



## FINLAND: SIMILAR YET DIFFERENT

### Finland's Perspectives on European Security Issues

Mr. Chairman,

It is a great pleasure and an honour to be speaking at this Forum this morning. The CSIS is well known around the world as a place where global security in an era of global change can be discussed by some of the best minds around. That alone makes an appearance at the Forum a particularly daunting task.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

At this particular point of history, most armed forces in the Western world are undergoing a process of profound, long-term transformation. Most countries are abandoning the concept of territorial defence and are emphasizing capabilities to conduct international peace-support operations in places far away from their borders. Not Finland.

Most countries are also discarding the great Napoleonic idea of raising mass armies by conscription and, instead, they are creating small all-professional armed forces. Not Finland.

Furthermore, for most western and central European countries NATO is the answer to their defence prayers. Once again, not for Finland.

How can this be explained? Why is Finland still holding on to the concepts of territorial defence, general conscription, and staying outside of the military alliances, while for practically all other countries in the developed world these concepts are ideas from the past?

To understand Finnish defence thinking, it might be useful to think of Finnish national security interests as three concentric circles. The outer circle comprises common values. Finland is interested in promoting and defending such values, as is demonstrated by our support, and participation in, the United Nations' peace-keeping and humanitarian operations.

The second circle brings us closer to home, to Europe and to security threats affecting Europe. The more stable the European continent remains, the safer will Finland be. As a consequence, our forces

continue to be involved in NATO-and EU-led operations, be it in the Balkans, Africa, or even in a far-away Afghanistan.

Finally, it is within the third circle where our national interest reigns supreme. Such core issues as national independence, security and well-being of the Finnish citizens, and, ultimately, even the very survival of the nation are at stake here. To defend the Finnish territory we need strong national defence. And since we are not a member of any military alliance, we have to build up our defence independently.

In sum, the Finnish forces are actively participating in peace-keeping and peace-support operations abroad, at the same time when we are making sure that our powder is dry to defend the country, should our territorial integrity or the nation's very existence become under threat.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Robust commitment to international operations is nothing new for Finland. The first Finnish peace-keeping troops were deployed in the Sinai Peninsula in 1956, one year after Finland had gained membership in the United Nations. The Finnish troops were battle-toughened World War II veterans, dressed to the searing heat of the Sinai in heavy winter uniforms – the Finnish battalion must have been quite a sight. Since then, Finns have been regulars in these foreign engagements, so that about 50 000 Finns have by now served under UN, NATO, or EU flags.

From the Finnish point of view, one of the most interesting and important developments is the effort of the European Union to build up its military capabilities. Here Finland is, of course, a bona fide participant, since we have been a member of the Union since 1995.

It was not too long ago, when Lord Robertson, then Secretary-General of NATO, sneered at the European Union being a political and economic giant but a military dwarf. Since then serious efforts have been made to beef up the European military capabilities. Operation Althea in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Operation EUFOR DRC in the Democratic Republic of Congo, current talk about deploying EU forces in Chad in the near future – all this is a living proof that peace support operations are on the EU agenda to stay.

The term most often used for this activity within the EU is "crisis management". It includes military operations but it emphasizes other tools: political, economic, and other non-military instruments. The growing capability for military crisis management is a significant addition to EU's repertoire of crisis management tools.

It is the capability for being able to react rapidly that is now in the centre of EU's attention. The fact is that there is plenty of traditional military capability in Europe – tanks, airplanes, ships, personnel. However, just a handful of European countries have the capacity to project force far beyond their borders.

For that reason, the focus of attention has been the concept of Battle Groups. A Battle Group is a force package that is based on a multinational combined arms, roughly battalion-size force of about 1500-2000 personnel, which will be reinforced with combat support and combat service support elements. It will be comprised of assets and capabilities that will be held at a high readiness of 5-10 days and sustainable for 30-120 days of operations.

Finland has been particularly active in supporting the Battle Group concept. The first Battle Group in full operational capability, in the first half of this year, had troops from Germany, the Netherlands and Finland. We are also one of the contributors in the Nordic Battle Group to be deployed in the first half of 2008, along with the Swedes, Norwegians, Estonians and the Irish.

Despite their name, the Battle Groups are not meant for waging war. Their scope of tasks is the so-called "enhanced Petersberg tasks". These tasks range from humanitarian support operations, search and rescue operations, as well as evacuation operations all the way to the separation of parties by force, if needed. Proper training and modern equipment will give an opportunity to use them confidently in situations where, for example, violent ethnic clashes or even massacres are imminent.

There are several challenges to the EU crisis management in the future. But I would argue that these challenges are not specific challenges only to the EU. They are no different from the challenges we all are facing, for example, in places like Afghanistan.

One of the challenges is that we must clearly recognize that in most crises we need a comprehensive crisis management approach, and a mixture of different crisis management instruments. We will often need the military among them, but not necessarily always. The military instrument, however, often is the instrument we must use first to create a modicum of stability in the crisis area.

Let's take one example from Europe. The military situation is now stable in Bosnia-Herzegovina. It is so stable that we can now consider changing our international presence there from a military operation to a police operation. The biggest security challenges at the moment in Bosnia-Herzegovina are corruption, smuggling, and organized crime. They can be met by better boarder controls, more professional police forces, improved legal and prison system, and better governance in general, not by keeping foreign military forces in the country.

Another example would be Afghanistan. Military forces were and continue to be needed to provide basic stability in that country. There are still serious problems of instability in the south and east of Afghanistan. Taliban forces raid villages and military posts before retreating to safety across the Pakistan border. Instability is on the rise also in the northern parts of the country that have stayed relatively stable so far. I do not see any other way but to have a strong and resolute presence of ISAF and OEF in Afghanistan as long as the basic stability is reached.

But we should be very careful at how long we want to carry that burden. Our basic aim should be to bring security, good governance, rule of law and economic growth to Afghanistan. This will be not done by a division of more soldiers. For this we need a division of doctors, engineers, lawyers and school teachers. It will be a combination of military, economic and development assistance tools that we all need to use in a smart way to manage the country and to create a stable and democratic country.

It is also crucial to empower the local population, and to turn the governing of Afghanistan to the Afghans as soon as possible. There is one huge obstacle. Many of the Afghan officials are connected to the war-lords and through them to the narcotics trade. Drugs make up more than half of Afghanistan's gross national product, and there is no sufficiently appealing alternative crop for farmers. That situation is alarming and needs our special attention.

Finnish troops are working side by side with troops from the NATO nations in these foreign operations. In fact, calculated in terms of per capita, Finland is one of the highest contributors in NATO peace support operations. We have been in Kosovo in the KFOR operations from the very beginning, and we entered Afghanistan in January 2002, as one of the first non-NATO contributors. Out of the total of more than 850 troops we are deploying abroad just now, about 500 are operating under the NATO flag.

Therefore, a particularly vexing question for a country like Finland, which has its presence in both camps, is how to get the EU and NATO to work together and set sights on the same goal. One key factor in producing compatible forces, capable of working together in crisis management operations, is how well we are able to ensure harmonization and mutual reinforcement in between the NATO Response Force, the NRF, and the EUBG.

So, how to do that job right? According to the EUBG concept that I described briefly above, the EU will develop a number of multinational Battle Groups available at short notice to undertake autonomous operations, principally in response to requests from the United Nations.

It is clear from this description that the EUBG is complementary with the NRF. For many countries, the EUBG and NRF assets are drawn not only from the same pool of forces but they actually are the very same forces.

Harmonizing between the EUBG and the NRF is therefore crucial. There are at least three areas where harmonization is crucial. First, commonly defined and agreed, detailed military capability standards and criteria for EUBG's are an absolute necessity. They should be the same for the NRF and the EUBG. Secondly, another area for special harmonization efforts is the area of training and education. Therefore, the already well-established NATO training program used for the NRF should also be used for EUBG training and exercises. Thirdly, assessment and certification of the earmarked EUBG and NRF units is another important issue. The NATO certification process should be used to the fullest.

Why would somebody from Finland worry so much about harmonizing the EU and NATO rapid response capabilities, you might now wonder. There is a simple answer: since Finland is contributing both to the EU and NATO crisis management capabilities, and because we can afford to have only one set of forces used for both purposes, it is vital for us that the EU and NATO will be able to work together.

The task for both organizations is exactly the same: to get the right type of forces with the right kind of capabilities to a right place at the required state of readiness, and to do it efficiently, economically and rapidly without any unnecessary duplication. That is the reason Finland is here holier than the pope: the EU and NATO will just have to be able to find a way of working together better than they are doing so far.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

So far I have focused my remarks mainly on global issues, on how we all together could be conducting better the difficult business of crisis management around the world. Let's now at the end turn our attention to our immediate neighbourhood. What is Finland's security situation like as we are approaching the second decade of the millennium?

In general, Finland is privileged to be located in one of the safest corners of the world. However, given our geographical location, the three main security challenges for Finland today are Russia, Russia and Russia. And not only for Finland, but for all of us.

It is clear that Russia is, supported by the huge revenues it is reaping from oil and gas, on its way of becoming a world player again. According to the Russian world view, military force is a key element

in how it conducts its international relations. As a consequence, there is a determined program to strengthen the Russian military capabilities. If the military procurement program 2006-2015 will be financed as expected, it will mean a much stronger Russia in military terms by the middle of next decade.

In terms of its military capabilities, Russia will have a lot more weight to throw around. Whether it chooses to do it in its immediate neighbourhood is another matter. The bronze statue crisis with Estonia raises some disturbing questions. There is no smoking gun that will clearly indicate that the Russian authorities were behind the cyber attacks. Yet, the attacks were well coordinated and gave a foretaste of what could be done in situations where state-level actors would choose to use cyber attacks as a weapon.

Be that as it may, Russia will continue to be a strong regional actor in the High North. Strategic importance of the Kola Peninsula will wake up Russian military interests from their decade-long hibernation, as is attested by the Russian bombers showing up again in the sea areas around Iceland and northern Scotland. After the well-publicized expedition to the North Pole, the Russian interest in the polar areas is clear, and the Baltic Sea is getting all the more important in the next few years as one of the main routes for Russian energy exports.

Although the Russian suspension of the CFE Treaty can hardly be explained in terms of its growing military interest in the flanks, it is, however, an indication of how far Russia is willing to go to press home a point if it feels its views are not taken into due consideration by NATO.

What does this all mean from the point of view of Finland's national security? I think it would be a foolish – and mistaken – conclusion to draw that the new Russia will threaten Finland's security. This is not the case. What it means, first and foremost, is that those who at the end of the Cold War were eager to proclaim that the era of geopolitics was over in the North of Europe were just plain wrong. Geopolitics is back, and it is back with force, and we who have the responsibility for Finland's national defence must draw certain conclusions.

At the same time, we see Russia as an opportunity, not only as a challenge. We should be smart about how we draw Russia in to be a responsible player and a partner in our part of the world. Perhaps easier said than done, but for us in Helsinki there really is no other choice.

Finally, a few words about the future of Finnish defence. How do we plan to defend our country, especially if we insist on staying outside the Alliance?

The Finnish Government has just nominated a group of experienced government officials to start working on the Defence White Book 2008. What can we expect out of this work?

Without trying to guess the outcome, it will be perhaps safe to say that those who might wish to see radical changes in Finland's defence orientation will most likely be disappointed. There will be certain continuities. Perhaps the most important continuity will be the emphasis on maintaining the ability to defend national territory. For that, we will need a high number of trained reserves.

The feature that will stay as a way to train the reserves will be general conscription. That will guarantee both the quantity and quality of national reserves. If we mobilize fully today, we now have an armed force of about 350 000 soldiers. That number will perhaps come down somewhat, maybe to around a quarter of million men. What we have found out is that the Playstation and Nokia generation young men and women just make excellent soldiers when given proper training and equipment. The reservists also form the bulk of our troops in peace-support operations.

It is also important to note that neither of the concepts I have mentioned, neither the defence of territory nor the system of general conscription will be seriously contested by the Finnish citizens. To the contrary, in the public mind they are the cornerstones of Finnish national defence, and as such they are fully supported by the huge majority, more than 80 per cent, of the population.

There will be of course room to improve the current system. There will be Finnish "transformation", too. All the opportunities will have to be used to reap the benefits of modern technology. I just paid a visit to the JFCOM and ACT commands in Norfolk, Virginia yesterday and realized that Finland is one of the most advanced countries in terms of Network Enabled Defence (NED) capabilities.

It is force multipliers like the NED that we have to develop and carefully nurture in order for us to be able to defend our territory.

Our cooperation in defence procurement matters with the United States is extensive. We fly the F-18 Hornets, and we are now in the middle of the Mid-life Updates, MLU's, for these fighters. There will also be discussions on other technology releases during my meetings in the Pentagon tomorrow. And it is not a one-way street: there are high-tech defence solutions in Finland that our American friends are interested in.

It is also certain that Finland's strong commitment to participation in international peace support operation is there to stay. Given the future economic constraints, it is role specialization, use of high-tech contributions, and cooperation with like-minded nations that will be required. But I can

guarantee you that the Finnish blue and white flag will continue to be there where well groomed and rigorously trained soldiers are need for international operations.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are living in a world where new threats and challenges to stability and security are global, complex and multidimensional. There are no set solutions that we can apply to these threats and challenges. There are different ways of facing the new threats, and there are different tools we can develop to use to defend ourselves when we are threatened.

What I have tried to argue in my brief remarks is that a country like mine might produce the necessary tools in a different way from the others, but the end result is similar: we are there to stand up to protect our common values, to produce security and stability, and even to defend our national territory, whenever and wherever such threats emerge.

I would like to stop here and answer your questions. One last point, though: the new Finnish Government in its Government Program promised to produce a study on the pros and cons of NATO membership, in order to provide a basis for our future policy orientation. That review will start any day now, and the results will be part and parcel of the 2008 Defence White Book.

Perhaps this is a good place to stop, now that I have whetted your appetite on the question of "to be or not to be".

Once again, it has been a real privilege to be here this morning.

Thank you for your attention.