradition requires a more precise contextualization. *Realpolitik* is above all politics opposed to liberal ideas by appealing to their unrealizability. But this opposition is not radical: *Realpolitik* is rather a sceptic shadow of the 19th century liberal-progressivist *Weltanschauung* tending both to reduce policy demands and to intensify politicking (from above).

The ideas of morality and justice, economic and social stability in combination with progress in prosperity and rationality are also largely shared by the *Realpolitik* tradition. All this tends to see politics as something residual, limited to constitutional question as well as to foreign policy and diplomacy. Radical policy demands are to be seen from the perspective of reducing the need for politicking in the future, when justice and morality will reign and progress has become more or less automatic.

The *Realpolitik* tradition does not reject this vision but holds it to be too optimistic. It is dominated by the paradigm of domestic politics, not considering the reality of international relations, i.e. the concert of the great powers in the unstable equilibrium characteristic for post-1815 Europe. In this perspective foreign policy and diplomacy cannot be only of residual importance. In order to maintain and strengthen the state's position in the concert of states active politicking in relations towards others becomes a necessity to which domestic politics should be subordinated.

To call politics an 'art' signifies in the 19th century a differentiation over against the other connotations of the Latin word *ars*, namely technology and

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craft. By no means any activity of persons in authoritative position deserves e.g. for Bismarck the name of politics' this requires from the activity certain qualities comparable to those found in 'other arts'. Only by acting in an 'artistic' way may a state be successful in its foreign policy. What these qualities are is hardly thematized in the *Realpolitik* tradition tending to appeal to 'natural talents'.

The mainstreams of the *Realpolitik* tradition reserves the possibility of politicking for the leaders of the state, still considered the paradigmatic 'subject of politics'. To turn the 'art of the possible' to domestic politics and to give e.g. to party leaders the possibility of participating in the art of politics is to give *Realpolitik* an interpretation that transcends the limits of the tradition. A further step in that direction consists in re-interpreting the concept of possibility in a way in which the existing state of affairs is criticized in the name of the possible, as is the case with the re-formulation of *Realpolitik* into *Politik ist eine Kunst des Unmöglichen*, as e.g. Max Weber (1917, 524) and Karl Liebknecht (1922, 278–279) have done.

THE LEARNING OF *REALPOLITIK* IN FINLAND

If the origin of the *Realpolitik* tradition lies in empire-building Germany, its reception in Finland appears rather strange. How could a doctrine created for a 'great power' in the centre of international politics at the stage of its 'national unification' function as a model for a small peripheric country that was only an autonomous Grand Duchy in the Russian Empire in the first phase of the *Realpolitik*-reception. The old 'Fennoman' nationalist leader Yrjö-Koskinen was also highly critical of Bismarck (cf. PMS 1, esp. 14–15), who was likewise no model for any other Finnish politician.

The relative plausibility of *Realpolitik* seems to be mediated by an analogy to the post-1848 German situation. In short, the Russian unification policy after the 1890s threatening Finnish autonomy placed Finnish politicians in a position comparable to that of the German liberals after 1848 and especially in the Bismarckian period. The conciliatory 'Old Finns' took a stand corresponding to that of Rochau. Behind this stand there was also a realization that Russia's policy towards Finland had also to do with its role in the competition among the great powers in Europe. When the First World War and the Russian Revolutions made Finnish independence possible in 1917–1918, the legalist and moralist strategy was generally experienced as having been more successful than the moderate one. Only the negotiations with the Soviet Union in 1939 and the wars of 1939–1940 and 1941–1944

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re-actualized the *Realpolitik* tradition, which since then — due to Paasikivi and Kekkonen — has been felt to be the correct strategy.

J.K. Paasikivi (1870–1956) belonged to a generation which had internalized the 19th century *Weltanschauung* characterized above. The Old Finns were no reactionaries: even they believed in »mankind, humanitarianism and justice» (PMS I, 23). Something of this *Weltanschauung* is preserved through Paasikivi's whole political career, as a layer which could be relativized but not rejected altogether. The early belief in the secondary role of »political originality» in comparison with »socioeconomic and cultural development» in relations with Russia (a text from 1903, quoted in PMS I, 127) is affirmed in some diary notes after 1944 criticizing the neglect of economic questions for the political (e.g. P I, 141, 143, from 21.&23.4.1945) — amidst a direct apologia of politics!

The decisive step towards *Realpolitik* was taken when Paasikivi was a junior member of the Old Finns leadership subsequent to the Russian 'February manifesto' of 1899 against Finland's autonomy. The legalist and moralist strategy was countered by a historical view — Paasikivi was himself a legal historian — relativizing the validity of the 19th century *Weltanschauung* where the relations of a great power to a small country were concerned (cf. PMS I, esp. 39). Although there exist no text collections from Paasikivi's short time as a monarchist and pro-German senate leader after the Civil War of 1918, the commitment to the *Realpolitik* tradition might well help to understand such an activity. As a bank director (1914–1934) and conservative party leader (1934–1936) the economic liberalism and other components of the 19th century *Weltanschauung* become more actual in Paasikivi's thought (cf. e.g. PL II, 182–232). The negotiations with the Soviet Union in 1939 and the war experiences again radicalised the *Realpolitik* to an extent unimaginable to the Old Finns at the turn of the century (cf. PMS I, 67). In the post-war period he seems also to have learnt that the reasoning of domestic policy, too, could sometimes be counted as a matter of *Realpolitik* (cf. P I, 353, from 20.6.1948).

Urho Kekkonen (1900–1986) belonged to another generation, to which the 19th century *Weltanschauung* is already alien. In 1934 he sees e.g. economic liberalism to be »transferred to textbooks» since 1928 (PK IV, 57). While the 1899 manifesto was constitutive for Paasikivi's 'political generation', the declaration of Finnish independence (December 1917) and the bloody Civil War of 1918, in which Kekkonen participated as a schoolboy (cf. V) — on the White side, of course — were the constitutive even for his political generation. Kekkonen's original ideology is a populist (republican) nationalism, into which *Realpolitik* slowly creeps.

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Thinking in 'national' categories remains central for Kekkonen. Before the war he for example projects the dream of an independent Finland to past generations (PK I, 54, from 17.7.1938) – Finnish historians made similar projections – but even later Kekkonen speaks of »thinking in a Finnish way» (MP 313–317, from 1.6.1952) or claims that »as Finnish people . . . we have only a single common task» (PK II, 444, from 5.2.1967).

A kind of '*Realpolitik*' in relation to Kekkonen's early populist idealism may be seen in his 'Self-defence of democracy' (1934, in PK IV) advocating, if necessary, exceptional methods against anti-democrats as well as in his attempt as a minister of justice to ban the right extremist party (PK I, 51–78, from 22.11.1938). Even the moderate legal positivism à la Georg Jellinek, which dominates his dissertation on municipal law (KV, 1936) can be interpreted as a step towards 'realism' compared with a naive populism.

After having belonged to the anti-*Realpolitik* opposition to the Moscow treaty of March 1940, Kekkonen turned during the war of 1941–1944 towards a *Realpolitik* à la Paasikivi. Since 1943 he openly defends the doctrine of *Staatsräson* as well as *Primat der Aussenpolitik*. All this is not, however, presented as an opposition to his populist views but rather as their *Aufhebung*.

The plausibility of *Realpolitik* beyond its original context depends on the relation between the strength of the analogy in situations to the 'height' of the contextual barricades in 'applying' the tradition of *Realpolitik* to action in a new situation. In the latter respect the task of Paasikivi, himself a 19th century cosmopolitan who had internalized the original opposition to which *Realpolitik* forms a shadow, seems to be 'easier' than that of Kekkonen, for whom the rise of *Realpolitik* occurs within a horizon of populist nationalism, which has relatively little in common with the liberalism of a Rochau. But let us see how the reception of the *Realpolitik* tradition is realized in detail in the texts of Paasikivi and Kekkonen.

PAASIKIVI'S CONCEPTION OF *REALPOLITIK*

The post-1848 German origin of *Realpolitik* is well-known to Paasikivi. Among the *Realpolitik* 'authorities' discussed above he explicitly refers to Bismarck and Meinecke, while no mentions of or hints at Rochau are made in the texts available to me. Treitschke is occasionally mentioned, but as an apologist of a great power's imperialistic tendencies, he is not among Paasikivi's favourites (cf. PMS I, 22, cf. also P II, 243).

Compared with Rochau Paasikivi is almost exclusively concerned with foreign policy. The factual realities of this policy, no 'natural laws of political

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forces', are the basis for reducing 'over-idealistic' demands. A radicalization of *Realpolitik* in the encounter with the Soviet Union leads Paasikivi to a recognition of »a greater relativity than we are usually accustomed to think» in economic and social questions (TMS I, 23), and in the post-war era he is ready to give greater scope to »economic interventionism» than in the thirties (cf. the New Year speeches from 1949, 1954 and 1956 in PL I). In the fifties he also criticizes the 'unpolitical' self-identity of the Farmer's Union: it »does not get rid of politics» (P II, 310, from 23.10.1952).

The famous quotation »against geography we can do nothing, and not can you», attributed by Paasikivi to Molotov (TMS I, 46) or to Stalin (ibid. II, 185), likewise does not appeal to 'laws' of geography but rather to a brute fact. The same holds for another quotation, from the English historian Macaulay, »The origin of wisdom lies in the recognition of facts» (TMS I, 199, PL I, 9). The facts limit the realization of some policies but they are also a challenge to find new possibilities which make use of an undeniable fact, such as the proximity of Finland and the Soviet Union. Similarly, the factualist critique of 'wishful thinking' (cf. e.g. TMS I, 101) is no mere critique of exaggerated demands à la Rochau but also one of neglecting and under-estimating 'bad' possibilities.

Although critical of Bismarck's politics of 'blood and iron' (PMS I, 76), Paasikivi is an admirer of his art of politicking. He is inclined to a naturalist view of 'political capacities', which he often laments the Finns lack (TMS I, 36, P I, 315, 491). Among Paasikivi's favourite expressions is *Augenmass*, mostly referring to the lack of political capacities and explicitly attributed to Bismarck (not to Weber) (e.g. TMS II, 212). To appeal to the 'eye measure' is also to relativize factualism, especially in foreign policy, where judgment and choice are to be made in the absence of definite 'facts'. Paasikivi criticizes the Social Democrat leader Väinö Tanner precisely for defective *Augenmass*: »Foreign policy, where we often cannot know any sure facts as a basis for decision and where the rightness or erraneousness of decisions becomes clear only in the future, was not Tanner's strongest side» (TMS I, 57, cf. also P II, 284, from 14.6.1952).

Apart from *Augenmass* lies in the affirmation — referring to the English historian J.R. Seeley — that in every situation there are several realizable possibilities. For this reason Paasikivi considers speculation on past possibilities never realized worth an examination for their realizability (esp. TMS I, 94–97, II, 219–221). As Prime Minister after the war Paasikivi makes this kind of counter-factual thought experiment concerning the possibility that Finland had not joined the attack against the Soviet Union in 1941 (PL I, 51–57, from 11.2.1946).

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This openness to possibilities is not however identical with Bismarck's 'opportunism'. Paasikivi retains a moralist core: »we cannot admit right to be wrong and wrong to be right» (P, 438, from 12.4.1946, cf. also his view on Machiavelli in PMS I, 59). But precisely this remnant of moralism seems to give to Paasikivi a definite, unthematicized policy criterion, with which 'wisdom' as a realizability criterion is combined. This combination sometimes allows Paasikivi to approach the 'art of the impossible' -conception of politics.

Although Paasikivi explicitly refers to Meinecke's *Idee der Staatsräson* as well as to his other works (cf. e.g. PMS I, 80–81, TMS I, 53, 93–96), he speaks of *Staatsräson* in the sense of the traditional opposition to ethical considerations. He thus seems to miss the novelty of Meinecke's 'bridge' concept which includes ethical considerations in *Staatsräson* (although Paasikivi's own moralist core tends to function in an analogous way).

Meinecke's transformation of *Staatsräson* into a policy ideal is, however, explicitly approved by Paasikivi (TMS I, 93, P II, 10). It serves him as a basis for distinguishing between 'true and false' or rather 'legitimate' and 'illegitimate' interpretations of *Staatsräson* (cf. with reference to Meinecke PMS I, 81, TMS I, 95–96). This distinction presupposes one between the 'rational' interests of the state and its 'irrational' tendency to exaggerate them. Lack of *Augenmass* in the legalist-moralist tradition signifies an inability to make this kind of distinction and leads to a rejection of *Staatsräson* as such.

The distinction between legitimate and illegitimate recourses to *Staatsräson* is fundamental to Paasikivi's political strategy. The link between the conciliatory policy of the Old Finns towards Russia and Paasikivi's attitude towards the Soviet Union lies in discerning legitimate Russian/Soviet security interests in Finland from the imperialist tendencies of a great power to extend its demands beyond the limits of a 'wise' policy. Paasikivi's concern is to get both Finnish politicians and Soviet leaders to accept this distinction (cf. esp. TMS I, 53–55, 93–96).

The fact that state leaders themselves have to interpret and – for Paasikivi if not for Meinecke – even to decide, what the specific *Staatsräson* in an actual case 'requires' (cf. with reference to Meinecke PMS I, 81, TMS I, 53), makes its 'application' as a policy criterion difficult. In the absence of neutral instances to appeal to Paasikivi tries to convince the opponents by historical parallels (cf. Denmark of the 1860's in TMS II, 173) or by appealing to the 'teachings of history' in general (PL I, 64–65, from 11.2.1946). But he is well aware of the relativity of these 'teachings' in the case of a state like the Soviet Union. During his period as Finnish Ambassador in Moscow 1940–41 he was himself surprised to see how different from Nordic traditions was the Soviet treatment of legal questions. For example he sent to Helsinki a telegram

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against juristery: »The Kremlin is no local court» (TMS II, 104).

Meinecke's singularization of *Staatsräson* into an optimal policy doctrine is thus simplified by Paasikivi into an opposition between two types of *Staatsräson*. Choice of policy is not one of optimization but only of avoiding commitment to over-bold demands. In this sense it seems that Paasikivi makes use rather of a Rochauan than a Meineckean *Realpolitik*.

This view is linked with Paasikivi's explicit commitment to the background assumption of *Realpolitik* great powers are »subjects of politics», small states its »objects» (P I, 592, from 3.4.1948, cf. also TMS I, 55). In the context of world politics between 1815 and 1914 being a »subject of politics» does not mean being a sovereign power but having a foreign policy of one's own, not merely making passive resistance to others' policies. It is in this sense that Paasikivi 'defines' politics as an intentional action, i.e. as conducting a policy of one's own (quoted from a context of domestic politics in PL II, 185–186, from 6.10. 1933).

All this does not rule out the possibility that even a small state might be a subject in world politics, in the sense of having a policy of its own. But this is more difficult than for great powers: it requires special conditions and extraordinary wisdom. In order to participate as subjects in world politics the politics of the small states must be an art (cf. PMS I, 121, P I, 324, from 7.6.1948).

KEKKONEN'S RECEPTION OF *REALPOLITIK*

Together with other thinkers from the 1815–1914 period the *Realpolitik* authors belong to Paasikivi's central intellectual references. Kekkonen is, of course, less well acquainted with this period and his references to Bismarck and Meinecke seem to be mediated by Paasikivi. But this very fact makes the differences in the reception of the *Realpolitik* tradition equally interesting in the texts of Kekkonen – even if they do not give such a near-by full picture of his views on politics as is the case with Paasikivi.

Perhaps the most important difference between Paasikivi and Kekkonen in their views on politics is the fact that for Paasikivi the paradigm is world politics as a concert of powers, while Kekkonen's point of departure is the formation process of a nation-state. Paasikivi is above all a defender of small states' possibilities to act as subjects in world politics, and it is a matter of chance only that it is Finland for which he is acting. For Kekkonen the focus lies rather in the nation than in the state, and the paradigm of Finland with its specific history dominates his perspectives in world politics as elsewhere.

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While Paasikivi sees the conditions as well as the wisdom in policy as decisive criteria for a small state's ability to play the role of a subject in world politics, size has no constitutive significance for Kekkonen. Decisive for him is rather the intensity of nation-building: formal independence is not enough, the state must be 'unified' into a single nation, in order to be able to function as a subject in world politics.⁴ Thus Kekkonen departs from domestic politics and sees as his main political task a unification of the nation transcending the 1918 division into Whites and Reds (cf. PK I, 56, from 17.7.1938 or PK II, 445–447, from 5.2.1967).

When after the war Kekkonen advocates the *Primat der Aussenpolitik* doctrine in a radical form, this does not signify an abandonment of the constitutive role of domestic politics. Only an *Aufhebung* of the as such legitimate internal division allows a nation-state to act as a subject in world politics (cf. PK I, 158–159, from 1.7.1945; KM I, 98, from 7.9.1960; T, 24). We might even suggest that the celebrated 'unanimity of the Winter War' (1939–1940) is preserved as an experience worth repeating with another content in Kekkonen's post-war thinking about the Finnish foreign policy (although no explicit reference to this can be found in his texts).

From this perspective the *Primat der Aussenpolitik* doctrine signifies for Kekkonen a kind of warning, not to endanger the unity of the nation-state by intensifying conflicts in domestic politics. And conversely, the more unanimous the parties are on foreign policy, the broader is the room left for their internal conflicts in domestic politics. Considered as a means of domestic politics, Kekkonen's interpretation of the *Primat der Aussenpolitik* doctrine thus radically departs from the Bismarckian policy of confrontation in the direction of a double integration strategy.

What Kekkonen on several occasions presents as a 'definition of politics' falls likewise among the 'art of the possible' conceptions (NN I, 21–21, from 8.9.1943, *ibid.*, 46, from 14.6.1944, KM I, 98, from 7.9.1960, PK II, 335, from 25.9.1964 and T, 169). On the first occasion he formulates his view thus: »Politics is nothing but calculating the conditions and possibilities»; later he gives slightly varied formulations. In the first instance he tells us precisely where he has borrowed this 'definition', namely from a letter of the young general Bonaparte to Talleyrand in 1796. When the origins of the definition lie outside the specific context of the *Realpolitik* tradition, it may be expected that Kekkonen's view on politics differs from the 'art of the possible' doctrines typical of this tradition.

Conspicuous in Kekkonen's formulation are words like »calculating», »weighing» and »accounting» (NN I, 21). Compared with Bismarck's and Paasikivi's *Augenmass* view, stressing the approximate character of all political

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judgment, which Kekkonen explicitly criticizes (NN II, 62–63, from 5.6.1970), his view on politics has a more quantitative, even 'scientific' character. The paradigmatic 'artist' in politics would be a kind of super-mathematician. For Kekkonen politicians tend to lack the courage »to act according to the results of calculation» (T, 169). All this seems to presuppose a mechanical equilibrium model as a metaphor for the field within which politics 'takes place'. No genuine decisions are needed, the politician seems to be reduced from an artist in the strong sense to a technician.

To the traditional *Realpolitik* interpretation Kekkonen's 'definition' of politics is linked with emphasis on the »restricting bondage» involved in the need to »consider and make use of the possible» (KM I, 98). The ambiguities of the concept of the possible are not thematized. To the same tradition belongs a quotation from a West German politician's 'definition' of *Realpolitik*: »Das ist ein Mann, der einen Tisch anfasst und sagt: Holz. Der also nicht fragt: Warum ist das nicht Eisen.» (KM I, 103, from 19.12.1960).

In quoting Macaulay on the recognition of facts as »a first thing in politics» (MP, 300–301, from 20.6.1944, cf. also KM I, 162, from 10.4.1963), Kekkonen interprets the thesis more 'positivistically' than Paasikivi. For the latter the facts are not a given »basis» but rather limits and challenges to projects, which are themselves 'prior to the facts', not only formed after the facts have been first established.

The concept of *Staatsräson* is also given a factualist interpretation: »We have to start with the fact that every state follows a policy which has as its aim the state's own interests» (NN I, 8, from 1943). This could be called a reification of the *Realpolitik* tradition by taking away the opponent which is included in the original context of *Realpolitik*. On other occasions this opponent, »wishful thinking», is still present in Kekkonen (e.g. his view that the Finns possessed »the world record in it» between 1939 and 1941, in KM I, 266, from 6.1.1966).

Another aspect of reifying the *Staatsräson* in 1943 is Kekkonen's commitment to a Treitschkean view: »The morality of the state is another thing than the morality of the individual» (NN I, 8). Together with some pronouncements concerning domestic politics (cf. e.g. the Burkean view of the nation as unity of generations in PK I, 53–57, from 17.7.1938) this *Staatsräson* is an expression of an organicist view on the nation-state (on the »national suicide» cf. also NN I, 39–43, from 3.3.1944). This view of the nation-state as the 'given' unit in world politics tends after the fifties to be replaced by the search for world unity as a kind of *Aufhebung* of national interests (cf. e.g. KM I, 155, from 14.1.1963 and PK II, 431–432, from 6.1.1967).

The national interest is interpreted by Kekkonen in the fashion of the

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Meineckean singularization of *Staatsräson* into a policy ideal, without mentioning Meinecke's name (cf. PK II, 31, from 9.2.1957 and T, 13). But unlike Paasikivi, Kekkonen does not get involved in the difficulties of interpreting this ideal, apart from referring to 'consequence' (T, 27, NN II, 389, from 1974) and to 'success' (e.g. PK II, 181, from 26.11.1961).

CONTRIBUTION TO THE *REALPOLITIK* TRADITION

If a history of *Realpolitik* as a tradition in the conceptual history of politics were ever be written, J.K. Paasikivi would surely deserve mention as one who gives to the tradition a 'small state turn'. By liberating *Realpolitik* from a view allowing the great powers alone to act as subjects in world politics and by trying discuss the conditions under which small states may be more than *quantités négligeables*, Paasikivi makes possible a '*Realpolitik* from below'. Thus he re-vitalizes the tradition in a period in which it had already become obsolete both in conceptual discussion of politics and in the practice of world politics.

The 'small state turn' requires certain relativizations in the *Realpolitik* tradition. This concerns e.g. the success criterion. Unlike a Treitschke Paasikivi does not justify success, he only blames the failures: if the results of a policy »have been unsuccessful, it is, at least in most cases, because the policy has been more or less wrong or has not been wise . . .» (P I, 179, from 4.8. 1945). But also the remnants of moralism in Paasikivi's thinking can be interpreted as a factor modifying the great powers' self-legitimation by success alone.

The most interesting component in Paasikivi's 'small state *Realpolitik*' is the interpretation of wise politicking as an 'existential necessity' for a state to act as subject in world politics. Although he admits »in theory», that »there are cases in which the result of any one policy is as bad as that of another» (P I, 179), the small state must to its utmost not to get involved in such a situation. Paasikivi's attempts to distinguish between legitimate and illegitimate *Staatsräson*, the use of the *Augenmass* and direct epithets for a 'wise' policy such as 'careful, moderate, far-sighted, conciliatory' (PMS I, 76–77) or 'negotiating and compromising' (ibid. II, 186) are further measures for maintaining a small state in the subject's position in world politics.

The converse side of Paasikivi's 'small state *Realpolitik*' is his lack of interest in domestic politics. Internal conflicts appears to him largely as disturbances for the wisdom of the state's foreign policy. From this perspective – together with his commitment to the 19th century *Weltanschauung* – the sharp separations between foreign policy and domestic politics (esp. P I, 410,

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from 18.1.1947, P II, 42, from 23.9.1949) and between politics and economics (P I, 141, 143, from 21.&23.4.1945) become as intelligible as their relativization on superior 'political' grounds, as was the case in Finland's rejection of Marshall aid (P I, 471, from 10.7.1947, cf. P II, 391, from 15.12.1953).

Politics is for Paasikivi — in small states, at least — reserved for the state's leaders. In reproaching the parliamentary majority for »not understanding anything about politics» (P I, 678, from 30.11.1948) he is not expressing the wish that all MPs would become wise politicians but only that they would understand the demands of his own 'wise' policy. Similarly, street demonstrations (ibid., 320, from 2.6.1946), strikes (ibid., 478, from 14.8.1947) and too much politicking in general (ibid., 167, from 13.7.1945) are judged to be a potential nuisance to 'his' foreign policy. His diary quotes with delight the characterization given to him in a Daily Express commentary: »the most skilled politician in post-war Europe» (ibid., 619, from 25.5.1948).

The most interesting apology for politics is contained unwittingly in this sentence: »I have really had so much to work that I have had no time to bother about politics» (P I, 94, from 26.1.1945). For the conceptual historian this is an interesting hint at the ancient *polis* vs. *oikos* -distinction. But ultimately politics remains for Paasikivi, as for the *Realpolitik* tradition in general, only a necessity. Both the Weberian passion of a politician 'living for politics' (cf. Weber 1919) and the *polis* or later republican idea of an active engagement of all citizens in politics (cf. Arendt 1958 and e.g. Skinner 1984) remain beyond Paasikivi's horizon, in which all politics is still dominated by the state's foreign policy paradigm.

The place of Kekkonen in the conceptual history of the *Realpolitik* tradition is less deserved. The above discussion leads to the conclusion, that in Kekkonen's usage the slogans of the *Realpolitik* tradition lose their close connection with their German context. They tend to become — together with ideas of different origins — instrumental to a more general 'realistic politics', rather than transfer of *Realpolitik* ideas over contextual borders.

Compared with Paasikivi Kekkonen understands better the specificity of domestic politics, although harmonizing the conflicts by his 'unification program'. As a more general understanding of politics than the *Realpolitik* tradition is capable of, the abandonment of the size criterion for participation in world politics could also be appreciated. But it is probable in this very step that he loses contact with the specificity of Paasikivi's revision of *Realpolitik* and with his idea of the art of politics as an existential necessity for small states.

Kekkonen's view of politics tends to become more instrumental than

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Paasikivi's manifesting no more understanding than the latter for a passionate politicking of citizens or even of politicians. This is justified by the following argument: »Political life is ruled by the law of effort . . . Without a certain goal, without clear aim, the individual or group acting in political life is like a whirlwind (NN I, 47, from 20.6.1944). The limits of the *Realpolitik* tradition are here manifested in considering the activity of politicking without a previously determined goal to be mere opportunism.

REALPOLITIK IN THE FINNISH 'SECOND REPUBLIC'

When the term *Realpolitik* is used in Finland after 1944, it seems that Paasikivi was the only politician still aware of its closer meaning in its original German context. For others it is a synonym for a new slogan in world politics, *power politics*, or simply a return to the Old Finns' 'concession policy' towards Russia. In this respect the 'Second Republic' has signified a *revanche* ex post of *Realpolitik* over the legalist-moralist line.

The success of *Realpolitik* in surmounting contextual barriers from Bismarck's Germany to Paasikivi's and Kekkonen's Finland is thus a result of two 'conceptual turns'. The relative plausibility of *Realpolitik* in the Finnish situation is largely due to Paasikivi's transformation of the doctrine into a 'small state version'. But the finesses of this thinking seem not to have been properly understood by the younger generation of politicians and *Realpolitik* is thus restricted to a slogan or to an analogy of an analogy.

The weak point in Paasikivi's 'small state *Realpolitik*' is the inability to understand the potential radicality of conflicts between ideologies, parties and other groupings in domestic politics. The integration strategy of Kekkonen does this somewhat better, but its limits lie in not questioning the value of harmony or unification itself. While Paasikivi and Kekkonen defend politicking or at least criticize the inability to do it (for Kekkonen cf. KM I, 106, from 18.10.1960 and PK II, 325, from 25.9.1964), their epigons appealing to *Realpolitik* tend to use this almost exclusively as a means of restricting politicking, not only in foreign policy but also in questions assumed to endanger the authority of state leaders. The opposition to 'Paasikivi-Kekkonen line' in its turn has had recourse to the openly antipolitical 19th century legalist-moralist view. The only permitted mode of politicking appears to have been to criticize the opponents for politicking.

The state paradigm of politicking typical of *Realpolitik* has, however, been replaced by the party paradigm. Through the intensification of party activities since the wave of 'politicization' in the sixties, a certain 'decentralization'

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of politicking has taken place. But the politicization appears largely to have taken place in forms analogous to *Realpolitik*, *Staatsräson* being transformed into *Parteiräson*, and *Primat der Aussenpolitik* into the *Primat der Parteipolitik*. The decline of party activity, in turn, appears to have resulted primarily in the renaissance of a naive legalist-moralist opposition to politicking.

NOTES

- 1 The idea is developed more closely in Palonen 1985a, esp. Einleitung.
- 2 Both my interests and my strategies of text interpretation being different from the earlier studies on Paasikivi and Kekkonen I have not mentioned them in the texts, although read most of them. As sources I have only used published monographs or collections from the works of Paasikivi and Kekkonen, not being concerned with 'basic historical research' but interpretative conceptual history for which they seem to offer 'enough' material.
- 3 For a closer exposition of *Realpolitik* and its place in the conceptual history of politics cf. Palonen 1985b, esp. 31–42, for 'Politik als Kunst des (Un)Möglichen' also 55–56, 108–109.
- 4 In this respect Kekkonen's view of the relations between domestic politics and foreign policy as well as of the relation between nation and state corresponds to views developed by Ruuth 1922.

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This volume has been published after finishing my manuscript. I have not changed my text but only added some notes referring to the second volume of Paasikivi's diaries.

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