



FINABEL

EUROPEAN ARMY
INTEROPERABILITY CENTRE

LAND FORCES MODERNISATION WEBINAR

On 23 March 2021, the Finabel Permanent Secretariat (PSec) hosted a webinar on Land Forces Modernisation aimed at exploring the positions of military, industrial, and academic stakeholders. The webinar focused on the challenges and opportunities for the improvement of both military equipment and military personnel.



ANNARITA SILVERII

COMMUNICATION MANAGER AT FINABEL PERMANENT SECRETARIAT

Ms Silverii, on behalf of the Finabel PSec, introduced the discussion on Land Forces Modernisation and moderated the event. She described the meaning of land forces modernisation as “the process of changing equipment or doctrine of land forces to deal with new and emerging scenarios.” The three interlinked security challenges facing modern land forces were presented:

- Unconventional Warfare: ideological resistance and the gradual build-up of resistance groups and forces as a response to a contested political structure. It expects resistance groups to grow organically from a clandestine underground to covert auxiliary networks, then on to overt guerrilla groups and eventually mobile forces. Because it avoids battle in the classic sense, especially in its earlier phases, it is difficult for land forces to intervene early to prevent the growth of the resistance.
- Asymmetric Warfare: is the conflict between two or more parties where force and equipment diverge significantly, and like unconventional warfare, irregular actions substitute the conventional battle with the aim of reducing the effectiveness of conventional force. These conflicts are usually conducted by non-state actors, in hostile operational environments, such as Afghanistan or Mali.





- Hybrid Warfare: which combines conventional, unconventional, cybernetic, and asymmetric warfare to achieve military ends. Considered the biggest challenge to militaries operating today, hybrid warfare shifts attention to a trichotomy of troops-population-opponent rather than force-on-force and keeps.

To highlight how militaries have been concerned with remaining relevant, in the face of current threats for security and defence, Ms Silverii quoted the Norwegian Armed Forces who recently noted: “a challenging strategic environment constantly reminds us that we cannot take our freedom and security for granted”. She stated that nations are continuously improving how they detect and fight threats and she noted that technology is part of the process because it has been deeply integrated into the tools and functions of militaries as a means to increase the probability of favourable results.

Additionally, Ms Silverii introduced the April 2021 issue of the magazine, 'Finabel Times', which covers the developments regarding the modernisation of land forces and interoperability from military, academic, and industrial perspectives.



MAJOR-GENERAL KARL ENGELBREKTSON

OF THE SWEDISH ARMY, AND PRESIDENT OF THE FINABEL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE



General Engelbrektson offered opening remarks from Northern Sweden, where he was participating in an exercise. The General gave an overview of the most recent Swedish Army modernisation project, Total Defence 2021-2025. The plan involves a review of the structures that include both the war functions and manoeuvres, the functions of the brigades and the divisions. He discussed the reorganisation of the Swedish Army to reinforce its capacity to respond faster to any possible attack on Swedish territory. He also referred to Sweden's particular geographical and climatic characteristics. Gen Engelbrektson discussed, among the others, the issues related to logistics, artillery, and ground-based air defence and how they related to Sweden and its plans for land force modernisation.

Sweden will begin the replacement of military equipment in the coming years. Starting with infantry fighting vehicles (IFV) and tanks, which the General considers a crucial point of the project. He expects that Sweden will be able to cooperate with France and the UK on their tanks programme.

Finally, reflecting on the Swedish Army, Gen Engelbrektson considers that it is still necessary to grow in numbers and in organisation, focusing on the technical aspects such as unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV).



BRIGADIER BEN BARRY

(RETD), SENIOR FELLOW FOR LAND WARFARE AT IISS



Brig Barry began his presentation by indicating the main lessons from current wars. These include hybrid warfare and the relevance of particular capabilities, such as having allies and advisors on the ground, precision weapons and artillery, and unmanned air systems.

Furthermore, he pointed out that, even in modern warfare, there are recurrent concepts which remain valid, including the importance of integrating new capabilities (for instance, cyber) and face specific issues (such as geography and terrain, urbanisation). The armed forces need to overcome adversities to remain competitive. European land forces must confront numerous challenges, including increasing investments in armour, air defence, and electronic warfare to face their opponents.

Infantry is a crucial capability, and it will remain essential. For this reason, it will require comprehensive modernisation, as it is frequently the least advanced resource in modern armies. Brig Barry pointed out how some countries are pursuing the path of creating “Super Soldiers”; however, this is not a reality in Europe yet due to legal and ethical factors.



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Armoured vehicles will remain decisive, and the integration of Defensive Aid Suites (DAS) will make them more effective. Furthermore, unmanned systems are increasing and are becoming more influential in modern warfare.

Brig Barry stated that, when deployed, the armed forces will also have to consider the non-state actors' capabilities; IEDs will continue to be used, land mines will return as a cheap defensive weapon but with technological improvements. Moreover, according to Brig Barry, the battlefield will soon witness the increase of directed energy weapons, including blinding sensors, air defence and counter indirect fire and non-nuclear electromagnetic pulse. Therefore, combat engineer capabilities will increase in importance when facing these challenges.

Brig Barry asserted that intelligence surveillance and reconnaissance would deliver new opportunities and threats, including indirect fires, which could increase the number of casualties.

Overall, to be ready to face modern warfare, armies will have to analyse lessons from past operations and training, and learn from their allies and opponents. Moreover, they will have to monitor civilian and military science and train more frequently with virtual simulators.



MR MARC ESSIG

INTERNATIONAL COUNSELLOR IN DEFENCE & AEROSPACE AND
FORMER CHAIRMAN AND CEO OF THALES HELLAS S.A.



Mr Essig highlighted the complexity of the European industrial sector, including the multitude of entities and initiatives that constitute it and as well as the challenges they face. Moreover, he recognised the importance of the European Defence Fund (EDF), which represents a key asset to commence and increase the research for new systems and equipment for land forces. He noted that it was also and cooperation between European states and industries.

Mr Essig stated the sector faces several challenges:

- Many of the leading companies' stock remains in national hands.
- A lack of standardised equipment.
- Fragmented platforms that can be used to share different capabilities.

The key to overcoming these issues is the cooperation between the actors. Mr Essig pointed out that, over the years, several European industries have undergone a consolidation process driven by mergers and acquisitions. Nowadays, Mr Essig believes that two major cooperation initiatives at the European level will change the face of coordination and cooperation: SCAF (Système de Combat Aérien du Futur), a new fighter collaboration between France, Germany, and Spain and MGCS (Main Ground Combat System) Franco-German tank project with KNDS (Nexter and KMW) and Rheinmetall.



MR MARCESSIG

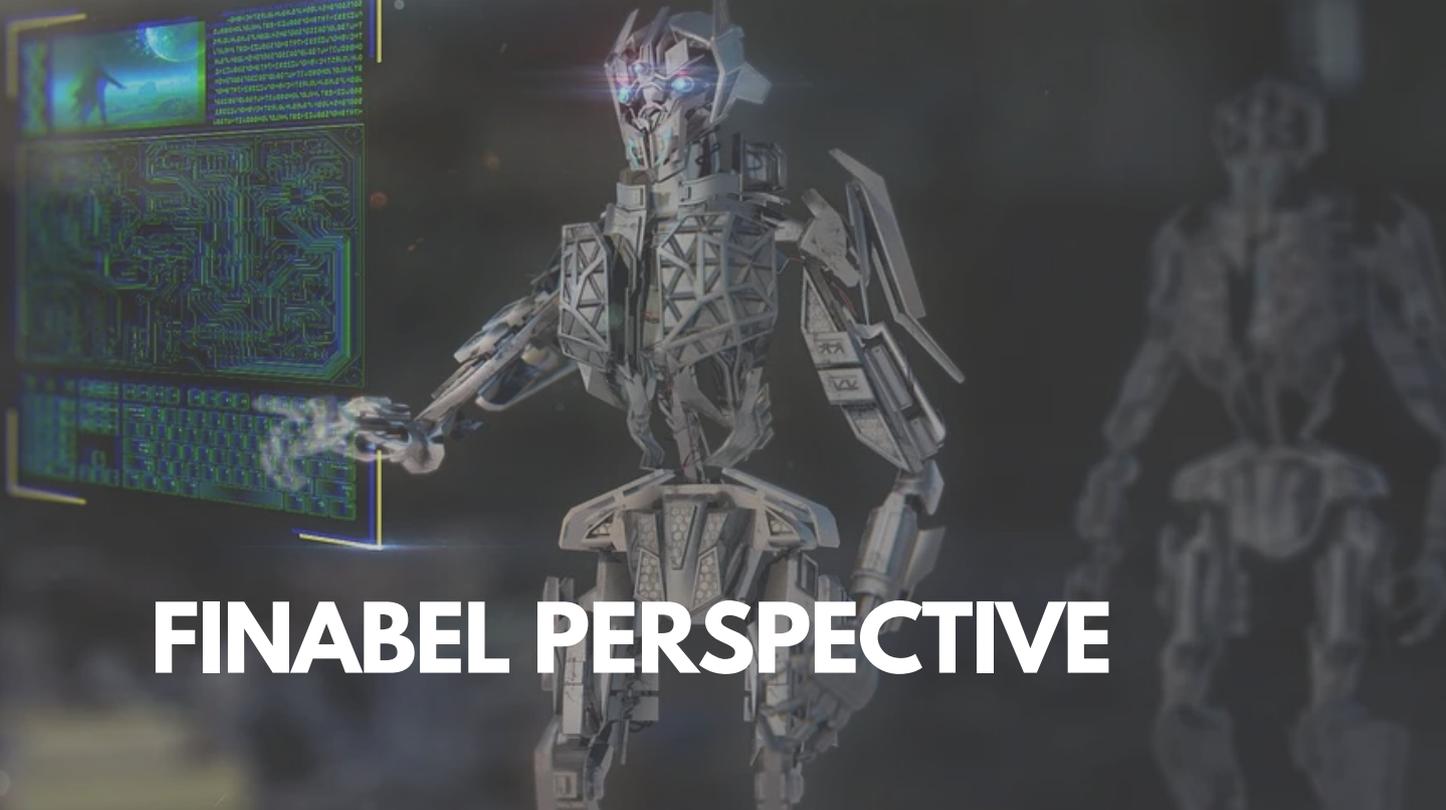
INTERNATIONAL COUNSELLOR IN DEFENCE & AEROSPACE AND
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However, severe limitations and constraints to the industrial sector still remain, including national protectionism, equipment export, and cultural differences between countries.

How can the industrial sector overcome these challenges and provide European troops with the best equipment?

Mr Essig suggests building up a balanced European industrial base that assures local and fair participation. Moreover, it is relevant to promote transatlantic, multinational, and regional cooperation, which will enhance interoperability between the armed forces. Simultaneously, it is necessary to ensure national autonomy and interests. Finally, it is necessary to cooperate to establish a European Flexible Manufacturing System, reducing complexity and rationalising organisations to secure interoperability at the European level.



FINABEL PERSPECTIVE

The modernisation of Land Forces should be a holistic project, encompassing micro- and macro-managing features to allow combat forces to become more efficient in their operations. In this regard, increasing scientific and technological development to offer greater quantity and quality of tools for national defence is important, but it is also essential to strengthen the human dimension, the organisational factors, coordination, as well as adaptation to conflict environments to ensure strategic effectiveness.

Therefore, it is necessary to continue analysing the trends, innovating and improving the capabilities of the Land Forces. Finabel is committed to further reflect on this issue and encourage a deep and constructive debate regarding the technical, logistical, and operational factors of the Land Forces according to the current challenges for security and defence.

Created in 1953, the Finabel committee is the oldest military organisation for cooperation between European Armies: it was conceived as a forum for reflections, exchange studies, and proposals on common interest topics for the future of its members. Finabel, the only organisation at this level, strives at:

- Promoting interoperability and cooperation of armies, while seeking to bring together concepts, doctrines and procedures;
- Contributing to a common European understanding of land defence issues. Finabel focuses on doctrines, trainings, and the joint environment.

Finabel aims to be a multinational-, independent-, and apolitical actor for the European Armies of the EU Member States. Thee Finabel informal forum is based on consensus and equality of member states. Finabel favours fruitful contact among member states' officers and Chiefs of Staff in a spirit of open and mutual understanding via annual meetings.

Finabel contributes to reinforce interoperability among its member states in the framework of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), the EU, and ad hoc coalition; Finabel neither competes nor duplicates NATO or EU military structures but contributes to these organisations in its unique way. Initially focused on cooperation in armament's programmes, Finabel quickly shifted to the harmonisation of land doctrines. Consequently, before hoping to reach a shared capability approach and common equipment, a shared vision of force-engagement on the terrain should be obtained.

In the current setting, Finabel allows its member states to form Expert Task Groups for situations that require short-term solutions. In addition, Finabel is also a think tank that elaborates on current events concerning the operations of the land forces and provides comments by creating "Food for !ought papers" to address the topics. Finabel studies and Food for !oughts are recommendations freely applied by its member, whose aim is to facilitate interoperability and improve the daily tasks of preparation, training, exercises, and engagement.



Quartier Reine Elisabeth
Rue d'Evere 1
B-1140 BRUSSELS

Tel: +32 441 79 38 – GSM: +32 483 712 193

E-mail: info@finabel.org

You will find our studies at www.finabel.org



<https://www.finabel.org>

@FinabelEAIC



<http://armyinnovation.eu>

@ArmyInnovaEU