



The Finns Party The Finnish Parliament Elections of 2015

FINNISH DEFENCE AND SECURITY POLICY

The foundation of Finnish defence and security policy, for many decades, has been general conscription with sufficient material resources and the existence of an active reserve system. This approach – combining and integrating many groups of young Finns with diverse backgrounds – strengthens the goal: an effective defence of the Finnish homeland.

Military service is, and has been, for young Finnish men and women an honourable act of serving their country. One learns responsibility and working well in groups and how all can thereby benefit. Additionally, young people develop social skills, gain self-confidence and self-esteem and get a better understanding of their own rights and obligations. The Finns Party fully supports the goals and effects that military service provides.

The period of military service should not be shortened to any further degree. The talk of a 4 month service period is not realistic – military training of individuals can be effected in 4 months but more time is needed for the skills needed to serve as a part of a larger group. The Constitution stipulates that everyone is obliged to participate in the nation's defence or assist in it. General conscription is economically efficient and is the only realistic way of defending such a country as Finland. The system must be comprehensive – the number getting full dispensation from service should be limited. If armed or unarmed military service is not possible due to personal convictions, then 'civilian service' functions for those people must be sought that support defence and security.

Gender-neutral conscription is not needed for Finland nor are there presently economic possibilities. The Finns Party does support the general participation of women as well as working in the distribution of knowledge regarding the national defence. Further development of training women for performing important functions in the national service during crises should be considered.

The Finns Party does not support a policy of selective conscription – this can lead to the Swedish system with an expensive and nationally-disruptive paid army. The Swedish way could also lead to a lack of determination. A credible defence, without such resolution, becomes questionable – even with allies and/or greatly inflated defence budgets.

Sufficient material resources must, of course, be part of the mix for a strong defence. Finland cannot continue to irresponsibly scrimp on military budgets in the name of 'reform.' Operational decreases have already reduced resources to the point of significantly affecting the level of believability in the effectiveness of Finnish defence capabilities. Similarly, regional defence strategies are at risk - new approaches have included regional units consisting of reservist volunteers. These solutions should be supported - they need additional training possibilities - but it should be remembered that the volunteer nature of these units cannot be thought to comprehensively serve regional defence needs.

Funding Finland's defence

Finland's present security and defence situation is relatively stable – but, as we have seen in the Ukraine, it could deteriorate markedly. It is thus clear we cannot be miserly with spending for military readiness. Credible and solid capability is not sensibly built in the midst of a crisis.

The Finns Party places high value on our military personnel and their work. We insist on defence forces appropriations to be maintained at least at the present level but to account also for strengthening in the long term.

The Finns Party is in favour of the minimum requirements of the Parliamentary Assessment Group's report on the Long-term Challenges of Defence (publication 3/2014). This report recognized the guidelines of the Defence Administration so that the budget would increase by about 50 million Euro in 2016 with gradual increases thereafter resulting in a total of about 150 million Euro (indexed).

NATO membership

Traditionally, the spirit of defence and the Finnish military have always been valued highly by the Finnish population. There is every reason to believe that this is due to a Finnish citizen's own interest in Finland having a strong defence capability and that they should also take responsibility for it.

The Finns Party believes that the policy of military non-alignment has served Finland so well that it should be changed only when based on very pressing grounds. NATO membership has not been presented with sufficiently concrete reasoning that it would allow one to assume, with certainty, that defence of our country would be better with such membership. Instead it seems our flexibility in national defence matters would be narrowed - and we would get – in the face of international crises – obligations within the NATO alliance.

The EU does not guarantee Finland's security

With the Cold War as a background, many Finns believed security to be the main reason for joining the EU. Even wishful thinking in this regard has waned over the years of membership. The fact is that Finland, as an EU member, has been a part of the great power politics with no security guarantees. Despite the Treaty of Lisbon we would get EU sympathy in the case of an emergency but not anything more.

In theory, the EU wants the goal to be a common security and defence policy. In practice, there has been no tangible development in that direction. The reason is simple: the majority of EU members already belong to NATO and there is not much sense in building overlapping systems.

From the Finnish perspective, an EU security framework should insure material supply. Finland has its own military industries and the Finns Party wants the export licensing policy for Finland's defence industry to be made available in a similar manner as for other EU countries – Sweden offers a good model.

The future of the EU battle groups program should be examined - what's the point of having them if they are not able to be used when needed? Finland should not be spending limited resources on taking the lead role for this group at the end of the decade.

Nordic defence co-operation

The Finns Party favours the very realistic and pragmatic concept of Nordic security and defence co-operation. It's a much more natural approach than the rather impulsive one of the EU. Co-operation does not solve the overall financial problems related to the Defence Forces nor does it give any concrete security guarantees. Nevertheless, if it is felt to be beneficial to Finland's defence, we are in favour of proceeding.

A strengthening of co-operation still assumes that the vital national defence capabilities remain in our own hands and we keep "our feet on the ground" and not get carried away by any idea of others taking responsibility for our own security. Independent nations will consider their own interests. Sweden does not want any military alliance with Finland - they think of Finland more as a geographic buffer. Norway, Denmark and Iceland have put their bets on NATO. For these countries Nordic military co-operation seems to be something like a tasty 'side dish.'

Definite benefits of Nordic co-operation will come from joint procurements, joint training and exercises - and, of course, experience with international crisis management. Nordeco is an effective and versatile structure for co-operation: each country can decide on its participation on a case-by-case basis and a smaller group of countries can go ahead on its own.

International crisis management

Finland has actively participated in situations involving international crisis management: as a member state within the UN and EU and also with NATO via the Partnership for Peace program. International involvement is a component of Finland's foreign and security policy and one of the statutory roles of the Defence Forces. Missions and exercises are to be prioritized as per importance but the defence of Finland must always be the first place of concern.

The Finns Party believes the UN should have the major role in international crises while being skeptical of EU policies as well as viewing NATO-led operations even more critically. Military operations, where peace is being forced at the point of a gun, is not, in the opinion of the Finns Party, a place for the use of resources of small countries. It's a different matter when decision-making power stays with Finland in a controlled peace-making situation.

If a decision to use Finnish military personnel for a particular crisis is made in a democratic manner, that decision must be respected. The policy of the Finns Party is to support our troops no matter what the operation or function.

Finland must not compromise on matters involving the safety of its men and women working abroad - they must be provided with the best possible protection. On their return, they should be given full support - and including, if needed, psychiatric care. Finland, when providing international assistance, has to give first consideration to its own national interests – in the same manner as other countries. Finland should not participate in a crisis without assuring that Finland will thereby improve its own military capabilities. For example, such operations should increase the level of military, logistical or administrative expertise, the skills of the Defence Forces in international situations as well as those situations having an influence - directly or indirectly - on the security of Finland such as a sudden deluge of immigration.

The Finns Party believes that once a political decision has been made for participation in a crisis management situation, the operational responsibility should then be that of the Defence Forces and not kept with the Foreign Ministry where it is presently.

The unfortunate Ottawa Land Mine Treaty

The political decision to sign the Ottawa Land Mine Treaty of 2012 was a strategic error without military or economic justification - the Finns Party was the only party which was in unanimous opposition. In reality, the old political parties are possibly paying with Finnish blood. The responsibility now lies with the President of the Republic, the Prime Minister and Cabinet - and the members of Parliament voting for agreement.

The large countries - Russia, the United States and China - are still able to use land mines as they have not signed the treaty. It's completely incredible that Finland went along with this prohibitive treaty when we have a border of over 1300 kilometers with Russia - which is permitted to use these mines. The capability of the fragmentation and blast mines will hopefully be replaced by the year 2016 with other methods. At the same time the number of troops will be decreased and the whole defence of Finland is in the balance.

Anti-personnel mines are important for Finland's defence as we have long borders with a relatively low population. When one considers Finland's topography, mines are an extremely effective means of defence. The Finns Party believes that Finland should investigate the possibilities of disengaging from the Ottawa Treaty. At the very least, Finland should prepare readiness to manufacture mines rapidly and in a large number.

Developing cybersecurity

Society must protect computer and telephone networks from attacks. As a stable and highly educated, technologically aware country, Finland has the possibility to be a model for the world with regard to cybersecurity.

A cyber strategy has been approved for Finland, but there has been silence about Finland's capability to perform a cyber attack. The Finns Party believes that there cannot be a sustainable defence without the ability to counterattack.

Finnish 'cyberlaw' should be developed so that the Defence Forces can benefit from the information possibilities afforded by the various cybernetworks.

In the future there will be many ways by which the enemies of the state can operate. At the same time, it must be said that new types of threats do not make military force obsolete. Therefore, we should also not lapse into cyberhype.

Border control – at a high level

Significant components of security policy are border control, immigration policy and the system of policing. Finland must have a high degree of border control - we need to know, quite clearly, who is coming to our country – significant help will come from the Eurodac identification system. The Finns Party believes Finland should remain outside of the envisioned general European Immigration and Refugee policy – by doing so, Finland can independently decide who and how many of these persons can enter the country.

Finland has begun preparation at the government level for the EU-Russia visa-free system. The Ukraine crisis has most definitely frozen the situation. The Finns Party believes, in any case, that such a visa-free program must be given careful consideration before any approval. If such a system does develop in the future, sufficient preparation time must be given.

The Finnish Ministry of the Interior has estimated that a visa-free system between Finland and Russia could, quite possibly, even triple the current number of people crossing the land border. There are dangers, for example, of cross-border crime and infectious disease transmission. Before any such system is operational, there must be updated data systems installed, proper border stations constructed for both sides of the border and sufficient personnel trained - all this with recognition of a growing traffic level and the avoidance of any risk situations.

If an EU-Russia visa-free system is eventually approved, the Finns Party believes the EU should contribute significantly to the costs of improving the physical and administrative means to handle the traffic. Finland must strongly advance its own interests in these matters.

Ownership of Finnish land by foreigners is, in the opinion of the Finns Party, very problematic if Finns do not have the same ownership rights in the country of those same foreigners. The Finns Party believes that ownership rights must exist with specific corresponding reciprocity. Additionally, Finnish security matters must be considered in these matters.