

Finland – an Active Member of the Common European Security and Defence Policy

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Prior to its accession to the EU, Finland was not regarded as an ideal member of the CFSP. In Maastricht, the twelve member states of the EC had agreed on deepening their former political co-operation into the form of a common foreign and security policy. The entrance of the three non-aligned states to the newly established European Union was widely expected to further hamper integration in this policy field, where the deepening of integration had proved to be problematic from the start.

The realisation of Finnish membership proved these expectations wrong. The Finnish policy has indicated a wholehearted commitment to the project of European integration, implying loyal and constructive participation even in the CFSP and its new prolongation, the Common European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP). Non-alignment, like other key principles of Finnish Cold War foreign policy, have not placed any constraints on Finnish participation in common EU policy. In this article, Finnish participation in the ESDP is analysed from the perspective of national objectives. Finland's position and objectives are grasped firstly by pinpointing its position in the general lay-out of the ESDP, and secondly by extending the analysis to some other policy formulations which are highly relevant in this field. Finally, the EU's role and policy in the recent fight against terrorism is contemplated from the Finnish perspective.

Finland and the Common European Security and Defence Policy

Right from the outset of its EU membership, Finland made it clear that its former policy of neutrality would not put any constraints on its

participation in the CFSP. Like the other non-aligned members of the EU, Finland gained observer status in the WEU at the beginning of 1995. The relationship between this status and the position of non-alignment did not evoke any criticism in the domestic political debate. Thus far, and due also to the intensive co-operation conducted with NATO, it had become clear that in the new political situation the policy of non-alignment could be vested with a flexibility that would not have been possible in the Cold War climate.¹⁾

The Intergovernmental Conference of 1996 brought the issue of a deepening defence dimension into open political debate, and pushed the government to formulate a national position on the subject. In this situation the official Finland created a policy line that was to gain some continuity as far as the Finnish position towards the development of a common defence was concerned. The policy line even formed the basis of the common Finnish-Swedish initiative made to the IGC.²⁾ Together these countries stressed the need to create a military crisis management capacity for the EU, as well as the possibility for non-aligned members to participate in the activities launched within its framework. The message of the initiative was twofold. Firstly, it expressed the willingness of the two non-aligned EU members to extend the project of integration into the military field. But secondly, it also expressed the aspiration to limit this field of integration to crisis management, leaving territorial defence to NATO.

Even if the Finnish government has been eager to guide the EU's defence dimension in the direction of crisis management, it has not – at least not publicly – opposed more far-reaching

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forms of integration in this field. The national position in the 1996 IGC was formulated in the following way in the government's report to parliament:

Crisis-management tasks can be separated from actual defence functions which, for the countries that are NATO members, are still under the responsibility of the organisation and which the militarily non-aligned countries take care of themselves. In the TEU, a common defence is mentioned as a possible long-range objective. In the present conditions, development of the defence dimension means strengthening crisis-management and peacekeeping capabilities.³⁾

The Amsterdam Treaty, signed in 1997, seemed to bring relief to the non-aligned members of the EU, as it responded to the need to deepen the defence dimension by creating a military crisis management capacity for the Union and failing, consequently, to merge the EU and the Western European Union.⁴⁾ Finland and Sweden celebrated the success of their common initiative on crisis management, even though an important change of formulations had been made at the insistence of the large member states.⁵⁾ However, things started to change as a result of the Saint Malo process – launched in the autumn of 1998, after the sudden turnabout in British EU policy – which led to a swift acceleration of the common defence policy.⁶⁾ As it soon became evident that Finland would have to deal with the new turn of the defence dimension as one of the key challenges of its first EU Presidency, demands grew concerning the solidity of its national position.

The Finnish government was none too eager to deliberate on the changes that the Saint Malo process and the British change of policy would bring to the EU. It tended to emphasise that the process was fully in line with the Amsterdam Treaty, the fulfilment of which would only accelerate.⁷⁾ The flexibility of the Finnish position was concretely tested when the Cologne European Council invited the Finnish Presidency of the EU to advance the creation of a military crisis management system. In this situation, the government chose to ignore the national suspicions connected with the deepening military dimension of the EU and exerted effective leadership of the process at EU level. The results of the Helsinki European Council – the decision on the size and details of the crisis management troops as well as on the new mili-

tary organisation – were more far-reaching than national Finnish goals.⁸⁾ This did not, however, ignite any controversy in the national political debate, even if the newspapers did make reference to the key role that the large member states were playing in the crisis management process.⁹⁾ The contents of the Helsinki EC decision were approved by the Finnish Parliament in November 1999. Finland has, subsequently, offered to make available to the EU its rapid deployment force set up for the purposes of international crisis management. The total strength of the offer amounts to 2,000 soldiers.

The Finnish government has – because of the comprehensive reasons for Finnish EU membership – treated the deepening of European integration as beneficial from the Finnish point of view. In this context it has even been able to accept the incorporation of the new military dimension into integration, as this dimension inevitably plays a major role when it comes to the credibility and effectiveness of the EU in the international arena. Finland's position on the following step taken in this process, that is, from crisis management to a form of territorial defence, has been somewhat ambiguous. Finland evidently does not want to participate in a project which risks violation of the transatlantic system. Still, one cannot disregard the possibility that the protection afforded by this transatlantic system can best be achieved through the EU and the mutual dependence that has been created between it and NATO. This leads to a political readiness to participate in the deepening of the EU's defence dimension. The priorities of Finnish security policy have been given a new order in the newest white book of security and defence policy, in which Finnish non-alignment is relativised and simply made an instrument for Finnish security policy. The white book defines credible defence as the basis of Finnish security policy and states that it is, under the present circumstances, promoted by military non-alignment.¹⁰⁾

Finland and the Principles of International Security

Finland's participation in the ESDP was earlier in this article contoured mainly in terms of flexible adaptation, where not even those parts of foreign policy which were formerly the most delicate stemmed the pace. A similar picture

can be drawn when it comes to Finland's position in respect of the key institutions and principles of the international system. A gradual slide towards the position adopted by the majority of EU members can be perceived in many important issues even here.

The United Nations – with its system of collective security – has traditionally taken an important position in Finland's foreign policy. The leading principles of the UN Charter have formed the very core of Finnish policy on issues of international politics, and Finland's strong contribution to UN peacekeeping forces has been widely recognised.¹¹⁾ In a study of Finland's UN policy during the 1990s, Unto Vesa concludes that during its EU membership Finland has clearly moved closer to the other EU members instead of its previous reference group, the Nordic countries.¹²⁾ This is a natural result of the co-ordination of UN policies taking place in the framework of the CFSP. The Kosovo crisis was an extreme example of this new alliance. Finland clearly distanced itself from its old policy line of giving primacy to the Charter principles when the Finnish leadership, together with the rest of the EU, considered the NATO air strike legitimate even though it lacked a UN mandate.¹³⁾

The national legislation on peacekeeping can be singled out as another area which gives expression to the increasing emphasis on the EU which is taking place at the expense of the UN. Up until 1995, Finland's participation in international peacekeeping operations was based on two leading principles. The first was the necessity for a UN or OSCE (Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe) mandate for such operations. The second was the prohibition on participating in peace enforcement. Finnish soldiers were allowed to use force only in self-defence. Both principles were motivated by the fact that, in the delicate area of peacekeeping, a solid ground was needed for international action. Peace enforcement was not regarded as a suitable form of operation for a small state. Since Finland joined the EU a more flexible attitude has been adopted vis-à-vis both of these principles. Since 1995, Finnish peacekeeping legislation has been amended several times, purportedly to allow Finland to participate in new types of crisis management operations. An amendment from 1995 created the right to 'extended peacekeeping', implying

the possibility of a more extensive use of force.¹⁴⁾ In this regard, however, parliament must be heard in the case. The 2001 amendment further increased the compatibility of Finnish peacekeeping legislation with the EU treaties which, since 1999, have entitled the EU to carry out all types of crisis management operations.¹⁵⁾ The prohibition on participating in peace enforcement was abolished other than in connection with that taking place in the framework of articles 42 or 51 of the UN Charter. The Finnish policy in connection with the NATO air strike in Kosovo indicated that even the other key principle of Finnish peacekeeping policy, the necessity for a UN or OSCE mandate, has gained more flexibility. Moreover, an amendment made to the peacekeeping legislation in 2001 enables Finland to participate in humanitarian operations – or in the protection of such operations – at the request of FN organisations or agencies.¹⁶⁾

There is one particular issue in Finnish foreign and security policy, however, which has received a lot of attention as it has been unusually slow and hesitant to adapt itself to the EU's position. Finland is the only member state of the EU which has not put its name to the international convention to ban anti-personnel landmines, signed in Ottawa in 1997. This is a result of the key role that landmines play in Finland's defence, given the long land border the country has to defend. Due to the pressure directed at Finland from the other EU members, as well as from civil organisations, the government has committed itself to a plan according to which the landmines will be replaced by other weapon systems by 2006.

The Finnish Non-Alignment in the Rapprochement of the EU and NATO

The idea that EU membership won't question Finnish non-alignment has formed the starting point for the official Finnish EU-policy. The validity of this assumption was firmly put into doubt by the form taken by the EU-NATO relationship in connection with the fight against terrorism, following the attacks against the USA in the autumn of 2001. The U.S. decision to take NATO's system of collective defence in use reduced the EU's room of manoeuvre in the situation. Such a situation, where the EU would have taken a different position than that

which a majority of its members represented through NATO, would have been very strange. The EU was, consequently, forced to give its full support to the acts taken by the U.S. and NATO. As the application of NATO's collective defence took a very flexible form, the aligned and non-aligned EU members stood, in fact, very much on the same line vis-à-vis the counter-action.

The situation was new for the Finnish government and, at first, a conception of a larger national room of manoeuvre might have formed the basis for national action. As soon as the EU's common position was taken, Finland kept strictly to it. A clear cautiousness has, however, been characteristic of Finnish policy, reflecting

perhaps its small state identity as well as its traditional reservation towards the use of force as a means of international security. In official policy statements, the Finnish support for the military operations against Afghanistan has been based upon the mandate given by the UN Security Council and upon the subsequent EU decision.

The events of autumn 2001, at the very latest, have made concrete the implications of participation in a multilateral security system. Finland has, in general, been a very adaptable member of the ESDP, which – at least in domestic political debate – has been sworn to keep to certain political limits. These limits start to be quite flexible.

Notes

¹⁾ Concerning the shift from neutrality to non-alignment, see T. Tiilikainen, 'The Finnish Neutrality – Its New Forms and Future' in L. Goetschel (ed.) *Small States inside and outside the European Union* (Boston: Kluwer, 1998), pp. 169-79.

²⁾ See *The IGC and the Security and Defence Dimension: Towards an enhanced EU Role in Crisis Management*; Memorandum from Finland and Sweden 25 April 1996; See also *Finland's points of departure and objectives in the EU's Intergovernmental Conference 1996*. A report given to Parliament by the Council of State 1996, p. 41.

³⁾ See *Finland's points of departure and objectives in the EU's Intergovernmental Conference 1996*, p. 41.

⁴⁾ Concerning this relationship, see P. van Ham, 'The EU and WEU: From Cooperation to Common Defence?' in G. Edwards and A. Pijpers (eds), *The Politics of European Treaty Reform, The 1996 Intergovernmental Conference and Beyond* (London: Pinter, 1997), pp. 306-25.

⁵⁾ In the Memorandum from Finland and Sweden (See *The IGC and the Security and Defence Dimension*), the EU's new crisis management powers were formulated to cover 'humanitarian tasks and military crisis management and other elements of the common defence policy to be defined in the long term'. The final formulation of the EU's powers corresponded to the original formulation of the Petersberg tasks (Petersberg declaration, WEU Council of Ministers 1992), according to which '...shall include humanitarian and rescue tasks, peace-keeping tasks and tasks of combat forces in crisis-management including peace-making' (TEU, art. 17, 2).

⁶⁾ The change in British policy was followed by a set of summits between the large member states, the high point being the Saint Malo declaration given by Great Britain and France, which emphasized the necessity of building an independent defence capability for the EU (Joint declaration on European Defence 4 December 1998). Concerning the backgrounds and interpretation of the process, see S. Biscop, 'The UK's Change of Course: a New Chance for the ESDI', *European Foreign Affairs Review* 4 (1999), pp. 253-68 and G. Andréani, C. Bertram and C. Grant, *Europe's military revolution* (London: CER, 2001).

⁷⁾ See e.g. Prime Minister Paavo Lipponen 'Suomi tukee EU:n kriisinhallinnan vahvistamista', *Helsingin Sanomat*, 6 December 1998. ⁸⁾ They were more far-reaching as far as the EU's autonomy, the level of its military system or the general level of detail of the decision were concerned, see T. Tiilikainen, 'Suomi johtajana EU:n ulkosuhteissa' in T. Martikainen and T. Tiilikainen (eds), *Suomi EU:n johdossa, Tutkimus Suomen puheenjohtajuudesta 1999* (Helsinki: Helsingin yliopisto, Yleisen valtio-opin laitos, Acta Politica nr. 13, 2000), pp. 171-2.

⁹⁾ E.g. 'Suomi esittää nyt tarkkaa aikataulua', *Helsingin Sanomat*, 26 November 1999.

¹⁰⁾ See *Finnish Security and Defence Policy 2001*, Report by the Council of State to Parliament 13 June 2001.

¹¹⁾ Since 1956, more than 40,000 Finnish peacekeepers have participated in over 20 operations. The maximum number of Finnish soldiers in international operations is 2,000 per year. With this contribution, Finland has – from time to time – been one of the leading suppliers of troops.

¹²⁾ See Vesa, 'Suomen YK-politiikan pitkä linjat', *Ulkopolitiikka* 3 (2000), p. 20.

¹³⁾ See Vesa, 'Suomen YK-politiikan pitkä linjat', p. 21. Forsberg pays attention to the fact that foreign minister Tarja Halonen just gave her support to the common position (CFSP), while President Ahtisaari was more explicit in his support of the NATO operation; See Forsberg, 'Ulkopolitiikka' Puolueettomasta pohjoismaasta tavalliseksi eurooppalaiseksi', T. Raunio and M. Wiberg (eds), *EU ja Suomi, Unionijäsenyyden vaikutukset suomalaiseen yhteiskuntaan* (Helsinki: Edita, 2000), p. 269.

¹⁴⁾ Laki Suomen osallistumisesta Yhdistyneiden kansakuntien ja Euroopan turvallisuus- ja yhteistyöjärjestön päätökseen perustuvaan rauhanturvaamistoimintaan (1565/95).

¹⁵⁾ Rauhanturvaamislaki (750/2000).

¹⁶⁾ Rauhanturvaamislaki (750/2000).