

You can help to get Sweden and Finland in NATO

2022-07-10

Sweden and Finland have tried hard in a nice and diplomatic way to deal with the Turkish blockade against their NATO membership. As result, the agreement between Turkey, Finland and Sweden was signed in which Turkey promised to stop its blockade against Swedish and Finnish NATO membership. Within days it became clear that Turkey does not intend to respect the text of that agreement but just demands people to be extradited regardless of the rule of law and international treaties. It is clear now that in the current approach, Turkey will only allow Sweden and Finland in NATO if Sweden and Finland violate and ignore their own rule of law.

Turkey is not a rational actor in terms of a western state. Turkey and Erdogan are one and the same at the international level and Erdogan is a de-facto dictator and more akin to a mob boss than a democratic leader. Therefore he demands that Sweden and Finland extradite people without any regard for the justice systems in their respective countries. [Obviously that is impossible in both countries](#). Given that the relevant Courts (etc.) [already decided in many of these extradition cases that these persons cannot be extradited](#), it is clear that Sweden and Finland [cannot legally extradite these people](#) that Erdogan wants to exact his revenge upon. It will be revenge as they will be [tortured](#), [raped](#) and [killed in Turkish prisons](#). Even in the purely hypothetical case in which the Swedish or Finnish government would order the relevant police force to simply round up people and put them in a plane (regardless of what a Court decided), these policemen and the pilots of the plane could refuse to do that out of fear of being prosecuted later on for following illegal orders. The same would apply to the military. So both the legal and the illegal routes to appease Erdogan are closed. Sweden and Finland cannot fix this on their own.

Apparently some people in Sweden and Finland think that 'Erdogan will cave in somehow'. This is an illusion. Any real expert on the region will confirm that. Erdogan is domestically and internationally in such a difficult position that he cannot give up these demands and allow it 'to blow over somehow'. In his mind and for his electorate he has to show that he is 'the strong man that gets his way'. It's a very primal and macho type of politics that he depends on. Erdogan will therefore not 'cave in somehow'. He may cave in but it will require clear action to force him to that point. But it will not happen by sitting it out and hoping he will be removed by the elections in Turkey in June 2023. The US is not in a position to somehow fix it for Sweden and Finland. The US has a lot on its plate in that region: the Iranian threat, keeping Arab allies on board, maintaining military presence in North-East Syria and so on and so forth. It cannot include this dossier as well in that part of the world. That is also why the US stayed out of almost this whole process. Moreover the US Congress and Senate despise any caving in to Erdogan and that limits any possibility for President Biden to move something when it comes to Turkey. For that reason the White House will not even be able to get Turkey a US deal regarding F-16's. It shows how limited the US options are in this situation.

That means that there is only one way left how Sweden and Finland as a whole will have to (and can) act to get an alternative approach going. This is necessary as Erdogan will not 'cave in somehow' without further action from Sweden and Finland. Sweden and Finland need to find additional strength (friends) and turn

the tables against Erdogan. Basically Sweden and Finland need to ask the rest of the EU for support in order to protect both countries. The rest of the EU needs to assist Sweden and Finland in its defense (becoming part of NATO) and support the protection of the rule of law in both Nordic EU Member States.

The EU wants to have the rule of law upheld in all EU Member States and demonstrated that towards Hungary and Poland. That means that the EU and all other EU Member States are obliged to support Sweden and Finland against Turkish pressure in upholding the rule of law in Finland and Sweden. Moreover the EU has an obligation (an intention that is expressed in Article 42.7 TEU) to support the defense of Sweden and Finland. To put it differently; given that the EU supports the defense of Ukraine (not an EU Member State), it for sure has the duty to support the defense of Sweden and Finland and therefore the duty to help both countries become NATO members.

Turkey is abusing the need for additional defense (need of NATO membership) of Sweden and Finland to the extent that Turkey is pressuring the rule of law in both EU Member States. The rest of the EU Member States and the EU have an obligation to support Sweden and Finland on both accounts. In any case the EU has the obligation to help to prevent that the need for proper defense does not lead to deterioration of the rule of law in either Nordic EU Member State.

On that basis it is clear what the alternative approach should be. Sweden and Finland need to ask the EU and other EU Member States to put serious pressure on Turkey. That does not mean that this will be necessarily be a request from the Swedish and Finnish governments to the other EU governments and the EU. This can perhaps even better be done via the Parliaments, MP's and civil societies of Sweden and Finland towards the EU, EU Member States and their Parliaments.

Basically, Swedish and Finnish MP's, Parties, NGO's, Trade Unions and so on can get the message out towards the EU and the other EU Member States to get their respective Parliaments to adopt resolutions and motions that ask their governments and the EU Commission to support the defense and rule of law in Sweden and Finland and therefore to put serious pressure on Turkey to stick to its agreement and allow Finland and Sweden in NATO. Of course, Swedish/Finnish MP's, parties, NGO's and Trade Unions and so on need to communicate this message online in English. They can put it online in English-language statements and videoclips so that this message is carried throughout Europe and picked up by international media.

As in the case of Ukraine, Swedish and Finnish societies and politics can mobilise European sentiment and politics to get the support they need. Erdogan is universally hated/disliked throughout Europe and Sweden and Finland liked throughout Europe. In this context, an appeal on Europe to act works toward an achievable goal.

In practical terms, this approach can be done by any political or social actor in Sweden and Finland. It does not demand any budget or even much time for organisations and MP's and so on to put that message online. This approach allows for all of society to be involved and help Sweden and Finland to become NATO member states. In fact, any Swedish or Finnish citizen can put that message online and tell Europe to get behind Sweden and Finland and put pressure on Turkey. You can help to get Sweden and Finland in NATO.

The rest of the EU has stayed silent as it did not want to interfere with a delicate process. That delicate process is over after Madrid as Turkey violated the Madrid agreement within days. It is now the time for the whole Swedish and Finnish political landscapes and citizens to act and to ask the EU and all other EU Member States to put European solidarity in action.

Johannes de Jong

Director Sallux