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Russia Eased Citizenship Process For Foreigners In Russian Army

President Vladimir Putin [signed](#) a decree on 4 January simplifying the process of obtaining Russian citizenship for foreigners who join the Russian Army. The spouses, children and parents of foreigners serving in the Russian Army, will also receive fast-track citizenship. This simplified citizenship process appears to be targeted at citizens of ex-Soviet countries who live and work in Russia.

Russia's Population Could Fall to 130 Million By 2046

Russia's statistics agency [Rosstat](#) stated on 10 January that under its 'most likely scenario,' the country's population could drop from 146.1 million to 130 million by 2046 due to declining immigration and low birth rates. Rosstat's 'worst-case scenario' anticipates an even deeper population decline of 15.4 million over the next twenty-two years, amounting to 7,00,000 fewer people immigrating to the country annually. The data does not account for Ukrainian territories acquired by Russia.

Russia-China Trade Reached US\$ 240 Billion in 2023

[Trade](#) between Russia and China reached a record US\$ 240 billion in 2023 – an increase of 26.3 per cent from 2022. Chinese exports to Russia increased by 46.9 per cent, while imports from Russia rose by 13 per cent. China also received half of Russia's oil and petroleum shipments in 2023. Interestingly, [Japan](#), in December 2023, imported the highest monthly volume of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) from Russia in seven years.

North Korean Foreign Minister Visits Moscow

North Korean Foreign Minister Choe Son Hui, during his [visit](#) to Russia on 16 January, hailed the deepening of ties

between Pyongyang and Moscow. He stated that the meeting with his Russian counterpart showed that "friendly bilateral ties were developing in accordance with the plans of the two countries' leaders." Meanwhile, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov stated that the purpose of the meeting was to take stock of agreements signed during the September 2023 summit between North Korean Supreme Leader Kim Jong Un and President Vladimir Putin in Russia.

Kazakhstan to deploy troops in Middle East and Africa

On 19 January Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, proposed [deploying](#) a contingent of troops to the Middle East and Africa (MEA) region for United Nations missions. The proposal, put forward during the joint meeting of the Parliament, received unanimous support. This paved the way for Kazakhstan to contribute up to 430 military personnel to various UN peacekeeping missions. Kazakhstan has officers serving in several UN missions, including six in Western Sahara, two in the Central African Republic, two in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and nine in Lebanon.

Tajikistan's President Visits Qatar

On 21 January, Tajikistan President Emomali Rahmon [visited](#) Qatar on a State visit. During the visit, the two parties discussed expanding the inter-parliamentary relationship of the two countries. Other aspects of cooperation included trade and economic cooperation, the participation of governmental and private sectors, as well as Tajikistan's hydropower potential and renewable energy resources.

Uzbekistan's President Visits China

On 24 January, Uzbekistan's President Shavkat Mirziyoyev [visited](#) China on a

State visit. The two leaders discussed the need to develop a comprehensive strategic partnership across various sectors. China stressed that it supports Uzbekistan in safeguarding its national sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity. The two leaders welcomed the launch of a pilot project to introduce Chinese vocational education in Uzbekistan through the Luban Workshop.

Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Gharibashvili resigns

On 29 January Irakli Gharibashvili, announced that he would [resign](#) as the Prime Minister and assume the role of Chairman of the ruling Georgian Dream Party on 1 February. He mentioned that he was stepping down from his position in accordance with the "principle of rotation" that had not been previously stated as part of the Party's governing principles. Referring to internal inter-Party democracy, he said it is necessary to "give others a chance."

Norway Allows Direct Sale of Arms to Ukraine

The Norwegian Government has announced a significant policy shift, allowing direct sales of [weapons](#) and defence-related products from Norwegian [defence](#) companies to Ukraine, effective from 1 January 2024. This move aligns with Norway's broader commitment to supporting Ukraine, which includes donations from existing stockpiles, acquisitions through international cooperation, and training Ukrainian personnel. However, this decision does not change Oslo's existing defence export mechanism.

India's Raksha Mantri Visits the United Kingdom

On 8 January, India's Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh [visited](#) the United Kingdom

for a three-day visit. The visit marks a significant milestone as it was the first by a Raksha Mantri after twenty-two years. During the visit, talks between the Raksha Mantri and UK's Defence Minister Grant Shapps, centred on defence, economic cooperation, joint military exercises and military ties. There was a specific mention of cooperation in the maritime domain. During his visit, the two leaders participated in the India-UK Defence Industry CEOs Roundtable in London.

Türkiye Backs Sweden's Bid For NATO Membership

On 23 January 2024, Türkiye's parliament voted in favour of [Sweden](#) joining the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), marking a significant step forward in the Scandinavian country's long-fought attempt to enter the Western military alliance. Sweden's accession to NATO will be a historic turn in the country's legacy, as it will diverge from its centuries-old military non-alignment policy. After Türkiye President Erdoğan signs the ratification protocol, Hungary will be the only country left to ratify Sweden's membership bid.

French President Emmanuel Macron Visits India

French President Emmanuel Macron paid a [state](#) visit to India on 25 January. He was also invited as the Chief Guest for India's 75th Republic Day. This has made France the only country to have the privilege of being invited for a record six times. During the visit, the two nations signed deals for cooperation in various sectors, including defence, space exploration, civil aviation, science and technology, health, public administration and urban development. The two nations also announced cooperation in renewable energy, visa issues and UPI.