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Opinion: Stoltenberg's confirmation as Governor of Norges Bank – a new scandal? **TOPICS:** 2021 Elections In Norway Governor Of Norges Bank Jonas Gahr Støre Jonas Støre

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg The former prime ministers and Labor leaders Gro Harlem Brundtland and Jens Stoltenberg beside the current prime

minister and Labor leader Jonas Gahr Støre. Photographed together at the Labor Party's national meeting in 2019. Photo: Terje Pedersen Advertisements CONTROLLING COMPLEXITY. 💢 AXONIUS

confirmed as the next Governor of Norges Bank. The fact that the current NATO boss and former Prime Minister will head Norway's central bank shows that Norway is not immune to the sort of grubby and murky backroom deals (or should that be dinners) and party nepotism that plagues other countries.

In what was surely one of the country's worst-kept secrets, Jens Stoltenberg has been officially

POSTED BY: JONATHAN WILLIAMSON 8. FEBRUARY 2022

AN AXONIUS DOCUMENTARY

205 year old "glass ceiling" still intact at Bankplassen 2 Months after winning a crush election and returning to power after 8 years in the political wilderness, it appears that the Labour Party (Arbeiderpartiet, AP) has further secured the reins of power. The AP

now have their man at Bankplassen 2, Oslo. Current NATO Secretary-General, two-time former Prime Minister, and darling of the AP, Jens Stoltenberg, has been confirmed as Norway's new central bank

head honcho. Before we delve into the process (or lack thereof) of his selection, please spare a thought for (quite literally) the only woman in contention: current Deputy Governor, Ida Wolden Bache. Having set about quietly, but confidently, rising through the ranks of the organization she is now Number 2 of, many have presumed that she was the Governor-in-Waiting. In a somewhat alarming decision, a woman possessing far more theoretical and practical experience in the goings of a Central Bank has

seen her nomination pipped by...a man. The glass ceiling, some 205-year-olds, is still very much intact at Bankplassen 2. Should Stoltenberg have kept out of the two-horse race, the AP could have claimed, however indirectly, that it was on their watch that this glass ceiling was shattered. However, they now have swapped an indirect win for a political scandal of their own making. Central Bank policy, according to Norges Bank, is apparently still very much a man's world.

Støre's debt to Stoltenberg Last fall, in Norway's first COVID era election, Jonas Gahr Støre finally led the AP back to the land of milk and honey. Having led the party since 2014, Støre was in charge for the 2017 election where a 3.4% swing against the AP led to accusations of being overconfident, cocky, and taking things for

granted. The man that he replaced as party leader was his mentor, friend, and confidant Jens Stoltenberg. The two men are so close, politically and personally, that many felt a vote for Støre was

exposure needed before a shot at Norway's top job.

the return to the "Golden Age" of Stoltenberg's government a decade or so ago. Though there is but a year or so in age difference, the relationship (politically speaking) is one not unlike a mentor and protege. Støre's rise to power and national prominence was very much planned and overseen by Stoltenberg. Stoltenberg appointed Støre as Foreign Minister, giving Støre his first taste of real political power, influence, and national publicity. This job, for many in Norway, is often seen as a truly key portfolio and often gives would-be leaders the national, and international,

The career trajectory of Støre has very much, at least at the beginning, been actively influenced by the hand of Jens Stoltenberg. So when Støre led the AP back into power last fall, was it any surprise that his old mate and mentor Jens may come knocking on his door?  $\triangleright \times$ **Business Insurance** 

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Støre told the media that he had not. Yet details have emerged about two dinner parties and a plane trip from New York where Stoltenberg had discussed the job with Støre, current Governor of Norges Bank, Øystein Olsen, and Oil Fund chief, Nicolai Tangen. Støre later admitted that the topic had been discussed but he recused himself due to the "conflict of interest."

ear.

is supposed to have.

like cronyism.

We still have the disturbing fact that Stoltenberg discussed his nomination for the top job with the governmental economic heavyweights months before he officially announced his nomination and just shortly after the election. Did Stoltenberg have a "wish list" for Støre before the 2021 election? It is clear that Stoltenberg's nomination was very much a talking point just days after the crushing election win.

Majority of the Storting didn't want Stoltenberg as Governor It is not too often in today's political climate that the majority of the Storting and the public can agree on something. Stoltenberg's nomination was the topic that brought the public and the politicians

together. A majority of Stortinget members did not want Stoltenberg to become the next Governor

due to a blurring of political independence, neutrality, and objectivity that the Central Bank Governor

Even if Støre wasn't at this discussions or didn't listen (he did, after all, repeatedly tell the media that

he recused himself from further conversations of this topic – if that is to be believed ), there is no

doubt that the topic and subject of these "discussions" would have drifted back to Støre's office and

It has also emerged that the Finance Ministry, headed now by Trygve Slagsvold Vedum (SP), actively encouraged Stoltenberg to apply for the job. This flies in the face of the political independence of the Governor, something which has had cross-party support for generations. If the AP wanted to change course and have political appointees as Governors then why was this not a party policy that should have been debated and put to the voters at the last election? Instead, we have this stealth

assumption of power by the AP which is not only against historical precedent but also looks rather

Is the AP so drunk on power – having won the 2021 election convincingly – that it now disregards the sentiment and opinions of both the Storting and the Norwegian population? Why was his nomination discussed only in private planes and dinner parties at not by the AP, in public, before the 2021 election?



Stoltenberg nomination sullies Støre's fresh government

The nomination of Jens Stoltenberg, though highly qualified for the job, represents a whiff of a

closely to Stoltenberg for years, will no doubt have to wear some of the accusations of sexism,

This appointment can be seen as the second scandal to shake up Støre's government. The first

involved former President of the Norwegian parliament (Storting) Eva Kristin Hansen (AP), who

formally resigned in November, after the public prosecutor ordered a fraud investigation against

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scandal for the freshly elected Støre government. Jonas Gahr Støre himself, having aligned himself so

cronyism, undemocratic and discreet backroom dealing, and the creeping politicization of the central

the ongoing Russian crisis? These questions need answers.

bank Governorship.

**About the author:** 

stated.

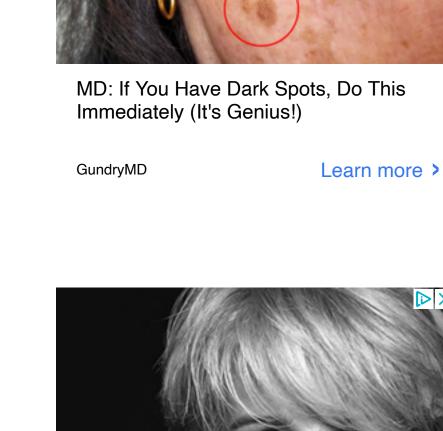
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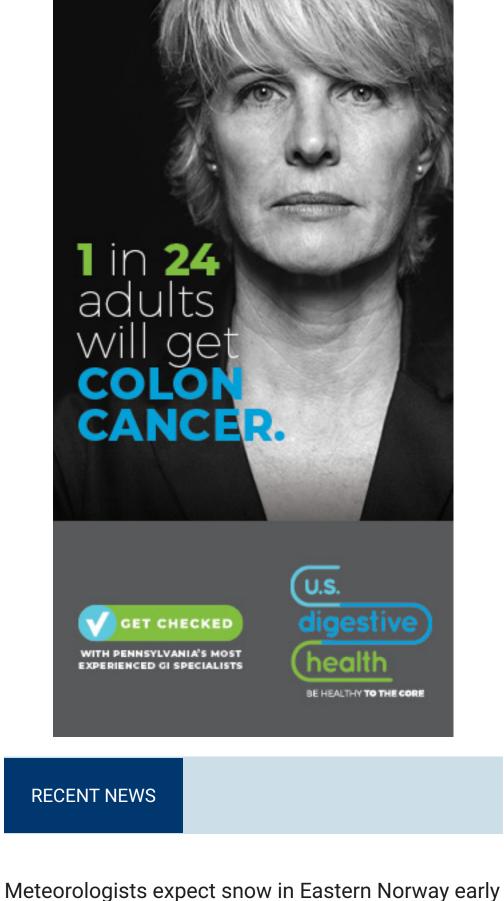
Let us hope – for the nation's sake – it is also this government's last scandal.

was there a chance that Stoltenberg's mind was elsewhere last year and into this year, coinciding with

Jonathan is a lover of the written word. He believes the best way to combat this polarization of news and politics, in our time, is by having a balanced view. Both sides of the story are equally important. He also enjoys traveling and live music. Source: #NorwayTodayNews

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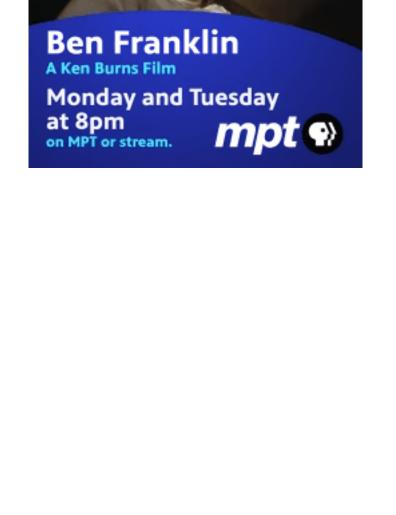
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ON "OPINION: STOLTENBERG'S CONFIRMATION AS GOVERNOR OF NORGES BANK - A NEW SCANDAL?"

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