

Turkey's Erdogan Agrees to Back Sweden's NATO Membership

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has agreed to back Sweden's NATO membership on the eve of a two-day NATO summit in Lithuania. NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said that Erdogan has agreed to submit Sweden's accession protocols to Turkey's Parliament, the Grand National Assembly, which needs to ratify Stockholm's NATO membership. The announcement came after Erdogan and Stoltenberg met with Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson. In a joint statement, the leaders noted the efforts Sweden has taken to placate Turkey since last year's NATO summit in Madrid. Turkey's main gripe with Sweden is its alleged support for the PKK. The statement said Sweden has "amended its constitution, changed its laws, significantly expanded its counter-terrorism cooperation against the PKK." By applying to join NATO, Sweden abandoned its long-standing policy of neutrality, which kept the country out of two world wars.

Mirziyoyev Wins Uzbek Presidential Election

Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev won the 2023 presidential election against virtually no opposition, enabling him to remain in power until at least 2030. Mirziyoyev received 87% of the vote against three opposition candidates who were relatively unknown. The snap election comes after Uzbekistan passed a constitutional referendum to extend presidential term limits from two five-year terms to two seven-year terms, which also reset Mirziyoyev's term count. Mirziyoyev's victory secures the continuation of his iron-fist rule. Additionally, he will likely continue promoting Uzbekistan's neutral stance on the Russia-Ukraine war in order to secure energy deals with Russia and increasingly import Russian goods like energy. Mirziyoyev's victory also means Uzbekistan will likely continue to engage productively with Afghanistan's Taliban government and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization to ensure the stability of Afghanistan. He will likely look to run for reelection in 2030, extending his rule to 2037.

Putin Reportedly Met with Prigozhin following Wagner's Mutiny

Russian press secretary Dmitry Peskov announced in his daily briefing that President Vladimir Putin met with Yevgeny Prigozhin, the leader of the Russian paramilitary Wagner Group, and top Wagner officials in Moscow, Russia, on June 29. At the meeting, Putin and Prigozhin discussed a deal to drop charges against Prigozhin over his leadership of Wagner's June 23-4 armed rebellion against the Defence Ministry, and they also worked out the future of Wagner's operations abroad and in Ukraine. At the meeting, Prigozhin reinforced his loyalty to Putin, despite Putin (so far) refusing to sack Shoigu or Gerasimov. The public announcement of the meeting comes four days after Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko claimed that Prigozhin was not in Belarus. It would seem the announcement was to demonstrate Putin's control of Wagner, as he was able to come to peaceful terms with Wagner's leaders without giving into Prigozhin's demand that Putin sideline chief of the General Staff Valery Gerasimov and Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu. The announcement also suggests to the public that Putin did not view Prigozhin as a real threat and that the government is united, thus publicly reinforcing the strength of the president's regime.