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TRANSCRIPT

Online Event

**“At a Crossroads: Finland’s Perspectives on
Transatlantic Security”**

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FEATURING

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CSIS EXPERTS

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Max Bergmann: Good morning, everyone, and welcome to the Center for Strategic and International Studies. My name is Max Bergmann, and I'm the director of the Europe Program here at CSIS.

It is our tremendous privilege today to host the foreign minister of Finland, Pekka Haavisto, for a conversation on Finland's perspectives on transatlantic security. The world has, obviously, been transformed by Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Europe has united like never before. And it is, of course, just a week after Finland's historic decision to apply to join NATO. There is much to discuss, and we are honored to have Foreign Minister Haavisto here in Washington and at CSIS.

A quick few words about Minister Haavisto's background. He has served as Finland's minister of foreign affairs since 2019. He has been a member of the Finnish Parliament on and off since 1983. The minister has also served in a variety of government positions in the past, including Finland's minister of development and the environment and its minister of international development. He has also served in multilateral bodies, including the U.N. and the European Union. We are delighted he could make the time to join us on an incredibly busy trip to Washington, and at such a critical moment.

I also want to invite our online virtual audience to submit their questions to us through the "ask live questions here" button on our event page. And I will do my best to bring them into the conversation. But before we get to our back and forth, I want to turn the floor over to Minister Haavisto for some opening remarks. Thank you so much, sir, for joining us. The floor is yours.

Minister Pekka Haavisto: Well, thank you, Max. And it's great to be here with you, and also the audience online. And thank you for taking up the very crucial topic of Finnish and European perspective on the current security situation. And maybe first to say that the U.S.-Finnish relationship, of course, is now more active than earlier. We have a very regular contacts now between Helsinki and Washington. And this is also what brings me now to Washington. And of course, we are following also the tragic events in Ukraine, but of course Finland's request to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, NATO, is also our topic today. I will meet with Secretary Blinken. And I had yesterday eight senators. And so this has been a very active visit now to Washington.

Let me first run through the – how we got to this moment in time. And the 24th of February '22, of course, was also for us a turning point, when Russia launched a massive invasion against the sovereignty of its neighbor. Of course, the offensive was a shock to the whole world. Russia, which has willingly joined the European security order, now wants to annex and control its sovereign and independent neighbor, Ukraine. In December, Russia started the diplomatic preparation, in the form of ultimatums. And

countries between NATO and Russia would not have full sovereign rights to decide over their own destiny. Their security interest would be permanently subjugated to Russia's interests. Indeed, even some NATO countries would not have full rights as alliance members. This interpretation was confirmed by Russia's attack.

When people ask us: Why did you not react earlier? For example, when Russia invaded Georgia in 2008 or when it annexed Crimea in 2014? Why? An answer to that is actually including five points. First, the European security architecture has failed regarding Ukraine. The security order established during the Cold War and which was enshrined in the OSCE agreements and principles could not stop the full-scale war in Europe. And, of course, as you know, the OSCE is very dear to us Finns because of the Helsinki Final Act of 1975 and so forth.

Secondly, Russia was able and willing to gather over 100,000 soldiers against a single neighboring country without having to mobilize additional forces.

Thirdly, we see that Russia is now willing to take higher risks, including casualties. The attempt to try to change the regime of a neighboring country of over 40 million people cannot be described as a calculated risk.

Fourthly, there is more and more loose talk in Russia about weapons of mass destruction, including tactical nuclear weapons and chemical weapons. This has led to many Finnish citizens asking, what would we do if we were threatened with these types of weapons?

And fifthly, the rules of warfare, like the Geneva Conventions, are not respected. When we look at all the human-rights violations in Ukraine, we can see that a lot of violations against the Geneva Conventions happening.

The burden of the war has, of course, been borne by Ukrainians. They pay the price of Russia's brutal invasion and we support them full-heartedly. Russia's attack has failed to achieve some of its key targets. Kyiv remains firmly in Ukrainian hands, and the legitimate government prevails.

Russia's invasion has had unexpected outcomes. First of all, we have seen the Ukrainians rallying to defend their country, culture and democracy in a way that can only inspire others. Secondly, there are consequences that are only beginning to unfold. Ukraine and Russia are major food exporters who together provided about 30 percent of world wheat exports. Ukrainian fields and infrastructure are now being destroyed. Consequences will be felt globally as shortages when prices are rising.

I wish also to thank the Biden administration for highlighting food security also in the U.N. Security Council.

Lastly, Russia's neighbors have reacted, carefully coordinating with the United States and other partners. The European Union has showed unprecedented speed and decisiveness in condemning and sanctioning Russia and in delivering defense material to Ukraine. These sanctions deliver a massive blow to Russia's economy, trade, and war effort.

Let me now turn to Finland, where the popular opinion had remained for some time rather skeptical towards NATO membership. Anyhow, we have been keeping this, what we call NATO option, in our security white papers, I think, since 2004, when we have said that if the security situation changes around the Baltic Sea area, we are ready to reconsider the possible NATO membership.

And, of course, after the events in Ukraine, there was soon a majority, then over 60 percent support for joining NATO. When the parliament voted now NATO membership, there were 188 representatives out of 200 supporting submitting an application for the NATO membership. The latest polls show that 76 percent are in favor of joining NATO. This is the highest figure ever in Finnish opinion polls.

And, of course, our closest neighbor, Sweden, has also made the same decision. And we have really prepared this process hand in hand. And for us it's very important because we have so close military cooperation, defense cooperation also, with Sweden. And we both have been partners of NATO.

And a good question, what happens next? First of all, of course, we maintain our support to Ukraine. That's the only way to ensure that Ukraine is in a strong position in possible future peace negotiations with Russia. Finland, together with the EU and the United States, stands firmly behind Ukraine and its people.

Second point is that while the rules-based international system and the European security structures, such as the OSCE, could not prevent the Russian aggression, we must not abandon them. We will also need various forums after the war.

Thirdly, from a European and Finnish perspective, I see that the rapid and smooth ascension process to NATO for Finland and Sweden serves everyone's interests. We naturally fully respect the right of every NATO member state to go through their parliamentary processes, and all concerns or questions by member states will be addressed accordingly. It is to continue our constructive dialogue with our allies and are ready to continue the discussions on the outstanding issues.

I'm very grateful for the unwavering support that we have received from the United States throughout the process. We have received widespread bipartisan encouragement and I look forward to the Senate approving our membership. Early yesterday, a possibility to talk directly with eight senators, and I could really feel that there's a bipartisan support to our case. We value also the commitment that President Biden made last week to deter and confront any aggression during the ascension process.

Our membership in NATO is, after a thorough consideration, for the best of European and transatlantic security. Finland has taken this step following a close and wide-ranging partnership with NATO for almost three decades. Finland, in our understanding, is a security provider. The Finnish armed forces are strong and can already operate seamlessly with NATO. The Finns' willingness to defend their country is among the highest in the whole world. Finland's security model is based on a comprehensive approach and preparedness across the society and beyond the traditional military approach. Together with Sweden, we will make a strong contribution to the stability of the Baltic Sea region. As a country with a capable and well-trained military, as well as large wartime reserve of 280,000 soldiers, Finnish membership would strengthen the alliance as a whole. As a NATO ally, Finland will commit to the security of all allies.

And then finally, Finland is also a strong proponent of cooperation between European Union and NATO. We must develop and mobilize EU security and defense-related policies and capabilities, not to compete but to complement NATO capabilities and capacities.

And finally, Finland's membership in NATO is not a threat to anyone. We want to maintain our more than 800-miles border with Russia a peaceful border. We only seek to enhance our own security and to contribute to a stable security order in Europe. As President Biden said, quote, "New members joining NATO is not a threat to any nation; it never has been. NATO's purpose is to defend against aggression," unquote.

Thank you for this opportunity of starting the debate.

Mr. Bergmann: No, thank you, Mr. Minister.

I want to sort of start maybe with some of – your opening comments that touched on why now, because you mentioned Russia invaded Georgia in 2008, Russia invaded Ukraine in 2014, there was also the opportunity after the fall of the Soviet Union, and you touched on many of those reasons, but was Russia's invasion of Ukraine this time in 2022 a real shock to the Finnish population? Did you see a real shift in how people viewed NATO, how people viewed Russia? Did that really change the thinking and perception within Helsinki as well, within the Foreign Ministry, within the government?

Min. Haavisto: I think there were two steps. The first step was late last year when Putin and other leaders in Russia warned that any enlargement of NATO to the east will be met very seriously by Russia and they would react to that, and probably the talk was more meant to Ukrainians and Georgians, but in Finland and Sweden it actually attacked our views of our possibility of joining NATO. And then when the February attack happened against the Ukraine, that was the second step, when you see that Russia is now ready to take very high risks. Of course you can speculate that maybe Putin didn't have all the intelligence and maybe he was dreaming that this is a rapid operation and so forth, but we saw the readiness of Russia to take very bold steps which also are risky for their own security, a lot of losses, a lot of manpower lost, a lot of equipment lost, and of course you are living next to a neighbor that can do very unpredictable steps, and that was something that caused a big concern.

Mr. Bergmann: I want you to maybe talk a little bit about the process in how this decision was tackled by Finland. I had the pleasure of being in Helsinki about six weeks ago and was deeply impressed by the sobriety at which all the political parties were treating the subject, in which the government was approaching it, which the public was approaching, but this marks a tremendous shift, I think, in the identity of Finland, that we think of Helsinki summits, President Trump and President Putin being there, but also you mentioned the Helsinki Final Act – Helsinki being this venue for kind of neutral conversation. How will this sort of impact the identity of Finland, do you think, going forward?

Min. Haavisto: Well, first of all, we really think that the OSCE and the Helsinki Final Act has been made to prevent wars in Europe, so that there is a mechanism. Of course, we saw a long time that negotiations with Ukraine and Russia ongoing, the two Minsk agreements and so forth, and we were actually – still up to January there was this talk that OK, we should implement two Minsk agreements and these 100,000 troops on the Ukrainian border, it's only an exercise and so forth. So there was some doubletalk, actually, at the same time talking that, yes, we will solve this peacefully and, secondly, preparing for military action. And I think that was a shock for Finns. We didn't expect that there will be a full-scale war in Europe and actually someone wants militarily to change the government in a country of 40 million people, almost 10 times bigger than Finland. And that was the reaction.

And then actually the opinion shift first, I would say, happened in public opinion. Political parties started to react that, hey, this is a new situation. We had earlier 30 percent of people supporting the NATO membership. Maybe this is the time to use the NATO option that we have always been writing in our government programs. And then political parties started to have their

meetings. And then this came actually in the form of two white papers to the Finnish Parliament.

First, only this kind of, I would say, open-ended paper on security changes and explaining what has happened, how this is affecting us, without any proposed solution. But telling how weak their security structures currently are in Europe, and so forth. And that was a debate in the parliament. And then when the parliament came to the conclusion, step-by-step, that maybe the NATO option is the best, then we delivered a second white paper to the parliament, proposing the NATO membership.

And then, at the same time, of course, we had a very intensive dialogue with Sweden. And I dare to say that we had a certain influence also on the Swedish process, timetable, and maybe to the result.

Mr. Bergmann: And how important was it that – for Finland – that Sweden also make this move in tandem with you? Was that something you were very focused on, or merely hoped for? How important was that for sort of Finnish foreign policy over the last few months, to try to ensure that Sweden also joined with Finland?

Min. Haavisto: It was very important because we really have a very close military and defense cooperation with Sweden. We are both partners of NATO, but we have also a lot of bilateral cooperation as well. Anyhow, at the quite early stage when we were asked: Are you going to NATO, even without Sweden, our answer was yes. This is our decision. We cannot influence so much the Swedish decision. We hope that they are coming on board, but it's their decision. But we came actually at the quite early stage to the conclusion that, yes, we go now.

Mr. Bergmann: And I want to ask about your president when – had the pleasure of calling Vladimir Putin to inform him that Finland was making a decision to apply to join NATO. Strikes me as potentially a fairly awkward conversation. Is there anything you can share about Putin's reaction, about Russia's reaction? You mentioned a lot of the belligerent statements prior to – or, prior to the decision to join NATO. What's been the reaction? What was Putin's reaction on the phone?

Min. Haavisto: I understand it has been quite a professional discussion. Of course, President Niinistö and President Putin have been meeting each other several times, have been calling to each other several times during the normal decades and on bilateral relations and so forth. So it's, of course, a discussion between people who have had contacts also earlier. And I think I appreciated very much that President Niinistö decided to call after president and prime minister had openly told their position on NATO membership and when the parliament was preparing it's – not to ask permission, but to tell what

decision has been made. And I think that's a very timely call. And some people were surprised, you know, people abroad – why do you call Putin in these times? But I think Russia will always be our neighbor. And in all circumstances, the communication lines has to be kept up. And that's part of the diplomacy.

Mr. Bergmann: And going forward, now Finland finds itself in somewhat of an awkward period, where you've applied to join a military alliance, you are not yet a member. We saw back in 2016 Russia essentially back a coup attempt in Montenegro as they were waiting to join NATO, in order to circumvent or subvert that process. What are you concerned about in this intervening period? There's been – a lot of foreign leaders have traveled to Helsinki. Prime Minister Johnson, Emmanuel Macron. There's relations being developed between the U.K. and France about security guarantees. What are you – how is Finland approaching this period? What are you – looking for, what are you nervous about in terms of Russia's reaction? And what do you expect also from the United States?

Min. Haavisto: At the beginning of this process, that early spring when the discussion started – March, and so forth, when we started the discussion about the issue, we, of course, were looking: What are the possible risks? And of course, traditional military risks, violation of sea areas, violation of airspace, or cyber threats, hybrid threats – we are very security-oriented people in Finland. You know, we always go through the most negative scenarios and we are going through those negative scenarios. And we understood that there are some negative scenarios which you cannot cope alone.

And then we, of course, very in contact with the governments which you are mentioned – the U.S., U.K., European governments – and what will be your support in the case that something bad happens. And of course, everybody said first you are not under the NATO Article 5, but some kind of security assurances – maybe not guarantees, but assurances can be given. And all countries, of course, gave their own statement.

But starting from Boris Johnson, who visited, a very strong statement before our decision came. U.S. reaction, Biden, came. The French reaction. Poland, actually bigger and smaller EU countries, and some of the EU countries saying, hey, you are under the EU Article 42.7 already, why do you even ask? If you give so much support to Ukraine in these circumstances, which is not a member of the European Union, of course we will come to your help if something happens.

And I think these assurances helped us, of course, to make the final decision. And when people are now asking is something bad happening, we don't see anything. Our border is peaceful and so forth. And we have been saying that we don't expect anything, but we are prepared for everything.

- Mr. Bergmann: And have you seen any sort of uptick in Russian cyber activity or violations of Finnish airspace, any activity along the border? Are there any concerning signs over the last few weeks? I know Russia has its hands full in Ukraine, but I'm curious if there have been any signs of Russian activity toward Finland over the last few weeks.
- Min. Haavisto: Well, actually, on a quite normal level. Some violations of airspace, and of course the cut of the gas pipeline. But that was expected because we refused to pay in rubles the gas and so forth. But these are all consequences that we calculated. Nothing surprising.
- Mr. Bergmann: Now, I want to talk a bit about the ascension process. You're here in Washington. There was a letter from more than 80 U.S. senators. We were talking before that Finland has really brought bipartisanship to Washington. Maybe you could – if you could give us some color on the – your conversations that you had yesterday. I know you were up on the Hill. You were talking to senators. What are the prospects, do you think, for a speedy ratification for Finland? How did you come away from those conversations?
- Min. Haavisto: Oh, we got, of course, to hear from the senators very positive feedback, and all of those who – to whom we were talking to welcomed Finland, actually saw that we are a net contributor of security to NATO. We are not consuming resources; we are bringing resources. We are important for the – also for the Baltic states and so forth, if Finland and Sweden joins. I think that was very positive. Then, of course, we got some questions about Turkey and Turkey's position, and also if there are other reservations by any NATO member countries and so forth.
- So it was a very, very good discussion, and I could see that the Senate is really wanted to speed up its own decision-making. And we are very grateful for these 82 senators who have already stated their position for this.
- Mr. Bergmann: We're getting a lot of questions coming in about the one clear obstacle that has emerged potentially for Finland's ascension and Sweden as well, and that's the reaction from Turkey. There was a delegation of Finnish and Swedish foreign officials going to Ankara to have talks with the Turks. What can you tell us about your conversations with your Turkish counterparts? How do you see this playing out?
- Min. Haavisto: Well, basically, I visited Turkey twice this spring and our president has been calling to President Erdoğan and so forth. And at the earlier stage there were no indication of any problems, but when we tabled the application then these problems occur – a strong reaction, suspicion that Finland and Sweden harbor some terrorists in the – in the Turkish eyes and so forth, and some criticism that – about the arms trade restrictions and so forth. We

understand that there are a number of NATO countries who have similar concerns and similar discussions with Turkey. But of course, Turkey is in a very decisive role at the moment because we need to have a consensus of all 30 NATO member states.

So, we sent delegations on Wednesday. They're in Ankara. Started discussions using five hours and so forth, and we agreed to continue the process. But of course, we are – we are also testing the open-door policy of NATO, if NATO has open doors or not. We think that it has, but this is – of course, now it's up to the NATO also to handle this process.

Mr. Bergmann: And part of the argument for Finland joining NATO, and Sweden as well, is that it's going to be additive to the alliance. Now, there's some that have offered the concern, well, suddenly NATO's border with Russia becomes much, much, much longer. What is your – what was your argument to the U.S. senators, to Turkey, to others about – what does Finland, do you think, bring to this – bring to the NATO alliance? How will Finland impact NATO going forward?

Min. Haavisto: Actually, I was arguing that we are bringing a long border but a peaceful border. And when you look back to the history, most of the years it always have been peaceful border during different administration. You know, you can start with the tsar time and Lenin and Stalin and Khrushchev and Brezhnev and Gorbachev and Yeltsin and now Putin and so forth. We have – we have seen many changes in our neighborhood and we have always respected and tried to maintain a peaceful border, of course, with Russia. So this is our attitude.

At the same time, of course, we see that it's not only about Finland but the whole NATO is facing new type of challenges by Russia. It's not only traditional military challenges; it can be hybrid influence, it can be cyber influence, and so forth. And we think that we have a lot of capabilities of addressing those risks, so it hopefully adds to the security of the whole alliance.

Mr. Bergmann: I want to ask you a bit about the European Union. There's a mutual defense clause within the European Union, Article 42.7, and over the last decade the EU has been doing a lot on defense and spending more money for various procurements. And we've seen the EU spend or allocate 1.5 billion euros for security assistance to Ukraine. How do you – how is – Finland joining NATO, how will that impact the momentum behind EU defense? How do you – what role do you see for the European Union playing in defense going forward?

Min. Haavisto: Our military expenditure, we are exceeding the 2 percent GDP so we are fulfilling the NATO requirements on that. And of course, we have – we have just ordered 64 F-35s and Sweden has very strong submarine fleet and

submarine technology and so forth. So we think that we are adding to the overall security of NATO also with our military equipment.

Of course, when you look at the European Union, actually, it has been maybe a surprise to everyone that when you look at the frontline on the support on Ukrainian issue, it has been European Union, actually, that has launched – together, of course, with the U.S. – the sanctions, very tough sanctions against Russia, but at the same time channeled a lot of military support, military equipment, and lethal materiel from EU member states to Ukraine. Even Finland has been sending five packages of this military support and so forth. Everybody's quite surprised, actually, that the European Union, who has maybe a tradition of not so easily agreeing on things, on this issue have very rapidly agreed and mobilized quite a lot of support.

We, of course, as a European Union member, would like to have even closer cooperation between NATO and European Union on defense. And of course, European Union's strengths are maybe more on the civilian defense side – on the hybrid issues, on cyber – than the traditional defense, which is of course NATO's expertise. But I think it's very important that when we have the processes that NATO's Strategic Concept and European Union Strategic Compass actually developing at the same time as close cooperation between these two institutions as possible would be good.

Mr. Bergmann: And of course, there's been a lot of attention here in Washington on Finland and Sweden, but Denmark is also going to have a vote about potentially joining the EU military instruments. Have you been in touch with your Danish counterparts? Have you been encouraging them? Or what sort of conversations have you had on that?

Min. Haavisto: Yeah. I have been very delighted, actually, talking several times with my colleague Jeppe Kofod in Denmark on this. And this has really, actually – I think this is one of the consequences of the Russian attack against Ukraine, that even the security thinking in Denmark has changed. And hopefully, they can also join those mechanisms that we have in the European Union security. And of course, this would mean that all the Nordic countries, if we are all NATO members, if we don't have any particular restrictions on EU security issues, so then we can even more work together between the Nordics.

Mr. Bergmann: I guess Norway is the one holdout. You'll have to work on them to apply to join the European Union.

Min. Haavisto: This is what Stoltenberg – I think he said that's a moment that he was thinking that, rather, Norway will join European Union before Finland and Sweden becomes members of NATO. (Laughter.)

Mr. Bergmann: After a while –

Min. Haavisto: But this goes reverse now.

Mr. Bergmann: Before we get to more audience questions, I want to ask you about your analysis of the situation in Russia and also the situation on the war in Ukraine. You're obviously one of the most astute observers about Russia. Finland focuses intensely on what's happening internally in Russia. What do you see playing out with the impact of economic sanctions, the stability of the Putin regime in the Kremlin? How have – how has Russia responded to this crisis? And how do you see Russia moving forward in the next few months or years? Do you see a stable situation in Russia, or do you think the situation could become quite volatile?

Min. Haavisto: That's, of course, a question – I don't have any crystal ball, but first of all, there has been some of those peace plans between Russia and Ukraine, some peace talks facilitated by Turkey. We have been trying to follow those processes; some papers tabled and so forth. But, of course, it's very much up to the Ukrainians to decide whether it's the right moment to have any negotiations and discussion. Of course, it has been so bitter, the Bucha human-rights violations and so forth, that I understand fully the mood in Ukraine is maybe not so supportive for talks just at the moment.

On Russia, of course, when you look at the long-term consequences, the sanctions are affecting very negatively to their economy and so forth. But, of course, Russia has a reputation of having a long resilience on this, and it will take months or years – who knows? – when this is really affecting. And many of those, of course, who have other opinions than Putin has now left the country. If you look at the NGOs, human-rights organizations, environmental organizations, free journalists and so forth, they are part of – out of the country. And, of course, this – you cannot in the country hear these critical voices so much.

Mr. Bergmann: I'm going to go to some of the questions that we're getting from the audience. We're getting a number. From Breaking Defense, there's a question about what additional security assurances do you need from the U.S. during this time between now and your actual ascension to join NATO?

Min. Haavisto: Well, of course, at the moment, as I said, our border is peaceful; no particular threats. But, of course, the capability to react rapidly if some threats occur – and, of course, now we have been saying mainly, you know, the navy visits and so forth will show that there is partnership, taking part in the common exercises, and so forth. But at the same time, we really are looking. If things are keeping calm, then nothing particular; but, of course, the readiness to react rapidly if something occurs.

Mr. Bergmann: And we have a question from Business Insider. In a post-ascension environment – so after you join NATO – what role would Finland like to see NATO forces play in ensuring the security of Finland's Baltic coastal areas and airspace? So after you join NATO, what role do you want to see NATO playing vis-à-vis Finland?

Min. Haavisto: Well, in our parliamentary debate there was a lot of discussion. Would there be permanent bases and so forth? And then actually many parliamentarians referred to Baltic states, that it's very difficult to get any permanent bases and so forth. It's actually, of course – on the first hand, we will take care of our own security. That's clear. We will maintain our military expenditure and take care of our own security.

We will also participate, of course, in the NATO common activities like the air patrolling in Baltic states and so forth, that we are sure that we are part of this kind of rotating mechanism. And then, of course, whenever and wherever NATO needs, we are ready to participate to the common exercises. That's, of course, the normal routine of NATO. Then comes the NATO security planning and military plans and so forth. Of course, we then participate from our part and, of course, looking very much the cooperation around the Baltic Sea. There are many – several NATO countries, then, after Finland and Sweden has joined in.

Mr. Bergmann: We have a question from a U.S. Army officer asking whether Russia's scorched-earth attacks on civilian infrastructure changed Finland's approach to how it would defend against a similar attack from Russia launched against infrastructure. How are you sort of seeing the events play out on the ground in Ukraine, the attacks on the infrastructure? What is the – is that impacting how your military is thinking about defending itself and how you're thinking about your civilian infrastructure?

Min. Haavisto: Actually, we are one of the maybe few European countries who still have this tradition of building bomb shelters, and even for nuclear war and so forth, for all its citizens. Actually, it's in our legislation that we have to. If you visit Helsinki, you can find a lot of those installations and readiness for all kinds of wars against the civilians, against the cities. Of course, that's there, but we were shocked about – that civilians were targeted. We were shocked that suburbs and cities were targeted, because so many rules of warfare has been violated. And I think we, of course, appreciate very much the work of the ICRC and others who are – the Red Cross – who are trying to work for – in these circumstances. But we have been – our reaction has been to support the International Criminal Court and their investigations. Because it's very important that those who are guilty for breaking the rules of the warfare will be processed.

Mr. Bergmann: Can I ask, just an extension of that, you know, how sanctions have impacted your economy and your interaction with Russia. You know, we've talked about the long border, but there was also lots of cross-border economic engagement, lots of travel back and forth, Russians coming to visit Helsinki, Finns going to St. Petersburg. And a lot of cooperation in the energy sector. So what has been the impact on Finland's economy? Are that cross-border interaction still happening? Is there cooperation happening on environmental issues in the Baltic? What has been the impact on the economic side or on the environmental side as well?

Min. Haavisto: On the border, first, we really – I think in the most active years, we had the biggest Schengen visa factory in the world when our St. Petersburg Consulate was giving maybe 1 million Schengen visas per year and there were 7 million border crossings, or something like that. So it was very active. Then, of course, the COVID time took it down. And we are still a little bit in this post-COVID tail. And at the same time, the sanctions appeared. So the border crossing – the border is open, of course. And you can, with your documents, come over. But not so many are coming out. Not usual tourists at the moment, but people for family connections and some businesses that are not sanctioned, and so forth, are – this is working.

On other cooperation forms, we have freezed now, for example, the Baltic Sea cooperation, we have freezed the Arctic cooperation with Russia in these circumstances. But of course, for Finland it has been very important that the environmental cooperation works. And thinking about the dump of nuclear waste around Novaya Zemlya and around the Kola Peninsula or the Baltic Sea, cooperation and so forth. Of course, we have to come to the future situation that this cooperation continues, but at the moment it's freezed.

There are economic consequences, but Russia has not been so big economic player in the Finnish economy. And of course, companies have tried to find new markets, and so forth. So currently no dramatic case. Of course, the price of the energy, food prices inflation. But it is common now for European countries as well.

Mr. Bergmann: A lot of this is playing out in Brussels right now over whether to push forward on an oil embargo. What do you think the prospects are of further sanctions on the oil and gas sector for Russia?

Min. Haavisto: Finland has been advocating, actually, both oil embargo and gas embargo. There's no problem from our side. But of course, I can see that particularly the gas is very sensitive for some European countries where the consumers are using the energy gas from Russia. And the governments are there saying that if you cut now the gas, people will go to the streets. And they don't ask Putin down. They ask their national governments down. And of course, we

don't want to shoot our own leg. I think that's understandable. But for Finland, these bans are not a problem.

Mr. Bergmann: And how – if you were to sort of look forward a year, two years, five years, when it comes to the energy sector do you see Europe undergoing a massive transformation here? I mean, where do you think Europe will get through this current sort of spike in energy prices? How do you see Europe going forward with its decoupling from Russia? Is this just a temporary step where eventually if there's a peace deal with Ukraine Europe would go back to the Russian gas, because it's so plentiful and right there? Or is this a permanent shift that we're seeing?

Min. Haavisto: I think this is a permanent shift. I feel that you can cut the pipeline only once, because when you cut it you are after that unreliable in business terms. And then if you look now what's happening in Europe, short-term solutions, LNG terminals. LNG ships. Finland just ordered one of those LNG ships from U.S. And we have earlier already built about the connector that we can take part of the gas through the Baltic States, and so forth. With LNG, it's this kind of short-term solution on the gas issue. Then when we look to long-term solutions it's more on the green technologies and green transformation that's happening. And wind energy, solar energy, and so forth. I think this was a really wake-up call for Europe.

Mr. Bergmann: Your prime minister is in Ukraine – or was in Ukraine yesterday. Ukraine is obviously pushing for EU membership. There's a lot of support for Ukraine, especially among eastern members, of becoming – gaining candidate status. What is Finland's view on potential Ukraine membership in the European Union?

Min. Haavisto: When our prime minister visited Kyiv, he expressed the support of having this status or candidate status for Ukraine. But, of course, our main concern is we know that when you go to through the *acquis communautaire*, it takes a long time, and so forth. That something rapid – more rapid should happen with Ukraine – the support from European Union to Ukraine. And of course, we are already looking the reconstruction of the country.

When President Zelensky gave a speech to the Finnish Parliament, he asked if Finland can do something with the educational sector, if we can do something with the rebuilding of the schools, and so forth. And we have already also achieved refugees from Ukraine. More than 20,000 go right to Finland. Half of them are children. We have immediate status schooling for these children. But of course, we need also investments for schools in Ukraine. These kind of issues are now discussed.

Mr. Bergmann: Now, there's been a lot of debate going on in the European Union and Brussels about Ukraine membership. France, but also other Western

European countries in particular, note that before Ukraine could potentially join there has to be reform to some of the rules, potentially treaty reform. Mario Draghi went before the European Parliament saying that we need to – the European Union needs to move away from unanimity on some of the voting decisions so that not one country can block an entire union. What is Finland's view on some of these proposed reforms that are being thrown out?

Min. Haavisto: There are a lot of different proposals. But for example, on the foreign policy issues, we have been thinking that this unanimity is a little bit too much, that it could be unanimity minus one or something like that but not a single country could block the European Union foreign policy decisions, because that's a – and I the disaster, you can see it in the U.N. when European Union tries to form a common opinion on the U.N. affairs, for example. It's not easy. And it will be very beneficial if we could get common foreign and security policy decisions more easily in the European Union.

Mr. Bergmann: And can I just ask an extension of that? One of the ways that the EU does its budgeting – and they do it in seven-year cycles, and the budget passed in 2020 not anticipating that you would have this massive war, that there would be a lot of money to expend on energy. But a lot of the money allocated for the security assistance, the European Peace Facility, and other aspects of the defense side have been really drawn down. Is there a prospect of potentially plussing-up or adding more funds to that, or perhaps having another budget discussion short of that seven-year cycle?

Min. Haavisto: Well, the European Peace Facility actually has been a very good tool for this, actually compensating the countries when they have been given defense materiel to Ukraine. And also, Finland has been using that facility. And I think there is pressure and it has been – the amount has been raised already a couple of times, and there is probably pressure to continue with the – with the bigger funding for those purposes. I think on those issues, we have been quite flexible and it has – it has worked quite rapidly, those decisions.

Mr. Bergmann: And perhaps – so final question about – and if we return to NATO, we've talked a lot about what Finland brings to the alliance. What do you think Finland also brings to the broader security for NATO, especially in the Baltic? I've heard a lot of discussion that the High North now needs to be sort of an additional focus for NATO planners. You know, previously, without Finland and Sweden, the focus was – could be on the Arctic but not necessarily, you know, on defending Finland. How do you think things will shift with – inside of NATO? And what do you hope to see in terms of where NATO planners and NATO forces and other aspects of NATO planning ahead?

Min. Haavisto: I'm thinking the High North, the Arctic issues, will be at the table. If you think that seven out of eight Arctic Council members are NATO members as well,

that's, of course, a new issue and has to be addressed. But at the same time, of course, the – we are talking actively to countries of the eastern flank and particularly some of the southern countries are asking, is there now too much concentration going to be in the north and so forth? And we have been – our message has been that all these areas are important for us.

So it's a – some people speak about the Nordic fortress or something like that. I think it's too much; we have to look all those concerns, including, of course, the Mediterranean partners, and they, of course – northern Africa is as relevant as others, so we have to balance also inside NATO these issues.

Mr. Bergmann: Well, Mr. Haavisto, I know that you have a tremendously busy schedule here in Washington. You have another full day of meetings ahead of you. I wish you the best of luck in those meetings, and it is a tremendous honor and thrill that you came to CSIS today and were willing to speak with us. And also best of luck in Finland's pursuit of NATO membership. I think everyone – you know, almost everyone on this side of the Atlantic is rooting for you and hope that this process is very speedy. So thank you so much.

Min. Haavisto: Well, thank you for this opportunity of talking with you. Thank you.

Mr. Bergmann: Great.

And thank you so much for all those that attended online, and this video will be – will live in perpetuity on the website, so please share it and send to your friends as well. Thank you so much.

Min. Haavisto: Thank you.