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Welcoming Remarks:

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Speakers:

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P R O C E E D I N G S

GENERAL ALLEN: My name's John Allen. I'm the president of the Brookings Institution. And on behalf of the Institution I want to welcome their excellencies, the ambassadors from Sweden and Finland: Ambassador Karin Olofsdotter and Ambassador Mikko Hautala from Finland. And they're here to discuss Finland and Sweden's path to NATO membership and the implications for their two countries as they join the alliance.

Now Russia's brutal and unprovoked attack of Ukraine really has had enormous effect upon the European security architecture, and in general the strategic architecture around the world. To include prompting the Nordic countries of Finland and Sweden to fundamentally reassess their long-held defense doctrine of non-alignment. And indeed just last Wednesday Finland and Sweden officially applied for NATO membership.

Now their application came after weeks of internal debate, as it should be, in their countries, and it was a vigorous debate. And after a significant pivot of public opinion following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, today Finland and Sweden demonstrate the popular support and the parliamentary support for the decision by seeking to join the alliance.

This decision has received some outspoken support from our NATO countries, including the United States. So it should be noted that the process of joining NATO requires the unanimous consensus of all 30 of the current members. By joining NATO countries agree, and in this case Sweden and Finland would agree, to the inherent principle of collective defense that is at the heart of NATO. Which has it called Article V of the NATO Charter or the Washington Treaty, that an attack on one state of the NATO Alliance is an attack on all states of the NATO alliance. And it's worth remembering here today that the first time that Article V actually was instituted was after the attack upon the United States on the 11th of September 2001.

Finland and Sweden have chosen to agree to this form of solidarity, which in and of itself represents a true watershed moment in the history of the NATO Alliance. It's a

great honor to be here for this moment, and it's a great honor for us to give our guests the opportunity to enlighten this audience as to the thinking of both of those countries about their own security and ultimately the collective security of Europe.

Now before the conversation gets underway, I'd like to take a moment to offer some brief introductory remarks on our guests. Ambassador Karin Olofsdotter took up her post as ambassador of Sweden to the United States in 2017. You have seen a lot since you have been here. And prior to assuming her role as the ambassador she served as the director general for trade in the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. And her career in the Foreign Service started in 1994 with her first posting to the Swedish Embassy in Moscow. She's also served as part of the Swedish delegation to NATO and the Swedish EU representation in Brussels, working on European security and defense issues.

Ambassador Mikko Hautala became ambassador of Finland to the United States in September 2020, and that's been an exciting time for you as well, having just joined us. But prior to that he served as the ambassador of Finland to Russia. Ambassador Hautala has also served as a diplomatic advisor to the minister of foreign affairs, as well as the first secretary at the permanent representative of Finland to the EU in Brussels. At the beginning of his career he served as an attaché in the Embassy of Finland in Kiev, Ukraine.

So I'll turn the floor over here in just a moment to Michael O'Hanlon, our senior fellow and director of the Center for Security, Strategy, and Technology, and Constanze Stelzenmüller, our senior fellow and occupant of the Fritz Stern chair on Germany and trans-Atlantic relations.

And we've very much live this afternoon. And for those in our audience who are not with us but coming in, if you'd like to submit questions, please do at events@brookings.edu, or at #NATOMembership. So with that, over to you Constanze, and thank you for joining us, Ms. Ambassador, Mr. Ambassador.

MS. STELZENMÜLLER: Thank you very much John for the kind and complete introduction; saves us a lot of work so we can get directly into the conversation.

We are not going to get into a lengthy discussion of why you're here. At this point I think there are few people on the planet who don't know that Russia invaded Ukraine on February 24, and that has changed the minds of a lot of Europeans about a lot of things. And it seems right now that Finland and Sweden are set to be members number 31 and 32 of NATO, which as far as I, a German, am concerned, is a very good thing and something I have hoped for for a long time, I will say, so this makes me very happy. But on another note, I want to say something that maybe is a little more surprising for Americans because all you ever hear about from Europeans is the narcissism of minor difference, right? It's how we always disagree with each other about everything.

Can I just say that there are few German children who did not grow up either reading Astrid Lindgren, and not just Pippi Longstocking, but Karlsson, whom you referenced, who is one of the great Nordic figures of European children's literature. And also the Moomin Trials of course by Tove Jansson from Finland. And what I'm trying to say here is that we acclimate to each other's cultural sensibilities through these things as well. And so there is more cultural commonality than you might think already there.

I might also mention on a slightly more serious level that you of course have both remember the EU for 30 years, since '91 and '92, and since the Treaty of Lisbon and before that the WEU Treaty. There has been a neutral defense clause, Article 42.7 of the EU Treaty. You cannot know about how serious that is without American background, I grant you, but, you know, we're already committed to Euro security.

But with that what I want to talk about first with both of you is the obstacles that have currently popped up in your way. And the first obstacle of course is a pretty big one, at least it seems like that, is Turkish President Erdoğan saying he would object to a swift entry of both of your countries into NATO. Ambassador Hautala, maybe you'd like to start us off responding to that. How serious do you think this is, and can anything be done to overcome those objections?

Mr. HAUTALA: Thanks. First of all I would say that you mentioned that one

of us is going to member number 31 and one of us is going to be member number 32. I think that's the next debate, 31 or 32.

MS. OLOFSDOTTER: We're both going to be 30 and a half.

MR. HAUTALA: Okay. That's a compromise. But basically Turkey's objection, it does know that we can't proceed with the access and talks until they will lift their veto, that's for sure. So obviously I think we are still in the assessment phase trying to find out how serious the demands and the problems are. Then I think we can assess how serious the situation finally is.

I think nevertheless we take this situation seriously because it's a serious matter and we have said it publicly already that we intend to discuss with the Turks on their demands and ideas and concerns. And I think this vote is going on just right now. So our president was here last week, I think he said also publicly that since Finland is applying for NATO membership it means that obviously we have to take seriously security concerns of all the member states that will become our allies. So we are now doing quite that, and I hope we can find a solution which is sustainable for all sides, or will be soon.

MS. STELZENMÜLLER: That's a highly diplomatic answer. Ambassador, you did say last week in a debate organized by our friends at CEPA that as far as you were concerned Turkish objections to Swedish behavior were all wrong, and of course what Erodoğan is referring to here is not just Swedish but Finnish and in fact American and a lot of European objections against the Turkish offensive in 2019 against the YPG and in Syria, the YPG, who has the Kurdish organization, sister organization of the PKK which was instrumental in helping the U.S. led coalition in Iraq drive our IS.

Which is what also I think, Mike, I would quite like to bring you in here as well after we hear the Swedish ambassador. What can you do to overcome the sort of the particular bilateral Swedish and Turkish consent, which also refer of course to PKK or militants living in Sweden?

MS. OLOFSDOTTER: Well thank you so much. First of all thank you so

much for having us. And just as Mikko said, this is a discussion we are having with the Turkish government right now. My prime minister talked to President Erdoğan Saturday and they agreed to stay in contact and see how this can be resolved.

And I just want to underline that Sweden, of course, is a very strong ally in all the issues that deals with terrorism and, anti-terrorism I should say, not terrorism. And, you know, the European Union has had PKK on its terrorist list since 2002, so we've always been there for that. But just rightly, as you said, we have been operating with some of these organizations in Syria as the United States has done and as many other Europeans have done. So we really hope that we can see eye to eye with the Turkish, with their views and our views, and that's the discussion we are having right now, both when it comes to terrorism because of the weapons, weapon embargo issues and so on.

And I just want to make clear that just as our prime minister did when she was here, we take joining NATO extremely seriously. And we really see ourselves as a partner strengthening the whole alliance, all of its territory. And we are of course, given our location, a great contributor to security in the north. But security in the north, of course strengthens security in the south. So this is not something you can divide when you join an alliance like this.

And as you also know, this was not an easy discussion in our countries. Sweden has been militarily on the line to neutral since 1814 and we changed our mind in three months. And that shows the severity of the situation. So for us it's now that we've taken the decision, we of course wanted to become members as soon as possible because we see what's going in Ukraine and in our region, and we really want to be a contributor to the security of the alliance and as soon as that is possible.

MS. STELZENMÜLLER: Fair enough. But we were chatting earlier a little bit, and maybe, Mike, you'd like to come in. By the way we're dividing this up among ourselves a little bit but I'm already breaking it up. I'm supposed to talk about the larger political ramifications and then Mike will go into the more in-depth security question.

But, Mike, there is an American aspect to this, of course, which is what Erdoğan really wants is the attention of the president of the United States. Am I wrong, and perhaps in conversations about F-35s and F-400s?

MR. O'HANLON: It's a great question, Constanze. I'm a little humble speaking in front of John Allen, who's got such a distinguished career on this issue, as many others, as a coordinator against ISIS several years ago.

You know I'm not going to give advice to Swedish and Finnish friends about, and certainly not suggest that they compromise on their values about individuals they want to protect. But I would say the United States can respect what Turkey has done in regard to the Syrian Civil War, a little more than we sometimes do.

Without necessarily praising President Erdoğan, Turkey has welcomed 4 million refugees from Syria. That problem would have been so much worse without Turkey's role. We can never say that enough. So if I was coaching President Biden on how to handle this conversation, I might suggest that he reiterate that message. Because let's just bear in mind here in the United States we're not as good as the Nordics on refugee resettlement. We've taken in thousands, the Turks took in millions. And so we've all had very tortured strategies towards the Syrian civil war. So even if some aspects of Erdoğan's policy haven't been very good, I would at least acknowledge a debt to the Turkish people for what they've done on a humanitarian level in regard to the refugees.

MS. STELZENMÜLLER: Fair enough. Let me return to you, ambassadors, and talk about the mood in the U.S. Now we've heard Biden say last Thursday, Sweden and Finland have strong democratic institutions, strong militaries, and strong and transparent economies, and a strong and moral sense of what is right.

That, even by the president's standards of Irish enthusiasm, is a ringing endorsement. And it's clear that Mitch McConnell is trying to outdo that with the speed with which he is pushing the GOP to propel this into signing.

But there is as well a perhaps less noticeable undercurrent of skepticism

here both among think tankers and among in certain corners of the GOP that says for a variety of reasons, and you can find this argumentation both on the progressive left in the sort of Quincy Institute sort of middle, and on the right of the GOP, that, you know, the Europeans can really deal with this on their own, we're just acquiring, you know, more burdens and these are burdens that the Europeans should bear.

What's your answer to those Americans, and have you actually gotten questions from this in your many visits on the Hill and as well. Are people coming to you and saying, you know, you shouldn't be doing this, or we shouldn't be paying for it?

MS. OLOFSDOTTER: No. If I may start, I think both of our countries are actually great contributions to NATO. We have shown over the years how we take security seriously. And given where we were during the Cold War, Sweden spent about 4 percent of GDP on defense in the 60s and 70s.

We have an enormous, for being a smaller country, defense industry. We build our own fighter jets which we actually can send to others when, you win many contracts but we also win some. Fighter jets, we build our own submarines, you know, a lot of our weaponry can be seen in the Ukraine right now. We are ramping up our military bases, going back to a conscript Army, going for 2 percent. We have been in every NATO operation since we became Partners for Peace.

So we have really shown, I think, what we contribute with and also our solidarity even if we were not ever a member before. So I think also if you look at the geography, we are the two missing pieces in the jigsaw puzzle of northern security. So I would say to those Americans who are hesitant that actually we will really contribute something, so that of course American presence in Europe is extremely important but maybe you can sleep a little bit better at night because we are there as well.

MS. STELZENMÜLLER: Ambassador Hautala.

MR. HAUTALA: Yeah, I think I could also echo what Karin said. But perhaps in the case of Finland, we have the additional kind of question, which is the border.

The fact that we have around 30 miles of common border with the Russians.

My first response to that is that it's not a military vacuum that we have, it's a heavily defended by capable law enforcers that everyone has. So it's not something that needs to be filled with NATO, it's something that is basically filled with the Finland armed forces already.

Secondly, NATO already has five member states with common border with Russia. So it would bring a quality development to this puzzle. So I think these are the main arguments. But basically most of the questions we get, I think I can speak for both of us, I think we get really positive remarks.

Of course for Finland as well as Sweden, we make the numbers. Last year we actually spent 2.3 percent, we have an extremely strong will to defend one's own country. Actually the Finns have the highest percentage of people who want to defend their own country militarily. It's quite far the biggest, the strongest in Europe. So I think our defense policies have always been based on these kind of thought throughout the 20s and the scenario that you may end up in a war with the sort of future enemy with the capable forces. So that has always been our planning.

And since we were not aligned for a long time, non-alignment didn't mean we sort of didn't pay attention to this. It meant that we have to be ready to do everything totally alone. So that was the basis of military planning in our case. So it means that we are, relatively speaking, well prepared for that.

And then like for example, the decision to buy F-35s from the U.S. last December, I think even in absolute terms it's a big decision. But in relative terms, if you take into account our population, I think it's actually globally one of the biggest deals U.S. has made of those fighters. So it simply tells you that we are investing in our business, we are taking responsibility. So we are not, together with Sweden, a kind of free-rider who would try to benefit from somebody else's resources.

Then I still would ask for a vote of confidence. I think we do bring additional

technological capability. I'm speaking about in Swedish case it's Ericsson, in our case Nokia. If you want to have a totally safe metric solution.

MS. OLOFSDOTTER: A method that saves people.

MR. HAUTALA: Yes. So come to us. And then we have AI, we have quantum, we have all of these things that are quite rare.

MS. STELZENMÜLLER: Ambassador, fair enough. And I have totally sympathy for the plug, both for your defense capabilities, both of you. And it just has to be said, for a relatively small countries, 5.5 million in your case, about 10 in yours, right? You know, to have the defense industries that you have and to have 200,000 reservists, in your case, is astonishing.

MR. HAUTALA: It's 900,000 so.

MS. STELZENMÜLLER: Okay. Well if my country could compete with that, I'd be very happy. And we, too, of course, once we fielded 12 divisions during the Cold War. But that's a very long time ago, sadly.

What I want to ask you is both of you of course have a tradition of total defense which stems from your motherland past. Do you think that's something, there are lessons in there of practice of engaging the business sector and civic society for NATO that you, in other words experience that you could bring to NATO you see?

MR. HAUTALA: I think totally yes, because we know that knowing it's the era of hybrid warfare, I think we are going to face a lot of economical turmoil which has sort of separately, I would say damaged applications.

MS. STELZENMÜLLER: Sure.

MR. HAUTALA: So I think in our case. But I have to say that the total defense course it's been in the making for more than 50 years, it's a long time. It's a 60-years sort of long process. And it actually means that you have to engage not only the military or political leaders, you have to engage business leaders, even leaders of cross-roads institutions. And you have to educate them into that thinking and you have to have

basically a single mindset in those areas. So it doesn't come easy or fast.

I think in our case because we have been totally consistent, we've been doing it throughout the Cold War, after the Cold War, everybody else was basically, like for example you mentioned Germany. Germany was basically selling all of its sort of useless weapons. You know which country came in and bought it at the price for scrap metal? Us.

MS. STELZENMÜLLER: I didn't know that.

MR. HAUTALA: So I mean we've been fairly kind of consistent in that. And that total defense is part of the country.

MS. OLOFSDOTTER: The same with us. This was really a part of the Cold War era. In the phone books at the times you can, you know, read the first page was what you should do in case of war or crisis. And the first one was like fill your bathtub with water. So it's always been in our minds, then with, you know, the happy days of the 90s we kind of lost it a bit but we have now gotten back to the total defense concept.

We just opened a couple weeks ago a new agency which we had in the old days, the Agency for Psychological Defense. And this is both about preparing the general public for an awareness of now cyber and hybrid, and also disinformation campaigns but also connecting civil society, companies, etcetera. The difference today is that I think in Cold War days for instance our grocery food stores were mainly Swedish, now they're international ones. So how do you deal with international companies and providers of these kind of basic things in a crisis mode? And I think that, I mean I don't know but I guess that could be a very interesting discussion to also have within NATO because it's the same companies that we are talking about.

MS. STELZENMÜLLER: Absolutely. And that actually brings me to my last geopolitical question before I hand over to Mike, which is one that is currently preoccupying a lot of people, which is that the current blockade by Russia of the Black Sea and Ukraine's naval ports is creating massive food insecurity globally. But we're seeing an emerging Chinese and Russian narrative that this is a war of the West against the Global South in

which the West is depriving the Global South of food security.

Now Finland and Sweden have long traditions not just of good (audio skip) and diplomacy, but also of development policy. If any two countries are experienced with this and have global networks in Europe, it's you two. What can you bring to the European and the trans-Atlantic alliance debate about how to right this now sort of dangerously skewed perception?

MS. OLOFSDOTTER: Well, Sweden for its part, you know, has been giving 1 percent of GDP in development for many, many, many years. So we are one of the largest contributors in the world actually to this, both in absolute terms but also by (inaudible) of course. So I think what we bring to the table is a kind of trustworthiness that this is something that we have done for a long time, we have done it globally, we have excellent contacts all over the globe.

But I agree with you, this is a scenario we need to change. And I don't think we've really come to the conclusion yet how we will do that. But this is I think a fundamental importance. Maybe one of the, of course ending the war and ending the suffering is the most important, but then this is one of the most important issues we need to tackle. And when we talk about the west, we're 1 billion out of 8 so we're not that many but of course we're an economic force to reckon with and given how we have operated, all of us together on development for so long, we need to change this.

MS. STELZENMÜLLER: But then let me ask you, Ambassador Hautala, finally, before I hand to Mike. Do you have any suggestions on western alliance-based, U.N.-based, whatever works, economic or humanitarian acts of intervention to come to grips with this humanitarian crisis at a time when it appears to be practically impossible for all sorts of security reasons to do anything about the naval blockade? What do we do?

MR. HAUTALA: Well basically it means if you can't do anything about the naval blockade, I think it's going to be a big problem because Ukraine alone is responsible for, if I remember correctly, for 10 percent of global wheat.

MS. STELZENMÜLLER: Yeah.

MR. HAUTALA: So if you take out 10 percent then you add some other sort of logistical problems elsewhere. And you are in trouble already so I think you should be able to fix that because it's not about words or communication, you also need the stuff itself.

By current set, I mean for Nordics we can pass on the message. I think we can be helpful in that. But let's be frank, it doesn't solve the problem. I think we have to have a global focus on this by all the NATO institutions and obviously I think we actually have to get together and have a high-profile discussions on these and like to send a message of peace. It has to be sort of solved at the practical level and the Ukraine naval blockade has to be solved somehow.

MS. STELZENMÜLLER: Well that is a perfect handover bridge to my friend and colleague, Michael O'Hanlon. So what do we do about the Ukrainian naval blockade? That and many other things.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. We will get into a couple of military questions. But I wanted to begin also at a high level of geopolitics. And you both served in Russia in your careers. And I wanted to get your take on how to understand why this war happened. And we're not here fundamentally to discuss that question, and you may want to pass on it, which you certainly have the right to do.

But I guess the way to make my question specific is to ask is this all just Putin's war? Or is there something about Russian strategy, Russian thinking more broadly defined that you could almost see this coming, at least when you look back now with the benefit of hindsight, knowing what tragedy has befallen us in 2022. Can you start to see the roots of it in terms of the broader Russian strategic culture in the times that you were based in Moscow? Or is this really just in one guy's head fundamentally, and one person's huge mistake?

MR. HAUTALA: I think it's both. It's one guy's head but it's also shared by actually much of the elites and it's also shared by I think the majority of the population when

it happened.

My own observation during my years in Moscow was that the historical mission idea, the idea that Russia has to kind of gather the lands and become a center of this newly gathered, as they say, it's kind of ancient Russian lands. I think it's gained a lot of acceptance. It was widely disseminated by the propaganda. I think much of the population actually did buy the story. And I think if you read Putin's article last July, I think it's all very clear. Because if Ukraine is denied of its statehood and right to exist as an independent country, I mean how much more you can actually say? I think it's all there.

So this carry on of historical mission thinking I think it's largely sort of went without us fully realizing the potential. I think we all saw it, we concluded that it's dangerous, it may lead to something. But I think basically almost none of us really took it the full seriousness that this will actually turn to outright war.

But I think there are deeper reasons for that. I think president obviously in the Russian system because he's the sole decision maker almost, I think he has a great responsibility for this. But let's be honest, I mean there's a wide acceptance among the elite, among the population, so I mean this kind of idea. If we would say that we need some lands back from Sweden or vice versa, I mean --

MS. OLOFSDOTTER: Vice versa.

MR. HAUTALA: Yeah, vice versa, so I mean things would be, I mean everybody would simply think that this is totally crazy. But that didn't happen actually in Russia so a lot of population supported that. So I think it's much deeper problem than we perhaps like to think.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. It's a very illuminating answer. Anything to add?

MS. OLOFSDOTTER: No, I agree with you. And of course I served there as a junior diplomat in the mid-90s and that's when we had a totally, I mean the Soviet Union had fallen, privatization was going on, we thought it would be another Russia than it

developed into, sadly so. Because of course it's a formidable country with fantastic people and country. I mean you know all this.

So of course I agree with Mikko that, and maybe it is because we're so close by, but we were given so much intelligence by our American friends and you who are Americans should really be proud of that, how you cooperated with us and all. At the end of the day we didn't, I think it was so close we didn't really want to see that it actually could happen, and then it did.

So I think that really shocked us in a way and that was, you know, what brought us to take this decision so fast. Because we didn't want to believe it in the end I guess. But Russia is to blame for this, no one else.

MR. O'HANLON: And that's so I could ask you both one more follow up question to that which is directly relevant to what's going on now with your countries' application for NATO membership, and Constanze was already talking about it with you, but I want to bring it right to a point.

Why did your countries change their mind on NATO membership? And, you know, I'll just let you put it in your own words, but is it fundamentally about a specific risk you now feel in military terms, in geographic terms, or is it more about the sense of where Russian strategic culture has gone which may even transcend and go beyond Putin, or something else that I can't even put into words.

MS. OLOFSDOTTER: If I may start on that. Because we have had slightly different policies in our country and NATO membership was not on the table in Sweden. That didn't mean that it was out of the question that we would ever apply. But we did everything we could to build our security and cooperation with others without joining a military alliance and, you know, going back to 1814, I won't give you the whole story. But it's really ingrained almost in our DNA on how we look at our own security, building it ourselves and this kind of, you know, middle of the road where we're not a member but cooperating as closely as possible without becoming a member.

And so we have seen of course the buildup in Russia of their military forces. And I remember last year I was a bit worried that the United -- of course I can completely understand the U.S. focus on China, but I was a little bit worried that you were not as focused on European security as maybe we would like because we really saw the buildup of military capabilities in Russia and saw it as a threat.

So you and I together spent a lot of time talking to the administration and members of Congress on what we saw. Because as I said, completely understand the focus on China but we need to focus here as well because it is a dangerous place and we have seen that now.

So I think when you look back it was a gradual process. And maybe we don't want to admit that, but when the attack really came, that really changed it for us. Because we saw the brutality and we saw that this is completely illegal, and it changes European security architecture forever. And that really was what made it happen.

MR. O'HANLON: So in your case, I guess each of your countries, your last big war was against Russia in one form or another. In your case it was more than 200 years ago, in your case this century. And of course we've actually had events at Brookings honoring the 1939-1940 Finnish War, one of the most amazing efforts in history. But then you found a way to make your peace with them, so to speak, or at least to get along throughout the Cold War.

What changed in Finland that led to your reassessment?

MR. HAUTALA: I think, Michael, we had basically three reasons for that, for the decision. One of the reasons was already Putin's demands in December.

MS. OLOFSDOTTER: Yes.

MR. HAUTALA: Because he was clearly trying to define the European security order in a way that would have left us, Sweden and some others, kind of permanently outside NATO. And outside NATO for us, by definition, means that you are within their sphere of influence. So he was clearly, because before that Putin always said

that well, it's your decision to join, we will be against but it's, he sort of accepted that we have a sort of free choice on the matter. Now he was trying to deny that. So that was a kind of first shock.

And we also concluded that if we do not react to this kind of an attempt, it sort of means that we've got to accept it or we can leave it there. And we couldn't leave it there.

Secondly, I think the attack in February was mainly a trigger. It wasn't the only reason or, I think it was a needed trigger because you can't do this without somebody pulling the trigger, but that was the trigger.

Third reason is that while up here in the U.S. people define us that you were neutral, that you've made a kind of a historical decision, you sort of jumped from the neutrality right into the alliance. That's not the case because we've been integrating with NATO for almost 30 years. We decided to buy U.S. fighter jets, F-18s, right after the Cold War in '92. We have been fully enterable with NATO for more than 20 years.

In our foreign policy doctrine, and here's a small difference, between the U.S. and Sweden. We have had since 2004 a formal doctrine saying that if the situation changes, we may apply for NATO membership. We have always kept it as an option and we have always made sure that we are basically as close to NATO as you can possibly be without being a full member.

So for us, instead of being a sort of a giant leap from one status to another, it's actually a final step on a long path towards becoming a member state. This is also something which explains to us that, hey, this is something we've been discussing for the past 30, 20 years and we've always thought that this is possible one day. Then the argument was in our internal debates that if peace doesn't constitute the need of change we have been talking about in our doctrine, then what does?

So I think the conclusion was fairly easy and simple in this situation. But three reasons long term and in the present which made it easy and made us also technically

ready, then the Russian attempt to defy the order in a way that would have left us permanently in the cold, thirdly, the attack as a trigger.

MS. OLOFSDOTTER: And I totally agree with what Mikko said. And one of the fundamentals for us is, you know, every country's sovereign decision on its own security policy. And as you said, it's not going be dictated from Moscow. And that goes for everyone. Everyone has that sovereign right. So that was fundamental.

And then also Swedish security is of course very much tied to Finnish security. So one of the issues that was discussed also, is Sweden, if you think of Finland joining and not Sweden joining, we would be completely alone.

MR. O'HANLON: Yeah.

MS. OLOFSDOTTER: In this kind of case, surrounded by NATO countries but we would probably have to increase our defense spending even more to maybe 3 or 4 percent if we would be completely on our own. So that's also an issue that was discussed, that if Finland goes with a NATO membership, we have to do it as well. Even though it's of course our own sovereign decision. Our security is so closely tied to each other.

MS. STELZENMÜLLER: Sort of like Switzerland.

MR. O'HANLON: Yeah. And it could raise the question, an uncomfortable one for Sweden, you know, not that you are going to have this debate, but do you need nuclear weapons if you're the only neutral country left in the Baltics, Russia's going to start thinking about targeting you. Even 3 or 4 percent, I'm not going to put words in your mouth but I can imagine.

MS. OLOFSDOTTER: I mean we started developing them in the 50s, we just sent the plutonium back to you in 2006. So who knows --

MR. O'HANLON: 2006.

MS. OLOFSDOTTER: That was never an issue. But we actually did start planning on our own nukes in the 50s.

MR. O'HANLON: So I have two more questions for you and then we'll go to

the audience.

One is going to be about your own defense posture. And I realize it's a little speculative, but we really need to have some of this conversation for all due diligence before a ratification vote, and what kind of help you would need from the rest of the membership.

And also then my second question is going to be what help can you provide us, especially for the Baltics, which of course are exposed, which are three of those five countries, Mr. Ambassador, that you already mentioned are bordering Russia; in the case of Lithuania with Kaliningrad, and the other two more directly with the main Russian land mass.

And so I want to get to the Baltics on my last question. But first, if you were to join NATO what kind of help would you need from us in terms of NATO forward military deployments, if any, on your territory; in terms of NATO air cover, whether based in the Nordics or based in more, you know, more southerly Europe, but able to cover your territories is well; in terms of intelligence sharing? Are there one or two areas where you would imagine the greatest help might be needed, and of what magnitude roughly? Do we need to send a division to permanently station in Finland, do we need to have a couple of air wings in Sweden, just some, I realize you can't answer that question definitely, but sketching out the range of plausible debate as you could see it. If I could start with you, please.

MS. OLOFSDOTTER: Well actually that is not something we have discussed yet. Because, you know, as I said, we are quite a forceful nation on our own. And we have been alone --

MR. O'HANLON: Right.

MS. OLOFSDOTTER: -- for a long time. So we, as I have seen in the political Swedish debate, there is no debate on what would be stationed in Sweden, or I don't think anything right now. And that's not how we are going into the alliance either, we're not asking for that.

So I think the most important part is of course operational planning, that's crucial, that when you become a NATO member that's what happens. So that needs to go

very quickly so we know how we can operate together.

And we already have quite deep planning with Finland, but it's not as deep, of course, as it would be within the alliance. So operational planning is key. Command and control of course. I haven't seen that we are, no, there's no discussion on troops or things like that because we are quite capable and we are already, you know, collaborating very closely with our Finnish friends. We will increase the collaboration with our Nordic friends, Norway and Denmark and so on, and also in the Baltics coming to that.

So that has not really been a discussion. And in intelligence sharing, we really hope that we bring, you know, good knowledge about our region, given how our intelligence services operates.

And then we really see a role as a strengthening in the Baltic Sea. As I talked about, we have quite strong Navy, a very strong Navy. We already have submarines, we are building new submarines that are tailor-made just for the Baltic. So that's one. We are also ramping up our Air Force. So I think together in the Nordic region we will have 200 planes or something like that. So we are, you know, forceful. So there's no debate on what can be brought, it's more like how do we contribute actually.

MR. O'HANLON: Very helpful answer. Sir.

MR. HAUTALA: That's most of the same. I am also flying solo here because there's no decision on that. But basically, as I said, we have strong armed forces so we are not taking this decision out of some kind of military desperation that we need to fill the gap. There's no debate at all.

I think a lot of these needs will depend on what the situation looks like down the road. If the Russian reaction stays middle of the road muted as it has been so far, I think we don't have any interest in kind of a demanding divisions here and there and wings here and there. So I mean I think basically we have what we need sufficient for the moment if the current environment stays the same. If things raises, I think we have to have a discussion.

You mentioned the Baltic States and the Baltic area. I think obviously as

allies we will play a role there. But I would also be careful not to sort of start discussing about any kind of regional blocks within NATO. Let the north Europeans take care of the north Europe, and then the south Europeans take care of the south Europe. No, I think that would be wrong because as allies we have to think NATO sectorially, 360 degrees.

So if there's a need in the south then I think we have to be committed, even if our particular problems are perhaps in the north. I think we expect the same for the southern member states of NATO. So I think we have to be careful not to become a kind of regional NATO within NATO. That would be actually weakening the alliance.

So that's why we don't speak lightly about let's take care of the Baltic States or what, something like that. I think everybody has to care of everybody, that's how the alliance stays strong.

MR. O'HANLON: Constanze, you wanted to come in, and then I've got the last question for you before going to the audience.

MS. STELZENMÜLLER: I just thought we should maybe have a final question about the war in Ukraine.

MR. O'HANLON: Okay, good.

MS. STELZENMÜLLER: And maybe that's what you were going to ask but I would love to hear both of our speakers give us their sense about well, what the chances are of the West helping Ukraine not just survive but get back its territory. And then for us to help it reconstruct, revive. And then perhaps put it on a European parth, whatever that takes.

And I would really like to hear that, but I don't want pre-empt your question.

MR. O'HANLON: So we'll give you a second to think about that.

And I will ask about the Baltics in a more narrow military sense, notwithstanding your excellent point, Mr. Ambassador, about how we're all in this together and soon to be at twice the size, assuming ratification, twice the size NATO was at the end of the Cold War.

But I wondered just, you know, those of us who have had the good fortune to visit your countries and the Baltics, understand the geography. You are modest-sized populations but you're pretty big countries. And your terrain is pretty tough and you're pretty tough people and you've proven that through history.

The Baltics are also wonderful, tough people, but they have tiny countries, very good for tanks coming in and out. A lot of open fields, sort of like eastern Ukraine, and at least in many areas, and they are strategically exposed. We all know that and that's been the hardest problem really for NATO since they became members in 2004.

Which means that and, you know, trying to set up here a discussion and hear your answers. Which means that I think solidifying NATO logistics pathway to the Baltics actually is a major potential contribution that Sweden and Finland being incited, not to mention Norway and Denmark and the whole Baltic Sea area now.

But to the extent we can essentially establish a reliable logistic pathway to the Baltics, I think that's an important contribution to a holistic NATO defense. Do you agree, and what kind of steps might operationalize that? Can you give an example or two of where, you know, geographically we might work together to, you know, on an island or some other kind of specific preparation that might be appropriate to solidify NATO's ability to defend the Baltics, assuming membership for your countries?

MR. HAUTALA: So basically the answer is, our answer is simple, we will become part of joint planning and preparations that will allow then the alliance to sort of benefit from all the logistical possibilities that membership actually brings. I think it's already one contribution clearly.

MR. O'HANLON: Excellent.

MS. OLOFSDOTTER: And there has not been any detailed discussion of course because we just handed in our applications.

MR. O'HANLON: Right, right, exactly.

MS. OLOFSDOTTER: But if you look at geography, geography is

everything. And look at the islands we have in the Baltic and what I told you about our submarine capabilities and naval capabilities, and you can envision taking part in air policing or, I mean there are so many things --

MR. O'HANLON: Right.

MS. OLOFSDOTTER: -- that detailed discussion hasn't come about, and that's why I said that operational planning is key. And that's what really needs to start very, very soon.

MR. O'HANLON: Well I'm very happy for the answer though because I've sometimes been a critic of how, as Constanze knows, the NATO enlargement process has happened historically and did not support the idea of offering membership to Ukraine. But one of the reasons is we tend to treat it at a very high level, superficial level before any kind of votes or debates. And I think it's important to have at least the kind of texture you've provided today to understand that first of all you've got strong militaries, and you would also be able to help the alliance protect existing members. I think understanding at least a little bit of that debate is important for a general American audience.

As you know, we have millions of viewers on C-SPAN right now watching us, so this is a good opportunity to bring the message to the country.

Constanze's got the last question, I'm going to give the time back to her to wrap up on that. But first, could I see if there are any questions from the audience. Maybe we'll do a round from the audience and then, Constanze, I'll give it back to you.

So why don't we take, I see three hands. So why don't we take all three together. You can each answer whichever one or two you like. Starting here in the second row, ma'am, please with your questions. And please identify yourself if you could as well.

MS. KELLY: Hello. Okay. My name is Laura Kelly, I cover foreign policy with The Hill. Question for both the ambassadors on Turkey's protest or opposition to your countries joining NATO. Can you talk about some specific areas of cooperation you think you can achieve with Turkey, or any non-starters that the Turks may raise that you just

cannot agree to?

MR. O'HANLON: And then two rows behind, please.

MR. CHARLES: Thank you. I'm Wayne Charles, retired foreign service. Also a question on Turkey. I wonder if you could tell us what you think is Erdoğan's endgame? Considering all the items in play, F-35s, Russian made anti-aircraft system, handling of Kurdish refugees, what do you think he'll be willing to prepare to settle for?

MR. O'HANLON: And then finally we had one hand over here, and we'll finish with that.

MR. KOBER: Stanley Kober. As General Allen mentioned, we were in Afghanistan; Article V, but we lost the war. We left last year. That is not mentioned, and I'm puzzled why you don't seem to be concerned that NATO just lost a war.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. So, madam, over to you for first on any of those.

MS. OLOFSDOTTER: Yes, thank you. So I don't want to speculate on what President Erdoğan's endgame is about, I can only, you know, talk about what's in our discussions that we are having. And that's very much what you of course see in the media, the discussion on terrorism and on arms safes. So those are topics that are covered in the discussions we have with the Turks.

So I have, and I don't want to speculate about an end game on that actually. I just hope we can solve it because we really want to be members of NATO.

MR. HAUTALA: Right, right.

MS. OLOFSDOTTER: And we think we are a contribution, as we've just talked about.

MR. O'HANLON: Any other comments, including on the Afghanistan question?

MS. OLOFSDOTTER: Oh, right, right, right. Well of course, yes, we all lost in Afghanistan and we were there as well and we also had to leave head over heels. So

that's of course something that we all have to contemplate what went wrong, what could have been done differently. But when we just look at our own national security and the security for the Swedish population, we still think that joining NATO is the alternative to give ourselves, and hopefully our neighbors, and the alliance as much security as possible. So that's the reasoning behind that. But then I think we all need to do hard thinking about Afghanistan of course.

MR. O'HANLON: Mr. Ambassador.

MR. HAUTALA: Thanks. Obviously on Erdoğan's endgame I don't have a crystal ball, I guess nobody has how it's going to play out. I think right now we have to focus on what are we actually taking about. I think as Karin said, there are certain items, including some political issues, terrorism issues, sales issues. I would simply say that I'm sure there are things that could be done. But then there things also which cannot be done.

I think anything that would somehow jeopardize or put in question our role as a rule of war country, or would question our freedom of speech in our country, freedom of political opinion, I think that would be impossible. Because Finland is Finland and it's going to stay Finland no matter what. So I think there are things that can be done, and then there are no-go areas. But we don't know where we actually are right now.

MS. OLOFSDOTTER: I completely agree with that comment.

MR. HAUTALA: Then on the sort of winning the war. I think when we look at NATO, I think Afghanistan was a loss joint undertaking. I think it was, we all understand why it became so difficult, why it became so long-standing. I think one has not to forget that NATO, to be very honest, it's been the most successful alliance in history. It basically made sure that the Cold War ended without one shot being actually, without a single shot being done in Europe. So I think it's, I think the deterrence of NATO and Article V is really strong. I don't have any doubts that all the countries outside NATO they do respect that. And that's because the alliance has been so successful. So I think Afghanistan doesn't deny the relevance of NATO for us in any way.

MR. O'HANLON: And let me sneak in one final question for myself before then handing to Constanze to wrap up on the Ukraine conflict.

And my question actually does focus on the endgame. I think your interest is the next few months maybe, I'll let you speak for yourself, but I just wanted to offer you the chance to comment on behalf of yourselves or your governments about how you think of the endgame in this conflict.

Secretary Austin of course provoked an interesting debate at the Pentagon when he came back from Kyiv where he and Secretary Blinken visited at the end of April. And Austin came back, and he said our objective is to weaken Russia so they can't do this again. And of course then that led to a big debate about whether our permanent long-term goal is to weaken Russian, really indefinitely, or is this a means to an end. And what is the long-term goal for European security once this war is finally over?

So I just wanted to ask if there's a way you think about an answer to this debate that Secretary Austin sort of provoked about the long-term objective in regard to Russia.

Madam, starting with you, please.

MS. OLOFSDOTTER: I think what's really important is that we safeguard European security and the right of every one of us to choose our own security. And that's nothing for Russia to have any views about. This expansion of us to NATO is not confrontational to Russia but we have seen what they have done. So it's safeguarding our own security. We are not going to be more threatening to Russia than we've ever been before because we have not been a threat to Russia. Maybe we were 400 years ago, many times, but that was then, and this is now. I think that's extremely important.

And also we must make sure to do everything we can that Russia does not do this again. And that's maybe what Secretary Austin was talking about. The Swedish politicians have been talking about, you know, being in it for the long haul, making sure that, you know, Russia doesn't get the possibility to do that again. And then there's the question

of how do we do that then? But this is something we really need to look at, you know, going forward.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. Sir.

MR. HAUTALA: I would say to weaken Russia is one way to put it. I would rather say that recourse is also dangerous because there are then all kinds of opportunities, kind of difficult scenarios open up. So historically for Finland, strong Russia has been a problem, but recourse has also been a problem so it's a kind of a, it's basically what kind of political software it has, that's the issue.

So I think the optimum outcome of all this, and I don't have the faintest idea how and when it's going to end. I think it's all kind of a surprise wrapped in mystery. So I think nobody can see that. But I think down the road before a real sustainable European security can be rebuilt, what we need is a Russia whose population, at least majority of it, sees that this kind of policies of land acquisitions and at war, that this has to stop. This doesn't bring a successful future for the country nor its citizens. I think if this lesson is not learned, I think the problem will, I'm sorry to say, will keep on repeating itself.

I don't know how to make them sort of unlearn that but frankly this has to be the goal. And we are not looking for a weak Russia, a kind of unstable Russia. We would rather see economically prosperous, politically stable, certainly freer Russia. That would simply deny these kinds of policies from itself. I think that was the order we were all striving at 30 years ago but we didn't succeed.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you. Constanze.

MS. STELZENMÜLLER: Well these are incredibly difficult questions and you've answered then with great grace. But for the moment we've got a war on. And it seems to me that the Ukrainians are defending themselves, with some help from us, in a way that ought to stir the heartstrings of Nordic peoples, right? If ever anybody was sort of enacting total defense in a country with all of civil society jumping in and defending themselves, including women, it's the Ukrainians.

How do we help save Ukraine from Russia's invasion?

MR. HAUTALA: I think we are doing it already. I think the question is that we simply have to keep on doing that for quite some time because as I said, I don't see how it's going to end, or at least I don't know when. So I think it's a matter of stamina, staying power, and there's no other way.

MS. STELZENMÜLLER: Which is of course also a Nordic specialty.

MR. HAUTALA: Yeah, it is. But I have to say that I'm not surprised at all that Ukraine is fighting so bravely because they have absolutely everything to lose. There's no place they can go if they fail. So it's understandable.

MS. OLOFSDOTTER: I think one important aspect of this because as you said, Mikko, we don't know when this will end and we like to help, of course, the Ukrainians in any way we can. But then our populations must also be prepared for that it will cost us. And I think that's an important task of our politicians, to make sure that the population understands why is maybe petrol or gasoline more expensive, what is this doing to us, how does that, you know, comply with our own defense, how much can we send or give away to the Ukrainians without hurting our own security. There's so many layers to this.

But it's really important that we keep on explaining to the general public why we are doing this and why we will have to be at it for a long time. Because, you know, things change, there are elections, there are new crisis in the world and it might not be forgotten in any way but that we all have to be prepared to help. And it will cost, even for us, even though it's nothing in comparison to the price that the Ukrainians are paying. But the only way to help them is if we pay as well, and we must be doing that.

MS. STELZENMÜLLER: Absolutely. I think those are great words to end this event on.

I think I can speak for both of us when I say thank you so much for spending an hour with us and with our audience both here in the room and online. I think this has been a terrific conversation.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you both.

MS. OLOFSDOTTER: Thank you.

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