

**Research Briefing**

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# NATO enlargement: Sweden and Finland

## Summary

- 1 What is NATO?
- 2 Joining the Alliance
- 3 Sweden and Finland's applications to join
- 4 What does Russia think of NATO enlargement?

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## Summary

On 29 June 2022, NATO invited Sweden and Finland to join the alliance. Both countries said Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, and domestic re-appraisals of their security environment, had prompted them to end decades of neutrality and military non-alignment to seek to join the Euro-Atlantic security alliance. NATO allies [signed the Accession Protocols](#) on 5 July 2022. The UK Government [laid the Accession Protocols](#) the following day.

## What is the process for joining?

NATO has [an 'open door' policy](#) and any European country is [eligible to join](#) NATO. The only requirement for any applicant is that they are in a position to further the principles of the founding Washington Treaty and to contribute to the security of the North Atlantic area.

Since 1999 aspiring members have used individually tailored Membership Action Plans to prepare for membership and to make any required political, legal, military or security reforms.

All 30 members of NATO have to unanimously agree to invite an aspiring country to join. This then starts the accession process, which involves each member of the Alliance signing and ratifying the Accession Protocol. The ratification process is in accordance with each member's national procedures. Only once the ratification process is complete can the applicant country formally join the Alliance.

## When will Sweden and Finland join?

Sweden and Finland [submitted simultaneous applications](#) to join NATO on 18 May 2022. After the announcement, NATO member Turkey indicated its opposition to their membership, citing Sweden and Finland's support for Kurdish separatist groups.

At the NATO summit in Madrid on 29 June 2022, Turkey, Sweden and Finland issued a joint memorandum in which the Nordic countries agreed not to provide support to such groups. NATO then [formally invited both countries](#) to join the Alliance. NATO Ambassadors [signed the Accession Protocols](#) on 5 July 2022.

The Secretary General said there is a "[strong will](#)" within the Alliance to ratify as soon as possible. However, President Erdogan has suggested [Turkish](#)

[ratification is dependent](#) on Sweden and Finland keeping to the agreements made in the joint memorandum.

## How has Russia responded?

Russia has long opposed the expansion of NATO. However, President Putin has indicated he sees no threat to Russia if Sweden and Finland join the Alliance. He has said Russia will respond if NATO begins to establish military infrastructure in either of the two nations. Russia has an 830-mile [border with Finland](#).

Both countries are concerned Russia may take provocative or retaliatory measures towards them in the period before they join the Alliance. NATO allies are providing what Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg has called “[substantial security assurances](#)” to Sweden. This is likely to take the form of an increased presence in the region, training exercises and high-profile visits.

The UK has explicitly said it will [support either country if attacked](#).

## NATO expansion

NATO has seen several periods of expansion. The Republic of North Macedonia became the 30<sup>th</sup> member in 2020. Currently only Bosnia and Herzegovina is participating in the formal [Membership Action Plan](#) (MAP). Georgia and Ukraine have expressed a desire to join, but neither has formally begun the process.

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# 1 What is NATO?

The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation was formed in 1949 as an alliance of 12 nations dedicated to ensuring their collective security and preservation and intended to counter the perceived threat from the Soviet Union and later the countries of the Warsaw Pact.

The preamble to the [North Atlantic Treaty](#) (also known as the Washington Treaty) states the core values and goals of the members:

They are determined to safeguard the freedom, common heritage and civilisation of their peoples, founded on the principles of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law. They seek to promote stability and well-being in the North Atlantic area. They are resolved to unite their efforts for collective defence and for the preservation of peace and security.<sup>1</sup>

The main tenet of the Alliance is Article 5 of the treaty, which states unequivocally that an armed attack against one shall be considered an attack against all.

From its inception through the Cold War, NATO looked eastwards to the Soviet Union. Relations with Russia improved in the 1990s and NATO's focus shifted to Afghanistan in the early 21st century.

However, the end of combat operations in Afghanistan in 2014, coupled with Russia's military aggression in Ukraine and the threat from Islamist groups in North Africa and the Middle East, has prompted a significant shift in NATO's thinking: back to its own territory, the Euro-Atlantic area, and challenges emanating from its eastern and southern flanks.

All decisions by the North Atlantic Council, NATO's principal decision-making body, are taken on the basis of consensus among all Allies. NATO is headquartered in Brussels and is led by a Secretary General.

For further background, see Library paper [What is NATO?](#)

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<sup>1</sup> [The North Atlantic Treaty](#), 1949

## 1.1

# A very short history of enlargement

NATO's original 12 members were Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Luxemburg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, the UK and the United States.

Since then, NATO has seen several periods of expansion. These periods have not been without controversy, with members having differing views about the speed or benefits of enlargement.

Greece and Turkey were the first to join the founding 12 nations in 1952, followed by the Federal Republic of Germany in 1955. Then there was a gap until Spain joined in 1982.

The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the end of the Cold War prompted much discussion within NATO about its role and purpose, and how to establish a new relationship with the states of eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union.

At its Brussels summit in 1994 NATO confirmed it was prepared to accept new democratic members from central and eastern Europe, though it specifically avoided any timeframe for NATO expansion. This led to the 1995 Study on NATO Enlargement, which sets out the basic criteria for NATO membership.

The Brussels Summit also launched the Partnership for Peace Initiative. A 1997 Library paper described this as “an attempt to reconcile eastern Europe's demands for NATO membership with Russian fears of NATO enlargement.”<sup>2</sup>

There were concerns at the time about the affect expansion might have on European stability. In 1997 a group of leading US diplomats, including former US Defense Secretary Robert S McNamara, wrote an open letter to President Clinton in which they characterised the expansion of the Alliance as “a policy error of historic proportions” which would “decrease allied security and unsettle European stability”.<sup>3</sup>

However, NATO reaffirmed its open door policy by formally inviting the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary to apply to become members of the Alliance at its Madrid summit in July 1997. They subsequently joined in 1999.

At its Prague Summit in November 2002, the Alliance invited Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia to begin accession talks and reaffirmed. They joined in 2004.

Albania and Croatia joined five years later, in 2009, followed by Montenegro in 2017 and most recently the Republic of North Macedonia in 2020.

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<sup>2</sup> Commons Library, [NATO enlargement](#), RP 97/51, 8 May 1997

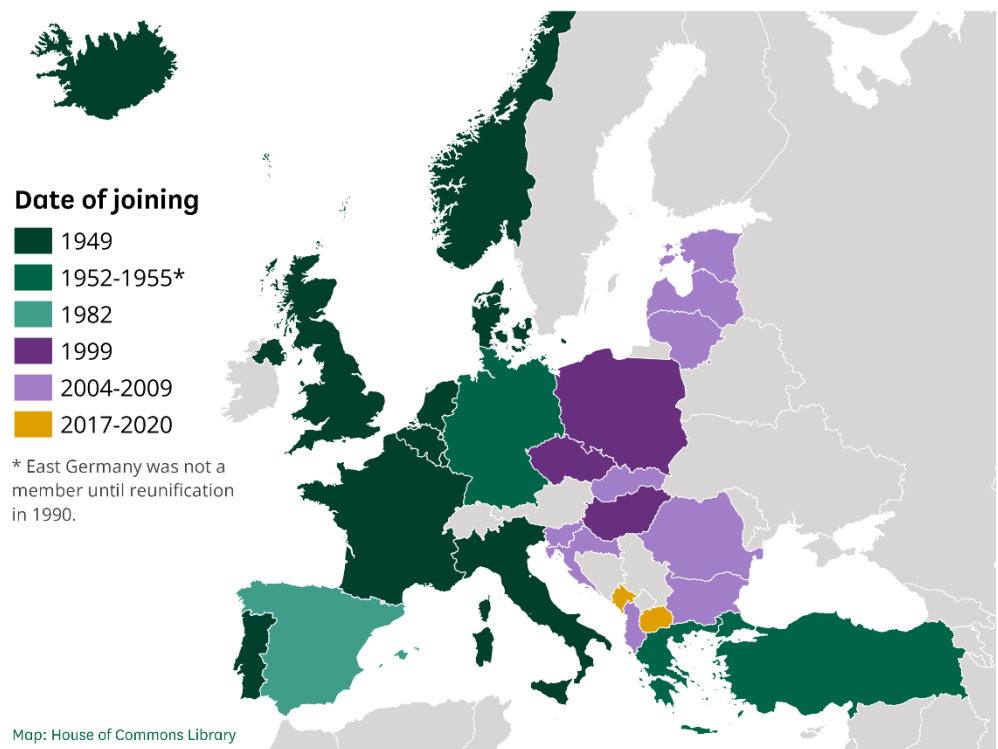
<sup>3</sup> [Open letter from former US diplomats to President Clinton opposing NATO enlargement](#), 26 June 1997

## Potential members?

Currently only Bosnia and Herzegovina is formally involved in the Membership Action Plan. NATO says it “needs to continue pursuing democratic and defence reforms to fulfil its NATO and EU aspirations and to become a well-functioning independent democratic state.”<sup>4</sup>

At the 2008 Bucharest Summit, Allied leaders agreed that Georgia and Ukraine will one day become members, though differences among Allies at the time meant they stopped short of inviting them to begin the MAP process.<sup>5</sup> Georgia has been invited to participate in the meeting with the leaders at NATO’s summit in Madrid in June 2022.<sup>6</sup>

## Nato enlargement in Europe



<sup>4</sup> NATO, [Relations with Bosnia and Herzegovina](#), 23 May 2022 (accessed 15 June 2022)

<sup>5</sup> Jonathan Eyal, “[NATO’s Bucharest Summit: The unanswered questions](#)”, RUSI Newsbrief, Vol 28 issue 4, 28 April 2008

<sup>6</sup> NATO, [Pre-Ministerial press conference](#), 15 June 2022



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## 2 Joining the Alliance

NATO has [an ‘open door’ policy](#) and any European country is eligible to join NATO. Since 1999 aspiring members have used individually tailored Membership Action Plans to prepare for membership and to make any required political, legal, military or security reforms. A formal invitation to join is made with the unanimous consent of all NATO members, after which each Ally must sign and ratify the Accession Protocol. The ratification process is in accordance with their national procedures and therefore can take several months. Only once the ratification process is complete does the applicant country formally join the Alliance.

### 2.1 Who can join the Alliance?

There are three key substantive requirements for accession to the Alliance:

- Membership is open to European states.
- NATO enlargement requires unanimous agreement.
- The state must be “in a position to further the principles of this Treaty and to contribute to the security of the North Atlantic area”.

These are set out in Article 10 of the Washington Treaty:

The Parties may, by unanimous agreement, invite any other European State in a position to further the principles of this Treaty and to contribute to the security of the North Atlantic area to accede to this Treaty.<sup>7</sup>

There is no obligation to join. NATO makes clear it respects the right of every country to choose its own security arrangements. Article 13 of the Treaty gives Allies the right to leave should they wish to.<sup>8</sup>

### 2.2 What is the process for joining?

#### The Membership Action Plan (MAP)

Countries interested in joining the Alliance are invited to join what is called a [Membership Action Plan](#) (MAP). This was launched at the 1999 Washington Summit to help countries aspiring to NATO membership in their preparations,

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<sup>7</sup> [The North Atlantic Treaty](#), 1949

<sup>8</sup> NATO, [NATO enlargement factsheet](#), July 2016 (accessed 15 June 2022)

and evolved out of lessons learnt from previous enlargements and the conclusions of the 1995 [Study on Enlargement](#). The MAP is described as “a practical manifestation of the Open Door policy.”<sup>9</sup>

Each MAP is tailored to the individual country and may involve political, legal, military, defence and security reforms. A NATO factsheet explains some of the core requirements for any country aspiring to join the alliance. These range from a functioning democratic system to a willingness to make a military contribution to NATO operations:

To join the Alliance, nations are expected to respect the values of the North Atlantic Treaty, and to meet certain political, economic and military criteria, set out in the Alliance’s 1995 Study on Enlargement. These criteria include a functioning democratic political system based on a market economy; fair treatment of minority populations; a commitment to resolve conflicts peacefully; an ability and willingness to make a military contribution to NATO operations; and a commitment to democratic civil-military relations and institutions.<sup>10</sup>

Countries participating in the MAP submit individual annual national programmes on their preparations for possible future membership. There is some flexibility which allows members to choose how they participate in the Alliance. Iceland, for example, does not have its own armed forces and so cannot deploy military personnel. However, it does provide civilian peacekeepers to NATO-led operations and hosts NATO exercises and events.<sup>11</sup>

Since 1999 every new member that has joined NATO has used a MAP.

## The Accession process

Once an aspiring country has met all the requirements, or indicated it will be able to do so, it then informs NATO of its desire to accede to the Washington Treaty. If all the members agree, NATO then invites the country to begin accession talks. This begins a [seven-stage accession process](#):

1. Accession talks to confirm the invited countries willingness and ability to meet the political, legal and military obligations and commitments of NATO membership.
2. The Foreign Minister sends a letter of intent to the NATO Secretary General formally accepting the obligations and commitments of membership, plus a timetable for the completion of any required reforms, if relevant.
3. An Accession Protocol is signed by all NATO members.

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<sup>9</sup> For an overview, see: NATO, [Membership Action Plan \(MAP\)](#), Last updated: 14 May 2022

<sup>10</sup> [NATO enlargement and open door factsheet](#), July 2016, accessed 14 June 2022

<sup>11</sup> NATO, [Member countries](#), 8 June 2022. This also provides other examples of flexible arrangements for other countries.

4. The Accession Protocol is then ratified by each individual member, according to their national requirements and procedures.
5. The Secretary General then invites the potential new member to accede to the North Atlantic Treaty.
6. Invitees accede to the North Atlantic Treaty in accordance with their national procedures.
7. Upon depositing their instruments of accession with the US Government, which is the depositary of the Washington Treaty, invitees formally become NATO members.<sup>12</sup>

### How long does the ratification process take?

The ratification process usually takes about a year after the initial signing of the Accession Protocol by all the member states. The ratification process will differ according to each individual member.

**Table 1 Timeline of Accession Protocols**

Country or countries	Date of signature of Accession Protocol	Date of Accession to the Washington Treaty
Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia	26 March 2003	29 March 2004
Albania and Croatia	9 July 2008	1 April 2009
Montenegro	19 May 2016	5 June 2017
The Republic of North Macedonia	6 February 2019	27 March 2020

Source: [NATO enlargement](#), accessed 13 June 2022

### What is the ratification process in the UK?

The Accession Protocol is laid before Parliament for 21 sitting days' scrutiny under the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010 (CRAG). Provided there are no objections, the UK then deposits its instrument of ratification.<sup>13</sup> However, the Government may exempt a treaty from the CRAG provisions in 'exceptional cases'.

<sup>12</sup> NATO, [NATO enlargement and Article 10](#), Last updated: 10 June 2022

<sup>13</sup> [PQ 219389 \[Macedonia: NATO\], 19 February 2019](#)

Accession Protocols can be found in the [FCDO's Multilateral treaties published in the Miscellaneous Series](#) (from 2013 to present) collection.

To give an example, after the signing of Montenegro's Accession Protocol in May 2016, the Government laid the [Protocol of Accession](#) (Cm 9293) before Parliament on [29 June 2016](#), under the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010, as a Command Paper. The Protocol completed its Parliamentary scrutiny period following the summer recess on 15 September.<sup>14</sup> The UK ratified the Protocol in November 2016.<sup>15</sup>

The [Accession Protocol for the Republic of North Macedonia](#) was re-laid on 27 June 2019 (the earlier version laid on 6 February [was withdrawn](#) because of an incorrect date of signature on the front cover). The Protocol was [ratified in October 2019](#).

Further reading: Commons Library paper [Parliament's role in ratifying Treaties](#).

## 2.3

### How long does the whole process take?

In practice, the application process can take several years if the aspiring country is required to complete any political, legal, military, defence or security reforms, or resolve any outstanding issues. The two most recent members took several years from beginning the MAP process to joining the Alliance:

- **Montenegro** was invited to join the MAP in December 2009. It started accession talks in December 2015 and the Accession Protocol was signed by Allied foreign ministers on 19 May 2016. The ratification process took nearly a year, and Montenegro became a full member of the Alliance when the instrument of accession was deposited in Washington D.C. on 5 June 2017.<sup>16</sup>
- **The Republic of Macedonia** joined the MAP in 1999. It was invited to begin accession talks at NATO's Brussels Summit in July 2018, after resolving the longstanding issue of its name with Greece. Allies signed the Accession Protocol on 6 February 2019 and North Macedonia became a full member of the Alliance when the Instrument of Accession was deposited in Washington D.C. on 27 March 2020.<sup>17</sup>

Participation in the MAP does not guarantee membership of NATO.

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<sup>14</sup> [PQ47202](#), 17 October 2016

<sup>15</sup> [PQ 59579 \[Montenegro: NATO\], 19 January 2017](#)

<sup>16</sup> NATO, [Relations with Montenegro \(archived\)](#), 14 December 2017 (accessed 15 June 2022)

<sup>17</sup> NATO, [Relations with the Republic of North Macedonia](#), 17 September 2020 (accessed 15 June 2022)

## 3

# Sweden and Finland's applications to join

On 18 May 2022 Sweden and Finland simultaneously handed in their [official letters of application](#) to join NATO. Both countries followed similar trajectories, producing reports in April and May reassessing their security environments, before confirming their intention to apply. The two countries were [formally invited to join the Alliance](#) at the Madrid Summit, 29-30 June 2022.

### 3.1

## Why are Sweden and Finland applying to join NATO?

“A dark new chapter has begun in the history of Europe”

[Swedish Foreign Minister Ann Linde](#)

June 2022

Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 prompted both countries to reverse decades of military non-alignment and neutrality to join the Alliance.

While the two countries have a very different history and relationship with both NATO and Russia, in recent months they have followed a similar trajectory in drawing the conclusion that joining the Alliance was in their best interests.

Both countries published papers reassessing the security environment in light of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Similar in style, they set out their current policy environment, relations with key partners and NATO, and the impact membership might have:

- [Government report on changes in the security environment](#), Finish Government (13 April 2022)
- [Deterioration of the security environment – implications for Sweden](#) (13 May 2022). This report contains statements from all the political parties represented in the parliament, the Riksdag, including statements of opposition to NATO membership from the Left party and the Green Party.

Both countries cite Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and the changed security environment, as the main driver of their decision. They also cite the principal benefit of membership being NATO's collective defence agreement. This is clearly stated in their respective reports on the security environment. Finland's Report states:

For Finland, the most significant effect of its possible NATO membership would be that Finland would be part of NATO's collective defence and be covered by the security guarantees enshrined in Article 5.<sup>18</sup>

Sweden's report states:

For Sweden, the primary effect of NATO membership would be that Sweden would become part of NATO's collective security and be covered by the security guarantees enshrined in Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty.<sup>19</sup>

Sweden added that by joining with Finland "all Nordic and Baltic countries would be covered by collective defence guarantees."<sup>20</sup>

They also similarly argue in favour of joining together, believing they would be left more exposed if they did not join but their neighbour did. This is a particular concern for Finland, which shares a long land border with Russia, and with whom it fought a [devastating war in the winter](#) of 1939-40.

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"The only country that is threatening Europe's security and openly waging a war of aggression is Russia."

[Finnish Prime Minister Sanna Marin](#)<sup>21</sup>

May 2022

Shortly after publication of the reports, on 16 and 17 May respectively, the Swedish and Finnish leadership announced their intention to apply for NATO membership.<sup>22</sup> On 18 May 2022 Sweden and Finland simultaneously handed in their [official letters of application](#) to join NATO.

In June, Sweden's Foreign Minister presented an updated statement of foreign policy to the Riksdag. Ann Linde said, "Russia's war has created a new and more dangerous reality for Europe and Sweden". Given Article 5 of NATO's treaty applies to NATO members only, she argued the "best way for Sweden to protect its security is for Sweden to join NATO."<sup>23</sup>

Further statements can be found on the Finnish Government website: [Finland and NATO](#) and on the Swedish Government website: [Sweden's road to NATO](#).

The Finnish [Government report on changes in the security environment](#) also includes a detailed list of the stages of Finland's possible NATO accession process (in annex 2).

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<sup>18</sup> Finnish Government, [Government report on changes in the security environment](#), 13 April 2022

<sup>19</sup> Swedish Government, [Deterioration of the security environment – implications for Sweden](#), 13 May 2022

<sup>20</sup> Swedish Government, [Deterioration of the security environment – implications for Sweden](#), 13 May 2022

<sup>21</sup> Paper amended on 22 June 2022 to correctly identify Sanna Marin as the Finnish not Swedish Prime Minister.

<sup>22</sup> Finnish Government, "[Finland declares its interest to accede to NATO](#)", 17 May 2022; "[Speech delivered by Prime Minister Sanna Marin at Parliament's plenary session](#)", 16 May 2022; Swedish Government "[The Government has decided today that Sweden will apply for NATO membership](#)", 16 May 2022

<sup>23</sup> Swedish Foreign Ministry, [Statement of Foreign Policy](#), 10 June 2022

## 3.2

## Why is Turkey opposing their application?

Turkey<sup>24</sup>, a NATO member, objected to Finland and Sweden's application. Turkey cited their support for Kurdish separatist parties, particularly the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), and restrictions on arms exports to Turkey. President Recep Erdoğan said, "until Sweden and Finland show clear, concrete and decisive steps we will definitely not change our stance on the NATO issue."<sup>25</sup>

Ranj Alaaldin, of the US-based Centre for Middle East Policy at Brookings, said the Kurdish question cannot be decoupled from western security interests and "Turkey's conflict with the PKK has long complicated Turkey's relations with the U.S. and its European allies."<sup>26</sup>

### Agreement is reached

On 28 June, at the NATO Summit, Turkey, Finland and Sweden issued a [trilateral memorandum](#), ending Turkey's opposition to NATO inviting them to join. As part of the memorandum, Finland and Sweden agreed to not provide support to YPG/PYD (Kurdish groups in Syria), confirmed that PKK is a proscribed terrorist organisation, and committed to prevent activities of the PKK and other terrorist organisations and affiliated and inspired groups. They also agreed to "address Türkiye's pending deportation or extradition requests of terror suspects expeditiously and thoroughly." Sweden and Finland also confirmed there are no national arms embargoes on Turkey.<sup>27</sup>

The trilateral memorandum paved the way for NATO to formally invite Sweden and Finland to join the Alliance. The summit declaration acknowledged Turkish concerns:

In any accession to the Alliance, it is of vital importance that the legitimate security concerns of all Allies are properly addressed. We welcome the conclusion of the trilateral memorandum between Türkiye, Finland, and Sweden to that effect.<sup>28</sup>

### Ratifying the Accession Protocols

NATO Ambassadors [signed the Accession Protocols](#) on 5 July 2022. The Protocols now need to be ratified by each of the 30 members of NATO.

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<sup>24</sup> "Since this paper was first written Turkey has formally changed the English-language spelling of its name to Türkiye. For consistency, unless quoting directly, this paper will use Turkey.

<sup>25</sup> "[Turkey sets conditions for backing Swedish, Finnish NATO membership](#)", RFE/RL, 21 May 2022; "Turkey rejects NATO offer of trilateral talks with Sweden and Finland", Financial Times, 15 June 2022

<sup>26</sup> Ranj Alaaldin, "[Turkey's threat to derail Swedish and Finnish NATO accession reraises the Kurdish question](#)", Brookings, 3 June 2022

<sup>27</sup> NATO, "[Trilateral memorandum between Türkiye, Finland and Sweden](#)", 28 June 2022

<sup>28</sup> NATO, [Madrid Summit Declaration](#), 29 June 2022

The Protocols for each country will enter force when each of the Parties to the North Atlantic Treaty has notified the Government of the United States of America of its acceptance of the Protocol. The US State Department maintains a status list for each Protocol:

- [Protocol to the North Atlantic Treaty on the Accession of the Republic of Finland](#), done at Brussels July 5, 2022
- [Protocol to the North Atlantic Treaty on the Accession of the Kingdom of Sweden](#), done at Brussels July 5, 2022

### The UK Government fast-tracks the ratification process

The UK Government laid the Accession Protocols on 6 July 2022:

- [Protocol to the North Atlantic Treaty on the Accession of the Republic of Finland](#), CP 730
- [Protocol to the North Atlantic Treaty on the Accession of the Kingdom of Sweden](#), CP 731

Usually, the Protocols, as a treaty, would be laid before Parliament for 21 sitting days' scrutiny under the [Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010](#) (CRAG).

However, the Government may exempt a treaty from the CRAG provisions in 'exceptional cases'. The Foreign Secretary informed the House in a [written statement](#) on 6 July 2022 that the Government intended to apply that exemption to the Accession Protocols, to ensure that Finland and Sweden are integrated into NATO as quickly as possible. The Foreign Secretary said:

In accordance with section 22 of the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010 (CRAG) I wish to inform the House that I believe the Protocol to the North Atlantic Treaty on the Accession of the Republic of Finland and the Protocol to the North Atlantic Treaty on the Accession of the Kingdom of Sweden (together the "Protocols") should be ratified without the requirements of section 20 CRAG having been met.<sup>29</sup>

Vicky Ford, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, [updated the House](#) on behalf of the Foreign Secretary on 6 July 2022. She explained that, given there were not 21 sitting days before the summer recess, when the Government aimed to complete the ratification process, the protocols should be ratified without the 21-day requirement having been met.<sup>30</sup> David Lammy, the Shadow Foreign Secretary, supported the Government's position, as did Alyn Smith for the SNP and Jamie Stone for the Liberal Democrats.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> [HCWS188, 6 July 2022](#)

<sup>30</sup> [HC Deb 6 July 2022 \[NATO Accession: Sweden and Finland\]](#)

<sup>31</sup> [HC Deb 6 July 2022 \[NATO Accession: Sweden and Finland\]](#)



Further information on CRAG can be found in Commons Library paper [How Parliament treats treaties](#), CBP 9247.

The US State Department [received notification from the UK](#) of the UK's acceptance of the Protocols on 8 July 2022.

## Turkish support... for now

However, President Erdogan has since threatened to hold up the process by not ratifying the Accession Protocols if Finland and Sweden do not fulfil the agreements made in the memorandum:

First Sweden and Finland should carry out their duties and those are in the text ... But if they don't, of course it is out of the question for the ratification to be sent to our parliament.<sup>32</sup>

He also said Sweden had promised to extradite 73 individuals as part of the agreement, although the memorandum does not contain any explicit pledges for specific extraditions.<sup>33</sup>

## A deal with the US for F-16s?

Some believe Turkey is also seeking to leverage its position for other purposes. A former head of NATO, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, said in May “the price (for support) is unknown at the moment, but that there will be a price is clear.”<sup>34</sup> Barin Kayaoglu, an assistant Professor of World History at the American University of Iraq, Sulaimani, suggests Turkey's regional influence could be boosted if Erdogan's concerns are addressed.<sup>35</sup>

Media reports prior to the summit speculated Turkey is looking for the US to lift restrictions on combat aircraft.

In 2019 the US halted Turkey's involvement in the US-led F-35 fighter jet programme after Ankara bought the Russian S-400 missile defence system. Turkey has since requested the US approve upgrades to its existing F-16 fleet and to sell it new F-16 aircraft, until it is able to produce its own indigenous fifth-generation fighter aircraft. De Hoop suggested “that price might well be that the Americans lift their block on F-16s.”<sup>36</sup>

Following the Summit, President Biden said that during a bilateral meeting with the Turkish President, he had indicated his support for selling F-16s to Ankara. However, he denied there was any “quid pro quo” with Ankara for

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<sup>32</sup> [“Erdogan says Sweden, Finland must fulfil NATO agreement promises”](#), Al Jazeera, 30 June 2022

<sup>33</sup> [“Erdogan says Sweden, Finland must fulfil NATO agreement promises”](#), Al Jazeera, 30 June 2022

<sup>34</sup> [“Turkey's unstated goals in blocking Sweden and Finland”](#), Politico, 20 May 2022

<sup>35</sup> [“How Sweden, Finland's NATO membership could impact Turkey”](#), Al-Monitor, 18 May 2022

<sup>36</sup> [“Turkey's unstated goals in blocking Sweden and Finland”](#), Politico, 20 May 2022

agreeing to Finland and Sweden's application. Congressional approval is required for any sale.<sup>37</sup>

### 3.3 When might Sweden and Finland become members of NATO?

That is not yet clear, especially given President Erdogan's suggestion that Turkey may hold up the ratification process. The Secretary General said at the summit there is a "[strong will](#)" within the Alliance to ratify as soon as possible. The ratification process has taken about a year for recent members (see section 2.2).

### 3.4 Are Sweden and Finland covered by NATO's collective security pledge?

No. A core tenet of the Alliance is [Article 5](#) of the Washington Treaty. This states that an armed attack against one shall be considered an attack against them all. This only applies to those who belong to the Alliance.

### 3.5 What happens if Russia attacks either country before they join?

Sweden acknowledged this risk in its report on NATO membership:

Russian provocation and retaliatory measures against Sweden cannot be ruled out during a transition period in connection with a Swedish application for NATO membership.<sup>38</sup>

Sweden says this could take the form of political pressure, activities aimed at undermining, hybrid activities, military provocations and diplomatic action. Finland similarly suggests Russia could respond in ways "that are difficult to anticipate", and could see increasing tensions on the border between Finland

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<sup>37</sup> "[Biden voices support for selling F-16s to Turkey, denies 'quid pro quo'](#)", The Hill, 30 June 2022. Further information on US-Turkish relations, including defence and arms exports, can be found in "[Turkey: Background and US relations in brief](#)", Congressional Research Service, R44000 (accessed 1 July 2022).

<sup>38</sup> Swedish Government, [Deterioration of the security environment – implications for Sweden](#), 13 May 2022

and Russia.<sup>39</sup> In May, Russia's gas giant Gazprom halted gas exports to Finland.

Jens Stoltenberg has said Sweden and Finland's security matters to NATO, which has increased its presence in the region. This may take the form of more joint exercises and "presence in the region."<sup>40</sup>

In early June the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Mark Milley, held a high-profile press conference with the Swedish Prime Minister on board the [USS Kearsarge](#) when docked in Stockholm. The Swedish Prime Minister said the warship's presence "shows President Biden's security assurances are followed by actions."<sup>41</sup> President Biden had previously said that while their applications are being considered, the US "will work with Finland and Sweden to remain vigilant against any threats to our shared security, and to deter and confront aggression or the threat of aggression."<sup>42</sup>

Finland has also said that simultaneous accession processes with Sweden could "facilitate preparation for and response to Russia's possible reaction."<sup>43</sup>

Jens Stoltenberg has also said that many allies are providing "substantial security assurances" to Sweden.<sup>44</sup>

## 3.6

### UK security agreements

On 11 May 2022 the Prime Minister travelled to both countries and signed separate non-binding political declarations agreeing to support each other. The statement with Finland said:

We confirmed that, should either country suffer a disaster or an attack, the United Kingdom and Finland will, upon request from the affected country, assist each other in a variety of ways, which may include military means.<sup>45</sup>

The same wording is in the [agreement with Sweden](#).

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<sup>39</sup> Finnish Government, [Government report on changes in the security environment](#), 13 April 2022

<sup>40</sup> NATO, [press conference](#), 13 June 2022

<sup>41</sup> "US warship calms Sweden's NATO nerves", Politico, 5 June 2022

<sup>42</sup> [Statement by President Biden on the application to NATO by Finland and Sweden](#), White House, 18 May 2022

<sup>43</sup> Finnish Government, [Government report on changes in the security environment](#), 13 April 2022

<sup>44</sup> NATO, [press conference](#), 13 June 2022

<sup>45</sup> [UK-Finland Statement](#), 11 May 2022

## 3.7

## How will Sweden and Finland's membership affect NATO?

NATO's Secretary General, Jens Stoltenberg, has described the two Nordic countries as "[NATO's closest partners](#)" and said their membership "[would increase our shared security, demonstrate that NATO's door is open and that aggression does not pay.](#)"

The armed forces of both countries have exercised and trained with NATO members. In June 2022, Finland and Sweden joined 14 NATO members in the NATO-led exercise Operation Baltops. Held annually, the [2022 exercise](#) involved over 7,500 personnel and 45 ships.

Both countries are part of the UK-led [Joint Expeditionary Force](#), a non-NATO grouping of 10 northern European countries, meaning their armed forces have already exercised and trained with several NATO members.

### Shifting the internal dynamics?

Sweden and Finland's presence in the Alliance may shift the internal balance between member states northwards, with a likely greater focus on the High North and the Arctic. Whether that comes at the expense of the concerns and priorities of southern members such as Spain and Italy is unclear.

More broadly, their membership will inevitably affect wider relations between NATO and Russia. The inclusion of both countries will enlarge the area of the Alliance and significantly increase the land border with Russia.

General (rtd) Sir James Everard, a former Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Europe, NATO, discusses the implications of their application with the Defence Committee on 24 May 2022. He described the move as a disaster for President Putin because rather than halting NATO expansion, he has encouraged two very capable armed forces to join. He also said NATO could learn from both countries, citing Sweden's whole of society approach, for example by teaching children about how to spot disinformation.<sup>46</sup>

Jon Henley, the Guardian's Europe correspondent, suggests the addition of Finland's and Sweden's armed forces would be major boost to NATO's assets in northern Europe and improving security and stability in the Baltic region.<sup>47</sup>

The editorial of the Singapore newspaper the Straits Times describes their application as "by far the most significant geopolitical consequence" of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The newspaper says it will be important to see how China interprets the move:

<sup>46</sup> Defence Committee, [oral evidence: US, UK and NATO](#), 24 May 2022, HC 184 2022-23, Q167

<sup>47</sup> "[Why are Sweden and Finland not yet in NATO and does the Alliance want them?](#)", The Guardian, 12 May 2022

If Beijing's takeaway is that the events in Europe presage a similar encirclement of itself through an expanding Quadrilateral Security Dialogue or Aukus, the Australia-United Kingdom-United States group, both of which are China-focused, there is bound to be reaction from Beijing.<sup>48</sup>

Anne-Marie Slaughter, chief executive of the New America think-tank, suggests their membership will deepen the East-West fissure:

Admitting them to the military alliance will redraw and deepen Europe's 20th-century divisions in ways that will probably preclude far bolder and braver thinking about how to achieve peace and prosperity in the 21st.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> [“NATO expansion has wide consequences”](#) (editorial), The Straits Times, 24 May 2022

<sup>49</sup> “Expanding NATO will deepen East-West Fissure”, Financial Times, 5 May 2022

## 4

## What does Russia think of NATO enlargement?

Russia has long opposed NATO enlargement, seeing it as a “Cold War anachronism” and as a direct threat to its own security. Moscow views NATO enlargement as encroaching on its near abroad or its natural spheres of influence, including the former states of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact.<sup>50</sup> These concerns are chronicled in historical Commons Library papers (links below).

In 1993 Yevgenii Primakov, the then director of Russia’s Foreign Intelligence Service and later Boris Yeltsin’s Foreign Minister, delivered a “blistering critique” of NATO expansion. For Primakov, the history of enmity between NATO and Russia was a “psychological mind-set [that] cannot be broken painlessly”. NATO expansion to Russia would create “a new geopolitical situation that is extremely disadvantageous to Russia”. Overall, in terms which would later become familiar under Putin and Medvedev, Primakov warned that “if the countries of Central and Eastern Europe join that organization, the objective result will be the emergence of a barrier between Russia and the rest of the continent”.<sup>51</sup>

Successive Russian governments have also pointed to verbal assurances given by the Americans to Soviet leaders, at the time of German reunification in 1989, that NATO would not expand further to the east.<sup>52</sup> However, nothing was written down to that affect in any agreement.

Relations between Russia and NATO deteriorated rapidly in 2008 after Russia’s military action in Georgia. NATO indicated at its Bucharest Summit that Georgia and Ukraine could one day join the Alliance, something Russia vocally opposed. Russia’s Foreign Minister, Sergei Lavrov, said that “we will do all we can to prevent Ukraine’s and Georgia’s accession into NATO and to avoid an inevitable serious exacerbation of our relations with both the Alliance and our neighbours.”<sup>53</sup>

<sup>50</sup> The [Warsaw Pact](#) was a political and military alliance established by the Soviet Union and seven other Soviet satellite states in Central and Eastern Europe: Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Poland and Romania.

<sup>51</sup> Yevgenii Primakov, cited in Robert H Donaldson and Joseph L Noguee, *The Foreign Policy of Russia*, Third Edition, 2005, p254; cited in Commons Library paper [Russia and the West](#), RP09-36, 24 April 2009

<sup>52</sup> See Commons Library papers [NATO enlargement](#), RP97-51, 8 May 1997 and [Russia and the West](#), RP09-36, 24 April 2009; Timothy Andrews Sayle “Enduring Alliance: A history of NATO and the postwar global order”, Cornell University Press 2019

<sup>53</sup> “[Russia Talks Tough in Response to NATO’s Eastward Expansion](#)”, Deutsche Welle, 11 April 2008; cited in Commons Library paper [Russia and the West](#), RP09-36, 24 April 2009

In the aftermath of the conflict between Russia and Georgia, relations between Moscow and the Alliance broke down completely.

In the same year President Medvedev outlined, in detail, his objections to NATO expansion, charging that the Alliance was seeking to encircle and contain Moscow by building-up its military presence on Russia's borders. Like Putin, Medvedev criticised Western governments for failing to honour the promises made at the end of the Cold War not to encroach beyond the territory of a unified Germany. To Medvedev, NATO's expansion was clearly aimed at Russia:

Russia cannot feel comfortable in a situation where military bases are increasingly being built around it, and there are more and more missiles and anti-missile defence systems. Really, Russia just cannot feel comfortable in such a situation. [...] how is this build-up not against us [...] It is absolutely against us – there is no other way to understand the situation.<sup>54</sup>

Prior to the invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Russia had sought longer term security guarantees from the Alliance that Ukraine would not be admitted as a Member State and that NATO military infrastructure will not be deployed in the country. The Kremlin had described these as “red lines” for Russia's national security. In remarks to the Russian Federal Assembly on 1 December 2021, Foreign Minister, Sergei Lavrov, accused NATO states of seeking to “pull Ukraine into their orbit and turn it into an ‘anti-Russia’”.<sup>55</sup>

In his annual news conference, on 23 December 2021, President Putin referred to the 1990s discussions, which he characterised as NATO promising Russia to “not move an inch to the east.” He accused NATO of cheating Russia “shamelessly” with five waves of NATO expansion, saying “They told us: there will be no expansion, but they expanded.”<sup>56</sup>

However, Putin has said he sees no threat to Russia of the inclusion of Sweden and Finland. He has caveated that comment by adding “the expansion of military infrastructure into this territory would certainly provoke our response.”<sup>57</sup> Following the formal invitation to join, Putin reaffirmed this position:

With Sweden and Finland, we don't have the problems that we have with Ukraine. They want to join NATO, go ahead.

But they must understand there was no threat before, while now, if military contingents and infrastructure are deployed there, we will have to respond in kind and create the same threats for the territories from which threats towards us are created.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Dmitry Medvedev, Transcript of the Meeting with the Participants in the International Club Valdai, 12 September 2008; cited in Commons Library paper [Russia and the West](#), RPO9-36, 24 April 2009

<sup>55</sup> Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, [Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's remarks on Russia's foreign policy priorities](#), 1 December 2021

<sup>56</sup> [Press conference](#), President of Russia, 23 December 2021

<sup>57</sup> [“Putin sees no threat from NATO expansion, warns against military build-up”](#), Reuters, 17 May 2022

<sup>58</sup> [“Putin: Russia will respond if NATO sets up infrastructure in Finland, Sweden”](#), Reuters, 29 June 2022

## The 1997 Founding Act <sup>59</sup>

During discussions of expansion in the mid-1990s with NATO, Russia sought to prevent the stationing of forces and nuclear weapons from the existing Member states on the territory of the new Member states. In the 1997 Founding Act between NATO and Russia, NATO stated that “they have no intention, no plan and no reason to deploy nuclear weapons on the territory of new members”.

However, they made no such commitment regarding forces, only that they would avoid the permanent stationing of substantial combat forces:

NATO reiterates that in the current and foreseeable security environment, the Alliance will carry out its collective defence and other missions by ensuring the necessary interoperability, integration, and capability for reinforcement rather than by additional permanent stationing of substantial combat forces.<sup>60</sup>

The Act does go on to say that “reinforcement may take place, when necessary, in the event of defence against a threat of aggression and missions.” While NATO has [deployed forces along its eastern flank](#) in recent years, ever since Russia’s annexation of Crimea in 2014, NATO argues these are on a continuous rather than permanent basis.

### Related Commons Library papers

The section above draws on material from the following Library papers:

- [Russian foreign and security policy](#), CBP7646, 5 July 2016
- [Russia and the West](#), RPO9-36, 24 April 2009 discusses in detail Russian concerns about NATO enlargement (section 5).
- [NATO enlargement](#), RP97-51, 8 May 1997

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<sup>59</sup> Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov’s remarks on Russia’s foreign policy priorities, 1 December 2021

<sup>60</sup> [Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation](#), May 1997



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