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Turkey Supports Sweden's Bid For NATO Membership At Vilnius Summit 2023

Why In The News?

- Turkey Has Agreed To Allow Sweden To Join NATO **After Closed Door Negotiations** Between NATO Chief Jens Stoltenberg And The Leaders Of The Two Countries Ahead Of A NATO Summit In Lithuania.
- **“Completing Sweden’s Accession To NATO Is An Historic Step That Benefits The Security Of All NATO Allies At This Critical Time,”** Stoltenberg Said At A Press Conference In Vilnius.



The Return Gift Turkey Gets From USA

- Hours After Ankara’s Decision Was Revealed, The Administration Of US President Joe Biden Announced It Will Move Forward With **The Transfer Of F-16 Fighter Jets To Turkey** In Consultation With The US Congress, In What Seemed To Be A Trade-off For Ankara’s Green Light To Stockholm’s NATO Membership.
- The Pentagon Said That US Secretary Of Defense Lloyd Austin Discussed His Country’s Role In **Turkey’s Military Modernisation** With Turkish Defence

Minister Yasar Guler On The Phone - Another Indication That Negotiations Over Sweden's Entry Were Helped Along By A **US-Turkey Defence Deal**.

- **Ankara Sought To Purchase US F-16s** And Modernize The Ones It Already Owns As Compensation For Its 2019 Removal From A US Led International Programme Developing And Producing New F-35 Fighter Jets.
- Washington Sacked Turkey From The Popular **Scheme After Its Purchase Of The S-400 Defence System From Russia** Despite Warnings From The US.
- The Development Led To A Bilateral Crisis Between The Two Allies And Washington's Imposition Of Sanctions On Turkey In December 2020 In The Area Of Defence Under The **Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA)** - The First Time Such Sanctions Targeted A NATO Member.



The Return Gift Turkey Gets From Sweden

- Sweden Agreed To Work Closely With Ankara To Address The Latter's Security Concerns Through Annual Trilateral Talks That Include NATO. Echoing A Similar, Unimplemented Deal Negotiated In Madrid In 2022, **Stockholm Affirmed That Its "Counterterrorism" Efforts Would Continue** After Its Entry Into The Alliance.
- Sweden Reiterated That It Will **Not Provide Support To Kurdish Fighter Groups**, And The Organisation Turkey Describes As The "Fethullah Terror Organisation", Which Is Accused Of A Failed 2016 Coup That Took Hundreds Of Lives.

Erdogan Links EU And NATO Issues

- Erdogan Achieved What He Wanted Regarding Turkey European Union Ties By Linking, Practically In Writing, Ankara's Issues With The Bloc To Sweden's NATO Bid.
- The Joint Statement Referred To Turkey's Frozen EU Accession Process, With **Sweden Expressing Support For Efforts To Revive The Membership Talks.** Ankara Has Been A Membership Candidate Since 2005, And Negotiations Have Not Progressed Since 2016.
- The Joint Statement Also Saw Stockholm Promise To **"Actively Support Efforts"** In Two Areas Ankara Wanted Improved: **Modernisation Of The EU-Turkey Customs Union And Visa Liberalization.**
- Ankara Has Condemned Repeatedly The Increase In **Rejected Schengen Visa Applications** By Turkish Citizens, **Demanding Visa-free Travel For Turks In Europe.**
- EU Officials Say Ankara Needs To Work On The Bloc's Criteria To Get The Concession And Claim That There Is No Ill-treatment Of Applications By Turkish Citizens.
- Turkey Has Also Sought For Years Changes In The **Customs Union It Has Had With The EU Since 1996.** The EU Has Not Agreed To Start Talks Over The Issue Despite Calls From Ankara And Commerce Communities In Both Countries.



Sweden's Farewell To Neutrality

- For A Country That **Hasn't Fought A War In Two Centuries,** The Decision To Join NATO Was Huge. Sweden Declined To Take Sides During Both World Wars And Throughout The Cold War, **Embracing Neutrality As Core To Its Security Policy And Even Its National Identity.**
- Though It Tweaked Its Status To "Nonaligned" After **Joining The European Union In 1995** And Gradually Increased Cooperation With NATO, Stockholm

Until Last Year Ruled Out Applying For Membership, With Public Opinion Firmly Against It.

- As Late As November 2021 - Three Months Before Russia's Full-scale Invasion Of Ukraine - Then Defence Minister Peter Hultqvist Promised **That Sweden Would Never Join NATO** While His Center-left Social Democrats Were In Office. Then The War Started.
- As Russian Tanks Rumbled Across The Ukrainian Border And Missiles Struck Kyiv And Other Cities, **Public Opinion Shifted In Both Finland And Sweden**. Even Hultqvist And The Social Democrats Made A U-turn, And In May Last Year **Sweden And Finland Jointly Applied For NATO Membership**.

What About Hungary?

- Unlike Turkiye, **Hungary Has Not Given A Reason** For Why It Hasn't Yet Ratified Sweden's NATO Membership. Hungary Pursued Close Economic And Diplomatic Ties With Russia Before The War.
- Since It Started, Prime Minister Viktor Orban Has Refused To Back Ukraine With Weapons And Argued Against European Union Sanctions On Moscow. During A Visit To Vienna Last Week, **Orban Denied That Hungary Was Delaying Sweden's Membership Bid**.
- Many Analysts Believe That **Orban Is Waiting For Erdogan's Next Move** And That Hungary Will Approve Sweden's Accession If Turkiye Looks Likely To Do The Same. **That's What Happened With Finland's Accession**.



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