

## POSSIBLE NATO MEMBERSHIP OF FINLAND

(This article is sponsored by “TÁMOP-4.2.2/B-10/1-2010-0001 RISKS AND RESPONSES IN THE TALENT SUPPORT” PROJECT)

**Professional and social debates were begun about the possible NATO membership of Finland. So far the membership is only an option in the official security and defense documents, while the NATO peacekeeping operations have a significant impact on the participation of the Finnish Defense Force.**

During the Cold War Finland represented a consistent policy of neutrality. The country gradually built up its international relations through which it managed to maintain its security and the political and economic freedom of movement. During this period Finland used the political aim of neutrality to strengthen its international position. To achieve this Finland cooperated with regional and global international organizations by which it could gain experience. Its representatives have been actively designing and updating these organizations and they effectively represent the interests of the country. The core of this policy is neutrality and independent military defense. This policy has led to Finland's European Union membership in 1995, which is reflected in the interpretation of a new policy of neutrality. The restatement of neutrality means that Finland declared a “non-military alliance”<sup>1</sup> status within the European Union (EU). The new interpretation is in line with the country's security needs, and did not prevent the country from having to participate in developing the ESDP<sup>2</sup>. The Finnish Security and Defense Policy tools are also adapted to the new approach. These include the fact that Finland wanted to keep a stable position in the EU's decision-making. Finland's pragmatic security policy also implies that EU-NATO relationship should be taken into account. On the level of political rhetoric it can be said that the country has continued a two-step policy in the sense that they have always insisted on the need to strengthen the EU's military capacity, but it also had a very important role in the Transatlantic security structures.

Significant changes have taken place in the relationship of Finland and the outside world after the end of the Cold War. The Security and Defense Policy Papers<sup>3</sup> issued in the early 1990's states that “the national consciousness was based on the continuous adaption of the country's foreign and security relations, and not on the fast break with tradition. The new White Paper was prepared during the second cycle of Matti Vanhanen's prime ministership and it was published in January 2009.<sup>4</sup> This document based on various reports and analyses is a starting point for Security and Defense Policy Strategy and it determines the possibilities of developing the Finnish Defense Force and functions on the long term. This analysis is an integral part of NATO's membership position. In Finland NATO-related issues on the agenda are in the centre of attention, because the Finnish public has represented an extremely negative attitude in this respect for many years.

The Finnish Defense Force's participation gives special emphasis to the NATO-related analysis in international crisis management operations. For Finland although it is not a NATO member, it is extremely important to cooperate with the alliance. Finland wishes to improve and extend the Transatlantic defense and security cooperation through this organization. Finland believes that the NATO is essential for the view of the Transatlantic military security and defense cooperation. Finland's possible NATO membership should be judged in the context of the European Union's Common Foreign and Security Policy development. The European Union's Common Foreign and Security Policy discussed a

<sup>1</sup> Finland's Security and Defense Policy Strategy 1995: [http://www.defmin.fi/files/246/2513\\_2143\\_selonteko95\\_1\\_.pdf](http://www.defmin.fi/files/246/2513_2143_selonteko95_1_.pdf) 2009-08-05 23:09

<sup>2</sup> ESDP: European Security and Defence Policy

<sup>3</sup> Finland's Security and Defense Policy 1995: [http://www.defmin.fi/files/246/2513\\_2143\\_selonteko95\\_1\\_.pdf](http://www.defmin.fi/files/246/2513_2143_selonteko95_1_.pdf) 2009-08-05 23:09

<sup>4</sup> Finland's Security and Defense Policy Strategy 2009: <http://www.vnk.fi/julkaisukansio/2009/j11-turvallisuus-j12-sakerhets-j13-finnish/pdf/en.pdf> 2009.07.02 13:27

number of tasks in parallel with NATO. There are a number of parallel topics in the agenda of NATO and EU.

The Finnish aspect for possible NATO membership may be that the country has substantial contribution to NATO activities while it cannot participate in decision – making. The foreign judgment of Finland, however, is likely to change with NATO membership as the majority EU member states are also NATO members. The potential NATO membership impacts the countries international position positively because the Alliance is a political and military organization, which is based on the culture of the western democracies.

#### KEY AREAS OF COOPERATION<sup>5</sup>

Finnish cooperation with NATO is based on longstanding policy of military non-alignment and a firm national political consensus. From this basis Finland selects areas of cooperation with NATO, that match joint objectives.

The important cooperation program is Partnership for Peace(PfP). Finland participation in this program, the objective of which is to develop and enhance interoperability between NATO and partner forces through a variety of PfP instruments and mechanisms. The framework for cooperation between Finland and NATO is an Individual Partnership and Cooperation Program(IPCP), which lays out the key areas of cooperation.

#### SECURITY COOPERATION

Finland participates in NATO-led military crisis operations in Afghanistan and the Western Balkan. Finnish soldiers have been working alongside Allied forces as part of the International Security Assistance Force(ISAF) in Afghanistan since 2002. At the beginning of 2011 Finland deployed 195 soldiers in Afghanistan. Most of them are under the Swedish-led Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Mazar-e-Sharif, located in Northern Afghanistan. Finland supports the development of the National Afghan Army, for instance by participating in the Operational Mentoring and Liaison Team(OMLT) and the NATO training mission. Finland has increased her funding to the build-up of the Afghan army through NATO's voluntary fund. In 2010 the support amounted to 600.000 Euros.<sup>6</sup>

Finnish forces have also played significant roles in securing peace in the former Yugoslavia. Finland contributed a battalion to the NATO-led peacekeeping mission in Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Finland started participating in NATO Rapid Reaction Force in 2012. Finland has maintained a rapid reaction force for peacekeeping operations which consists of two-infantry battalions, a technical battalion, a transport and a CIMIC squadron. The Finnish Navy also takes part in the rapid reaction force with two vessels but currently the Finnish Air Force is not part of the unit established for peacekeeping.

Finland participates in other NATO programs, for example: NATO-Russia Council's Airspace Initiatives, Strategic Airlift Program, and some projects for development of capabilities.

All Finnish security and defense political documents deal with the cooperation of the Scandinavian states. The document<sup>7</sup> published in 2004 states that the primary aim is preserving the security and stability in the countries of the region. Furthermore it states that Sweden is a priority partner for Finland within the group of the Nordic states. Finland' Security and Defense Policy Strategy<sup>8</sup> issued in 2009 stresses the priority of the cooperation of the Scandinavian states. Finland wishes to preserve cooperation among the states of the Nordic region. It makes every effort to further regional cooperation in the environmental, economic, public health, transport, and cultural development. Finland supports the

<sup>5</sup> NATO's relations with Finland: [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics\\_49594.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_49594.htm) letöltési idő: 2012-12-23 19:23

<sup>6</sup> Finland supports Afghanistan: <http://www.finlandnato.org/public/download.aspx?ID=70404&GUID={0D30A335-384B-44FA-B818-B996845EE86B}> letöltési idő: 2012-12-23 17:48

<sup>7</sup> Finland's Security and Defense Policy Strategy 2004: [http://www.defmin.fi/files/311/2574\\_2160\\_English\\_White\\_paper\\_2004\\_1\\_.pdf](http://www.defmin.fi/files/311/2574_2160_English_White_paper_2004_1_.pdf) 2010-06-01 15:54

<sup>8</sup> Finland's Security and Defence Policy Strategy 2009: <http://www.vnk.fi/julkaisukansio/2009/j11-turvallisuus-i12-sakerhets-i13-finnish/pdf/en.pdf> 2010-06-01 16:17

stability and development of the regional cooperation.

#### DEFENSE AND SECURITY SECTOR REFORM

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century the international system and international policies went through many important changes. The Soviet-American confrontation had an influence over the majority of the world. The reason of the Cold War was "The Blocking". After the Cold War the number of conflicts increased significantly. All Finnish security and defense policy documents deal with the new types of conflicts, which involve the use of military force. The documents establish that these crises and conflicts are happening because of religious, historical grievances, for possession of natural resources and abuse of human rights and democracy.<sup>9</sup>

Finland has participated in PfP Planning and Review Process(PARP) since 1995 which influences Finland planning and activities. Cooperation in these frameworks is aimed at enhancing Finland's ability to take part in peace-support operation, as well as allowing the Allies and other partners to benefit from Finnish expertise.

Finland's Comprehensive crisis-management Strategy was issued in 2009. The document based on various expertise of crisis-management operations. The Finnish Ministry of Interior established the internal resources of these operations. The Finnish Defense Ministry has devised a national pool of forces for crisis-management operations.

Finland contributed to the development of the European Union(EU) Battle group concept. It is cooperating with Estonia, Sweden and Norway and other countries.

Finland contributes to NATO's program of support for security-sector reform in western Balkans, southern Caucasus and Afghanistan.

The priority of projects has been the reform of the security sector, especially increasing the resources for developing the police and the prison administration.

#### CIVIL EMERGENCY PLANNING

Civil emergency planning is a major area of the bilateral cooperation. The aim is for Finland to be able to cooperate with NATO in providing mutual support in dealing with the consequences of major accident or disaster in the EAPC area.

#### SCIENCE AND ENVIRONMENT

Finland's scientists have participated in numerous research workshop and seminars in the Science for Peace and Security Program (SPS). The topics have included border security, the fight against terrorism and environmental security in harbors and coastal areas.

Finland's possible NATO membership should be judged in the context of the European Union's Common Foreign and Security Policy development. For Finland a possible NATO membership may create new and closer bilateral relations with member states.

Another Finnish aspect for possible NATO membership may be that its international relationship has contribution to changes. Finland has a good relationship with a neighboring countries. Finland' possible NATO membership may change in the relationship. The most important change can occur in the Finnish-Russian relations because Russia has continually opposed the expansion of NATO in its neighboring areas. However Finland has had experience of a change with Russian position, as there were ambiguities in relation to the country's EU membership in the Russia. These factors and other objections of relationship between the two countries, which could negatively affect both parties were

<sup>9</sup> Andrea Márton: Changes in the security and defence policy of Finland in the 21st. Century [http://uni-nke.hu/downloads/kutatas/folyoiratok/hadtudomanyi\\_szemle/szamok/2012/2012\\_1/2012\\_1\\_br\\_marton\\_andrea\\_angol\\_111\\_116.pdf](http://uni-nke.hu/downloads/kutatas/folyoiratok/hadtudomanyi_szemle/szamok/2012/2012_1/2012_1_br_marton_andrea_angol_111_116.pdf)  
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Budapest, 2013.  
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satisfactorily addressed. Of course, Finland's possible NATO membership should provide a new basis for relations with the Baltic countries and Sweden as well. From 1990s Finland has a good relations with the Baltic countries, which should be designed to expand new areas, such as defense cooperation as the Baltic countries are NATO and EU member countries. In its relations to Sweden no significant changes are expected.

Finland's possible NATO membership should influence its foreign judgment because the majority of European Union member states are NATO members. The possible NATO membership should have a positive effect to the international situation of Finland because NATO is the political and military organization, which is based on the culture of Western democracies. The connection requires a decision from some countries, and will be based on a significant economic, political and military consensus.

Each NATO member country seeks to established balance between national sovereignty and independence decision-making and federal obligation. Due to its own decision Finland continuously participates in a widening scale of tasks, which it takes on in the framework of cooperation with NATO. The main arguments of the opponents of NATO membership are the increase of the defense budget and the binding commitments which originate from NATO membership. However, those arguing for the alliance often mentioned the example of Norway and Estonia, whose allied commitments led to the development and strengthening of the security.

Another key aspect for Finland's possible NATO membership is the country's political freedom of movement which could strengthen its own defense system and Finnish territorial defense.

The principle of reciprocity means creating security and stability within the alliance in accordance with commitments of NATO membership. Therefore the guarantee of the country's security would become part of the tasks of the alliance. Of course Finland has to aim to get supports, military capacities which it doesn't have to constitute an essential support for organization of complete defense. The possible NATO membership has other advantages such as participation of Finland in the political activities of NATO. The participation in the political decision-making process could promote the enforcement of Finnish political, military interests and the prevention of dangers which could threaten the security of the country. In a case of the NATO membership the country could delegate approximately 100-150 persons mostly military officers into the military organization of NATO.

All in all Finland's possible NATO membership could be examined from several, different points of view. Among others from the point of view of the current Finnish law, the Constitution, the national sovereignty, the current president of the republic's status and based on the compulsory conscription army, decision-making and decision support system. Finland's possible NATO membership will change the international judgment of the country. However, it will happened there will be a long way to go until majority of the Finnish society should accept the giving up certain part of defense and military traditions.

*Keywords: Finland, NATO, International Relation, Finnish Defense Forces*

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