The Ambassador Series: Virtual Event with Swedish Ambassador Karin Olofsdotter

TRANSCRIPT

Discussion

- Ambassador Karin Olofsdotter, Ambassador of Sweden to the United States
- Michael Doran, Senior Fellow and Director, Center for Peace and Security in the Middle East, Hudson Institute

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A video of the event is available: https://www.hudson.org/events/2121-virtual-event-the-ambassadors-series-a-conversation-with-swedish-ambassador-karin-olofsdotter62022

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Michael Doran:

Hello. Good afternoon. I'm Mike Doran from the Hudson Institute, and I'm joined today by the best ambassador in Washington, DC, Karin Olofsdotter, the Ambassador of Sweden. Hello, thanks for joining us.

Ambassador Karin Olofsdotter:

Hello. Thank you so much for having me.

Michael Doran:

And you're here to discuss with us primarily the Swedish application to join NATO, but also everything that's going on in the world.

Ambassador Karin Olofsdotter:

That would be great.

Michael Doran:

So let me start, as I like to do, with a completely baseless stereotype...

Ambassador Karin Olofsdotter:

Okay, shoot.

Michael Doran:

...which I have in my head. I've been to Sweden at least once, so I'm not completely ignorant, but I had a vision of the Swedes.

Ambassador Karin Olofsdotter:

Of the blondes, which I am not.

Michael Doran:

I had another vision of the Swedes, in addition to the blondes from the James Bond movies. I had a vision of the Swedes as bunny huggers, just a country for whom military neutrality was in its DNA. And this is clearly not true now. I think we can see that so could you just help me? Explain to me what happened.
Ambassador Karin Olofsson:  

Yeah. No, well up till now, military neutrality or military non-alliance has basically been in our DNA, because Sweden is a great warrior nation. Up till 1809, we were basically in every war you could possibly perceive. We have fought the Russians, I think, not more than anyone else, but a lot. So I actually calculated, this is just for curiosity, but between basically the year 1000 and 1809, we were in 60 wars and that's not counting the Viking raids, I guess. But we have always been a huge warrior nation. We were a big power in Europe. In 1809, we lost Finland to Russia. We got Norway in return a little bit later. And since then, our territory has shrunk. But in those days we, long story, but we had to get a new king, a new royal family, because it was perceived that the former one was a little bit too much against Napoleon.

Ambassador Karin Olofsson:  

So they got another one who they thought would be pro-Napoleon. That didn't turn out to be the case in the end. But the crown prince imported a French marshal. He wanted to play a role as a peace negotiator in Europe. And also our coffers were empty because we had been in all these wars and we had lost territory, as I said. So he decided that Sweden should be military non-aligned and neutral because he wanted to play a role as a peace negotiator. So that has followed us then through history. And as many countries in the 19th century, we were very poor. One-fourth of our population or one-third even left for America.

Michael Doran:  

That's how we got all these Swedes in Minnesota.

Ambassador Karin Olofsson:  

Yes, exactly, exactly, exactly. But what happened was, fast forward to the beginning of the Cold War. Actually Sweden suggested to Denmark and Norway that we should form a defense union, but then Denmark and Norway realized that when NATO was formed, that was where they wanted to belong. Our security has always been tied to Finland, given our history. Finland was part of Sweden for 700 years. And as I said, we lost it in 1809.

Michael Doran:  

This is because Russia is the major strategic threat, and Finland is the...?

Ambassador Karin Olofsson:  

Yes. And also Finland was part of our territory for 700 years. So when Finland had to have this friendship pact with the Soviet Union, we realized that we couldn't join NATO, because then we would leave Finland alone. The risk of an attack of the Soviet Union on Finland was considered so high that this would be bad for our neighborhood, to put it very simply. So we decided to
stay outside of NATO at the time. We even started producing our own nuclear weapons in the 50s. We just sent the plutonium back to you guys in 2006, I believe it was.

Ambassador Karin Olofsdotter:

But anyway, so we had to take care of our own security. So in the 60s, 70s, and part of the 80s, we were spending 3% to 4% of GDP on our own defense. To make our own defense believable and our military non-alliance and neutrality believable, also because we are great engineers, we have a lot of engineering companies, we developed a very strong defense industry. So we actually build our own fighter jets. We build our own submarines. We have had, don't have it anymore, a huge, ship-building capacity. We had a big conscript army. We really took care of our own security, and as I said, 3% to 4% of GDP.

Ambassador Karin Olofsdotter:

Then the Soviet Union fell. We all believed in a new day, and like many in Europe, dismantled our defense or cut back on it, late 90s realized that we had cut back a little bit too much, so we were down to 1% of GDP. Still producing our own fighter jets and our own submarines and all that, and a lot of other weapon systems as well. So then slowly, gradually, and then you come to 2008 with the attack on Georgia and then Crimea in 2014 and then we realized Russia was not what we thought it would be.

Ambassador Karin Olofsdotter:

So then we increased our defense spending even more so we're up to 1.3, 1.4. Between 2014 and 2025, we did an increase of 80% of our defense spending. And we've just decided to go for 2%, which is massive. So we really take our security extremely seriously. And joining NATO, we know we are a great contribution to NATO because of our very advanced military forces, our super modern equipment. And we have been in every NATO operation since the last 30 years, so we are a strong contribution.

Michael Doran:

So in my ignorance, I had this notion of Swedish neutrality as the product of an attitude. But what you're saying to me is there was actually a strategic brain all along that was weighing the balance of forces and deciding that this was strategically the best move for Sweden.

Ambassador Karin Olofsdotter:

Yes, for the region.
Michael Doran:

For the region.

Ambassador Karin Olofsdotter:

For ourselves, first of all, of course, but for the region. And I guess security policy in the end always comes down to yourself or your own nation because that's what the politicians are responsible for. So in the mid-90s, we joined the European Union, so then we dropped neutrality because we didn't feel that you could have a neutral foreign policy and be part of a foreign policy union.

Michael Doran:

You joined the EU in '95?

Ambassador Karin Olofsdotter:

In '95, yeah. So since then we've been military non-aligned, but that doesn't mean that we don't cooperate militarily with a lot of countries. As I said, we've been in every NATO operation since we became Partners for Peace, that program that NATO has, and now we're an enhanced partner to NATO. We have very deep defense planning and cooperation with Finland, with NATO, as I said, an enhanced partner. We are a very close partner to the United States. And our fighter jets, for instance, the Gripen, 50% of the content is American. So we do a lot of development, technological development, together with you guys.

Michael Doran:

I did not know that.

Ambassador Karin Olofsdotter:

And we just actually saw who builds, forget about the car, but Saab actually split in the 80s to two branches, one for the military arm and one was the car arm.

Michael Doran:

Doesn't it make jet engines? Am I wrong about that or no?

Ambassador Karin Olofsdotter:

I don't know about the engines, but they do make airplanes.
Michael Doran:

Yeah.

Ambassador Karin Olofsson:

And right now we have a new factory out in Indiana, where we produce trainer fighter jets for the U.S. Air Force that Saab is doing.

Michael Doran:

I did not know that.

Ambassador Karin Olofsson:

And based on the Gripen model.

Michael Doran:

So I can't leave this neutrality question behind, though. I admit it's from ignorance, but still, this decision to apply for membership in NATO, there must have been some elements of the Swedish society that are uncomfortable with it.

Ambassador Karin Olofsson:

Sure.

Michael Doran:

And it can't be something that happened just because of the Russian invasion. There must have been some kind of shift. Could you discuss that a bit?

Ambassador Karin Olofsson:

Yeah. I mean we have eight political parties in Sweden, and some of them have been wanting us to join NATO for a long time. Others have not. And the biggest political party, the Social Democrats, they have not wanted to join NATO, but everyone has been in unity that we should cooperate with others as closely as possible. And also when we joined the European Union and later on when that union developed, it has kind of a solidarity clause. And so every government for the last 10 to 15 years have reiterated that if there is an attack or a crisis in a Nordic country, because everyone is not a member of the European Union, a Nordic country or an EU member, we will come to that country's rescue. So it's kind of been a one-sided solidarity expression.
Michael Doran:

Right.

Ambassador Karin Olofsdotter:

But of course, that didn't mean that we could count on anyone else because, as we all know, and now Article 5 is sacred for the members of the alliance. And so gradually we have increased cooperation with others. And then when we saw what happened in February, and we also saw earlier, of course, the buildup around...

Michael Doran:


Ambassador Karin Olofsdotter:

Yeah. And that, and also Russia built up around Ukraine, starting from late fall. Of course, that made us very worried. And then when the massive attack came in February, I think we realized that this was a brutality and a use of force that we had not expected coming out of the Russians.

Ambassador Karin Olofsdotter:

So given the debate that changed in Finland, followed on a strong debate in Sweden, and our security is so linked together, as I told you about all these thousands of years. So that really made the debate very strong in Sweden. In general, support for joining NATO has been around 38%, 40% among the general population, but then it actually has gone up. And I think the support to join NATO is very high if Finland joins. If Finland wouldn't join, the support is lower.

Michael Doran:

Ah.

Ambassador Karin Olofsdotter:

So our security is really tied together.

Michael Doran:

Interesting.
Ambassador Karin Olofsdotter:

And if you look at the map, we are the missing pieces of the jigsaw puzzle for NATO operational planning. And so with us both joining, you get a strategic depth.

Michael Doran:

Right.

Ambassador Karin Olofsdotter:

That's very important for all of NATO.

Michael Doran:

I wasn't aware of how linked Sweden and Finland are. I guess I've also been to Finland. I guess because the languages are so different, I didn't really think of it as a unit in that way. You kind of answered a question I have, but I'm sure you have more to say on it. We have a lot of people in America today on the left and on the right who are arguing for a more restraintist foreign policy, America First. And so the first question that comes to their mind when we talk about expanding the alliance is you're expanding Americans' commitments to other countries. Aren't we just endangering ourselves? Aren't we embroiling ourselves in other people's conflicts we don't need to be embroiled in? Aren't we taking on more free riders? Aren't we provoking the Russians and so on? So if we had someone who thought like that here and they were to put those questions to you, what's in it for America, what would you say?

Ambassador Karin Olofsdotter:

Yeah. I would say a lot is in it for America because you have already promised as an alliance, and that's not just the United States, to come to the rescue of Norway and the Baltic republics and Northern Germany and Poland. And I mean, that's a commitment that you all have done as NATO members.

Michael Doran:

Right.

Ambassador Karin Olofsdotter:

If you then get Finland and Sweden as well. And if you look at the map, Sweden is a huge territory. We're actually the size of California.
Michael Doran:

Right.

Ambassador Karin Olofsson:

With 10 million people, 400,000 moose. They're also great.

Michael Doran:

You have California without the homeless.

Ambassador Karin Olofsson:

Yeah, exactly. Yes, yes. No, but we bring, as I said, strategic depth. We bring these actually great military capabilities and very modern armed forces that are already totally interoperable. I think our accession talks, when they happen at NATO, we're scheduled to be half...

Michael Doran:

Totally interoperable. I'm sorry. I'm sorry to interrupt you. I had not thought of that, but since you're a partner nation, and you've been...

Ambassador Karin Olofsson:

Yes. Our defense industry is totally interoperable because otherwise they wouldn't have a market.

Michael Doran:

Right.

Ambassador Karin Olofsson:

So everything we do is NATO standard.

Michael Doran:

Right.

Ambassador Karin Olofsson:

Otherwise, we wouldn't be able to sell it and also not cooperate with others because that's
what we do. So we actually...

Michael Doran:

I'm sorry I interrupted you.

Ambassador Karin Olofsdotter:

No, no, no, no. So we actually, and I really want to tell that to those Americans who are hesitant, we bring additional forces and additional strength to NATO. I think you Americans can sleep a little bit better at night because if you really look at the map, you see that we fill in a hole that has been missing.

Michael Doran:

Right.

Ambassador Karin Olofsdotter:

So when we do operational planning for the whole of this region, it contributes to the security of all of the alliance, of course, because the way we operate and how we cooperate in the north will of course strengthen it. So that's good.

Michael Doran:

So it must actually make Mr. Putin very nervous, very uncomfortable.

Ambassador Karin Olofsdotter:

Yes. Then again, we haven't attacked anyone since the 18th century. And also I think that's important to say. Of course, we realize that we are joining an alliance that is about the defense. It's not an alliance that's kind of provoking wars with others. It's a defense union, and we are really ready to be part of the defense of all of NATO, of course.

Michael Doran:

So Mark Twain supposedly said that God created war to teach Americans geography.

Ambassador Karin Olofsdotter:

Okay. That's maybe a bit, how do you say, inward looking.
Michael Doran:

But it's also true. And so I learned a little geography since the war in Ukraine began. And I discovered this island, you probably are familiar with it, Gotsland? Am I...

Ambassador Karin Olofsdotter:

Gotland.

Michael Doran:

Gotland?

Ambassador Karin Olofsdotter:

Yeah.

Michael Doran:

All of a sudden I keep reading about Gotland and the strategic importance of it. I didn't know it existed until now. Why does this island matter? Why are the Russians threatening it? What's the...?

Ambassador Karin Olofsdotter:

No. The Russians aren't really threatening it, but, of course, it has a very strategic location in the Baltic because it's a big island. I don't actually know what to compare it with in size in the United States, but it's a big island basically in the lower Southern part of the Baltic. So it has a strategic location because you can go in through the strait between Sweden and Denmark and then you go up and then you have all the NATO allies and then you have Kaliningrad, which is Russian, and then you have the Port of St. Petersburg and so on. So there's a lot of military traffic here and a lot of trade. It's always been about trade. And this was a huge Viking hold actually originally and for the [inaudible foreign language]. So it's always been a strategic location. So if you have hold of Gotland, you actually have a lot of access and room to maneuver and decide about the Baltic Sea, but now it's ours.

Michael Doran:

But this would've always been the case.

Ambassador Karin Olofsdotter:

Yes. It's always been the case.
Michael Doran:

How come it's suddenly in the news? What's the...?

Ambassador Karin Olofsdotter:

I think it is because we are talking about Baltic security again, and we are talking about this region. But it's been like that for 1000 years.

Michael Doran:

It's just opposite Kaliningrad. Is that...?

Ambassador Karin Olofsdotter:

Yes, and the Baltic republics.

Michael Doran:

Yeah.

Ambassador Karin Olofsdotter:

So, I mean, this has always, through history, been a very strategic place.

Michael Doran:

So there are no Russian designs on it? Nothing?

Ambassador Karin Olofsdotter:

I haven't heard that, but, of course, we are reinforcing it militarily right now to be on the safe side. So we put a lot of effort now on reinforcing Gotland militarily.

Michael Doran:

Okay. So the other thing I learned from the war in Ukraine is that there's this place called the Black Sea and just underneath it is Turkey.

Ambassador Karin Olofsdotter:

Yes.
Michael Doran:

Yeah. I had not been aware of this prior to that. And now I discovered it.

Ambassador Karin Olofsson:

What grade did you have in geography?

Michael Doran:

Anyway, I'm a very quick study. Right?

Ambassador Karin Olofsson:

Yeah. Yeah.

Michael Doran:

I also learned that the Turks have some reservations about Swedish and Finnish accession to NATO. Can you tell us where the discussions are now?

Ambassador Karin Olofsson:

Yes. Well, of course, we had gotten assurances from Turkey earlier that they were looking upon our membership favorably. And we do think that the Turks think it's a good thing that we would join, but they have concerns related to their security with us joining. And, of course, for us, Turkish security is very important. We are joining an alliance where all the member states are very important so, of course, we take their concerns seriously. And we are looking into how to address some of them. So, for instance, as we speak, we are now getting new terrorism legislation or anti-terrorism legislation, maybe one should say. I mean, we've always been a strong fighter against terrorism but fixing a few things that were missing. For instance, now it will be forbidden or illegal in Sweden to be a member of a terrorist organization. That will be a crime in itself.

Ambassador Karin Olofsson:

Then we are also looking at weapons export. We have very strict legislation, as most countries do, but now when we join, hopefully join an alliance, we will have to look at all members equally when it comes to arms export. So that's something as well. We are also looking into some of the organizations in Northern Syria, how we will be in official contacts with them. Those are also organizations that the United States and all of us are closely working with because they are fighting DAESH, which is very important.
Michael Doran:

I'll give you my view. You didn't ask for it, but I'll give you my view on the Turkish policy. I don't want to minimize the concerns that they say that they have about Sweden and Finland, but there's a Turkish saying that I yell loudly at my daughter so that my daughter-in-law will get the point.

Ambassador Karin Olofsson:

Okay. I understand what you mean.

Michael Doran:

Yeah. They're poking their finger at Sweden and Finland because they can't poke it comfortably at the Americans, but the real agenda is with us.

Ambassador Karin Olofsson:

Yeah. Maybe it's like that, but now it's about us. So what we try to do is, given our legislation and how we see the world, trying to do whatever we can within the limits we have, of course, address the concerns of Turkey so that they understand that we are really becoming a member for all of the alliance. And we recognize Turkey's armed forces and their strength and they're part of the alliance and so on.

Michael Doran:

I see the two of you...

Ambassador Karin Olofsson:

We're really trying to address this. And then we will see if there are, as you said, the sister or the daughter-in-law in that game or not, but we can only do our thing.

Michael Doran:

Right, right. If I read you correctly, it sounds like the conversations with the Turks are going productively.

Ambassador Karin Olofsson:

We hope so. We are in contact with them. I can't go into the details of the conversations.
Michael Doran:

You can tell secrets here. We don't reveal any...

Ambassador Karin Olofsson:

Yeah, exactly. No, but I really hope that we will come to a good agreement because I do think, as I said, we are a great contribution to the alliance and us joining strengthens the whole piece of it and also Turkey. So we really hope that we can come to an agreement as soon as possible, because we are, of course, worried about our security situation, given what we have seen that the Russians are doing in the Ukraine.

Michael Doran:

Right.

Ambassador Karin Olofsson:

There's always a threat level in the Baltic and always been tensions. But, of course, we feel that the Russians are unpredictable and dangerous. So we really want to be members as soon as it's physically possible.

Michael Doran:

Let me ask you about that. If I'm not mistaken, you know Russian. Is that right?

Ambassador Karin Olofsson:

Yes.

Michael Doran:

Yeah? I was surprised at how many Europeans were surprised by... I was in Hungary on pretty much the day, February 24th.

Ambassador Karin Olofsson:

You know I've served as Ambassador to Hungary as well.

Michael Doran:

I did not know that.
Ambassador Karin Olofsson:

Yes, yes.

Michael Doran:

Oh, forgive me. So they were telling us, they're not going in. Putin's going to cut a deal. This is on February 24th or 23rd. And I thought this is crazy. I just think it hasn't happened very often in history that you've had an army buildup that big that didn't get used. I mean, you get saber rattling, but not a buildup like that. But a lot of Europeans were taken by surprise.

Ambassador Karin Olofsson:

Yeah. And there, I must really say how grateful we are to the United States for sharing intelligence in a way that we maybe haven't seen before. That has been absolutely great. And I think we saw, just as you did, we saw the buildup. We worried about that, but we didn't ourselves maybe see the intent, which you saw. This is just me speculating now, but when you live somewhere, you don't want the worst to happen. It kind of maybe becomes that you don't want to see it because the truth is so horrible.

Michael Doran:

Right.

Ambassador Karin Olofsson:

So I don't know if that was the case, but your intelligence proved absolutely right. And I think this has also been very great for transatlantic relations. And we see that the administration is doing that on other areas as well now so that's extremely helpful.

Michael Doran:

You realize we're going to put a quote on the website now that the Ambassador of Sweden says that Mike Doran's intelligence was great for the transatlantic relations.

Ambassador Karin Olofsson:

Exactly. No, no, but I think the way your administration really informed us was great.

Michael Doran:

It is the great advantage that we have. We're terrible at human intelligence, but we have this great electronic eye that we see...
Ambassador Karin Olofsdotter:

I don't know how they got the intelligence, but if it was human or machine, I don't know, but it was good intelligence.

Michael Doran:

I could tell you this. It was machine, but the very best intelligence comes when the human and the machine come together.

Ambassador Karin Olofsdotter:

Yeah.

Michael Doran:

When the bad guy's mistress puts a gizmo under his pillow, that's where the really good stuff comes from.

Ambassador Karin Olofsdotter:

Maybe that's what happened. Who knows?

Michael Doran:

It could be. Yeah. Maybe there's a gizmo under Putin's pillow.

Ambassador Karin Olofsdotter:

If you know, Sweden, you know that when we do something, we kind of do it seriously. We're a country of engineers.

Michael Doran:

Right.

Ambassador Karin Olofsdotter:

That's who we are. And we will be a great member of NATO. We will do everything we can to keep an alliance strong, and given our military capabilities and our experience, we are a great contribution. So I hope those of you out there who are hesitant about our military forces and what we are, you can put that unrest aside.
Michael Doran:

Okay. That's great.

Ambassador Karin Olofsdotter:

And sleep better, as I said.

Michael Doran:

Do you have a moment for a question or two?

Ambassador Karin Olofsdotter:

Sure.

Michael Doran:

Okay. So let's turn it over to the audience. And there's Matt.

Matt Hunter:

Well, thank you for being here, Ambassador. And it is, I think, very exciting that we're talking about NATO expansion for the first time in 20 years, in just about 20 years. There was a great interview this morning in the Wall Street Journal with the Finnish president, whose name I'm not going to try...

Ambassador Karin Olofsdotter:

Niinistö.

Matt Hunter:

Thank you for filling that in because I would've butchered it, where he went into some detail about Finnish military cooperation with the alliance and with the United States. You've touched on some of it. I wonder if you might talk some more about it, just for comparison. The Finnish president even made the point that if you actually include reservists, Finland, a country of 5 million, has more military manpower than the Germans, who have 80 million people.

Ambassador Karin Olofsdotter:

Yeah.
Matt Hunter:

So I wonder if you might talk a little more specifically about Sweden.

Ambassador Karin Olofsdotter:

Yeah, well, Finland has never given up its conscript army. We did for a while, but we’re back at it. We’re not at the numbers we used to be. And I don’t think we will either, because now it’s more about technology for our part.

Ambassador Karin Olofsdotter:

So within the 2% that we are now going to spend and also the decisions we’ve already taken, we are building five new regiment or military bases. We are also procuring more fighter jets, as I said. So I think we will be up to 90. So together Norway, Finland, and Sweden, you will have 200 fighter jets in both American and Swedish for that region. We have commissioned new submarines. We already have two, but we are commissioning more. And then those are, how do you say, tailor made for the Baltic, and we build them ourselves, as I said. A couple of years ago, we bought a Patriot missile defense system. And given that we are now on a shopping spree, as we say, we are likely to procure more of those.

Ambassador Karin Olofsdotter:

So both spending and ramping up our capabilities, but also, of course, looking into how do we build up more manpower? So it’s a combination of these two things. But given our territory, I mean, Finnish forces are very much focused on army and air force. They have navy as well. But given our situation, we have to focus on all three, given our long coastline. So I think we are a good combination.

Seated Guest:

Four subs.

Michael Doran:

Do you think...?

Ambassador Karin Olofsdotter:

Yeah, we will have four subs.
Seated Guest:

So we have [inaudible].

Ambassador Karin Olofsdotter:

I thought we had only two.

Seated Guest:

[inaudible].

Ambassador Karin Olofsdotter:

All right. Okay. Okay. Sorry. So we actually have four submarines. We will have even more submarines.

Michael Doran:

Do you think that if Sweden had not applied for NATO membership, Finland would've applied alone? Was it a requirement of Finland that Sweden go along with it?

Ambassador Karin Olofsdotter:

Well, the President of Finland has been very clear that this is something we're doing together. And also, if you again look at the map, the strategic depth you get is... If Sweden would've been a military not aligned in the middle there, it would, of course, make it more difficult.

Michael Doran:

Right.

Ambassador Karin Olofsdotter:

And the debate in Sweden has been that if we wouldn't have gone for this, we would have had to go up to 3% or 4% of GDP again on defense pending, because then we would be completely alone.

Michael Doran:

When is the last time that all of the Nordic countries were in a military alliance?
Ambassador Karin Olofsdotter:

Oh, we've never been. When there's a...

Seated Guest:

[inaudible]

Ambassador Karin Olofsdotter:

Yeah, 14th century.

Seated Guest:

[inaudible]

Ambassador Karin Olofsdotter:

Yeah. Union of Kalmar in the 14th century. And then over history, Sweden has had Finland and Norway, Denmark has had Norway, Russia has had Finland, we had Norway. It's all been a mix. Sweden has, though, never had Denmark, but Denmark has had the Southern part of Sweden, where I come from.

Michael Doran:

So now with this, is Sweden taking Denmark or Denmark's taking Sweden?

Ambassador Karin Olofsdotter:

Exactly. We're waiting for that battle. No, we're extremely good friends. We've always had great Nordic cooperation. And we have had a passport union and a common labor market since the 50s, long before the European Union. So we are totally integrated. But now when we are hopefully all part of the same defense union, the corporation will be even stronger.

Michael Doran:

Yeah. That's very interesting. A very interesting thought. Do we have any other questions? Ann Marie?
Ann Marie Hauser:

I just have a quick question about the public mood and sentiment. I mean, did you just see that shift remarkably on February 24th? Because you said you had eight political parties, and usually these are hard decisions to make, as we see in Germany and France.

Ambassador Karin Olofsson:

Some of the political parties, as I said, had had an agenda to join NATO for a long time. For instance, the liberal party of Sweden just has a new party leader, and he's quite fun. He has these posters around the country with an old ugly tie, where he says I've been a proponent of NATO membership since this tie was modern. So that's one. The Sweden Democrats, they have been against joining, but they changed their mind, saying that if Finland joins, then Sweden should also join. And the moderate party and the conservative party have also had an agenda to join NATO for a long time. So it's been various views among the parties. So there are two parties still who are not in favor of joining, and that's the left party and the green party. But when you look at the representation in parliament, it's a small majority. I think, is it 88% of the parliamentarians who are for joining NATO? So it's very strong support.

Michael Doran:

You know, the alliance is a Catholic wedding. You can't get divorced. Well, you can divorce, but it can't divorce you. But my point is you're signing on for a lot more than just balancing Russia at this moment. How do you see Sweden in the larger context of Western defense? In particular, what I'm thinking about is China. Do you think that the United States and Sweden are on the same page with regard to China, for example?

Ambassador Karin Olofsson:

More or less, yes. And we are also a member of the European Union and have been so since 1995. So when it comes to our economy, we are totally integrated within the European Union, but we are also a huge trading partner. So for instance, Sweden is actually the 15th largest investor in the United States. And when it comes to population in the world, we're like number 90. And we have companies like Ericsson, ABB, AstraZeneca, a lot of these huge multinational companies on the forefront of research and technology. And for instance, Ericsson, of course, is critical to 5G and future technology and communication and all that. We all are trading with China, United States, Europe, Sweden, but of course, over the last years have become much more aware of what the backsides of this can be. So just like you, we have a strong investment screening strategy in Sweden.
**Ambassador Karin Olofsdotter:**

When the rollout of 5G was happening in Sweden a year ago, it was decided that Huawei cannot be part of that rollout. And we were one of the few countries that actually called that out.

**Michael Doran:**

Oh, I did not know that.

**Ambassador Karin Olofsdotter:**

Yes. So we take this very seriously. At the same time, of course, we see both China as an important player and an important market, just like you do, but, of course, we have to be careful. And that's why I also think that the collaboration between the United States and Europe and the European Union, I mean, is extremely important when it comes to the future of technology and standards. It might sound really unsexy and not fun, but standards is the thing.

**Michael Doran:**

Right.

**Ambassador Karin Olofsdotter:**

Because if we together set the standards across the Atlantic for the future technologies, that's what the Chinese will also have to adapt to.

**Michael Doran:**

Right.

**Ambassador Karin Olofsdotter:**

And that's how you rule the world.

**Michael Doran:**

Yeah.

**Ambassador Karin Olofsdotter:**

So, I mean, there are so many facets to this, of course, how we should join and work together on China. And I think it would be really interesting to see now, Finland, Sweden, Norway, Canada, the United States, the Arctic and Russia and China. So you will get a totally different
strength now, militarily, going north.

Michael Doran:

Is Sweden on the Arctic Council?

Ambassador Karin Olofsdotter:

Yes.

Michael Doran:

Ah, okay. Interesting. I hadn't thought of that dimension either. Right. No.

Ambassador Karin Olofsdotter:

I mean, I really think if we are all serious about that democracy is important, freedom of expression, technologies that are good for us, et cetera, et cetera, the United States and Europe need to really collaborate. So the more we can increase trade flows between ourselves, the more we can exchange people and researchers and all that, the stronger we will be. And together we are the market.

Michael Doran:

All right. Well, I for one am completely convinced, but I was pretty easy to convince anyway.

Ambassador Karin Olofsdotter:

Yeah, but you were a bit surprised.

Michael Doran:

Yes. I was surprised, and it was a very persuasive case. So thank you very much for coming. We really appreciate it. And thanks to all of you for tuning in.

Ambassador Karin Olofsdotter:

Yes. Thank you so much.