

Euro-Atlantic Perspectives

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Purpose of Euro-Atlantic Perspectives:

The purpose of *Euro-Atlantic Perspectives* is to impart information about Youth Network and ACF activities as well as Atlantic Treaty Association (ATA) and Youth Atlantic Treaty Association (YATA) activities in order that ACF and Youth Network members remain up-to-date on issues affecting transatlantic relations both nationally and internationally. The e-newsletter will help to circulate current ideas about issues that are on the agenda in Euro-Atlantic security and defence policy debates, in the ATA/YATA network, and nationally in Finland.

Besides the educational and informative aspect of the newsletter, it also aims at fostering discussion and debate about current issues influencing transatlantic relations. We hope to touch base on a broad range of topics via think pieces from security specialists, informative articles, event commentary, reviews and opinion pieces.

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Message from the editors

In this issue, we have two sections, one that covers Finnish national issues and another that focuses on international issues. The national section concentrates on debates affiliated with the Finnish presidential election held in January 2006. It covers some of the most important topics through coverage from three public debates organised by the ACF Youth Network, held on the level of Finnish young political leaders. The themes and dilemmas will not disappear from the political agenda after the election, and the discussion is likely to remain heated as the nation prepares for its upcoming EU presidency starting in July.

The international section is well placed. It contains one article on the EU battlegroups - a speech by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Estonia - outlining the challenges that Western nations face in the Middle East, the YATA presidents' (former and current) vision for 2006, and a think piece on YATA's role in the Black Sea Region.

The international community faces great challenges on how to live in peace and harmony with the Muslim communities within Europe and in Middle East, North Africa and Asia. A few current issues quickly come to mind: the cartoons of Muhammed, which circulate in media around Europe and Islamic countries spreading anger and frustration; Hamas' rise to power in the Palestinian territory; and the daunting tasks we face in stabilising Afghanistan and Iraq. The nuclear crisis with Iran is certainly not the final item on the list, but I believe that the few scenarios mentioned illustrate the complexity and variety of issues we have to tackle. The speech by Estonian Foreign Minister gives some interesting perspectives into the debate.

Also in the international section, Dr Pål Jonson, Secretary General of the Swedish Atlantic Committee, illuminates upon the EU battlegroups. Where will they be deployed and why? What kind of environments will the soldiers be facing? The debates in Europe about sending additional troops to Afghanistan are just a tip of an iceberg. Dr Jonson outlines the birth of the Battlegroup concept and its characteristics in a very clear and understandable way. It is a good introduction to the concept and the main questions surrounding the battlegroups for anyone interested in learning more about this exciting and controversial topic.

To wrap up this issue, we have included two timely articles on YATA. Among other things, they discuss YATA's current status and the future vision, and what YATA's role in the area of the Black Sea is and should be.

I hope that you will enjoy this issue. This will be the last issue in this format. That does not mean an end to our ACF Youth Network newsletter activities. We aim to be more efficient in creating discussion, and in engaging youth and our national

ATA/YATA members. Our objective is to create a newsletter which will be edited within the Nordic/Baltic framework and cover a global scope of issues. In addition another newsletter is to be published by the ACF and ACF Youth Network in Finnish. So stay tuned and make sure to send us feedback!

1 NATIONAL SECTION

1.1 Young President Makers and the Security Policy of Finland, Panel Discussion in Tampere. By Mr Jarmo Sunnari, Local Executive of the Tampere Chapter of the ACFYN in 2005

The Tampere Chapter of the Atlantic Council of Finland Youth Network organized a panel discussion on 22 November 2005 to talk about the relations of the candidates of the 2006 presidential election and the security policy of Finland. This was part of the series of similar events, of which the others were organised in Turku and in Helsinki.

The panel discussion was held among five panelists. Three young politicians were invited, each from one of the biggest political parties in Finland: political secretary of the Tampere branch of the National Coalition Party and a student of International Relations, Henna Hopia; personal assistant of MP, Mikko Kriikku from the Centre Party; and student of IR, Venla Virkamäki (Social Democratic Party). The Grand Old Man of the IR, professor emeritus of the University of Tampere, Osmo Apunen, was invited as a commentator and specialist. The author of this report acted as the chairman of the panel.

After welcoming the guests and verifying that the opinions expressed by the speakers were their own and not those of the Presidential candidates', professor Apunen gave a good ten minute introduction to the historical relations of the former presidents and the security policy of Finland.

Then there was a good discussion over various issues. One of these was the question whether the security of Finland is created inside or outside the country. This naturally concerns both the EU and Nato, and also revealed the difficulty of defining the concept of security. As always in conversations like this, there was an argument over whether we should be more or less involved in international security cooperation, and this argument was extended to individual expressions of vision as to which direction this cooperation should head.

We heard not so different points of views regarding the ideal position of the President on Finnish security policy. The real debate was more in the political choices what should be taken as a nation. And as one can imagine, it was Nato that divided those present.

In this particular issue the Centre was not the center, since it was Mr Kriikku who seemed to be permanently against Finland's joining the alliance, and Ms Virkamäki, the Social Democratic, who displayed quite a pragmatic approach to Nato membership by basically linking it into the direction of Nato's strategic development. Ms Hopia, on the other hand, was clearly in favor of membership.

This should be good news for YES-side people, since Ms Hopia has focused her studies and political career on security issues more so than the other two young politicians.

Professor Apunen intentionally raised the temperature of the discussion by predicting that during the next presidential term Finland would experience its first zinc caskets and asking what our young politicians think of that. Before this question, the three representatives had come to the conclusion that we have quite a peaceful and a stable future to come. The professor was not so optimistic about it. Nor was the chairperson, to whom was also posed a provocative question: Mr Kriikku asked me why is Nato worth joining. My answer was based on the belief that it is not Finland that will make the decision regarding whether our peace is threatened or not, but it is determined by the security development of a much larger geographical area - Eurasia. And here Nato is the most important military pillar of societies like ours, which are based on democracy, freedom and market economies. I think we ought to support the pillar, not avoid it.

Because there were so few of participants, and most of them had good security policy credentials, the conversation evolved more into an in-depth debate than a basic information-sharing event. Although strong debate is pleasurable, we should not forget the importance of the latter kind of activities, as the gasoline of democracy is good information, which people use to make up their mind when choosing their leaders.

1.2 The Youth Parties' Foreign Policy Experts Evaluate the Finnish Security Policy Foundations. By Mr Mikko Tyrväinen, Newsletter Executive of ACFYN

The Atlantic Council of Finland Youth Network (ACFYN) organised a panel discussion on the future developments of the Finnish security politics at the Finnish Institute of Foreign Affairs (FIIA) on December 7, 2005. The panel consisted of the representatives of the three main political parties' youth sections: Johanna Kentala (Communications manager, Finnish Centre Youth), Lauri Holappa (Political Secretary, Social Democratic Youth) and Simo S. Hämäläinen (The Youth League of the National Coalition Party). Each panellist promoted and argued for the views of their respective presidential candidate, as well as put their own opinions and expertise on the line.

Prior to the panel discussion, leading experts of Finnish security politics, Peter Ekholm (consultant), Henrikki Heikka (FIIA) and Tapani Vaahtoranta (director of FIIA) gave their analyses on the current Finnish foreign and security policy environment. Thus, the experts set the panellists a framework within which the discussion unfolded. The event, held a few hours before an official debate organised by the Finnish Broadcasting Company on television, managed to

attract a crowd of just over a dozen people - consisting mainly of the members of the youth political parties and other NGOs. The audience was anxious to hear how the panellists would address the question of the inevitable changes in the Finnish security politics as well as the question of the Finnish Nato membership.

Mr Vaahtoranta set the course for the discussion by introducing three paradoxes concerning the Finnish security politics discourse. According to Vaahtoranta the presidential candidates have not been entirely honest with their views on the national defence solution. Given that Finland is not threatened directly anymore by any conventional threat, it seems paradoxical that in her defence planning she anchors herself in mass defence against an invasion. Another unclear Finnish position is the will to remain non-aligned within the EU even though the European constitution states otherwise as far as the mutual security guarantee is concerned. Moreover, Vaahtoranta called for more solid arguments for remaining outside of the Nato framework. It has been said that Russia is the only reason why it would be rational for Finland to not join Nato. Now however, relations with Russia have changed considerably and still new arguments are given as to why Finland would be better off without Nato. This time anti-americanism and anti-bushism are at the core of the arguments.

Mr Ekholm and Mr Heikka concentrated on transatlantic relations. Mr Ekholm saw that since the US is losing interest in Europe, the EU should now concentrate on drafting a transition schedule so that the pulling out of the US from Europe does not come as a surprise. He also expressed the view that now trade and security politics both are at the core of the EU's relations with the US and Russia. The economic gap between the US and the EU as well as the lack of political will form two of the main obstacles for the EU action. Nevertheless, Ekholm is optimistic about the European defence policy process.

According to Heikka, EU—US relations have reached a phase of reconciliation where both actors have made moves in order to close the political gap. The US has adopted the nation building strategy and the EU has improved and strengthened its crisis management capability. The CIA prisoner flight scandal affects the relations between the EU governments and their people. The actions of the governments in the war on terrorism will prove to be more liberal than claimed officially. As a result of this the “darker side” of war on terrorism will be revealed in Europe as well, which may narrow the transatlantic gap even more. Heikka emphasized the importance of Finland and Sweden in transatlantic crisis management cooperation. The two countries' high tech capability positions them at the leading edge of international crisis management.

The core of the panellists' presentations and the discussion afterwards consisted of relations with Russia, the new non-military threats in the horizon and what role international organisations — the EU and Nato — should play in Finnish defence policy. In response to the paradoxes introduced by Mr Vaahtoranta the panellists stressed that while Russia does not pose a military threat, other factors such as

nuclear safety, diseases, oil spills in the Baltic Sea and slow development of democracy put neighbouring countries in danger.

The Centre Party candidate Mr Vanhanen and president Halonen have argued that Finland is already as active as needed in international crisis management and that, in their opinion, conscription with a reduced reserve is a better choice than professional armed forces. Therefore Finnish Nato membership is not needed now that it is still unclear what Nato is transforming into. Moreover, the Centre Party calls for a "sparring partner" for Nato to reduce the US unilateralism.

The National Coalition Party candidate Mr Niinistö has opposed the views of the two largest parties and sees Russia more as an opportunity than a threat due to mainly economic reasons. Mr Hämäläinen stated that Nato is a viable solution, albeit just a part of the solution, for Finnish security guarantees. The National Coalition Party considers it a grave problem how simplistically numerous experts have argued against Finnish Nato membership. Also Mr Hämäläinen stated that a multidimensional debate is vital and it is important that the discussion is not based on simplistic or reductive arguments.

In regards to Finland's national defence system and doubts expressed about it being out of date, the government forming parties (Centre Party and Social Democrats) defended the view that there is a consensus about the current system and that the existing defence policy is legitimate due to the fact that the European defence policy is still incomplete. In addition, the free riding problem is currently avoided with credible national defence.

Moving from the national back to the international stage, the topic of global responsibility caused a fair deal of discussion ranging from the question of immigration in Finland to the role of the UN in dealing with the new threats. Mr Holappa argued for other actors besides states to deal with globalization and human security. How to deal with the new security environment should be seen from a fully different perspective than the one of nation states. Therefore more inter-organisational cooperation is needed.

The National Coalition Party too argued for more power to organisations, but for completely different reasons. When the Social Democrats want initiatives similar to the Helsinki process to continue, the National Coalition Party view is that since the European constitution is shelved for the time being, the roles of the EU and Nato automatically become more important.

1.3 Finland's Security and Defence Policy - A panel discussion with student supporters of the key presidential candidates in Finland's presidential elections 2006. By Mr Aaretti Siitonen, Local Executive of the Turku Chapter of the ACFYN

The panel discussion, organised on 22 November in Turku, was preceded by an analysis of Finland's current position vis-à-vis NATO and the ESDP (European Security and Defence Policy) by Professor Pekka Sivonen of Finland's National Defence College. In his analysis, Dr. Sivonen emphasized that the term neutrality has lost its original meaning in Finland's context. With the suspension of the European constitution's ratification process, ESDP has also suffered a setback, but has still advanced far enough to make the concept of neutrality for nations taking part in it quite anachronistic. There is no direct equivalent of NATO's article V in ESDP, but according to Sivonen, pragmatically speaking, there is a solidarity clause as well as common defence acquisitions already. However, ESDP is not and cannot become a parallel structure to NATO, as most of its associates are also members of NATO. Only a crisis situation would show how well the solidarity within ESDP works. It is certain that a country partaking in ESDP, but not in NATO would be - albeit inadvertently - sidelined in the decision-making process. In Sivonen's opinion, militarily speaking, ESDP is a more theoretical and shakier construct than NATO.

Sivonen emphasised that Finnish public opinion is largely against NATO membership (26% for, 50+% against) because NATO is perceived as a tool of US hegemony and Finns are generally very critical of the current US administration. His belief is that as a more moderate administration takes office in the US and as ESDP structures become better defined with its division of labour vis-à-vis NATO, Finnish public opinion will eventually turn to favour NATO membership. He concluded his analysis by pointing out the positive prospects of Finnish NATO membership, namely the inclusion of security guarantees and increased influence inside the alliance.

The panel discussion was headed by Antti Kaski from the Department of Political Science of the University of Turku. The Participants were Tytti Seppänen, of the Centre Party, Rogaciano Cavadas of the National Coalition Party and Anssi Pirttijärvi of the Social Democrats. The panellists emphasized that they could not speak directly for their candidate, but would attempt to give their own opinions as typical supporters of their candidates.

Cavadas emphasized the changing role of NATO. He argued that NATO was originally designed to keep Germany in check and the Soviet Union at bay. Now that Russia is a partner and Germany a steadfast ally, NATO is looking for a new role. With the Eastern European states, including the Baltic States, as members, Cavadas considers Finland's non-member status a strange deviant. He calls for an open discussion of NATO's changing nature and Finland's position in regard to it.

Seppänen believed her candidate, Prime Minister Matti Vanhanen to believe in the so-called NATO option. This means that close cooperation with NATO would be continued without actual membership as a politically defined goal. A credible defence of the entire country, relying on Finland's own armed forces, would be maintained. She felt that the threats facing Finland currently are not military by nature - instead terrorism, climate change, pandemics and major accidents are to be feared. She wanted the role of the United Nations to be stronger.

Pirttijärvi believed his candidate, the incumbent president Tarja Halonen also focused her expectations on the UN, demanding a UN mandate for any military enterprise that Finland takes part in. He said that otherwise Halonen is much on the same lines with Vanhanen, despite a differing views of an ideal society (with Halonen being a socialist and Vanhanen a liberalist).

In relation to Russia the panellists agreed that dependence on Russian energy is a source of concern for Finland. Rogaciano was sceptical of the wisdom of maintaining relations to Moscow via Brussels, but in Seppänen's view there is more than enough direct and local cross-border cooperation going on between Finland and Russia; she felt that it made sense to use every available route of communication. Pirttijärvi felt that there is a double morality at work when the EU fails to condemn Russia's actions in Chechnya. He also felt that Finland should free itself of dependence on Russian oil.

In regard to foreign and security policy the panellists were all sceptical of NATO membership, with Cavadas questioning the future role of NATO. In his view Turkey joining the EU might, for example, force other EU members to send troops to the Iraqi border. He hoped for cooperation without obligations and believed that development aid and other soft measures could prevent crises in advance. Seppänen and Pirttijärvi both agreed that it is not yet necessary to join NATO. Instead, they hoped that the different options would first be carefully weighed in terms of expenditures and other effects. They did not wish ESDP to become a competitor with NATO, but also did not believe that Finland's increased influence in NATO would be worth the price of membership.

Seppänen emphasized the need to face the new, non-military threats and called for a re-assessment of the entire structure of Finnish defence, including the current system of compulsory conscription. All of the panellists regretted the absence of a 'crystal ball' with which to gauge future developments and aid decision-making, especially in regard to Finland's eastern neighbour. In general, the views of the panellists confirmed Professor Sivonen's estimate of Finnish public opinion vis-à-vis security policy in general and NATO in particular.

2 INTERNATIONAL SECTION

2.1 NATO and the Middle East. Minister Urmas Paet's address at the 51st General Assembly of the Atlantic Treaty Association in Tallinn 29.09.2005

Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

I believe it is fair to say that our interest in seeking to increase our dialogue and cooperation with the Broader Middle East has been influenced to a great extent by external developments. Terrorist attacks against the United States, Egypt and the UK among others have turned not just NATO's, but the entire world's attention towards what has been called the Broader Middle East. Despite some recent positive developments, the last couple of years there have been mounting concern regarding the worsening of the Israeli-Palestinian dispute. And then there has been the influx of refugees and asylum seekers in many southern European Alliance countries.

These developments have reminded us, in a very stark way, of the continuing volatility of the Mediterranean and Middle East regions. And, of the way in which this volatility impacts also on our safety, on our economies and well-being in Europe and America.

Having said this, we all realise that these are deep-rooted, complex, and inter-related problems. We need to address the problems that create an atmosphere where violence rather than a peaceful development is seen as an alternative. These are problems that need to be addressed first and foremost by the countries in the region themselves. By politicians who show vision and leadership by people who are prepared to come to terms with the past, but determined also to shape the future of their own countries.

It is clear, at the same time that the international community has to be supportive -- through political engagement and economic cooperation. Even though Estonia is geographically far away from the Middle East region Estonia fully supports EU's and NATO's initiatives in the Middle East and North Africa and sees it as a chance to contribute to the development of the region. Against today's global security challenges, geography offers no protection. Terrorism, proliferation regional conflicts, failing states – these challenges have implications far beyond the places in which they originate.

Among the major international institutions, the European Union through its Strategic Partnership with the Mediterranean and the Middle East, the Barcelona Process and the European Neighbourhood policy obviously have a key role to play in supporting economic, political and social reform in the region. But I also believe that NATO has a role as well, in engaging the wider Atlantic community,

and complementing and reinforcing the efforts of other international actors. NATO has contributed significantly to the cooperation with the states of the Greater Middle East within the framework of Istanbul Cooperation Initiative as well as Mediterranean Dialogue.

The region is very dynamic and we have witnessed changes in domestic as well as regional affairs - most recently Egypt took some steps towards a more inclusive political system, the same goes for Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, democratic elections have been held in the Palestinian territories, Iraq and Lebanon. In the economic sector, a free trade agreement between the EU and the Mediterranean states should be implemented in 2010, a free trade agreement between Jordan, Egypt, Tunisia and Morocco has already been signed and many of the countries in the region are making efforts to make their economies more efficient. But unfortunately the development has been much slower than we would have hoped.

This is especially sad since at least a part of the region is generously blessed with one of the world's most valuable commodities - oil - and has nevertheless taken the road to progress so passively. It is richer than other developing regions, it has enormous human capacity, natural resources and other possibilities, which the majority of developing countries lack. The population of the Middle Eastern and North African countries has grown significantly during the last thirty years. As a result of this growth today 40% of the populations in these countries are under 14 years old. This is the "coming generation". These are the people to whom the reforms have to be directed to. They will have the possibility to see also results that the reforms will bring. But unfortunately they are also a part of the problem - the region faces the overwhelming task of supplying jobs to a population that grows with approximately 4 percent per year - the reforms have to start today, there is no time to spare.

I would like to address briefly a couple of issues that seems to me to stand out as crucial for development. The first one being the importance of raising the level of education in the region in order to create a solid basis for further reforms. Reports show that the number of illiterate people in the region is growing. Reforming education and raising the literacy level in this region will be steps towards good governance and peace. Reforming education should not only include opening more schools, it includes also reforms in school system. What can the international community do?

The guiding principle for the international community in supporting reforms in the countries has to be, however, respect for national and regional specifics. Therefore we need to work with our partners on an individual basis. I am hopeful that educational issues will be addressed at the upcoming summit on the tenth anniversary of the Barcelona declaration and goals such as to halve the number of illiterate adults and children in the region by the year 2010 will be set.

It is important to understand that implementing reforms in order to achieve good governance does not mean giving up culture or tradition of these societies. Quite the contrary – with good governance there appears a larger possibility to save the unique culture of this region.

And bluntly speaking this is also the way for the international community to increase the security.

Last but not least I will touch upon the importance of economic liberalisation.

Economic liberalisation has helped many countries to improve societies. The Baltic and Central European countries have made their own experience during the past decade in building up democratic institutions and reforming our economy? - These changes have transformed also the mentality of individuals and whole nations. Alongside democratic institutions and their consolidation over the years, there are, of course, also other significant factors upon which the generally positive trend of development in the Baltic Sea region rests. Among these, cooperation, which is based upon shared interests and values, is the foremost. In the early nineties, cooperation was the euphemistic term often used to define foreign aid. But over the years, cooperation spread to all spheres of common interest – in addition to matters dealing with the economy, cooperation in connection with the environment, education, health, the fight against crime and drug trafficking, etc, has grown in importance and scope. Every country has its own unique transformation experience that can not be copied directly, but I do believe, that certain positive experiences of the Baltic Sea region and central Europe can help us to develop mutually beneficial cooperation between the Alliance and our Mediterranean and Middle East partners and help us to find ways to support socio-economic development and democracy in the Broader Middle East.

In an ever more interlinked world we need to make better use of each other's knowledge and achievements in order for the future generation to be able to live in a better world.

2.2 “The EU Battlegroups - a vehicle for defence transformation”. By Dr Pål Jonson, Secretary General of the Swedish Atlantic Council

Introduction

In one of the latest developments within the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) the European Union's (EU) Member States have declared that they, by 2007, should be able to provide force packages of battalion size combat units with combat support and combat service supports that are deployable within 5-10 days and able to operate autonomously up to 120 days. These force

packages or “Battlegroups” as they are called, indicates a rising level of ambition for the ESDP process. Yet, more significantly they will also generate a number of challenges particularly for the small and mid-size Member States which will force them to undertake a much needed defence transformation in order to enhance the deployability and agility of their armed forces.

The Main “Drivers” for the Battlegroup Concept

The embryo to the Battlegroup concept can be traced to the EU Headline Goal process first outlined at the Helsinki European Council in December 1999. The main achievement at the Helsinki Summit was the agreement that the Member States by 2003 should establish the European Rapid Reaction Force (ERRF), which would consist of 60,000 troops, deployable within 60 days and sustainable for at least one year. However, the Presidency Report from the Summit also discussed the need to establish smaller rapid response units within the ERRF that would be able to act within 8 to 10 days notice for more time urgent operations. This aspect of the ERRF was later put on the diplomatic backburner, as the main focus of the ESDP process was shifted to achieving the numerical targets for the Headline Goal by 2003.

However, in 2003 France and the United Kingdom took an initiative to further advance the EU’s ability to respond to emerging crises. In the final communiqué from the Franco-British summit at Le Touquet in February 2003 - at the height of the two states’ rift over how to handle the Iraq crisis - the two highlighted the need to further develop the rapid response dimension of the ESDP process.¹ And at a Summit between the two in London on November 24, 2003 they referred to the necessity that the EU develops “tactical forces”, which predominately but not exclusively, were to be created to support the United Nations’ peacekeeping efforts in Africa.² On February 10, 2004 the Battlegroup concept was formally introduced into the EU system via submission to the Political and Security Committee, and in June 2004 the European Council adopted the concept as part of the EU Headline Goal 2010.³ Thus the Battlegroup concept has within a remarkably short time been incorporated into the ESDP process and it is arguably the dimension that currently absorbs the most time and attention of the Member States.

¹ See Joint Declaration FRANCO-BRITISH SUMMIT, Le Touquet 4.2.2003.

² Thus, as noted, the first documents that derived from the Franco-British initiative had references to the Battlegroups being shaped for operations, predominately but not exclusively for Africa. When the initiative was transformed into EU policy these references had disappeared. To some extent this reflected the shifting political balance within the EU after the enlargement in May 2004. Most of the new Member States did not want any explicit references to Africa and viewed the United Kingdom’s and France’s focus on Africa as a reflection of their historical colonial ties with countries on this continent.

³ See ‘EU Head Line Goal 2010 approved by the General Affairs External Relations Council on 17 May 2004 and endorsed by the European Council of 17 and 18 June 2004’.

There have been several factors that have contributed to the rapid advancement of the Battlegroup concept. Firstly, important impetus was generated in June 2003 through the EU operation *Artemis* in the Democratic Republic of Congo. This operation, undertaken at the request of the United Nations, was intended to stabilize the humanitarian situation in and around the city of Bunia in order to assure that United Nations' peacekeeping forces could then take over the control in the area. The operation consisted of 1800 troops, which is comparable to a Battlegroup, with France as the framework nation. Within three months the intervening force had been able to ensure relative peace and stability and the return of displaced persons. The result of the operation was perceived to be rather successful for the EU since it showed that its decision-making apparatus and military planning bodies were able to launch a demanding operation within a short time-span. It thereby furthermore provided self-assurance and confidence among political leaders and practitioners that the EU also could undertake operations that had the character of a peace enforcement mission. It is doubtful if it would have been possible to galvanise consensus around an ambitious initiative like the Battlegroup concept if the Member States had not had references to Operation *Artemis*.

Another factor that also generated an incentive to develop the Battlegroup concept was the idea of extending the clause "permanent structured cooperation" to the field of security and defence cooperation during the negotiations for the European Constitution. This clause as outlined in the European Constitution would enable a group of more able-bodied Member States to establish a nucleus within the security and defence dimension of the Union and thereby at least informally gain more influence over the ESDP process. One of the formal requirements for qualifying for the permanent structured cooperation was to be able to contribute rapid reaction forces with a deployment time of 5 to 30 days.⁴ Thus there might in the future be a correlation between the size and relevance of the contribution by a Member State to the Battlegroup concept and the possibility to participate in the permanent structured co-operation if the Constitution ever enters into force. The Franco-British initiative to set demanding requirements for the Battlegroups derives from an obvious dissatisfaction of the two pre-eminent military powers within the EU regarding the inability of the other Member States to rapidly deliver adequate forces for high intensity crisis management operations. The reason for this is of course that most of them have not sufficiently transformed their armed forces from a territorial defence focus to an enhanced ability to participate in international operations. Thus the Battlegroup initiative can in large parts be viewed as a measure meant to generate external pressure through the EU on the Member States to reshape their armed forces towards force postures that are better equipped to enhance the EU's crisis management capability.

⁴ 5-30 days is equivalent to the deployment time for the NATO Response Force.

Aims and purposes for the Battlegroups

A Battlegroup as such is not a new invention specifically adopted and tailored for EU crisis management operations. On the contrary, it has been a commonly used force composition in manoeuvre warfare for decades. In essence it can be described as the smallest self-sufficient military unit that can be deployed and sustained over time in a theatre of operation. A Battlegroup is based on a combined-arms, battalion-sized force of 1,500 troops reinforced with combat support and combat service support elements. Each Battlegroup will be associated with a Force Headquarters and pre-identified transport and logistics elements. It has also been stated that the Battlegroups can be supported by so-called strategic enablers implying combat support from sea and/or air power in joint operations. Thus, given their limited size the Battlegroup concept is agile enough to undertake rather demanding armed combat missions. Thus, with the Battlegroups it is intended that the EU will be able to undertake autonomous rapid response operations, most likely under a UN chapter VII mandate, either for stand-alone operations or for the initial phase of a larger operation. A Battlegroup can for example be utilised as a spearhead force that enters a conflict region and stabilizes the area long enough to enable the deployment of follow-on forces that can operate in the area for a longer period of time.

It should be noted, however, that these forms of operation are often both very demanding and highly hazardous for the participating parties. The Member States will have to give thorough consideration to the risks that can be involved in such operations and guarantee that the Battlegroups have the best possible training and force protection before they are deployed. If an operation fails because of short-coming in these areas it would in all likelihood have disastrous consequences first and foremost for the troops involved. Furthermore, it would also generate a serious setback for the ESDP process, which would of course be to the detriment of the Member States given the amount of political capital they have invested in developing an autonomous crisis management capability outside of NATO. In essence the stakes are high and the risks numerous if and when the Battlegroups are used for the sort of missions that they are intended for.

Contributions to the Battlegroup Initiative as of 2005

The Member States have several options to contribute to the Battlegroup concept. If they have a high level of ambition and military proficiency they can provide a national Battlegroup where all the troops and resources come from a single state.⁵ A second option is to provide a Battlegroup based on a framework concept where one state provides combat elements while others provide combat support or combat service support functions. A third option would be to provide a multinational Battlegroup where all the state assigns resources to the different

⁵ The label national might be some-what misleading in so far that the command and control function always, in one form or another, will be multinational in ESDP operations.

aspects included in the Battlegroup. A fourth option would be to provide niche capabilities in support of the Battlegroups.

The advantage of national Battlegroups is obviously that they contain a high degree of homogeneity as far as language, training and command and control structures are concerned. This facilitates for high combat effectiveness and interoperability, which is vital when undertaking peace enforcement operations. Furthermore is the certainty of the deployability of a national Battlegroup high in so far that it is only one Member State that makes the critical final decision to go along with an operation. The military dependency on other Member States is considerably smaller than in a multinational Battlegroup. The drawbacks of national Battlegroups are, however, that they become rather costly to sustain and they cannot work as a vehicle for increased defence cooperation with other EU Member States. Furthermore, it is from a political perspective favourable to be able to share risks with other participating Member States when a Battlegroup operation is or is about to be launched.

When France and the United Kingdom introduced the Battlegroup concept to the Political and Security Committee in February 2004 they requested as many national Battlegroups as possible. However at the November 22, 2004 Military Capability Commitment Conference, the Member States made initial commitments to the formation of 13 Battlegroups of which only four were national.

- United Kingdom
- Italy
- Spain
- France
- France and Belgium
- France, Germany, Belgium, Luxembourg and Spain
- United Kingdom and the Netherlands
- Germany, The Netherlands and Finland
- Germany, Czech Republic and Austria
- Germany, Poland, Slovakia, Latvia and Lithuania
- Italy, Hungary and Slovenia
- Italy, Spain, Greece and Portugal
- Sweden, Finland, Estonia and Norway⁶

Niche capabilities have so far been offered by the following Member States:

- Cyprus (medical group)
- Lithuania (a water purification unit)
- Greece (the Athens Sealift Co-ordination Centre)

⁶ Declaration on European Military Capabilities. Military Commitment Conference, Brussels, 22 November 2004.

- France (structure of a multinational and deployable Force Headquarters)

The objective of the EU is to have two of the 13 Battlegroups at readiness at the same time on six-month rotation. The two Battlegroups on readiness would be able to begin operating no later than 10 days after the EU decision to launch the operation. Since January 2005 the EU has one Battlegroup on readiness. Full Operation Readiness is scheduled to begin from January 1st 2007.

A significant aspect of the rotation system is that the Member States that are contributing to the two Battlegroups on readiness will most likely be under heavy pressure to conduct an operation if the overwhelming majority of the Member States deem it as desirable or necessary that the EU should undertake such an operation. This in particular poses a challenge for the Battlegroups based on contributions from some of the smaller Member States. These have previously had a tendency to by choice or necessity “pass the buck” to France and the United Kingdom to undertake dangerous and time-urgent crisis management operations. This would in political terms no longer be possible or at least entail a high political cost when their Battlegroups are on readiness. In short, with the contribution to a Battlegroup comes a large share of responsibility and high expectations from the other Member States to be able to deliver in times of crisis.

The Battlegroups and NRF- pitfalls and possibilities

The development of the Battlegroup concept cannot be assessed in complete separation from the development of the NATO Response Force (NRF), which was adopted at the NATO Prague Summit in 2002 and launched on Initial Operational Readiness in October 2003. Out of the 25 EU Member States 19 are also members of NATO and most of these contribute to the NRF and the Battlegroups with a single set of forces. Yet while there are similarities between the Battlegroup concept and the NRF such as a focus on early entry- and out of area operations there are also defining differences. One of the most obvious differences lays in the size of the two formations. The NRF consists of approximately 25,000 troops including combat support and naval and air assets, which can be tailored according the specific needs of an operation. The land-component of the NRF consists of a brigade size manoeuvre unit. A Battlegroup consists of a third of this formation since it is centred on a mechanised infantry battalion. The sea and air components of the Battlegroups are also still rather under developed even though it has been stated that the Battlegroups could be supported by strategic enablers through air and sea power. The Battlegroup concept is thus a considerably more land-centric formation than the NRF. The NRF's deployment time (5-30 days) is somewhat longer than the Battlegroups', but it is considerably more robust and able in large parts because of the US contribution and thus considerably better equipped to handle more demanding operations.

Furthermore, contrary to the Battlegroups, which are focused on the Petersberg tasks including those mentioned in the EU Security Strategy, the NRF covers the

whole spectrum of military operations from crisis management to counter-terrorism and collective defence.⁷ Yet its main focus is arguably on improving the European NATO Allies' ability to participate in high intensity warfare operations rather than to contribute to peace support operations.⁸ While the Battlegroup concept indeed also can be viewed as a vehicle for converting the EU Member States toward an enhanced ability to undertake expeditionary operations, there are no official conversion programs associated with the Battlegroup concept. There is potentially a risk that the states that remain outside of the NRF will in the long run suffer a disadvantage since they cannot participate in the process to enhance the European Allies' ability to contribute to high intensity warfare operations and other developments of operational concepts within the NRF. Given the fact that the Battlegroups are intended to be used primarily for peace enforcement operations, it is vital that they are agile and preserve a high proficiency to undertake armed combat operations and maintain escalation dominance in such operations. Thus, the process that is associated with the NRF will bring important added value to the abilities of the Battlegroups, and the states that remain outside of the NRF run the risk of falling behind in this regard. The members of the EU and NATO have stated that the development of the Battlegroups and the NRF should be mutually reinforcing and complementary. However, since the members of the two organisations contribute to the NRF and the Battlegroups with a single set of forces difficulties might occur for those that belong to both organisation if there is a demand to participate in an NRF operation and a Battlegroups operation at the same time if the rotation systems for the two are not properly coordinated.

In conclusions it should be noted that the Battlegroups will not provide the EU with silver bullets to deter, prevent or even limit the escalation of violent conflict. The two Battlegroups available on readiness at the time will consist of 3000 troops with strategic enablers, or in reality two mechanised but rather light infantry battalions. By any standard this is a limited size when dealing with armed conflicts. Yet the Battlegroups initiative is still of significance since it will deepen multinational defence cooperation in Europe as the Member States collaborates to establish functional Battlegroups based on their respectively aptitude and niche capabilities. It will enhance the EU's ability to undertake peace enforcement operation in practical terms but also mentally. The fact that the EU is developing forces particularly tailored to handle operations where the peace has to be enforced rather than kept is clearly a step up the conflict ladder for the EU and it indicates that the EU is prepared to take a greater responsibility for international security issues.

⁷ The Petersberg tasks includes humanitarian and rescue tasks, peace-keeping tasks and tasks of combat forces in crisis management, including peacemaking. European Security Strategy also includes joint disarmament operations, support for third countries in combating terrorism and security sector reform as possible operations within the ESDP framework.

⁸ It is noticeable that even though the NRF has been on readiness since October 2003 it has not yet been used in any operations.

2.3 YATA of Yesterday – YATA of Tomorrow: A joint report⁹ By Troels Egeskov Sørensen and Harald Thørud, Former and Current YATA Presidents

In 2005, any NGO, which deals with the creation and/or strengthening of civil society must have a strong youth dimension. The youth body of the ATA has joined hands with the ATA leadership and the ATA member associations in reaching the common goal of creating a strong and well-functioning Youth Atlantic Treaty Association (YATA). Today's YATA is composed of nearly 30 national youth chapters, and is one of the strongest and most influential youth NGO networks in the world.

Aside from all of the activities organized by the national chapters, YATA has (since 2002 created a web page, developed two internet forums for debate and information exchange, and organized several regional and international conferences. YATA members have been engaged in dialogue with the decision-makers of the world, including George W. Bush, Colin Powell, Gerhard Schröder, Tayep Erdogan, and many more. In this sense, YATA has been playing its role as the *Voice of the Civil Society*. This is largely based on the philosophy that the development of world politics should not only be up to the governments and diplomatic elite, but should also involve the civil society.

The YATA of tomorrow will grow and become an even stronger youth-network than it is today. A focus for the future will be the creation of strong national chapters in Central Asia and the Black Sea Region. In December of 2005, YATA organized a large conference at the NATO HQ in Brussels, where NATO Secretary General, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, was present. The participants at this event, who came from nearly 30 nations, were selected on the basis of an essay competition organized by the YATA Executive Board. Such initiatives have become an important tool in NATO's Public Diplomacy strategy, and we are planning to organize similar events in 2006.

Strengthening youth cooperation within the national associations is of great importance to YATA, and we will work towards creating more events and closer cooperation within all of our areas of activity. New financial partners are important in order to be able to reach out to all our national chapters – this reality is at the core of our new partner strategy. The updating of the YATA webpage, as well as the YATA events in Istanbul and Brussels later in 2005 are partly the result of this new strategy. By organizing international conferences and bringing young future leaders together, YATA is becoming a key player in creating a sound base for the future of the transatlantic relationship.

⁹ Published previously in ATA Newsletter of November 2005.

2.4 YATA in the Black Sea Region¹⁰ By Harald Thørud, YATA President

The geographic location of the Black Sea makes it a region of key strategic importance for the Euro-Atlantic security network. While NATO today covers nearly half the coastline around the Black Sea, YATA, after the proposed establishment of a Moldovan YATA, will have chapters in every country in the region. November 2005 was an exceptionally strong month for the YATA network in the Black Sea Region. In mid-November, the establishment of the Turkish YATA (YATA-Turk) was officially acknowledged with an impressive ceremony in Istanbul, bringing together participants from 11 countries. The growing importance of YATA was made evident by the official recognition of the establishment of YATA-Turk by the Turkish Ministry of Defence, the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and NATO Secretary General, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer. In early November, the Romanian and Armenian ATA and YATA associations organised two successful events, focusing respectively on: 'Education for Security and Defence at Europe and NATO's South-Eastern Borders' and 'Challenges and Opportunities for the Youth to Enhance Stability in the Black Sea Region.'

In Yerevan, 24 young students from 11 countries formed a Black Sea Youth Network within the YATA framework. This initiative aims to create a Black Sea identity, and promote mutual understanding among the peoples of the region. It will surely be a key aspect in further developing YATA's role in the Black Sea Region. The Black Sea Youth Network, which will be fully established by early 2006, will encourage communication and information exchange between its members, while striving towards the promotion of a shared regional identity. Year 2006 will see many exciting YATA projects come to fruition. In early January, our Azerbaijani youth partner association organized their fourth international NATO school event (NISA), in Guba; and in the spring, YATA is planning to organise a Black Sea youth seminar in one of the region's capitals. Building on the Baltic success story, and using it as a model for future initiatives, YATA will continue to work towards strengthening the emerging civil societies of the Black Sea Region.

¹⁰ Published previously in ATA Newsletter of December 2005.