

SWEDISH PARLIAMENT PUSHES ON WITH NATO ACCESSION

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The Swedish Parliament voted to proceed with NATO membership—but Hungary has now revealed plans to, like Turkey, ratify Finland's accession ahead of, and

separate from, Sweden's.

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Sweden's parliament [voted](#) in favour of proceeding with its NATO accession on Wednesday evening, March 22nd. The country's future will now depend on the decisions of Hungary and Turkey. But the road to accession hit a new roadblock after President Orbán's Fidesz party [declared](#) that Hungary will ratify Finland's NATO application on March 27th, but "will decide on the case of Sweden later."

Swedish lawmakers voted for NATO membership with 269 in favour, 37 against, and 43 absent. In a seven-hour debate, dissenting voices in the parliament, or Riksdag, came from the Left and the Green parties, who [asked](#) that membership only be accepted if no nuclear weapons were placed in Sweden. A [proposal](#) to that effect was put forward by a group of Social Democrats but failed to gain the necessary votes to pass.

One Green party MP, Jakob Risberg, [said](#) that "Sweden is about to plunge into a nuclear alliance with a Turkish despot as a doorman."

Historically, the Green party and the Left party were joined by both the centre-left Social Democrats and the national-conservative Sweden Democrats (SD) in opposing NATO membership. But this changed following Russia's invasion of Ukraine over a year ago, with the SD now [strongly](#) in favour.

"When reality changes, we must also rethink old truths," said Sweden Democrat Aron Emilsson, the chairman of the Riksdag's Foreign Affairs Committee. "This is a historic but still necessary decision to make," he [continued](#), "we are leaving 200 years of nonalignment behind us."

While Sweden initially applied for membership along with Finland in the spring of 2022, Turkish demands for Sweden to crack down on Kurdish activists and [Quran-burning](#) protests have [delayed](#) Sweden's application. Turkish President Erdoğan may want to [play](#) the foreign policy strongman ahead of a [close election](#) in May, while Sweden has refused to meet those Turkish demands that would violate Swedish national law, particularly on free speech.

Hungary, for its part, has previously [voiced objections](#) against Sweden as the country has been more involved than Finland in the EU's rule-of-law debate targeting Budapest. Still, the expectation from Stockholm was that their membership would be ratified alongside that of their neighbour to the east. Finding that [Finland alone would gain Hungary's approval](#) already next week, Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson [said](#) to public broadcaster Sveriges Radio on Thursday, March 23rd,

I'm going to ask why they are now separating Sweden from Finland. These are signals we have not received before, so I'm absolutely going to raise this with Orbán today.

Foreign Minister Tobias Billström, however, seemed confident that Sweden would join in time for the next NATO summit in Vilnius, Lithuania.